

# Interview with Comrade Hawi

On February 6th, the Lebanese Army lost control of West Beirut, and was threatened by widespread desertion from its ranks. The previous day, Prime Minister Wazzan's government had resigned. Yet US envoy Rumsfeld had the audacity to declare, "We don't believe the Lebanese government has collapsed."

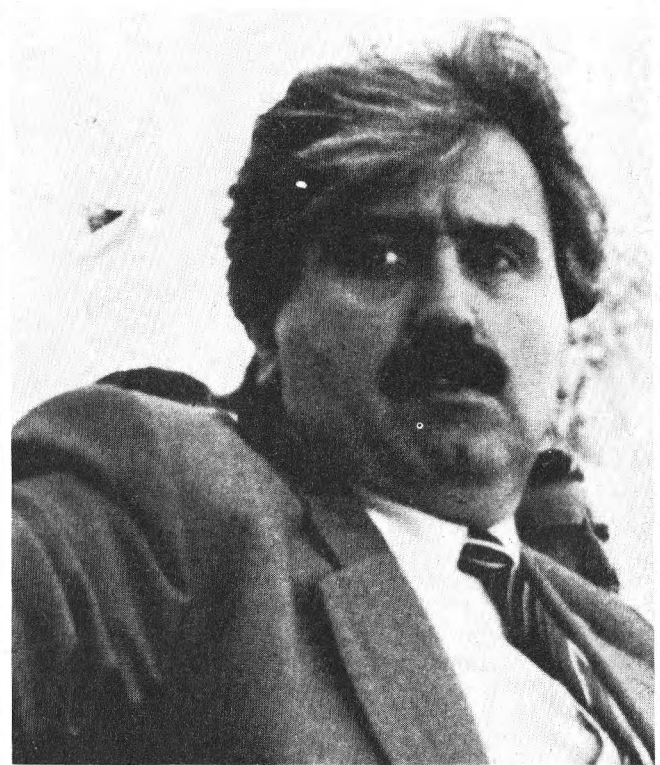
On this real turning point of a day, the PFLP's weekly, "Al Hadaf", had the opportunity to interview Comrade George Hawi, General Secretary of the Lebanese Communist Party, on the latest developments and the perspectives of the nationalist victory in Beirut. Of particular interest are Comrade Hawi's evaluations of the linkage between the armed struggle in South Lebanon and in Beirut, and of the possibility for the Palestinian revolution to benefit from the recent Lebanese experience in order to reestablish its struggle in Lebanon on a more fruitful basis than before.

## On the Wazzan government's resignation...

Wazzan's resignation is the beginning of the collapse of the rule of the Phalangists and the Gemayel family. From one angle, it is no doubt a political maneuver aiming to dilute the total, united political opposition that emerged in confronting the Gemayel authority. It also aims to absorb the popular disenchantment with the authority on both domestic and foreign policy issues. However, this maneuver came too late and did not take into account the most recent developments. The popular movement and the position of the progressive forces, mainly the National Salvation Front and the Amal movement, has closed the door on all maneuvers.

The question is no longer one of a government, whether like the previous one or a national unity government, if it works with this group (the Phalangists) who are responsible for destroying all Lebanon, including Ashrafiyeh, the Metn, Kaserwan, Bint Jbail and Batroun (areas with large Christian populations which the Phalangists claim to represent). Moreover, it is no longer possible to have a dialogue with the Phalangist Party or its representatives in power. Walid Jumbatt, in our name, rejected entering into any parliamentary, political maneuvers or consultations. Also, Nabih Berri, in our name, rejected this game. Both emphasized a major demand: the downfall of Amin Gemayel.

The other tasks will come as a result of this major task, cancelling the May 17th agreement, departure of the invading US troops and the rest of the MNF, removing all forms of the Phalangist Party's authority in the state and from all affairs related to the political, economic and social future of Lebanon. Other issues related to the authority will be under discussion with the new president of the republic, not with the present one.



Developments have gone way beyond halfway or partial solutions. The policy of the Phalangists and the President closed the door on halfway solutions or reconciliation. Our call for reconciliation was never a call for reconciliation with

the Phalangist Party. On the contrary, it was a method to expose the policy and behaviour of the Phalangists. We insist on a common life in a democratic Lebanon in which all citizens live with equal rights and duties, and are free to choose their political system, their representative and judicial institutions, and the power apparatus that serves this choice. We always emphasized that what has prevented this choice is the project of discriminatory, sectarian, one-group hegemony.

In order for the Lebanese people to live on the basis of national reconciliation, the first requirement is total defeat of the project of Phalangist hegemony, which we rightfully described as the project for the Zionization of Lebanon. The latest events have placed the country on the threshold of a solution which would enable our people to regain complete independence, confirm their Arab identity, guarantee democratic development and mobilize their potentials for the battle of liberating the territory occupied by the Israeli enemy. This means supporting the Lebanese National Resistance Front against the occupation, supporting the popular movement that has transformed the South into a permanent uprising against the occupation, with the participation of all social, political, nationalist and religious circles.

