

# **Our code of morals is our revolution**

George Habash selected speeches and  
interviews  
1970 - 1984





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1970 – 1984

This book contains nine speeches of and interviews with George Habash from 1970 until 1984. During this period, George Habash was the General Secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and a leading figure in the Palestinian, Arab, and international revolutionary movement. Most articles in this book were originally published in the PFLP's periodicals *Bulletin* and *Democratic Palestine*, which are publicly available through [pflp-documents.org](http://pflp-documents.org). The articles were only slightly edited for improved readability.

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## List of organizations and abbreviations

**ALF:** Arab Liberation Front. Palestinian party that is strongly related with the Iraq Ba'ath party.

**ANM:** Arab Nationalist Movement. Arab nationalist organization founded in 1952 by George Habash. The ANM had chapters in many Arab countries and formed the foundation of various influential revolutionary parties, such as the PFLP and the National Liberation Front in South Yemen.

**DFLP:** Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Split off from the PFLP in 1968.

**Fatah:** Founded in 1959 and led by Yasser Arafat until his death in 2004. It has always been the largest organization within the PLO and was the leading force in signing the Oslo accords and creating the Palestinian Authority.

**LNLM:** Lebanese National Movement. United front organization in Lebanon from 1969 until 1982, consisting of pan-Arabist, antiimperialist, and socialist organizations.

**PFLP:** Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Revolutionary and communist national liberation organization, formed in 1967 by George Habash and others. It was and remains the second largest organization within the PLO.

**PLF:** Palestinian Liberation Front. Organization formed by, among others, Ahmed Jibril in 1959. It was one of the founding organizations of the PFLP in 1967 but withdrew one year later to form the PFLP – General Command. In 1976, large portions of General Command rejected Jibril's leadership and formed a new organization, reassuming the name PLF.

**PLO:** Palestine Liberation Organization. Formed in 1964, the PLO became the umbrella organization of most Palestinian resistance organizations, including Fatah, PFLP, DFLP and multiple smaller organizations. Until the formation of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, the PLO was recognized by many governments, liberation movements,

and international bodies as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

**PNC:** Palestinian National Council. Parliament of the PLO.

**PNF:** Palestinian National Front. The PLO organization inside Palestine from 1973 to 1982.

**Steadfastness and Confrontation Front:** formed in December 1977 by the PLO and the governments of Algeria, Libya, South Yemen, and Syria in rejection of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat's visit to Israel one month earlier.

## Introduction

The works of George Habash collected in this book provide a historical, collective, and personal journey through the Palestinian revolution from 1970 to 1984. Habash, in this book as leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, dedicated his whole life to the struggle for Palestinian and Arab liberation. His contributions are immense and cannot be summarized easily; from daily organizing in the refugee camps to internal and international political work, and from leading the armed struggle to his theoretical contributions; Al-Hakim (“The Doctor” or “The Wise one”) embodied the spirit and practice of a revolutionary leader.

The young Habash, witnessing the ethnic cleansing of the Nakba as a medical student, joined the growing pan-Arab movement, which provided an alternative to the colonial and semicolonial rule by Europe and the United States in the Arab world. The 1948 defeat of the Arab armies by Israel demonstrated the incapability of the bourgeois traditional leadership to defend the land and its people from imperialist and Zionist aggression. While working as a doctor in the camps, Habash, together with other young radicals, among them Wadi’ Haddad, formulated an anti-imperialist and panArab vision, which crystallized into the formation of the Arab Nationalist Movement. The ANM organized substantive chapters in various Arab countries, and was politically aligned with the Arab nationalist regimes, particularly Gamal Abdel Nasser’s Egypt.

When the Arab armies were defeated again by Israel in 1967, big parts of the pan-Arab movement were shocked. For George Habash and his comrades, the defeat showed the lack of capability and will on the part of the Arab petit bourgeois governments to confront imperialist-Zionist aggression head on, and they started to incorporate Marxism in their ideology. It became clear to them that only the Palestinian and Arab proletarian masses, the workers, peasants, and refugees, formed the basic revolutionary forces capable of confronting and ultimately defeating the enemy.

The defeat of 1967 also united various Palestinian resistance organization to form the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which identified four enemies of the Palestinian people: Zionism, Israel, imperialism, and Arab reaction. As its General Secretary, Habash led the Front to become the second strongest force within the Palestine Liberation Organization, and a leading revolutionary force in Palestine, the Arab world, and internationally. Thousands of Palestinians (and Arabs and internationals) joined the ranks of the PFLP, its mass organizations,



and the guerilla army. And while its international operations such as plane hijackings are its most famous operations, these were only one part of the mass based social, political, and military organization of the Front.

The texts in this book reflect the revolutionary struggle of the Palestinian people when it was at its highest points. Habash is full of revolutionary hope and argues that the Palestinian revolution provides the only possibility for liberating Palestine and returning to the land he and his people had been expelled from. He made parallels with the Vietnamese, Algerian, and Cuban revolutions, where people defeated colonialism and imperialism through revolutionary resistance.

Seen from the Palestinian standpoint, revolutionary resistance was the only way to respond to Zionist, imperialist and Arab reactionary terrorism. As Habash told dozens of mainly western hostages who were taken by the PFLP as part of four plane hijackings in 1970:

*After 22 years of injustice, inhumanity, and living in camps with nobody caring for us, we feel that we have the very full right to protect our revolution. We have all the right to protect our revolution. Our code of morals is our revolution. What saves our revolution, what helps our revolution, what protects our revolution is right, is very right and very honorable and very noble and very beautiful, because our revolution means justice, means having back our homes, having back our country, which is a very just and noble aim.<sup>1</sup>*

The Palestinian revolution achieved many successes for the Palestinian people. It provided the Palestinian nation with the most basic necessities after its ethnic cleansing and occupation in 1948, 1967, and beyond. Social, cultural, economic, political, and military organizations were all built up as part of the Palestinian liberation movement. This is why Habash notes as the first achievement of the Palestinian revolution the “crystallization of the militant, national identity of the Palestinian people, and their rallying their struggle around the PLO, their sole, legitimate representative.”

Even though the PLO had a crucial role in rebuilding the Palestinian nation through revolutionary organizing, the 1970s saw its right wing leadership, dominated by Fatah, pushing ideas of achieving Palestinian liberation through diplomatic means rather than revolution and armed struggle. Habash and the PFLP became the strongest critics of this defeatist stand, that included the readiness of the PLO leadership to recognize and negotiate with the enemy. In Tasks of the new stage (1972), the PFLP

1 George Habash speech, 1970, *Our code of morals is our revolution*.

specifically opposed the creation of a comprador Palestinian state:

*Connected intimately with all this is another political battle confronting the resistance movement, and which is a more serious problem now than it was before September, that is the “Palestinian State” ... Such a solution will erect a Palestinian political structure to put an end – historically speaking – to the whole Palestine problem and all that it created and continues to create in the way of difficulties for imperialism and its interests... It chose this time precisely... because some of the traditional Palestinian leadership has begun to move openly towards suspect solutions... This is to be carried out by creating a suspect entity to be dominated at the same time by Israel, reaction, and imperialism. It is intended to form an instrument for enforcing foreign exploitative domination over the Arab area.*

With today’s knowledge, the correctness of the PFLP’s criticism of a comprador Palestinian state can hardly be overstated. After the PLO’s participation in the Madrid conference and Oslo accords at the beginning of the 1990s, its revolutionary character was largely replaced by state building efforts through the Palestinian Authority. The PA became a comprador Palestinian state – a state that is completely intertwined with imperialism and Zionism. This state has no sovereignty, no economic or military power, and no legitimacy among its people because it does not resist the enemy. Even worse, the PA collaborates intimately with the enemy under so-called “security coordination” to attack anyone who is active within the resistance.

However, Madrid and Oslo not only affected the PLO, but also undermined the Palestinian mass movement. While Palestinian mass organizations used to operate within the revolutionary framework of the PLO and its factions, many of them shifted their focus from the struggle for liberation and return to liberal and narrow human rights advocacy. Huge sums of money, mainly from Europe and the United States, entered Palestinian “civil society” with strings attached.

Similar tendencies prevailed among international supporters of the Palestinian liberation struggle. Capitalism was restored in large parts of the socialist block. And, maybe more importantly, international revolutionary organizations who used to cooperate with the Palestinian left and its mass organizations, providing political and material support for the revolutionary struggle, were replaced with official NGO’s whose politics are confined to the (legal) limits of imperialism.

It is here that we find the real strength of Habash’s thought and

ideas we tried to capture in this book – a scientific, dialectical analysis of the enemies and forces of the Palestinian and Arab revolution based on their class interests. His total confrontation with the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary camp and his complete rejection of all their solutions, combined with a ruthless struggle for the organization of the Palestinian, Arab, and international masses into a revolutionary front, provide us with important examples for the current struggle and the path forward.

Today, revolutionary consciousness is growing among Palestinian, Arab, and international youth. This movement is developing its capabilities to resist the enemy and at the same time struggles against the conservative parts of the leadership of the left. It is asking itself fundamental questions about the strategy and tactics of the liberation movement. How do we confront imperialism, Zionism, and reaction in 2021, on the political, cultural, economic, and practical levels? What are our political priorities – in Palestine, in the Arab world, and internationally?

In this book, we will find George Habash's answers to these questions from the 1970s and early 80s. However, the world has changed, and so has the left. It could be said that the left, in Palestine, the Arab world, and internationally, is in crisis. Most socialist organizations have so far failed to mount a substantial alternative to the neoliberal imperialist offensive; the PFLP has not been exempt from this damaging crisis. It is up to the new revolutionary generation to formulate a new antiimperialist, pan-Arab, socialist vision and (re)build the organizations capable of putting this vision into practice.

We are happy that the publication of this book coincides with the Masar Badil conference, the revolutionary Palestinian Alternative Path, in Madrid from 30 October to 1 November 2021. Thirty years after the defeatist Madrid conference, there will be a Madrid conference of resistance. We hope that the words of Habash find resonance with everyone who struggles for Palestinian liberation and return.

*In light of the Madrid Conference, the current moment calls more than ever for a discussion of the Palestinian revolutionary alternative. Because all the rights and struggles of our people will be blown in the wind in the event of the success of the autonomy project.<sup>2</sup>*

Thomas Hofland  
International Center for Palestine Studies

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<sup>2</sup> George Habash, 1992, interview with Al-Hadaf, *The entitlement of the present and the coming horizon*.

Amsterdam, October 2021

## **The journey of al-Hakim: 1925-2008**

*Written by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and published on [www.pfllp.ps](http://www.pfllp.ps)*

Comrade Al-Hakim was born on August 1, 1925 in the city of al-Lydd, Palestine. At the time, Palestine was under British colonial control under the British Mandate, and Palestinians were facing the materialization of the colonial settler project known today as Israel. Dr. Habash attended Anglican school and then public school in al-Lydd during his early education; he then studied at the Orthodox school in Yafa, before attending secondary school in Jerusalem. He completed high school in 1942. During his childhood years, he was deeply influenced by the situation in Palestine, including the Palestinian revolution between 1936 and 1939 against British colonialism and impending Zionist colonialism. He returned to Yafa after graduating high school, teaching for two years in the same school he attended before enrolling in the American University of Beirut in 1944 to study medicine.

In 1948, while comrade Habash was studying in Beirut, al-Nakba took place, in which over 700,000 Palestinians, including Dr. Habash's family and many other Palestinians in al-Lydd, were driven from their homes and made refugees. Along with other Palestinian and Arab comrades in Beirut, in response to al-Nakba, Dr. Habash founded the Arab Nationalist Movement. This movement became very strong among youth, students, and intellectuals across the Arab world, and was the first pan-Arab movement to take up armed struggle to confront colonialism and to liberate occupied Arab land. After graduating with his medical degree in 1951, he participated in clinics serving Palestinian refugees in the camps in Jordan along with comrade martyr Dr. Wadi' Haddad, while continuing his leadership of the Arab Nationalist Movement.

After the defeat of 1967, he and his comrades established the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The Palestinian revolution was under severe attack at the time, not only by Israel and imperialism, but also by reactionary forces and regimes in the Arab world. In Jordan, the Palestinian movement faced massacres at the hands of the regime, and was forced to flee to Lebanon, where a new base of the Palestinian revolution was established. In Lebanon, Dr. Habash continued his leadership of the Front throughout the civil war and the Israeli invasion, until 1982, when the PLO and its activists, fighters and institutions were forced to leave Lebanon. Al-Hakim and his comrades went to Damascus in 1982,

after which he focused heavily on the establishment and development of institutions inside Palestine, as well as the protection of the Palestinian revolution's existence, recognizing as he did the dangers to Palestinian rights posed by the beginnings of the so-called "peace process;" for example, initiatives by US President Ronald Reagan and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd and the so-called Amman agreement of 1985.

In 1987, with the outbreak of the great Intifada, Dr. Habash called for upholding Palestinian national unity, and convening the Palestinian National Congress in Algeria in 1988. Comrade Al-Hakim always understood national unity as a necessary condition for the continuation of the struggle and the national liberation movement, whether in Beirut during internal fighting among Palestinians and after as well, recognizing that the internal contradictions among Palestinians could not be solved through military mechanisms, but rather through the democratic processes of the liberation movement.

In 1993, when the Oslo agreement was signed, Comrade Al-Hakim called for maximum popular opposition to the agreement and saw in it a defeat of the Palestinian traditional leadership of the PLO.

Dr. Habash warned that the Oslo agreement particularly targeted a central issue of the Palestinian national movement, the right to return. In 1994 and 1995, he called for internal and external meetings for Palestinian leaders and activists in exile, to launch campaigns and establish al-Awda committees and right to return organizations everywhere possible in order to protect this vital and central right for Palestinian refugees in light of the new threat posed by Oslo and its effects.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine convened its sixth conference in 2000, in which Dr. Habash participated, delivering his last address as General Secretary, before declaring his resignation from the post. He did this, providing an example for allowing the transfer of leadership within an organization through its democratic processes, which he upheld as a value that strengthened, rather than weakened, organizations and movements. The Front elected Abu Ali Mustafa to succeed Dr. Habash as General Secretary.

From 2000 through 2008, Dr. Habash established the al-Ghad al-Arabi center for studies and lived in Amman near his daughters and family. He is survived by his wife, Hilda and two daughters, Maysa and Lama.

Throughout his life, comrade Al-Hakim demonstrated not only the highest level of care and dedication to his people, but also consistently and clearly conveyed and developed a scientific vision and analysis both of the future of the revolution and the dangers and plans against

it forged by the enemies of his people. Al-Hakim has left us with a rich experience bearing many legacies from which we can benefit and learn, as we continue along his path until the liberation of Palestine.

## **Our code of morals is our revolution (1970)**

*George Habash delivered the following speech at the Jordan International Hotel in Amman on June 12, 1970 at 5:00 am. Habash was talking to hostages who were captured during a massive quadruple hijack operation by the PFLP, and in the face of the US-backed Jordanian regime attacks against the Palestinian revolution. The speech was originally published by the PFLP Information Department under the title "Our code of morals is our revolution."*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel that it is my duty to explain to you why we did what we did. Of course, from a liberal point of view of thinking, I feel sorry for what happened, and I am sorry that we caused you some trouble during the last two or three days. But leaving this aside, I hope that you will understand, or at least try to understand, why we did what we did.

Maybe it will be difficult for you to understand our point of view. People living different circumstances think on different lines. They cannot think in the same manner, and we, the Palestinian people, and the conditions we have been living for a good number of years, all these conditions have modeled our way of thinking. We cannot help it. You can understand our way of thinking when you know a very basic fact. We, the Palestinians, for 22 years, for the last 22 years, have been living in camps and tents. We were driven out of our country, our houses, our homes, and our lands, driven out like sheep and left here in refugee camps in very inhumane conditions.

For 22 years our people have been waiting in order to restore their rights, but nothing happened. Three years ago, circumstances became favorable, so that our people could carry arms to defend their cause and start to fight to restore their rights, to go back to their country, and liberate their country. After 22 years of injustice, inhumanity, living in camps with nobody caring for us, we feel that we have the very full right to protect our revolution. We have all the right to protect our revolution. Our code of morals is our revolution. What saves our revolution, what helps our revolution, what protects our revolution is right, is very right and very honorable and very noble and very beautiful, because our revolution means justice, means having back our homes, having back our country, which is a very just and noble aim. You have to take this point into consideration.

If you want to be in one way or another, cooperative with us, try to



understand our point of view. We do not wake up in the morning to have a cup of milk with Nescafe and then spend half an hour before the mirror thinking of flying to Switzerland or having one month in this country or one month in that country. We do not have the thousands of millions of dollars that you in America and Britain have. Every day, we live in camps. Our wives wait for the water, whether it will come at ten o'clock in the morning, twelve or three o'clock in the afternoon. We cannot be calm as you can. We cannot think as you think. We have lived in this condition, not for one day, not for two days, not for three days. Not for one week, not for two weeks, not for three weeks. Not for one year, not for two years, but for 22 years. If any one of you comes to these camps and stays for one or two weeks, you will be affected. You cannot think and handle things regardless of the conditions you will be living.

