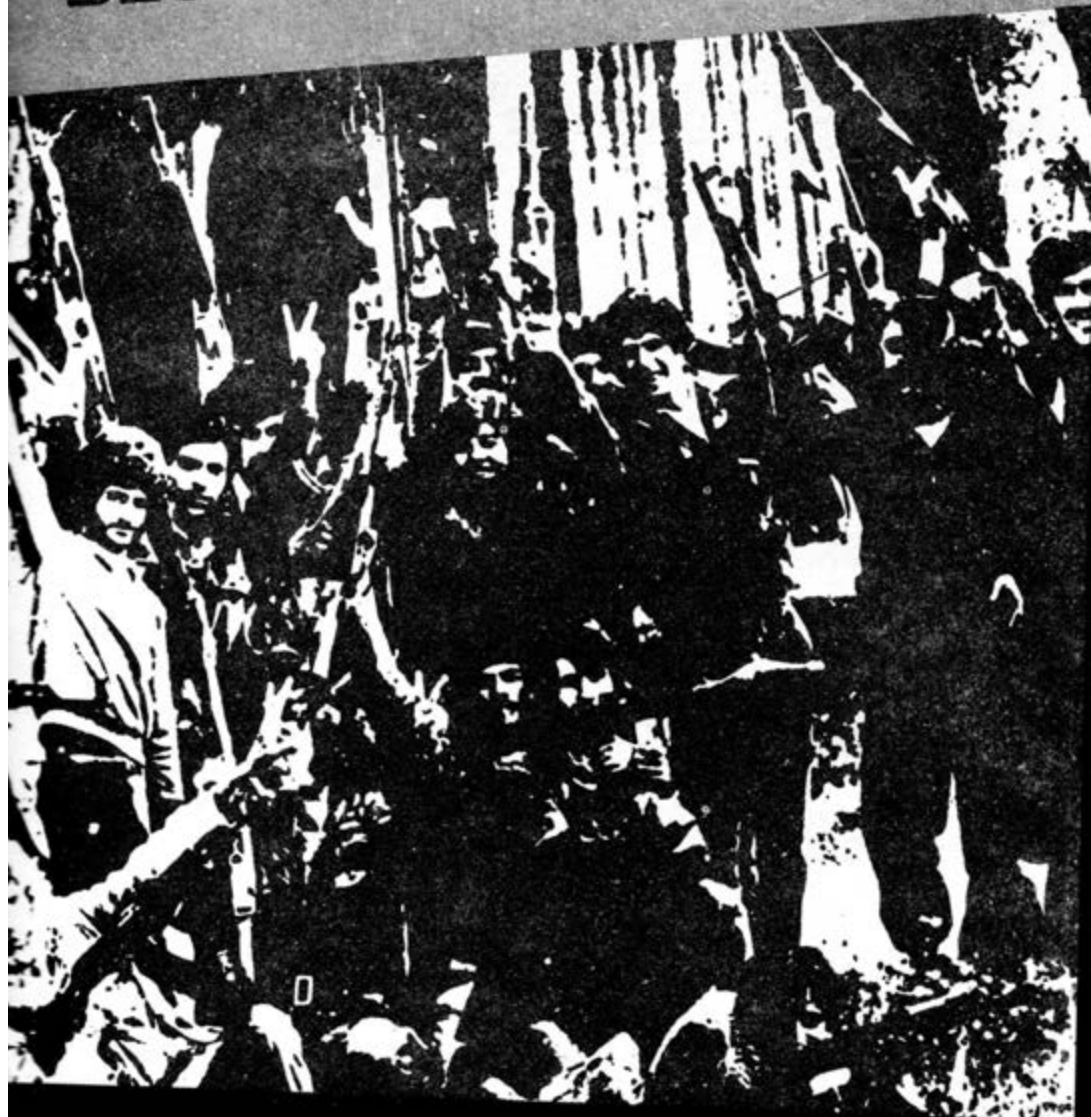




man and
his word

GEORGE HAOUI

UNITY IS THE BEST ROAD TO VICTORY





During the last few years, Lebanon has been turned into a battleground where the Palestinian revolution, the Lebanese National Movement and other progressive forces of the Arab world are waging a bitter struggle against imperialism, Zionism and the reaction.

