No. 35
October 1989

DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE

Battle of Identity

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.

You can support these aims by subscribing to *Democratic Palestine*. Furthermore, we hope that you will encourage friends and comrades to read and subscribe to *Democratic Palestine*. We also urge you to send us comments, criticisms and proposals concerning the magazine's contents.

The subscription fee for 12 issues is US $24. If you wish to subscribe or renew your subscription, please write us your address, the number of copies you want of each issue, and whether you are a new or former subscriber. Send your letter to our correspondence address:

Democratic Palestine
Box 30192
Damascus, Syria

Telephone: 420554 or 331913
Telex: HADAFO 411667 SY

At the same time, please pay your subscription by having a deposit made to the bank account below. Inform us in your letter of the date you have made the deposit.

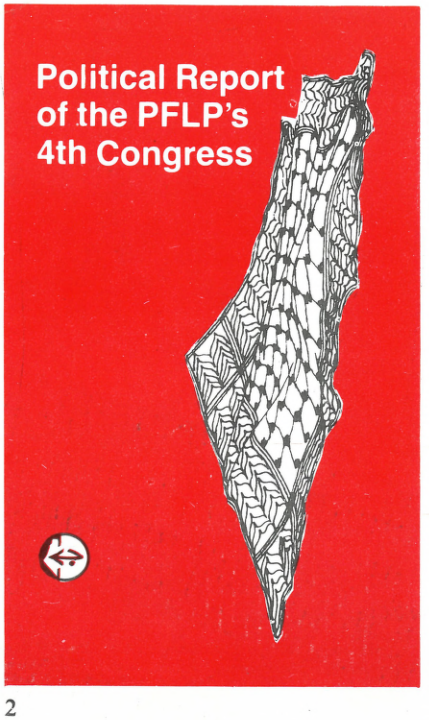
Pay to: Mohamed Al Masri
account no. 463035-002
Bank of Beirut and the Arab Countries
Shtoura, Lebanon

Editor: Talal Ahmed
Assistant editor: Maher Salameh
Editorial Committee: Haneen Salameh, Ahmed Halaweh, Randa Abdul Rahman, Lina Al Aswad, Farida Al Asmar.

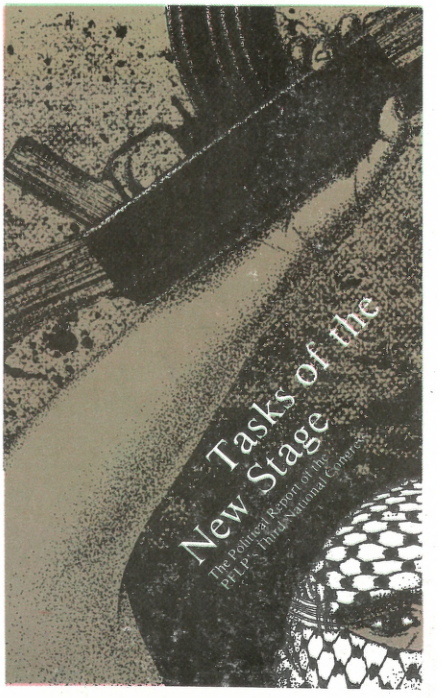
Table of Contents

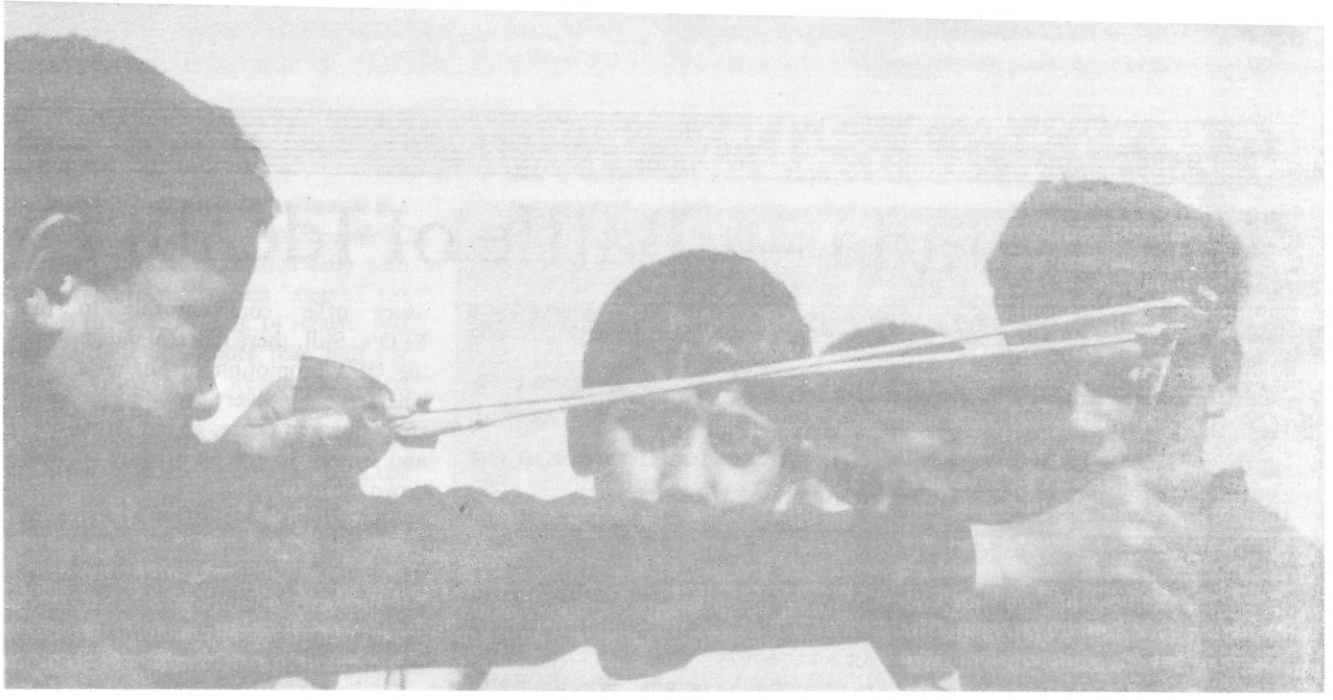
4 Occupied Palestine - Battle of Identity
7 Interview: «The uprising is the focus of our lives.»
10 Fatah Conference
13 The Shamir Plan - Obstacle to Peace
15 Israeli Security - Where did it start and where does it end?
22 Lebanon - On the Brink of Disaster
25 The Prevailing Arab Order
30 Military Coup in Sudan
33 Afghanistan - Stop the Aggression!
34 NGOs Meet on Palestine
37 *Tragicomedy of Daffodils and Silver*
Poem by Mahmoud Darwish

PFLP Congress Documents



The following two books are available on request from the PFLP Information Department: *Political Report of the PFLP's 4th Congress* and *Tasks of the New Stage*. Each book is $5 (US), plus $1 for handling and shipping. Order now by writing to *Democratic Palestine's* correspondence address, stating which book(s) you want. Deposit your payment in our account (see inside front cover) and mark your deposit: for books. Please inform us of the day you made the payment so we can confirm it. If you cannot make a bank deposit from your country, send a check to us enclosed in your letter.





What Do You Think of *Democratic Palestine?*

We at *Democratic Palestine* would like to know what you think of our magazine. Please send us your comments and suggestions concerning the following questions. It would be helpful to us if you refer to specific issues or articles when making your critique, whether positive or negative.

- Do you find our choice of topics relevant? What types of articles would you like to see more of - feature stories, studies, interviews? Are there important topics we have neglected? If so, what?
- How do you evaluate the quality of the analysis in our articles? Do you find the articles readable and easily understandable?
- What is your opinion of our coverage of the intifada?
- How is our cultural section? What cultural items would interest you?
- What is your opinion of the appearance of our magazine? Would you prefer a photograph on the cover rather than an original drawing?
- If you are involved in solidarity work or journalism connected to Palestine or the Middle East generally, please evaluate the usefulness of our magazine to your work.

Our main idea with this questionnaire is getting some feedback for evaluating our work. However, we might like to publish some of your letters. Please sign your letter in any case. Indicate whether it would be all right for us to publish it or not, and whether or not you want your name used if we print your letter.

●

Please Pay Your Subscription...

We hope in the near future to send out reminders to our subscribers who are due to renew their subscription. You could help us and lighten our administrative work by taking the initiative to pay your subscription if you have not done so since receiving 12 issues of *Democratic Palestine* (somewhat over two years). Please fill out the form below and send to our correspondence address; deposit the subscription fee of $24 (covering 12 issues) in our bank account, or send us a check for the same amount with the form.

To Democratic Palestine, Box 30192, Damascus, Syria

Name .....

Address .....

.....

New Subscriber ..... Former subscriber .....

I deposited ..... (amount) on ..... (date) in your bank account as follows: Mohamed Al Masri, account no. 463035 - 002, Bank of Beirut and the Arab Countries, Shtoura, Lebanon.

Please send me ..... copy / copies of each issue of *Democratic Palestine.*

The Intifada — Battle of Identity

While trying to market the Shamir plan under the guise of «free elections,» the Zionist authorities embarked on the most sweeping measures yet to squash the Palestinian struggle for freedom in the occupied territories, culminating in the battle of the ID cards.

Palestinians under occupation achieved a partial victory on July 22nd, when 200,000 West Bank students returned to elementary schools and high school graduating classes, following a seven-month closure. On August 2nd, 70,000 more went back to school with the reopening of junior highs. On August 30th, 10th and 11th grade classes were finally resumed, but universities and other insitutes of higher learning remain closed.

Reopening the schools has been a persistent demand of the intifada as highlighted by the United National Leadership's call for a day of fasting by Palestinians all over the world (children exempted) on July 19th, to stress this demand, as well as protesting expulsions and the detention conditions at Ansar III.

Having lost four months of the 1987-88 academic year, and all but a month of the current one, it was a top priority for students to resume their education. However, occupation troops continue to be stationed in the vicinity of schools, contrary to the promises of the civil administration. The soldiers' ongoing provocations against students, and the intermittent closing of some schools, are signs that the occupation authorities are hoping for any excuse to close the schools again - and for good. Thus, international vigilance should not slack off in monitoring this basic field of human rights.

In call no. 43, the United National Leadership stressed: «... the occupation authorities decided to reopen schools as an unavoidable result of the persistence of the intifada which gathers increasing international sympathy for its confrontation of the enemy's policy of enforcing ignorance against our people for more than two years in particular. We call on both students and teachers to condense the curriculum to make up for what has been lost... We call on all to continue the popular education program to make up for gaps in the regular schooling. All international humanitarian and academic institutions are asked to put pressure on the occupation authorities and oblige them to reopen the universities and higher institutes.»

«TRANSFER, STARVATION... GENOCIDE»

The partial reopening of the schools stands out as the single Israeli concession to date. On all other counts, the intifada is facing a critical juncture, politically and physically. There are few on the international scene who would claim that Shamir's plan is a peace offer commensurate to the PLO's. Still, there is a real danger that the US's promotion of Shamir's plan will serve to divert from meaningful steps towards peace, giving Israel time and leeway to try once again to beat down the intifada.

The Zionist leadership's sense of urgency about doing away with the intifada has only been increased in the recent period due to a whole array of factors, including the internal effects on Israel itself: declining morale in the army, the resurgence of economic problems as reflected in rising unemployment, and discontent among settlers due to the army's alleged inability to protect them. Behind these factors looms the simple fact that over a year of brutal repression has not dented the intifada's momentum. On the contrary, in addition to ongoing popular organization and recurring demonstrations, there are signs of increasing militancy and radicalization. From May on, there were increased instances of attacking Israelis with knives and firearms, as well as abductions. This led to the death of several soldiers and settlers, and had a noticeable impact on the settler society at large. Perhaps most shocking was the implication of

Starvation - chicken farm destroyed by the occupation forces

the July 6th operation on an Israeli bus traveling from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. A single Palestinian, armed only with daring and inventiveness, steered the bus off the road, killing 14 Israelis and injuring over 20 - more than half the number killed in the previous year and a half of the uprising.

Another indication of the intifada's solidity and radicalization has been the intensified campaign against collaborators, signalled by the United National Leadership's call to make April 26th, a day of holding collaborators accountable. This was presaged by instructions in call no. 32, at the first of the year, for setting up people's courts to make the system for dealing with collaborators just and based on national consensus. With a system of giving warnings and chances for repentence having been in effect for an extended period, the strike forces doubled their efforts to purge those who violated the national will by not resigning from posts connected to the occupation, or persons whose criminal activities detracted from the social cohesion of the masses. The occupation authorities are well aware that this campaign deprives them of vehicles for penetrating the popular unity.

The Israeli military's sense of having played many of its cards, without any returns, was succinctly expressed by Chief of Staff Dan Shomron on June 15th: «Everyone who wants the intifada eliminated must understand there are only three ways to do this: by transfer, starvation, and physical elimination, that is - genocide.» On June 19th, Shamir said that the government would take secret steps to stop the uprising. In fact, over the summer, each of the options Shomron named has been employed to some degree, secretly or openly.

Although the Israeli government is still not prepared to take the consequences of all-out «transfer,» it has been ready to defy world condemnation by continuing to expell Palestinians from their homeland: eight West Bank and Gaza Strip residents were permanently evicted from Palestine on June 29th, to be followed by five more West Bankers on August 27th. Among them were trade unionists, students, professionals, peasants and formerly imprisoned militants. This brings to 61 the number of Palestinians expelled since the intifada began.

Drawing by a fifteen-year-old girl living in the occupied territories: «They could not penetrate the streets, so they used helicopters to throw tear gas.»

Physical elimination, though not yet at literally genocidal levels, is a threat constantly hanging over the head of every Palestinian of the intifada. In June, 26 Palestinians were martyred, five of them children. Though this death toll is lower than the preceding two months, a careful examination of the circumstances shows that most of these deaths were in fact summary executions where Zionist soldiers deliberately murdered persons they perceived to be activists of the intifada, in some cases ignoring the possibility of arresting them. In early July, Shomron affirmed to the Knesset Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee that regulations for dealing with «suspicious persons» allowed the army to detain or shoot with plastic bullets at Palestinians simply because they were masked - a common phenomenon at a time when the entire population, and especially youth, have good reason to think they are wanted by the occupation authorities. In early September, Defense Minister Rabin further ▶

«legalized» the shoot-to-kill policy already in effect, by announcing that Israeli troops can use live ammunition to stop masked Palestinians in daylight or at night.

In accordance with the policy of physical elimination, high casualty rates continued over the summer. Scores of Palestinians were martyred, many more wounded and even more arrested as the occupation army enacted large and constant «security sweeps» under the cover of curfews. As of September 1st, 650 Palestinians had been killed in the course of the intifada.

It was, however, the option of starvation that the Israeli occupation authorities seized upon to implement unconditionally. This began in mid-May when, in an unprecedented move, Gazans working in Israel were rounded up en masse and sent home indefinitely, with the announcement that a new identity card would be needed to enter Israel. So began the battle of the ID's that has become the most concentrated round in the conflict of wills between the intifada and the occupation to date. Noting the overall increase of repression that has accompanied the Shamir plan, the United National Leadership, in call no. 43 of late July, stated: «... the acme of this warfare is to be found in the measure that the authorities are trying to implement in the Gaza area to defeat the will of our people there and force them to take the magnetic identity cards as a means of pressure against the daily bread of hundreds of thousands of our steadfast people in heroic Gaza.»

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

Initially, the Israeli requirement of new IDs was presented as a punishment connected to the finding of the dead body of an Israeli sergeant who had been missing since February, and the almost simultaneous disappearance of another soldier. Indeed, it is a punishment of the Gaza Strip for its untiring resistance to occupation, but it is also much more. The occupation authorities soon announced that Palestinians with «criminal records» would not get the new computerized cards, confirming that it is a security measure. But more basically, the campaign to impose IDs is aimed at creating material divisions among the people, and contradictions between the people and the leadership of the intifada which of course called for rejecting the new cards, knowing this to be a new attempt by the occupation to control the people. Another prerequisite for being issued a new card was paying taxes, so the campaign also aimed to break the intifada's refusal to fund the occupation.

The Gaza Strip was the first target simply because of its poverty. The high population density, the fact that 70% of the people live in camps (being refugees from 1948 occupied Palestine), and the concurrent lack of access to land and agricultural means, make self-sufficiency much more difficult than in the West Bank. So the occupation targeted those most dependent on work in Israel to serve as a test for subsequent plans to enforce new IDs in the West Bank. Another less publicized form of economic warfare accompanied the battle of the IDs: As if to dispell doubts that the the occupation was saying «submit or starve,» Gaza fishermen were forbidden to go out to sea in May and June. The ban was lifted just as the season ended.

Prolonged curfews were frequent in the Gaza Strip throughout the summer as the occupation troops confiscated the old IDs as part of their escalated harassment, ordering Palestinians to wait for hours in the hot sun to get a new card if they wanted to enter Israel for work.

Just as steadily, resistance to the new cards mounted, resulting in frequent clashes with the occupation troops. The strike forces and popular committees spearheaded the campaign on the local level to collect the new cards that had been imposed, while the United National Leadership geared its calls to coordinating resistance to the cards on the national level. A main aim of the leadership's efforts was organizing support, so that this battle between the occupation and the occupied State of Palestine could not be confined to the Strip alone; June 20th, July 3rd-4th and July 30th were observed as general strike days by all the workers of the occupied Palestinian state in solidarity with Gaza workers. The Palestinian masses in the 1948 occupied territories were called upon to give material support to the Gaza workers through all available channels. West Bankers were under strict orders not to replace striking Gaza workers on the job in Israel; call no. 44, August 15th, called such strike-breaking «national treason.» The same call appealed for the PLO's support to be channeled to the poor, for they are «the base and fuel of the intifada.»

The battle of the IDs came to a head as August 18th approached - the day designated by the occupation for the new cards to be mandatory. In the preceding days, Gaza workers were frequently turned away from entering Israel as a test, and there were daily clashes between the troops and the people. Special cards were issued forbidding some Gaza residents from entering israel, while the occupation troops also demanded presentation of the new cards for citizens moving within the Strip itself. Three-quarters of the 60,000 new cards distributed by the occupation authorities were handed over the popular committees.

August 18th marked the beginning of the two-week strike in the Strip, and the week-long solidarity strike in the West Bank, as called by the United National Leadership. The strike was almost totally observed throughout, marking a victory for the intifada, and its longest strike to date. Even after the termination of the strike on August 31st, the number of Gaza residents going to work in Israel with the new cards was only a fraction of the number ordinarily working in the Zionist state.

