

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Jack O'Dell, active in Black liberation movement and the international peace movement for more than 30 years, is the international affairs director of Operation PUSH, an associate editor of *Freedomways* magazine and a member of the staff for international relations of the Rainbow Coalition. In the 1960s, O'Dell was on the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), where he became the focal point of a virulent red-baiting attack unleashed by the FBI against Dr. Martin Luther King and his associates.

In this September 27, 1984 interview with *Frontline* correspondent James Early, O'Dell discusses the Rainbow Coalition: how it came into being, its continuity with the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, its view on the Reagan vs. Mondale choice in 1984 and its promise for the future shape of U.S. politics. In his remarks, O'Dell brings his years of experience to bear on many of the central questions on the top of the progressive movement's agenda, including the political significance of the electoral arena and the road to transforming the present two-party system.

The interview (printed below in edited form) begins with O'Dell's summation of the essential politics of the Rainbow and his analysis of its historical links to the civil rights movement:



Frontline photo

Veteran activist Jack O'Dell.

The Rainbow is the progressive stream in American politics—distinct from the conservative trend which stands for the status quo and retrogression; distinct from the liberal trend which stands for minimal change and a kind of patchwork approach to the problems of the country. The progressive trend stands for fundamental change, for the kind of changes that are necessary to solve the problems of this civilization.

The primary base of the Rainbow is the Black community, because Afro-Americans as a political community have the most advanced political instincts in this country. These instincts arise out of our struggle of over two and a half centuries on this continent. But that base becomes a force of attraction that makes it possible to build a coalition of all of the dispossessed and disinherited and dissatisfied. Even some people who are living fairly well support the Rainbow, because they know that the contradictions of this society—the racism, the militarism and the sexism—are things that they would like to see changed. So the gravitational center is the Black community, but that gravitational center enables all other dissatisfied sections of the U.S. population to rally around and to unite in coalition for progressive change.

The possibility of change arises not only out of the depth of the crisis U.S. society is in now; it is tied to the civil rights continuum. Coalition building was a feature of the civil rights movement. The civil rights movement was led by Afro-Americans, but it involved all sections of the population who conceded that civil rights had been denied certain strata of the population, and consequently felt that an injury to one was an injury to all, that there was a deficiency in the general body politic of democracy.

You recall that Dr. King, emerging from the later stages of the civil rights

movement, having had legislation passed to abolish segregation, formed the Poor People's Campaign. The Poor People's Campaign was the Rainbow Coalition in embryonic form, because it pulled together the dispossessed. There were, in addition to Afro-Americans, whites from Appalachia, Indians from the reservations and Hispanic community representatives and so forth. So the seeds of today's Rainbow were present in the Poor People's Campaign.

Then in the late '60s and '70s, with the emergence of a distinct movement to change U.S. foreign policy vis-a-vis Vietnam, you had the emergence of the peace movement, the disarmament movement; you had the emergence of the women's movement to struggle to correct the inequities that women face. These became new components to be added to any coalition building.

This developmental pattern now finds its crystallized expression in the Rainbow Coalition of 1984, born out of Jesse Jackson's candidacy for President. In between, you had the coalition-building for mass demonstrations. June 12, 1982 in support of the U.N. special session on disarmament was the largest single mass demonstration in the history of the country. Then you had the historic 20th anniversary March on Washington last August that brought over 400,000 people to the nation's capital on the issue of jobs, peace and freedom. All of these groundswell, grassroots efforts to dramatize concern for jobs, for employment, for health care, for peace, for justice, find themselves in the electoral arena in 1984 in the form of the Jesse Jackson for President campaign and the Rainbow Coalition.

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

There is also an international dimension. Our interest in democracy and in saving the planet from nuclear annihilation coincides with the interest of all the world's peoples, regardless of color. We don't have separate interests from other people on this planet. And we can only change society if we save it from destruction. You know, sanity is a universal proposition; we're part of the human family.

