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DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE

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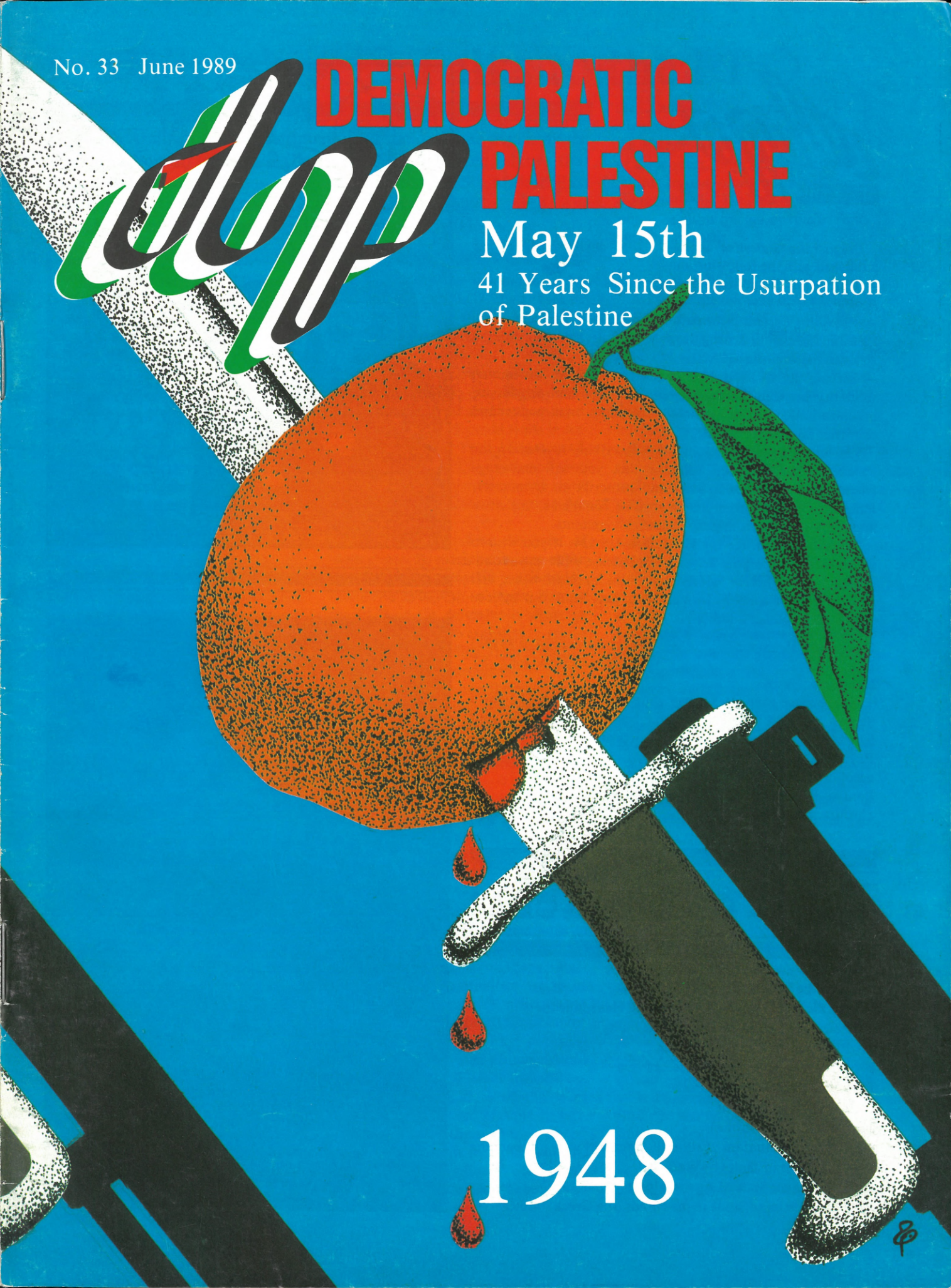
41 Years Since the Usurpation of Palestine



DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE

Democratic Palestine is an English language magazine published with the following aims:
— Conveying the political line of progressive Palestinian and Arab forces;
— Providing current information and analysis pertinent to the Palestinian liberation struggle, as well as developments on the Arab and international levels;
— Serving as a forum for building relations of mutual solidarity between the Palestinian revolution and progressive organizations, parties, national liberation movements and countries around the world.

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Why the US Talks to the PLO

The Bush Aministration's continuation of the dialogue begun by the Reagan Administration with the PLO, though belated, shows that such contacts have become a component of the US's Middle East policy under the impact of the uprising. With this in mind, one should analyze the US's motives in continuing this dialogue.

The second round of the US-Palestinian dialogue, which took place in Tunisia in March, did not produce the desired result of breaking the deadlock and paving the way for peace negotiations. The Bush Administration decided to continue talks with the PLO following a waiting period of three months. During the time between the first and second meetings, the intifada did not subside or slow down. Rather it maintained its momentum despite the escalation of Israeli repression. The decision to hold a new round of talks, like the US's original decision to talk to the PLO, was prompted by the intifada, its escalation and the unprecedented international support it has galvanized for the Palestinian cause. This in turn has isolated Israel and the US which has continuously vetoed and threatened to veto any UN Security Council resolutions which condemn Israeli brutality in the occupied territories.

It is no surprise that the latest US-PLO talks did not produce any tangible results. The US Middle East policy did not change substantially with the changing of administrations. On the eve of the second round of the US-PLO dialogue, US Secretary of State James Baker, speaking before a congressional committee on foreign aid, reaffirmed the US government's opposition to a Palestinian state, as well as its commitment to the Camp David accords, including the section on the Palestinians, which calls for «self-rule» under Israeli occupation, a plan very similar to the bantustans created by South Afrcia, and which has been emphatically rejected by the Palestinian people.

The US does not recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; nor does it recognize their national rights of repatriation, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state.

Why then does the US continue the dialogue with the PLO? The answer to this question lies in the US agenda for the Tunis meetings and in the statements of US officials.

Charles Redman, State Department spokesman during the Reagan administration, spelled out the three main points which the US would stress in the dialogue with the PLO. The second meeting with the PLO confirmed that the Bush Administration has not changed the emphasis on these three points:

First and foremost is the issue of «terrorism.» By placing this issue at the top of its agenda, the US is attempting to kill two birds with one stone: putting the PLO on the defensive in order to limit its maneuverability, while gradually transcending from renouncing terrorism to a denunciation of any kind of «violence,» i.e., the intifada; in addition to asking the PLO to cooperate with the CIA and FBI.

Secondly: The US intends to keep its representation at these meetings at the ambassadorial level.

Thirdly: The US views these talks as a forum for presenting its point of view vis-a-vis a settlement, rather than for dialogue in the real sense of the word.

The US's preferred mechanism for achieving a settlement is direct negotiations. If there is to be an international peace conference, then it should be a prelude to direct negotiations. Furthermore, such negotiations are to be conducted between Israeli officials and Palestinians from the 1967 occupied territories rather than PLO officials. The negotiations would ultimately lead to the withdrawal of Israeli troops from certain populated areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the Palestinians would then be granted «autonomy» within the framework of continued Israeli military occupation; this is in accordance with the section of the Camp David agreement which stipulates «self-rule» as the solution for the Palestine question. After a period of three years, the PLO can participate in the second phase of negotiations, along with the Jordanian regime that would be given the major role in running the bantustan.

KISSINGER'S LEGACY

Although the uprising broke through the 1975 ban on speaking to the PLO, the basics of US Middle East policy have not changed radically since Kissinger's step-by-step approach began creating the conditions for Camp David. By the early seventies, Israeli military superiority was already considered of paramount importance in this strategic area. Israel was increasingly viewed as a strategic asset, safeguarding the interests of US big business by keeping the Arab nationalist countries and forces in check. Overall imperialist interests were translated into a concrete policy where virtually all Israeli positions were deemed correct - an orientation that encouraged Israeli aggression and intransigence over the years; meanwhile US imperialism strove to extract concessions unilaterally from the Arab side. In the US's geopolitical view, the Palestinian liberation movement, the PLO and, by extension, a potential Palestinian state are viewed not only a threats to Israel but as destabilizing elements in the Middle East of subservient oil monarchies which the US aspires to maintain.

The continuity of the Kissinger legacy is particularly apparent today with Bush's appointment of Brent Scowcroft as national security adviser and Lawrence Eagleburger as deputy secretary of state; both have worked closely with Kissinger in government and in his consulting firm. Here it is relevant to recall Kissinger's «consultations» on the uprising. According to the *New York Times* of March 6, 1988, he told US Jewish leaders at a private gathering, «The insurrection must be quelled immediately, and the first step should be to throw out television *a la* South Africa.» According to him, the uprising should be suppressed «brutally and rapidly.» Although US officials do not say such things public- ▶

ly, the basic approach of the US from the beginning of the uprising was to give Israel time to deal with the uprising, i.e., to suppress it.

While some observers have chided Bush for having no foreign policy due to delays in presenting initiatives, this is pure naivety or a willfull cover-up when speaking of a president who has rejuvenated the input of the National Security Council and the CIA in the decision-making process after the fiascos of Irangate (in which Bush was, incidentally, deeply involved). More credible are those who forecast that the Bush administration will be more pragmatic and strategically oriented than its predecessor. In order to avoid such diplomatic non-starters as Shultz's ill-fated plan to abort the uprising in 1988, the Bush administration may rely more on behind-the-scenes diplomacy and promoting general trends rather than specific initiatives. A paper entitled «Building for Peace» is reported to be Bush's handbook on the Middle East. It was prepared by a group headed by former Democratic presidential candidate, Walter Mondale, and Lawrence Eagleburger, and published by the pro-Israeli Washington Institute for Near East Policy in 1988. Its central thesis is «conditioning the environment» by encouraging moderates, and it endorses four principles which don't depart in essence from Camp David. The US motivations in conducting a dialogue with the PLO can be analyzed in this context.

Thus, in lieu of a stated US initiative, we are witnessing the deliberately slow pace of the dialogue aiming to pressure the PLO, meanwhile working to get pro-US Arab regimes to do the same.

UNILATERAL PRESSURE

The US is seeking to pressure the PLO into modifying its policies radically whereby it would no longer be a revolutionary force leading the Palestinian people to realize their aims. Alternately, if the PLO resists this pressure, the US will try to discredit it, saying it is not ready for peace. This point is crucial for the US plan to succeed. Since it is clearly impossible to end the intifada, the US prefers to at least circumvent the PLO in order to select «suitable» Palestinian negotiators from the occupied territories, to liquidate the intifada politically. It is in this light that the meetings between Palestinians who are considered PLO supporters and Israelis from Labor, Likud and other Zionist parties present adanger to the intifada's continuation. What is at stake here is the importance of the PLO's representation of the Palestinian people, which is at the same time a symbol of the unity of the Palestinian cause, and a guarantee against partial solutions that wouldn't fulfill minimum Palestinian rights. These meetings did not lead to any positive change in the Israeli position, but rather create illusions among the Palestinian right and confusion among the masses. As a result of internal discussions, these meetings were stopped in March based on agreement among Palestinians in the occupied territories and the PLO's public declaration of its intent to stop them. However, similar moves in the future would give the US an added lever in its attempts to pressure the PLO and abort the intifada.

Concerning the question of «terrorism,» the US position amounts to outright blackmail, for its definition of terrorism means not only spectacular operations on the international scene, but also any form of militant popular struggle. Pressuring the PLO to stop guerrilla warfare against the Zionist occupation from South Lebanon aims at relieving Israel of pressure on the northern front so it can turn the full force of its military against the masses of the uprising. Their struggle is the next target. This was the meaning of the US call for the PLO to refrain from all attacks on Israeli military and civilian targets if it wants to continue the dialogue. At the very least, the US aims to halt the escalation of the uprising, because it compounds Israel's problems now and, if continued, will force Israel to the negotiating table from a position of weakness in the future. Getting the PLO to renounce «terrorism» is thus not a formality to make it «acceptable» but a lever for getting the PLO to whittle down its aspirations and drop some Palestinian rights in return for promises that the US is not forced to deliver on, such as pressuring Israel to ease repression.

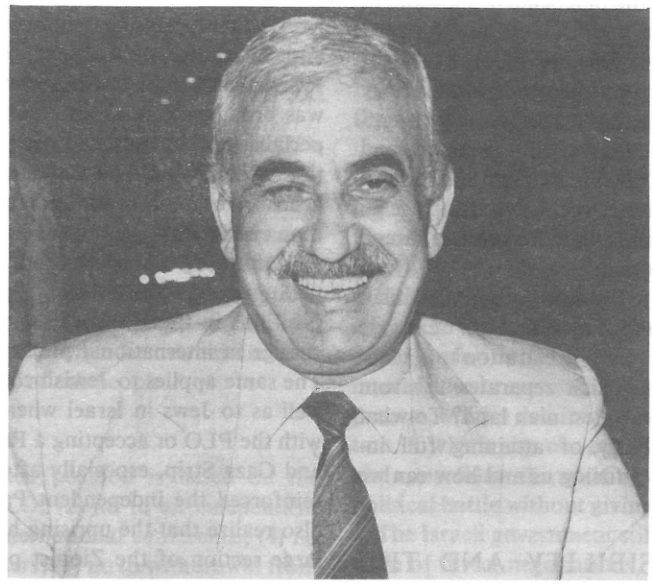
Though US criticism of Israel during the uprising has been unprecedented, it has still only touched the tip of the iceberg targeting the most blatant Israeli atrocities because these harm Israel's international reputation. The results of Shamir's April visit to Washington D.C. show that the US has yet to contemplate any real pressure. All the US statements about «reducing tension» and «confidence-building measures» were revealed to be directed first and foremost at the PLO. Added to this, the US launched a campaign to block the State of Palestine from gaining admission to UN agencies, beginning with the World Health Organization (WHO).

Shamir's visit was prefaced by several seemingly keynote US statements. Baker had told Congress in mid-March that Israel might have to talk to the PLO or at least, as he later modified it, this should not be ruled out. As Shamir arrived in the US, Bush spoke of «security for Israel, the end of the occupation and achievement of Palestinian political rights» (*Guardian,* April 5th). Nonetheless, Bush gave qualified support to the plan presented by Shamir for electing Palestinians in the occupied territories to be negotiators, provided that these elections are «directly linked to a broader political process that includes negotiating and concluding an agreement on final status (of the territories)» as Bush said Shamir had assured him (*International Herald Tribune,* April 7th). Since Shamir's plan gives no more leeway for Palestinian demands than did Shultz's a year before, the US administration can be quite sure it won't lead to a broader peace process. Once again, the US appears to be helping the Israeli government to gain time, hoping it can suppress the uprising, or that the Palestinians will tire out. In the meantime, such plans aim mainly to create division within the PLO and between it and the people in the occupied territories.

In conclusion, the US-PLO dialogue, though a gain of the uprising, is one which must be used wisely in full awareness of the US aims. This means refraining from giving concessions that will not be reciprocated, while escalating the uprising to pressure the US to recognize the Palestinian people's rights. It is the intifada itself which brings the Palestinian people closer to exercising their rights to repatriation, self-determination and an independent state. The US will begin to recognize these rights as their inevitability becomes clear in the battlefield in occupied Palestine. ●

Dr. George Habash

The Uprising Has Made the Palestinian State a Realistic Possibility



The achievements of the intifada, since it began in December 1987, are many. The crucial positive effects of the uprising have extended to all levels of the Arab-Zionist and Palestinian-Zionist conflict, putting the Palestinian cause in a better state than it has been in for the past two decades. The most important of these achievements is that the intifada succeeded in advancing the slogan of freedom and independence from the realm of historical possibility into the realm of realistic possibility. This is perhaps the first time our people experience such conditions and have such a historical opportunity.

When the United National Leadership of the Uprising declared, in call no. 3 of January 18,1988, its demand for freedom and independence, this could have seemed to be a noble ambition or an attempt to mobilize the people to continue their brave struggle against the Israeli occupation. Encompassing all the classes, strata and sectors of the Palestinian people under occupation, the uprising continued to make changes in international public opinion in favor of our people and their legitimate struggle to attain their rights to repatriation, self-determination and an independent state. The ongoing uprising which is deeply rooted in the occupied land, started its second year with great certainty that it will continue until achieving its aims. The enemy leaders and intelligence service also reached the same conclusion and were obliged to admit that the uprising is an expression of the Palestinian people's aspirations, and will not stop unless there is a political solution for the crisis.

Although the Palestinians started to think of the slogan of freedom and independence a long time ago, the uprising makes this slogan realistic, especially after the intifada succeeded in imposing the Palestinian option, making King Hussein sever the legal and administrative ties to the Palestinian West Bank... There is no doubt that King Hussein's step is among the most important historical achievements of the uprising. The slogan of freedom and independence now has a concrete field of action. The world came face to face with the logical question: What is the future of the occupied land and who will have sovereignty over it?

