Interview with Comrade Hawi

On February 8th, the Lebanese Army lost control of West Beirut, and was threatened by widespread street fighting. The previous day, Prime Minister Wazzan's government had resigned. Yet US Envoy Rumsfeld had the audacity to declare, "We don't believe the Lebanese government has collapsed."

On this real turning point of a day, the PFLP's weekly, "Al Hadaf", had the opportunity to interview Comrade George Hawi, General Secretary of the Lebanese Communist Party, on the latest developments and the perspectives of the nationalistic victory in Beirut. Of particular interest are Comrade Hawi's evaluations of the linkage between the armed struggle in South Lebanon and in Beirut, and of the possibility for the Palestinian revolution to benefit from the recent Lebanese experience in order to reestablish its struggle in Lebanon on a more fruitful basis than before.

On the Wazzan government's resignation...

Wazzan's resignation is the beginning of the collapse of the rule of the Phalangists and the Gemayel family. From one angle, it is no doubt a political maneuver aimed at diluting the total, united political opposition that emerged in confronting the Gemayel authority. It also aims to absorb the popular disaffection with the authority on both domestic and foreign policy issues. However, this maneuver came too late and did not take into account the most recent developments. The popular movement and the position of the progressive forces, mainly the National Salvation Front and the Amal movement, has closed the door on all maneuvers.

The question is no longer one of a government, whether like the previous one or a national unity government, if it works with this group (the Phalangists) who are responsible for destroying all Lebanon, including Ashrafiyeh, the Metn, Beqaa, Saida, Tyre, Nabatiyeh and Nabul, (area which the Christians populations which the Phalangists claim to represent). Moreover, it is no longer possible to have a dialogue with the Phalangist Party or its representatives in power. Walid Jumblatt, in our name, rejected entering into any parliamentary, political maneuvers or consultations. Also, Nabib Berri, in our name, rejected this game. Both emphasized a major demand: the downfall of Amir Gemayel.

The other tasks will come as a result of this major task, canceling the agreement and the Israeli occupation, its conditions and retreats. For this purpose, we will work on the following:

1. We stand for the absolute cancellation of this agreement and the Israeli occupation, its conditions and retreats. For this purpose, we will work on the following:
2. We see this disparity as tactical differences as to the overall revolutionary process.
3. First, allow me to address what I consider to be the resurgence (of the national movement) in the present circumstances. The basic thing here is what is taking place in South Lebanon: the armed struggle against the occupation. The role of this struggle is to uncover the revolution's meaning and the resurgence of the liberation struggle in Lebanon. Israel is the central, basic link in the chain of the enemy plan. Therefore, weakening this link will weaken the other links. The historic decision to reunite the Israeli occupation by force of arms, and the historic initiative taken by our General Secretary, Comrade Hawi, to draw up a schedule whereby the process of canceling this agreement and the Israeli occupation, its conditions and retreats, will be put into effect.

4. On the current situation and its perspectives...

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On February 8th, the Lebanese Army lost control of West Beirut, and was threatened by widespread riots. The previous day, Prime Minister Wazzan's government had resigned. Yet US envoy Rumsfield had the audacity to declare, "We don't believe the Lebanese call for reconciliation was never a call for reconciliation with the Phalangist Party. On the contrary, it was a method to exploit the fear of the Phalangists. We always insisted on a common life in a democratic Lebanon in which all citizens do their duties, and are free to choose their political system, their representative and judicial institutions, and the power apparatus that serves this choice. We always emphasized that what has prevented this choice is the project of discriminatory, sectarian, one-group hegemony.

In order for the Lebanese people to live on the basis of national unity, there must be a total and unreserved withdrawal, for destroying all Lebanon, including Ashrafiyeh, the Metn, Wazzan's resignation is the beginning of the collapse of the Phalangist Party. On the contrary, it was a method to exploit the fear of the Phalangists. We always insisted on a common life in a democratic Lebanon in which all citizens do their duties, and are free to choose their political system, their representative and judicial institutions, and the power apparatus that serves this choice. We always emphasized that what has prevented this choice is the project of discriminatory, sectarian, one-group hegemony.

On the western media's reports about reservations of some parties in the National Salvation Front concerning Jumblatt's call for Amin Gemayel's resignation...

There is a desire on the part of the western and reactionary media that there be such a difference. Certainly, the disparity, which may exist about the method of getting rid of the Phalangist hegemony. But like in occupied Palestine, the facts in South Lebanon show that the contradiction between the oppressed and the oppressors cannot be solved by psychological means or petty inducements. The mass of occupied Arab land - and the popular response is resistance. Now that the front of Lebanese nationalist resistance has spread from the South to Beirut, the Liked government is doubly caught in the trap of its own making. It is more than ever clear that the goals of the 1982 invasion will not be fulfilled, no matter how long the IDF remains; continuing casualties bring this home to the Israeli public daily, feeding the internal crisis in the Zionists entity. Yet further withdrawal, to save lives and avert the criticism, will increase the territory of liberated Lebanon. This would provide the example which the Zionists, like imperialists and Arab reaction, most fear, that armed popular resistance is the only way to recover occupied Arab land.

