

ther any action should be initiated. The comrades explained that the PFLP's organization in the prisons stood for democratic and collective solutions. For example, if a strike or other action was intended, it should be decided on by all the prisoners and organizations together. New prisoners should themselves decide which organization they chose to affiliate with, or if they wanted to change organizations. Unity should be the main criterion regulating solutions for various problems. Fights between fellow political prisoners should be avoided at all costs. The PFLP comrades launched a novel method for stopping fights between persons of different organizations. If two refused to stop fighting, then all the prisoners in the cell would fight the two, forcing them to cease.

Zuhdi summed up his impression: «After being sentenced and moved to prison, life was more stable. We had an organizational code that regulated punishment for any infractions. Our life was very organized.»

Abu Waffa pointed to the changes that occurred over time: «In the beginning we ran our affairs according to the traditions and customs inherited from our society. Some clannish attitudes appeared among the prisoners and were encouraged by the enemy. We saw everything in terms of black and white, while in reality, there is a whole range of colors. We were very harsh on any mistake. However, we developed in jail, and we developed our internal relations in a more progressive way.»

Zakaria said, «The situation in the

prison went through different phases. In the sixties, there were clannish relations between the prisoners, which was encouraged by the Zionists. In 1970-71, we were made to do forced labor. Then, in 1971, the Interior Minister said that the Palestinians who once threw bombs now work and help the soldiers on the front. After we heard that, we stopped working. Between 1972 and 1977, the nuclei of the resistance organizations developed in the prisons. This was the democratic phase. The prisoners' internal organization was strengthened. There was a constitution and a code of punishment, which we followed. Our main struggle against the enemy increased.»

Abdul Hamid said, «I do not exaggerate by saying that the prison life was highly organized. Concerning the PFLP, our internal regulations were strictly implemented and highly respected. Our party activities were carefully programmed. We also had cultural and art activities. The imprisoned national movement had its own imprisoned national constitution that all organizations abided by. It was the supreme law to be referred to if there were problems between the organizations. There was a committee composed of members of different organizations, that dealt with the enemy's prison administration. This committee negotiated with the prison authorities during struggles for demands to improve our conditions. Any problematic issue between the organizations was dealt with through democratic dialogue. We

always put our national interests above such differences.»

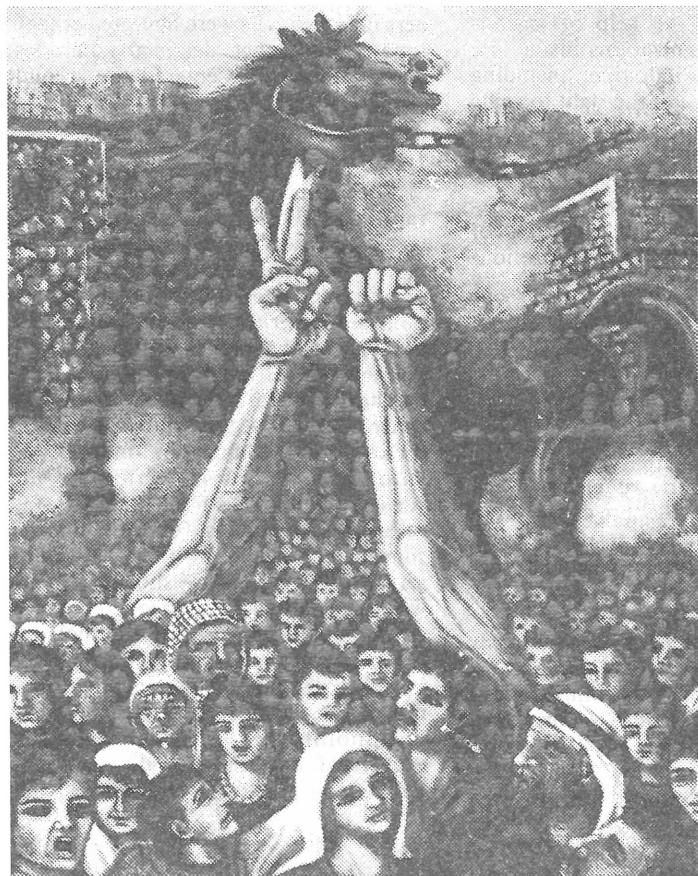
Mohammad concluded, «Everything was organized; each organization had its leadership inside. There was also a penal code to be used in cases of one prisoner aggressing another, spying for the enemy or otherwise collaborating. Depending on the offense, and whether it was the first time or a repetition, punishment was decided and implemented collectively. This could be social - ostracizing the offender. It could be physical in serious cases. It might also be educational, requiring the offender to read or copy a text, or to enter into discussions.»

PROBLEMS AND STRUGGLE

We asked the comrades to enumerate the main problems they faced while in the prison, either with the Zionist authorities or with fellow prisoners. Abdul Hamid responded, «The main problems we had with the enemy concerned the bad conditions, so we were in continuous struggle for improving our living conditions and the food, for having a cultural life, visits and medical treatment. We insisted on celebrating national occasions but, of course, the enemy refused this. We celebrated the PFLP's anniversary even though the Zionists used tear gas to stop us. But we went on, using the walls and doors as drums, fulfilling our program. The authorities went berzerk and sent some of us to solitary confinement and others to other jails. However, tension mounted and they had to relent; everybody was returned to his original place. The same type of thing happened in our struggle for the right to a break outside in the sun.»

Abu Waffa noted, «Our problems with the enemy are part of the contradiction between Zionism and our people overall. The enemy wanted to rid us of our revolutionary spirit and we wanted to solidify it. Our weapons in this struggle were first of all our own unity in the jail and then our bodies and souls. An example of these weapons being used effectively was the hunger strike in Ashkelon that lasted 65 days with the participation of 430 militants... If there were problems among us, these were solved with reasoning. Violent solutions were rare.»

Mohammad said that among the prisoners, there were some minor problems that could easily be solved. In contrast, with the enemy, there were numerous problems which he described as follows: «There was aggression against the prisoners and destruction of our few belongings. We replied according to the maxim: an eye for an eye. There were arbitrary searches of our cells, just to annoy us; things were



«To Freedom» by the Palestinian artist Fathi Gabin in the Gaza Strip, to celebrate the 1985 prisoner release