The answer was direct and conclusive: This is occupied Palestinian land as was confirmed for the first time by the UN Security Council in resolution no. 605. Israel must withdraw from this land as confirmed by international laws and norms, UN resolutions and other regional and international bodies. On this land, the Palestinians must begin to exercise their sovereignty and build their independent state in the framework of comprehensive arrangements which insure their rights to repatriation, self-determination and an independent state. By the brave uprising, this position has acquired great international support, as seen in UN resolutions and in the partial change in the official European position and the deep change in international public opinion, including in the US. In addition, the intifada has affected the Zionist state on the political, economic, social and psychological levels.

Much can be said about the decline of the official Arab order, the inability and collusion of many Arab regimes. Much can be said about the deep crisis of the Arab national liberation movement. Nonetheless, no one can ignore the effects of the uprising on the Arab arena. At the Amman Summit (1987), there was near consensus on the denial of the rights of the Palestinians and favoring the Jordanian option. Then, the Summit of the Uprising in Algiers rearranged Arab priorities in favor of the Palestinian cause and achieving an Arab consensus on the Palestinian slogan of freedom and independence. Concerning the crisis of the Arab liberation movement, the uprising came to pose the big question: Who among these regimes can guarantee its own internal front? How long will the Arab masses remain silent in Egypt, Jordan, etc? What is the responsibility of the Arab liberation movement which should serve as a lever to bring about change in the Arab arena? ▶

All in all, what was seen in call no. 3 as a remote dream has become a realistic possibility, after the Jordanian step.

The second qualitative step towards freedom and independence was the Palestinian National Council's extraordinary session in Algiers, and the historical decision it adopted on November 15, 1988, to declare the independence of Palestine and the establishment of the independent Palestinian state. This was the logical culmination of the intifada, the raising of the slogan of freedom and independence, and the Jordanian decision. The declaration of independence was met by broad Arab and international recognition and increasing support. This laid siege to the Zionist dreams of expansion, and made the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories a very expensive enterprise for which Israel pays the price in terms of its international reputation in the international arena and among Jewish communities abroad.

Today, the following questions are posed to the Palestinian revolution, leadership, cadres and masses: How can we transform national independence from a declaration to a reality? How can we bridge the gap which separates us from establishing the Palestinian state on Palestinian land? To what extent is there a realistic possibility of attaining full independence? What are the obstacles facing us and how can we overcome them?

THE HISTORICAL POSSIBILITY AND THE REALISTIC POSSIBILITY

Naturally, the slogan of freedom and independence was prominent throughout the course of the Palestinian struggle against the Zionist invasion and gradual occupation of Palestinian land. The Palestinian people were governed by colonial mandate authority when the first world war ended. They were unable to attain political independence as did other peoples in the area, because they were confronted by the Zionist invasion which uprooted them and constructed a colonial entity on about 80% of their land in 1948. With the war of 1967, Israel occupied the rest of the land and drove more than half of the inhabitants into Arab and foreign countries where they lived between the hammer of the Zionist occupation and the anvil of the conspiracies of subordination, annexation and the confiscation of their national identity. Although the contemporary Palestinian revolution, led by the PLO, has until now been unable to expell the occupation from any piece of Palestinian land, still it revitalized the Palestinian identity and the concept of national independence as the only acceptable solution for the question of Palestine and the aim which we will not relinquish.

In the two preceding decades, the Palestinian revolution has experienced ups and downs; it has experienced conducive conditions as well as obstacles, but never before was there a realistic possibility of attaining independence and establishing a state on our national land. Although each round of confrontation brought us closer to this cherished aim, still it remained in the realm of historical possibility until the intifada erupted to accentuate realities which the enemy had always worked to negate. The uprising asserted to the world that Israel cannot absorb the results of the 1967 war, and that the Palestinian people will refuse any option that detracts from their legitimate rights to their land and state, as enjoyed by other peoples of the world, in accordance with international law.

The uprising proved to the world that the Palestinian revolution is not a set of centers and offices which the Zionist army can destroy and occupy as happened in 1982 in Lebanon. Rather it is a living expression of the Palestinian people's will for survival and their yearning for freedom and independence. The roots of the revolution in the occupied territories are no less deep than in other areas. The struggle of the Palestinian people will continue, using all available means until achieving their aims. The outbreak of the intifada in the occupied territories, its broad mass character and its use of strikes, stones and molotovs as weapons, elicited great support for the Palestinian cause. For the first time, the fascist face of Israel was broadly exposed - a characteristic which Zionist and imperialist propaganda had tried to hide by lies and false allegations. The Palestinian demand for freedom and independence has now become more understood in the international arena than ever before.

Monitoring European and American popular reactions to the uprising, which have begun to influence governmental positions in these imperialist centers, shows the extent of the change in international public opinion in favor of our cause. The same applies to Jewish communities around the world, as well as to Jews in Israel where more are calling for dialogue with the PLO or accepting a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, especially after the Jordanian decision which reinforced the independent Palestinian option. However, we also realize that the uprising has created a situation wherein a large section of the Zionist public has moved further to the right.

OBSTACLES

Saying that there is a realistic possibility for attaining a Palestinian state does not mean that we should belittle the obstacles to this goal. No one should underestimate this task as if the state were within reach. The distance between the declaration of independence and its acutal achievement is very difficult and long. Bridging this gap requires overcoming two main obstacles: the US and the Israeli positions.

THE US POSITION

To date, the US continues to base its policy on the following premises:

1. commitment to helping Israel be absolutely superior to the Arabs and the Palestinians;
2. considering the Palestinian state as a destabilizing element in the region, which must not be allowed to happen;
3. considering an international conference to be premature, and preferring direct, bilateral negotiations; viewing the proposed international conference as merely an umbrella for direct negotiations;
4. promoting certain Palestinian personalities in the occupied territories, and keeping the door open for the Jordanian regime to share in the arrangements of any solution of the Palestinian problem;
5. stopping the intifada is a main aim of US diplomatic maneuvers in the region;
6. the Jordanian option is the preferred solution for the Palestinian problem.

Any observer of US policy, whether at the end of Reagan's term or under the new administration, will have noticed these main lines. From the US side, the first two rounds of dialogue with the PLO focused on these premises. But this should not obscure the change which has occurred in the US stand on the Palestinian question due to the intifada and its repercussions ▶

on the Arab and international arenas. The most important sign if this change is the US decision to accept a dialogue with the PLO, which is a great victory for the uprising on the international scene. The US modified its absolute rejection of an international conference, although it prefers direct negotiations. It called on Israel to consider the idea of negotiations with the PLO and not to deal with the uprising as a matter of terrorism. These changes, brought about by the uprising, should be pursued until the needed change in the US position is achieved, i.e., until the US recognizes our people's right to self-determination and an independent state.

Forcing the US to change its position should be a major aim of the Palestinian political moves, based on escalation of the uprising, because the US position is the main international asset on which the Zionists rely in continuing their occupation of Palestinian land. While the intifada in the occupied territories works to undermine the pillars of the occupation, Palestinian diplomacy must intensify to make the desired change in US public opinion, and to urge the new administration to accept the legitimate rights of our people.

THE ISRAELI POSITION

As of now, the official Israeli position is based on the following no's: (1) no to the PLO; (2) no to an independent Palestinian state; (3) no to an international conference; (4) no to returning to the pre-1967 borders; (5) no to withdrawal from Jerusalem which is considered the eternal, indivisible capital of Israel; and (6) no to the Palestinian right of repatriation.

These six no's are apparent in the program of the coalition government and in the programs of the main parties. They constitue the main obstacle to any possible solution for the Palestinian question, especially since Israel has two main assets: direct occupation of Palestinian land, and unlimited US support for its intransigent policy. Up until now, these two factors have enabled Israel to bear the international pressure and isolation it faces. However, there is less understanding today for the Israeli political discourse than there was in the past, for this discourse is based on chauvinism and obstinance which are now outdated. It reminds of the worst cold war rhetoric and portends the escalation of tension and the possibility of an all-out military explosion. Thus, it no longer enjoys the support of all Jewish communities in the world or all of Israel's traditional friends. Although the six no's still constitute the essence of the official Israeli position, this should not obscure from view the effects which the uprising and the international and Arab reactions to it, have had on the Israeli scene.

The Israeli position on the intifada and the means for dealing with it has passed through several stages:

1. considering repression as the only means for dealing with the intifada and rejecting any political discussion;
2. continuing repression while searching for political outlets via Jordan and some Palestinians in the occupied territories, who are not affiliated to the PLO;
3. continuing repression and searching for a political outlet via Palestinians in the occupied territories, including followers of the PLO.

Still, we need more struggle to oblige Israel to accept the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and to sit with it at the international conference. Although the six no's still constitute the essence of the Israeli government's position, there is a new growing political current in Israel, not only among democratic Jewish forces, but also in the big Zionist parties, especially the Labor Party. This trend realizes that sooner or later Israel will have to talk to the PLO, and that the intifada cannot be stopped by military means. Moreover, some who previously supported the Jordanian option now speak about a demilitarized Palestinian state with limited sovereignty. This shows the current of change that has started in Israel among groups which we by no means consider to be democratic forces or from the peace camp.

The appearance of such phenomena in Israel does not mean that the rightist and extremist camp has been weakened. Rather the strength of this camp is growing as shown by the results of the Knesset elections and the Israeli municipal elections. There are two contradictory phenomena in Israeli political life today: On the one hand, the rightist and extremist positions are growing and gaining strength; while on the other hand, there is also growth of the forces that call for talking with the PLO, and exhibit various degrees of willingness to accept a Palestinian state. The hesitant and inconsistent centrist forces pay the price of this polarization which was induced by the uprising and its international repercussions. The outcome of this polarization process will be determined by many factors, the most important of which are: our capability to continue, expand, escalate and consolidate the uprising, and to pursue our diplomatic and political battle without giving gratuitous concessions.

The Israeli government still refuses to sit with the PLO at the table of direct negotiations, so we can only imagine how long and difficult is the road we have to traverse before we can oblige Israel to accept negotiations with the PLO at an international conference, or to acknowledge our right to an independent state, withdraw to the 1967 borders including in Jerusalem, dismantle the settlements and last but not least, accept the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland. We are still at the beginning of this long road, and we must not underestimate the difficulties we face, because this would spread harmful illusions and justify the logic of giving concessions without getting anything in return. This would weaken the alertness of our people and their willingness to fight a protracted war.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN DECLARING INDEPENDENCE AND ACHIEVING IT

In the light of the above-mentioned obstacles which widen the gap between declaring and achieving independence, especially the Israeli and US positions, we dare say that the declaration of the Palestinian state is a project that requires struggle. In order to actually establish the state, we had better notice the difference between declaring and achieving independence.

For precisely this reason, we noted from the very beginning the existence of two points of view concerning the intifada. The first counts on harvesting the political fruits of the uprising prematurely. Accordingly, the advocates of this viewpoint are ready to give gratuitous concessions. The other point of view sees the necssity of making political gains from the intifada, but at the same time, the advocates of this viewpoint are working to turn the uprising into a qualitative turning point in the process of Palestinian national struggle. Hence, we say that we are on the threshold of a new stage which had resulted from the stage of Palestinian armed struggle, without ending it or belittling its historical importance as some people imagine. We consider the uprising the legitimate offspring of the Palestinian armed struggle. Although the uprising is now the first among ▶

the Palestinian strategic priorities, this does not mean omitting the distinguished role of the armed struggle in this strategy.

From this perspective, we have a series of responsibilities to shoulder in order to shorten the distance between declaring and achieving independence. The focus of these responsibilities is how to protect the uprising and guarantee its continuation and escalation, for it is the Palestinian people's primary asset in this period of the national struggle.

I. PROTECTING THE UPRISING POLITICALLY

«The uprising will go on for years, and nothing can put an end to it except a political solution.» This is a quote from the annual report of the Israeli intelligence, which was presented to the cabinet. This means that not only our friends, but our enemies as well, are convinced of the futility of a military solution, and convinced of the Palestinian people's insistence on continuing their legitimate resistance until achieving freedom and independence.

It is now obvious that even massive savage repression will not stop the intifada. Since the uprising has become part and parcel of the Palestinian people's daily life, they will not allow things to return to the status quo prior to December 9, 1987. This is the situation in the occupied territories. It shows that our fears about the future of the uprising are not related to Rabin's repressive measures. Rather, our fear arises from deficient political protection of the uprising and from the political battle being conducted on the basis of trying to make hasty gains from the uprising, and thus giving concessions without getting anything in return.

Over the previous months, we have faced many situations which reflected the haste of some Palestinian circles - from the premature call for forming a government-in-exile, to the document of an adviser, to brother Yasir Arafat's press conference in Geneva and its aftermath - Arafat's expressing readiness to engage in direct, bilateral negotiations. These and other similar positions weaken the revolutionary vigilence of the masses of the intifada. They cause confusion in their ranks and serve to weaken Palestinian national unity, because they are a clear violation of the resolutions of national consensus.

The Palestinians have passed many crossroads of this type, and managed to maintain their unity and cohesion. Yet this does not mean that the dangers of this policy have diminished, for the believers in this logic insist on trying again and again. Moreover, we may face situations which would lead some Palestinians to lower the minimum platform of our legitimate rights if we do not begin working from now to block such policies and practices. Hence we call for adhering to the invariable princples of the Palestinian struggle, as well as to the PNC's decisions, because the road of concessions is endless, and our obstinate enemy will not be defeated unless we show more firmness and adherence to our basic goals.

II. CONSOLIDATING THE INTIFADA

Consolidating the uprising means first of all maintaining the war of stones by reinforcing its organizational and socioeconomic structure. This entails work on two levels.

The first level: The organizational structure of the uprising can only be reinforced by developing the United National Leadership of our people under occupation, which is the embodiment of the broad national coalition represented by the PLO which reflects the interests of all classes and strata of our people. Reinforcing the organizational structure of the uprising requires bolstering it with more popular committees which are the auxiliary leadership of the UNL in every street, alley, village, town and camp; and the broad popular base which carries out its militant activities and programs. It also entails reinforcing and enlarging the strike forces, the militant arm of the UNL for confronting the enemy and its agents. It entails developing popular voluntary work in the fields of health, education, social services and family solidarity. It also means that the UNL should be complemented with trade unions and popular orgonizations, so that the termination of the uprising would mean an unprecedented termination of a whole people. One Israeli leader has already had to admit that arresting the activists of the popular committees means arresting a whole people; it a mounts to the same if they are considered outlaws. This truth must be enshrined in the minds of the Zionist leaders until their fascist measures are abolished forever, and they are obliged to recognize our people's legitimate aims.

The second level: Consolidating the socioeconomic base of the uprising can be achieved in part by returning to the land, developing agriculture and spreading the «victory gardens» (homegardens) experiment. It can also be fulfilled by encouraging local industry, developing self-sufficiency, rejecting consumptive habits, adopting a policy of austerity, being satisfied with necessities and working to disengage from the Israeli economy as much as possible. Successfully increasing self-reliance not only guarantees the continuation of the intifada, but also shortens the life of the occupation, because the enemy will someday discover that the price of occupation is much greater than the benefits.

III. ESCALATION OF THE INTIFADA

We must not give the enemy the chance to adapt itself to the uprising as might be the case if the uprising continues at a set level. Although we have succeeded in maintaining the intifada's momentum and broad scope throughout the 1967 occupied territories for over a year, nevertheless we have not succeeded in moving to the stage of total national disobedience. This has both subjective and objective reasons, but we must not give up trying. The second year of the intifada should witness a qualitative escalation through partial, interim and gradual disobedience which would pave the way for total national disobedience. This is the primary means for seriously harming the enemy - politically, economically and in terms of morale, making the costs of occupation much too high. The Israeli losses in the first year, estimated at 1.5-2 billion dollars, must be doubled in the second year.

Moreover, escalation of the uprising entails the use of military force, in addition to other forms of resistance, in order to benefit maximally from the enemy's sensitivity to human losses in its own ranks. This is our legitimate right as acknowledged by international laws and conventions. It is our right to defend ourselves and to struggle for liberation and independence. This is not terrorism as the hostile Zionist and imperialist media try to portray. The uprising and the armed struggle are two faces of the same coin. There is no contradiction between them except to those who have tired of the armed struggle and prematurely announced the end of this stage. In order to keep the necessary mass character of the uprising out of danger, we must practice armed struggle outside the terrain where the uprising is taking place, i.e., from across the Arab borders and inside the 1948 occupied territories. ▶

IV. ENLARGING THE SCOPE OF THE UPRISING

With the eruption of the intifada in the 1967 occupied territories, there were significant supportive activities in the Palestinian land occupied in 1948, culminating in some large demonstrations and the eruption of the war of fires against Zionist property. These activities aroused fear in Zionist circles, where the propaganda machine had long been working to spread the idea of «Arab-Jewish coexistence» under the banner of the Jewish state. Some Israelis described these activities as a catastrophe and a mortal danger. Of course, there is nothing surprising about this reaction, for if the uprising proves Israel's failure to absorb the results of the 1967 war, then the eruption of the uprising in Israel itself means the failure to absorb the results of the Zionists' usurpation of Palestine in 1948. This gives rise to a major question concerning the future of the Zionist project in Palestine and its potential for continuing.

