

Maurice Nhora, representative of the Lebanese Communist Party, gave a talk on the 55th anniversary of its founding, from which *Tricontinental* has taken the following extracts.

The Lebanese Communist Party belongs to the Lebanese National Movement, which groups all Lebanese progressive forces.

Background of the Lebanese people's struggle

AFTER the fall of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, the French and British colonialists divided their inheritance in the area. When Lebanon and Syria were placed under French mandate in 1920, the Lebanese national liberation struggle against French colonialism was stepped up, under conditions of harsh repression.

At the end of 1925, armed revolution in Syria and certain parts of Lebanon brought new sectors of Lebanese workers, intellectuals and patriots into the struggle. The colonial authorities unleashed their repression, banning all political parties and mass nationalist activities in general. Although the people's movement was weakened by these repressive actions, it still continued.

During the '30s, the struggle spread to the masses, and the working class — now much more numerous — stepped up its fighting actions.

European fascism and the looming danger of World War II imposed new tasks. A board front against fascism and war waged political and mass campaigns against fascist collaborators and against French colonial power in Lebanon as the struggle for independence and democracy spread. Colonialism's pressures and terrorist measures at the start of the war failed to weaken the Lebanese people's firm struggle against colonial power, shown in widespread people's uprisings in the cities.

On November 22, 1943, the independence of Lebanon was proclaimed, and the people engaged in a huge uprising in support of this victory, which strengthened nationalist currents and further prepared the workers and the masses for their role in the struggle. Trade union unity led to many gains, the most important of which was the passage of the Lebanese Labor Law in 1946. At the same time, the struggle for the withdrawal of foreign armies from Lebanese territory continued.

Colonial troops were finally withdrawn at the end of 1946. It should be noted that the Soviet Union's position on the question of Lebanese and Syrian independence and the evacuation of foreign troops from those territories was an important factor in frustrating colonialist maneuvers to maintain armies and military bases in those countries.

The victory over colonialism and the attainment of independence — which forced the evacuation of colonialist troops from Lebanon and Syria — plus the social and political gains made by the working class and the masses, provided a stimulus for other Arab peoples to increase their struggles for freedom from colonialism.

The important change in the correlation of world forces, the defeat of fascism and the victory of the Soviet Union and the other countries that chose the socialist path of development weakened the forces of colonialism and imperialism and paved the way for the upsurge and spread of the colonized peoples' struggles for independence and national liberation.

The ruling Lebanese bourgeoisie began to seek an understanding with the colonizers and to cooperate with the Arab reaction,

increasing repression and terrorism, denying all freedoms and banning trade unions and mass organizations. The reaction and the colonialist sympathizers used the Palestinian struggle to attack the forces of liberation in general and the Communist Parties in particular and to foster enmity toward the Soviet Union in an effort to hide their own crimes, their shortcomings and their ties with the colonialist and imperialist countries that were trying to set up a Zionist state in Arab territory, deny the Palestinian Arab people their rights and expel them from their homeland.

Imperialism in action

Because of the Arab region's tremendous oil resources — which account for approximately two thirds of the world's reserves — its important strategic position as crossroads for Asia, Africa and Europe; and its proximity to the Soviet Union, imperialism concentrated and is still concentrating its efforts on obtaining absolute control of this region and on repressing the national liberation movement.

Imperialism's plans for the Middle East called for dividing the region into several states and taking over their resources, using neocolonialist methods to prevent a people's uprising that would win freedom for the area.

The Zionist State of Israel was created in the late '40s as an outpost for safeguarding imperialist oil interests and, in general, as a basic means for perpetuating underdevelopment and keeping the Arab peoples divided in order to strike at their liberation movements. The final purpose of all this was to ensure total imperialist domination and continuing plunder of the region.

Imperialism also began to set up a network of military alliances in the region — a network that included Lebanon and other independent countries — in an effort to destroy real independence.

