

# The Occupied South

## Sealed Off, But Still Resisting

To the extent that the Zionist War Minister may be considering further partial pull-backs in Lebanon, the reason lies in the sustained military and mass resistance of the southern population. Though the occupiers virtually sealed off the South following the Nov. 3rd explosion in their Sour headquarters, the Lebanese National Resistance Front (LNRF) has continued operations on a daily basis. On Nov. 20th, Israeli television reported that there had been 89 anti-occupation operations since the IDF redeployed along the Awali River on Sept. 4th, with 35 soldiers killed and 64 wounded. By the end of the year, this was 39 killed in 130 attacks.

Having previously closed the Awali crossings, the Israelis imposed new restrictions in mid-November, requiring a special pass for Lebanese wishing to drive a vehicle into the occupied South. The result was not more security for the Zionists, but further enagement of the Lebanese. Having traveled to another part of the country, a citizen had to apply at the Israeli liaison office in Dbayeh (fascist-dominated town north of Beirut) for a visa to drive home. The other alternative was applying in Saida before leaving the South. The first day this procedure was in effect, only seven of the 200 Lebanese, who lined up at IDF headquarters in Saida, received passes. After waiting for hours, the rest were rudely driven away by Zionist soldiers who unleashed police dogs and fired in the air. The Israelis evidently also found this arrangement too cumbersome, for the pass restriction was lifted within a week for Lebanese. Palestinians still need a special permit.

Bottlenecking north-south traffic has disastrous effects. With the bridges only open nine hours daily, traffic was cut to about one-third the normal flow. In early December, the

mayor of Saida estimated that 70% of the South's citrus and banana crop, normally shipped to Beirut and on to other Arab countries, was going to waste or sold at a loss. The cost of transporting building materials tripled due to the prolonged waiting time at the bridges; thus, construction came to a halt in the South, as did public works projects. The 3,000 civil servants living in Beirut found it difficult to reach their work in Saida.

Two separate attacks on Israeli checkpoints at the Awali bridge in mid-November exemplified the popular anger at this attempt to isolate and strangle the South. Even with the abolishment of the permit, top security measures still prevail, clogging traffic and eliciting mass resistance. On Nov. 23rd, Zionist soldiers fired in a crowd of people crossing the bridge on foot, wounding four Lebanese civilians. The soldiers then had to beat off the crowd that was pelting them with rocks.

Israeli patrols and convoys continue to be plagued by roadside explosions, especially in the vicinity of occupied Saida. The popular support given to the LNRF was clearly demonstrated on December 2nd, when freedom

*One of the two crossings at the Awali line.*



reached new heights on Dec. 14th and 15th, when the giant firepower of the New Jersey was unleashed on the mountains.

Generally, the MNF have beefed up their presence and logistics. In early November, the US 6th Fleet was reinforced with 30 new vessels. Later in the month, agreement was reached for the US to use its bases in Turkey for supply runs to Lebanon and increase its use of Turkish ports for US warships. Turkey's dictators have evidently decided that any negative repercussions on trade with Arab countries will be offset by the \$750 million they will receive from the US in military aid next year. Britain is also stationing three warships off the Lebanese coast to back up its MNF contingent.

Underlying the overt military aggression, there has been increased emphasis on imperialist intelligence operations. In addition to its air raid on the Beqaa, Nov. 17th, France is playing a prominent role in these efforts, relying especially on Arabic-speaking African mercenaries from its former colonies, who are among the Foreign Legionnaires in its MNF contingent. Joint French-Lebanese Army units man checkpoints along the coastal road in the 'Greater Beirut' area. Moreover, French intelligence experts have been integrated into the Lebanese military and political intelligence branches. The French takeover of police functions is a back-up to the US anti-guerrilla campaign. This year, when 'Israel' again made air and sea attacks a regular feature of life in Lebanon, with a total of 12 so far, it was no longer the sole foreign aggressor, but enjoyed the 'good company' of its imperialist allies.

On the internal scene, the Dec. 1st assassination of Sheikh Halim Takiuddin, the most prominent Druze religious leader living in West Beirut, shows the Lebanese fascists' intent to sabotage national reconciliation. Then came the car bomb in West Beirut on Dec. 5th, which killed 16 and injured 100 citizens; this was claimed by the Front for the Liberation of Lebanon from the Foreigners, notorious as a front for the Phalangist Party.

However, the Zionist-imperialist aggression has not gone unchallenged. The US Marines have drawn fire on themselves and suffered new casualties. Most important, the heroic decision and performance of the Syrian forces to confront the enemy warplanes, which resulted in downing two US planes on December 4th, and an Israeli bomber and three reconnaissance drones on other days, show the potential for thwarting the enemy aggression, if the Lebanese-Palestinian-Syrian nationalist alliance is strengthened. ●