Nonetheless, the activities in the 1948 occupied territories have not yet developed from supporting the uprising to actually partaking in it, due to subjective and objective factors. The most important of these is the objective difference between a situation where our masses face the danger of transfer, settlement-building, the iron fist, expulsion and collective detention, and a situation where the Palestinians are considered second-class citizens. Moreover, there is a subjective difference between a community where the Palestinian revolutionary forces have the decisive role, and one where other forces are relatively active and influential.

Although we do not belittle the importance of the militant activities of our masses in the 1948 occupied territories, yet they have not moved to the level of participation. So we should put this issue on our working agenda by all possible means, and in cooperation with the active Palestinian forces and the (democratic) Jewish forces (in the 1948 occupied territories), in order to enlarge the scope of the uprising, so that it covers all of Palestine. Our success in achieving this goal is a qualitative weapon which has a tremendous potential for affecting the enemy. We should not belittle the importance of this weapon, for it will have a decisive effect on the process of shortening the distance between declaring and achieving independence.

V. THE ROLE OF PALESTINIANS IN EXILE

The fact that more than half the Palestinian people live in exile obliges us to shoulder a special responsibility for activating and organizing them, for the battle requires that all participate. Since the outbreak of the uprising, the center of the national struggle has moved to the occupied territories, but that does not justify belittling the importance of the second base of the revolution, which is outside Palestine. It is not viable to concentrate periodically on one base and ignore the other, as happened in the past when it seemed that we were focusing on the exterior base rather than on the interior. Priority must be given to the occupied territories, but that does not at all mean belittling the importance of the role that our masses in exile may play. Furthermore, the history of the contemporary Palestinian armed revolution is to a great extent the history of the remarkable role of the Palestinians in exile, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon, at a time when our masses in the occupied territories were experiencing very hard times.

It is true that the circumstances began changing in the last decade, especially after the 1982 war, but that does not mean that the role of the masses in exile should not continue and escalate, even though this occupies the second place in our priorities at this stage. There are many duties to be performed by the masses in exile in order to support the uprising - from campaigns to collect donations, to political and informational work in support of the PLO and the PNC's resolutions, to armed struggle across the borders to Palestine. However, all this requires a programmatic policy from the PLO, in order to benefit from these tremendous potentials and use them to guarantee the continuation and escalation of the uprising.

Bearing in mind the difficulties the PLO faces vis-a-vis the various Arab regimes and the latter's failure to meet their commitments towards the uprising, self-reliance is the only way to insure that sufficient support is provided for the intifada. When thinking about activating the role of the masses in exile, we must take note of the hindrances that the Arab regimes put before the PLO's independent activity among the masses. Nevertheless, these hindrances should not stop us from advancing towards fulfilling this mission. It is our duty to exert all efforts in our long and hard struggle to put our national independence into effect.

VI. DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN THE PLO

Mobilizing and organizing our people's potentials and fulfilling the tasks needed to reach freedom and indpendence require a revolutionary instrument that can undertake these tasks efficiently. It is no longer a secret that one of the dangers facing the uprising is the level and type of unity that exists within this revolutionary instrument, and the level and nature of the PLO's institutions. The policy of individualism and the domination (of one group) still prevails in the Palestinian work, while corruption and favoritism are still trademarks of our national institutions. Work is hindered in almost all the PLO's mass organizations and unions. This abnormal situation should not continue, especially in the era of the intifada which necessitates a «revolution within the revolution» and a rearrangement of all our institutions, work programs and internal relations, in order to attain a really qualified and unified revolutionary instrument which can rise to the level of heroism which is being practiced daily in the occupied territories.

Democracy must be extended in all our institutions. We must rely on the principle of proportional representation in forming our organizational bodies, institutions and unions. All fields of Palestinian national work should be unified so that we would have a single united revolutionary instrument, rather than a series of centers and offices. We should address the world with a united line, policy and instrument, provided that the process of reform takes place, and the PLO's institutions are reconstituted on the basis of proportional representation. However, this does not rule out the organizational and ideological independence of each component organization of the PLO.

Achieving democratic reform is moreover necessary in order to guarantee maximal support to the uprising, via a single channel, i.e., the UNL. It is also important to conduct the political battle with the same efficiency as the masses are fighting the battle of stones and molotovs against the Zionist enemy. To be loyal to the intifada and its central slogan -freedom and independence, we need such a comprehensive reform. This is an objective necessity and not a question of the petty interests and calculations of some Palestinian officials who turn their backs on democratic reform. ●

PLO Central Council Meeting

From March 31st to April 3rd, the Palestinian Central Coucil held its ordinary (biannual) meeting in Tunis. As the highest decision-making body in the PLO between sessions of the National Council, the Central Council focused its attention on the uprising, as well as the PLO's political moves since the last PNC. The latter topic was the subject of intense debate.

The convening of the Central Council coincided with the 13th anniversary of Land Day and the uprising completing its 16th month. Naturally, the council's agenda was concentrated on the continuation and escalation of the uprising. Related to this, there were long and heated discussions about the results of the PLO's political moves and the means for reaping the political fruits of the uprising on the local, regional and international levels. These moves should be based on the national invariable principles and on the resolutions of the consecutive PNC sessions, in order to accumulate further gains and eventually achieve the Palestinian people's goals of repatriation, self-determination and an independent state. In this light, there was disagreement about the right wing's policies of giving concessions, particularly since the last PNC session, for these policies have grave effects on the uprising and the Palestinian national struggle in general.

In the first session of the council meeting, the participants listened to the report of the PLO's political department read by its head, Farouq Qaddoumi. The report included an overview of the PLO's political moves since the PNC's 19th session, the achievements of the Palestinian cause and the directions of the PLO's political work in the coming period.

The second report was read by Mohamed Milhem, the head of the PLO's department for the affairs of the occupied territories. It concentrated on the uprising, its main characteristics, the role of the masses and the situation of the mass organizations in the occupied territories.

In all of the following sessions, the discussions revolved around the PLO's political moves. The council members mainly discussed to what extent these moves are in harmony with the resolutions of the last PNC and with the demands of the uprising. There was unanimous agreement on the importance of national unity, on consolidating the uprising economically, organizationally and politically, and on adhering to the Palestinian national goals. However, sharp differences surfaced over one main issue, namely the concessions that were given at the expense of these goals. In the discussions, there were two political points of view based on differing understandings of the nature of the enemy and thus of the means of directing the struggle on all fronts.

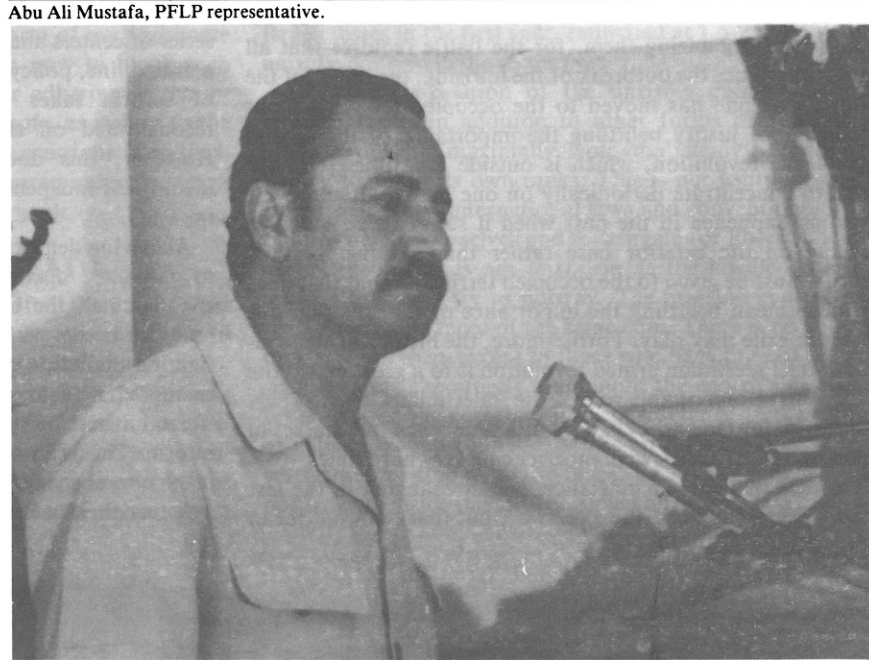
POLITICAL HASTINESS

The first point of view is that of the right wing within the PLO, which exaggerates the possibility of the enemy forces' recognizing Palestinian rights, provided that the PLO gives concessions in response to their conditions and demands. The advocates of this point of view justify their concessions with their idea that the Palestinian state is within reach. They call for moving quickly to reap the fruits of the uprising before it is too late, meanwhile disregarding the balance of forces and whether conditions are ripe at this stage.

The right wing tried to distort the truth during the discussions by claiming that the concessions they have given are in harmony with the PNC's resolutions, rather than being contrary to these. In other instances, they tried to retract some of their declared positions that clearly deviated from the resolutions of national consensus, by accusing the international press of having falsified their statements or taken them out of context. PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat was the main advocate of this point of view, and he insisted that his statements had not deviated from the PNC's resolutions, but were rather his own interpretation of these resolutions.

Here we recall that in the press conference Arafat held in Geneva in December 1988, he explicitly recognized the legitimacy of the Zionist entity. In addition, he spoke about «renouncing terrorism» and accepting Security Council resolution 242, without mentioning the Palestinian right to self-determination, whereas the PNC coupled acceptance of 242 with this right. Moreover, Arafat later on expressed willingness to visit Jerusalem - as did Sadat - provided that he has overall Arab support for such a move. He also offered a ceasefire in South Lebanon, i.e., ending attacks on the Zionist occupation forces from there. In March, he proposed an economic union between Jordan, Lebanon, Israel and the State of Palestine. Moreover, on several occasions, Arafat has declared his willingness to have direct ▶

Abu Ali Mustafa, PFLP representative.



negotiations with the Israelis, contrary to the PNC's stress on an international peace conference as the correct forum for negotiations. Parallel to all this, there have been meetings between Palestinians and Zionists who do not recognize Palestinian national rights.

The advocates of this point of view were not content with defending their own position, but tried to throw the ball into the court of others, accusing some Palestinian organizations, and particularly the PFLP, of not abiding by the PNC's resolutions. As examples of such «violations» they cited press conferences and statements issued by Palestinian organizations criticizing the PLO leadership, although such freedom of expression is the right of the constituent organizations of the PLO.

POLITICAL GAINS STEM FROM STRUGGLE

The second point of view was advocated by the democratic organizations and other nationalists at the council meeting. The most forceful advocate of this point of view was PLO Executive Committee member Abu Ali Mustafa, deputy general secretary of the PFLP. This point of view opposes the concessions given by PLO leaders, based on a scientific understanding of the nature of the enemy forces and a precise calculation of the balance of forces. This point of view affirms the importance of reaping the political fruits of the uprising, but asserts that the independent state will not be achieved by giving gratuitous concessions, but rather by escalating all forms of struggle in order to seize our rights from the enemy. Thus, it is necessary to unite all efforts and provide all the needed conditions for escalating the uprising, while foiling political and military attempts to abort it. Only in this way can we create the needed change in the present balance of forces that would make the enemy retreat.

Therefore, it is only logical that the advocates of this point of view demanded that the right wing stop its political hastiness which has definitely not resulted in changing the essence of the enemy camp, but on the contrary has harmed the uprising and the achievements made by our people through their sacrifices. The overly hasty policies of the right wing give the enemy forces greater maneuver room in their attempts to abort the uprising, meanwhile lessening Israel's isolation.

Comrade Abu Ali Mustafa stressed that the orientation of all of the PLO's political moves, positions and statements should be evaluated in terms of how they serve the struggle process and provide for the needs of the uprising and serve to protect it politically. Speaking at the second session of the council meeting, Comrade Abu Ali stressed that the achievements noted in the political report are above all due to the uprising. He asserted that forcing the Israelis to withdraw from the occupied territories and forcing the US administration to recognize Palestinian national rights, as well as the actual establishment of the independent Palestinian state, all necessitate escalating the uprising and inflicting greater economic and human losses on the occupation forces, meanwhile continuing gradual civil disobedience until reaching total civil disobedience. Comrade Abu Ali frankly addressed Arafat, saying that he is «optimistic to the point of illusion.»

Comrade Abu Ali also stressed the importance of national unity, connecting this to the democratic reforms needed for improving the PLO and its various institutions and bodies. He confirmed that national unity means all abiding by the resolutions of national consensus, which in turn means ending individualism and the hegemony of any one group and, on the other hand, consolidating collective leadership.

FINAL STATEMENT

In its final statement, the Central Council confirmed the importance of escalating the uprising and consolidating the unity of the United National Leadership and all the mass organizations in the occupied territories, from the popular committees and strike forces to the unions for workers, students, academics, etc. The Central Council also called on all the mass organizations to foil the deceptive Israeli maneuvers, such as the plan for municipal elections and self-rule (autonomy). Furthermore, the final statement urged the international community to act immediately to exert pressure on Israel to stop its terror and end the occupation. It reaffirmed the need for convening an international conference this year; therefore, a preparatory committee should be formed by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The statement stressed that it is a central task to consolidate unity and collectiveness within the PLO, so that it may lead the struggle of the Palestinian masses effectively. Finally, the statement said that the Central Council had made the important decision to choose PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat as President of the State of Palestine. The statement reaffirmed that the Executive Committee will carry out the tasks of a Palestinian provisional government until the formation of such a government, in accordance with the decisions of the PNC.

Although the final statement was generally positive, and there was consensus on its contents, the disagreement over the concessions made by the right wing was not resolved. Comrade Abu Ali said that the democratic forces will continue to raise this question openly and frankly in order to resolve the political differences that exist within the PLO, and to protect the Palestinian struggle from the main threats it is now facing, which he summed up in five points:

1. The threat of political blackmail, such as the calls for reducing tension in the occupied territories and for goodwill gestures (as the US administration proposes).
2. The threat of creating alternatives to the PLO, such as through elections in the occupied territories.
3. The threat of undermining the Palestinian national invariable principles consecrated in the National Charter, such as omitting the right of return.
4. The threat of attempts to void the international conference of its contents, such as talk of direct negotiations and unilateral solutions.
5. The threat of describing legitimate forms of struggle, such as armed struggle, as «outdated» or a form of «terrorism.»

Comrade Abu Ali said that the final statement of the Central Council was very clear about how to confront these threats, but the real guarantee lies not in statements, however sound they may be, but in all abiding by these guidelines. Finally, we could not agree more with his evaluation that reality remains the best test for examining results and proving what is correct policy and what is erroneous. ●

Coalition Government Rejects Peace

During the early stage of the Palestinian intifada, Israeli officials contended that it was a fleeting phenomenon, a temporary outburst which would subside in a short period of time - but they were wrong. The continuation, escalation and comprehensiveness of the intifada forced the Israeli government, military officials and media to admit that the intifada is organized and with no end in sight - it clearly represents a threat to Israel. The Israeli government and research centers formed special committees from the military and security divisions to find ways of aborting the intifada. These committees reached the conclusion that the intifada cannot be stopped; moreover, they warned of the dangerous ramifications of the intifada on the Israeli society. The intifada has unleashed a polarization process in the Zionist state. On the one hand, more Israelis see the need for addressing the Palestinian cause. On the other, there is an even stronger trend moving further to the right, hardening Zionism's most racist and aggressive characteristics. As the intifada continues, this polarization deepens. Yet to date, the government's position has not undergone substantial changes, as is clear from the contents of the Shamir plan.

REPRESSION IS A CONSTANT

In the beginning of the intifada, the Israeli government position was to consider repression the only method for dealing with it, rejecting any political discussion. On this basis, on December 24, 1987, the Israeli cabinet approved the methods to be used to suppress the intifada, including the infamous «shooting to kill» policy. Three weeks later, on January 17th, the entire cabinet endorsed the brutal measures being used by the occupation army. This was about the time Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin proclaimed the brutal policy of «might, force and blows», i.e. breaking bones. Later in January, Rabin announced still more measures against anyone who participates in the intifada. Shmuel Goren, coordinator of activities in the occupied territories was critical of journalists' use of the term *popular uprising*. He and Shamir continued to charge that the demonstrations were begun by a small number of «terrorist provocateurs,» denying that they articulated the feelings of the majority of the population. Within the first three weeks of the intifada, the Israelis had ▶

Shamir trying to sell his election plan.

arrested 1,200 Palestinians and on January 23, 1988, for the first time since 1967, emergency powers were used in East Jerusalem to impose a curfew. Rabin then forecast on March 24, 1988, «The residents of the territories are beginning to feel exhausted.»[1] He was wrong. Then he said, «We have good people, good Arabs, there's a few hotheads being roused up by phone calls from Abu Jihad in Tunis.»[2] Hence, the April 1988 inner cabinet decision to assassinate Khalil Al Wazir was taken and implemented. Still, the Israelis were referring to the intifada as only «riots.»