When our revolution started three years ago, so many attempts were planned to strike our revolution. Actually, all commando organizations after June 1967, a very well-known date to you, started and their eyes were aimed at the conquered land. But when the revolution went on, so many forces – our enemies – made so many plans to beat this revolution. America is against our revolution. We know this very well. We feel this very well. We felt it last year from the aid of the Phantoms. America is against our revolution; they work to crush our revolution. They work through the reactionary regime in Jordan and the reactionary regime in Lebanon. They tried on the fourth of November in 1968 to crush the revolution. Nevertheless, during events here, all of us were aiming for the conquered land. This was the first attempt on the fourth of November 1968. A second attempt, four months ago, on ten February. And during the last week we lived the third attempt. Actually, they are working daily against the revolution. Every day. These dates are the peaks only. When their attempts reached a certain high level, every time we lose men, we lose blood, we give sacrifices. On the tenth of February, there was something like fifty casualties at least. Regarding this third attempt from the reactionary regime to smash the revolution, and people who live here in Jordan know it very well and feel it very well, the reactionary regime started this. Anybody who lives in Jordan knows this very well. We cannot base our revolution on lies. I am talking facts here.

Last Saturday, there was an incident here in Amman. On Sunday, there was an incident in Zarqa. And then things flared up. This time, we felt, to be frank with you, that this attempt, at least from their point of view, seems to be the final attempt. I mean to say; we felt that this time they are determined to smash the revolution no matter what level the sacrifices

would be. Here, we felt that we have all the right in the world to protect our revolution. We remembered all the miseries, all the injustices against our people and the conditions they are living in, the coldness with which world opinion looks at our case, and so we felt that we will not permit them to crush us.

We will defend ourselves and our revolution by every way and every means, because – as I told you – our code of morals is our revolution. Anything that protects our revolution would be right. This is our line of thinking. So, we put counterplans deciding that we should win. One of the items in this plan was you, what happened here. We felt that we have the full right to put pressure on the reactionary regime, America and all forces, and this will be a winning card in our hand. I am talking very frankly, and I also have to be frank and tell you something: we were really determined. We were not joking.

I am very glad that things and conditions went the way they should, because – to be frank – we were fully determined, that in case they will smash the camps, we will blow up this whole building and the Philadelphia. We were really determined to do this. Why? Because we know that our revolution will continue even if they crush us here in Amman. And we want your governments to know that from now on the Front will mean every word it says. We were fully determined to blow this Hotel and the Philadelphia Hotel on one condition and in one circumstance, we were keen not to lose our nerves. They are very determined, by their tanks, artillery, and airplanes, to smash us.

You are not better than our people. During the last incidents there were something like 500 casualties, the lowest number, believe me, the lowest number. Yesterday, I was only in one hospital, where the doctors told me that there are 280 wounded and 60 dead. Dead fighters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel so much relief now that we were not put in the corner and forced to do all that we were determined to do in case conditions went in that way. I know the liberal way of thinking; I know it very well. I know how difficult it would be to convince you.

I know that some of you will be saying at present, “What do I have to do with these conditions? This is very unfair and very unjust and rude and selfish.” All right, conditions in which people live – these conditions, actually, determine their way of thinking and code of morals. We tried our best – and I hope we succeeded in this – that during your presence in this hotel under the auspices of the Front, you would be treated the best way we can. This is the first time we have managed a hotel. Our men, I am

sure, know how to fight very well, but I do not know to what extent they were good at managing the Hotel. But instructions were very clear. I hope they succeeded in this.

I think we always helped you by keeping our nerves. The day before yesterday, Al-Wahdat camp was shelled for more than half an hour. Anyone of you can go to Al-Wahdat camp and see the places affected. It is very natural to start thinking that time of executing the action. We held our nerves very well.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You have to excuse my English. From the personal side, let me say, I apologize to you. I am sorry about your troubles for three or four days. But from a revolutionary point of view, we feel, and we will continue to feel that we have the very, very full right to do what we did.

Thank you very much.

## **Liberation, not negotiation (1974)**

*George Habash gave the following interview to Italian newspaper Il Manifesto, where it was published on January 29, 1974. The English translation was originally published in two parts in PFLP Bulletin #9, March 1974, and Bulletin #10, April 1974.*

**Il Manifesto: The PFLP was the organization which openly opposed participation in the “Peace Conference,” can you explain the political reasons behind your refusal?**

George Habash: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, as a revolutionary organization struggles for the interest of the oppressed Palestinian masses, for liberation, repatriation, and self-determination. Given that we are part of the Arab liberation movement and the world revolution, the PFLP cannot adopt a position except through the recognition of the basic interests of these revolutionary forces.

In refusing participation in the so called “Peace Conference” in Geneva, the Front does not base its refusal on either emotive or chauvinistic reasons, rather it derives its position from clear recognition of what this conference actually represents at this point and time.

The Conference is in basic conflict with the interests of the Palestinian and Arab masses and its national progressive and revolutionary forces. In addition, it is an attempt to curb the necessary conditions for the development of their struggle. The “Peace Conference” relies on two factors: The legal factor and the political factor.

The legal factor: The Geneva Conference convenes based on the UN Security Council resolution 338 which in turn is based on resolution 242 plus the negotiations with Israel. Both of these resolutions provide for the withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories, and at best from all the occupied territories hence. In return they implicitly impose the recognition of Israel and a guarantee of its presence and its borders.

Such a recognition, which the convening of the Geneva Conference will concretize as the basis to solve the Middle East crisis, provides a clear recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist colonization on the greater portion of the Palestinian homeland. Simply put, the recognition of the Israeli, Zionist egression until June 4, 1967. This clearly represents a major setback to the rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland and their right to self-determination.

The simple fact of any participation on the part of any representatives

of the Palestinian people would mean the acceptance of the two Security Council resolutions, hence recognition of the setbacks they contain, regardless of the geographic boundaries of the Zionist entity.

Concerning this, some people are claiming the possibility of dividing the Palestinian rights into temporary versus historic rights, in other words we are capable of acquiring part of the Palestinian land now as a step on the road of struggle to fully acquire it.

To these people we would like to clarify the major difference between partial liberation throughout struggle and the establishment of a revolutionary authority on it, and the acquiring of that part without struggle but by giving up the other part of the land.

Partial liberation represents a great leap forward in the process of struggle and creates more favorable conditions for the whole Palestinian and Arab revolutionary process including the Jewish one. In addition, it increases its revolutionary alliances on the world level. Whereas the second represents an abortion of the local revolutionary process and the first step in dissolving the revolutionary alliance of the Palestinian resistance internationally, if it goes beyond what it required as “temporary rights”. What would we then tell the world after we bow out of the agreement we had accepted?

As for the political factor: The Geneva Conference meets under very important and dangerous political conditions. It represents an attempt to curb a clear uprising of the Arab masses so as to crystallize the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary interests threatened by the uprising.

The Geneva Conference meets in the aftermath of the October war which produced two categories of results: basic results which form objective conditions for a progressive Arab uprising; and results that would permit for the advancement of the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary attack.

The first category is summarized as follows:

A) Destruction of the myth regarding the enemy’s supremacy. As a result, the Palestinian and Arab masses regained their confidence in their abilities and ultimately in the inevitability of victory. At the same time, it shook the Zionist forces’ confidence, both in and out of Israel, in addition to all of the imperialist and reactionary forces that stand behind it, in the ability of the Zionist entity to expand and to play both the colonialist and imperialist roles it is entrusted with.

B) The October war took place in a period where Arab political divisions were quite strong, but the escalation of the contradictions with the Zionist enemy caused the renewal of unity among the Arab masses to

a degree not even expected by the closest observers. While the moves for settlement – e.g., the Geneva Conference – represents the shortest road to circumscribe this unity.

(The unity among the Arab masses is not a metaphysical or chauvinistic matter, but it is a material objective power that proves its ability when confronting imperialism and its weakness in disengagement. Its nature is progressive, revolutionary, and liberating. This nature is more deeply rooted to the extent that the revolutionary progressive forces are capable of leading the struggle.)

C) The October war proved more to the world than any other time, what the Israeli leaders have been trying to hide, that this entity is not an independent Jewish state but a presence that is organically linked to and protected by US imperialism.

The PFLP's contention that US Imperialism is our main enemy was confirmed, whereas the Zionist entity and the reactionary Arab forces are nothing more than appendages to US imperialism.

The danger of the Geneva Conference regarding this point is that it weakens the Arab peoples' animosity towards US Imperialism and depicts the latter as a neutral arbitrator as opposed to the main enemy, a fact recognized by our people during the last war.

Hence the struggle of the Palestinian and Arab masses would be transformed from an anti-imperialist national liberation movement, into a limited nationalistic fight for the regaining of some of the lost lands.

The October war proved very clearly the importance of the relations between the Arab national liberation movement and the socialist countries. In addition, the war proved the Arab masses' willingness to fight, and the socialist countries continued material support. In fact, the Arab masses' desire to fight is the real basis upon which our struggle is founded and is what provides the material grounds for the support we receive from the socialist countries. In spite of the opportunistic and dangerous political stands adopted by certain Arab regimes prior to the war regarding the sacrificing and curtailing of their relationships with the Soviet Union in favor of a change of direction leading to a pro-US position: the dependence of the reactionary oil kingdoms who have a very frank and blunt hatred for anything pertaining to communism, socialist countries and the Soviet Union (the massacre against the Sudanese Communist party, and the pushing out of Soviet military advisors from Egypt), in spite of all these antagonistic developments, the Soviet Union and the Socialist countries presented all sorts of material-economic aid.

This close interrelationship between the Arab national liberation

movement and the socialist countries is actually based on a common struggle against imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction. Such intimate relations provide the liberation forces an essential weapon by which to wage their struggle.

The last war also proved in a practical and definite way the importance of relations between the Arab national liberation movement and the socialist countries. A relationship which is an essential source of strength for the Arab liberation struggle.

The second category of results from the October war can be illustrated through the following:

A) Exposing the conflict between the interests of the present Arab regimes in achieving victory over Israel and their interests in preventing the provisions that can secure victory. Generally speaking, the Arab nationalist regimes are opposed to Israel and imperialism, but that is fundamentally different from securing the conditions for victory. The October war uncovered that the main reason for the Arab side's inability to achieve a strategic victory does not lie in the quality of the Arab fighter nor in the quality of the available arms, and neither in the preparedness of the Arab masses to give and sacrifice.

Simply put, it lies in the class and political structure of these regimes whose interests are in conflict with what is needed for democratic revolutionary preparedness that guarantees the development of the war into a total national war, through which all the national resources that our people possess will be set free without limits.

The weakness which the October war uncovered in the Arab regimes provides us with the knock on the door of US imperialism, with all the possible concessions they can offer, in hope of a solution that will weaken the level of conflict within the regimes' structures. Simultaneously it lessens the danger of its own crisis and postpones for as long as possible the development of the masses' revolutionary uprising that threatens their interests.

B) The direction the Arab regimes have taken poses a threat to the positive results of the October war. These regimes are dealing with these positive results in two ways:

1. They hold on to them so as to enable their rationalization which postulates "peace" i.e., capitulation.

2. In order to rationalize their capitulation stand, these regimes refuse to learn any lessons from the October war, hence forcing an unwanted case of blindness on them. These lessons, if they were to be taken well, would clearly show the Arab's ability to score victories. Instead, the Egyptian

regime proves its dual approach as regards its position vis-à-vis the Israeli troops on the West bank of the Canal. We are told by top Egyptian military leaders that in no time they can drive off the enemy's forces, while they simultaneously engage in peace talks at the 101 kilometer, and at Geneva, and accomplish certain results at such closed sessions in hopes of driving out the Israeli forces. By claiming their incapability of refusing the proposed settlement the regimes try to rationalize their capitulation.

This trend puts the regimes in a position where they must make further concessions in favor of Israel, US imperialism, and Arab reaction. Contrary to what the positive results of the October war indicated, we notice that a fast process of relations is taking place in the interests of US imperialism and Arab reaction, where a new campaign causing doubts regarding the relations with the Socialist countries reemerged once again as was prior to the war. From all that has been preceded it is clear that the Geneva Conference both its legal and political factors represent the elimination of the greatest portion of the Palestinian people's national rights, and an elimination of the positive Arab conditions, the October war, and the embryonic advances of the Arab masses progressive uprising.

The present Arab political direction towards Geneva is above all an expression as to their opposition to the people's struggle i.e., people's war, and the giving in to US imperialism by relying on Arab reaction.

Under the present circumstances of anti-progressive, antineutral policies, any "Palestinian entity" that is proposed in Geneva must be rejected because not only would it be a partial Palestinian entity, i.e., 22.2% of all Palestinian land, but in addition it is organically linked to the anti-progressive principles, and in fact would be established to serve and further the interests of this anti-progressive and anti-national policy.

Hence we do not only reject the attendance of representatives of the Palestinian people, but we reject as well the political contents implicit in the direction that the Arab regimes have taken.

**How does the PFLP evaluate the Syrian and Iraqi positions? What is the Egyptian political role in the present stage? What is your evaluation of the Faisal-Sadat axis?**

The PFLP's evaluation of the present Arab conditions is centrally based on the conflict between two lines that crystalized since the October war. This evaluation is not in disagreement with the PFLP's strategic look before the war but stems from it and emphasizes its basic features.

- 1) The line that holds to the positive achievements of the October



war and aims to overcome its negative results. In other words, the line that holds more to the ability of the Palestinian and Arab masses in their abilities and the inevitability of victory through releasing its capabilities for the continuation of the struggle.

2) The line that is more convinced after the October war that it cannot achieve victory over the enemy without sacrificing its own class interests which insures the victory. This line depends more now in its political direction towards a settlement on the basis of safeguarding its personal interests than that of the battle and the struggle.

The Arab political division between these two lines is not geographical as it appears at first sight. That is to say that Iraq is with the first line and Egypt with the second. For in Egypt itself there is a very wide mass force that struggles in the direction of the first line. There is an internal battle between these two lines in the whole Arab region including the Palestinian one, although the majority of this line or that appears to be different in this region or that. While we see that the Iraqi forces who fought heroically in the October war refuse the proposed Kissinger settlement, and we see that the Egyptian regime puts forward all the concessions it can to make the settlement successful, the Syrian regime ties its approval to the Security Council resolution 338 with a special understanding that views Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories in 1967 as a precondition in addition to the respect of the lawful rights of the Palestinian people.

Our position concerning these various Arab states is crystal clear. We are a revolutionary Arab force as much as we are a Palestinian revolutionary force. As such the battle between these two lines that are mentioned above spreads all over the Arab region and is also our battle.

Without reservations we are with the political and social forces of the first line in every Arab state from Mauritania to Bahrein and against the forces of capitulation. And of course, in every area of this large battle we have an evaluation of the nature of the fighting forces, the limits, and the size of the necessary local alliances for the interest of the whole revolutionary process in the area.

We believe that this explanation of the PFLP's present position answers question number two regarding Syria and Iraq and question number three regarding the Egyptian role and the Faisal-Sadat axis.

**What is the PFLP evaluation of Faisal's oil policy? Does this policy guarantee Faisal's independence from the US? Or is it a US policy to strike European and Japanese interests?**

The oil in the Arab countries, as it is in the other underdeveloped countries, has been exposed since its discovery to the ugliest process of thievery and exploitation by the imperialist monopolist oil companies. And it has presented in this century the most important target that the Arab homeland has faced of imperialist military and political attacks that reached a barbaric level. It is very natural that one of our basic struggles, and that of the Arab national progressive forces, is the enabling the Arab masses to liberate themselves and liberate their natural resources of which oil is top priority. Therefore, it is natural that we support every step that is directed against the thievery operation, and we were, as were all of the Arab masses, highly in favor of the Arab steps taken in this field such as the nationalization of the Iraqi Petroleum Company and its pipelines in Iraq and Syria a year and a half ago, and also support the measures taken in Libya and Algeria.

In addition to this, our principal position considers that oil is one of the main Arab weapons in the battle of liberation that is waged by the Palestinian and Arab masses. Since the outset of our struggle, we emphasized the necessity of striking the imperialist interests in the Arab homeland, especially the oil interests. Particularly during the October war this became a demand that the masses insisted upon. It is impossible for the Arab masses to accept the fact that the air bridge, which was continuously supplying the enemy with all kinds of weapons to protect and expand its aggression was consuming Arab oil. They would not maintain their silence!

The popular demands were summarized as follows:

1) Cessation of the oil flow to all countries that support the enemy, especially the US.