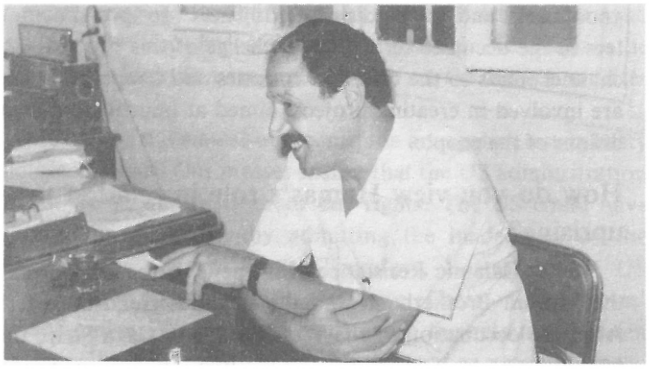
The Israelis seem to admit at least a partial defeat in this battle. In late August, the Israeli daily *Haaretz* quoted an Israeli security source as saying that the Ministry of Defense has tentatively decided to impose *new* measures that will facilitate control of West Bank residents entering Israel. There are now discussions in the Israeli government about prohibiting Palestinians from entering East Jerusalem.

The battle of the IDs has confirmed once again that the Palestinians have chosen their identity and are willing to fight for its materialization in an independent, democratic state, despite the sacrifices entailed. ●

Interview

«The Uprising is the Focus of our Lives»

In August, *Democratic Palestine* interviewed Masoud Othman Zaiter who was expelled from Palestine by the Zionist authorities on January 1, 1989, together with 12 other Palestinians.



Masoud Othman Zaiter was born in Haifa, Palestine. His family was expelled from their home in 1948, when the state of Israel was founded. Afterwards he lived in Nablus, married and had six children. He began by telling us about his youth:

Due to my father's illness, I had to go to work after graduating from high school, rather than continuing my education. I was arrested the first time in 1962 by the Jordanian authorities, while I was still a teenager; I remained in prison until 1966, due to my nationalist activities. In 1968, after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, i.e., the rest of Palestine, I was arrested by the Israeli authorities, because of my anti-occupation activities. This time I spent nine years in prison. During my imprisonment, my family suffered the worst conditions. My daughter was born and raised in my absence, and my father became very ill. My release, after nine years, meant the continuation of my struggle.

In 1985, at the time of the escalated iron fist policy, I was put under administrative detention for six months. I was put under administrative detention once more in 1987, and again in 1988, before being expelled on January 1st.

What are the roots of the popular committees?

The popular committees existed in the towns, villages and camps of the West Bank and Gaza Strip before the uprising. They were basically formed to develop the work of the Palestinian political and mass organizations and trade unions. These committees were revitalized during the uprising. There are popular committees for relief, agriculture, education, support to families, health, popular resistance, etc., in addition to the strike forces. They are now the broadest framework in the occupied territories, not being limited to any one organization or area.

These committees are the main instrument for confronting the occupation on all levels, politically and organizationally, based on the United National Leadership's program. The leadership's calls are distributed everywhere by the popular committees the same day they are issued. The committees' main task is building popular authority by breaking all links with the occupation authorities - severing ties with the civil administration, boycotting Israeli goods, etc. Let's take, for example, the merchants' committee in Nablus. Its task is to circulate the United National Leadership's instructions among the merchants, to stress the boycott of Israeli goods for which there are local alternatives, to control prices and supervise the merchants' commitment to the leadership's decisions.

The relief committee, as another example, works to provide foodstuffs to besieged areas. All committees work together to achieve social solidarity and cooperation. The neighborhood committees follow up on landlords to make sure they are committed to the United National Leadership's order to lower rents by 25%. I am proud to mention that all the landlords of Palestine's West Bank and Gaza Strip have been very committed to these orders. Another example of the functions of the popular committees is preparing everything needed for special days of confrontation against the occupation authorities, called by the United National Leadership, such as gathering stones, erecting barricades, etc.

How do you view the intifada from outside, since your expulsion?

I feel confident and optimistic. I have faith in our people's potentials, especially since the uprising has become the focus of our thinking and lives inside and outside of Palestine.

The uprising has been exposed to many political schemes, in addition to the continuous repression aimed at aborting it. Its continuation and expansion has elicited international support, confused the US administration, put the Israeli government in a precarious position and increased the contradictions in the Israeli camp. For all these reasons, the occupation intensified the use of its old-new methods of divide and rule. It has issued false statements in the name of the United National Leadership in an attempt to confuse the masses and abort the uprising. It has spread rumors aimed at creating division in the ranks of the PLO and the masses. The unity and comprehensiveness of the uprising is the main source of its power. So the occupation tried to exploit any political difference among the Palestinian organizations. For example, during the last PNC session, the ▶

PLO accepted resolution 242, but the PFLP did not agree on this. The occupation tried to exploit this, but the response of the people in the occupied territories was clear and conclusive. It was clear that they will continue the struggle against the occupation together, meanwhile understanding these differences on the political level, without that detracting from unity in struggle.

The main threat at this stage is the Shamir plan for liquidating the uprising and confusing world public opinion. The Israeli government wants the world to think that it is considering a political solution. Meanwhile, this plan was coupled with bloody repression in many forms: outright killing, collective arrests and detentions, expelling activists, starvation and economic siege.

The United National Leadership and all our people have strongly rejected this scheme, because it does not take into consideration our goals of repatriation, self-determination and the independent state. This plan is only a new embellishment of Camp David and the autonomy plan.

I would also like to emphasize that the open and secret meetings that have taken place between prominent Palestinians and Zionists, officials or otherwise, constitute a threat to the unity of the Palestinian people and the PLO, and to the interim program. The political struggle is part of our struggle as a whole. We must take a clear position against these meetings, because they aim at creating an alternative leadership to the PLO in the occupied territories. This has been confirmed in the calls of the United National Leadership.

Regarding support to the uprising from outside, there is financial support, but the problem is one of organization and distribution. The PLO has the principal responsibility in this field. Support is badly needed in view of the horrible conditions of life for the people under occupation. So far, there are 99,000 injured, just to give one indication of the need. The PLO, including all the Palestinian organizations, should organize the delivery of support to all sectors of the masses, knowing all the restrictions Israel imposes to try and stop money from coming in.

The Arab regimes are another factor in this problem. Many of them have not provided the financial support as was decided at the Algiers Summit. It is the PLO's duty to urge the Arab countries to provide support, and to make sure the money is in good hands and is well distributed. There are special committees in the occupied territories in charge of this process. They channel funds to the different societies and cooperatives, and are involved in creating projects aimed at improving the conditions of the people.

How do you view Hamas's role in relation to the uprising?

Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) is the outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood and the religious trend in general. After the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, their position was as if there was no occupation and no need to struggle against it. Instead of working to attain our rights, this trend was attacking the national movement and the political organizations. However, at the beginning of the uprising, Hamas was formed and it began to issue statements and be involved. It has called for strikes in contradiction to the program set out in the calls of the United National Leadership, thus creating confusion. This imposed on the Palestinian nationalist organizations the important task of strengthening their own united work in order that all resistance be organized within the

Jerusalem April 1989

common nationalist framework. Until now, the United National Leadership is calling on Hamas to work together, so that all efforts are united in accordance with a planned program. This is necessary for mounting the most effective confrontation of the enemy. All should work on the basis that the intifada is our main concern, in order to achieve our rights.

Aside from the Israeli repression, what are the obstacles to the intifada?

The silence of Arab officialdom constitutes a major obstacle for the masses of the intifada. Morale support from the Arab masses has also been inadequate, though we realize the obstacles which many regimes impose on the masses to fetter such support.

Moreover, the masses of the intifada are against overly hasty political moves. Our masses realize that the US administration is not truly concerned about our rights. The US could have showed its credibility by admitting the inadequacy of the Shamir plan, but it didn't. Therefore, betting on the US weakens our position and has negative effects on our masses' steadfastness. We have to realize that the relation between Israel and the US is one of partnership and common interests. The PLO must have a clearer and firmer position. The PLO must commit itself to the PNC's resolutions and adhere to our rights for repatriation, self-determination and the independent state. Our masses in the occupied territories insist on not giving any concessions.

What are the difficulties delaying total civil disobedience?

The intifada has to move towards this qualitative step of total disobedience; it is doing so gradually. However, gradual civil disobedience is not chiefly a question of how many strike days are observed. Basically, it means the degree to which the intifada has been able to establish national authority, boycotting the civil administration and fulfilling the subjective and objective conditions for total disobedience.

Civil disobedience basically means total rejection of the occupation and civil administration. The conditions for achieving this include organizing the provision of the needed financial support to our masses in the occupied territories, and organizing more and more popular committees and strengthening their activities. Achieving total civil disobedience is a long and hard process of struggle.

Would you speak about your experience of detention in Israeli jails?

In 1968, after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, I was arrested for resisting the occupation and imprisoned for ten years. I was deprived of the most basic human rights. The Palestinian prisoners fought in the prison with all the means available to us - hunger strikes, refusing the family visits decided by the prison authorities as a protest, and refusing to go outside for our break as a protest. We were fighting for our human rights and for improving the conditions of detention. In the prison we were prohibited to read books and deprived of medical care. Our living conditions were very hard. We had to fight. Struggle means to be organized, and we actually were very well organized. As a result of our struggle and sacrifices, including prisoners being martyred, we did make gains in terms of improvement of our daily life conditions. The prison authorities constantly tried to retract our gains, but our organized movement was capable of confronting their attempt via hunger strikes and other forms of struggle.

Prior to the intifada, it was mainly the members of the Palestinian organizations, and especially their active militants, who were arrested. Nowdays, in the time of the intifada, all the masses, whether members of an organization or not, are being detained. New interrogation and detention centers have been established. The detainees are being subjected to brutal repression in Dhahiriya, Fara, Ansar II and Ansar III detention centers. They are subjected to constant beatings, overcrowding and racist and fascist violations.

It may case, because of resisting the occupation, I was detained under very hard conditions and without charges being specified. I was in Tulkarm prison when I was notified of the deportation order against me. Expulsion is a political decision taken by the occupation authorities aimed to abort the uprising, like their other repressive measures. One is not expelled on the basis of specific charges; the decision is based on the fact that one is a militant resisting occupation which is considered to threaten Israeli security.

After the deportation order is issued, one has in theory the right to appeal to the Supreme Court which is a civil court. I did not appeal because I do not believe that the military appeal committee, the Supreme Court or any other Zionist legal body is truly democratic or just.

Can you tell about your expulsion?

Any militant about to be expelled should have the right to see his family, but I wasn't given this chance. On January 1st, the prison officers gave the prisoners an outdoor break, except for us (the ones to be expelled). We were informed that we would be expelled and told to get ready. We are all tense, confused and emotional. We refused to leave our cells unless we were given the chance to say farewell to our friends and comrades. There were moments of grief as we were leaving, with all the prisoners saying: «... we may die, but we will uproot death from our homeland.»

Many soldiers accompanied us to the prison administration building where our pictures were taken. We were handcuffed and blindfolded, thrown into a military vehicle and driven to a military camp. In the same humiliating manner, we were thrown into a helicopter that took us to South Lebanon; we were unable to tell whether it was an area under the control of the Lahd forces or the Israeli army. We refused to take the money they offered us. The soldiers threw us on top of each other on the floor of a truck, then threw buckets of water on us and shouted insults. When we approached Marjeyoun, we were pushed into cars that were waiting for us, and threatened not even to look back. There were many journalists waiting in Marjeyoun. After being interviewed, we asked to be taken to the closest PFLP post where we were warmly received. And here we are! ●

The Fatah Conference

The fifth conference of Fatah (Palestine National Liberation Movement) concluded on August 9th in Tunis. Due to Fatah's status as the largest component organization of the PLO, the conference was followed with great interest by Palestinian, Arab and international forces. In this article, we will deal with the major political issues which have significance for the Palestinian struggle as a whole, without covering all the details of the conference's work.

Two important documents were adopted at the conference. The first was the political program, on which we will concentrate our discussion, because it contains the basic principles of the Fatah movement and also addresses the current situation. The second document was the communique which reflected some of the important points contained in the program.

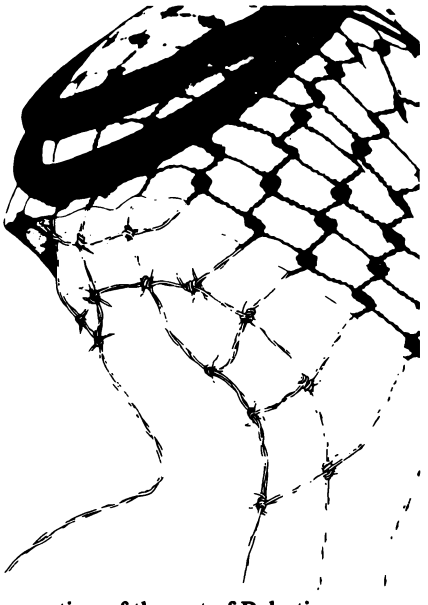
MIXING STRATEGY AND TACTICS

The political program includes a set of tactical, strategic and current tasks which should be compared with the original strategic and interim goals of the Palestinian revolution. We can begin to evaluate the political program by noting some points which might be useful for such a comparison:

First: The program lacks criticism of past experience despite the fact that this would strengthen the movement and help it overcome its shortcomings, assuming that critical review would be used to change positions and practices for the better.

Second: The program mixes between current and strategic tasks. Moreover, there is sometimes a tendency to play on words when assigning priority to the various tasks. This appears to be a attempt to escape responsibility for how these tasks should be implemented in practice, and which tasks are considered primary. Below we will provide some examples:

- The program omits all mention of the liberation of all of Palestine, despite the fact that it correctly posits the Palestinian people's historical right to Palestine. The program labels the partition of Palestine and the establishment of the Zionist entity in 1948, as a big crime. Nevertheless, the conference failed to define the strategic tasks needed for reversing this crime, although it did clearly define the interim tasks for ending the 1967 occupation of the rest of Palestine.



- In the process of discussing escalating the struggle, the program uses the term *armed action*, not armed struggle. This is not just a case of mistaken word usage, but means practicing violent actions in a tactical, intermittent way, rather than seriously considering armed struggle to be the basic, strategic form of struggle required for the liberation of Palestine. This is reminiscent of the way in which Yasir Arafat used the ambiguous word *caduc* (obsolete, or null and void), to describe the Palestinian National Charter, during his May visit to Paris. He used this word to meet the demands of the French government for a change in PLO policy, while avoiding the appearance of violating PNC decisions. Thus, changes in wording about the armed struggle make us wonder whether it is being seriously considered as the basic way of confronting the Zionist enemy. Moreover, *armed action* is not described in the program as being ongoing, whereas other forms of struggle are. Statements by Fatah officials after the conference have confirmed such doubts. Some defined *armed action* as referring to the intifada which is at present predominantly mass rather than armed struggle. Abu Iyad of Fatah's Central Committee also said that the use of the term armed struggle in the conference's communique did not necessarily mean that it would be used today or tomorrow. Such statements make one think that emphasizing armed struggle in the communique was more of a rhetorical threat to the US in view of its failure to advance the dialogue with the PLO, rather than expressing serious intent to escalate the liberation struggle.

- The conference adopted the program of the 19th PNC session which stresses the Declaration of Independence and the establishment of the State of Palestine. However, the conference avoided assessing statements and moves by some PLO leaders since the PNC, that violate the PNC's decisions. In fact, we do not know the real decision of the conference concerning UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 serving as the basis for resolving the conflict in the Middle East. One could view it as positive that these resolutions were not mentioned if this means that they were not adopted as part of Fatah's program. On the other hand, it is inconsistent to adopt the PNC's program without mentioning them, for their acceptance at the PNC marked a break with previous PLO policy. Failing to mention them may be no more than an evasion of responsibility, keeping the door open for adopting whatever position serves tactical and pragmatic considerations in the future.

In the same way, the conference took no clear position on Israel's right to exist, or whether the Palestinian National Charter is considered *caduc*. Moreover, there is no mention in the program of the Camp David accords, despite the fact that the Zionist enemy continues to mold its plans on these accords. The

program even failed to specify that the Palestinian section of the Camp David accords has totally failed.

These points make us think that although there may have been extensive debate at Fatah's conference, the end result was a set of compromises that will basically allow the previous policy to continue, perhaps with considerable modifications.

Although we have criticism of the program, chiefly concerning the lack of linkage between strategic and interim tasks, it is positive that Fatah maintained its nationalist principles concerning many issues which have importance for the Palestinian struggle. The spirit of the intifada was strongly felt at the conference, and it is to the intifada that the main credit goes for the positive aspects of the program.

NO RETREAT FROM THE INTERIM PROGRAM

The conference confirmed the Palestinian people's historical rights in their homeland, Palestine's belonging to the Arab nation, and the unity of the Palestinian people everywhere. It stressed that the Zionist invasion of Palestine aimed to eliminate the Palestinian people and their civilization, and that the founding of the settler-colonial Zionist entity was part of imperialism's plan to control the resources of the Arab nation and keep it within its sphere of influence.

The conference confirmed that: «There will be no peace, no settlement and no security in the Middle East without the recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination and national independence.» The conference mandated Fatah's Revolutionary Council to form a special committee for confronting Zionist immigration to our homeland. This decision is very important. However, the initiative to form such a committee should come from the PLO, whereby all Palestinian organizations would take part, as this would serve the purpose of unifying Palestinian efforts.

The conference was very clear concerning the national principles for the current stage. It stressed Palestinian national unity and the independence of Palestinian decision-making as basic preconditions for the intifada and for achieving the Palestinian goals of repatriation, self-determination and the ▶

establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

The communique called for «escalating the popular intifada in order to end the Zionist occupation,» and for protecting the intifada politically by confronting the autonomy plan and other liquidationist projects aimed at creating false alternatives to the PLO. The conference rejected Shamir's plan, because elections should be free and held under international supervision - conditions that can only be fulfilled after the Israeli withdrawal. Instead, the conference declared «total commitment to a fully empowered international peace conference on the Middle East, convened on the basis of international legitimacy and UN supervision, with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and all concerned parties, including the PLO on an equal footing and with equal rights as the other parties.»

Concerning the controversial issue of what conditions should be set for meeting with Israelis, the conference adopted a very positive position: «to continue dialogue with the democratic Israeli forces that reject the occupation; support our people's inalienable rights, including repatriation, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state;» and that recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. However, this issue is not solved via adopted resolutions. The PNC previously defined the basis for relations with the democratic Israeli forces. Nonetheless, some in the PLO leadership have used these resolutions to make contacts with outright Zionists, including members of the Likud. It is this practice that needs to be addressed and rectified.

Despite our reservations about the term *armed action,* it was positive that this was related to asking the Arab states which border on Palestine to respect the Palestinian revolution's right to practice its militant tasks across all the Arab borders and to mobilize the Palestinian masses in the struggle for freedom and independence. This could be the point of departure for a common Palestinian plan for revitalizing armed struggle across the Arab borders with Palestine, beginning with the most concrete possibility we have, which is Lebanon.