The second stage of Israeli official policy was to continue the repression while searching for a political outlet via Jordan and some Palestinians in the occupied territories. In a *Newsweek* interview, Shamir said that Israel would only agree to negotiate with its Arab neighbors without pre-conditions, thus offering direct talks anticipating the results of «peace for peace» as Shamir calls it, or really «peace for nothing.» Shamir later said, «There is no PLO option. There will be no Palestinian state declared under occupation... and if such a state is declared this will be most dangerous for the people in the territories.»[3] But with the Jordanian move of severing legal and administrative ties with the occupied West Bank on July 31, 1988, the door was closed to the Jordanian option. Still the government did not face reality. It swiftly intensified repression, deluding itself that this was working as was apparent in Rabin's comments in autumn 1988, «Plastic bullets have reduced violence in the territories» and «The use of live ammunition reveals a downswing of the uprising.»[4] Rabin even had the audacity to forecast on November 16, 1988, that within six months the intifada would die out, but he was wrong again.

Eventually, some superficial gestures were made by Israel in order to look good in the international arena. Shamir said, «I don't believe in conferences and things like that, but if it can help someone that these negotiations be held under some formal auspices of the superpowers or the UN, I don't mind, as long as the negotiations are direct and on the condition that the external bodies do not intervene in the content of negotiations.»[5] Shamir also accepted the idea that the US and Soviet Union host talks held under UN auspices.

Meanwhile, Rabin continued with his carrot and stick tactics, such as his January 20, 1989 proposal to have neutral, non-UN supervision of elections in the occupied territories, and considering freeing jailed Palestinian leaders who would be willing to negotiate with Israel. However, the carrot is nothing compared to the stick.

The third stage is the continuation of repression and looking for a political outlet via Palestinians in the occupied territories, including followers of the PLO. This strategy can best be exemplified by Rabin's scheme. His plan has three stages; it begins with a three to six month period of calm (after the intifada has been suppressed), and then elections in the territories take place. These elections would serve to establish some sort of governing council to handle Palestinian self-administration over an interim period of time. Then those elected officials would be delegates to an international conference that would in turn negotiate a final settlement. Although Rabin only refers to the participation of Palestinians from the occupied territories, his plan hints that they could be acting on behalf of the PLO, because he offered at this point to release from administrative detention Faisal Husseini who is known to be affiliated with the PLO. Foreign Minister Moshe Arens also added in March that he did not object to negotiating with Palestinian personalities who support the PLO but are from the occupied territories. Rabin realizes that there must be political talks; he is quoted in February at an inner cabinet meeting as saying, «It is not possible to put an end to the intifada militarily.»[6] Then he said on May 8th, «The present measures are of no use, the only way is through a political solution.»[7]

Both the Labor and Likud wings of the government realize talks must occur but somehow fantasize that a non-PLO Palestinian partner will materialize; this illusion is due to their fear that talking to the PLO will eventually lead to the creation of an independent Palestinian state and be interpreted as a reward for the intifada. The government's official positions, which both Likud and Labor agree on, are the following:

1. No withdrawal from united Jerusalem which is the eternal capital of Israel.
2. No to a Palestinian state; Israel's eastern border will always be the Jordan river; no other sovereignty over the Gaza Strip as well.
3. No withdrawal from the Golan Heights.
4. Settling the problem of Palestinian refugees should be a part of any solution.
5. No Palestinian right to repatriation.
6. No to negotiations with the PLO.
7. No to a fully-empowered international peace conference.
8. Ruling out total Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 territories and no non-Israeli military force will be allowed to enter the West Bank.
9. Lastly, the Palestinians in the occupied territories should practice some form of self-administration in regards to their internal affairs.

In regards to the settlements in the occupied territories, there is no intention of dismantling them. In fact, there was a decision by the coalition government to build eight more, of which three have already been built. Shamir views these as Israel's security against a possible Palestinian state.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

The culmination of all of the previously mentioned plans, statements and tendencies has come about in the form of the Shamir plan which was first introduced during his April visit to the US. This plan is based on four points:

1. An expansion of the Camp David accords between Egypt and Israel, rejecting any «land for peace» formula in the occupied territories.
2. Calling upon the Arabs to quit hostilities and the economic embargo on Israel, and begin negotiations.
3. Resolving the Palestinian «refugee problem perpetuated by the Arab governments» while offering what Shamir termed decent housing and dignified living for the Palestinians.
4. So-called free and democratic elec- ▶

tions, by which Shamir means free from «the atmosphere of PLO violence, terror and intimidation,» with the aim of creating a delegation of Palestinians who would negotiate with the Israeli government an «interim period of self-governing administration to be followed by negotiations for a permanent settlement.»

Further details of the plan include that residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip would elect 10 representatives who would participate in talks with Israel in order to negotiate a five year period of limited self-administration. These 10 would be responsible for the administration of the territories. Subsequently, after three years have passed, they would negotiate a final settlement on the future status of the occupied territories.

Shamir's plan was formally approved by the Israeli cabinet on May 14th in a 20-6 vote. Science Minister Ezer Weizman and another Labor cabinet member voted against the proposal because it avoids negotiating with the PLO, whereas Sharon, two others from Likud and one member of the National Religious party voted against for fear that this proposal would lead to a Palestinian state.

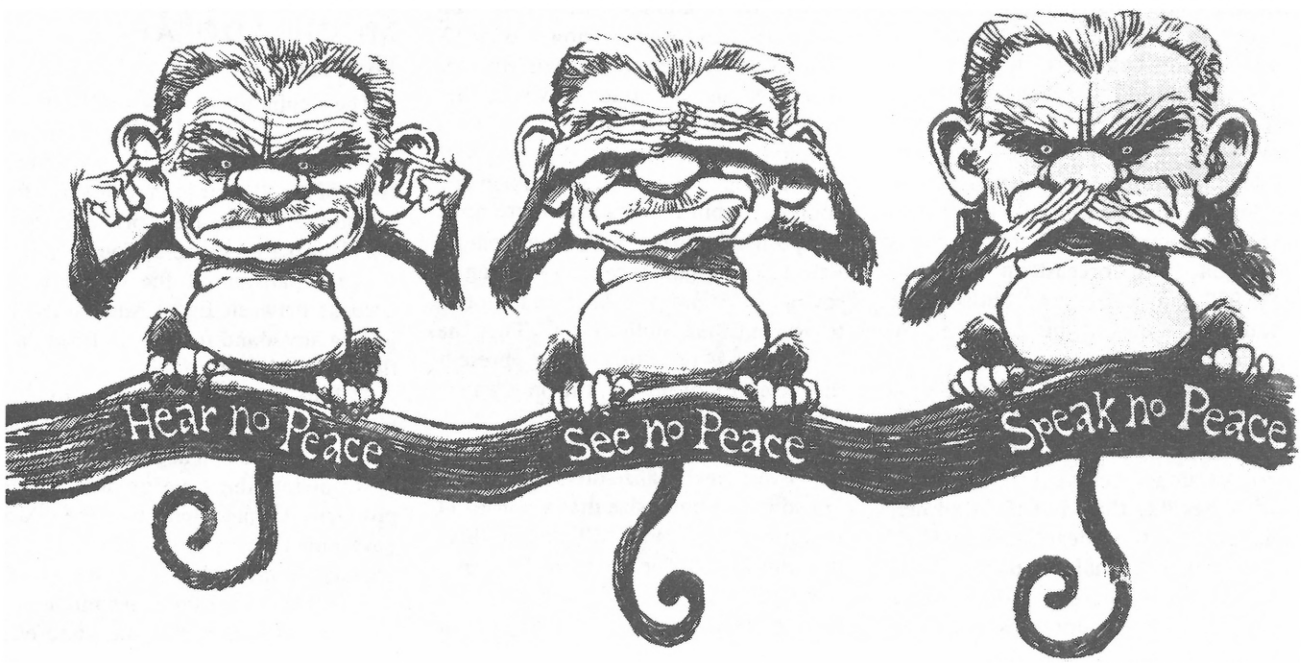
One of the reasons why the plan was approved by a large majority is because controversial topics were skirted. Some of these issues include: what the final settlement will consist of; if the uprising must stop before elections are held; if the residents of East Jerusalem will be able to vote; and lastly, if there will be some type of international supervision. Of course Shamir has clearly said no to all of the above. In regards to the final settlement, an independent Palestinian state is ruled out in favor of continuing Camp David with self-administration, perhaps a confederation with Jordan or Israel. In regards to aborting the uprising, it is obvious that Shamir continues to demand this. He was quoted by Israeli radio as saying that he told the cabinet that the plan would enable the government to take a harder line in suppressing the uprising. The residents of East Jerusalem will most likely not be able to vote since they are residents of the «capital of Israel,» and lastly, as Shamir says, there's no need for international supervision since Israel is well-known for its democracy and fair election practices!

Shamir also added while in the US that he would not give up one inch of land, nor talk to the PLO or accept a Palestinian state. Shamir still demands direct talks with Jordan, Egypt and Palestinians from the occupied territories. He also rejected any PLO participation in supervising the elections and said that only Palestinians from the occupied territories could be involved in such supervision.

Of course there are many reasons for the introduction of such a plan. Chief among them is the expressed purpose to end the intifada and to create an alternative leadership to the PLO, in essence to split the Palestinians and to maintain control over the occupied territories. The plan aims to put the diplomatic ball in the PLO's court, giving Israel a democratic facade to change its tarnished image in the international arena, while at the same time trying to further the Camp David accords.

It is no wonder that the PLO and the Palestinian people reject this proposal because there is nothing whatsoever in it that is in their interest. This is yet another imperialist-Zionist scheme to try to abort the intifada and return to the status quo which is needed if their interests in the area are to be protected. Obviously, they see the winds of change blowing against them. One thing the Israeli government should keep in mind is that when the leadership of the intifada raised the slogan of freedom and independence, it was because they mean to achieve just that. ●

1 *Al Fajr*, April 17, 1989
2 *Middle East Report*, May-June 1988
3 *Israel and Palestine*, September 1988
4 *Al Fajr*, April 17, 1989
5 *Middle East*, February 1989
6 *Destour*, Arabic, February 10, 1989
7 *Voice of Israel*, Arabic, May 8, 1989



ISRAEL PUBLIC OPINION POLLS

The following is a compilation of 18 different polls taken over a two-year period, raising the most pertinent questions concerning Israeli attitudes towards the intifada.

DO YOU AGREE THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL SHOULD NEGOTIATE WITH THE PLO IF IT RECOGNIZES ISRAEL, AGREES TO UN RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 AND ABANDONS/RENOUNCES TERRORISM?

Source of Poll	Date	Percentage-Yes
New York Times	April 1987	42 %
Yediot Ahronot	December 23, 1987	54 %
New York Times	April 1988	53 %
Israel's Labor Coalition done by Canadian firm of Desima	September 1988	60 %
Peace Now	March 1989	66 %
Washington Post-ABC	March 30-April 3'89	70 %
New York Times	April 2, 1989	58 %
unknown-Within Israel	April 1989 (Among Likud Voters)	51 % 39 %

TABLE 2
DO YOU AGREE WITH THE «TRANSFER» POLICY?

Source of Poll	Date	Percentage-Yes
Tel Aviv & Hebrew Universities published in the *Jerusalem Post*	December 25, 1987	42 %
Unknown	After December 23rd nationwide strike	80 % (deport inciters)
Israeli Institute of Applied Social Research & Communication Institute of the Hebrew University	June 1988	66 %
Tel Aviv University	June 1988	40 %
Israeli Institute of Applied Social Research & Communication Institute of the Hebrew University-published in the *Jerusalem Post*	*August 1988*	*49 % in general* *66 % in Likud*
Unknown	*April 1989*	*41 %*

TABLE 3
DO YOU FEEL THAT ISRAEL IS TOO DEMOCRATIC OR LENIENT VIS-A-VIS THE PALESTINIAN POPULATION IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES?

Source of Poll	*Date*	*Percentage-Yes*
Hodashot quoted in *Time*	February 8, 1988	27 %
Ha'aretz	January 18, 1989	40 %
Unknown	April 1989	45 %

TABLE 4
ARE YOU OPPOSED TO DEFENSE MINISTER RABIN'S POLICIES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES?

Source of Poll	Date	Percentage-Yes
Israel Shahak-Peace Activist	April 1988	20 %
Among Israeli High Schoolers	June 1988	40-55 %

TABLE 5

DO YOU AGREE WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PALESTINIAN STATE?

Source of Poll	Date	Percentage-Yes
Tel Aviv & Hebrew Universities published in *Jerusalem Post*	December 25, 1987	8-10 %
Israel's Labor Coalition done by the Canadian firm of Desima	September 1988	37 %

TABLE 6

DO YOU AGREE ON SOME TYPE OF TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE?

Source of Poll	Date	Percentage-Yes
Tel Aviv & Hebrew Universities published in the *Jerusalem Post*	December 25, 1987	8-10 %
Israel's Labor Coalition done by the Canadian firm of Desima	September 1988	57 %

TABLE 7

DO YOU THINK THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT SHOULD PRACTICE TOUGHER MEASURES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES?

Source of Poll	Date	Percentage-Yes
Unknown-In Israel	After December 23rd nationwide strike	69 %
Ha'aretz	January 18, 1989	86 %

A swing to the right among Israelis.

Aoun's Suicidal War

The Lebanese civil war entered its 15th year amid the most relentless artillery battles ever between the reactionary forces led by General Aoun, and the nationalist and progressive forces. This round of the conflict threatens to formalize the country's partition and preclude the possibilities of a political solution.

As the six-man Arab League committee was supposed to hold its third meeting with Lebanese political leaders on March 17th, Lebanon witnessed a qualitative political and military escalation, with heavy artillery duels across Beirut's green line. These clashes erupted two days after Michel Aoun, head of the military government, imposed an air-and-sea blockade on March 6th, against the ports in the nationalist areas: the Jiyeh port run by the Progressive Socialist Party, led by Walid Jumblatt, and the Ouzai port run by the Amal movement, led by Nabih Berri, both south of Beirut. In response, the nationalist forces closed the crossings linking East and West Beirut, and fierce battles ensued. Between March 8th and mid-May, over 400 people were killed and approximately 1,500 wounded.

The peak of the fighting occurred on March 14th as people were heading for work, and children for school; 39 were killed and 96 wounded in the day-long shelling in the Beirut area. Most of the casualties occurred in West Beirut; among the dead were two school children. It was the worst single day of violence in the civil war since 1985. Electricity plants were heavily damaged, leaving some areas in total darkness, while others had only a few hours of electricity daily. At least 50,000 people were evacuated from the area around the main fuel depot in East Beirut after it was shelled, due to the danger of explosions.

AOUN'S DRIVE FOR POWER

The situation in Lebanon returned to the same cycle of violence, provocations and arbitrary shelling, causing Arab and international efforts for a settlement to fail. The war of the ports disrupted the efforts of the Arab League committee to reach an interim solution for the Lebanese crisis, or at least remove some of the complications. The major reason for this escalation was General Aoun's drive for power.

In the «What will happen if we build another Beirut?» speech delivered by Aoun on March 25th, he expressed his determination to carry on his dirty war against the Lebanese people and the nationalist and progressive forces, vowing to fight even at the risk of destroying the capital. Despite appeals from Lebanese and non-Lebanese leaders and bodies to end the fighting, Aoun and his isolationist allies in the army and Lebanese Forces persisted in their campaign which acting prime minister Salim Hoss described as «this shameful massacre, this new cycle of mad violence.»

The battles between Aoun's forces and the nationalists took on a new dimension on March 14th, when Aoun declared a «war of liberation against the Syrian army,» saying there would be no peace in Lebanon until Syria withdraws its troops. Aoun declared, «The battle has already begun,» raising many questions: Why did the general declare this war? Does he wage this war in order to attain the presidency? Examining the latest developments and their background, one sees that in the months preceding the fighting, Aoun behaved according to the logic of a politician striving to prove his worthiness to be president and present a real solution, according to his view, for the Lebanese crisis. He evaluated that the political situation was ripe for selecting a president who would be capable of resolving the crisis by any means. Thus, he worked for internal and external acknowledgement of his worthiness.

Aoun has made no secret of his presidential ambitions. His fortunes seemed to improve in February when he cracked down on the Lebanese Forces who are notorious for their connections to Israel, their opposition to political reform and their chain of violence against anyone who disagrees with them. Syria, for example, praised Aoun's moves against the Lebanese Forces as a step towards resolving the political stalemate. Now, however, Syria appears determined to confront Aoun's efforts to extend his authority to all of Lebanon and demand Syrian withdrawal. Aoun blockaded the nationalist ports in order to tighten his control over the entire Lebanese coast, so as to impede the Arab League's peace efforts. Objectively, this creates conditions which maintain the status quo. To the same end, Aoun rejected Hoss' proposal to set up a joint committee from the fractured Lebanese Army to find ways of enacting and monitoring a cease-fire. Instead, Aoun insisted that such a committee be drawn from the Lebanese and Syrian armies with a mandate to enforce a cease-fire, and to set a timetable for a Syrian pull-out. Hoss rejected Aoun's contention, saying the Syrian presence in Lebanon was legitimate: «The Syrian army entered Lebanon in 1976 at the request of the then reigning Lebanese government. This request was later endorsed by the Arab League of which Lebanon is a founding member.» Hoss said that any demand for a Syrian pull-out should be made by a united Lebanese government which does not now exist. He accused Aoun of taking «unilateral decisions that are pushing Lebanon to the brink of a disaster.»

