

NATIONALISM HURTS THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE

by the Mideast Committee of Correspondence

Historical Background

The Palestinian "problem" is a product of inter-imperialist¹ rivalry in the Mideast. The stakes for the imperialists in the Mideast are quite high: oil; the strategic land bridge that links Africa, Asia, and Europe; the Suez Canal. At the time of the rise of modern imperialism at the beginning of the twentieth century, the area was under the control of the Ottoman Empire (whose centre was present-day Turkey). The war between the imperialists of 1914-18 saw the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the division of the Mideast into small nation states controlled by France and Britain.

Clearly, in dividing up the area into small nation states, the imperialists sought to divide and rule. They hoped to counter the growth of pan-Arabic nationalism by fostering a ruling class in each state who would use a narrow state nationalism to protect their own vested interests and thus keep the working class and its allies of the whole area divided.

Basically, the strategy of the imperialists today remains the same. Today, the spoils are the same but the chief imperialist blocs involved are the Soviet Union and the USA. Of course, the new imperialist combination of Europe (the European Common Market countries) as well as the People's Republic of China (whose policy has become openly counter-revolutionary and, in fact, imperialist since the Cultural Revolution) are both deeply involved in the politics of the Mideast—to get out of it what they can. In the US camp, we find Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, North Yemen, the Trucial States, Kuwait, Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia. The Soviet Union holds great influence over Syria, Iraq, Algeria, Southern Yemen, and Egypt. Egypt and Libya, however, have recently become more and more up for grabs.

The Palestinian "problem" began as a result of the colonization of Palestine by the Zionist movement, sponsored at first by British imperialism and later by US imperialism. The Zionist movement developed in Europe in the late 1800's as a response to anti-semitic attacks, primarily in Russia. It remains today a nationalistic, racist movement geared to the resettlement of Palestine by Jews. The interest of the British in Zionism was primarily to establish a base of white European settlement in the area, and secondly, to benefit from the inevitable Jewish-Arab strife. The US imperialists merely stepped into the shoes of their British predecessors.

The early fights of the Palestinian workers and peasants against the British occupation and Zionist colonization were led by the traditional religious and feudal leaders.² From 1936 to 1939, they undertook an insurrection involving general strikes and armed revolt.³ During this period, the Zionist armed forces cooperated with the British. In 1948, due to terrorist attacks by the Zionist military forces and political gangs, as well as false promises of Arab leaders to provide temporary refuge until the Zionists were driven out, about one million Palestinians fled the new state of Israel.⁴

The refugees of 1948 never regained their lands or jobs. Many still live under wretched conditions in refugee camps in some of Israel's neighboring Arab countries. Many others, despairing of ever regaining what they had lost, emigrated to all parts of the world.⁵ Those who remained lived as second class citizens, subject in many cases to military rule, curfew, detention, travel restrictions, discrimination in jobs and schooling, inability to join the army as well as unions.

The 1967 war created another 350,000 Palestinian refugees (UN statistics). Many again fled to Jordan and then to Lebanon and Syria, again mostly to live under wretched conditions. Others remained under police rule in the occupied territories within Israel where they are used as a pool of cheap reserve labor-power by the Israeli bosses. They have had no civil rights whatever until very recently nor social security.

The Movement

The present Palestinian movement is a recent development with both progressive and very reactionary aspects. The purpose of this essay is to offer constructive criticisms of the movement with a view to advancing the world revolution of the working class. If this essay dwells on the reactionary aspects, particularly nationalism, the very reason for it is that we regard the struggle in the Mideast as very important and the weakness of nationalism (from our own experience) as catastrophic.

The progressive aspect is simply the militance of the movement, the call to mass action and mass organization. Al Fateh, the original and still largest resistance organization, grew up out of the General Union of Palestinian students in Cairo. In 1959, the Union called for popular armed struggle under the control of the Palestinian

masses. Since then masses of armed workers and peasants, many of whom study communist writings, have created a qualitatively new situation in the Mideast. Never again will religious and feudal leaders make the decisions.

The great weakness and reactionary aspect of the movement is nationalism, which manifests itself in the following ways:

- 1) a false strategy of national liberation,
- 2) disastrous alliances with local bourgeois,
- 3) collusion with foreign imperialists,
- 4) division in the working class and its allies,
- 5) elitism in the leadership of the movement.