The international response that is coming to the Rainbow Coalition is because of the universality of the principles that we represent. The Black community in the U.S. is seen around the world as being in the vanguard of social change in America. The world's people, many of whom are victims of the barbarism of this social order, see hope in our initiative. They see us as a special contingent of freedom fighters, a new front that has been opened up in the struggle for peace and democracy. The people of El Salvador and Guatemala and South Africa are looking to us to make a difference in their situation. So it is our universal appeal that is our strength and we must never violate that.

Throughout the 1984 primary season, Jesse Jackson took a strong position against racism in the Democratic Party and in the labor movement. This stance placed him in stark contrast to what one might call the conciliatory stand of Black Democratic Party forces such as Andrew Young, Coretta King, Julian Bond, Coleman Young and others. To what do you attribute this difference?

I think that there are always those in any country and in any movement who are on the cutting edge of history. This means that their sense of timing as to what is the new reality is on target. And there are always those who have less of a sense of this or at a particular time may miss a particular turn of events.

Jesse Jackson, in this season of American history, has been on the cutting edge of history. And when the Rainbow and his candidacy raised the question of "Our Time Has Come," it meant that we sensed what the accumulated experience of our people dictated, and the moves that were dictated by our accumulated experience.

The Black community has been the most consistent supporter of the Democratic Party since President Roosevelt's

second term. It's interesting that we were the last ones to leave the Republican Party. Most people went Democratic in '32; we went in '36. But once we went, we became the most consistent supporter of the Roosevelt New Deal policy and of the Democratic Party for almost fifty years.

Now it's time for another change. But the habit of supporting the Democratic Party is bound to be ingrained among

our time had come. The excitement, the enthusiasm of the Jackson candidacy in the Democratic Party was the only excitement and enthusiasm generated in the whole campaign. We picked up 3.5 million votes; we ran third out of a field of eight; we won a majority of voters in 60 congressional districts. The Rainbow has been born as a sign of hope and possibility as people look to the future.

Interview with Jack O'Dell Reflections on the Rainbow



"In many respects, we have picked up where Martin left us . . . and taken it further. He left us

some leadership when you've done it for half a century and certain concessions have been won. But we must never forget the fact that we had to fight for the right to vote in the Democratic Party; we had to go to court to get a Supreme Court decision to outlaw the Texas white primary; we had to lay down our lives to vote in the face of the brutality of Democratic Party sheriffs, Democratic Party registrars and Democratic Party politicians. They have made slates that left us off, and took us for granted. So we have a body of grievances against this party that we have been so loyal and supportive of, and, at a certain point in any people's experience, there's a time when you say enough. When someone comes forward and says enough, if they are in step with the masses of people, then that creates a whole different dynamic.

But there is also leadership, who in good faith and with integrity, may not grasp that moment until it is almost past. They would say wait a minute, this is not the time. Of course, you never hit a turning point in history where there are not those who say this is not the time. They said that to Dr. King at the time of Vietnam. But he said no, we can't put up with the Vietnam War because the hopes of the poor are being shot down in the rice paddies of Vietnam. And there were those who said in the '60s, I don't know about this direct action, just going into restaurants and sitting down; I don't want to go where I'm not wanted. People have all kinds of rationales to kind of keep on keeping on in the same groove.

So, when a shift comes and the time comes for that shift, there are those prepared to make the shift immediately because they understand that is the time, and there are those that may be slower and say, well I don't know man, I got this in place and that in place, and these people I'm working with seem to be all right. Yet time goes on and circumstances develop independent of our will. Our consciousness has to catch up with this or we will miss moments in history.

And it is obvious—this was the moment,

Can the differences between Jesse and others in the Black leadership family be traced back to differences of assessment and perhaps of interest at the time of Martin Luther King's death, differences about which way the movement should go or how it should be organized?

