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DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE



Day of the Land
March 30th



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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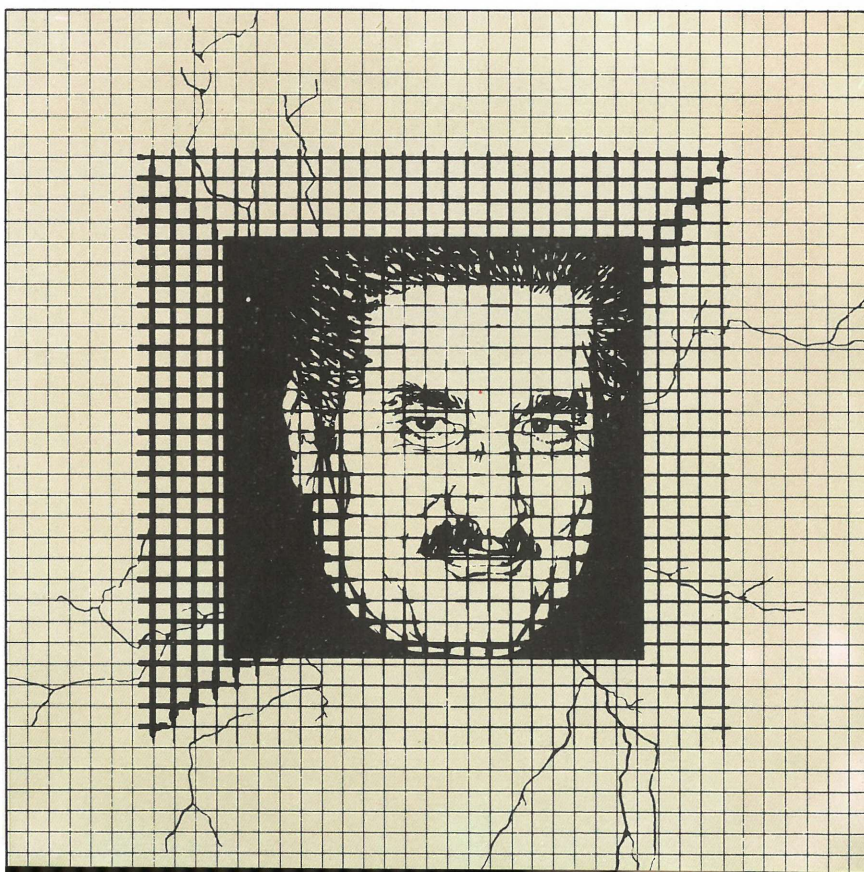
Free Abu Issam and All Political Prisoners in Jordan

In our last issue, we wrote about the massive arrests of patriots in Jordan, including the leading militant Azmi al Khawaja (Abu Issam), who is still being held by the Jordanian Central Intelligence. We have recently been informed that Abu Issam was beaten and tortured until he lost consciousness. The interrogators are still trying to get information from him by force. However, he has resisted all their attempts and confronted his captors with high morale. Abu Issam's wife has been prohibited from visiting him since his arrest two months ago.

In another incident related to political prisoners in Jordan, representatives of Amnesty International met with the wives of some of these prisoners. The wives explained what had happened to them, especially about being prevented from visiting their husbands. The Amnesty International representative related that the authorities had told him that the prisoners detained at the Central Intelligence are still being questioned after which they will be transferred to prison for trial, then released! Obviously, this is a big lie concocted by the Jordanian authorities to trick the in-

ternational organizations working for justice for political prisoners. The process described by the authorities corresponds to the formalities of Jordanian law, but the reality is that such

prisoners are held by the Central Intelligence for an indefinite period, sometimes years. Many are never brought to trial at all, much less speedily released.



Editorial

How Long Will the War on the Camps Continue?

There is no doubt that the Syrian entry into West Beirut is the most outstanding event in the region at present. It continues to attract the attention of Palestinian, Lebanese, Arab and international political circles alike. All are watching the effects of the ongoing developments on the future identity and position of Lebanon, taking into consideration the close connection between the Lebanese problem, regional problems and the Arab-Zionist conflict, as well as the failure of all attempts to separate the Lebanese conflict from the Middle East conflict. An observation period is required for all concerned parties to explore the nature of the steps being taken and their effects on the present and future circumstances.

The Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist forces, along with all the Arab national liberation movement, are awaiting Syrian positions and moves that would restore the nationalist Palestinian-Lebanese-Syrian triangle of steadfastness to its true militancy and strength. Previously, this alliance facilitated the defeat of the Israeli, US, NATO and Phalangist forces in 1983-84, aborting the infamous May 17th accord after inflicting heavy losses on the enemy forces.

The Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist forces are also awaiting Syrian positions and moves supportive of the national democratic trend of resistance in Lebanon, which lost some of its strength as a result of the wars waged by Amal against it, in a marked deviation from the real battle against the fascist, sectarian trend. The sectarian trend that spread within Amal not only constitutes an obstacle to consolidating the nationalist program and continuing the war for liberation and democratic change. It has also weakened the nationalist alliance's confrontation of the aggression launched against the Arab liberation movement by the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary alliance, as a prelude to spreading Camp David in the region.

These are the aspirations of the Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist forces that are supported by progressive forces on the Arab and international levels. The aspirations of the Lebanese fascists, who are supported by the US and 'Israel', are entirely different. The fascist forces have publicly declared that they will resist the Syrian presence unless its main goal is to disarm the western sector of Beirut and hand it over to the Lebanese authorities, after being 'cleansed'. They insist that the Syrian forces work seriously for the release of foreign hostages and strike Islamic fundamentalists. The public positions of the Lebanese fascists, the US and 'Israel', are accompanied by a flood of direct and indirect threats that Syria will be drowned in the Lebanese quagmire if it does not deal with the situation in a manner acceptable to Washington, Tel Aviv and the Lebanese presidency. These very forces had all themselves failed to eliminate Palestinian-Lebanese nationalist armed presence over the preceding years, despite the application of massive aggression to that end.

In view of these facts, it is clear that the enemy forces are working to delay and ultimately avoid the measures proposed for political reform as a step towards resolving the Lebanese problem. At the same time, the enemy forces are waiting to see the steps taken and how these impact on the future of the Palestinian-Lebanese nationalist armed presence and the sectarian nature of the Lebanese regime. The Lebanese fascists

have waged a fierce war and joined the Zionists in their battle to eliminate the Palestinian revolution and the Lebanese national movement in order to impose their sectarian hegemony on Lebanon. All facts indicate that they have not changed their line or their relations with the enemy forces. On the contrary, the fascists are vigorously improving their relations with Tel Aviv, Washington and the Arab forces who are moving towards Camp David.

Thus, legitimate fears are harbored by the Lebanese and Palestinian nationalist forces who have shouldered the main burden in the battle against the fascists' plans and the attempts to transform Lebanon into a US-Zionist satellite. Their fears stem from the fact that they have not been part of the current discussions on the future of Lebanon, the political solutions being proposed and how these plans would safeguard the achievements made by Lebanese and Palestinian nationalists in the battle against the fascists. Based on their sacrifices, the Lebanese and Palestinian nationalist and democratic forces have the right to participate in decision-making and practical planning of the steps to be taken. Above all, they have the right to ask Syria to pressure Amal to stop its ugly practices against Lebanese nationalist cadres and leaders, and to lift the siege on the Palestinian camps. This would save the nationalist forces and allow for the unification of their capacities. If it is true that the Syrian entry into West Beirut has had immediate results, such as restoring security and stability to the courageous city which suffered greatly from Amal's war, it is also true that this entry has not yet forced Amal to lift the siege on Burj Al Barajneh and Shatila camps. The residents of these two camps are still trapped in daily suffering, despite the Syrian forces' deployment in West Beirut. The Syrian forces did help in a partial lifting of the blockade on food and medical supplies to the camps. Still, they have not yet taken the necessary steps to ensure the withdrawal of Amal and the Lebanese Army from the area surrounding the camps. Only this would ensure the cessation of the daily attacks on the besieged Palestinians.

The present conditions necessitate alertness to the known plans of the fascist forces and their regional and international allies. At the same time, these conditions require an immediate initiative to unify and consolidate the nationalist ranks, by stopping Amal's war against Lebanese and Palestinian nationalists. In the light of the intensification of Amal's siege of the camps, the question now being asked by the camp residents, and by Palestinian, Lebanese and Arab popular and political forces, is: Why is the camp war continuing, and for how long? This question is a legitimate one, since many thought that the Syrian forces' entry into West Beirut would facilitate a solution to the camps' problems.

The Palestinian people and revolution have confirmed their adherence to their nationalist armed presence in Lebanon. They are determined to uphold the achievements made through their struggle and sacrifices. At the same time, they are endeavoring to adhere to all the agreements reached with the Lebanese nationalist forces, under Syrian auspices, concerning the camps in Lebanon. We expect all sincere patriotic forces to take these things into account. ●

Occupied Palestine

Mass Uprising Heads Towards Land Day

«Those Palestinians are demonstrating against Amal's siege of the camps in Lebanon, but they're throwing stones at us!» That is what a Zionist officer told reporters about the mass demonstrations that broke out all over the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip in February, and are continuing with full force. The officer may be 'astonished' that Palestinians are throwing stones at the Israelis while protesting Amal's continuous siege of the camps in Lebanon, but the truth he wants to hide is that the Palestinian people are also protesting the Zionist iron fist policy in the occupied territories. The other truth being underscored by the mass uprising is that the struggle of the Palestinian people is dialectically interconnected, whether in Palestine, Lebanon or elsewhere.

The ongoing popular uprising in occupied Palestine clearly projects our people's adherence to their national identity, their land and their representative, the PLO. The current uprising is a continuation of the consistent struggles of our people against the occupation. In February, the popular uprising led one newspaper to headline its story about the demonstrations by saying: «Israel Lost Control.» The following is an account of the uprising starting from February 19th, the day we left off in the previous issue of *Democratic Palestine*.

DEMONSTRATIONS CONTINUE

In the occupied West Bank, Palestinian youth erected roadblocks in the streets of Ramallah on February 19th. They threw stones at the occupation forces who fired tear gas into the crowd and made arrests. In Nablus, the occupation army imposed a curfew on Askar camp after the residents staged a symbolic funeral for a Palestinian martyr, a taxi driver named Samih Ibrahim Kharrousheh who was killed by the Zionist troops the day before. In a courageous operation, Samih had stormed a Zionist patrol near Askar camp with his taxi, injuring three of the soldiers. Curfew was also imposed on Duheisheh camp in the Bethlehem area.

Also on February 19th, the occupation authorities extended the closure of

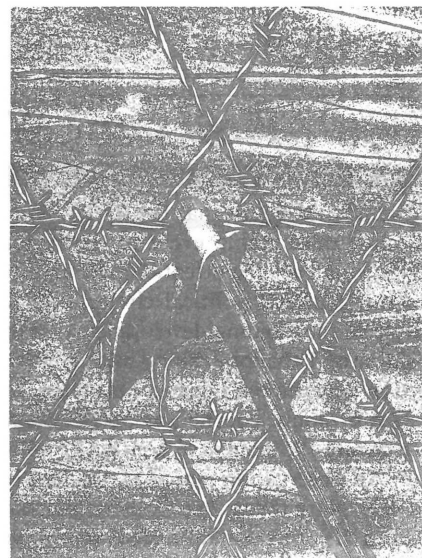
Bir Zeit University for three days and of Al Najah for one week, in an attempt to reduce the possibility of demonstrations breaking out. The Zionists also imposed house arrest on Dr. Abdel Sattar Qasem of Al Najah University. They extended the arrest of *Al Fajr* journalist, Talal Abu Afifeh, for another ten days, while sentencing journalist Hani Abu Ghadhib and Mohammad Sobeh Abdel Haq from Nablus to two months imprisonment.

In the occupied Gaza Strip, Palestinian youth erected roadblocks, threw stones at the occupation forces and waved Palestinian flags in Rafah and Khan Younis. Zionist troops shot indiscriminately, and two Khan Younis youth were wounded. In Jabalia camp, which the Israelis have named 'The Fearsome Camp', militant demonstrations erupted, at which the Zionists imposed a curfew and blocked all entrances to the camp.

On February 21st, Zionist soldiers used tear-gas bombs and shot at demonstrators in Ramallah and Hebron, in the West Bank. An Israeli military spokesman said that one Israeli soldier was wounded and that a curfew had been imposed on Nablus. In Hebron, the occupation forces closed off the area near the Islamic College after student demonstrations. About 150 students staged a sit-in inside the college. In nearby Dura, the occupation forces dispersed a large demonstration. In Gaza, a molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli car, destroying it.

MORE UNIVERSITIES CLOSED

On February 23rd, the occupation authorities closed down the Islamic Colleges in Hebron (until March 15th) and in Gaza (for ten days) after large student demonstrations in which seven students were injured and about 131 arrested. An eyewitness said that the demonstrations erupted when the occupation forces arrested several students and forced them to stand with their hands raised. Meanwhile, other students burned tires and chanted anti-occupation slogans, at which the Zionist forces fired water cannons to disperse them. At the same time, Bir Zeit



and Bethlehem Universities reopened, while Al Najah remained closed. Demonstrations continued in Askar and Al Jalazon camps in the West Bank; the Zionist forces used tear gas, trying to disperse them.

ZIONIST MURDERS

On February 23rd, a Palestinian youth was martyred in the Gaza Strip. Zionist soldiers shot him, claiming that he had refused to stop at a military checkpoint.

In the West Bank, demonstrators erected roadblocks in Ramallah and Beit Jala, while demonstrators in Al Jalazon stoned Israeli settlers' cars. In Askar camp, demonstrators threw stones at Israeli patrols. Zionist troops were reinforced in Jerusalem after the heroic bomb attack on the Israeli border patrol the day before, in the Bab Al Amoud quarter. The occupation forces increased the number of checkpoints and patrols in Jerusalem's streets, while breaking into Palestinian homes and arresting 200 youth. Meanwhile, the infamous terrorist Kahana declared that his KACH gangsters would start conducting special patrols in the Bab Al Amoud quarter. The occupation authorities threatened to close down schools in the Bethlehem area and the Gaza Strip in order to stop the uprising. The military governor of the West Bank prohibited several students from returning to Al Kha'fer Secondary School in Bethlehem after their release from Al Faraah prison, on the pretext that they had incited other students to demonstrate.

In addition to repression in the streets, Zionist oppression was ap-

parent in other fields of life as well. The occupation authorities decided to demolish 35 houses of Jabalia camp on the pretext that they are located near a military camp. The Israeli magazine *Kutrachit* reported that since 1967, the occupation forces have arrested half a million Palestinians, about one-third the total population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On March 2nd, a Palestinian youth was killed and two wounded during a demonstration in Nablus. The martyr was Fayez Faris Ya'ish who was shot by Zionist soldiers in their attempt to disperse the demonstration. In the Gaza Strip, the occupation authorities ordered 70 houses in Khan Younis demolished under the pretext that they were built without a license.

In Um Al Fahm in 1948 occupied Palestine, over 4,000 people marched through the streets, protesting the closure of the town's schools due to lack of funds. While outright closing educational institutions in the 1967 occupied territories, the Zionists adopt a policy of starving the educational system for Palestinians within the borders of the Israeli state, both in an attempt to keep the Palestinians subjugated.

On March 3rd, the occupation forces imposed a curfew on Balata camp, near Nablus, after demonstrations in which residents erected roadblocks and threw stones at the Zionist soldiers. In Ramallah, students at the female teacher's institute demonstrated, burned tires and put up roadblocks in the streets leading to the institute.

In the Gaza Strip, the occupation forces closed down Jabalia secondary school for girls after the pupils had participated in demonstrations. House arrest was also imposed on several Gaza residents who study at Bir Zeit University.

In Jerusalem, the Zionist authorities ordered the closure of Al Nuzha Theater, the home of Al Hakawati theater group. A military court extended the detention of the progressive Israeli Michel Warshawski who was arrested in mid-February when the authorities closed down the Alternative Information Office which he directed.

On March 5th, the occupation forces continued to blockade Al Amari camp near Ramallah for the third consecutive day, after a molotov cocktail was thrown at an Israeli military vehicle. The same day, settler thugs attacked

several houses and stores in Halhoul, near Hebron, while it was under curfew.

EDUCATION THREATENED

Frustrated with the active, vanguard role of Palestinian students in the mass uprising, the Zionist authorities threatened to permanently close down all Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Zionist War Minister Yitzhak Rabin said in an interview with Israeli radio that those universities and schools «had become a locus for disorder and PLO influence which incite student demonstrations.» This can only be understood as a threat to close down the Palestinian universities and secondary schools if the demonstrations continue.

There are reports from occupied Palestine that the Zionist authorities are preparing a special educational curriculum for Palestinian students in the 1948 occupied territories, which is totally contradictory to the goals and historical rights of the Palestinian people. Another element in the Zionist de-education policy is enacted through deliberate neglect. Although careful studies have shown that Palestinian Arabs in the Zionist state need almost 2000 additional classrooms, the authorities have authorized the building of only 90. Only a quarter of Palestinian children attend kindergarten, while 90% of Israeli Jewish children do so.

SMALLPOX THREATENS PRISONERS

Due to the bad conditions in the Zionist jails, there was an outbreak of smallpox among the more than 500 Palestinian prisoners in Jnaid prison, near Nablus. Sixty cases of smallpox were identified. This is the direct result of the occupation authorities' persistent refusal of the prisoners' demands for better living conditions, especially health conditions and alleviating overcrowding in the cells.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

In protest of the Zionist iron fist policy in the occupied territories, international solidarity with the Palestinian people intensified. In Geneva, the UN Committee on Human Rights condemned the Israeli authorities' violation of the Geneva conventions by denying the rights of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and by the continued occupation of the Golan

Heights. The document issued by the 43-member committee expressed deep concern over the iron fist policy, and condemned the arming of Israeli settlers in the occupied territories. As could be expected, the US rejected the document.

No longer able to totally obscure the facts, a US State Department report about the human rights situation in 167 countries acknowledged that Palestinians complain of mistreatment by the Israeli occupation authorities. The US report cited figures concerning the number of Palestinians killed, wounded, missing, arrested, under house arrest or deported, and the number of houses demolished and shops closed. The US figures were, however, much lower than those cited by Amnesty International. For example, the US report stated that in 1986, about 32 Palestinians had been placed under administrative detention, while Amnesty International reported 144 Palestinians arrested in this way in 1986.

