

Why Sadat Failed

by Toufiq Toubi

We are meeting five months after the Sadat visit to Israel, after the start of the new Sadat-Begin-Carter performance which shocked wide sections of world public opinion and confused the clear thinking of others. It is necessary to make some deductions for our continued struggle for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The fiasco of such an adventure is now clear, but the negative effects of such a pro-imperialist adventure were quick to unfold.

The harm done to the peace process in the Middle East—the undermining of the role of international organs such as the Geneva Conference, the wedge driven within Arab ranks, the prospect of strengthening Israel's militarist intransigence, the new plots hatched against the just rights of the Palestinian Arab people, and the PLO as their legitimate representative, and the new dangers emanating from the U.S. scheme for a new pro-imperialist alignment with Israel-Egypt-Saudi Arabia-Iran as its pivot to guarantee U.S. regional hegemony—of all these dangers we warned very seriously in time.

Events were quick to prove the correctness of our predictions. Instead of the peace which Sadat and Begin declared would be forthcoming, the Israeli ruling circles considered the political atmosphere created after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem to be convenient for a new aggression against Lebanon and against the Palestinian Arab people.

Exploiting the attack of Palestinian armed elements on Israeli civilian travellers on March 11th, an attack which we condemned as immoral (and incompatible with the struggle of a just national movement) and in our opinion detrimental to the just cause and struggle of the Palestinian Arab people, the Israeli militarists launched their barbaric invasion of Lebanon, aiming at liquidating the Palestinian movement and its armed struggle and annexing more Arab land. We differentiate, of course, between the just struggle of the Palestinian Arab people and the unjust aggressive fight of the rulers of Israel who have been carrying on a terrorist war of attrition against the Palestinian Arab people for decades.

Invasion Planned

We also knew, as Begin later confirmed, that Is-
Toufiq Toubi, deputy general secretary of the Communist Party of Israel, delivered this speech to an emergency session of the Bureau of the World Peace Council in Helsinki in April.

rael's invasion of Lebanon would have been carried out sooner or later irrespective of the Palestinian attack on civilians on March 11th.

The mass destruction of dozens of Lebanese villages by systematic air bombing, the criminal use against civilians of devastating cluster bombs and other destructive weapons, over two hundred thousand new refugees uprooted from their homes, the planned *blitzkrieg* by large land, air and sea forces, confirmed the plans of the Israeli government for new annexations and the physical elimination of the Palestinian Arab national existence.

Worldwide condemnation and the inability to liquidate the Palestinian people's heroic struggle, which has in fact gained new impetus, caused the new Israeli aggression to fail abominably, and sooner or later the Israeli army will have to withdraw. The bankruptcy of the policy of force is also causing second thoughts in Israel itself, where more people are recognising now the futility of such a policy and joining our condemnation and demand for immediate Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.

While the new U.S. imperialist-inspired adventure in Lebanon by the Begin government was encouraged by the Sadat-Begin honeymoon in Jerusalem and in Ismailia, at the same time it crystallized the consequences logically deduced from the Sadat-Begin-Carter performance.

The first important assertion from the impasse at which the Sadat-Begin-Carter efforts have arrived is that without a real change in the policy of the Israeli ruling circles, without their acceptance of the principle of total withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, without recognizing the just rights of the Palestinian Arab people, their right to self-determination and the formation of an independent state, alongside Israel, there can be no advance to a real, just settlement. Without such a basic change in Israel's policy toward the Palestinian people, there can only be capitulatory separate, temporary agreements finally detrimental to the cause of peace.

The obstacle to peace was never the lack of negotiations between Israel and the Arab countries as the Israeli ruling circles always alleged. Lately, King Hussein himself acknowledged that negotiations took place a number of times, but Israel's refusal to withdraw and to recognize the Palestinian's rights always caused such negotiations to fail.

It was proven that the obstacle was never lack of Arab recognition of Israel. Sadat came in person to Israel, asserted Egypt's recognition of Israel,

eliminating, according to his assertion, 70 percent of the causes of the conflict (which are, he alleged, psychological). Egyptian delegations went to Israel and Israeli delegations went to Egypt and nonetheless no settlement was reached.

It was proven that the obstacle to peace is, in reality, Israel's non-recognition of the just rights of the Arabs and its refusal to recognize any right, even the very existence, of the Palestinian Arab people.

There were, to our sorrow, people who call themselves friends of the Palestinian Arab people and of Israel who helped to create the absurd image that Begin is the strongman who will strike a deal for peace. Begin's response to Sadat's humiliating overture was the very opposite—namely, adopting more extremist positions.