On the Arab level, the conference defined the PLO's position in the Arab liberation movement and confirmed the need to «consolidate relations with the national democratic forces, movements and parties in the Arab homeland.» It defined the position of Palestine on the Arab official level, by confirming commitment to the Arab Summit decisions. The statement called on the Arab states to implement these resolutions, especially in terms of their financial commitment to the intifada. Such a statement was needed in view of the Arab states' negligence in carrying out the summit's resolutions.

In particular, the conference called on «the Arab confrontation states to unify and mobilize the parties and masses in order to face the Israeli aggression.» The statement also confirmed the special relations between the Palestinian and Jordanian people, and the need to develop these relations in harmony with the national interests. The form of relations between the two people was defined as a Palestinian - Jordanian confederation, although it was not specified that this should follow the establishment of the Palestinian independent state.

Concerning Lebanon, the conference expressed support to the Lebanese people for the achievement of national unity, sovereignty and an end to the Zionist occupation of their land. However, the statement did not take a stand on the current war in Lebanon. Avoiding a definite stand with the Lebanese national forces in this crucial battle does not benefit the Palestinian revolution or the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.

It is also a problem that the conference chose to explicitly condemn Syria, while remaining silent on the specific role of other Arab regimes, even the Egyptian regime that signed the Camp David accords with the Zionist occupier.

On the international level, the conference defined its position towards international and regional organizations in accordance with their stand on the Palestinian cause and the people's struggles in general. It confirmed the continuation of the PLO-US dialogue, but at the same time indirectly criticized the US policy because it does not recognize the Palestinian people's rights to self-determination and an independent state. It noted that the US has a totally biased policy of supporting the Zionist occupation forces and covering up their violations of our people's rights. It rejects an effective international conference and the UN resolutions that favor the Palestinians, while denying the PLO's representation of the Palestinian people. The conference put the US in the corner that it deserves. This being the case, Fatah's policy should be based on the fact that the US remains as the main enemy of the Palestinian people, which merits denunciation, not false hopes and appellations. Accordingly, ways must be found to force the US to submit to our people's rights and to stop its total alignment with the Zionist enemy.

The most prominent point in the final communique was about laying a plan for «escalating and guaranteeing the continuation of the intifada. We must enhance the United National Leadership's role through developing the popular committees and the popular and union activities, including the strike forces. In addition, we must undertake to guarantee material, informational and political support to the intifada from the Arab nation and international community.» The communique confirmed the conference's denunciation of «terrorism and especially state terrorism,» referring to the Zionist enemy, and insisted on the Palestinian people's «right to practice all forms of struggle, including armed struggle, against the Zionist occupation,» despite this being omitted in the program.

Generally, the fifth conference renewed Fatah's commitment to the principles for Palestinian national work. This can serve to strengthen overall Palestinian gains under the PLO's leadership. National unity in the PLO is a key to upgrading the Palestinian national work and escalating the intifada to be even more effective in the struggle against the Zionist state and its ally, the US. Armed struggle must be intensified in the occupied homeland and from the surrounding countries in order to create the conditions for enforcing our people's rights to repatriation, self-determination and an independent state. Hopefully, there will be a dialogue among the organizations of the PLO on how to best work together to achieve the national tasks stressed by the conference. ●

The Shamir Plan

Obstacle to Peace

The US administration salvaged the Shamir plan and the unity of the Israeli coalition, after the challenge of the Likud Central Committee's decisions in early July. However, the Shamir plan remains in the intensive care unit, requiring new animation, as most recently attempted by President Mubarak with his ten-point plan.

Sooner or later, the Shamir plan is bound to die - not only because it represents the Israeli denial of the Palestinian people's legitimate rights, but also because it is no more than a reaction to the PLO's peace initiative, designed to foil it. In essence, it is a maneuver aimed at gaining time in order to terminate the uprising and reduce international outrage at Israeli brutality against the Palestinian people in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. This was tangibly proven by events on the Israeli political scene in July.

On July 5th, Shamir himself announced the decisions adopted by the Likud Central Committee. These made the true intentions of his plan all too obvious by explicitly ruling out not only the PLO and a Palestinian state, but any negotiations before the elimination of «violence» (meaning the uprising), as well as the participation of Palestinians from East Jerusalem in the elections. On the other hand, settlement-building would continue.

These conditions made it impossible for either the Labor Party or the US to credibly market the Shamir plan as a «peace plan.» The Shamir plan was in trouble, particularly after the Labor Party's Executive Bureau, by a vote of 45 to 2 on July 10th, recommended withdrawal from the coalition government. However, instead of the Shamir plan being declared dead or the coalition dissolving, the Israeli government met to renew its commitment to the plan without any amendments. Why?

US SALVAGES THE PLAN

On July 10th, the US State Department declared its intention to send a delegation to Israel in order to get clarification on the future of the government's «peace initiative.» The US also stated that the Likud decisions did not help the peace process; that the Israeli government was not bound by the decisions of one party; and that the US was not willing to change its policy according to this or that Israeli party's position.

To show its seriousness, the State Department declared that the US might look more closely at the possibility of advancing the peace process via an international conference, especially after the Likud Central Committee's hard-line conditions. At the same time, it was reported that the White House pressured the Labor Party not to withdraw from the coalition government. This was the background for Shamir's retreat, whereby he assured the US administration that the Israeli plan remained valid, without any changes, as previously approved by the government on May 14th. Thus, the US cancelled the planned delegation and urged the Labor Party to remain in the coalition. This paved the way for a compromise, whereby the Israeli government reconfirmed the Shamir plan as is, on July 23rd.

Shamir thereby agreed that the Likud decisions were internal party positions, non-binding on the government, even though part of the Likud Central Committee's decisions was that they were binding on all Likud representatives in the government and Knesset, as a guideline for any future negotiations or implementation of the Shamir plan. This makes it doubly obvious that Shamir considers his «peace» plan as no more than a propaganda ploy. He declared that the government decision to adhere to the plan as originally adopted did not affect the Likud Central Committee decisions one millimeter. He wants to say that his plan exists as it is since, in his view, there is no Arab response to it anyhow.

This compromise was acceptable to Shamir and the Likud because it averted the problems which would have arisen if the government had fallen - a return to new elections or the establishment of a minority government lacking in national consensus and effectiveness. In view of the problems Israel is already facing due to the uprising's daily achievements, it is to the advantage of both Likud and Labor to avoid further problems.

LABOR'S DILEMMA

It was obvious that the Likud Central Committee's decisions increased the Labor Party's dilemma. Sections of the party have long questioned the advisability of remaining in government with the Likud. On the other hand, past election results indicate that Labor would not improve its position in the case of new elections; nor would going into the opposition. In view of these factors, Labor agreed to the US administration's advice and stayed in the coalition, even though the essence of the Likud position was exposed to be somewhat different than the plan the Labor Party purports to promote. In order to complete the game, Labor's leadership met on July 10th and decided to remain in the coalition. They also confirmed a series of decisions which conform to Likud policy, such as: No to a Palestinian state, no to elections before the intifada is «exterminated,» no to negotiations with the PLO; and «United Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel.» However, other decisions were adopted which contradict the Likud position, such as: territorial compromise based on UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 228, the possibility of international observers ▶

for the elections, if they are from friendly countries, and that East Jerusalem Palestinians could vote, but not in Jerusalem.

US PRESSURES THE PLO

Instead of drawing the obvious conclusions from the Likud decisions, the US administration considered the government decision to reaffirm the Shamir plan as adequate. The US continued in its policy of trying to circumvent an international peace conference and the PLO's peace initiative. It continued to try to pressure the PLO to accept the Shamir plan, ambiguously claiming that it is only the beginning of a process, but without specifying the basis for this process, its stages, the PLO's role or how the Palestinian people's national rights will be addressed. The US administration furthermore tried to take advantage of the Fatah conference's communique, to propagate that the PLO had retracted its moderate line. US insistence on its position led to the failure of the fourth round of the US-PLO dialogue, just as the previous meetings had failed to make any real advances.

This proves that the US does not view Shamir's plan merely as a first step that is subject to amendment, but rather as an expression of US policy in the Middle East, based on the lines of Camp David, where there is no room for the PLO or Palestinian rights. If the US administration was really serious about advancing the peace process, it should have seized the opportunity to pressure Israel, especially after the Likud decisions. Instead, it saw the failure of the Shamir plan as a threat, because not to present a peace project in the current situation would leave it without an active policy in the area. The US rushed to salvage the Shamir plan because it is as much a US plan as an Israeli one in terms of its emergence, essence and aims. Now, the US is trying to exploit the events around the Likud Central Committee's decisions to beautify the Shamir plan and have Shamir himself appear as a «moderate» who is besieged by extremists and needs support. The overall aim of these maneuvers is to maintain the US's role and hegemony in the Middle East, by buying time for Israel to terminate the uprising through broad-scale repression; meanwhile, the US works politically to trap the PLO into accepting the Shamir plan, hoping to isolate the PLO from the uprising or lessen support to this struggle.

MUBARAK'S 10 POINTS

1. Israel should accept the election results.
2. The elections should be internationally supervised.
3. Protection would be provided for the Palestinian candidates.
4. The Israeli forces would withdraw from the polling areas.
5. Israel would be obliged to begin talks on a final settlement within a three to five-year interim period.
6. Settlement-building would stop.
7. Freedom of expression.
8. No Israel entry into the polling areas.
9. Israel would accept the principle of land for peace as part of a final settlement.
10. Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem would vote.

The US role in salvaging the Shamir plan was vital to its survival, since the US is almost the only power to have accepted this plan unconditionally. Added to the Palestinians' decisive rejection and the opposition of many Arab governments, Europe seems more inclined towards an international conference for solving the Middle East conflict. In June, both the EEC and the Socialist International, in their respective meetings, called for a UN-sponsored international peace conference; the EEC emphasized the importance of the PLO's participation in this conference. (The Israeli Labor Party boycotted the Socialist International meeting due to the PLO's having been invited as an observer.)

MUBARAK STEPS IN

Taking advantage of Egypt's official reintegration into Arab politics, Mubarak proposed a plan which serves to back up the US efforts to salvage the Shamir plan. He presented it as a means of finding a middle ground for furthering the peace process - a compromise between the Israeli proposal for elections under occupation, and the PLO's support to elections after Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Though presenting some changes in the means of holding elections, Mubarak's points don't differ in essence from the Shamir plan or Camp David. There is no mention of the PLO as the party to be negotiated with, or of the Palestinian state.

Thus, Mubarak joins the Israeli government and the US administration in retarding the peace process, despite statements to the contrary, for there will be no peace in the area without recognition of the Palestinian people's national rights to repatriation, self-determination and their independent state. The Palestinians are continuing the uprising in an unprecedented manner, having determined that they will not retreat from their goals of freedom and independence, whatever sacrifices this entails. It is not wishful thinking to say that Shamir's plan will inevitably face death, because in the last analysis it aims to create an alternative Palestinian leadership, and such attempts have repeatedly failed. The Palestinian people are united in viewing the PLO as their sole, legitimate representative. Anyone who wants to resolve the conflict must take this into account, and address the PLO.

●

Naji Al Ali

Israeli Security

Where did it start and where does it end?

In occupied Palestine, wearing clothes or painting pictures with the colors of the Palestinian flag is a security offense; so is throwing stones, teaching a neighbor's child to read or planting a tree. One can ask whether peace itself is thought to threaten state security: Why else to arrest Palestinians who engage in peace dialogues with Israelis, or prevent Israeli peace activists from visiting West Bank villages, or convict Israeli politicians for meeting PLO officials?

Judging by the daily functioning of the Israeli occupation forces, security appears to be a term so broad as to defy definition. The ambiguity and elasticity of the Israeli security concept became obvious to the world during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon; today it stands exposed by the brutality enacted against the unarmed masses of the intifada. Still, when the PLO launched its peace offensive in 1988, it faced a barrage of queries as to whether its proposals would meet Israeli security needs.

In this study, we will examine how the Israeli state views security, hoping to provide a background for assessing the prospects for the PLO's peace initiative, and the intifada's impact on the course of the Arab-Zionist conflict. We will deal with the elements of Israeli security, how this concept has changed over the years, and the impact of the intifada on Israeli thinking in this sphere.

It is our thesis that the main reason for the elasticity of the Israeli security concept lies in the nature of the state itself, which is based on the Zionist ideology. As a settler-colonial enterprise, the Zionist movement had to concern itself with all aspects of building a state: territory, natural resources, immigration, industry, infrastructure, etc. It could not be content with a narrow definition of security restricted to the military sphere alone, although this is in fact the bulwark of the whole project. We will not here focus on the military aspect in detail for the simple reason that we previously dealt with this topic extensively in a study on the Israeli role in the region (see DP nos. 24 - 32). Here we ask the reader to bear in mind the primacy of military supremacy in Israeli thinking, both in terms of sophisticated weaponry and the training, combative morale and integrity of the armed forces, for this is a main factor in evaluating the effects of the Palestinian intifada.

Besides imposing a comprehensive definition of security, the Israeli state's nature means that it can be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between legitimate security concerns on the one hand, and the Israeli drive for expansion and military supremacy on the other. Objectively, Israeli statehood occurred via uprooting and disempowering the Palestinian people, occupying their land and that of neighboring Arab peoples. Thus, Israel engendered the hostility of Palestinians and Arabs, and necessitated their struggle to redress these grievances. As a logical consequence, any expression of Palestinian national identity or Arab progress can be construed as a threat to Israeli security, because it challenges the essence of the Zionist project.

WHO IS THE ENEMY— PALESTINIAN OR ARAB THREAT?

Israeli strategists generally count the Arab «invasion» in 1948 as the major challenge to Israel's establishment. Yet assuming the Zionists exert their military prowess where they sense a threat, one should note actual practice. The Zionist militias began their concerted campaign of armed attacks on the Palestinians in December 1947, five months before the Arab armies entered Palestine, and in fact right after the UN approved the establishment of a Palestinian and Jewish state. One can argue that the real brunt of Israeli violence over the years has been most consistently directed against the Palestinians, at home or in exile, as in Lebanon.

There are even indications that the Zionists found the Arab intervention convenient, for it provided them with the appearance of fighting regular armies rathering than brutalizing a mainly civilian population. On May 13, 1948, the US consul general in Palestine reported the British view that Deir Yassin, where 250 Palestinians were massacred on April 9th, «might be repeated by the Jews to deliberately provoke a premature attack by the Arab armies» (Stephen Green, *Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel 1948/1967,* p. 32).

After the Arab retreat, «military stabilization» of the ceasefire lines involved fighting the attempts of Palestinians trying to return to their land and families. The other side of the coin was the imposition of martial law on those Palestinians remaining in the Zionist state, not to be lifted until 1966, whereafter it was imposed on the rest of Palestine occupied in 1967. Military rule was enacted in the name of security, but functioned mainly to gain control of land resources.

In another vein, the Swedish UN mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, was assassinated by the Zionists on September 17, 1948, after he submitted a report recommending the return of the Palestinian refugees. Was this a security operation to forestall the Palestinian return?

In *My People, The Story of the Jews* (1968), Abba Eban paints a typical picture of Israel's situation after 1948: «... the Arab governments renewed their attempt to harry Israel out of existence. There is no precedent in modern international history for such a comprehensive and diversified hostility. Eban builds up to the 1956 attack on Egypt, citing «a massive Egyptian armament program... the seizure of the Suez Canal... Alliances with Syria and Jordan under Egyptian command gave Israel a sensation of encirclement.» In 1967, Eban claims, Syrian initiated hostility, counting on «uncritical Soviet support.» Eban credits the Soviet Union with bringing Egypt into the picture, and goes on to describe an alliance of almost all the Arab states, whereby their troops «converged toward Israel like greyhounds advancing to tear the quarry to pieces... Israel faced the greatest peril to her existence that she had known since the hour of her birth» (pp. 500 - 505). ▶

Other Israeli leaders, including Moshe Dayan, Ezer Weizmann, Chaim Bar Lev and Mattityahu Peled - all generals - have made public statements which dispute the threat to Israel's existence claimed by Eban in both 1956 and 1967. The other noteworthy aspect is that in describing all this period, **Eban never mentions the word *Palestinian* or the occupation** of 1967. The Palestinian issue is referred to only obliquely, as an appendage to Arab hostility: «They (the Arab governments) asserted the right of Arab refugees to 'return' to Israel irrespective of Israel's will or security... In 1953-1956 a new technique was devised for expressing Arab hostility toward Israel. Terrorists *(Fedayeen)* were trained and organized for infiltrating into Israel...» from Egypt and in 1967 from Syria (pp. 500 - 509).

What is real in what Eban wrote in 1968 is the persistent Israeli fear that the energies of the Arab world will be pooled under a unified leadership and used to back up the Palestinian cause; and that Egypt and Syria are the Arab states most consistently identified as posing the greatest threat.

This perception of the enemy threat went unchallenged for three decades. Hebrew University professor and expert on **security affairs, Dan Horowitz, writes: «From the time of the** War of Independence up to the electoral upheaval of 1977, various governments in Israel attempted to accord relatively greater weight to the regional conflict between states and to play down the importance of the ideological national conflict between communities» (*Israeli Society and its Defense Establishment,* edited by Moshe Lissak, 1984, pp. 94 - 95). The first is considered basic security, giving reason to go to war, while the second is seen as current security, not requiring war. This distinction was shuffled in 1982 when Israel fought its longest war primarily against the PLO and the Palestinian and Lebanese masses, rather than against the Lebanese state, although this state was, of course, further undermined by the invasion, and Syria's army was also targeted. According to Horowitz, this marks a shift in the thinking of the Israeli political and military establishment, toward stressing inter**communal conflict, elevating it to the sphere of war. Among** the implications of this shift, he names:

1. reduction of the probability of solution through inter-state territorial compromise in the West Bank and Gaza Strip;
2. increased chance for belligerent conflict «in the wake of widespread, extended terrorist activities;»
3. Israel would tend to initiate war when its military might is at a peak and «strategic environmental conditions are optimal for exploiting opportunities,» rather than when it was threatened. «Paradoxically, this means that the signing of a peace treaty **with one Arab state or another does not reduce the probability** of embarking on initiated wars; rather, to the contrary, the likelihood is increased.»

This shift was presaged by the rise of the Palestinian resistance after 1967, which forced the Israeli army to focus on «the war within.» Though it received less publicity at the time, the strength of the *fedayeen* in the Gaza Strip in 1970 was met by a virtual war, complete with the establishment of a concentration camp in the Sinai, holding families of «suspected terrorists» - the prototype for Ansar in South Lebanon and today's Ansar III in South Palestine. Ironically, Israel's development of a counterinsurgency strategy along the lines used by the US in Vietnam, was the first sign of a grudging, implicit acknowledgement of the Palestinian dimension of the conflict. With time, this impacted on Israeli thinking about the 1967 occupation: «More than three-quarters of the Israelis who participated in the 1979 Task Force discussions *privately* questioned the ability of Israel to keep a million and a half Palestinians under occupation for much longer» (John Edwin Mroz, *Beyond Security - Private Perceptions among Arabs and Israelis,* 1980, p. 137. emphasis added)

Still, up into the eighties, most Israeli experts continued to view the threat to Israel as coming from the Arab states. In contrast to the flamboyant declarations of Begin and Sharon, serious analysts dismiss guerrilla warfare, «terrorism» and the pre-intifada civilian resistance in the occupied territories as real security threats. The typical assessment of experts was that «Israeli control of the West Bank and Gaza also constitutes an ideological-political prod to Arab action... It is in this sense that the centrality of the Palestinian question to Israeli security must be understood» (Mark Heller, *A Palestinian State: The Implications for Israel,* p. 24).

