

There are some appeals to the PLO to change its Charter. What is your opinion on that?

We reject this. There was agreement on two basic issues prior to the discussions which took place before the convening of the PNC. The first was not to alter the Palestinian National Charter, and the second was not to change the political program of the PLO. I realize that such talk did take place; therefore, it was necessary to have consensus on rejecting any change in the Charter or the program so that we could begin dialogue on the other issues. Of course, the demands for changing the Charter are basically from 'Israel' and the US. World public opinion should know that their aim is to put obstacles to the peace process. The Israeli motto is 'Greater Israel' from the Nile to the Euphrates. The program of the Likud incorporates all of Palestine and Jordan into the Jewish state.

If the US demands that we change our Charter, and if we and our Soviet friends demand a change in the charter of the Zionist movement, the program of the state, etc., this will be placing obstacles to the process of peace. The imperialist-Zionist plan is clear. Until this moment, they do not recognize the PLO or our legitimate national rights; they object to our right as a people to self-determination.

How do you evaluate the PLO's effectiveness in galvanizing support for the intifada on the Arab and international levels?

We realize, of course, that the PLO's major issue is the intifada and facilitating support for it. All the political and diplomatic endeavours since December 8, 1987, are related to the intifada. However, allow me to say that, despite that, we are not satisfied. The most prominent example was during the Palestinian dialogue prior to the PNC; 95% of the dialogue centered around the political issues stemming from the intifada, the Jordanian move severing ties with the West Bank, and the new international political climate. Of course, all this is important. However, it should not be at the cost of the continuation and escalation of the intifada, its consolidation and expansion, its repercussions on the Palestinian and Arab levels, and our tasks based on these repercussions. Placing emphasis on the political issues is not satisfactory to us.

Our main concern now after the PNC is for our comrades who represent the PFLP in the (PLO's) occupied territories committee and the Executive Committee, to work on implementing the PNC resolutions concerning the intifada. Of course, supporting the intifada does not mean financial support only; it includes material, mass and military support from outside. As far as the financial support is concerned, we feel that it should go to the United National Leadership and its various committees in the different cities, villages and camps, so that this support will reach the poor masses who bear the largest share of the burden. The intifada is on the agenda of all activities of the PLO. However, we are not satisfied because there is an opportunity to do more, to make more reforms and to give more support on all levels.

What are the immediate tasks for the independent Palestinian state, and what are the dangers facing it?

Before I answer this question, I want to point to the vast difference between the declaration of the state and establishing a state. Extracting a state from 'Israel' will not be easy. It's sad

to see that there are some who take this lightly. The Palestinian state will not come about unless the balance of forces makes 'Israel' accept the establishment of this state. The intifada has raged for one year, and had vast repercussions internationally, as the cry of a people calling on the world to face up to its responsibility towards the values of humanity. Despite that, despite the isolation of 'Israel' and its economic losses which have been beyond our expectations, both the Likud and Labor agree on force as the only means for dealing with the intifada. The experience of this last year exposed the true nature of Zionism and the settler-colonialist interests which it will not easily yield. Therefore, we stand before a long and difficult struggle in order to bring about tangible changes in the balance of forces. We have to think of how to make such a change, to think of all the factors which affect the balance of forces.

I hope that the declaration of independence will give our masses a new motivation for struggle, and not cause illusions among us about the difficulty of bridging the gap between the declaration of the state and its establishment. Before I answer the question about the tasks of this state, we should examine the tasks of the PLO for closing this gap. The task of this state at present is attaining the greatest recognition possible, as well as membership in the Arab League, the Islamic Conference, the Organization of African Unity, the non-aligned movement and the United Nations, even if not full membership... Of course, we hope for more recognition in the future because that would be a big moral support for the intifada and the Palestinian people, and a big slap in the face to 'Israel'.

As for the dangers facing this state, there are three sources: from 'Israel', from the Arab states and from within. The most dangerous, of course, are those from 'Israel' and the US administration. 'Israel' will try its utmost to prove to the Palestinian people and the world that what the PLO did during the last PNC is but a joke and has no practical value; with the passing of time, the Israelis will ask the Palestinians: Where is your state? Where are your leaders? What have they done for you? This is the biggest danger.

The Arab reactionary governments, such as Egypt and Jordan, will say: Your state has been declared, congratulations! This is a very good thing you've done. Why don't you think of a confederation with Jordan? This will bring us back to the Jordanian option; this is another danger.

The danger from within stems from the present condition of the PLO. I am afraid that there exists a discrepancy between the resilience of the intifada and the PLO's reaction to it; this gap should be closed. I wish to reiterate, however, my deep belief in the ability of our masses in the occupied territories and outside to persevere and bypass all of these obstacles and establish our state.

Where does the Palestinian bourgeoisie stand now?

We are in a stage of national liberation. We face a settler-colonial enemy which hurts the interests of all classes of the Palestinian society. This explains the comprehensiveness of the intifada which encompasses all cities, villages and camps, all ages, all political and ideological trends, all classes, businessmen and workers. We can only explain this by the nature of the contradiction between Zionism and the Palestinian people. The bourgeoisie is now in the nationalist camp. After the accomplishment of national liberation, then it is another story, but for now it is a national bourgeoisie and plays a very basic role relative to its size and ability.