COORDINATED STRUGGLE

The present uprising is a continuation of the chain of mass uprisings since the day the Zionists set foot in Palestine. It encompasses all the towns, villages and camps of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, attesting to our masses' ability to organize and coordinate joint action, despite the Zionist attempt to disrupt this coordination by imposing curfews and blockades. The masses' resistance is reinforced by the intensification of armed struggle, and the creation of new forms of confronting the Zionist enemy. The Zionist officials' own words and hysterical measures also serve to confirm the magnitude of this uprising.

As we go to press, demonstrations continue, heading towards the Day of the Land on March 30th, the annual occasion for Palestinians to manifest their unified adherence to their land and the PLO. The current demonstrations have reinforced the unity of the people in confronting the array of dangers threatening their lives and revolution, from the Israeli-Jordanian division of functions plan, to Amal's war of attrition on the camps, from the occupiers' iron fist to imperialism's animosity to Palestinian rights. Daily our masses are confirming their ability to confront and eventually defeat the fiercest of the enemy's plans to liquidate the Palestinian cause. ●

Military Operations

In February, a series of military operations occurred in all different parts of occupied Palestine, complementing the ongoing mass uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The continuation of Amal's dirty war against the Palestinian camps in Lebanon did not prevent Palestinian militants in the occupied homeland from continuing their heroic actions against the Zionist forces, to defeat the plans of annexation, confiscation and containment.

Thirty-seven military operations were conducted during the month of February, against military and other vital Zionist targets. The method of execution varied, but taken together they caused real disruption in the Israeli 'security' measures and concern to Zionist officials.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

In 1948 occupied Palestine, seven operations were conducted in the Galilee, Triangle and Negev (Naqab). Of these, three were in Tel Aviv, one in Haifa, one in Al Khudeireh, one in Bir Sheeba, and one in the Upper Galilee, which was carried out by Palestinian militants who crossed the border into Palestine.

In the occupied West Bank, there were 21 operations, of which 11 were in Jerusalem, four in Nablus, two in Hebron, three in Tulkarm and one in Jenin.

In the occupied Gaza Strip, nine operations occurred. Five of them were in Gaza and Al Shatti camp, one in Al Nusseirat, one in Khan Younis, one in Rafah and one in Dir Al Balah.

TYPE OF OPERATIONS

Molotov cocktails were extensively used in February. There were 21 molotov operations, as opposed to 18 in January. In addition, eight explosive charges were detonated in Zionist military targets or other vital installations. There were two stabbings of Zionists. A Zionist soldier was kidnapped; so far, his whereabouts are unknown to the Israeli authorities. A car was crashed into a Zionist military patrol. There was an attack from across the borders and the burning of a bank.



OUTSTANDING OPERATIONS

On February 1st, there were three operations of note: A Zionist soldier, Noah Shoro, 31 years of age, was stabbed near Bab Al Amoud in Jerusalem. A molotov cocktail attack targeted three military vehicles in Gaza. An explosive charge was set off in a bus parked in a station in Al Khudeireh, causing nine injuries, two of them serious, according to the Zionists. The Israeli radio reported that the bus was on its way to Jerusalem from Haifa, and that the charge had been put under the driver's seat or in the luggage compartment. The radio termed this the most dangerous operation since last February when a bomb exploded in a Tel Aviv neighborhood.

There was a molotov cocktail attack on a military bus in Hebron on February 4th, and on a military patrol in Gaza on February 10th. In mid-February, the house of a collaborator in Tulkarm was attacked twice with molotov cocktails. On February 11th, there was an explosion in Bir Sheeba, while five molotov cocktails were thrown at an Israeli bus in Qalandia, outside Jerusalem.

An outstanding operation, which planted fear in the hearts of the Zionists, occurred when a Palestinian taxi driver, Samih Ibrahim Kharousheh, rammed his car into a gathering of Zionist soldiers near Askar camp on February 17th. Three of the soldiers were injured according to Israeli admission. Israeli officials spoke openly of their fear that this type of operation will spread in the occupied territories.

Another outstanding operation, which spread fear among the settler population, was the hand grenade attack on a group of border guards near Bab Al Amoud in Jerusalem, on February 21st. The Zionists reported that one soldier was killed and 17 others wounded, but one should bear in mind that they usually play down the casualties in their ranks.

On February 26th, there was an explosion in Bni Brak quarter of Tel Aviv, which is inhabited by Zionist extremists. On February 15th, there was a car bomb in Kfar Saba near Tel Aviv, and on February 20th, the Hapoalim bank in Jerusalem was burned.

LOSSES

According to the Israeli military spokesman, the operations in February caused the death of one and the injury of 23 Israelis. However, the number and quality of the operations carried out indicate that the official Israeli casualty figures do not tell the whole story. There was, moreover, extensive material damage caused by some of these operations.

Concerning the Palestinian revolution's losses, four militants were martyred in a clash with Zionist forces near a settlement in the Upper Galilee. The heroic taxi driver was also martyred when Zionist troops shot him near Askar camp.

Fighting Occupation in Gaza

One Woman's Story

On the occasion of International Women's Day, we take the opportunity to relate the story of Um Samir. Allow us to call her one of the 'little heroines' - one of the thousands of militants who never made it to the final pedestal of fame, but without whom the revolution and liberation of Palestine would be impossible.

Um Samir is a Palestinian from the Gaza Strip. Militant, wife, and mother of three children, she is as active and devoted to her cause and the revolution today as she was twenty years ago, at the time of the 1967 Zionist occupation of the remainder of Palestine. Here she retells her experience as a militant during the first years of the occupation of the Gaza Strip. This was a shining period in the course of Palestinian struggle. The militants of the PFLP were in command of the Strip at night, despite the Zionist military rule. The outstanding leadership of PFLP political and military commanders at that time was a hallmark in the Palestinian struggle. Especially famous was Mohammad Al Aswad, called Guevara of Gaza for his outstanding role as the PFLP's military leader there at that time.

I am the youngest in a family of five children. Being the only daughter did not make any difference. I was very close to the youngest of my brothers, who was a member of the PFLP.

At the time of the Zionist occupation, I was not politically conscious, but everyone, young and old, was gripped by a fever, a patriotic enthusiasm which pushed us to demonstrate, to agitate against the enemy. I was barely a teenager then, but under the influence of my youngest brother, I was slowly introduced into the organization. I was not very active among the masses; rather I was part of cell, along with a few other comrades. These were the only people in the organization I was ever to know from the time I was recruited until I left the Gaza Strip. We knew each other only by our code names.

My family was never aware of my activities. My brother used to cover up for me so I could carry out my duties. I was entrusted with smuggling arms from one point to another, or hiding them until they were required. Sometimes I was asked to strike up a relationship with families of collaborators to gather information about them.

During that period, the PFLP raised slogans rejecting so-called peaceful solutions with the enemy. It was our duty to paint these slogans on the walls. This had to be done very late at night or very early in the morning. It was the

same when we distributed leaflets. Our enthusiasm never left room for fear, and we would squabble over whose turn it was to carry out a certain task. We would feel a special kind of pleasure when a task was assigned to one of us. Once when I was distributing handbills I tripped over the outstretched leg of a sleeping Zionist soldier who was supposed to be patrolling the street. I was so alarmed that I quickly retraced my steps and distributed the handbills in another area.

Our missions were not especially dangerous; on the other hand, they were not unimportant. I remember once the organization desperately needed a typewriter and a mimeograph machine. Our responsible drew up a plan for us to steal these from a training center in the vicinity. I and another female comrade kept watch, while another comrade threatened to shoot if the principal (who slept at the center and woke up at our sounds) called the police. Luckily, he didn't try anything. This was to our advantage because the pistol our comrade held was damp from having been buried underground. When he tried it later, it didn't shoot! Anyway we got what we needed, and our higher commander, Guevara of Gaza, rewarded us with chocolates. Looking back, I was more concerned with how I was to get back into the house without waking my family, than I was about carrying out the operation.

OPPOSING COLLABORATION

Another mission which was not so successful was an attempt to assassinate Gaza's mayor Rashad Shawwa (feudalist and known collaborator). Our group consisted of four male comrades, myself and my girl friend. For two weeks, we watched him and kept a record of his schedule - when he left the municipality, when he arrived home, what kind of car he drove, and so on. Our plan was to shoot him as he was leaving the municipal building. However, on the appointed day, the area was teeming with Israeli patrol cars, and we couldn't possibly have done anything without being caught. We quickly agreed to change the site of the planned assassination to the area of his home. After he got into his car and drove off, we followed him in two separate taxis. We arrived before he did, took our positions and waited. Shawwa stopped his car in front of his house. Before he got out of the car, our comrades walked over to him and asked for his papers. Shawwa handed them over. Then realizing that they had drawn pistols and were going to shoot, he ducked. The bullets went through the windshield. The other gun did not go off, because the bullets were too damp. Desperate, our comrades threw two hand grenades into his car, but they did not go off either. We all realized that to waste any more time attempting to kill him would be dangerous, so we ran away only seconds before a patrol car swerved into the street. We were all terribly disappointed and were reprimanded by our commander for our failure.

In the early 1970s, the members of the municipal council were appointed by the Zionist authorities. The PFLP was opposed to such appointments, and we decided to threaten these municipal council members with death if they did



not resign. I was sometimes among those charged with distributing the threatening letters. This task had to be done quickly. We had to distribute handbills throughout Gaza, and

threatening letters to the homes of the council members, all in one day. I was charged with delivering a letter to the house of one council member. I knocked on the door, and his wife

opened. I handed her the letter in a sealed envelope, saying it was an invitation. She asked who I was, but I said that I was the wife of one of his friends. Looking back, I was only fif-

teen years old at that time; my agitation when she asked me questions probably aroused her suspicions. Whatever it was, she opened the envelope and read the contents before I had time to cross the street and catch a taxi. She started screaming at the people in the street to catch me; I remember she used a lot of obscene words. Anyway, I had to run across an open field to the other side where I caught a taxi and went to the appointed meeting place. The taxi driver said, «Oh, look, that woman is calling after you.» She had left the house and started running after me herself when nobody had responded to her. I just shrugged and told the taxi driver I had never seen her before - which was true.

MESSENGER TO FAMILIES

Sometimes we would be charged with other tasks which were less dramatic, but potentially just as dangerous. I was supposed to distribute salaries or letters to the families of martyrs or of comrades on the run or imprisoned. The letters were in a very compact form so that we could easily hide them, or if necessary swallow them. Money was distributed every two months; a reduction in frequency was necessary so as not to look suspicious. Once, I and my girl friend had such a mission to carry out. She was always the very serious type, and soldiers at checkpoints were always picking on her in particular. I was more fashion-conscious and gave the impression of not being the type to be involved in any serious work. At one checkpoint, this paid off. My friend was asked to get out of the car and enter a tent the Zionists had set up for searching women. I was not asked to get out. Luckily I was the one carrying the letters and money. I had the letters in my mouth, making ready to swallow them if I was called to be searched. Fortunately, things never came to that.

As I said before, my brother used to cover up for me when I was absent from home, carrying out my duties. However, he was killed by the Zionists, and my freedom of movement was greatly reduced. I had to find different excuses to leave the house. This was difficult because my family was over-protective of me as the only daughter, and especially so after my brother's martyrdom. This situation was temporary however, only a few months. Then I graduated from high school and enrolled in a community college. My

teacher had been a member of the PFLP, and was aware that I was politically active. He would therefore give me special permission to leave the college when I asked. This allowed me to carry on my organizational duties. I also wore the traditional Gaza dress (a long, black skirt and head cover) so that when I moved about, I could cover my face and not risk that people recognized me and reported back to my family.

MILITARY TRAINING

After a period of carrying out duties of the type I have described, my girl friend and I started demanding to be trained for the military section. Our record was good, and our comrades arranged for us to be trained to carry and use arms, not just smuggle or hide them. However, our means and methods were very primitive. We could not afford to use live ammunition in training. Bullets were few and precious. We used to be trained in somewhat isolated and sheltered backyards, or inside. We were taught how to dry damp bullets in hot sand, how to hold and aim a pistol, and how to use hand grenades.

Our organizational duties continued much the same as usual; we would hold our meetings as always. Not more than two or three of us would meet, always in public places, and never for long periods of time. None of us knew the others' real names. This was a precaution we learned to appreciate later on when some of our comrades were caught during an operation. At the risk of sounding vain, I must say that the comrades of our group were something special. They were as militant, loyal and steadfast in prison as they had been outside. I must also say that it was not just our comrades who acted commendably.

THE MILITANTS AND THE MASSES

Although the majority of the Palestinian people in Gaza were not actively involved in the resistance organizations, their hearts were with us. When Zionist patrols attacked us during demonstrations or chased us down the streets, we could be sure that any door we knocked on would be immediately opened to give us refuge. Sometimes we were hosed down with red water, a dye used to spray

demonstrators so they could be identified later. People would take us in, give us a change of clothes and help us clean up. Sometimes I would lose my way when sent to a new area to distribute money to martyrs' families. People would willingly and discretely walk me to the house I asked about.

I remember one woman who had two sons in the Zionist jails. She was our special link to these prisons. My family's neighbors were always ready to hide the handbills I had to distribute, because I could not keep them at home for fear of my parents discovering them. One night while I was distributing handbills, a man walked up to me out of a side alley and asked for one. I was taken completely by surprise. (The militants' objective was to spread the handbills without actually handing them to persons, for they could be arrested if 'caught in the act'.) I tried to put on a brave face and denied having anything with me, but the man persisted and tried to persuade me that he was 'on our side' as they say. Finally, because I was desperate to shake him and get my job done, I let my intuition overrule my sense of caution. I gave him a handbill and he walked away.

Sometimes, however, our experiences were not pleasant, especially as females in a society such as ours. Once I was keeping watch on a certain position several days in a row. One shopkeeper noticed me and obviously thought I was hanging around for - you know - immoral purposes. He walked up to me and offered me money. I was so upset that I shouted at him. Later, the organization had a male comrade accompany me for such tasks.

I was also active in the framework of my regular life, i.e., at school. The high school I attended had over 1,000 girl students. Literally all of us would take part in demonstrations. One time all the girls agreed to march in a demonstration commemorating a certain event which I no longer remember. Our school had the reputation for giving the Zionist authorities a particularly troublesome time, so we expected that the soldiers would be very brutal in dispersing the demonstration. Therefore, we prepared a molotov cocktail to use in self-defense, or so we thought. We hid it in the girls' washroom on the window sill. We had not however counted on the sun overheating our homemade bomb. It ex-▶

ploded in the washroom before we went out to demonstrate. The Zionists patrolling the area stormed the school on hearing the explosion. We felt utterly ridiculous afterwards for not having been more careful; one of us could have been in the washroom by chance when it exploded.

Any time the Zionist authorities got wind of our activities in the school, they would storm it. One time they were particularly brutal. They cordoned off the school and a whole troop of soldiers charged into the classrooms. Not one girl escaped being brutally beaten up; the eyes of one of my classmates were smashed by a soldier. Girls that tried to hide under the desks were pulled out by their hair and beaten. The soldiers lined the teachers up against the corridor wall, along with the principal, and threatened to shoot them if they tried to call for help, or moved to defend the girls. I remember that about 200 girls had to be hospitalized for broken arms or legs, or concussions. The central hospital had to be cleared to make room for these cases.

The number of injured would have been much higher had not the women of an area known as Shaja'yeh (literally meaning 'the brave') intervened; they were well-known for their daring confrontation of Zionist soldiers. About a hundred of these women, bare-handed, started to fight the soldiers surrounding the school. They were especially outraged that the ambulances were not allowed in to take the injured to hospital. I remember that one woman actually tried to wrench a machine gun out of a soldier's hand. When she couldn't manage that, she settled for grabbing his helmet off his head. She started to run, kicking the helmet ahead of her as the soldier ran after her. That year they stormed our school four times, closing it down for days or weeks at a time.

The years when Guevara of Gaza was leading the PFLP's struggle in the Strip were truly among the highlights of Palestinian struggle. I cannot describe the immense feeling of pride when we read the headlines about how the Zionists ruled Gaza by day, but the resistance ruled it by night. We paid a heavy price however. Every day we would go to the main hospital in Gaza, to find out who had been martyred. The bodies of the martyrs were laid out on a cold slab of marble in a bare, dismal room in the hospital, to be identified by

the family. There was always an air of sympathy for the families and outrage at the fascist authorities. Sometimes when a particularly well-known militant had been martyred after living in hiding for months, and inflicting heavy losses on the enemy, word of the martyrdom would spread like wildfire. The hospital square would be overflowing with people inflamed with outrage. They would storm the hospital, lift the body high above their heads and march with it in a demonstration, defying the enemy soldiers' guns and all. I remember all of this as if it were yesterday.

MY BROTHER'S MARTYRDOM

We were brought up by our parents like most other people. We were not rich, nor were we poor. We never lacked anything, and our parents prided themselves that they were always able to provide for our smallest needs. It therefore came as a shock to them when they found out that my youngest brother was a member of a resistance organization. It was everybody's general impression that you are forced to take up that road in life only because you need money. Our family found out about my brother's political affiliation only six months before he was martyred.

One day he rushed into the house and told them that somebody had confessed in jail and brought his name up; he had to go into hiding. For six months we contacted him only with difficulty in out-of-the-way places. He studied for his high school certificate during these six months, gave in his examinations and was accepted at Cairo University's engineering faculty. The Zionists came to our house a few times and threatened us, to try and find out where he was hiding, but to no avail. Sometimes they would come after midnight, storming the house and turning the kitchen upside down. Soldiers with the machine guns poised would be on the roof, at the doorstep, in the front yard, and in the house.

Then one day, in the afternoon of January 1, 1970, they stormed our home for the last time. I was alone; the rest of

the family was at the market. Our whole neighborhood was surrounded. The soldier in charge told me that my brother had gotten into a fight and was down at the police station. I was to inform my family to come. When my family was informed, they went and found out that he had been dead for five days. His body was torn apart by machine gun bullets. When he died, he was 21 years and three months old.

Later on we found out that a collaborator had discovered my brother's hideout and informed on him. The Zionists surrounded the room where he was hiding. A battle ensued, and he managed to kill the commander of the Zionist patrol and wound several others, before they killed him. Our comrades had found out who the collaborator was; they vowed that he would be dead and buried before my brother was buried, and they carried out their vow. The next day the collaborator was shot dead, and his family buried him before we even knew about my brother's death.