Aoun also reacted negatively to the statement issued in Bkirki by 23 Christian members of parliament, calling for an immediate stop to the fighting. Although Aoun himself now heads the reactionary forces who have blocked political reform which would make Lebanon a normal parliamentary dmocracy, he dismissed the statement of his fellow Christians by saing that these deputies were elected 17 years ago. On the same occasion, he told the public, «Don't worry if the presidential elections do not take place. If there is no president, the people will impose the ▶

leader and I am going to carry on.» Aoun's populist demagogery is clearly only a cover for his savage war to impose his authority, since it is clear he would not be elected as president. More than ever it is clear that what is going on is neither a «war of liberation» or simply a war over the ports; it is Aoun's war, his drive for power and his suicidal, sectarian project.

SHELLING THE ARAB LEAGUE COMMITTEE

The meetings held by the Arab League committee with the various Lebanese parties to the conflict in January and February, made it obvious that the committee would deal with the Lebanese crisis as an internal problem connected to the nature of the political system and the privileges which some sects enjoy. This approach annoyed Aoun and the other sectarian forces, since it means focusing on the need for political reform. For this reason, Aoun chose to escalate the military confrontation and direct it against Syria, just as the Arab League committe should hold its concluding meetings. Aoun aimed to accentuate the question of Syrian withdrawal in order to portray the conflict as stemming from external not internal causes, and thus divert the discussions of political reform into discussions of what he calls «Syrian occupation.» This was confirmed by his statement that the «war of liberation is more urgent than reform...»

By focusing on Syria, Aoun aimed at marginalizing the role of the Lebanese nationalist forces who have been pushing for reform of the sectarian system for more than a decade. Simultaneously, the general aimed to besiege Syrian and force it to abandon its opposition to the reactionary forces' sectarian project. On this level, Aoun's war is closely connected to the regional situation, and fits into the US and Israeli plans for isolating Syria in order to break its opposition to Camp David.

At the same time, Aoun's provocation of a new, relentless war provides a cover for all the Lebanese reactionary forces that want to avoid political reform in order to secure the privileges accorded to the Maronite Christians by the prevailing sectarian system. This was apparent in the statement of Phalangist Party President George Saadeh, who is also a major figure in the Lebanese Front which groups all the Lebanese reactionary parties: «The Front is not opposed to political reforms, but we cannot turn to political reforms at a time when a shower of shells are falling on us...» Thus, Saadeh hopes that the Lebanese will forget that it was his Phalangist Party that unleashed the bloody civil war 14 years ago, to break the power of the Lebanese nationalist forces and their Palestinian allies, in order to ward off democratic popular change.

For these reasons,Aoun is determined to continue his war to the end, because any backing down on his part would defeat his presidential aspirations. Initially, Aoun attained partial success on this level, for the urgency of stopping the fighting replaced the urgency of political reform. Thus, Aoun's shelling of the Lebanese people was also a shelling of the Arab League committee, converting it into a ceasefire committee rather than a body searching for a more lasting solution.

INTERNATIONALIZATION

Since they represent a minority of the Lebanese people, the Lebanese reactionary forces have never been capable of imposing their project in all of Lebanon, as Aoun now tries to do. This was even the case when Israel staged an all-out invasion of Lebanon in 1982, thinking this would bring about a pro-Israeli government. Nonetheless, Aoun began his war based on the assumption that he could rally external support from the imperialist powers for his drive against Syria. It became obvious that he had surpassed the limits of reason in his calculations. When his expectations were not filled, he put himself in the awkward position of castigating his potential allies, even attacking the US for its refusal to become involved in a new adventure in Lebanon. «The US secretary of state says that the US is incapable of doing anything to help Lebanon. This is a plot. America is not incapable, but America is taking part in a conspiracy of silence regarding the destruction of Lebanon by Syria.» So said Aoun in response to US Secretary of State Baker's remarks: «We make a lot of statements and sometimes it is frustrating to think that is really about all we can do... We have scant influence with the Syrians.»

The US is certainly not involved in any conspiracy to protect Syria as Aoun says. In fact, it is the US that has armed and trained the part of the Lebanese Army which is fighting for Aoun. Aoun himself is the type of leader the US would like to see heading a strong central government which controls all of Lebanon. In this light, one can understand Aoun's tirade as a plea for more aid, rather than a criticism of US policy.

The point is that the US is deeply convinced of the futility of getting directly involved in the Lebanese conflict, especially after the failure of its earlier efforts to bolster Amin Gemayel's presidency in the wake of the Israeli invasion. Moreover, US priorities in the Middle East at present focus on bailing its top ally, Israel, out of the dilemma imposed on it by the Palestinian intifada. The US is not ready to go out on a limb to help lesser allies like Aoun, but prefers to let the Lebanese crisis boil on its own, in hopes that this will sap the energies of Syria, the Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese nationalist forces. In this light, the US prefers to express support to the Arab League efforts. «The US supports the Arab League initiative to bring an early end to the fighting, so that negotiations can begin to resolve the problems at the roots of the Lebanese crisis,» said the US ambassador to Lebanon, John MacCarthy.

The Soviet Union also refused to respond to Aoun's blackmail that if international efforts were not forthcoming, he would destroy Lebanon. The Soviet leader Gorbachev stated, «The Soviet Union will do its best to help the Lebanese people, but the Lebanese crisis has to be viewed from the angle of the Middle East problem.» The Soviet Union's refusal of internationalization is based on awareness that it is difficult to solve the Lebanese crisis in isolation of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its core, the Palestinian cause. Accordingly, the Soviet Union supports the efforts of the Arab League Committee, and thinks ▶

that Syria should play a basic role in an Arab solution on the basis of maintaining Lebanon's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. Internationalization would only complicate the Lebanese crisis further.

Only France has come out in direct support of Aoun. French officials have publicly demanded the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, and urged the US and Western Europe to join France in helping Lebanon's «beleaguered Christian community,» disregarding the fact that this community is beleaguered as a result of the suicidal projects of Aoun and his ilk who claim to represent the Christians. French President Francois Mitterand said, «The Christians' lives are in danger... whoever the threatened minority might be, we don't accept that it is the victim of this situation.» French Foreign Minister Dumas stated, «I called on UN Secretary General Javier Perez De Cuellar concerning the need for convening the Security Council if the six-man Arab committee has failed in its efforts.» In accordance with this view, the French government sent ships to Lebanon with the intention of aiding only those in East Beirut where Aoun rules. This provided the excuse for French officials to issue threats, as when the French envoy to Lebanon, Jean-Francois Deniau, warned that opening fire of French ships «would be an act of war against France.»

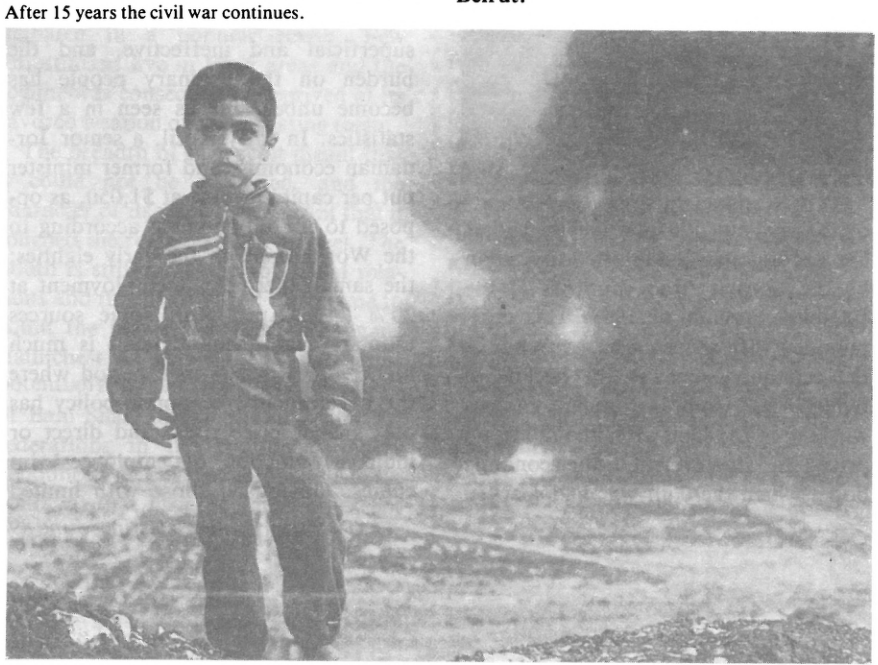
France's dispatch of two ships loaded with fuel, food and medical supplies to East Beirut caused the nationalist and progressive forces to accuse France of bias towards Aoun's project, and to warn against these ships docking. Acting Prime Minister Hoss expressed shock at France's biased position, and demanded that this position be clarified and balanced before France delivered aid to Lebanon. As a result of mounting criticism, and the failure of other powers to support internationalization moves, Mitterand was forced to modify the French stand, stating on April 12th, that France wants to be the friend of all the Lebanese people, and that the humanitarian aid is meant as a sign of friendship and solidarity with the Lebanese people.

Whatever the intentions of the French government, its position has objectively served to encourage Aoun to carry on his criminal war.

CEASE—FIRE?

The situation in Lebanon appeared at a deadlock in the latter part of April, and there was almost a week of calm until April 25th, when Aoun's forces resumed their shelling of the nationalist areas on the eve of the Arab League foreign ministers' meeting in Tunis. The meeting adopted resolutions calling for an immediate, lasting cease-fire and lifting the blockade of the ports, airport and land crossings. For an interim period not to exceed three months. The six-man Arab committee will work to find a lasting solution for the crisis in cooperation with all Lebanese parties. The resolutions also called for setting up an observer force drawn from Arab armies to monitor the cease-fire, the lifting of blockades and the opening of crossing points between East and West Beirut.

After 15 years the civil war continues.



Though both sides have nominally accepted the ceasefire, its success remains uncertain. Surely Aoun's acceptance of the cease-fire is tactical, decided in the light of his failure so far to achieve concrete gains, despite having unleashed a war of unbearable hardships on the Lebanese people. In early May, the ceasefire did go into effect, but only to be disrupted by four days of murderous shelling, until being reestablished on May 10th. However, the real test will come when the discussions about a more lasting solution get underway. The war can be renewed at any time since the positions of the two contending sides remain basically the same - Aoun having not relinguished his sectarian project, and the rest of Lebanon still refusing to submit to sectarian domination.

THE ISRAELI ANGLE

Aoun's war harmonizes with the plans of the Zionist state to keep Lebanon weak and divided through continuing sectarian wars. Israel is the prime benefactor of Aoun's sectarian project which serves to prolong de facto partition. The war in Lebanon serves to divert attention from the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories, and from the continued Zionist occupation in South Lebanon and daily aggression on the people there. The ongoing struggle of the Lebanese National Resistance against the Israeli occupiers and their allies in the South Lebanon Army, is thus part of the efforts to oppose Aoun's sectarian project. Accordingly, efforts to resolve the Lebanese crisis must be directed towards ending the Israeli occupation, while enacting democratic reform in the Lebanese political system. At the same time, it is difficult to imagine a really just, lasting solution for the Lebanese crisis isolated from a comprehensive solution to the Middle East conflict. Thus, creating a democratic Lebanon is one aspect of the ongoing struggle against the plans of imperialism, Zionism and reactionary forces in the area, and this struggle must be based on the unity of the nationalist and progressive forces.●

Sources for this article include the Lebanese daily *Al Safir*, the Palestinian weekly *Al Hadaf*, the Arabic magazine *Al Mostaqbal* and AP news bulletins.

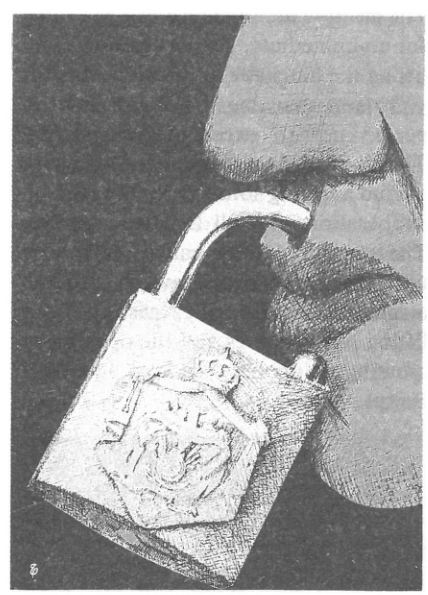
Jordan
Mass Protest

As King Hussein began talks with US officials in Washingtong D.C., his closely guarded home front exploded, rupturing the facade of stability that had prevailed for nearly two decades. Jordanians throughout the southern part of the country took to the streets, protesting the latest price hikes and venting their rage chiefly on government buildings and banks.

The direct cause of the outburst was the government's economic policy, but the mass revolt is not unrelated to political issues. For years, the Jordanian regime has used the Arab-Israeli conflict as an excuse for maintaining martial law, meanwhile striving to buy off significant strata of the population with a degree of relative prosperity. However, the consequences of the aggravated economic crisis proved that Jordan is not immune to the phenomenon of bread revolts experienced by other countries. When taxi drivers in Maan began protesting the rise in gasoline prices on April 18th, they were joined by people from all the strata that are harmed by the government's economic policy. Over the next five days, the revolt continued and spread to Kerak, Tafila, Petra, Mazar, Ghor al Safi, Salt and the surrounding villages, as well as Tayyeba farther north and Jabal al Tareq on the edge of Amman; demonstrations occurred at the University of Jordan in Amman and Yarmouk University in Irbid in the North. The regime dealt harshly with the protestors; the army and security forces opened fire on the people. Under the cover of curfews and a partial media black-out, 18 people were killed and about 200 injured, in addition to approximately 300 arrests.

THE ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

The price rise that sparked the uprising was a consequence of the agreement with the IMF announced by the Jordanian government on April 14th, which also entailed an increase in direct and indirect taxation, selling out public companies and other measures as part of a package deal whereby Jordan would get aid to reschedule its $ 6.5 billion debt. This was the latest downspin in the economic crisis which burst into the open in November 1988 with the collapse of the Jordanian dinar's exchange rate; its roots, however, lie in the dependent nature of the economy and the regime's reliance



on external aid. 1988 marked the end of the steadfastness aid allotted to Jordan by the oil-rich Arab countries at the Baghdad Summit of 1988. This compounded with other negatives trends in the economy, such as the decline in remittances from Jordanian citizens working in the Gulf after the fall in oil prices, and the reversal of the economic boom which the Gulf war had sparked in Jordan in its initial phase. Moreover, Jordanian exports were affected after the Central Bank ceased loans to many domestic industries, and domestic investment stagnated.

What remained was the aftermath of irrational overspending and growing dependence on imported goods, many of them luxury items, in line with the growth of the parasitic commercial-bureaucratic bourgeoisie. In the past period, about 70% of the GNP went to finance imports, half of them consumer goods. On the other hand, the deficit in the Jordanian budget rose to constitute 22% of its GNP, with Jordan owing $1.2 billion on its $6.5 billion debt by the beginning of this year, according to the Central Bank.

The growing dependence on imports in line with the growth of the parasitic bourgeoisie has led to further distortions in the Jordanian economy where the service sector accounts for 60% of the GNP, while agriculture and industry combined account for only 26%. Productivity has even declined with more than 35 industrial companies declaring bankruptcy in the past two years, according to official state reports. At the same time, corruption has grown rapidly, and big capitalists simply smuggle money out of the country, further compounding the currency crisis. Giving more maneuver room to the private sector has diminished the role of the state in the economy, particularly in the field of consumer protection, leading to waves of inflation and widening class differences.

The various measures taken by the regime to stem the crisis have been superficial and ineffective, and the burden on the ordinary people has become unbearable as seen in a few statistics. In early April, a senior Jordanian economist and former minister put per capita income at $1,050, as opposed to $1,700 annually according to the World Bank in the early eighties; the same expert put unemployment at 20% (AP, April 4th); some sources estimate that unemployment is much higher. This occurs in a period where the government's economic policy has only meant price rises, and direct or indirect reduction of employees' incomes. Obviously, those with limited ▶

incomes are suffering most. According to official statistics, 17.5% of families in Jordan have a monthly income of 50 dinars, which is considered under the poverty line. On the other hand, 20% of families have access to 48% of the GNP, while the remaining 80% must live on the remaining 52%.

In this light, the economic policy of the regime amounts to little more than organized plunder of the country's resources, impoverishing broad strata of the population. It is no wonder that the people turned their wrath on the government, expressing themselves in slogans such as those shouted in Kerak: «Cancel all the latest economic measures,» «Bring to trial those who were responsible for the deterioration of the economic conditions» and «Form a national government that will work for free and honest parliamentary elections.»

