



The right to a homeland

COMMUNISTS OF THE ARAB COUNTRIES ON THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM

Nowadays, one of the gravest threats to international peace comes from the Middle East crisis. Its root cause and basis is the Palestinian problem, the problem of the Arab people of Palestine, which has been condemned by imperialism and Zionism to live the life of an exile without a homeland. The Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties of Arab countries held in April 1978 emphasized in its main statement: 'Developments in the Middle East over three decades have shown that peace in this area cannot be established if the national rights of more than 3 million Palestinians are ignored, denied, trampled or evaded.'

Since the Palestinian question arose, the communists have always consistently and steadfastly stood for the cause of the Arab people of Palestine. The communists' stand in the fight for its just solution was the subject of an exchange of views sponsored by the WMR Commission on Problems of the National-Liberation Movement in Asian and African countries, with the following taking part in the discussion: Michel Kamel, Political Bureau member, Egyptian Communist Party; Adib Dimitry, veteran Egyptian communist and journalist; Albert Farhat, CC member, Lebanese Communist Party; Omar Al-Fassi, CC Political Bureau member, Party of Progress and Socialism of Morocco; Naim Ashhab and Issa Mdanat, CC Political Bureau members, Jordanian Communist Party; Arabi Awwad, CC member, Jordanian Communist Party, and Varouge Saletan, CC alternate member, Syrian Communist Party.

Below is a summary of their statements in the exchange of opinion.

In his opening speech, Naim Ashhab, member of the WMR Editorial Council, said that there is now growing interest everywhere in the Palestinian problem and a growing understanding that its solution is the central element of a settlement of the Middle East conflict. Sadat's betrayal has once again demonstrated that surrender under pressure from U.S. imperialism and the Israeli rulers merely puts off the prospect for establishing a just and lasting peace and cannot in general lead to any peaceful solution whatsoever, even of the kind the imperialists and Zionists envisage. There is a growing conviction that any attempts to side-step the Palestinian problem are doomed to fail.

At the same time, a fairly large section of world opinion is still less than fully aware of the tragic condition of the Arab people of Palestine, which have been deprived of their homeland for over 30 years. Some also fail to understand the true substance of Zionism as an extreme reactionary and racist movement, whose aggressive acts pose a threat to peace not only in the Middle East, but throughout the world.

Ashhab then said that the Israeli rulers' policy of actual genocide with respect to the Arab people of Palestine has an ever more pronounced effect on Israeli society as well. This applies both to the socio-economic sphere, where there is a mounting drive on the working people's living standards, and to the sphere of politics. Fascist groupings and bands of raiders and killers have been stepping up their activity. They have been stockpiling weapons for use against the Arab population with a view to completely driving the Arabs from their native lands. The policy of the Zionist elite has turned the people of Israel into a hostage to world imperialism, above all U.S. imperialism, and the country now also faces a looming threat of fascism. Life has shown once again that Engels was right when he said that no people oppressing other peoples can be free.

Another dangerous plot

Issa Mdanat said that the Palestinian problem was itself produced by imperialism, which for many years fanned friction among the Arab peoples in mandated Palestine, pursuing its policy of divide and rule. It encouraged the Zionists' aggressive aspirations, and in 1948 gave its blessings to the rulers of Israel and the Arab reactionary regimes for their gross infringement of the national rights of the Arab people of Palestine. Let us recall that the UN General Assembly's Resolution of November 29, 1947, envisaged the establishment of two states in Palestine—a Jewish state and an Arab state. But as a result of the first Arab-Israeli war, the territory designated for the Arab state was divided between Israel, Jordan and Egypt. In this way the Arabs of Palestine were deprived of the right to self-determination and the establishment of their own state.

Just now attempts are being renewed to deprive—but in a new form—the Arab Palestinian people of its legitimate and inalienable rights. This is an effort to realize a plot, said Arabi Awwad, whose purpose is to isolate the Palestinian national

movement, to undermine it and wipe it out. One of the most dangerous manifestations of this plot is the Camp David deal, as a result of which a major Arab state, Egypt, has sided with the enemies of the Palestinian people.