We are living in a period in which the Phalangist Party is its representative in power. We have no reason to reconcile with this group (the Phalangists) who are responsible for destroying all Lebanon, including Ashrafiyeh, the Metn, Wazzan's resignation is the beginning of the collapse of the Phalangist Party. On the contrary, it was a method to exploit the fear of the Phalangists. We always insisted on a common life in a democratic Lebanon in which all citizens do their duties, and are free to choose their political system, their representative and judicial institutions, and the power apparatus that serves this choice. We always emphasized that what has prevented this choice is the project of discriminatory, sectarian, one-group hegemony.
People of the southern Sahara - living under Phalange threat, Dec. 1983

fend Lebanon as an independent Arab state in the face of Israel and its imperialist backers, or there will be no army in Lebanon at all. This army also needs to have an army; the internal security forces are better than the army in preserving internal security. We want an army that agrees with Syria and the Palestinian revolution on confronting the Israeli occupation and the danger of US aggression, not an army that fights Syria and the Palestinian revolution with US and Israeli support.

There is also the economic crisis. An added reason for this crisis is that billions of dollars are paid in cash to the US and France. The state pays 30% more than market price in order to have immediate delivery. The state also pays the price of shells shot by the US forces against our people and the Lebanese treasury. All this is accompanied by deals and brokerage within the government. The economic situation is a total disaster. It threatens the working masses with unemployment, the agricultural workers with losing their bread; also small producers are threatened, as is the national industry and agriculture and a major part of services.

The destructive social consequences of the economic crisis portend the emergence of crises of a new type. The bread revolt, as happened in Tunisia and Morocco, is possible in Lebanon, but here it will be among an armed people, an armed working class, armed revolutionary forces. We shall not fail to use any method in our struggle to keep the working class and other working people from paying the price of the crisis. How can the working class go hungry while possessing arms and when there is food in stock, and money accumulating in the monopolies' treasuries? We propose a socio-economic reform in the country, even more strongly than in the previous period, because the crisis is more violent and destructive than previously.

Where, then, is it possible to make compromises? Why compromise with the state? Our principled position specifies a set of factors: (1) the balance of forces, (2) the position of our allies, in as much as we may propose an advanced task, (5) our permanent distinction between the central link in the struggle and other links, (4) our view that if the major link is broken, this opens opportunities for developing the struggle in other areas. The other link must be long and strong.

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On the perspectives for the Lebanese National Resistance Front if the Israelis were to withdraw from the South...

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Before the quelling of the popular uprising in Tunisia, in early January, a new one had started in Morocco. Besides the great similarity in the struggles of both, there are nuances in the two countries in same methods of protest. This led to widespread clashes with the regimes' forces, and as a result, hundreds of victims. Both the Tunisian and Moroccan authorities answered the protesting masses with iron and fire.

In Morocco, the uprising coincided with the Islamic Summit Conference, a fact of great embarrassment to King Hassan II, who promptly clamped a news black-out on events in the streets. Both regimes employed tanks, besieged universities and schools, and imposed martial law. In Tunisia, brute force was rounded off with a political maneuver: The Interior Minister was made to resign, serving as a scapegoat for the price rises which sparked the revolt. And as spoke Bourguiba in Tunis, so did King Hassan in Morocco, on local television and radio, accusing "communists, Zionists, Khomeiniists" and other foreign forces. This did not push the Palestinian revolution to practices its vanguard role in a better way. Lebanon will not go back to the same exposed form of conflict, as a place for public Palestinian revolution presence, exhibitions and inflation. Lebanon, belongs to the Lebanese nationalist forces, and to the Palestinian revolution as well. We must know how to use the arena better for the Palestinian revolution, while at the same time not damaging the Lebanese nationalist forces. We must use it as a means to mobilize potentials in order to continue the struggle in all forms, inside and outside the occupied territories, for liberating Palestine and achieving the legitimate national rights for our people. We look of death to an approach that bypasses the Lebanese national factor and then returns to the Palestinian revolution. The fact of its liberation, as happened before. The Palestinian revolution will not find it easy to establish a kingdom on the territory, instead of strong and quality of Palestinian armed presence and the form of practice. In this perspective, the PLO no longer needs the thousands of fighters, but it needs quality fighters.

On the Palestinian role in the Lebanese National Resistance Front...

It is our duty to say that Palestinian revolutionary forces, among them PFLP and DFLP, participate in an important part of the Lebanese National Resistance. However, Palestinian participation is not limited to the South. Palestinians are present in other areas - the mountains, the southern suburbs of Beirut, etc. More than others, they are exposed to terror, harassment and maltreatment by the puppets of Israel, the fascist forces and the authority. Self-defense is a basic right. On the other hand, they participate in the Palestinian National Resistance Front, their allies in the struggle.

On the future...

A realistic analysis of the conflict today, on different levels, makes it possible. One legacy in Lebanon, if fully achieved, will not only automatically reflect on the overall situation of the Arab national liberation movement. In addition, this issue will help in exposing the Israeli role in Lebanon and it will develop into a big dilemma for Arab reaction... We have confidence in the abilities of our people, in the support of our allies and friends, and in the ability of our own party as well.