The struggle for Geneva is like the struggle we waged to force the opening of the "Second Front" in World War II. We are confident we will succeed. But there are governments and forces who are trying to postpone the convening of the Geneva Conference in order to make harder the achievement of a just peace in the Middle East, to postpone it year after year in order to exhaust the forces of peace and bring about the conditions in which the forces of reaction will have the upper hand.

We are for reconvening the Geneva Conference for peace in the Middle East. Through the struggle and unity of the peace forces in the Middle East, through new achievements against the enemies of peace and progress, we will be able to force those reactionary governments and elements to open the second front for achieving a just and durable peace.

It is immoral to speak about a peace conference in the Middle East, that such a conference is very

The War on the Palestinians

by Emile Habibi

near, while what is happening in fact in the Middle East are acts of aggression, war and bloodshed. We cannot pass to other items of the agenda without addressing ourselves to the most recent aggression of our government in Israel, the brutal aggression on civilian women, children and men in southern Lebanon. One village, Azziye, was erased from the face of the earth. More than 110 people were killed, most of them women and children. There are politicians in your country pretending to be fighters for human rights, who were able to find excuses for such an atrocity, such an inhuman aggression. Openly, officially, in the name of one of the states who comprise the Security Council, it was declared that Israel has no other choice but to retaliate. Not only that: there was an insinuation that such massacres, such pogroms will continue as long as the Arabs, especially the Palestinians, do not capitulate.

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We abhor such an attitude. We deplore such an attitude. We call not only on fighters for peace and democracy, but on human beings to refuse to accept in the last quarter of the 20th century a policy of tribal strife; that as long as a tribe has killed my woman, my tribe has to retaliate and kill 100 women to equal the woman who was killed from my tribe. We cannot build normal relations between states in this way. Can you equalize an act—accepted or not accepted—of a popular movement, of a Katyusha launched by a resistance movement with the air force of a state which is recognized by the UN? Can we call this a justified retaliation?

Mr. Menachem Begin, the prime minister of Israel, cried out in the funeral of the woman who was killed by the Katyusha in Nahariye, "Why was Rifka killed? What did Rifka do?" It is true that Rifka was an innocent Israeli. It is true that Rifka had an elementary right to live in peace and security. It is true that we deplore the death of Rifka and her friends. But why, after 30 years since the establishment of the State of Israel, have those wise people who are ruining the State of Israel, who proved that they are very good on the battlefield—why have they been not able to find a common language with their neighbors? Why did they not find any way out for the State of Israel, but drowned more and more in the marshes of the policy of force and aggression?

The Natural Thing

The leadership the U.S. declared that this has been the natural thing in the Middle East for 30 years. They said that the vicious circle has been continuing for 30 years. Why has it been continuing? Who is responsible for our people living in this continuous bloody tragedy of recurring war, destitution and discrimination?

Rifka was killed because Esau was killed, because the brothers and sisters of Esau are languishing in refugee camps. If they are not killed by the Israeli

aggressors, they are killed by the Arab brothers. Rifka was killed because the leaders of Israel are ready to sacrifice the youth of Israel as cannon fodder in the service of a foreign power. They are cheaper cannon fodder than the cannon fodder that was used in Vietnam. Mr. Begin is making it cheaper and cheaper by his new economic steps in order that the owners of the cannon will be generous with him.

Mr. Begin declares that he is willing to go to Geneva without preconditions. He said "The Arabs will demand that Israel evacuate the occupied territories. They have the right to demand," he said, "but we will refuse. There will be Arabs who will demand that a Palestinian state be established. Let them demand. But we will refuse." And he said, "We are believers, and the Arab leaders are believers. Since we both believe in one God, one day I am sure," he said, "we will come to agreement." And in the meantime, what is happening in southern Lebanon will continue.

Yesterday we read in the papers that again there was an Israeli retaliation because a Palestinian Katyusha was launched at an Israeli village and there were no casualties. In Israel it is easy to invent much bigger lies than a Katyusha.