National Liberation—A False Strategy

National liberation as a strategy for the emancipation of the working class has come into vogue only in the last 50 years. Previously, communists organized directly for socialism, that is, for the dictatorship of the working class. However, at the World Congresses of the Communist Internationale of the early twenties, a strategy of national liberation was promulgated for the so-called "backward areas" (today terms, "the third world" or "semi-feudal, semi-colonial countries"). The strategy held that, because of the supposed primitive development of capitalism, the smallness of the working class, and the large percentage of peasants in these areas, a two stage revolution was required. First, there was to be national liberation (expulsion of the imperialists), then socialism. Lenin himself formulated the tactic—a national liberation movement led by the working class represented by the communist party. State power would be won through a worker-peasant alliance, the mass of peasants being won by the bourgeois democratic demands for land reform (as opposed for the revolutionary communist demand of collectivization). Mao Tse-tung elaborated this theory to its fullest in his work, *On New Democracy* (1940). He stated that an alliance ought to be made of various "revolutionary" classes, including the national bourgeoisie, which alliance would run the new state. Since the alliance would be led by the working class and the communist party, the state would theoretically move directly on to socialism.

There are three major errors in the strategy. First, although many feudal remnants remained, there was no significant country in the world in the twenties where capitalism was *NOT* the principal mode of production. Certainly, this situation is even more true today. Moreover, the dialectical materialist approach that communists use to solve problems, shows that, with the development of imperialism on a world scale, quantity becomes quality; i.e., it becomes foolish for communists to fight for anything but socialism anywhere. This became especially blatant after the victory of socialism in Russia in 1917. Secondly, a wrong estimate is made of the peasantry. As capitalism develops, more and more peasants are forced off the land. Many become agricultural workers, hence winnable to socialism. Finally, the concept of joint rule of the working class and bourgeoisie is absurd from a communist point of view.

Examples of the failure of the national liberation strategy for the workers are many. Collaboration with the old

bourgeoisie resulted in the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and, lately, China. (For a detailed study of these failures, see *Road to Revolution III*, Progressive Labor Party, USA). In Vietnam, the same strategy resulted in deals at Paris that not only didn't achieve socialism (by definition), but also threw millions of lives of workers and poor peasants away in permitting US capital to remain in South Vietnam and to penetrate North Vietnam.

In the Arab countries, national liberation has also led workers to a literal dead end. In Algeria, the revolution lasted nearly ten years and cost one million lives. Today, the workers are not appreciably better off than under French imperialist rule. They have no political power. French capital is even more entrenched in Algeria than before the revolution. The US imperialists have recently negotiated the largest energy deal in history with the new Algerian bourgeoisie. Diplomatic relations with the US are soon to be restored.

In 1968, the National Front took power in Southern Yemen after ousting the British imperialists. During the struggle, a number of people with a Marxist-Leninist perspective joined the Front. They were very impressed with the aims of the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution in China, and proceeded to win the peasants to Marxism-Leninism. When the Front took over, it maintained the old civil service and old officers trained under the British. In other words, it ignored the main point of Marx in the *Civil War in France*. In this analysis of the Paris Commune of 1871, the first uprising of the proletariat in history, Marx makes the only change in his ideas expressed in the *Communist Manifesto*: that the state machine of the capitalists cannot be taken over or reformed by the workers. It must be smashed and completely replaced. The Marxist-Leninist cadre in Southern Yemen understood this maxim and descended from the mountains to take over the Fifth Province. They began to build a socialist society, dispersing the police, dismissing the civil service, organizing the workers' militia, and collectivizing all production. The National Front government quickly mobilized its British-trained army and attacked the "extremists." The people of the Fifth Province fought back but were overwhelmed. The cadre was either killed or jailed.

Yet the Palestinian movement as a whole today follows the national liberation strategy. (In fact, all segments of the movement regard South Yemen as a revolutionary state.) There are a number of resistance organizations that comprise the movement under the umbrella of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) formed in 1964 by the Arab Summit Conference (meetings of Arab heads of state). Fateh is the largest. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was founded in 1967 out of the old Arab Nationalist Movement. The Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DPFLP) split from the PFLP in 1969. These are the largest and most important, though there are a number of smaller groups.

National Liberation—Different Interpretations

National liberation is interpreted differently by the

different groups. However, due to the absence of centralism in each group, the line varies from place to place, person to person, and time to time. Fateh says,

We are fighting today to create the new Palestine of tomorrow; the progressive, democratic, and non-sectarian Palestine, in which Christian, Moslem and Jew will worship, work, live peacefully and enjoy equal rights.⁶

On the alliance of class forces they are less clear,

We can adhere neither to classical theories nor to rigid idealistic concepts . . . The bloody battle of the Zionist occupation is one of survival and not over a social ideology . . . In such a struggle ideological differences ought to disappear.⁷

In practice, Fateh seeks to make the classical alliance of national proletariat, peasantry and petty bourgeois, as well as bourgeois.