After Camp David, Syria in particular was regarded as Israel's implacable foe, and there are indications that Israeli perceptions of the Arab regimes' intentions are resistant to **change. In 1978-79, a retired Israeli military official stated** that the Eastern Front (Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia) «is a very real threat to Israel because its combined military strength makes it a more formidable opponent than Egypt... we can never discount the possibility that Egypt would renounce the Treaty and open a second front against us... most of all we understand that the ultimate intentions of our Arab neighbors are by and far the same as they have been... perhaps they are slightly more realistic now but that is hard to prove» (Mroz, op. cit., pp. 32-34).

Under the title «Israeli Perceptions of Threat,» Mroz lists the following:» An attack from the Eastern Front... Establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza... Arab population growth in Israel... An alteration of Israel's special relationship with the United States... Terrorism as a current security threat.» The first two are categorized as primary. Other security concerns mentioned include: Libya and Iraq acquiring nuclear capacity, Syrian intentions in Lebanon, increased dependence on foreign energy sources and the fact that Israeli water sources are vulnerable to attack.

There is ample evidence that most Israelis view a Palestinian state as a «mortal danger,» especially if headed by the PLO, as claimed in a pamphlet issued by the Israel Information Centre in 1978, and repeated by many an Israeli politician. This seems to contradict the perception that «terrorism» which by Israeli definition means Palestinian action against the occupation, is a secondary concern. One can only understand this apparent contradiction in the light that the Palestinian cause as such is considered dangerous in that it challenges the legitimacy and demographic integrity of the Zionist colonial project, regardless of the PLO's ability to mount a military threat to the Israeli state. This danger prompted the 1982 invasion of Lebanon; it explains the occupation forces' seemingly overdimensioned response to the intifada, and the revival of the age-old Zionist option of «transfer.» In 1984, Sharon advocated dealing with Palestinians under occupation as he had

tried to deal with the PLO in Lebanon, as a primary threat requiring war: Speaking on Israeli army radio, he said, «Let's assume for a moment that Jews will not live in Nablus, and in the course of time terrorist activity begins in Nablus... it is reasonable to believe that the day will come when we have to shell Nablus.»

Yehoshafat Harkabi, retired head of Israeli military intelligence, maintains the opinion he has expressed since 1968, that guerrilla warfare and «sporadic subversion» are not a challenge to Israel; he believes that «Israel's overemphasis on terrorism is a mistake,» helpful only in public relations «as a way to castigate the PLO.» But he goes on to note: «A new phenomenon is 'private enterprise' terrorism, carried out by individuals, especially young people, which is not spectacular but hurts just as much - such as random stabbings with a kitchen knife... it may become a considerable threat.... This sort of terrorism is very hard to suppress; it has no command posts or headquarters to strike at, and attempts to counter it through increased repression and collective punishment are likely to lead only to an escalation in scale...» (*Israel's Fateful Decisions,* 1988, pp. 36 - written before the intifada).

TERRITORY AS SECURITY?

Territory could not but be the pillar of the Israeli security concept since the state exists by virtue of conquering others' land and procuring the required infrastructure. The multidimensional significance of territory was obvious in the appeal of Chaim Weizmann, Zionism's foremost pre-state leader, to US President Truman in the autumn of 1947, as the UN Partition Plan was being drawn up. Weizmann argued against the prevailing inclination to exclude the southern Negev from the proposed Jewish state, citing the importance of Aqaba as the only outlet to the Indian Ocean: «For the Jewish state this outlet will be one of the most important routes for commercial relations with that part of the world.» Citing the need to develop industry and commerce to absorb Jewish immigration, he said that the importance of Aqaba was much greater than just a piece of land, concluding «Aqaba in the hands of the Arabs, may be a permanent threat in the rear of the Jewish state» (quoted by Eban, op.cit., p. 442).

The quest for territory was expressed in Ben Gurion's concept of carrying the war into the enemy's territory, i.e., the land which the Palestinian peasants refused to sell or abandon. In 1948, the Zionist militias not only took control of the territory allotted by the Partition Plan, but carved deeply into the proposed Palestinian state which would have no chance to materialize.

After a brief interlude in the early fifties when Moshe Sharett, who had replaced Ben Gurion as prime minister, tended towards reaching an accomodation with Nasser, the territorial expansion option decisively won out: «Prior to 1967, Israeli military doctrine called for an offensive military strategy to compensate for its numerical disadvantage, lack of strategic depth, and the absence of acceptable borders with its neighbors. The concept of preemptive war and retaliatory strikes became an essential ingredient of Israeli military policy... linked... with a deterrent theory that advocated an Israel strong in both military manpower and weaponry» (Mroz, op.cit., p. 114).

In the 1956 attack on Egypt, Israel occupied the Gaza Strip and Sinai, and was the last of the attackers to withdraw. The pre-emptive war strategy reached its height in 1967. «It was only after Israel had acquired significant territorial gains in the Six-Day War that the formula of 'defensible borders' emerged... (which) essentially called for expansion of Israel's geographical security margin to enable her to absorb an enemy attack without a pre-emptive strike» (Horowitz, op. cit., p. 91).

Pre-emptive strikes did not stop, but the belief in the territorial component of Israeli security was strengthened across the political spectrum. The Whole of Israel movement was formed by prominent Labor intellectuals and politicians. Yigal Allon, Palmach commander and later foreign and deputy prime minister, declared that he would choose East Jerusalem over peace; Moshe Dayan, defense minister, said the same about Sharm al Sheikh in the Sinai.

The 1973 war showed that the «defensible borders» did not guard against surprise attack, and that occupation invited war. Though this sent shock waves through the Israeli military and political establishment and the public, it did not lead to deep questioning of the territorial option. «The Israeli public embraced the concept that Israel was saved in October, 1973, largely because the enemy had been at a distance when the war began, and there was sufficient time for mobilization to stop the several front attacks» (Mroz, op. cit., p. 45). After the war, the government rejected King Hussein's offer of a separate agreement, if Israel would withdraw 12 kilometers along the length of Jordan, because this would have denied the Jordan River as Israel's security border *(Maariv,* April 25, 1980). The main response of the Israeli leadership was to further build up the state's military might. Subsequent elections in 1977 brought in the Likud which unabashedly promoted an ideology of territorial expansion.

Yair Tsaban of the Mapam Party contends that Camp David greatly affected Israeli perceptions: «Before Sadat's trip to Israel, between 80 and 87 percent of the Israeli public supported Dayan's formula for Israeli security (that the Sinai and Sharm Al Sheikh was preferable to peace)... but then Dayan became one of the architects of a peace plan based not on a different percept but on its exact opposite... An overwhelming number of Israelis... changed their minds overnight. Why? Because before, their political imaginations had been unable to comprehend something other than war» (*Journal of Palestine Studies* 56, Summer 1985).

Other indications tend to modify this assessment: «Despite the peace treaty with Egypt, the majority of Israelis today still adhere to the view that defensible borders without peace are preferable to peace without defensible borders» (Mroz, op. cit., p. 38). Prominent Labor politicians and military men opposed the negotiations with Sadat on the assumption that he would demand a return to the 1967 borders. The former prime minister, Golda Meir, called Begin's «peace plan» a«concrete terrible danger.»

Mroz reports that «many Israelis believe that the retention of troops in the Jordan Valley is essential to guarantee the effective demilitarization of the West Bank and, in the event of another war, would make Jordan itself the front line» (op. cit., p. 115). There is broad consensus that the Golan Heights are ▶

essential for Israeli security. Likud's implementation of the Camp David accords in fact proved that Israel only relinguished the Sinai to improve conditions for holding on to the other territories occupied in 1967. The 1982 invasion of Lebanon was to a great extent launched in hopes that crushing the PLO there would make it easier for Israel to retain the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Israel retreated from most of Lebanon only because the Palestinian-Lebanese National Resistance made the new superexpansionism too costly in army casualties and loss of social consensus. In contrast, it took Egypt ten years to regain Taba, even after signing a peace treaty with Israel.

All in all, the territorial option appears to have enormous resilience in Israeli security thinking, despite growing awareness of its drawbacks, particularly in terms of increasingly heavy defense burdens. For example, Mroz reported: «Numerous Israelis have pointed out that, prior to the 1967 war... a force of a few thousand troops was sufficient to guard its borders. In contrast, several divisions of tens of thousands of soldiers are required for the same duties today» (op. cit., p. 119).

With the onset of the intifada, Israel has been forced to station more troops in the West Bank than were originally needed to conquer it. Moreover, the army in engaged in the process of reconquering liberated villages time after time. «The Israeli soldiers cannot retreat or even fail to advance, for loss of control over so much as a few square feet of public space gives the Palestinian state physical reality» (Anne Joyce, *American-Arab Affairs,* Winter 1988-89).

SETTLEMENTS AS SECURITY?

In Zionist strategy, settlements obviously derive from the need to control territory, backing up military conquest with demographic conquest. However, Israeli statements as to the role of settlements in security and defense policy are contradictory.

Harkabi addresses the role of settlements in war, drawing on *The Defense Line in Judea and Samaria,* written by Aryeh Shalev, a brigadier general in the reserves and scholar at the Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University: «During the War of Independence no settlement, except for Nirim, withstood the onslaught of a regular Arab army without the aid of the Israeli army. Even with regular day-to-day security, settlements are more of a liability than an asset because they require forces to guard them and because they are a provocation to the Arab population. The settlements increase rather than decrease the need for Israeli military efforts... And let us not forget that sophisticated intelligence-gathering tools are increasingly able to provide Israel with warnings of an Arab invasion long before settlements could sound the alarm» (op. cit., p. 124).

«Until 1977, Labor-dominated governments tended to emphasize the trip-wire and antiterrorist functions of settlements and concentrated the settlement effort in the Jordan Valley, to which Labor security doctrine ascribed paramount importance. Even within this framework, the immediate security value of civilian settlements (as opposed to military outposts) was a subject of dispute, and settlement policy was arguably as much a product of the government's territorial aspirations... » (Heller, op. cit., p. 112). Moshe Dayan is one of many Israeli leaders who has dismissed the security value of settlements.

As of 1982, there were 110 Zionist settlements, housing between 20-25,000 settlers, in the 1967 occupied territories (*Al Fajr,* December 10, 1982). The 1981 Labor party platform specified the following as indispensible security zones: the settlements in the Jordan Valley, the Etzion Bloc (southeast of Bethlehem) and a Jerusalem Bloc stretching eastwards to the Maale Adumin settlement complex.

Mroz's book cites military officers who still contend that settlements have value as an early warning system, as sealing the borders to «terrorists» and providing up-front units on the spot (along the Jordan Valley). But he also cites a defense analyst speaking of the Golan Heights, site of the largest concentration of Israeli settlements in the 1967 occupied territories, as saying, «One can make a good case that security is not the major purpose of these settlements» (op. cit., p. 174). Mroz also cites Israeli polls made in 1978 and 1979, showing that «some 69.8 percent of Israelis believed that peace within secure and recognized borders was more important than the right to settle on the West Bank and Gaza» (op. cit., p. 156).

While few would maintain that settlements have major military significance in the face of a real war, there is no doubt they play a sustained role in «the war within» which is in reality more closely related to the demographic battle. When he was defense minister, Ariel Sharon said that settlements were the «Zionist response to the menace of establishment of a Palestinian state and to Soviet expansionism in the Middle East» (as quoted in the *Journal of Palestine Studies,* Spring 1983). At a time when many Israelis were disturbed by the possibility of the autonomy plan being implemented in a way that they viewed as tantamount to a Palestinian state, Dan Horowitz wrote in *Yediot Aharonot* (June 6,1980): «From this point of view, there is no importance in the fact that some of the settlements are like ghost towns. The main thing is that when the time comes it will be possible to mobilize Jewish masses to prevent the evacuation of the settlements and maybe even defend them with arms. And if, in spite of everything, some arrangement is found for the period of autonomy, it will be possible to operate from these bases to prevent it, and this violence will be disguised as self-defense.»

Today, this appears as a premonition of the settlers' increasing brutality and provocations against the masses of the intifada; the outcome of this confrontation will surely have a decisive impact on the issue of whether settlements provide security to Israelis or the opposite.

SECURITY FROM ABROAD

Israeli security has always depended to an abnormal degree on its international relations (including with Jewish communities around the world), and aid from the imperialist center in particular. The average Israeli is highly cognizant of this fact, whether he likes it or not, despite the rhetorical bravado of some like Dayan and Sharon about Israel «going it alone.» Ironically, these two have been in the forefront of Israeli efforts to garner military aid and strategic cooperation from the US.

«Israel's best friends include the strongest nations. The United States showed a great constancy of support, interrupted

drastically only by the conflict of 1956. No other relationship brought Israel such enrichment and security over two decades... France was Israel's mainstay for a full decade and more... The preponderance of French equipment in Israel's armed forces had a powerful emotional effect on the country's youth» (Eban, op. cit., pp. 510-511). In March 1952, Eban asked the US that Israel be included in any Western-oriented Middle East defense pact that might be planned (Green, op. cit., p. 74).

«Between 1968 and 1973 Rabin served as Israeli Ambassador to the USA and in Washington he developed a new concept according to which Israel's security was more dependent on decisions made in the White House than upon decisions taken in government offices in Jerusalem» (Amos Perlmutter, Michael Handel, Uri Bar Joseph, *Two Minutes Over Baghdad,* 1982, p. 49). Israeli dependency became obvious in October 1973 when only a massive military air lift from the US allowed Israel to regain the initiative.

Most of the few instances of Israeli territorial withdrawal have been dictated by international considerations. Eban describes Ben Gurion's policy in this respect as follows: «In 1949 he drew back from nothern Sinai rather than incur British armed resistance and American disfavor. He entered the 1956 Sinai campaign... only when he felt assured of support against air attacks on Israel's cities. Two days after declaring that Israel would never abandon the occupied territory or allow foreign troops to enter it, he proclaimed Israel's evacuation in favor of United Nations troops. The United States and the Soviet Union had demanded this, and he saw no course but to comply» (op. cit., p. 516)

In withdrawing from the Sinai in conjunction with the Camp David accords, Israel for the first time acted according to a «double track strategy» defined as combining capacity maximalization with threat reduction (Heller, op. cit., pp. 3-4). While the threat reduction involved drawing Egypt out of the Arab confrontation front, the capacity maximalization was achieved via massive new levels of US military aid and institutionalized strategic cooperation.

«A leading Israeli defense analyst stated that there are three major factors, apart from geographic borders, that make up the strategic balance from the Israeli perspective: 'Israeli military capabilities as compared to Arab military capabilities; the nature and depth of the American commitment; and the application of military capabilities, especially the question of strategic surprise. Unfortunately, the second is as important as the first and third.' The possibility of a change in the degree and strength of American support is seen as a potential threat of the highest order to Israeli security» (Mroz, op. cit., p. 132).

Israeli dependence on the US has led some to argue that the US can force Israel to make peace; this debate has taken on a new dimension with the onset of the intifada, the attempts of Israel's friends to «save it from itself» and the opening of the US-PLO dialogue. This issue will be examined later in this study; here, we will only cite some pre-intifada facts which mitigate against optimism in this respect: «The Egyptian-American relationship worries the Israelis insofar as it could mean that America will no longer see Israel as its sole, reliable partner in the region. All Israelis realize that Israel's economic well-being and security depend on the continued close cooperation between the United States and Israel... Many advocates of the peace process believe that once peace is achieved, Israel will need less foreign aid... Israelis are not so certain that the change would be in Israel's best interests» (Mroz, op. cit., p. 57).

The Israeli Labor Party is considered to be most sensitive to the importance of Israel's relations with the West, yet it was a Labor minister who told the *Jerusalem Post* (June 17, 1986), «When it comes to our security or the PLO, we have no option but to differ with the West.»

The dialectics linking Israel with its imperialist backers are extremely complex and dynamic as can be deduced from Moshe Dayan's arguments when he told an assembly of Israeli ambassadors why a defense pact with the US would be harmful: «A defense agreement would only tie our hands... Reprisal actions, which we should be unable to carry out if we were bound by a defense agreement, are the elixir of life for us. Firstly, they oblige the Arab countries to take strict measures to maintain security on the frontiers, and secondly - which is the important point - they help us to maintain tension among the population and in the army. Without this we shall not have a fighting people, and without the structure of a fighting people we shall be lost...» (quoted in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* 37).

COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY

Those who view Israeli security in a comprehensive manner are less optimistic about its strategic situation than those who make their judgements in terms of military prowess alone. Below we cover three studies carried out by respected Israeli think tanks.

Mark A. Heller's *A Palestinian State - Implications for Israel* was written under the auspices of the Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University. Heller argues for a Palestinian state (a severely restricted one), as the least dangerous of the options available to Israel for insuring its security, based on the following disadvantages of perpetuating the status quo:

- the economic costs of Israel's defense burden;
- the possibility of new Arab war coalitions emerging in the future;
- the demographic problem involved in absorbing the West Bank and Gaza Strip;
- the occupation's negative effects on Israel's moral fiber, national cohesion, international relations and Jewish immigration.

Indeed by 1979 and 1980, Jewish emigration had begun to exceed immigration by about 10,000 each year *(Jerusalem Post,* December 11, 1981), and this trend has continued. «Privately Israeli officials acknowledge that the birthrate and the emigration / immigration statistics are most worrisome to them» (Mroz, op. cit, p. 55).

In Heller's view, a durable settlement would offset the geomilitary value of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (usually viewed as the protection which the West Bank in particular offers for Israeli industrial and population centers). The PLO should be brought into the settlement so it would not have interests in undermining it. Rather, this process would weaken and divide the PLO, and busy it with the details of managing a state, like the Arab governments. Heller reasons that the ▶

otherwise preferable Jordanian option would ultimately lead to a Palestinian state on both banks of the Jordan River.

Two of the dangers Heller sees as remaining even after such a settlement are: «secessionist sentiments among Israeli Arabs» and Israeli access to water. Generally, Heller's proposals are technocratic: arrangements that assuage Israeli security fears and meet Israeli conditions. He assumes, for example, that Palestinians in their new «state» would still work in Israel and/or that Israel can compensate for their cheap labor via a needed technical overhaul. He totally overlooks the relations and structures of colonialism that have evolved over the years, and their political, social and economic impact on both the Israeli and Palestinian societies. Despite all his talk of the advantages of peaceful settlement, his model ultimately rests on continuing Israeli military control: continued reliance on preemptive attacks, retention of Israeli-manned early warning systems in the already demilitarized Palestinian state, and even more US aid and strategic cooperation.

