

leadership of the Arab national liberation movement. This leadership, with its bourgeoisie nationalism, is no longer capable of leading the Arab mass movement. Although the working class parties are not suffering from this ideological and class crisis, they have committed mistakes which prevented them from becoming the alternative to the bourgeois leadership.

This analysis does not excuse the PLO from its share of responsibility for the present situation on the Arab level. The PLO has given priority to relations with the Arab regimes, while neglecting relations with the Arab masses. Moreover, the ambiguous policy of giving gratuitous concessions has negatively affected the Arab masses' response to the Palestinian uprising. Creating a state of ascent in the Arab arena is the responsibility of all components of the Arab liberation movement. The Palestinian national movement could play an important role in activating the Arab masses, but this doesn't excuse the Arab national movement from its direct responsibility for confronting the Zionist occupation, and supporting the Palestinian uprising.

The overall lack of a sufficient response to the uprising on the Arab level does not mean there were no initiatives among the Arab masses. We have seen movement in some Arab countries - Jordan, Egypt, etc. The Lebanese national resistance has given a positive example of continuous daily struggle against the Zionist occupation.

When we talk about support to the uprising, we don't mean only material support. The Arab masses' activities should aim to pressure the respective regimes into defining a clear position on the US administration, in accordance with the demand that it recognize the State of Palestine and our people's right to self-determination. The biggest favor the Arab masses could do for the uprising is to enforce a change in the US position.

Finally, I would like to point to the need for dialogue among the contingents of the Arab liberation movement, on this central issue. One practical step in this direction is worth a dozen programs (plans). Theoretical discussion is important and so is material and moral support. We hope that the PLO Executive Committee implements the decision of the last Central Council, for reviving the Arab committee for supporting the Palestinian revolution.

So far, we in the PFLP have been unable to provide a supportive Arab environment for the uprising; nor has the PLO managed to activate Arab officialdom to this end. But we must give more attention to this issue. We must define the tasks and obstacles involved in order to surmount them. I dare say it will be difficult to achieve the State of Palestine, without activating the Arab arena on the official and mass levels.

In your view, will the new openness between the Soviet Union and other socialist countries on one hand, and Israel on the other, contribute to giving the Soviet Union a more effective role in the search for a solution to the Middle East crisis?

I would like to preface my answer by noting the distinct difference between the principled position of the socialist countries and that of the US administration. The latter is still refusing to

recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, as well as their national rights, and the fully empowered international conference as the framework for resolving the Middle East crisis. In contrast, the Soviet Union has always recognized the PLO and supported our rights. It is a mistake to compare the two positions, as do some Arab reactionary forces.

We do notice that the Soviet Union has adopted flexible tactics. We understand this flexibility, but we differ on some points, without this changes our principled friendship; having tactical differences with the Soviet Union is not harmful. Our criteria for evaluating these various tactics is based on their results. Some of the differences we have with the Soviet Union are as follows:

First is the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel, which we feel is harmful to our cause, regardless of the Soviet Union's motives, such as commitment to the Helsinki accord which specifies freedom of immigration. But this immigration augments the strength of the Zionist entity. We must not compare the immigration of Soviet Jews to Western Europe, with their immigration to Israel which is a racist, expansionist state, occupying our homeland and repressing our people.

Second is contacts with Israel such as meetings with Israeli officials, air flights to Israel, cultural exchange and consulate officials' exchanging visits. I would like to ask the Soviet comrades if this will lead to further isolating Israel, or breaking that isolation? Isn't it necessary to tighten the siege on Israel, especially in view of the intifada, in order to force Israel to submit to the international will for peace. When Comrade Shevardnadze visited the Middle East, he said that if Israel continues to reject peace, it will find itself in the position of South Africa - isolated internationally. Then why this openness?

Third is the principle of a balance of interests in solving regional conflicts, that the Soviet Union called for. We understand this in relation to the principle of an equilibrium in the balance of forces which avoids all-out war and total defeat for either side. This principle means reaching a point where each side realizes the necessity of considering the interests of the other. In our situation, it will take the Zionist leaders a long time to realize the necessity of a solution. The Zionist ideology, as expressed by Shamir, stresses that the West Bank and Gaza Strip are part of the «Land of Israel» and there will be no withdrawal from these areas. We must struggle to force the enemy to submit to the will of peace, and in order to achieve freedom and independence and establish our state.

Fourth is the international conference: We and the Soviet Union agree on the necessity of holding an international conference as the proper framework for reaching a solution to the Middle East crisis. This Soviet position, however, has changed; they are now talking about an effective international conference instead of a fully empowered one. We also view preliminary negotiations as harmful in as much as these could lead to direct, bilateral negotiations outside the framework of an international conference.

I want to conclude by confirming that we differ with the Soviet Union, but within the framework of principled alliance and friendship.