THE SOCIAL BASE OF THE REVOLT

Erupting as a spontaneous economic protest, the April revolt distinguishes itself from previous mass movements in Jordan, which were based on national, political issues. It occurred in areas where the national and progressive movement has not traditionally been strong. This was, however, no accident, because the South is generally the poorer half of the country and the population there is thus hardest hit by the economic crisis and related austerity measures. Thus, for the first time, the masses of the South, the masses of the countryside, all the popular sectors and almost all of them Jordanian have participated in a popular revolt. Few Palestinians live in these areas and the regime was consequently deprived of its favored weapon of scapegoating them.

The breadth of the revolt meant that it could not be dismissed, and the character of its social base meant that it touched the regime's Achilles heel. The South is still dominated by tribal relations and this has allowed the regime to count the population there among its staunchest supporters. It was thus potentially devastating when the leaders of Bani Shar, one of the largest tribal federations in the country, publicly denounced «a class of opportunists (in Amman) that have no interests except in the accumulation of unlawful money and wealth at the expense of the people» (as quoted in *The Guardian*, April 25th).

It has been from among Jordanians living under tribal conditions that the regime has recruited its most loyal troops for repressing the people, as was apparent in the war on the Palestinian resistance from September 1970 until July 1971. However, this year's revolt signalled a narrowing of the regime's social base, as soldiers took their place in the ranks of the people protesting government policy; several soldiers were among those martyred, including a senior air force officer - an unprecedented occurrence. The revolt was preceded by a near mutiny in the army's 12th battalion, led by Masoud Al Adwan, protesting inflation; this led King Hussein to visit the battalion several times before departing for the US. The military has recently called for salary raises but the government refused, showing how the economic crisis has limited the regime's maneuverability in terms of satisfying even sectors considered of vital importance. Such friction is almost unknown in the Jordanian army since 1970 when the regime purged those with nationalist inclinations or hesitations about confronting the Palestinians.

These characteristics of the revolt, added to its timing which coincides with the Palestinian intifada in the neighboring occupied territories, mean that it could mark a turning point for the struggle in Jordan. It gives the opportunity to link the daily social and economic issues of vital importance to the masses with overall national political issues - the struggle for democracy and for Jordan to have a nationalist policy in harmony with the interests of the masses and with the Palestinian cause. This is the meaning of spreading the Palestinian intifada throughout the Arab world, to make it a mass struggle for freedom and social justice

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Narrowing the social base of the regime, and questioning its stability, means narrowing its room for maneuver and thus its potential usefulness to imperialism as a buffer zone protecting Israel and subsuming the Palestinian problem. It is this function of the regime which has enabled it to garner aid from the US in particular and from other reactionary regimes, like Saudi Arabia. Thus, the regime is in a bind, for it needs such support more than ever in the light of the revolt. This explains the authorities' quick response, both the immediate violent repression and the king's rushing home to set things in order, leading to the hasty resignation of Zeid Al Rifai's government on April 24th and promises of speedy elections. There have been no elections in Jordan since 1967, and the regime had only recently contemplated holding new ones. This idea did not stem from any sudden democratic impulse on the part of the regime. Rather, the intention was to constitute an all Jordanian parliament after having severed ties to the Palestinian West Bank, the residents of which had been nominally represented in the old parliament. Also now, in the absence of overall democratic freedom, new elections in themselves would offer very little as the parliament does not have real power and political parties are banned.

The political implications of the mass revolt were summed up as follows by Abdel Rahim Malouh, PFLP Politbureau member who spent a number of years in Jordanian jails during the seventies, in an interview in Damascus:

«This broad mass movement will force the king to sit down and think, to discuss the situation and reevaluate previous policies. This process has begun with dissolving Rifai's government, and that in itself is a achievement for the masses, since it was one of their demands. This means that the regime acknowledges that their past policies were responsible for the situation. However, we are convinced that this will not solve the problem, because the roots of the crisis are the class nature of the regime and its subordination to imperialism. There is a big possibility that the regime will resort to repressive policies, but in any case, this unique event, which has not occurred in Jordan for years, will have a decisive influence in the coming stage... It is a qualitative, militant turning point and a prelude to future events. ●

«Everyone should learn from it, especially the Jordanian nationalist and progressive forces, in order that they may shoulder their responsibility as the vanguard and improve their ways of working in order to fulfill the demands and goals of the masses. The events have proven that social and economic factors and the struggle for democracy are priorities for the masses. These events and similar events in other Arab countries show that, in most cases, the masses take the initiative before the organized political forces. This in itself necessitates learning a lesson.»

These lessons must be learned quickly in order to face up to the king's current maneuvers as he tries to capitalize on the fact that the revolt was explicitly aimed against the Rifai government and not the monarchy per se. A classical stick-and-carrot scenario is underway, trying to keep the social situation in tow, while restructuring the economy according to IMF conditions and the needs of the ruling class. On the one hand, the king appeared on television to lecture his subjects on «being good» and holding out the carrot of quick elections and the loosening of restrictions on free expression. On the other hand, the stick is ever present.

Military governors have been appointed in Maan, Tefila and Kerak, and the security forces seemed poised for more repression if needed. Although as previously stated, it was not organized political forces which initiated the revolt, the progressive and national parties naturally supported this mass struggle. They made their position known by calling for the abrogation of the IMF agreement, economic reorientation, redistribution of wealth, an end to corruption, democratic freedoms, etc. On this pretext, the security forces arrested a number of political activists and professionals, including the vice-president of the Jordanian Writers' League (previously bannd by the regime), the head of the Geological Union and members of the Jordanian Communist Party, the PFLP and the DFLP, as well as members of parliament, such as the deputy from Kerak. So, rather than providing more democracy as promised, the regime has actually reversed the moves it made earlier this year when it declared an amnesty and actually released a number of political prisoners.

The bigh stick is most graphically illustrated by the appointment of Zeid Bin Shaker as prime minister for the new government whose designated role is to prepare for the new parliament elections. Until being appointed as court adviser on security affairs this year, he served as army commander for 12 years and is described in the official army history as «the principal architect of the operational plan for neutralization of the fedayeen» (1970-71). He is a member of the Hashemite family and personally accompanied King Hussein to quell an army mutiny in Zarqa, in 1957, during a period when the nationalist forces stood much stronger in Jordan than is the case today. (In 1956, there were relatively free elections under Suleiman Nabulsi's government, which enabled nationalist forces to take the majority of parliament seats.) Shaker is reputedly popular in the army which is disproportionately recruited from among southerners. It remains to be seen if his charisma works in the post-revolt phase.

Fulfilling the masses' demands requires a number of immediate steps to reduce unemployment, increase wages in line with the reduction of the dinar's value, and lower the prices on basic goods. However, the popular revolt has accentuated the fact that Jordan's economic crisis cannot be solved short of a comprehensive economic reform which could only be enacted if there is a radical political change as well, based on instating civil liberties and reviving parliamentary life through free and democratic elections. Such programs can only be enacted by a national democratic government that enjoys the trust of the masses. This is not something that can come about overnight, but should provide the guidelines for the nationalist and progressive forces' struggle in Jordan. The Jordanian mass revolt has already provided the Palestinian uprising with an objective support in forcing the regime to think twice about its policies. With the active input of the conscious political forces, the mass movement in Jordan could play a pivotal role in spreading the intifada to open a new stage of the Arab national liberation struggle. ●

Anni Kanafani

Originally, the Foundation was established to collect and republish Ghassan's literary works and arrange translations, as well as to carry out other cultural activities. The kindergartens began as part of these cultural activities and have become the main focus of the Foundation's work. We have chosen to specialize in kindergartens instead of doing a lot of different activities, because we felt it was better to concentrate on one theme. Maybe the fact that I am a kindergarten teacher influenced our choice, but the main thing was that in 1974, when we began, there was a great need for kindergartens in the camps; there was only one in all the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, established by the *In'ash* group in 1970. So we began by establishing a kindergarten in Burj Al Barajneh camp, Beirut, in 1974.

We now have six kindergartens. All run on a double shift, which means that one group of children come from 8 a.m. until noon, and another group from noon until 4 p.m. There are also two groups of teachers. The Burj Al Barajneh kindergarten is still small, accomodating about 60 children. Since 1981, we have been hoping to build a bigger and better kindergarten just outside of the camp, to accomodate needy Lebanese children as well as Palestinians. The Foundation was established by Lebanese as well as Palestinian friends of Ghassan, and is a recognized Lebanese foundation, open to all children according to need. We have had to postpone our plans for the new building due to the recurring wars, beginning with the 1982 Israeli invasion, but we haven't given up this plan.

In Ain Al Hilweh camp, near Sidon, there is a larger kindergarten for 300 children. In Rashidieh camp, near ▶

Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Foundation

Expanding Child Care in Times of War

On March 19th, *Democratic Palestine* had the opportunity to interview Anni Kanafani, wife of the martyred Palestinian writer and political leader, Ghassan Kanafani. Anni is one of the founders of the Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Foundation, and serves as vice-chairperson in charge of the kindergarten program. On the occasion of the 17th commemoration of Ghassan's July 1972 martyrdom, and of the International Day of the Child, we print what she related to us about the Foundation's work in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon.

Tyre, we run a kindergarten for approximately 100 children. Our kindergarten in Mar Elias camp in Beirut has about 100 children, and in North Lebanon, there is one in Badawi camp with 100 children, and one in Nahr Al Bared camp with 200.

NEW PROJECTS FOR HANDICAPPED

In 1986, we opened a new section of the Ain Al Hilweh kindergarten as a project for mentally handicapped children. We began with six children and now we have 20. All the teachers are trained. A Norwegian pre-school teacher specialized in teaching handicapped children came to work on this project, and trained the other teachers. In Lebanon, the ordinary kindergartens are very much like school, whereas we stress creative activities and play, though we do begin teaching reading and writing skills to the children of pre-school level. The mentally handicapped children, however, don't go to regular school, so we have now made a slow-learner program for them. This program also serves children who have dropped out of the UNRWA schools. In the UNRWA schools, a child can repeat a class only once; if they fail again, they drop out, so we are also addressing the problem of these children. We started the Ain Al Hilweh project because we felt the importance of offering something for the handicapped children, as there were really no programs for them. Since we started, another organization has also started a project for handicapped children in Tyre, so there is development although it is gradual.

In the autumn of 1986, we began the Mar Elias habilitation kindergarten for physically handicapped children. We have 10 children in this program, mainly spastic children who are not mentally handicapped in any way. Very little has been done for these children before; the ordinary schools in Lebanon don't take them, partly because they are not equipped to do so, but also due to the attitude of keeping these children out of sight. This project is in the same building as the Mar Elias kinergarten, so it is a partially integrated program. The handicapped children come on the bus in the morning with the other children and, of course, they are all on the playground together. Once a week, the handicapped children go downstairs to join the other children, and sometimes a group of the other children come up to join the handicapped ones. In the beginning, a specialized Swedish pre-school teacher directed the project, and she trained the other teachers who have continued the work. A Lebanese physiotherapist works with the children two hours daily, and a consulting doctor visits the children weekly.

Every Saturday, we take the children on a trip in the center's bus, either on a picnic or to see a bakery, for example, or other activities. This has more than one purpose. The children get the chance to be outside and see something new. At the same time, the public becomes accustomed to seeing handicapped children. When people see that someone is taking care of these children, they get very interested, and want to help. Many times they offer the children something. This helps to integrate the children into their surroundings. We have also been able to integrate one child from this project into a regular kindergarten.

Of course, we need special equipment for this center - special chairs and tables which can accomodate wheelchairs. We now have a small workshop producing equipment for these children. Other people have also begun to come to this workshop, so we are making equipment for children outside our own project as well.

TEACHER TRAINING CENTER

Our newest project is the Kindergarten Resource and Training Center in Beirut, for training early childhood teachers working in deprived areas. The idea dates back to the beginning of the 1980s. We were a small group of professionals who started a committee and worked out a proposal for a two-year training program for teachers and supervisors working in existing kindergartens. With the 1982 war, there was no way of doing anything, but we continued the idea. In 1983, we developed close contact with a teachers training school in Denmark that was willing to help, but with the situation in Lebanon, there are no guarantees. In 1985, we reestablished the committee and began a small training project in Mar Elias, sponsored by UNICEF. Finally in 1988, we opened the KG Resource and Training Center to offer a two-year training program for 25 in-service pre-school teachers, with Arabic as the language of instruction. This is important, because although universities offer a B.A. in early childhood education, it is usually in English or French; in the summer, there are short intensive courses in Arabic, but this is limited and not accessible to all.

By setting up the KG Resource and Training Center, we offer a more extensive course, and in Arabic, to ▶

teachers and supervisors working in the kindergartens set up by different associations and organizations. The center is affiliated with the Kanafani Foundation, but has its own board, of which I am a member, for planning the program. Besides raising the level of preschool education, this center also has the function of increasing cooperation between the different kindergartens in different places in Lebanon. We hope we can contribute to greater unity in the curriculum and attitudes of these kindergartens in this way.

COPING WITH THE WAR SITUATION

Acutally in Lebanon, all children live in fear, and this was the case even before the 1982 invasion. Almost all our facilities have been damaged at some time; some have been completely destroyed. In times of war in one area, the Palestinian camps of another area will become overcrowded from families looking for a safe place.

Prior to 1978, we had a project for a children's home in Burj Al Shemali in South Lebanon. After the 1978 Israeli invasion, we were not really able to use this home. In the 1982 invasion, the Rashidieh kindergarten was destroyed, as was the one in Burj Al Barajneh, while the one in Ain Al Hilweh was badly damaged. As of 1982, 42 kindergartens and nurseries had been established by different groups. We were able to carry out repairs quite quickly after 1982, but this was not the case for all. Repairs were still being made in 1984 for the damage inflicted in 1982, and since then there have been other sieges and destruction affecting a number of the camps.

Now in 1989, there are more than 50 kindergartens and nurseries operating. I think it is very important to stress that in spite of all the war and destruction in Lebanon, it was possible to establish kindergartens, clinics and other social institutions. This was the case all during the civil war, and even after 1982. Life still goes on. When a kindergarten is hit, you have to find a way to repair or rebuild it. Generally, it is possible to get financial support for this, but due to the situation, it is sometimes impossible to bring in building materials in large quantities for repair. For example, in Rashidieh, we were not able to do the necessary repairs, but then with the help of UNRWA, we got building materials, so the kindergarten is now repaired and operating. Most organizations have put a great deal of effort into reestablishing their kindergartens.

In view of the situation, all the kindergartens should have shelters, but this is not always possible if one is established in an abandoned house. However, if we build the building ourselves, we make sure that there is a shelter. Also, in times of war, we don't have all the children at the kindergarten, because the parents are afraid to send them.

As part of our relief work for displaced families in the war situation, we started mobile kindergartens for more than 150 children in the Sidon area in December 1986. The staff brought materials with them and worked with the children in the areas where their families were temporary living. Meals were also provided, and this program continued until most of the displaced families were able to return to their former houses in the camps.

In 1985, we started a project for home-based kindergartens in the Sidon area. In this program, a young mother or girl receives seven or eight children in her home. We found young mothers who had no income; perhaps her husband is dead, and she has small children of her own. In this way, she can take care of her own children and receive others, while also having an income. We now have five of these home-based kindergartens operating, and we consider it a successful project. The mother comes to the regular kindergarten for a month or two to see how we work and get training before she starts the work in her home. We have continuous follow-up, and there is a supervisor who buys materials, and spends a week at each home-based kindergarten in turn.

FUNDING

The Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Foundation is a non-profit organization and that is why we have to ask people and organizations to help us. The children do pay a symbolic fee if the family can afford it. Of course, we don't refuse a child if the family cannot pay; on the contrary, we take the children from hardship families first. But most families can pay a small amount, and we have always felt it is important that they pay something if they can to increase family involvement with the kindergarten, so that they feel a sense of responsibility.

Our main funding, however, comes from soliciting contributions from individuals and organizations abroad. It has been possible to raise funds from international NGOs for establishing kindergartens. The project for physically handicapped in Mar Elias is sponsored by the Swedish Save the Children, while the project for mentally handicapped in Ain Al Hilweh is sponsored by the Norwegian Save the Children. In both cases, these organizations paid the costs of building and establishing the project, as well as covering maintenance. We were very lucky in this case, as it is generally very difficult to get organizations to cover operating costs. Our main sustenance since 1975 is fundraising, and we get contributions from many friends in Europe. Of course, we always need more contributions. Having a continuous program means that continuous funding is needed. We have to pay basic salaries, and with the economic situation in Lebanon, these should actually be increased, but until now we haven't been able to do so. We as a foundation are a source of employment for many people as well as serving the chidren.