Now that the intifada has concretely proved that the Palestinians are quite serious about building a truly independent state, and are already laying its foundation, one wonders how this reality fits with models such as Heller's. In the introduction to his book, he writes that the weakening of the PLO by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 makes his ideas even more feasible than when they were written. What now, if the PLO is strong?

ECONOMIC RESTRICTIONS

Israeli Security Planning in the 1980s: Its Politics and Economics (Zvi Lanir, editor, 1984) is also from the Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University; the contributors are from this center's permanent staff headed by Aharon Yariv, former head of military intelligence. By its own definition, the center concerns itself with: «The concept of strategy... in its broadest meaning, namely, the process involved in the identification, mobilization and application of resources in peace and war to strengthen and solidify the national security of the state of Israel.» This book includes a historical review of many factors related to defense and security policy, but the focus of many of the contributors in on the crisis of the Israeli economy. Lanir introduces the study as follows: «Most experts agree now that Israel has reached a critical stage where it must reassess the challenge to its security and even its defense doctrines as the result of the weight of economic constraints.»

Writing about the regional arms race, Aryeh Shalev points out that Israel's ability to enlarge its armed forces in the future will be limited because it has already reached its capacity to allocate funds to defense; on the other hand, the technological arms race can only push defense costs up. In the period since this study, Israel failed to fundamentally resolve its economic problems, although a number of the symptoms have been inhibited. Thus, this issue is important in measuring the effects of the intifada, if only in terms of the added defense outlays required in the attempt to suppress it.

Reviewing this study in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* 56, Summer 1985, Uri Davis writes how one is struck by the authors' awareness of the possibility of the state's collapse, noting: «The fact that the state of Israel controls the most powerful military machine in the Middle East does not in itself redress its fragility.» Yariv himself writes: «Any Israeli defeat in armed conflict spells out - and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future - the end of its sovereignty.»

WITHDRAWAL FOR SURVIVAL

Harkabi adopts an even more comprehensive approach: «In most countries the national debate centers on what policy will yield the best results, whereas in Israel the debate is existential: what policy is less perilous to the country's existence? Mr. Begin repeatedly said that if Israel withdraws it will find itself in 'mortal danger'» (*Israel's Fateful Decisions, p. 50).* Harkabi contends the opposite: «Withdrawal will leave a state that will have to defend itself and live in difficult conditions. Annexation will lead to safer borders, but it is doubtful whether the state will survive to defend them.» He bases his contention on three main criteria:

1. Demographic: «Israel must withdraw from the West Bank not because of any obligation to Jordan or the Palestinians but in order to prevent a demographic disaster that would put an end to Israel as a Jewish state. Furthermore, it is the only way to put an end to the conflict» (op. cit., p. 119). Based on estimates that if prevailing trends persist, Palestinian Arabs will constitute 45-50% of the population of 'Greater Israel' by 2000 or soon afterwards, Harkabi warns that this is comparable to the PLO dream of a democratic Palestinian state, and a strategic problem much greater than the geographical problem that would accompany Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. Concerning the other side of the demographic balance - Jewish immigration - Harkabi sees no reason for optimism. He terms the settlement movement a success only in physical terms, but a failure in human terms, since immigration is dwindling. He refutes the belief that annexation will awaken a fresh wave of immigrants, saying: «Jews may be attracted to a Jewish state, but not to a country with a mixed and unsettled population» (op. cit., p. 48).

2. Time is not on Israel's side: Harkabi views the younger

generation of the PLO as more radical than the older leaders, and warns that prolongation of the conflict holds out the possibility of radicalization of the Arab world. He advocates negotiations now, while the Arab states are «beset with problems,» because the «crude balance of forces» is evolving in favor of the Arabs due to their greater ability to absorb losses. Harkabi cautions that «damage to Israel from Arab civil unrest will be much greater than the damages from terrorism,» countering the common contention that the West Bank will become a «base for terrorism» in the event of withdrawal.

3. Harkabi's most compelling argument is related to Israel's moral fiber. He decries the country's moral decline and lack of self-criticism as more serious than the economic crisis or the Lebanon war. He connects the moral decline to the ascent of the Likud and Revisionist ideology, the growth of religious fanaticism and chauvinism, and harnessing the Jewish religion to the wagon of territorial maximalism. For him, it is a question of survival that Israel abandon the «Zionism of acreage» for the «Zionism of quality.» He connects this with the international aspect, emphasizing Israel's relationship with Jews all over the world: «Should the Zionist enterprise collapse, the Jewish religion will be blamed for its share in the calamity since it recommended the path that led to disaster, and the major factor in the Jewishness of most Diaspora Jewry - identification with Israel - will vanish» (op. cit., p. 208). He also notes: «The capacity to achieve goals does not depend only on the size of the local forces that have to be overcome, but also on the support for these goals in the world community...» (op. cit, p. 215). «The need to behave in accordance with international norms... has now become a condition for the survival of both the state and the people» (op. cit., p. 199).

Harkabi's book in English is based on a book he published in Tel Aviv in 1986, i.e., well before the outbreak of the intifada. In the preface to the English edition, he writes: «Three years ago, when I began to write this book, the urgency of changing Israeli policy arose from the opportunity offered to Israel after Jordan and the PLO, in February 1985, reached an agreement based on a principle unprecedented in the history of the Arab-Israeli dispute - namely 'land for peace'.» He continues that the intifada has only strengthened his arguments, and urges Israel to negotiate with the PLO, based on mutual recognition.

Children in Khan Al Sheeh camp, Syria: Do they **threaten Israel?**

LIMITATIONS TO CHANGE

No matter how comprehensive their analysis and compelling their arguments, these think tanks and experts suffer from significant limitations due to their own relationship to Labor Zionism, at least in its original version. It is this mainstream Zionism which has actually shaped Israel as it is today, yet most often they analyze Israel's problems without taking into consideration that they stem from Zionism's very nature, not simply a wrong interpretation or implementation of Zionist principles.

While on one level, the 1977 Likud election victory appeared as a rupture in traditional Israeli politics, on another level it was the logical ripening of a society which evolved via colonialism, military conquest and expansionism - processes begun by Labor. Parallel to the rise of the Likud, we have witnessed the rightward evolution of the Labor Party, culminating in the 1984 national unity government and continuing up to today. Thus, those who see the two poles of Zionism as fundamentally different may lack the means to draw the Israeli body politic towards their ever so rational arguments, for Israel's inner dynamics are moving in another direction, according to a different logic.

This point will have importance in evaluating how the intifada has affected Israeli security thinking. For example, in as much as the Labor Party and various analysts view the demographic danger as the greatest one, they advocate the «land for peace» formula. The right has another recipe for this problem; it is called «transfer.» However, these two models are not so far apart as they seem. For one, the territorial compromise envisioned by Labor is generally much less than needed to fulfill Palestinian demands for an independent state. Moreover, according to Heller, «The purpose of territorial compromise is to *transfer* the bulk of the Palestinian population to Jordanian jurisdiction» (op. cit., p. 35, our emphasis). Harkabi, in *Arab Strategies and Israel's Response,* 1977, wrote: «by announcing its readiness to withdraw and let a Palestinian state be set up outside Israel's borders, Israel would return the Palestinian problem to its true natural habitat - inter-Arab politics - and free itself from a heavy burden» (quoted in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 54, Winter 1985).

It is a far cry from such thinking to attitudes which would enable Palestinian-Israeli coexistence in two parallel states, as many now advocate. It is hard to separate in the Zionist mind between the perceived need for security and the racism that has accumulated from years of being colonizers. Why else does the Israeli army persist in brutalizing the masses of the intifada all the while many soldiers and officers are reported to think that the problem can only be solved via political means? We will try to address these questions in the next issue of *Democratic Palestine* when we discuss the impact of the intifada on Israeli security thinking.

●

On the Brink of Disaster

For the first time in the 15-year-old civil war, the Lebanese crisis is being regarded as a regional conflict, heading towards further complications. Failure to resolve the internal conflict has opened the way for external factors to play an increasingly larger role, so that they now appear to dominate the situation.

Since March, Lebanon has been subject to a bloody and bitter conflict, leading to the death of hundreds of its citizens. This conflict was punctuated by weekly and sometimes daily cease-fires which the isolationist forces, led by General Aoun, never honored, but rather exploited to serve their tactics. Ever since Aoun, the head of the military government, plunged Lebanon into this bloody war, the country has been suffering more lethal bombardments. Arbitrary shelling has become part of the daily routine, while the Lebanese have been observers -witnesses to the fragmentation and destruction of their country. Thousands of Beirut's 1.5 million inhabitants have fled the city since the battle between General Aoun and the nationalist forces broke out on March 8th. The fire is still raging, grinding toward a brutal military climax; Lebanon is farther away from a political settlement than at any other time.

Developments in Lebanon are tragic for all concerned. The internal conflict between the isolationists and the national progressive forces has been exacerbated by outside interference. As each group sought to strengthen its position by appealing to outside forces, the conflict has become increasingly regionalized and internationalized.

«No Red Lines Anymore»

Since March, more and more Lebanese have come to support the demand of the nationalist forces for political reform. In June, the Arab League's three-state committee suggested that the Lebanese parliament meet outside the country to draw up a document on political reform, to be discussed at a subsequent meeting of the parliament in Lebanon, when conditions would permit. A number of Maronite MPs residing in East Beirut publicly expressed their readiness to attend such a session. However, they were publicly attacked and threatened by General Aoun, and consequently silenced. In July, the Maronite patriarch Sfeir called for reform and the equality of all sects in Lebanon, in the interests of a political solution. He was planning a meeting between political figures from East and West Beirut, to prepare for a session of the Lebanese parliament. This move was also blocked by General Aoun and the continuation of the war.

The nationalist and progressive forces were in fact quite patient in relation to Aoun's criminal isolationist plan. They had hoped to avoid a devastating total confrontation. However, Aoun persisted in his mad war, refusing dialogue or a cease-fire before the pull-out of what he calls the «Syrian occupation.» In Aoun's words, «Frankly speaking, I am not prepared to reach understanding with anyone who tries to negotiate with me on reform before liberation» (*Al Qabas*, Kuwait, July 3rd).

When it became clear that Aoun has no intention of stopping, the nationalists took action. Suddenly, Aoun and his isolationist allies found themselves in a critical situation in Beirut and the surrounding hills, as Souq Al Gharb was attacked by the nationalist forces. In mid-August, 16 Lebanese organizations that oppose Aoun joined together in the Lebanese Nationalist Front, supported by Syria and Iran.

This escalation was presaged by the deadend in the efforts of the three-state committee (Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Morocco), formed at the Arab Summit in Casablanca in May. After three months, the committee had still not been able to enforce a comprehensive cease-fire in the fighting between Aoun's forces and the Lebanese nationalists. In a move that almost everyone now regrets, the committee announced its failure on July 31st, and the guns of Lebanon sounded again in a desperate 'war of survival' as described by Walid Jumblatt, leader of the Progressive Socialist Party (*International Herald Tribune*, August 25th).

In the statement issued at the end of the meeting of the three states' foreign ministers, the committee expressed «great disquiet at the loss of human lives and the untold suffering caused to the Lebanese people.» It announced that its mediation efforts had come to a «deadend in both the political and security fields,» mainly because «Syria's concept of spreading (the Lebanese state's) sovereignty is different from that of the committee» (*Al Safir*, Lebanon, August 1st).

Damascus, in reply, accused the committee of failing to heed an agreement to halt arms supplies to both sides as part of a deal to allow Lebanon's warring factions to build a new unified government. In a letter to the committe, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa said, «Aoun and his allies are responsible for the committee's failure,» accusing the general of trying to partition Lebanon into mini-states along sectarian lines (*Al Safir*, August 7th).

The relative optimism that prevailed when the Arab committee began its efforts in the early summer, vanished in August, to be replaced by bitter military confrontation. The nationalists' ground offensive against Souq Al Gharb on August 13th came against a background of four days of incessant shelling. Souq Al Gharb, in the hills southeast of Beirut, is the frontline position guarding Aoun's forces at the Presidential Palace and the Defense Ministry, five kilometers away. Three hundred fighters of the Lebanese nationalist forces attacked Aoun's positions there. Although there

can be no military solution to Lebanon's political problems, the nationalists were forced to resort to the military option; in the process, they surpassed the «red lines» that have existed between the isolationists and nationalist forces for a number of years. «No red lines any more, we shall undertake any action we deem appropriate at any place, any time and by any means,» said Walid Jumblatt (AP, August 16th). It was the first time since the current confrontation began in March that ground forces moved against each other, having previously been firing from stationary positions.

WAR BY PROXY

Since the cease-fire in the Gulf War a year ago, Iraq has put its energies into its old fight with Syria, choosing Lebanon as the theater of confrontation by arming Aoun. Thus, Iraq seeks to punish Syria for supporting Iran in the Gulf War, without itself paying the price of this harassment. Also the unresolved hostilities between Iraq and Iran spill over into the conflict in Lebanon.

The Casablanca Summit tried to defuse the Syrian-Iraqi feud, but failed. All they could do for Lebanon was to set up a committee of the heads of state of Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Algeria, who dispatched their foreign ministers on a round of diplomacy. The three foreign ministers shuttled between Damascus and Baghdad, seeking to bring the two Arab rivals to pressure their respective Lebanese allies to abide by a truce. They tried to achieve a compromise between the two sides to scale down the Lebanese conflict, but they made no progress.

INTERNATIONALIZATION

Although Aoun enjoys the support of virtually all the imperialist countries, it was notably France which sent its armada to the Mediterranean, at a time when it had become obvious that Aoun's forces were in a difficult position. Aoun himself openly stated: «I would like a French military intervention» (AP, August 18th).

France tried to present its threat of military intervention under a humanitarian guise. The minister for the French speaking world, Alain Decaux, said, «Everyone feels the Lebanese question as a tragedy but France feels it in its heart. Across the centuries, France has been the protector of the Christian community. There is no reason why our country should not continue in that role forever» (*The Guardian,* August 16th). «There is no question of military intervention... France does not believe in a military solution,» said the French ambassador to Lebanon, Rene Ala *(The Guardian,* August 22nd).

However, the French statements didn't dispell fears that the fleet was sent close to Lebanon's shores for a covert political purpose. Sending warships to the Mediterranean was an attempt by the French government to influence the outcome of the Lebanese conflict in favor of Aoun's forces, by internationalizing the situation. It appears that France is attempting to revive its past colonial role in the area.

Aware of these aims, the Lebanese Nationalist Front declared that it had «decided to deal with any French presence off our shores as a military target» (*International Herald Tribune,* August 24th). Amal leader, Nabih Berri, one of the members of this front, said that he would give orders to open fire on any French naval vessels that approached the Lebanese coast.

Another aim of sending the French fleet was to sabotage the Arab League efforts to resolve the Lebanese crisis. This was confirmed by diplomatic moves which centered around a three-step «peace plan» disclosed by the French foreign minister, Roland Dumas. This plan reflected the French government's bias towards Aoun's forces by laying all the blame for the crisis on Syria. It could thus only serve to widen the internal differences in Lebanon.

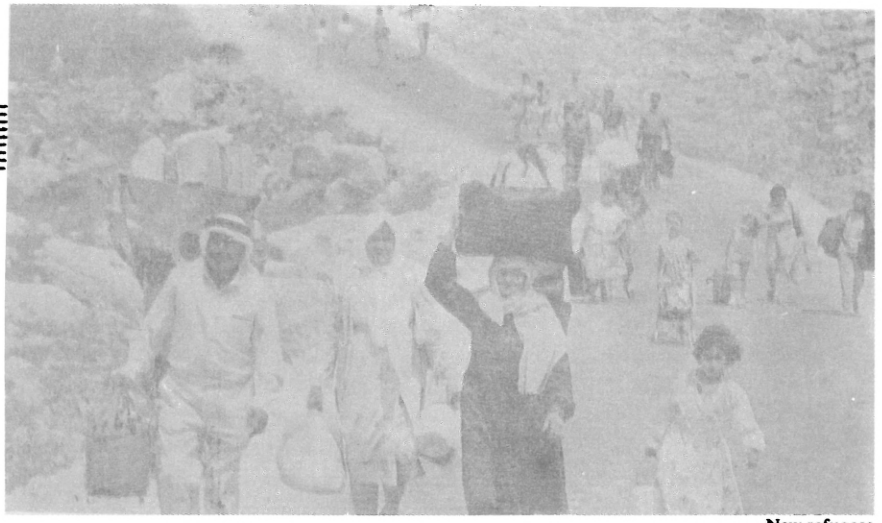
The Soviet Union was the first nation to mark its distance from the French position, pointedly denying that the dispatch of the French warships had been discussed in Moscow during the visit of the French envoy. Moreover, the Soviet Union has engaged in active diplomacy aimed to consolidate the ceasefire delcared by the UN Security Council in mid-August. This was an embarrasment to France, and raised hopes that it might yet be possible to achieve a cease-fire as a first step to ending the war. Dr. Salim Hoss, head of the legitimate government in Lebanon, said, «No one but the Soviet Union can do anything at this stage» (*The Guardian,* August 26th). The Soviet Union has expressed support to the Arab League Committee, encouraging it to resume its efforts.

FACTS BEHIND THE IMPASSE

In addition to the French attempt at intervention, Israel and the US are the two parties that have done most to block a solution to the Lebanese crisis along the lines pursued by the Arab three-state committee. The continuation of the crisis serves the interests of Israel which wants to keep Lebanon weak and divided, in order to enforce its own hegemony. Moreover, as stated by retired Israeli Brigadier General Aharon Levran, «It is a blessing for ▶

Israel that Syria will be bogged down deeper and deeper in the Lebanese mud» (AP, August 17th). Levran went on to threaten that a Syrian victory in Lebanon could force Israel to rethink its present «non-intervention» policy. The same day, Israeli Prime Minister Shamir declared, «There are red lines. The red line is the safety of Israel.» Concurrent Israeli statements made it clear that a build-up of Syrian forces in Lebanon was considered a threat even if they did not move into South Lebanon, previously considered the «red line.» This is because they could be accompanied by Syrian missiles which might interfere with Israeli air surveillance of Lebanon. Israel prefers the present state of tension, so that it has a free hand in continuing its bombing of the Palestinian and Lebanese National Resistance forces. Thus, it is not the Syrians but the Zionist state which is the major force in the destabilization of Lebanon, as seen in years of aggression and attempts to prevent national reconciliation by arming and promoting the Lebanese isolationists, in East Beirut and the South. The internal Lebanese differences have been aggravated by the Israeli interference and occupation. An occupied country is by definition a divided country.

