Camp War in Lebanon

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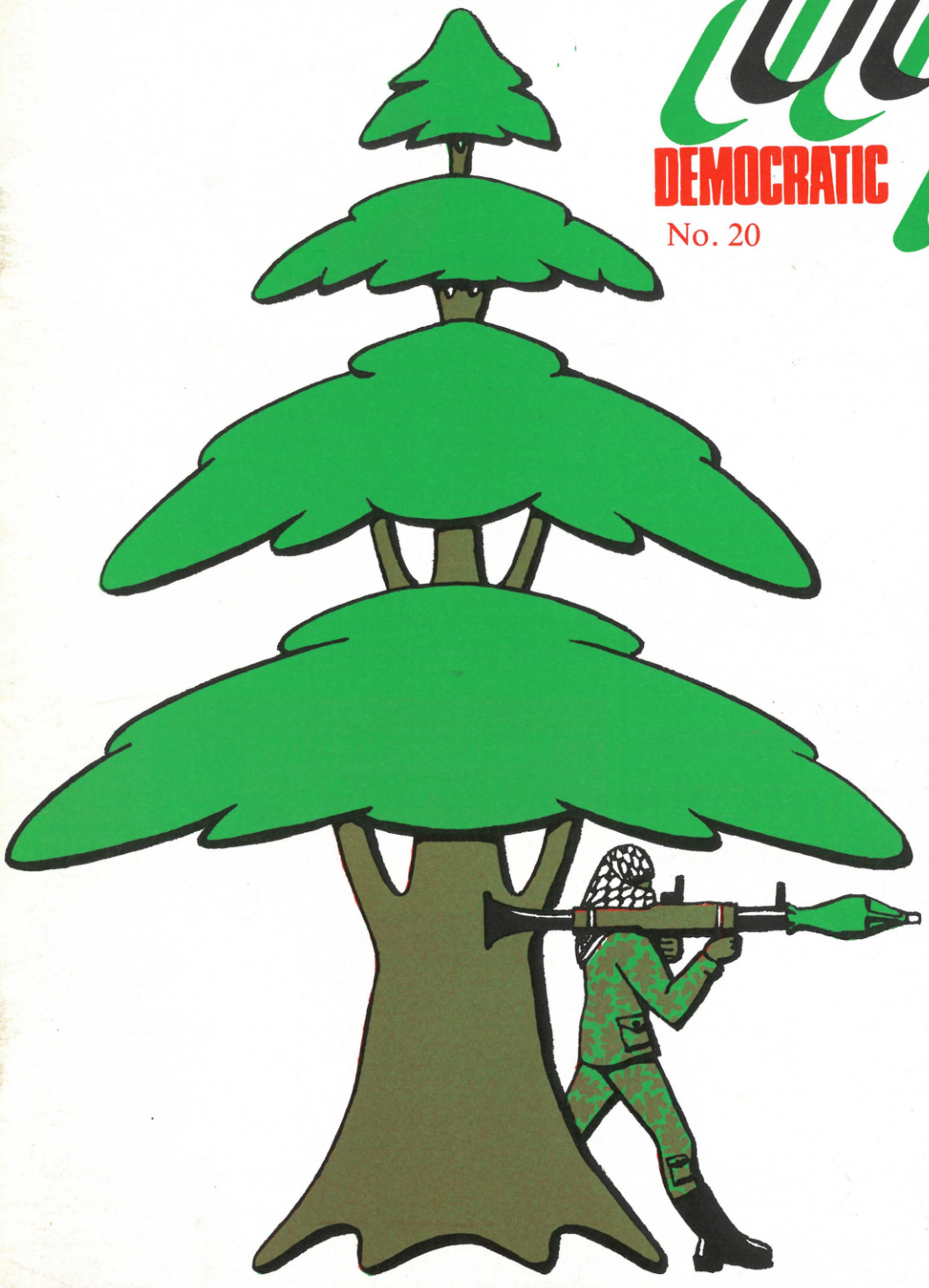

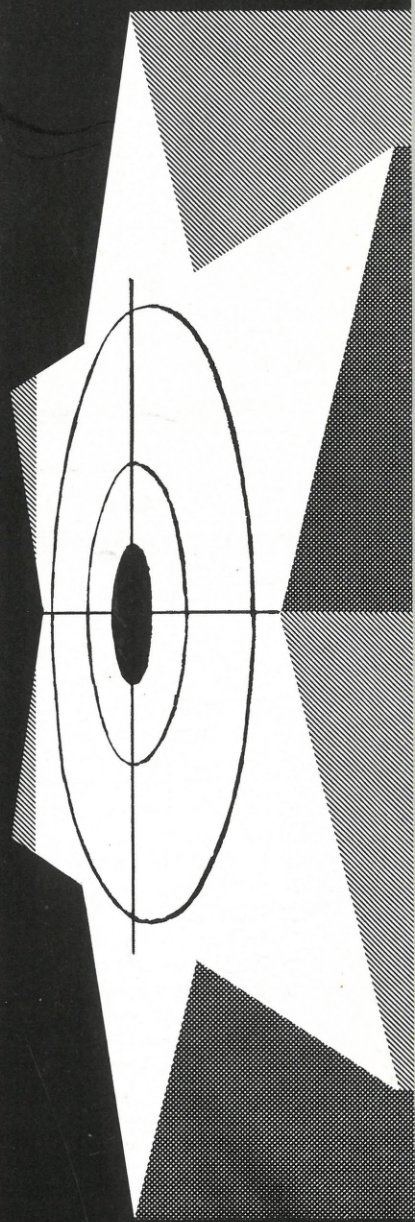

Defending Palestinian Rights to Combat Zionist Occupation

DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE

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— 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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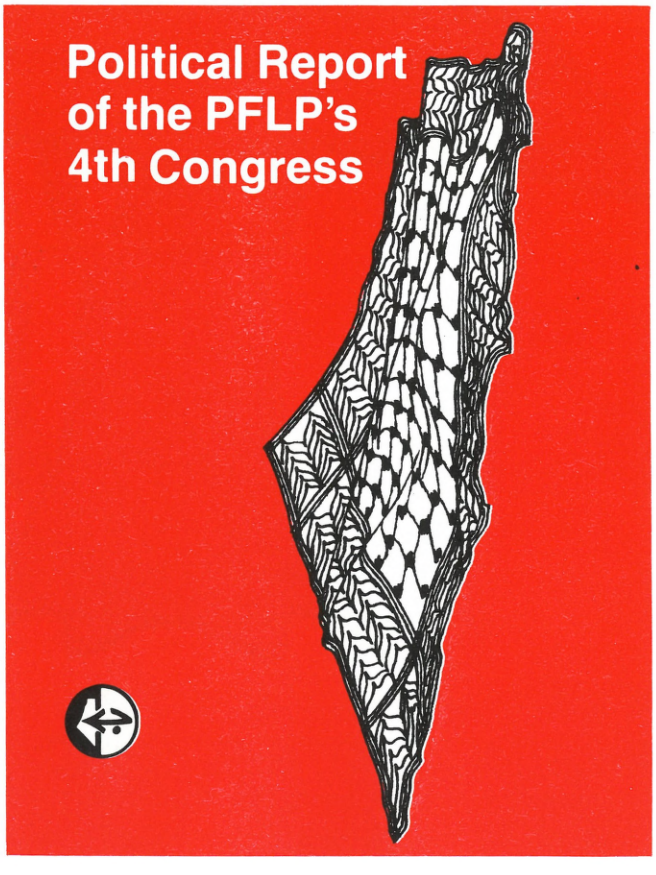


Editorial

The Shift in Amal's Role

The fierce battle between the Palestinian resistance and the Amal movement, which is now raging from the Beirut camps to South Lebanon, dates back to Amal's unprovoked attack on Rashidiya camp on October 1st. The very fact that Amal has been besieging this relatively small camp for two months proves that this is no local incident, but one prong in Amal's overall plan. Despite intense efforts by Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist forces to end the war, Amal has persisted in its campaign to enforce the downfall of Rashidiya. To this end, Amal reinforced its murderous shelling with an embargo on food and other essentials, and psychological warfare against the camp residents, using methods reminiscent of Zionist-fascist terror.

When all this failed to cow the people and fighters of Rashidiya, Amal broadened the range of its aggression and attacked the Palestinian camps near Beirut and Sidon. Not even the Popular Nasserite Organization of Sidon, stationed to enforce the mutually agreed upon ceasefire, escaped Amal's aggression. Thus, Amal blocked all efforts at a peaceful solution among allies, and proceeded in efforts to impose its sectarian conditions, not only on the Palestinians, but on Lebanese nationalists as well. In the quest for hegemony over the nationalist areas, Amal has engulfed the anti-Zionist, anti-fascist forces in a side battle and enforced a rift in Palestinian-Lebanese relations. The battle assumed wider, dangerous dimensions as brigades of the regime's sectarian army involved themselves on Amal's side, supplying helicopters, arms and manpower in the Beirut and Sidon areas.

Pivotal to Amal's military campaign were its positions in the hills of Maghdousheh, overlooking Sidon from the southeast-used for shelling Ain Al Hilweh and Miyeh Miyeh camps, and as a connection point for the transfer of supplies from Amal strongholds in Beirut to the South. On this background, the Palestinian resistance undertook an operation on November 24th, designed to enable defense of the camps, and force Amal to accept reasonable calls to end its suicidal project. Palestinian freedom fighters gained control of Maghdousheh from the Amal forces. (It is noteworthy that Amal is not an indigenous force in Maghdousheh which is a Christian village; Amal had simply established military positions in this village because of its strategic location, halfway between Beirut and Tyre, enabling control of the coastal highway.)

From the time of gaining Amal's positions in Maghdousheh, the Palestinian organizations declared their readiness to withdraw immediately in the context of a genuine ceasefire, guaranteeing the camps' security. The Palestinian revolution does not seek to occupy or control any Lebanese territory, and has exerted every possible effort with their brothers in the Lebanese national movement, to bring about a political solution to end this dirty war.

Instead of responding positively to the Palestinian proposals, Amal's leadership escalated its political and military aggression against the Palestinian people and revolution, using the same pretexts as Lebanon's enemies, such as the dangers of Palestinian 'expansionism' and resettlement in Lebanon. The results of the numerous meetings and ceasefire agreements, since the first camp war in 1985, have clearly shown that Amal's leadership is determined to execute its criminal project against our people and revolution. Amal's insistence is due to a set of factors that paved the way for Amal to move from revolutionary positions to counterrevolutionary ones. The main factors in this shift are as follows:

First: Amal's sectarian nature predetermined the future of this movement and the horizons for its development. Sectarianism is an avenue to isolationist and reactionary positions. It leads to a form of harmonizing with the plans of the Zionist enemy which relies on sectarian divisions to divide and weaken Lebanon, fragmenting it into cantons that would justify the Zionists' own sectarian ideology and existence. Amal's sectarian nature limited the movement's role in fighting for liberation and democracy. Influential circles in Amal assumed a passive position during the 1982 Israeli invasion, in contrast to the nationalist resistance mounted by other sections of the movement. Amal was late in assuming its place in the Lebanese National Resistance Front. Then, as the Israelis began their staged, partial withdrawal, some circles of Amal turned their energies to striking Lebanese nationalist and democratic forces, along with continuous attacks on the Palestinian masses and nationalist presence.

Second: Changes in Amal's structure have created an internal balance of forces, whereby those circles connected to the reactionary Lebanese authority and to the Zionist enemy have augmented their influence in the movement as a whole. A major element in these changes is that Amal members who collaborated with the Zionist occupation forces in the aftermath of the 1982 invasion, have been reinstated in their posts.

Third: During the past few years, Amal's leaders began to feel that there was a possibility for a sectarian solution to the Lebanese conflict in the foreseeable future. Thus, they strove to arrange the conditions in the patriotic and Islamic arenas in a way that would guarantee their own hegemony. With this motive, Amal waged wars on the Palestinian camps, and killed and expelled patriotic Lebanese from West Beirut. In the end, none of the Lebanese nationalist forces were able to operate in South Lebanon. Thus, Amal hoped to usurp the right to speak for the nationalist-Islamic forces, as a prelude to gaining more privileges in the context of the Lebanese regime's sectarian game. Related to this was the feeling of Amal's leaders that it was possible to make a deal with the Zionist enemy in the South, allowing Amal to impose its influence and eventually build its own sectarian canton - the 'Shiite state'. This would mean playing the same role as Antoine Lahd and his South Lebanon Army. This pushed Amal leaders to invent formulas for security arrangements which would guarantee Israeli security upon withdrawal from South Lebanon, in return allowing Amal to build its 'state'. The Palestinians are to be the scapegoats for these security arrangements.

Amal leaders thought that the internal conflict in the PLO, and the PLO's deteriorating relations with some Arab nationalist forces, especially Syria, would enable the execution of their project. Amal tried to cover its dirty actions with slogans such as the «deviating resistance» and opposition to Arafat's policies. Ironically, in reality, Amal's own policy marks a surrender to the enemy conditions and serves to spread the policy of capitulation in the Arab arena.

In the light of all these factors, influential circles in Amal decided that the time had come for executing their campaign against the Palestinians, even at the risk of exposing their true intentions. Recent statements by Amal leaders, though ambiguously worded, confirm that complete control of the South, in preparation for building the 'Shiite state', is at the top of their agenda. To achieve this goal, they will not stop at attacking the Palestinian armed presence, but aim to drive Palestinians to emigrate. The next stage would be eliminating Lebanese nationalist presence in the South as well. The campaign to liquidate the Palestinian revolution as the price for this 'state' will be broadened to include massacres against Lebanese patriots in Beirut and other regions, in order to impose Amal's sectarian hegemony. The fate of the Abu Al Aswad camp, near Tyre, is a clear example of Amal's methods and a warning about its ultimate goals. This small, relatively isolated camp,

where there had been no previous fighting, was burned down; the 5,000 or more residents were expelled northwards.

To justify their atrocious methods and suspicious goals, the worst concepts are being uttered, similar to the slogans used by the Phalangists and the Jordanian regime to justify their own massacres against the Palestinians. Thus, the slogan of «separating Lebanon's problem from the regional conflict», long used by the Phalangists, is today raised by Amal, as is the other favorite of the Lebanese fascists about the danger of the Palestinians resettling in Lebanon.

The Palestinian revolution's reply to this misleading propaganda is straightforward: The most obvious way to fight the resettlement conspiracy is to support the Palestinian liberation struggle, protecting the revolution's armed presence in Lebanon and allowing it to continue the struggle against Zionist occupation, so that the Palestinian people may return to live in Palestine. In line with this perspective, the Palestinian revolution calls on all nationalists and progressives to intensify their efforts to implement the October 28th accord. This was reached between the Palestinians, the Lebanese national forces and Amal, to guarantee opening the coastal road, and solving the problem of Rashidiya in accordance with the Damascus accord of 1985, which ended the first camp war, but whose implementation Amal has persistently blocked. Executing the October 28th accord would pave the way for ending this war, lifting the siege from all the Palestinian camps, and stationing Lebanese national movement forces at posts evacuated by the Palestinian fighters. This would avoid friction that might lead to a new round of wars.

The Amal forces have waged a vicious war against our camps and revolution. If they are not forced to back down now, they will never stop their attempts to execute their bloody project. Either the Palestinian revolution deters this danger firmly now, a job that requires collective efforts, or this internal war will escalate, facilitating further imperialist-Zionist-reactionary aggression against the Lebanese and Palestinian people. All are held responsible before the people and history. The Palestinian people are determined to continue their liberation battle, and will not fall prey or be used as scapegoats in others' retrograde projects. ●

The Battle for Maghdousheh

After 50 days of siege around Rashidiya camp near Tyre, it was logical for the Palestinian fighters in the Sidon area to try and intercept Amal's supply route. On November 20th, Palestinian freedom fighters destroyed a truck full of ammunition intended for Amal. Amal used this as an excuse to start a battle in the Sidon area. Using medium and light range weapons, Amal forces attacked Palestinian positions. Then a ceasefire was agreed on November 21st, but Amal did not abide by this. The next day, Amal forces opened fire on Palestinian positions, and shelled parts of Sidon with heavy artillery. This continued for three days.

The Palestinian revolution then decided not to allow a repetition of the situation prevailing in the camps of Beirut and Tyre. the organizations decided to take a qualitatively new step to defend the camps, by taking over Amal's positions in the Maghdousheh hills which are strategically located, enabling control of the coastal road linking Beirut to Sidon and Tyre. On November 24th, the Palestinian revolution took control of this area in a fierce battle. Among the Palestinian forces, there were six martyrs and 35 injured. From Amal's forces, fifty were killed and fifty taken prisoner; three of their armoured vehicles were destroyed.

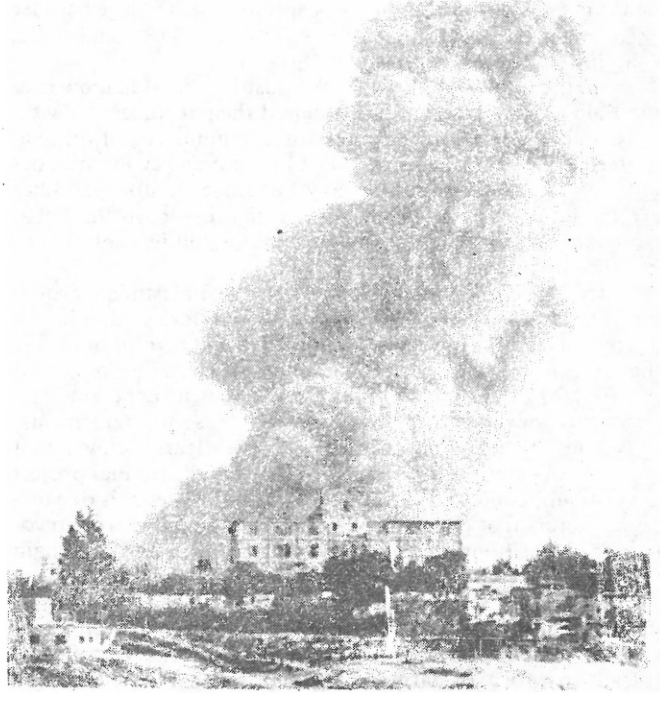
On November 25th, Amal tried to recapture the hills. Amal amassed 1,500 fighters and elicited the support of the Lebanese Army. There was a fierce battle lasting for six hours, in which the Palestinian fighters were able to contain Amal's attack. More than one hundred of Amal's fighters were killed.

The Amal forces reacted to their defeat with a barbarism reminiscent of the Israeli-engineered Sabra-Shatila massacre. They attacked Shatila camp and destroyed a building over the heads of the families living in it. In the Tyre area, they burned the Abu Al Aswad camp to the ground. Amal and the Lebanese Army again tried to capture Maghdousheh, but failed.

On November 27th, Amal tried seven times to capture Maghdousheh, but was forced to retreat, leaving behind dozens of dead. On that day, 'Israel' went to the aid of Amal, staging air raids on Palestinian positions, the fourth such attack in the space of eleven days. While Palestinian forces concentrated their fire against the Zionist planes, Amal was able to advance, but the Palestinians quickly regrouped and contained the advance. The next day, the Palestinian forces were able to recover the positions taken by Amal on the east of Maghdousheh. On November 29th, the Palestinian forces advanced one kilometer, to consolidate their control of the area. As we go to press, the fighting continues. The Palestinian fighters are determined to defend their camps and revolution. ●

Palestinian fighters scale the Maghdousheh hills

Miyeh Miyeh camp hit by Israeli air raid Nov. 27th



Diary of the Camp War

South Lebanon

Rashidiya

All efforts to implement a ceasefire agreement between Amal and the Palestinians in South Lebanon failed, as Amal consistently escalated the war. All indications point to the fact that Amal is determined to impose its schemes, spreading its unholy war to all the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. This aims to liquidate the Palestinian armed presence, in order to impose Amal's dominance over as much of Lebanon as possible. In this way, Amal strives to gain a bigger share in the government in a sectarian redivision of power in Lebanon.

Amal provoked the situation on September 5th, when 30 of its militants stormed Al Qasmeyeh camp, on the road between Tyre and Sidon. Many houses in the camp were barbarically stormed in a search for weapons. Many houses were destroyed, and dozens of young men were rounded up. Two days later, on Sept. 7th, Amal elements proceeded to Burj Al Shamali camp, near Tyre. Houses were stormed and searched. Everyone in the streets of the camp was barbarically beaten; ten men were arrested, three of them members of the local popular committee. All attempts by the popular committees in both camps, to recover the detainees, failed.

As we wrote about in «Democratic Palestine» no.19, groups from Amal installed a road block at the entrance to Rashidiya and held back a bulldozer and trucks loaded with building material for a hospital project in the camp. Later in the day, these were destroyed, on the pretext that they were being used to build military fortifications. Amal used humiliating methods to search everyone entering or leaving the camp. Each day, many were beaten and detained.

The next day, Amal brought one of their injured fighters to Jabal A'amel hopital in Al Bus camp to be operated on. Along with the patient, they brought Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners, to force them to donate blood, but the doctors refused this.

Amal's practices became more and more unbearable. A delegation of the security committee that includes representatives from Amal and the Palestine National Salvation Front, arrived in Rashidiya camp to meet with the popular committee and listen to their complaints. They heard the story of continuous detentions of Palestinians, confiscation of foodstuffs at the roadblock, harassment of shopowners, torture of prisoners, and storming and destruction of houses. Amal's representatives in the security committee promised not to harass any Palestinian, inside or outside Rashidiya, unless they are suspected of security violations. They also promised to allow foodstuffs, and medical and construction materials to enter the camp.

After the security committee left the camp the next day, Amal did not live up to their promises, but resumed their barbaric practices which greatly resemble the practices of the Zionist enemy. Many houses were stormed on Sept. 10th, in a search for weapons.

This situation went on for five days, requiring a second meeting with Amal's leadership. On Sept. 15th, a meeting was held in Damascus between leaders of the PNSF in the South, representatives from the Lebanese National Unity Front, the Political Council of Sidon, Syrian observers and Amal. Discussion focused on points of joint action between the PNSF and the Amal movement. Amal's leadership agreed on the following points:

1. giving the popular committee the role of resolving the problems of the Palestinian masses in the camps, and regulating relations with Amal in the South;
2. not to discriminate between Lebanese and Palestinians in terms of political activities, freedom of speech, work and transportation; and to facilitate transportation for Palestinians;
3. to give strict orders to Amal's security not to beat and torture Palestinian prisoners;
4. to release all political prisoners in the South immediately;
5. to allow foodstuffs, medical and building material to enter Rashidiya;
6. to give all facilities possible to the fighters in order that they can combat the Zionist enemy;
7. to deal with the expansion of armed presence in Sidon and nearby areas through a joint military plan.

The Amal cadres who signed the agreement promised to abide by it. The situation was relatively calm for two weeks despite minor violations by the Amal forces around the camp, but this was the calm before the storm.

AMAL IGNITES THE WAR

On Oct. 1st, early in the morning, Amal ignited the battle by subjecting the camp to heavy firing. The fighters charged with defending the camp fired back to force Amal to stop. Half an hour later, Amal started shelling the camp, using all types of weapons. The deteriorating situation called for an emergency meeting. The PNSF and the popular committee met for long hours. There were communications with the nationalist leaders of Sidon and the Syrian observers. A second emergency meeting took place that same day between the PNSF and the Lebanese National Unity Front,in order to coordinate steps to prevent the deteriorating situation in the Tyre area.

A third meeting was immediately called for, this time of Sidon's Political Council, which the PNSF and Amal attended. It was decided to send a high-level delegation to the area to control the situation. At the same time a fourth meeting was held with Red Cross officials in the South. The Red Cross failed to extract Amal's permission to enter the camp with medical aid and to transport the injured to a Sidon hospital.

During a short ceasefire, the popular committee met with Amal cadres outside the camp. Amal demanded that the popular committee surrender all heavy weapons before discussing a ceasefire. Amal continued to shell the camp heavily for three days, using 60mm mortars and different caliber machine guns. Amal gunfire murdered one Palestinian and injured another on Oct. 3rd. In retaliation, a group of Palestinian fighters attacked the roadblock, and destroyed a vehicle belonging to Amal.