At present, the participants in the Camp David deal are discussing a project for establishing an 'autonomous administration' on the Arab territories occupied by Israel, and have not given up their attempts to find among 'moderate' Palestinians potential traitors to the national cause prepared to cater for the realization of their schemes. This project has the purpose of obliterating the Palestinian problem, of taking it off the agenda as the national problem of a people deprived of the possibility of enjoying its legitimate rights. Simultaneously, the Israeli authorities have been putting through extensive measures to colonize the occupied Arab lands, have continued to drive the native population off these lands and to set up new militarized settlements on them, a practice which has been repeatedly condemned by the international community. Menachem Begin, the Israeli Prime Minister, said that the question of 'Judaea and Samaria' (as Israel's Zionist rulers call the West bank of the Jordan River) is not subject to review, because that land is the homeland of the Israeli people and the presence of Israeli troops on it does not amount to occupation but to 'liberation.'

In Lebanon — now the main base of the Palestine Resistance Movement (PRM), the Israeli militarists have not ceased their aggressive acts, declaring that they want to wipe out the resistance forces, and to draw Lebanon into the Camp David alliance. Directly abetting this is the internal fascist-minded reaction and the right-wing Christian separatists in Lebanon. Making use of the Arab countries' inability to put up real resistance to this piracy, Michel Kamel said, the Israeli thugs seek to spread in the hearts of the population of this country, which has become an object of aggression, feelings of despair and despondency, and to incite them against the Palestinian contingents. At the same time, it is being suggested that some kind of 'new' and 'just' solutions are possible. One of these actually boils down to an attempt to 'exchange' the Palestine Resistance Movement for Haddad's 'state'² to eliminate the 'state' at the price of disarming the Palestinian fighters.

However, the participants in the discussion emphasized, the sponsors and executors of the plot have failed to attain their goals. The Camp David accords and their consequences have been strongly condemned and rejected by all the Arab peoples, the patriotic regimes in the Arab countries, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and all the progressive national forces. The Arab states-members of the Steadfastness and Rejection Front have adopted — notably at their meeting in Damascus — important decisions aimed at invigorating the struggle against the plot by the forces of imperialism, Zionism and reaction. The need for a strategic alliance with the USSR and the other socialist-

community countries was posed with greater clarity and definition than ever before.

At the Baghdad summit meeting, even Arab countries with reactionary, or so-called moderate regimes were forced, despite some attempts to maneuver, to bow to the unanimity of the Arab peoples and their progressive patriotic forces, and to condemn the Camp David deal. They had to agree to some political and economic sanctions against the Sadat regime and to mount an actual Arab boycott against it.

The Camp David and the Washington 'peace' treaty between Egypt and Israel have led to a fresh upswing in the Palestinians' mass struggle. A powerful tide of strikes, marches and manifestations has rolled across the occupied Arab lands, with their participants indignantly protesting against the fresh attempt to deny the Arab people of Palestine the restoration of its legitimate national rights. The veritable nation-wide storm of wrath has become an insuperable barrier to the attempts by the Camp David alliance to find individuals among the Palestinians who would agree openly and unconditionally to side with them as the traitor Sadat has done.

The resistance movement has been activated in Lebanon as well. According to Awwad, hundreds of enthusiastic volunteers from various Arab countries have arrived in Lebanon to take part in military operations on the side of the progressive patriotic forces and Palestine resistance contingents.

The participants in the discussion declared that the plot of imperialism, Zionism and reaction against the Arab people of Palestine poses an exceptional danger. But what is most important is that its main purpose has not been achieved. The plotters have failed to put an end to the Palestine national movement, to undermine and destroy the resistance forces, and to 'evade' the Palestinian problem, which continues to be pivotal to the ongoing confrontation, and the key issue of a Middle East settlement.

Schemes to split the movement

Speakers said that Camp David is not only a new attack by imperialism, Zionism and reaction against the Arab national-liberation movement, but is also evidence that their moves against it are running into an impasse. The sponsors of the Camp David deal have, of course, scored a major success by wresting Egypt from the united Arab front against the Zionist aggressor and winning it over to their side. But if this is not followed by further steps, if no new breach is made in pan-Arab solidarity, the situation could become dangerous for them, and they are aware of this.

The Arab world is now faced with another Camp David, that is, a continuation of the old Camp David line, but in a new, subtler and more camouflaged form. It is already being said that the first step along this way did, indeed, entail some mistakes and miscalculations, but that these can be overcome in the future and that the 'Palestinian people's' demands will be taken more fully into account.'

What does this mean in concrete terms?

Mdanat drew attention to the fact that there was good reason why after the Arab peoples indignantly rejected both the Camp David accords and the Washington 'peace' treaty between Egypt and Israel, and after the Sadat regime, which has taken the path of capitulation, found itself in profound isolation in the Arab world, the United States began to hint at some possible review of its foreign-policy line in the Middle East, and a more favorable attitude to the legitimate interests of the Arab people of Palestine. Awwad noted the emergence of statements about the 'impossibility of ignoring the Palestinian problems,' about 'the Palestinians' national aspirations' and even about a 'Palestinian homeland.' Some U.S. officials have even taken some action in an effort to convince the rest of the world that there is a trend among U.S. ruling circles to take a new approach to the whole complex of Middle East problems.

