

The PFLP, while highly praising the firm and principled positions of the USSR concerning our people's struggle, appreciates the peaceful Soviet initiatives leading to the agreement to eliminate medium-range and short-range nuclear weapons, as the first step towards protecting humanity from the dangers of a nuclear war.

The success of the imperialist-Zionist-Arab reactionary aggression in this region is not inevitable. In contrast to the official policies' decline, bright signs have emerged and proved the Arab nation's capabilities. Our Palestinian people's upris-

ing in the occupied homeland the heroic struggle of the Lebanese National Resistance Front, and the Palestinian military operations in the occupied homeland, the latest being the heroic hang-glider operation, all these facts point out the possibilities of success in foiling all hostile plans.

On the 20th anniversary, the PFLP promises to continue the struggle until total victory and the achievement of the national goals of the Palestinian people of return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state on Palestine.»

Interview with Comrade George Habash

On the occasion of the PFLP's 20th anniversary, Secretary General Comrade George Habash gave an exclusive interview to *Al Hadaf* and *Democratic Palestine*

Twenty years after the PFLP's establishment, can you describe the circumstances in which it was formed. What were the expectations that motivated the decision to establish the Front?

The idea to establish the PFLP arose due to the results of the 1967 war, when the Zionist enemy succeeded in occupying the rest of Palestine, in addition to the Sinai and the Golan Heights. This made the Arab and Palestinian masses disillusioned with the nationalist bourgeois regimes, headed at that time by Nasser's regime in Egypt. The masses were shocked by the defeat and the new Zionist expansion, and by the failure of the nationalist bourgeois project spearheaded by the Egyptian regime. The question was what to do to restore our masses' self-confidence and restore the credibility of our slogans.

In order to liberate Palestine, struggle by all means was needed... at that time, the PLO was not the same as it is now - it was not a front-like framework led by the armed resistance organizations, it was only a few years old. The masses had no confidence in it. It did not represent the Palestinian people's will. Nor was it a suitable framework for mobilizing their capabilities for the liberation struggle. It had been established by the Arab regimes, which made it difficult to imagine that it could escape their control. This is not meant to belittle the importance of the PLO's having been established... But the requirements of truth make us point out the many reservations and questions that remained... Faced with this situation, we made our decision to initiate new revolutionary action whereby the Palestinian people could practice their will by fighting to liberate their homeland.

In these circumstances, it was natural to think of establishing a national front, representing the vanguard Palestinian forces, to restore the prominence of the Palestinian role which had been overlooked from 1948 until 1967. The time had come for a new revolutionary response, with a different class nature, capable of facing the new challenges. We saw the Algerian people's revolution as an inspiration, as well as the experience of the Yemeni masses in the South, who achieved independence in 1967.

A POPULAR FRONT

We engaged in contacts with all Palestinian forces and organizations that were preparing for armed struggle to liberate Palestine through protracted people's war. The most important organizations were Fatah, the Palestinian branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement, the Heros of Return, the Palestine Liberation Front, the Palestinian branch of the Baath Party and more than twenty smaller factions. This abundance of factions reflected the Palestinian people's awakening.

The name, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, did not emerge at that time, for the negotiations which were held among Palestinian organizations in Damascus aimed at forming a fighting, nationalist, people's front. We wanted to include all Palestinian forces, also Fatah, but the dialogue did not end in agreement to form such a front. Fatah refused to participate, so the only choice then was to work with the organizations that agreed to forming a unified front. Thus, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was formed from the Palestinian branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement (the Youth of Revenge), the Heros of Return, the Palestine Liberation Front and a number of independent nationalists.

When we first thought of establishing the PFLP after the June defeat, the expectations were that this front would include all fighting Palestinian organizations, as had happened in Algeria (the Algerian National Liberation Front) and the National Liberation Front that achieved the independence of South Yemen. We never thought that we would be building a Marxist-Leninist party. The idea of transformation was not introduced at that time. When the PFLP's establishment was declared, it was clear that it was a front including the greatest possible number of existing Palestinian fighting organizations, and which aimed to continue working with Fatah in a unified front. This is what happened in 1968, when we reached an agreement that made the PLO a front-like framework led by the fighting organizations, without losing the PLO's representative capacity as a member of the Arab League.

From the start, we didn't plan to form a party called the PFLP.