I think possibly that is true, but one would have to really think that through. That's quite a zig-zag. It is the zig-zag of history. When Martin left us, what was germinating were the seeds of a Rainbow Coalition in the form of the Poor People's Campaign. The enemies of our movement saw in removing him a possibility of slowing down this development and the growth of our movement. So in many respects we have picked up where Martin left us, but under a new set of conditions, and taken it further. He left us at a Poor People's Campaign, an encampment, and we have entered the political arena with our own candidate fifteen years later.

So this is both the same and qualitatively new. I think that at the time of Martin's assassination, quite aside from the impact that act of murder was intended to have on our movement, we have a challenge before us: first, to deal with foreign policy as an integral part of our domestic concern; and second, to address the economic questions, since the civil rights agenda was being completed. I think from that moment on you had two trends: you had those that were still in the civil rights track, and those who recognized that the civil rights agenda was unfinished business to be sure, but there was new business emerging at the very same time and that if we didn't address the new business the civil rights agenda would be rendered somewhat meaningless.

We completed an agenda within a certain framework, and started a new agenda without a pause, you might say. The economic agenda of full employment and civil equality began to emerge as an urgent issue right alongside the civil rights

agenda in its later stages. And so there were those like the NAACP and the Urban League, who continued to perceive of our agenda as a civil rights agenda when in fact we had entered the period of struggle for civil equality.

The civil rights agenda meant that we had to work on the implementation of civil rights laws. The civil equality agenda dictated that we understand the vicissitudes

formation, a period in which a new two-party system will emerge that represents a real alternative for the masses of people. The present two-party system gives those in power the choice. We are in the process of building a realignment of political forces that will give us a choice. We are in the beginning stages of this.

That means we have to nurture it, and protect it, and cultivate it and have the

that believes in limited nuclear war. Also, we have an interest in taking the Democrats to power because this buys time for the development of the Rainbow's independence.

Mondale is not our candidate; our candidate is Jesse Jackson. But not having won the nomination, we have to look at the options. The Mondale/Ferraro ticket is not our ideal ticket, but it is a live option.

anti-slavery party. The best they could do was compromise.

But they reached the point where compromise was no longer valid. The society had to decide whether it was going to be slave or free—that is, based on wage labor. And so there was born, in 1854 in Wisconsin, a group that later became the Republican Party. And their argument was that the Republic was supposed to be a Republic of free men. 1854. Their time had come.

Today, we can no longer live with militarism; we can't keep on escalating this military budget. We've got to go in a new direction. The Democratic Party cannot make up its mind to be an opponent of the military-industrial-media complex. We are being born saying you must make room for us and you must take the country in a new direction. The Democrats are resisting, saying we'll cut the increase in the military budget, but we're not going to decrease the military budget. This is a parallel, an analogy to the 1850s. The Rainbow went to the people as an independent candidacy within the Democratic Party primary election system. We will become the second party before the end of this decade.

How did the U.S. left contribute to the Rainbow?

I think in the later stages the left in the U.S. recognized the significance of this candidacy. I think they were slow to do so, slow to take initiative, because they don't yet understand the historical significance of the Black community in the U.S. They suffer a theoretical deficiency in their conceptualization of social change in the U.S. Since this was a Black candidate, who came from a mainstream community, meaning the Black community within the Democratic Party, the whole attitude toward electoral politics that the left often has come into play. They have characterizations of the two-party system that are often undialectical. As a result, they miss opportunities where there are breaks that occur in social development and social change. I don't mean that they were ever antagonistic to the Rainbow. I just don't think they understood it in its earlier stages.

But I think that now the whole left is assessing this whole development in a much more positive way. I think their slowness affected the impact that the candidacy and the campaign had in this election year, but I think there's been a lesson learned. I think that they now will have a greater state of readiness to help in building the Rainbow.

BLACK LEADERSHIP

But they will have to accept that the Black community is the parent of this child. If they cannot accept that the majority leadership, not exclusive leadership, will be coming from the Afro-American community, they will not be able to make the necessary contribution.