Speakers were unanimous that any talk about alleged changes in the U.S. stand is altogether groundless. Its purpose is to split the ranks of the Arab and Palestinian liberation movement, by producing among unstable elements inclined to conciliation illusions concerning the possibility of attaining the Palestinian people's national goals with the aid of U.S. imperialism, so suggesting that it is inexpedient to concentrate their fire against U.S. policy in the region. This talk is also aimed to encourage the capitulationists in the Arab ranks, who keep saying that the key to a settlement is in the hands of the United States, which is why its favorable attitude needs to be secured by any means.

U.S. imperialism, Awwad emphasized, has led and continues to lead the plot against the Arab national-liberation movement. It was the chief architect of the Camp David deal, and the inspirer and accomplice of Sadat's treachery. The United States has not repudiated Camp David or the project for establishing an 'autonomous administration' on the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel. It still refuses to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and has flatly rejected the idea of an independent Palestinian state. It is only the tremendous U.S. military-political assistance that has enabled Israel to retain the Arab lands it has seized, to colonize them and to mount ceaseless aggressive acts against neighboring states.

In this context, Kamel pointed to the great danger of the attempts by reactionary and right-wing forces to distract attention from U.S. imperialism as the arch-enemy of the Arab national-liberation movement, to ignore and sever the close organic connection between it and the Zionist state of Israel, and to reduce the whole matter to the personality of the traitor Sadat. These forces, while maintaining and even strengthening the relations with the United States, especially in the commercial and financial sphere, confine themselves to verbal attacks on Israel and, since Camp David, on Sadat. This approach was also reflected in the decisions of the Baghdad summit, which did not contain anything that was directed against U.S., notably oil, interests

in the region. The point is, speakers emphasized, that it is impossible to frustrate the plot of imperialism, Zionism and reaction without active resistance to U.S. policy, without undermining the economic, political, military and ideological positions of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East.

The participants in the discussion devoted much attention to the stand on the Palestinian problem taken by the West European states and by the social democratic parties of Western Europe which constitute the core of the Socialist International. Mdanat drew attention to the fact that hints about a 'new role' for Western Europe and the European Economic Community in the Middle East conflict began to appear simultaneously with attempts to substantiate a 'change' in the U.S. stance. But there is no hard evidence of such a change. Can one speak of a change in the stand of the Socialist International, when Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, the leader of the Austrian socialists, who is usually referred to in this context, gave only the most general mention to the rights of the Arab people of Palestine in his speech in the United Nations, without having come out clearly in support of its right to set up an independent national state?

Awwad said that the West European countries, while declaring their support for a just settlement of the Palestinian problem, in effect regard Camp David as a fait accompli and as a step toward the establishment of peace. They assert that there is a need to go on moving along the Camp David way, that is, to try to involve the Palestinians as well in the negotiations between the United States, Egypt and Israel.¹ The promises about the prospects for solving the Palestinian problem are invariably accompanied by statements about the need for 'moderation' and 'struggle against the extremists.' Thus Kreisky said that there were 'many communists among the Palestinians,' and then went on to emphasize that those who 'take a moderate stand' should be involved in the negotiations. The real purpose of these moves is to split the Palestinian ranks, to pit various Palestinian contingents against one another, and ultimately to undermine the Palestinian national movement as a whole.

In Saletan's opinion, many of the acts taken by the states and social democratic parties of Western Europe are covertly inspired by U.S. imperialism. There is a definite allocation of roles. The United States lays stress on the cajoling of Jordan in an effort to wrest it from the front of pan-Arab solidarity, to give up support for at least the minimum level of the accord that has been reached at Baghdad. Simultaneously, through the parties of the Socialist International, the United States seeks to influence the PLO in order to induce it to depart from the struggle against the Camp David deal and Sadat's treachery. The purpose here is to weaken the resistance faced by the Camp David alliance, to isolate Syria and subsequently to force it to capitulate, and ultimately to inflict a blow on the liberation movement in the whole Arab world.

Joining in the discussion of this question, Albert Farhat said that there was good reason for the

dangerous acts of the West European countries and the Socialist International parties. One should consider the time and the conditions in which these acts were first carried out. Are they not a reflection of the impasse into which the efforts of U.S. imperialism in the Middle East have run?