2) Nationalization of these countries' shares in the oil companies, and the nationalization of all their interests in our countries.

With the increasing insistence of the Arab masses on these demands, the Arab governing reactionary regimes in most of the oil countries were not capable of keeping the oil weapon neutral in the battle. We cannot deny that the usage of this weapon received a welcome from the masses.

Principally we support all measures that liberate the Arab oil and strike the thievery operation that it is exposed to, and principally we are for the use of oil in the battle.

But we are the first to object to the methods used by the reactionary Arab regimes. We took the initiative of writing a long analysis concerning this matter in our central organ Al-Hadaf. The main points can be summarized as follows:

1) The cessation of exporting oil to the US, and diminishing the amount exported to other countries is by no way a substitute to the necessity of nationalizing US interests. This nationalization we consider the basis for the usage of oil in the battle.

2) The method that was used by Arab reaction in this field leads to an unequal harm between the US, Europe, and Japan. This brings to the US more profit than it loses by the cessation of Arab oil to it.

3) The increase of oil prices by the Arab countries is a legitimate right and a demand to be insisted upon. But this without the nationalization of the oil companies brings the majority of the profits to the accounts of the oil monopolies of which the US share is 60%.

4) Nationalization alone is capable of correcting this unequal harm that the US benefits from. The policy of diminishing oil production without distinguishing among friends, enemies, and neutrals does not serve the Arab interest. It might enable the US and the hostile propaganda machinery to create a wave of animosity towards the Arabs. It might also enable the US to convince Europe and Japan to support its policy through claiming that they cannot guarantee continuous Arab oil supply except through the success of its policy which aims at the control of the whole area.

Events have proven our analysis. According to the Far East Economic Review, "By exploiting the present oil crisis the Western oil industry has increased its profits 44% as compared to the same period last year. During the third quarter of the present year Exxon's profits increased 80%, Gulf's increased 91%, Mobil's 64%, Standard Oil of India 37%, Getty 71%."

The New York Times wrote the following: "What concerns the international oil companies, the sudden increase in the price of international oil, was accompanied by a great increase in their profits."

This is one example of the limited and more appropriately nonexistent impact of the oil weapon in the absence of the nationalization of imperialist oil interests.

Imperialism is rearranging the area in a way to stabilize it under the leadership of Faisal and Sadat. What are the tasks of the resistance movement, militarily, politically, and socially at the present stage?

Pinpointing the revolutionary task in any stage calls in addition for the understanding of the nature of that stage, the specification of the central points of that stage. The specification of the central points or point that governs the movement and expressions in that stage.

Regarding the Palestinian resistance movement and the Arab national liberation movement there are two central issues that we must face at this

stage. The first is the continuation of armed struggle and the increase of that struggle through involving more powers of the Palestinian and Arab masses in all the military and nonmilitary battles. The second is to face the dangers surrounding the existence of the Palestinian resistance, which manifest themselves in the attempt to liquidate it or liquidate its cause. This is centralized now in the Geneva Conference which is known as the “Peace Conference”, and the politics that it contains as we pointed out previously. Resisting the danger cannot be done except by the following:

1) Preservation of the unity of the resistance movement, and strengthening of this unity by mobilizing the widest mass base and its powers, by rejecting the liquidation operation prepared at this time.

Such an emphasis on national unity and its structure as well as its revolutionary political line are the conditions capable of silencing those elements who are deviating from the line, without causing a split in the resistance.

2) Work to the utmost possible to coordinate and develop the Arab revolutionary effort that is carried out by all progressive forces in the Arab homeland. To build on the positive results of the October war so as to curtail the setback of the regimes and what this represents of political dangers on the Palestinian level, the resistance and the revolutionary Arab national liberation movement.

**What is the PFLP’s position concerning the “Rome Massacre”? In addition, what do you think of the imperialist powers who are attempting of placing the blame of the “Rome Massacre” on the Palestinian revolution and in particular the PFLP?**

Before entering the details of the Rome operation, we should clarify our principal position regarding external operations of the resistance. In short, the clash on the external front is a confrontation between the Palestinian people who were uprooted from their homeland and dispersed abroad in the presence of the forces and interests that still work and assist in the continuation of the state of dispersion and uprooting.

This existence outside the Palestinian and the Arab front provides legitimacy to the external confrontation. But in our opinion as a revolutionary organization with a proletarian internationalist scope, this legitimacy should be guided with a safe look at the interests of the Palestinian, Arab, and international movement.

Concerning every operation that we are responsible for, we are required to evaluate the costs and benefits that are achieved by the revolutionary

movement on all levels, Palestinian, Arab and international.

At the same time, we do not represent all the uprooted and dispersed Palestinian people, and we do not plan all the foreign operations. Hence we cannot guarantee the wisdom and the correctness of all operations that take place outside, neither the outcome to the interests of the revolutionary movement. It is only natural that the dispersed and uprooted Palestinian people express their national aspirations and justified wrath in ways and means that might be wrong in certain cases. In other words, the exercise of the legitimate external confrontation, which is derived from the nature of the Palestinians presence with the enemy abroad, sometimes comes in ways that are not controllable by any revolutionary political line.

Such characteristics fit the last "Rome Operation" which we had nothing to do with. In addition, the PFLP supported the resolution of the Central Council of the PLO to form an investigative committee to probe into the background of the operation and to determine who is behind it. Upon the termination of the investigation, the facts will be publicly released.

**After the October war, it became clear that there is a rightist trend in Israel. In your opinion, what is the role played by the US in influencing this trend? What is the situation of the Red Front inside Israel?**

Throughout the first days of the war, the PFLP studied the various possible contingencies likely to result from the war specially as regards the internal impact of the war on Israel. We reached the conclusion that the human, material, and political losses that the Israeli entity would suffer would usher important political changes.

We specified it as follows:

- 1) A defeat to the ruling circle of Zionism.
- 2) The growth of two lines: One on the right of the present leadership. The second on the left of that leadership, we called it the Nahum Goldman line.
- 3) We also noticed the growth of the radical line, which is represented through the following parties and organizations: Rakah, Matzpen, Siah, Black Panthers and the antiwar elements among students, youth, and intellectuals.

We expected that the balance of power of these changes will be determined by the length of the war and its military, economic, and political results.

We believe that the shortcomings of the October war which the Arab

political leadership bears responsibility for, is what made capable the rise of the right wing in Israel. Depending on the results of the war, the right wing attributed Israeli losses to only military and political mistakes that the leadership had committed and accordingly this wing claimed that it could have avoided them. It presents as proof the partial victories that Israeli army was capable of achieving towards the end.

This is regarding the internal effects of strengthening the extreme right wing inside Israel. As for the external effects we notice that the US propaganda machinery has contributed greatly to making this prominent. Although the US depends on the ruling wing in Israel, it sees that the presence of the extreme right wing allows it to employ it as means to pressure the Arab regimes for more concessions.

This is regarding the extreme right. Regarding the Red Front, the subject to a great extent enters the issue of the security of the revolution. The PFLP looks at the Red Front as a historical symptom which forms a very important dimension of the struggle in the future.

In the view of the PFLP it is inevitable that many Jews will rebel against the Zionist ideology and liberate themselves from its ranks and limits. Their outlook will be that their interest is common with the revolutionary Arab forces in building a democratic socialist society which presents the just and peaceful solution to all national, religious, and racial problems.

**Does the PFLP believe that there is a possibility of the resistance movement being attacked militarily during the “Peace Conference” or after it?**

Those who are part of the “Peace Conference,” especially the participating Arab regimes, have a dual outlook towards the Palestinian resistance movement. On the one hand do they need a Palestinian side to participate in the settlement, which they were not capable of acquiring from outside the ranks of the resistance movement. On the other hand they consider the resistance with its revolutionary dimension as not being that side, or even the contrary, that the revolutionary resistance presents the main obstacle in the way of reaching a settlement.

On the basis of this dual outlook, which contains the need for the resistance and the need for its participation, the work now is in the direction to squeeze the revolutionary content out of the resistance, hence, to eliminate its danger for the possible settlement. Also, to transform the resistance into an entity without mass revolutionary content which will

make it an easy prey for cooptation. This policy shapes the political battle taking place now within the resistance and tries to influence its results. It might find it necessary at a certain time to attack the militarily resistance here or there, in order to secure the results of the battle in its favor.

We suspect that Israel is the first possible agent that will carry out such an attack or the Lebanese regime which falls second in line.

The first possibility is most probable and might manifest itself through an Israeli attack on southern Lebanon, which will provide the chance to bring the Lebanese water resources in the Geneva Conference. Or it might manifest itself in special Israeli operations that will enable the Arab regimes and their propaganda machinery to compare their “victories” during the October war with the “inability” of the resistance to defend itself.

In considering all of the above, we notice that the important position of the US is to attempt to lineup the resistance movement into participating in the capitulation plan. The major danger lies in the pressure that the reactionary Arab regimes are applying so as to ensure Washington’s goal of bringing the resistance to Geneva.

In addition, the already anticipated attacks from Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon to liquidate the resistance will act as another agent that would push the resistance in participating in this capitulationist operation.

## **“Nothing is dearer than freedom” (1974)**

*George Habash made the following press statement on 25 September 1974, one day before the Arab Summit Conference in Rabat, Morocco. It was originally published in PFLP Bulletin #13 September-October 1974.*

The Arab Summit Conference of Arab heads of state will be held tomorrow in Rabat. On this occasion, the PFLP wishes, through you and with your assistance, to present to the Palestinian and Arab masses as well as to all the progressive regimes and forces on the Arab and international level, its position regarding the subjects that the Arab delegates will deal with in Rabat.

The PFLP aims to fulfill its obligations towards our Palestinian people's cause and the cause of our Arab masses, as well as the cause of progress and peace in the world.

The recent withdrawal of the PFLP from the Executive Committee of the PLO is based on a scientific conviction that the path followed by the PLO leadership at this stage is full of big dangers regarding the future of the Palestinian and the Arab national liberation movement, and that this path does not represent the real nature of our people's interests and aims, and thereby, we take this opportunity to explain the correct political line – the path which we believe will realize the objectives of the masses.

We are passing a very delicate and decisive stage. Such a stage requires a determined ideological and political struggle between what is right and what is wrong, what is illusion and what is real, between the deviationist political line and the correct one. It also requires a refrain from abuses and nonfundamental quarrels, out of the faithfulness to our martyrs and the aspirations of our future generations.

Allow me to say that you, as journalists, bear a good part of responsibility in this respect, whether by putting before the masses all realities and points of view, or by the call for a responsible scientific dialogue, far from abuses.

The recent position of the PFLP, I mean its withdrawal from the Executive Committee of the PLO, has been subject to questions and remarks on your part and on the part of the forces that we care for.

In spite of the fact that the PFLP has explained its viewpoint, it still hopes that through your questions, this could further explain to our masses the reasons and considerations behind the position it adopted, knowing quite well all its implications, meanings, and results.

More than a year has already passed since the ceasefire last



October. During this period, Saudi Arabia and Egypt carried most of the responsibility for steering the Arab world on the path to regain the Arab occupied lands in the June war, and the realization of what they call, generally and without any definition, “The national rights of the Palestinian people.” What has been the result?

The results have become clear to all: Israel has been given the necessary time to regain its breath and to rebuild its military institution; to supply it with new weapons – on the level of its air, naval and land forces. The enemy of the people, the US, has been able to reimpose its moral domination over the area in preparation for its full control, both politically and economically. Above all this, and rather more dangerous than all this, all issues that have been dealt with during this period came with the promise of Israel’s existence being taken as a *fait accompli* that bears no discussion, and that any alleviation of the consequences of the 1967 aggression has to be at the cost of a final Arab and international consolidation of the consequences of the 1948 aggression. Hence a full cancellation of one of the major objectives of the Palestinian and Arab revolution – the liberation of all Palestinian national soil. Not that only, but it is natural that after all this, the results will be a disintegration of the revolutionary atmosphere that spread among the masses when the fighting was going on, as well as a split in the official Arab camp; a lack of readiness on the part of some anti-imperialist national regimes to bear responsibility of these results under the banner of so-called “Arab solidarity” and a weakening of the organic links with the socialist countries. This last point alone forms a central point in the US policy in the area, at this stage.

All this happened while Israel is still in Sinai, the Golan and the entire Palestinian land. The equation presented became completely clear: the US might put lenient and smooth pressure on Israel to withdraw from “Arab territories” occupied in the war. In return for this, the Arab side has to pay the price: part of the price will go to US imperialism, the enemy of the people, and the other part will go to Israel’s security, legitimacy, and existence. The price list required for withdrawal is a very long one beginning with an end or a weakening of the relations with the socialist countries down to the price of oil and its quantity of production from our lands.

Is there anything wrong with this analysis? Is there any exaggeration? Is there any wrongdoing? Are there any brinkmanship and sabotage attempts? Do we not have the right after all these results to categorically and decisively condemn this reactionary capitulationist and submissive

policy, its protagonists, and its supervisors, and to call on the masses – all Arab masses – to confront it, drop it, and crush it?

In the light of all of this, we view the main task of the Rabat conference is to set a final and complete withdrawal out of this path – the path of imperialist and deceiving political settlements and a definition of an alternative political line.

What is the alternative?

First, the serious and continuous preparation for a war of liberation and not a war that aims to push for a political settlement.

Second, that this process of preparation is not limited to the military aspects only.

From the military side there has to be a complete preparation for the plan: armament, training, full mobilization, and the provision of all that is needed for a long battle that might extend for years. The preparations must include the economic, social, and political programs that will create out of the Arab masses a solid and deep base that provides the fight with the human and material needs until victory is achieved. The release of the masses potential by providing them with freedom and justice is the road to building up the power, which Israel, aided with all the imperialist forces, cannot defeat.

Third, that all resources of the Arab nation – including the economic, oil, and hence the financial – be mobilized with enough courage to the interests for the battle, without fear of US imperialist threats.

Fourth, in the serious national liberation war there must be a consolidation of the closest relations with all the socialist countries on all levels – political, economic, and military – as well as the closest relations with the progressive regimes and forces of the world. This forms a basic line of alternative political progress.

Fifth, it must be very clear in our minds from the outset, that in such a war, we will not be facing Israel alone. We will certainly be facing US imperialism with all its military, political, economic, and sabotage weight. The claim of the Egyptian authorities that they “were forced to ceasefire in October because they found out that they were fighting the US,” is in the best interpretation, a naive statement which reflects the absence of a scientific definition of the enemy camp and that of the friends.

These are major points in the alternative program which our masses demand the Summit conference to wage our battle upon.

Our masses are asking with bitterness and decisiveness, why do we not follow this path? If there are some who say that such a program embroils us in a tough fight with the mighty US imperialist giant and all means of

war and destruction it possesses, our reply here is the Vietnam example and the struggle of the heroic Vietnamese people which has been able, through its determined long war of liberation, to force this giant's face into the mud and force it to withdraw from Vietnam, leaving its puppets in Saigon to face their fateful destiny.

If there is anybody who says that such a program will carry with it death to every Arab family and will force heavy sacrifices on our masses, we reply that this is the law of liberation until now.

Our people in Algeria suffered one million martyrs for their freedom; the great Soviet peoples also paid twenty million martyrs during the Second World War to maintain the revolution; the great Chinese fought over twenty years to attain their aims and objectives. The heroic Vietnamese people have paid, and are still paying daily, group after group of martyrs under the slogan "Nothing is dearer than freedom." To those who claim that this program threatens world peace, we say that the entire Vietnamese war and the fundamental crisis it has created in the backbone of the American imperialist did not lead to a world war because of the nuclear power balance. We do not ask our friends to fight our national war; we only request from them the support they granted to all the nations fighting for their freedom. Finally, we refuse to let this slogan "international peace" be used as a sword over our heads and prevent us from liberating our land and resources.

Our conviction is firm and fundamental that this is the road to a just and durable peace in the region. One day truth will be clear to all, that there is no peace in the region with the existence of a fascist, racist state based on a reactionary doctrine and with the aim of serving the imperialist interests.

The slogan of a democratic society in Palestine raised by the Palestinian revolution is the only road to freedom and progress for the entire people of the region, including the Jews, and is the road to permanent and durable peace.

The "permanent and just peace" advocated by the messenger of imperialism Kissinger is a plan to maintain the "nucleus of instability" in the region.

This is what the PFLP has to say on the eve of the summit conference in Rabat. Are we saying this because of a real possibility that some Arab regimes will reevaluate their past policies and will adopt our patriotic political line? Of course, we wish this to be true from our depths, but the problem is not that of our own wishes. The interests of some of the Arab regimes completely contradict the policy of progressive national

people's war. The inhabitants of palaces who are directly linked with imperialism and who join with it in exploiting the wealth of peoples and the output of the proletariat; these regimes and social forces who are living in an environment of abundance will not take this path, the path of the revolutionary political line. They want to maintain the status quo in order to enjoy a life of corruption and abundance at the expense of millions. These regimes and the reactionary and capitulationist forces condemn our policy and downgrade all who call for it. But this policy remains to be the only policy to serve the interests of millions of our Arab masses and the interest of the greatest majority.