To accuse Al Fateh of bourgeois tendencies because it does not limit the Palestinian revolutionary combat to the class of workers and peasants is unjust, to say the least. Those who make such accusations overlook the fact that Al Fateh does represent a particular class, but a wider one: the class of uprooted, displaced and oppressed Palestinians.⁸

The PFLP calls for the leadership of the working class in the liberation struggle.

In the revolution of 36, the sons of the workers were the material of the revolution, but the leadership was from the feudal capitalist families which were waiting for the first chance to bargain on the revolution with the British colonialists. All they wanted from the revolution was to take power for themselves in a state tied to imperialism. So the revolution didn't win. . .

After 36, the first national bourgeoisie, then the petty bourgeoisie came to the leadership of the revolution. The revolution didn't win. That's why from now on we should insist that the working class must be the leadership of the revolution. . .

The Palestinian liberation struggle is a national struggle but at the same time it is a class struggle. . .

I want to say that the capitalist-revisionist class does not constitute more than one per cent and at the most does not exceed ten per cent. The interests of the remaining ninety per cent of our people are not tied to colonialism and imperialism—and so they are not enemies of the revolution. On the contrary, they are

one of the powers of the revolution . . . The organization of the ninety per cent should be by the leadership of the working class . . . The honest national petty bourgeois, the honest national bourgeois should be proud of the leadership of the working class.⁹

The DPFLP uses explicitly Marxist-Leninist rhetoric in calling for working class leadership and ideology. Not only once in a while do they call for socialism,

The weakness of the Palestinian national movement lies in the fact its leadership has never adopted the ideology of the working class, but rather expressed the hopes and goals of the petty bourgeois. This leads the revolution only half way, and not to its ultimate end, to change the relations and concepts which dominate every bourgeois society. Hence, the participation of both the national and the petty bourgeois in the national liberation movement has two aspects. The first is positive, since it allows a large section of the population to participate in the resistance movement. The second is negative, allowing the infiltration of the logic of compromise, with the ensuing danger of crippling the revolutionary movement in the middle of the struggle. We believe that the petty bourgeois and part of the national bourgeois can and should play their roles within a large front. This front should be led by the alliance of the workers and peasants, for it's the workers who are the most revolutionary class and the peasants who are the essential power of the national liberation movement.¹⁰

. . . nor is the destruction of the Zionist outlook enough. It is necessary to lay down the basis which will guarantee that there will be no reincarnation of Zionism. This cannot be achieved except if the future Palestine becomes a socialist unified state linked to the whole area.¹¹

Alliance With The Bosses—Disaster

The class alliances following the national liberation strategy have led the Palestinian movement to weaken its day to day work and to two bloody massacres. The PLO receives each year a quota of funds from each Arab state which is part of the Arab League (an organization similar to the British Commonwealth for the Arab countries). This money is used to finance the bureaucratic functions of the PLO including its virtually non-combattant military force, the Palestinian Liberation Army, stationed in Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan (!). This money acts as a sort of blackmail in two ways. First, it provides a check on the movement from picking up genuinely revolutionary communist practices. If the movement suddenly became anti-capitalist, there would be no more money. Secondly, the Arab rulers use the money to divert the Palestinian and Arab workers in general from class struggle against themselves in the Arab

countries to nationalist war against Israel.

The resistance organizations also receive funds from the Palestinian Liberation Fund which receives donations from both workers and sheiks.¹² These funds are split among the groups in accordance with their strength in the PLO. Hence, Fateh gets the lion's share, followed by the PFLP and the DPFLP.¹³ In order not to antagonize many of the donors, the resistance organizations not only do not attack religion, but, in various degrees, pay lip service to it. Fateh, for instance, used to begin their military leaflets: "In the name of the God, the holy, the merciful . . ." ¹⁴ Of course, relying on gods goes against relying on the workers.

Another nuance of this alliance with the Arab rulers is the game played by the PFLP and DPFLP. When the PFLP has good relations with Syria, the DPFLP is having good relations with Iraq, and vice versa. Iraq and Syria are run by governments composed of two antagonistic sects of the Ba'athist Party (which claims to be socialist).

