



The Arab national-liberation movement

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The movement is going through a difficult period; it has to contend with serious obstacles; our Party believes there is a danger of losing hard-won major gains.

Stronger Right wing

The Israeli aggression and occupation of extensive areas have greatly complicated the Arab national struggle. A way out has to be found in a situation that leaves little room for maneuvering. The Israeli aggressors continue to deliver blow after blow at the Arab countries without, so far, encountering adequate resistance.

Right-wing groups, not only in Egypt but in other Arab countries too, have taken advantage of the situation. Their leaders blame the policy of the progressive elements who led the movement before and after the six-day war for all its present difficulties. Political clashes and discord among the progressive forces have helped to activate the Right forces. Their influence has increased within and beyond the ruling circles, and their position has strengthened since Nasser's death and the brutal suppression of the Palestine resistance and the Jordanian national movement in September 1970.

There is other evidence of the movement's troubled times. The split between its detachments and within them has become deeper; conflicts have often been violent and destructive. Arab reaction, including the monarchical regimes in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, etc., has consolidated its position and presents a real danger to the gains won in the liberation struggle.

For all that, however, the most alarming symptom is the strengthening of the Right wing within the Arab national liberation movement. There are other problems, too, but they existed before, and though they presented a grave potential danger to the movement, they were not impediments intrinsic to it. For even before the June war, Israel pursued an aggressive policy, imperialist expansion continued and the Middle East reactionary regimes were strong. Nevertheless, for 20 years the movement enjoyed uninterrupted rapid growth.

The present alarming situation is attended by the strengthening of Right-wing views in home and foreign policy and ideology. For instance, latterly there has been much more talk in Egypt of Islam or Arab socialism than of scientific socialism, which Nasser advocated to the last days of his life. This ideological shift accords with the Right-wing policy of revising some of the progressive economic and social measures implemented under Nasser's leadership.

The Rights are hostile to democracy. Out of fear of the working people's historic role in political life they have come out against working-class and other mass organizations and disapprove of political parties. They would like to turn the Socialist Union in Egypt, Libya and the Sudan into loose organizations with no articulate policy, but with compulsory membership of the entire people. And this in societies in which the class struggle is developing in ever sharper forms.

Their views on Arab unity and other national problems, particularly the Palestine issue, are avowedly chauvinistic. This complex problem, closely linked with the rise of national sentiments among the Arabs, merits closer examination.

The prominence given the national aspect of the liberation struggle is due to several factors. First, there is the tragedy of the Palestine refugees, who after the formation of the State of Israel fled to other Arab countries. This has exerted a tremendous influence on the life of every Arab, has become part of his day-to-day concerns. Second, the ever-present menace of Israeli aggression against the Arab states, and primarily the vanguard detachments of the national liberation movement. Lastly, bourgeois attempts to exploit the situation to divert the working class and the masses from the fight for their economic demands, social change and socialism, and channel their energy into the labyrinth of complicated and muddled national problems.

This over-emphasizing of the national question, notably the Palestine issue, and absolutizing, at one period, the idea of Arab unity, have done more than anything else to weaken the class struggle. It has not developed in a way that could be expected in conditions of constantly deepening social differentiation.

But the unremitting struggle for common aims and interests and against a common foe has made Arab unity the legitimate demand of the people, and not merely a goal which at one time accorded with the interests of the developing bourgeoisie. The striving for Arab unity is now more deeply rooted, more closely tied to all the political, economic, social aims and aspirations of the national liberation movement. But this is no justification for the persistent attempts to make independence of the movement the dominant idea and contrast it to the objective need for closer internationalist ties with the world revolutionary movement. That attitude suits the Right-wing forces, who want to use the independence idea as a cover for their anti-communist and anti-Soviet sentiments.

In practice, all this talk of the movement's independence is often

paralleled by encouragement of division within it. This is especially characteristic of Quadafi, the head of the Libyan regime, who makes no secret of his hostility to some sections of the movement. This is clearly evidenced – even within the triple alliance of Arab republics – by his attitude towards Syria.