Our wretched and deprived working class living in the "tin" towns surrounding Arab capitals and cities, as well as our poor peasants suffering from misery and unhappiness in the countryside of Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Arabian Peninsula are the ones who are facing the daily toughness of life. They are the ones who continuously feel the degree of class and national oppression they are subject to. They are the ones who want change to come about. They are the ones who know that the gun and the people's national war is the essential means of solving their contradiction with their class and national enemy, represented by Israel, imperialism, and the reactionary and puppet forces.

The patriotic policy which the PFLP puts forward as an alternative to the capitulationist policy, is the policy of the patriotic regimes and forces, the policy of the revolutionary classes of our nation.

Our aim in presenting this policy on the occasion of the Rabat conference intends to uncover the incapability of the capitulationist, puppet and reactionary regimes to adopt this patriotic line on one hand, and to define that political line which our Palestinian and Arab masses want the national and progressive anti-imperialist regimes, represented by Iraq, Algeria, Democratic Yemen, and Libya, to fight for on the other hand.

Our aim, as well, is to enable the masses to distinguish between Arab solidarity based on a patriotic line and "Arab solidarity" based on a capitulationist line. Our Palestinian people in particular have suffered bitterly of so-called "Arab solidarity" – the solidarity of the regimes on a number of occasions throughout its history of national struggle. In the name of "Arab solidarity" they aborted the great strike and our people's armed revolt of 1936. In the name of "Arab solidarity" the armies of the Arab states entered Palestine under the leadership of Prince Abdullah and Glubb Pasha to mislead the Palestinian and Arab masses and to enforce

the plot of the creation of Israel.

Today we declare with our loudest voice that an attempt to enforce a political settlement is being carried out under the banner of the Arab Summit conference and the “Arab solidarity”. The capitulationist forces will present the Kissinger plan to end the state of war with Israel in return for promises – more promises – to withdraw from some Arab territories.

Our masses firmly declare that an end to the state of war with the Zionist usurper enemy is a clear betrayal of our struggle throughout history. It is the task of the national regimes to abort this conspiracy.

The Palestinian and Arab masses demand from the representatives of Iraq, Algeria, Democratic Yemen, and Libya to counter this capitulationist position and to struggle for an Arab solidarity based on a people’s war of long duration. Not a tactical war and neither secret diplomatic maneuvers that aim to make the national regimes an umbrella for capitulation and political settlement.

The US policy aims, through a settlement for the “Arab-Israeli” conflict, to carry out an overall plan for the whole Arab region. This plan aims at strengthening the reactionary regimes; second, it will strike the Arab gun in Palestine, Oman, and Eritrea. Only after this, US imperialism can be confident of the method to control Arab oil, production, prices etc., as well as the future of Arab capital so as to deny our masses from exploiting this important basic fortune to utilize it in its fight against poverty, diseases, misery, hunger, etc.

This is the overall American plan, which US imperialism hopes to get through what it calls the “Arab-Israeli” conflict. Thus, all forces should bear clear responsibility before the masses at this crucial period of the Arab struggle.

This is on the Arab level. On the Palestinian level, the PFLP struggled since the October war to push the PLO leadership to condemn all policies of settlement, which lead to the present results. The PFLP also demanded that the PLO leadership presents the alternative political line, that of continuing the fight, the line of people’s liberation war, depending on its heroes, fighters, and masses, the national and progressive regimes, the masses of our Arab people who long to fight and condemn all liquidationist policies. We wanted the PLO to be a vanguard in the true sense to the Arab mass movement, not from its size and traditional military capabilities, but through a revolutionary political line, which will mobilize the millions of our masses, rallying around it all national and progressive forces on the Arab level. But the PLO leadership followed the same political line lead by Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

In light of the dangerous results that the capitulationist political line will lead to, the PFLP withdrew from the Executive Committee, because it cannot shoulder the responsibility of a dangerous position it does not believe in. We are not convinced of all the excuses that were given, but we remain within the PLO represented in the National Council, so that we will fight with the bases, cadres, and the revolutionary Palestinian forces to correct the line of the leadership in order to keep the Palestinian revolution, a revolutionary vanguard for the oppressed, deprived, and wretched of our Arab nation.

The aim of our struggle on the Palestinian level is to stop the PLO leadership from deviating and entering the Geneva swamp – the swamp of capitulationist settlement.

We call on our comrade fighters, on all the militant bases of the revolution, and on the masses to stand in one line facing of the deviationist leadership and to stop it from continuing that path.

We call on the comrade fighters, the militant bases, and the masses to build national unity – a unity of bases and masses – that will pull the carpet from under the feet of the capitulationist leadership.

The PLO, for some time now, has been waging a series of battles regarding its representation of the Palestinian people, presenting the problem to the US and others. The same issues and battles will probably come up at the Rabat Summit. Waging these battles under a political line subservient to the Arab capitulationist policy, represented in Saudi Arabi and Egypt in the first place, raises some questions regarding the value of these battles.

The PFLP believes that the aim of these battles and their development in a certain way is a cover-up to the historical political deviation reached now.

The PFLP has a strong conviction that the political line it represents expresses the interests of the Palestinian and Arab masses. The PFLP will continue to struggle for the victory of this line with all its power and capabilities.

We will continue to struggle for the unity of the Palestinian revolution on the basis of a political line that rejects the betraying settlements and is determined on the continuation of the revolution.

We will struggle to keep the Palestinian revolution a vanguard of the mass movement, not a puppet to the regimes.

We struggle to liberate the Palestinian land through the continued military and political struggle – not through the diplomacy of Kissinger and the Geneva conference.

We struggle to bring down the mercenary regime in Jordan in the East Bank, not stopping with forbidding it to return to the West Bank.

Let the Zionist enemy, who occupies our land, know that we do not forget for a minute that our struggle to strengthen the Palestinian revolution is to inflict severe and strong blows against Zionism until all its dreams of staying on our land are shattered.

**Long live the Palestinian people's struggle for the liberation of the entire national soil!**

**Long live our Arab people's struggle to build the unified socialist society!**

**Long live the people's struggle against imperialism, for freedom, peace and progress!**

## **Resist the settlement, escalate the struggle (1975)**

*The following are excerpts of two interviews with George Habash, originally published in Al-Dastour on 20 January and Le Monde on 6 February 1975. The excerpts were translated to English and published in PFLP Bulletin 15, January-February 1975.*

**Question: Some criticize the PFLP for having withdrawn hastily from the PLO Executive Committee. What is your opinion about this and why?**

George Habash: There was no haste, maybe we should even consider that there was some delay. To specify the date and reasons of our withdrawal, we should go back to the events that preceded our withdrawal.

After the October War, it became urgent to take a clear stand on the question of the proposed settlement. We took a decisive position on this question, but the leadership of the PLO took a “no position” stand and showed signs of readiness to bargain. They justified this by saying such tactics were necessary in order to preserve our international friendship and avoid a clash with Syria and Egypt. Despite the gravity of this position and what it might cause on the mass level, we preferred to wait, in order to preserve the national unity of the resistance movement.

Then the twelfth session of the Palestinian National Council was held, and it was an ideal opportunity for the PLO to take a clear stand as to the settlement. But they proceeded with their maneuvers instead in order to justify their “no position”. Then, these so-called tactics were exposed as tactics for the acceptance of the settlement. This applied in particular to the provision that the Geneva conference is to be rejected as long as it is convened on the basis of Security Council resolution 242, which treats the cause of our people as a question of refugees. The “refusal” to reject the settlement contained the implicit acceptance of the Geneva conference and resolution 242, provided only one point was altered, that is, the provision dealing with “the problem of the refugees,” but not the other provisions that call for “recognition of Israel ensuring its security and borders and ending the state of war.”

In fact, we had to dissociate ourselves from this defeatist stand, that includes the implicit readiness of the PLO leadership to negotiate with the enemy and recognize them through participation in the liquidationist Geneva conference, provided one of the provisions of resolution 242 is altered.



And yet, we preferred to wait. But our hopes were shattered totally when the PLO leadership began to have contact with the US. It was no longer a question of tactics or avoiding a clash with Syria and Egypt. Instead, it became clear that the PLO leadership was seeking to take part in the settlement. Its so-called “tactics” are detrimental to the masses.

There was no room for illusions anymore. We had no alternative but to depart from this road, and so we withdrew from the leadership of the PLO and referred the issue in all its dimensions to the Palestinian and Arab masses, and particularly to the bases and cadres of the resistance movement.

### **Are there attempts to bring back the Front to the Executive Committee?**

There were two attempts for dialogue, one immediately after our withdrawal, and the second a short while ago. But in both cases, the leadership of the PLO raised the question of dialogue in isolation from the basic question, which is the acceptance or the rejection of the settlement.

This dialogue was void of any revolutionary seriousness. It represented an attempt from the defeatist forces to slow the masses and cadres who are uncovering them.

We say it clearly:

Let the PLO leadership halt its gradual fall into participation in the settlement. Let it halt its mission to the Arab reactionary and capitulationist regimes. Let it stop its secret and overt contacts with the imperialist enemy and ask for explanations for these contacts. Let it explain the contacts with Israeli representatives in Austria and Czechoslovakia. Let it take a nationalist, revolutionary position that rejects the liquidationist settlement, and instead relies on the masses and revolutionary forces. Then they will find us, without mediation, under the banner of this nationalist revolutionary position. But if the PLO leadership continues in this current capitulationist course, we shall not only be outsiders, but also against it. This is our stand, and any other talk about mediation is only intended to mislead the masses.

### **How does the PFLP see the tasks of the Palestinian resistance at this stage?**

The principal task of the Palestinian national movement in the present and future stages are the resistance of the settlement and the escalation

of the struggle.

These can be divided in the following specific tasks:

1) Building up the revolutionary organization within the occupied lands, and escalating the popular and military struggle against the usurping Zionist enemy.

2) Escalating the political struggle to oppose the settlement on the Palestinian and Arab levels; opposing the settlement in our view is exactly the same as opposing the imperialist alliances, such as the Bagdad pact.<sup>3</sup>

3) Building up a Palestinian-Jordanian national front, to escalate the struggle for overthrowing the mercenary regime in Jordan, and setting up a national democratic regime that will serve as a base for the continuation and development of the revolution.

4) Deepening the relations between the resistance movement and the Arab masses and revolutionary forces, in order to oppose the capitulationist policies of the Arab reactionary and defeatist regimes; in other words, building up a Palestinian Arab rejection front.

5) Strengthening the bonds of the alliance with all revolutionary forces of the world. These are the socialist countries, the national liberation movements, and the working class and democratic forces in the capitalist countries.

### **What about the military line after the PFLP operation in Tel Aviv?**

Every revolutionary group that undertakes armed struggle should stop every now and then to study and reevaluate its military methods. The formulation of military strategy is as necessary and important as the formation of political strategy. As for us, we have used a variety of military methods in fighting the Israel enemy. From within the occupied lands, we used the methods of urban guerrillas, and the methods of mobile mountain guerrilla units. From the exterior, we used the methods of infiltrating patrols, border clashes, and special suicide missions.

The time came to study and evaluate all these methods in the light of the objective circumstances, the nature of the conflict, and the balance of forces. There is no doubt that this halt, implicating the choice of new methods or the development of old ones, and then preparing for new action has taken some time, perhaps longer than what was expected. But we can

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3 The Bagdad Pact: also known as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) or Middle East Treaty Organisation (METO) was a military alliance between Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. It was established in 1955 as part of the Cold War, and dissolved in 1979.

say now that we stand at the threshold of a new phase of armed struggle, or new military methods that were developed during this comprehensive and profound critical study.

**Do you believe that foreign operations tactically serve the Palestinian cause?**

Foreign operations are the natural result of the collision of two opposing forces outside the soil of the homeland. The first force is our Palestinian people, who were driven out of their homeland and dispersed throughout the world. The second force are the Zionist interests, which are the direct enemy and the principal beneficiary from the displacement of our people. There are two forces outside the homeland, which can be described as the criminal and the victim, and they are contradictory by their very nature. It is the duty of the revolutionary movement to make plans for this collision and use it to serve the cause of the revolution.

We have used a variety of methods in the past. Some of them have served their purpose, others are still suitable for our revolution and our cause.

An example is the attempt to sink the Israeli oil tanker Coral Sea in the Red Sea. There remains a very important point in this connection. It is to emphasize that our military action abroad is auxiliary, compared to our military action inside the occupied lands. The latter forms the principal and basic means of our revolutionary struggle.

**The PLO believes that if it can get back a part of Palestine, this will be the first step towards a united and democratic Palestine. What is your opinion on this?**

In principle, I am not against a “step-by-step” approach that can make our cause progress. But the actual circumstances will not allow any progress. The international and regional balance of powers is unfavorable. Any negotiation will only lead to a recognition, whether implicit or explicit, of the state of Israel whose borders will be guaranteed by Arab and foreign countries.

**Would you prefer to see the West Bank and Gaza restituted to King Hussein?**

This is a false dilemma which Arafat is trying to face us with. The real choice is not between the PLO or King Hussein. It is between capitulation and armed struggle. Our duty is to mobilize the masses and aim them so that they can recover their country inch by inch. Such an objective is not easy to reach. But why should we be less patient or less willing to fight than the Vietnamese people? We would rather fight ten more years or even twenty instead of adopting such a pétainist logic.

## **The youth will build the future (1979)**

*The following are excerpts of a speech George Habash delivered at the fourth annual summer camp of the Palestinian Youth Organization in Lebanon. It was originally printed in PFLP Bulletin #31, October 1979. Printed above the interview were the following two main points: "You have a major role in forming the national, regional and world future," and, "Our battle in Palestine cannot be separated from the international struggle."*

Comrades,

It pleases me very much to be with you today and to have the opportunity to speak with you. I wanted very much to come to you. Some duties are performed as duties and some duties are done with willingness and pride. I do not feel my presence among you today only as a duty assigned to me with which I must comply. Rather I feel a real wish to be with you and hope to be with you in the future for days and not only hours.

What makes this duty a pleasurable one is a feeling that I am speaking to a group of male and female youths who are going to have a major role in forming the future. This feeling is based on fact. Naturally, youth are flowing with fitness and creativity. I could see this in your athletics and other activities. This could be the reason behind my feeling. But ideologically I believe that the main reason behind my willingness to come is my feeling that I am talking to a group of comrades that are going to build the future – the future of the homeland, the future of the masses, that of the region and of the world.

Some of you will ask: Will we build the future of the world, the region, and of Palestine? And the answer is yes. The scientific answer is yes.

The human being is a huge energy, intellectual energy, willingness, work ability, capacity for action, a real active element to engineer the future. And you are those who will build the future. You are those who will decide what kind of future you want for yourselves, for your people, your cause, and your land, for the region and for the world.

To participate in creating the future, you must decide the goal of your life. After that you must think clearly about the means and the weapons that can enable you to achieve that goal. However, the will to use these weapons depends on having a clearly defined aim. Did each of you ask yourself: What is my aim in this life?

In today's world, the world in general, there is a championship

wrestling match being fought. There is a struggle on the international level. Did you read the daily newspaper? Remember some of the headlines:

- “The Iranian masses dismiss the Shah.”
- “Our masses in the occupied land confront the Camp David plot.”
- “Student demonstrations in Sudan”, etc.

Listen to any news media and you find yourselves facing struggle – on the Palestinian soil, the Arab soil, in the region, in the world. What is this struggle? What is its essence?

It is a struggle between the forces of enslavement and the forces of freedom. Between the minority of exploiters and the masses.

Between classes, the imperialist class, which owns the means of production and the oppressed workers who produce the goods that sustain the world and are deprived of using them.

Our aim in life, the aim of each one of you, is to take a role in this battle.

Do you want to be spectators at this championship wrestling match? The battle is the battle of all humanity, the battle of all the masses – the battle between freedom and oppression.

Our battle in Palestine cannot be separated from this championship match, from the ongoing global struggle. What kind of battle is going on in Palestine now? Colonialist groups came to Palestine, not to live in peace, not to assimilate with the Palestinian people, but to capture the land and its resources and to expel mothers and fathers from their land with an eye towards controlling the resources in the Arab region.

This is the fact of the struggle that is going on in Palestine. This fascist enemy force, captured by Zionist-racist convictions is faced by oppressed people with democratic convictions, people saying, “This is my land. Welcome to you if you want to live with us as brothers, but we reject expulsion from our homes and our land; we reject oppression. No to the Zionist-racist state in Palestine. Yes to a democratic Palestine where all without exception can live in peace.”