I will not recount the details of mourning and sadness, but I will just mention one positive thing that emerged from this tragedy. The shock of my brother's martyrdom made my family realize more concretely what the revolution was all about. The change was not so dramatic that I dared to tell them about my own participation as a party member, but I did notice a change in their attitude towards others whom they knew played a role in the revolution. They were more receptive, more sympathetic, more willing to help out or contribute. Contrary to what the Zionist authorities expect, the pain and tragedy inflicted on our people have not made us cower. Rather this has led to the mobilization of even broader sectors of our people to fight against the occupation.

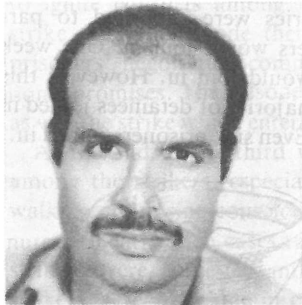
Finally, I left the Gaza Strip not because I was deported, pursued or wanted, like thousands of others. I left to study at the university in Beirut. Now, because I have been outside the occupied territories for so long, I have lost the right - according to the Zionist authorities - to return to my homeland, Palestine.

Um Samir is still a militant, still a comrade. She retold the stories of her past experience with modesty and sometimes embarrassment at what she believed were insignificant events. Her contribution, sacrifices and devotion to the cause, however, like those of thousands of other men and women, are the ingredients of the formula for the liberation of Palestine. ●

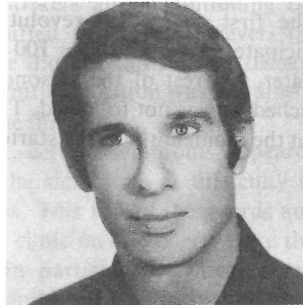
Highlights of Palestinian Struggle

1976 Hunger Strike in Ashkelon Jail

The United Nations has declared 1987 to be the Year of Palestine, and April 17th is the Day of Solidarity with Palestinian Prisoners. We mark these two occasions with an article on the 1976 hunger strike in Ashkelon jail in occupied Palestine.



Abdel Aziz Minawi



Zakaria Tatari

It is of great importance to remember the past struggles of the Palestinian people - their consistent, ongoing fight for establishing a popular, democratic state in Palestine. Palestinian revolutionaries imprisoned in Zionist jails have constituted a primary force in our masses' struggle at all stages. They have accumulated a rich militant experience and set a shining example for our masses of the possibilities for steadfastness and resistance, even under the worst of conditions. The following account of the Ashkelon strike was contributed to *Democratic Palestine* by two former political prisoners, comrades Zakaria Tatari and Abdel Aziz Minawi, who were among the 1,150 Palestinian revolutionaries liberated from the Zionist jails in 1985, in exchange for two Israeli soldiers captured by PFLP-General Command.

PRELUDE TO THE STRIKE

Before talking about the historical strike in Ashkelon, it is essential to review the development and conditions of the prisoners' movement in the Zionist jails at its different stages. Both objective and subjective factors determined the development of the prisoners' movement.

The objective factors can be divided into two: First was the physical and psychological oppression enacted against the prisoners' movement and organizations inside the Zionist jails, in order to eliminate the Palestinian national identity and armed struggle. Second was depriving the Palestinian prisoners of the least humanitarian rights to which political prisoners all over the world are entitled, and which are clearly outlined in UN documents. Among the subjective factors were the level of coordination between the various resistance organizations inside the prison, and the consolidation of the alliance among these organizations in the prisons and among the Palestinian masses at large.

On this background, we can understand that there were many reasons which led the imprisoned militants to think of conducting such a strike as occurred in Ashkelon, raising the slogan of «Yes to hunger, no to subjugation.» The strike was an effort to counteract a number of negative factors and tendencies among the prisoners themselves, while at the same

time pressuring the Zionist prison authorities for improvement in the conditions of detention. Among the factors which the strike aimed to correct were: First, the deterioration of the conditions of the prisoners' movement and its organizational dispersion and division. Second were the attempts of the prison administration to spread despair among the prisoners and erode their morale. Third was the emergence of opportunist trends, rightist and leftist, among the prisoners, along with the religious trend (the Muslim Brotherhood) and the so-called democratic trend which presented itself as a substitute for all the Palestinian resistance organizations. Fourth was the spread of 'tribalism' whereby people were classified by their origins (Gaza, West Bank, etc.), and prisoners banded together on the basis of their place of origin, acting according to the idea of 'the survival of the fittest'. Fifth was the bad living conditions suffered by the Palestinian prisoners, which impacted on their morale, leading prisoners to think about their own situation and sentence, while neglecting their people's cause.

A sixth factor was the prison administration's policy of discriminating between the prisoners, showing preference for those who worked in the prison (almost 2/3 of the inmates) in such jobs as tailoring, building, etc. Those who worked were granted a number of privileges: an extra 30 minutes of lighting in their cells, an extra half hour break, and a 10-15 minute extension of the monthly family visit. They were allowed to meet their families in a room, rather than separated from them by a screen.

A seventh factor was the spread of disease among the prisoners, heart, skin, stomach and other diseases which demanded immediate medical treatment or surgery which was denied. This had resulted in the death of several militants: Abdel Qader Abu Al Faham, Omar Awad Allah Yousef, Yousef Karim and Fuad Salamah.

Eighth was that books, newspapers and studies were prohibited. Ninth was the distinction made between Jewish criminal prisoners and security (i.e. Palestinian) prisoners, whereby the former gained more rights than the latter, if the latter had any rights at all. Tenth was that the cells were grossly overcrowded with more than 40 people squeezed into a room suitable for less than 10.

All these factors and problems accumulated, motivating some of the organizations' leaders inside the prison to think about conducting a strike that would be much more effective than previous forms of protest. The hunger strike is considered the highest form of prison struggle to be used especially when all other methods are exhausted in the struggle against the oppressive conditions. Previous forms of protest had included meeting with the prison administration to convey the prisoners' demands, refusing a meal, refusing to go out of the cells during the daily break and refusing to meet with visiting families. The prison administration had responded to all such actions by ig- ►

noring them, or by promising to look into the matter, and then 'forgetting' all about it.

PLANNING THE STRIKE

Given the miserable conditions and the ineffectiveness of the prisoners' previous forms of protest, preparations began for a hunger strike in Ashkelon, as well as in other Zionist jails. Preparations started six months before the date of the strike was set. Plans were made in order to strengthen the relations among the prisoners and boost their abilities. The aim was to build trust between the prisoners and the leadership in the jails, to consolidate the prisoners' enthusiasm, and to coordinate effectively between the various organizations inside and outside the prisons.

In the pre-strike deliberations, there were democratic discussions among all imprisoned militants from the various resistance organizations. A committee was formed to decide on and plan the strike. It included representatives from all organizations in the prison: one from Fatah, one from PFLP, one from DFLP, one from the Popular Struggle Front, and one to represent the other organizations. The decision to stage the hunger strike was taken unanimously by the committee, plus one non-committee member from the Muslim Brotherhood. The entire pre-strike dialogue was secret. What was publicly declared before the strike was the demands of the prisoners for improved living conditions. The final outcome of the dialogue was positive. It is noteworthy that bilateral discussions between Fatah and the PFLP, and collective discussions among all the organizations, served to restore the effectiveness of the prisoners' movement.

The committee of all the organizations' representatives prepared the practical measures for the strike. It sent messages to all nationalist and progressive forces and institutions in occupied Palestine, particularly the Committee for the Defense of Prisoners and the Committee of Lawyers. Messages were also sent to the Arab governments, the Arab League, the UN, the Red Cross and the Pope, explaining the harsh circumstances which the Palestinian revolutionaries were enduring in the Zionist prisons. Finally, the date was set for the strike -unanimously agreed to be on December 11, 1976, the ninth anniversary of the founding of the PFLP.

THE STRIKE DECLARATION

On the morning of December 11, 1976, a prisoner handed a document to the officer on duty at the start of the daily roll call. This document declared the start of the hunger strike, the reasons for its declaration and the prisoners' demands. This marked the actual implementation of the plan which had been under preparation for weeks by the strike committee. This committee took upon itself the formulation of the prisoners' decisions about protesting their conditions. It conducted extensive, secret communications among all the prisoners from the different organizations, to ensure their unity in struggle. The plan aimed at continuing the hunger strike until fulfillment of the prisoners' demands, or until the prisoners faced death.

A negotiating committee of four prisoners was formed to take decisions relating to the course of the struggle, to negotiate with the prison administration and to meet with the Red Cross and delegations. A central organizational detention committee was formed to follow up the question of living conditions in the prison. Subcommittees were formed to guarantee the coordination and execution of the plan. Information committees were formed to issue news about the strike, and follow up

the reactions outside the prison. Special cleaning committees were formed of prisoners who were asked not to join the hunger strike, so that they could serve as messengers between the different sections of the prison.

The document declaring the start of the strike was smuggled out of the prison to be sent to international and local organizations, so that they could begin a solidarity campaign that would put pressure on the Zionist authorities to submit to the prisoners' demands. The negotiating committee and the central organizational detention committee laid out a three-stage program for maximizing the capacity of the militants who were participating in the strike. All sick prisoners were excused from participating, as were the cleaning workers. In the first stage, 150 revolutionaries were supposed to participate. After 10 days, 100 others would join in. One week later, the rest of the prisoners would join in. However, this schedule was not followed. The majority of detainees joined in at the moment the strike started. Even sick prisoners joined in.



FORCE—FEEDING

The Zionist prison administration only realized what was happening when the strike actually erupted. At first, they tried to ignore the action, thinking it would not last long. They did not imagine that so many detainees had the energy needed to continue for more than a week. For one week, they continued to ignore the strike, but things did not happen as they had wished. The strike continued, and the administration declared an emergency situation in Ashkelon. Guards and medical staff were prohibited from leaving, and more personnel were brought in.

After the first week, the prison administration made its first concerted effort to break the strike. They started sending groups of strikers to the prison clinic. Here guards tied each prisoner to a chair, and a nurse would attempt to force-feed him with hot, salted milk. This caused the prisoners severe pains, and the administration was forced to transfer some of them to hospitals outside the prison for emergency treatment. Despite this, the strikers continued their fast, thus foiling the Zionists' first attempt to break the strike.

On the ninth day of the strike, the administration once again attempted to break it. This time, they isolated the revolu-

tionary leaders in two separate cells, while force-feeding others with hot milk, this time sweetened.

Then, on the 16th day of the strike, the administration admitted a Palestinian delegation to the prison. It included the infamous Rashad Shawwa and Lawyer Fayez Abu Rahma, both rightists, who visited the prison on the pretext of checking up on the conditions. They gave the strikers promises, trying to get them to end their action. Obviously, the prison administration's allowing them in was a propaganda ploy, to defuse the international and local reactions to the strike, which had reached a level that was embarrassing for the Israelis. In allowing the delegation's visit, the administration also hoped to ignite conflicts among the strikers about continuing the strike, and thus erode their unified position. However, the prisoners' negotiating committee did not fall for this delegation's promises. The prisoners' unified position was sustained, as was the strike which entered the third week.

At the end of the third week, certain symptoms appeared among the strikers, especially the sick, such as difficulty in walking and losing consciousness. This forced the guards and nurses to carry such cases to the clinic on stretchers. Here the strikers were force-fed milk. In particularly critical cases, strikers were put alone in cells and pressured to make a deal with the administration for ending the strike. This attempt to take advantage of the critical state of some of the strikers was, however, in vain. The revolutionaries continued the strike.

STRIKE—BREAKING BY TORTURE

With the exception of some who stopped due to their critical state and at the request of their comrades, the revolutionaries continued their strike. The administration's attempts to break the strike continued to fail. Then, on the 30th night of the strike, a new attempt was made. Prison guards started transferring groups of prisoners to other prisons, while leaving some of the strikers in Ashkelon. They then began to torture the strikers, but only to face failure to break the strike once again.

In view of the continuous failure of Ashkelon's administration to halt the strike, Haim Levi, director-general of Israeli prison affairs, promised the negotiating committee to comply with the prisoners' demands. His pledge was given on the 45th day of the strike, and the committee agreed to stop the strike. With the strike over, all the strikers, including those who had been transferred to other prisons, were returned to Ashkelon.

THE STRIKE RESUMES

Days passed with no sign of the prisoners' demands being fulfilled. The negotiating committee, in conjunction with the central organizational detention committee, decided to renew the strike. Thus, 20 days after stopping, the hunger strike was resumed. The prison administration quickly transferred the members of the negotiating committee to Tel Mond prison; other prisoners were transferred to other prisons as well. Severe punishments were imposed on the strikers remaining in Ashkelon.

The new phase of the strike lasted for 22 days. It ended after the strikers received pledges to fulfill their demands. At the same time, the members of the negotiating committee in Tel Mond continued to strike until the 38th day (counting from the resumption of the strike). Then they received assurances from their lawyers and families that the prisoners in Ashkelon and other prisons had stopped their strike.

The decision to end the strike was taken unanimously after the authorities had pledged to meet the prisoners' demands.

However, based on wrong calculations, the Muslim Brotherhood threatened the prisoners' unity by refusing to end their strike. Yet due to the ineffectiveness of this force, the strike ended anyway as agreed by all other prisoners.

Through the secret and public methods at their disposal, the striking prisoners had been able to follow how the news of the strike was spreading outside the prison. They were aware of the solidarity campaign with their struggle in occupied Palestine and abroad. They knew that their compatriots in other Zionist prisons had staged strikes lasting at least one week. In occupied Palestine, there had been solidarity sit-ins and hunger strikes in the Red Cross offices in Jerusalem and Gaza. There were mass demonstrations and commercial strikes protesting the occupation authorities' oppressive measures against the prisoners. The Committee for the Defense of Prisoners had convened several press conferences, to explain the strikers' demands and call for their recognition as political prisoners, not criminals. Amnesty International and the International Red Cross also joined in the protest, condemning the Zionist prison policies. Liberation movements around the world showed their support to the Palestinian prisoners' demands.

RESULTS OF THE STRIKE

The famous hunger strike in Ashkelon had a series of results which set a precedent at that time in terms of improving prison conditions. Sponge mattresses were provided. The daily break was increased by two and a half hours. A second family visit was allowed each month. Some newspapers were provided and some books with contents about Palestine. Summer and winter clothes were supplied. Prisoners acquired the right to celebrate national and international occasions. The centers where prisoners had worked were closed down with the exception of the kitchen and the room for washing clothes. Discrimination between Jewish criminal prisoners and Palestinian political prisoners was reduced somewhat concerning food and allowances.

Perhaps more importantly, the strike had a series of repercussions on the prisoners' mutual solidarity and unity in struggle. Relations between the Palestinian organizations were reorganized on a firm basis. Coordination grew between the prisoners' movement in all the Zionist jails. The prisoners' reinforced solidarity facilitated the elimination of collaborators in the prisons, and helped curtail the influence of reactionary trends such as the Muslim Brotherhood. All in all, the alliance between the Palestinian resistance organizations was strengthened in the prisons and among the masses in occupied Palestine.

To be realistic, such achievements, no matter how important, did not constitute a 'coup' in the Zionist authorities' prison policy. The strike showed that such achievements can only come through hard, unified struggle, but Zionism, as a racist and fascist movement, could only continue its repressive policy, attempting to subjugate, if not eliminate, the Palestinian people. Prisoners are targeted daily by the Zionist authorities who realize that breaking their morale is the first and essential step towards defeating the Palestinian national liberation movement. Thus, many of the achievements made in the Ashkelon strike have been retracted, and Palestinian militants continue to strike and strike again for fulfillment of the very simplest human rights. Nonetheless, the hunger strike in Ashkelon constituted a qualitative leap in the struggle of the prisoners' movement which is on the front-lines of the overall Palestinian struggle confronting the Zionist entity. ●



US—Israeli 'peace' conference

International Peace Conference?

Major capitals in the Middle East have, for some time now, been witnessing very active movements, dealing with the revived deliberations about an international peace conference on the Middle East. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' visit to Cairo in late February, the EEC's declaration about an international conference, and the generally positive response of the Arab regimes, have all helped the forceful comeback of talk about the conference. This comeback has occurred despite the fact that the stands of the various parties involved on the conference have not changed in contents. Nor is it clear whether such a conference can be convened this year, or the next for that matter.

BACKGROUND

It couldn't have come at a better time from the point of view of the enemy alliance. The situation on the Arab and Palestinian level presents a tempting offer for the imperialist powers to now come up with the idea of an international conference on the Middle East. The capitulationist trend that spread in the region after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, paved the way for Arab reaction and the imperialist-Zionist alliance to attempt to impose

the imperialist plans on the region.

The imperialist-Zionist alliance drew hope that they had a chance to impose their plans due to a series of developments, chiefly: the PLO's division, the Amman accord, the Cairo declaration of the rightist PLO leadership, the Peres-Hassan II meeting, the Peres-Mubarak summits in Alexandria and Cairo, the Iraq-Iran war, the war of the camps in Lebanon, and Egypt's official return to the Islamic conference and its restoration of relations with many Arab regimes.

The convening of an international conference, which would lay out an acceptable basis for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict, is not a new idea. Neither is it an Israeli idea as Peres attempts to project. The idea is an old one, dating back to after the 1967 war. The US and 'Israel' have consistently rejected the whole idea for obvious reasons: the Israeli insistence on direct, bilateral negotiations, and the US desire to impose its hegemony on the region.

Before the 1973 war, all doors leading to an international conference were blocked, which led Egypt and Syria to enter that war. Afterwards, the talk about an international conference was revived. Under the pressure of the military consequences of the war, the

Geneva conference was held. Henry Kissinger, then US national security advisor, succeeded in transforming the conference into an «international umbrella» - exactly what Peres wants today - in which direct, bilateral negotiations between Egypt and 'Israel' ultimately resulted in the Camp David accords.

After the achievement of the first and second disengagement agreements between Egypt and 'Israel', Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy stopped. For the third time, talk about an international conference was revived and even developed. It halted, however, with Sadat's visit to occupied Jerusalem in 1977, which replaced the idea of an international conference with direct negotiations. This resulted in the infamous Camp David accords. The US and its Zionist ally considered that what was achieved with Sadat was a precedent which could be repeated and spread.

CURRENT PROSPECTS

Formally, there are only small rocks that obstruct the road to an international conference. The US administration which used to consistently veto the idea of such a conference, had now withdrawn its reservations, supported by Western Europe. In the Israeli

arena, the Labor Party is with an international conference and the Likud is against. Theoretically, the Israeli obstacle could be removed by breaking the present partnership between Labor and Likud in the national unity government, leading to new elections with a Labor victory.

Yet facts indicate that things will not go according to this hypothesis, because what has prevented the convening of an international conference is the US-Israeli position on the nature and results of the conference. To date, the joint US-Israeli position on the conference, which is sought to be convened this year, has not changed.