So what has happened last week will recur. More Palestinians will be killed. New colonialist settlements will be established in the occupied territories; they are not *Jewish* settlements but white colonialist settlements, antipeace settlements, settlements which are intended to prove that Israeli occupation will continue forever. After a few years the rulers of Israel will declare that the new borders, the borders of occupation, are not secure borders; that women and children are living in those settlements. The rulers of Israel are sacrificing the lives of these women and children in order to be able to declare one day that a new Rifka was killed by a Katyusha and that Israel needs new secure borders.

Begging Begin

This is what is happening now. This is how they are planning a new Geneva Conference. Mr. Sadat did not learn from the world "Begin," but "begging." He is begging Mr. Begin, and those who are above Mr. Begin, to bring about a solution. Let them meet in Jerusalem, as Mr. Sadat is ready to do, or in Cairo, as Mr. Begin wishes to do. Why will they not bring about a peaceful settlement? What is hindering them? They are planning a settlement which will not be durable because it will not be just, it will not be accepted by the people who are the core of all this conflict—the courageous and heroic Arab people of Palestine.

Certainly no peace fighter will accept a Geneva Conference that will be only a pretext to postpone the solution, to continue the policies of exterminating a people. Some governments, including Israel, have developed plans for a peace settlement for the Middle East against and without the Arab people of Palestine. Since this people would refuse such a solution, since this people have no place in the plans of aggression and imperialism, these governments think they will be able to exterminate them.

A war of extermination is being waged against the Arab people of Palestine. We have seen it happening for 30 years while the various rulers of Israel were shouting that the Arabs want to throw the Jews into the sea. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, they have been doing everything to ensure that not even one Arab will remain. Through massacres—like those at Deir Yassin and Kafr Kassem—and threats, they forced most of the Palestinian Arabs to leave their country.

Even though 140,000 Arabs remained in Israel, the rulers could not bear them. One of the Zionist leaders of Israel declared in the 50's, "We never thought that Arabs would remain in the State of Israel." And those Arabs who remained—we were born there, that country is our homeland. I must tell you that some people have asked me, "How come there are Arabs staying in Israel?" I told them, "Ask my mother." I have a birthright to that country. The Palestinians have no other homeland. Those who think otherwise—of Jordan or any other Arab country—are mistaken. I am sorry to say that the Arabs countries have proven not a homeland for the Palestinians, but a graveyard. There is no other solution but to give this courageous and heroic people their right to self-determination.

We live under policies of evacuation and extermination. And we are continuing for 30 years with the help of the genuine Jewish progressive forces in Israel, headed by the Communist Party of Israel, which is the only Jewish-Arab party in Israel—the others are Zionist parties, racist parties—we are continuing for 30 years our struggle to preserve our elementary right to stay alive in our country, in our homeland.

For 30 years the government has been confiscating Arab land. Of 585 Arab villages and towns which existed at the time of the establishment of Israel, only 107 remain now. All the others were razed, their land was confiscated, their people evacuated or thrown out. And yet Mr. Begin declares that he is ready to roll out the red carpet for Mr. Sadat in the name of peace.

Endangering State Security

But all the land that has been confiscated, all the Arabs who have been thrown out—this is not enough. The Galilee is not yet "Judaized," and 48 percent of the population there are Arabs. This, says the government, is endangering the security of the state.

So what will be done with the Arabs? The government is thinking of a solution on the pattern of what happened to the American Indians over the past 400 years. Begin has sent the commander of the "green commandos"—who roam the Negev and the Galilee destroying Arab houses—to the U.S. to study how it was done historically.

The government confiscated enough land and destroyed enough Arab villages in order to bring about a racist majority in this or that place in Israel, but has not solved the problem of "Judaizing" Israel. The only solution is to expel the Arabs, to exterminate them.

Mr. Golda Meir said openly and unashamedly while she was the prime minister that she is awakened from her sleep whenever she remembers that at every minute a new Arab child is born in Israel. This is not published in the "free" press. It will not be published that the deputy prime minister in the Begin government recently declared, when he visited the Galilee town of Acre, that he is very angry that more Arab children than Jewish children are attending the kindergartens of Acre.

What is this if not racist thinking? It is the thinking of circles who believe that in the last quarter of the 20th century they can exterminate a whole people. And if we do not have enough time, they say, then let us postpone a just solution. And if it is not easy, let this postponement come through a "Geneva Conference."