In the evening Amal shelled the camp for four continuous hours. Early in the morning of Oct. 4th, the shelling stopped, but there was sniping for several hours, injuring one Palestinian. At 3:30 p.m. Amal opened fire on the camp again, using 107/81mm mortars, RPG's and 23 mm machine guns; three Palestinians were injured and several houses were destroyed. At 4 a.m. the next day, there was an hour of shelling ▶

which targeted most of the camp. More houses were destroyed. The shelling stopped for that day and sniping resumed. As expected, shelling started again in the evening, lasting until the early hours of the morning. The next day, Oct. 6th, Amal snipers were active. This pattern was repeated for the next two days-heavy shelling at night and sniping during the day.

Early on Oct. 7th, a joint delegation, including representatives from Amal, the PNSF and Syrian observers, headed for Tyre in an attempt to reinforce the ceasefire. The delegation met with leaders of Amal, who agreed to a complete ceasefire, in order to facilitate the implementation of the previously signed agreement. However, on the same day, Amal escalated the shelling of the camp for two hours, using all types of mortars. One Palestinian was martyred, and two others were injured.

ARRESTS AND BANISHMENT

On the same day, Amal gangs launched a campaign of arrests in the Tyre area. Hundreds of Palestinian families were warned to leave the camps within 48 hours. These families have lived in the villages and camps of the South for years, in many cases since 1948. Spurred by the necessity of putting a stop to this harassment, the joint committee, including representatives of the PNSF, Amal and Syrian observers, met in Tyre, to implement the Sept. 15th agreement, signed in Damascus. Tension lessened temporarily as a result of the intense political and mass activities. Reports from the camp said that since Sept. 30th, there had been 36 injured, 6 of them critically, and 4 martyrs, in addition to unidentified bodies scattered in the fields.

Amal did not wait more than 24 hours to start the shelling again, from the night of Oct. 8th until daylight. Sniping went on the whole day until the joint committee arrived and met with the popular committee and later with the PNSF. While the joint committee was in the camp, the injured were evacuated. Immediately after the committee left the camp, at 2 a.m. on Oct. 9th, Amal's fire started again, and went on until morning, when sniping started. Amal's snipers murdered one civilian and injured four others, despite the fact that the Palestinian fighters were completely committed to the ceasefire agreement. Amal's violations forced the joint committee to return to Rashidiya on the 12th, taking a decision to stay there lest the situation erupt again. A messenger carried a letter to Damascus, to inform the Syrian leadership of the situation, and ask them to exert more pressure on Amal to abide by the agreement, especially to allow foodstuffs into the camp and release the prisoners.

The next day, the joint committee and the popular committee met with Amal's leadership in Tyre. Amal's leadership demanded that all weapons in the camp be surrendered, saying that until then they would continue to besiege the camp. They claimed that the popular committee was unable to restrict the Palestinians in the camp, holding it responsible for the eruption of the situation! The popular committee answered that its function is services, and the issue of weapons is outside its jurisdiction. The popular committee demanded that Amal restrict its own people. At the end of the meeting, the Amal leadership agreed to the following points:

1. total ceasefire from both sides;
2. prohibiting the carrying of arms in public;
3. holding seminars in the camp, emphasizing brotherhood between the two sides;
4. allowing the popular committee to take charge of the camp;
5. a joint military operations room.

Amal also promised to allow students in the camp to go to school and to release the prisoners immediately. Based on the popular committee's demands, Amal agreed to allow women to go in and out of the camp to bring foodstuffs.

The next day, Oct. 14th, Amal's leadership confirmed its commitment to the ceasefire agreement, and allowed four Red Cross vehicles to enter the camp, but the prisoners were not released.

CEASEFIRE VIOLATED AGAIN

On Oct. 15th, as soon as the joint committee left the camps, Amal elements violated the agreement by setting up new sandbag barricades around the camp, allowing only six cars to leave, and confiscating foodstuffs at the roadblocks. Moreover, at the roadblocks, Amal elements beat and humiliated Palestinians, threatening their lives if they did not leave the camps. Sniping started, murdering one Palestinian. The next day, Amal built more barricades, closed all the roads, and prevented civilians from bringing fuel for their oil stoves.

On Oct. 21st, the camp woke up to the sound of shelling. Soon after, the PNSF contacted Nabih Berri to inform him of the situation in Rashidiya. Berri in turn called a meeting early the next day with the PNSF, the Lebanese nationalist forces and the Syrians. Meanwhile Amal escalated the shelling and destroyed several houses in the camp. No meetings managed to stop Amal this time. The shelling continued for two days, which led the Palestinians to launch a military attack on an Amal post in the Shawakir area of Tyre. The Palestinians were able to completely destroy the post, and cause Amal 17 casualties. One Palestinian fighter was injured. Later the same day, another military operation was launched against an Amal post in Ras Al Ein. An Amal fighter was killed, and many were injured.

Those two military operations silenced Amal for one night, but Amal reinforced their ranks and started shelling the next day, killing civilians and destroying many houses. Reports from the camp on Oct. 24th, said that thousands of Amal gangsters were being mobilized in all areas of the South in preparation for a massive attack on the camp. This was accompanied by a broad campaign of arrests. When their jails could not accommodate more prisoners, Amal used schools to detain Palestinians. Amal forced hundreds of families to leave, and toured the camp with loudspeakers agitating for «Jihad» (holy war) and «the war of revenge for Hussein» (a Shiite prophet). Reports from the camp said that the war has reached its most dangerous climax, and that the guarantees given by Amal were no more than ploys for gaining time.

A group of Palestinians loyal to Arafat mobilized a large force on Oct. 25th, and advanced to take two Amal posts without meeting any resistance. The same group took over Amal posts near Maghdoosha, a Lebanese village south of Ain Al Hilweh, after a fierce battle. The Palestinian groups took some prisoners and captured some weapons.

In retaliation, Amal barbarically shelled Rashidiya all night on Oct. 25th. The next day, Amal launched a counterattack to recover their posts, but the attempt failed, after a battle so fierce that some of Amal's shells fell on the city of Tyre. Eleven Palestinians were martyred, and thirteen injured.

As a result of a meeting between Mustafa Sa'ad, general secretary of the Nasserite Popular Organization, Dr. Nazeeh Bizree, head of the Political Council of Sidon, Lieutenant Colonel Zyad, head of the Syrian observers, members of the PNSF leadership in the South and Amal, the Palestinian fighters had to withdraw from the posts they had taken within one week. However, Amal was not satisfied. These latest attacks provided Amal with an excuse to open fire on Rashidiya again. One civilian was injured. Moreover, the ceasefire agreement gave Amal time to mobilize its forces in preparation to attack, in order to restore its posts. Amal distributed leaflets calling upon the Lebanese masses to fight on its side.

AMAL ADVANCE THWARTED

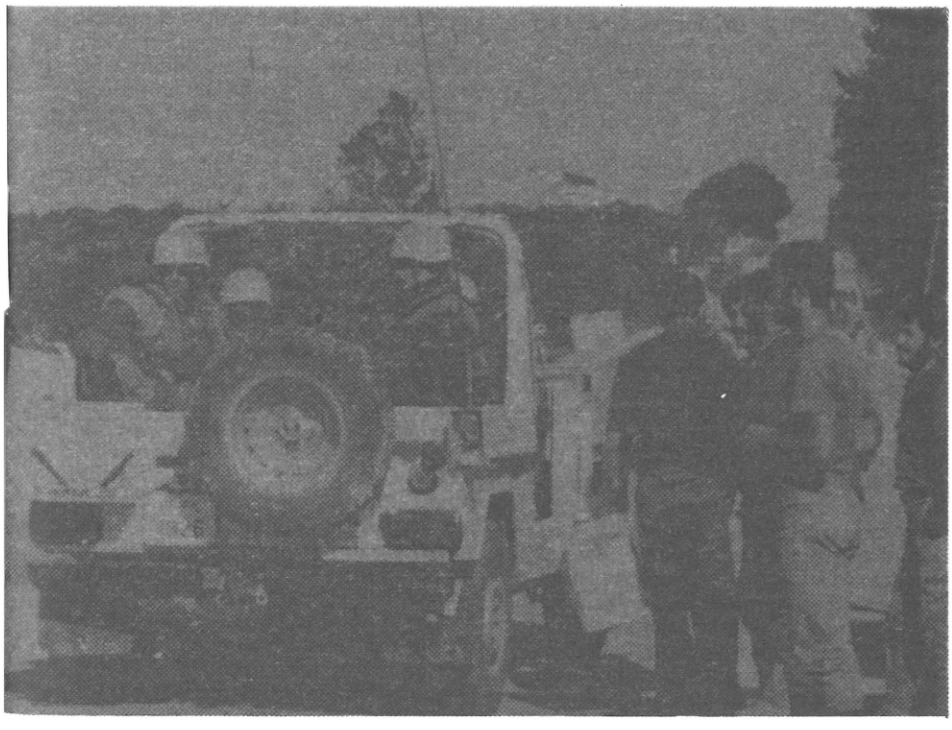
On Oct. 27th, Amal, with the help of Lebanese Army tanks, made an early morning attempt to advance on Rashidiya from the south, after long hours of shelling. They were heroically confronted by the Palestinians. Amal withdrew, leaving behind tens of dead. One Palestinian was martyred and another injured. Amal barbarically escalated the battle, from night until the morning. Once again, there was a meeting between the same forces, which issued a statement calling for a ceasefire, an end to the war of attrition on Rashidiya, and reaffirming the Palestinian demands for lifting the seige, releasing prisoners, etc. Moreover, the statement said that «all forms of internal fighting between allies should be brought to a halt in order to strengthen confrontation against imperialism, Zionism and reaction.» Amal agreed that all forces withdraw to their former posts, under the supervision of the Popular Liberation Army (of the Popular Nasserite Organization), on the condition that the PLA's task end immediately after the withdrawal process from all positions of tension is completed.

The very next day, right after the agreement was signed by all parties, the camp war continued. Amal shelled Rashidiya for hours. The buffer force was unable to take its positions because of Amal's continuous aggression, this time using Grad rockets. There were heavy casualties on both sides. On October 26 and 27th, Palestinian losses were three martyrs and six injured. On Oct. 28th, Amal advanced with bulldozers to open a passage from the southeast of the camp. The confrontation caused the Palestinians three casualties. Reports from the camp said that Lebanese Army helicopters transported ammunition from Beirut to Amal in Tyre.

Amal continued its aggression all day on Oct. 29th. At 11 p.m. an urgent meeting was called in Mustafa Sa'ad's house. The meeting was attended by Walid Jumblatt of the Progressive Socialist Party, George Hawi of the Lebanese Communist Party, Asem Kanso of the Arab Socialist Baath Party, the PNSF delegation and Amal. An agreement was reached which did not differ in essence from the many previous ones. Once again Amal promised to abide by the agreement. Yet, the next day, Amal elements kidnapped three civilians at a crossroads outside Rashidiya. On Oct. 30th, Amal unleashed a heavy barrage of shelling on the camp and attempted to advance. Clashes ensued, causing six deaths. The Palestinians sabotaged Amal's bulldozer and forced them to withdraw.

A representative of the PNSF arrived in Tyre to meet with local cadres of Amal to discuss the situation, only to discover that they were greatly agitated; they were demanding: first, the surrender of all weapons from the camp; and second, postponing the arrival of the joint coordination committee to Tyre, as had been agreed in the last meeting, on the pretext that they needed time to bury their dead. It was, however, obvious that they needed more time to prepare for a new battle. Amal then ignited the war in Burj Al Barajneh camp in Beirut to delay the joint committee's arrival in Tyre, to supervise implementation of the last agreement. As expected, shelling broke out in Rashidiyeh once again on November 1st, and went on for several days, causing the Palestinians eight martyrs and six injured.

Amal roadblock at the entrance to Rashidiya



IMPLICATIONS OF THE WAR

As we go to press, the camp war remains unresolved. Yet whatever the outcome, the reasons for its eruption and continuation are already clear. Amal is determined to improve its share in the Lebanese cake. Due to the ideology and class nature of its leadership, Amal fails to see that the solution for the Shiite masses, historically the poorest of Lebanon's poor, is an end to sectarianism. Instead, Amal seeks to bolster its position within a slightly readjusted sectarian system, by carving out a Shiite canton in South Lebanon. To this end, it is working to eliminate any elements that might disturb the spread of its dominance, whether the Palestinian revolution, the Lebanese nationalist forces or even Hezballah.

Amal's efforts to disarm the Palestinians coincide with the Israelis' military campaign against all nationalists in the South. Amal's attack on Rashidiyeh is indirectly helping the Israelis to achieve their goal of liquidating the Palestinian revolution in Lebanon. Whether consciously or not, Amal is serving as a security force, to protect the Israeli border. For some factions of Amal, this is a deliberate policy aimed at gaining Zionist approval for Amal's dominance in the South.

The camp war in the South has regional implications as well. For its part, the right-wing PLO leadership is attempting to exploit the situation by making a show of military prowess to cover up the setbacks it has suffered in other fields. Ultimately, the quagmire of the camp wars will be used by the right wing to show that armed struggle is no longer viable for the Palestinians. Amal is using the right wing's activities and statements as an excuse for escalating the war, though the real reasons are those we have previously named. Ironically, while claiming to oppose Arafat's line, Amal is actually giving the right-wing excuses for continuing its deviating course. In the end, the PLO's wrong line and Amal attacks on the Palestinian camps, both play into the regional game where imperialism, Zionism and several Arab regimes have already agreed on the elimination of the PLO and the Palestinian role altogether.

However, the camp wars have also shown that the Palestinians are a force to be reckoned with. Far from falling prey to the regional game, Palestinian revolutionaries have closed ranks and heroically defended the camps and their right to bear arms. In the battle with Amal so far, the Palestinians have stayed on the defensive, fending off Amal's attacks. However, no one should expect the Palestinian revolution to remain with arms folded in the face of all these inhuman attacks on our masses and revolution. ●

Palestinian Camps in Beirut

In mid-October, a correspondent for *Democratic Palestine* visited the Palestinian refugee camps in the Beirut area. Here he spoke with a broad range of political activists, professionals, freedom fighters and ordinary residents of Shatila and Burj Al Barajneh camps. The following is excerpts from some of these interviews. It is noteworthy that since his visit, both these camps have been subject to renewed attacks by Amal's forces.

Shatila Still Besieged

Comrade Abu Samer, administrative officer of the PFLP in Shatila, is married and has eight children. He is from Dir Al Qassi in northern Palestine. He explained the situation in the camp: «We still live in a state of semi-siege. We have been asking our Syrian brothers to find a solution for that. Our children are afraid to go to school. Everybody is searched... We did not expect these wars with Amal. We fought together and considered ourselves allies before the first camp war in May 1985. Amal started harassing our people. Then suddenly, they started the war. We used the loudspeakers of the mosque to ask them to stop, but Amal was fulfilling a Zionist-imperialist plan. This first war lasted until the Damascus agreement was concluded (in June 1985).»

«There was calm for two months. Then Amal started throwing grenades at the camp intermittently, and harassment of our people outside the camp increased. There was a battle of six hours, and we defeated Amal and controlled their positions. Then we withdrew to our own positions on the orders of our political leadership. That was in October 1985. Then, in December 1985, there was the war of four days. In February 1986, there was the war of 20 days. Then there was the 45 day war in June 1986.»

FRONTLINE DEFENSE

We interviewed the fighters in a PFLP military position that is on the frontline in the defense of Shatila camp. Comrade Abu Athab explained, «I have been involved in all the battles to defend Shatila since 1985. In 1985, I fought from outside the camp, because I could not enter. After that, I moved to the camp. The camp wars are a direct service to 'Israel', because they aim to rob our people of their arms. Regardless of the pressure on us, we will never give up our weapons.»

Comparing the military situation now with the first battle with Amal in 1985, Comrade Abu Athab said, «Before and just after the first battle, our situation was desperate, because we were not prepared to fight Amal. We did not have enough arms or ammunition. There were not enough military cadres to lead the defense. Now the situation is much better. We even have a medical staff. In the first battle, the fighting was all in the camp itself, but in the following battles, we advanced to a certain extent, so the fighting would not take place in the camp.»

Comrade Samir Harb, leader of the position, said, « I am proud to say I am a fighter with the PFLP, because it is a revolutionary organization that honors the Palestinian cause and armed struggle... We realize that Amal is carrying out a plan to take away the arms of the Palestinian masses. The Amal leadership is divided into two main factions. One is mislead by the idea of building a sectarian, purely Shiite canton. The other is directly tied to Zionism and its state. The second faction is more influential in the South. The main body of Amal is nationalist, but is mislead by these two factions...»

Comrade Samir explained the main lessons gained in these battles as follows: «The first lesson was fighting in hand-to-hand combat. At times, the only distance between us and Amal was a brick wall. I learned that I can fight anyone face-to-face to defend our revolution. The other lesson concerned developing special relations with the masses during a state of siege. Our steadfastness cannot be separated from the steadfastness of our masses. Our masses played a vital role in supporting the fighters. The women used pillow cases to transport sand for defense lines, and they helped transport food, water and ammunition.»

Comrade Samir explained how they had controlled their position in the first place: «Before the 20 days battle (February 1986), we were not here. Then there was a political decision that this area is part of the camp's defense. This area consists of three passageways through which the Amal gangs were able to direct fire at the center of the camp. We were able to defeat Amal here and take control of the area in order to protect our people.»

Comrade Abu Athab was injured in the fighting with Amal, and we asked if he bore hard feelings against the Shiites. He replied, «For forty years, we have lived alongside Lebanese Shiites with no problems. We intermarried. We consider them brothers. For this reason, I have a strong hatred of those elements who serve 'Israel' by trying to create antagonism between the Palestinians and Lebanon's Shiites.»

Concerning future battles, he said, «We are going to adopt much more severe tactics if Amal strikes again, regardless of their excuse. We are not going to limit ourselves to responding. We will implement the agreement by force and we have the power to do it. We will not allow any force to rob us of our arms.»

Comrade Abu Athab described the relations between the fighters and the masses: «Our masses are our source of moral support during the battle. They become fighters too by participating in the militias. We in the resistance were ready for battle and had food stocks for three meals a day, while the masses faced shortages. So we helped out. By the end of the battle, we ate only two, sometimes one meal a day. That had no effect on our steadfastness. We are used to this because we have had the experience of previous occasions. In conclusion, he stressed, «I would like to salute all progressive fighters around the world who struggle against imperialism. I call on the Palestinian leaders to reunite the PLO on a nationalist basis, as has been proposed by the PFLP. I hope that our comrades abroad will increase their support for us by all means possible.

POPULAR COMMITTEE

Mr. Darwish is a member of the popular committee of Shatila camp. He is from Akbara near Safad in northern Palestine, and has nine children. He gave an idea of the popular committee's aims and activities: «The popular committee was established in 1973, in accordance with a PLO decision... Since the establishment, our aim has been the same, i.e., serving the masses and acting as the executive and political apparatus in the daily life of the camp. The popular committee is divided into different committees for external relations, internal relations, social affairs, finances, information, public services and projects. Every committee has its duties. The project committee is responsible for accomplishing specific projects, such as water and electricity. Recently, two wells were dug in the camp, and the water is good. Electric lines were set up, and the sewage system was repaired. We brought two electricity generators. We also manage several bakeries and cooperatives.»

«The public service committee is responsible for garbage collection and clearing away the rubble after wars. The social committee is responsible for

social affairs in the camp and for distributing materials we receive as donations. The information committee is preparing to start reissuing the camp bulletin that was published before 1982. During the recent clashes with Amal, we published a newsletter to keep our people informed about the situation. This committee is also responsible for public meetings and rallies... The popular committee supports the political line of the Palestine National Salvation Front, and there is full cooperation. The other organizations adhere to the committee's decisions.»

Mr. Darwish described life in Shatila on the background of events since 1982: «Life is very hard for our people. They suffer from continuous aggression. Our houses were destroyed; every home has been affected. There is a housing problem in the camp. Living conditions outside the camp also affect us - the economic situation in Lebanon and the security problems. Most Palestinians are afraid to go out of the camp. Unemployment is extremely high.»

«One week after the revolution evacuated, the fascist Phalangists, directed and supported by the Zionist forces -with indirect support from US imperialism - carried out the massacre. More than 5,000 people were affected. The main cause of the massacre was that people were not armed. We will never forget that painful lesson. We will never give up our arms, even to our closest ally.»

«After the massacre, there was the repression of the reactionary Lebanese regime. Every house was searched and every youth detained. That was a period of humiliation. It made us determined in our work for the return of the revolution. We worked with our allies of the Lebanese national movement until the February 6th uprising. We played a big role in liberating West Beirut from the fascists... This is one of the reasons we were surprised by Amal's attack on the camp... We had fought together against the fascists and Zionists in Beirut and the South...»

Mr. Darwish explained current problems, such as the harassment people face from Amal when going in and out of the camp: «There is a lot of harassment. There is only one entrance to Shatila open now, though the Damascus agreement (which ended the 1985 camp war) states that all entrances should be reopened. There is almost a state of siege around the camp, even for bringing in food or building materials to repair damaged houses... There were four schools in Shatila, running two shifts each. Now there is only one school with one shift. There used to be 8,000 students. Now there are 500. The schools were destroyed. We rebuilt the one functioning school, but the students in the last year lost one year of instruction.»

Mr. Darwish concluded by saying: «We hope that our friends in the world will increase their understanding of our cause. We are freedom fighters for the liberation of Palestine, not bloodthirsty criminals. We hope they will pressure their governments and institutions to support our people in their struggle.»

THE HEALTH SITUATION

Dr. Mohammed Al Khatib is assistant director of Shatila hospital, and member of the camp's popular committee. He is from Khalsa in the North of Palestine, and is married with two children. He explained the living conditions now in Shatila: «The living conditions in the camp cannot be separated from those experienced by the ordinary Lebanese citizens. There is unbearable inflation due to the political conflict, and the military and social situation in Lebanon. This inflation is affecting all. The economic crisis endured by the Lebanese citizen is also endured by the Palestinians. Within a few years, the price of the dollar rose drastically. This affects the price of food and all daily life essentials. Inflation hits the poor and middle classes hardest, and the vast majority of the camp residents are poor...»

We asked Dr. Khatib's opinion of the Palestinian resistance's comeback in the camps and how he evaluates the period after May 1985,as compared to the foregoing periods.He replied as follows: «For the sake of argument, I don't say the comeback of the resistance: I say reorganization of the resistance's situation. In 1985, there was not a return of the resistance. There was a group of youngsters of Shatila and Burj Al Barajneh, who defended the camps; they are the sons of the camp residents. The people of the camps had felt the dangers of the Israelis and of the Lebanese fascist authority. The people have a national cause and must therefore carry weapons to defend their rights. The resistance's comeback is a reorganization of the Palestinians' situation inside the camps. I don't see great numbers of fighters or leaders from outside the camps. The vast majority are camp residents. The fighters are from the camp, those who were in the militias or had been trained in the use of weapons.»

«The resistance is not the same as before 1982... With the Palestine National Salvation Front, there is a way of thinking and dealing with people that differs from what it was before 1982. We know how the situation was before 1982. Now there are no offices outside the camps, only inside. With the new trend, the situation is better than it was, naturally with some reservations, such as that we are still living in a camp that is not suitable for living, especially healthwise. The sewage problems are the same as before. With the winter rains, there are still overflows and large pools of standing water. Much effort should be devoted to these problems by the resistance leadership.»

Dr. Khatib spoke of the health situation and services in Shatila: «Now in the camp, there is a field hospital, along with daily clinics, and we have eight surgeons and six general health doctors. We accept all cases from the camp and outside. It is worth noting that Lebanese people have started coming to this hospital in big numbers, from outside the camp. This hospital treats people and distributes medicine free of charge. People come to the hospital for free treatment, because of the high price of medicine and treatment outside the camp, and because of the high professional standard of the doctors here.»

«As for the health situation, the camp is located in a bad area - I call it uninhabitable, so we have a number of diseases which spread fast, like diarrhea and vomiting in children. Such cases are common. It seems to be the result of impure water and the garbage that piles up in the streets. There are also diseases such as liver and heart disease, which are very common and seem to be the result of the bad health conditions in the camp.»