The social democrats and the communists are divided by very deep ideological differences. But the presence of the common threat from the most aggressive imperialist circles creates the possibility for their joint action in the international arena. This is exemplified by the meeting between a working group of the Socialist International on disarmament problems with General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Leonid Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders.

One cannot, of course, regard the Socialist International as a reliable ally. One must have no illusions that it will be able to play the crucial role in a Middle East settlement and in the solution of the Palestinian problem. But it is not right either to see everything everywhere as expressions of a plot, Farhat said.

There have been many instances in modern history, Mdanat said, when U.S. imperialism, the striking force and outpost of world imperialism, has been forced to retreat. But it has never made concessions voluntarily. It has retreated only in defeat. Imperialism, Zionism, and reaction have started a fierce offensive against the Arab peoples and the liberation movement. This offensive has naturally come out against resistance and rebuffs, but it has not suffered a defeat. That being so, is it right to talk about a retreat of U.S. imperialism, and also of the imperialist states of Western Europe and the Socialist International parties, which act as a reserve of world imperialism and are frequently used by it for its purposes? Of course, not. That is why continued vigilance with respect to the moves by the West European powers and the Socialist International parties is justified and necessary.

The participants in the discussion reaffirmed their parties' assessment that U.S. imperialism is Enemy Number One of the Arab, including the Palestinian, national-liberation movement. They emphasized the importance of using any inter-imperialist contradictions in the interests of the Arabs' just cause. But it is altogether wrong and extremely harmful in practical political terms to present this as an alternative to stepping up the liberation struggle in all its forms, and to strengthening and developing the natural strategic alliance of the fighters for liberation with the Soviet Union and other socialist-community countries.

Feasibility of program, unity of ranks

In the course of the discussion, much attention was given to the question of why the moves of imperialism, Zionism and reaction against the Palestinian national movement have run into an impasse. And this is a situation which cannot in any sense be regarded as unfavorable for the forces of national liberation in the Arab world.

Just as the destiny of the Arab people of Palestine

is closely connected with that of all the other Arab peoples, so its struggle for a restoration of its legitimate and inalienable national rights is a component part of the common liberation struggle. The Palestinian national movement is exerting a great influence on the Arab anti-imperialist movement as a whole, on the situation in all the Arab countries, and on the conditions in which the progressive patriotic forces have to fight. Omar Ali-Fassi said that the Palestinian problem also has an influence on the situation in his country, Morocco, despite its relative remoteness from the Arab East and the actual zone of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Lebanese representative emphasized that over a period of more than 30 years it has invariably had a revolutionizing effect, helping to deepen the anti-imperialist content of the Arab peoples' liberation movement and acting as a factor radicalizing the political and socio-economic transformations in the Arab countries since 1948.

Nor is this surprising. After all, it is specific to the Palestinian people's struggle that it has to fight against the bluntest and most savage forms of colonialism and occupation, against wild anti-Arab Zionist chauvinism, and against gross attempts to cast doubt on the very fact of the national existence of the Palestinian Arabs and to deprive them of the right to a homeland and the establishment of a state of their own. The Arab people of Palestine are in direct confrontation with imperialism and Zionism, its product, which Farhat described as an expansionist, racist movement, with a special role in the destiny of the Arab world as an instrument of neo-colonialism in Asia and Africa.

To this day, the plot against the just cause of the Arab people of Palestine has not yielded the desired results, Mdanat said, primarily because in contrast to the situation after the 1948 disaster, the struggle for national liberation has been taken up by broad masses of Palestinians as their own cause. They reject tutelage from the forces seeking to deprive them of the right to take independent political decisions. The Palestinian national movement has become a movement of the whole people. It is led by the Palestine Liberation Organization, which has been recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine and which in that capacity has won broad international recognition. It has won prestige because of its steadfastness in the struggle, because it is truly national and patriotic, and because all the Palestinian masses are rallied round it. The latter was demonstrated most unequivocally when the Arab population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip resolutely rejected every attempt to isolate it from the PLO.

What is highly important, speakers noted, is that, compared with 1948, the political program of the Palestinian national movement has undergone radical change: it has become much more mature and realistic. The time has passed when extremist declarations about the need to solve the Palestinian problem by 'driving the Jews into the sea' and liberating the lands 'from the river to the sea'⁴ provided fuel for Zionist propaganda. The new and

much more constructive approach⁵ helped world opinion to become more aware of the fact that the Palestinians do not demand anything unacceptable and that, on the contrary, their demands in the present situation are reasonable and can be met. Speakers noted in this context that in the recent period the PLO was also recognized by a number of West European countries, a new and important positive element in the development of the Middle East situation.