The struggle in southern Lebanon is so closely related to the cause of the Arab people — especially the Palestinian question — that it may be said that the future of all the Arab world will be decided there.

For this reason, **Tricontinental** has followed the events that are taking place in Lebanon with close attention and has published the views of a number of outstanding Arab personalities on this subject.

Below, we present journalist Moisés Saab's interview with George Haoui, General Secretary of the Lebanese Communist Party, who analyzes the historical and ideological roots of the Lebanese crisis and discusses the prospects for the struggle now being waged in his country.

THE situation in Lebanon is still very complicated and difficult. For five years, we have been engaged in a bitter struggle against the imperialists and Zionists and their reactionary plans concerning the Middle East crisis and the situation in Lebanon.

The Lebanese crisis is very closely related to the Middle East crisis. For the last ten years — since just after the Palestinian revolution was crushed in Jordan and President Abdel Nasser died — Lebanon has been the most important scene of the confrontation with the imperialist-Zionist front that is trying to settle the Middle East question in such a way as to serve the interests of imperialism, Zionism and the Arab reactionary classes. Because the Palestinian revolution is vitally present in Lebanon and the country has a progressive national movement that has formed a united front, there is every reason to believe that the government will try to pressure and blackmail Syria.

In 1975 when the Sinai agreements were being drawn up, the reactionary Lebanese forces — acting hand in glove with Israel, the United States and Sadat — began to implement a plot against the Palestinian revolution and the Lebanese progressive movement.

During the first few years of the civil war, the situation was very difficult. Then, after a short period of calm and stability — no more than four or five months — another wave of military provocations began against the Palestinian revolution, the Lebanese National Movement and the Syrian Army.

This new confrontation was related to the preparations for the

new escalation of the plot in the region: Anuar el-Sadat's visit to Israel. During the preparations and immediately after the visit, Israel began its great offensive against southern Lebanon — a large part of which is now occupied — and, at the same time, sent masses of troops into the interior of the country, where they engaged in acts of aggression and provocation.

We are now faced with permanent Zionist aggression. Moreover, we have to stand firm against the Lebanese Front — a reactionary, fascist front that engages in political pressures and military attacks with the aim of gaining control over Lebanon and dividing its territory, creating a fascist regime in complete collaboration with the Israeli Zionist regime. Far from opposing the Israeli aggression, the Lebanese Front devotes its energies to trying to crush the Palestinian revolution and its presence in Lebanon.

The Israeli aggression in the south is growing ever stronger. Every day, hundreds of people in Lebanese villages and Palestinian refugee camps have to be evacuated. The number of victims of the aggression continues to rise, and the government, the UN forces and all the reactionary forces in the country are exerting great pressure to force the Palestinians to leave southern Lebanon.

There is a great danger that Israel will occupy more land in the south. In view of this situation, the only thing our Party and the Lebanese National Movement, along with the Palestinian revolution, can do is to fight against that aggression politically and militarily, defend the southern region and continue our military actions to liberate that part of our country now occupied by Israel (either openly or through the traitor Saad Haddad).

Last August, our comrades in the south took part in an important battle against the Zionist aggressors. Five of our comrades were killed after fighting for an hour against 250 Israeli soldiers, who attacked one of our bases. Israeli propaganda tried to ignore the presence of progressive Lebanese forces among the southern population, playing down the Lebanese people's position and trying to make it seem that the attack had involved only Israeli and Palestinian fighters. However, after this heroic action and that of the following night, Israel was forced to state openly that its troops had had to wage a bitter battle, a huge combat. It was no longer possible for it to sweep the existence of the progressive Lebanese forces under the rug. Earlier, in July, other comrades also fought against the aggression in another part of southern Lebanon. Our Party is ac-

tive among the southern population, struggling to achieve Lebanese unity, free this area and push back the Israeli occupation.