Against the imperialist offensive

This imperialist offensive and the repression that accompanied it could not halt the march of the Arab peoples' liberation struggle.

The Lebanese people's struggle against imperialism, its allies and Israel (their tool) spread and became stronger. The Arab peoples' struggles and their opposition to the ruling reactionary regimes — that proved incompetent and impotent in the face of the Palestinian problem — increased. These regimes began to fall. The feudal monarchy in Egypt gave way to the government of Gamal Abdel Nasser, in 1952; changes also took place in Syria, and a new upsurge in the Arab liberation movement followed the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the failure of the tripartite (Israeli-Anglo-French) aggression against Egypt in 1956.

Within the framework of this bloody struggle between the Arab national liberation movement, on the one hand, and imperialism and its allies in the region, on the other, the Lebanese patriotic masses rose up against the reactionary government of Camille Chaumon when he supported "the Eisenhower principle," allying himself with the United States in 1958. During the armed uprising against the Lebanese government, the US Army oc-

cupied the coastal area to prevent the overthrow of the puppet government and to threaten the Arab liberation movement as a whole. Our Party played a significant role in the armed struggle and in the political mobilization of patriotic groups and currents, which weakened the influence of the reactionary forces that were promoting sectarian conflicts within this struggle.

The puppet government was toppled, and the US Army was forced to withdraw from Lebanon. Meanwhile, the Arab liberation movement continued to grow: the Iraqi puppet government of Nuri Said was overthrown by the Iraqi people and their revolutionary liberation forces. The Algerian Revolution spread and became stronger; the Arab liberation movement became a basic, determining factor in the politics of the Arab world, and this stimulated the liberation movements of Africa and Asia in their struggles against imperialism.

Maneuvers and aggression by Israel, imperialism and the reaction

In June 1967, when the Arab liberation movement was deepening and radicalizing its struggle against imperialism, the feudal monarchy and internal capitalism, Israel launched the aggressive war in which it seized new Arab territories in Egypt and Syria and the rest of Palestine. This was the reply that imperialism, Zionism and the reaction made, from outside, to the upsurge of the revolutionary movement which they had been unable to halt and crush from within.

As a result of that war, imperialism stepped up its pressures and maneuvers to reap the fruits of the military defeat of the area's progressive and nationalist regimes. It encouraged the Arab reaction to play a greater role and took advantage of differences within the Arab liberation movement to strengthen its right-wing elements.

In this regard — especially after the death of Nasser, who was a basic force in the Arab liberation struggle against Israel and imperialism — the imperialists, Zionists and Arab reactionaries concentrated on crushing the Palestinian resistance and preventing the Palestinian people from recovering their identity. One example of this was Jordan's "Black September" of 1970, when thousands of Palestinians were murdered by King Hussein's regime.

While US imperialism and the Arab reaction were strengthening their positions, some positions in the Arab liberation movement — especially those held by Egypt — were weakened; the situation in Lebanon, however, continued its positive development.

The Lebanese people's struggle and the Palestinian resistance grow

Both the people's national struggle against imperialist pressure and Israel's constant attacks against Lebanon increased considerably after 1967. Social and class struggles by the workers, peasants and students to win specific and general demands continued to spread. The socioeconomic crisis of the Lebanese regime, which began in the mid-'60s, sharpened until it affected all economic sectors, but mainly the masses. The negative effects of this crisis touched not only the working classes and the peasants

but also the petite and middle-level bourgeoisie, leading to further economic and political struggles in Lebanon and the beginning of a shift in the political position of the petite bourgeoisie, which pressured the government to renounce its reactionary course and join the people's national movement for reform and change.

Some gains were made in this atmosphere of mounting national social struggle at the end of the '60s, and democratic freedoms were restored to the political parties so that all, including the Lebanese Communist Party, could operate openly. The Communist Party played a basic role in uniting the trade union movement and mass social and national struggles and in developing cooperation between the parties and national progressive forces.

