Lebanon: The Test Not Only of The PLO But The Whole Left

In the wake of last week'srafat's visit to Israel, the political and military situation in Lebanon is more volatile than ever. The ongoing civil war in Lebanon, which has claimed thousands of lives, has been exacerbated by the influx of Palestinian refugees and has taken on a new dimension as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) becomes increasingly involved.

The PLO has been a key player in the Lebanese conflict since its inception in 1975. The organization, led by Yasser Arafat, was established to represent the Palestinian people in their struggle for self-determination and independence. Since then, the PLO has been involved in various armed conflicts, including the Israel-Palestine conflict and the Lebanese Civil War.

The PLO's presence in Lebanon has been both a source of strength and weakness for the organization. On the one hand, the PLO has been able to use its military capabilities to defend its bases and resist Israeli attacks. On the other hand, the PLO has been criticized for its role in the ongoing conflict and for its relationship with other militant groups, such as Hezbollah.

The recent visit of Yasser Arafat to Israel has raised new questions about the future of the PLO and its role in Lebanese politics. Some analysts have suggested that Arafat's visit to Israel could signal a shift in the PLO's priorities, with a greater focus on stabilizing the situation in Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East.

One key issue that has been mentioned is the question of whether the PLO should continue to be involved in the Lebanese conflict. Some argue that the PLO's continued presence in Lebanon is necessary to protect the interests of the Palestinian people and to provide a counterweight to Israeli aggression. Others argue that the PLO's involvement in Lebanon has become a drain on its resources and has diverted attention from other important issues.

The PLO's role in Lebanon is likely to remain a contentious issue for some time to come. As the conflict continues, it will be important to monitor the situation closely and to assess the impact of the PLO's actions on the overall stability of the region.

Dears:

No act of barbarism seems to be beyond the degeneracy of our times that have disgraced World War II. The Holocaust, the U.S.'s dropping of the A-bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and today we need add abysmal cynicism to the butchery and savagery of the Lebanon in Christian Right. As if the murderous 25,000 siege, => Yolo also by the cut-off of the water, of the Palestinian refugee camp, Tal Zaatari, were not enough, the unworthy son of the infamous fanatic, the so-called Lebanese Interior Minister Camille Chamoun—Danny—continued to slaughter in cold blood, the Palestinians who were streaming out of the camp with white flags for safety.

Told that the son of the "moderate" Rightist head of the Phalange, Pierre Gemayel, had agreed to let the Red Cross arrange the evacuation, these were the words Danny Chamoun spouted out: "There might have been an agreement between Gentlemen. The Gentlemen, but how much of the front does the Phalange hold—85 yards?" (1) It is hard to conceive of anyone to the Right of the Phalange, but it is Christian Right in Lebanon you both the gunmen, and foremost of all, he who head a private army, and Chamoun's "Tigers" who thereupon descended upon the Palestinians like wolves and looters and when the carnage was over, the bull-dezeers were corrupted into mannequins. Back in 1958 it was the wily father who trumped up the bogus issue of the impassibility of the Palestinians "seizing power," whereupon Eisenhower was all too happy to rush to U.S. intervention. In 1976 the Beirut massacre indites in outright genocide. The grisly end to Palestinian Resistance at Tal Zaatari will not bring to end the civil war between rulers and ruled, Muslim and Christian and other.

It is true that the civil war that erupted 16 months back, on April 13, 1975, to be exact, was sparked by Palestinians against the Phalangist massacre of a busload of Palestinians who were returning from a meeting of the "Rejection Front." (2) And it is true that Muslim reprisals to such reprisals were not without their atroci-

ties. It is not true that it is a religious war between Palestinian Muslims and Lebanese Christians. Rather it is a class war between Lebanese masses—Christian as well as Arab and those who profess no religion—and the exploitative, racist, sexist rulers who have been enriching themselves ever since the Egyptian revolution in 1952, dammed in 1956, that expelled Western imperialism and Lebanon and ended its fake "international" capital center for Middle East Arab oligarchs as well as Western imperialists.

Not only is it a civil war between masses and rulers, both Lebanese, but the Palestinian Left who have helped have played a most ambivalent role both in a class struggle sense and in a global context. It is therefore necessary to probe the dialectic of developments these past 16 months from both the obvious phases of Arafat's waffling, Syria's complete turnabout and actual withdrawal from Lebanon; to the so-called "liberation" of "Lebanon" by Palestinians, "liberation" that is in reality a second Occupation by Palestine, to the forthcoming June 1976 round of elections in which the Christian Right will again be the undisputed strong of the Christian Right rulers.