We believe that the attacks will continue — and, therefore, so will our struggle against the Zionist aggression.

What influence have the Camp David agreements and talks had on the Lebanese crisis?

The Camp David agreements are behind this escalation and the whole situation. Lebanon is the arena, the second objective, of those agreements. The success of the Camp David agreements will be determined by their success in Lebanon. Why? Because, unless the Palestinian revolution is completely wiped out, nobody — not a single Palestinian — will join in Israel's and Egypt's talks on "self-determination" as a solution to the Palestinian problem. If our enemies manage to wipe out the Palestinian revolution, then it will be easier for them to find a traitor or two whom they can present as "representatives" of the Palestinian people.

That is the first aspect. The second is that the Baghdad Summit Conference and the Arabs' united opposition to the Camp David agreements would not be so effective if the Palestinian revolution were eliminated, because the reactionary Arab regimes were pushed into taking this stand against the Camp David agreements by their fears for their own interests. We may say they are being pressured by their peoples, that sympathize with the Palestinian revolution. Therefore, if they betrayed it, they would have reason to fear the Palestinian revolution and their own peoples. If the Palestinian revolution were eliminated, the reactionary Arab



regimes, such as those of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, would be freer to participate, along with President Sadat, in the Camp David agreements.

If the Palestinian revolution were wiped out in Lebanon, Syria's position would be weakened. Therefore, the pressures that are being exerted against Lebanon are also directed at crushing the Palestinian revolution and influencing Syria's position.

US maneuvers to get Saudi Arabia's King Hussein and the rulers of other Arab countries to support the Camp David agreements have not been successful, because of the presence of the Palestinian revolution. If it weren't for this factor, both King Hussein and the other reactionaries in the Arab countries would stop opposing the treaty.

This means that the key to the question now lies in Lebanon. This is the reason for this escalation of the Israeli aggression, combined with President Sadat's initiative. The interests behind the Camp David agreements are trying to push those agreements so they will gain new ground and new positions every day. We are on the defensive now, and just the fact that we can hold on to the positions we already have is positive.

Since the Camp David agreements, all the pressures exerted by the United States, Israel and Sadat have been directed against Lebanon, with the aim of breaking the steadfastness front, that opposes the Camp David agreements. Begin has stated in no uncertain terms in the Israeli parliament that Israel will continue its aggression against Palestine and Lebanon, and he invited President Sarkis to visit Israel — or, if this were not possible, to sign another treaty similar to the Camp David one, in Lebanon. This statement clearly shows Begin's intentions: he wants a new treaty with Lebanon similar to the Camp David one, and the Palestin-

ian revolution is the price to be paid for Lebanon's independence, its unity and support for the pro-fascist movements. This means imposing a reactionary, fascist regime in Lebanon, a regime that has good relations with and is controlled by Zionism, against the will of the Lebanese and other Arab peoples in the region.

We are sure that Lebanon is the second stage of the Camp David plans. In Lebanon, the Camp David agreements will either be advanced or come to a halt. We are determined to halt them and to maintain our position, to fight against the Israeli aggression and not permit the Lebanese government to buckle under to Israel's demands, wishes and dictates. The Palestinian revolution feels the same way.

Does the Lebanese problem have religious roots?



It has some religious facets, but its content is not religious at base. Essentially, it is a problem of classes and national tendencies.

During the last ten years, the Lebanese bourgeoisie — especially the financial oligarchy — has tried to solve its crisis in the economic, social and political fields by adopting measures that go against the interests of the working class, peasants and middle and petite bourgeoisie. The Lebanese political system is based on religious discrimination. For example, not everyone is eligible to be elected President of the republic; for that, you have to be a Christian — a Maronite Christian. In general, all the political leaders are chosen on the basis of their creed and religion. The Maronites get the key posts, such as the Presidency of the republic, the top Army command and a majority in Parliament. This apparently religious distribution of posts was set up in 1943, and great social and economic changes — as well as religious and political ones — have taken place since then. The Maronite domination has a class content, because the Maronites control the bourgeoisie. This doesn't mean that there are no Muslim bourgeois — only that they don't call the shots.