This is the battle that is going on in Palestine and it is part of the battle being fought on the world level. Do you want to be a spectator at this battle? Or to identify that our aim in life is to participate effectively in this battle, to take our roles in this battle.

The aim of this life is to participate in the struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor to establish a new order on the Palestinian soil, on the Arab soil, on the whole globe. A world that is different from the world in which you are living in this era of history.

Nobody can promise you a world without problems; but the world that you are able to build in the future can be emancipated scientifically from many of the oppressions which you are witnessing today. Your life will have a meaning when you take a role in this battle.

Is it enough that each one of you understand what has been said and does not want to remain a spectator, but wants to participate in this battle on the side of oppressed masses against the oppressors? Is it enough that each one takes this decision to be an active participant in forming the future?

The answer is that this decision is the first step to be taken; but after that, it is necessary to prepare yourselves to possess the weapons to use in realizing this aim. I hope that the Palestinian Youth Organization will be the framework that serves you in attaining these weapons, in holding them firmly and in starting to use them in this battle until the progressive forces achieve victory.

### **Many weapons**

What are the most important weapons to possess to enable each one of you to be a strong active force participating in the movement of history? Be confident that you are able to do very much in the future, to create the future of your people, your homeland, to actually and scientifically decide the future.

There are many weapons; I will emphasize two major ones and I trust in my responsible comrades in the Youth Organization to make it a framework to enable you to possess the struggle weapons to participate in the future.

The first weapon is the educational one, getting education and educating. The second weapon that I want to emphasize is the organizational weapon. Possess these two great weapons.

Naturally, each of these points needs an explanation. What do I mean with the educational weapon? What to learn? Everything? What should we learn?

Education is beneficial in all fields without exception. But the education which we need to possess in order to participate in building the future, is the education of the revolution, the revolution as science. You will ask, "is the revolution science?" Yes, the revolution is a science as much as physics and chemistry are, because there are principles and laws. As there are principles and laws for light, sound, electricity, etc., there are laws for the movement of history. How does this movement proceed?

What are the laws that govern this movement? How will the masses be able to determine the future of society?

This is a science and whoever wants to participate in forming the future should start by preparing him or herself to possess this science. This science is demanded from all of you. This science can complement engineering, chemistry, physics or medicine or any science you want to specialize in, but the common science that all of you must possess in order to participate in forming the future is the science of revolution.

This science reveals to you why oppression exists in this world. Is oppression the result of evil in human nature, that some want to oppress and exploit others? Is this battle on the world level rooted in the existence of an invisible evil force that motivates this battle? Or is there another thing and other reasons behind the oppression existing on the Palestinian, Arab, and global levels? What is this thing? What are the other reasons?

If you possess the answers, you will feel that you understand the laws that motivate the movement of history. Then you will be able to participate in forcing the movement of history in a specific direction. This is the first task of the Youth Organization: to submit before you simply and clearly the picture of the struggle on the world level. How our oppression and problems are part of this battle, to identify the contending forces clearly, to define our position in the revolutionary camp, to identify the weapons we possess to achieve victory against the enemy camp.

The other weapon is the organization - what can any of you do individually? If you want to participate in forming history, your path is to be a part of an organized party. Unless you choose this path, you will, whether consciously or unconsciously, slip onto the other path, the imperialist road, the road of self-centered thinking, of self-interest, and you will be in the enemy camp in this battle.

If one of you has thought of being a doctor or an engineer, the first in the class, it is possible to achieve a certificate with an excellent grade average, to get a big scholarship and come back to your country. You will have a reputation and money, but isolated from allying yourself with the goals of the masses. Whether willfully or not, you will find yourself automatically on the road of Prince Fahd, the Shah of Iran, the Somoza class.

Today there is petroleum wealth in the region and there are many dollars. An engineer, for example, can gradually find him or herself possessing a little surplus. Why not invest it in a small project? Then associations, a little bigger project, bigger and bigger. Such a person will become part of the class that is allied with the ruling minority against



which the masses revolt and one day smash everything from under their feet.

The value of the Youth Organization is to play a role on the organizational level in the mobilization of the Palestinian youth, enlightening them about the importance of organization, the importance of solidarity, cooperation, and friendship.

Comrades,

I believe strongly in the significance of the Palestinian Youth Organization if you want a major role in forming the revolution's future, the future of our Palestinian masses, the future of Palestine, the region, and the world.

For the tens, hundreds, and thousands of Palestinian youths, full of qualifications and creativity, the Youth Organization will be the leadership for the male and female comrades to advance their energies and capabilities, to identify their position in the struggle, to give the weapons with which to start challenging the enemies' forces.

Imagine the results of this operation:

The results are one hundred percent for the masses' victory, as the laws of history reveal. You are participants in the achievement of the masses' victory.

Ask yourselves what are the aims and goals of our lives? Some of you may ask philosophically, "Why am I existing on this earth?"

My answer is that you are existing willingly and unwillingly; your existence became a fact, and it became your duty to ask the following question: How do I understand my life? What is my aim with this life? Identify your aims, define your position regarding the present battle on the Palestinian, Arab, and international levels, possess the primary weapons, the educational weapon, the science of revolution and the organizational science through the Youth Organization and afterwards other organizational forms. The Youth Organization will be a prerequisite to this. In this way, you will begin in forming the future.

I have great hope that you, the leadership of the Youth Organization, will present for the Palestinian revolution and the Palestinian masses an organization based on comradely democratic relations, a real closeness with the masses and a real willingness to be in their service.

Be ambitious to build such an organization with your own hands, present it to your people, your cause, to the prisoners among your people, for your martyrs, to history as an active tool to create the human being who follows a clearly defined aim and knows the road to reach it, possessing a great will to struggle and the daily struggle experience until

reaching this aim.

After clarifying the strategic path lying before the youth organization, it is important to face the tasks of today.

We have a very sacred task. This is to protect the Palestinian revolution at this critical moment. There is an organized program to liquidate the Palestinian revolution completely. There are continuous official political declarations from the enemy during the past months stating that they want to end the Palestinian revolution. Possibly you can tell me who told you that?

A scientific political analysis of the events in the region told me that. This analysis indicates that imperialism is seeking complete control over the region and its resources, especially the petroleum. Imperialism needs these resources for its sustenance and knows very well that there is an obstacle to its control. This obstacle is the Palestinian gun, and it should be liquidated. In addition, we see the daily air attacks on the South and Lebanon as a whole. Do you need more proof to be sure that this year, 1979, in particular, and 1980 will witness a campaign to liquidate the Palestinian resistance on Lebanese soil? Thus, our task is how to foil the enemy.

Continue building the Youth Organization, which I hope will become stronger in the coming year. I hope that by 1985 it will be a revolutionary framework to mobilize all the Palestinian youths. Continue this task, but now we should protect the Palestinian revolution and its gun in Lebanon.

How to foil this plot? What are the programs we should struggle for in order to prevent the liquidation of the Palestinian revolution? What are the weapons we possess?

Please allow me to start with the moral weapons before the material ones. When you study the science of revolution, you will learn about an important weapon, in fact, the major weapon in the hands of the oppressed masses. This is the belief in the justice of the cause and determination to defend that cause regardless of the sacrifices. Do not allow the enemy propaganda and psychological warfare to deprive you of this weapon. This weapon should be in your possession along with the belief in victory.

Comrades, after the Vietnam experience, this talk has become fact.

## **The experience of Vietnam**

Although the Vietnam experience is well known, we will continue allowing ourselves to speak about it daily. Why? Because, in brief, in the experience of Vietnam we see a small nation of about forty million people,

lacking atomic weapons, heavy weapon production and the material base of the industrial countries. And we see US imperialism, leader of the imperialist system, with all its material, military and economic power and directing its forces and destructive tools against the Vietnamese people, but the Vietnamese people were victorious.

### **How did that happen?**

This is an important point because when we know how Vietnam happened, then we need not fear what is happening in the South. We will precisely know that in spite of the difficulties we have faced and are going to face, we can only be victorious. This will not be an emotional feeling you have in your chest for five minutes, but a fact you believe because you see it as we see the sun right now.

The major weapon of the Vietnamese is a moral weapon. Their belief in their just cause, and their determination to live in freedom and to continue the struggle no matter the consequences.

We must not forget for one day the Vietnamese leader Giap's statement when US imperialism escalated its war against Vietnam, employing the most advanced weapons in a wipeout operation. During these continuous attacks, imagine that Giap said calmly, "You America are able to destroy Hanoi, the capital, and Haiphong, you can leave no stone unturned in our country, but there is one thing that you will never be able to destroy – our will to struggle."

The enemy can end this will to struggle in one way only: by liquidating all the Palestinian people without exception. Through political mobilization of the youth and of all the masses through the revolutionary organizations, we can reach the level that the human being will say: There is no boundary between me and the cause. If we reach this level, we are assured of the revolution's future. We have a deep need now for this moral weapon. Do not allow the enemy to destroy your morale and that of your people.

We are now hearing a tone saying to the world, "what is the revolution?"

"Israel," Saad Haddad, daily air strikes, Sadat's treacherous position and the official Arab position in doing nothing. And afterwhile we hear a hopeless tone saying, "This is pure stubbornness. We are getting nowhere." You might hear some of these whispers on the mass level and this explains why some leave for Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, West Germany, etc.

This is the most dangerous weapon in the hands of the enemy, the one which breaks our will to struggle.

### **The Palestinian revolution will remain**

Comrades,

There are setbacks in the Palestinian revolution, but do not forget for one moment that the revolution is staying now, and it is the major obstacle confronting imperialism in the region, in spite of the continuous conspiracies which the revolution has been facing in Lebanon since April 1975.

Does not the survival of the revolution until this moment mean that the revolutionary process has the ability to persist? Do you think that if the imperialist, Zionist, and reactionary forces in Lebanon had been able to liquidate you and your revolution in April 1975, that they would have delayed it for one day? No!

We are staying here. And in spite of the situation, we have our youth camp, and our comrades are carrying arms in the South. We are staying in spite of four continuous years of conspiracies to wipe out our revolution. We are here because we possess the means of survival and if we understand how to deepen and strengthen these means, we will withstand this battle and be victorious.

How many times have the weak in spirit and the counterforces believed that the revolution ended? Remember the wave of such speculations after the September events in Jordan in 1970 and after Jerash and Ajlun in 1971. More than once the enemy attempted to plant pessimism in our minds. They told us that with this wide gap in the balance of power, "Israel", Zionism, a half million troops equipped with destructive tools, Phantom-15's and - 16's, cluster bombs, the fascist militia, what could we do? We shall do much. First, we will withstand. And second, we will achieve victory.

### **The weapons that enable us to withstand**

First, we have in our hands the moral weapon. The moral weapon to take our political decision with knowledge and deep responsibility, to know what this decision means and to be faithful to it as well as the necessity of implementing it. A decision saying that it is necessary to defend the revolution no matter the sacrifices. Transmit this decision to half a million in Lebanon, to every house, every tent, to every youth, to

every woman, to every old man, until this decision becomes a common one, fully comprehended. Put this decision to a test, whether to surrender or to be faithful to the martyrs' blood, to our prisoners, to our people and their historical struggle. Put it to a test through political mobilization to raise the people's consciousness. Transmit this political decision to the Palestinian masses, then to the Lebanese masses and after that we will be victorious in Lebanon in spite of the big gap in the balance of forces. Our major weapon is the moral weapon and the belief that we will be victorious.

Our second weapon is our political decision to liquidate oppression, racism, and fascism from all of Palestine, from the Arab region and from the world. In the long run, this will occur one hundred percent and you will one day celebrate the end of all the imperialists and reactionaries on the Arab land.

Our third weapon is Palestinian national unity.

Some of you might ask: Do you in the PFLP agree with the Palestinian-American dialogue? The European initiative? With resolution 242 or some amendment to this resolution, based on a settlement with "Israel" and Zionism?

The answer is that we are calling for a boycott of US imperialism, diplomatically, politically, and economically, and we reject and condemn any dialogue. We reject resolution 242, whether amended or not, as we reject any resolution that recognizes the existence of Zionist "Israel" on the Palestinian land.

How do we explain the sharp differences with other Palestinian resistance organizations regarding the dialogue with the US, regarding the settlement and the form of settlement, the issue on the position of Arab reaction, such as Saudi Arabia's position, and the fact that the PFLP sees it necessary for the Palestinian revolution to be a sword on the minimum level against the reactionary forces in the region? How can we combine all those issues and call in good faith for Palestinian national unity?

It is true that we differ on a number of issues, but we agree on two major things: First, to reject Camp David. Second, to defend our existence in Lebanon.

What are the major battles facing the Palestinian revolution materially at this moment? Camp David, the "autonomy" plan, and the battle in Lebanon. Let us unite in these battles and continue to discuss our political differences concerning the other issues.

Our fourth weapon is to develop our armed struggle, raising its quality.

Each of you should participate in a certain task defending the

revolution. It is the duty of the leadership and the organizations to present to the masses the political picture which can rally the masses around the cause and insure that each one find his or her position in the revolution.

### **Our tasks towards the Lebanese National Movement**

We cannot separate our battle and the protection of the Palestinian gun in Lebanon from the Lebanese masses and patriotic movement. Nor can we be a substitute for them. But through political dialogue with the Lebanese National Movement, we will participate and support it to assume the leadership of the battle in Lebanon; because we will win this battle on one condition only – if we are able to mobilize the masses in Akar, Tripoli, El-Mena, El Petrone, Beirut, Saïda, and Sour and this is the task of the LNM.

We are present in the Lebanese arena, and we have duties towards the LNM and the Lebanese masses. After that, we should shout loudly to confront the Arab regimes and progressive movements with their responsibilities towards the South. A long time has passed in the battle of the South and the Arab regimes have not carried a simple responsibility towards the masses regarding their call to enable them to remain steadfast. It is about time, and it is the right of the revolutionary forces to say to the Arab masses the facts about the Arab regimes.

It is necessary that our masses in each region of the Arab world know how their rulers possess billions of dollars, not less, yet they are stingy towards the masses of the South, not paying the cost of meeting the needs of the LNM. At a press conference two weeks ago in Saïda, the patriotic movement stated that they need a hospital, three hundred water wells, and fifty clinics and calculated the expense to be between forty and fifty million liras. Let us say three hundred million Lebanese liras at most to meet the needs. This means one hundred million dollars. Do you know that one hundred million dollars means half of Saudi Arabia's income for just one day?

Saudi Arabia produces 9.5 million barrels of oil daily. The price of each barrel is \$18. The total daily income approaches 180 million dollars. If Saudi Arabia wanted to give, the regime would only be relinquishing roughly twelve hours of income. It is necessary to let all the Arab masses feel the extent of oppression and then be prepared to put the head of the traitors in the mud; then the masses will achieve victory. Then tens of millions, and more, will be in the hands of the masses in the South from the Arab dollars, which belong to the Arab masses and the Arab nation.

We are going on this road, and we will be victorious. When we think

about the coming month, the coming years, the situation that we will face, I do not try to hide from you that we will feel this heavy task and feel the big difference in the balance of power. But I have a long vision, five to ten years forward. Let us work together in light of the strategic lines which I spoke about, as a Youth Organization, then you will have one result. This result is that your songs, your chants, your art, your expressions, which I saw today, your ambitions and your aims will become a reality.

## **Formation and development of the PFLP (1979)**

*George Habash gave the following interview to the PFLP Bulletin in early November, on the occasion of the forthcoming twelfth anniversary of the PFLP. It was originally published in PFLP Bulletin #33, December 1979.*

### **Bulletin: Why and how was the PFLP formed from the Arab Nationalist Movement?**

George Habash: In reality, the answer to this question is to be sought in the June 1967 defeat of the Arab regimes. The military defeat of the United Arab Republic, then under the leadership of Nasser, in the Six Day War came as a shock to the Arab Nationalist Movement and its analyses. Consequently, it was necessary to analyze and explain this event in order to extract its lessons. Through such re-examination of our past views and positions, we found ourselves in transition from the ideological, political, organizational, and military stands held by the ANM before the 1967 war, to new ideological, political, organizational, and military stands in its aftermath.

Prior to the June war, the ANM was closely allied with Nasserism. It is true that there were minor contradictions; we had our own independent political, military, and organizational views and were not in absolute conformity with Nasserism. Yet, we did not represent a radically different position. On the basis of our adherence to Nasserism, we had our own conception of the Arab revolution, its aims, and the methods for realizing these aims, including our view regarding the process of the liberation of Palestine.

However, in the aftermath of the June defeat, we became convinced that the program of Nasserism had failed, that it was not capable of achieving the aims of the Arab revolution: unity, freedom, socialism, and the liberation of Palestine. Moreover, we came to believe that the Nasserite trend and the programs emanating from it had become incapable of keeping pace with the path of the Arab revolution and that only a new stage and a new class leadership with new political programs would be capable of achieving all of the aims of the Arab revolution and the liberation of Palestine.