«For children, there is a big problem. First, children really need great care from the parents, which means the parents should be educated. Because of the low level of education of our people, some are unable to perform parental duties in a good way. As preventive medicine, we give vaccinations free of charge, but families are forced to buy those vaccines which we do not have in supply. Whooping cough vaccine is not available at our hospital, and it costs 800 Lebanese pounds which is very expensive. We distribute milk to children, which is available through the popular committee, UNICEF and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS). We distribute it by doctor's prescription to poor people.»

«Medicine is necessary for a child; therefore, UNRWA's medical service has to provide these vaccinations. UNRWA, with all its service branches, does not give what is needed locally, whether in terms of curative or preventive medicine. Of course, if UNRWA is not providing, then the PRCS has to provide these vaccinations and services, because it is officially responsible for meeting our people's medical needs.»

Dr. Khatib assessed the process of repairing the damages that the camp has suffered, saying, «Of course, there are now repairs going on for some groups of houses whose occupants can't live outside the camp, especially with winter closing in. Work is going on, but very slowly. The vast majority of houses are damaged. On the outskirts of the camp, you could see houses that are unfit for habitation, especially with winter approaching. The other thing is that it appears that a high-level decision is required, involving the resistance leadership and Amal. It seems that the decision to rebuild is stalled until such a decision is declared.»

Life in Burj Al Barajneh

DEFENDING THE CAMP

We interviewed the fighters in a PFLP military base defending Burj Al Barajneh camp. Comrade Abu Jilda began: «We are in this position to defend our people and camp. We would prefer to be in the South facing 'Israel', but Amal forces us to fight here. We have been in this position for two years. Amal continues its harassment. We are expecting war any day, and we are ready.»

Comrade Adnan, deputy leader of the PFLP in Burj Al Barajneh, related the background of the wars with Amal: «The battles with Amal were forced on us. It was part of the conspiracy to negate the Palestinian role in Lebanon and enforce sectarian solutions. As Amal rose to be the dominant Shiite force, it viewed all Palestinian and non-sectarian Lebanese forces and parties as obstacles, because of the history and strength of the democratic, progressive forces within the Shiite community. Amal is not a homogeneous organization. It needs to open a war with an 'outside force' to keep itself from shattering, and to create support among the Shiites in the face of the growing influence of Hezballah. After the fascist forces were thrown out of Beirut, Amal did not continue the fight against 'Israel' because of the presence of a pro-Israeli trend within it. Instead, it made war on the Palestinians on the pretext of Arafat's activities, and not wanting to return to the situation before 1982.»

«During the last battle (June 1986), we were fighting only defensively, but when we saw that the camp was being shelled deep inside, we decided to take the battle out of the camp. We divided the frontline into three sections, 2 defensive and one supportive. Our plan was that as soon as we face aggression, we will expand to control the square just beyond the camp. We were able to accomplish this, as you can see for yourself. We were able to defeat Amal's forces, though they were much greater in number.»

Comrade Abu Nidal Al Ashqar, military responsible for the PFLP's forces in Burj Al Barajneh, assessed the results of the last battle: «Before the last battle, certain elements in Amal, especially from their security forces, began instigating trouble. Together with hostile propaganda, this caused tension to rise. Later on, Amal started heavy bombardment of the camp. We were prepared and our military ability was good. We could carry out any political decision that was made, even to advance. We decided to expand the area we control only to the extent needed to save the camp from aggression. That's why we took the square... We observed the ceasefires with good will, hoping each would be the last, but the other side has used the ceasefires as a tactic for inflicting heavy losses among our people by suddenly opening fire. We cannot have the same practice, because we do not believe in such tactics.»

Concerning expectations about future battles, Comrade Abu Nidal said, «Definitely, Amal will not be able to enter the camp. The balance of forces is changing to our favor. Amal is getting weaker internally and the Lebanese national movement is reconsidering its alliance with Amal.»

LIFE IN THE CAMP

Abu Iskander is a member of the Burj Al Barajneh popular committee. He is fifty years old, comes from Kwaikat near Acca in Palestine, and has five children. He described living conditions in the camp:«We are living a tragedy. We have lived in a state of siege since 1985. The camp needs to be cleared of the debris from the war, but we could not accomplish that yet. People cannot move in and out of the camp. There is no work. People depend on the help of the Palestinian organizations. UNRWA gives a little help, and some have family members in the Gulf (who send them money). Unemployment here is 100%.»

Abu Iskander discussed the effects of Amal's attacks on the camp. One thing he mentioned is that «this caused our people to increase their ties with the revolution and solidify the resistance. We did not want Amal to be our enemy; we were allies before,» he added. Amal's attacks have also led to the problem of emigration. Abu Iskander said, «There are many people who emigrate for financial and social reasons, but the most important reason is the security situation. More than 200 men left recently. If the security situation was good, no more than 20 would have left.»

Mr. Taysir is a respected person in Burj Al Barajneh camp, and responsible for rebuilding Haifa hospital there. He has six sons. Five of them have been freedom fighters, carrying arms, since the revolution started in Lebanon. One of them was martyred. His girls attend university, and work in the students' and women's unions. He evaluated the work of the popular committee in Burj Al Barajneh as follows: «After 1982, the popular committee faced a very difficult situation because of the Zionist-Phalangist aggression. Though it provided some services, it did not develop. Then after the return of the revolution, the situation improved.» About efforts to rebuild the houses that have been destroyed in the camp war, he noted, «There was some help from the PLO and the Palestine National Salvation Front, but there was no jointly organized work. Each force took care of its own people. Many houses were repaired, but Amal does not allow rebuilding unless we rebuild Amal's areas as well, and that is impractical».

Through discussion, it became obvious how the security situation is affecting all aspects of life in Burj Al Barajneh, for as Mr. Taysir explained, «It is very difficult to leave the camp, to go to Beirut for example. No one can leave to obtain ID papers or a passport, or to go to the dentist. (We are working to establish a dental clinic here.) For this reason,the phenomenon of brokers sprang up. Camp residents pay others a lot of money to do errands for them, because they are afraid to leave the camp themselves. Also because of the bad security situation, many young men travel abroad in order to go to university, but of course, not every family can afford to send their children to a university outside Lebanon.

UNRWA's policy also affects the education situation, as Mr. Taysir explained: «After 1982, the UNRWA schools were affected because UNRWA's policies are closely related to those of imperialism, 'Israel' and the Arab reactionary countries. UNRWA diminished educational services. After 1985, schools were closed for long periods. As of now, they have been closed all year. This has a negative effect on our youth. In my opinion, this is an attempt by US imperialism and UNRWA to keep our people ignorant.»

«IF WE ABANDON OUR ARMS, WE ABANDON OUR LIVES»

Mr. Taysir also discussed various issues related to the political situation and the recurring camp wars. He evaluated the role of the Palestinian organizations and the Lebanese national movement, in defending the camps, as follows: «During the 1985 camp war, the Lebanese national movement did not even issue a statement to support us... In 1986, however, most Lebanese nationalist organizations were supporting us on the media level. However, in practice, nothing was done, except for providing some food, although we all fought alongside the Lebanese national movement in the February revolt in 1984 and in the mountains (against the fascists). We don't ask them to fight Amal, but we need their political support. All Palestinian and Lebanese nationalists, including Amal, should unite to confront Zionist aggression against South Lebanon and Palestine. The Palestine National Salvation Front fought fiercely in defense of the camp. Fatah also did. Many were martyred on both sides. It was a great expression of national unity in the field. Though the right-wing PLO leadership has deviated, this did not negatively influence our masses in the camp. Everybody fought together to protect the camp.»

Mr. Taysir explained the purpose of weapons in the camp, saying, «The people say that if we abandon our arms, we abandon our lives, our honor and our cause. As long as Palestine is not liberated, we have no right to

abandon one piece of our arms. We are carrying arms in the camps, not to fight Amal or the Lebanese people, but to protect ourselves against hostile forces, to prevent another Sabra-Shatila massacre. We will keep on carrying arms even after the Lebanese resolve the Lebanese conflict, though I don't see any solution unless the Palestinian problem is also solved. I don't separate the two issues; the two causes are linked. The talk about a foreseeable agreement between the Lebanese factions and the establishment of a strong central government is just that - talk... As for the contention that the Palestinians want to settle in Lebanon or anywhere besides Palestine, this is not true. If that were true, why do we have hundreds and thousands of martyrs? Why do we teach our children to teach their children to continue carrying arms until Palestine is liberated?... Let everybody know that we don't accept settling in any land other than Palestine.»

Mr. Taysir was very pessimistic about the chances that the PLO leadership's policy will obtain any of the Palestinians' rights.He explained why: «Since the issue of a 'peaceful' settlement was declared, we've gained nothing but misery for our people. When the settlement issue was first raised, the PFLP rejected this, but our people were divided on the subject. When the issue of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza was raised, our masses asked: Then why are we also fighting in the part of Palestine occupied in 1948, where a good number of youth are joining the revolution? They said that if there is going to be this state, why are we killing our youngsters? The settlement which Sadat entered (Camp David) was based on the balance of forces at that time which, though unfavorable to us, was better than it is now. The PLO couldn't get anything then, so how can it get anything now, after the PLO leadership has switched its direction? This is not in favor of the Palestinians or the PLO's program.»

«King Hussein has gained a lot from the Amman accord and is now dividing functions with 'Israel'; PLO was dealt out of the game... As for Mubarak, he said he would not return his ambassador to 'Israel' unless 'Israel' withdraws from South Lebanon and recognizes the PLO. Now we can see that he has sent his ambassador back, before 'Israel' withdrew or recognized the PLO, which it will never do, even if the PLO leadership recognizes resolutions 242 and 338. On the contrary, the PLO leadership hasn't and couldn't get anything. Its policies have affected our people negatively, dividing them and weakening the PLO militarily and politically, on the Arab and international level. If the PLO were stronger and united, we wouldn't have to fight these camp wars, instead of fighting to liberate Palestine.»

Mr. Taysir warned against any internal fighting in the camps: «Neither 'Israel' nor reactionary or sectarian forces managed to affect our unity. The PNSF must deal with this matter, regardless of what the rightist leadership has done, because Fatah's base in Lebanon, or elsewhere, is patriotic, though misguided...» He concluded with a few words to our readers outside the Arab world: «I thank all those who support our just cause. I thank all the organizations that have supported our clinics or hospitals, or have helped us on the political level. We ask support groups to explain our cause to the largest sector of their people...»

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

Abu Lu'ai is a resident of Bourj Al Barajneh and a teacher in Beirut. He is originally from Kwaikat, a town in the Acca district of Palestine. He spoke of the living conditions in Bourj Al Barajneh now: «In general, the living conditions have changed in so many ways after the camp war of 1985. Before, all the people had something outside the camp. Students attended school outside the camp. Workers had jobs in Beirut and its outskirts. After 1985, everything changed. Students could no longer leave the camp to go to school, and workers could not go to their jobs. There was discrimination between Lebanese and Palestinian workers. Many Palestinians were laid off and replaced by Lebanese. The social and economic conditions were worse than ever. Looking for a source of income became the most urgent task for everybody.»

«Most people took full-time work with the different resistance organizations for two reasons: first, because it is a source of income, and second, to enable the defense of their lives and the camps. However, this in itself also created certain problems. The main problem was that certain organizations recruited indiscriminately. Many people took full-time work in the resistance because of their need for money, not because of their convictions. A lot of the resistance's money is used for economic aid to people. Instead, I believe this money should be utilized to build projects to absorb the unemployed and stop the increasing immigration of our young people.»

«The Palestine National Salvation Front is the representative of our people in the camp. Unfortunately, there are many faults in its work. There are not enough field visits by the responsibles. Maybe this is due to the political situation which is changing daily, but I believe that it is necessary to visit the ordinary people of the camp and discuss their living situation in order to solve some of their problems... The most positive role of the resistance was in the period after 1982, prior to 1985. Then there was correct revolutionary work; underground work is the most beneficial...»

«Of course, when there is danger, everyone will carry a gun and turn out to defend the camp, because the danger threatens the whole camp, not only certain houses or certain people. But the point is how to defend the camps? In 1969 (when the Lebanese army attacked the resistance and camps), all the fighters concealed their faces with their kofiyehs, because they knew there were informers among them. But now, fighters show off because everyone who carries a gun is labeled a hero. This is one of the reasons the students and workers are unable to leave the camp. Many of the fighters are politically immature, and there is too much talk about who is a fighter and who is not. This talk gets back to Amal. We have fighters who have not been able to leave the camp since 1985, because Amal detains and kills anyone who has carried a gun... What I mean to say is that recruitment should be done more carefully.»

Abu Lu'ai was adamant about the need for educational facilities. He said, «We have a big problem which is the lack of schools. The students cannot leave the camp to attend school because of Amal. Gradually, education will be eliminated if nothing is done. The youth of the camp have nothing to do when they cannot attend school. This leads many of them to hang around and take drugs or alcohol. In addition, many just stopped going to school and took full-time work with some organization, as a result of the economic situation. The organizations' political education for their members is not enough. They should try to open classes, so the students could resume their education.»

«UNRWA's services have diminished. They provide very few books or school supplies now. The main task of the Salvation Front now, in my opinion, should be following up with UNRWA the issue of reopening Sibleen vocational institute. It has been closed since 1982. Many young people attended this institute after finishing high school, because of the high costs of universities. Now our youth cannot leave the camp to finish their education at all, so it would be very important to reopen this institute. UNRWA does not provide food for the people of the camp on the pretext that they are out of money, but they are paying salaries of over 20,000 Lebanese pounds each to their foreign staff members.»

«At this stage, high school fees are over 7,000 Lebanese pounds per semester. Most families cannot send their children to high school. Therefore, I suggest that the Salvation Front work to open a high school in the camp, so that the 200 students who have finished grammer school can at least finish high school. The Salvation Front has opened a school in Sidon. We heard that it was the greatest service to the people there. Two other schools were opened in Tripoli and Tyre. We need such a project here, or at least ▶

night classes to teach the essential subjects.»

Abu Lu'ai also stressed the importance of political education: «I would like to reaffirm the importance of consistent political education. Our people hear about the differences between the organizations, but they don't always understand all the reasons. There should be constant clarification about the difference between the nationalist political line and the capitulationist line, in order to mobilize the people... We have to keep the people aware of the enemy's schemes, in order to stop them from emigrating. Before 1985, we never heard that our people wanted to emigrate. Now, because of the difficult economic and security situation, people want to leave. Our leadership has to move fast on all levels - to provide the conditions for steadfastness and to raise the people's political awareness.» ●

Zionist Plane Downed

Palestinian fighters survey the downed Israeli warplane.

When the Zionists occupied Palestine in 1948, some journalists asked Ben Gurion: «What about the Palestinian people?» He answered: «The old will die... and the young will forget.»

No doubt he was mistaken. The young have not forgotten. They kept on fighting and reminded their children not to forget. For years, Israeli fighter planes have been terrorizing the very Palestinians whom they drove from their home in 1948, but our people in exile don't forget; nor do they give up their struggle.

On October 16th, the Israeli air force staged its 13th bombing raid on Lebanon this year. Israeli bombers attacked the Palestinian refugee camps Ain Al Hilweh and Miyeh Miyeh, near Sidon, in South Lebanon. Facing this attack, Palestinian revolutionaries shot down an Israeli F-4A plane; the plane's navigator was captured. This was a reminder that the Palestinians do not forget. They will continue to fight for return to their homeland.

CONVERTING THE SCRAPS OF AGGRESSION

The children of Ain Al Hilweh have transformed the remnants of the Israeli F-4A fighter plane into a source of income. Within a few days, children began flocking to the site where the plane had been shot down, about five kilometers from Ain al Hilweh, near Miyeh Miyeh camp. Ranging from fifteen to nineteen years of age, they did not bother with the hardships of the roads which blocked their path to the F-4A remnants. Nor did they care about the Israeli MK surveillance plane which kept flying over the area. They rushed to the site and started gathering what they could carry of the remnants. They carried these back to the camps and nearby villages, and sold them to «buy books and school items, so we can obtain an education which is the most important weapon in life,» as one of these children said.

The plane's metal was aluminum which scrap metal dealers eagerly buy. Thus, Palestinian children found an unexpected source of income in this American-made Israeli tool of destruction, which had been a frightening ghost of death over their heads only a few days before. Hassan, a resident of Ain Al Hilweh, told reporters that he had paid part of his four children's school fees from this revenue. A child, putting his load on the scale to be weighed at the metal dealer's, said, «If only another plane would be shot down, so we could buy more books and school items, and winter clothes.» ●

Selling the scraps

The Amman Accord Must Be Officially Cancelled

JOINT POLITICAL COMMUNIQUE: THE POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE (PFLP) AND THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNIST PARTY(PCP)

High-level delegations from the PFLP and the PCP met late in October to discuss the latest and most prominent developments on the Palestinian and Arab levels. On the Palestinian level, both parties noted the escalation of the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary conspiracies against the Palestinian national cause and the PLO. They also noted the increasing interest of Palestinian nationalists in restoring the PLO's unity in order to confront all conspiracies threatening the future of the Palestinian national struggle.

The parties discussed at length the dangers of the Jordanian-Israeli coordination in the division of functions plan for the occupied territories. The Jordanian 'development' plan, the reopening of branches of the Jordanian banks in the occupied West Bank, and the appointment of pro-Jordanian mayors, are all part of the US-supported, Israeli-Jordanian scheme, aiming at diminishing the PLO's influence and creating a new leadership that cooperates with 'Israel'. This plan also aims at normalizing Israeli-Jordanian relations in order to implement a form of self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to be jointly administered by 'Israel' and Jordan. This would lead to depriving our people of their national rights to return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state. The parties noted that the process of implementing the division of functions plan is going forward, step by step, while the Zionist authorities escalate their oppressive campaigns against our masses in occupied Palestine. Meanwhile, splits continue in the Palestinian national ranks, and official Arab action is lacking.

The PCP and PFLP express their great pride in the steadfastness of our masses in Palestine. Their escalation of mass, military and political resistance against the Zionist authorities and repressive measures, confirms that the division of functions plan is the most dangerous threat at present.

The PCP and PFLP call for broad national unity in occupied Palestine to confront this plan, based on assembling the national forces, factions, personalities and committees that oppose the Zionist occupation and its practices, and the Israeli-Jordanian schemes, and that adhere to the national goals of our people, and the PLO as their sole, legitimate representative. The danger of the conspiracy requires all Palestinians, without exception, to unite and surmount all obstacles to united confrontation of the Israeli-Jordanian schemes. It also necessitates serious work to unite the mass organizations on a democratic basis. Both parties see that cancellation of the Amman accord and regaining the PLO's unity will contribute greatly to providing the conditions for confronting the division of functions plan, especially since the Jordanian regime took advantage of the division in the PLO and the political cover given by the Amman accord, to go ahead with its plans.

The PFLP and PCP warn of the dangerous role of the Egyptian regime in the conspiracy to liquidate the Palestinian revolution. Specifically, the regime continues to pressure the right-wing PLO leadership to accept resolution 242 and completely submit to the US conditions, in preparation for restoring the PLO's relations with Jordan on the basis of the Amman accord. The Alexandria summit between Mubarak and Peres reaffirmed the reality of this regime's policies. It refuted the claims of some Palestinians that there is a 'distinction' between the Mubarak and Sadat regimes.

The PCP and PFLP confirm that the current focus of all Palestinian nationalists is to act fast to restore the PLO's unity on a national, anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist basis. Both parties feel that the objective conditions needed for unity have been created by the heightened imperialist-Zionist-reactionary aggression against the PLO, aimed at liquidating its political role, and by the exposure of the danger of betting on the US and on relations with the Jordanian regime. Providing the subjective condition is thus necessary. What is needed is for the right-wing PLO leadership to retreat from its political course which caused the split. This means an end to wagering on the US solutions, to bargaining with the aims and achievements of our masses, and to depending on the Arab reactionary regimes.

The PFLP and PCP consider that the political agreement of Prague, signed early in September, was a step, though an insufficient one, towards restoring the unity of the PLO. The two parties confirm that definite declared cancellation of the Amman accord by Fatah's Central Committee and the official PLO leadership, would help to achieve more steps towards regaining the PLO's unity. This would advance the process of national dialogue in preparation for an agreement on the complete political and organizational basis of unity. Both parties emphasized the following points:

1. Commitment to the political program of the PLO, the resolutions of the PNC, up to and including the 16th session, and the Palestinians' right to return, self-determination and an independent state.
2. Adherence to the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of our people; rejection of all formulas for delegating, mandating or sharing its representation; and confrontation of all plans for an alternative to the PLO.
3. Clear and declared cancellation of the Amman accord.
4. Boycotting political relations with the Camp David regime in Egypt.
5. Commitment to the resolution of national consensus that clearly rejects Security Council resolution 242.
6. Total rejection of all capitulationist plans such as Camp David, the Reagan plan, self-administration and the division of functions. An international conference, where the PLO is equally and independently represented, is the suitable framework for resolving the Middle East question and blocking any partial or unilateral settlement.
7. Consolidating the PLO's alliance with the Arab progressive nationalist forces and regimes, particularly Syria and the Lebanese and Jordanian nationalist forces.
8. Consolidating the PLO's relations with the forces of liberation, progress and socialism in the world, particularly the Soviet Union and the socialist community.
9. Taking the organizational principles of the Aden-Algiers agreement as a guideline; mainly, to eliminate hegemony in the leadership and political decision-making of the PLO. This would be done through turning the PLO into a real national front, led collectively by a trustworthy leadership that protects the PLO's political line and relies on democratic principles in its activities.

The PCP and PFLP confirm their determination to advance Palestinian national unity in the framework of the PLO, and to contribute to providing the necessary conditions for achieving unity on the aforementioned political and organizational basis. They will also confront the destructive efforts of the Egyptian and Jordanian regimes, and the rightist Palestinians that collaborate with them.

Discussing the situation of the Palestinian masses in Lebanon, both parties noted that the Amal movement has recently broadened the scope of its aggression on our camps, to include those in the South. The parties reaffirmed that these aggressions sabotage the joint confrontation of the Zionist occupation and its agents in South Lebanon, which does not serve Lebanon's liberation, independence or unity.

The PFLP and PCP express their great appreciation of the Lebanese nationalist forces' struggle against the Zionist occupation and its agents. They reaffirm their interest in consolidating the Palestinian-Lebanese militant alliance. They demand that the Amal movement stop its aggression against our masses, lift the siege on the camps and implement the agreements signed, in order to strengthen the joint confrontation of the Zionist occupation and its agents. ▶

Both parties salute the heroic steadfastness of our masses, and call upon all Palestinian nationalists to consolidate unity in order to protect our camps and the rights of our masses to live in dignity and participate in the struggle to restore their rights to return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state on their own soil.

Concerning developments on the Arab level, the delegates noted that US imperialism, in cooperation with 'Israel' and with the complicity of the reactionary Arab regimes, has recently escalated its aggression against the Arab national liberation movement and regimes, particularly Syria and Libya. This aggression escalated to the point of bombing civilian targets in Libya. The Ifran and Alexandria summits are one form of this imperialist-Zionist-reactionary aggression that aims at spreading Camp David and subordinating the entire Arab area to US-Israeli hegemony. The British government's decision to cut diplomatic relations with Syria is a new escalation of the imperialist-Zionist campaign to exert political and economic pressure in order to force Syria to retreat from its nationalist, anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist position.

The PFLP and PCP warned of an Israeli aggression against Syria in collaboration with US and British imperialism. Both parties expressed their support to Syria in its confrontation of the political and economic pressures and imperialist-Zionist aggression. They call on all Arab and international forces of liberation and progress to support Syria and its national, anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist trend.

At the Reykjavik summit, US imperialism confirmed its determination to adhere to its aggressive course and drive for hegemony. US imperialism will not spare any vicious adventures on the Middle East, in cooperation with its strategic ally, 'Israel'. This will require the nationalist regimes in Syria, Libya, Democratic Yemen and Algeria, to advance the level and forms of their political cooperation to a point enabling them to confront the imperialist-Zionist challenges. This will also demand of all Arab nationalist and progressive forces to consolidate unity and overcome all obstacles in order to unite the confrontation against the imperialist-Zionist aggression. Moreover, they must work on consolidating their alliance with the Soviet Union and the forces of liberation and progress in the world.

