



## The people's will is unbroken — the struggle goes on

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The main objective of the U.S.-Israeli aggression in Lebanon, which was planned openly, before the very eyes of world opinion, are known well enough. This journal has commented on them,<sup>1</sup> and so I will only deal with the concomitants of the criminal act.

It was launched after the population of the occupied Palestinian areas had carried out actions unprecedented in extent and intensity against attempts to impose a so-called civilian administration. The Israeli authorities regarded it as a step toward the final annexation of the territories held by them since 1967. But the fight of the population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip showed the world that Tel Aviv's policy was meeting resistance among the Palestinians, who stand together in upholding their legitimate national demands. They are set on making the invaders go, on establishing an independent state and on securing the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes according to the UN resolutions. In the course of their actions the Palestinian people reaffirmed their solid unity behind the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as their only lawful spokesman. As for the invaders, they showed appalling brutality again by committing atrocious crimes. This outraged the world public, added to the international isolation of Israel's rulers and made the world so much more aware than before of the justice and legitimacy of the Palestinians' patriotic struggle. The PLO won greater prestige than ever.

However, there were other notable factors at work in the Middle East. They tended to create an atmosphere favorable to aggression and were undoubtedly taken into account by those who planned the invasion and decided on its timing. The more important of these factors may be listed as follows:

First, the process of "normalizing" relations between Egypt and Israel had been completed. It had led to the stationing of "a multinational force" in the Sinai, which definitively excluded a major Arab country from the score when the initiators of the aggression got down to assessing the balance of military forces.

Second, the Iranian-Iraqi war had exhausted both countries, primarily their armed forces, in two years of fighting. It deprived the Palestine Resistance Movement (PRM), Syria and the Lebanese National Patriotic Forces (NPF) of the two belligerents' material and manpower resources as a strategic reserve. As Rafael Eitan, Chief of the Israeli General Staff, put it, the armed conflict in the Persian Gulf had provided excellent conditions for the Zionists' aggression.

Third, the United States and NATO were building up their military presence in the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean; foreign troops were stationed in Egypt under the Camp David deal and a U.S. rapid deployment force was conducting war games in our area.

Fourth, steps had been taken to form a military bloc of Gulf countries under the aegis of Saudi Arabia, a measure fitting into Washington's bid for a "strategic consensus" intended to unite the reactionary regimes of the region, including the parties to the Camp David deal, on anti-Soviet lines.

In addition to these basic factors favorable to Tel Aviv's plans for aggression, there were less important ones that the aggressor took into account none the less. They included differences over secondary, passing disputes among the Arab forces committed to the struggle against imperialism, Zionism and Camp David. A further factor was the low efficiency of the Steadfastness and Resistance Front. This draw-

back stood out in bold relief precisely when the Front should have acted as a united vanguard to induce the Arab world as a whole to take a stand ensuring at least a minimum of what was needed to beat off the invaders.

Israel's aggression goes beyond regional bounds. It is also a stage in the process of stepping up world tensions begun by the Reagan administration, the most reactionary and aggressive U.S. administration of the recent period. The Middle East is in the flames of war, and this has turned our region into the source of a most serious threat to world peace.

The invasion of Lebanon brought out the qualitatively new level of Washington's and Tel Aviv's coordinated action in implementing the agreement on "strategic cooperation" signed by them in the autumn of 1981. Washington constantly offered a helping hand to the Israeli butchers perpetrating genocide in Lebanon. The aggressor's defense was assumed by none other than the U.S. President himself. Reagan virtually backed up Tel Aviv's big lie, the allegation that the Israeli invasion was a "defensive operation." The American bombs, missiles and shells used by the aggressor against the civilian population of Beirut were likewise described by him as "defensive."

Washington did not confine itself to supplying Israel with the latest deadly weapons, including cluster, pellet and phosphorous bombs prohibited under international agreements.<sup>2</sup> It protected the invaders diplomatically by vetoing Security Council decisions aimed at stopping the aggression. The behavior of the U.S. delegation was frankly obstructionist. It presented that international organization with a challenge of outrageous cynicism, undermining its efficiency and prestige.