This strong upsurge in the people's national movement helped to protect and aid the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon and bring the bulk of those forces into our country after the reactionary Jordanian government tried to wipe them out during "Black September" of 1970.

The staunch cooperation between the Lebanese National Movement (MNL) and the Palestinian resistance strengthened the positions of both in confronting pressures from the imperialists' and reactionary Lebanese and blocked all their attempts to wipe out the Palestinian resistance.

This meant that Lebanon became a focal point both for confrontations and for firm resistance to the imperialist offensive; it grew to be a serious obstacle to the capitulationist solution that imperialism, in its efforts to destroy the Palestinian people's cause and to cripple the Arab liberation movement, sought for the Middle East conflict.

Under these circumstances, the MNL became a major force for the rapidly growing people's movement that exposed and weakened the position of the Lebanese reaction. The reaction then began to wake up to reality and see the weakness of its positions and those of the regime and the type of government it defended. It became less and less able to cope with the crisis and to respond to the people's movement's struggles and demands. The regime and the Lebanese bourgeoisie even failed to carry out the economic, social and political reforms that the country needed and remained indifferent to Israel's constant attacks.

The Lebanese bourgeoisie took the road of fascism, allying itself with the monopolists, businessmen, importers and big landowners and harshly repressing the Lebanese National Movement and the Palestinian resistance in order to perpetuate the regime and its positions of strength. Thus, the vestiges of bourgeois democracy were eliminated.

The Two Years' War

The new stage of the reactionary Zionist imperialists' plans for the Arab region called for attacking and annihilating all the liberation forces — especially the Palestinian revolution, because of its essential role in the Arab struggle against imperialism and Israel — that could constitute an obstacle to them. Therefore, supported and egged on by imperialist and Zionist centers, the most reactionary forces in Lebanon wanted war to break out in order to obtain the Zionist reactionary-imperialists' objectives



in the Arab region. The resistance put up by the National Liberation Movement, however, and its cohesion with the Palestinian resistance, the great sacrifices made and feats achieved, the thousands of our people who gave their lives in the struggle and the international solidarity that helped consolidate our forces kept our enemies from achieving their aims in this war, which lasted two years (1975-76).

Even though military and political intervention in the second year of the war kept the National Liberation Movement and the Palestinian resistance from defeating the bourgeoisie and its regime, it couldn't destroy the unity of the Palestinian resistance or offset its great influence. Nor could it break the MNL's strength and unity. Moreover, the cease-fire did not mean that a solution had been found.

Arab Deterrent Forces were sent to Lebanon by the Riad and Cairo Arab Summit Conferences, held in the autumn of 1976 — Summit Conferences in which the Syrians were the principal force — in order to halt the war, guarantee security throughout Lebanon and create propitious conditions for reaching a political solution so the government could rebuild the Lebanese Army and other security bodies for carrying out this task.

The Arab Deterrent Forces failed to achieve their main aim, because international reactionary, Zionist and imperialist circles conspired to frustrate any solution that would protect Lebanon's unity, its Arabism and its democratic development. They also conspired to forestall implementation of the agreements that were signed by the Lebanese government and the Palestinian resistance.

The reactionary Lebanese forces' efforts kept the ADF from carrying out their mission in the region dominated by the fascist reaction, which was thus given a free hand to engage in military preparations and to receive military and other kinds of aid from Israel and various NATO member countries, which sought to use this region to implement the Zionist reactionary project of

1. completely dominating Lebanon by eliminating the MNL and its progressive parties and also doing away with the Palestinian resistance and the Palestinians' physical presence on Lebanese soil;
2. doing away with democratic freedoms and installing a bloody fascist government that would attack the people's movement;
3. isolating Lebanon from the rest of the Arab world and destroying its Arabism in order to turn it into a second Israel and a new imperialist base against the Arab liberation movement; and
4. temporarily accepting the establishment of a small, divisive religious state in the region, with Israel's protection and support.

