

For a Multiracial State in Palestine

[The following interview with Nayef Hawatmeh, a leader of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, appeared in the January 19-February 1 issue of *Africasia*, which is published in Paris. The Democratic Front was organized in February 1969 as the result of a split in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The translation from the French is by *Intercontinental Press*.]

[On one point we should like to register a difference with Nayef Hawatmeh, even though it may be of only a terminological nature. He categorizes the privileged bureaucracy in the Soviet Union as a "class"; we would use the word "caste." In Marxist terminology a social class plays a necessary function in a specific economic framework. Both capitalists and workers are essential, for instance, in the functioning of the capitalist system. But the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union plays no such necessary role. As a privileged layer it is a *parasitic* formation. It can therefore be eliminated through a political revolution without overturning the planned economy. In fact the planned economy will function much better when the bureaucratic excrescence is removed.]

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Question: What distinguishes the Democratic Front [DF] from the other resistance groups organizationally? Have the enlarged meetings you have held recently produced anything new in this regard?

Answer: It can be said that at the beginning the Democratic Front was only a revolutionary project. Today, it is becoming a more and more solid organization. As regards the national conference of cadres in October 1969, we were able there to establish the basic principles of the Democratic Front and demonstrate its genuine revolutionary Marxist-Leninist character both to our own members and to the broad masses.

We have rescued Marxism from the pillory where the bureaucratic practices of the Arab Stalinists had kept

it for the last forty years. The Stalinist parties stood Marxism on its head. The Democratic Front has set it on its feet. Now, thousands of men march under its banner. Moreover, we have broken the counterrevolutionary blockade against the DF and built, from a position of strength and in the framework of a clearly defined strategy, a network of political and social relationships and pacts on the Jordanian, Palestinian, and Arab scene.

Finally, we have established the essential structures for an organization capable of engagement in the struggle of the proletariat, and we have backed it up with an effective military sector capable of responding to any treacherous attacks—which gives us much greater tactical flexibility.

The conference also discussed the question of the relationships between the Democratic Front and the Party, and reached the conclusion that the formation of a party requires training a great number of qualified cadres. Also discussed was the question of recasting the relationships inside the Democratic Front so as to complete the present transitional stage as soon as possible and move on to full democratic centralism.

Thus, the elective principle will be applied to all levels. Congresses will be held regularly. All of the cadres and rank-and-file members will participate in making decisions and carrying them out, and will have the right to criticize and to exercise control. Likewise every committee will be backed up by a soviet, extending from top to bottom, from the soviets in the military bases, the refugee camps, and the villages to the Central Committee. Already, the Military Committee is under the control of the soldiers' soviet representing all the rank-and-file soviets.

All the soviets meet periodically to assign the new tasks and review the execution of the old. The Council of Soviets has full powers to censure all or a part of any higher body. Neither the Political Bureau nor the Central Committee has the right to oppose

decisions made by the soviets. It is these soviets which constitute the nucleus of the future party. Parallel to this, the Democratic Front has undertaken to form workers', peasants', and women's organizations. At this time, one such organization has already been set up—the National Union of Jordanian Students.

The majority of the left groupings have come into the DF. This is true for the League of the Palestinian Revolutionary Left and the Palestinian Peoples Organization. Only the Jordanian Communist party has remained outside the DF. This is natural because this reformist and bureaucratic party is communist in name only.

Q: What specific role does the Democratic Front intend to play inside the resistance movement?

A: Our participation in the Sixth Palestinian Conference and the consistent action program we presented to the masses as well as to the congress helped to differentiate the right-wing currents and elements sharply from the advanced elements. Thus, the Democratic Front intends to:

- Play the role of revolutionary agitator inside the resistance and Arab revolutionary movement.

- Subject all the existing situations to unrelenting theoretical and practical criticism and exercise a two-fold pressure (through the ranks and at the summit) on the resistance movement.

Q: Do your fighters receive any pay?

A: We have neither ranks nor pay. Our fighters are recruited on a volunteer basis and receive a systematic political education. On the military level, our operations are carefully planned and therefore effective. There are no distinctions between ordinary fighters and leaders. Recently we lost a member of our Central Committee, Omar Mosaâd, in an operation.

Q: How has the DF implemented its original strategy of the Arab revolution thus far?

A: As we see it, the Palestinian national liberation movement is an integral part of the Arab national liberation movement and is closely bound up with the problem of the socialist revolution throughout the world. The DF is undertaking to extend the armed struggle against the bases and positions of the counterrev-

olution throughout the Arab world. Naturally this requires us to struggle for the formation of an Arab revolutionary front.

Furthermore, our bases are open to all revolutionary elements, Arab or foreign, who want to receive military and political training. Afterwards they are free to fight in our ranks, or, better, return to their own countries to prepare the conditions for a revolution there. At present there is a brigade in the DF composed of revolutionists from all the Arab countries. We also have a group of foreign revolutionists and it is not impossible that it will be expanded to form an international brigade.

The DF is also seeking to strengthen its relations with the revolutionary and internationalist movements. Thus, we invited Comrade Cabral (Guinea-Bissão) to come and visit our bases. Similar invitations were sent to the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and the Communist party of Cuba. An encampment under the auspices of the DF has just ended in Jordan. We are also establishing contacts to organize a conference of the Arab and international left.

Besides this, we have organizational links with certain Arab left formations, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf (Dhofar) and the Revolutionary Movement of the Arab Gulf.

Q: As regards the final objective of the struggle, what solution does the DF advocate for the Israeli and Palestinian questions?

A: For the first time in the history of the Arab revolution, the DF has proposed an internationalist solution to the Israeli and Palestinian questions. Up to now, in relating to the Israeli question, Arabs have been under the influence of the ideology of the ruling classes, a feudal and religious, or at best, petty-bourgeois ideology, with an anti-Semitic tinge.