The scenario of this cooperation was prepared and agreed on beforehand. Immediately after Israel had begun its armed action, Washington joined in what may be called Operation Camouflage. It was claimed that the invasion of Lebanon pursued a limited aim — that of safeguarding Israeli settlements in the border area against artillery and mortar fire from Palestinian fighters. The fraud was calculated to neutralize certain vacillating political forces in Arab countries.

When, however, Israeli troops crossed the line alleged to be the limit of their thrust into Lebanese territory, Washington changed its vocabulary and proceeded to fully support Israel's political claims, insisting that they be met as the price of halting the advance of the troops. What this meant in practice was the demand that all foreign troops be pulled out of Lebanon. In this way the Israeli army's bandit-like inva-

sion was equated with the presence of PRM fighters and Syrian troops forming part of the inter-Arab peace-keeping force moved in at the request of the lawful government of Lebanon and by decision of an Arab summit.

Lastly, after the Israeli troops had completed the encirclement of West Beirut, Reagan's personal envoy, Philip Habib, whose words and deeds in the diplomatic sphere were regularly backed up with devastating Israeli bombings and shellings, concentrated on securing the withdrawal of the Palestinian forces from the beleaguered city. But even at that stage of escalating aggression it became obvious that the Zionist hawks wanted not so much the removal of the Palestinian fighters from Beirut and Lebanon as the physical destruction of the PRM, above all the PLO leadership. Their barbarous intention found expression in the massacre of the inhabitants of West Beirut and in the clearly unacceptable conditions of withdrawal of the Palestinian fighters from Beirut put forward by them.

The Israeli gorillas' robber-like tactics were quietly okayed by Washington. However, pressure from an indignant world opinion, resolute warnings from the Soviet government and the staunchness of the heroic defenders of Beirut forced the White House to begin maneuvering. Reagan even voiced "anger" at the reckless behavior of his Israeli partner, but Tel Aviv's Ambassador to Washington, Moshe Arens, hastened to dismiss it as "anger in the context of very close strategic cooperation." Even the American press questioned the sincerity of the President's resentment. One paper said, not without reason: "He may not want to share responsibility for the dirty work, but does he really want it left undone?"<sup>3</sup> Another comment by the same paper read: "It is inconsistent for the United States to look forward to the larger strategic fruits of the operation without tolerating Israeli tactics, harsh as they may be."<sup>4</sup>

That Washington expected to pick these "larger strategic fruits" is beyond all doubt. Its primary aim was to defeat the Arab national liberation movement and impose its undivided domination on the region, meaning above all else monopoly control of the region's vast energy resources. The position of undisputed master would have enabled the United States to force its competitor-allies from certain positions and win greater opportunities of putting economic and political pressure upon them. These calculations added inevitably to what was already strong friction between Washington and its West European partners, above all France. The French reject the U.S. imperialists' claim to absolute hegemony in the

Middle East, especially since they are used to considering Lebanon a traditional sphere of their influence. Paris expressed discontent at the prospect of Israeli troops storming Beirut and offered to participate in the dispatch of international forces to disengage the belligerents. The French stance was also influenced by the growing protest of the country's democratic opinion against Israel's atrocities and by the expanding movement in support of the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine. The French communists played a vanguard role in this.

The utter degradation of rightist Arab regimes, which surrendered to imperialist and Zionist designs and stooped to renouncing national patriotic goals, stood out in stark contrast against the background of the "strategic cooperation" of the parties to the U.S.-Israeli alliance. They were reluctant to do even a minimum, such as helping call an urgent Arab summit so as to publicly take a common stand of some sort (I must note, however, that in the past this often served as a mere disguise for reluctance to put up effective resistance to the invaders).

What angered public opinion most of all was the disgraceful refusal of Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries to use the effective strategic weapon they possess — oil and enormous reserves of foreign exchange (over \$200 billion) deposited in West European and American banks — against aggression. Had they used or at least seriously threatened to use this weapon, Washington would have had to crack down on its men in Tel Aviv. But the reactionary Arab regimes shrank even from severing diplomatic relations with the United States in protest against its undisguised complicity in the aggression. Think how sadly the "noble anger" of the Saudi rulers, who all but broke off all relations with Britain over a film on the life and death of a Saudi princess, compares with their cringing to the patrons of genocide against the Lebanese and the Palestinians. And surely the verbal protests of the regime under Hosni Mubarak, who refused to do so much as freeze relations with the government of that blood-thirsty terrorist, Begin, were not worth much more.