Lebanese industry has developed considerably in the last ten years, and many factories, shops and industries have sprung up along the coast (which had been inhabited almost exclusively by Christians), drawing workers from other parts of the country — mostly Muslims, from the south and east, but also Christians from the Mount Lebanon area — to settle there. This led to working-class unity and struggle based on class interests — not on creed or religion — which frightened the political regime and the ruling religious forces.

This is one aspect. The other is the fact that the economic crisis in



Lebanon has hit all the important strata of the petite and middle bourgeoisie, which have also begun to struggle against the authority and domination of the financial oligarchy. Their struggle is, at the same time, that of the working class.

Since the working class is the best organized force at the trade union level and in the leadership of our Party and other groups, the petite and middle bourgeoisie's struggle is linked to the cause of the working class. The regime began to lose the historic stability it had won by controlling the petite and middle bourgeoisie. In view of this, the only path the big bour-



geoisie could take was that of fascism, which it used to try to reestablish its economic, political and religious control. This fascist solution has taken a religious form in Lebanon because of historic contradictions and the links between class and religious monopolies. On the one hand, there is the Maronite bourgeoisie's domination of the bourgeoisie as a whole; on the other, there are the workers and peasants — most of whom are Muslims — together with most of the Christians. The religious forces have not been able to hide the class and social content of this struggle.

We might also say in this regard that, because of the existence of

thousands of Palestinian workers in Lebanon and hundreds of thousands of Syrian workers who are employed in these factories and companies along with the Lebanese workers, there is another link between the class struggle and the national question in Lebanon's history.

We should also say that most members of the working class, who come from the south and east, have continued the battle against Israel's aggression, thus opposing the Lebanese state's and authorities' policy. At the same time, the struggle continues on the political, eco-

conomic and social planes, identifying the national question with the main objectives of the working class' struggle.

As a result, religious aspects seem to appear as a facade in certain phases, but the real content of the Lebanese crisis of 1974 and '75 is social and classist.

How will the correlation of forces develop in the future?

Everything depends on two main questions. The first of these is whether or not we can stop the Camp David agreements from gaining ground. If we can, the correlation of forces will shift way over in our favor — first throughout the region and then, as a result, in Lebanon itself.

The second question — which is very closely related to the first one — is whether or not we can achieve unity within the progressive anti-imperialist ranks of the Arab world. This is the most important condition for creating a new correlation of forces favoring the Arab national movement, because international public opinion supports those who struggle for independence, social progress and peace. It is up to us and the other progressive elements in the Arab countries to create this unity. Ethiopia is a clear example of what I mean. The correlation of forces used to oppose Ethiopia and its revolution, but, when the revolutionaries in that country decided to fight against imperialism and the reaction, the socialist countries — the Soviet Union, Cuba and others — helped them by providing them with all the things they needed for victory.

This means that the Arab progressive forces should make a decision. The international situation

is favorable. All we have to do is unite and advance in our struggle against imperialism, Israel and the Camp David agreements.

Please tell us, briefly, what the main results of the 4th Congress of the Lebanese Communist Party were

For us, this Congress, held at a very difficult time for our country's political existence and security, was the most important event in the life and history of our Party. In it, we discussed — both at length and in depth — all the questions related to the Lebanese crisis, the future of our country and the future of the Arab national liberation movement. We also went into the international situation and that of the national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The three or four most important topics that were discussed were related to Lebanon. For example, we analyzed the internal crisis of the capitalist regime that gave way to fascism. We presented documents on events and realities that show the economic roots of the fascist tendencies. The Congress also issued a call for unity among all the forces that want peace in Lebanon, national independence, democratic progress and good relations with the rest of the Arab world so we may unify our struggle against the imperialists', Israel's and the Lebanese reactionary forces' plans of aggression. We called for the widest cooperation among our forces in order to save our country's unity, national independence, Arab character and democratic development. We pledged to continue our struggle alongside the Palestinian revolution to defend its existence and to mobilize the masses for political and military struggle against the Zionist aggression in order to liberate the south from the occupa-

tion by Israel and Saad Haddad, its lackey.