### **On the western media's reports about reservations of some parties in the National Salvation Front concerning Jumblatt's call for Amin Gemayel's resignation...**

There is a desire on the part of the western and reactionary media that there be such a difference. Certainly, the disparity, which may exist about the method of getting rid of the Phalangist authority, is exaggerated. There is no difference on the principle of getting rid of it. This disparity stems from differing positions on how to combat the Phalangist hegemony. We see this disparity as tactical differences as to the method for salvation. We leave it up to experience on the one hand, and the balance of forces on the other, to determine the best approach for implementing the tasks agreed upon. Our conviction is that the development taking place in the field is the determining factor in resolving this question. Therefore, we should not be impressed by this media exaggeration which expresses the desires of its owners, more than expressing the facts.

### **On the current situation and its perspectives...**

First, allow me to address what I consider to be the resurgence (of the national movement) in the present circumstances. The basic thing here is what is taking place in South Lebanon: the armed struggle against the occupation. The role of this struggle is determining the overall revolutionary process in Lebanon. Israel is the central, basic link in the chain of the enemy plan. Therefore, weakening this link will weaken the other links. The historic decision to resist the Israeli occupation by force of arms, and the historic initiative taken by our party in this respect, provided the major prelude to the process of resurgence taking place today in Beirut.

This is the main lever in the process of nationalist revival. It is also the real lever for a revolutionary Arab nationalist resurgence. We provide the start of a new phenomenon in the Arab national liberation movement and a heritage for all revolutionary traditions in the Palestinian revolution — (how to) develop it and avoid falling into the great error previously committed. I will not here characterize the role of all the nationalist forces participating in the heroic struggle of our people. However, I would like to emphasize the special role played by the PFLP in this context, by cooperating totally with us. This provides a distinguished example as to how relations between the Lebanese progressive and nationalist forces and the Palestinian revolution should be.

The uprising in Beirut achieved the first part of its tasks by liberating West Beirut from the army of the one-group authority and the control of the Phalangist Party. I want to note the important role of the patriotic soldiers and officers who refused to continue being used as a repressive tool against their own people, their relatives and the working masses in the southern suburbs and Beirut.

Concerning the Israeli occupation, withdrawal will inevitably be imposed, and the attempt to create a puppet mini-state for Israel in the South will fail, as the masses' avalanche continues, to liberate their land from the Israeli occupation and its lackeys, and consolidate nationalist control in the South. We are not for the army of the one-group authority returning to the South. We struggle under the slogan: The Land to Whoever Liberates It! The South is for the workers, peasants, revolutionary intellectuals, students, women and men of the South. The South is for the honorable militants of the Amal movement and our party, and all progressive and nationalist forces of the South.

In light of the tasks mentioned previously, two duties lie ahead of us: first, to abolish Phalangist control in the state; accordingly, we will work on the second: assembling the broadest forces from all political, religious and social trends in the broadest front (which already exists), irregardless of the organizational framework. We will work to recruit the broadest popular movement possible to wage all forms of struggle, without exception, in order to achieve this task, for in the final analysis, this is what is required to liberate Lebanon, unite it and guarantee its Arab identity. These tasks are connected and cannot be separated from each other.

### **On whether the regime and Phalangist Party will try to trap the opposition in a compromise...**

We have to differentiate between compromises and compromises. The conflict and any dialogue revolve on major issues: first the political position towards the May 17th agreement and the Israeli occupation, its conditions and results. For our part, we will not make any compromises in this area. We stand for the absolute cancellation of this agreement, waging the battle for liberating the country unconditionally, implementing Security Council resolutions 508 and 509, and sufficing with the 1947 armistice agreement. Any compromises made by the authority below this line cannot deceive the active, influential nationalist forces. The struggle against the May 17th agreement is a struggle against all the political results of the Israeli occupation, a major one of these being the Phalangist authority. We will struggle to bring down the Phalangist project for hegemony.

Concerning compromises on other issues, we will not accept anything which allows for the continued presence of the US forces or the MNF in Lebanon. Any flexibility in tactics will not be at the expense of the principle decisions. We insist on the cancellation of political confessionism and drawing up a schedule whereby the process of cancelling this will take place gradually. Our insistence on principles will be total, but there may be flexibility concerning the form of application.

The second issue, which does not tolerate partial concessions, is the enactment of a serious, democratic change in the popular representation in Lebanon, the parliament and the election law. We shall insist on the principle of change. As a working class party, we believe that there is no room for real democracy unless the power of the bourgeoisie is brought down. Yet we struggle for the highest degree of democracy possible in the framework of the bourgeois state. This will create an atmosphere conducive to developing our struggle for bringing down the bourgeoisie's control of the power.

