

The second point-of-view dealt with the uprising as a qualitatively new stage in the Palestinian national struggle, considering that it could establish a qualitatively new stage for the Arab national liberation movement. This view does not belittle the need for striving to make political gains from the uprising. It advocates striving to open new strategic horizons to enable the uprising to create the needed change in the nature, structure and role of the Palestinian national liberation movement. This would prepare for changes in the nature, structure and role of the Arab national liberation movement, in order to overcome its crisis.

Some have evaluated our call to deal with the uprising as a qualitatively new stage, as a kind of revolutionary romanticism and a tendency towards the strategic at the expense of immediacy and tactics. But our view differs totally from this mistaken evaluation. We remain convinced that the value of tactical or interim slogans lies in their ability to shorten the distance to the strategic aims. There is a vast difference between dealing with the uprising as an event to be utilized under all circumstances, and dealing with the uprising as a qualitatively new stage which will make needed changes in the nature of the Arab-Zionist conflict and its motive forces on the Arab-Palestinian front. We are still convinced that the ideal realization of our aims, even in immediate slogans, involves dealing with the uprising as a qualitatively new stage, because in this way we can best support the uprising.

Why do we believe that the uprising constitutes a qualitatively new stage? What are the conditions for transforming the uprising into a qualitatively new stage in the Palestinian and Arab struggle? In this article, I will try to answer these questions.

FEATURES OF THE UPRISING

Three major features have made the uprising a qualitatively new stage in the Palestinian-Zionist and Arab-Zionist conflict; they give us confidence that the uprising can constitute the beginning of a qualitatively new stage in the Arab national liberation movement.

1. THE CENTER OF GRAVITY SHIFTS TO PALESTINE

The first feature is that for the first time since the establishment of Israel, the center of gravity of the Palestinian national movement has shifted to inside Palestine. After 1948, only 170,000 of our people remained in Palestine, and no one mentioned them when speaking of the balance of power. No one paid attention to the role of this minority living on their land in the midst of the Zionist majority who were celebrating their victories, meanwhile viewing the remaining Palestinians with suspicion and hostility. The main concern of this minority was self-defense and guaranteeing the minimum necessities of life. Meanwhile, the Palestinians outside the 1948 occupied territories were facing conspiracies to obliterate, disperse and confiscate their national identity. The Palestinian national movement was in exile and was absorbed into the Arab national movement - Nasserism, the Baath Party, the Arab Nationalist Movement, the Arab communist movement and the

Islamic fundamentalist movements which began to appear at that time.

From 1948 until the June 1967 defeat, the Palestinian national movement had not emerged as an influential force in the area, despite the beginning of the nationalist reawakening and the feeling that it was necessary to restore the Palestinian national identity in the late 1950s. The roots of the reawakening had always been there, as seen in the attempts to infiltrate back into Palestine. Some of the events which contributed to this national reawakening were the Israeli attempt to divert the course of the Jordan River, Syria's withdrawal from the United Arab Republic (with Egypt) and the victory of the Algerian revolution in 1961. In this period, the center of gravity was embodied in Nasserism. The masses attached their hopes to Nasser. For all these reasons, the issue of the struggle inside Palestine, as opposed to the struggle outside, did not exist.

After 1967, around 40% of the Palestinian people fell under occupation. It was no longer a question of a small minority, but involved vast sectors of our masses. Consequently, a new question arose to be solved by the Palestinian national movement. This was parallel to the defeat of the Arab nationalist regimes and the frustration of the Arab masses with the slogans propagated during this period, as well as the emergence of the Palestinian national movement as a center of gravity in the area.

It is true that the national reawakening's roots date back to the 1950s, and the militant Palestinian organizations were established in the 1960s, which together began a qualitatively new stage towards crystallizing the Palestinian national identity and an independent center for our people. However, it is also true that the failure of the Arab national bourgeoisie's program, as exposed by the June defeat, played a prominent role in the establishment of the contemporary Palestinian revolution and in the great national reawakening of the Palestinian movement.

When speaking of this period, we cannot but mention the earlier instincts about the importance of the struggle inside Palestine, as was manifested in the first attempts by the Palestinian organizations to assert themselves in the interior by sending weapons, cadres, fighters and leaders into the occupied territories. In this, they were able to benefit from the relative weakness of the new occupation, and from the potentials offered by the armed Palestinian presence in Jordan. This enabled infiltration into Palestine before the occupation authorities had tightened their control through population registration and security measures.

The early nationalist consciousness came up against many obstacles, the most important of which were: (1) the total security measures enacted by the occupation to stop infiltration attempts, leading to the arrest and expulsion of scores of cadres and leaders, and hundreds of militants; and (2) the spontaneity which characterized the movement of cadres and weapons into Palestine, due to our lack of experience and organization. This led to the failure of early attempts to consolidate the base of the revolution inside Palestine. The objective conditions of that period ruled out big achievements on this level.