At the same time, we focused attention on the new tendencies of the government and of the President of the republic, for they are laying the groundwork for a military dictatorship if the fascist plan of isolation doesn't serve their purpose. In this plan for a military dictatorship, the Lebanese bourgeoisie will play the same role it played in the fascist project. This, of course, will not favor most of the population or even many strata of the bourgeoisie itself. The example of Greece is very clear in this regard: after Karamanlis brought the colonels to power 10 or 12 years ago to stop the advance of democracy there, he became one of their victims and was then forced to fight to topple them. By then, Greece had retrogressed for many years. Now, we are talking very openly with the masses of Lebanon — and especially with the bourgeoisie — telling them we can't let this happen here.

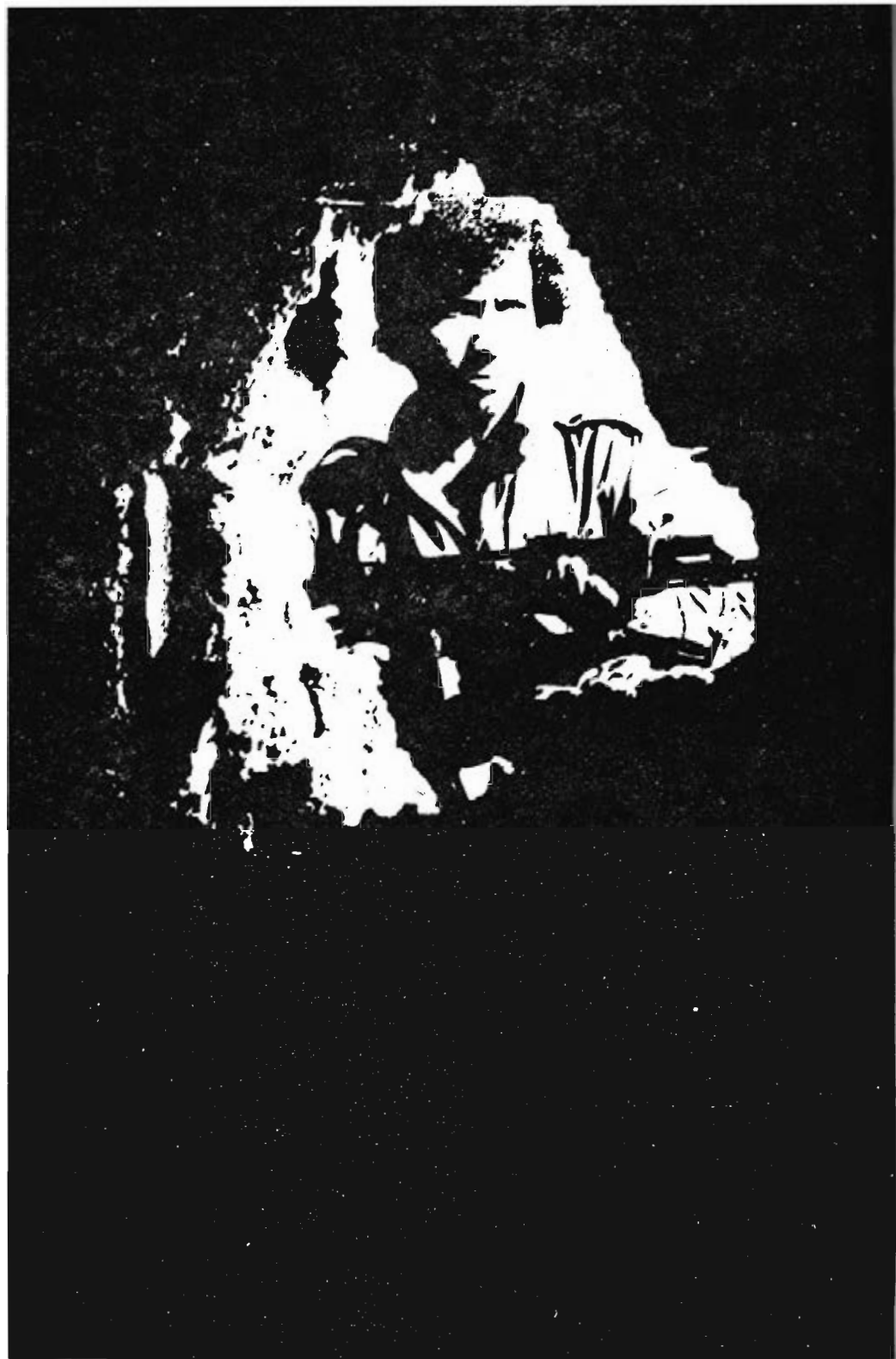
Concerning the Arab world, we support its positions and decisions against the Camp David agreements. The most important thing is to keep these agreements from being developed. At the same time, however, on analyzing the Arab national liberation movement, we see that it has a leadership crisis because of the class background of those who are directing it. The petite and middle bourgeoisie, who control this national liberation movement, are trying to keep it in a middle-of-the road position, with one face against imperialism and another against the masses, development and communism — against the interests of the revolution. In some of the Arab countries, this tendency seeks to eliminate democracy; keep the masses out of the struggle; and maintain a vacillating, wishy-washy position that cannot stand up to and triumph over any aggression such as that spon-