The strengthening of the unity of the Palestinian ranks is a key condition of success in their struggle. Only if it is united, can the Palestinian people mobilize all its forces and potentialities, give a resolute rebuff to the acts of the imperialist-Zionist adversary, and secure the realization of its legitimate and just national aspirations. There is a need, Al-Fassi said, to avoid contradictions and conflicts on secondary issues, by putting what is main and basic over and above what is superficial and insignificant. In this connection, speakers pointed to the great importance of the January 1979 session of the Palestine National Council, which adopted a program for national Palestinian unity.

Being an organic component of the Arab national-liberation movement, the Palestinian national movement has a direct stake in the utmost strengthening of cooperation and coordination of action with the progressive patriotic forces in the Arab world consistently backing the Palestinians in their just struggle.

In the present situation, much importance is attached to the solid alliance between the Palestinian national movement and the Lebanese patriotic movement, because the main bases of the Palestinian resistance movement are now located on the territory of Lebanon. Shoulder to shoulder with the fighters of the Palestinian contingents, Lebanese patriots and democrats have been beating back attacks by right-wing fascist-isolationist armed formations and the Israeli aggressor. The combat unity of the forces of the Lebanese patriotic movement and the Palestinian resistance movement served as a shield for the PRM in the civil war which flared up in the Lebanon and in the conditions of unceasing Israeli aggression.

Special attention was also given to the relations between the Palestinian national movement and the progressive patriotic regime in Syria. The attempts to remove the Palestinian problem from the agenda are now directed precisely against that country and its consistent line of rebuffing the imperialist-Zionist schemes in the Middle East and the capitulationist plans for an American-style settlement.

The Palestinian national movement is on the side of Egypt's progressive, patriotic forces, and regards itself as their ally. The Palestinians are aware that one of the goals of the traitor Sadat and those who have cleared the way for him was to deal a blow at these forces.

The communists play a prominent role in many sectors of the struggle, above all in the occupied territories. They are the most steadfast and consis-

tent champions of the just cause of the Arab people of Palestine, whose victory will also be their own victory. Mdanat cited the example of the activity of the Palestinian communist organization in the West Bank, a branch of the Jordanian Communist Party. He specifically mentioned its work within the Palestinian National Front, a mass political organization set up in August 1973. On it are represented various organizations and forces: Al-Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and progressive patriotic leaders, including the mayors of several cities. The communists have a leading place within the front.

In Lebanon, communists are taking part, shoulder to shoulder with the resistance fighters, in the mass armed struggle, demonstrating their combat and ideological and political steadfastness in the most difficult sectors. The participation of the Syrian Communist Party in the activity of the Progressive National Front is a significant contribution to the common cause.

The stand taken by the overwhelming majority of Palestinian organizations on the persecution of the Iraqi Communist Party in its own country, provides an example of solidarity and cooperation between Palestinian liberation fighters and the communists of the Arab countries, Awwad said. These organizations sided with the Iraqi communists and offered asylum and various support to many of them who were forced to leave their country.

The strengthening and development of ties between the Palestinian national movement and the communists of the Arab countries create the conditions for enhancing their role in the struggle for a just solution of the Palestinian problem and meeting the legitimate national demands of the Arab people of Palestine.

It was said in the course of the discussion that the Palestinian national movement, which needs allies both for its consolidation and for attaining final victory, has been growing and gaining in strength by moving closer to other forces of the world revolutionary process. Of fundamental importance for the movement here is the utmost strengthening of various forms of cooperation with its natural ally: the Soviet Union and the other socialist-community states, because without their support it could not have withstood the direct attack from the united front of the forces of imperialism, Zionism and reaction. That is why such a great danger is posed by the attempts to contrast the slogan of a strategic alliance with the socialist countries with other alternatives, or the attempts to regard the socialist states only as a source of material assistance and suppliers of arms.

The participants in the discussion said that all the achievements of the Palestinian national movement have resulted from the persevering and dedicated struggle by the Arab people of Palestine over the decades, the steadfastness of the Palestinian Resistance Movement, the masses of people in the occupied territories, the all-round and growing assistance from the allies of the Palestinian liberation fighters, primarily the Soviet Union and

the other countries of the socialist community. But although these achievements are incontestable, they are still only tactical, and have not developed into a strategic success, into a decisive victory over the imperialist-Zionist adversary.