Yet neither lavish military, financial and diplomatic aid to the aggressor from the United States, the Zionist invaders' unprecedented atrocities on Lebanese soil, the disunity of Arab states, nor outright betrayal on the part of reactionary regimes could break the will of the Lebanese and the Palestinians for resistance. The Tel Aviv strategists' plan for a blitzkrieg miscarried. The myth of the "invincibility" of

the Israeli army was exploded. The invasion made clearer than ever that Israel's "strength" lay primarily in the weakness of Arab regular armies with which the Israelis had to grapple in the past. The whole might of a colossal war machine was brought down on Lebanon. It was expected that over 100,000 troops supported by 1,000 tanks and covered by the most up-to-date aircraft of U.S. make would force Lebanon, Syria and the PRM to their knees in a matter of days. Defense Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel boasted that his army would accomplish the mission in a mere three days.

However, this time the aggressor came up against people's armed forces knowing what they were fighting for and prepared to hold out against any odds. Israel's casualties in Lebanon topped all those suffered by it in all previous military operations. For weeks fighters of the PRM and the Lebanese NPF operating in Beirut stood their ground against Israeli armored divisions and sustained bombing and shelling. At that time Beirut resembled in a way Paris during the 1871 Commune, for it was fighting not only against the superior forces of the Israeli invaders but against the Phalangists' fascist units and the apparatus of the Lebanese authorities, who submitted abjectly to the invaders' demands. The Israeli command will hardly ever have reason to pride itself on its military "gains" in Lebanon. The harsh lesson taught to the invaders will certainly have its effect on future developments in the region.

Nor did the parties to the U.S.-Israeli alliance achieve their main political objectives. In spite of the heavy casualties suffered by the Palestinian people and its armed units, the aggression proved counterproductive. Actions by world opinion, statements by many statesmen, the activity of the International Commission for inquiry into the crimes of Israel against the Lebanese and the Palestinian peoples and, lastly, the discussion of the Israeli aggression by the UN Security Council and the work of the Extraordinary Special Session of the UN General Assembly on the Palestinian problem played a very important part. More than ever before, they showed that the Palestinians' just cause enjoys international sympathy and appreciation. They also exposed the substance of Israel's expansionist policy and its role as a tool of imperialism in the region more than ever as well as the unprecedented isolation of Israel and its Washington backers.

The Palestinian and Lebanese patriots' courageous resistance and the invaders' losses in manpower and materiel also had an impact on the public mood in Israel itself, where there began an anti-war movement unparalleled in

scale. In the view of Israel's reactionary Zionist leadership, a dangerous rift opened in Israeli society. The democratic forces, especially the Communist Party of Israel, are gaining in prestige. The party again demonstrated its profound internationalism and real patriotism by demanding an end to aggression, to the policy of expansion and separate deals and by insisting on a just and comprehensive settlement of the Middle East problems with due regard to the interests of every people of the region, including the people of Palestine represented by the PLO.

In pursuing its aims, the U.S.-Israeli alliance relied primarily on the strength of the Zionist military machine. Along with this, at all stages it resorted in varying degree to other devices, such as political maneuvering, fraud and intrigues. The Israeli invaders tried, for instance, to differentiate their treatment of the Palestinians and the Lebanese in the occupied areas of Lebanon by brutally suppressing the former and showing a measure of leniency to the latter (except, needless to say, for the communists and other NPF members). Arab reaction, in turn, tried to discredit Syria by accusing it of reluctance to engage the enemy. It expected to weaken the Syrian regime in this way, isolate it at home and throughout the Arab world and exonerate reactionary Arab rulers from responsibility for their refusal to come to the aid of the victims of aggression. The thesis of an "alternative homeland" for the Palestinians, said to be Jordan, was used once more. This ploy was aimed at misleading world opinion and blackmailing the Jordanian regime into accepting Camp David and ultimately becoming an accomplice in the liquidation of the rights of the Palestinian people. At the same time steps were taken to pave the way for a new crime against the population of the Arab lands seized by the Zionists, the expulsion of the greater part of the inhabitants.