The current Israeli-US-EEC political and informational campaigns for an international conference have precise tactical aims to benefit the interests of these parties.

By promoting the idea of an international conference, the Labor partner in the Israeli government aims to safeguard the process of warming up the cold peace with Egypt. This warming up started when Peres was prime minister, but is now threatened by neglect with Shamir as prime minister. The communique issued by Peres and the Egyptian foreign minister, after the former's visit to Cairo in February, stressed the two parties' mutual desire to «improve bilateral relations.» Peres' promotion of a conference also aims at projecting 'Israel' as a peace-lover, and to encourage the Jordanian regime in particular to take further steps in normalizing relations with 'Israel', leading to direct negotiations. When asked about his enthusiasm for an international conference, Peres said that «if we object to the convening of such a conference in the present time, our position would jeopardize the peace process in a sensitive period and would project us in front of the world as a rejectionist front.» What Peres meant by «sensitive period» was the active efforts being made by 'Israel', Jordan, Egypt, the US and some imperialist European countries to pave the way for the Jordanian regime and some Palestinians to join the Camp David process.

For the US, it is of great importance that all such maneuvers continue so that all look up to Washington and its role in the region, especially after the Camp David process has failed to go beyond the Egyptian front, and all previous plans to expand Camp David have failed. Added to this is the

deterioration of the US's credibility after Irangate and the exposure of the plan to overthrow the Libyan government, in addition to the internal problems facing the Reagan Administration. All these factors have combined to threaten the US role in the Middle East settlement process, leading the Reagan Administration to accept the idea of an international conference which it opposed not so long ago. Accordingly, the Reagan Administration sought to convince Shamir, who visited Washington in February, to accept the idea. The US also encouraged Peres to visit Cairo and discuss the concept of an international conference with the Egyptian regime, and gave the green light for the EEC to accept the convening of such a conference.

The EEC has its own motives for issuing a declaration calling for convening a conference, to safeguard its interests in the Arab world, and give the impression that the EEC's positions are not necessarily exactly the same as those of the US.

The Egyptian regime's active participation in the maneuvering around an international conference aims at achieving its own interests. The regime seeks to reassure the US and 'Israel' that it is a dependable partner and middleman that can attract other Arab regimes to the imperialist-Zionist settlement. At the same time, it seeks to reassure Arab reaction that it is playing a constructive role aimed at solving the

region's problems and insuring stability. Thus, the regime is cultivating an Arab decision to restore Egypt's seat in the Arab League, as it was restored in the Islamic Conference three years ago.

OBSTACLES

The convening of an international conference on the Middle East necessitates the resolving of many contradictions and objections among the regional and international parties involved. The first of these differences concerns the nature and goals of the conference. As a matter of fact, the conference now being deliberated is actually two conferences.

The first was suggested by the Soviet Union years ago and supported by Arab regimes and the majority of countries of the world, while being decisively rejected by 'Israel', the US and some of its allies. Such a conference would be held under UN auspices with all concerned parties, including the PLO, participating. This conference would arrive at a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict, ultimately recognizing and fulfilling the Palestinian people's rights to return, exercise self-determination and establish an independent state.

The second conference is the one recently called for by the Israeli Labor Party and accepted by the US, the EEC and some reactionary Arab regimes, like Egypt and Jordan. Both these regimes have agreed with 'Israel' and the US on ten points for the convening of the conference:

1. The conference is not a substitute for direct negotiations, but a complement.
2. The conference has no authority to impose a solution.
3. The conference has no right to invalidate any agreement reached between the parties elsewhere.
4. The conference will set up bilateral committees on a geographic basis when the period of direct negotiations is reached; negotiations in one committee do not depend on those in other committees.
5. The conference procedures should be agreed upon before it is convened.
6. The conference would be held on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.
7. The participants would be agreed upon before the convening of the conference.
8. The Palestinian representation should be agreed on before the conven-

Foreign Ministers Meguid of Egypt and Peres of 'Israel' call for international conference.



ing of the conference; all steps should be coordinated with Washington.

9. The Soviet Union has to change its policy towards 'Israel' and restore diplomatic relations as a precondition for participation.

10. The duration of the conference should be limited.

Thus, the US—Israeli conference puts preconditions and classifications for the conference and the participants. It would only be a temporary procedure, leading ultimately to the goal of bringing the Arabs and Israelis to the negotiations table. The PLO's participation is refused in advance, offering as a maximum a place for the Palestinians within the Jordanian or other Arab delegation. The Soviet Union's participation is conditioned on its restoring diplomatic relations with 'Israel' and allowing the emigration of Soviet Jews.

JORDAN'S DELIGHT

Since the political coordination between the Jordanian regime and the rightist PLO leadership was suspended in February 1986, the Jordanian regime has rapidly proceeded with its policy of normalizing relations with the Zionist state, prior to signing a treaty. At the same time, Jordanian officials have continued to confirm the necessity of convening an international conference. It is by now clear that there is Jordanian-Israeli coordination in imposing their division-of-functions plan in the occupied territories, as a prelude to direct negotiations under the auspices of an alleged international conference.

Although the Jordanian regime has always claimed adherence to the concept of an international conference, this position stems from its attempt to avoid the consequences of overt, direct negotiations with 'Israel', Sadat-style. It is most probable that Peres' primary motive for finding a formula for a conference that would 'beautify' direct negotiations, was extracting the Jordanian regime from the stalemate it is facing.

THE PALESTINIAN RIGHT'S REVIVED ILLUSIONS

Like Peres' real aim of bringing King Hussein to the table of direct negotiations, raising the issue of an international conference aims at extracting the

settlement from its stalemate. It aims at reviving the illusions of the PLO's rightist leadership that by involvement in the 'peaceful solution', it can overcome the political stalemate it entered after coordination with the Jordanian regime was halted.

After the 1973 war, the PLO rightist leadership had the illusion that an international conference would be held. However, after the smoke had cleared, it became obvious that the US planned to advance Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy instead. A few years later, the developments in the region had clarified in practice the kind of 'peace' Washington and Tel Aviv were seeking to impose, i.e., Camp David. More years passed and the international conference was not held, neither according to the US concept, nor according to the PLO rightist leadership's concept. Throughout these years, US—Israeli obstinancy was responsible for obstructing the possibility of convening an international conference in which the PLO would participate on an equal footing with other concerned parties, especially as the balance of power was leaning heavily in favor of the enemy alliance.

Still, the Palestinian right continued betting on the possibility of a change in the US position, whereby it would recognize the PLO and accept its full participation in the conference. Renewed illusions about the possibility of convening an international conference were seen in the recent political moves of the rightist leadership on several fronts: First, relations were restored with the Jordanian regime, as seen in Khalid Al Wazir's visit to Jordan and the meeting of the joint Jordanian-Palestinian committee. Second, the right-wing leadership continues to consolidate relations with the Camp David regime in Egypt. Third, this leadership is making extensive political moves on the European continent.

Despite all these efforts, facts clearly indicate that the PLO will not be accepted as an independent party, on an equal footing with others, at the international conference now being planned, if the conference is to be held at all. This remains the case even if the PLO were to accept the US—Israeli conditions. While the Amman accord was the result of the PLO rightist leadership's search for a place in the settlement process, the terms of this accord and

the course it charted also prove that any Palestinian participation would only be within the framework of a Jordanian delegation for direct negotiations.

FEASIBILITY

A good number of Arab regimes do not reject the Israeli-US conditions for an international conference in essence. Still, one cannot assume that all these regimes will find the strength to challenge the Arab masses and national liberation movement. One cannot assume that the Soviet Union will accept to participate in a conference of that nature and aim. On the other hand, it is unthinkable that the two strategic allies, 'Israel' and the US, will voluntarily relinquish their conditions, and accept the concept of an international conference as the Arabs or the Soviet Union desire. A rather far-fetched possibility is that the Arab regimes give up the peace plan adopted at the Fez Summit, thus submitting to the Israeli-US conditions. Otherwise, the chances for convening an international conference on the Middle East are non-existent this year, or in the next three years. (Next year is the US presidential elections, and the next would be the new administration's first year in power).

Experience had proven that Washington and Tel Aviv do not seek an international conference. Rather what is being sought now is the liquidation of the Palestinian cause and the PLO. The rightist PLO leadership's adherence to the Amman accord and restoring relations with the Jordanian regime only help pave the way for the enemy alliance's plans, offering King Hussein a cover for his capitulationist steps in the process.

It is clear that the only road open to the PLO leadership for getting out of its stalemate is officially and publicly cancelling the Amman accord, and ending relations with Cairo. This would set the conditions for restoring the PLO's unity on a clear nationalist basis, antagonistic to the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary alliance and all capitulationist plans and projects. This is the only way to obstruct the Jordanian and Egyptian regime's maneuvers. It is the prerequisite for the PLO's regaining its position in the Arab national liberation movement, as a vanguard fighting the imperialist plans, whether these are promoted via an international conference or without one. ●

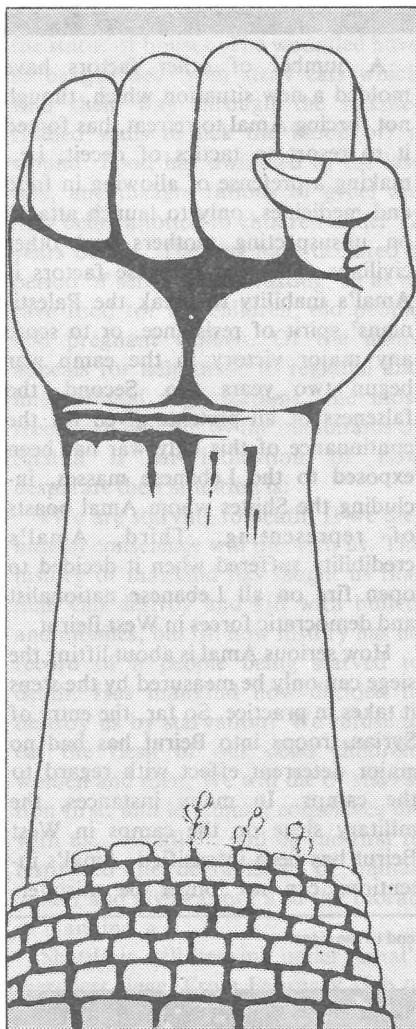
Striving for Palestinian National Unity

A series of intensive, inter-Palestinian meetings have been going on in the capitals of Algeria, Tunisia and Libya for some weeks now, aimed at restoring the PLO's unity. The reported agreement among some Palestinian organizations to convene the Palestinian National Council (PNC) gave these efforts added importance. Thus, it is necessary to once again examine the issue of the PLO's unity and on what basis it can be achieved.

The policies of the revolutionary democratic Palestinian forces concerning the PLO's dilemma, have been based on serious, consistent efforts to restore the unity of the PLO, while enacting the needed changes in its line and structure. To this end, a joint communique was issued on December 22, 1986, by the PFLP, DFLP and Palestinian Communist Party (PCP). The communique laid out the basis for restoring the PLO's unity, stressing that: «The main task which guarantees successful confrontation of the aggressive, liquidationist onslaught is the continuation of the efforts to reunite the PLO on an anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist and anti-capitulationist basis.» The communique reasserted the conditions for restoring the PLO's unity on a nationalist basis, especially «to cancel the Amman accord explicitly and officially» and «to stop relations with the Egyptian regime as long as it adheres to the Camp David accords.»

This joint communique was viewed as a unified position on the part of these three democratic forces, for confronting the rightist leadership and working to restore the PLO's unity on a solid political and organizational basis. Unfortunately, two of the parties who signed the communique, the DFLP and the PCP, did not adhere to its contents. As a result, the mid-March meetings in Tunis, between Fatah's Central Committee, DFLP, PCP, Arab Liberation Front (ALF) and the splinter group of the Palestinian Liberation Front (Abu Abbas), yielded only concessions to the right wing, strengthening its position. The Amman accord was considered 'dead', thus relieving the right wing of responsibility for abrogating it, at a time when relations with the Jordanian regime are being

revitalized (see article on an international peace conference). Moreover, the agreement reached in Tunis neglected the issue of the PLO rightist leadership's relations with the Egyptian and Moroccan regimes. It also labeled the next PNC as the 18th session, thus legitimizing the 17th session held in Amman without Palestinian national



consensus, which finalized the division of the PLO. This also means that the membership of the 18th session would be based on the composition of the 17th session, giving undue weight to rightist elements. The Tunis meetings were followed by announcements about convening the PNC on April 20th. However, if convened on such an unclear, soft basis, this PNC would

only serve as a forum for blessing Arafat's policies.

NEW DIALOGUE

In Libya, a dialogue is now in progress between six Palestinian organizations: PFLP, DFLP, the Palestinian Liberation Front (mainstream), PFLP—General Command, the Popular Struggle Front and Fatah-Revolutionary Council (Abu Nidal). These meetings are in response to Libyan and Algerian initiatives and directed towards formulating a unified position for restoring the PLO's unity on a solid political and organizational basis. As we go to press, the results of these meetings are unknown. However, given past experience, it is imperative to point out that real agreement requires adhering to the terms agreed upon not only in speeches, but in practice as well. The rightist trend's sincerity about achieving the PLO's unity is now being put to the test. If it fails to respond positively to the ongoing dialogue, another blow will be dealt to the PLO's role and its dilemma will be prolonged.

In conclusion, it is necessary to reaffirm the political and organizational basis without which any talk of Palestinian national unity is in vain. First is public, official cancellation of the Amman accord, and stopping relations with the Camp David regime in Cairo. Second is adhering to the resolutions of the legitimate PNC sessions, including the 16th session, on UN Security Council resolution 242. Third is adhering to all PNC sessions including the 16th and considering any others illegitimate. Fourth is applying real democratic reforms in the PLO, as outlined in the Aden-Algiers agreement, stressing the importance of collective leadership. All moves should be judged by these standards.

We are confident that the Palestinian revolution will eventually be able to overcome all divisive trends, whether coming from the right-wing deviationists or from the adventurists. This confidence stems from the fact that the Palestinian masses are well-versed in hard struggle. Sooner or later, the masses' struggle will impose the unity needed to achieve their legitimate national rights. ●

Lebanon Palestinian Camps

The Palestinian camps in Lebanon are still heaving under the heavy shackles of Amal's brutal siege imposed almost six months ago. Although some relief has been allowed into the camps in the form of minor quantities of food and medical supplies after the entry of the Syrian troops, various ploys have been used to circumvent agreements and measures taken, rendering them useless.

Disease and sickness have spread rapidly, not only because of severe shortage of medical and food supplies, but also because of inability to give proper burial to the dead. More women have been exposed to death while trying to secure food than if they had carried arms; 90-95% of the wounded and martyred from mid-February to mid-March are women.

The atrocities perpetrated by the Amal gangs inevitably resulted in solidarity campaigns with the besieged Palestinians, which Amal and its backers could not ignore. In an effort to relieve these pressures, Amal mobilized the media in an attempt to show that they had taken a 'big step' towards restoring their 'humanitarian standing'. Nabih Berri has declared more than once that the blockade on food and medicines had been lifted from all the camps - however, Amal reserves the right to impose a military siege. These tactics are obviously designed to put the wool over the eyes of the public, thus allowing the Amal gangs to pursue their acts of brutality without being scrutinized.

A number of other factors have molded a new situation which, though not forcing Amal to retreat, has forced it to resort to tactics of deceit, i.e., making a pretense of allowing in food and medicines, only to launch attacks on unsuspecting mothers and other civilians. The first of these factors is Amal's inability to break the Palestinians' spirit of resistance, or to score any major victory in the camp war begun two years ago. Second, the falseness of all pretexts given for the continuance of this ugly war has been exposed to the Lebanese masses, including the Shiites whom Amal boasts of representing. Third, Amal's credibility suffered when it decided to open fire on all Lebanese nationalist and democratic forces in West Beirut.

How serious Amal is about lifting the siege can only be measured by the steps it takes in practice. So far, the entry of Syrian troops into Beirut has had no major deterrent effect with regard to the camps. In many instances, the military siege on the camps in West Beirut has been intensified. Amal's intentions can no longer be misinter-



Demonstrators in Hamburg, West Germany, demand an end to the siege:
«Hands off the Palestinian refugee camps!»



Zuhdi Al Adawi

preted. It aims to break the camps' resistance from within in order to avoid storming them, for that would have unwished for international and regional repercussions. Most crucially, the Amal forces would suffer heavy losses if they chose a head-on collision with a people well-versed in warfare.

anon

Camps Still Besieged



Breaking the camps' resistance is a prelude to disarming the Palestinian people, depriving them not only of their right to join in the war against the Zionist enemy, but of their very right to existence. Thus, it is an illusion to believe that Amal intends to take comprehensive measures to lift the inhuman siege.

SHATILA IS STARVING

The camps of West Beirut paint a particularly bleak picture. Almost 85% of Shatila has been completely destroyed. The camp's population, about 3,000 Palestinians, is locked into an area of 100 meters by 150 meters, taking shelter in the remains of demolished structures which have lost the status of houses. The wounded have to be guarded from stray cats which find their way through the missile-riddled walls to lick the blood off a wound. Food has dwindled to the last bits, and meagre rations of gruel are now being allotted to children under 12 years of age. The rest have declared a period of self-imposed fasting, so as to save food for the children, old people and pregnant women. Of the many appeals for help made to regional and international organizations, the most recent call sent out by the inhabitants of Shatila is an indication of how desperate their situation is:

«We are starving to death. If we die, human conscience will die with us. The history of mankind has taught us that man can destroy and kill with bullets and missiles, but till now history has no record of a people being starved to death. Has mankind now decided to destroy us by starvation? We refuse to eat the flesh of our dead children, women and men. We will die of starvation first, and let human conscience die with us... Shatila... will be the first to testify to the degradation of human values and civilization, and the morals of mankind.»

Shatila is still heaving under Amal's merciless siege. From February 19th to mid-March, 24 women were wounded and two martyred in attempts to leave the camp to secure food supplies. Scores of others have been killed or wounded by indiscriminate shelling. At night, hand grenades are thrown regularly at the camp's entrance, to prevent people from attempting to buy supplies under the cover of darkness.

