

Welcome To The Shabab!

by Patrick Moodly

Danger and opportunity are inseparable. When the seas are turbulent, it is possible for a vessel seemingly vanished in the wave's trough to emerge at the crest of the next great swell.

While noting the overall international situation, the last conclusion for one to draw is that nothing remains but to wait for one's own small craft to be buffeted, swamped and sunk in the inevitable global storm.

The revolutionary struggle of the Palestinian people defies the attempts by armchair intellectuals to achieve a "realistic two-state" solution.

The historic role of the Palestinian and Azanian revolutions, both against settler-colonial states controlled by the USA, will vastly influence the whole world for decades to come.

From The River Jordan To The Sinai

About two years ago, the settler-colonial state of Israel seemed all powerful, and some dared say that the Palestinian "wild card" had been discarded from the Middle Eastern deck. Reactionary vultures of all stripes cackled over "the corpse of the Palestinian movement." Today Israel's godfathers in the USA openly worry about the stability and survival of this indispensable link in their empire!

About two years ago, the USA was congratulating itself that its Persian Gulf policy had brought success: long-sought open alliances with the Arab gulf states were jelling, and its expanded armada had established a

firm foothold in the area. The *intifaada* (uprising) has sent all the Arab states who work closely with the United States scrambling to establish their "anti-Israeli" credentials as they worry about the sparks from Palestine jumping to ignite the masses within their own borders.

About two years ago, the goal of liberating *all* of Palestine from Zionism and imperialism seemed like an old dream that was fading amidst cynical "realism". December 9, 1987 saw the Palestinian people rising up together in unprecedented unity.

The spectre of national liberation has re-emerged and it walks a flesh and blood- in the fiery new generation of the shabab (the Palesinian youth). It is breath-taking to see how much the shabab have accomplished in the struggle and sacrifice of the *intifaada* which blankets the whole ancient land of Palestine: from the River Jordan to the edges of Sinai's desert, throughout the impoverished towns and refugee camps of the Gaza Strip, in the crowded farm villages of the West Bank, in the Arab districts of East Jerusalem and amongst the so-called "Israeli Arabs" – those Palestinians who live within the "Green Line."

Concentration Point

The Middle East is the concentration point of complex and volatile contradictions. If the knot of contradictions in the Middle East point to World War III, the *intifaada* has put an exclamation mark on the revolutionary potential of the masses. It has demonstrated that Israel and its US

master are not omnipotent, they are giants with feet of clay.

History will record that the most important political victory won by the *shabab* is to show that revolution has a genuine chance of defeating imperialism and settler-colonialism.

An Israeli colonel, on patrol in a Gaza Strip refugee camp, finds himself shaken by Palestinian eyes: "Their eyes show hatred – no doubt. And it is a deep hatred. All the things they cannot say and all the things they feel inside of them, they put into their eyes and in how they look at you. You feel a hatred from them ..." To this soldier, armed to the teeth and backed by all the modern weaponry of a Western power, the fearlessness of the *shabab* is unnatural, unsettling and foreboding: "They are not afraid to look right at you," he complains to a reporter, as his patrol approaches a group of glaring Palestinian youths. "Sometimes you pass a school, and stone-throwing kids come out and you give them a daring, intimidating look. They stare right back at you and they give you the feeling that they have self-confidence." He adds that the *shabab* do not look at his automatic rifle with hatred but with covetousness. This too makes him uneasy.

Israel and the US have thrown everything at the *shabab* including genocidal military assaults on civilians, illegal detentions, demolitions of homes and deportations. Israeli Prime Minister Shamir vowed: "Israel will prevent in the most determined way any attempt to carry out any idea- to the extent that there are madmen who raise it – of establishing a Palestinian government. Such people will be met with an iron fist that will leave no

trace of their attempts.

But the situation "on the ground" is still being shaped by the Palestinian masses, meeting in the slums and fighting defiantly through the crooked streets.

Negotiated settlement

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has attempted to use the power of the *intifaada* to force the world powers towards an international conference, in the hope that Israeli occupation can come to a negotiated end. What this means is to install *another* form of reactionary armed control over Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza: either Jordan serving as the new gendarme or some collaborators ruling a mini-state bantustan on Israel's behalf.