The reaction used religious issues and employed violence against all citizens who belonged to Muslim sectors — and, naturally, also against the Communists and Christian patriots — because

it wanted to create incidents and stir up religious hatred, deceive some groups of Christians — especially the Maronite sect — and win them over so as to camouflage the social and national liberation content of the struggle. Thus, it tried to show them that it was fighting in defense of the Christians and of Lebanon, in order to isolate the Muslim Arabs, whom it depicted as seeking to swallow Lebanon up and oppress the Christian minority. It even went so far as to consider Israel, the Arabs' enemy, as an ally.

Zionist attacks on southern Lebanon continue

In addition, in mid-March 1978, Israel continued its air, sea and land attacks on and threats against southern Lebanon. Some 30 000 Israeli soldiers participated in these attacks, occupying important parts of this area. Moreover, the fascist reactionary militia also attacked the Syrian members of the ADF when Syria opposed Sadat's visit to Israel, and used its military might to chastize the Lebanese rightists and even members of the Maronite sect — which had once been its ally.

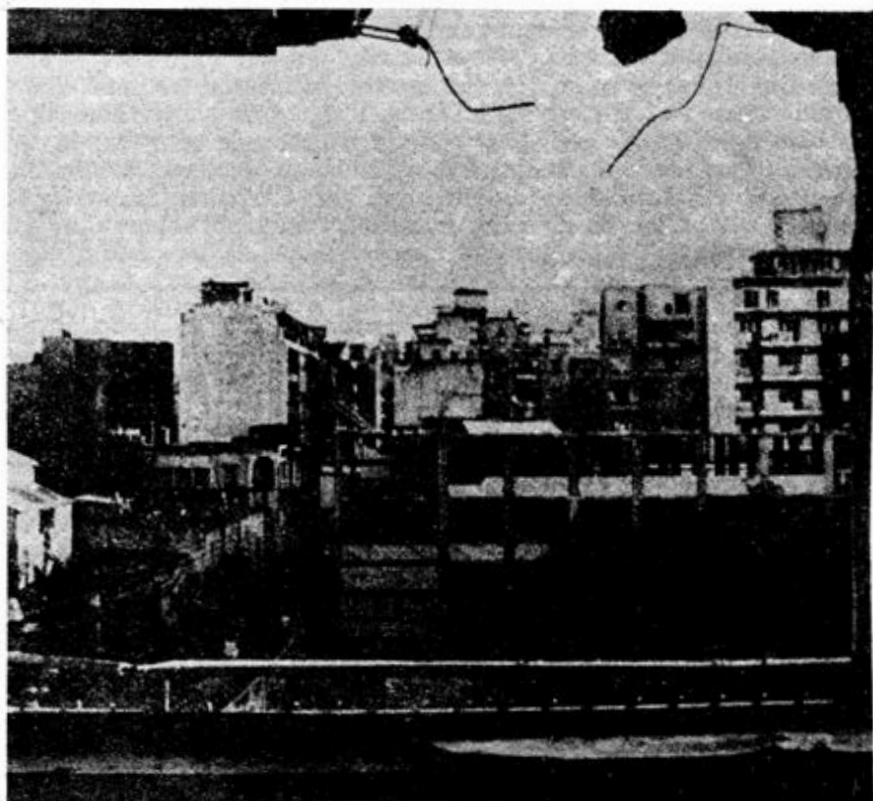
Similar events took place in northern Lebanon against relatives of former President Suleiman Frangié when the Christian Maronite current he headed opposed the alliance with Israel, the falling out with Syria and the division of Lebanon.

All these events in Lebanon during the cease-fire — and especially in the last two years — clearly show that the imperialist, Zionist and reactionary circles that began the war are still trying to frustrate any just political solution, keep the Lebanese conflict going and use Lebanon to put pressure on Syria's staunch stand in order to achieve their objectives. Nevertheless, the reaction and imperialism have failed to wipe out the Palestinian resistance and the MNL — a thing which they must do to facilitate carrying out their aggressive plans in the Arab region and implement the Zionist plot to isolate Lebanon.