The PCP and PFLP strongly condemn the US's course of generating international tension and confrontation, and further escalating the arms race. Both parties express their great appreciation of the consistent peaceful policy of the Soviet Union. This policy was evident in the realistic proposals made by Gorbachev, general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, at the Reykjavik summit, aiming at nuclear disarmament and stopping the arms race. Both parties call on all factions of the Arab national liberation movement to upgrade their contribution to the international movement struggling for maintaining peace and preventing the danger of a destructive nuclear war.

At the end of the meeting, both parties expressed their great satisfaction with the developing comradely relations between the PCP and PFLP. They confirmed their determination to further develop these relations in the future. ●

PFLP Visit to Cuba

On the invitation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, a PFLP delegation, headed by General Secretary George Habash, visited Havana, the capital of freedom in the Americas, from October 23rd until November 5th.

The delegation also included Politbureau member Abu Ahmed Fuad, head of the PFLP's military department, and Central Committee member Bassam Abu Sharif. The PFLP delegation held official talks with comrade Leonel Soto, member of the Politbureau and the Central Committee's Secretariat, and Deputy Director of the Foreign Relations Committee; as well as comrades Eloy Valdez and Abascal of the Central Committee's Foreign Relations committee. The discussions dealt with imperialism's increased aggression on the international level, its escalation of the arms race and insistence on the 'Star Wars' program. Both parties saw the impact of this in increased aggression against the people who are struggling for freedom and independence around the world. They discussed the impact of this aggressive policy on the Middle East, especially in the Palestinian and Lebanese arenas, as well as the US aggression and threats against Libya and Syria.

Comrade George Habash explained the new developments in the Palestinian arena, especially the dangers of the deviating policies of the official PLO leadership. He clarified the PFLP's position on reuniting the PLO.

The delegation also met with Cuba's Foreign Minister Isedor Malmerca and State Minister for Foreign Relations Levi Farah. They met with Politbureau member Carlos Rafael Rodriquez, and discussed how the Communist Party of Cuba and the PFLP could cooperate in facing the aggression of US imperialism and Zionism.

Comrade Habash delivered a lecture to the cadres of the International Relations Committee on the Middle East question in general and the situation of the Palestinians and the PLO in particular. While in Havana, Comrade Habash met with representatives of other national liberation movements.

HABASH MEETS FIDEL

The climax of the visit was on November 4th, when Comrade Habash had a lengthy meeting with Comrade Fidel Castro Ruz, Cuba's great revolutionary leader. The meeting covered the Palestinian situation in detail, and the way to reunite the PLO. The two leaders also discussed the situation on the Arab level, especially Lebanon and the Gulf war. They discussed the international situation, focusing on ways to face US imperialist and Zionist aggression. Comrade Fidel stressed Cuba's ongoing support for the Palestinian people's struggle.

Comrade Habash expressed appreciation of Cuba's internationalist role and its support to the Palestinian revolution in general and to the PFLP. He expressed the Palestinian people's solidarity with Cuba and its leadership in the face of US imperialist aggression.

IMPRESSIONS OF CUBA

Democratic Palestine interviewed Comrade Abu Ahmed Fuad on the delegation's return from Cuba. He conveyed his impressions of the visit: «Our delegation received a warm welcome. The Cuban comrades have a distinct feeling of internationalism and deep respect for the struggling contingents of the Palestinian resistance. They expressed unconditional support for the progressive political line of the organizations that are seriously opposing imperialism and Zionism. In the discussions and visits to different party institutions, we felt the deep concern of the Cubans for what is happening in our area, particularly in occupied Palestine. We were surprised at the degree to which they follow the details of our struggle.»

«The meetings with the Politbureau and Central Committee members showed the Cuban comrades' concern about reuniting the PLO on an anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist and anti-reactionary basis. The Cuban comrades expressed support for the correct line of the PFLP in terms of policy, tactics and ways of confronting the imperialist plans... From the first day, any visitor to Cuba will feel the spirit of internationalism among the heroic Cuban people. They are ready to sacrifice to help the oppressed people all over the world.» ●

PFLP Central Committee Statement

In *Democratic Palestine* no. 19, we covered the press conference after the PFLP Central Committee's session. Below we print the text of the statement issued by the Central Committee at the conclusion of the same session.

SEPTEMBER 1986

To our masses in the occupied territories,
To our masses everywhere,
To all the fighters of the Palestinian revolution,
To all patriots,

The Central Committee of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine held an important session, Sept. 27-9th, 1986, specifically to discuss the important and dangerous political developments involving the Arab region in general and the Palestinian arena in particular. The Central Committee's discussions were based on the Politbureau's report which covered these developments, their interaction, and the PFLP's stand on them, from the time of its last session. The Central Committee endorsed all the recommendations and stands stated in the Politbureau's report.

In its discussions, the Central Committee focused on Palestinian national unity as the main and basic subject among all others. The Central Committee considers that reestablishing the PLO's unity is the central task at this stage, to which the PFLP's leadership, cadres and rank and file should devote all possible efforts. The Central Committee believes that achieving reunification is the main task for enabling the Palestinian revolution and people to effectively confront the US- Zionist-reactionary schemes which aim at cancelling the PLO and finding submissive substitutes ready to participate fully in the process of liquidating the Palestinian national cause on the Zionist enemy's conditions.

With a high sense of responsibility, the Central Committee discussed the basis for reestablishing the PLO's unity, taking into consideration the bitter Palestinian experience of the past four years, i.e., the dismantling, dispersion and division of the Palestinian ranks. The Central Committee discussed in depth the causes of this state of division and the roots of the PLO's present crisis.

The Central Committee endeavors to reestablish the PLO's unity and revitalize its programs and struggle against the enemy. Based on this, the Central Committee emphasized that Palestinian national unity should be based on an anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist program that in no way harmonizes with the projects advanced by the US administration and its local allies, first and foremost the Jordanian and Egyptian regimes.

The Central Committee emphasized that the anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist program, capable of reunifying the Palestinian ranks, is the program that draws a clear political line. This means rejecting and confronting the imperialist and Zionist projects that aim to resolve the Middle East crisis and its core, the Palestinian question, via the Palestinian section of the Camp David accords ('autonomy') and the condominium plan for joint Jordanian-Israeli rule of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Such an anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist program is not an impossible condition. Rather it provides suitable common grounds for the Palestinian nationalist forces in their march to achieve the interim tasks of the PLO, fulfilling the Palestinian people's rights to self-determination, return and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on their national soil.

In accordance with its national duty, the Central Committee reassessed the stage following the departure of the Palestinian revolutionaries from Beirut in 1982. It drew the lessons of that stage and determined the correct basis for national unity in the light of these lessons. It is impossible and illogical to lay the foundation for reestablishing the PLO's unity without drawing the lessons of the previous stage.

The Central Committee found that the dominant PLO leadership's departure from the PLO's program, on which the Palestinian ranks were united, is the main cause of the division of the PLO. This departure was manifest in the adoption of a program contradictory to the PLO's national program. The signing of the Amman accord was a concrete step by this leadership towards adopting a program in contradiction with the anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist program. This accord signified the readiness of the PLO leadership to participate in the execution of the US-reactionary version of a regional settlement. This dealt a blow to the program that had united the Palestinian ranks and upheld the legitimate rights of our people.

The real beginning of the process of reestablishing the PLO's unity is abandoning this program which is in contradiction to the national program, by clearly, officially and publicly abrogating the Amman accord which is still being used by the Jordanian regime for executing the condominium plan in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, along with the Zionist enemy. Such cancellation of the Amman accord would certainly be a serious declaration of the signatories' readiness to return to the national program which represents our people's interests and legitimate national aspirations. At the same time, the Central Committee noted that the dangers threatening the Palestinian national cause emanate not only from the Jordanian regime's schemes and cooperation with the Zionist enemy. To a great extent, these dangers also emanate from the other US-Israeli gateway - the Egyptian regime, the gate of Camp David. Mubarak's regime is reactivating the Camp David accords. Employing promises and pressure, the Egyptian regime is relentlessly striving to contain the PLO leadership within the boundaries of the US solution.

The Central Committee emphasized that the PLO must cease its relations with the Egyptian regime which has unequivocally stated its commitment to the Camp David accords. Stopping these relations is a prerequisite for returning to the national program. The Egyptian regime's efforts only serve the policy of normalizing relations with the Zionist entity - this dangerous, colonialist phenomenon in the Middle East region. Stopping relations with Egypt and adhering to the Baghdad Summit resolutions would mean insistence, on the PLO's part, on continuing the struggle to achieve the national goals of our people. Any leniency or compromise in this sphere will retard the PLO's struggle to achieve its goals. Moreover, it means opening the door for other Arab regimes to follow in its footsteps, further weakening the Arab ranks and subordinating them to imperialist hegemony. The importance of ending relations with the Egyptian regime was confirmed in the Aden-Algiers agreement. The Palestinian organizations that signed this agreement considered this point as part of the basis for reestablishing the PLO's unity.

The Central Committee ascertained that the correct and necessary step toward achieving the unity of the Palestinian ranks is slamming these two gateways to the US liquidationist solution by cancelling the Amman accord and ending relations with the Egyptian regime. This would pave the way for reestablishing the PLO's alliances with the states of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front and the Arab liberation movement, confronting the US-Zionist projects.

The Central Committee specified the proper basis for unifying the Palestinian ranks as follows:

First: clear and public cancellation of the Amman accord, and ending relations with the Camp David regime - the Egyptian regime.

Second: commitment to the resolutions of national consensus, and the resolutions of the legitimate sessions of the Palestinian National Council, up to and including the 16th session. Considering the session held in Amman divisive and illegitimate, politically and organizationally.

Third: taking a serious and effective position to boycott and expose the dangerous, conspiratorial role of the regime of King Hassan II.

Fourth: following a decisive policy toward suspected, reactionary figures in the occupied territories, whose activities serve the schemes of the Zionist entity and the Jordanian regime. Those figures, who accept the appointment and installation of mayors, are serving the 'autonomy' plan and the Israeli-Jordanian condominium policy.

Fifth: improving relations with the Arab nationalist states, members of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, first and foremost Syria; deepening and coordinating efforts to confront the imperialist and Zionist schemes, in accordance with the resolutions of the consecutive sessions of the PNC, especially the 16th session.

Sixth: consolidating and strengthening militant relations with the Lebanese national movement; developing the Lebanese-Palestinian-Syrian nationalist confrontation of the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary plans, in order to defeat them.

Thereafter, the Central Committee discussed the necessary organizational basis for reunifying the PLO. After thorough discussion, the Central Committee concluded the lessons of the previous bitter experience. The Central Committee reaffirmed that reunifying the PLO requires organizational reforms. These reforms will guarantee reconstituting the Palestinian National Council, the Central Council, and the establishment of a genuine, trustworthy, collective leadership committed to strict defense of the rights of our people. This leadership would be committed to the struggle to achieve our people's aims of return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state; and committed to implementing the resolutions passed by the legitimate institutions.

Based on concern for reunifying the PLO, the Central Committee affirmed the necessity of the Politbureau's expediting the plans drawn up to start intensive communications and initiatives with all Palestinian and Arab patriots and internationalist parties, to achieve this central task. This is based on the great and deep sense of patriotic responsibility resting on the shoulders of the Central Committee and the leaderships of the other Palestinian organizations, to confront the dangers of the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary plan facing our national cause. The Central Committee clearly emphasized that it is not setting conditions, but proposing a basis for national unity, which it sees as the way to extricate the PLO from the course of seeking a US solution, and restore it to the course of national struggle.

The Central Committee also ascertained the importance of immediately starting a comprehensive national dialogue. They directed the Politbureau to start this immediately in the case of official and public cancellation of the Amman accord, because this would mean a serious declaration of intention, a start of the process of reestablishing the PLO's unity, and readiness to return to the program of national consensus.

The PFLP's insistence on this political and organizational basis stems from our feeling that the dangers that surround the PLO and Palestinian cause, aiming to cancel it from the political map, do not allow for the ambivalent policy of saying 'yes' and 'no' at the same time. This policy dragged the PLO into its current crisis. The course of the revolution is very clear to us, and to everyone who wants to continue the struggle to fulfill our right to return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state.

Concerning the statement issued in Prague, as a result of the discussions held between the Fatah movement, the DFLP and the Palestinian Communist Party as a step towards national unity, the Central Committee affirms that this falls short of providing the necessary political basis for solid and stable national unity, opposed to the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary alliance. The Central Committee views the text of the statement as a return to the policy of 'yes' and 'no', which has harmed the Palestinian struggle for so long. The statement that the «Amman agreement is no longer the basis of our work» is a return to the policies of 'yes' and 'no' It does not close the gates to US-style solutions.

Therefore, the Central Committe of the PFLP insists that the political basis be very clear, beyond the shadow of a doubt. The text of the Prague statement means that the Amman accord is not cancelled, and that coordination between the PLO leadership and the Jordanian regime was only frozen. Meanwhile, the Jordanian regime continues to rely on this accord for implementing the condominium policy of cooperation with the Zionist enemy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Serious and clear confrontation of the Jordanian regime's schemes, especially the joint condominium policy, requires cancellation of the Amman accord to pave the way for reestablishing national unity, and intensifying the struggle against the enemy schemes in all forms.

The Central Committee found that the Prague statement left the Cairo gate wide open. This poses a great threat to the Palestinian national cause. The Central Committee therefore affirms that the political basis for national unity must include a clear position on relations with the Egyptian regime, the gateway to Camp David.

The Central Committee considers reestablishment of the PLO's unity as an urgent, central task. It thus proposed the political and organizational basis needed for this process, specifying the mechanism whereby dialogue could begin for achieving this task. The Central Committee calls upon all Palestinian and Arab patriotic forces, and all international allies, to join efforts to achieve this urgent task.

The Central Committee discussed the situation in the occupied territories. It highly evaluated the escalation of popular struggle against the occupation, its policies and practices. The Central Committee identified the overwhelming threat posed by the Israeli-Jordanian joint condominium policy. It directed the Politbureau to use every available means to defeat these policies, and called on all Palestinian patriotic forces to consolidate their ranks in the occupied territories to confront these dangers. The Central Committee gave special instructions to the Politbureau on confronting the appointment of new mayors by the Zionist enemy and the Jordanian regime, and on confronting the joint condominium policies, and the Zionists' policies of settlement and usurpation.

The Central Committee discussed the important and grave developments on the Arab level, as these are interconnected with our national cause and affect the future of the Palestinian and Arab nationalist work. The Central Committee affirmed that the Arab region is experiencing successive, escalating attacks from the imperialist forces, headed by the US administration. The lack of unity and solidarity in the Arab ranks in the face of these attacks, led to new setbacks and deterioration. This was manifest in the treacherous Ifran meeting, followed by the meeting between Mubarak and Peres in Alexandria, signifying further submission to imperialist hegemony over the region. This dangerous situation requires consolidation in the ranks of the Arab steadfastness and confrontation forces. It demands the revitalization of their confrontation of the imperialist and Zionist schemes in the region..

The Central Committee also discussed the developments in Lebanon, emphasizing alliance with the Lebanese nationalist forces in confronting the Zionist enemy, liberating the South from occupation, confronting the fascist forces, and preserving a united, independent, Arab Lebanon. In this framework, the Central Committee affirmed that defending the Palestinian nationalist armed presence in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, is a patriotic duty. The PFLP will continue enacting this duty regardless of the forces trying to cancel this presence. The Central Committee warned against any inter-Palestinian fighting in the camps in Lebanon, and called on all forces to consolidate their ranks to confront all schemes to cancel the Palestinian nationalist armed presence in Lebanon.

Concerning the Gulf war, the Central Committee affirmed

its total rejection of the occupation of land by force. It called for cessation of hostilities in this war that has destroyed the resources of both the Iranian and Iraqi people.

The Central Committee discussed the imperialists' escalation of their attacks against the Arab patriotic states, which poses a great danger to the struggle of the Arab masses for progress and liberation. The Central Committee saluted the steadfastness of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in the face of direct US aggression, and affirmed its solidarity with the Libyan revolution and masses. Concerning the imperialist and Zionist threats to Syria, and the amassing of Zionist troops on the Syrian border in preparation for an attack, the Central Committee affirmed the Palestinian revolution's stand alongside Syria, against the imperialist and Zionist schemes.

The Central Committee highly evaluated the Soviet peace initiatives for protecting the world from destruction and for spreading peace and justice on our planet. The Central Committee affirmed the need for strengthening the Palestinian revolution's alliance with the friendly Soviet Union and the socialist community. The Central Committee considers that the Soviet Union, with its firm support to the struggle of the Arab masses, is a strategic ally of our people and revolution. The Central Committee saluted the Soviet Union and the states of the socialist community for their support to the struggle of the Palestinian and Arab masses.

The Central Committee concluded its session by affirming our alliance with the liberation movements of the world and the socialist community, first and foremost the Soviet Union. The Central Committee saluted the masses in occupied Palestine and called on them to intensify their struggle against the joint Israeli-Jordanian projects - against the condominium policy and the installment of mayors.

The Central Committee pledges to the Palestinian masses to continue the struggle to achieve the national tasks, i.e., the right to return, self-determination and the creation of an independent state. ●

PFLP Communique on Meeting with Fatah's Central Committee

Comrade George Habash, General Secretary of the PFLP, met in Prague with brother Khalil Al Wazir (Abu Jihad) of Fatah's Central Committee. The talks centered on the situation in the Palestinian arena and the dangers the Palestinian struggle faces in the present period, mainly the Jordanian-Israeli division of functions conspiracy, and the ongoing attempts to eliminate the Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon, as a step towards liquidating the national cause of our people altogether.

Brother Abu Jihad presented a working paper from the Central Committee of Fatah, which included the following principal clauses:

1. The Prague declaration, signed on September 5th, with all its political and organizational clauses, is considered binding on all parties in the national dialogue.

2. The Central Committee of Fatah commits itself to approving the declaration of the cancellation of the Jordanian-Palestinian accord, signed February 11, 1985, in the comprehensive Palestinian dialogue which would start on the eve of the PNC's 18th session.

3. All procedures leading to the PNC, including the time and place, would be agreed upon before the start of the comprehensive national dialogue, on the basis that the period between the start of the national dialogue and the convening of the PNC would not exceed one week.

4. At the same time, the PFLP declares in the national dialogue, its withdrawal from any political or organizational forms or committees outside the ranks and institutions of the PLO, and also declares its commitment to attend the PNC.

Comrade Habash presented the PFLP's point of view on how to restore the PLO's unity, as expressed in the following principal points:

1. The PFLP sees that public and official cancellation of the Amman accord is the entrance to any comprehensive national dialogue. Without this, the process of Palestinian national dialogue would continue to stumble. The party which has the power to cancel the Amman accord is fully responsible before our people and revolution, for the stalemate in the efforts to regain the PLO's unity on a firm nationalist basis.

2. Based on this truth, the PFLP considers the Prague declaration as a step seeking national unity, but which is incomplete and insufficient. Therefore, some parties who signed this declaration have started a process of reevaluating it, in order to improve and complete it, especially concerning honest and official cancellation of the Amman accord.

3. The PFLP, along with the majority of Palestinian revolutionary organizations, sees that a condition for Palestinian national unity is closure of both gateways to the US solution: Amman and Cairo. This dictates breaking relations with the Camp David regime in Egypt, as well as cancellation of the Amman accord.

4. The PFLP still adheres to the organizational clauses of the Aden-Algiers agreement, which would guarantee realization of a collective, democratic, trustworthy leadership for the PLO, instead of hegemony and individualism.

5. The PFLP calls on Fatah's leadership to stop using methods of postponement and unclear formulas like «approving the declaration of the cancellation of the accord... in the dialogue», and instead to publicly declare the official cancellation of this accord. Let's not hide anymore behind the flimsy pretences which are used to justify this dangerous policy.

6. The PFLP adheres to its evaluation of the 17th session of the PNC as being illegal, convened in the absence of Palestinian national consensus and opposed to it; this session paved the way for the ill-reputed Amman accord.

7. In the case of its convening after the cancellation of the Amman accord, the comprehensive national dialogue is obliged to discuss all political and organizational issues and problems which the Palestinian revolution faces in the present period. This aims at formulating a Palestinian national agreement on these problems. Therefore, the dialogue cannot be viewed in a superficial or unconcerned manner. Nor can it be confined to a short period such as was mentioned in Fatah's proposals (one week), unless some are still looking at the process of comprehensive national dialogue as a formality.

8. The contents of Fatah's proposals, mainly the necessity of a prior agreement on the time and place of the PNC, even before the start of the comprehensive national dialogue, are contrary to serious desire to (1) start the dialogue; (2) reach a national agreement; and (3) broaden this agreement in order to achieve a unanimous agreement.

9. Asking the PFLP to commit itself to attend the PNC, even before achieving a national agreement, and to abandon our present nationalist alliances, is part of the policy of paralyzing the conditions and putting obstacles to the unity process. This process starts by cancelling the 'Jordanian-Palestinian accord'; it continues with the comprehensive national dialogue and agreement, and concludes with the convening of the PNC. The PNC then would consecrate this agreement, formulate a clear and distinct policy for the PLO, form a trustworthy, collective leadership, and institute democratic reforms in the PLO.

10. The PFLP, by confirming its position on how to restore the PLO's unity and the principles necessary for attaining such unity, renews its insistence on exploiting all possible efforts to put these convictions into practice. The PFLP confirms its adherence to the policy drawn up by its Central Committee to start intensive communication and initiatives with all Palestinian forces to speedily restore the PLO's unity on a nationalist basis, opposed to imperialism and Zionism. ●

The Israeli-Jordanian Di

Under the guise of 'improving the quality of life', 'Israel' and Jordan are dividing functions between them in order to impose their joint rule on the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. In *Democratic Palestine* no. 19, we printed an article about the conception and intentions of this plan. Since then, the Israeli and Jordanian preparations for this plan have entered the stage of implementation, which is the subject of the article below.

It is difficult to list all the measures that have been taken by the Jordanian and Israeli governments in preparation for imposing the division of functions plan. In this article we will attempt to list the most recent steps that affect all aspects of the life of our masses in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. From the Jordanian side,these steps are being enacted in the framework of an economic development plan. The real intent of this plan is to reduce the political status of Palestinians in the West Bank to that of Palestinians in Jordan, i.e., subordinated to the monarchy and its policies. Far from improving the quality of life for our masses, the Israeli-Jordanian coordination aims to negate the role of the PLO and in general the Palestinian struggle for liberation, self-determination and an independent state.

NEW GROUP OF STOOGES

In coordination with the Zionist authorities, the Jordanian regime has selected some of its supporters in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to form a preparatory committee for the so-called Jordanian-Palestinian Gathering in the occupied territories, in order to market the Jordanian schemes among our masses. In September, the preparatory committee of this new Jordanian-backed organization distributed its third statement, setting out the «political principles for bringing together the masses in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip». On September 15th, the Jordanian daily, *Al Ra'i,* published the text of the statement that was entitled «Holy Unity Brings Together the Jordanian and Palestinian Peoples.»

The statement claimed that «widespread support» for the gathering had encouraged the preparatory committe to expand, in order to include representatives of all sectors of the people and all cities and villages of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The statement stressed that: «National unity between the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples is a holy unity that represents the aims and aspirations of our Arab nation on the road to achieving the whole Arab unity,» and «The coordination between the PLO and Jordan is a national duty, due to the fact that the two peoples have the same aim and the same destiny.» In addition, the statement called on all parties to recognize all UN resolutions concerning the Palestinian cause, including resolution 242. The statement called for implementing these resolutions through an international peace conference, attended by all parties concerned and by the permanent members of the security council-in short, all the demagogy used by the Jordanian regime to cover its moves towards direct negotiations with the Zionist enemy, cutting out any independent Palestinian representation.

