

negotiations with the Israelis, contrary to the PNC's stress on an international peace conference as the correct forum for negotiations. Parallel to all this, there have been meetings between Palestinians and Zionists who do not recognize Palestinian national rights.

The advocates of this point of view were not content with defending their own position, but tried to throw the ball into the court of others, accusing some Palestinian organizations, and particularly the PFLP, of not abiding by the PNC's resolutions. As examples of such «violations» they cited press conferences and statements issued by Palestinian organizations criticizing the PLO leadership, although such freedom of expression is the right of the constituent organizations of the PLO.

POLITICAL GAINS STEM FROM STRUGGLE

The second point of view was advocated by the democratic organizations and other nationalists at the council meeting. The most forceful advocate of this point of view was PLO Executive Committee member Abu Ali Mustafa, deputy general secretary of the PFLP. This point of view opposes the concessions given by PLO leaders, based on a scientific understanding of the nature of the enemy forces and a precise calculation of the balance of forces. This point of view affirms the importance of reaping the political fruits of the uprising, but asserts that the independent state will not be achieved by giving gratuitous concessions, but rather by escalating all forms of struggle in order to seize our rights from the enemy. Thus, it is necessary to unite all efforts and provide all the needed conditions for escalating the uprising, while foiling political and military attempts to abort it. Only in this way can we create the needed change in the present balance of forces that would make the enemy retreat.

Therefore, it is only logical that the advocates of this point of view demanded that the right wing stop its political hastiness which has definitely not resulted in changing the essence of the enemy camp, but on the contrary has harmed the uprising and the achievements made by our people through their sacrifices. The overly hasty policies of the right wing give the enemy forces greater maneuver room in

their attempts to abort the uprising, meanwhile lessening Israel's isolation.

Comrade Abu Ali Mustafa stressed that the orientation of all of the PLO's political moves, positions and statements should be evaluated in terms of how they serve the struggle process and provide for the needs of the uprising and serve to protect it politically. Speaking at the second session of the council meeting, Comrade Abu Ali stressed that the achievements noted in the political report are above all due to the uprising. He asserted that forcing the Israelis to withdraw from the occupied territories and forcing the US administration to recognize Palestinian national rights, as well as the actual establishment of the independent Palestinian state, all necessitate escalating the uprising and inflicting greater economic and human losses on the occupation forces, meanwhile continuing gradual civil disobedience until reaching total civil disobedience. Comrade Abu Ali frankly addressed Arafat, saying that he is «optimistic to the point of illusion.»

Comrade Abu Ali also stressed the importance of national unity, connecting this to the democratic reforms needed for improving the PLO and its various institutions and bodies. He confirmed that national unity means all abiding by the resolutions of national consensus, which in turn means ending individualism and the hegemony of any one group and, on the other hand, consolidating collective leadership.

FINAL STATEMENT

In its final statement, the Central Council confirmed the importance of escalating the uprising and consolidating the unity of the United National Leadership and all the mass organizations in the occupied territories, from the popular committees and strike forces to the unions for workers, students, academics, etc. The Central Council also called on all the mass organizations to foil the deceptive Israeli maneuvers, such as the plan for municipal elections and self-rule (autonomy). Furthermore, the final statement urged the international community to act immediately to exert pressure on Israel to stop its terror and end the occupation. It reaffirmed the need for convening an international conference this year; therefore, a preparatory committee should be

formed by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The statement stressed that it is a central task to consolidate unity and collectiveness within the PLO, so that it may lead the struggle of the Palestinian masses effectively. Finally, the statement said that the Central Council had made the important decision to choose PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat as President of the State of Palestine. The statement reaffirmed that the Executive Committee will carry out the tasks of a Palestinian provisional government until the formation of such a government, in accordance with the decisions of the PNC.

Although the final statement was generally positive, and there was consensus on its contents, the disagreement over the concessions made by the right wing was not resolved. Comrade Abu Ali said that the democratic forces will continue to raise this question openly and frankly in order to resolve the political differences that exist within the PLO, and to protect the Palestinian struggle from the main threats it is now facing, which he summed up in five points:

1. The threat of political blackmail, such as the calls for reducing tension in the occupied territories and for goodwill gestures (as the US administration proposes).
2. The threat of creating alternatives to the PLO, such as through elections in the occupied territories.
3. The threat of undermining the Palestinian national invariable principles consecrated in the National Charter, such as omitting the right of return.
4. The threat of attempts to void the international conference of its contents, such as talk of direct negotiations and unilateral solutions.
5. The threat of describing legitimate forms of struggle, such as armed struggle, as «outdated» or a form of «terrorism.»

Comrade Abu Ali said that the final statement of the Central Council was very clear about how to confront these threats, but the real guarantee lies not in statements, however sound they may be, but in all abiding by these guidelines. Finally, we could not agree more with his evaluation that reality remains the best test for examining results and proving what is correct policy and what is erroneous.