Begin's "Autonomy"

We witnessed the birth of Begin's grotesque autonomy plan for the Palestinian Arab people, his neocolonialist plan for continued negation of their right to self-determination, for continued Israeli occupation of the whole West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and continued provocative Jewish settlement, even in Sinai. Begin's response to the Sadat initiative was a new interpretation of Resolution 242 of the Security Council, asserting that the West Bank and Gaza Strip are not covered by the Resolution.

The second prominent consequence asserting itself during these five months is that without a common stand by the Arab countries, at least by the "confrontation states," no advance can be made towards a just peace with Israel; and those Israeli rulers gambling on disrupting unity among Arab countries are undermining every effort for a peaceful settlement.

The third outstanding consequence is that without the participation of the Palestinian Arab people and their legitimate representative, the PLO, there can be no future for any peace effort. Therefore, those Arab reactionary rulers who, together with Israeli ruling circles, plot against the just rights of the Palestinian Arab people and try to exclude the PLO from the arena of a peaceful settlement are practically undermining every effort for a just and lasting peace.

We would like to assert again that without the active participation of the PLO in the peace process, no progress can be made toward a peace settlement. It is significant to point out that [then] Israeli Chief

of Staff Mordechai Gur, in an interview in the *Jerusalem Post*, had to assert that one of the unexpected results of the Lebanese adventure is that the PLO was indirectly a party to the agreement that is being worked out for the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Lebanon. More people are asking why the PLO cannot be a partner for making a just peace.

The last important consequence emanating from the failure of the Sadat-Begin-Carter performance is that every attempt to draw away the efforts for settling the Middle East crisis and the Palestinian problem from the international arena, away from the Geneva Conference, away from frameworks set by the UN, away from the participation of the Soviet Union, such "peace efforts" are also bound to fail.

It has been demonstrated how futile and illusory are the concepts that peace can be arrived at by placing the fate of peacemaking in the Middle East in the hands of U.S. imperialists who, if given "Arab goodwill," would force Israel to accept a just settlement.

It is true that there are now tactical differences between Carter and Begin and some wishful thinkers want to gamble on this. But those who expect that U.S. pressure on Israel's rulers for a just settlement could be brought about by kneeling before the U.S. patron would find themselves as betrayed lovers.

Source of Conflict

It has been demonstrated that under U.S. imperialist patronage, Israel and the Arab countries would never be reconciled. Imperialism, which is the source of the Middle East conflict, is not interested in a just, stable settlement, but in maintaining tension, in continuing the tragic conflict in order to continue to strike at the Arab national liberation movement and to utilize the conflict for its material and economic interest in the Middle East and the world.

We therefore can say now with more confidence what we said during Sadat's visit to Israel, that pulling away from Geneva is pulling away from a just peace. Now it is clear that only by returning to the Geneva peace conference, with the participation of all parties concerned, including the PLO, can the Middle East conflict progress on the path towards a just, stable and comprehensive peace.

The impasse facing the U.S.-sponsored efforts

for a settlement and the bankruptcy of Sadat-Begin-Carter maneuvers, the extremism demonstrated by the ultranationalist Begin government, the Lebanese adventure and the new difficulties it brought to Israel; the failure to break up the PLO and the Palestinians' struggle for their just rights, the brave demonstrations by the Palestinian Arab people in the occupied territories in the thick of the aggression in Lebanon, prove the vitality of his people's just struggle. These elements, and the serious dangers engulfing the situation in our region, are helping more people in Israel to realize that peace and the continuation of the Begin government in office are incompatible, that peace and continued Israeli occupation of Arab territory and Israeli settlements in occupied Arab territories are incompatible.

Petitions submitted by Israeli pupils to the Begin government, then by hundreds of university students, the developing movement of the reserve officers asserting that peace is more important than a bigger Israel, the mass demonstrations held recently under this slogan, all these developments encourage progress on the Israeli scene. While these developments weaken the Begin government, it threatens antidemocratic and repressive measures against the forces of peace.

But we are convinced that the main movement in Israel in favour of a just peace ensuring the rights of all peoples and states of the Middle East, including Israel and the Arab peoples, can be developed, and for this we, the forces of peace in Israel, are concentrating our main efforts. It is our opinion that the main directions of our actions on the world scale should be now:

*A worldwide campaign for a reconvening of the Geneva peace conference as the only road to a just peace in the Middle East;

*Mass world actions for immediate and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon;

*Support for the proposal to convene an international conference in support of the Palestinian Arab people and for a just peace in the Middle East. ■

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We wish Ralph and his family good health and long years of active work for a world of socialism.