We do not find that real conditions exist for convening a Geneva Conference which will lead not to postponement, not to new aggressive attacks on Lebanon and on the Palestinian people, but to a peaceful settlement. The obstacle in front of a Geneva Conference is not, as they are trying to show us, the problem of who will represent the Palestinians. To this day, the aggressors are not ready to evacuate all the territories occupied in the 1967 war. The fact is that Mr. Sadat has not achieved the elementary demand of the liberation of the Egyptian territories. Neither has Syria. And Begin has declared openly that he will not give up one inch of the West Bank.

So what are they going to discuss in Geneva? With the Palestinians or without the Palestinians, what are they going to discuss? Are there certain Arab leaders who are ready to share with Mr. Begin the Egyptian homeland and the Syrian territories? Mr. Begin wants to discuss with them the fate of their homeland, without preconditions. This is not according to the Security Council decisions. The Geneva Conference should be convened not to distribute the occupied Arab territories between the Arabs and Israel, but in order to find a formation for a stable and just peace.

Palestinian Representation

Representation of the Palestinians in Geneva is not a formalistic question, but a basic one. Mr. Dayan, who speaks freely, declared openly that the Israeli government does not want to recognize the PLO because it does not want to recognize the self-determination of the Arab people of Palestine. He is right in drawing this conclusion, because all this discussion about who represents the Palestinians is a discussion of those who would not want to recognize the right of self-determination of the Arab people of Palestine.

The Palestinians have decided that the PLO is their representative and leadership. We have no right to interfere in their decision or to discuss their decision. They chose the PLO in a very democratic and popular way. Through a long struggle, through sacrifices, they brought about this great achievement of unity of a people—the PLO.

When Mr. Begin recognizes the apartheid government of South Africa, does he ask who elected it? Or when he recognizes the Pinochet government of Chile, does he ask such a question? Or the U.S. government, when it has diplomatic relations with such governments, does it ask how they were elected? They know how they were elected because they elected them. It is a question of the recognition of the self-determination of a people. When you recognize the self-determination of a people, it is

the business of that people to bring about its own leadership and representatives.

Certain aggressive circles want to put the blame on the Palestinians for new aggressions. They want to make retaliation the future policy of the Middle East.

Nobody has the right to demand from the Palestinians to recognize Israel as long as the State of Israel openly declares in the decision of the Knesset that all Palestine is part of the historical land of Israel. When former prime minister Rabin declares that there is no place to meet the Palestinians but the battlefield, how can any honest man ask of the Palestinians that they should be the first to recognize the right of existence of Israel, as long as they are not being recognized even as a people?

We are asking, for the sake of a just peace and durable peace, that Israel withdraw, that it give even a sign that it is willing to retreat from the occupied territories, that it is willing to recognize that another people lives in this country of Palestine.

In the last elections to the Knesset the Communist Party of Israel received for the first time the majority of the Arab vote and a substantial Jewish vote. We are considered officially the representative of half a million Arab citizens of Israel, half a million Arab Palestinians who never left their homeland. Our party declares even from the platform of the Knesset that we recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Arab people of Palestine. Our party defended and defends all the victims of Israeli occupation.

The leadership of the PLO has shown that it will be ready to accept the internationally proposed solutions if there would be a possibility of implementing them, if Israel will show any signs that it is ready to accept them.

Cut the Circle

When there is blood shed we declare that we have to cut this vicious circle, and there is no other way but to withdraw from all the occupied territories and to bring about a just peace.

Recently we had an official meeting of Jewish and Arab representatives of our Party with representatives of the PLO and we issued a joint declaration. Between us, we represent the Arab people of Palestine. Not only this; we represent the future relations of peace and good neighborliness in the Middle East.

As the struggle of the progressive forces in Israel continues, as the unity of the Arab people of Palestine deepens, as the solidarity of all peace forces strengthens—and especially the solidarity of the forces of peace and socialism and the solidarity of the democratic and anti-imperialist forces in the U.S.—we will be able to bring about a peaceful solution and stop the threat of a new aggressive war, which we consider as the main danger in the present situation in our region. We call upon you, upon all democratic forces, to give more solidarity and more support to the just cause of a just, durable peace in the Middle East. The conflict in the Middle East is a hotbed of a new war, and it is our duty to extinguish it. ■