This gathering is headed by Adnan Abu Oudeh, former Jordanian minister. It also includes members of the Jordanian parliament, right-wing Palestinian mayors such as Freij and Shawwa, Mustafa Doudeen of the defunct village leagues, and Othman Al Hallaq and Isam Al Anani of the newly established pro-Jordanian *Al Nahar* newspaper in Jerusalem. The gathering also enjoys the support of the renegade, Abu Zaim, who led the pro-Jordan split in Fatah. Abu Zaim is now seeking to form a Palestinian party in Jordan, in coordination with the Jordanian intelligence. The Jordanian regime has given full authority to Abu Zaim to maneuver within the Palestinian communities in Jordan. There he spreads his propaganda, agitating people to cease the armed struggle and revert to politics which, according to him, only King Hussein has mastered.

TURNING PALESTINIANS INTO 'JORDANIANS'

Along the same lines, the Jordanian government has granted temporary passports to Gazans residing in Jordan. The Septmeber 16th issue of the Jordanian daily, *Al Dustour,* quoted a Jordanian official as saying that a joint committee, composed of officials from the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of the Occupied Territories Affairs, is finalizing procedures for issuing the passports. The official said that this decision is an extension of the decision to allow Gazans to own real estate in Jordan. Another decision was taken by the Jordanian government recently, allowing the residents of the Palestinian camps in Jordan to buy the houses they are living in. This decision has already been implemented in both Al Wehdat and Al Hussein camps. It is obvious that such a decision is aimed at gradually eliminating the Palestinian camps in preparation for achieving the US-Israeli wish to eliminate the UNRWA.

On October 9th, the Kuwaiti daily, *Al Watan,* reported that reliable Palestinian sources have revealed that the Israeli authorities recently allowed some Palestinian personalities (former or present members of the Jordanian parliament, who are residing in the West Bank), to cross the bridges to and from Jordan in their own vehicles. The same sources said that the Israeli authorities are also in the process of issuing special passes to all taxi drivers that take passengers to Jordan, in order to facilitate the process of travel from the West Bank to Jordan.

CAIRO—AMMAN BANK

On October 2nd, high level Israeli sources revealed that 'Israel' and Jordan had held direct, secret negotiations in London. In September, officials from both the Israeli and Jordanian central banks, and Shimon Peres' aide, participated in negotiations. A memorandum of understanding was drawn up and signed, regarding joint supervision of the reopening of the Cairo-Amman Bank's branch in the West Bank, for the first time after 19 years of occupation. The sources said that this was the first written agreement between Jordan and 'Israel' since the official state of war was declared in

The appointed mayor of Al Bireh flanked by Israeli soldiers

vision of Functions Plan

1948. Both parties agreed not to publicize the agreement.(1)

Israeli officials had already declared, on September 17th, that 'Israel' will allow the reopening of the bank in the West Bank in October. Needless to say, the bank reopened within the framework of the Israelis' continous efforts to increase their control and Jordanian influence in the occupied West Bank at the expense of the PLO. General Shlomo Goren, head of the 'civil' administration of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, said: «This step will consolidate relations with Jordan and will create good political results.» At a press conference, he added: «Israel will close the bank if we discover that it finances anti-Israel groups... Israel will have the right to conduct security and monetary inspections of the bank, to guarantee that it will not finance guerrilla activities.» Meanwhile, he elaborated, Jordan will take care of the administrative aspects.

It is worth mentioning that the Jordanian government owns 10% of the bank's shares; Cairo owns 12%, while the rest are owned by individual Palestinians and Jordanians. Midhat Kana'n, who will resume his position as the manager of the branch after 19 years, said that the bank will mainly supervise the process of transferring money from Jordan to the different institutions in the West Bank.(2) This bank reopening is obviously an attempt at giving the Palestinians imaginary power in line with the plan for 'improving the quality of life'. At the same time, it legalizes Israeli inspection of the transfer of funds. 'Israel' can use this condition as a loophole for closing the bank at any time it perceives that its functioning is not to Israeli advantage. In the meantime, while only a limited strata of Palestinians will derive any benefits from this bank, the Israelis will use their supervisory position for further harassment of Palestinian national institutions.

APPOINTED MAYORS

Immediately after the Cairo-Amman Bank step, 'Israel' appointed Palestinian mayors in Al Bireh, Ramallah, and Al Khalil (Hebron). Israeli army officers had been administrating those cities since 1982, when the elected mayors were dismissed for refusing to cooperate with the Israeli authorities. On September 28th, 'Israel' appointed Hassan Al Tawil as mayor of Al Bireh, Khalil Musa Al Khalil as mayor of Ramallah, and Abdul Majeed Al Zeer as mayor of Al Khalil. These appointments come six months after the execution of Zafer Al Masri who the Israeli authorities appointed mayor of Nablus.

A spokesman for the Israeli Defense Ministry said that «due to these appointments, the last three cities of the West Bank, that were still administered by Israeli officers, will be now administered by Palestinian personalities.»(3)

The occupation authorities are expected to take similar steps to appoint mayors in all West Bank and Gaza Strip municipalities. These appointments aim at achieving two goals: first, to normalise relations between 'Israel' and Jordan on the political and economic levels, and consequently normalise the Israeli occupation; and second, to prepare a delegation from the West Bank and Gaza Strip to participate, when the time comes, in direct negotiations under an international umbrella. The Israeli closure of *Al Mithaq* and *Al Ahad* papers was one of the steps taken to pave the way for the propaganda campaign by pro-Jordanian papers, such as *Al Nahar,* to support the two aims mentioned above.

The Israeli radio said that these appointments were made immediately after approval by the Jordanian government. The Jordanian government had taken a decision to invalidate the signatures of eight legitimate mayors of the occupied West Bank: Bassam Shakaa of Nablus, Ibrahim Al Tawil of Al Bireh, Hilmi Hannoun of Tulkarem, Hamid Hamdallah of Anabta, Amin Al Naser of Qalqilya, Hijazee Rasheed of Deir Debwan, the mayor of Jenin, and the deputy mayor of Ramallah.

Mr. Al Zeer, the appointed mayor of Al Khalil, told reporters that he enjoys the approval of Jordan, and he «will work to improve the daily services of the municipality of Al Khalil, and will not interfere in politics.» (Zeer, incidently, is a prominent member of the Muslim Brotherhood with close links to his counterparts in Jordan.) Mr. Hassan Al Tawil, the appointed mayor of Al Bireh, said: I accepted the post solely to aid in the economic expansion of Al Bireh, and will have no political activities.» He also said that he enjoys the approval of Jordan and «expected» tacit endorsement from the PLO.»(4) Even taking these statements at face value, «not interfering in politics» in an occupied country is in itself a policy - at best, acceptance of occupation, at worst, collaboration. In reality, the three who accepted to be appointed as mayors have agreed to cooperate in joint Israeli-Jordanian rule of the West Bank, which is part of the attempt to liquidate the Palestinian cause.

WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

With all of these steps, the features of the Israeli-Jordanian plan are getting clearer and clearer. The plan for 'improving the quality of life' is only a new name for the self-rule plan, that 'Israel' was unable to implement for years. By taking Jordan as a partner, the Zionists hope to break the united Palestinian resistance that previously blocked attempts to impose the 'autonomy' plan. 'Improving the quality of life' is really an effort to cultivate a strata of the Palestinian bourgeoisie willing to link its political and economic future to Jordan's monarchy. 'Israel' is now calling on Jordan to take the final step in the scenario for which it was created: absorbing the independent Palestinian identity in order to protect Zionist occupation.

'Israel' did not await an official statement from Jordan declaring its acceptance of this role. It is well known that 'Israel' and Jordan have had indirect, secret coordination, which explains the Jordanian approval of the mayorial appointments. 'Israel' focuses on the Palestinian personalities that reject armed struggle, and are connected with the capitulationist Jordanian policies.

After King Hussein decided to cease coordination with the PLO in February, Peres proposed the so-called Marshal plan for the Middle East. The plan theoretically assumes a state of comprehensive peace in the Middle East and concretely entails an economic development plan for the area, financed by the US and western Europe. Although the plan is supposedly drawn up for the whole Middle East, if focuses on the West Bank as a sample. Yet, the plan is costly and would burden 'Israel'.

The plan for 'improving the quality of life' necessitates a huge sum of money-150 million dollars, according to the Jordanian prime minister, Zeid ▶

Al Rafa'i. In an interview with the Lebanese magazine, *Al Hawadeth,* August 22nd, he said «Jordan's financial situation does not allow it to finance the plan.» Therefore, he added, the money needed to make the plan possible will be provided by «the Arab and Islamic governments, Arab funds, European countries, the US, Canada and Japan» - ie., imperialist and reactionary forces.

In his last visit to Washington, King Hussein discussed the issue with the US government.(5) US officials have recently said that Washington was very satisfied with the latest Jordanian procedures. They also said that Washington is searching for ways to incorporate the Israeli and Jordanian plans, in order to define the size of the aid that will be given.

In light of the developments towards implementing the plan for 'improving the quality of life', the Kuwaiti paper, *Al Watan,* on October 2nd, said that Britain and other European countries are planning to send representatives to Jordan in November, to look into a financial program for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, amounting to 100 million pounds. London radio quoted Timothy Rinton of the British foreign ministry, who visited Amman early in October, as saying that Britain will participate in the conference that will be held in Amman in November, to discuss the details of the financial aid.

Moreover, the EEC at its September 4th meeting in Brussels, approved a proposal allowing West Bank and Gaza Strip produce to be sold on EEC markets, offering Palestinian farmers conditions similar to those offerred 'Israel', Jordan and other Mediterranean countries, such as a 60% decrease in tariffs. The EEC's head of development plans arranged for this deal when he visited Tel Aviv and Amman last year.

A spokesman of the EEC replied to those who warned of possiple political consequences, saying, «There are no political aims behind the EEC's decision.» However, he added, «The committee had noticed that there is a deplorable situation,» pointing to the situation of the Palestinian farmers in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, who are being discriminated against.(6)

Related to this, the US is involved in funding the construction of a $25 million highway linking Jericho in the West Bank,with Na'our in Jordan.This would facilitate the transport of products from the occupied territories to markets abroad. It could moreover be used by the Israelis to circumvent the Arab boycott against their products.

In Jordan, the official papers daily publish scores of government decisions to allocate tens of thousands of Jordanian dinars for the plan for 'improving the quality of life.' The Jordanian daily, *Al Ra'i,* reported on October 10th, that the Jordanian government had allocated 35,000 dinars to the literacy program and the unions of welfare societies in the West Bank; 15,000 dinars to the union of welfare societies in Jerusalem, and 10,000 dinars to each union in Nablus and Al Khalil.

On October 9th, Dr. Al Qatanani, Jordanian deputy minister of Occupied Territories Affairs, received Mr. M. Abdul Fattah, the representative of medical laboratories and blood banks in the West Bank. The deputy minister promised to look into the needs of the medical labs and blood banks within the framework of the development plan for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On October 8th, *Al Ra'i* published a lecture by Marwan Doudeen, Jordanian Minister of Occupied Territories Affairs, entitled «The West Bank after Two Decades of Occupation.» In this, he said that the suspension of coordination between Jordan and the PLO meant termination of financing of the Steadfastness Fund that is supervised by Jordan and the PLO. According to Mr. Doudeen, this caused the Jordanian government to draw up its own program to finance the development plan, in order to resolve the crisis of the Palestinian people in the West Bank!

To all this 'aid', we can only say that the social, economic and health situation in the occupied territories has been deplorable for years. The sudden concern of the Jordanian and Western European governments smells suspiciously like bribery. The Palestinians under occupation are to be given some marginal benefits that don't alleviate the basic problem of occupation, in hopes that they will tie their fate to the Jordanian monarchy. Thus, the PLO could be cut out, and the Middle East conflict solved to the interests of imperialism, Zionism and reaction. The Gulf states' refusal to meet their financial commitments to the Palestinian National Fund (the PLO's treasury) shows Arab reaction's complicity in the plot to eliminate the PLO's role.

INFILTRATING THE TRADE UNIONS

It has also been decided to send a delegation of pro-Jordanians from West Bank trade unions to Amman, to meet with Marwan Doudeen and draw up a work plan, in order to control the trade unions by flooding the nationalist unions with new recruits.

Another decision recently taken by the Jordanian government is to appoint 70 new engineers to work in the municipalities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In practice, this means flooding the Palestinian Engineers' Union with elements that are supportive of the Jordanian regime's policies. The Jordanian government also appointed a number of doctors and nurses in the different clinics and hospitals of the West Bank for the same purpose that it appointed the engineers. Recently the Jordanian government resumed payment to lawyers in the West Bank, taking over the previous funding role of the PLO-Jordanian Joint Committee. At the same time, the regime reinstated lawyers who were previously suspended by the union for failure to abide by the 1967 decision to boycott the courts. The resumption of payments is an attempt to gain at least part of this sector of our people to the Jordanian regime's side. With the same aim, salaries have also been resumed to teachers, the largest single sector of employees in the West Bank.

DOUBLE IRON FIST

Along the same lines, a reshuffle in the Jordanian cabinet has resulted in the promotion of a hard-line, former intelligence officer to the important post of Minister of Interior. The appointment of Mr. Rajai Al Dajani, one of the few Palestinians to renewed attempts by Jordan to increase its influence in the occupied territories. This move is a signal to Jordan's men that the regime is determined to protect them from the wrath of our masses, particularly after the appointments of three mayors in the West Bank, by the Zionist authorities.

It is very obvious that both the Jordanian regime and the Zionist Labor party are determined to continue their conspiracy, and they have already taken concrete steps towards achieving it. Moreover, the Likud, headed by the new prime minister, Shamir, has not rejected the division of functions plan. In fact, Shamir has more than once expressed satisfaction with the Jordanian procedures, for these aim at eliminating the role of the PLO in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. What would Shamir and the Likud want more than liquidating the PLO and normalizing relations with Jordan, in order to reach the point of direct negotiations?

Shimon Peres has eliminated the Jordanian regime's fear that Shamir's government would work to deal a blow to the plan and abort the whole process. Early in September, Peres met Hikmat Al Masri, Vice-president of the Jordanian senate, and gave him a message to King Hussein, saying that the political trend of the coalition government will continue in one of two ways: Either Shamir will accept continuation of the same path, or Peres will disrupt the coalition after Shamir takes power, in order to have new Knesset elections. In this case, the Labor party will definitely take power, according to Peres.

It is worth mentioning that the Jordanian procedures were not confronted by the right-wing leadership of the PLO. The least the PLO leadership could do is to officially cancel the Amman agreement, especially since Jordan's foreign minister, Taher Al Masri, has said that all the measures taken by his government are based on the spirit of the Amman accords.

(1) *Al Nahar,* October 3, 1986.
(2) *Al Safir,* September 19, 1986.
(3) *op. cit.,* September 29, 1986.
(4) *The Guardian,* September 20, 1986.
(5) *Al Fursan,* July 1986.
(6) *Al Safir,* September 5, 1985.

Military Operations

Occupied Palestine

Our contradiction with the Zionist state is a question of existence, which cannot be resolved without the elimination of either the Zionist state or the Palestinian identity. This fact is one of the particularities of the Palestinian-Zionist conflict. It means that for the Palestinian national liberation movement, armed struggle is the primary form of struggle. Violence is inherent in the Zionist project and therefore inherent in any serious attempt to confront it. In line with this understanding, the Palestinian people under occupation are continuously escalating military operations, both in quantity and quality.

Below we cover the military operations in occupied Palestine from mid-September until early November. The Zionists invariably confronted this revolutionary violence with fascist means of repression - mass arrests, attacking children, curfews, etc. All casualties listed below are those reported by the Zionist media. We would like to note that the Zionist state has an official policy of suppressing or downplaying casualty figures.

LATE SEPTEMBER

In the last half of September, there were 21 military operations, including stabbings, stonethrowing and explosions against Zionist targets. In Haifa there were three explosions in this period. One was in a chemical company, and caused 19 injuries and an estimated $50 million in material losses. Another target was a Zionist intelligence center, and a third explosion occurred in an apartment building where a high-ranking intelligence officer lived. In total, there were 21 Zionists injured in Haifa. In Jaffa, a settler was shot and injured. In Jerusalem, there was an explosion in an intelligence center, and a Palestinian woman stabbed a Zionist. In the Tel Aviv area, explosions occurred in a restaurant frequented by Zionist soldiers and a building of the Israeli Ministry of War.

In the occupied West Bank, there were three firebomb attacks on Israeli buses and vehicles, and two stonethrowing incidents; the Zionists reported two injuries. In Al Bireh, Yasir Abaid, who had been collaborating with the Jordanian regime, was stabbed for working against his people.

In the occupied Gaza Strip, there were five attacks on Zionist patrols; the Zionists admitted two injuries. Palestinian revolutionaries clashed with Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint, and one of them was martyred. In Gaza's market, a Mossad agent was knifed to death by Palestinian militants.

OCTOBER

In this month, 39 military operations occurred in different parts of occupied Palestine. The most outstanding was in Jerusalem on October 15th, near the Wailing Wall, where new recruits were taking the oath of allegiance to enter the Givati Brigade (special forces). Three hand grenades were thrown into the gathering, killing one Zionist and injuring 69 others. A military bus and eight cars were completely burned; 16 other vehicles were damaged; 40 ambulances were needed to take away the injured.

Also in Jerusalem, an explosion took place in front of a police station; and an Egged bus was stoned. There was an explosion in the King David Hotel, causing a US Congressman, who was visiting the Zionist state, to run out with only a towel around him!

In the Gaza Strip, a Zionist was stabbed to death on October 8th. There were six incidents of bombs thrown at Israeli vehicles, causing two injuries, and four incidents of stonethrowing. On October 22nd, demonstrators stoned a border patrol post, injuring one officier and three soldiers. Three Palestinians were injured when the Zionist forces fired into the demonstration; 53 Palestinians were detained. In Gaza, there were also two attacks on collaborators: There were two explosions in the house of Hamzeh Turkmani, appointed mayor of Gaza by the Zionist authorities. Another collaborator, working as a policeman, was stabbed.

In the West Bank, there were two explosions during October, in Ramallah and Nablus. A Zionist was stabbed in the Al Khalil (Hebron) area on October 11th. Three Israeli vehicles were stoned in Nablus, injuring two Zionists. Five firebombs were thrown at Israeli vehicles in different parts of the West Bank, injuring two Zionists. In Nablus, three grenades were thrown against Zionist vehicles. An explosion occurred near the military governor's house in Hebron.

In Naharia, in the part of Palestine occupied in 1948, a Zionist was stabbed in a nightclub on October 10th. A Zionist soldier was shot in Haifa. In Tel Aviv, a grenade was tossed into a nightclub, and on October 16th, an interrogation officer was shot to death in nearby Peta Tikvah. The car of Abraham Shalom, former director of the Shin Beth, was bobby-trapped; it exploded when he turned it on, and his right leg was maimed. In Bir Sheeba, a Zionist soldier was shot dead. On the road between Acca and Tabariah (Tiberius), on October 21st, a Palestinian rammed his truck into a gathering of Zionist soldiers; five of them were killed and 13 injured. In Ramleh prison, Palestinian militants killed a collaborator.

EARLY NOVEMBER

In the first week of November, four operations took place. There was an explosion in Kiryat Malashi settlement in the West Bank. An Egged bus was stoned near Ramallah. In Gaza, stones were thrown at a military patrol and a firebomb targeted an Israeli truck. ●

PFLP MILITANTS STAB ZIONIST SETTLER

The PFLP claimed responsibility for the November 15th stabbing in the Old City of Jerusalem. A PFLP military spokesman said: «In compliance with orders, the group of the martyr Shadia Abu Ghazala operating in occupied Palestine, attacked a gang of Kahana's terrorists as they were roaming the streets of Jerusalem, intimidating and beating up Palestinian citizens. The militants used knives and killed one Zionist, while critically injuring another. Army, security and intelligence forces arrived immediately on the scene, surrounded the area and arrested a large number of Palestinians... The PFLP reaffirms its determination to continue the armed struggle against the Zionist enemy in occupied Palestine and elsewhere. The PFLP warns that the Zionist gangs will always be punished for their acts of intimidation against our people.»

History repeats itself. This time, though, Britain's share is a comedy.

Thatcher Joins the US-Israeli War on Syria

On November 2, 1917, 'Her Majesty's' Foreign Secretary Balfour issued his famous declaration which granted Palestine to the Zionists. On October 29, 1956, Britain joined France and 'Israel' in waging war on Egypt, in a clear challenge to President Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal. In both historical incidents, Britain was the powerful empire, «on which the sun never set.» The Balfour Declaration was issued when imperialist Britain was at its peak. It gave the Zionists the break they needed in legalizing their occupation of Palestine. However, after the defeat of the 1956 tripartite attack on Egypt, the British empire saw its last days. Britain had been relegated to playing second fiddle to US imperialism.

Now, thirty years after the Suez war and 69 years after the Balfour Declaration, Thatcher imagines that the sun might shine on Britain again, and that 'happy days' might be 'here again'. The latest example of this wishful thinking was seen in the breaking of ties with Syria, on the pretext of fighting 'international terrorism'. However, the final act of the play is not yet over.

The 'play' started in April when the British police arrested Nezar Hindawi on charges of trying to destroy an El Al airliner at Heathrow airport on April 17th, by smuggling explosives aboard in the bag of his Irish fiancee, Anne-Marie Murphy. This 'plot' was foiled by an El Al security agent who found plastic explosives hidden in the false bottom of Murphy's hand luggage. It is worth noting that it was an Israeli guard, not British guards or detectors, that foiled the 'plot'. Quite a security scandal!

Until October 6th, the day Hindawi's trial started, there were no indications of an 'Arab connection' - official or otherwise. Even more indicative, Margaret Thatcher had declared, after the British police had completed their investigations, that these showed no Syrian connection with the 'plot' or with Hindawi.

However, the second scene of the play unfolded after the Old Bailey court in London convicted Hindawi of violating the 1982 Aviation Security Act, covering airline sabotage, and sentenced him to 45 years in prison, one of the longest sentences handed down by a British judge in recent years. Just four hours later, British Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe announced the diplomatic break with Syria. Howe claimed that the British decision was based on «conclusive evidence of official Syrian involvement» in the attempt to sabotage the airliner. Anne-Marie had earlier been found innocent.

During the trial, Hindawi testified that he was planning to smuggle drugs in the bag carried by Murphy, not explosives. According to Hindawi, these drugs were to be smuggled to the West Bank in order to make a fortune. He said that he had met a person in Damascus and agreed with him to smuggle drugs to the West Bank for $250,000. During the trial, Hindawi expressed his belief that Israeli agents had switched the bag which his fiancee was carrying, with one containing explosives, or that the person he had met in Damascus was an Israeli agent. Hindawi testified that after the arrest of Anne-Marie Murphy, he had headed for the Syrian embassy to get help. Hindawi said he met with the ambassador, but the latter had kicked him out.

In an interview with *Time* magazine in early October, President Hafez Assad assured that the Syrian government had no connection with Hindawi, and that «no terrorist acts are carried out from Syria, by Syrians or others.» He said that Hindawi, a Jordanian, had obtained a Syrian passport at a time when relations between Syria and Jordan were tense. He added that Hindawi had gone to the Syrian embassy in London after the incident, but that the embassy officials had refused to give him any help, and kicked him out.

After Hindawi's conviction and the ensuing accusations of a 'Syrian connection', the British government broke diplomatic ties with Syria. Syria responded immediately by closing Syrian airspace, ports and territorial waters to British planes and ships. The nineteen British diplomats in Damascus were given one week to leave the country. The Syrian government issued a statement denying the false charges and indicating that «the present British government, since it took power, has made its campaigns against Arab states and third world countries.»

LOOPHOLES IN THATCHER'S CASE

It is logical to wonder why the British guards did not find the explosives, for the bag went through sophisticated electronic detectors. It is also logical to wonder why the Syrian embassy did not help Hindawi to escape, if syria had been involved. Even more revealing is the *Washington Times* report on an interview with French Foreign Minister Chirac. In an interview with the editor-in-chief of the *Washington Times*, Chirac had said that the West German government, namely Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, had informed the French government that the Israeli secret service (Mossad), with Syrian dissidents, had planned the attack on the El Al airliner in order to indict Syria for terrorism. Chirac added that the Mossad had ordered Hindawi to head for the Syria embassy after delivering the explosives to his Irish girl friend. After Paris and Bonn denied the contents of the interview as reported, the *Washington Times* editor-in-chief, insisting that the interview was accurate and genuine, published the whole text two days later (November 10th).

