

were one organization of the revolution and behaved in this way.

The biggest question we asked ourselves at that time was: What is the political, ideological and social nature of our organization? We outlined our answer in the light of developments experienced by the Palestinian branch of the ANM, ideologically and class-wise. We considered ourselves an organization of the Palestinian working class, i.e., the organization that represented the ideology and political thinking of the working class. In short, the second stage meant keeping the name PFLP, despite the realization that we were an organization of the working class...

The third stage witnessed intensification of internal discussion between the leading figures of the Palestinian branch of the ANM.

These discussions focused on whether or not the PFLP, given its new situation after the PLF's withdrawal, could be transformed into a working class organization. There were two viewpoints. The first viewpoint was held by those who still lead the PFLP. They maintained that the PFLP could be transformed into a leftist, Marxist -Leninist party, representing the Palestinian working class. They held that in the transformation process, although it might be long, the PFLP would be able to acquire Marxist-Leninist theory.

The second viewpoint maintained that this was impossible, that PFLP, as a petit bourgeois party, could not be transformed into a working class party. The maximum they thought could be reached by the PFLP was to have leftist elements, but not to become a Marxist-Leninist party. This stage ended with the group holding this view splitting from the PFLP in February 1969, to form the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Naturally, this was not the only issue of contradiction that caused the split. There were many political and organizational differences, but the main issue that led to the split was the issue of transformation. I thought that we could have managed to solve the political and organizational differences had the viewpoints on the transformation process been reconciled.

The fourth stage: After the DFLP's split, the PFLP entered the fourth stage in its development - the stage of transforming into a Marxist-Leninist party, a party for the Palestinian working class. We are still in this stage which is near successful conclusion. This stage, which started after February 1969, is divided into several substages, which we can review through our national congresses: The second congress, which was held in February 1969, issued «The Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine», which outlined the PFLP's aspirations and future (organizational) form.

Between February 1969 and March 1972, the PFLP's leadership worked to crystallize the Front's leftist nature through its political positions and slogans, whether concerning the position on the Jordanian regime, the Jordanian masses and nationalist forces, or the PFLP's understanding of the concept of Palestinian national unity. In all these positions, we worked to crystallize our leftist political identity as a Palestinian organization for the working class.

In the third congress, in March 1972, we reviewed the organizational structure of the PFLP and outlined the big shortcomings in this. We examined the factors of this shortcoming and outlined organizational guidelines to overcome this. The congress adopted the internal rules and regulations of the PFLP, which are the rules for a communist party. Then started the long, hard process of advancing the organizational

situation of the Front to the level outlined in the internal rules and regulations, particularly to enact democratic centralism which is the basis for all working class parties. This was one of the most difficult stages through which the Front has passed, and many questions were raised about its capability to succeed in the transformation process. However, around 1979, we began to feel that we had successfully passed this stage.

In the fourth congress, April 1981, we were able to register our satisfaction with the progress we had achieved in the transformation process, on both the political and organizational levels. We outlined the headlines for our future tasks: to conclude the transformation process by strengthening the theoretical knowledge of our leadership and cadres.

These are the stages undergone by the Front in its transformation into a Marxist-Leninist party. As you noted, they were intertwined. It is difficult to totally separate the one from the other. I have simply distinguished them in terms of our main concern at each stage...

## THE PFLP AND THE SPLITS

Who was responsible for the splits in the PFLP? What caused them and were they inevitable or not? To what extent has the Front overcome the possibility of splits in the future?

First, let us distinguish between what happened in 1968, when the PLF withdrew, and what happened in 1969, when a group split to form the DFLP. In the first case, it was not split, but the termination of a partnership between several organizations, exactly like when the PFLP terminated its partnership with the Salvation Front in April 1987... As for the second case, it was a real split. A group from our ranks split and formed a new organization, after it was impossible for them to coexist with the mother organization, especially since the differences focused on a central issue, that of transformation.

In 1972, the PFLP again faced a split by a group which called itself the Popular Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Palestine, but this was of little importance in terms of this group's size or political-theoretical ideas. The disappearance of this organization from the Palestinian political scene proves its weakness, but in any case, it was a split.

The PFLP has constantly reviewed this issue of splits. In the past, we laid all the blame on the group that split. We used to study the reasons behind the split, as claimed by the splitting group. We blamed left opportunism or selfishness or factionalism, etc., as the causes for the split. However, with the advance in the transformation process, we have changed our way of analyzing this issue and its causes. In the organizational report of the fourth national congress, we said that in addition to the factors for which the splitting group bears the main responsibility, the internal situation of the PFLP's leading bodies at that time was also partly responsible for the splits.

I believe that given the state of the Front's leadership at the time, these splits could not have been prevented. Had the situation been different, we might have succeeded in containing and minimizing them. Today, after two decades, history has given us an answer to the outcome of this experience. Had the PFLP disappeared or shifted to the right or remained in bourgeois ideology and practice, we could say that the viewpoint of the comrades of the DFLP was correct. However, since the contrary has occurred, and the Front has made great progress in the transformation, to a Marxist-Leninist party, the PFLP's viewpoint was proven correct. I don't want to go into details in