Israel also tried in various ways to arouse doubts about the effectiveness of Soviet aid to the victims of aggression. Among other things, it insisted on the alleged technical imperfection and ineffectiveness of arms supplied by the Soviet Union to those who were resisting the invaders. The battle of Beirut, fought against heavy odds by the combined forces of the PRM and the Lebanese NPF using these arms, once again proved the opposite. And its experience showed that besides possessing arms, one must know how to use them and, most important of all, be willing to fight.

Speaking of the political aspect of the matter, we wish to stress that the Soviet Union promptly took a firm stand against the Israeli

aggression and gave the victims the necessary moral and material aid and support. At hours that were crucial for the Palestinian and Lebanese patriots, the head of the Soviet government, Leonid Brezhnev, sent direct messages to President Reagan stressing the need to act without delay in order to curb the aggressor and stop the bloodshed. The Soviet Union again demonstrated the sincerity of its friendship and the depth of its solidarity with the Palestinian, Lebanese and all other Arab peoples. This found vivid expression in Leonid Brezhnev's telegram to Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO Executive, asking him to convey to the defenders of Beirut his admiration for their courage and staunchness. "We in the Soviet Union," the message said, "think highly of and appreciate the deep sense of responsibility and unshakable faith in the justice of your cause which you show in fighting to ensure that no more blood flows in the streets of Beirut and to secure the right of the Arab people of Palestine to life and free, independent development."<sup>5</sup>

The various dirty stratagems to which Tel Aviv and Washington had recourse failed to produce the results they sought. But it would be naive to imagine that these stratagems left no trace. It will take the communists and all other patriots much effort to clear away the falsehoods that were piled up, reveal the real causes and aims of the Israeli attack on Lebanon to millions of people and show who helped the invaders and how, and who defended the interests of the victims of aggression.

The Zionist plan to end the struggle of the Palestinian people by means of atrocities in the occupied areas and of genocide in Lebanon is bound to fail. Throughout their history, and more particularly since 1948, our people have repeatedly been a victim of heinous crimes on the part of imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction. But each time they recovered from reverses stronger than before and prepared to fight on. Neither difficulties nor sacrifices have broken their spirit and never will.

This is not to say, however, that vigilance in view of the enemy's treacherous schemes is no longer necessary. Fighting in Lebanon is not over and yet Israeli leaders have begun to hint at a new attempt to impose a "civilian administration" on the population of the occupied Palestinian territories, an attempt which in the past was defeated by a powerful upswing in popular resistance. During the fighting in Lebanon, Tel Aviv called for the resumption of the dialogue with "moderate elements" in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The occupation authorities look to collabora-

tion on the part of these elements as guarantee of pushing through the farce of "civilian administration."

At the same time repression against patriots in the occupied areas was stepped up. The Israeli invaders disbanded nine Arab municipalities which in Israel's view had shown particular militancy within the framework of national resistance to occupation. The persecution of mass organizations, primarily the unions, intensified and their leaders were thrown behind bars. There began raids on Arab villages during which the entire population was manhandled. Well-known fighters, such as Daoud al-Ataouna, a communist trade union leader, were ambushed and shot dead. Bandits from the so-called "village leagues" armed by Israel and recruited from out and out traitors and riff-raff, operated with growing insolence. Needless to say, all this was accompanied by boastful talk about "victories" of Israeli arms and by the allegation that the resistance forces were unable to hold their own against them.

There are many indications that the Israeli invaders do not plan to get out of Lebanon in the foreseeable future. In a setting dominated by the invaders' tanks and guns, Bashir Gemayel, leader of the right-wing Christian Kata'eb party, was elected Lebanon's new President. Menachem Begin himself sent him a congratulatory message. Official Washington, for its part, expressed satisfaction with Gemayel's election.