Logic dictates that Britain's breaking relations with Syria had nothing to do with Hindawi's case, but was actually a continuation of the anti-Syrian campaign initiated by 'Israel' and the US long before the Heathrow airport incident occurred. Hindawi's conviction paved the way for «America and Israel to celebrate the first terrorist case which could directly be linked to President Hafez Assad» (*Sunday Times*, October 27th).

The US escalated its political campaign in the Middle East long before the Hindawi case, aiming to continue the imperialist 'peace' process. This was especially apparent after Peres' visit to Morocco, and George Bush's trip to the region, where he talked with Zionist leaders, Hussein of Jordan and Mubarak of Egypt. Then there was the first Egyptian-Israeli summit since Sadat's death in 1981, and lastly, US envoy Richard Murphy's visit to Damascus where he met the Syrian president. All these activities aim specifically at reaching a Camp David-type agreement which would eventually end the Middle East conflict at the expense of the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights.

However, Murphy's discussions with the Syrian president showed that the road to spreading Camp David is still paved with many obstacles. Hafez Assad informed Murphy that the only framework acceptable to Syria, for discussing the conflict, is an international conference attended by all parties concerned, including the PLO, and by the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Obviously, Syria presents a major obstacle to a new Camp David. It is equally obvious that imperialism, Zionism and reactionary forces would pool their efforts to remove this obstacle, along with the others, specifically the Palestinian revolution and the Lebanese national movement. To this end, the enemy alliance is increasing pressure on the Arab national movement and regimes, escalating threats and

actual aggression. This has already been seen in the US raid on Libya, the increased Israeli aggression against Lebanon and the Palestinian camps there, the continuation of the war initiated by some factions of Amal against the Palestinian camps, and the reactionary regimes' vicious attacks on progressive forces. To all this aggression has now been added the campaign of political and military threats against Syria.

Britain's breaking relations with Syria is the latest step in this campaign. Not surprisingly, it received immediate approval from the US and Canada who withdrew their ambassadors from Syria; the Israelis were overjoyed. However, the British government soon met disappointment when eleven out of twelve EEC foreign ministers, meeting in Luxembourg on October 27th, rejected all the specific British proposals for common action, such as temporary withdrawal of their ambassadors from Damascus, and restricting the operation of Syrian Arab Airlines in Europe. Then, after increased US and British pressure, the EEC foreign ministers met in London on November 10th, to discuss British proposals for sanctions against Syria. They agreed to some measures, including a ban on arms sales, suspension of visits by high-level officials, a review of the activities of Syria's diplomatic missions, and tighter surveillance of the operation of Syrian Arab Airlines. Greece was the only EEC member to refuse to endorse these sanctions, affirming its rejection of the whole case against Syria. The sanctions were viewed as symbolic, without much impact on Syria. Obviously, the EEC members agreed to them mainly to show solidarity with Britain and to avoid causing embarrassment.

The US, for its part, followed up with much stronger measures. On November 14th, the US declared an embargo on the sale of planes, helicopters, spare parts and electronic equipment to Syria, and imposed trade restrictions. Still, the last scene of the play is not yet over. The comical aspect is that Thatcher, in this day and age, dreams of reviving the old British empire, without realizing that it has been relegated to the trashbin of history. Playing Mrs. Rambo more than 8000 miles from Britain - in the Falklands - or even closer, in Syria, is only Thatcher's dream.

Clearly, the vicious campaign against Syria is ultimately aimed against all the Arab nationalist regimes and movements, especially the Palestinian and Lebanese, on the pretext of fighting 'terrorism'. The intensification of this campaign requires that the Arab national liberation movement as a whole strengthen its solidarity in order to face any aggression which the imperialist-Zionist alliance many unleash on the Arab nation. ●

Jordan's Iron Fist

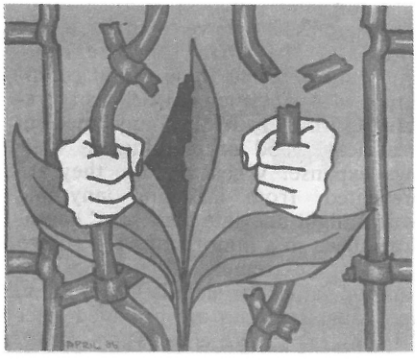
From Mahatta Prison to Jafre

In August, Jordanian security forces stormed Mahatta central prison in Amman. Their brutality did not stop at destroying and confiscating the meagre, hard earned belongings of the prisoners. In early September, sixty political prisoners from Mahatta, along with 21 from other prisons in Jordan, were transferred to the notorious Jafre prison in the desert - the Jordanian equivalent of the Zionists' Nafha prison in occupied Palestine.

The excuse extended to the public for the August 6th storming of Mahatta was that a hand grenade had been found in the visitors' waiting room. Although the prisoners have no access to the room, this was latched upon as a suitable pretext for the September 2nd transfer which was obviously preplanned. What makes the pretext even more flimsy is that 21 prisoners from other prisons were transferred on the same day, without being gulity of any obvious offense.

JAFRE PRISON

Ironically, the Jafre prison is officially named Jafre Reformation and Vocational Training Center. It is notorious for its harsh living conditions. The political prisoners transferred there consider it the ultimate punishment. The amount of food given is so insufficient that the prisoners live in a constant state of hunger. The quality of the food is so bad that it only aggravates the health of the prisoners, the majority of whom suffer from a variety of health ▶



problems. These are mainly internal problems such as stomach ulcers, kidney problems, inflammation of the duodenom, intestinal problems and rheumatism as well as tooth decay, inflammation of the gums, etc. A number of the prisoners' health condition is so critical that their lives are at stake. Needless to say, continued demands to allow the prisoners to set up a system for obtaining fresh fruits, vegetables and canned foods, have been ignored.

The bedding provided is insufficient to protect the prisoners from the desert cold at night. Lack of hot water for washing has led to the development of skin diseases, as well as contagious

diseases, among the prisoners. For reading material, only the local newspapers are allowed into the prison. One radio is allowed for every 25 prisoners. Demands to allow visiting between the cells have been rejected. Most brutal is the collective punishment imposed on the prisoners if any one of them is accused of the slightest misdemeanor. The stick and carrot policy practiced by the prison administration leaves prisoners at the mercy of the jailers' moods.

Suffering is not limited to the prisoners, but is extrapolated to their families as well. They have to suffer in the knowledge that their sons are constantly subjected to these brutal conditions, while they remain helpless, prevented from providing any medical treatment, food or clothing, at their own expense. When visiting, they are prevented from bringing anything which might alleviate their sons' conditions, even in a minor way. The trip to Jafre is extremely difficult. (See parents' letter for details.) Moreover, no proper facilities are provided after the long trip; there is no water, toilet, shelter or proper waiting room. Visiters have to withstand the summer heat or winter cold before it is their turn to be allowed in for a ten minute to one hour visit. The length of the visit is dictated by the mood of the prison authorities. All this intentionally inflicted physical strain hits the elderly especially hard. Despite repeated demands to provide proper facilities for visitors, nothing has yet been forthcoming.

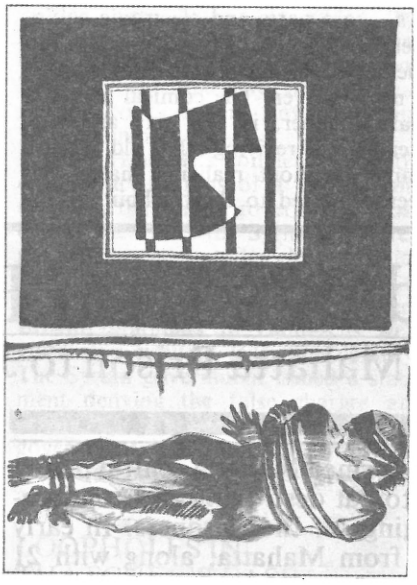
The deliberate psychological and physical suffering inflicted on families and prisoners alike is no less than inhuman. It is required that all democratic forces shoulder their reponsibility in the campaign against the inhuman practices of the reactionary Jordanian regime. The struggle for the release of these political prisoners is a must for all who consider the defense of human rights a just cause. ●

Parents' Appeal

The following letter was sent by families of political prisoners in Jordan to the Committees for the Defense of Democratic Freedoms in Jordan. At the same time, a protest letter was sent to the Jordanian Minister of Interior.

We are the families of the political prisoners in Jafre prison, who were transferred there on September 2nd, from a number of other prisons, particularly from Mahatta central prison in Amman. We condemn the decision to transfer them, considering it an intentional measure to harass them and us.

To brief you on what happened: In mid-August, the security forces stormed Mahatta prison, destroying and confiscating the prisoners' belongings, as well as bodily and verbally abusing them. This was followed by arbitrary measures preventing families from providing food and clothes, without the prison administration's providing for these needs. Visiting hours were shortened, and families body-searched in a humiliating manner before entry. As a result of all this, our prisoners declared a protest strike on August 29th, refusing the visits of their relatives. As families, we tried in our turn to protest to the International Red Cross regional office in Amman. However, we were forcibly prevented from doing so by the security forces.



On the fifth day of the strike, our detainees were transferred from Mahatta, and from prisons in Irbid, Salt, Zarqa and Al Joweideh, to the desert prison, Jafre, 300 kilometers from Amman. They were transferred late at night and taken for a seven-hour journey. Eighty-two prisoners were put in three barracks. Lack of proper medical care and a polluted water supply caused the spread of dysentery. This is not to mention the complete absence of reading materials and basic daily needs, added to inhuman treatment.

This unjust measure is a harsh blow to us as families. It means we have to travel 300 kilometers from Amman to be allowed a maximum of one hour for visiting. This means spending five hours going and another five hours returning, in addition to humiliating body searches and the strictest observation during the visit. Moreover, we have to arrange for a means of transportation ourselves, for there is no public transportation to the area of the prison.

As the party concerned with preserving the human rights of our imprisoned sons, we appeal to you to send delegations to visit this desert prison as soon as possible, in order to assess the reality of the situation and try all means to alleviate the harsh conditions. ●

NO COMMENT

While registering at the Jordanian University, students were surprised to discover that the course on the Palestinian cause, which had hitherto been obligatory for high school and university students, was no longer given such a status. It had been reduced to an elective, to be taken only by Christians in the science departments, whereas Muslims take a religious course. As yet, the Ministry of Education has voiced no justification for this.

Fascism shows its ugly face to Lebanon's Christians.

The East Beirut Battles

The results of Eli Hobeika's late September attempt to return to East Beirut highlighted the suicidal nature of the Lebanese fascists' sectarian 'dream'. It has never been viable for a minority (in this case, Lebanon's Maronite Christians, among whom the fascists have based themselves) to rule over the majority. Lebanon's particular experience has accentuated the hopelessness of such a project. Over a decade of civil war, and frontline struggle against Israeli aggression and occupation, has brought two facts to the fore. One, the deprived and dispossessed, whether Lebanese or Palestinian, will not accept their plight forever, but are constantly rising up against their national and class enemy. Two, if the Lebanese cannot unite on internal reform and a clear position vis-a-vis 'Israel', the whole future of Lebanon is called into question.

These two facts directly collide with the fascists' historical policy of monopolizing state power in order to promote the economic interests of the elite, rather than of the country, and of allying with the Zionist enemy, if need be, against the Lebanese and Palestinian masses' militancy. The internal struggles within the fascists' ranks over the past two years are due to the differing factions' ideas of how to adjust to, or resist, these realities.

In March 1985, Samir Geagea forcibly took command of the Lebanese Forces militia, in what was widely seen as a 'revolt' against the traditional Phalangist party leadership, and the possibility of Lebanon's rapprochement with Syria. In May of the same year, Hobeika ousted Geagea. Then, contrary to the course charted by President Amin Gemayel (also of the Phalangist Party), Hobeika opted for reconciliation with Syria, and signed the tripartite agreement for political reform of the Lebanese system. In January 1986, Geagea and Gemayel banded together to oust Hobeika from East Beirut, in a bloody onslaught. Evicting Hobeika did not, however, resolve the internal contradictions, as seen in the two rounds of fighting this fall between Geagea's forces and those more inclined to Hobeika's line of conciliation. (See *Democratic Palestine* no.19.)

In Geagea's original 'revolt', the heavy aggression was turned against the Palestinians of Ain Al Hilweh and Miyeh Miyeh camps, in an aborted attempt to spread fascist control in the Sidon area. However, the ensuing power struggles have demonstrated the fascists' willingness to murder, pillage and generally wreak havoc in the Christian community they claim to represent. This was especially clear in the latest round.

On September 27th, 300 militiamen led by Hobeika moved from West Beirut into the East, with the stated purpose of correcting the abnormal situation prevailing there and saving the population from Geagea's iron grip. It is noteworthy that this is the first time any military force has crossed the 'green line', established to divide East and West Beirut, as a result of the fascists' campaign in the mid-seventies, to 'cleanse' the Christian areas of poor Lebanese Moslems, Palestinians and progressive Christians as well.

Hobeika's men managed to cross this line without initially meeting resistance, and take up key posts in Ashrafiyeh. Expectedly, Geagea's forces reacted savagely, and a bloody battle ensued. Artillery engulfed the area, with shells also falling in West Beirut, and as far away as Zahle in the Bekaa Valley, where Hobeika has his headquarters. After ten hours of intense battle, Hobeika's men were forced to retreat, chiefly because of the Lebanese Army's intervention, with tank fire being directed indiscriminately in East Beirut residential areas. This development had not been anticipated by Hobeika, but it served to show how President Gemayel and major portions of the army use their power to protect Geagea's extreme fascist tendency.

Initial counts indicated 65 dead and 200 injured, many of them civilians, and over $10 million in material damage to homes and businesses in the East. The next day, the Lebanese Army foiled another Hobeika attempt to advance, but the bloodshed did not stop there. Not content with Hobeika's withdrawal, Geagea's men maintained the state of siege and launched a massacre in their own communities. Prisoners taken in the battle were summarily executed, as were suspected Hobeika sympathizers. The internal purge continued for two weeks, with at least sixty people killed in cold blood after ceasation of the battle. Reports poured in about the discovery of mass graves in the villages outside East Beirut.

Though Geagea maintained his hold on East Beirut, a serious blow had been dealt to his and the Lebanese Forces' credibility, and that of the fascists generally. Initially, the East Beirut population was shocked by the penetration of the 'green line'. The Lebanese Forces' much-vaunted security was exposed as a paper tiger before Christians who have been indoctrinated to think that the dividing line is necessary for their protection against the 'Moslem enemy'. Then, residents of the East were treated to murderous examples of the real meaning of fascist 'security' and 'stability'. The fascists' cruelty to 'their own people' exposed the disarray in the Christian ranks. The Maronite Patriarch issued a statement condemning the bloodshed, including a thinly veiled criticism of Geagea's Lebanese Forces. The fascist parties, the Phalangists and the National Liberals of Chamoun, maintained an embarrassed silence, hoping nobody would remember that it is their policy over the years that has built up to such disasters for the Christian community.

Above all, these events illustrate that the way to break fascist dominance in East Beirut, or Lebanon as a whole, is not through betting on one faction or another. Only the national democratic program forwarded long ago by the Lebanese National Movement holds out a solution. All those wanting to promote Lebanon's unity and liberation from Zionist occupation, would do well to give full support to that program. ●

Class Polarization in Egypt Today

Interview with the Egyptian Communist Party

Below is an interview with Comrade Ahmed, Politbureau member of the Egyptian Communist Party, as was printed in the no. 12, 1986 issue of *Al Nahj*, the journal of the Arab communist parties.

This interview is of special importance because of the critical stage through which the Egyptian people's struggle is passing. The economic and political 'open door' policy moved Egypt from a forward position in the Arab front opposing imperialism, to a forward position in the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary activities in the area. The Egyptian Communist Party has played an important role in opening the eyes of the Egyptian people to the reality of the trap into which they were dragged via Camp David and the 'open door' policy.

What were the main lines of the struggle after the Communist Party was revived in 1975?

The Communist Party was declared on May 1, 1975, consisting of three Marxist organizations that united early in 1973. Earlier, efforts had started to rebuild the party, through Marxist study groups that discussed this task and worked to achieve it. This coincided with the first signs of the retreat and ensuing crisis of the system of 'national capitalism', which was the prelude to the 1967 defeat

The period from the 1967 defeat until 1975 was rich in national, democratic and social struggles. Faced with the 1967 'catastrophe', our people chose to challenge the defeat. Millions took to the streets on June 9th and 10th, refusing to accept Nasser's resignation. This was not just an emotional move as some have portrayed it. On the contrary, it expressed the people's awareness of the necessity of blocking the way to capitulation. Popular consensus was predicated on the demand for 'change' and popular participation in the political life and decision-making. The people were demanding a revolutionary program that focused on arming the masses, forming a popular defense army and calling for democracy and freedom of expression. This also meant redefining the role of the proletariat and the peasants to guarantee more genuine representation within the political and mass organizations; purifying the state apparatus and army of reactionary elements; adhering to the economic and social achievements; demanding a real war economy; standing firm against all wasteful tendencies and controlling elements of capital accumulation in the private sector, etc.

Despite the spontaneous nature of their movement, the masses became a strong popular censor on the regime's policies. The mass upsurge in February and November of 1968 were among the factors that motivated the regime to wage the 1968-9 war of attrition. Sadat came to power in late 1970 in a difficult period. The people were tired of the no-war, no-peace situation. Sadat had to adjust to the escalating nationalist tide. He promoted the slogan of 'decisiveness' all through 1972, but soon his lies were uncovered. The year of decisiveness was almost over when huge student demonstrations broke out, demanding armed struggle to liberate the occupied land. University students held a sit-in. Sadat barbarically suppressed the student movement. At the end of 1972, the security forces invaded the university campus for the first time in Egypt's history. More than 1,000 students were arrested at Cairo and Ain Shams universities. The Helwan workers played a major role in this event. They and the communists joined the students in their battle; the communists' role was very prominent.

Under the pressure of popular demands, Sadat was forced to enter the October War that the people wanted as a liberation war. Sadat, in contrast, only wanted to maneuver; he viewed the war as a short-term investment for launching his march towards retreat and capitulation. At the same time, the economic 'open door' policy that he intensified after the October War, led to the deterioration of the living conditions of the toiling masses Due to this situation, social struggle increased in the early seventies. There were many workers' strikes and peasants' movements. In the Shubra Al Khaima area, there was a wide-spread strike by textile workers in the private sector. Helwan workers also organized strikes early in January 1975, and marched to Cairo in a demonstration. Workers at Al Muhallah (Egypt's largest textile factory) organized a huge strike that Sadat put down, using tanks, armed vehicles and airplanes.

This period also witnessed important democratic struggles that enforced the masses' right to organize themselves. The masses rejected the single organization formula(the one-party system). Egyptian communists made an important initiative in this regard; they started reorganizing their ranks and called for freedom to form parties and democratic organizations.

In fact, the decision to dissolve the Communist Party, in the mid-sixties, did not last for long. Developments soon revealed the seriousness of this mistake. There was realization of the necessity of having a party for the working class. There were many attempts to meet this need in different forms. Many imagined that a party of the working class could be achieved by transforming the vanguard elements within the Arab Socialist Union into a scientific socialist party. However, it was soon discovered that this was an illusion, especially since the Nasserite experience had faltered after the failure of the first five-year plan to achieve its goals in 1965, and after the development of the private sector at the expense of the public sector, and the development of the rural bourgeoisie. Then the crisis of the Nasserite regime's structure surfaced and was manifest in the 1967 'setback'. This completely eliminated what remained of the illusions about the possibility of making the regime progressive, in the absence of the working class and its communist party.

Preparations began for the formation of Marxist organizations. Even the Nasserite youth started working independently. After the 1967 defeat, groups of the youth organization were arrested and accused of forming secret Marxist circles in the youth organization. A blow was dealt to the leftist elements in the central committee of the youth organization, and later it was suspended.

The declaration of the communist party was the first violation of the ban on the right to form political organizations. Months later, the Sadat regime, for many reasons, was forced to allow the formation of trends within the Arab Socialist Union. These were developed into political parties.

In general, these were the main lines of the revolutionary struggle that coincided with the declaration of the Egyptian Communist Party.

What are the most prominent signs of class polarization at present in Egypt? Does the political alignment reflect class interests?

A number of factors are accelerating class polarization. Among these are the intensification of the present regime's crisis and isolation; the increasing gravity of the class struggle; the growing rejection of the policies of subordination; the

intensification of capitalist exploitation and how the capitalists throw the burden of the economic crisis on the masses' shoulders. Class polarization is assuming the following forms:

1. There are increasing uprisings of the popular masses to defend their interests - workers' strikes, peasant uprisings and broad student movements. For the first time in the history of Egypt, the peasants have begun to organize themselves for establishing a peasants' union. The working class is creating new forms of organizations for the struggle, such as committees to defend the public sector. Resentment and anger also extend to middle class professionals and intellectuals. We find even judges resorting to strikes to achieve their economic demands, in addition to university staff members. The solidarity of staff members and professors with the student movement increased as the students were struggling to remove guards at the university and to cancel the regime's control over the student unions. Resentment is even expressed by the central security forces, the main repressive organ of the ruling bourgeoisie.

2. There is increasing harmony between the state authority and big capital, and intermarriage between big capitalism and the bureaucratic capitalism. The role of the big bourgeoisie's organizations is prominent - the industrial association,the bank and commercial association. These function jointly with Arab, US, French and West German capital, and with the American Chamber of Commerce which includes 350 Egyptian companies! Most prominent was the role of the businessmen's association and its interrelation with the authority. All of these associations are alliances between private capital, the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, the representatives of the state and foreign monopoly capital.

3. The increasing gravity of the class struggle is annoying national bourgeois circles, even within the opposition alignments. The national bourgeoisie started to feel the danger threatening the capitalist system itself. This motivated it to call for erecting declared and undeclared bridges with the authority, and to seek the unity of the bourgeoisie. The national bourgeoisie called for reconciliation with the regime, and dialogue with the ruling party. It demanded the formation of a broad front of the five parties, including the ruling party.

4. There is an increase in instinctive hostility towards US imperialism, capitalism and the US schemes, but the masses' hostility lacks awareness of the dimension of the class struggle. Hostility is directed towards an amorphous enemy, represented in parasitic capitalism and corruption. This confusion intensifies attempts to water down the class struggle against the ruling big bourgeoisie, instead directing fire against the parasites. Recently, there was a call for the 'civic sector' to ally against the threats of a 'military coup', which in essence aims at watering down the class struggle.

5. The political alignment does not accurately reflect class interests, since the harsh restrictions on the right to organize prevent congruity between political and class alignment. The rule for parties, for example, prohibits political alignment on a class basis. It prohibits the formation of legal parties on a class basis. The latest election law consolidated this phenomenon, and imposed many 'marriages of convenience' between opposite forces. A clear example was the Muslim Brotherhood's joining ranks with the Wafd Party, and then with the Ahrar Party, after their compromise with the Umma Party failed.

Where do you place the religious trends on the map of social struggle? Is there cooperation among these trends? Is there an objective basis for cooperation between these trends and the working class in the struggle against Camp David?

The religious trends are not new phenomena in Egypt. They became prominent in the political arena during the economic crisis of the thirties. The Egyptian big bourgeoisie played a major role in embracing the Muslim Brotherhood groups that were formed during the government of Ismael Sidqi (one of the most prominent figures of the big bourgeoisie). Despite their huge membership, the Muslim Brotherhood groups were unable to achieve political weight. This was especially true after the exposure of their relations with the palace and the governments which represented only the elite. The Muslim Brotherhood tried to sabotage the national struggle; they declared their support to Sidqi the day the Egyptian national movement, led by the National Committee for Students and Workers, confronted the government and successfully combatted the planned agreement between Sidqi and British Foreign Secretary Bevin. The committee was formed by Egyptian communists, allied with other democratic elements.

During Nasser's regime, the religious trends went underground, due to the many blows that were dealt to them,and due to the national and social achievements made in this period. They appeared again after Sadat's May 15th coup in 1971. Sadat tried to rely on them to consolidate his social base. He released their prisoners and encouraged Muslim groups in the universities. He gave his blessings to their semi-fascist practices against Marxist and Nasserite trends in the universities, and enabled them to control the student unions. He also provided them with mosques and street corners as platforms for spreading their ideology.