Movement and Refugees Suffer from Nationalism

In its day to day work among the Palestinian refugees, moreover, the movement and the refugees themselves suffer from nationalism—from this bourgeois alliance. In the camps in Lebanon, for instance, life is wretched. Most refugees have no citizenship, social security, welfare, unemployment insurance, hospitalization, etc. Work is of a seasonal nature on the farms or in construction. Wages for refugees are usually less than that of Lebanese. The Red Crescent (same as Red Cross) hospitals refuse to treat any refugees except for cash. The average operation costs about \$200.00 or about three or four months wages of a refugee. Housing is extremely overcrowded and poor—tin or mud huts. Sanitation facilities are virtually non-existent—no sewers, four or five families sharing a water tap. Yet the camps are often surrounded by tall modern buildings. Those who aren't working receive a UN grant which is eight cents per person per day. This generosity is pooled and rationed in the camp. The Lebanese propaganda that justifies this oppression is that the Palestinians are guests in the country, hospitably (and temporarily) settled by the Lebanese government. The resistance organizations also accept the fact that, even though the camps have existed for a quarter of a century and though a whole generation has grown up knowing only life in the camps, this resettlement is temporary. In fact, the organizations encourage this type of thinking. And, while the resistance does improve the lot of the refugees in some ways (mainly medical aid which unfortunately acts like a bandaid over a slashed throat), it does not organize the camp refugees against the Lebanese government for better conditions. Thus, the continuing miserable conditions of the refugees¹⁵ is a direct result of the movement's nationalist politics—the politics of the return of the whole people back to Palestine, and the unwillingness to antagonize the Lebanese government.

Dependence on the Arab bourgeoisie has resulted in giant massacres in Jordan in September '70 (Black September) and in Lebanon in May 1973.¹⁶ There were constant flare-ups of violence in Jordan between the state army and the fedayeen (Palestinian fighters) after June 1970. Yet the resistance was not preparing for a showdown. Hussein, like any capitalist ruler, can't have an organized armed force of workers and poor and landless peasants outside the control of the state machine. Fateh in Jordan in 1970 said that there was nothing to worry about. They claimed to have connections with top army officers who would stage a coup if Hussein dared attack. Unfortunately, these army officers were precisely those used to stage Hussein's attack. (So much for trusting bosses!) When the fighting ended after about three weeks, the movement was virtually wiped out in Jordan. Though thousands were killed, the rank and file of the movement put up a terrific fight, especially in the areas to the north of Amman, like Irbid, where, on the initiative of the DPFLP, attempts to form workers' soviets were made. *Incidentally, Israeli planes assisted Hussein in bombing resistance positions.*

In April '73, precisely the same conditions prevailed in Lebanon. After several Israeli attacks, including one in the heart of Beirut itself, the Lebanese ruling class got the message of the Zionists and US imperialists, "Wipe out the movement!" Hundreds of Palestinians and Lebanese were murdered or wounded by government troops before the truce was declared. The movement was not liquidated in Lebanon, however, due to the strength of the resistance and its support by Lebanese workers and peasants, organized mainly by leftists. On the other hand, the movement could claim no victory. What exists now is a standoff. The Lebanese government tolerates the movement because the working class forces it to do so. During the strife, however, it received a public assurance of aid from Israel against the movement, if the government became endangered. The movement tolerates the bourgeois regime in its hope to use Lebanon as a base against Israel. Clearly, this is not a stable situation. Either the Palestinian and Lebanese fighters must clean up their own house first (i.e. do in the Lebanese bosses and carry off a socialist revolution in Lebanon), or there will be more massacres.

Collusion with Imperialists

Another consequence of nationalism is the dominance of the movement's politics by revisionism of the Russian and Chinese varieties. Revisionism was defined by Lenin as bourgeois ideas and practices in the ranks of the revolutionaries. Revisionists and revisionist ideas, he explained, were even more dangerous than capitalists and bourgeois ideas since they camouflaged themselves in revolutionary rhetoric and tended to confuse the workers. So it is today with Russia and China, once socialist, now imperialist.

Since the movement has taken Zionism, US imperialism,

and Arab reaction as its enemies, and not the world capitalist system in general, it has seen its way clear to alliances with both Russia and China. Mainly, these imperialists have bought their way in with military hardware. The justification of the DPF for this reliance on Russia and China goes something like this: "We must do the same as our Vietnamese comrades. They didn't try to determine who were the real socialists, the Soviet Union or China (!); they merely fought for the liberation of Vietnam."¹⁷ It is quite clear now that the Russian and Chinese bosses, who wined and dined Nixon while his planes bombed Hanoi, will sell out the Palestinians as callously they did the Vietnamese. The interests of these new imperialists is only to expand their empires in the Mideast. They deal with every reactionary regime they can. For instance, two weeks after Nimeri of Sudan staged a counter coup to regain power and massacred the pro-Soviet Communist Party, he was shaking hands with Chou En-lai on a stage visit to Peking.¹⁸ At the same time, the new imperialists try to create left cover for themselves by supporting the Palestinian movement.