Obstacle to success

Why has it been impossible up to now finally to frustrate the plot by the forces of imperialism, Zionism and reaction, and to take the decisive step toward a real solution of the Palestinian problem taking into account the legitimate national aspirations of the Arab people of Palestine?

Speakers were unanimous in the view that the root cause lay in the crisis of the Arab national-liberation movement. Farhat said that according to the conclusions drawn by the Fourth Congress of the Lebanese Communist Party, this crisis is essentially a crisis of leadership of the movement, a crisis of the monopolization of leadership by representatives of the petty bourgeoisie.

The progressive patriotic forces of the Arab world, including the ruling regimes taking an anti-imperialist stand, are not yet capable of uniting their ranks, wrenching the initiative from the hands of reaction and putting an end to its offensive. Adib Dimityr emphasized that the main thing that has enabled the Camp David deal to evade a total fiasco for such a long time, that has enabled Sadat and his ilk to conduct with impunity the ignominious and treacherous line is the incapability displayed by the national-patriotic authorities in the Arab countries to give a fitting rebuff to the plotters.

The progressive Arab forces are still divided, noted Al-Fassi, and there are contradictions between their contingents which are not always based on principle. These forces have yet to work out a sufficiently clear-cut common political line, to define the concrete tasks for the near future and the long term, and to formulate the relevant slogans that could rouse broad masses of people to action.

The weakness of the Arab national-liberation movement has an influence on the Palestinian national movement. With the present unfavorable alignment of forces in the Arab world, it is an illusion to hope for a truly just settlement of the Palestinian problem. To achieve such a settlement, there is a need above all to overcome the crisis of the Arab national-liberation movement.

Speakers said that the struggle to ensure and extend democracy in the Arab countries is an important aspect of these efforts. It is the policy of curtailing and suppressing democratic rights and freedoms that was one of the causes of the 1967 defeat, which started the crisis in the Arab national-liberation movement. The fact that masses of people, the progressive patriotic forces, parties and organizations cannot exercise their democratic rights does irreparable harm to the struggle to do away with the aftermath of the Israeli aggression, to liberate the occupied territories, to secure a just solution of the Palestinian problem, and to establish lasting peace in the Middle East. It is impossible to

defeat the imperialist-Zionist adversary without the active and direct support of the masses.

At the same time, recalled Kamel, after 1967, in the face of a rising tide of popular resistance to the aggressor and literally millions of volunteers flocking to the recruitment centers, even Nasser, undoubtedly an outstanding national leader, dissolved the armed resistance organizations in Egypt, so dampening down the mass élan. He held that it was up to the army to fight for liberation, and up to the people to work in production, and so in fact kept the broad masses from actual participation in the battle. Clarifying his idea, the speaker said: it is not a matter of substituting mass action for the regular army; but it is not right to regard the struggle against the adversary only as a task for the military, a task which the masses of people have nothing to do with.

The basis on which Sadat was able to commit his act of treachery, Mdanat said, was the absence of democracy in Egypt. The tragic events in Iraq, where repression was directed against the communists, who cooperated in the National Progressive Front with the ruling Baath Party, and against other democrats, also resulted from the absence of democracy. This could happen again in other Arab countries unless a persevering struggle is carried on to ensure democratic freedoms. This struggle strengthens the front of the progressive patriotic forces in each Arab country and on the scale of the whole Arab world.

At the same time, it is possible and necessary to insist on an extension of democracy within the Palestinian movement itself, within the PLO, on the need to have all the militant Palestinian forces, including the communists, represented on all its organs, especially, the Executive Committee. For a long time now, the Jordanian Communist Party has been working for this end. If the communists were represented on the Executive Committee, this would certainly narrow down the opportunities for moves by right-wing elements. On the other hand, it would help to do away with the suspicious attitude to the communists which one still finds even in the ranks of the patriotic forces in the Arab countries.

The participants in the discussion expressed profound concern over the crisis in the Arab national-liberation movement which has a negative effect on the Palestinians in realizing their just and noble goals. Conversely, unification in this struggle of all the progressive patriotic forces, both among the Palestinians and in the Arab world generally, and strengthening of relations with their natural allies — the Soviet Union and the other socialist states — create more favorable conditions for overcoming the crisis of the movement.

Contending trends

It was said in the course of the discussion that the Palestinian national movement reflects not only the basic contradiction between the Arab people's liberation struggle and the policy of imperialism in the Middle East, but also the class contradictions inherent in the Arab world. This creates the basis

for the contest of various trends within the movement involving social sections and groups which have a different class nature.