TERRORIZING WOMEN

Burj Al Barajneh is another dismal example of daily suffering at the hands

of the Amal gangs and their backers. Amal has formally agreed to allow women to leave and reenter the camp within a designated time period to buy food (9 a.m. to 12 noon). However, this time has turned into one harbouring terror and harassment for women. Incidents of women being wounded or killed by Amal militiamen at the camp's entrance, especially between 9 a.m. and 12 noon, have become daily fare. Between February 19th and 27th, a total of 31 Palestinian women were intentionally shot at by the Amal forces. Four of them died immediately while several of the wounded see no hope of survival because of lack of treatment. Those who fall close to the camp's premises are dragged to shelter; others are sometimes left unaided because sporadic outbursts of fire keep people away.

On February 28th, a comrade was shot dead in his tracks while trying to organize the women's exit from the camp to get food. Two women were also shot and left wounded in the chaos of fear and bullets. One of them later died of her wounds. The next day, after a number of women had - strangely enough - been allowed out, Amal and the Lebanese Army's 6th Brigade suddenly began heavy shelling of the camp at 9:12 a.m. An average of six missiles per minute bombarded Burj Al Barajneh. Women who had considered themselves lucky to get out of the camp were now trapped outside. They had to risk their lives dodging bullets while attempting to sneak back to their

Camp residents without food or security



homes. As of mid-March, 47 women had been wounded and eight martyred.

RASHIDIYEH

In Rashidiyeh camp in the South, another version of Amal's brutality prevails. For tactical reasons, tied to the conditions imposed on Amal with the Palestinian withdrawal from Maghdousheh, Nabih Berri's gangs have made a pretense of being lenient by allowing women to leave and reenter the camp each day, to procure food supplies. This, however, did not stop Amal's militiamen from reverting to other methods of harassment. Women were not allowed to carry more than three kilos of food into the camp. Flour, newspapers, batteries, heating fuel and kerosene for lanterns were not allowed in. A special checkpoint was set up outside the camp to search women. At times, their money and food supplies would be confiscated for no reason.

In the first week of March, Amal militiamen ambushed and murdered three camp residents and threw their bodies in a nearby field. Under various pretexts, homes of Palestinians are stormed and people arrested. In the past couple of weeks, four women were arrested in this way. Then, on March 19th, Amal issued new directives: Women are not allowed to leave the camp more than twice a month - surely a prelude to more horrendous measures to come.

FALSE MEDIA

No less atrocious is the media campaign spotlighting 'truckloads of supplies' entering the camps. Not only are Amal's gestures of lifting the blockade on food and medical supplies ludicrous; they are utterly false. At times, Amal pretends that the trucks are not let in because the roads to the camps are unfit for passage; thus, they condition entry of supplies on the Palestinians paying for clearing the road. At other times, the Amal militiamen help themselves to the medical and food supplies, despite the fact that two or three truckloads barely cover the needs of the camps for a couple of days. (Burj Al Barajneh's population is 20-30,000, as is Rashidiyeh's.) Moreover, the bulk of these supplies are dried milk, flour, yeast and sugar. Fresh fruits and vegetables are delicacies not enjoyed by the camp residents. This has caused

scurvy to crop up in Burj Al Barajneh, a disease resulting from severe lack of vitamin C, marked by spongy gums, loosening of the teeth, and bleeding in to the skin and mucous membranes.

In Rashidiyeh, Amal's militiamen go through the trouble of fabricating situations which prevent the entry of food supplies. In the camps of West Beirut, their approach is more direct, reflecting their true intentions. Every instance of unloading supplies in Burj Al Barajneh and Shatila is accompanied by military aggression. On March 1st, Amal shot at the tires of two supply trucks being unloaded in Shatila; four Palestinians were wounded. On the same day, Amal started to shell Burj Al Barajneh as another two truckloads entered. Several people were wounded, being caught unexpectedly in the midst of this brutal attack. The next day, another attempt to unload supplies of flour and milk was given the same treatment; one Palestinian was martyred and three wounded. On March 4th, a woman carrying supplies was shot dead.

Amal is not satisfied with exercising direct brutality against innocent Palestinian civilians, but resorts to deceitful tactics as well. In one incident, Amal set up a point where it offered to sell 25-liter containers of kerosene to Burj Al Barajneh inhabitants (four times the going price on the market). The next day people came in hopes that this fuel would be made available again, and were caught unawares by machine gun fire. Two women and a child were wounded. On March 9th, another two women were wounded so seriously that they later died.

In protest, the Salvation Front committee urged women not to leave the camps, even if Amal declared that they were allowed to. Clearly, Amal's tactics aim at allowing people to gather, making it possible to mow down the largest number of victims at one blow. Again, Amal made a show of providing fuel supplies and brought in journalists to cover their gesture. However, the great majority of women adhered to the Salvation Front committee's call, thus foiling Amal's theatrical ploy.

On March 10th, the unloading of trucks was again hampered by machine gun fire on Shatila and Burj Al Barajneh. In Shatila, three Palestinians were wounded; in Burj, nine. Moreover, the trucks were subjected to sniper fire to

prevent anyone from approaching. The same day, the popular committee of Burj Al Barajneh petitioned all religious figures to take action against these atrocities. Ironically enough, two days later Amal offered to renovate the mosque destroyed in Rashidiyeh.

On the backdrop of all this ugliness, Israeli fighter planes make regular surveillance flights while their gunboats float menacingly offshore, the silence of their guns reflecting implicit approval. On March 20th, and again on March 23rd, the Israeli air force went into action to Amal's advantage, bombing Palestinian positions east of Sidon.

SECTARIANISM VS. NATIONAL STRUGGLE

The tactics to gain time, used by Amal and those who support the plan to eliminate Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon, no longer come as a surprise to anyone. Amal now ties the lifting of the siege on the Palestinian camps, to Palestinian withdrawal from Janasnayeh, Ain Al Dulub and Al Qrayeh, three villages east of Sidon. This clearly indicates Amal's intention to ignite a new situation which would hinder any solution contrary to its interests. Amal's new conditions for Palestinian withdrawal from these three villages is not connected to the issue of Maghdousheh. Palestinian forces entered Maghdousheh because of the deperate need to force Amal to lift the siege on Rashidiyeh. However, Palestinian presence in the other three villages east of Sidon dates back to the time when the Zionist and fascist forces withdrew from the area, under the pressure of the Lebanese National Resistance.

It is evident that Amal wishes to create a new situation which would enable it to capitalize further on the Palestinian tragedy, i.e., to push for more concessions, or possibly to impose a siege on Ain Al Hilweh camp and find excuses for continuing the siege on other Palestinian camps. Moreover, the clashes between Amal's militiamen, and those of the Progressive Socialist Party and the Lebanese Communist Party, substantiate the fact that Amal is a sectarian force no less a threat to the Lebanese national democratic project than other sectarian forces.

The US—Israeli Special Relationship

SDI Cooperation

This is the concluding installment of the study on the US-Israeli relationship, as viewed and engineered by US imperialism. It deals with the Zionist state's participation in 'Star Wars' - the Strategic Defense Initiative of the Reagan Administration.

With a world economy that has more of a military cast today than twenty years ago, the US administration and the military-industrial complex are looking to further boost the military's share in economic activity. This share has already risen from 4.7% in 1960 to 6% in 1985 worldwide, with the US playing no small part in the increase. Measured in US dollars at their 1984 value, world military expenditures more than doubled during the same period, from \$400 billion to \$940 billion - a sum that exceeds the income of the poorest half of humanity.

No less significant is the 1984 total of arms imports of underdeveloped countries, which is \$35 billion annually - \$2 billion more than grain imports. It is no wonder that the US regards high-tech, military-related industries as a growth sector of the economy. In 1986, the US faced a deficit in high-technology trade of more than \$2 billion according to a study made by the Joint Economic Committee of Congress. This was considered disturbing by US officials, since in 1980, the US had enjoyed a high-tech trade surplus of \$27 billion. This dropped to \$4 billion in 1985, and was converted into a \$2 billion deficit in 1986. This is mainly in the areas of computers, aircraft and other military-related products. This drop is mainly due to large research and development costs, a problem which is to be resolved through the Strategic Defense Initiative, with the Pentagon bankrolling the project. It is therefore not surprising that the Zionist entity, the US's strategic asset, should follow its partner's footsteps into the SDI, as was formalized in the document signed May 7, 1986.

Through participation in the SDI, the Zionist entity is being groomed to play a broader role as imperialism's strategic asset worldwide, in accordance with imperialism's drive to expand its interests, especially in the crucial Middle East area. Enhancing the military and economic superiority of 'Israel' in the region will enable it to strike at popular liberation movements and nationalist regimes without fear of retaliation. An even stronger 'Israel' will guarantee the continued subservience of imperialism's stooge regimes in the region, especially those bordering the Zionist entity. This would preserve the stability necessary for protecting existing imperialist interests in the region (Gulf oil reserves, exploitation of markets and natural resources). At the same time, it would hinder the genuine economic, political and military independence of the Arab regimes.

All in all, the Zionist entity will be developed into an even more menacing military-political club, to be used to push Camp David to higher levels of implementation. This in turn leads to a spiraling demand by other countries in the region for more arms to offset Israeli military superiority. This demand will naturally feed into the pockets of the imperialist military industries. The stationing of AWACS in Saudi Arabia, and Egypt's increasing military budget, are only two examples of this spiraling which began with the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian accord.

The repercussions of Israeli participation in the SDI are not limited to the Middle East. As SDI partner, 'Israel' will more apparently become a base for the US's international crusade against the Soviet Union, other socialist countries and newly independent nations. The SDI will trigger new, more sophisticated technology which the US will utilize to reassert its dominance over its rivals in Japan and Western Europe, while breathing new life into the troubled US economy.

On the other hand, participation in the SDI will address some of the problems plaguing the Zionist entity, which imperialism has great interests in resolving. It will alleviate the slump in the Israeli economy and maintain the rigorous economic reforms implemented under US supervision. Israeli Defense Minister Rabin stated, «We hope to carry out research on designs within the framework of SDI in as much as it solves our problems» - a statement with both economic and military implications. By strengthening 'Israel', participation in the SDI will better enable it to pursue the ultimate goals of the Zionist project: full control not only of Palestine, but of the resources of the whole region.

Partnership in the SDI could also help 'Israel' stem the rising emigration of expert technologists and scientists, by providing challenging job opportunities and better salaries. 'Israel' will be able to team up with the US and its European allies in research to develop systems against short-range tactical ballistic missiles. Alone, the Zionist entity lacks the funds for developing such systems. Being a partner to the SDI allows 'Israel' to share in US research and development (R&D) money for military technology. An infusion of \$50-100 million from SDI subcontracts, or teaming relations with US corporations, portends enormous profits for Israeli high-technology and military firms. The technology transfer involved in such military research will raise the technological level of the entire Israeli industrial sector, both civilian and military.

THE MOTIVATION FOR SDI

The Star Wars approach has earlier been evident in the arms race. Roughly 25 years ago, in an essay titled «Arms Race: Prerequisites and Results,» Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University described the SDI quite precisely: «States may define absolute qualitative goals, such as the erection of an impenetrable system of defenses (Maginot Line) or the possession of an 'ultimate' or 'absolute' weapon which will render superfluous further military effort regardless of what other states may do.» He also predicted the US's underlying motive: «The formulation by a state of its armaments goal in absolute terms is more likely to reflect the desire to obscure from its rivals the true relative superiority which it wishes to achieve, or to obscure from itself the need to participate actively in the balancing process.»

The SDI is the US's attempt to release itself from any arms control accord which would restrict or hinder attainment of

military superiority over the Soviet Union. The US's refusal to continue to abide by SALT-II, its production of the B-52 bomber, its intransigent position at the Reykjavik meetings and violation of the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missiles) treaty, all point to complete unwillingness to contribute to the «balancing process.» The restrictions imposed by the ABM treaty had kept under leash the development and deployment of space-based defenses, so that neither the US nor USSR needed to plan to overcome the other's defenses. The ABM treaty has functioned to restrain the arms race for the past 14 years. The US administration has now exchanged this treaty for the SDI project which will escalate the arms race. Despite this fact, the Reagan Administration has been forging ahead with the SDI, totally unprepared to make any concessions. US Defense Secretary Weinberger stated the US position clearly: «Extending the ABM treaty or doing anything that would prevent our doing all the things we need to do to develop a SDI is something obviously we would be very much opposed to» (*International Herald Tribune*, June 3, 1986). Even the science consultant for the Pentagon was chosen on the basis of his support for the SDI prior to any other consideration, even scientific merit.

It is evident that the SDI is a central element in US imperialism's strategic military planning to allow it to project its influence anywhere imperialist interests are threatened or intended to be expanded. Having existed in military parity with the Soviet Union over the past 15 years, US imperialism has reached a point where it must leap out of this parity, not simply by stockpiling more warheads, but by destroying every arms control accord. The SDI is organically tied to imperialism's underlying drive to expand or perish. It is therefore not surprising that the Reagan Administration has stonewalled all accords to control the arms race, for these would favor the spread of socialism strategically.

HIGH—TECH FOR AGGRESSION

The general impression is that the SDI is still at the planning stage. However, testing for this project has been underway for more than a year and a half, and close to \$3 billion have already been spent. Despite the Reagan Administration's preaching frugality, the SDI has remained untouched by all budget cuts. Not only does the SDI top all military projects to date; funding for the US armed forces in 1987 is the largest sum ever allocated to defense in peacetime (\$292.2 billion).

Since «every major technological breakthrough for monopoly capitalist industry has been made under military auspices, the military is an appropriate vehicle for SDI investments because it has the organization and system of internal security required» (*Frontline*, March 3, 1986). It is not surprising that all previous arms programs have been brought under the wing of the SDI office of the Pentagon. So imperative is the SDI to US imperialist plans that Reagan is using the last years of his term to «...lock future administrations into the SDI as the underpinning of all US military strategy.»

Another factor which makes the SDI a project different from the rest is that the US is using it to draw its allies more directly into the arms race, by inviting other imperialist industrial giants to join it. The US strives for a gigantic technological-military-political alliance, revolving around the SDI, in order to confront the so-called communist 'threat'.

ISRAELI TASKS

The Zionist entity is cut out to play no small role amidst these giants. The fact that it is the first non-NATO state to join

the SDI is significant in itself. It is elementary knowledge that 'Israel', through imperialist military and economic support, has been able to construct a formidable military apparatus over the years. The 1980s are of particular importance since evidence of the unique US-Israeli relationship has manifested itself on various levels. Some of the most prominent measures taken to reinforce this alliance are: the conversion of US loans to 'Israel' into grants; the signing of a strategic cooperation agreement, of which the SDI cooperation is an extension; the implementation of a Free Trade Area agreement; and joint military maneuvers in 1985, along with increased sharing of intelligence information.

The main areas in which SDI research and development will be carried out in conjunction with 'Israel' are the following:

- a. at least three different kinds of lasers;
- b. kinetic energy weapons, nicknamed 'smart rock', which are able to seek out a target in the air and destroy it on impact;
- c. particle beam technology, a new high-tech field for directing energy at targets;
- d. sophisticated computer technology. The SDI will depend heavily on computers which require software more complex than any other system ever attempted. These envisioned 'super-computers' would be used to process data, detect missile firings, determine the source of attack, compute trajectories, discriminate between real warheads and decoys, and aim and fire weapons.

It is in this field that 'Israel' has a major role to play, with more than just interesting ideas and unique proposals to offer. Israeli military industries, universities and private companies have already presented the SDI Organization with more than 150 project proposals which are expected to produce subcontracts valued at \$50-100 million a year. The fields of specialty include: (a) electronics; (b) electronic countermeasures; (c) lasers and holography (a photographic method using laser light to produce three-dimensional images); (d) hypervelocity weapons, e.g. an improved rail gun with tank-mounted capabilities; and (e) optics. Israeli contractors will be working on computer switches which operate optically rather than electronically. Research will be geared to speeding up such microscopic switches which operate logic gates - the components of semiconducting chips that enable computers to calculate.

Despite all skepticism, experts estimate that this research could yield results in a matter of years.

With their record for producing high-quality products at relatively low costs (due to lower-paid labor), Israeli companies will be able to compete in bidding for specific SDI contracts, separately or in joint ventures with US companies. The US is interested in coordination with 'Israel' to reverse its own deficit in high-technology trade. This will proceed by converting 'Israel' into a high-technology base from which the US can harvest gains for both sides. The US thereby aims at reducing its dependence on Japanese-made components. The most sophisticated weapons in the US have become increasingly dependent on components imported from Japan. This fact has triggered many a debate in the Pentagon and arms industry. Japan is the world's leading supplier of computer memory chips which are key elements in many electronics-based weapons systems. Not only does the US depend on Japan for this high-tech product; it also buys advanced technology that is not yet available from US suppliers.

The feasibility of the SDI project, envisioned as the ultimate space weapon 'to end all weapons', is not the question. For

starters, this project itself will require a nuclear capacity, so the argument that it will make nuclear arms obsolete is patently false. The funds invested, plus the technological spin-offs produced, especially in the military field, will be sufficient to fulfill imperialism's economic and military ambitions that have so far been restrained by international accords. The SDI project will also serve to activate the Israeli military industry and the economy generally. According to Lt. Gen. James Abrahamson, SDI director at the US Defense Department, high-tech is to be channeled into improving Israeli military capabilities: «The technology... will contribute to some of Israel's very pressing military needs.»

NOT CONFINED TO SPACE

The SDI is not a lot of 'space-junk' as many think. It is much more down-to-earth than most imagine it to be. One of the first technologies to emerge from SDI research is that needed for anti-tactical ballistic missiles. Developing a workable defense against tactical missiles, a small part of the SDI, could be accomplished in the relatively near future with existing weapons. It is believed that the computer software for the US's Patriot anti-aircraft missile, or the expensive AMRAAM (advanced medium range air-to-air missile) could be reprogrammed. Either could then target ballistic missiles which are comparatively slower and lower flying than strategic missiles.

US and Zionist strategic analysts attach high priority to anti-missile defense. Experts in military technology estimate that 'Israel' will be cut out to develop systems capable of locating and destroying ground-to-ground missiles with laser beams operating in conjunction with an advanced computer system. This technical know-how to be acquired through participation in the SDI, will better enable the US to project its military hegemony through Israeli battle performance.

No less connected to these projects are high expectations for R&D in aircraft technology. The US is particularly involved in projects related to this field in conjunction with 'Israel', especially those carried out by the Israel Aircraft Industries and Tadiran which produces technological components. Dr. Robert O'Neill, director of the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, says that by joining the SDI, 'Israel' will be able to update aviation electronics and combat command and control systems, especially since it depends greatly on air superiority.