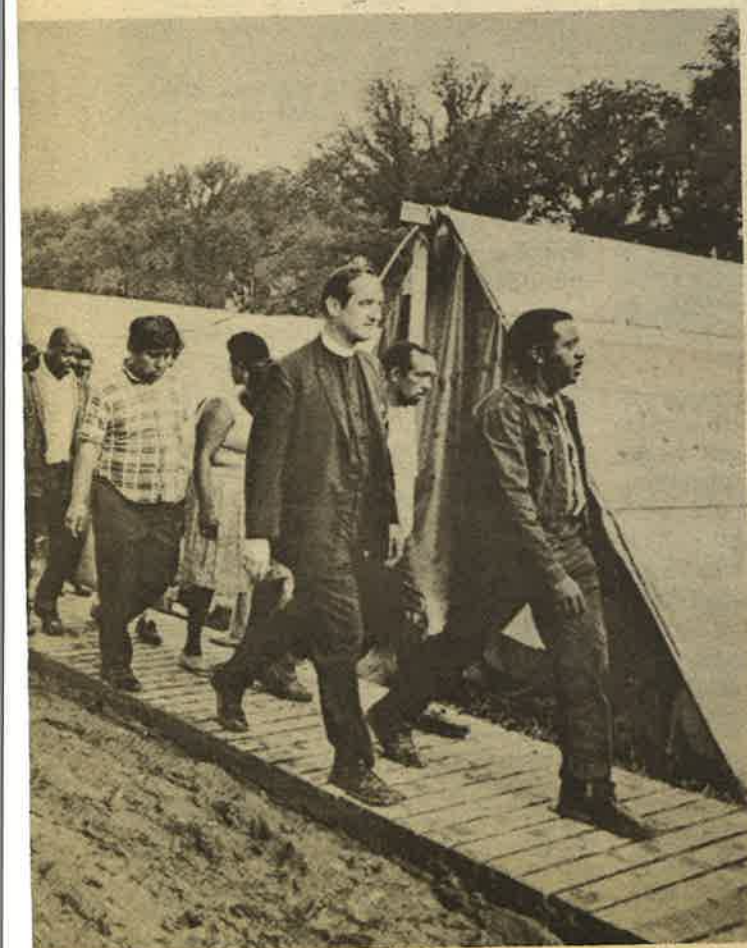
What about the socialist and communist left in particular? Did they make any contribution or did they too have a lowered and narrow vision of the significance of the Rainbow?

If they run candidates then I would question their understanding of this development. For example, without wanting to do injustice to anyone, I think that the Socialist Party ran a candidate for mayor against Harold Washington. [It was the Socialist Workers Party—editors] Supposedly that was a close race and theoretically they could have pulled votes away. I would say that if you do that, then that is not a contribution.

I know that the Communist Party said that the Jackson candidacy was great and whatever and said that they should help build the Rainbow and stuff like that. But I don't know if any of those parties have the strength to both go out and get petitions for their own candidates in the general elections and at the same time really make the contribution. Some of them may have rhetorically expressed real support, and that's good, but in terms of their practical work, if they took the time to field their own candidates even if it was for later on, I would say that some of that energy is

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Rainbow—Past, Present and Future



Neal Casey/Frontline photo

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tudes and fragilities, the contradictions, in the economy of this country. The civil equality agenda dictated that we take a different measure of our relation to this society and examine the structured inequality that systemically we had become accustomed to.

The civil rights agenda presumed that our situation was not systemic. The struggle for civil equality tested that assumption. It did not assume that getting civil rights legislation would make us equal. It would make us equal before the law, but equality before the law is not equality. We have equality before the law in the sense that the law has confirmed our equal citizenship, but that has not made us equal in any of the indexes of equality. We die seven years younger. We have three or four years less education. We live in the worst housing. We are 12% of the population and 40% of the poor. You've got to assess this reality. And we then have to understand, if this is the reality, and it has a systemic root, what is our relation to peoples in other parts of the world who are involved in this same kind of struggle?

Unquestionably the Rainbow Coalition made a significant impact on the Democratic Party this year. But is this long range? Is this a long range impact on the Democratic Party?