The third major issue is the army. There is a decisive, united, nationalist position: Either a nationalist army to de-



*People of the southern suburbs - living under Phalangist threat, Dec. 1983*

fend Lebanon as an independent Arab state in the face of Israel and its imperialist backers, or there will be no army in Lebanon. Without this task for the army, there is no need to have an army; the internal security forces are better than the army in preserving internal security. We want an army that agrees with Syria and the Palestinian revolution on confronting the Israeli occupation and the danger of US aggression, not an army that fights Syria and the Palestinian revolution with US and Israeli support.

There is also the economic crisis. An added reason for this crisis is that billions of dollars are paid in cash to the US and France. The state pays 30% more than market price in order to have immediate delivery. The state also pays the price of shells shot by the US fleets against our people and the Lebanese treasury. All this is accompanied by deals and brokerage within the government. The economic situation is a total disaster. It threatens the working masses with unemployment, the agricultural workers with losing their bread; also small producers are threatened, as is the national industry and agriculture and a major part of services.

The destructive social consequences of the economic crisis portend the emergence of crises of a new type. The bread revolt, as happened in Tunisia and Morocco, is possible in Lebanon, but here it will be among an armed people, an armed working class, armed revolutionary forces. We shall not fail to use any method in our struggle to keep the working class and other working people from paying the price of the crisis. How can the working class go hungry while possessing arms and when there is food in stock, and money accumulating in the monopolies' treasuries? We propose a socio-economic reform in the country, even more strongly than in the previous period, because the crisis is more violent and destructive than previously.

Where, then, is it possible to make compromises? Why compromise with the state? Our principled position specifies a set of factors: (1) the balance of forces, (2) the position of our allies, in as much as we may propose an advanced task, (3) our permanent distinction between the central link in the struggle and other links, (4) our view that if the major link is broken, this opens opportunities for developing the struggle in other areas. The battle is going to be difficult and long. Our major task is to build an internal balance of forces that demonstrates the internal character of the battle. This will lessen external influence without cancelling it. This would also have the Arab position become a supportive one and not an alternative that runs against the Lebanese progressive and nationalist forces. We will work to have complete coordina-

tion with Syria and the Palestinian revolution, and we will rely on international support to our national cause.

### **On the perspectives for the Lebanese National Resistance Front if the Israelis were to withdraw from the South...**

If Israeli withdrawal takes place, it means that we have made a great historical accomplishment, not only in our struggle in Lebanon, but this would have repercussions on the Arab national liberation movement in general and the Palestinian revolution in particular. In this case, we face a major question: What can a liberated Lebanon offer the Palestinian revolution in support of the Palestinian people's cause? It is inevitable to play a very important role, not less than the role played by Lebanon previously; the practice will be the same, but in different forms. It is not in the interest of the Palestinian revolution, the Lebanese progressive forces, Lebanon, or the Palestinian cause, to return to the same anarchy and old practices. This did not push the Palestinian revolution to practice its vanguard role in a better way. Lebanon will not go back to the same exposed form of conflict, as a place for public Palestinian revolution presence, exhibitionism and intermittent infighting. Lebanon, with its nationalist ties, belongs to the Lebanese nationalist forces, and to the Palestinian revolution as well. We must know how to use this arena better for the Palestinian revolution, while at the same time not damaging the Lebanese nationalist forces. We must use it as a means to mobilize potentials in order to continue the struggle in all forms, inside and outside the occupied territories, for liberating Palestine and achieving the legitimate national tasks of our people. We are not ready to return to an approach that bypasses the Lebanese national factor and then drags the Palestinian revolution into problems that detract from its tasks of liberation, as happened before. The Palestinian revolution will not find it easy to establish a kingdom on others' territory, instead of struggling based on the facilities available in this land for the political, military and popular work in the occupied territories. This requires a radical change in the size and quality of Palestinian armed presence and the form of practice. In this perspective, the PLO no longer needs the thousands of fighters, but it needs quality fighters.

### **On the Palestinian role in the Lebanese National Resistance Front...**

It is our duty to say that Palestinian revolutionary forces, among them PFLP and DFLP, participate in an important part of the Lebanese National Resistance. However, Palestinian participation is not limited to the South. Palestinians are present in other areas - the mountains, the southern suburbs of Beirut, etc. More than others, they are exposed to terror, harassment and maltreatment by the puppets of Israel, the fascist forces and the authority. Self-defense is a basic right. On one hand, they participate according to their conviction in their self-defense. On the other, they participate with the Lebanese National Resistance Front, their allies in the struggle.

### **On the future...**

A realistic analysis of the conflict today, on different levels, makes us optimistic. Our victory in Lebanon, if totally achieved, will not only automatically reflect on the overall situation of the Arab national liberation movement. In addition, the dilemma for US imperialism and Israel in Lebanon will develop into a big dilemma for Arab reaction... We have confidence in the abilities of our people, in the support of our allies and friends, and in the ability of our own party as well.