

The Lessons of Four Decades of Struggle

In *Democratic Palestine* 30, we printed an article by Dr. George Habash, analyzing the reality of the Zionist state, entitled 'Israel' - 40 Years. The article below is the conclusion of this analysis, entitled Lessons of Four Decades of our People's Militant Experience. It reviews past tendencies and mistakes, with the aim of contributing to a new Palestinian and Arab strategy of confrontation.

THE LESSONS OF FOUR DECADES OF OUR PEOPLE'S MILITANT EXPERIENCE

On the occasion of the ill-fated fortieth anniversary of the establishment of the state of 'Israel', we cannot but speak, though briefly, about the most significant lessons gleaned from the mistakes committed in the process of Palestinian and Arab nationalist confrontation of the Zionist invasion over more than half a century. The starting point of such an assessment should by necessity be comprehensive, scientific and integrated knowledge of the enemy. Such knowledge becomes doubly necessary in a situation where there are heaps of false information, and policies of ignorance and obscurantism pursued by a series of hostile parties. Yet it is even truer that our approach should be complemented by careful observation of the gaps and errors we ourselves have been committing in the same period. Knowledge of the enemy and critical reassessment of the course of our struggle are two essential conditions. There is no way to overlook them when drawing up a comprehensive confrontation strategy equal to the challenges of the Zionist-imperialist project which targets all of us.

The first lesson of our errors concerns the dialectics between the Palestinian national dimension and the pan-Arab dimension of the struggle against the Zionist enemy. How have we dealt with this extremely important issue?

Historically, this issue has played a principal role in determining the advances as well as the retreats of the Palestinian struggle. Mistakes in solving the Palestinian national / pan-Arab equation have led to the exaggeration of one dimension at the expense of the other, bringing about the most serious and harmful consequences. The history of the Palestinian struggle is full of evidence to support this hypothesis.

In 1936, the reactionary Arab position, particularly that of the Hashemites, made a particular contribution to foiling the longest and most comprehensive strike in our people's history, which had reached the level of civil disobedience. Also in 1939, the Arab reactionary regimes contributed to thwarting the Palestinian rebellion. Through their influence on some Palestinian leaders, they planted illusions about the intentions of the colonial British Mandate authorities. The same tragic scene was repeated in 1948 when the Arab armies, led by Prince Abdullah of Jordan, came and asked the Palestinians to depend on them to liberate Palestine from the «Zionist filth» (as Abdullah said). These armies performed the well-known

drama of losing Palestine, in spite of the popular resistance and heroic steadfastness of the Palestinians.

Since then, the relationship between the Palestinian and the Arab national dimension has taken a wrong course; the Arab national aspect, for various reasons, overwhelmed the essential Palestinian aspect. The problem became even more complex when the Jordanian reactionary regime took part in the conspiracy to liquidate the national identity of the Palestinian people.

It is impossible in such an article to cover the entire development of the Palestinian and Arab liberation movements' outlook, including our own, on this issue. Therefore, we shall confine ourselves to the most prominent stages of development as far as we, the PFLP, earlier the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), are concerned:

1. The first stage covers the period 1948-1967. In this period, the Arab national dimension was clearly held above the Palestinian one. At that time, we were in the framework of the ANM. The reason for such an erroneous outlook may be found in a number of factors, including the level of our development and the spread of the liberationist national trend which took a clear anti-imperialist direction, represented at its height by Nasser and Nasserism. At that time, we gave priority to the Arab national dimension, rather than the Palestinian one, in the struggle against the Zionist enemy, though we didn't overlook the need for having Palestinian action, slogans and programs. This developed gradually in our consciousness and practice, going through different stages, including the foundation of the Palestinian branch of the ANM, up to the establishment of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) at the end of 1967. At that time, we succeeded in grasping the correct way to deal with the problem.

2. The second stage began with the end of 1967, the year of defeat, and has continued to the present. During this period, we were functioning within the framework of the PFLP. We stressed the necessity of safeguarding and crystallizing the particularly Palestinian dimension within the general Arab national framework. At that time, we were able to grasp a sound approach to this very sensitive problem, regardless of occasional mistakes.

In brief, it can be said that this problem has given birth to two wrong tendencies which appeared at different historical stages. The two continue to coexist in contradiction to each other...

A. The first tendency tries to subjugate the Palestinian national dimension to the Arab national one. Its supporters raise