On July 31, 1988 King Hussein of Jordan, an American puppet, announced that he would cut the "legal and administrative links" that have bound the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to his government. As a US State Department official explained: "Hussein is putting the PLO on the spot ... Eventually, he figures, the West Bank Palestinians will come to their senses and may decide that the ultimate solution is a confederation of the West Bank with Jordan."

A two-day general strike shut down the West Bank beginning on August 1, 1988 and an even bigger strike spread through the "occupied territories" on August 8, 1988 and again on August 14. Hussein's move fueled the determination and resolve of the *shabab*.

As the Gaza Strip shook with rebellion against the Israeli occupiers, the Palestine National Council, the "parliament in exile" of the PLO issued a symbolic "declaration of independence" for a Palestinian state (September 1988). This declaration is based on the 1947 UN Partition Plan, which divided Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The PNC calls for "peace negotiations"



based on UN resolutions on Palestine, specifically naming UN Resolution 242. Passed after the 1967 War, UN Resolution 242 implies the recognition of Israel as a legitimate state.

The PLO thus openly recognized Israel's "legitimacy" and called for a "mini-state" made up only of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Such a mini-state can mean no more than a *bantustan a la Transkei or Venda*. It would be stripped of any real political, economic and military independence and surrounded by armies from Israel and /or pro-West Arab states like Jordan and Egypt. The Soviet Union has indicated support for the recognition of Israel and the "mini-state" solution.

Boasted a high-ranking PLO official: "We are now concerned with gaining world support, and we cannot ignore international facts that have become realities." This talk of realism is PLO doublespeak for counter-revolution and defeatism.

The Battle of Karameh

During March 1968, the Battle of Karameh erupted when a small band of *fedayeen* successfully defended the guerrilla base of PLO at Karameh, Jordan against a vastly superior Israeli force. Karameh marked a phoenix-like rebirth of the Palestinian cause. In the weeks following March 21 1968 hundreds of thousands of people took down their posters of Nasser and replaced them with posters of the *fedayeen*, wrapped in *kaffiyehs*, guns in hand.

By 1974, however, official PLO policy (represented by Arafat's speech to the UN) had gone from an erroneous though in many respects still revolutionary-line, to a consolidated orientation of subordinating the armed struggle to deals and diplomatic manoeuvring with one or another imperialist. The role of armed action in PLO strategy was reduced to that of an "irritant" designed to constantly remind the Zionists that

"the Palestinian question will not go away" and that "a negotiated solution is unavoidable."

The impotence of this overall PLO strategy was never more starkly evident than in the decision to surrender and leave the city of Beirut under the "protection" of a US multinational task force rather than fighting the Battle of Beirut through (July 1982).

Welcome to The Shabab

In September 1988, a thirteen year old Palestinian girl at a summer camp in Libya told a reporter: "We must fight for all of Palestine." Her fifteen year old companion nodded in agreement: "Up to now, everything Chairman Arafat has done has been right. But the day he recognizes Israel is the day I will oppose him. I will win my state by fighting, not be recognition." Indeed, illusory schemes of a relatively cheap and painless road to liberation through brokered deals with "enlightened" or pragmatic great powers lead, not to victory, but to paralysis and disaster.

Welcome to this fierce new generation! With incredible courage and sacrifice, the *shabab* have placed themselves in the front ranks of the struggle against settler-colonialism and imperialism. Much will be demanded of them as we free Palestine ... and Azania!!! ■

REPORT OF A BANKRUPT

If you blow out the candles in my eyes,

If you freeze all the kisses on my lips,

If you fill my native air with lispng curses,

Or silence my anguish,

Forge my coin,

Uproot the smile from my children's faces.

If you raise a thousand walls,

And nail my eyes to humiliation,

Enemy of man,

I shall not compromise

And to the end

I shall fight.

Enemy of man

The signals are raised at the forts,

The air

Is thronged with beckonings,

I see the sails at the horizon

Striving,

Defying,

The sails of Ulysses are veering home

From the seas of the lost

The sun is rising,

Man is advancing,

And for his sake,

I swear

I shall not compromise

And to the end

I shall fight

I shall fight.

- Samir Al-Qassem