It is as long range as we make it. We are at the beginning of a new chapter in American political history. Of course a new chapter that is beginning also represents the closing, to some degree, of another chapter, of a previous period.

We have to study history. While we have closed out a period and begun a new one, we could have a reversal because the laws of development are such. We could enter a very serious period of repression in this country, in which people would be grabbing for the previous period in terms of security. We may very well be facing that. But in terms of our development, we are not going to de-develop.

This is the beginning of a new period in the history of the U.S., a period which in my judgment will result in a new political

purity of motive and the determination that will allow it to grow. We are witnessing the beginning of political realignment, and the Rainbow is the vehicle for that in this embryonic stage of development. In the political realignment that will emerge, it is possible that the Democratic Party as we know it will go out of history, and a new political formation will emerge that represents a real political alternative to the entrenched Republican conservatism that really represents the seeds of fascism.

DEFEAT REAGAN

In 1984, the Rainbow Coalition is committed to the election of the Mondale/Ferraro ticket because there is a greater danger to the country than their lackluster, irresolute and often racist attitudes. The greater danger is another four years in which representatives of the most racist, most militarist sections of big business will have power in our country. So the Rainbow is clearly committed to the defeat and the retirement of the Reagan administration. The only vehicle, at this stage, that can do that is the Democratic Party with the help of the Rainbow. So it is our best judgment and our best interest to use the Democratic Party for that purpose.

But that does not mean that because we support the Democratic Party ticket we are obliged to remain uncritical. To the contrary, the Rainbow Coalition is an independent force within the Democratic Party that is articulating the only policies that will make the Democratic Party a real alternative to the Republican Party in the long run. But we don't argue that the Democratic Party will be wise enough to understand that. That's why I raised the question that it may go out of history.

For this election, however, there is a choice. There is a choice between a Mondale/Ferraro administration that believes in arms control, is in favor of negotiating the abolition of nuclear weapons with the Soviet Union, and supports the idea of the right of unions to exist and full employment. There's a difference between that administration and one

You note that there is a realignment going on that will change the two-party system as we know it. Does that obviate the possibility that over the next 12, 15 or 20 years a third party, a more working people-oriented party, might arise out of the germs of the politics set forth by the Rainbow Coalition?

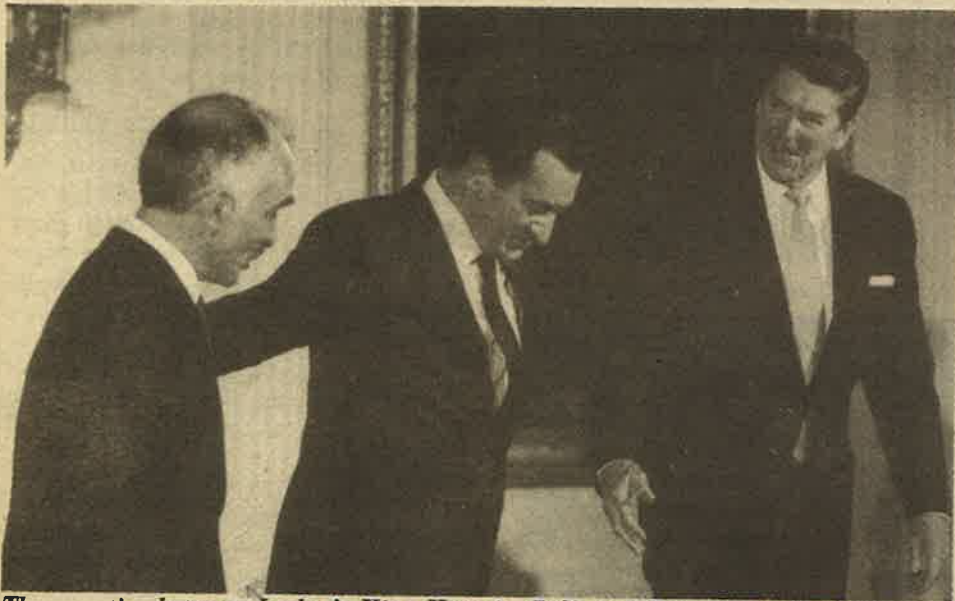
Well, I think that's exactly what I'm speaking to, but I don't see it taking that long a period of time. I think that a coalition has been born within the parameters of the Democratic Party that represents the successor, the possible successor, to the Democratic Party, either through a transformation of that party or a replacement of it.