Friendly relations with the imperialists (of any stripe) will never advance the Palestinian movement. In the last few years, in direct proportion to the growing (but probably temporary) Russian-US detente, the Syrian government, the one Arab country that has given the most scope to the movement's activities, has been clamping down. Today, resistance organizations in Syria must apply to the deuxième bureau (security and intelligence) to undertake military actions. In other words, the movement in Syria has become more or less an appendage of the Syrian war machine. The Syrian machine, in turn, is only an appendage of the Soviet imperialist machine. Where, then, does revisionist aid put the Palestinian movement?

Nationalism Divides the Workers

The Palestinian movement as a whole calls on all Arabs to join the fight to liberate Palestine. In practice, however, the movement works against this unity. In every country the resistance has an organization, it tries to organize Palestinians mainly, and only to fight Zionism in Israel. On the other hand, it does not organize Palestinians or anyone else to fight the bourgeoisie in these countries. This job it leaves to the local leftists. In fact, the movement tries to co-exist with the governments as best they can. The consequence of this strategy is to misguide the masses of workers and peasants in these countries. They are led to believe that, in fighting Zionism, they too can co-exist with their own regime. The effect, then, is to divert the non-Palestinian Arabs into *not* fighting the regime, and to prevent the success of the Palestinian movement which will always be thwarted by the regime. Compare this approach to that of the Lebanese (pro-Soviet) Communist Party during the early fifties (when it was still militant) that tried to organize Palestinians, Armenians, Kurds, and Lebanese to fight together for socialism. Until recently, however, most of the resistance groups had a slogan of "non-interference in Arab affairs."

The nationalism of the Palestinian movement makes unity of Arab and Jewish workers that much more difficult. The DPF regards as "superficial Marxism" "the need for allying the Arab proletariat with the Israeli proletariat."¹⁹ This view is typical for a national liberation movement which is based on national rather than class politics. While the Palestinian movement has rejected the outright racist slogans of some of the religious and bourgeois leaders to "drive the Jews into the sea," etc., the appeal of the movement comes through to Jewish Israeli workers as racism—as antagonistic to them because they are Jewish. If the appeal came through as fellow workers urged to join the common struggle against the imperialist system along with Arab brothers and sisters, then it would be a different story.

This problem is further compounded by the petty bourgeois nature of the fixation in the movement on land and and property. Take the typical attitude of a kibbutznik in Israel. If one is to confront him, saying, "You stole the land from the Palestinians!" he will look at you strangely and reply, "I never stole anyone's land. I was born on this land and worked it all my life." Unless, in fact, our kibbutznik was a soldier in 1948 or 1967, his words are true. Like white workers in North America, the Jewish immigrants were used as mercenaries to seize the land from the Palestinians for the imperialists and the Israeli ruling class. Their descendants have no guilt. Most of the agitation and propaganda of the Palestinian movement, then, falls on deaf ears. The "democratic solution" is no solution at all to the question of land and property for the Jewish worker. The task is not to determine who is the rightful owner of which property. Rather it is to fight for socialism—common ownership of all means of production (including land) by the working class, irrespective of nationality.

Elitism and Nationalism Go Hand In Hand

Any revolutionary movement can suffer from elitism; that is, from leaders who don't integrate themselves with the workers' struggle. However, the Palestinian movement suffers especially from this weakness because of nationalism: First, the leaders try to make friends with the national bigshots. Secondly, the building of the cross-class alliance brings bourgeois and petty bourgeois people into the leadership. A genuinely communist party or movement, on the other hand, concentrates on developing working class cadre to the point that the leadership is solidly working class as well as the big majority of the membership.

In the Palestinian movement, and especially in the right-wing Fateh, we find great disparities in the material well-being of leaders and members. In their infamous attack on Beirut of April 1973, the Israeli agents knew exactly where to find their high echelon victims—in the most luxurious apartment buildings in the fashionable district. The many privileges for officials, including offices in modern apartment buildings, do nothing for their militancy. The fact is that most of the membership of the movement come from working class or poor peasant origin. Especially, in the DPF, they join to fight for what they believe is in the interest

of their class. And they are the most dedicated and tough fighters. The contradiction in class origin and class aims between the members and leaders is another consequence of nationalism.