The Israeli aircraft industry grew in tandem with the Technion's aeronautical engineering faculty. Therefore it is natural that this institute of technology in Haifa, should play an important role. For thirty years, the Israeli Technion research center has been supported by three of the US armed services with funds ranging in the millions of dollars. The institute provides 70% of the country's engineers and much of its scientific research. Already the US had doubled donations to the Technion to make up for the withdrawal of 50% of the Israeli government's subsidies.

In addition to improved anti-aircraft capacity, the US is taking giant steps towards renovating and expanding the naval forces and facilities in 'Israel', whether ships or submarines. There is talk of bigger and more ships as well as enhanced surveillance efforts to counter threats to US imperialist military maneuvers in the region.

STAR WARS ON EARTH

Many arguments have been raised against the SDI in the US and in 'Israel'. These include the colossal technological and

financial effort needed to erect the so-called defense umbrella off the ground. It is estimated that the SDI would require from 600 to 5,000 shuttle flights, costing \$30-60 billion. In view of the US's shuttle disasters suffered during the past two years as a result of pushing the shuttle launches to 15 a year, the SDI does seem to be rather far-fetched. Moreover, writing instructions for the computers that would manage the 'star wars' battle is another colossal task. Even if it were technically possible to produce the necessary software, there would be no way to test it completely. Another obstacle is the effort needed to mount a defensible platform from which to destroy missiles in their boost phase. In addition, in space the duplication of equipment required for high reliability is extremely expensive, and realistic testing of the integrated hardware and software after deployment is impossible.

With respect to 'Israel', many opponents of its participation in the SDI have expressed skepticism in view of its infant space agency, compared to the better established research and development giants of the imperialist camp. The Israeli space agency was only recently established (July 1983) under the guidance of the Minister of Science and Development. Operating out of a rented office with a handful of full-time employees, it is sustained on a budget of \$500,000 a year. This office works in close coordination with NASA, with US technicians installing a laser tracking station in the hills near Jerusalem. The station will be one of 19 around the world. The US claims that their main purpose is measuring the movement of continents, but is this all?

Yet whether the SDI is feasible or not, the US and 'Israel' are forging ahead on an expanded level of alliance which will tolerate no debate or opposition. Donald Hicks, US undersecretary of defense, suggests that he will withhold research grants from scientists who criticize Defense Department policy. He particularly had the SDI in mind: «If they want to get out and use their roles as pros to make statements, that's fine, it's a free country,» he said in an interview with *Science* magazine, but «freedom works both ways. They're free to keep their mouths shut... I'm also free not to give them money.» (Mr. Hicks is the nation's largest dispenser of research funds.)

In short, being a part of the SDI, 'Israel' would move up with the leading edge of technology useful for military application. «Space junk» is not the point - improvement in computer technology, battle management systems and detection systems is. In the second week of February this year, US Defense Secretary Weinberger stated that the US may be able to deploy the first elements of the SDI within six years. Newspaper reports confirmed that some of the components first to be deployed have not so much to do with space, but are advanced new weapons. The most immediate result of 'Star Wars' may simply be more 'advanced and efficient' battles here on earth.

Thus, opposition or skepticism on the basis that the SDI cannot produce a 100% effective shield is beside the point. The Pentagon's military objectives could well be achieved if the SDI can give the US enough of a first-strike edge against the Soviet Union and any retaliatory strike, to guarantee its political edge around the world. In this context, the US's intensified interest in fortifying 'Israel', its most reliable ally and military base in the Middle East, is a number one priority of its strategic policies.

Non-Jewish Zionism

Dr. Regina Al Sharif is a Palestinian researcher and the author of a book based on her study of the origins of Zionism in American and European history and culture. In a lecture delivered in English in Kuwait, Dr. Al Sharif gave an exposé of the major ideas tackled in her book. Although of historical nature, her study has current relevance in view of the special support being given to the Zionist state by American Christian fundamentalists, such as Jerry Falwell and his 'Moral Majority' - a group that is also ardently backing Reagan's most reactionary policies.

The main thrust of the author's lecture (and book) is that Zionism appeared in Western Europe, and then the US, several centuries before the emergence of an official Zionist movement. Without this early trend, no official Zionist movement would have materialized. The author concludes that the support of Western Europe and the US for the state of 'Israel' sprouted naturally from the seeds of Zionism originally sowed in western culture. She also concludes that European and US partiality for the Zionist entity is most likely to continue and increase, because this support does not stem from temporary or superficial factors or from the presence of the Zionist lobby. Moreover, this partiality is directly proportional to western animosity towards the Arab nation.

Dr. Al Sharif's conclusions serve to discredit illusions popular among rightist Arab forces that: (a) there is a possibility of lessening US favoritism for Zionism, and steering it in their direction; and (b) the US can be rendered an impartial mediator in the Arab-Zionist conflict.

Despite these commendable conclusions, Dr. Regina's ideas have their shortcomings. Whether intentionally or not, she overlooks the material base of imperialism's alliance with Zionism. While her emphasis on the cultural and ideological aspects provides interesting points that are often overlooked, one does not get the picture of Zionism's organic connection with imperialism's pursuit of monopoly capitalist goals in the strategic Middle East. Dr. Regina does, however, point out the convergence of Zionism with British colonial interests in the Middle East at the end of the 19th century. Her research lends credibility to the hypothesis that

if Zionism had not existed, the colonial powers would have invented it. Her analysis also substantiates the fact that without the support of the colonial powers, Zionism would not have materialized into a concrete project.

Following is a resumé of the lecture given by Dr. Al Sharif in Kuwait. (The subtitles are our own.)

ORIGINS OF THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

The special relationship between the US and the Zionist entity is a truth long boasted of by both parties. Former US President Carter gave an adequate description of this relationship in an address to the Israeli Knesset in March 1979. He said that this was «not merely a special relationship» but «a unique one... which cannot be destroyed because it is deeply rooted in the conscience, values, religion and beliefs of the American people...» On what basis has this special relationship been erected and what are the factors contributing to its survival? Dr. Regina believes that Zionism is the binding ingredient between the west and the state of 'Israel'. The Zionism she is referring to is non-Jewish Zionism, as distinct from Jewish Zionism.

The general impression is that Zionism is a purely Jewish phenomenon, as if it were a Jewish ideology embraced by European Jews towards the beginning of this century. However, from her research, Dr. Al Sharif concludes that Zionism is a product of western culture and civilization, of which it is an inseparable part; it is the fruit of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The history of western civilization is full of myths, beliefs and superstitions that are Zionist in nature. As a consequence, US policies are

designed to serve Jewish Zionism. The US and western European countries view the Middle East from a Zionist viewpoint. This fact requires one to view the US-Israeli relations based on studying the nature of Zionism itself, keeping in mind that Zionism was born and nurtured in the west, and works to benefit western interests.

Jewish Zionism emerged as a coherent political ideology and a modern, organized, political movement in Europe towards the end of the 19th century. However, the major pro-Zionist hypotheses can be traced back 300 years before the convening of the first congress of the official Zionist movement in Basel in 1897. The Zionist trend was developed over four centuries of European religious, social, political and ideological history. Non-Jewish Zionist traditions have their roots in myths which were incorporated into western history mainly through the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. Protestant teachings introduced Zionist myths into European thinking during the 16th and 17th centuries. These were to a great extent concordant with the myths that later formed the 'internal logic' of Jewish political Zionism, for example: the idea of God's chosen people, the promise and the second coming of Christ.

ZIONIST MYTHS FROM PROTESTANTISM

The first of these myths placed the Jews as a people apart from all other peoples. The myth of the promise is based on the indestructable connection between the 'chosen people' and the Holy Land, with Palestine having been promised to them in advance as the land of the Jewish nation. The second

coming of Christ was supposed to end the Jews' state of exile; they would return to Palestine and establish their 'national presence'.

The European reformation movement concentrated on Palestine, because the Holy Land and Palestine held the ideal combination of ingredients to substantiate comprehensive Zionist interpretations. Thus, Palestine became the homeland of the Jews, and the Jews became the people of Palestine, in the eyes of western Protestants. The Jews were depicted as a 'people estranged' from the European countries they had always lived in, as a people 'removed from their rightful country' who must be 'returned' to it at the appropriate time.

Thus, the Zionist misrepresentation of modern history, based on claims of 'historical rights' in Palestine, reverts back to Protestant Evangelicalism. The history of the land of Palestine has, on the other hand, been gradually reduced to paragraphs, and even these are limited to the history of Jewish presence there. Europeans were eventually led to believe that nothing of major consequence ever occurred in Palestine, except for what was depicted in the stories of the Old Testament. More important still was that no serious efforts were made to challenge or categorize these stories, and they became accepted as true history.

The incorporation of Zionist themes into the fabric of European Protestantism reached a peak during the period of Puritanism in England in the 17th century. Puritanism was a fanatical trend which attached special priority to the Old Testament. This was converted into a guidebook even for everyday living. Thus, depiction of the Jews as the descendants of the Israelites of the Old Testament became most widespread during the 1740s. Previously it was popularly accepted that Palestine was the Christians' Holy Land which many an Englishman had sacrificed his life to «defend against the heretics.» Today, however, Palestine has been stripped of its old Christian content to become the «homeland for Jews who must return to it» according to the prophecies of the Old Testament.

It is evident that the organic connection between Zionism and European

culture originated from religious ideas. Even during the Renaissance, art and literature picked up where religious belief left off. Zionist themes can be found in the classical works of European writers and philosophers such as John Milton, William Blake, Newton, Fichte, Pascal and Rousseau. The understanding of Jews and Judaism as an 'organic nation' instead of being a religious group or religion, was one of the specialties of the philosopher Kant who said that Jews were «Palestinians living among us.»

ZIONISM CONVERGES WITH BRITISH INTERESTS

Towards the end of the 19th century, England became the ideal hotbed for political, non-Jewish Zionism, due to the convergence of three major points of British interest in the land of Palestine. These were: (a) the balance of power in Europe; (b) the security of India; and (c) the route to India through Syria. It was from this convergence that an unnatural unity between the policies of the British empire and a kind of patriarchal Christian Zionism was initiated. This unholy alliance became more evident in British policies as time went by.

It was none other than Lord Anthony Ashley Cooper, the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, who was the first to coin the slogan «a country without a nation for a nation without a country» in 1839. This was later to be picked up by prominent Jewish Zionists and rephrased as «a land for a people for a people without a land.»

The well-known Canadian geologist, Sir John William Dawson, after returning from a journey to Palestine, wrote that to date no nation had been able to establish itself as a people of Palestine, and no unity or national spirit prevailed there: «The mixture of tribes there are only temporary residents, clearly awaiting those who deserve to be permanent owners of the land.»

A decade later, an English scientist, Isaac Ash, proposed the following in order to convert Palestine into a homeland for the Jews: He said that three of four steps must be implemented immediately to «restore Jewish nationality to Palestine.» These were (1) buying land from the present owners; (2) making it valuable by in-

jecting capital, and thereafter renting it to the Jews for an unlimited period at a stable rate, after the restoration of the land; and (3) the capital injected must be directed not only to land restoration, but also to creating jobs of 'national nature and importance'. With regard to the fourth point, he advises that all these tasks and others must be carried out to enable the 'nation' to 'maintain its independence' by putting it in a position of military defense. This statement, which preceded the establishment of the Zionist National Fund by 30 years, clearly heralded the policies outlined by Jewish Zionist leaders three decades later.

PROTESTANTISM CARRIES ZIONISM TO AMERICA

It was natural that the Zionist trend emanating from Europe would constitute an important element in American thought and political life from the time of European settlement in the New World in the second half of the 17th century. In effect, English Puritanism, which had celebrated the Zionist theme, established the foundations for future English-America missionary work. According to William E. Hartpole Lecky, a prominent Irish historian and essayist, «Hebrew mortar is what established the basis of American democracy.» Evangelical missionary work in the US took on a broader form than that which prevailed in Puritan England. It developed into a widely accepted culture permeated by many Zionist principles.

At that time, the most prominent American Jew was William Blackstone, author and benefactor, who launched innumerable campaigns calling for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, despite the fact that this conflicted with the desires of many American Jews. After concluding a visit to Palestine in the 1890s, he returned to the US and in typical Zionist fashion began his work with renewed conviction that Palestine should be developed agriculturally and commercially by her 'rightful' Jewish owners. His efforts culminated in an appeal to the then US president, Benjamin Harrison, insisting on the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

At first glance the submission of such a petition to the US president might be ►

taken as an exaggerated gesture made by an overzealous religious fanatic. Closer examination of the petition reveals that it was signed by 400 of the most prominent US citizens of that time - names that could veritably comprise a 19th century *Who's Who*. It had the signatures of chief editors of major US publications, members of Congress, conservatives, business representatives and major US capitalists like John Pierpont Morgan, John Rockefeller, William Rockefeller, magistrates, and judges, including the chief justice of the US Supreme Court, Melville Weston Fuller. Far from being an overzealous effort of a fanatic, this document indicated which way the wind was blowing in US politics.

The US media rushed to expound the 'moral importance' of this appeal, as well as the political benefits which the US stood to gain in supporting such a project. Thus, six years before the convening of the first Zionist Congress in Basel, the idea of establishing a Jewish Palestine had been woven into the fabric of American culture.

It is important to note that at the end of the 19th century, Zionism was still in its infancy as a political movement, and

did not enjoy widespread support among Jews. Jews were still engrossed in the process of assimilating in the European and American societies. Even in 1917, when debate on the Balfour Declaration was at its height, Lord Edwin Samuel Montague, the representative of the Jewish community in England, rejected absolutely the Zionist idea of a distinct Jewish state. He also condemned Zionism as being a miserable political belief and a form of anti-semitism.

Comprehending non-Jewish Zionism and its history provides a deeper understanding of western support for the Zionist entity in Palestine. It also serves to dispel the widely accepted view that western support for 'Israel' is largely due to the influence of the Jewish minorities within the western political systems, especially in the US. Neither the weight of the Jewish vote nor the pressure of the Zionist lobby are the real reason for the support to non-Jewish Zionism. The latter had enjoyed a well-established status in the western world long before the broad campaign for recruiting Jewish support to Zionism was launched in the wake of the second world war.

On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of westerners do not consider Zionism as a racist ideology, but as a 'moral strength'. This 'moral strength', deeply rooted in the history of western civilization, first arose as a religious belief. The implicit hypotheses of Zionism were first conceived and conveyed by non-Jews under various religious, social, economic and strategic guises.

If one scrutinizes the current conflict, one finds that non-Jewish Zionism is a main element in the process of foreign policy decision-making in the US and Western Europe. Moreover, the only constant factor in US Middle East policy is unswerving support for the Zionist entity. Given the overall effective political factors in US policy-making, there is no logical way to change this policy. The strong partiality reserved for 'Israel' by its western allies is directly proportional to the animosity reserved for the Arab nation. Therefore, non-Jewish Zionism not only paved the way for the colonization of Palestine, it brought with it a firmly established hatred towards the original Arab inhabitants of Palestine.

‘International Terrorism’ and the West

This essay was sent to *Democratic Palestine* by Raafat Georgy, a graduate student at the University of Berkeley. In his own words, it was written «to negate the mythological perspective which the American media presents» of the Middle East in particular. We greatly appreciate the main trend of thought expressed in the essay. However, we do have points of disagreement which we explain in a box below.

According to the West, international «terrorism» is threatening the foundations of «civilized» society and, therefore, all «freedom loving» nations must come together to combat this evil of «barbarism.» This Manichean view of the world depicts the West and its allies as «civilized,» and those who oppose Western encroachment or express their inalienable right of self-determination as «barbarians» bent on

the destruction of all things Western. Upon analysis we shall see that it is this self-righteous West who, primarily through indirect means, is the architect of terror.

No single issue has been more distorted by the West than the Arab-Israeli conflict and no single people more maligned than the Arabs. This distortion has been largely shaped by the systematic «pro-Israel» bent of the

media. Arab «terrorism» is over dramatized and reported without any historical juxtaposition, political context, or any explanation that mirrors reality. Arab violence is portrayed in such a way that it conforms to the «barbarian» model; hence, this ethnocentric construction of the West vis-a-vis the Arabs precludes critical discussion of the problem and only allows blind condemnation. In contradistinction to this pejorative depiction of the Arabs, the state of Israel, from its inception, has received overwhelming support from the West. This support, which has been and continues to be at all levels, political, economic (primarily the U.S.) and social, enables the Zionist state to commit numerous acts of «terrorism» without any commensurate treatment from the media. Israeli «terrorism» is euphemistically termed retaliation and, according to

such logic, Palestinian retaliation is, invariably, «terrorist» in nature.

A closer inspection of Israeli «retaliation» will reveal the true nature of the Zionist state and its duplicitous partner, the United States (herein, I shall use the U.S. only, because it leads the West in an all-out support for Israel). On April 9, 1984, the Irgun-LEHI (Stern Gang) groups massacred 250 innocent men, women and children in the village of Deir Yassin. The survivors of that massacre were taken to Jerusalem and paraded through the streets to instill fear in the indigenous population, which efficated the expulsion of 300,000 Palestinians the following month. In October 1953, unit 101 commanded by Ariel Sharon attacked the Jordanian village of Qibya,★ which killed 70 people; again innocent men, women and children (note that as of yet there is no PLO). The following description was given by UN military observers: «Bullet-riddled bodies near the doorways and multiple bullet hits on the door of the demolished houses indicated that the inhabitants had been forced to remain inside until their homes were blown up over them... Witnesses were uniform in describing their experience as a night of horror, during which soldiers moved about in their village blowing up buildings, firing into doorways and windows with automatic weapons and throwing hand grenades.»¹ It is interesting to note that Sharon, who was responsible for a great many other massacres, is being hailed as a hero within Israel and the West.

In December 1954, Israeli military aircraft captured a Syrian civilian airliner in order to use the passengers as hostages for exchange with Israeli soldiers captured by Syria. Former Israeli Prime Minister, Moshe Sharett, states in his diary: «Our action was without precedent in the history of international practice.» The euphemisms used to describe this event were «diversion raid» or «retaliatory raid.» A parallel act committed by Palestinians is termed «hijacking,» «terrorism» or «barbarism.» The preferential use of epithets by Israel and the West has always been an effective tool in the construction of the Manichean view of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict; namely that Israel is the bastion of civilization in the Middle East and the Palestinians are «barbarians» bent on the destruction of «innocent» Israel.