The treaty of betrayal

While carrying out these political actions, the enemy circles also strove to inject new life in the Arab reaction and lay the groundwork in the region for a rapid union between Sadat's Egyptian regime and Zionism. The imperialist-sponsored Arab reaction-Zionism-Egypt alliance was forged at the Camp David meeting.

The Camp David agreement is another dangerous stage in the imperialists', Zionists' and reactionaries' regional plans, which imply serious dangers for the existing conflict, that pits the Arab peoples and the liberation movements against imperialism, Zionism and the Arab reaction. This agreement negates the Palestinian people's right to self-determination in their homeland and to an independent national state of their own. Moreover, it does not consider the principle of Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967. Even in Egypt, Israel is setting the conditions for its withdrawal from the territories it holds in the Sinai — which goes counter to the sovereignty and national integrity of that country.



The Camp David agreement envisages relations between Egypt and Israel prior to Israel's complete withdrawal from the Sinai, plus US-built Israeli military bases in an important region near the Egyptian border. This means tying Egypt in with the interests of the Zionist imperialists in such a way as to make it a political and military pawn of the United States in the region.

Therefore, the agreement

1. attempts to reverse the position of Egypt, which used to be a basic part of the Arab liberation movement against imperialism and Israel, and oppose it to the Arab liberation movement, in alliance with Israel and the United States;
2. is an expression of the neocolonial policy, initiated with Egypt and Israel, that seeks to solve the conflict "step by step";
3. tries to get the other Arab states directly involved in the solution to fall in with this plan, one by one. This is the basis for the agreement, and the United States is using it as a strong-arm tactic to achieve total Arab capitulation to the imperialist and Zionist offensive:

4. strengthens Israel, preparing it — with Egyptian help — to pressure Syria and the Lebanese revolutionary forces and step up its aggressive activities in the region; and
5. seeks to present the Camp David meeting, organized by the United States, as a "good" substitute for the Geneva Conference, thereby bypassing the PLO and the Soviet Union — fundamental and necessary for any solution — and cutting them off from the Arab states, that will thus be forced to capitulate.

Therefore, Sadat's signing of the Camp David agreement was the worst betrayal of the Arab peoples, of the sacrifices they have made, of their historic struggles and especially of the Egyptian Arab people's struggle and stand.

Moreover, this agreement did not solve the main problem in the Middle East, which is that of the rights of the Arab peoples whose lands are occupied, and of the Palestinian people in particular. This agreement goes counter to the Arab liberation movement and is aimed at dealing it a harsh blow and at guaranteeing imperialist domination of the region.

The elements we have mentioned constitute immediate dangers, but the agreement poses yet another serious threat to the future development of the confrontation between the national liberation struggle of the Arab peoples, who are advancing toward develop-



ment and progress, on the one hand, and imperialism and its allies, on the other. The worst of these dangers is that of

1. no longer viewing Israel as an enemy of the Arab peoples but rather opening the doors for its expansion and exploitation, giving the Arab reactionaries — whose hands used to be relatively tied in their relations with the imperialist states, because of their differences over Israel — complete freedom to establish a direct and total alliance with imperialism, which provides them with a number of slogans and approved activities (anticommunism and anti-Sovietism) and leads them to take a position opposed to all the forces for liberation and progress in the world, and
2. ensuring imperialist control in the region — including the plunder of its great oil resources and other wealth — in order to keep it backward and split, to fill the area with military pacts and bases and to use the reactionary states as tools to carry out the imperialist objectives of striking at the liberation movements in Africa and the Arab world.

The announcement of the Camp David agreement provoked fury and indignation among the people in the Arab region, including the Egyptian people, who — in spite of their government's repression and Sadat's attempts to pull the wool over their eyes by saying that the agreement would bring them happiness and solve existing social problems — raised their voices in protest against it. This was even true of rightist circles that had been cooperating with Sadat prior to the signing of the agreement.