I avoid, in making this analysis, the concept of a third party. I think that the American people have an addiction to the two-party system, and once you perceive yourself as a third party, you have adopted a category that puts you outside the parameters of power. Power is exercised within the two-party system, and therefore we have to have the goal, if we become a political party, to be a second party, not a third party. I'm saying we have to mature enough within the Democratic Party to either transform it or replace it.

This is rooted in the historical experience of the U.S. You recall that there was another crisis in the 19th century, the crisis of the slave mode of production. You had two parties, the Whigs and the Democrats. The Democratic Party was the party of slavery, of the slaveholders.

The Whig Party was a northern-based business party, which objectively opposed slavery because wage-labor, rather than slave-labor, was their basis for growth. But they could not bring themselves to be a consistent foe of the slavery form of exploitation. They compromised. Because even though the Whigs opposed slavery for themselves, in the North, the fact is that the cheap production of cotton and the export of it was in the interest of these northern shippers. So the Whig Party could not make up its mind to be an

Jordan Recognizes Egypt, Boosts U.S.-Israeli Hopes



The new ties between Jordan's King Hussein (left) and Egypt's President Mubarak (middle) have breathed life into the long-discredited Reagan Plan.

By Phyllis Bennis

Jordanian King Hussein's reopening of diplomatic ties with Egypt on September 25 signals a new and dangerous political initiative by the forces of Arab reaction.

Despite the King's speech six days later condemning an Israeli call for peace talks as an "exercise in subterfuge and deception," the Jordanian move was welcomed by Israel and the U.S. as a major advance for their regional aims. Besides offering a measure of legitimacy to the U.S.-orchestrated Camp David accords of 1979, the step breathed new life into the equally anti-Palestinian Reagan Plan of 1982. And in a particularly disturbing development, Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) chief Yasir Arafat has expressed support for Hussein's move.

GOAL OF WASHINGTON

Hussein's recognition of Cairo was the first by any Arab country that had participated in the Arab League's boycott of Egypt announced soon after Anwar Sadat signed his 1979 peace treaty with Israel. Jordan's shift has been a central goal of Washington since Camp David. Imperialism's aim is to swing the more backward forces in the Arab world behind a "settlement" of the Palestinian question that would leave the Palestinian people without their full national rights, locked into some form of "local autonomy" dominated and enveloped by the Israeli state.

Hussein's decision thus moved Jordan center stage in the U.S. scenario once again. Washington hopes Hussein's initiative will counter the anti-imperialist motion of Syria, Libya and South Yemen, derail the Palestinian movement, and thus lend new momentum to the so-called "peace process" begun with Camp David.

It appears that some regional gains for the right are already underway. On October 3, powerful Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Sheik Ahmed Zaki Yamani met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, in the first meeting between a Saudi cabinet official and an Egyptian president since the Saudis broke ties with Egypt in 1979.

Hussein was careful to deny any intentions to reopen talks based on the long-discredited Reagan Plan which called for Jordanian control of the West Bank and completely repudiated any role for the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. But it is clear that many forces of Arab reaction, certainly including Hussein, are in fact waiting for the U.S. elections and an expected Reagan victory precisely to revitalize that Plan. Top-level U.S. diplomatic moves are already underway. For example, the visit to the region of U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Richard Murphy is what one U.S.-based supporter of the Palestinian left called "the most

dangerous indication so far of a new return to the Reagan Plan." Washington has long pledged to support the Arab right wing against its progressive opponents and it is quite likely this extends to concrete guarantees of military protection should Hussein face retaliation for betraying the anti-Zionist front. Murphy arrived in Amman the day after Hussein's announcement about resuming ties with Egypt.