When Syria first marched in to aid the Left, it was under the guise of its own Palestinian Army, Sa'iga, which was supposedly under the control of the PLO. That was not only the view of Arafat, but his

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crystalline enemy of the Left, N.Yet Hawatneh, head of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (FDLP) who so assured Le Monde in a special interview, "If I want to make it clear that the PLA is under control of the PLO, and there were no regular army troops under Syrian command, as claimed."

So confident was Arafat both of gaining a whole country as buse as against Israel, and for a seat at a new Geneva conference as Palestinian State, in the winter of 1975, that he was following the events at the UN more than the actual developments in Lebanon. Above the machine gun fire in Lebanon where the fratricidal war was raging, he was ordering the PLO representa-
tive at the UN regarding the Arab-sponsored Resolution on "Zionism Is Racism" to "analyze" the Lebanon war itself as but a "constancy," a war initiated by "International Zionism." (3) Having thus buried the UN Declaration of a "Decade for the Elimination of Racism" that was to have been fought against South Africa and Rhodesia, with the "Amendments" that "Zionism Is Racism," he had to face the startling reality that not only was Syria out to cut PLO to size, but evidently Syria was aided by some Arab kingdoms, Saudi Arabia especially, and actually collaborated with Christian Right rulers.

Above all, what was gravitating at all the people was: would Syria have made so total a U-turn without at least tacit agreement with the U.S.A.? To call Assad a "traitor" at this late stage will hardly change the course of events. Syrian leadership is asking: where is the now that the victories of 1975 are worse than Pyrrhic? now that the counter-revolution has been extended into 1976, and there is no end in sight? The last tragic denouement was, after all, preceded by the failure of the nascent genuine revolutionary forces. The narrow single-issue goal of extinction of Israel which is, when all is said and done, the only unifying force of all Arabs. There was still time in the spring of 1976 to choose between Assad (who had by now openly sent in the regular Syrian Army "to stop the bloodshed," and Kamal Jumblatt, who had resisted Assad's "compromises" and the actual shoring up of Christian Right rulers) and thus save Lebanon from the Lebanon masses. In an interview with Eric Rouleau(5) Jumblatt still viewed the future optimistically: "Lebanon will become a lave state, our Christians will end by abandoning the Maronite caliphate, the Arab will choose between Assad (who had by now unilaterally and on his own accord and right of an apartheid "clericalism which is keeping it chained down." Then he spoke of the future as a "Socialist Republic," adding: "Communists may seem stupid today, but one day people will recognize the way to the Lebanese people's, even the whole of the Arab world's spiritual renaissance." We will return to Jumblatt as the socialist umbrellas of some ten Left organizations. Here what is crucial is that Arafat chose then, not Jumblatt, but Assad, after which he waffled long enough to have Assad refuse him entrance to Syria. Arafat did manage to convene an emergency meeting of an Arab League where, for once, he didn't propose words(6).

"You, the 20 members of the League, are sitting here either in silence, or paying lip-service to the Palestinians' cause while the Palestinians are being slaughtered right before our eyes. There are 3,650,000 Palestinians living in your countries. You cannot destroy us. I warn you that if you try you will not get away with it." If the implication is supposed to be that a genuine social revolution "overshoots" the feudal king-
doms, Arafat is more obdurate than he has any right to be: to think that that wasn't precisely the fear that swept over the rulers, and hence their affinity, not with the Arab masses, but with Christian Right oppressors. The Arab-Israel confrontation is the "distorting lens(7)" with which to 'view' what is happening in Lebanon, and has rendered meaningless the designations of "Left" and "Right" in all Arab countries. It is time to turn away from all these narrow nationalisms, and see it is what it is that does recognize, in theory, what are class divisions, and ask that Left why it has done nothing but fail to do the Left.

II. THE STRANGE ANCESTORS AND TWO NARROW NATIONALISM OF THE NEW LEFT

The very narrow nationalism of the New Left cannot be understood, much less fought, outside revolutionary international context, and the totally contradictory types of nationalism that emerged out of World War I, and World War II, and then the Cold War period, inter alia, total different historical periods, but totally different philosophies of revolution. No academic nomenclature motivated Lenin's return to Hegelian dialectics at the outbreak of World War I. When it was the demand for an end to the betrayal of the Second International workers and peasants alike to each other across national boundaries. What Lenin called "the bacillus" for proletarian revolution came, instead, from the Irish Easter Rebellion, 1916.