Even though this rejection of the situation in Egypt and many other Arab countries did not mature and explode against the reactionary rulers, a positive influence was felt and grew constantly.

The best proof of this rejection was the general strikes and other activities through which the Palestinian people in the occupied West Bank and the Lebanese and Palestinian patriotic masses in Lebanon expressed their firm rejection of the agreement and called for its abrogation.

In this climate of tension and because of the shameful content of the Camp David agreement, that is a glaring offense to Egypt and to the Arabs in general, no Arab state — not even the most reactionary — could accept it.

The Saudi Arabian and other reactionary Arab regimes stated their reservations and their disagreement with the agreement. The agreements adopted by the steadfastness front, composed of

Syria, Algeria, Libya, Democratic Yemen and the PLO, rejected it completely and called for its abrogation because they consider Sadat's position to be capitulationist and traitorous for Egypt and every other Arab nation. In addition to attacking the role played by the United States, they called for a consolidation of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union.

Iraq also announced its rejection of the agreement and issued an invitation for the Arab Summit Conference that was held in Baghdad in November 1978, at which Iraq declared its intention to devote all its military and political facilities to working with Syria to counter the Camp David plans and Israel's threats.

Therefore, Sadat is alone in insisting on the path of betrayal — but not really alone, because we know that his attitude represents the aspirations and interests of the feudalists and big bourgeoisie; it represents the tendency tied to imperialism. Moreover, we know from the experience of other peoples that, as it tries to obstruct the work of national liberation and supports its basic interests, the ruling exploiting class will doubtless move toward an alliance with imperialism, which will hurt the cause of the liberation of its homeland and people.

We understand that the position of the Arab reactionary regimes, such as those of Saudi Arabia and Jordan, whose governments are led by the most reactionary classes in opposition to the interests of the people and the development of the Arab liberation movement, is not principled opposition to the Camp David agreement. Rather, what those regimes really want is to make some changes in it and touch it up a bit so they can accept it. Their "rejection" of the agreement now does not mean that they are against Sadat or cooperation with imperialism.

Imperialism is making use of these reactionary forces and states and is benefiting from the rightist currents in some of the Arab countries, using them as well as Israel to carry out its plans with a view to eliminating all the obstacles that now lie in its path and attacking the positions and forces that hold out against and reject its objectives. Therefore, it is hurrying to implement the various aspects of the agreement between Egypt and Israel and is exerting pressure to bring in the Jordanian government. In addition, it is whipping up secondary problems among the Arab countries. Its pressure to halt the struggle in Lebanon was simply a part of the process of smoothing over the situation in the region so as to then go on with its plans.

In spite of its positive aspects, the agreement issued by the meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Arab countries that are militarily and financially involved in the Arab Deterrent Forces — a meeting held in Lebanon, in response to an invitation issued by its President, Sarkis — didn't do anything but provisionally freeze the conflict, at the expense of the Syrians. In fact, in response to a request by Sarkis, it was agreed to increase the

number of forces in Lebanon from Saudi Arabia and the Sudan, and possibly Jordan, and to have them occupy important positions held by the Syrian forces so that, in those regions where reactionary forces were stationed, it would be easier for the Lebanese reaction and the Arab reaction in general — and, therefore, Israel and imperialism — to exert political pressure and make war break out when they deem it convenient, thus pushing the Lebanese reaction, if necessary, into declaring the internationalization of the conflict in Lebanon and opening the door to imperialist military intervention.

Imperialism's furious offensive, aimed at controlling the Arab region, is a constant, and pressures and the use of all resources to implement the Camp David agreement continue; many obstacles still stand in the way of these plans, however, and there are possibilities of a serious rejection of the agreement and of its champions, as well, in spite of the significant imbalance of forces provoked by Egypt's going over to the camp of the imperialist, Zionist enemy.

The Lebanese people and the rest of the Arab masses reject the Camp David agreement and are bent on repelling imperialism, its toadies and all capitulationist solutions.