One such trend is the extremist deviation which, behind a screen of 'leftist' talk, has refused to set any real goals in the struggle and has reduced it to a single form, armed acts, which are frequently terrorist. Its spokesmen reject the idea of an independent Palestinian state on the territories liberated from the Israeli invaders, oppose political and diplomatic activity in the international arena and deny the need to cooperate with the progressive forces of Israel. All of this prevents a further rise in the Palestinian people's struggle and does it grave harm.

While stressing the need most resolutely to overcome this trend, speakers noted that the extremists are being weakened by the strengthening of the positions of the constructive forces in the Palestinian national movement. In this context, Awwad said that the Rejection Front⁶ is now actually no more than a name. Characteristically, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which had been a part of it and which had declared its withdrawal from the PLO Executive Committee, has now applied for readmission.

The other trend is right-capitulationist. Mdanat, agreeing with Farhat's view that as the contradictions between the Arab people of Palestine and the imperialist-Zionist bloc are acute and irreconcilable, the Palestinian bourgeoisie's possibilities for maneuvering were objectively narrower than those of the bourgeoisie in other Arab countries, said that this did not mean that it had no such opportunities at all. Some of its strata and spokesmen have shown an inclination to make a deal with imperialism, and their attempts to maneuver may assume the most diverse forms. Thus, after the conclusion of the Camp David accords and the Egyptian-Israeli 'peace' treaty, some Palestinians suggested that these were acceptable. Moreover, some, like the mayor of Gaza Rashad al-Shawa or the mayor of Bethlehem Ilias Frej, announced their readiness to join in the negotiations on the establishment of an 'autonomous administration.' It is true that they were later forced to repudiate such statements under powerful pressure from the Palestinian masses and the progressive patriotic forces, which unanimously condemned Sadat's traitorous and capitulationist line.

Conciliatory trends have also been in evidence within the PLO itself. One of its leaders tried, at a meeting with the West Bank mayors, to induce them to collaborate with persons like Rashad al-Shawa and Ilias Frej. The existence of such trends will also be seen from the attempts — with the growth of the PLO's international recognition — to confine its activity to the political and diplomatic field.

In view of the tough stand taken by Israel's Zionist rulers, who flatly reject even the consideration of the right of the Arab people of Palestine to self-determination and the establishment of an independent national state, some circles have once

again started to talk about the possibility of returning to the project for a United Arab Kingdom in some form.⁷ The problem is posed as follows: what is better for the West Bank Palestinians: life under Israel's administration or under the Jordanian monarchy?

Speakers emphasized that there is no question here at all of any 'preference' for this or that type of national oppression. There is a need not to choose 'the best' oppressor, but firmly and consistently to stand up in defense of the inalienable and legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine.

Considering the dangers arising from the use of the Palestinian problem to fan nationalism, Kamel said that it was not only progressive patriotic but also right-wing, conservative and even reactionary forces that sided with the Palestinian national movement. They are doing so under pressure from the masses and public opinion in each country and in the Arab world as a whole, but also in the light of their own interests. By bringing the Palestinian problem to the fore, they want to divert attention from the social struggle in their own countries and to get a free hand in conducting their line against those who want a change of the existing social system. In the same way, the right-wing and reactionary forces seek to justify their repression, the maintenance of the state of emergency and the curbs on democracy, thereby receiving dividends from nationalism, if one could put it that way.

The participants in the discussion agreed that the right-capitulationist trend now presents the main danger and pointed to the need for the most uncompromising struggle against it. At the same time, they stressed that the healthy patriotic trend undoubtedly prevails within the Palestinian national movement, that it is led by forces which on the whole take a progressive and consistently anti-imperialist stand, and that it is the vanguard combat contingent of the Arab national-liberation movement.

Preparing the future victory

The participants in the discussion also considered the ways and means for enhancing the communists' role in the national-liberation struggle of the Arab peoples, including the people of Palestine. They accentuated the need for a creative approach to working out a positive position resting on an in-depth study of the fundamental problems of the national-liberation movement, and of the place and role in it of the working class and its parties.

In this context, Farhat urged the need for a critical evaluation by the communists of their positions, stressing that a study of the concrete political situation alone, without an elaboration of strategic problems could — and this is most dangerous — make the communists' participation in tackling current issues qualitatively inadequate and limited.

Among the key problems requiring such an approach was above all the problem of strategy and tactics of the communist parties on class and political alliances.

Dimitry said that the question of alliances became

especially acute after the June 1967 aggression, which showed the inability of the progressive patriotic regimes in the Arab countries to stand up to the imperialist-Zionist adversary. At that time, the slogan of Arab solidarity was directly embodied in the convocation of the Khartoum summit meeting in August-September 1976.