Other Problems: Terrorism and Male Chauvinism

Two other problems, not necessarily connected to nationalism, plague the Palestinian struggle: terrorism and male chauvinism.

Terrorism is especially a problem since it is a further obstacle to the unity of Jewish and Arab workers. While the real terrorists in the Mideast are unquestionably the Israeli rulers like Meir and Dayan, the reactionary Arab leaders like Hussein, and the US imperialists,²⁰ there is no excuse for those sincerely interested in social change undertaking terrorist acts under the guise of making revolution. The DPF puts the matter well. First they quote Lenin, who condemns the terrorists in the same breath as the economists,

The economists and the modern terrorists spring from a common root, namely subservience to spontaneity . . . At first sight, our assertion may appear paradoxical, for the difference between these two appear to be so enormous: one stresses the "drab everyday struggle," and the other calls for the most self sacrificing struggle of individuals. But this is not a paradox. The economists and terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity. The economists bow to the spontaneity of the "pure and simple" labor movement, while the terrorists bow to the spontaneity of the passionate indignation of the intellectuals, who are either incapable of linking up the revolutionary struggle with the labor movement or lack the opportunity to do so. It is very difficult indeed for those who have lost their belief or who have never believed that this was possible to find some outlet for their indignation and revolutionary activity other than terror.²¹

The DPF continues, Guerrilla warfare cannot turn into mass armed action by merely escalating armed activities, but rather by the participation of the people themselves in fighting on the one hand and by their participation in the political and ideological debates within the ranks of the fedayeen movement. "Pure" military activity, as well as individual terrorism, can only lead to the degeneration of political activity among the masses and hence the weakening of the link between armed activity and the mass movement.

What do "external operations" represent in this context? Those acts responding to the enemy through individual terrorism do not threaten him in the final analysis, nor do they affect the balance of military power which still operates to the enemy's advantage.

Rather, they create a great deal of noise and a tendency to substitute individual deeds for organized armed action. . .

Individual violence has no faith in the viability of mass participation, which is the natural basis of a people's war against an enemy who is far more advanced in military power and technology.²²

As mentioned, the practical effect of Palestinian terrorism in Israel is to further alienate the Jewish working class, who are the victims in most cases of the bombs placed in bus depots, supermarkets, cinemas, factories, etc. Another effect is the diversion from grass roots organizing that terrorism provides. A fatal example occurred in August 1970. While King Hussein was preparing his attack on the resistance, the PFLP was in the process of hijacking five commercial jetliners to the Sahara where they were blown up. The attention of the Palestinians was diverted from real issues at hand to a drama enacted thousands of miles away. Still another weakness is the accumulation of terrorist activities undertaken to undo previous terrorism. Specifically, terrorism for the purpose of the release from jail of captured terrorists has become more or less a fixture of Mideast politics. Finally, there is the cloak and dagger war of assassinations and counter-assassinations now being waged between Israeli and Palestinian agents throughout the world. The war began with the decision of the Israeli cabinet to eliminate the Palestinian leadership. After several bloody assassinations, Black September responded with the Munich Games affair. Since then, hardly a month has gone by without an assassination or a letter bomb on either side. What role are the workers expected to play in these affairs, other than cheering and booing from the sidelines? Would not better security for Palestinian leaders (including moving their residences into the villages and refugee camps) be a better answer?

Lastly, terrorism serves to alienate the international working class from the cause of the Palestinian workers and peasants. The support of workers abroad is a powerful weapon against the bosses, but letter bombs and Munich massacres don't win that support. These acts only play into the hands of the western imperialists whose media love to portray serious revolutionaries as terrorists. Often these acts are explained by indicating that the intended victims are Israeli soldiers (e.g. Munich). This explanation does not hold. The Zionist bosses are having an increasingly difficult time recruiting for their army. Moreover, since the Israeli army is a drafted army (mainly of workers), we ought to hold our sights on the common soldiers of Israel, like the drafted US soldiers in Vietnam, as a potential revolutionary. This view does not mean not fighting Israeli aggression. It means that a class distinction must be drawn in the Israeli army, as in the rest of Israeli society.