The ability of the Arab states in the steadfastness front and their consolidation for the practical implementation of the Iraqi agreements of offering military and material aid to Syria to counter the Camp David agreement play a very important role in consolidating and boosting the process of resistance to and active rejection of the Camp David agreement.

Firm and surely successful opposition to the Camp David agreement that will frustrate all imperialist plans and objectives in the Arab region requires that the Arab countries

first: take a path radically opposed to imperialism and reject the imperialist "solution," based on the present correlation of forces in the region (which would constitute an Arab capitulation to imperialism and Israel);

second: achieve unity on the basis of a program of common struggle, believe in and have confidence in the masses, create a democratic climate that will make it possible to participate actively in the struggle, confront all vacillations or deviations from the line of the liberation struggle and constitute an Arab progressive national front. All the progressive, nationalist and revolutionary forces are included in this program, participating actively in determining policy, the forms the struggle will take and its development — which makes it possible for all the energy of the masses, whose class interests coincide completely with anti-imperialism and freedom, to be concentrated;

third: provide all the aid that is needed to strengthen the main positions of opposition in the struggle now being waged in Lebanon and Syria; consolidate the forces and unity of the Palestinian resistance; support the Lebanese National Movement, which is a center of basic confrontation in the conflict; use arms and political confrontation of the Lebanese isolationist reactionary forces to oppose the division and Zionization of Lebanon and Israel's and imperialism's threats and acts of intervention; and frustrate their plans and objectives;

fourth: support the Egyptian people's progressive movement, that is struggling under difficult conditions against the Sadat government and its path of treason, in order to bring Egypt back to its true position in the Arab liberation movement; and

fifth: consolidate and develop relations of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries that support us, cooperating with them on the basis of their being basic allies of our peoples' struggle for liberation and progress.

The application of this program against imperialism, Zionism and the reaction is the only way by which the Arab liberation movement can oppose imperialism's plans for Arab capitulation, once more consolidate its position and bring about a change of forces that will enable it to come up with a revolutionary solution to the problem of the Middle East, one which will force Israel to withdraw totally and unconditionally from the occupied Arab territories and restore the Palestinian Arab people's right to self-determination in their homeland through the creation of an independent national state.

The Lebanese Communist Party has 55 years' experience, including a long, hard struggle — which required many sacrifices and claimed many lives — against imperialism and the reaction, in benefit of our working class and our Lebanese people and in support of the cause of the Palestinian people and the Arab peoples in general. Now, it is better prepared than ever to continue this struggle and has become deeply rooted among our people. It is dear to the working class and the humble masses, and it is being consolidated and is growing within the Lebanese National Movement.

Therefore, it is determined to continue the struggle alongside the patriotic masses so as to frustrate the fascist and Zionist plan of the Lebanese isolationist reactionary forces. It is determined to continue the struggle alongside the Palestinian resistance in defense of its revolution and its cause, for this is its main means of opposing the Camp David agreement and all other capitulationist imperialist solutions.

We believe that our Lebanese people's struggle is both useful and sure to win — with the preservation of the unity of a democratic, Arab Lebanon. We are equally confident that the Palestinian cause — that, in 1948, broke the back of the reactionary class regimes dependent on imperialism and led them to fall into the hands of the movements and forces of liberation — cannot be wiped out or trampled upon. Now, any solution that goes counter to the Palestinian cause will simply spur the outbreak of a revolution and bring about a deep, radical change in the development of the Arab liberation movement.

We are sure that we will triumph over imperialism, the reaction and their objectives.

We will win because this is a time in which the peoples, with their struggle, have shown that they can stand up against imperialism. We are part of a vast world front that is composed of the community of socialist nations, headed by the Soviet Union, and all the other forces of liberation and peace.

With the strengthening of our peoples' struggle and with international support and solidarity, we can overthrow the imperialist, Zionist and reactionary forces and attain victory. ●