THE QUESTION OF TARGETS

Referring to a Palestinian attack on Ma'alot settlement in occupied Palestine, Rafaat Georgy writes, «Granted that the killing of 20 (Israeli) youths was without justification and immoral...» We feel that this merits comment: The main line of the Palestinian resistance is, of course, to strike Zionist military targets. However, it is necessary to point out what this means in the specific context of the national liberation struggle in occupied Palestine. 'Israel' is a settler-colonial state. This means it is not only the occupation army and police forces that directly deprive the Palestinian people of their land and rights. Zionist settlements, of which Ma'alot is only one, are built on Palestinian land that was either occupied by force of arms, or confiscated through unjust, racist laws. In either case, the rightful owners are evicted. The settlements are moreover armed, serving as *de facto* extensions of the Israeli army and in some cases actual military posts. This has been very obviously demonstrated by the armed settlers' movement in the West Bank, but it is a characteristic of Zionist settlements throughout occupied Palestine. While recognizing Mr. Georgy's right to make his own evaluation, we maintain that attacking

Zionist settlements is a legitimate and necessary part of the Palestinian liberation struggle.

IRRATIONALITY OR STRATEGY?

The essay says, «When a Palestinian witnesses his whole family massacred by Israeli bombs, supplied by the United States, his rational mode of reasoning ultimately loses out to irrational behavior.» This is in the context of explaining the conditions under which the Palestinian people live. We greatly appreciate Mr. Georgy's exposition of the bad conditions under which Palestinians live, and we are certain that anyone can find instances of irrationality on the part of some Palestinian individuals or groups, like among any population. However, we hope Mr. Georgy does not mean that the Palestinian armed struggle as such is the result of reasoning losing out to irrationality. The line of armed struggle was adopted due to the lessons of the Palestinian people's experience and the assessment that only through revolutionary violence, combined with other methods of struggle, can Palestinians regain their rights. Armed struggle is a conscious strategy that has proved its validity in Vietnam, Algeria and other anti-colonial struggles.

In March 1978, Israel invades Lebanon leaving 250,000 people homeless and 2000 dead. By June 1982, Israel again invades Lebanon with far greater destruction; leaving over a million homeless, 20,000 dead, 48% of which were civilian population, and 30,000 injured. (The figures are from the UN. They are undoubtedly conservative figures). It is of some interest here to note how Israel is writing history by using an Orwellian language to describe the 1982 invasion; it was appropriately termed «Operation Peace for Galilee.» Language here is being used to change the epistemological construction of Israeli society and, to a large degree, the West. The thousands of Palestinians and other Arabs who die under Israeli «retaliation» become obscure numbers in the media; they are, and this is most unfortunate, pro-

grammatically destined to become historical footnotes.

In comparison, when Israelis are killed by Palestinians or other Arabs they (Israelis) are accorded front page news and extensive television coverage. We are bombarded with platitudes and inculcated with interviews of the survivors and relatives of the survivors. In May 1974, the PLO captured 20 teenage Israeli hostages (the Ma'alot attack) from a paramilitary youth group (Gadna) and after Israel refused negotiations, the 20 youths were killed in a rescue attempt. The incident enjoyed sensational coverage by the American media and, as usual, the event was reported without any context; thus leaving public opinion to render blind condemnation. Granted that the killing of 20 youths was without justification and immoral, ▶

blind condemnation only serves to exacerbate the problem of «terrorism.» The context that the American audience had not the chance to take into consideration was that the Ma'alot «terrorist» attack was preceded by «weeks of sustained Israeli napalm bombing of Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon»² killing over 200. This crucial context is not justification, but an explanation; an explanation that is too often edited out for the purpose of effacing public opinion.

Israel's leading partner or, I'm more inclined to say, conspirator is the United States (the U.S. is the de-facto representative for the Western world; therefore, we may deduce, in a more abstract sense, that the conspiracy against the Arab people and more specifically the Palestinians is Western-Israeli). This «special» relationship is a dialectical process that opts to keep the Palestinians under a canopy of oppression.

Undoubtedly the most powerful lobby in Washington is AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee). AIPAC is the principle architect of the systematic «pro-Israel» policy in the Congress, Executive branch and the Pentagon (remember that AIPAC is but one element in the larger picture of Zionist influence in the West). From 1948 to 1981, the U.S. has poured \$42 billion (this includes public and private aid) into Israel. For fiscal year 1978 to 1982, Israel received 48% of all U.S. military aid and 35% of U.S. economic aid, worldwide. In 1983, the Reagan administration requested almost \$2.5 billion out of a total aid budget of \$8.1 billion (this included \$500 million in grants and \$1.2 billion in low-interest loans).³ There is strong evidence that the 1982 invasion of Lebanon («Operation Peace for Galilee») was backed by the United States, as Meir Pail writes: «All signs indicate that the U.S. gave reasonable political backing to the IDF [Israel Defence Forces] invasion of Lebanon, even when it became clear that it was delivering a heavy blow both on land and air to the Syrians in Lebanon.»⁴ Pentagon figures «reveal a massive surge of military supplies from the U.S. to Israel in the first three months of [1982].»⁵ Note that the invasion began on June 6, 1982. In 1982, military aid to Israel was almost 50% greater than the preceding year. It is indeed an unfortunate tragedy that the U.S. pours

billions of dollars into Israel (an illegitimate entity that continues to deprive another people of their fundamental right of self-determination on their homeland-Palestine).

The United States supplies Israel with state-of-the-art technology to be used unconditionally for the destruction of a whole people-the Palestinians. How do millions of defenceless Palestinians defend themselves against F14's, F15's, smart bombs... etc? Would the label of «barbarism» apply to Israel when they advertize a bomb being dropped over defenceless people with the caption saying: «Bombs you can count on to do what they're supposed to do. That's the only kind of bomb we make.»⁶

Hitherto, I used the term «terrorism» in quotes for a good many reasons. The term has no clear definition; there is no absolute standard by which one can juxtapose a particular act of violence to determine if it is «terrorism» or not. Each definition is a function of political means or ideological ends. The U.S. constructs a Manichean definition to depict those who confront her foreign policy as «terrorist.» According to Washington, «Terrorism in any cause is the enemy of freedom» and unless punished by «democracies» who have a «moral right» to do so, the foundations of «civilized» society will be undermined.⁷ Such rhetoric, when analyzed critically, is grossly naive and ethnocentric. Moreover, the underlying assumption behind the term «civilized society» is that there are certain societies who are «uncivilized,» who harbor «uncivilized» individuals that commit «terrorist» acts. Israel, on the other hand, is an ally of the U.S. and, therefore, enjoys linguistic immunity. I have also used the term «terrorism» in

quotes, so that I may describe American-Israeli-Palestinian violence without using connotative terms.

When Palestinians employ violent means in their struggle against Israel and, granted, this violence is at times directed towards civilian population (the PLO, Palestine Liberation Organization, has repeatedly condemned violence directed towards civilians), we may condemn such acts morally and politically, but condemnation does not explain why such violence occurs and how we can prevent them. We need to analyze the causal forces that underlie «terrorism.» The socio-anthropological conditions in which the Palestinians live is a variable usually overlooked. The Palestinians have been forced off their land; disenfranchized, defamed and denied their fundamental and human right of self-determination. The Palestinians in Lebanon live under constant Israeli raids that have become banal «retaliation» for Western-Israeli media. The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip cannot vote or express themselves freely; they are dehumanized in their own home-Palestine. In short, life for the Palestinians has become nihilistic. When a Palestinian witnesses his whole family massacred by Israeli bombs, supplied by the United States, his rational mode of reasoning ultimately loses out to irrational behavior. Let us term this form of violence oppressed-based-violence. Oppressed-based-violence is a socio-political disease created by the oppressor, maintained by the oppressor and can be eliminated by the oppressor. When the U.S. and Israel use ultra-technology to destroy other people, that is terrorism with all of its connotation. Terrorism is those who are in power (the U.S. and Israel) employing violent means to keep those who oppose them in a subaltern position, and posturing to be «civilized.»

US demonstration against state terrorism



1. E.H. Hutchison, *Violent Truce*, Devin-Adair, New York, 1956.
2. Edward Said, *Question of Palestine*, pp. 172, 149.
3. Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle*, p. 10.
4. Meir Pail, *A Military Analysis*.
5. Claudia Wright, *New Statesman*, Aug. 20, 1982.
6. Aharon Abramovitz, *Ma'ariv*, Aug. 20, 1982.
7. Address by George Shultz, Secretary of State, «Terrorism and the Modern World.» Washington: Bureau of Public Affairs, Department of State, *Current Policy* No.629, October, 1948.

★ Qibya is in the West Bank, Palestine. At that time, it was under Jordanian jurisdiction.

Soviet Disarmament Breakthrough

On February 28th, CPSU General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev proposed that all medium-range nuclear missiles be phased out of Europe within five years. The Soviet Union and the US would scrap all but 100 warheads each, to be redeployed on their own territory (in the case of the Soviet Union, in the Asian republics). Comrade Gorbachev outlined other disarmament steps the Soviet Union was interested in exploring: reduction of long-range missiles, conditional on non-deployment of weapons in space; substantial cuts in conventional forces in Europe; reduction of short-range missiles; and the withdrawal of the Soviet missiles that were stationed in the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia after NATO's 1979 decision to deploy US cruise and Pershing-II missiles in Britain, West Germany, Italy and Belgium.

Comrade Gorbachev's offer was promptly welcomed by Washington and a number of West European capitals. The propaganda usually set in motion automatically whenever the Soviets table a peace proposal just didn't work this time. The imperialist forces had been criticizing the Soviets for conditioning any missiles accord on non-development, testing and deployment of weapons in space. Boldly, comrade Gorbachev broke this linkage, depriving the imperialist forces of all their arguments. In broad outline, his proposal corresponds to the 'zero option' which the US promoted with European support, precisely because they thought the Soviets would never accept it. Blinded by their own anti-communism, the imperialists have grossly underestimated the seriousness of the Soviet's desire for peace. Gorbachev's proposal caught them off guard.

In view of the Reagan Administration's determined militarism, epitomized in the SDI program for weapons in space, the Soviet Union had two options. It could have lived with the stalemate that followed the Reykjavik Summit, content that the world had seen that it was Reagan who had blocked an accord by insisting on the SDI. Alternately, the Soviet Union could take a new approach to regain the momentum in the disarmament talks, even if this meant major compromises.



The Soviet leadership opted for the latter, based on their sincere desire for peace and their determination to channel their resources towards the economic and social renewal that is sweeping the home of the October Revolution.

Thus, the Soviet missiles initiative has a double significance. On the political level, it emphasizes the vital interrelation between a socialist country's domestic and foreign policy, and that this convergence is in the interests of global peace and human progress, while also consolidating socialism. On the practical level, Gorbachev's initiative is being viewed by many as opening the way for «the biggest breakthrough in arms control since the heyday of detente in the early 1970s» (*The Guardian*, March 2nd). Bruce Kent of the CND in Britain noted, «Gorbachev has lifted the level of debate from warheads to people, and to the needs of our fragile planet. Someone in the name of humanity, and with the morale stature needed, ought to be able to reply» (*The Guardian*, March 9th). The atmosphere at the Geneva disarmament talks was revitalized as the Soviets officially tabled their proposal, bringing within reach an INF treaty (Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces, i.e., medium-range missiles).

FOLLOW—THROUGH

Despite the substantial Soviet compromises offered, the imperialist powers recovered from their surprise and began rumbling their reservations, trying to deprive Gorbachev of the initiative. The US stressed the obstacles to an INF treaty, especially verification and the problem of short-range missiles (which the Reagan Administration insists on increasing prior to the freeze the Soviets have previously suggested). The Reagan Administration also insisted that the remaining 100 Soviet medium-range missiles be stationed at one base in Siberia, while the US would put theirs in Alaska, right across the Bering Straits from Soviet territory! Britain's Thatcher and West Germany's

Kohl pointed to the 'threat' of Soviet superiority in conventional forces (a superiority which is incidentally disputed by the International Institute of Strategic Studies' 1986 report). The French government was adamant that negotiations should not lead to the «denuclearization of Europe», even though the Soviet proposal leaves aside the British and French nuclear arsenals.

While expressing disappointment at the mixed response, Soviet officials continued to make their initiative more concrete, steadily undermining all excuses. They agreed to on-the-spot verification of missile removal. They pledged to reposition their remaining 100 medium-range missiles out of range of European as well as US territory. They agreed to the INF treaty's containing a provision on dealing with the issue of short-range missiles. They embarked on discussions of a troop pull-back from Europe, with the Warsaw Pact meeting for this purpose on March 24th. An official statement confirmed that the missiles moved into GDR and Czechoslovakia would be removed upon the signing of an INF treaty.

As a result of concerted Soviet struggle for peace, against all odds, a series of events show that a breakthrough may indeed be at hand. The Geneva INF talks were extended. The US announced that Secretary of State Schultz would visit Moscow, accompanied by senior arms control advisors, to discuss all issues. There is, of course, still a chance that the Reagan Administration will try to sabotage disarmament by harping on its distorted perception of «regional conflicts» and «human rights» - two issues it wants to discuss in Moscow, in addition to disarmament and bilateral relations. However, still reeling under the impact of the Iran/contragate scandal, the Reagan Administration may realize that it needs a positive foreign policy result in arms control, to try and recover its sliding popularity.

In any case, the majority of the world is eagerly watching the arms control talks in Geneva. This round, due to the new Soviet initiative, could well lead to the removal of medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe - a cause for which unprecedented numbers of people have demonstrated and struggled over the past few years. ●

Taking Stock of 'People's Power'

The Philippines

Over a year after the demise of Marcos, the political situation in the Philippines remains in flux. Yet even before Cory Aquino had completed her first year as president, two events gave a sharp warning of the government's ultimate orientation. The first was the January 22nd massacre of 18 peasants and the injury of dozens of others, when government troops opened fire on 10,000 people marching in Manila, to demand action on the promised land reform. The second event was the related suspension of the peace talks between the government and the National Democratic Front (NDF). Since the writing of this article two events have further clarified developments: Reagan reportedly authorized a CIA operation against the revolutionary movement, while Aquino openly declared her government's intention to wage war on them.

In February 1986, Cory Aquino was swept into office by the long-repressed mass movement for democracy, with a last minute push from part of the military command that belatedly realized Marcos had become a hopeless case. With its slogan of «people's power» and initial moves at democratization, the new government enjoyed immense popularity. However, from the start, the revolutionary forces pointed out that more than formal political reform was needed to change the semicolonial, semifeudal structures bequeathed by the Marcos dictatorship and subordination to US imperialism. These structures and the dictatorship's repressive apparatus would continue to function against the masses, with or without governmental approval, if not decisively dealt with.

Over the past year «people's power» has been kept alive and advanced by the ongoing mass movement, benefitting from the democratization process. The government, however, has failed to take meaningful steps towards the fundamental socioeconomic reforms needed to make «people's power» more than a demagogic, populist slogan. Little more than promises have been forthcoming to alleviate the desperate situation of the majority of the people.

LAND REFORM'S CENTRALITY

Sixty per cent of Filipinos are poor peasants, while most land and other resources are owned by a few big landlords and compradors. Thus, it was not by chance that events crystallized around the march for land reform, for this issue is a key to social justice. Agrarian reform is also related to the

issue of regaining the Philippines' national sovereignty, for maintenance of the semicolonial, semifeudal structures is dictated by imperialist domination, especially that of the US which views the country as a supplier of cheap agricultural products.

Despite this urgency, it was not until the first days of March 1987, that Aquino announced steps for funding land reform, at the same time declining a question as to whether she would distribute land on her own sugar plantation. In fact, the main economic measure adopted by the government in the midst of its seeming indecision, is import liberalization. By lifting the ban on imported consumer goods, the government has given a green light for more imperialist penetration to the detriment of local industry and agricultural development.

The rural population is also the main target of the counterinsurgency campaign conducted by the army, which was actually stepped up in the spring of 1986, concentrated against areas where the New People's Army (NPA) is active. This counterinsurgency includes shelling, kidnapping, torture and murder, hamletting, confiscation and burning of crops, food blockades and the declaration of «free-fire zones» on the rationale of separating the NPA guerrillas from their mass base.

Workers and the urban poor were also part of the march for land reform on January 22nd, for these sectors also feel the lack of meaningful economic changes. The anti-labor laws enacted during the Marcos era have not been repealed. The right to strike has not been restored in reality, despite promises to that effect, and wages remain-

ed fixed at a low level. There are still instances of workers being fired for their efforts to form a union. In a statement released January 18, 1987, KMU (the May 1st workers' organization) pointed out the extent of violence being enacted against workers: «As we continue to wallow in misery, our ranks are openly attacked. In the past year alone, under this new government, 22 strikers were killed in the picket line, 12 were abducted and 'salvaged' (summarily executed), including Ka Lando Olalia and Leonor Alay-ay (labor leader and his driver, believed murdered by the army). In addition, seven were reported missing, 223 injured and 145 arrested in assaults on the picket lines. The ouster of Labor Minister Sanches is the latest attack on our ranks. President Aquino did not heed our plea to retain this pro-labor minister. Instead, she heeded the demands of the representatives of big business and the militarists in the government...»

A statement by PISTON (Federation of Drivers' and Operators' Associations Nationwide) sheds light on the connection between the government's economic policy and the masses' plight: «We, the drivers, belong to the 59% of the population who live below the poverty line, due to the very small income derived from driving... Some \$3 billion, or 30% of the national budget is at present allocated to the payment of interest on foreign debt, a large portion of which went into the pockets of the greedy dictator and his cohorts. What kind of administration is this that gives more priority to the payment of foreign debt than to the millions of its people who are unemployed, without secure

livelihood or decent housing, and starving because of lack of funds for their welfare?... It has been proven by our historical experience that unless genuine land reform is implemented, the countryside will never progress and... there will never be a basis and a complement for the development of national industries and a transportation industry which will ensure the well-being and prosperity of the laboring masses...»

ELITE DEMOCRACY

The government's failure to enact other than surface reforms is due to pressure from the extreme right and the US, combined with its own class nature. Originally, the government was composed of bourgeois reformers (representing the big bourgeoisie who opposed Marcos' monopoly, wanting political, but not basic economic reform), extreme rightists (who deserted Marcos only because he proved incapable of ruling), and progressive liberals (representing the national bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie, who took the initiative in the first phase).

The extreme right's pressure, punctuated by several coup attempts, has essentially aimed at increasing US aid to the army's counterinsurgency, rather than actually toppling the Aquino government. Consequently, the coupists were treated with kid gloves by the army command, in stark contrast to the violence directed against protesting peasants and workers. The government's net response to this pressure was a trade-off: Defense Minister Enrile, who profiled the extreme right, was

removed in November, followed by the ouster of the democratic Labor Minister. While Enrile's replacement, General Rafael Ileto, is just as pro-US as his predecessor, the new labor minister is a corporate lawyer! Army Chief of Staff Ramos, who emerged as a strongman after the November coup attempt, is an old hand at close cooperation with the US. Educated at West Point military academy, he served alongside US troops in Korea in the fifties, and in Vietnam in the sixties.