Because Lenin's revolutionary concepts of internationalism and the philosophy of national self-determination "overshoots" the feudal kingdoms, there was never a time within nationalism was ever reduced to nationalism, as it was with Stalin once power was won. On the con-

In fact, the Left, of course, could not prophesy, that was it all. Let us recollect the language of the Russian Revolution, thus, never was a time when nationalism was ever reduced to nationalism, as it was with Stalin once power was won. On the con-

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front, but rather in the context of the present day, and in the context of the general struggle of the world's peoples against Great Russian chauvinism as displayed in his native Georgia. As the Georgian Communist, Ernstevadze put it: "It is true that Marx wanted the union of the proletariat of the whole world, but he never claimed that all Russians ought to unite at Tiflis."
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It is such an attitude to imperialism, along with the theoretical void that has pervaded the Movement since the death of Lenin that has led revolutionaries to collaborate with narrow nationalist leaders. It is the "anti-imperialist" though purely nationalist. Evidently nationalism of the so-called Third World is of itself revolution- ary even when it is under the banner of a king, a Shah, or the emir. Thus they can realize nationalism though void of working-class character, as national liberation.

It isn't that class is the sole characteristic of national liberation movements that revolutionaries can support. It is that the working-class nature is its essence and it is that the revolutionaries and international impact emerges from masses in motion.(10)

I have no time for the Old Left like present-day Trotskyism(11) that taints all, including the Arab variety of Stalinism. What is important to note is the most original derivative of national Communism—with the most "uninterrupted" r-r-revolutionary phrasemongering—Marxism. Yet, with its very first separate international development when the Sino-Soviet world was still in orbit rather than in conflict—the 1955 Bandung Conference.(12)—its pure nationalism with but global reach likewise plunged into the Arab League lands "sub-imperialist" enfeoffment.(13)

The point is that, in the present circumstances of purely nationalist anti-imperialism with a global reach (not to mention the two actual nuclear power contenders for single world domination—U.S. and Russia) we cannot bury our heads in the sand. That not only blinds you, but also robs you of revolutionary reason. All it leaves you with is the narrowness of one enemy—whether that be Israel, or Israel's oppressive nationalism which attempts denying the very existence of Palestinian national consciousness, not to mention the right to self-determination, or China's obsession with Russia as enemy number one. Our nuclear state-capitalist world is far more dangerous than the old imperialist of endless division and redvelvets of the world by the Big Powers. Once it is nuclearmed, the Damascus sword puts into question the very survival of civilization as we have known it.

This does not mean that we give up the struggle for self-determination. Palestinian especially. (14) It is that we do not narrow our vision of the revolutionary struggle for a totally different world, of truly new Humanist foundations, the first necessity of which is the unity of philosophy and revolution.

Otherwise, long before "the final day," we will not only be confronted with impotent hijacking, to which Dr. Habash's Committee is already reverting, both to such tragic waves as Lebanon, which is more agonizing than a repeat of that bloodbath in Jordan in 1970. It is much later in the day. It includes not only Palestinians, but Lebanese revolutionaries. And, in the civil war-no


This quote is from a review of Fred Halliday's new work, Arabs without Futures, in New Left Review, 95, 1-2/1979, by Maxine Rodenren. Nearly any work by this great scholar will give the reader the most comprehensive view possible on the Middle East.

Frantz Fanon was profoundly conscious of the contradictory types of nationalities facing the African revolutions. See especially the chapter, "The Fifths of National Consciousness," in "The Wretched of the Earth." Rosa Luxemburg, who hardly had any sympathy for the "National Question," being totally absorbed in internationalism, did, however, profoundly grasp imperialism's oppressive domination of non-capitalist lands: "Though imperialism is the historic method prolonging the career of capitalism, it is also a sure means of bringing it to a swift conclusion." (Accumulation of Capital)

That present-day Trotskyists flies in the face of the Trotsky legacy both historically and theoretically. I have shown in Political-Philosophic Letter No. 1. The latest developments on Lebanon and Israel further expand their opportunism. See especially interview with a Lebanese Trotskyist in Paris, Intercontinental Press, 7/28/1976, as well as the latest issue on Israel. (August, 1976)

An interesting new view is in Iran, the Koran War and China, by Michael Brauer, Jan Jansen, Academic Press.

The expression regarding Iran, is Fred Halliday's in Arab without Futures. See footnote 9.

See Noam Chomsky, in New Politics, Winter 1976. Also Israel and the Palestineis, A Different Israeli View, and the endless PLO statements. The Left's authentic representative, the head of the Lebanese-Arab army, Ahmad al- Khatib, who has always been Al Fatah, complained recently of the difficulty to make a revolution in Lebanon; there is too much money around. The trouble is that oil money and not only from "left" Iraq and Libya but also from Saudi-Arabia bankrolls the PLO.