

# Theoretical Questions Raised by the Intifada

The intifada has revitalized the contemporary Palestinian revolution, raising many new theoretical issues, while reasserting old ones. Turbulent revolutionary periods demand that we find new styles of thinking and practice, suitable to these developments, in order to create the means of struggle needed for the new situation.

## The dialectic of the interior and the exterior

Among the issues raised with new urgency is the relation between the struggle inside and outside of Palestine - the interior and the exterior. This has always been a particularity of the Palestinian revolution since more than half of the Palestinian people live in exile. Over the years, the center of gravity - the leadership, as well as the military, informational and financial headquarters - has been stationed outside Palestine. This gives the relation between the interior and the exterior a different character than that prevailing in other liberation movements. In the Palestinian situation, this has become a major issue relevant to the revolution's overall political and military activities; it is an essential issue in the Palestinian strategy.

The revolution's center of gravity was supposed to be inside Palestine all along - from the time of the resistance's presence in Jordan, later in Lebanon and so on. Yet the center was always outside, and while it devoted attention to the interior, this was inadequate. The 1982 invasion and the PLO's departure from Beirut was a big loss for the Palestinian revolution's exterior center. Due to these losses, the arena of action in the occupied territories took on top priority. In the period from 1982 until the outbreak of the uprising, there were significant developments which made the uprising inevitable.

Being primarily in exile, the revolution was subject to the influence and pressure of the Arab regimes. This pressure had a great influence on the Palestinian strategy and tactics. The various components of the Palestinian leadership have derived political and military weight from their respective Arab counterparts among the ruling Arab bourgeoisie. This further complicated the internal struggle within the Palestinian revolution, and influenced the policies, activities and confrontation plans of the Palestinian leadership as a whole. Of course, the Arab regime's influence has not been the deciding factor in the Palestinian bourgeoisie's policies, because in the final analysis, the decisive factor is chiefly internal. However, the factor of the Arab regime's influence gains more significance, the more the Palestinian bourgeoisie's policies approach the official Arab policies.

The fact that the center of gravity lies outside Palestine, has had a series of negative effects on the Palestinian revolution. Most prominent among these are the military blows and repression to which it has been subjected; moreover, the revolution has been partially deprived of its opportunity to work among the masses. Nonetheless, the concentrated presence of the revolution's center in the exterior has enabled a number of achievements over the last decades.

It was not due to the wish of any organization that the center of the revolution has been in the exterior. Rather, this situation was dictated by a number of historical circumstances, both objective and subjective. Due to the particularity of the Palestinian cause, the interior-exterior dialectic is bound to continue. Therefore, any discussion of this matter revolves around a proportional shift in this relationship, i.e., relative shifts in action and influence.

After the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the principal Palestinian organizations concentrated on the work in the occupied territories. This push, together with the accumulation of militant experience by the masses in the occupied territories, paved the way for the uprising which, in turn, strongly revived the issue of the proportional weight between the interior and the exterior. Being a qualitative turning point in the Palestinian national struggle, the uprising necessitated a new form of relation between the interior and exterior - and a shift in favor of the interior. This will make the interior more qualified to chart the Palestinian policies in the future.

There are different opinions concerning this issue in the Palestinian arena: The Palestinian Communist Party calls for marginalizing the exterior in favor of the interior which would become the decision-maker. Meanwhile, the right wing in the PLO views itself as the only decision-maker, while the interior, with all its militant structures, is merely an instrument and an extension.

In our view, both these opinions are extreme. The first viewpoint does not take into consideration the historical circumstances which led to the center of the revolution being positioned in the exterior. Such a viewpoint, despite intentions, leaves room for questioning the soleness of the PLO's legitimate representation of the Palestinian people. The second viewpoint marginalizes the main arena of the Palestinian struggle, belittles the role of the masses, and reduces their daily sacrifices to tools for achieving certain goals.

The solution to this dilemma is: Firstly, maintaining one leadership center, in this case the PLO, for many obvious reasons; secondly, embarking on a process whereby the interior gradually becomes a full partner in decision-making, based on the organic unity between the interior and the exterior. Now is the time to make this proportional change. Over two years, the uprising has created its own structures, enabling it to take the leadership in the field. Overlooking the significant role of these structures could directly harm the uprising's ability to achieve its goals. The experience of the past two years has proven that consolidating these militant and mass structures can make the interior an equal partner in the decision-making process. Such a change will have a positive impact on the uprising and the Palestinian revolution as a whole, for the following reasons: