

in the Soviet Union, particularly after the CPSU's 27th congress, indicate the importance of democracy. On the other hand, there is the situation in the Arab world where some regimes have used economic and political advances to obscure the question of democracy. This points to the importance of democracy and to the negative effects on the society when democracy is lacking.

Undoubtedly, the issue of democracy is relevant to the Palestinian people. We can even say that our need for democracy, for mobilizing the capabilities of every Palestinian, is an urgent need, particularly in view of the nature of the conflict in which our masses are a major party.

Can we say that the existence of free speech, which we are proud of in the Palestinian arena, is democracy? The answer is no! Free speech constitutes only one aspect of democracy. It does not encompass the full scope or meaning of democracy. After instituting free speech and developing democratic concepts, the method should be outlined whereby the will of the society can be extracted and materialized... In this way, we could reach decisions despite the multiplicity of opinions.

My aim is to point to the importance of the PLO institutions, through which democracy could be achieved...

THE PNC AND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

According to the PLO's internal regulations, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) should convene every year; every four years, the membership of the council should be selected anew. In the past, due to both internal and external reasons, the PNC did not convene every year. Thus, in practice, a new council has been selected about every three sessions of the PNC (editor's note).

According to the organizational rules, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) should convene once a year. Therefore a new session should be held in April next year. It is well-known that the term of the presiding council (the 6th) with its old composition, has expired. Thus, a new PNC should be formed. This raises the question of whether we are ready to conduct a courageous and scientific evaluation capable of overcoming the discrepancies of the past. This demands that we take continuous, cumulative steps towards achieving democracy.

There have been discrepancies in the composition of the preceding councils. Some felt that when the PNC convened, it was an occasion for the minority to exercise its dictatorship over the majority, the majority being forced to say yes to the minority in order to protect national unity. Others contend that the PNC's composition allows for the hegemony of a single faction. Isn't there a solution that satisfies all - that makes all feel that the PNC's composition has an objective basis?

Unfortunately, due to the exceptional circumstances in which the Palestinian people live, we cannot hold elections. Had we had that opportunity, we would have reached a solution to this problem, even if only a partial one. How can we then, in the light of this reality, solve the issue?

During the dialogue that preceded the PNC's unifying session and during the session itself, discussion focused on the view that it was necessary to define the PNC membership in accordance with the percentage of representation allotted to the independents, the (resistance) organizations, the unions, etc... What is required is to determine the basis on which these percentages are decided...

This problem can only be resolved through the principle of proportional representation, in order to form a

democratic PNC in which everybody adheres completely to the resolutions adopted... What are the standards for determining the representation of each organization?

As an example, we in the PFLP feel that we are wronged and should be better represented. Outlining a set of standards would make it possible to know what the PFLP represents. The number of seats allotted to the PFLP in the PNC could be determined on that basis. This would be applied to all organizations, including Fatah, that we think is overrepresented.

... I therefore introduce a proposition which I hope will be discussed, calling for the Executive Committee, in cooperation with the PNC president to begin preparing to evaluate the formation of the next PNC, at least by January. This means determining the number of representatives for independents, (resistance) organizations and mass unions, and the percentage of each (resistance) organization. In this way, by next March, we would have a list of names, and the PNC could convene in April.

TOWARDS A NEW CONCEPT OF THE CENTRAL COUNCIL

Given the resolutions adopted at the April PNC concerning the tasks and powers of the Central Council, this council should embark on a new experience. As I understand the resolutions, the tasks of the Central Council are as follows: (1) insuring the Executive Committee's adherence to the PNC's resolutions and holding it accountable; (2) evaluating the Executive Committee's activities between PNC sessions; and (3) issuing guidelines for the Executive Committee's work. In the light of this, our task is to confirm the new concept of this institution...

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

While I express the PFLP's satisfaction with the regularity of the Executive Committee's meetings so far, I criticize the delay of the Executive Committee in agreeing on a set of internal regulations for itself... (this has since been drafted -editor's note). I also hope that the Executive Committee completes preparation of the various sets of internal regulations which outline the tasks and powers of each department of the PLO.

