

# Development of the PFLP's Posters

*The following article, written by the responsible for PFLP's art section, appeared in the anniversary edition of «Al Hadaf», the Front's Arabic weekly.*

We cannot be sure when the art of the poster began to take shape in the Palestinian society. We do find an early form of this art in the twenties, but it was not up to the standard in other parts of the world. Rather, there were posters advertising theater groups or commercial goods. Later, as Zionist colonization escalated, there were agitational posters, calling the people to take up arms and defend the country. However, the poster as a cultural and informational material did not assume its current form until the late fifties and early sixties. At this time, it began to assume a conscious and artistic form. One kind was the posters issued by UNRWA. These were educational, aiming at increasing public awareness about health. Another kind of poster emerged with the establishment of the PLO in 1964. This developed and engendered an understanding for the political poster in the Palestinian society.

The development of the poster in the PFLP intersects at many points with the same process in other Palestinian organizations. All were affected by the same political events and shared many national occasions, such as the anniversary of the revolution (Jan. 1st), the Black September massacres in Jordan 1970, the Day of the Land, the Day of the Prisoner, the Day of the Martyr, etc. There are, however, differences in the content of the posters of the various organizations, due to differing political lines and ideologies; there are also differing artistic views, depending on the personnel working in this field in each organization.

## **The armed resistance from 1967 and its effect on the poster**

The early posters of the PFLP have a special impact, because they convey the memories of the early years of militancy. We find great artistic value, simplicity and clarity in the early posters, making them easily understandable to all. The early period witnessed militant armed uprising in two main arenas:

occupied Palestine and Jordan. The distinctive features of the posters of that time were as follows:

*One:* The early posters conveyed a definition of the political and ideological identity of the PFLP. There were text posters, displaying only written slogans, while other posters combined slogans with drawings or artistic symbols. One early poster depicted the Palestinian flag and two hands carrying a weapon; it read: «The road of armed struggle...the road to a free Palestine.» On another, there is a hand holding a weapon and the slogan: «Liberating Palestine is the battle of the Arab masses...and the cause of progressive forces in the world.» A third poster carries lines by the Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish: «My home is not a suitcase and I am not a traveler.» Still another poster reads: «Armed struggle is the response of the toiling masses to the June defeat...People's war - our path to liberation...Our enemies Israel, Zionism, imperialism and reaction...Leading the revolution - the working class.»

*Two:* The early posters were affected by the youthfulness of armed struggle which created a state of uprising among our people who had spent 19 years wandering, dispersed and dep-

rived. Almost always we find pictures of weapons - the rifle, molotov, hand grenade - on the PFLP's posters at that time.

*Three:* The early posters often expressed and paid tribute to the extensive military operations of the Palestinian resistance at that time: The commando units crossing the Jordan River and the actions of military units active in occupied Palestine. In addition, there was the battle of Al Karama which created a tremendous mood of militancy among the masses. On an undated poster, we find a drawing of Al Maghazi battle in the Gaza Strip. Another one shows a Palestinian fighter, wearing the kofia and holding a grenade, atop a Jordanian army tank. The slogan on this poster reads: «Glory to the fighters who destroyed the fascists' tanks at Al Wihdat» (refugee camp in Jordan). A poster entitled «Greetings to the rebels in Gaza in their heroic struggle» contains a drawing of a hand holding a molotov. In the background is a collage of military communiques announcing operations staged by militants of the Front in the Gaza Strip.

*Four:* At this stage, Palestinian symbols began appearing and became widely used in political posters and other art work - the rifle, the kuffiyah, the horse, the map of Palestine, etc.

*Five:* From the artistic aspect, the painted posters were the most successful, followed by posters using photographs. Use of the collage was not so successful. Realism was the dominant style, portraying events and persons as they are, with the beginning use of clearly defined symbols. On one poster there are no slogans, but rather the statement: No need for clarification. This poster shows a picture of a hat made of the US flag with Zionist stars. It is placed on a skull with open jaws holding two victims of the Black September massacre. In one of the eye sockets of the skull is the head of Jordan's King Hussein, with one eye covered by a patch, like Moshe Dayan.

The posters of this time employed many symbols and clear, direct ideas. One poster, that is more of a cartoon drawing, shows a person wearing a military uniform and a helmet covered with the US flag, holding in his huge hand a club with the Star of David on it. One of the most famous posters of Ghassan Kanafani shows a woman drawn in the