This is in general. As to the Palestinian arena specifically, prior to the 1967 defeat, the Palestinian branch of the ANM was preparing for armed struggle in Palestine. Thus, it began training its members and



sending patrols to occupied Palestine with the aim of reconnaissance, organizing and storing weapons. Some of our comrades were martyred during this preparatory stage. Comrade Khalid Abu Aisheh was our first martyr in 1964. In spite of this, however, we cannot consider ourselves as having really begun the continuous armed Palestinian revolution against the Zionist existence in Palestine at this point. Our conviction during that period was that the transition from the preparatory stage to that of continuous and persistent armed revolution demanded coordination with the United Arab Republic. In this way, the revolution was to begin at a time when the UAR was capable of facing the Israeli reaction on the one hand, and capable of welding with the Palestinian revolution on the other hand, so that it could directly participate militarily in the battle to liberate Palestine.

The June 1967 defeat crystallized new conceptions regarding the liberation of Palestine. Our new views were radically different. We now considered the Palestinian people as the basis and the catalyst of the liberation process. The practice of armed Palestinian revolution, and not its mere preparation, became the objective force capable of developing the conditions of the Arab National Liberation Movement to a level, whereby it can confront imperialism, Zionism and reaction.

On the military level, our views changed also. We now base them on the principles of protracted people's war – the Palestinian people's liberation war that with due time transforms into the Palestinian and Arab peoples' war, as is partially the case today in Lebanon. We realized that only through such a war can victory be guaranteed. The conventional wars waged by the Arab countries against the Zionist entity are doomed to defeat, even if some of these Arab countries have patriotic regimes, the reason being the superior technological level of the imperialist-Zionist camp.

In addition, we developed the view that in the struggle against imperialism, there exists a strategic alliance between the Palestinian revolution and all forces of world revolution, primarily the socialist countries.

This new outlook stipulated that the Palestinian revolution must be a protracted people's war, mobilizing all the Palestinian masses in a United National Front led by the revolutionary working class party. It further stipulated that the Palestinian revolution was interlinked with the Arab proletarian revolution and allied with the forces of world revolution. Such a new strategy required a new political organization. This briefly reviews the reasons for the formation of the PFLP.

Another important point to be clarified here is how the PFLP was formed. Upon its establishment on December 11, 1967, the PFLP included not only the Palestinian branch of the ANM, but rather all the Palestinian organizations adopting armed struggle with the exception of Fatah. Any review of the eight existing organizations in the Palestinian arena will clarify this point, in the sense that most of these organizations did not exist at the inception of the PFLP.

After the 1967 defeat, the Palestinian branch of the ANM worked towards establishing a broad front including all the Palestinians armed factions existing at that time. For this purpose, it initiated dialogue and discussion among all these factions without exception in Damascus. However, Fatah did not follow up on the Damascus meetings, preferring to remain on its own, outside the framework of the Front. Thus, the Popular Front was formed, including in its framework all the armed factions with the exception of Fatah.

What explains the close link between the PFLP and the Palestinian branch of the ANM and consequently, the ANM as such, from the masses' point of view as well as from the point of view of many forces, is the fact that the Palestinian branch of the ANM formed the basic organization and was the one to take the initiative in the formation of such a front.

**How do you explain the transformation of many factions within the ANM, such as the Communist Action Organization in Lebanon, the National Front in Yemen, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO) and the PFLP into Marxist-Leninist organizations?**

The ANM was formed as a result of what we usually termed the catastrophe of the Arabs in 1948. Its formation was an attempt to overcome the defeat at the hands of the Zionists. In this context, the ANM was established and raised four slogans:

- Arab unity.
- The liberation of the Arab nation from colonialism and imperialism.
- The defeat of Zionism and its political entity – the state of “Israel”.
- The liberation of Palestine with the aim of returning it to the Arab nation.

At that time, our view of the method to realize these aims was based on the mobilization of the masses through the political organization of the

Movement. The ANM stressed solid discipline and revolutionary practice, demanding of the members that exert all their efforts and time to serve the general aim and to be among the masses, serving them. Generally speaking, the ANM also affirmed the importance of revolutionary violence as a way to achieve its aims.

This are in brief the principles of the ANM upon which we started to form branches in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait (all formed before 1955) and later in Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Bahrain, North and South Yemen. In our program, we planned to form branches in every part of the Arab world without exception.

Through the experience acquired in the process of struggle, through our practice and through the dialogue going on between us and other political forces, we discovered that these concepts of the ANM were for the first, incomplete, second, that some of them were vague, idealistic, and unscientific, and third, that some aspects of these concepts were wrong. I can give some examples that indicate the conceptions of the ANM and how they changed.

The clearest example is how the ANM viewed the question of class struggle at its inception. At that time, we had no position as to the role of each class in achieving the aims of the Arab revolution or in realizing the slogans of the Movement. We used the term “masses” and emphasized their role. However, by this we meant all classes, with the exception of traitors and collaborators. In fact, we rejected the principle of class struggle. We believed that all classes in the Arab countries could be mobilized in the overall national struggle, contributing to its interests and strength.

This view reflected itself on our organizational structure. We assigned no importance to the class background of the members. On the contrary, when students and intellectuals from big bourgeois families joined our ranks, we regarded this as a sign confirming our view that all classes without exception were patriotic and have an interest in the overall Arab struggle for unity and liberation.

However, concrete events, objective conditions and practical experience forced us to re-evaluate the question of class struggle. Through the process of struggle, we changed our view and came to believe that our national battle was not isolated from the class struggle objectively going on, regardless of whether we acknowledged it or not. What really crystallized our new outlook was the position of the Syrian bourgeoisie in the time of the Syrian and Egyptian merger in the United Arab Republic. Due to its opposition to the nationalizations, the agrarian and other social

reforms initiated by the Nasser regime, the Syrian bourgeoisie sabotaged this unity, fomenting a coup that led to Syrian withdrawal from the UAR. The ANM took a position against this step, regarding it as a move in line with the bourgeoisie's class interests and against the overall Arab national interests. After this event, it was impossible to ignore the class struggle and the role of each class in the national struggle. We realized that the class alliance capable of achieving our aims is that of workers, peasants, petit bourgeoisie, and some sectors of the national bourgeoisie, whose interests are harmed by the enemy alliance. It had become clear that the big Arab bourgeoisie was closely linked to imperialism and Zionism.

Moreover, the 1967 defeat added a new aspect to our developing class concept. It became clear that this patriotic class alliance must necessarily be led by the party of the working class. Vanguard leadership of this alliance is required to ensure its mobilization to wage a persistent battle against imperialism, Zionism and the non-patriotic big Arab bourgeoisie and the reactionary Arab forces.

It is important to point out here that one of the major reasons for the formation of the PFLP was the class perspective we gave the Palestinian and Arab struggle. Through experience, we learned that the most oppressed classes – the workers, peasants, sections of the petit bourgeoisie, and the Palestinians living in the refugee camps – are the ones most in contradiction with the imperialist, Zionist, reactionary alliance. It is they who carve history with determination that can persevere in this protracted war without wavering. In 1936 in Palestine, the masses waged a six month general strike, probably one of the longest in history. They spread into the rural areas and waged armed struggle. But the revolt against the British and Zionist plans failed, one of the main reasons being the vacillation of the feudal and bourgeois leadership.

Practice and the reevaluation of the experience in the context of ever-changing objective conditions face us with new theoretical hypotheses. These hypotheses accumulated into a new set of concepts. These new interrelated concepts in their totality constituted a Marxist-Leninist line of thought. We had enough theoretical courage to acknowledge that. Our experience and struggle paved the way for us to adopt Marxism-Leninism.

### **The ANM and the national question**

The change in the view of the ANM was not limited to the issue of the class struggle, although this remains the most significant. Also our perspective on the national question changed.

Through experience, we discovered that our view of the relation between the struggle in each Arab country and the overall Arab national struggle was vague, idealistic, and inaccurate. We demanded that our branches in the different Arab countries struggle for Arab unity and the general aims of Arab liberation and revolution. Consequently, all our efforts at the time were directed towards protests, distributing leaflets, and organizing demonstrations against the reactionary pacts and imperialist conspiracies, calling for Arab unity, etc. However, experience proved that only certain strata could be mobilized around such slogans. The greater portion of the masses could only be mobilized in the struggle for economic, social, and political demands that concerned the interests of the majority of the masses in the particular country involved. Consequently, our viewpoint changed from a general national struggle to a more specific struggle, oriented to the demands of the respective countries, but with a unified Arab national perspective.

As determined by our new outlook, the process of Arab unity became dependent on the achievement of the National Democratic Revolution in the different parts of the Arab world, so that these parts could reach a stage whereby the process of unity would be possible.

The translation of this on the Palestinian level can be understood when we realize that in our previous view, the role and responsibility assigned to the Arab masses in the process of liberating Palestine were far too general and vague. This view went to the extent of abolishing the specific role of the Palestinian people. This change in our view, orienting the struggle to the particular conditions of each area, does not only apply to the Palestinian arena, but to other parts of the Arab world as well, such as Yemen, Lebanon, Oman, etc.

### **The ANM and revolutionary violence**

From its inception, the ANM emphasized the importance of armed struggle, but through experience we realized that our concept of revolutionary violence was poorly defined. It could be interpreted as militaristic activities, as individual terrorism, or even as military coups. Actually, we went through such stages. However, numerous experiences, crowned by the 1967 war, crystallized the correct meaning of revolutionary violence as the armed vanguard party and the armed masses. In terms of our specific struggle, it means protracted people's war.

### **The ANM and organizational transformation**

As I mentioned earlier, the ANM emphasized the importance of revolutionary discipline, revolutionary behavior, and close ties with the masses, but we lacked an ideological base for these demands made on our members. Our interactions with revolutionary thought revealed to us that Leninism clearly defines the theoretical basis for the organizational principles and accurately explains them without idealism, vagueness, or infantilism. In fact, we were practicing many correct principles, but systemizing them on a firm ideological base facilitated our organizational development, more clearly linking our organizational principles and practice with our political goals.

### **The ANM and internationalism**

The nationalist thought of the ANM also reflected itself on our Arab international perspective. At the beginning, we regarded the Arab revolution as totally independent from the socialist and capitalist countries. I remember that in demonstrations our comrades raised the slogan “we follow neither the East nor the West.” At that time, we understood the concept of non-alignment in the same way as some non-aligned countries do today.

However, the process of struggle revealed to us that there is actually a great difference and contradiction between the enemy and the friendly camp. Moreover, the position of international solidarity and support, taken by the Soviet Union and the socialist countries in general with the national liberation movements, formed a basic factor that helped us to move towards our new position. This new position is that of radical antagonism to the imperialist camp and the closest and deepest solidarity with the socialist one, despite minor non-antagonistic contradictions between us and the forces of world revolution.

### **The ANM and Marxism-Leninism**

Based on a number of general assumptions, the ANM struggled seriously against imperialism. Between interval stages, practical experience crystallized in concrete facts upon which impelling concepts were formed. The method interlinking these concepts is dialectical materialism – Marxism-Leninism. Thus, the transition occurred in line with the progressive thought that is daily paving its way throughout the

world. Moreover, the movement of history is continuously proving the correctness of Marxist-Leninist theory. Marxism-Leninism affected the ANM's thought radically, but it did not contradict the basic aims we had set out to realize. On the contrary, it clarified the path so that we could formulate scientific programs that would enable us to achieve these goals – Arab liberation, unity, the liberation of Palestine, and a fourth aim adopted in the 1960's, socialism.

This in brief what explains the transformation of the former ANM branches in Oman, Yemen, Lebanon, and Palestine into Marxist-Leninist organizations. The phenomenon is not limited to the ANM. I believe that the nature of our era and the struggle going on in the world between the forces of progress on the one hand, and imperialism on the other hand, in addition to the progress made by the scientific socialist theory, renders many radical petit bourgeois forces liable to follow the same path. If these forces wage a radical struggle against imperialism, possess deep-rooted loyalty to the masses and are open to new truths crystallized by experiences, many of them will eventually and of necessity side with socialism and transform to Marxist-Leninist organizations.

**From the theoretical point of view, how does the Front view the question of transformation from a petit bourgeois nationalist organization (the ANM) to a Marxist-Leninist organization?**

Actually, this question requires a comprehensive theoretical article. It is difficult to give a full answer in an interview, so my answer must be general and condensed. This subject is dealt with in our literature, especially the second edition of the Path of Revolution, the official organ of the Arab Socialist Action Party, and the internal documents that were discussed at the third congress of the PFLP.

The primary explanation for this phenomenon of transformation is to be found in broader developments on the world level since the beginning of this century, especially the October Revolution and certain conditions created after World War II. This transformation was only made possible by these broader transformations, which reflected themselves on the local level, creating new objective conditions that in turn allowed for the development of certain subjective conditions.

Aside from this, part of the explanation for this transformation lies in the very nature of the petit bourgeoisie and its position between the two fundamental poles of the class struggle; the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat.

To analyze this phenomenon scientifically, we must look at how a set of objective conditions interacted with certain subjective factors in the organization, coupled with an understanding of the class nature of the petit bourgeoisie. The transformation of a petit bourgeois organization to a Marxist-Leninist one is not historically predictable. There are historical instances of philosophers moving from a position of idealism to one of materialism. But the definitive shift of a political organization from one class position to another is a new phenomenon that is linked to the greater transformations characterizing our era.

The first major objective condition in question is the development of capitalism into imperialism. This meant that the struggle of the colonized and oppressed nations against imperialism became of necessity of a struggle against capitalism. This provided the objective foundation for the slogan, “Workers of the world and oppressed nations, unite!” and for the national democratic revolution in the so-called “third world” to become part of the world proletarian revolution.

The centralization of capital, which characterized the transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism, enabled capital export, making imperialism an international system. This hegemony put its mark on the world in general but had particularly radical effects in the so-called “third world.” It meant that the emerging bourgeoisie in the oppressed and colonized nations became mere appendages to the bourgeoisie of the imperialist center – compradors, brokers, contractors, at best owners of inferior industry. Being organically dependent on imperialism, such a bourgeoisie was incapable of carrying out a bourgeois revolution to achieve political and economic independence. This is the big difference between the bourgeoisie of these countries and the European bourgeoisie, which was capable of leading the bourgeois revolution.

Imperialist hegemony and the resulting incapacity of the local bourgeoisie in the so-called “third world” led to the deterioration of the conditions of the greatest part of the masses, including the petit bourgeoisie. This is the source of the revolutionary sections of the petit bourgeoisie that aspire to political and economic independence for its nation. Finding the road to development blocked, the frustration of this class increases daily. If capitalism had remained a localized phenomenon, a different course of development might have occurred. But this is an if. Capitalism became imperialism and confronted the oppressed peoples with a new reality.

Now let’s approach the subject from another angle. The second major objective condition is the victory of the October Revolution and



the establishment of the first workers' and peasant' state. Then came the expansion of the socialist experience after World War II and the great achievements of the socialist countries on all levels. These achievements can be measured and are seen in the fact that this system is not plagued by the recurring crises that characterize capitalism. Thus, in addition to the example it provided, the socialist camp became a credible source of support for the national liberation movements aspiring to real development for their nation. This contributed to determining the choice of socialism on the part of organizations representing all the classes of the oppressed nations with the exception of the big bourgeoisie, which is organically linked with imperialism.

Again, it is necessary to link the interaction of these conditions with the dual nature of the petit bourgeoisie to understand why sections of this class made this choice. The dual nature of the petit bourgeoisie stems from its lack of a decisive role in the process of production. As a class, the petit bourgeoisie possesses means of production and this is what links it to the bourgeoisie. At the same time, the petit bourgeoisie works, and this is what links it to the working class. This dual nature allows certain strata of this class, under certain objective and subjective conditions, to align with the working class.

In Europe, the petit bourgeoisie joined the national bourgeois revolution. But here in the so-called "third world" countries, the impact of different objective conditions, especially the harm caused to the interests of the greater part of this class by imperialist hegemony in the economy, has led sectors of the petit bourgeoisie to join the ranks of the working classes.

### **Struggle within the ANM**

Still, these facts alone cannot explain the transformation of a petit bourgeois organization into a Marxist-Leninist one. This phenomenon is not a historical necessity. Rather, it becomes a possibility, which can be the case as a result of the struggle between the left and the right within the organization itself. In this conflict, there are right wing elements that remain bound to their ideology and past programs. The left are those elements who draw new conclusions from the experience gained in the intense confrontation with imperialism and from their practice in the mass movement. The left's true readiness to absorb new lessons and its real commitment to the goals of the masses leads to the realization that these goals can only be achieved by the ideology and the party of the

working class and its political programs.