Within a few years, the extremist Islamic trends had evoked the extremist trends in the Christian ranks. The religious trends serve as a reserve for the ruling bourgeoisie. Their policies serve the interests of the big bourgeoisie, especially the commercial bourgeoisie. This explains the support the religious trends receive from Arab oil capital, the Saudis in particular, and from big Egyptian capitalists. Everybody knows how Othman Ahmed Othman (wealthy, corrupt entrepreneur) embraced the Muslim Brotherhood when it was in conflict with the regime.

The Islamic groups were able to mobilize a broad sector of the petit bourgeoisie. The vast majority of their membership is students, professionals, craftsmen, small farmers and retailers.

The phenomenon of the religious groups is a complicated one which we cannot underestimate. We must differentiate ▶

Egyptians protest US and Israeli aggression

between the leaders and the base. Some of the leaders have close ties with Arab reactionary capital, such as the Islamic banks, with commercial and industrial big capital (the Sharif factories), and with investment companies. Some of them have dubious relations with the US intelligence service. However, the broad base consists of petit bourgeois elements that have rebelled against the prevailing capitalist society and its injustices. They suffer a great deal from the crisis, but are unable to find a revolutionary alternative. Finding no alternative, in this life, to their bitter situation, they try to escape from their reality by going backwards in time, chasing the illusion of metaphysical solutions and reverting to the life style of pre-capitalist societies. The leaders avoid offering definite political, social and economic programs, which in turn averts class polarization in the ranks of these groups. They depend solely on evoking religious feelings with 'glorious' but vague slogans about Islamic rule and Sharia (Islamic law).

The Islamic trend includes over 80 groups and circles. Among these, there are many contradictions, so deep that they accuse one another of being infidels. It is hard to imagine that these groups could merge. All attempts to unite them in the so-called Islamic Front have failed. There are two main trends among the Islamic groups. The first tends to cooperate with the regime, hoping to achieve their goals with its protection; this applies to the Muslim Brotherhood groups. The second trend rejects cooperation with the regime, seeking to replace it with Islamic rule. Included in this trend are the Jihad (holy war) groups.

Realizing that the religious trends are a real phenomenon that cannot be ignored or underestimated, our party deals with this on a clear basis:

1. We conduct a serious ideological struggle against their thoughts and ideology.

2. We demand that they politicize their activities and present a definite political and economic program. Such a program will expose the leaders and their relations with imperialist circles and the big bourgeoisie. These programs will isolate the leaders from their masses, expose their glittering moral slogans and show what interests their ideology serves. We saw one example of this when the leader of a prominent religious group was forced to speak politics with *Al Musawer* magazine. He clearly declared his concept of democracy, saying that under Islamic rule there is no room for opposition, or for any parties or organizations, not even Islamic ones. He also made clear his view that the main illness from which the society is suffering is the public sector, and called for strengthening the private sector!

3. Our party tries patiently to use any chance for joint action with the religious trends, on a minimum platform, in the struggle against Camp David and normalization with the Zionist enemy, for liberating Jerusalem, freedom of political organization and the defense of political prisoners and resisting torture. We know that it is difficult to reach a point of agreement with the Islamic groups, due to radically contradictory concepts and their blind, fanatically sectarian nature. These groups usually stay away from any joint nationalist work, but in the past period they participated in a number of activities organized as front work - the National Committee to Defend Democracy, the struggle against Israeli participation in the Cairo book fair, and the mass movement against the trial of Suleiman Khater. Their participation, however, usually confuses the national struggle, for they insist on imposing their slogans, such as instating Islamic law, on the other forces. They tend to make side battles, raising issues like atheism and Afghanistan.

With the rise of the progressive national movement, the growth of the left, the formulation of a correct, realistic program and tactics, and the presentation of revolutionary, scientific solutions to our national and social problems, we are confident that we will minimize the power of the Salafi ideology and isolate the extremist religious groups. (Salafi is an Islamic reform movement in Egypt, founded by Mohammed Ahduh in the late 1800's).

For years now, there has been talk of economic, social and political 'reforms'. What has come of these illusions?

The regime was able to implement some 'reforms', but we cannot view this question in isolation as some do. We must employ a class point of view - what is the nature of these 'reforms' and which classes benefit from them? The 'reforms' made only serve the interests of foreign and local capital; they consolidate the material base for the development of subordinate capital. The 'reforms' focused on efforts to direct the capitalist performance and the operation of the infrastructure. The toilers and middle strata do not benefit at all from these 'reforms'. On the contrary, the living conditions of the masses are getting worse. Wages have lost their real value due to spiraling inflation. Unemployment and indirect taxation are increasing. The limited advances that were made under Nasser's regime, in the fields of education, health and social services, are being retracted.

It is enough to know that the 'reforms' enacted by the ruling authority are directed by the International Monetary Fund, international capital and its institutions. These 'reforms' caused a decrease in subsidies for locally produced, basic consumer goods, and devaluation of the Egyptian pound, etc. The results of these 'reforms' are a heavy burden on the masses' shoulders, while the regime grants more benefits, such as exemptions from customs duties and taxes, to capitalist enterprises, to an estimated value of tens of billions of dollars.

The most recent statistics available, for 1975-82, reveal that for one per cent of families, income increased from 9.6% to 17.2% of gross family income, whereas for the vast majority of the masses, income is declining. The governmental 'reform' program includes decreasing the number of workers and overall wages. Ibrahim Nafee, editor-in-chief of *Al Ahram* news-

paper, predicts a 35% wage decrease in the government sector over the coming five years. We can imagine the size of unemployment if we add the two million unemployed who will return from abroad in the next two years, searching for work.

Politically, what the authority 'grants' is single precisely delineated freedom, freedom of the press, while the mass movement and freedom to organize are prohibited; strikes are considered criminal acts. President Mubarak personally amended the election law for the people's council (parliament). The new rule recognizes only one ballot - the official one. Fraud was used to deprive the nationalist opposition of representation; in this way, it was kept out of the people's council, the consultative council and the local councils.

In Mubarak's term, barbaric repression has been practiced against the legal moves of workers, students and peasants. University campuses and Al Azhar mosque were violated. Now 1,236 central security soldiers are being tried in the state security courts; 1,205 of them face capital punishment, despite the fact that there is a general consensus, even among officials, that their uprising was spontaneous. It erupted as a result of their bad living conditions and the humiliation to which they are subjected.

There are some who challenge these facts and the realities of daily life; they insist on circulating illusions about 'reforms' and counting on changes from 'within the regime'. However, these illusions find no echo among the masses. The leaders who promote such illusions are being isolated and losing credibility. There is a process of polarization going on within the parties they lead; there is a split between the leaders and their base.

I would like to stress one point in conclusion. We make a sharp distinction between the 'reforms' such as I have described, which we reject, and the necessary struggle to impose reforms and seize our rights in all aspects of life.

What are the lessons to be drawn from the elections conducted by Mubarak? What kind of democracy do you demand?

The main lessons can be summarized as follows:

1. Exposure of the illusions that there were essential differences between the regimes of Sadat and Mubarak. In fact, the latter imposed a much worse election law than his predecessors. The amendment changed the elections from a district system to one central ballot, in order to impose more restrictions and allow more chances to control the results. It guarantees depriving all opposition forces from representation in the parliament, while in the past a few individuals were able to enter. Still, the authorities were forced to falsify the election results, which exposes their claims about democracy and honesty.

2. Democracy is not a gift from God. It can never be attained by using logical, reasonable arguments, or by appealing to the 'enlightened' sector in the authority. Democracy must be seized through mass struggle, and the struggle of the conscious, organized popular movement.

3. Rejection of the tendency to accept reality and adapt to the situation. The opposition has quickly given up resisting the amended election law. They did not seriously try to exert any pressure, especially not on the mass level, even though they had a good example before them: The success of the lawyers in forcing the regime to back down on amending the rules for the lawyers' union. This achievement was due to their perseverance and the mobilization of all lawyers in the battle against the regime.

4. The political and social struggle cannot be confined to the forms and channels allowed by the authority or its law. The struggle has to be broadened through an active practice and imposed by force. In fact, the masses practice this policy, for all forms of mass struggle are illegal. The punishment for sit-ins and strikes, for example, is life imprisonment with hard labor. Only the fact of broad mass struggle prevents the regime from simply implementing this law. We raise this issue because many political leaders think a lot about legalities. As a result, they refuse to call for mass movements, or even to participate in any action that is 'against the law'; they wait for the authority's permission! Even worse, these leaders were able to obtain a court order allowing them to organize mass meetings and marches, but they backed down because this order contradicted the authority's orders!

5. Serious work to infiltrate the bourgeois institutions, mainly in order to use them as a platform for propagating the programs of the nationalist parties. This is not an aim in itself, nor the main form of struggle, though there are indications that some forces consider it so. There is no doubt that the nationalist and leftist forces benefited from the previous election campaign. It allowed some organizations to have broad contact with the masses and inform them of their program and policies. However, their failure to gain representation was followed by a period of paralysis and disunity, which only confirms the legalistic mentality of their leaders. They did not follow up and utilize the contacts gained with the mass movement, as if their job had ended with the elections.

There is a tendency to exaggerate the reasons for the relative freedom of the press, considering it the main test of the regime's 'democracy' The signs of the democracy that we are demanding stem from a class basis. We concentrate on democratic freedoms that serve the interests and struggles of the toiling masses, and allow freedom of movement for the more radical forces, i.e., the real left. Thus, we struggle to seize the right to form parties without restrictions, and the freedom to political, social and trade union organization. We struggle for ridding the parties of the authority's hegemony, and for the right to strike, sit-in and demonstrate, etc. In general, we struggle for all that serves the organization and mobilization of the toiling masses.

Can you inform us about the activities of the revolutionary movement in the mass organizations?

First, it is necessary to know about the background. The most important lesson learned by the traditional Egyptian bourgeoisie is persistently working to dismantle the revolutionary movement and, more important, isolating it from the mass movement, while seeking to control the latter, especially the labor organizations, if it is not able to liquidate them. The bourgeoisie gained experience in this field because at an early stage it was faced with well-developed, active workers' and peasants' movements. Since the 1980s, there has been a protracted, strenuous struggle by the trade union movement. With the bourgeois revolution, led by Saad Zaghloul, one of the first decisions of his government was dissolving the general workers' union. The union leadership was arrested and the workers subjugated to the worst kind of oppression for several decades. The bourgeoisie sought to dominate the movement and organization of the working class, as well as to passify it. This policy was applied by all, from the Wafd Party to the elite parties under the monarchy, to the extent that the Honorable Abbas Halim from the ruling family sought to establish a workers' party.

In Nasser's era, the state consolidated its grip on the labor organization, subordinating it to the state's bureaucratic political formation (the Arab Socialist Union); membership in the latter was required for being nominated to any trade union position. Following the collapse of the monarchy, the regime violently suppressed the peaceful strike of the Kafr Dawar workers. The military court instituted the death sentence which was carried out on two union leaders, Khamis and al Bakarey. In spite of this, the workers supported the July revolution, especially in the period when its nationalist position was consolidated after the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956. The progressive direction pursued by the regime in the social and political arenas gave the workers many gains. Then came the 1967 defeat. This led the workers, together with all the popular ranks, to confront the capitulationists, to reject defeat and expose its internal causes, to move for seizing their right to participate in decision-making, and supervise the plan for 'change' which became a mass demand for insuring the base of liberation.

Following the coup of Sadat in the interests of domestic and foreign capital, the workers' movement was subjected to double hardship. There was vicious, direct suppression and confinement of the labor movement, and an attack on all of the workers' social and economic gains. This attack culminated in the open door policy. For example, after adoption of the laws to encourage «foreign and Arab capital», law 43 was issued in 1974, prohibiting the formation of labor unions among workers in Arab and foreign firms.

When the growth of the trade union movement is accompanied by the escalation of the national struggle, and their reciprocal influence, the workers' movement can rise to lead the national struggle. We are aware of this phenomenon in the history of our struggle, during the nationalist revolution of 1919, and after the second world war when the Executive Committee for Workers and Students led the movement for national and social struggle. After the defeat of 1967, it again occupied an effective position with the escalation of the social and national struggle against Camp David and the open door policy, which are the two basic components of Egypt's political and economic dependency.

Currently, the Labor Union Confederation includes 23 general unions and 2,350 labor committees. Its membership reaches two million workers. The rules and regulations for forming unions and electing the leadership were especially formulated to prevent honorable workers from being represented. This makes the unions a plaything in the hands of the authority. The labor minister is president of the general union. A series of laws, especially no. 35 of 1979 and no. 1 of 1981, eliminate most of the jurisdiction and rights of the labor unions, and strengthen the central leadership of the general unions. This leadership is composed of mercenaries and agents of the regime - big administrators and technocrats, i.e., a yellow leadership. The attorney general is entitled to object to the workers' nominations, which serves as a filter to eliminate 'undesirable elements'.

The struggle is intensifying between the workers and the yellow leadership of the confederation; the workers are gaining strength and have made some accomplishments in the political and trade union fields. In many instance, they have been able to impose their will on the authority and its agents within the unions. This reality has been confirmed in the escalation of the struggle for economic and social demands, and in the political arena as well. As an example, the head of the confederation accompanied Sadat on his visit to Jerusalem and endorsed the Camp David accords, whereas the working masses rejected the accords. The authority failed to impose the visit of the former Israeli president Navon as planned to a series of work places, because the workers threatened to prevent his visit by force. These are indications that the trade union movement has liberated itself from the imposed yellow leadership. The movement attained a tangible victory in the most recent elections, especially in the trade union committees. This advance is attributable to the increased influence and persistent activity of the leftist and revolutionary parties, particularly our party, in the ranks of the workers' movement.

The same phenomenon is apparent in the rural areas where agricultural workers have been deprived of unions, even in Nasser's era. However, at that time, the cooperative movement was activated and expanded with the land reform laws, even though it remained under the control of the bureaucracy, agricultural supervisors and the rich in the rural areas. Still, even in the absence of unions, there was a revolutionary movement, as was seen in the 1919 revolution, in the peasant uprisings prior to the July 1952 revolution and during Nasser's era. The revolutionary peasant forces formed a union in 1983; it imposed its existence and widened its field of activity, despite being deprived of legitimate status. It functions independently of the legal political parties. A violent struggle is going on now against the authority's efforts to apply the law for «organizing relations between owners and tenants,» which was formulated in the interests of rural capitalism. In March and April, the peasants took up arms to confront the security forces that came to evict them from their land. This happened in the Bahout area, Talkha and Al Hamra mansion in Buheirah, and the Qanayat Center and Akyad village in the eastern province.

The 1919 revolution, in the course of its battles, gave rise to the slogan of «Long live the students and workers.» This expressed the particularity of the Egyptian student movement and its nationalist and socialist character in the liberation struggle. Throughout the student movement's history, the Marxist and revolutionary organizations have had a significant impact, especially since the mid-forties and the organization of the Student Executive Committees. On February 17, 1946, the Executive Committee for Students and Workers was formed; it proved capable of leading an important stage in the national struggle.

The July 1952 revolution led to the stagnation of the student struggle, but the 1967 defeat quickly reignited student demonstrations in February and November 1968. This was the beginning of the large student uprising in January 1972, and led to the formation of the National Committee for Students which included approximately 100,000 students. The left, especially the Marxists, played a principal role in leading this battle.

The regime used police repression, and consolidated the religious groups, as tools for confronting the revolutionary and leftist groups at the universities. The movement fluctuated until the February 1984 uprising which was also joined by the university professors. The essence of this uprising was the demand to cancell the student rules and regulations, and the university guards; to liberate the student union from the regime's control; for freedom of political, social and cultural activities, and restricting the union's membership to students. The current bylaws stipulate teachers' membership and assigns one of them veto power over the union's decisions. This caused the International Student Union to refuse to recognize the union.

There was an upsurge in the student movement, concurrent with the regression of the religious groups, the advance of the leftists and the development of the national movement's struggle. There were a series of strikes, demonstrations and marches of university, college and school students, protesting the weakness of the authority in the face of US and Israeli aggression which reached a climax in the bombing of the PLO's headquarters in Tunis, and the highjacking of an Egyptian civil aircraft by the US Air Force, during and after the trial and assassination of Suleiman Khater. The left made some gains in the 1984-5 student union elections, despite all the pressure, restrictions, diversions and fraudulence, and despite the fact that hundreds of leftist leaders were prevented from being nominated.

In the arena of youth work, all the parties have formed youth organizations. These are limited in influence, functioning as offices subordinate to the parties to which they are connected. In contrast, the Egyptian Democratic Youth Union, the first youth organization to be organizationally independent of all the parties, has a comprehensive program for youth and is led by progressives.

The professional unions have played a prominent role in defending the interests of the various sectors and in the political arena. The lawyers' guild led major struggles, defending their rights and resisting Sadat's policy, Camp David and the normalization of relations with 'Israel'. The lawyers' guild has supported the nationalist and progressive movements throughout the Arab world, especially the Palestinian revolution. In this, they were joined by nationalist members and leaders of other unions and clubs at educational institutions. These unions and clubs are fields of continuous struggle between the authority's desire to dominate, and the nationalist and democratic forces.

Our party is present in all these fields. We play an influential role in mobilizing for political, economic and social demands, in coordination with other leftist and nationalist forces. We took initiative to form defense committees for the causes of the masses and the Arab nation, such as the Egyptian Committee to Defend Freedom, the National Committee to Defend Democracy, the Committees to Defend the Public Sector, the Committee to Defend Nationalist Education, and the Support Committee for the Palestinian and Lebanese People. However, the ideological and political influence of the left generally is much greater than its accomplishments in the mass organizations. ●

To be continued in the next issue.

Star Wars Vs. Peace

On October 11-12th, in Reykjavik, Iceland's capital, the second meeting between US President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev was held amidst US-generated tension. The summit ended without setting a date for a full-scale summit in the US between the two leaders, and without reaching accords concerning arms limitations, despite the hopeful atmosphere in the first rounds of the negotiations. Disappointment came quickly after the fourth round, in which Reagan's insistence on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), known as Star Wars, caused the summit to fail.

During the two days in which the leaders met, four rounds of negotiations took place, amounting to 11 hours and 54 minutes. The unexpected length of the talks was in itself an indication of how close the two sides came to making historic decisions which would lessen international tension, decrease the threat of war and pave the way for restoring detente. However, the results of the summit did not match the hopeful, early indications.

Despite disagreements on the agenda and priorities, there was agreement between Gorbachev and Reagan concerning the principal issues to be discussed in the meeting. The disagreement occurred in the final round, when Reagan insisted on continuing Star Wars' testing not only in laboratories, but also in outer space. To this, Gorbachev said that only «a madman would accept such a request.»

Is it then a surprise ending? To answer that, one should recall the atmosphere which affected the relations between the two countries prior to the summit. Then, one can conclude that it was not a surprise ending. The summit was held as the US administration was intensifying its aggressive steps which would damage US-Soviet relations, and thus bring closer the threat of nuclear war. One should recall how the Reagan Administration tried to make a big case out of the arrest of Daniloff, the American journalist caught spying in Moscow. The US then expelled 25 UN-based Soviet diplomats, and carried out a nuclear explosion in Nevada, just one day after approving Gorbachev's call for a summit. Last, but not least, there were Caspar Weinberger's statements about the «Soviet threat». Recalling these actions is enough to make one realize that the results of the summit matched the preparations made by the US, despite the hopeful atmosphere which predominated during the first three rounds of the talks.

A summit held in such an atmosphere, with Washington's insistence on Star Wars vs. the Soviet Union's striving for peace on earth, could only end one way. The contradictions between the two sides were not only on principal issues such as the SDI. There were even contradictions concerning the nature of the meeting itself. While the Soviets viewed it as a «work meeting» to complete what had been agreed upon in Geneva, but not implemented, the US viewed it as a preparatory rehearsal for the next summit.

The Soviet Union showed great flexibility and gave major concessions in order to reach accord on the principal issues. The Soviets proposed a program of three parts, aiming at: (1) reduction of the strategic arsenal by 50% within five years; (2) elimination of all intermediate-range nuclear warheads in Europe and 100 in Asia; and (3) banning SDI testing in space for at least ten years. During the negotiations, the two sides basically agreed on the first two, but Reagan's insistence on SDI testing in outer space brought the summit to a deadend, with no accord on the first two parts either.

Despite the failure, Gorbachev expressed his belief that the possibility for continuing dialogue still exists, as does the possibility for another summit.

As expected, Reagan tried to blame the Soviet Union for the summit's disappointing conclusion, in order to escape from the embarrassment his administration suffered due to its insistence on SDI testing, with no consideration for the world's safety and peace. Reagan countered the Soviet Union's insistance on eliminating or freezing Star Wars, by suggesting to «keep Star Wars, even after strategic ballistic missiles were removed from both arsenals ten years down the line.» Ridiculously, Schultz argued that SDI should be retained as an «insurance policy against cheating.» However, to the USSR and the world, it was obvious that the US was seeking military superiority through SDI and that Reagan's 'Soviet-to-blame' theory was just a pretext for achieving that.

It was not only the summit which showed how far from each other the two leaders are on peace issues. The Soviet Union long ago initiated a peace offensive with no positive response from the US. The simplest example is the Soviets' unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, which started in August 1985, and is still in effect. Another example is the Soviet proposal to completely eliminate the nuclear arsenals of both countries before the year 2000. All these Soviet peace initiatives were aiming at a safer world. In a press conference after the summit, Gorbachev said that the SDI does not «frighten the USSR even from a military standpoint» and that the Soviet Union would have the answer for it without much «sacrifice on our part». However, he noted that this problem has many aspects. It generates suspicion between the two countries, and would ultimately lead to the development of new, sophisticated weapons and a new stage of the arms race, whose consequences no one can know. Gorbachev remarked that it seemed that the Reagan Administration, which claims to be the protector of the US and 'freedom', had come to the summit without precise proposals-empty-handed in fact. All it brought were «old proposals which emit naphthalene odors» and which complicate the Geneva negotiations.

Despite the Soviet Union's flexibility, the Reagan Administration's obsession with attaining military superiority brought to an end this summit which so many people were hoping would reduce the threat of nuclear war. Comrade Gorbachev and the Soviet Union achieved a great moral victory by winning the propaganda battle against SDI in this round, showing clearly that it caused the failure of the Reykjavik summit and the efforts to reach accords on reducing tension and the nuclear arsenals of both sides. Reagan's refusal of the Soviet proposals ruined a great opportunity for reducing not only the arms race, but also international tension. Grasping this chance, by contrast, might have opened the doors to restoring detente.

Events the first week of November confirmed the ongoing nature of US imperialism's determination to sabotage attempts at disarmament. In Vienna, at the Conference on European Security and Cooperation, Soviet Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnadze met with US Secretary of State Schultz for five hours on two days, reaffirming the Soviets' interest in continuing dialogue. The meeting was to be a continuation of negotiations on the outline accords reached at the Reykjavik meeting. However, as Star Wars did to the Reykjavik summit, so it did to this meeting. According to Shevardnadze, the US tried to «beat a complete retreat from the high ground reached in Iceland» and put forth «a mixed bag of old mothballed views and approaches,» including points that the Soviet Union had already conceded in Reykjavik. Detente remains far away due to US imperialism's striving to attain strategic military superiority. ●

Copenhagen

World Peace Conference

In late October, 2,500 delegates from peace and anti-nuclear groups, progressive parties and countries, solidarity organizations and liberation movements gathered in Copenhagen, Denmark, for the World Peace Congress. This was the biggest non-governmental, international peace conference ever held in a western country. It marked the UN International Year for Peace.

The conference was divided into topic centers. Topic center no. 1 dealt with «Peace and Justice», emphasizing the linkage between these two concepts, and the necessity of eliminating the nuclear threat and the arms race altogether. It was noted that the millions spent on the arms race «could significantly improve the situation of 2/3 of humanity (referring particularly to the developing countries) and solve the problem of famine.»

