

PFLP's Political Relations on the Palestinian, Arab and International Levels

On the occasion of the PFLP's 18th anniversary, we asked Comrade Abu Ali Mustafa, Deputy General Secretary, to evaluate the Front's political relations historically.

Inter-Palestinian Relations

Would you describe the PFLP's political relations on the Palestinian level at the start?

At the initial stage, relations among the principal Palestinian organizations were characterized by two fluctuating currents. The first was enthusiasm for national unity with a clear democratic program and democratic front relations. The PFLP was the main organization calling for this, as it was composed of three fighting forces: the Palestinian branch of the Arab National Movement, the Palestinian Liberation Front (today PFLP-General Command) and the Heroes of Return, in addition to a number of national figures.

The PFLP made serious overtures to Fatah, for unity and democratic, national front relations, and was willing to overcome difficulties due to the importance of the matter. However, despite seeming enthusiasm, earnest ideas and plans, Fatah's leadership was pretentious and evasive. Its deceptive approach climaxed in its disengagement from the 1967 agreement (concerning unity efforts). Instead, it unilaterally called the Cairo meeting and proclaimed the existence of eight non-existent organizations. As an example, one of these was the General Society of Support for the Palestinian People, headed by Issam Sartawi; this was originally a medical society which Arafat transformed into a political organization. Arafat, in a theatrical gesture, issued a communique to hinder efforts for Palestinian unity, claiming the support of these fictitious organizations and ignoring those organizations which carried most weight in the Palestinian arena.

The second current was the latent and open conflict with the leadership of the PLO at that time. This conflict focused upon the legitimate representation of the Palestinian people - whether this was the right of the PLO leadership or of the armed organizations. This was especially so since the latter were enhanced by the popular will to carry the gun and fight after the tragic June 1967 defeat. The masses persisted in their determination despite the defeatist propaganda mouthed by submissive Palestinian figures like Sheikh Jabari and Aziz Shahade. The enthusiasm of the masses raised the prestige of the resistance organizations. This helped to defeat these submissive figures and their propaganda. It also overshadowed the reputation of the PLO, because the resistance organiza-



tions took the initiative and engaged in prominent battles with the Zionist enemy (Karameh, Bait Farek, in the hills of Ramallah and Al Khalil (Hebron), and in Gaza).

Then there was conflict between two lines of thought. The first advocated accepting the PLO as a framework for a front, provided reforms were introduced. The second rejected the PLO as a framework for a front, because it was an official representative of the Palestinians in the Arab League, and the Palestinian revolution should not get lost in the labyrinth of political tactics.

In 1968, the PFLP adopted the first line, making acceptance of the PLO's leadership conditional on reforming it on an appropriate basis (the PNC, PLA, Executive Committee, program and charter). The PFLP submitted practical suggestions to this end. It is noteworthy that during this debate, an infantile left group which later split from the PFLP, considered national unity with the bourgeoisie as treason and harmful to the revolutionary cause.

Fatah's leadership explicitly rejected the principle of cooperating to consolidate all efforts for national struggle and instate front relations within the PLO. Instead, they persistently connived to dominate the PLO with the help of some Arab regimes (at that time, Nasser).

The resistance enters the PLO

The next stage started during the PNC's 5th session in