

Relations on the Arab official and mass levels

How have the PFLP's political relations progressed on both the Arab official and mass levels? What factors influenced these relations?

The PFLP has a long history going back to the Arab National Movement. This movement was very influential in the Arab people's struggle, especially in the Mashraq (Arab East), the Gulf and Arab Peninsula, due to its national unification ideology. Reliance on this great heritage of militant mass struggle helped reinforce the Front and the Palestinian struggle.

In the Front's history, there was a period of transformation from the nationalist ideology of the petit bourgeoisie to the formation of a strict, militant party adopting Marxism-Leninism. This period witnessed hesitation about the following stage. Signs of differences and confusion began emerging on three levels:

One: Differences emerged with the late Abdel Nasser with whom the Arab National Movement's relations had been very strong in terms of action and relations on the Arab level. To a certain degree, Nasser acknowledged this transformation, but he could not take the criticism articulated by the PFLP's 2nd congress (February 1969), concerning the reasons for the 1967 defeat. This left its mark on the relations, especially as the Front's position was distorted by the regime's media and institutions. Later, the relations were severed when Nasser accepted the Rogers plan and there were demonstrations in Amman (organized by the Palestinian resistance) against this plan.

Two: The Arab National Movement had split into two trends. One adopted scientific socialism, while the other stuck to its original thinking. Yet even the trend that had adopted the new ideology was split in two over the validity of the concept of transformation. The group that did not believe in this concept sought to form a new party and later became the DFLP.

Third: The Arab communist parties, which were an effective force in the Arab mass movement, viewed this new trend with skepticism concerning two issues. The first was the thesis that it was possible to transform a petit bourgeois force into a revolutionary democratic one, and then go on to develop into a communist party. This issue elicited a broad discussion, ranging from supporters of the concept to opponents. Later, with time, the validity of the transformation thesis was proven.

The second issue concerned the means of struggle, and the perspective of the struggle against the Zionist enemy, whether or not it can be defeated. Some communists had reservations about armed struggle that to us was the highest and main form of struggle. Armed struggle was termed adventurist or Guevarist. This view was weakened and gradually vanished, but it was one of the main subjects of debate at the time. As to the perspective of our struggle with the Zionist enemy, some of these communist parties have still not settled this question politically, theoretically or in terms of struggle.

In addition to these external reactions to the new trend, there were internal factors which played a role in weakening the Front in the early years. Among these was the split, led by a team of infantile leftists who propounded theses such as forbidding any work within the trade unions, ruling out national unity with the bourgeoisie, limiting armed struggle to the occupied homeland, and the right of the minority in the party to express its opinion to the masses in the streets. In addition, this group had an infantile approach to educating the masses in Marxism-Leninism, and negative practices that led to weakening the credibility of the Front and alienating the masses. Later, with time, this thinking and practice was proven wrong.

In the years following 1970, there was an important transition in the path of the Front, especially after the 3rd congress. The program adopted, and the vision that was outlined of the next stage, constituted a leap in the life of the Front and the range of its role, based on the dialectical link the program established between the general and the specific, the Palestinian national and pan-Arab dimension. The Front gained respectability due to its accuracy and credibility in this field. Its position was reinforced by its high militant ability in confronting the imperialist-Zionist enemy in the region and internationally. The Front was distinguished by its principled relations with communist parties, revolutionary democratic forces and Arab nationalist forces.

On the official level, the documents of the Front defined the level and mode of relations with the Arab regimes in a way to serve the national struggle. Especially concerning the national bourgeois regimes, we outlined a policy of alliance and conflict. The exception to this policy is found in our relations with Democratic Yemen, which are based on political and ideological convergence and supported historically by joint militant relations that date back to before the October 1964 revolution.

Today, on the PFLP's 18th anniversary, we can assess what we have accomplished on the basis of our documents, especially the documents of the 4th congress and their accuracy. The PFLP is in a very strong, effective position in its relations with the Arab national liberation movement, as a Marxist-Leninist faction with its own class, national and pan-Arab analysis and vision of the struggle.

Relations with national liberation movements

How do you evaluate the Front's political relations with the national liberation movements of the world, from 1967 until now? What changes have occurred in this field?

Since its foundation, the PFLP has given this matter a great deal of importance. We realized that the revolutionary forces hostile to Zionism, imperialism, reaction and fascism, must unite their efforts in a broad international front. Despite the importance of this awareness, the matter was not thoroughly studied from a theoretical point of view. We lacked organization, continuity and follow-up in overall relations. These relations were sometimes determined by immediate tactical gains or spontaneous initiatives. These initiatives involved a mixture of trends ranging from forces that were ideologically conscious of the requirements and outlook of the struggle, to Trotskyist trends, Maoists, New Left forces, etc.

In the mid-seventies, there was a change in this field. The Front settled its view of these relations on the basis of political-ideological vision and protracted militant alliance. This is one of the aspects of the progress made in the transformation process where we arrived at a mature understanding of the three forces of world revolution. As specified in the documents of the 4th congress, these are the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, the national liberation movements in the three continents, and the working class parties in the capitalist countries. This resulted in organizing the militant relations between the front and the national liberation movements. Cooperation was programmed to serve the common goal of reinforcing militant unity against imperialism and the danger it poses to the people of the world, who are struggling for independence, social progress and world peace, to save humanity from imperialism's wars and evil practices. Today we can register