This battle between the left and the right raged in the branches of the ANM and in the organization as a whole. An important factor determining the outcome was that while radical petit bourgeois elements held the leadership of the ANM, its base was drawn from the ranks of the toiling masses. Other factors also influenced the transformation: the movement's participation in armed struggle, the fact that the movement was not in state power, the class structure of the Arab society, as well as specific local conditions.

### **Are there similar experiences in the world to draw upon?**

Of course, having occurred in a different context, no experience can be exactly the same, but there are examples that are related. In Cuba, for example, the peasants' armed revolution against the Batista regime was led by the July 26 movement; the war of national liberation was linked to the socialist revolution. It is beneficial to recall what comrade Fidel Castro said about the transformation of the July 26 movement on its anniversary in 1965:

“Prior to July 26, we were not able to call ourselves conscious Marxist-Leninists. While on our way to the attack on Mon Cada Fort, the group which organized the movement studied and among what we studied were the works of Marx and Lenin. We had the aspirations, views and spirit of revolutionaries and our thoughts were developing, but we lacked theoretical knowledge. We gained our understanding of scientific socialism through our search for better means of analyzing historical and social problems. We did not take our theoretical and political philosophy as polished readymade product. It entered our lives, our blood, and our minds. It is obvious that our enemies desire us to be liberal, blabbering reformists in the style of the petit bourgeoisie. It is true we were petit bourgeois, but to our good fortune, we ignored their exploitative ideological goods and adopted the ideology of the exploited and the oppressed, the ideology of the working class.”

Another example is the People's Revolutionary Party of Mongolia. “At the time of its establishment, Mongolia was not a capitalist or even semicapitalist country, but was dominated by feudal relations. The party's class structure was varied, including all democratic elements opposing the feudal lords. The victory of the October revolution serves as a prime support for the development of the party, which was an observer in the Third International. The party's direction towards officially

adopting Marxism-Leninism coincided with gradual change of its class composition. Working class membership increased while elements incapable of continuing the transformation process fell away.”

In addition, we can see the development in Democratic Yemen as well as in Angola, Mozambique, etc. Obviously, this phenomenon relates not only to the case of the Palestinian revolution or the Arab region, but to Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

### **How does the Front tackle the process of transformation in practice?**

In the first stage, the party struggle focused on the declaration of the PFLP’s adherence to Marxism-Leninism, which occurred in the August 1968 congress and was crowned in the February 1969 congress. We consider this as a qualitative step in the process of transformation. In light of this official adoption, the leadership was able to present a Marxist-Leninist program of political education for building new cadres and re-educating the original cadres. The opening of the cadre school in Jordan in February 1970 indicates the serious intent to implement this program as rapidly as possible. The theoretical side of the program consisted mainly of the works of Marx and Lenin, there was also political and military education.

To really understand the development process of the organization, we must look at the political situation at that time, specifically the presence of the Palestinian revolution in Jordan. This made demands on the PFLP, as part of the resistance, to determine a series of political stands – towards the Jordanian regime, towards Palestinian national unity, towards the Jordanian popular movement and its relation to the Palestinian revolution. The PFLP had to determine its line for its official and mass relations in the Arab arena in light of our view of the link between the Palestinian and Arab revolution. These were not abstract issues, but real questions posed by the struggle. We found that adopting Marxism-Leninism was not enough. Struggle was required to determine and affirm these stands. This second stage of party struggle crystallized the PFLP’s left political identity in the context of the battle of Jordan, which revealed the clearest chart of the left and the right within the resistance at that time.

Of course, these stages intertwined. The ideological education begun in the first stage did not end but was crystallized in political stands which reflected our understanding of the Marxist-Leninist concepts and how to practice the principles of democratic centralism, criticism and self-criticism, etc.

These organizational questions became the headlines of the party

struggle in the stage following the battle in Jordan. The loss of our position there forcefully presented the importance of building the revolutionary party capable of continuing the struggle despite setbacks. The extent of the Front's organizational development in this period was tremendous.

This third stage, prior to and following the third congress in 1972, aimed at establishing democratic centralism as the fundamental principle governing relations within the party in order to weld it into a strong solidly unified organization. Our organizational reality at the time was not that specified in the internal rules and regulations adopted at the third congress. Rather these reflected what the PFLP aspired to and the basis on which we would rely in building a communist party.

We consider the application of the principle of democratic centralism as one of our greatest achievements in the last years. The most important translations of this principle in practice are iron discipline, the minority's acceptance of the majority decision and the subordination of the lower ranks to the higher ranks. Of course, scientifically one can foresee that this stage is the most difficult one in the transformation process because of the demands it makes. Such discipline does not occur automatically within the various organs of the party, but only as a result of the growth of revolutionary proletarian characteristics in the ranks of our leadership and cadres. We are on the threshold of this transformation and anticipate its achievement between our forthcoming fourth congress and the fifth one. Between these two congresses, our first priority will be deepening the ideological education of our cadres, as we simultaneously work to develop our political stands and stabilize our organizational structure.

As a final point, some believe that with the achievement of transformation, the PFLP will become a party without internal problems and conflict. This is idealism. Communist parties wage a continuous battle against the petit bourgeois sediment that infiltrates from society. Keeping the party on the revolutionary course and developing the ideology and discipline of the cadres is only through a continued process of political education, criticism and self-criticism.

### **Why the name Popular Front when the PFLP has long aspired to becoming a party?**

The organization took the name of the Front because initially it was a front in the correct sense of the term. In addition to the Palestinian branch of the ANM, it included other Palestinian organizations – the Palestinian Liberation Front, the Heroes of Return, as well as a wing of independents

in the Jordanian-Palestinian arena, who sympathized with the Nasserite line. At its establishment, the PFLP's ultimate aspiration was to be a radical progressive front led by a revolutionary party. The concept of transformation from a petit bourgeois organization to a Marxist-Leninist party was limited to the ANM branch.

When the PLF and the independents withdrew, the ANM branch was the only political organization within the framework of the Front. As the leading political force, the branch was ambitious to transform the entire organization to a Marxist-Leninist party. The name PFLP was retained to safeguard the historical revolutionary struggle linked to this name.

### **How does the PFLP view the question of Palestinian national unity?**

Scientifically speaking, the united national front in the stage of national liberation is a precondition for victory. This becomes even clearer when we look at the particular conditions of the Palestinian Arab revolution. The nature of the Zionist entity as a colonial-settler state, and its material links to imperialism and reaction, renders this enemy force a fierce one. Such a battle demands the maximum mobilization of all the Palestinian people whose interests are harmed by Zionism.

In Palestine, the Zionists pursue a policy of mass expulsion, land expropriation, and economic destruction against the Palestinian people. This occurred in 1948 and is now being repeated in the West Bank and Gaza. As an example, we can see that in the West Bank and Gaza, which constitute approximately twenty percent of all Palestine, the Zionists have already expropriated approximately one million of the six million dunums of land. The Zionists have usurped great portions of the water resources for their settlements and for the cities occupied in 1948. This policy strikes at the roots of the Palestinian people's source of livelihood, which is mainly agriculture. Moreover, the enemy fiercely represses basic political and democratic rights. These colonial policies are antagonistic not only to the interests of the working class, but also to the peasants, the petit bourgeoisie, professionals, etc., and even to sectors of the national bourgeoisie, especially in occupied Palestine. This is the objective basis for the broad class alliance required to face the enemy in the form of a united national front, which includes all political parties and organizations, representing these classes, the various national forces and the organizations of the masses - women's, students', peasants' and workers' unions.

However, this front must be led by the vanguard party of the working

class. Imperialism and its local allies will always attempt to fragment the national forces. This can be by forwarding proposals, which guarantee some interests of the bourgeoisie at the expense of the working class. Here it is important to remember that certain interests of the bourgeoisie can be fulfilled without this constituting any gain for the masses, while the fulfillment of the interests of the working class is in the interests of the broadest sections of the masses.

We must always take into consideration that imperialism and even Zionism at a later stage, although it does not seem so now with Begin's government, will try to abort the Palestinian revolution through such proposals. This is the danger of the bourgeoisie being the decisive force within the revolution. Moreover, the hesitant position of the bourgeoisie cannot form a sufficient strong core around which the forces of the front can rally.

**The vanguard party's leadership of the national front is not the case in the Palestinian revolution today. Does this undermine the significance of the strategic struggle to achieve Palestinian national unity?**

Of course, the answer is no! Although the effective force in the Palestinian revolution is the bourgeoisie, it is the duty of all forces, especially the working class party, to wage a relentless struggle to achieve the highest possible level of Palestinian unity. At first glance, there might seem to be a contradiction here, but let me explain.

The working class party could assume the leadership position while participating in the PLO, if certain conditions are fulfilled. The first is the ideological, political, and organizational independence of the working class party within the framework of the united front. The existence of a joint program for all the forces within the PLO does not negate the right of the working class party to draw up its own program. On the contrary, the vanguard party must do its utmost to implement the joint program and at the same time exercise its full right to spread and explain its own program to the masses. National unity does not mean denial of the independence of other forces, representing the other classes and strata of the masses, or the undemocratic, amalgamation of all other forces by the bourgeois leadership.

The second condition relates to the common program of the national front, which must be a patriotic program that leaves no loopholes through which the bourgeoisie can move to accept imperialist proposals which aim at aborting the revolution. The third condition is that the working

class party wages a principled, continuous struggle within the front to develop the common program. The principle for relations within the front is solidarity-struggle-solidarity. This is not the same as within the party where the principle is unity-criticism-unity. The word “struggle” is important here, because it is through struggle that the working class party must pave its way to continuously protecting the general interests of the revolution.

Fourth is the implementation of democratic principles to govern the relations among the different forces in the PLO. The PLO framework must allow for the workers’ party to increase its representation in the PLO institutions in proportion to its growth within the masses.

Thus, the answer to this question is not a simple yes or no. We should be within the PLO framework, despite the fact that until now we are not in the leadership. But in accordance with these four principles, we must struggle for the strategic aim, namely, the leadership of the united front.

### **How does the Palestinian National Front (PNF) in occupied Palestine relate to the framework of national unity as a whole?**

First it is important to clarify that Palestinian national unity is not limited to the leadership of the Palestinian revolution. Rather, it is the unity of the masses, of the different classes that stand in opposition to imperialism, Zionism and reaction. The importance of Palestinian national unity lies in its translation among the masses in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, etc. This is the significance of the Palestinian National Front in occupied Palestine: that is a field application of Palestinian unity.

Another factor giving the Palestinian National Front its significance is that the greatest portion of the Palestinian people live in the occupied homeland. Let us take the Israeli figures. In the territories occupied in 1948, there are around 600,000 Palestinians; in the West bank 800,000, and 500,000 in the Gaza strip. That means that there are roughly two million Palestinians in occupied Palestine, almost half of the Palestinian people and two-fifths of the total population of occupied Palestine.

A third factor giving the Palestinian National Front its significance is that it is an instrument that is uniting the struggle of our masses who directly face the worst Zionist oppression. The conditions in occupied Palestine, the fierce Zionist oppression on the one hand and the militant outburst of the Palestinian masses, especially their struggle against Camp David and the “autonomy” plan, on the other hand, cause a crystallization process. This process forces a shifting out of the various parties and

factions of the Palestinian resistance, whereby only the active strong organizations survive.

Today it is the PFLP, DFLP, Fatah and the Communist Party participating in the Palestinian National Front. However, we urge all patriotic forces, progressive organizations, and mass organizations to participate in the Palestinian National Front.

Since the democratic and progressive forces form the backbone of the Palestinian National Front, it represents a developed state of Palestinian national unity, effectively implementing the programs adopted at the fourteenth PNC. This translation of the PNC programs takes into consideration the particular conditions for the struggle in occupied Palestine. Moreover, the Palestinian Nation Front program is to the left of the PNC programs without violating them in any way.

The Palestinian National Front's memorandum stresses the importance of democratic relations, a principle that greatly affects the overall effectiveness of the Front and which is not totally implemented in practice by the PLO leadership. The Palestinian National Front also makes it very clear that it is not attempting to form an alternative to the PLO. Rather it defines itself as the PLO's executive arm in the occupied homeland.

However, it emphasizes its right to voice its opinions and criticism, which have genuine value as coming from the struggle under direct occupation. It emphasizes that any assistance to the struggle inside must come through the Palestinian National Front and not around or against it. We must take an active role in making the Palestinian National Front a success, because this will reflect positively on Palestinian national unity outside.

**The PFLP holds that one of the main conditions for the liberation of Palestine is the strategic alliance with Arab national liberation movements. How does the Front apply this principle on the mass and official level?**

In fact, the most essential basis for distinguishing between the left and the right in the Palestinian revolution is precisely this question. On the ideological level, one can distinguish between those organizations who have adopted Marxism-Leninism and those who have not. Of course, this is a correct distinction. But if one looks into the struggle that is going on, one can see that those forces who say that they are not concerned with the internal situation in the Arab countries are on the right. The left forces are



those that say that our revolution is part of the Arab revolutions against imperialism and reactionary forces, that our revolutions are linked, that we cannot achieve victory without defeating imperialism and the reactionary forces in our area. When the Palestinian revolution becomes the lever for arising with the Arab mass movements, then this is the real democratic progressive line.

To answer more specifically, on the official level, there are certain Arab regimes that at present time in general have a position against imperialism and its plans. Thus, there is a scientific basis for us to ally with these regimes, namely Algeria, Libya, Syria, Iraq, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

As to the reactionary Arab regimes, objectively speaking they are allied with the imperialist camp. Thus there is no scientific basis for us to ally with them, despite any superficial minor contradictions with imperialism. Naturally, revolutionary principles allow for tactical manipulation of secondary contradictions within the enemy camp. However, there is a great difference between this and alliance with the enemy camp or one of its components.

We are enthusiastic to consolidate our alliance with the patriotic regimes with the aim of opposing the imperialist plans, Camp David, etc. despite ideological and political differences between the PFLP and these regimes. However, with the exception of PDR Yemen, we do not believe that these regimes can play the role for our revolution, which North Vietnam played as a strategic base for the National Liberation Front. Therefore, on the strategic level, we stress our relations with the Arab liberation movements, that have a political, ideological, and military line which coincides with or is similar to ours. With the objective conditions we face, these movements will not be capable of achieving their aims excepts through revolutionary programs ultimately leading to revolutionary regimes, which will be to the Palestinian revolution what Hanoi was to the struggle in South Vietnam and the establishment of a united country. Specifically, these forces which we regard as strategic allies are the communist parties, Marxist-Leninist organizations, progressive and revolutionary forces, not excluding democratic national bourgeois parties. As a first step, it is essential that these forces form national democratic fronts in the respective Arab countries, working to forge the conditions for national democratic revolutions – not superficial political independence, but real political and economic independence from imperialism. Only by interaction with this process going on in the different Arab countries, and forging unity on the pan-Arab level, will

the Palestinian revolution be able to achieve its specific strategic aims in Palestine.

Within this context, we give special importance to those countries where radical change is close in sight, such as Sudan, where the mass movement is in upsurge threatening the reactionary Nimeiry regime, and North Yemen.

As to the states bordering Palestine, we regard it as our full right to utilize this geographic proximity. In particular, this gives a special character to our relations with the Jordanian progressive movement. In the other Arab countries, we consider ourselves as a strategic ally of the progressive forces; who must themselves stand on the forefront of the struggle. Jordan, however, presents a specific arena different from the other Arab countries in some respects. First, Jordan has a border of roughly 650 kilometers with Palestine. Second, the Palestinians in Jordan constitute over seventy percent of the total population. Third, there are deep historical, political, and cultural links between the Palestinian and Jordanian people. Thus, the Palestinian revolution assumes the role of a full and equal participant in the Palestinian-Jordanian front.

### **How does the PFLP understand and practice the principle of internationalism?**

Of course, the first point that requires clarification is that by internationalism we mean proletarian internationalism because there is also bourgeois internationalism – imperialism is an international phenomenon. Opposing this is the solidarity of the working class and oppressed peoples all over the world. To us, proletarian internationalism means faith in the unity of interests of the workers and all oppressed, regardless of nationality, religion, language, and therefore the common struggle of the workers and oppressed against capitalism and the bourgeoisie in each country.

There is no scientific basis for differentiation between one human being and another because of race, religion, nationality, etc. The difference that must be taken into account from a human scientific point of view is class differences – the distinction between the oppressed and the oppressors, the exploited and the exploiters. There is a material base for proletarian internationalism just as there is for bourgeois internationalism.

In political terms at this stage of history, proletarian internationalism is expressed in the solidarity between all the elements of world revolution, all forces opposing imperialism, more precisely the socialist countries, the working class in the industrial countries and the national liberation

movements of the oppressed people.

From our point of view, proletarian internationalism does not contradict with proletarian nationalism. One cannot strive for the interests of the oppressed all over the world without struggling for the interests of the oppressed of his own nation.