ARAFAT'S ROLE

Perhaps most distressing is the role being played by Arafat in the rehabilitation of Camp David Egypt and in opening the door for eventual acceptance of some version of the Reagan Plan. Arafat's visit to Cairo last December conciliated imperialism's objectives, as the PLO leader not only resumed ties with Cairo on behalf of his wing of Fatah but called for an end to the broader Arab isolation of Egypt's pro-U.S. regime. Two days after Arafat's Cairo visit, Egypt signed a new trade protocol with Jordan, paving the way for further cooperation and ultimately Hussein's present move.

Immediately following the King's announcement, Arafat called on other Arab states to follow suit and recognize Cairo "for the sake of the Palestinian cause." Arafat arrived in Amman for talks with Hussein the same day as U.S. representative Murphy. The Jordanian King called both of these post-agreement visits "purely coincidental."

REJECTS ADEN AGREEMENT

Within the PLO itself, Arafat's moves represent a major setback to the continuing effort to rebuild national unity in the wake of the political dislocations of the last two years. Last July's Aden agreement between Arafat's sector of Fatah and the PLO's left wing led by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) has been essentially abandoned by the Fatah forces loyal to the PLO chairman. The agreement (see *Frontline*, July 23, 1984) was aimed at holding Arafat accountable to the stated policies of the Palestine National Congress (PNC), the Palestinian parliament, and thus restoring unity among the splintered factions of the organization in preparation for a new PNC meeting. But Arafat's attempt to force a PNC meeting on September 15 failed, because the requisite political accountability and unity had not been achieved.

Arafat himself has continued to breach the Aden agreement. After explicit instructions mandating an end to collaboration with the Camp David regime in Egypt, the PLO chief approved of Jordan's renewal of diplomatic ties, dealt with Hussein far more strategically than allowed by the Aden restrictions and indicated on the U.S. Cable News Network a willingness to recognize Israel—all in violation of PNC resolutions and the

Aden agreement. It now appears that Arafat's goals in signing the Aden agreement were only to pin down a projected date for the PNC and regain enough legitimacy to return to Egypt, Jordan, and the U.S. and claim that he can deliver the PLO to the designs of reaction in the region.

NO NATIONAL CONSENSUS

In refusing to accept Arafat's demand to hold the PNC on September 15 as mandated by Aden, the PFLP called for an indefinite postponement until the traditional pre-PNC national consensus of the entire Palestinian movement had been achieved. The DFLP, while also refusing to support the September 15 meeting, called only for a temporary postponement, warning that the holding of the next PNC could not wait forever.

The Fatah rebels, led by Abu Musa, held to their view that Arafat must be ousted before the PNC could be held. Syria, primary backer of the Abu Musa faction, continued to support the call to oust Arafat, but agreed, unlike the Fatah opposition, to meet with representatives of Fatah's central committee other than Arafat himself.

Overall Syria's role in the region remains one of confrontation with imperialism and Zionism, but in recent weeks Damascus has issued some disturbing statements as well. Comments about the Palestinian movement having little significance apart from its links to Syria have been attributed to high Syrian officials, indicating the political limits of Syria's militant nationalism. The danger of a future Syrian attempt to bend the Palestinian revolution to its own interest cannot be ruled out.

Responding to the latest events, the PFLP issued a statement which condemned Arafat and the new Egyptian-Jordanian connection, and specifically criticized Arafat's call for other Arab countries to recognize Egypt. The DFLP, while also condemning the Egypt-Jordan move, did not criticize Arafat's support of it.

