

Palestinian Information

Tasks and Perspectives

This is the conclusion of the essay by Bassam Abu Sharif which we began publishing in «Democratic Palestine» no.4. The entire essay has been published as a booklet by the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ).

There was an atmosphere of despair in the Arab region following the defeat of the Arab regimes in 1967. It was caused by a great disappointment among the masses resulting from the collapse of their hope that they would attain victory over the Zionist enemy on the basis of programs and actions of the patriotic, bourgeois regimes. Suddenly, during several hours, the dreams of a nation collapsed, which for so long had depended on the military forces of these regimes, imagining that they would implement their aspirations. Any patriotic mobilization or information activity in this situation was extremely difficult: It was necessary to bring about a quick change in this atmosphere.

On a worldwide scene the imperialist-Zionist information machinery spread its poison and hatred, flaunting the Arab defeat. On the one hand it exaggerated, telling public opinion that the Arabs were stronger and were the aggressor. At the same time it exaggerated the genius and «heroism of the Israelis», who despite their small number and their limited possibilities were able to strike a powerful blow against the Arab giant.

And Zionism dug out of the depths of memory of all the Jews in the world the story they had learned in religious schools about David and Goliath. And they claimed that the prophecy had been fulfilled and that little David with a slingshot had defeated Goliath armed from head to foot.

Such were the real conditions for the information activities which, following the defeat of 1967, some Palestinian groups began to conduct on the world scene. But even more difficult were activities in the Arab field. Face to face with hundreds of thousands refugees who streamed across the River Jordan seeking protection for the second time since 1948, face to face with the overwhelming defeat of the Arab military machine, and in the general despair prevailing in the Arab region, patriotic mobilization activity had a most difficult task and could not expect results in the foreseeable future.

There were doubts as to whether the efforts of those pioneers who tried to spread the spirit of revival and resistance among the masses could ever change the course of events.

Despite the lack of organization and disunity in this field, the strength of the Palestinian cause was felt in spreading the

spirit of revival, using means that combined and carried on parallel mobilization work. For every enemy bullet that hit its target, the pioneers came up with hundreds of words for mobilization. And for every fighter who fell, the funeral was accompanied by hundreds of promises pledging to persist. Hope flared from the first sparks inspired by an objective view of the situation of the defeated regimes and the feeling of the masses that the fatal battle was still ahead.

This approach was correct. Palestinian information workers started from the true reality and on the basis of this they advanced with healthy ideas and with authentic reality to a national and worldwide level.

1967 - 1970

Between 1967 and 1970 Palestinian information activities set as their goal to imbue the Palestinian masses with a spirit of patriotism and to mobilize Arab public opinion in support of the Palestinian revolution and the armed struggle as the path to the liberation of Palestine. On a worldwide scale they set as their goal to strengthen awareness of the fact that there exists a Palestinian people and a Palestinian national liberation movement, that there exist the firm inalienable rights of the Arab Palestinian people to their own homeland - Palestine.

On a worldwide scale, in the early months after the defeat, diverse efforts were expanded in order to explain the tragedy which had befallen the Arab people of Palestine. By word and picture attention was directed now to the new camps of Palestinian refugees. Among those who mounted such efforts were the Associations of Friends of Jerusalem, UNESCO's film section, and the Jordanian Ministry of Information, apart from the individual activities of certain Palestinian personalities.

However, starting in 1968, activity gradually was taken over by components of the resistance movement who in the meantime had begun military action against the Zionist enemy, and for the first time the character of Palestinian information activities changed. They became a fighter for the revolution in order to transmit its ideas. This contributed to reinforcing an awareness that there exists a Palestinian people and a Palestinian movement fighting for certain rights.

Thanks to the heroic struggle of Palestinian fighters,