And that attitude of an Arab state which is considered anti-imperialist finds its most dangerous manifestations in the following:

- in collusion with North Yemen and Saudi Arabia it has worked to overthrow the progressive regime of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen;

- in its negative attitude to the Palestine Resistance, it has incited one detachment against another, has supported some organizations and denied support to others;*

- on the plea of retaining the national character of the struggle, there is an attempt to join the Right wing of the movement with Arab reaction in a united front spearheaded against both imperialism and Zionism and against the progressive forces.

The essence of Right-wing philosophy is anti-communism, which is becoming increasingly frank and finds expression in anti-Sovietism. Things have reached a point where the Rights ventured to attack Soviet-Arab friendship and relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

Like other Arab progressives, the Communists believe that such actions, directed against a friendly state which has unflinchingly supported our struggle, and at the very least deserves our gratitude, are also meant to change the very character of the Arab liberation movement, its aims and tasks.

Born and strengthened in the crucible of the fight against imperialism and Zionism, for freedom and progress, Arab-Soviet friendship is of everlasting importance. It has been formalized in international agreements and embodied in the Aswan and Euphrates hydro-engineering complexes, the Helwan metallurgical combine, the North Rumeila oilfields and in hundreds of other projects carried out with Soviet assistance. The powerful support of the Arab peoples in their fight against Israeli imperialist aggression is a momentous testimonial to this friendship.

Together with other Arab progressive forces, we consider friendship between the Arab national liberation movement and the Soviet Union and with the world revolutionary movement the basis of our strategy at the present stage of the struggle to liquidate the consequences of the Israeli aggression, eliminate all elements of imperialist political and economic domination and promote democracy and social progress. No contingent of the national revolution can consistently work for the attainment of its goals if it lacks close and durable ties with the world revolutionary movement and its vanguard, the Soviet Union. This has been confirmed

*For instance, in November 1972, Libya refused to attend the All-Arab Peoples' Conference in support of the Palestine revolution, saying it would not sit down with Arab Communists.

by the long record of cooperation with the USSR, both in world affairs and in strengthening the defense capacity of progressive Arab states.

Contradictions of progressive regimes

The situation within the leading circles in power in a number of our countries is reflected in the complex problems of the Arab national liberation movement today.

The rise of the state of Israel, the 1948 events and the defeat of the Arab countries, then ruled by pro-imperialist forces, were followed by a series of coups d'état. In a way, this was a natural reaction to the open betrayal of the big bourgeoisie. These coups were the beginning of far-reaching political changes in our region. The new leaders came in the main from the petty bourgeoisie. Their anti-imperialist pronouncements won them wide popularity and engendered in the masses hopes of political and socio-economic change. The working class, weakened mainly by a series of blows dealt by the big bourgeoisie, was in no position to lead the struggle.

With leadership passing mostly to petty-bourgeois elements, the movement entered a new stage. The policies of the new leaders and their economic and social reforms were, as a rule, a reflection of the ideology and aspirations of the petty bourgeoisie, that large social stratum which plays such a big role in Arab countries.

But the fact should be taken into consideration that the mass of the petty bourgeoisie is now subjected to nearly the same exploitation as the working class. Hence, at the present stage, its economic and social demands are similar to those of the workers together with whom it constitutes the main force of the post-war Arab national liberation movement. And it has given it a new progressive content. It should be borne in mind that the petty bourgeoisie is an unstable mass, with some elements eventually becoming part of the big bourgeoisie and others, part of the proletariat. A regime dominated by members of the petty bourgeoisie accords with the transition stage, after which, apparently, elements committed to more consistent class positions will also come into the leadership.

Our Party program adopted by the Second Congress (1968) says that the rise of progressive regimes and their proclaimed policy of building socialism are in keeping with the stage reached by the Arab national liberation movement, at which 'there is constant enrichment of the movement's content, giving it a more clear-cut anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist orientation determined, in the main, by the social character of the classes and strata interested in its development, i.e., the mass of workers, peasants, and revolutionary intellectuals.'

The program also states that the changed alignment of forces in favor of the revolutionary-minded section of the petty bourgeoisie and its advent to power 'were facilitated by intervention of the masses, their support of the movement's revolutionary wing re-

sulting from their growing political consciousness, which in turn was largely due to the influence of the Communist parties and other progressive organizations.'