PALESTINIAN LEFT'S PROPOSAL

In recent meetings in South Yemen and in Algeria, the PFLP/DFLP-led Democratic Alliance within the PLO has developed a proposal to address these differences. The plan calls for a meeting in Damascus between the three components of the PLO (Democratic Alliance, Fatah central committee, and Fatah rebel-led National Alliance) and the three allied countries (Syria, Algeria and South Yemen) to discuss all outstanding differences and reach whatever accord can be found. Syria has in the main agreed to the Democratic Alliance proposal for talks, but calls for prior discussions between the Democratic and National Alliances to develop a common line isolating Arafat. Algeria and South Yemen have indicated that they will not host the PNC meeting until national consensus has been reached.

In response to these proposals, Arafat's aide Abu Iyad claimed that a meeting of Fatah central committee and other individuals and mass organizations within the PLO with "whoever is willing to come" will take place to plan a PNC meeting—even if the planning must take place on a ship.

So the organizational stalemate which the Aden agreement was intended to break continues. Since the goal of the Aden accords was to bring a united proposal to the entire PLO to be ratified at a forthcoming PNC meeting, Arafat's rejection of it has seriously set back the prospects of rebuilding a national Palestinian consensus. While the Fatah central committee has condemned calls from the Fatah rebels and others for the ouster of Arafat, claiming that only they can determine the leadership of their organization, their refusal to hold him accountable for the blatant violations of PLO policies speaks to a worsening of the PLO's already fractured unity, an advantage for reactionary forces throughout the region. □

O'Dell. . .

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energy that would have had to be taken from building the Rainbow.

I can understand people being fed up with the two-party system. But after saying that, you have to figure out how to get the hell out from under it. It's a process and it's a long time coming. I believe that the Jackson candidacy and the Rainbow Coalition is the greatest break in the two-party system since the Henry Wallace campaign and that was 35 years ago. Well, you have to be alert enough. If you've been waiting for a train for 35 years, don't miss it when it comes. When the train shows up, you can't be so tired waiting that you done gone on and got yourself a scooter and have begun pumping yourself on down.

How could the communists and socialists most effectively contribute to building the Rainbow in the coming period?

I think that organizational skills, the ability to interpret the significance of this motion, the raising of new ideas of platform that need to be looked at and addressed, the motivation of people to vote are all important. And sharing the vision; we have a vision. The Rainbow at this time does not have a vision of a socialist America, but it has a vision of America with justice and living in peace in the world. If we hold to that vision and pay the dues to implement it, what does that mean for people who believe in socialism?

One final question. We are approaching the 1984 presidential election in this country, and you have already noted that this holds grave consequences for the future of humanity. You've addressed this once, but could you comment further on the upcoming elections and their significance?

The main point is to remove from office the most dangerous government in the history of this country. I want to repeat that. The main point of these elections is to remove from office the most dangerous government in the history of this country. It is dangerous to our security, our constitutional rights and our survival, and it is dangerous to the world. Now we cannot remove this government by boycotting the election. And we cannot even elect better people at other levels by staying home.

We should participate in massive numbers, in unprecedented numbers, in this election and use the Democratic Party to retire Reagan and the crowd that he brought to power in 1980. There may not be a 1988 if we permit the policies of this government to have a second administration.

We have to concern ourselves with who is in the White House and who is in the State Department and who is Secretary of Defense. I mean, how can we be in solidarity with the people of El Salvador and not care who's President of the United States? How can we say that we oppose constructive engagement in South Africa, and don't want to dismiss the government that is the purveyor of constructive engagement? How can we let a man who has taken bread out of the mouths of our children in the hot lunch program and cut social security for the elderly, and eliminated legal services for the poor get a second term?

The opposition to our movement is organized; they are organized to vote. As long as we have the election process, then voting becomes important. We must choose for whom we vote, we must get the best possible candidates for whom to vote, and get the issues put forward, but you must vote.

Our future is at stake, both in a sense of progress towards equality and also in the real sense of survival on this planet. And we cannot afford not to vote against the man who believes in limited nuclear war, and is a few feet from the button. We can't afford to be apathetic about that, much less try to make it into some kind of sophisticated theory. □