This was not, of course, a mistake in tactical terms. The meeting yielded important positive results within the limits of the potentialities which existed after such a grave defeat. However, because strategic problems were not considered in adequate depth, the slogan of Arab solidarity was used to smuggle in ideas of a coalescence with Arab reaction and these ultimately led to Sadat's betrayal. These ideas were not met with sufficient resistance because of the absence of any mature counter-concepts. There were only the most general formulas like 'protracted liberation war,' 'struggle arms in hand,' etc.

By now, Kamel said, such ideas have, in effect, taken shape as a full-fledged action program enjoying the support of sufficiently influential forces in various Arab countries. Among these forces one will also find once progressive-minded intellectuals who, while urging 'realistic' thinking, are engaged in spreading illusions about the possibility of Arab reaction switching to anti-imperialist positions and even persistently advertising Saudi Arabia's role as the leader of the Arab national-liberation movement. An example is offered by Lufti el-Kholi's articles in the journal *Al Watan al Araby*.

In face of the dangerous plot, conceived and implemented by the Camp David alliance, the problem of Arab solidarity, Dimitry said, becomes even more important. The Baghdad summit meeting was marked by solidarity. From the tactical standpoint one has to recognize that its decisions were limited. But one should not lose sight of the fact that at the meeting attempts were made to prevent any far-reaching steps and to impede the radicalization of the Arab positions.

Arab patriots now have to operate in a very complicated situation. On the one hand, the dangerous offensive by imperialism, Zionism and reaction and the growing fascist threat increase the need to establish fronts and alliances of the broadest spectrum of political and class forces. But the differentiation and polarization of these forces is simultaneously intensified. To determine the line of action in these conditions, there is a need to comprehend and elaborate creatively the problem of the allies of the working class and the communist movement. Attention was also drawn to the importance of a more profound study of the socio-historical nature and class substance of international Zionism. Up to now, the progressive forces in the Arab world laid stress on exposing the aggressive practices of Zionism and showing the organic ties between the state

of Israel and imperialism. But a sizable part of world public opinion still has some sympathy for the present-day Zionist movement, being under the impression of the memories of the savage persecution of the Jews in the fascist period. This creates definite difficulties in winning over world public opinion for the Arab peoples' just cause. It is all the more necessary to expose the real roots of Zionism and to bare its true substance as a movement representing one of the forms of racism, which makes it akin to fascism.

There is a need, Mdanat remarked, to continue the exposure of China's subversive anti-Arab acts in the Middle East. That is not to say, of course, that China enjoys great influence in the Arab world or that many contingents of the Arab national-liberation movement are oriented upon it. Not at all. But there are still some illusions about Peking's policy with respect to the liberation struggle of the Arab peoples in general and the people of Palestine in particular. That is why it is necessary to expose the reactionary pro-imperialist substance of the Chinese leadership's line, and its hostility to all forces of peace, democracy, national liberation and socialism.

Summing up the exchange of views, its participants emphasized that, despite the danger of a plot threatening the Arab people of Palestine, it can be thwarted. Evidence of this is provided by the remarkable victories scored by the revolutionary and national-liberation movement of the peoples of Asia and Africa over the recent period. Unity of the progressive patriotic forces, their steadfastness in the struggle, and their solid alliance with world socialism and all the other democratic forces are a reliable guarantee of victory over the united front of imperialism, Zionism and reaction.

1. Egypt established its administrative control over the Gaza Strip. — Ed.

2. A narrow strip of territory in the south of Lebanon controlled by troops under the command of Saad Haddad, a former major of the Lebanese army, who has proclaimed a 'state' of his own in the area. Haddad's units operate in direct contact and collaboration with the Israeli army and are actually being supplied by it.

3. The results of the EEC summit in Venice in June 1980 made no difference to this assessment. Their declaration on the Middle East was seen by the PLO and progressive Arab countries as support for Camp David.

4. Meaning the Jordan and the Mediterranean — Ed.

5. Thus, the political program of the Palestinian Resistance Movement adopted at the 12th session of the Palestine National Council, recorded the principle of the need to establish a Palestinian national entity on territories freed from the Israeli occupation as the aggressor pulls out its troops from the occupied Arab lands. — Ed.

6. Founded in 1974 after the 12th session of the Palestinian National Council. — Ed.

7. Put forward in March 1972. It provided for the unification of the West Bank and Trans-Jordan under the Hashimite monarchy. — Ed.