The kidnapping of Sheikh Obeid by Israeli commandos in late July was one more attempt to keep the Lebanese crisis boiling, by reviving the issue of the hostages just as the Arab League committee announced that it had reached a deadlock. The US and Israel took this as a pretext for building up their military forces off the Lebanese coast, to threaten the nationalist forces and divert international attention away from what is going on in Palestine's West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the words of the Israeli defense minister, Yitzhak Rabin, «We should remember that bringing Sheikh Obeid to Israel brought the subject, at least from a media standpoint, to international attention» (AP, August 23rd). «We have one good bargaining card,» said Rafael Eitan, former army chief of staff, referring to the kidnapping of Obeid. «If one card is not enough, we have to go in one night and bring back a few more cards, and again the next night.... Lebanon is a box full of cards» (AP, August 8th).



New refugees

It is clear that the US administration has given Israel a free hand in Lebanon. In this sense, it is the chief conspirator in the Lebanese tragedy, for all the direct Israeli aggression on Lebanon has been funded and equipped by the US, in line with its interests in sponsoring attacks on the Palestinian revolution, the Lebanese nationalist forces and Syria, in order to maintain its geostrategic positions in the Middle East.

KEY TO SOLUTION

After 15 years of war, it is clear that no single political force or community in Lebanon is able to gain the upper hand. At the same time, no external force has been able to impose its hegemony. General Aoun's delusions about a final showdown have only brought more dead and wounded, and more fragmentation and dangers to the Lebanese people. Aoun's «war of liberation» is nothing of the kind; the liberation war is that being waged in the South against the Israeli occupiers and their proxies, not Aoun's war which is directed against the Lebanese people. Each new round of sectarian fighting has deepened divisions, making national reconciliation and reunifying Lebanon all the more difficult. If the smoke does settle in Lebanon, it will only lead to the tragic realization that the savage warfare of the past months was for nought.

As of this writing, the Arab League three-state committee has resumed its efforts with a meeting of foreign ministers in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on September 13th. It is very important that this committee has been reactivated, but its initiative must be more clearly articulated and intensive if results are to be achieved. Certainly, the members of this committee should listen to the view of all parties to the conflict, but they should also evaluate which positions are correct and which are wrong.

Lebanon's dismemberment is not the result of what Aoun calls the «Syrian occupation.» It is the result of the Israeli occupation and the breakdown of the Lebanese system itself due to the unworkable confessional system. So the key to the solution must begin with enforcing Israeli withdrawal while enacting a democratic reform of the Lebanese political system.

But does the Arab committee have the ability to exert joint pressure on Israel to force it to withdraw permanently from Lebanon? Clearly, it does not if for no other reason than that this question is closely connected to the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, and its core, the Palestinian issue. It is difficult to imagine peace in Lebanon, or Palestine, until there is an end to Israeli aggression. Until then, Lebanon remains on the brink of disaster. ●

The Prevailing Arab Order

This article provides a synopsis of the economic and political characteristics of the Arab order that prevails today by virtue of the policies of the existing regimes, among which the reactionary ones have gained preeminence. As such, it does not cover the other major actor in the area - the progressive and nationalist parties and mass movements. Nor does it give much attention to the social aspects of the current situation. We hope to address these latter topics in future articles, in conjunction with the question of democracy in the Arab world.

Crisis characterizes the present-day Arab societies. This crisis includes all aspects of life - political, economic and social... For objective and subjective reasons, all strata of the bourgeois have failed to find a solution for this crisis. The existing revolutionary alternatives have failed as well...» - Karim Mroweh, member of the Lebanese Communist Party's Politbureau.

Generally speaking, politics is part of the superstructure erected over the economic base of the society. Politics expresses economy, while economy ultimately determines politics. The Arab world is no exception. However, the gap between the development of the superstructure and the economic base can create the impression that there is a separation between politics and economy.

The ruling class that has evolved in most of the Arab countries has relinguished the aspirations for independence. It submitted to the conditions of the world capitalist system, and led the process of incorporating the Arab world into this system. With the growth of private ownership of land and capital, the parasitic nature of the Arab economy has increased. The social strata that profited from the growth of private ownership, formed a capitalist class that took over power either alone or in alliance with the previous ruling class, the feudalists.

An example is Saudi Arabia. Up until the fifties, Saudi Arabia was a tribal, feudalist society. The oil boom began the process of transformation towards a feudalist-capitalist system. State intervention and the development of a public sector paved the way for the oil revenues to accumulate in the hands of the state which is synonymous with the ruling family. In the seventies, national industry developed, but the industrial strata of the bourgeoisie remained embryonic due to the many obstacles it confronted. Industry did not attract the royal family (tribe), or the merchants. Thus, capital was concentrated in domestic and foreign trade. During this decade also, the feudalist aristocracy transformed into a financial group. The feudalist elite, merchants and businessmen united into one class that stayed at the apex of the social hierarchy and worked hand in hand with international capitalism.

OIL AND DEPENDENCY

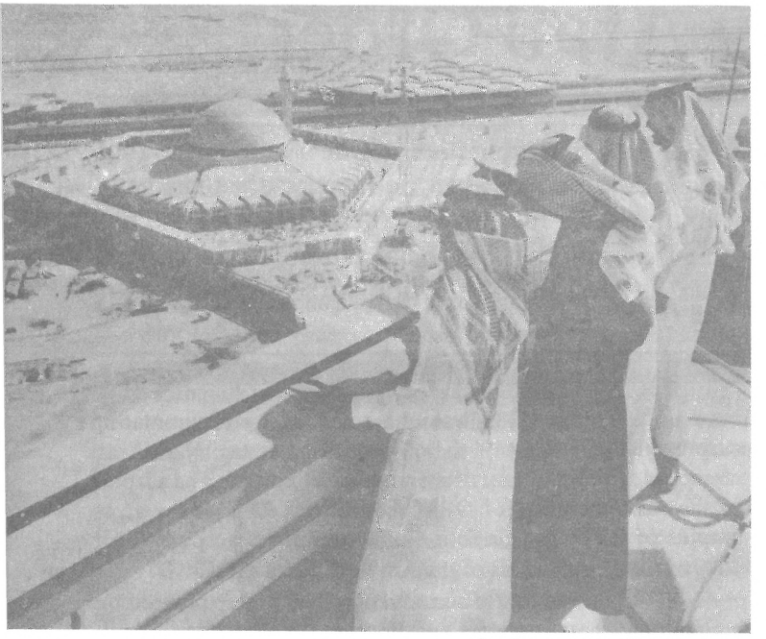
Although oil production in the Arab world goes back to the last century, the accumulation of revenues occurred only after the price of oil was raised twice, in 1973 and 1979. The period between 1973 and 1981 was characterized by accumulating surplus in the budgets of the oil-producing states. Nine Arab countries achieved a gross surplus of $323 billion. The surplus of the Arab members of OPEC constituted 93% of the gross surplus of OPEC, while four Gulf states alone accounted for 90% of the gross surplus of the Arab members in OPEC.

At the beginning of the accumulation, oil policy focused on maintaining these revenues and limiting the extraction of oil. This policy did not, however, withstand the challenges of the next stage, the period between 1982 and 1987. This stage was characterized by budget deficits, due to the fall in oil prices, as a result of the policy followed by US imperialism and the oil monopolies in conjunction with reactionary Arab regimes, such as Saudi Arabia. This policy aimed to further subordinate the Arab countries to the imperialist system, and to prevent them from utilizing the oil revenues to consolidate their independence via the development process. The problem was further aggravated by the competition among the OPEC states over their respective shares in production, in order to receive the highest income for dealing with the economic and social consequences of the oil boom.

Most critical, however, was the way in which oil revenues were used. The bulk of them were recycled into the capitalist center - invested on stock exchanges or deposited in banks. This diverted funds that could have been used for developing a local productive capacity. It moreover made the Arab economies vulnerable to the economic ups and downs in the capitalist countries; it also increased the Arab states' vulnerability to punitive political measures (as happened to Iran when the US administration froze Iranian assests in the US after the Shah's overthrow). The policy of exporting the oil revenues continues: During the first quarter of 1987, $2.43 billion were sent abroad from the Arab countries.

The oil boom has had far-reaching results on the economic and social levels. Economically, the oil states depended solely on producing and exporting oil. The increased oil revenues led to a construction boom and the rapid expansion of infrastructure (transport and communication). There was also a beginning development of social facilities (education and health). Relatively speaking, the oil boom also affected the non-oil-producing states. To varying degrees, they benefited from incomes in the form of aid and remittances from citizens working in the oil states, although the prosperity was not so clearly seen in all of them.

In the same period, the Arab states' dependence on imported ▶



Saudi Arabia's $3.5 billion airport

consumer goods, particularly food, increased. Prosperity increased the demand for consumer goods, and local production was incapable of satisfying this demand. Therefore, rather than becoming productive, the Arab societies became consumptive societies largely dependent on the outside world for providing even their daily food requirements. Moreover, the population became geared towards wanting imported luxury items to an exaggerated degree.

The early eighties marked the post-oil boom stage. With the fall in oil prices, the GNP of the oil-producing countries diminshed and the surplus of the boom became a deficit. During this stage, 50% of Saudi Arabia's surplus and 15% of Libya's surplus were depleted. All of Iraq's surplus was exhausted due to the decrease of oil revenues and the Gulf War. This also affected the other Arab countries, since their economies were linked to the oil.

DISTORTED CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT

There is no doubt that economic and social growth did take place in the oil boom stage. There were attempts to develop the countryside, expand industry and raise the standard of living of the population - of course to different degrees in the rich and poor countries. However, all this occurred in conjunction with capitalism, by attracting international companies to «help develop the Arab world.» The industrial development that has occurred was mainly for export to the western industrial centers (as with the petro-chemicals industry). The whole production sector was geared towards the interests of the world capitalist market.

The distorted capitalism in the Arab world increased foreign penetration, in addition to hastening the decline of the Arab national upsurge, and increasing repression. Instead of achieving development and prosperity, the Arab ruling class reproduced backwardness and poverty in a new manner. The Arab society became parasitic, living off of profits achieved without exerting any effort. The value of work is not recognized as much as is the value of ownership and property. The attitude towards work serves to constantly reinforce the parasitic nature of the society. The process of development requires a work force. Yet the level of productivity in the Arab world is very low, because people are not socially or economically rewarded for production. Rather, social position accrues from possession or family status. Moreover, class differences have widened. Today, 10% of the Arab population owns 50% of the national income. Annual per capita income in Somalia is $250, but $22,000 in the UAE. Instead of achieving independence, the ruling class cultivated subordination; instead of achieving unity, the Arab world has become disintegrated in an unprecedented way.

Since the early eighties, most Arab countries have taken an interest in implementing new economic austerity policies. In many cases, these policies were derived from world capitalism's strategy for overcoming its own economic crisis, by restructuring various countries' economies to ensure capitalist exploitation in a new way. This strategy also aims at remedying the foreign debts problem in order to protect the international monetary order from falling apart. Today the IMF is one of the most important centers for pursuing this strategy. The strategy doesn't only focus on the financial aspect, but includes a variety of economic and social aspects. It is concerned with economic growth, forms of capital ownership, income distribution and the channels through which it is spent. This strategy is implemented through emphasizing «free economy,» giving the private sector the main role in the economy, while diminshing the role of the public sector, limiting the influence of the state in the economy, freezing wages, and floating the currency, etc. The economic measures in Jordan are the most recent example of how this strategy is being applied in the Arab area. Moreover, this strategy seeks «cooperation for common interests» through joint ownership of capital and removal of barriers between the local and international markets. The Arab states were geared towards this international strategy through new economic directives aimed at rationalizing expenditures and limiting extravagance in consumption. The heavily indebted Arab states (such as Jordan and Egypt) hastened to adopt this strategy and to submit to the IMF conditions.

Since the Gulf states have better economic conditions and higher living standards, the austerity measures were limited to trying to redress the deficit in the trade balance due to the fall of the oil prices. This strategy did not, however, have positive effects on the Arab economies. In most Arab countries, economic growth came to a halt; per capita productivity decreased; and the 1987 GNP was down by 14%, as compared to 1980. Total Arab debts (non-military) increased to $102 billion in 1987, as compared to $65.5 billion in 1985, and $49.5 billion in 1980, in addition to the continuous deficit in the trade balance. It is apparent that this strategy has failed, due to the Arab economies' subordination to the capitalist market. The distorted nature of the capitalist development in the Arab economies deprives them of boom periods experienced by the developed capitalist countries.

The Arab economies' subordination to the capitalist strategy has strengthened the position of the Arab comprador that in turn furthers subordination to the international capitalist economy. Increasing capital accumulation in the hands of the bourgeoisie was matched by further empoverishment of the vast majority of the population. This is the background for the bread revolts that have taken place in Morocco, Sudan, Tunis, Egypt and Jordan. Even Algeria, which has followed a relatively independent course of development, was not immune to this phenomenon.

THE POLITICAL LEVEL

Although the Arab region became better off economically during the oil era, this also marked the beginning of the political decline of the Arab order. The oil era, led by the Arab capitalists, was full of national catastrophes.

In 1973, the Arab states enacted an oil embargo against the capitalist states that supported Israel, at a time when the US was importing more than one-fourth of its total oil imports from Arab countries. But, thanks to the insistence of the Saudi king and Egypt's Sadat, the embargo was lifted in early 1974. Saudi Arabia became the oil reserve that provided the capitalist countries with any amount any time. Prince Fahd signed an agreement with US President Ford in 1975, whereby Saudi Arabia was committed to not raising the oil prices by more than 5% until 1984.

From that time on, Saudi Arabia has hosted a US military base, and later bought the AWACS that are run by US military personnel. Meanwhile, Jordan was involved in joint military maneuvers with the US. Egypt signed the Camp David accords which marked a turning point in the Arab-Zionist conflict. Thus, Egypt broke decisively with the Arab national security doctrine of collective defense against foreign aggression, for Camp David involved military alliance with the US and peace with the Zionist enemy that continued to occupy Palestine and other Arab territories. On the economic level, the Camp David alliance was symbolized by the opening of the American Chamber of Commerce in Cairo, for coordinating the interests of US capital and the Egyptian business class spawned by the regime.

The Arab world was further humiliated when Israel bombed the nuclear reactor in Iraq and the PLO headquarters in Tunis, and the US airforce raided Libya, not to mention the US-backed Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARAB ORDER

The Arab order was established in the period between 1945 and 1955, after a number of countries achieved political in- ▶

Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Sabah in Cairo, August 1989

dependence from colonialism. In that period, the Arab League was timidly groping in the shadow of Western hegemony in the area. Britain contributed to establishing the Arab League in order to provide a collective institution for maintaining the status quo, although the other impulse for the establishment of the Arab League came from the Arab masses' demand for unity.

The Arab-Israeli war in 1948 was the first big test-and defeat- for the Arab League; it was clear then that this framework was incapable of rising to fulfill the Arab masses' aspirations.

In the late fifties and early sixties, several Arab countries experienced revolutions and coups, which increased the number of independent states. Nasser's Egypt was the focal point of the rising Arab national movement which comprised the mass movement and newly established nationalist regimes. The Arab League continued to exist, but Nasser's Egypt had greater political influence, and the Arab nationalist movement served as a pressure on the traditional regimes. This was a stage of Arab upsurge: The Suez Canal was nationalized; the subsequent tripartite aggression on Egypt was defeated; the Baghdad Pact was abrogated: and many Arab countries gained independence, including Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Kuwait, Somalia and Mauritania. Many foreign properties in the area were nationalized. Moreover, the issue of Arab unity was enthusiastically taken up for the first time, with the formation of the United Arab Republic in 1958, by Egypt and Syria (dissolved in 1961).

After the June 1967 defeat, the Nasserite project began to retreat. Although the 1973 war was a partial military victory for the Arab side, the seventies was the stage of decline for Arab officialdom. In 1975, the civil war broke out in Lebanon; the Camp David accords were negotiated and signed (1977-79); having separated Egypt from the Arab front, Israel took the opportunity to invade South Lebanon in 1978.

This decline continued into the eighties with the outbreak of the Gulf War, followed by the 1982 Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon. Despite the Egyptian regime's separate treaty with Israel, it was gradually reintegrated into the Arab arena in violation of the boycott decided in 1978.

One can see the deterioration more clearly when tracing the decisions of the Arab League. At the Khartoum Summit (August 1967), the Arabs raised the slogan: No compromise, no recognition, no negotiations (with Israel), despite the June defeat. At the last Arab Summit held in Casablanca (May 1989), there was a qualitatively dangerous change in the official Arab consensus: Egypt was officially readmitted to the Arab League, signifying the League's tacit acceptance of the Camp David formula. The usual espousal of slogans, that are never implemented, was replaced by calls for being «reasonable,» in addition to some feeble calls for uniting Arab efforts to fulfill the economic needs of some Arab countries.

REGIONAL BLOCS

From the late fifties until the early seventies, the Arab League existed in an atmosphere of unity. However, in the eighties, it began experiencing a state of regional polarization with the formation of three blocs: The Gulf Cooperation Council, formed in 1981, which groups Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman; the Arab Cooperation Council, formed in 1981, which groups Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and North Yemen; the Arab Maghreb Union, formed in 1989, which groups Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania.

These blocs are different from previous attempts at Arab unity which proclaimed the ultimate intention of merger of two or more countries. In contrast, the new blocs are an attempt to adjust to the new realities in the area, via coordination on the economic and political levels. Especially in the case of the newest one, the Arab Maghreb Union, the member states have pursued quite different policies in the past. All the blocs include regimes which have long allied with US policy in the area, but not all of them have resolved all the outstanding contradictions with imperialism, much less the Zionist state. All in all, this is a new experience in the Arab world; its future will be determined by how these blocs develop in terms of vital questions such as economic cooperation, presenting a united stand on the Arab-Zionist conflict and the Palestinian cause, and not least, addressing the need for democracy so that the Arab masses can contribute to the development of their society and national causes.

As of now, in view of the state of regional polarization, one can say that the results of the Casablanca Summit were not a surprise. In the summit, the downfall of the Arab national security doctrine was legalized with the readmission of the Egyptian regime,despite its treaty with the Zionist state and the US. This was a culmination of the accumulated intentions to end the unifying national trend, i.e., a culmination of the new Arab order. The character of this order is a group of regional entities that in theory could be merged into one unified entity, but which choose to remain separate. This means that each can chose its own defense and foreign policies, even if these are at the expense of another Arab state.

THE IMPERIALIST CHALLENGE

In the seventies, when the Arabs decided the oil embargo, Kissinger threatened to occupy the oil fields to prevent «Arab barbarism from controlling Western civilization.» At that time, Algerian President Boumedienne threatened the US that the Arabs would burn the oil fields if they sensed such a threat.