All of the solutions to the Israeli problem presented so far by the Arab right have been racist and chauvinist, varying between "driving the Jews into the sea" and at best sending them back to their countries of origin. The Arab and Palestinian right have been raking up the history of the Prophet's disputes with the Arab Jews in order to incite anti-Jewish hatred. For twenty years, exploiting the Palestinian problem has been a profitable business in the Arab countries; it served

as an alibi and cover for every dubious undertaking.

Today, the Arab reaction is raising the slogan of "unity of all classes for the liquidation of Israel."

On the other hand, the Jews throughout their long history have been subjected to the same chauvinist education. Under the cover of slogans such as "the chosen people," the Jewish feudalists were able to mask the class contradictions within the Jewish community, creating contradictions between the Jews as a whole on one side and the "gentiles" on the other.

In the modern period, too, Jewish capitalism has likewise subjected the Jews to its ideological domination with the slogans "Unity of all Jews" and "The Jewish question must be solved by the return of the Jews to the promised land," etc. Jewish capitalism has taken advantage of its struggle against European capitalism and all the suffering this struggle has brought on the Jewish people, and especially its poorer strata, to isolate the Jewish proletariat from the workers of their respective countries.

All the efforts by the first Marxists, by the Social Democracy, and later by the Bolsheviks, were in vain. The ideological and religious alienation of the oppressed Jews was stronger than their real interests. The example of Poaley Zion and the Bund is very significant in this regard.

The founding of the Zionist state was to reinforce this alienation. All, or almost all, the Israeli parties have openly or surreptitiously adopted the Zionist positions. There is, of course, the Israeli Communist party, which split into a Zionist and pro-Soviet wing after the June war.

In fact, there is no fundamental difference between them because they both propose a reactionary solution based on maintaining Israel, an oppressive usurper state linked to imperialism. At present there is only one small group in Israel, the Israeli Socialist Organization (Matzpen), which is evolving toward a progressive solution of the question.

As for us, we intend to build a democratic and socialist state where Israelis and Arabs will enjoy the same rights, a state where there will be no form of oppression, a state, finally, where the power, and all the power, will be exercised by workers' and peasants' soviets.

It is in this sense that we intend to

destroy the apparatus of the Zionist state. The future state will be integrated into an Arab federation or confederation (like Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia, for example). The organizational form matters little. What matters is the type of regime.

Q: At the beginning of the interview, you characterized the DF's attitude toward the worldwide and Arab revolutionary movements as one of critical examination. What assessment would you make, then, of the present state of the official Communist movement?

A: That is the problem of the century. . . In our opinion, you have to begin by subjecting the entire revolutionary movement to a thorough critical examination. Following Marx, we think that in order to rebuild you have to begin by criticizing what exists.

As a result of certain precise objective conditions, the Communist movement underwent a bureaucratic degeneration. The appearance of a new bureaucratic class endowed with exorbitant material and social privileges created a contradiction between the needs of the international proletarian revolution and the interests of the bureaucracy. It goes without saying that no class pursues a policy contrary to its interests. This is why the new bureaucratic class refuses to jump into "the adventure" of supporting the world revolution.

Historically, the bureaucracy had already appeared during Lenin's lifetime as an objective process and an expression of the backward state of Russian society. With his habitual frankness, Lenin raised his famous cry: "In words, the Soviet state belongs to the workers. In reality, this is far from so. The socialist revolution will triumph only if it carries the struggle against bureaucracy through to final victory. In order to do this, the entire population must participate in managing the country's affairs."

The phenomenon of bureaucracy, then, is not the product of any subjective will but the result of a lack of maturity on the part of the masses and their incapacity to take their own affairs in hand. On top of this, there were the factors of the capitalist encirclement of the Bolshevik revolution and the activity of the counter-revolution within the country.

Under the leadership of the Bolshevik party, the Russian proletariat was

able to make the revolution and defend it against its foreign and domestic enemies. However, weakened by the civil war and the involvement of a large part of the workers in the fighting, as well as by the famine, the Russian proletariat could not hold back the bureaucratic tide.

It must be said that the working class numbered only 6,000,000 to 7,000,000 persons in a population of 160,000,000. Moreover, the Bolshevik revolution did not totally destroy the Czarist state apparatus (there were White generals in the Red Army). Likewise, the Bolsheviks were unable to put *State and Revolution* into practice and this blueprint has remained a mere historical document up to the present day. An omnipotent bureaucracy converted "building socialism in one country" into a dogma instead of placing the Soviet state in the service of the world revolution.

At the present time, the socialist camp that follows the Soviet Union advocates resolving the contradictions in the world by peaceful means. In the last analysis, this proposition serves the interests of the bureaucracy which is anxious to avoid all conflicts that might jeopardize its privileges. This is how peaceful coexistence must be understood. All this has led the Soviet leadership to move progressively away from the proletarian line of struggle against imperialism; and, at the same time, has encouraged imperialism to take the offensive against the national liberation movements and even to defy the socialist camp. The savage aggression against the heroic Vietnamese people is an eloquent example of this. . . .

The result has been a weakening of the anti-imperialist front throughout the world. The countries of the socialist camp are being displaced from the center of the revolutionary process by the new forces of the revolutionary Marxist left in the underdeveloped countries and in certain capitalist nations. As these forces develop and acquire rich theoretical and practical experience through struggle, they will be able to establish international relationships on a revolutionary basis. To develop, these forces must combine in an international front so that they can help each other and so that they do not wage isolated struggles. Their slogan must be: Revolutionists of all countries unite to create more and more Vietnams.

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