Male Chauvinism Hurts the Movement

Male chauvinism is a very great problem in Arab countries, because feudal ideas on the role of women still predominate and because capitalism has not yet forced large numbers of women to work for a living outside of the home. It is no wonder then that male chauvinism is carried over very strongly in the Palestinian movement. Virtually none of the leadership are women. Perhaps ten per cent of the members are women. Of these, few are combatants. The majority are involved in medical work. The worst aspect of male chauvinism is that few within the movement recognize that the problem exists. As a result, little has been written on the subject and few statistics are available. Obviously, however, if the Palestinian and Arab working class women are discouraged from active participation, one half the potential strength of the working class is not being utilized. Moreover, if a truly egalitarian society is to be built, then the oppression of women cannot be tolerated in the ranks of the movement.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article is not to criticize for the sake of criticism. The Middle East is the powder keg of World War III. The struggle that unfolds there is of life-and-death interest to every worker in the world.

To criticize nationalism is also a life-and-death matter. Millions of workers the world over have already laid down their lives in wars for the sole profit of the capitalists of the world. In the Middle East, tens if thousands have already died for precisely this reason. The Palestinian movement has led thousands more in heroic resistance against Israeli bosses backed by US imperialists, as well as Jordanian and Lebanese bosses. It is a tragedy that workers on two sides of a border—and it is especially ironic that these Mideast workers are so similar in language, culture, earnings, and lousy working and living conditions—can be led every few years to go out and kill each other.

The nationalist divisions that the imperialists and their local hacks have used to stay in power for fifty years in the Mideast must end. It almost seems that, by mutual unspoken agreement, they have planned to keep things that way all along. Recently, during the massacre in Lebanon, Moshe Dayan was quoted as saying that the Israeli army might invade Lebanon, if necessary, to restore the government. In 1970, the Israeli government aided Hussein.

The main point of this essay is that the Palestinian movement is the wrong kind of organization to fight for the needs of the Palestinian workers and peasants. Only the straightforward fight for socialism—the dictatorship of the proletariat (and not the phony socialism of present-day Russia, China, Syria, or Iraq)—is the real road to liberation for workers in the Mideast and the entire world.

The only correct organization that can lead such a fight is a revolutionary communist party prepared to integrate itself in the working class through the leadership of mass organizations (like unions, student, and peasant

movements), based on the unity of workers of all nationalities. Presently in Lebanon, small cells are forming of fighters disillusioned with the nationalism of the Palestinian movement and the revisionism of Russia and China. They are not yet united organizationally but they have a good idea: to fight Zionism and US imperialism means to fight for socialism in the Arab countries.

In the end, what will inevitably be required is a new international of revolutionary communist parties in every country to lead the fight to a successful conclusion for the workers of the world.

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Footnotes

1 Imperialism, as defined by Lenin, is the final stage of capitalism. Through the concentration of production in the hands of monopoly capitalists and eventually, finance capitalists capitalism moved to a new stage. The driving force for the ruling class under imperialism is the export of capital for the purpose of its own reproduction. This export of capital is followed by territorial expansion. Hence the division of the world into several imperialistic blocs, whose rulers are in constant competition.

2 In 1920, a five day battle erupted in the streets of Jerusalem, April 5-9, between Arabs and British. Fourteen Arabs were killed and twenty-one wounded. Nine British and Jews were killed and twenty-five wounded. In 1921, the British fired on a demonstration in Jaffa. The fighting spread to the whole of Palestine and lasted fifteen days. One hundred fifty-seven Arabs died. Seven hundred were wounded. One hundred and forty British and Jews were killed and one hundred forty six wounded. In 1929, an uprising, known as the "Barak" rebellion saw three hundred fifty one Arabs killed and fifteen hundred wounded, thirty-two sentenced to life and one hundred eighty-seven handed sentences of from three to fifteen years. Saed Fouad, *Palestinian Fedayeen in Battle*, pp. 15-23.

3 The general strike lasted for six months during which the British had to deploy 72,000 troops. Three thousand Arab fighters were killed and seven thousand wounded. Of the civilian population eight thousand were killed or wounded. In 1937, Britain proposed to divide Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. The resulting fighting ended with the British dropping the proposal in 1939. One hundred thousand British troops were deployed as well as tens of thousands of police. Arab casualties were eight thousand fighters killed and fifteen thousand wounded, fifteen thousand civilians killed, one hundred ninety-six hanged and four hundred seventy-nine sentenced to ten years or more. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-23.