It would therefore be wrong to regard the progressive regimes, resulting from the successes of the liberation struggle, as petty bourgeois. Despite the absence of working-class representatives in the governments, nationalist revolutionaries took social, economic and political steps objectively in the interest of workers and peasants.

Later, however, the regimes encountered internal difficulties, which had a far-reaching effect on their policy. What are the reasons for and consequences of these difficulties?

They are traceable to the essence of petty-bourgeois political power. Lack of ideological clarity and an empirical approach to the realities in place of a scientific outlook—all this gives rise to instability in important areas of home and foreign policy. Petty-bourgeois leaders hold that the fact of their being in power, plus their success acclaimed by the masses, guarantees that their progressive program will be implemented. They tend to underestimate the role of the masses, live in constant fear that the masses will unite organizationally, and mistrust the working class and its political organizations and unions. This is evidenced by the continuous changes of attitude towards mass organizations in some of the Arab countries—one day they are dissolved, the next reorganized, with numerous impediments erected to their activity.

Though in content and form the Arab national liberation movement reflects the interests of the working class, peasants and other sections of the people, most parties have not in fact become truly mass parties. The fate of the movement depends chiefly on the personality of its leaders. This injects an element of spontaneity into the course of events.

The petty-bourgeois leaders strive to retain their monopoly on power, in order, they claim, to carry forward the progressive line. But under this pretext they suppress the class struggle, and employ ideological and administrative means to distort its content. This has precipitated sharp clashes between different sections of the Arab national liberation movement, leading to brutal repressions of working-class and Communist organizations.

Furthermore, the progressive petty-bourgeois elements have not succeeded in restricting the growth of the local, especially middle, bourgeoisie. Their measures were mostly indeterminate and inconsistent.

A government that is heterogeneous politically and in class background is not up to the task of eliminating the economic growth levers of the national bourgeoisie. This is borne out by recent developments: the bourgeoisie continues to grow despite the expansion of the state sector (which in Egypt, for example, embraced more than 80 per cent of all industry at one time) and the nationalization of foreign trade.

In some countries nothing has been done to eliminate the old

state machine (civic, as well as military) built by the bourgeoisie – inimical to the masses and devoid of patriotism. The bureaucratic elements, whose selfish interests conflict with the interests and requirements of society as a whole, have expanded. And they are trying to promote anti-democratic tendencies in the state, to discredit the earlier socio-economic changes, and, particularly, to obstruct the activity of the state sector. More, they are coming into the open with reactionary, essentially anti-communist, postures.

Home reaction associated with the deposed big bourgeoisie, which had been lying low for some time, is again rearing its head. Taking advantage of the crisis precipitated by the 1967 Israeli aggression, it has renewed efforts to direct political developments along a course more favorable for it.

In sum, the socio-political elements that headed the national liberation movement and eventually came to power, have proved incapable of coping with the complex interrelated tasks of the revolution: total political liberation from imperialism; economic liberation from foreign monopolies and development of an independent national economy; liberation of the rural masses from feudal exploitation and effectuation of an agrarian revolution; liberation of the working class, of the urban masses, from exploitation by foreign and local capital.

Much more radical forces with a homogeneous and consistent outlook should share in the leadership in dealing with the present and future objectives of the national liberation struggle. At present, however, a battle is raging between the Left and Right wings in the progressive regimes and the political organizations backing them. This battle is part of the class struggle in the Arab liberation movement and, as we see it, reflects the intrinsic contradictions that have grown with the growth of the movement.

Growing pains

The Right wing has done a great deal of harm to the liberation revolution in the Arab East. And the damage will be still greater if the Rights manage to retain their present strength.

But we are not inclined to be pessimistic. At the time of the June aggression, Communists declared that it had fallen short of its main objectives despite the grave defeat inflicted on the Arab countries, despite the loss of territory. It had been Israel's main purpose to strike at the progressive gains made in the long years of struggle. The aggressors aimed to overthrow the progressive regimes, emasculate their content and thereby retard the growth of the national liberation movement as a whole.