With the liberal progressive wing clearly weakened over the past year, the government has shifted to the right under the guise of centrist stabilization. It has come closer to the elite democracy model cultivated by the US to replace outmoded dictatorships and stave off real popular revolution. The new constitution is also indicative of this trend. Though filled with beautiful phrases, it contains no provisions for drastically reducing feudal or foreign oppression and exploitation. Still, the constitution was given overwhelming support by the electorate, which is quite understandable since the referendum was presented as a choice between the Aquino government or a return to the fascism of Marcos.

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE NDF

The crucial issues at stake, whether concerning social justice or relations to the US, converged in the talks between the government and the NDF for one simple reason: The NDF with its backbone, the Communist Party of the Philippines; its military wing, the New People's Army; and its component

mass federations, is unquestionably the largest organized force in the country, that has consistently fought for the people's national and social liberation. Due to sustained guerrilla warfare and mass mobilization, the NPA has substantial popular influence, especially in the countryside; in some areas, this amounts to liberated zones where elements of the NDF's national democratic program are put into practice. The NDF is active in the mass struggle throughout the country. Thus, how the government approached the NDF tells a lot about its real direction.

The NDF boycotted the elections won by Aquino in February 1986, judging that such a process was woefully inadequate for reversing the fascist dictatorship built up by Marcos, with US support. However, it soon became evident that the masses were rallying around the democratic process which Aquino symbolized, especially in the urban areas. This reality elicited broad discussions and self-criticism in the component organizations of the NDF, leading to policy adjustments to meet the challenge of the new stage -working to broaden the democratic process and push for socioeconomic reforms, while protecting the positions won in years of revolutionary armed struggle.

On this background, the NDF accepted the government's offer of peace talks, accompanied by a ceasefire, and these began in August/September of 1986. The NDF saw the ceasefire as a political issue, enabling discussions aimed at a comprehensive solution, based on agreement as to the economic and social causes of the insurgency - a point verbally ascribed to by Aquino.

The government negotiators, however, avoided a comprehensive discussion of causes, much less solutions, insisting in the end that the NDF simply agree to the new constitution. Meanwhile, the army continued its offensive against the NPA and the people in a number of rural areas. Fears increased that the government's real intention was to split the revolutionary forces, and impose their surrender. Such fear gained credence from Aquino's statement, made while she was visiting the US in the autumn, that she had called for the peace talks to «lay the moral foundation for setting aside the olive branch of peace and drawing the sword of war.» Facts show that these words were indicative of

Demonstrators hoist red flags, February 1986.



government policy, not merely intended to mollify US officials. Throughout the autumn, Enrile, echoing the US line, had been haranguing the government for «dealing with the communists.» However, Enrile's sacking marked no change in the government's approach to the talks. On the contrary, the January 22nd massacre exposed the government's anti-popular bent.

The NDF suspended the negotiations immediately, finalizing this with a statement on February 7th, entitled: «The Aquino government is not serious about negotiating a just and durable peace.» After reviewing the evidence of the government's bad faith, the statement concluded: «The NDF will only return to the negotiating table after the Aquino government shall have demonstrated its determination and its capacity to: (1) pursue programs that would attack our society's problems at their roots; (2) assert and effectively exercise civilian supremacy over the fascist AFP (the army), and thoroughly reform and reorient it; (3) give due recognition to the NDF as a political entity with a legitimate cause and a program supported by a considerable section of the population; and (4) work for a genuine settlement of the armed and political conflict.» The NDF called on the people's organisations «to wage militant and unremitting struggles on all fronts for their patriotic and democratic interests.»

NEW PHASE OF STRUGGLE

The armed struggle was stepped up immediately, especially in the four provinces where the NPA has long had

strongholds. On the background of the revolutionaries' determination to continue their just people's war, the government's efforts to deal with the NDF on the regional level failed. NDF organizations in the different regions rejected such talks. In Mindanao, the country's second largest island, a provisional council was established to coordinate recruiting, propaganda and organization for the liberation struggle. The council's vice chairman said that similar councils will be established in other areas by the end of the year. They will operate together in order to form an alternative to Aquino's administration. «Later, if we win, we will replace this government with a revolutionary government whose class content would have peasants and farmers who are not represented in the Aquino government,» he concluded. Moreover, the Moro liberation fronts have expressed their openness to cooperation with the NDF, should the government continue to reject their demands, or take military actions against them.

With the struggle in the Philippines entering yet a new phase, we have found it important to take stock of developments there for three main reasons. The first is obvious: The people of the Philippines, like all oppressed peoples, deserve the social justice and national sovereignty for which so many have fought and died. We like other progressive forces are following their struggle in the interests of international solidarity.

The second reason is that revolutionary forces everywhere can draw lessons from developments in the Philippines, especially pertaining to

how to deal with the new US strategy of trying to replace discredited dictatorships with 'moderate democracies' in order to halt the mass struggle.

The third reason is that the struggle for the national sovereignty of the Philippines has regional and even international implications in view of the massive US military presence there. The US bases there are some of the largest in the world. They were important for the US invasion of Vietnam and today hold a key position in the US global military network. Task forces from Subic naval base are regularly deployed in events such as the Iranian crisis, the Iraq-Iran war, and the conflict between North and South Yemen. A secret US document, leaked in March 1985, emphasized the importance of these bases to face what it called «expanded Soviet and Vietnamese threat in the region.» Truly these bases have an international role in US imperialism's war on the progressive forces of the world.

The Philippines are, moreover, involuntarily serving as a nuclear weapons storehouse for the US. The May-June 1985 issue of the NDF's English bulletin *Liberation* reported that Reagan had signed a secret memorandum authorizing the stationing of 467 nuclear bombs in other countries without notification of the local government. Of these, 227 were to be stationed in the Philippines, 32 each in the Azores, Bermuda, Canada, Iceland, Spain and Diego Garcia, and 48 in Puerto Rico. In view of all these facts, fighting US domination and military presence in the Philippines is an important part of the worldwide struggle for peace. ●

Peasants in Cayan march against militarization.



Fathi Gaben

Palestinian Artist in Jabalia



The Palestinian artist whose paintings constitute a threat to 'state security' in the occupied homeland.

In one of the houses of Jabalia camp, Gaza Strip, residence of thousands of Palestinian refugees, lives an artist who wanted to express his inner feelings through his paintings. It is natural that an artist's drawings are an interpretation of his feelings. For any Palestinian artist, this means expressing his sufferings and aspirations as part of his people's collective experience. Yet from this, the problem started for Fathi Gaben. He was imprisoned because the occupation authorities considered that his works constitute a threat to 'state security'.

In 1983, the Israeli authorities confiscated six of Gaben's paintings which were exhibited at Gaza's university. Later, Zionist soldiers raided his home, arresting him and confiscating magazines which are legal in Jerusalem, but forbidden in the Gaza Strip since it is officially under military rule. In May 1984, Gaben was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment and a fine of 30,000 shekels for 'subversive' paintings. The main evidence presented by the Zionist authorities to convict Gaben was a painting which, among other hues, used red, green, black and white - the colors of the Palestinian flag. The Zionist court refused his request to delay his imprisonment so he could find a way to pay the fine. On the contrary, he was sent to prison immediately with the threat of an added month in jail if the fine was not paid within a month.

This outrageous injustice prompted Palestinian artists to undertake a novel form of solidarity. In Jerusalem, eight artists arranged an exhibit of Gaben's paintings in Al Nuzha Theater, while they staged a paint-in. They began painting and drawing on the spot, selling their works, so that the proceeds could go to Gaben's family. The solidarity campaign spread. There were many international protests against the Israeli violation of freedom of artistic expression. For the first time,

Israeli artists expressed solidarity with a Palestinian artist. In August 1984, 30 Israeli artists visited Gaben's family, bringing toys and clothes for his children. They marched through Jabalia with placards opposing the growing fascist tendency in the Israeli state. The people of Jabalia gathered to protest the occupation, while the Israeli artists painted pictures using the forbidden colors. The artists later contacted Israeli politicians to have them intervene to get Gaben released.

Gaben was released two months early as a result of the pressure that built up. This did not indicate a real reversal of the Israeli iron fist against Palestinian art though. On August 30, 1984, Mufid Ghanem, an artist in Jenin in the occupied West Bank, was arrested and thirty of his works confiscated because he had used the colors of the Palestinian flag. However, Gaben's case had created such a stir that even the Israeli daily *Haaretz* sent journalists to Jabalia to interview him. This following is from their reportage.

FILE ON AN ARTIST

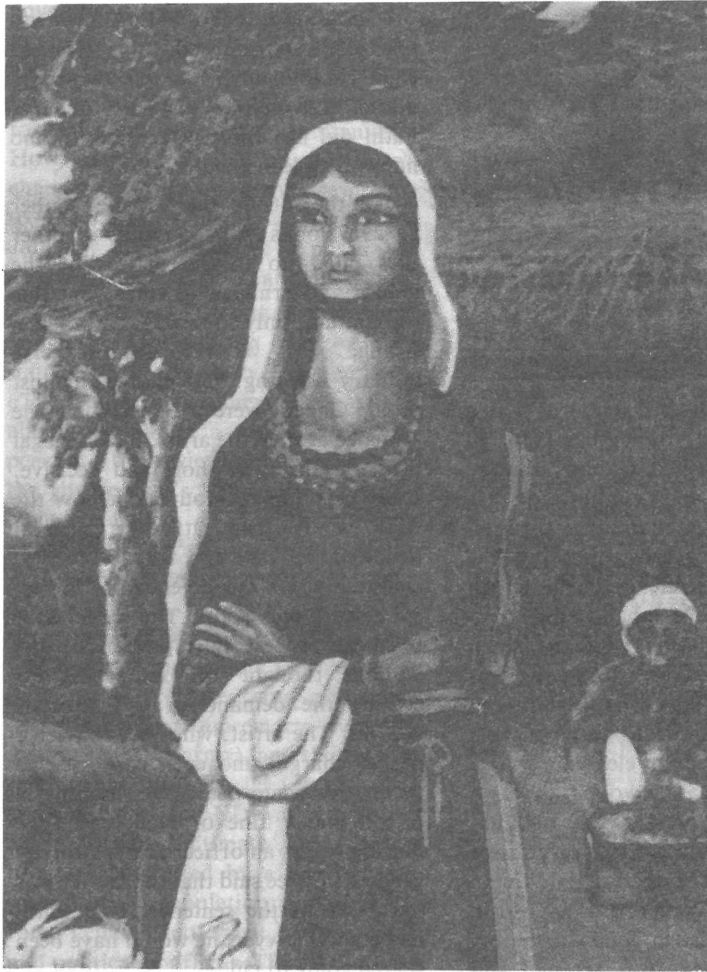
«In the military attorney general's office, located in the military governor's headquarters in one of Gaza's main streets... there is a blue file about a person living in Jabalia camp... He is considered famous, and even a national hero, and the reason for that is the military rule. He is the artist and art teacher Fathi Gaben, 37 years old, who was arrested by the security forces on charges of painting inciting pictures... On our way to his home, a military jeep patrolling the streets of the camp obstructed our way. The soldiers looked in our faces in disbelief, and one of them shouted: 'Have you gone mad? Do you know where you are now?' But Fathi Gaben's hospitality made us feel secure, even in Jabalia camp.

«Three months ago, Fathi Gaben was released... He returned to his wife and eight children in his simple two-room house. Yet despite his early release, Fathi did not smile... You don't find happy people in Jabalia.

«On the outside, the case file number 83/2967 looks like thousands of other files piled up in the offices of the military government in Gaza. But this file contains only a few pages in which a strange story is recorded in terse military wording. The charges against Fathi Gaben were registered... The sentence against the artist, like the legal deliberations, was short and decisive. From that file, we found out how the trial went: The attorney general reviewed the case and the authorities' charges, while the defendant's lawyer spoke very few words. The judge, as if to cut the process short, gave his verdict without thought or hesitation, executing the demand of the attorney general. The artist, who was convicted of the charges and even confessed to them, was sentenced to six months in prison and a fine of 30,000 shekels. Feeling sorry, an officer at the attorney general's office said that the lawyer was the cause of the sentence. Had Fathi had a good lawyer, he would have been spared going to jail.

«The story of Fathi Gaben's arrest could not stay secret. The strange charge sheet, and the sentencing of the artist to prison, soon became public, especially after the demonstration of some Israeli artists near Gaben's house. The charge sheet against Fathi contained three charges: first, receiving leaflets; second, keeping them; and third - the real surprise - that on August 19, 1983, the defendant had tried to influence public opinion in the area by painting and exhibiting at the Islamic University's art exhibition, pictures of an eagle, the PLO's flag and a boy injured during a demonstration...

«During the discussion of the punishment to be imposed, the lawyer asked the judge to take into consideration the defendant's confession and his monthly wage of no more than 30,000 shekels. He said that Gaben paints nature pictures; he did not mean any harm to security, and did not know that what he painted was forbidden. Otherwise, he would not have signed his full name on his paintings. However, the judge adhered to his opinion, saying that the crimes committed by the artist were very dangerous ▶



Fathi Gaben
painting

He started his art work with oil paintings which showed the beauty of nature, in addition to the Palestinian heritage. He then turned to more purposeful works based on the experience of everyday life and the Palestinians' sufferings under occupation.

Gaben worked as a house painter for several years. Later, he turned to art. At first, he copied magazine pictures, but then started drawing from his imagination. When asked why he turned to drawing, he said, «This is like asking why do you play soccer... God gave me this talent; there are some people who studied drawing in universities, but did not succeed.»

The contents of his paintings, and those of every honest Palestinian artist, are Palestine's tragedy. He says, «We take from this tragedy all the contents of our art works, but the one painting that identified me to the audience is the one called *Identity*. This painting acquired a broad local and international reputation.» Gaben's works are usually classical in style, but sometime cubist, because «this reaches the hearts of the masses.»

«We Palestinians,» says Gaben, «have a cause, and my artistic aspirations will not be fulfilled until our cause is justly and honorably achieved... The artistic complexity and symbolism that appear in some art works are the natural consequence of civilization's advancement in the 20th century, a fact that no one can deny or ignore. Human beings do not like complexity, but they are attracted to it and plant it in their subconscious. The more complicated life becomes, the more mysterious it is. Ultimately this benefits the arts. Maxim Gorky said that the abundance of complexity in different environments creates few characters - few in quantity, but rich and positive in suffering. The contemporary artist's mission is to pick up these complexities, develop and then surpass them, because life's nature is complexity. Ultimately, this affects art which is created from life.»

THE SCHOOL OF SUFFERING

Fathi Gaben's artistic career has yielded 22 paintings that are in public circulation, 27 paintings which are kept in his own collection and 170 paintings that have been sold. All express the Palestinian people's heritage and suffering. Gaben's own financial situation and the repression practiced against

to 'state security'. The judge held that despite the personal problems of the defendant who provides for seven people, the court could not ignore the danger of the crime, and had decided to execute the law fully...»

GABEN'S ORIGINS

«Fathi Gaben had become a hero. He never had a formal art education. He is from a family who used to live in Herbia, near the area of the kibbutz Yied Murdachai. In the 1948 war, his family fled to Gaza, as did all the village inhabitants. Since then, Herbia has been only a memory to its inhabitants who became refugees.

«The details of the story should be known in order to penetrate Gaben's personal and artistic life. The story has become old, but its repercussions on his life and art continue to develop. In a dialogue, Fathi revealed other dimensions of his experience.»

Name: Fathi Gaben

Date of birth: 1947

Place of birth: Herbia, Gaza Strip

In 1969, Gaben began to work as a professional artist. He is a member of

the Plastic Arts Union in the Occupied Land. He has had several exhibitions of his own, and participated in many others with other artists in the occupied land. His works have been confiscated by the Zionist authorities many times.

«Identity»



him prevent him from making exhibitions outside the Gaza Strip and West Bank, but his paintings have been exhibited all over the world, due to the efforts of the friends of the Palestinian people.

Gaben says that he belongs to the «school - or camp - of pain and suffering. From suffering we learn everything in life. The real artist is the artist of pain and suffering, coupled with talent and daily activity. The process of gaining artistic ability is refined from real suffering, in addition to my studying some art books. These were incomplete, but the bitter life I live fills out the gaps. Modesty is the best way to capture the hearts of the masses, and this comes before art work. The real artist is the one who knows his people and their feelings. This creates the real and honest person, and the artist must be a first-class person.»

«Our society, artistic and non-artistic, is filled with loud voices... selfish voices and even voices of hatred

and envy raised by some traditional artists who have entered the art world by recopying and trying to belittle the importance of successful works. The best we can hope for from our dedicated artists is that they come closer to each other... Real art work could facilitate a cultural atmosphere whereby the masses would sense their own civilized presence among the contemporary art trends in the world.

«We should not eliminate what is good in any art trend. There are artists of quality in realism, as well as expressionism, symbolism, surrealism and abstract art... Great works will remain distinguished by their vision and technical creation. There will continue to be controversy about their excellence and as to whether they transform into a general trend which affects the real direction of the plastic arts movement. Good art, as we view it through historical study, may have inferior aspects, but the real victory is seen in those geniuses who try to achieve the

mission of the masses through great art work.»

On the subject of critique, Gaben said, «In my opinion, critique is a unique achievement; it has its own difficult conditions... it is not at a lower level than art work itself. In fact, there are serious critique writings aimed at crystallizing the ideas of art and qualitatively adding to its human level. There are writings we should not call critique on the other hand... and a lot of old judgements have to be revised... Rejecting criticism is an oppression, a mistake which no artist should commit. Objective criticism is not personal criticism, and the artist should prove his originality, objectiveness and dedication to art and his aims. Rough, offensive criticism will ultimately affect the critic, while creative art will stay above any incorrect, subjective criticism, because it conforms with the character of life. Art corresponds to life and, at the same time, competes with it.»

Nicaragua today stands on the frontlines of the worldwide struggle against imperialism, fending off US aggression, while building a new democratic society. You can follow events in Nicaragua and Central America by subscribing to *Barricada Internacional*, the international newspaper of the Sandinista National Liberation Front. *Barricada Interna-*

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٩ آذار
يوم الشهيد
من دمنا
تولد الحياة

MARCH 9th
MARTYR'S DAY
Our Martyrs Build
The Revolution's Future