Topic center no. 2 on disarmament focused on the situation after the Reykjavik summit, noting that the Soviet Union's proposals «have opened new prospects... for the endeavor of the peace movement» and labeling the SDI as «the principal obstacle to reaching a world free of nuclear weapons.»

Topic center no. 3, entitled «Peace and Liberation», focused on the need for eliminating apartheid. Criticism was voiced of «the illegal behavior of the Reagan Administration, Israel and the apartheid regime» and of the US and Britain's «abusive use of the veto» to protect South Africa against sanctions. The conflict in the Western Sahara was raised and deplored as a remaining vestige of colonialism, worsened by the Moroccan regime's illegal occupation. Also touched upon was the «continued occupation by the US army of a part of Korean territory and the use of South Korea as one of the largest nuclear bases in the region.» Also, the nuclear alliance between South Africa and 'Israel' was denounced. Many participants raised the Palestinian issue, stressing that peace in the Middle East is inseparable from restoring the rights of the Palestinian people. There was condemnation of the Israeli army's repression of the civilian population in occupied Palestine and South Lebanon.

There was much condemnation of the aggressive US policy in Latin America, especially the use of «the territory of Panama, El Salvador and Honduras to launch attacks on Nicaragua.» Repression in Pakistan was brought up, as was the necessity of Puerto Rico's independence. Based on the view that «liberation, anti-apartheid, anti-racism, anti-zionism and world peace issues cannot be separated,» this topic center distinguished itself by forwarding concrete proposals. It advocated campaigns for sanctions against South Africa, for the release of all political prisoners there and in Namibia, and for greater support to the ANC, SWAPO, POLISARIO and Nicaragua. It was also suggested that 1987 be proclaimed Palestine Year.

Other topic centers dealt with «Peace and Human Rights», «Peace and Human Needs», «Living for Peace» and «Peace and Trust».

SOLIDARITY WORK WITH PALESTINE

Our correspondent took the opportunity to discuss the state of the solidarity work with the Palestinian people, with various Danish organizations working in the Palestine Campaign. Hanne Christensen, a leading activist, explained: «The Palestine Campaign was formed in 1982, immediately after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Before that, solidarity work was carried out by various organizations... In 1982, all these gathered in the same framework, and new forces entered, including trade unions which had not previously been involved. We were more than 20 organizations. We had a very big demonstration against the Israeli invasion with 15-20,000 people. It was the second biggest anti-imperialist demonstration ever held in Denmark... Alot of ordinary people reacted very strongly. They were shocked by the invasion. All their ideas about Israel as a democracy, and a way to solve the Jewish problem, were shaken...»

A comrade of the Danish Communist Party added: «When there were attacks on the Sabra-Shatila refugee camps, a group of us went to the US embassy and painted the Palestinian flag on their grass and on Israel's Place (a square in Copenhagen). Every time we made demonstrations, more organizations came to take part. We have changed public opinion a little, but we must do still more.»

Hanne continues, «The activities of the campaign continued to be strong and effective for a year... Then things returned to almost how they had been before 1982... When the bourgeois media does cover the Middle East, they try to confuse people by the way they describe Syria, Jordan, the forces in Lebanon, etc... We are not capable of confronting this kind of misinformation... It doesn't make things easier that the PLO is not united and one doesn't know exactly what the PLO will do. We are confronted with that kind of question every time we try to convince the trade unions to be more active in solidarity with the Palestinians.»

«We try to emphasize the situation in the West Bank and Gaza, where you have a very clear situation - there is the occupation and how it treats the Palestinians... You can take a stand on these things, criticizing Israel and its base. You can develop support to the Palestinian people and their right to exist and have political activities... We have talked about other ways of strengthening the solidarity. One is to connect Israel with South Africa; if people are against apartheid, they should be against Israel too, because it is exactly the same.

Also, Israel is a nuclear power. The peace movement should not accept that nuclear power be used as a form of pressure, and that's how Israel will use it. It is not just that the regional conflict could endanger world peace because the US or Soviet Union will start using atomic weapons, as some say. It is more obvious that Israel will use them first...»

Preben Moller Hansen is the chairman of the Danish Seaman's Union, and leader of Fealles kurs klubben, a militant labor organization that recently formed a new political party which bases its work on Leninism. Referring to their international contacts, Preben noted, «We have friendly relations with the PFLP. This is our best contact in the Middle East. We also have contact with the PLO office here, but we haven't done much with this, because we understand that Mr. Arafat is on a wrong course... We have to support the groups that fight in Lebanon for the interests of the working class, and we have the opinion that the PFLP is doing that.»

Asked about the Israeli-Jordanian policy for joint rule of the occupied West Bank, he replied: «No normal, thinking man, even if he is far away from Palestine, can accept Camp David, for it means a defeat for the working class. On the other hand, King Hussein comes with his plan which nobody can accept. You have only one way and that is to fight for your own country on your own grounds, not on other people's... Otherwise you will be as slaves for 100 years. You must try and get Palestine in your own way.»

Preben concurred with others involved in the Palestine Campaign, that the division in the PLO detracts from the solidarity work with Palestine. He also pointed out that many

internationalists are giving priority to supporting Nicaragua and the struggle against apartheid. The Danish Seaman's Union does alot of international political work as well as trade union struggle. In coordination with other unions, they devote much efforts to the fight against apartheid, and are part of an international network to discover and stop arms shipments to South Africa.

LIBERATION (BRITAIN)

Our correspondent interviewed Tony Gilbert, general secretary of Liberation that was formed fifty years ago as the League Against Imperialism. In Britain, all the major trade unions are affiliated to Liberation, and over 100 MPs are sponsors. Tony Gilbert told the following about the progress of solidarity with the Palestinians in Britain:

«In the Middle East, the dangers to world peace are great. Imperialism has got roots and the support of reactionary regimes, chief of all, Israel. It is beginning to be understood in Britain, that unless the struggle for the liberation of the Palestinians, the ending of now 20 years of military occupation of Palestinian lands, is resolved, there can be many wars in the Middle East, but there could be an even greater one. Therefore we are turning our attention in particular to the question of the Middle East, and with success. Even five or six years ago, there was confusion in the British labor and progressive movement. Many progressive MP's called themselves Labor Friends of Israel, because the Israelis traded on the 6 million dead as if the Palestinians were responsible for the deaths in the concentration camps. They have used the holocaust, but as they moved into more and more aggression in the Middle East, people began to realize that this is not defense. Sabra and Shatila will never be forgotten. The Israeli occupation forces are now treading the very same ground and using the very same methods as the Nazis used in their concentration camps.

«Now we have helped to organize Labor Friends of Palestine, Trade Union Friends of Palestine. We are beginning, in Britain, to have the Zionists on the run. Our job now is to expose them fully, so that everybody understands that peace and justice in the Middle East depend in the main on freedom for the Palestinians...»

In general, the peace conference in Copenhagen presented a great opportunity to meet with progressive forces from all over the world. In addition to those we have mentioned in the previous article, our correspondent had the opportunity to interview: SWAPO of Namibia, ANC of South Africa, POLISARIO, the Communist Party of India, comrades from Afghanistan, the Tudeh Party and Fedayeen Majority from Iran, British Labor MP Ernie Roberts, leaders of the World Peace Council from different countries, the Communist Party of Cuba, Farabundo Marti from El Salvador, comrades from Nicaragua, and the Left Socialist Party of Denmark. Unfortunately, time and space limitations prevent us from printing more than two of the many useful interviews.

Gus Newport

Interview with Gus Newport, mayor of Berkeley, California, and US vice-president of the World Peace Council

From your position in the World Peace Council, how do you see the US's role in world peace?

The US is certainly the no. 1 perpetrator against any peaceful solutions or reasonable agreement for a test ban, etc. It is certainly the no. 1 violator of the rights of third world countries, because of its imperialist, expansionist tactics. One has only to look at its support to 'constructive engagement' in South Africa, its continued aid to the contras in Nicaragua and to the government in El Salvador which is fighting a criminal war, its use of Israel as a supplier of weapons to dictatorships throughout the world. It has constantly responded only to Israel in the Middle East, and won't even consider or include the Palestinian people in any negotiations for a peaceful solution... Our foreign policy is strictly dictated by protecting investments and multinational corporations. Very few Americans are aware of this, but I think more and more are becoming aware, because it drains the resources of our cities. As the defense budget increases, resources for human needs in the United States decreases, so we have a high rate of unemployment, a lot of drug use, school drop-outs, people losing their homes and sleeping in the street. The working class people in the United States has become the victim of our foreign policies.

Doesn't this put a direct relationship between people in the third world and people in the US, who are both adversely affected by this policy?

That's a fact. I think that the freedom of the people of the third world is tied directly to the freedom of the people of color in the US, and vice versa. The US continues expanding its world markets. It then exports blue collar industrial jobs to cheap labor markets, to take advantage of paying slave wages to people of the third world. These are the types of jobs that Black people, Hispanics, Asian, people of color in general are most qualified to work in the US. So it creates unemployment, unrest, human disaffection, etc. The sooner that the people of South Africa, the Palestinians and others become free, the sooner the people in US inner cities become free, because those jobs then revert back to our people, because as you people become free, you will negotiate meaningful wages...

What is your view of the Palestinian question?

The Palestinians have received the worst treatment of any people in the world. What's happening in Palestine is another apartheid situation. Often when you discuss the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, especially with people of the Israeli lobby, they will suggest that to take a stand on the side of the Palestinian people is anti-Semitic. I always remind such people that the Palestinians and Arabs are Semites too. What about them?

Furthermore, the facts being created in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are more and more violating the rightful lands of the Palestinian people... The Zionists always say that the PLO has never respected their right to secure borders. My response is that nobody knows what borders you're talking about - those of 1947, or those after the 1967 war? Of course, they always define the Palestinians, Nicaraguans and Cubans as terrorists. Terrorism is always defined from without, never from within. I know what is happening in the case of the Palestinians and other third world peoples is a political response, because of their demand to establish self-determination for themselves. The true terrorists are the United States, Israel and Great Britain who have chosen to make illegal strikes against Lebanese civilians, Gaddafi, Grenada, etc. We have to redefine terrorism in our words...

If we had some principled politicians in the US, they would cut off all aid to Israel immediately, both because of its criminal acts against the Palestinian people and as arms supplier to totalitarian governments that are oppressing their people. I

don't think there will ever be a peaceful solution unless you bring the Palestinians and their representative, the PLO, to the table to talk about the situation...

Also, we have to find some way of educating the American people, for they have been led to believe that the Palestinians are nothing but terrorists. They don't know the history or the sufferings of the Palestinian people... I don't know how we educate the American people on that, because the media is controlled by the defense industry and the Reagan Administration; the Israeli lobby is the strongest lobby in the United States. The sooner we are able to encourage the kinds of politicians who have principles, but of course, one has to question the nature of the democracy of our own society, and that becomes a long story... ●

SWAPO

INTERVIEW WITH SWAPO PRESIDENT SAM NUJOMA

How do you describe the current struggle being waged by SWAPO?

We have declared the year 1986 as the year of general mobilization for final victory. This year alone, our combatants managed to bring down four South African military convoy planes and four helicopters. Of course, there is a news blackout on Namibia, so very little is known about our struggle at present. Actually, our combatants are facing the occupying troops daily and inflicting heavy casualties on their forces. That is the military situation...

In Namibia, we were not allowed to hold public meetings for the past five or six years. But early this year, our people defied this rule and called a meeting without the consent of the authorities. The meeting went on, but later the organizers were picked up and brought before a court of law. The judge said that they cannot go on preventing SWAPO from holding meetings, whereas the other so-called parties are allowed to hold meetings, for then we would have no other alternative but to continue with the armed struggle. As a result of this court decision, our people mounted a challenge. They called a meeting July 27th, which was attended by the overwhelming majority, including whites. The attendance was estimated at 25-30,000. From that time, our people have continued to hold meetings. The security police no longer interfere. We hope this will continue.

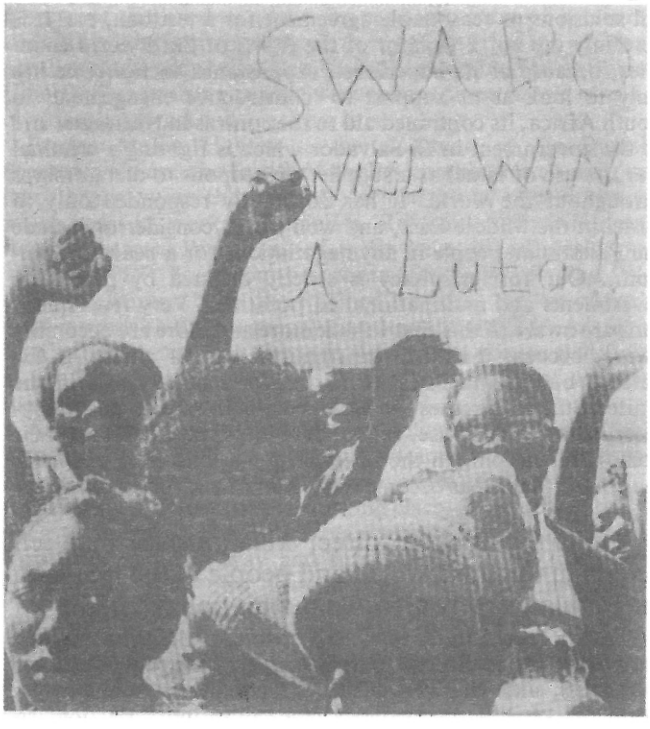
We very much appreciate the support we receive from the international community. At the moment there is nothing going on concerning the international political effort to find a solution, because the Reagan Administration introduced the so-called linkage, requiring that the Cuban internationalist troops be withdrawn from Angola before Namibia can be decolonized. We reject this, because the two issues cannot be linked. The Cuban troops are in Angola on the invitation of the legitimate government there and can only be withdrawn through an agreement by the two sovereign states (Cuba and Angola). Namibia has been on the agenda of the international community for the past forty years. It is the reponsibility of the international community to see to it that resolution 435 is implemented. Now we are appealing to the international community to condemn the US administration for introducing this irrelevant issue of linkage.

'Israel' supports the apartheid regime in South Africa. How do you see these relations?

It is quite surprising that there is a good relationship between Israel and South Africa today, because it is a known fact that during the second world war, the party that today rules South Africa was on the side of the fascists in Germany. These are the people who were eliminating the Jews, but today the former Nazis in South Africa are cooperating with the Israeli regime. We condemn this alliance between the two, because the Israelis are fighting the Palestinian people, and want to subjugate them, while the apartheid regime wants to subjugate the black people in South Africa and Namibia. The two are cooperating in this field, and I think it is high time for the PLO and SWAPO to also strengthen our ties.

How do you evaluate the US and Western European sanctions against South Africa? How will this affect your struggle?

If sanctions are imposed by all the freedom-loving countries in the world today, I am sure this would mean making headway with the struggle in both Namibia and South Africa. However, the western European countries, particularly Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany, are reluctant to impose comprehensive, mandatory sanctions against South Africa, because of their own economic interests. We look at this as racism because when it comes to their own interests, they impose sanctions. For example, Britain imposed sanctions against Argentina, but today Thatcher says that economic sanctions don't work when it is a question of South Africa. We, struggling here, feel this as racism. If one white man is killed, you can hear the whole world condemn that. Yet if hundreds of blacks or Arabs are killed, they don't care. Perhaps they assume all these are just like flies! ●



50 Years Later

The Message That Still Hasn't Gotten Through

By Heithem Adnan

I know not what to ask myself after reading the chapter entitled «The Message Which Arrived 32 Years Later» in Ghassan Kanafani's story, «Um Saad». Shall I ask myself if history is repeating itself? Should I say that great men truly possess the ability to foresee the future? Shall I ask whether our intellectuals have been able to bring home this message after fifty years? Or maybe I should ask about the fate of a people and revolution whose leadership was incapable of reading this people's history and heritage correctly?

I do not know, but when I read the chapter, I realized that the message has not gotten through, contrary to what Ghassan Kanafani wrote, that the message arrived thirty-two years later.

That day Um Saad went to Ghassan. She was distraught, and he asked, «What has happened, Um Saad?»

She pulled out a much folded and wrinkled piece of paper from her bosom, and thrust it towards him: «Hassan has read this to me. Ever since, I have been troubled.»

Naturally the letter had come from her son, Saad, who represents the real revolutionaries. The letter spoke of his comrade, Laith, who had been taken prisoner by the Zionists. Saad had discovered that Laith's family might turn to their cousin, a certain Abdel Moula, to mediate for their son. Abdel Moula was known as a collaborator, besides being one of the richer feudalists. Ghassan asked Um Saad why such a thing should distrub her. She replied that Saad had written to ask her to go to Laith's mother to stop her from turning to collaborators to beg favors for revolutionaries. Laith had told Saad that if anything happened to him, and his family tried to write to Abdel Moula, then Saad would be left with no alternative but to shoot them - pure and simple, to shoot the family of a revolutionary, if they turn to those who do not participate in the revolution, but plot to nip the bud of revolutionary blood before it blooms.

Um Saad was completely confused, and Ghassan asked if she was sure that Laith's family had written to Abdel Moula. She was not sure and must see.

Here I asked myself whether Laith's family, in 1986, would write to Mubarak or Hassan II or Hanna Siniora or their 'martyr' Zafer Al Masri, to beg favors for him now, in his current dilemma. I wondered whether the likes of Saad should shoot Laith's family or not.

My uncertainty increased with that of Um Saad as I continued to read and found her saying, «As soon as I heard Abdel Moula's name when Hassan was reading to me, I shook as if evil spirits had possessed me...»

This, of course, was because Um Saad was sure that Abdel Moula was the one who had killed Fadhil, the revolutionary of 1936, although «he did not carry a gun and shoot.» When Ghassan asked how a person could kill another without carrying a gun and shooting, she said: «In the revolution of 1936, Fadhil went up to the mountains. He was barefoot and carried a Martin rifle... He was away for a long time.» Um Saad was still at the beginning of her life then. She used to hear about things without completely comprehending them. She spoke of the six-month strike and the peasants who carried arms and went up to the mountains. Now, however, matured by life's bitter experiences, she remembers the events and says: «Then came the letter from the Arab kings, and the men returned to their homes.»

Then I wondered, «Did not a similar letter descend on us from the Arab kings assembled at Fez in 1982?

Um Saad had this to add to Ghassan: «The men returned to their homes... Now, if you ask me how, I wouldn't know. However, I do remember one event clearly.» Naturally, this event was the revolutionary Fadhil's heeding the letter of the Arab kings, whether in 1936, 1982 or thereafter. «Fadhil returned with those who returned to the village. He came down from the hills barefooted as he had ascended. The road must have been long, for he reached the square as the last ones reached the neighboring village. His clothes and feet were torn. He was completely exhausted and drained.»

I don't believe his condition differed much from that of those 'Fadhils' who reached the squares of Tunis, Algiers, Khartoum, Damascus or Sanaa after leaving Beirut.

Um Saad went on to recall... Now nobody remembers with her or can read her thoughts: «The square was teeming with people and Fadhil could not find a place except on the threshold of a home at the end of the square. He sat down to catch his breath and try to take care of his torn feet that were filled with dirt and thorns and blood. I was standing with the women, not far from him. I wouldn't have noticed him to begin with, had I not heard a woman say that it was Fahdil who works in the oil press, one of the first to go up in the mountains. The people began to applaud. We looked up and saw Abdel Moula ascending a table. He spoke and was applauded. I do not remember now what he said, but no doubt he spoke of the revolution, of victory, and of the English and the Jews. I do not know why at that moment I looked at Fadhil. I saw him stretch out his arms to the people, saying, «Hey you, it was I whose feet were torn, and now he is the one you clap for?»

I do not know why, but when I read these words, I imagined pictures of stouthearted fighters sitting exhausted in the squares of Tunis, Khartoum or Sanaa. One of the sons of King Hassan stands, speaking of victory amidst the applause of the Arab masses. I do not know why I began to imagine the pictures of heroes of successful guerrilla operations, pictures of the destruction wreaked by vengeful Zionist air raids, and pictures of tremendous demonstrations in the occupied territories, carrying pictures of Yaser Arafat.

However, my mental wanderings were cut short. Ghassan Kanafani summoned me to continue reading his story. He wrote that Um Saad «again spread out the piece of white paper, frayed by folding, before my eyes.» At this point, I felt that the words of Ghassan were like hammer blows on my head. I felt as if he had returned from the grave, the parts of his body reassembled once again in defiance of the Zionists' explosives. He rose to grasp each one of us with what remains of Palestinian feeling, to shake us and say: «Go and tell Laith's family in Tunis, in Sanaa, in Baghdad and everywhere, 'No, do not go to Abdel Moula or Mubarak or Hassan II or any one of his family, or else I will raise my gun and shoot you.'»

Um Saad once again intervenes to say: «Now, Abdel Moula once again, after twenty years, can you imagine?... How can such a thing happen?... I am not discussing Laith... Fadhil died afterwards. Some say he died of tuberculosis at the oil press. Others say he was killed in the 1948 war. Still others say that he left Palestine in 1949, returning afterwards, only to be killed on the road. However, this is not our subject.»

Of course, this is not the subject. The subject is that Laith's family should know what happened to Fadhil and not go to Abdel Moula. The subject is that the families of all the Laiths, wherever they are posted, should not go to the Moulas in Cairo, Rabat, Amman or Riyadh.

In 1968, Um Saad asked Ghassan, «If I went to Um Laith and reminded her of the story of Fadhil and Abdel Moula, would it do any good?» Ghassan answered with a question: «Maybe, but why do you speak as if you are sure that Laith's family is thinking of writing to Abdel Moula?» Um Saad answered, «I'm not sure of anything, but I must do something.»

At this point, I imagined Ghassan rewriting the story of Um Saad in 1986, and asking her if she is sure that Laith's family is thinking of writing Abdel Moula. I also imagined Um Saad speaking of the daily shuttles between Cairo, Amman, Rabat and Baghdad. I imagined her speaking to Ghassan about the Cairo declaration, the Amman accord, about the plan for 'improving the quality of life' in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, about Rashad Shawwa and Mohammed Milhem, and about the question of accepting resolution 242 and autonomy.

Um Saad suggests a solution to the dilemma of Fadhil and Laith: «If on that day, Fadhil had gotten up and shot Abdel Moula, would not the problem have ended?»

Ghassan answers: «If he had done so, the people would have killed him.» Ghassan explains why this would have happened, relying on the cleverness of Um Saad in knowing that, at a particular moment, it can be difficult for revolutionaries to shoot collaborators who are dressed in patriotic garb, or whom the people, the revolutionaries included, have made into a symbol.

However, the real solution does not escape the clever Um Saad. She responds to Ghassan, saying, «It's true that people would have killed him that day... it would have been better for him had he remained in the mountains and not attended that party» - exactly as happened to some of Laith's family who attended the 1982 'party' in Fez. Ghassan answers her: «If he had remained in the mountains, Um Saad, Abdel Moula would never have been able to hold the party.»

The excuse of Fadhil of 1936 was, in Um Saad's eyes, that «nobody was there to warn poor Fadhil.» What is the excuse of Fadhil of 1986, when many were there to warn him? After fifty years, the message has still not gotten through. Is anybody listening?

Protests on Balfour Day

November 2nd is infamous as the date of the letter sent in 1917, by British Foreign Secretary Balfour to the Zionist leader, Lord Rothschild, promising support for a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine. This letter, known as the Balfour Declaration, marked the beginning of official imperialist sponsorship of the Zionist program to colonize and usurp Palestine. Each year, this day is marked by the Palestinian people under occupation, with protests and acts of resistance against the Israeli occupiers.

This year the Zionists clenched their iron fist particularly hard on November 2nd. A virtual state of siege prevailed around many of the towns and camps of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Nonetheless there were mass demonstrations denouncing the occupation and imperialism. The people threw stones at Zionist vehicles, burned tires and blockaded roads. The Zionist forces opened fire and used teargas to disperse demonstrators in Jerusalem. Militant demonstrations in nearby Qalandia camp and in Al Bireh were brutally suppressed. In Al Amari camp, near Ramallah, demonstrators stoned an Egged bus, injuring one Zionist. The forces imposed a siege on the camp. Bir Zeit and Najah universities were also besieged, following demonstrations.