Also in the seventies, the US administration feared the series of successful revolutions that occurred in Ethiopia, Angola, Mozabique, Guinea Bissau, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Iran, and then Zimbabwe in 1980. The Middle East was a main area of concern for US imperialism. Thus, as one part of its global offensive to counter these developments, the US gave Israel the green light to launch a broad military operation that would have regional repercussions - the 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

The Arab response at the Fez Summit (September 1982) was to continue to bet on the US. This was clear in the Fahd plan whereby the Arabs were satisfied with merely calling on the US to stop its unconditional support to Israel.

Today, there are two major trends in the Arab world. The advocates of the first trend are working for more integration into world capitalism, and more internationalization of the Arab economy; they see no future for the Arab world outside the sphere of world capitalism. The second trend, the Arab national movement which is not the focus of this article, ad-

vocates reviving the Arab nationalist project with modifications to suit current conditions.

The ruling class, that advocates the first trend, is obviously no longer capable of achieving the nationalist tasks, such as Arab unity or liberating Palestine, for these demand an outright confrontation with imperialism and Zionism. This class is also incapable of achieving real socio-economic progress to the interests of the masses, for that would necessitate a confrontation with international capitalism.

The present official Arab leadership is impotent, economically and politically. On the economic level, the ruling class in most countries has led the Arab world into more integration in the international capitalist economy instead of, and at the expense of, achieving Arab economic integration. A distorted capitalism of a parasitic nature was formed, based on oil that will be depleted one day, unlike the land that is inexhaustible. The economy was further distorted by the focus of the capitalist class on non-productive sectors.

On the political level, the same ruling class guided most of the Arab countries into the lap of the capitalist countries, headed by the US, because its interests were directly linked with international capitalism. This class was unable to reconcile the aspirations for national independence and sovereignty on one hand and «international cooperation» on the other. Rather, it justified subordination in the name of «cooperation» between capitalist and underdeveloped countries. While imperialism is threatening Arab national security, the masses are being deluded that alliance with the US consolidates national security.

The present Arab leadership is importent and any future leadership with the same orientation will repeat the same experience. Whether the goals is Arab unity or social progress, real change requires the development of a new leadership representing classes that have interest in such change. What is needed is to revolutionize the Arab nationalist movement in terms of ideology, programs and methods of struggle. This necessitates that the movement resolve its crisis and rise to lead the Arab national democratic revolution towards socialism.

THE ARAB ORDER AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

The Palestinian popular uprising has further exposed the crisis of the ruling bourgeois. By setting a starkly contrasting example, the intifada confirmed the deterioration of the Arab order as a whole. Some Arab regimes have beseiged the uprising through suspicious political schemes, such as Mubarak's initiative. They have pressured the PLO accept the US conditions for a political settlement. Most regimes have refrained from giving financial support to the uprising, despite their own decision; and many have repressed the mass movements in support of the uprising.

For two decades, the Arab bourgeois have worked diligently to force the Palestinian bourgeoisie to capitulate and to transform the PLO into an element of the existing Arab order. These attempts will continue as long as the Palestinian revolution, led by the PLO, stands as an exception to the general character of the Arab regimes. At this stage, the Palestinian bourgeoisie is striving for a Palestinian state. Therefore, it is to its interests to be in a position of confrontation vis-a-vis imperialism and Zionism, and consequently the Arab reactionary regimes.

The uprising shocked the Arab regimes that had expressed their readiness to capitulate to the imperialist and Zionist plans in the Amman Summit. Surprised and perplexed, these regimes were reduced to spectators, waiting for a quick end to the uprising in order to go on with their maneuvers, planned in the summit, to achieve a regional settlement at the expense of the Palestinian cause.

Throughout the first six weeks of the uprising, the structures of joint Arab action were out of function. The Arab League held its first emergency meeting for the foreign ministers, based on a Libyan initiative, in Tunis on January 23-24, 1988. Then it took a number of decisions: «to mobilize the Arab mass forces to rally around the heroic Palestinian uprising and to provide all forms of support to the struggle of the Palestinian people....» In the same period, the 18th congress of the Arab Parlimentary Federation was held in Tunis, and called for «allowing the Arab masses to participate in providing practical support for the Palestinian people in the occupied territories...»

True to form, however, most Arab regimes behaved in a totally opposite manner. Demonstrations and other forms of mass support to the uprising were brutally oppressed in more than one Arab country (Jordan, Morocco, Egypt). Except for the few visits of the Arab ministerial committee to the five countries with permanent seats in the UN Security Council, the Arab resolutions have never seen the light of day.

The first Arab summit for the uprising (Algeria, June 1988) was held three months after the Algerian initiative to call it, and after the uprising had been going on for six months, not to mention the attempts of some Arab regimes to delay the summit, hoping that the uprising would end before then.

In conclusion, the Arab regimes that paid lip service to the uprising, while in reality imposing a siege around it, have done so for three main reasons: First, they are unwilling to allow the uprising to continue and escalate, for this means an end to their hegemony over the Palestinian cause. Second, and equally important, they fear the uprising's repercussions and influence on the Arab masses. Third, the reactionary regimes are tied to US policies for maintaining the status quo in the region, and therefore submit to the US administration's wish to avoid the emergence of a Palestinian state.

Resources (Arabic)
- Dr. George Habash, «The Existing Arab Order and the Palestinian Question,» *Al Hadaf* no. 943, January 22, 1989.
- Dr. Abdul Karim Dadiq, «Recirculating Arab Assets Invested Abroad... Reality and Potentials,» *Al Qabas,* June 10, 1989.
- Dr. Fouad Mursi, «The Present Arab Crisis- From a Tribe to a Nation,» *Al Safir,* June 8, 1989.
- Karim Mroweh, «The Need for a New Revolutionary Movement and a New Revolutionary Theory,» *Al Safir,* July 6,1989.
- Suleiman Taqi Al Deen, «The Features of the New Arab Order,» *Al Safir,* May 31, 1989.
- Dr. Sa'ad Al Deen Ibrahim, «Mubarak, the Summit and a New Arab Order,» *Al Qabas,* May 27, 1989.

Military Coup in Sudan

With the June 30th coup d'etat ends the first democratically elected government in the last 20 years of Sudan's history.

The recent coup of General Omar Hassan Ahmed Bashir has destroyed the accomplishments of the Sudanese people who, through their April 1985 popular uprising, chose democracy, political pluralism and debate, the freedom of political and union activities, and freedom of expression. The toppling of this democratic experience is indeed a blow to democratic aspirations.

PROBLEMS MAHDI FACED

The deposition of Sadiq Al Mahdi will not solve the problems that have existed in Sudan for many years. The roots of many of these problems go back to 18 years of Gaafar Nimeiri's pro-western dictatorship which was deposed in 1985 with the participation of the Sudanese armed forces.

After the April 1985 uprising, within exactly one year, elections were held, fulfilling a promise to the masses that power would be transferred to civilians; Mahdi's Umma Party won a parliamentary majority.

One of the two main problems Mahdi's government faced was the civil war in the South which has continued like an open national wound. The second problem was the economic crisis, consisting of stagnation, inflation, high unemployment, foreign debt, cash shortages and IMF pressures. Other closely-related problems included tribal feuds and shortages in food supplies. Many mistakes were made by the Mahdi government, but it would have been impossible, in any case, to resolve all of these problems in only three years.

ANNIHILATION OF DEMOCRACY

The new junta has its own program for solving the many problems Sudan faces. Its two basic premises are (1) annihilation of democracy and violating basic human rights, and (2) vagueness. A list of the first actions taken by the junta shows the destruction of all traces of the democracy that was built up during Mahdi's government:

Bashir suspended the constitution and announced military rule. The parliament was dissolved as were the president's cabinet, all political parties and unions. The independent press and non-Islamic societies were closed. There was a clamp down on all free expression, meetings, demonstrations and strikes. A dusk-to-dawn curfew was imposed; communications were cut. Some leaders of political parties and unions were arrested, while others were banned from travelling or working. Twenty-eight of the country's military officers were dismissed - virtually the entire senior command of the armed forces.

In place of all these institutions, Beshir established the so-called Revolutionary Council for the Salvation of Sudan which holds all legislative, executive and judicial authority without popular constraints or supervision. Moreover, Bashir named himself head of state, prime minister, minister of defense, head of the 15-member Revolutionary Council and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, meanwhile elevating his own military rank from brigadier to lieutenant general.

EGYPT'S ROLE

It is no coincidence that on Friday, June 30th, Middle East Radio (Egypt) was the first to report that Sudanese armed forces had entered areas in Khartoum, the capital, and had taken over the president's palace. It is also no coincidence that within a few short hours, Egypt became the first country to recognize the new regime. In fact, Egypt's delegation, which was sent to meet the new regime's leaders, included the head of the General Intelligence Service (GIS). Nor is it a coincidence that the very next day Egypt sent Sudan 20,000 tons of fuel oil, cargoes of medicine, children's food, vehicle spare parts, ammunition and army uniforms. Can it also be a coincidence that Nimeiri sought refuge in Cairo after deposition?

There are several reasons for Egypt's interest with the government of Sudan. To say the least, relations between Egypt and Sudan over the past three years have not been at their best. Some of the events which have aggravated the situation include Egypt's refusal to extradite Nimeiri to be tried in Sudan, and Mahdi's promise to receive Khalid Abdul Nasser who is wanted in Egypt for anti-government activities. Another factor was the close relationship between Mahdi and Gaddafi which had irritated Egypt.

But the main reason was the Egyptian regime's fear of the spread of the democratic experience in Sudan, and particularly the effect that it might have on Egypt's population, due to the proximity of the two countries.

The second reason was Egypt's frustration by Mahdi's inability to end the war in the South. After the coup, Egypt is exporting new weaponry to the junta in Sudan, and has persuaded Saudi Arabia to provide financial assistance. Ending the war in the South is critical for Egypt due to its heavy dependency on the waters of the Nile River. The continuation of the war in the South could threaten Egyptian water supplies.

Egypt is to receive 55.5 billion cubic meters of water from the river under the 1959 Nile Water Agreement between Egypt and Sudan, which incidentally expired on June 28th of this year. So far, Egypt has exceeded this limit and still requires much more for a major expansion of irrigated farmland scheduled.

With the projected Jonglei Canal, a 355 kilometer conduit through the Sudd Swamp in Southern Sudan, Egypt needs the war to end fast, particularly since

the SPLA now is in control of most of the southeast parts of the country and has captured 16 government garrisons in the last year alone.

NIMEIRI'S FOILED COUP ATTEMPT

Egypt not only played an essential role in the June 30th coup, but also played a role, directly or indirectly, in the foiled June 19th coup attempt. On Sunday, June 18th, 80 military persons, including 14 army officers, and 148 civilians loyal to Nimeiri were arrested after a coup plot was discovered. Gaafar Nimeiri, the former Sudanese dictator, denied claims by Mahdi's government that he had anything to do with the coup attempt, but the facts speak otherwise. Promptly after the foiled coup attempt, Nimeiri left Egypt for the first time since his deposition. He travelled to London and said from there that he would travel to an African country near Sudan, where he would plot his return. In addition, Nimeiri had given a series of interviews in Cairo in early June, stating that he would return to power within a two to four week period.

Mahdi stated that Nimeiri, the Islamic National Front and Moslem Brotherhood leader, Hassan Al Turabi, who incidentally refused to participate in Mahdi's government, were the forces behind the coup attempt. But to delve deeper, it is apparent that Egypt, critical of Mahdi's government, had given Nimeiri the green light to return, breaking its promise to Sudan not to allow Nimeiri to be politically active in Egypt.

As for the connection to the June 30th coup, whether Nimeiri had a role in it or not, Bashir is basically following the Nimeiri line, particularly the undemocratic form of rule and foreign policy stances.

THE SOUTHERN WAR

The six-year-old civil war in the South is one of the major problems facing Sudan. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) began the war against Khartoum in 1983, after Nimeiri imposed *sharia* (Islamic law) on the whole country. From Sudan's 25 million people, the northern majority are Moslem, but the southerners, who are one-third of the population, practice animism or Christianity. John Garang and the SPLA have four conditions before peace talks could progress to end the six-year-old war:

1) the abrogation of all military treaties,
2) a cease-fire (which had already been in effect for a while),
3) the lifting of Islamic law and any substitute laws, and
4) the lifting of the state of emergency which has been in effect since Nimeiri was overthrown on April 26, 1985.

In addition to these demands, the SPLA also called for more autonomy, and administrative and economic reforms in the South.

The government of Mahdi had abrogated a joint defense treaty with Egypt and proclaimed a military agreement with Libya null, fulfilling the first SPLA condition.

In February of this year, Mahdi was presented with an ultimatum from army officers that he either find a political settlement to the civil war, or give the military the means to seek a battlefield victory. Mahdi subsequently agreed to widen his government and hold peace talks with the SPLA. Talks were being carried out between Mahdi's

▶

Bashir and Mubarak

government and the SPLA in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, with the SPLA calling for Mahdi to implement an agreement it had signed in November 1988 with the Democratic Unionist Party, then a coalition partner in Mahdi's government.

On the other hand, Bashir's proposals for ending the civil war are relatively vague. He proposes concepts calling for peace, but in essence practices the opposite. For example, he offered to put the *sharia* laws to a national referendum if no agreement on them was reached. But the problem cannot be solved in this manner because the SPLA's opposition to *sharia* is a democratic demand which should be implemented without maneuvers to circumvent it.

As of yet, Bashir has not received any response from the SPLA to his proposals. But then again, does Bashir really want peace? If so, then why would he call for a tripartite union with Egypt and Libya, fully aware of the fact that such treaties remain a point of contention with the SPLA. Moreover, the general and his council scrapped the tentative peace accord signed on November 16th, which called for the freezing of Sudan's Islamic penal code and the abrogation of defense pacts with Libya and Egypt. The SPLA requests for greater autonomy, and economic and administrative reforms have not been addressed by Bashir at all.

For these reasons, Garang is not convinced that Bashir wants peace or democracy in Sudan. Therefore, Garang turned down an invitation to meet with Sudan's new leaders and dismissed Bashir's proposals, questioning his seriousness about ending the war, and stating that Bashir has secret plans to partition Sudan's northern and southern territories. Garang threatened to overthrow the new regime using military force and a popular uprising, unless it steps down and paves the way for general elections and democracy.

Obviously, there is no common ground between the two sides and Bashir is only aggravating the situation by not according the civil war due priority.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

The other major crisis in Sudan which must be addressed in detail is the growing economic crisis. This crippled economy is suffering from stagnation, inflation, a high rate of unemployment, lack of cash flow and IMF restrictions. The annual inflation rate is an estimated 85 percent, alongside an incredibly high foreign debt.The war in the South alone costs the government one million dollars per day.

The measures being taken by the new junta are only aggravating the situation. For example, the government printed $125 million dollars worth of local currency at the Bank of England because there is a cash shortage, but this will only cause a devaluation of the Sudanese pound. It also ordered citizens to trade in their foreign currency or face trial by a military court. Then the government imposed a three percent defense tax on the basic salaries of average employees, effective July 1st.

There is also the issue of food shortages which have become so acute that the UN, the ICRC and other organizations have sent relief food, medicines, seeds and so on. But these are temporary solutions which do not remove the need for major structural changes in agriculture, so that some relative form of self-sufficiency can be achieved.

For all intent and purposes, Sudan has been bankrupt for years. Meanwhile, Bashir's initial policies are only worsening the situation. He says he will «control the market and promote development according to a realistic, scientific plan» (*The Middle East*, August 1989). But exactly what that plan is remains vague.

REACTIONS

The second country to recognize Sudan's new regime after Egypt was Saudi Arabia which stated that it was prepared to work on political and economic relations with Sudan. Bashir himself visited Saudi Arabia, after his first visit to Egypt where he spoke with «big brother» Hosni Mubarak. The Saudi government promised him financial support, but even this support will not solve Sudan's deep economic crisis. Saudi Arabia and Sudan are both Red Sea littoral countries and also have been trying to develop a joint regional security policy.

Many of the reactionary Arab regimes welcomed the coup in Sudan, due to their apprehension of the example of democracy and the threat it could cause in their own countries.

On the international level, two days after the coup, Bashir met with the US ambassador to Khartoum, Norman Anderson. The US, for tactical reasons, did not openly support the coup but rather allowed its agents, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to do that. «The military has arrested a number of cabinet ministers. We regret the military taking action to overthrow Sudan's democratically elected government, and we urge an early return to democracy,» said State Department spokeswoman, Margaret Tutwiler on July 1st (AP, July 3rd). Subsequent developments will most probably indicate that this initial criticism was mainly propagandistic. Herman Cohen, US assistant secretary of state for African affairs, met with Bashir to determine whether the US will give aid to his government. Cohen subsequently called Mahdi's government incompetent.

Sadiq Al Mahdi's government was democratically elected by the Sudanese people in 1986. It is true that his government had its share of shortcomings, but at least there was a parliament, open political work and popular participation. Mahdi inherited many problems from the previous Nimeiri dictatorship, and now Bashir is inheriting those problems, but the ability of Sudan to resolve some of these problems with a democracy stood a much better chance than with the present junta.

With the June 30th coup, the Arab world suffers the loss of a democratic state. Bashir's junta has not produced any substantial policies on the critical issues facing Sudan today. The big losers in this case are the Sudanese masses who have suffered another coup d'etat in their 33 years of independence from Britain. ●

Afghanistan — Stop the Aggression!

On August 19th, the Afghani people celebrated the 70th anniversary of their independence from British colonialism. On April 27th, they had celebrated the 11th anniversary of the establishment of a progressive government led by the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Still, today, they have yet to enjoy the fruits of independence and progress fully, due to the continuation of the counterrevolutionary war engineered and sustained by US imperialism and the Pakistani military.

In the wake of the April 1988 Geneva accords for ending the conflict in Afghanistan, the western media was filled with predictions that Najiballah's government would not survive after the Soviet troop withdrawal. Even progressive forces expressed doubts about the future in Afghanistan. Yet today, well over half a year after the last Soviet soldier departed, the PDP government has proved its viability. This fact has caused some reshuffling in the ranks of Afghanistan's enemies.

The US administration set its hopes on the so-called transitional government formed in February by the Pakistan-based, fundamentalist Afghani opposition, despite the fact that these tribalists could scarcely unite among themselves. New shipments of US arms and Saudi funding, channeled by the CIA via the Pakistani military, aimed to encourage a counterrevolutionary offensive; Jalalabad, in eastern Afghanistan, was the centerpiece. However, despite months of trying, the rebel bands just couldn't take Jalalabad or any other Afghani town of note. Instead, their own weakness and dependence on external aid was further exposed. Government counteroffensives have inflicted substantial casualties in the contras' ranks, and their dead have included Pakistani soldiers and mercenaries from various Middle East countries, primarily Saudi Arabia. The counterrevolutionaries only military «successes» have been recurring rocket attacks on Kabul and other population centers, inflicting heavy civilian casualties, and other acts of sabotage.