Anyone wanting more information about the Foundation or wishing to make a donation is encouraged to write to its address:

GKCF
P.O. Box 135/375 Chouran
Beirut, Lebanon

The Foundation's bank account is as follows:

Acc. no. 67 00800/301971-3
Arab Bank
Ras Beirut
Lebanon ●

The Current State of Arab Culture

In this, Dr. Faysal Darraj analyses the effects of the June 1967 defeat and the ensuing developments, including the oil boom, on Arab thought and literature.

From the beginning of national independence up to the June 1967 defeat, the Arab East (Mashreq) witnessed a great rise in both nationalist and Marxist ideologies. Both defended a set of comprehensive positive values, looking forward to the realization of a new Arab society. The nationalist ideology called for Arab unity, social progress, liberation from colonialism, restoration of ancient Arab glory, assimilating positive aspects of European civilization, defense of science, etc. The Marxist ideology raised the slogans of liberation of both the individual and society, comprehensive social justice, unity of human thought, etc. In both cases, rationalism occupied a dominant position. The nationalist ideology gave priority to national identity as compared to religious identity, consequently defending a civil, secular society. The Marxist ideology fought metaphysics, and defended the principles of social development, the interaction of civilizations, etc. It glorified reason, and struggled for the politicization of the masses and democracy in word and deed.

In spite of the complete historical failure of these two ideologies for many reasons that cannot be listed here, their progressive character becomes clear when we look at the currently dominant ideas. Twenty years after the defeat, confessionalism has flourished and religious fanaticism has increased, while the concept of civil society has been waning. In addition to all its other results, the June defeat resulted in the defeat of Arab rationalism and the victory of various obscurant trends.

THE CRISIS OF ARAB THOUGHT

The June war led to the defeat of the political forces which stood for progress, humanist culture, rationalism, etc. Theoretically, it was essential that the defeated forces make self-criticism. However, their historical fragility prevented them from doing so; hence, the continuation and ever-growing magnitude of the defeat; and hence the fact that Arabs have started to look for an ideological alternative, or to withdraw in protest against the ideological trends which had risen before the defeat. In both cases, religion seemed to be the sole way out for a great part of Arab society. In such conditions, religion carried a multitude of different meanings according to the social forces which adopted it. Some found it an individual solution or a kind of protest against the failure of both capitalism and socialism. Others used religion to face the alienation they suffered in their daily life or took it as a cultural weapon to resist the European style of life. Still others resorted to a kind of political religion, considering Islam a method to build a new society based on Islamic ideals and concepts.

Although defeat has contributed to the creation of the objective conditions of a new revival of religion, this revival would have been impossible without the oil boom, especially in Saudi Arabia. This spread into many Arab countries, managing to dominate a great part of the ideological machinery which produces social consciousness, from the astounding increase in the number of mosques, to the audiovisual mass media and the establishment of publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, research centers etc. This has succeeded in creating a new cultural atmosphere, divorced from the actual problems of reality and even capable of pushing them away. Thus, the phenomenon of disguising the actual problem, while celebrating the delusive ones, has become the principal characteristic of the oil culture which is, in fact, the dominant Arab culture. Even when the real problems are approached, the solutions remain illusive.

The essential character of the prevailing Arab culture is not manifested in political allegiance or a partisan position, but in a series of ideological stereotypes which fight the defeat from defeated positions. Such stereotypes never criticize the thinking that prevailed before June 1967 in order to develop it, but in order to prove its complete failure, thereby resorting to ideas more backward than those of the Arab renaissance of a century before. Looking at the subjects taken up by Arab thought in its best known and most effective types, one sees how confused and impotent it is. Dr. Anwar Abdul Melik, an Egyptian Marxist from the fifties, recently wrote about «The Eastern Wind which Defeats that of the West.» He divides the world into East and West, and sees the future of mankind in the East, and its past in the West. The East, in his view, consists of the Arab-Islamic countries, together with China, Japan and the Muslims in the Soviet Union. To achieve the victory of the East, he considers the alliance between the intellectual and the authority necessary, because the latter is blind and without culture, while the former remains disarmed without power.

One of those who inspired the Islamic fundamentalist movement, Hassan Hanafi of Egypt, demands in all of his many books (*Tradition and Renovation, From Faith to Revolution,* etc.) the alliance of inspiration and history, after putting the former above the latter, assigning absolute authority to inspiration and consequently rendering Islam valid for all times and places. Hisotry, in his view, is the religious consciousness of the masses, or religion as perceived by the masses. Ultimately, he arrives at a concept very close to the «mass spirit» which leads to absolute irrationalism in both theory and politics. This irrationalism is clearly revealed in the concept of the «Islamic essence» whereby he believes that the Muslim is the sole one capable of understanding his religion, reality and future. Therefore, Dr. Hanafi rejects Western ▶

thought, as well as the contributions of Christian Arab thinkers from the renaissance up to the present. Moreover, he considers such contributions as a kind of conspiracy against the world of Islam. Equally, he rejects the interaction of human cultures and the concept of nationalism. Thus, he resorts to communalism which fragments society.

A former Marxist and influential journalist in Egypt, Adel Hussein, reiterates the ideas of Abdul Melik and Hanafi in his *Towards a New Arab Ideology*. Yet he elaborates a new concept which is the relationship of science to faith. In his view, the science of the West is not suitable for the East, not because of local particularity or uneven social development, but because of the eternal contradiction between the materialism of the West and the spiritualism of the East. 'Materialism is atheism which can never be a basis for building a scientific theory, because real science is faith. Consequently, there can never be any science, knowledge or culture beyond the faith of Islam. Such an outlook involves, among other things, racism and a call for self-isolation, as well as a communalist tendency, in addition to turning science into a normative question, changing its meaning from place to place, leading to the impossibility of any scientific laws.

The above-mentioned names are well-known and highly influential in the sphere of Arab culture. They hardly speak about economic and political dependency, imported technology or the fact that the dominant classes live on the consumption of European commodities. They see only the culture of the West, which in their view is the culture of rationalism, secularism, socialism, Marxism, etc.

While the above-mentioned names, along with many others, are cloaked in the mantle of new fundamentalism, there are others whose function is the same, even if by a different method. This other method is formalism or structuralism. Its outstanding spokesman in the Arab world is Mohammed Abdo Al Jabiri from Morocco, who wants to elevate Arab thought through radical criticism. He draws a line of demarcation between science and ideology, and sees all Arab thought as an ideological discourse which must be replaced by scientific discourse. In his view, the ideological is that which comes close to politics, social classes or the citizens' daily problems. Al Jabiri puts himself above all the social classes and political thought, to deal with the Arab mentality, the Arab personality and its autonomy, and Arab discourse, etc. Doing so, he eliminates all concrete realities to build up a formal relationship between two abstract poles, i.e., the Arab and scientific discourse.

Although Al Jabiri bases all his work on the exclusive difference between the scientific and the ideological, he does not see any necessity to dwell on the social conditions which govern the process of producing scientific knowledge, or the causes which bring about either ideological or scientific discourse. According to him, the production of scientific knowledge appears to be based either on individual genius or subjective inspiration close to prophecy. What is strange about this man of thought, who concentrates on the pure principles of science free of all social conditions, is that he sometimes moves from theory to politics in order to build a relationship of similarity between Arab nationalism and Islam, whereby the former becomes Islamic to the extent that the latter becomes Arabic. Ultimately, Dr. Al Jabiri demands that the Arab mentality be reformed in order to be capable of understanding modern science and technology. Consequently, the Arab revolution has to be a technological revolution!!!

The above-mentioned names are not exceptions; they reflect the image of the dominant Arab culture which revolves, in general, around two abstract poles, i.e., science and faith. Seeking refuge in abstraction, it refrains from criticizing the existing political regimes, if not supporting them, directly or indirectly, because it considers them capable, sooner or later, of materializing the Arab-Islamic dream by adding the *Quran* to imported technologies.

Certainly, the forces of rationalism have not lost all their positions in the cultural arena. They are still there in the contributions of a galaxy of thinkers, such as Samir Amin who continues his research on the problem of socialism in conditions of backwardness and dependency; the brave militant, Fuad Zakaria, who is fighting old and new fundamentalism; Abdullah Al Orewi who played an important role in the seventies; the scientist, Mahmud Amin, etc. Yet these democratic and rationalist forces are deprived of the actual possibility of expounding their ideology. They fight from defensive positions, or rather, they fight while retreating in a sense. The dominant forces produce both their ideology and its reader at the same time, while besieging the rationalist intellectual as well as his audience.

Although the theoretical scene is gloomy, the case of the novel is somewhat different.

THE SPECIAL ROLE OF THE NOVEL

The novel occupies a vanguard position in the realm of contemporary Arab writing. It is the literary practice which is closest to the genuine questions of reality, as well as to the problems of the Arab individual. The novel attempts to mirror the daily reality and the social process which has produced it. Sometimes, it may come so close to daily events that it takes the form of a social document. This is what makes the novel the best sphere for identifying the features of the Arab reality in the decades after the June defeat.

The June 1967 defeat was the most serious event in modern Arab history. Its significance and results surpassed those brought about by the establishment of Israel in 1948. Israel's establishment was an expression of the defeat of the Palestinian people and the impotence of the Arab regimes in a certain historical period when they were dependent on the colonial forces. But the June defeat was an expression of the defeat of the Arab revolution as a whole. Arab novelists have dealt with that defeat which was only possible because of the repressive policies which rendered the Arab individual defeated before the combat began. The atmosphere of defeat is there in *When We Gave up the Bridge*, a novel by Abdulrahman Munif, ▶

which clearly illustrates the frustration of the Arab individual who, before the defeat, had believed that he was advancing towards a new society, based on Arab unity and social progress. The defeat came and took away all dreams and illusions. The atmosphere of defeat is also present in *The Dreary Time* by the Syrian novelist, Hayder Hayder, which depicts the alienation of the Arab individual after the defeat - this alienation which would freeze his will and enable the defeat to continue. The June defeat not only defeated the political regimes or some of them, but it forced every Arab to live with his own defeat.

Something similar is found in *A Thousand and Two Nights* by the Syrian novelist, Hani Al Rahib, and in both *Six Days* and *The Return of the Bird to the Sea* by another Syrian novelist, Halim Barakat who lives in the US. These novels do not present a mere description of battle and defeat, but bring forth a comprehensive critique of the totality of the social phenomena which gave birth to it, including political despotism, marginalization of the masses, backward mentality and the absence of both individual and collective social responsibility.

While revolving around the June defeat, its causes and effects, the Arab novel became a political novel par excellence, because its basic subject is accusation of the existing authorities, considering them the basic factor responsible for the destitution of the Arab reality, which is manifest on many levels. The role of these authorities is destroying the collective social will and reducing the whole society to a political elite, unable to realize its existence unless it negates the whole society. Thus, the question of despotism is the principal subject which has governed the Arab novel for the last twenty years.

One of the most important novels dealing with repression is the masterpiece of Jamal Al Ghaitani, *Al Zaini Barakat,* which revived the Arab literary heritage to reconstruct a current subject and present an image of the typical despot. There is also *August Star* by Sunallah Ibrahim, which condemns every authority that converts man into a mute, muscular force; as well as *Allaz* by the Algerian novelist, Al Tahir Wattar, which exposes the relationship between bloody terror and the ideology of religious fanaticism; and the Egyptian novel, *An Eye with a Metal Lid,* by Sharif Hatatah, which depicts the forms whereby man is destroyed in prison, whether under a monarchy or republican rule.

Perhaps the novel which approaches total documentation, very close to an autobiography of every Arab political prisoner, is *East of the Mediterranean* by A. Munif, which presents the horrible image of the slow death of the political prisoner who is, if not dead within the prison walls, chased after being released by the security service to guarantee his real or allegorical death. The predominance of repression does not allow the Arab novelist to make much distinction between the small prison surrounded by high walls and equipped with its hangmen and instruments of torture, and the huge prison which is the whole society or homeland. In such writing, the Arab novelists do not defend the right of man to a free life to the same extent that they expose the destructive results of repression which converts society into terrified human atoms, seeking individual salvation and viewing the terms of homeland, community, society, etc., as something foggy, with no sense. While building authority, repression thereby undermines the very base of society.

Coming close to the daily life, to the reasons which have produced and reproduced defeat, the Arab novel has observed the sweeping social transformations in the Arab world during the past twenty years, characterized by defeat in the struggle against Israel, civil war in Lebanon, the disintegration of the political parties of rationalism and democracy, and essentially by the rise of the petrodollar, especially the Saudi one. This latter factor has not only bolstered the forces of reaction and obscurantism, but has succeeded in some Arab countries, through massive financial input, in restructuring the class and social framework. In other words, it has managed in some countries to produce a sociopolitical and cultural balance which would have been impossible without the lever of petrodollars.

One of the most significant novels to have provided an account of the social changes is *The Epidemic* by H. Rahib, which is one of the most important Arab novels in recent years. It depicts the tragic course of the Arab dream of liberation from its predominantly romantic and freely innocent beginning, up to a society of lust, greed, extreme egoism, etc. A course that begins with complete innocence ends, after the attainment of power, in comprehensive sin. Power was a dream, being a way to realize freedom and justice; the same power has, after seizing it, become an instrument for repressing both freedom and justice, very close to complete sin or an epidemic ready to destroy man.

There is also *The Distant Echo* by Fuad Tekerli, which describes the social transformations in Iraq in the sixties, which brought the Baath Party to power and constituted the beginning of the historical defeat of the communists. In this novel, we do not read the destiny of certain individuals but that of a society where the new is defeated by the old. Then there is *Disintegration,* a novel by the Algerian author, Rashed Bou Jadra, that deals with the reasons which deprived the Algerian Communist Party of its expected historical role, due to its inability to grasp the national specificity. *Feast for the Seaweed,* by H. Hayder, is a similar work; it depicts the tragic end of the revolutionary forces in Iraq and Algeria.

The June defeat is shown in the Arab novel as the beginning of a whole series of defeats. After the defeat of the Arab military, the defeat grows to include all the positive human values, as if the Israeli victory were a victory for all that is obscurant and inhuman in the Arab world. Death is therefore the natural end of every person who defends noble human values. The ordinary civil servant in *The Pains of Mr. Maarouf,* by Ghaeb Tuma Fereman, moves towards death. The Iraqi revolutionary dies in exile in *Feast for the Seaweed.* The same fate befalls the ordinary man in *Distant Echo.* The artist in *The Tragedy of Dimitrio,* by Hanna Mina from Syria, perishes because the cult of quantity and money leaves no room for either art or the artist. A similar destiny awaits the individual who dreams of the revolution at a time of social disintegration in *The Epidemic* by H. Rahib.

Individual as well as collective death remains the primary ▶

subject dealt with in the Arab novel. When death stops being the subject, it is replaced by complete or multi-dimensional alienation which soon leads to death. The intellectual in both *The Trees and the Assassination of Marzouq* and *East of the Mediterranean,* by A. Munif, dies either through coercion or being killed. Similar is the situation of the innocent hunter in *The Ends;* he lives freely in the bosom of nature; as soon as the hand of authority reaches him, he is killed by a sandstorm. Wherever it goes, power means death. The alienation of man leading to the brinks of lunacy is seen in *The Committee* by Sunallah Ibrahim, where the police chase a man in the street and in the workshop, even in his bed and kitchen.

In the conditions of Arab disintegration, we become familiar with civil war, or rather Arab wars in Lebanon. We face it directly or indirectly in the novels of Tawfiq Yousef Awwad and Ghadeh Samman, *The Mills of Beirut* and *Beirut Nightmares,* respectively. The total destruction of war is presented by the Lebanese novelist, Elias Khouri, in two works: The first is *The Small Mountain* which depicts the end of a whole stage in the history of a people, when all sacred values and ideals are undermined, when everything becomes permissible, when man becomes the cheapest commodity in the market of war and the industry of death. The second novel is *White Faces* which depicts a dirty war not conducted by people, but conducting them, because its continuation is necessary for the warmongers and for each social group to extract its privileges from killing. Defense of social privilege, guarded by death, converts society into a jungle; it turns the ordinary civil society into the enemy of all the arms merchants.

In the vacuum of such perdition, the forms of epidemics are multiplied: Defeat, power, oil which spurts in the desert to desertize the whole Arab life and carry defeat from the military arena into the home, schools, ideologies, etc. - all are epidemics to destroy man. The subject of oil is addressed by A. Munif in *Cities of Salt,* an epic novel in four volumes, which follows this tragic process from its very beginning to its potential future perspectives. Munif's book is the greatest Arab novel of the eighties and a landmark in the whole history of the Arab novel. While the role of natural resources is logically the realization of individual as well as social welfare, Arab oil has intensified colonial hegemony, bolstered repression and spread the cult of consumerism. *Cities of Salt* is a historical document of the tragic marriage between the accumulated colonial European experience and the primitive desert mentality, which gives power and luxury to the European and only a «city of salt» to the Arab. With the first rain, such a city melts away because the princes of Arab wealth do not consider natural resources as collective national property, but as private property destined for personal luxury, characterized above all by irrationality.