Yet, the progressive regimes survived. It is safe to say, moreover, that the aggression and the subsequent defeat gave impulse to revolutionary developments in the Arab world. Here are a few:

– the Palestine Resistance Movement grew organizationally stronger, ringing in a new upsurge of the national struggle of the Arab people of Palestine;

– the reactionary government in Sudan was replaced by a progressive regime;

– the feudal monarchy in Libya was replaced by a republic;

– the revolution triumphed and a progressive government was installed in South Yemen;

– a Baathist coup brought national progressive forces to power in Iraq.

However, there were conflicting aspects to all these events. Mistakes coupled with artificially induced growth weakened the Palestine Resistance Movement. The new regime in Sudan underwent a negative mutation and disintegrated due to internal strife. The coup d'état in Libya was controlled by politically and ideologically backward forces, who tried to strip it of its progressive content. The revolution in Yemen experienced convulsions and internal conflicts, which retarded its development. And in Iraq, the new leaders were at first influenced by backward, anti-communist ideology, which resulted in grave damage to the progressive movement and cost the lives of many Communists.

All the same, we are firmly convinced that the difficulties of the Arab national liberation movement are but growing pains – a malaise taking place in unprecedentedly complicated conditions. Take just the most meaningful developments bearing on our appraisal, for these are increasingly determinative for the future of the movement.

Firstly, the political and ideological positions of the working class have grown stronger. The bloody events in Sudan were universally condemned. In all Arab countries, the working class is active in promoting its economic and social demands, and workers, their political organizations and trade unions, are taking an ever more conspicuous part in public life. This is tending to enhance the role and strengthen the Communist parties.

Secondly, the masses are clearly inclined to organize. New progressive organizations are springing up, and are gradually growing into mass parties. This urge to organize is especially evident among workers, peasants, students and the youth of Egypt.

Thirdly, there is a tendency to form progressive fronts embracing different parties, including the Communists. This is opening up the way to participation in governments, even though at different levels, and assures the resolution of the complex problems facing our countries.

Fourthly, the political consciousness of the masses is rising. They are taking a firmer anti-imperialist and anti-reactionary stand, countervailing the indecisive and negative course of the Right wing.

Fifthly, the vast majority of the national and progressive parties, and broad sections of the people in the Arab countries are more strongly opposed to anti-Sovietism.

All these trends are on the upgrade, and here are a few recent facts of a clearly revolutionary complexion:

- the nationalization of oil enterprises in Iraq and Syria;
- the agrarian revolution in Algeria;

– the positive changes that have affected all the organizations in the Palestine Resistance Movement.

The Resistance Movement is following a clearer political and ideological course, and its relations with other detachments of the Arab national liberation and the world revolutionary movements are improving. It needs still greater support of the progressive forces in the Arab countries and the rest of the world, especially of the Communists. Then, by improving its own organization, it will help affirm the progressive content of the Arab national liberation revolution.

The all-Arab popular conference for the promotion of the Palestine revolution, held in Beirut, was a big event for the Resistance Movement and the entire Arab national liberation struggle. Representatives of progressive parties, including the Communists, worker and peasant organizations and trade unions of 14 Arab countries took part in it. Also present were delegations from the socialist states, international democratic organizations and Communist parties of capitalist countries.

The conference announced the constitution of the Arab Front of Assistance to the Palestine Revolution and approved its political program and statutes. What is more important, however, was the evidence it provided of greater unity among the different detachments of the Arab national liberation movement.

Our Party approved the draft of the Front's political program as the minimum acceptable by all Arab progressive forces. As we see it, the Front is an important milestone on the way to unity. And as pointed out by K. Joublatt, Chairman of the Progressive Socialist Party of Lebanon, who was elected the Front's General Secretary, the conference also showed the intimate link between the Palestine and Arab revolutions, and their link with the international revolutionary movement, with its three main streams: the socialist world system, the national liberation movement, and the working-class movement in the capitalist countries.

With scientific socialism taking an ever firmer hold on the ideology of the Arab national liberation revolution, the role of the Communist parties of Arab countries, and also that of the world Communist movement, is clearly increasing.

Difficulties have never been an insurmountable obstacle. Recall what Marx said in his reply to Kugelmann, who was in the depths of despair after the defeat of the Paris Commune: 'World history would indeed be very easy to make if the struggle were taken up only on condition of infallibly favorable chances.'