Setbacks in the battlefield fanned the historical rivalry among the component groups of the rebel alliance. Their internal clashes reached new proportions in August, when at least 300 were killed in a showdown between the two largest groups of the «transitional government» which the Bush Administration wants to promote as the «democratic alternative» to the legitimate Afghani government.

Faced with the debacle of the plan to overthrow Najiballah, the US has so far resorted only to technical readjustments in its hostile policy. By early June, the counterrevolutionaries' failure to take Jalalabad had become obvious. Pakistani President Benazir Bhutto fired Hamid Gul, head of military intelligence, who had advised the rebels in the ill-fated Jalalabad campaign. According to some reports, the sacking was at the CIA's behest, in order to find a scapegoat. This occurred just prior to Bhutto's visit to Washington D.C., where she and President Bush confirmed support to the «transitional government.» Bhutto was elected on a platform of democratic promises, including a pledge to end Pakistan's interference in Afghanistan. However, any real change in Pakistan's role vis-a-vis Afghanistan, since she assumed office, is imperceptible. In fact, the only country of importance in relation to Afghanistan, to have changed its position since the Geneva accords, is India which has supported the Afghani government in the face of Pakistan's intervention.

Although US policy vis-a-vis Afghanistan has not changed, the counterrevolutionaries' failures have had repercussions. In June, US Senators demanded a policy review. In early August, there were heated discussions between congressmen and CIA Director William Webster on why the rebels failed despite massive US arms shipments to their headquarters in Pakistan. The upshot was scapegoating and dismissing the head of the CIA Afghan task force. It is now reported that the US will attempt to deliver arms directly to the local rebel commanders in Afghanistan, rather than to the shaky coalition in exile.

Such a change in supply routing has in fact been reported before, and it is at this point that the ultimate futility of the US policy becomes most apparent. It is among the rebel commanders in the field that the Afghani government's national reconciliation policy has made some inroads. Furthering the reconciliation policy he began soon after coming to power in 1986, President Najiballah in March called on field commanders to stop the war and work to prevent Pakistan's violation of Afghanistan's sovereignty. In return, they could retain their arms, elect local councils and receive aid from the central government. A number of field commanders have taken up this offer.

US policy will fail as long as it tries to circumvent the legitimacy of the government in Kabul. The problem is not how to channel supplies to the contras, but the fact that these forces are neither a political or military alternative to the PDP government. The only result of the US, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and others continuing their interference is more human and material losses to the Afghani people. The current situation highlights the parallel to Nicaragua where the US-fueled contra war has not been able to break the Sandinista government, but has simply inflicted enormous destruction and suffering on the people.

The Najiballah government has maintained its realistic offer for ending the war via a cease-fire, talks and formation of a broad-based coalition government representing all Afghani parties. It is the counterrevolutionary alliance that has refused this option, and it has only been able to sustain its opposition because of continuing support from the US and Pakistan. It is the duty of the international community and the UN, which sponsored the Geneva accords, to take steps to end such foreign interference so the Afghani people can devote their efforts to social progress rather than war.

●

European NGOs Meet on Palestine

The third UN European regional Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) symposium on the question of Palestine, and the sixth UN international NGO meeting on the question of Palestine, were held in Vienna, Austria, between August 28th and September 1st.

The European NGO symposium, which was organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, attracted over 100 NGOs. Among the speakers who addressed the symposium were Mikko Lohikoski, chairman of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the question of Palestine; Jean-Marie Lambert, executive director of the International Committee for NGOs on the question of Palestine; and Yasir Abed Rabbo, member of the PLO Executive Committee.

Among the proposals presented to the two-day symposium were a peace march with international participation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, and an international student strike in solidarity with Palestinian schools, in an effort to pressure the Israeli government to reopen these schools.

The plenary sessions touched on the issues of the intifada, the international peace conference and implementation of Palestinian self-determination with emphasis on the role of Europe.

REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM FINAL DECLARATION

In the final declaration issued by the symposium, the intifada was posited as the main factor behind recent developments which help towards achievement of the goal of self-determination for the Palestinian people. Welcoming the results of the November 1988 PNC and the initiation of the PLO-US dialogue, the symposium expressed hope that «the US government will not use this dialogue as a reason to delay the preparations for the international peace conference...»

The declaration appreciated the recognition of the State of Palestine by some European states and called upon others to follow their example. The symposium participants consider that «Israel's continued refusal to acknowledge the most elementary rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and right to return to their homeland, is ultimately contrary to the best interests of Israel.» Shamir's plan was labeled an attempt to «cover Israel's illegal occupation and intensified repression of the intifada....» and accordingly judged «totally unacceptable.»

The symposium expressed deep concern over the increased violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, and deplored «the grossly inadequate measures to control the violence of Jewish settlers.» The declaration appealed to the Security Council» to consider the deployment of a UN peace-keeping force to safeguard the physical security of the inhabitants.»

WORKSHOPS

A series of workshops focused on the principles and practical means for carrying out solidarity activities in different fields.

One workshop focused on Palestinian trade with Europe: how the NGOs could assist in developing trade links between Europe and Palestinian producers and exporters. Among other things, it was decided that finance for income generating projects in the territories should take the form of direct investment rather than grants; this would confer a considerable degree of protection on these projects.

A second workshop bore the title: EEC and Palestine - Towards a More Constructive Policy. This group discussed public information, cooperation, twinning arrangements and lobbying activities to influence public opinion and government positions to be more favorable towards the question of Palestine.

A third workshop discussed the involvement of Jewish communities in Europe, nothing that many Jewish individuals and organizations were active in the peace movement, but the Jewish communities as such were not. There was great diversity of opinion on this issue, but it was agreed that the starting point was promoting «dialogue with and within Jewish communities on the issue of the international peace conference.»

The workshop on building the Palestinian education system had the advantage of being attended by five educators from the West Bank and Gaza. A review of the state of Palestinian education under occupation concluded with assessing the new reality: «Under the impact of this enforced 'school vacation' the students went through a new socialization and cooperation process that confronted educators with a new kind of student population: A new understanding of self-reliance and rejection of dusty hierarchies. And the educators found that the previous curricula had too much 'book wisdom' and not enough societal relevance... Out of the old and new experiences, the demand for a new Palestinian educational system evolved. And there are concrete proposals towards such a new comprehensive and specifically Palestinian curriculum...»

The workshop participants discussed how international cooperation, sponsorship and volunteers could contribute to and provide a form of security for local Palestinian efforts in the educational field. Among the workshop's recommendations was that established partnerships between Israeli and

European universities should be stopped until the Israelis reopen Palestinian universities.

Discussion in a fifth workshop centered on the role of the NGOs in the socioeconomic development and health care in the occupied Palestinian territory. The efforts of this group were prefaced by a conference on the same topic in the preceding days. The workshop emphasized that any support projects should take into consideration the greater degree of Palestinian self-reliance which has grown with the intifada, and be based on the existing Palestinian national infrastructure. Special mention was made of the crucial role of women in the intifada, and how this could be supported via specific projects, whether cooperatives or childcare. There was an appeal to launch a campaign throughout Europe to inform about the deterioration of socioeconomic conditions for the Palestinians under occupation, aiming to provide them with more protection and to obtain the release of the intifada prisoners first and foremost the children.

INTERNATIONAL NGO MEETING

The sixth UN international NGO meeting was held immediately after the European regional NGO symposium, with the theme: Intifada - the continuing struggle of the Palestinian people for independence.

In the opening session a statement was delivered by Alois Mock, Austrian minister of foreign affairs, who called for the immediate reopening of all schools in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and reiterated Austria's longstanding position of working for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement through the convening of an international conference on the Middle East.

Ronald Spiers, UN undersecretary general, delivered a message from the UN secretary general, expressing grave concern about Israel's harsh measures against the Palestinian population. He «was particularly disturbed at the large number of deaths and injuries, including women and children, detention of thousands of Palestinians, and numerous deportations in violation of Security Coucnil resolutions.»

The next statement was given by Absa Claude Diallo, chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. He noted that 20% of the 700 plus Palestinians who have been killed by the Israelis, are under the age of 16. He condemned Israel's «intolerable practices» and called for «measures to assure the protection of the Palestinian people living under occupation,» and for «continued efforts towards a negotiated settlement.»

Don Betz, chairman of the international coordinating committee of NGOs on the question of Palestine, said in his statement that the intifada was the reason why the world knew and cared more about the fate of Palestinians than at any time in the past.

The last statement was a message from PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat, president of the State of Palestine, read aloud by Daoud Barakat, Palestine's permanent observer to the UN Vienna. President Arafat said that despite the suffering and sacrifices of the Palestinian people, the PNC had adopted a peace initiative which indicates a genuine desire to achieve peace on the basis of international legitimacy. He accused the US administration of adopting a double standard with respect to the Palestinian question: «... while it pursued the defense of human rights everywhere, the United States was defending the violation of national and human rights of the Palestinian people by the occupation authorities.» Arafat added that the US continues to pursue a policy which does not help peace, by supporting the Shamir plan ▶

for elections under occupation, and hindering the efforts to convene an international peace conference.

WORKSHOPS

Six workshops were originally scheduled and a seventh was added, to discuss the following topics: protection of the Palestinian population, the role of NGO assistance in meeting the future economic development, mobilization for the release of Palestinian prisoners and potential deportees, mobilization of international support for Palestinian education and cultural institutions, building support for an independent Palestinian state with the Jewish communities and Israelis, the promotion of the peace process and the role of the mass media. The seventh workshop, which was added, was on the right of return for Palestinians who have been uprooted and expelled from Palestine since 1948.

FINAL DECLARATION

The final declaration of the international NGO meeting expressed support to the continuing struggle for freedom and independence, and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of return. It upheld the proclamation of the independent State of Palestine, and called on all member states of the UN who have not yet recognized the State of Palestine, to do so «in unequivocal terms and without delay.»

The declaration renewed the call for an international peace conference on the Middle East with the participation of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and all parties to the conflict, in order to achieve «a just, comprehensive, peaceful and permanent settlement.» Reaffirming recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, it urged all governments to do the same.

The declaration rejected the «spurious plan for so-called elections put forward by the prime minister and government of Israel, and whose principal international advocate is the government of the United States.» It labeled this plan the «opposite of democracy» designed to prevent Palestinian independence, and called for Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, in order for free elections to take place.

The declaration condemned the numerous acts of Israeli repression and appealed to the Security Council to establish a UN presence in the occupied territories to protect the Palestinian people and «bring the perpetrators of these practices to justice.» It also condemned Israel's attempt to destroy the Palestinian society by depriving children of an education, calling on international educational and cultural institutions to pressure Israel to reopen all educational institutions in the occupied territories.

Israel's introduction of nuclear weapons into the Middle East was deplored in the final statement, and Israel was called on to sign the treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Finally, the declaration requested the chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to convey the declaration to the 44th session of the UN General Assembly. ●

The following statement was circulated in the Vienna meeting by the Abna Al Balad Movement, and signed by scores of democratic Israeli groups, Palestinian organizations and solidarity and peace committees from a number of countries.

The uncompromising sacrifice of the Palestinian people living under the 1967 occupation has put the Palestinian question and its just solution back at the top of the regional and international political and diplomatic agendas. It has broken the false consensus which Zionism has created as to the future direction of the Palestinian struggle. The international community is being forced to recognize that there will only be a solution when the Palestinian people achieve their inalienable rights to return and to self-determination and to an independent state on Palestinian soil with Jerusalem as its capital under the leadership of the PLO.

On the basis of the unity of the Palestinian people we identify these three fundamental elements:

1) *The Right of Return*

Half of the Palestinian people are refugees. Their right to return is fundamental and must form a cornerstone of any resolution to the conflict.

2) *Palestinians in Israel*

Given that Israel is officially proclaimed as a Jewish state; and given the official denial by Israel of the national rights of the Palestinians in Israel; and given the official racist policies against them, the struggle of the Palestinians inside Israel as in integral part of the Palestinian people for their national, civil and democratic rights must be recognized.

3) *End of Occupation*

The immediate withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the 1967 occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, is a precondition for the establishment of an independent state, for the achievement of the rights of the Palestinians inside Israel and for the return of the refugees and deportees.

The efforts of the PLO and all progrssive and democratic forces to achieve the International Conference on the Middle East under UN auspices with the participation of all parties to the conflict including the PLO on an equal footing and with the participation of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to achieve the fundamental aims of the Palestinian people deserve utmost support at all levels: regional, national and international.

The Intifada has made new initiatives possible; the strengthening and reinforcing of the Intifada is a paramount duty of all who support the Palestinian people. ●

Tragicomedy of Daffodils and Silver

by Mahmoud Darwish

Come back they did
From the end of a long, long tunnel
to their own mirrors...
Come back they did
When restore they did
the salt of brethern
singly and in groups
Come back they did
From myths of defending citadels
to simple ordinary talks
No longer will they
Be raising hands and banners
for miracles
Come back they did
To remain honest
To arrange the winds
To marry sons and daughters
To revive the marble for dancing
To hang onions, beans, garlic
under the ceilng for winter
Come back they did
To milk their goats...
Clouds of pigeon feathers
Come back they did
On tips of vanity
To realms of divine charm
To banana groves
In ancient mountainous lands
To a mountain by the sea
To two lakes beyond memory
To a prophet's beach
To a lane full of lemon scent
The country is safe.
Storms of horses, Hexus warriors,
Tatar cavalries, masked and
unmasked, broke.
With lances and mangonels
Their names they immortalized...
and then they passed.
April remained as ever
Rocks shining with bloom
Lemon blossoms do really chime.
The soil remained safe,
completely safe
and virgin after them.
Land, like language, inherited is.
Storms of horses broke out
Then subsided,
then collapsed,
Grain out of grain tossed.
Being intent
Come back they did,
Their flutes restoring fire,
The remotest coming close,
Covered with volatile clothes,
fragile like glass,
Floods of anthems raged
Covering distance and exile.
What force can flying souls chain?
Every exile place became home intact...
Their myth they built the way they liked,
Pebbles were colorful birds,
Rivers were torn and burnt with love
Whenever by a daisy they happened to pass
They wept and wondered:
Are we a people
Or else wine for ever new offering?

You anthem! Take with you all the elements
Take us up
Step by step
Then to the vales descend...

Hurry up, you anthem!
You know the place
You know the time
The might of things in us you know....

Never they went, never they reached. Their hearts are almonds in every street. The squares are more generous than the skies, short of covering them. Seas often forget them. They know North and South; they flew pigeons to the towers of their homes. They picked one of their martyrs as a star to lead them to the wilderness of infancy. The moment they say: We have arrived, their leader falls on the initial arch. You hero, leave us alone! Let's proceed to another end! Damn all beginnings! You here, shrouded with extensive beginnings, tell us: How often will our journey remain the beginning? You hero, lying on sheaths of barley, on beds of almonds, embalm your agonizing wound with dew, with the milk of sleepless nights, with lemon blossoms, with bleeding stone, with the anthem - our anthem, with a feather plucked from the phoenix. Land, like language, inherited is!

... The anthem of theirs, a stone rubbing the sun.
Good and full of humor they were

They never knew dance or music
'cept in funerals of passing comrades.
Women they loved like fruit, ideals and cats
Years they counted with the ages of their dead.
Traveling to seas of doubt they kept saying:
What did we do with the carnations to remain so far?
What did we do with the gulls
To inhabit ports and saline in winds so dry?
To all the time welcome and see off?
... They were as ever, as all rivers,
far from steady,
Running everywhere,
A casual path may lead
To some way out of exile
Knowing nothing of life but as it is given by life,
They never queried beyond fate and graves.
Why should they care about what's there after doomsday?
Why should they care about the kinship
of Samuel or Ishaq to God?
This very hell is the hell itself.
They got used to planting
myrtle in their shirts
ivy in their camp yards.
They got used to preserving violets
in both their songs and enclosed graveyards...
Plants remained fresh and alive
Saturated with love
Yet, come back they did
Before their sun had set
Come back they did
To their very names,
To the clarity of time when swallows depart...
Moments of exile are
Both times and places altering inhabitants.
They are evenings blocking blind windows.
They are arrivals on beaches in sail-less vessels.
They are birds too loudly praising their songs.
They are the home which has become a throne...
Which has reduced nature into a body...
Yet, come back they did from exile
Who cares about horses left behind?
With their own hands they did smash
all their myths
and ran away to become free
To think with their hearts.

Come back they did from the great land of myth
To remember days and words of theirs.
Come back they did to the usual in themselves
To the one who walks along the embankment
Chewing his sweet idleness and his time
with no fixed purpose
Enjoying looking at roses just as
ordinary people without much ado.
From the womb of the lemon blossom
The lemon blossom is reborn
Opening in darkness
The windows of the ancient houses
To the endless horizon...
To the family peace
... Come back they did
Enough time has passed
For the caravan to come back
From its far-off Indian trip
Repairing the wheels, advance they did
Before saying words.
Kindling the star of memory through
the windows of Central Asia,
Come back they did;
did they in fact?
Come back they did
From the North of Damascus
Come back they did
As if from tiny islands in the boundless ocean.
Come back they did
From the endless conquests with innumerable captives.
Come back they did
As the minaret's shadow at sunset
recoils from the voice of the muezzin
Paths never ridiculed them
As stranger to stranger does
Both ebbing and flowing...
both stagnant and running,
The river is their guide.
The willow banner has its own soothsayer
Who hangs it on what spills over
From the molten gold of the moon
They have their story.
Adam, the archetype of migration,
regretted and wept.

Hager remained for the desert
Prophets wandered in all lands
Civilization itself migrated
Also palms did migrate
But all did come back in caravans,
or in dreams,
in thought
or in memory.

In the old images they saw
Both charms and ideals
Enough to describe doomsday.
Was desert enough for human loss?
Eyeing the apple, Adam set the first drop
of sweet honey in his wife's womb.
He resisted his death
Lived on to pray for his sublime God
Prayed on for his sublime God to live.
Did the first murderer, Abel, know
that his sleeping brother was dead?
Did he know that he knew not names yet?
Knew not the language?
Was the first fig leaf shrouding woman,
the first map?
No sun under the sun but the light of
this heart which breaks through all shades.

The question has ever remained with
no answer,
Any question is but an answer
with no question.
Those were questions raised by sand to sand
A forecast of what is both
visible and invisible,
Ignorance forecasting!
Sand remaining sand!
A sofist steals in to weave a woman's
darkness with his beard,
To rise in a crystal body.
Has the spirit any hips,
waist,
shadow?
In captivity there is room
For doubt
Since they got intoxicated.
Their liberties
Are what went on dropping from the
broken absolute around their tents:
Helmets, tins, blues, a water jug, arms
Traces of man, a crow, an hourglass,
Grass covering a slaughterhouse.

Translated by Fadel Jetker, with slight abbreviation.

Woodcut commemorating the September massacres against the Palestinians: «Massacres Can't Stop the Dawn of Independence.»