4 UNRWA Report to the General Assembly, 22nd session, 1967 726,000 in 1948; a total of 960,000 in 1950.

5 A minimum of 200,000 Palestinian refugees live in Arab countries other than Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. G. Chaliand, *The Palestinian Resistance*, p. 46. Another

- approximately 50,000 refugees have settled in Europe, Australia, and North America. Fouad, op. cit., p. 30.
- 6 Address by Fateh delegation to Second International Conference In Support of the Arab Peoples, Cairo, January 28, 1969.
- 7 Fateh, *Starting Points of Guerrilla Action*. Amman, second edition, 1967, pp. 64-65, 67.
- 8 *Al Fateh* (official organ of the movement), October 1, 1969 article: "Al Fateh and the Left."
- 9 (translated from) George Habash (PFLP leader), May Day Address, 1970, Hussein refuge camp, Jordan.
- 10 DPFLP, *Role of the Party*, p. 9, Palestinian Solidarity Committee, Buffalo, N.Y. (from *Al-Sharara*, vol. 1, no. 1.).
- 11 DPFLP, *Towards a Democratic Solution to The Palestinian Question*, pp. 9-10, Palestinian Solidarity Committee, 1970.
- 12 In the Arab Gulf, Palestinian workers have a small percentage of their paychecks deducted to the Fund. In other countries, for instance, a direct tax is added to goods and services, e.g. cinema tickets.
- 13 The Sixth Palestinian Congress 1969 allocated, out of 112 seats, 33 to Fateh, 12 to the PFLP, and 8 to the DPFLP. The PLO was originally set up by a coalition of such unlikely partners as Nasser, Feisal, Ben Bella and Bourgiba, respectively of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Tunisia.
- 14 Another example is Arafat's (leader of Fateh and PLO) letter to the Arab Summit Meeting in Cairo, 22 September 1970 (during the massacre in Jordan), "... God witness that it was a massacre. God is a witness to what I have told. So, let God be the judge between us, for God gives victory to those with him."
- 15 Statistics at El Baqaa camp, Jordan: Population 38,031; tents 7,001; water tanks 2; water points 30; latrines 0; bathrooms 2) taps 168; drainage points 142; doctors 4, 1969. Basic rations 1967 UNRWA per person per month, 10 kg. flour; 600 g. dried vegetables; 500 g. rice; 600 g. sugar; 375 g. fat; 150 g. bar of soap. In winter, rations are supplemented by 300 g. dried vegetables and 400 g. of flour per person per month. Five to seven litres lamp oil and one blanket are given to every three every year. (UN statistics.)
- 16 In Jordan in 1970, eight thousand Palestinians were killed and tens of thousands wounded. Fourteen thousand were arrested. The Jordanian army suffered 5000 losses. Fateh: *September Heroism and Massacres*. 1971, pp. 78, 110.
- In Lebanon in 1973, hundreds of Lebanese and Palestinian were killed or wounded. No more accurate statistics available.
- 17 "The world communist movement, headed by the Soviet Union—the land of Lenin, champion of the rights of oppressed people to self-determination—is urgently required to revise its erroneous Stalinist-Bureaucratic stand on the Palestine problem . . . On the First of May, our people extend their acknowledgment and gratitude to the Chinese People's Republic, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Korea, and Cuba, for their internationalist position on the Palestine problem. We hail the positions of the Sudanese CP and the Iraqi (Central Command faction) which call for the overthrow of the Israeli-Zionist structure and the establishment of a Democratic Palestinian state. . ." DPFLP, May 1, 1970. "It's strange that the Chinese comrades have so far had good relations with the right wing section of the resistance only, represented especially by Fateh." Naef Hawatmeh, *Thawry*, no. 7, p. 5, 1971 (leader of DPFLP). "Our work with some Trotskyite trends in the field of outside help for the Palestine problem has been criticized by most of the left circles and the international communist movement . . . The Trotskyites tried to dress the Front in their anti-Leninist position which calls for 'right of self-determination for the people who practice oppression, i.e. the Jewish community in Palestine and advocate the slogan of 'bipartisan national state'. . ." Ibid., no. 3, pp. 3, 6, 1971.
- 18 Road to Revolution III, p. 27.
- 19 DPFLP, *Towards a Democratic Solution to the Palestinian Question*, Palestine Solidarity Committee, Buffalo, p. 11.
- 20 Just a few days before the May massacre in Lebanon in 1973, "a secret conference of US diplomats in the Middle East and South East Asia was held in Tehran on the 23rd and 24th of April, attended by US Assistant Secretary of State for Northeast and Southeast Asian Affairs, Joseph Sisco, and Deputy Secretary of State, Kenneth Rush. Rush said on the 25th of April that America would not allow international terrorism to interfere with the normal course of diplomacy in the Middle East." *Arab Record and Report*, 1973, issue 8, p. 91.
- 21 from *What Is To Be Done* in DPFLP, *On Terrorism*, PSC, p. 3.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 3-4.