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**We salute
Arafat's life;
we mourn
his death**

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The CPGB-ML and the anti-imperialist magazine *Lalkar* express their deep sorrow at the passing away of comrade Yasser Arafat, without a doubt one of the greatest anti-imperialist fighters of our time, and the most representative spokesman of the Palestinian people for over 40 years.

Arafat has been involved in every significant event in the history of the movement for Palestinian liberation since the late 1950s. He and others founded Fatah in 1957 in order, at first, to initiate and co-ordinate small military attacks against Israel with a view to reigniting the spirit of the Palestinian people and keeping alive the 'Palestinian issue'.

In 1968, he led the fighters of the Karameh refugee camp in Jordan to one of the most incredible and unlikely victories in modern history, as they fought off an Israeli invasion by thousands of well-equipped Israeli troops. In 1982, under his leadership, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and its Lebanese allies single-handedly faced the full might of the Israeli army of aggression for two and a half months - 150,000 strong and armed to the teeth by US imperialism with the most sophisticated weaponry - and prevented it from overrunning West Beirut. The valour, the heroism and the steadfastness of the PLO fighters redeemed the honour of the entire Arab people, established the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and proved the invincibility of their struggle for national liberation. These were the superb achievements of the people of Palestine under Arafat's leadership.

Arafat's extraordinary devotion and selflessness is well documented. His life as a revolutionary was well underway by the age of 17, by which time (1947) he was smuggling weapons from Egypt to help the Palestinian resistance. In 1948, he moved from Cairo to Gaza to fight in the Palestinian resistance, and in the 1950s he was a respected student leader in Egypt. By 1964, the year in which Fatah started its military operations, he had given up a lucrative career in order to become a full-time revolutionary. The guerrilla warfare against Israel saw Arafat and his comrades imprisoned many times by Arab regimes and he survived scores of assassination attempts by Mossad. Having initially led from exile, he was able after the first intifada to repatriate the struggle to Palestine where, for the last three years of his life, he was effectively under house arrest in the PLO compound in Ramallah.

Arafat was among the first to realise that the Palestinians could in no way rely on the corrupt lackey Arab regimes, and that Palestinian liberation would have to be led by the Palestinians themselves. In 1969, Fatah gained control of the PLO, which had been set up in 1964 by the Arab states as a sop and a talking shop. Under Fatah's leadership, with Arafat as chairman, the PLO was able to unite the various disparate groups working for Palestinian national liberation into a single umbrella organisation, and this has been one of the keys to the success of the Palestinian struggle and its ability to operate independently from the reactionary Arab regimes. Without a doubt, maintaining the unity of the PLO for 35 years, in spite of the innumerable attempts by both Israel and the Arab regimes to break it up, was an incredibly difficult task, and one which was successfully undertaken by Arafat.

Arafat's death is a terrible loss to the Palestinian people and their struggle for national liberation. He more than anyone was responsible for transforming the desperation and desolation of the Palestinian people after the brutal seizure of their homeland by the Israeli fascists (with their British guns) into a vibrant political and military struggle for a Palestinian state. Once that state is created - as it inevitably will be - he will rightly be con-

sidered its father. His devotion, courage, self-sacrifice, military genius, tactical flexibility and extraordinary political skill have served the Palestinian people in the most profound way.

But the sense of loss at Arafat's death is not felt by the Palestinians alone. The effects of Arafat's death will be felt across the Arab world - for the Palestinian national liberation movement is at the cutting edge of Arab anti-imperialist struggle. After all, when Britain gave its diplomatic and military support to the setting up of Israel, it did so neither out of sympathy for the Jews nor out of particular vindictiveness towards the Palestinians - the Palestinians were simply the immediate victims of the British 'grand scheme'. The concept of Israel, obscure and lacking in historical legitimacy as it is, was given enthusiastic support by the British state on account of the fact that a Jewish state in the heart of the Middle East offered the perfect antidote to the rising Arab nationalist movement.

European colonialists had long been plundering the Arab lands, taking huge amounts of oil and paying a pittance for it. Arab nationalism was emerging as a significant threat to this cosy little arrangement. A Zionist state, set up with the support of, and run in collaboration with, imperialist interests, promised to be a bastion of colonial reactionary interest (an 'Ulster') in the Middle East, ready to act quickly against any Arab popular movement that threatened the interests of the major oil, armaments and other monopolies.

This fact is amply proven by the Israeli invasion of Egypt after the nationalisation of the Suez Canal in 1957. Consequently, the Palestinian liberation struggle is not fought for the Palestinian people alone, but for the whole of the Arab masses who suffer under the heel of imperialism; it is aimed against imperialist domination and for the freedom of the Arab peoples. Grief at comrade Arafat's death is not felt by the Arab masses alone - he will be mourned in all corners of the globe, by all people who suffer the ignominies of monopoly capital, and by all people who struggle against this decadent, moribund system that subjects billions of people to poverty, starvation, exploitation, oppression, repression and humiliation. For imperialism is an international phenomenon. It does not discriminate on the basis of skin colour or nationality - it will exploit anyone. Therefore every struggle against imperialism is a struggle on behalf of *all those* who are fighting imperialism.

One of Arafat's greatest assets as a leader was his ability to be flexible with regard to tactics, and appreciate the need for different approaches in different historical contexts. Signing the Oslo accords, so vehemently condemned by the fake left in the imperialist countries, is just one example of his ability to find his way out of an apparently hopeless situation.

Israeli Zionism and US imperialism tried their best to isolate Arafat, but the more they tried, the more they failed, for Arafat was loved by the people of Palestine. They rightly regarded him as a symbol of all their hopes and aspirations. Undoubtedly, there will be much gloating and malicious glee in the camp of Zionism and imperialism at the passing away of Yasser Arafat, but this glee will be short lived. The Palestinian people, through the intensification of their national liberation struggle, will deliver a crushing blow to Zionism and its backers.

It is our profound conviction that the Palestinian people will turn their grief at the loss of their leader into a powerful revolutionary torrent that will sweep away the Zionist and imperialist filth from the land of Palestine

Victory to the Intifada!