The likelihood of a new aggression against Syria cannot be ruled out. "The situation today," threatened Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Defense Minister, "is that all of Damascus is within artillery range of Israel."<sup>6</sup> The roar of battle, the Zionist top leadership believes, is a suitable background for announcing the formal annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. If this happened the population of both territories would find itself under a savage reign of terror aimed at making the majority, if not everyone, leave the settled areas. Securing "land without people" has always been a Zionist ideal.

In these circumstances it is highly important to preserve the PLO and its apparatus which world opinion sees as the embodiment of the Palestinian people's independent nationhood. The Israeli aggressors and their U.S. patrons calculate that with the Palestinian fighters out of Lebanon, both the PLO and the PRM will split from within. They expect that the Palestinians' settlement in several Arab countries will inevitably increase the influence of these countries, which often differ over the Palestinian problem, on various organizations of the resis-

tance movement and that this, in turn, will result in deeper contradictions between them.

Even now some people, such as Hosni Mubarak, plan to take up Sadat's initiative regarding the formation of a "Palestinian government in exile" that would "replace" the PLO. It took long years of unrelenting effort to win recognition of this organization in the Arab world and internationally as the only legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine. Yet it is now proposed that a "government in exile" be brought into being on the model of certain, mostly reactionary Arab "analogues." And if this "government" adopts a different position it will be denied recognition and cooperation by official Arab circles, or will have to fight them from birth. In any case, its formation in today's conditions would inevitably injure the national unity of the Palestinians and tell on Arab support of their cause.

There is a further danger to which our party has already called attention. Following the heavy fighting in Lebanon, it is reasonable to expect an intensification of two harmful trends in the Palestinian movement. One of them expresses itself in a search through the rulers of Egypt and Saudi Arabia for an unprincipled settlement on U.S. terms. This trend will be the principal danger at the next stage. The other trend may translate into an inclination to rash, adventurist moves ignoring the great complexity of the present situation. Diametrically opposed at first sight, the two trends are, in effect, a reflection of despair and frustration that may grow worse under the impact of the hardships of a protracted and grim struggle. There is a need for constant vigilance to prevent the loss of the big gains made in revealing the justice of the Palestinians' fight for their legitimate national rights to world opinion. A consistent and explicit political position in line with the UN resolutions on the Palestinian question is exceedingly important in this respect.

Speaking of the various pressing political and organizational problems, we wish to single out another two tasks of strategic importance. They are as follows:

- preserving the fighting alliance of the Palestinian revolution, Syria and the Lebanese NPF while overcoming likely contradictions or differences among them;

- promoting friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union as the paramount requisite of fruitful pursuit of the struggle for our people's national goals.

Lessons of recent years have shown that neither military ventures, nor separate deals can bring the peoples of our region real peace.

Attempts to revive the hopelessly deadlocked "Camp David process" by exploiting the aftermath of the aggression against Lebanon are apt to aggravate the situation still more. The Middle East conflict can only be settled by the joint efforts of the parties concerned, including, of course, the PLO as the sole legitimate spokesman of the Arab people of Palestine. This is one of the most important lessons of the Lebanese epic, which is certain to have a strong impact on the Arab national liberation movement as a whole and contribute to the maturing of conditions for fundamental, revolutionary changes in the region.

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1. See Rafic Samhoun, "When Masks Are Discarded," WMR, August 1982.

2. Since the founding of the State of Israel, the United States has granted it \$14.9 billion in aid. The Israeli Air Force is equipped with U.S. planes by 85 per cent. The Israeli Army has 1,460 M-60 and M-48 tanks and 4,000 armored personnel carriers purchased in the United States. Also, 90 per cent of its artillery, primarily 175 mm guns and the 155 and 203 mm howitzers firing cluster shells come from the Pentagon's arsenals. While this article was being written Israel was sent or was planned to receive a further 20 F-15 planes, 800 armored personnel carriers, 1,200 missile launchers and other military hardware worth \$1.5 billion.

3. *International Herald Tribune*, August 9, 1982.

4. *Ibid.*, August 7-8, 1982.

5. *Pravda*, August 6, 1982.

6. *International Herald Tribune*, August 16, 1982.