sored by the United States, Israel and Sadat.

Moreover, this crisis will continue, because the revolutionary forces, the Communists and others, are not fulfilling their role, the historic role of the working class. Therefore, they, too, are responsible for this leadership crisis of the Arab national liberation movement. Participation by the working class in the leadership of the national liberation movement isn't something we should wait for or ask for, saying, "Tell us what to do." Rather, it is a right that we should claim as our own. First of all, the most advanced forces, including the Communists, must have a really revolutionary program for solving the national question in a satisfactory way. If the Communists do not take up the national question and the liberation of Palestine, Arab unity and social progress, they will leave these matters to the petite and middle bourgeoisie — who will lead us to one defeat after another.

We have a very great responsibility, because the bourgeoisie, far from solving the national problem, has led us along the path of betrayal. Nor can the petite bourgeoisie solve this problem. Only the working class can play this role. The Camp David agreements have a social content, for they represent a coalition of classes against the national liberation movement at the general Arab level. The really revolutionary role of the working class as the force that is replacing the petite bourgeoisie is recognized in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world.

The most important question that we discussed in our Congress was this crisis in the leadership of the national liberation movement, in its two aspects: 1) the petite bourgeoisie as a class and as a political



organization and 2) the really revolutionary forces, led by the communist forces at the Arab level.

What effect does Saad Haddad's territorial separation have?

Saad Haddad is a tool of Israel's for covering over the Zionist occupation, extending it and annexing the territory which he and Israel have occupied in the heart of the country — now occupied by fascist isolationist forces — so they can, in the future, go on to control all of Lebanon's national territory. Therefore, we believe that his

"state" is and will be a serious threat and have called on all Lebanese to struggle against this maneuver — this separatist, divisionist and fascist "state" — and we alert all the Arab countries to this danger. Unfortunately, neither the reactionary forces nor even the patriotic progressive forces in the Arab countries have taken a really patriotic, national position against this danger.

We believe that it would be very risky to underestimate the danger of this mini-"state," this puppet entity, because it constitutes a phase, an aspect of the Israeli occupation of an Arab country. This is the first time that Israel has engaged in this sort of a maneuver in its occupation of Arab land. ■