In relation to these transformations which threaten the very national identity, the Arab novel constitutes a historical document condemning the status quo and calling for resistance. It is a protest against a world which crushes man, besieges him, deprives him of his dreams and destroys his heritage. Ibrahim Aslan defends the traditional popular quarters in *The Sad Swan.* Radwa Ashour defends the unity of the family in *Warm Stone,* this family which suffers from disintegration due to repression and continuous migration in search of a loaf of bread and a place that guarantees personal dignity, if this is possible. H. Mina upholds the banner of responsible optimism in *Harvest* where he proves that the militant can take hold of his destiny. We find also such a prominent novelist as Jabra Ibrahim Jabra writes about the terrified individual in his latest novel, *The Other Rooms.* Noteworthy is the fact that Jabra, in his previous novels, has been haunted by the abstract problems of life and death, perfect beauty and the individual who builds his own heaven on earth.

The significance of the Arab novel is not only seen in its defense of human, moral and patriotic values, but also in its artistic structure, and its belonging to a specific society and history. While defending the national cultural identity, the Arab novel tries to achieve its cultural identity through restoration of the literary-cultural heritage and coming close to the popular culture, to folklore. In other words, it tries to build a bridge between the literary past and present, to be a link in the literary-cultural chain which has a history, rather than being a literary genre that is borrowed, transplanted or imported. The features of *The Arabian Nights,* for example, are explicitly or implicitly present in *The Search for Walid Masoud* by Jabra, *White Faces* by Khouri, etc. The classical Arab culture is clear in the works of A. Munif, R.B. Jadra, as is the use of the popular tale in the works of H. Mina, Emile Habibi of Palestine and Jamal Ghaitani of Egypt, who goes even farther and tries to make use of the religious culture, ancient Arab architecture and the books of history. Ghaitani's *Al Zaini Barakat, Schemes* and *Manifestations* present a picture of his contradictory endeavor to construct a current novel with cultural materials of the past, leading the novelist, from time to time, to the verge of total formalism.

In brief, while approaching the real problems of the Arab situation, the Arab novel is driven to look for its literary materials within this reality itself, in order to produce its specific artistic form. Approaching reality is also reflected in the language of the novel, creating a vivid prose, far from the abstract rhetoric which is associated with the religious culture and abstract nationalist ideology. Traditional culture, its religious version in particular, considers that linguistic rhetoric lies in the imitation of the original religious texts; it considers the abstract book a point of reference; whereas the novel looks for its language in its search for the everyday subject which it depicts; it establishes an objective link between the word and the subject it refers to. Therefore, the novel, in addition to the press, is the essential sphere where Arabic is being developed and rendered current. Thus, the novel is the main field where the language is being liberated from the fetters of theology. It is not strange that the narrow religious ideology has, from the beginning of the century, opposed the novel, considering the imaginary world of fiction to be a false image which distorts reality and truth.

Basing itself on daily realities and protest against them, the Arab novel is creating its readers who read about their problems in it and there find how they live and what they want to say; hence the relationship of alliance and dialogue between the novelist and the reader. It is a dialogue about the causes of the current devastation and the means of overcoming it. At the same time, it is an alliance between two parties rejecting the same reality. The facts asserted in the Arab novel create the ▶

objective condition for an explicit or implicit alliance between the writer who refuses injustice and the reader who lives under this injustice. The sense of repression is the factor that unites the reader and the writer, the intellectual and the ordinary man who dreams of bread and human dignity.

THE DECLINE OF POETRY

Between theory and the novel there remains a narrow space for poetry. In fact, there is a big place for the poets, while the space of the poetic text diminishes. The poem is not equal to the poet in the present Arab cultural arena. A group of poets have managed to accentuate their positions and importance, thanks to the cultural and informational roles they play, thanks to their own cultural activity. Yet, for objective reasons beyond their control, they have failed to create the suitable conditions for reading their poetry in a broad and real sense, because the position of poetry, its ups and downs, is always bound by the social conditions.

Adonis (Syrian - born poet residing in Lebanon) has maintained his cultural significance and effectiveness due to his leading role in renovating Arab poetry, his journalistic activity and theoretical contributions to discussions about tradition, innovation, modernism and poetic language, in addition to his political essays and his struggle for freedom of thought and creativity. Similar is the status of the Palestinian Mahmoud Darwish who combines the poet, political leader and journalist in his personality; his name has been associated with the Palestinian cause to the point of becoming almost a symbol for it. Almost the same can be said about several other poets, such as Saadi Yousef of Iraq, Nizar Qabbani of Syria, Abdul Muti Hijazi of Egypt, etc. They are practicing journalism, teaching and political writing. Thus, poetry is only one of many aspects of the poet, though it is what brought the others into being.

The development of the social life in the Arab world, which is characterized by despotism, hunger and defeat, leaves little room for poetry if it does not directly deal with the daily problems of the individual. The reader is not ready to bother about anything except an explicitly political text which has nothing to do with poetry. We live in circumstances of illiteracy or semi-literacy, lack of education in poetry in particular and literature in general.

While the general national and social upsurge in the fifties and sixties led to the appearance of great poets (Al Sayyab, Hawi, Adonis, Qabbani, Darwish, Yousef, Hijazi, etc.) and provided conditions for the rise of poetry readers, the recent social changes have created a different cultural, political and psychological climate. The circumstances of oppression do not allow any direct contact between the poet and his audience. The book or the magazine, when released by the censor, remain the sole place of meeting. Besides, the poet is increasingly becoming an introvert, talking about the alienation of the soul and the triviality of existence, often plunging into the abyss of abstract stylistics, beyond the reader who doesn't find any trace of his problems in it. In other words, while repression has eliminated the possibility of direct contact between the poet and his audience, poetic formalism has eliminated the possibility of indirect contact. In addition, the conditions of hunger and deprivation oblige repressed people to look for something other than poetry.

The crisis of Arab poetry is, in fact, part of the overall crisis engulfing Arab society. The development of poetry requires freedom, the right to dream, a higher cultural level, open windows to the culture of humanity, liberated mentality, belief in man as a supreme value, etc. The dominant conditions in the Arab world reject and deny all such things; they create desperate, introverted people with an extremely narrow consciousness and culture. Thus, the general sociocultural situation besieges both poetry and the poetry reader. Such conditions present still another problem connected with the development of modern Arab poetry. Modern Arab poetry emerged during a period of political-cultural ascent, but the development of social life has denied it the opportunity of establishing its positions. It has been there without achieving ultimate victory. Modern Arab poetry has been defending new concepts in obvious contradiction, at fierce war, with all the prevalent reactionary culture. The transformations of the last twenty years have come to besiege the beginnings which have not established their victory. Poetic modernity, therefore, has looked as if it were an elitist appeal incapable of communicating its concepts to the ordinary reader. The reactionary press, together with the decline of the critical poetry movement, has contributed to this state of affairs and almost made a caricature of modernist poetical creativity. This means that defense of poetical modernity inevitably involves confrontation with the dominant cultural and political values in circumstances where everything creative and rational seems to be in crisis, fighting while retreating.

The Arab reader, through both home and school, has gotten used to a certain Quranic language of rhetoric and a one-dimensional perspective of poetry. Modern poetry has attacked traditional poetry, and looked for a new language. Although some poets in the past believed that the battle of poetry took place within poetry itself, consequent social developments have proven that the battle of poetic modernity is part of the entire battle for social innovation. Such deficient consciousness of adoring poetry, while forgetting reality, may have been one of the reasons for the present crisis in poetry. The crisis is manifested in the fact that poetry remains revolving around itself without anything genuinely new, in the absence of criticism capable of distinguishing between good and bad poetry, and with the predominance of naive poetry, there are hundreds of poets in the Arab world. Above all, the crisis is manifested in the increasing distance between the reader and the poet. The possibility of getting easily published is limited to a few poets.

Generally speaking: Great poetry deals with the great issues of man; Arab reality has reduced man to lost atoms occupied with the search for banal needs. Such a reality posits many tasks for the poetry movement including self-innovation in line with social innovation, re-evaluation of its recent past, and complete involvement in the overall struggle for the victory of the new over the old, if possible keeping in mind that both new and old are relative concepts.

In searching for new poetry that reflects the daily concerns and dreams of the common man, we come across some poets who make an effort to achieve something new. Yet in these times of depotism, the echo of poetry is either pursued or in exile or lost. ●

The Palestinian Stone

in the Hands of a Greek Painter

The following was submitted to us by Vesna Masharifa, a Yugoslavian friend who in the past contributed several short stories to *Democratic Palestine,* based on her experience in the Palestinian camps near Damascus. She now lives in Athens, and sent us this story after visiting an art exhibition there.

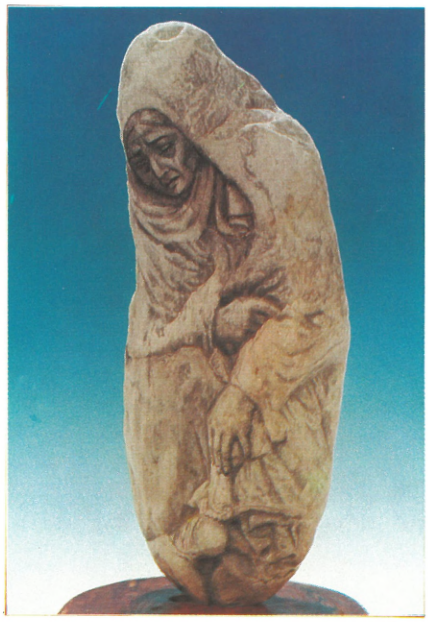
For thirty years, Genovefa Tsatsou has been exhibiting her art in the galleries of Athens. At her most recent exhibition on January 25th, the public was pleasantly surprised by her large collection of painted stones, exhibited together with her paintings, wood carvings and sculptures. The natural beauty of the stones - their rich contours, hollows and grooves - had been skillfully used by Genovefa as the background for paintings. Here, we will focus on the artist's experience with this new technique.

Genovefa Tsatsou began painting on stones four years ago. What was new was her idea of «discovering in the relief of the stone itself a sketch or starting point and helping it to become visible.» The idea occurred to her after visiting the Ioanis cave where she was fascinated by the artistic perfection achieved by nature. From that day, she began collecting stones from riverbeds, roads, mountains and beaches. She chose stones whose contours provided a dynamic relief, discarding the flat ones. After observing the stones under a strong light in her studio, she began to trace their lines and grooves. What the stone didn't offer, the painter had in her fantasy, and this is how the paintings were created. Genovefa never changes the basic color or shape of the stone. She says, «I must admit that it was very difficult to paint on an already formed, colored and grooved stone. My freedom of expression was so limited that at one point I thought that the stone had already created its painting, and I was only there to make it clear.»

Actually, it was not like that. In the beginning, Mrs. Tsatsou painted portraits, happy children, animals and nature. Then, last year, her inspiration was drawn towards other issues - human suffering, people without a homeland, their dreams and wishes. I asked her why she changed the themes of her paintings, and she replied, «Everything happened so quickly. After a television program about the uprising in the occupied Palestinian territories, I was thinking about the Palestinian children who fight the Israeli occupation with stones. In my mind, these stones were part of a huge historical mosaic, made in honor of the Palestinian people and their struggle. All of a sudden, I related those stones to my work. I started to feel a stronger need to paint about the common problems of people all over the world, who live under occupation and in exile. As the concept of nostalgia is very close to me, I started to paint people without a homeland and their nostalgia.

NOSTALGIA FOR HOME

Mrs. Tsatsou was born in Macedonia, in a small town called Naussa. At 18, she came to Athens to study art and has lived here since. Even though she occasionally visits Naussa, she lives with nostalgia which can be seen in her paintings which always convey memories of her hometown. «Although I have lived in Athens for 30 years, Naussa is always in my thoughts. I paint the houses, flowers and people from my town with deep nostalgia. My ▶



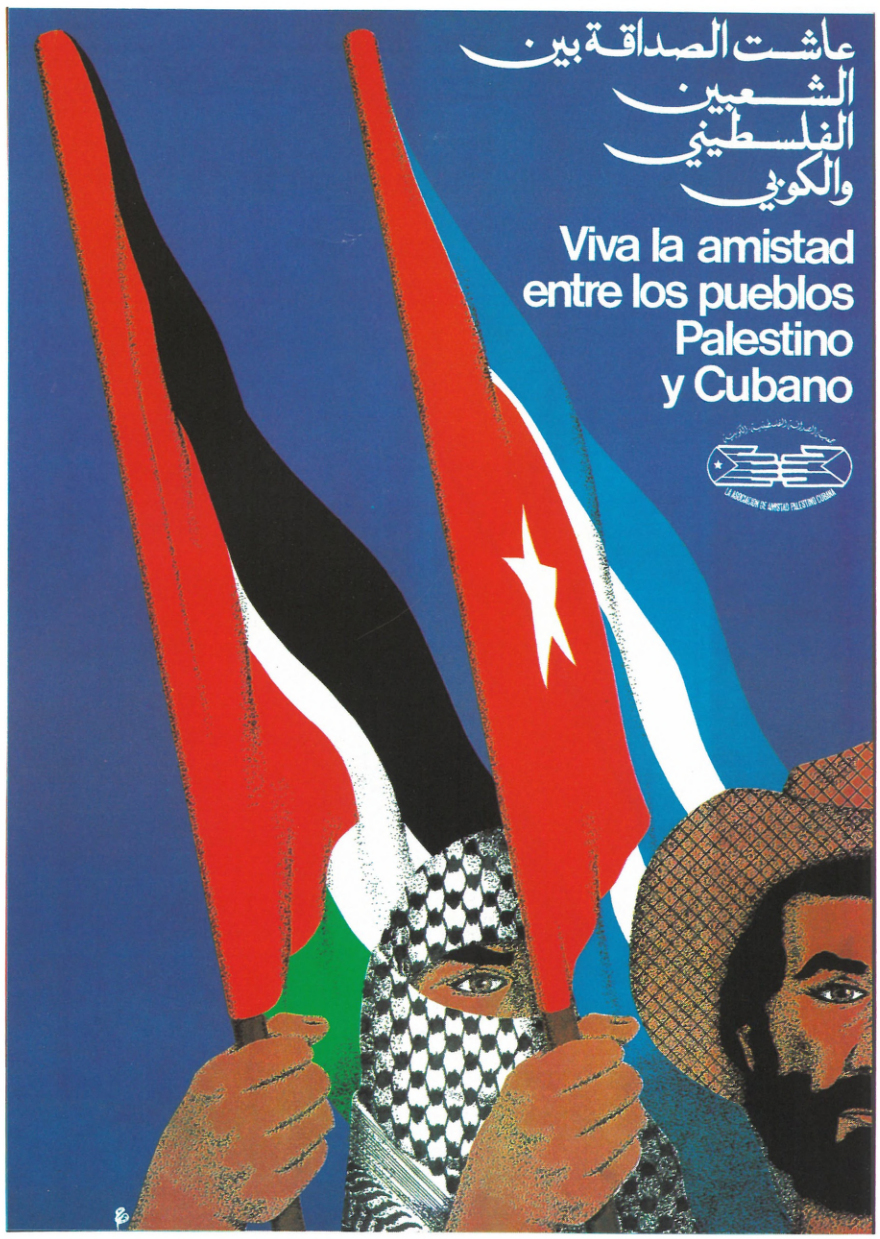
own feelings make me truly compassionate with people living in exile or under occupation, with emigrants and homeless people.» For this reason, she reacted strongly to the division of Cyprus in 1974. She painted a huge canvas in support of the Cypriot emigrants from the occupied zone, and presented it to the Cypriot embassy in Athens, where it still hangs.

THE STONES

At the exhibition, art lovers spent most of their time in the corner where the stones were on display, admiring their beauty and expressiveness. One stone, 30 cm in size, was entitled «Mother's Pain» and dedicated to the Palestinian mother, showing in the artist's words «the pain and agony of a mother who lives under the burden of uncertainty which prevents her from raising her children happily.» The figure is in a position of mourning, which is not so easy to achieve with a stone, and appears to be chiseled. The thick stone background, made as the mother's headdress, serves at the same time to depict the heaviness of her burden.

In two other works, entitled «Forced into Emigration» and «Emigrants,» crowds of sorrowful people rise out of the stones' relief. The characters are intentionally painted with ancient style clothing to convey the artist's idea that «there have always been people who remained without a homeland.» Mrs. Tsatsou believes that «this period of destruction, aggression, selfishness and brutality will pass; one day, people will live in love, peace and solidarity.» She dedicated one of her paintings, «Song for the Past,» to this coming day. In this work, «a young beautiful girl sings about the life of distress her people have experienced. Her clothing shows that she still belongs to this period of torment, but the new life is beginning, and the past is only part of a song.»

The exhibition included many small and large stones on which Mrs. Tsatsou had painted her vision of Palestinian villages, women and children. They convey her deep feelings and sincere support to the brave Palestinian people and their just struggle for their human rights. In her own words, «I have never been to Palestine, but I have strong feelings about the people there. They are part of my imagination, and that is why I dared to paint a people, and their towns and villages, although I had never met them or visited their homeland.» ●



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