We must not understand proletarian solidarity one-sidedly, only as seeking material support or publicity. The bourgeois forces try to depict our relations with the Soviet Union as an arms market. This is not what we mean by solidarity. The other side of the coin are the PFLP's duties towards other revolutionary forces. To be good internationalists, we must be part of the battle raging on the world level between the oppressed and the oppressors, in Europe, in Asia, in Latin America, in Africa. Of course, there are many ways to do this. The political education of our members about the international dimension of the struggle is one way. The decision that each member must give a percent of his or her income to our proletarian collection is a concrete translation of this solidarity. But the main issue is perhaps how we translate this solidarity politically in our relations with other revolutionary forces.

The PFLP strives to forge political alliances with all forces of world revolution. We are trying to deepen our links with the socialist countries without exception, but especially the socialist community headed by the Soviet Union, with the progressive democratic forces and parties representing the interests of the working class in Europe, America, and Japan. At present, we give high priority to establishing political links with liberation movements all over the world. We have not yet reached our goals concerning the liberation movements of Africa and Latin America, but this is something we are working on.

What does it mean to have these political links? Very simply, we discuss our revolution and hear about the revolution of the other party. This exchange of experiences and political points of view creates the basis for mutual solidarity, deepening our relationship on all levels.

### **In view of the conditions for the Palestinian revolution, how does the PFLP apply its military line?**

In general, our military line is based on a long-term people's war and not on conventional warfare or upon armed insurrection. I have touched on the reasons for our adoption of this strategy in the review of the transformation within the ANM. The experiences of 1948, 1956, and 1967 all point to the futility of trying to confront the Zionist enemy, with

its organic link to imperialism and resulting technological superiority, with a quick or conventional war. Even the 1973 war confirmed this, as the initial Israeli retreat was quickly compensated with the help of the US-imperialist air bridge.

Only the mobilization of all the masses in a continual long-term war led by a united national front with the revolutionary party at the forefront can achieve victory. One of the Nicaraguan slogans “the united armed masses will never be defeated” forms a positive alternative to the Chilean experience where the slogan was “A united people will never be defeated.” In particular, the Vietnamese popular war constitutes a beacon for us, reinforcing conviction in this strategy. But this in no way means that the Vietnamese experience can or should be applied exactly in our situation. This is our general concept, but within this context, we must affirm certain basic points.

There is a set of objective factors upon which we can build in developing our war into a Palestinian-Arab liberation war. The first is the Arab nation of which the Palestinian people are an integral part and through which they can unite with the other Arab peoples. In addition, the enemy already occupies Arab areas other than Palestine – in Syria and Lebanon. Its plan is to spread in wide areas of the Arab land in accordance with the Zionist concept of its state as extending from the Nile to the Euphrates. Moreover, the presence of great numbers of Palestinians in the other Arab countries, as a result of their expulsion, aids in the process of integrating the Palestinian and Arab struggle.

The second point to assert is that our adherence to the long-term people’s war does not mean that we leave no role for regular armies. There can be a role for regular Arab armies, but the question is what kind of armies and under what kind of regimes? It must be revolutionary regular armies of liberated societies, which represent the aspirations of the masses. The role of such armies will be integrated with the role of the armed masses carrying out military tasks in occupied areas and that of the people’s militias defending liberated areas. These are theoretical lines for the future development of the struggle.

Today we are still objectively in the position of strategic defense. The balance of power is clearly in favor of the enemy forces. Therefore, our military practice focuses on tactical attacks with the objective of gradually weakening the enemy forces and simultaneously developing and expanding our own forces. The aim of this is to transform our position to that of strategic attack.

Within this overall context, we have at present three basic military

lines:

1) The guerilla warfare in the cities against the Zionist enemy in Palestine. Concrete events testify to the capabilities of the revolution in this field. The Zionist enemy has more than once admitted the escalation of these operations and its own inability to put an end to them. These operations aim at military and economic targets in order to weaken the enemy's capabilities and strike at its repressive tools and agents.

2) Military operations through the Arab borders surrounding Palestine against the Zionist military forces.

3) Operations of defense against the Zionist attacks as well as the attacks of counterrevolutionary forces. Today such operations aim particularly at safeguarding the open military presence of the revolution in Lebanon, but we aim to extend this field to all Arab countries surrounding Palestine.

Our specific military tasks at this stage focus on increasing the accuracy with which we implement these operations, escalating them, and broadening their scope. The central link for transferring from this military reality to a higher one, bringing us nearer to the stage of popular liberation war, is raising the political and military abilities of the armed masses to a level which enables us to establish liberated areas. This would greatly increase the level of the popular liberation army's daily military confrontation with the enemy, tactical at first and becoming strategical, to liberate occupied land.

Because of the difficulty of liberating Palestinian land from the control of the Zionist military institutions, we in the PFLP believe that the presence of the revolution on liberated Arab land is a prerequisite for beginning the actual liberation of Palestine. In this light, establishment of a revolutionary authority in Jordan, in alliance with the revolutionary forces here, constitutes a central task for moving the Palestinian revolution to a qualitatively higher stage.

**Western media has depicted the PFLP as an organization whose sole function is to make international operations, especially hijackings. This has even generated heated discussions among some anti-imperialist forces. How do you evaluate such operations and what weight should they have in the overall military strategy of the PFLP?**

The aim of the western media is to abuse the Palestinian revolution and the PFLP, to present the PFLP as an international terrorist organization and not as a fundamental leftist organization within a national liberation

movement. Our experience has taught us that the western media is not far removed from imperialism and its plans.

At the time the PFLP was engaged in a developed guerrilla struggle against the Zionist occupation in Gaza, struggling on the mass level in Jordan and elsewhere to influence the progressive direction of the Arab mass movement, sacrificing martyrs to defend our people and with hundreds of our members imprisoned and tortured by the Zionists, at that time the western media only highlighted a certain type of our operations.

The reality behind the international operations rests on two basic facts related to the specificity of the Palestinian struggle against Zionism. First, it is important to remember that Zionism is not restricted to Palestine but is a world organization linked with world imperialism in a special form. Second is the fact that the Palestinian people do not exist on their own land but have been scattered throughout the world as the result of the Zionist programs.

In light of these facts, the PFLP saw it as our right, while waging the primary battle in Palestine, to strike certain Zionist-imperialist targets outside the occupied land. In truth it is not a question of international military operations but of operations against the positions of Zionism and imperialism outside the occupied homeland.

This type of operation has at no time formed our primary military line. We have no thought that the liberation of Palestine can result from such operations, regardless of how they were to be developed. Our evaluation has always been that they have a tactical supportive function in relation to our strategy of people's war. In a certain period, these operations achieved positive goals by disrupting the enemy forces, by raising the morale of our masses, by marring the image of invincibility with which the Zionist enemy has attempted to surround itself, by forcing the Palestinian cause upon wide sectors of western public opinion that were totally ignoring the justness of our struggle.

This is our historical evaluation of this type of operation. Today in light of the ability of the Palestinian revolution to practice its daily military struggle against the Zionist presence in Palestine, it is natural to lessen the role of these operations. They do not represent in our minds the same proportion as they did in the beginning of our experience. However, this does not mean the end of our right to deal blows to the enemy, even if it is outside Palestine, if we find it necessary. But this entails sharp awareness of not harming third parties who are not directly related to the conflict.

In relation to the hijacking of planes, we have taken an official party

decision to stop this and we have announced this on many occasions and stated the reasons.

## **On the occasion of International Workers Day (1980)**

*George Habash delivered the following speech on the occasion of International Workers Day in Ein Al-Helweh camp in Saida, Lebanon, in May 1980. It was originally published in PFLP Bulletin #39, June 1980.*

Today we celebrate International Workers Day. It is an occasion to evaluate the meaning of this day. The working class has begun to be conscious of the system that exploits it and has determined to struggle daily until abolishing this tyranny.

### **The unity of the international working class against the unity of international capital**

At a certain historical stage of the development of human society, a certain system arose in some European countries, whereby a few capitalists possess all means of production, while the masses of workers toil and sell their labor power to the capitalist class in order to secure their livelihood.

As a result of the accumulation of capital, a result of the surplus created by the workers, these capitalist countries developed. Their interests demanded that this capital flows to all countries of the world in order to plunder the resources and exploit the peoples of the world. Thus, the capitalist class became the enemy of the working class in their respective countries and the enemy of the oppressed peoples. Thus, the revolutionary slogan which we follow was raised: Workers of the world and oppressed masses, unite! A relentless conflict began in the world. What was the result?

The 1917 revolution was the first victory of the working class, the first revolutionary authority of the workers and peasants. This victory provoked the capitalist forces to try to liquidate this revolution. Wars of intervention continued for more than ten years. However, the working class in the Soviet Union was able to resist. Thus, the first socialist system was established.

In the 1940s, socialism was victorious in more than one European and Asian country. Workers' authority was established in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, German Democratic Republic, Mongolia, etc. Then the first socialist country challenging imperialism in Latin America was Cuba.

I say these things because imperialism is incessantly attempting to



push our masses to a state of desperation and capitulation.

Today the socialist system accounts for more than one-third of the world's industrial production. If we take into consideration that the countries where socialism was established were mainly backward agricultural countries, we realize the extent of the working class's progress and achievements in these countries.

Look at what has happened in the world in the last five years. Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Ethiopia. Then the Iranian Revolution, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, and Zimbabwe. These are the concrete victories achieved by national liberation movements. As a result, the capitalist system is undergoing a crisis at the same time imperialism is escalating its aggression – a sign of weakness and not of strength.

Since imperialism feeds of the world market, any victory achieved by a people is a loss for imperialism. Thus, the imperialist crisis has deepened. This explains the current hysteria of the US. As Carter himself said to Congress at the beginning of the year, he fears a dangerous situation. He named three reasons: first, the growth of the military power of the Soviet Union; second, the broad social, political, cultural, and religious movements in various areas of the world; third, the dependence of US imperialism on oil imports for the continuation of its industry.

Moreover, we can add that in some countries where reactionary puppets are still in power at this time, it is inevitable that the peoples will rise and take hold of their resources, thus placing imperialism in a deeper crisis. This is what explains the formation of the Quick Strike Force, the declarations about building a new Fifth Fleet, the increase of military bases in Oman, the Indian Ocean, and the continuous visits of American military personnel to Kenya, Somalia, and Sudan to establish American military bases.

In crisis, imperialism attempts to turn back the wheel of history by striking at people who have achieved their victories.

### **US military maneuvers – a policy for subduing the people**

American imperialism is now preparing for a military maneuver at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba in an attempt to strike at the Cuban revolution. Here we declare to the whole world that we stand in solidarity with the hero Fidel Castro, with the Cuban people and revolution against the imperialist enemy.

The US immediately attempted to abort the Cuban revolution some

years ago, before it took firm roots. You all remember the American aggression – launched by the Kennedy administration in the beginning of the 1960s. At that time, Castro himself led a tank under the slogan of “Homeland or Death” and the masses rallied around him and defeated the imperialist attack.

The same imperial conspiracy could be applied to the Iranian peoples’ revolution. This revolution achieved victories not only for the Iranian people, but also for the Palestinian revolution and for the Arab world. It is an anti-imperialist revolution, crushing the treacherous Shah regime and the SAVAK.<sup>4</sup> It is a revolution against Zionism, and it shook the imperialist strategy in the area.

Therefore, imperialism attempts to liquidate the Iranian revolution. These aggressive schemes started at Lout desert and they will not halt. We declare to the Iranian people, to the leaders of the revolution, to Imam Khomeini, that the position of the sincere Palestinian and Arab masses is to support the Iranian revolution. We also declare that any Arab regime that weaves intrigues against this revolution violates the position of the Arab masses and betrays them.

It is important to note that we also realize the subjective gaps in the Iranian revolution – the implications of leaning towards striking the progressive and leftist forces and the dangerous effects of this on the Iranian revolution. We also realize the implications of not providing a democratic solution for the national minorities, based on the principle of the right to self-determination. Nonetheless, we recognize that this revolution during this period is antiimperialist, anti-Zionist, and anti-reaction.

What really happened in Afghanistan, seen scientifically, removed from distortions and the imperialist aggressive maneuvers?

In April 1978, there was a revolution against the reactionary monarchic regime, as happened in Iran. The difference is that the Iranian revolution was led by a patriotic and progressive religious trend, while the Afghan one followed a political ideological line; it was an anti-imperialist revolution based on the power of the Afghan people. Imperialism and local reaction became rabid and wove conspiracies against the Afghan revolution. In this situation, the Soviet Union took a political position that it would not allow people to be attacked or the historical movement to be impeded.

This means that a people waging a bitter struggle against imperialism, Zionism, and reaction will find a real ally and support in the Soviet Union,

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4 SAVAK: The Iranian secret police during the rule of the Shah.

to the degree that the people concerned have themselves decided.

### **Camp David reflects imperialism's international policy**

It is impossible to understand the Camp David policy and to confront it without relating what is occurring in our area to what is happening on the international level. Due to the crisis that American imperialism faces and its vital interests in this area, the imperialist-Zionist-Sadat alliance was formed and clearly declared its intent to forcefully safeguard imperialist interests and hegemony in the area.

Before, the Arab world was primarily valued for its geographic location, linking Europe, Asia, and Africa. Now this area possesses a vital weapon that the treacherous rulers do not know how to utilize. But our heroic masses will one day know how to use it once they hold power and drag imperialism to the ground.

Now the US consumes twenty million barrels of oil daily; it produces nine to ten million barrels a day, i.e., fifty percent of its consumption; the rest are imports, mainly from the Arab area. This is the importance of the area to imperialism. But the issue is not confined to oil; it also involves imperialism's foreign trade, through which the US gets in return the greater part of the money it pays for oil.

Saunders says that Arab dollars in American banks amount to \$140 billion.<sup>5</sup> This was in 1978. This year's studies indicate that the surplus from the OPEC countries will approach one hundred billion dollars. However, the petrodollar does not support South Lebanon or the Arab and Palestinian struggle. Most of it supports "the free system" as Ahmad Zaki Al Yamani, the Saudi Oil Minister, claims.

According to Saunders' statistics, ten percent of American trade enters our area. When the US attacks us, it is because it wants to retain these one hundred billion dollars, the oil resources, and the markets of the area. I say this so that we all know that in the coming years, we will face a relentless battle, through which imperialism will attempt to stamp out our determination, to liquidate us and our revolution, and to strike every national liberation movement in the area in defense of its interests.

### **Let us build the revolutionary alliance – the alliance of workers**

The imperialist-Zionist-Sadat alliance safeguards not only the imperialist

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<sup>5</sup> We were unable to find the original source Habash is referring to here. It is probably a text by Professor Anthony Saunders.

interests, but the Zionist interests and the interests of the ruling reactionary bourgeois class in the area as well. We must build the alliance of the workers and peasants, Palestinian, Lebanese, Syrian, Arab, Middle Eastern, and internationally, that destroys the imperialist-Zionist-Sadat alliance. We are one hundred percent capable of that, and the movement of history points in this direction.

Our enemy is afraid. Peres, head of the Labor coalition, says, “What are we going to do with the Palestinians? Why should we accept their autonomy now? The Palestinian population in the Galilee approaches six hundred thousand, seven hundred thousand in the West Bank and four hundred thousand in Gaza.”

The Israelis themselves made a study that indicates that in the year 2000, the Palestinians will constitute 46% of the total population. Imagine, five years after that, the Palestinians will again become a majority in Palestine – a new Zimbabwe. We must not lose confidence in ourselves, although victory will not be easy. This is not the PFLP’s task alone, but the responsibility of every Palestinian organization and patriot. We have consistently proved that we are a people who deserve to live. Our masses will not accept being without determination and action.

The tasks of the Palestinian revolution, including Palestinian national unity, will not be achieved, unless each one of you undertakes his/her responsibilities. If we can shoulder these responsibilities, our strength will be multiplied. We will be able to move from the stage of steadfastness to the stage of liberation.

### **Palestinian national unity**

Why has Palestinian national unity not been achieved until now? Because there is no continuous mass pressure capable of imposing it.

Slogans are always raised in the Palestinian arena emphasizing the importance of holding the Palestinian National Council as soon as possible, so that we can achieve the tasks of the organizational program. This is not enough. We must understand national unity on the basis of the forces capable of implementing it and how it is to be achieved.

Since the convening of the last PNC, about one year and four months ago, Palestinian national unity has not been achieved, despite the challenges of the stage! Is the mere convening of the next PNC enough to accomplish national unity?

Palestinian national unity can be achieved when each and every Palestinian patriot reads the political and organizational programs

adopted in the last PNC and struggles for their implementation. We do not understand national unity in a superficial manner. In the coming PNC, we will insist on a genuine implementation of these programs. We will not deceive ourselves or our masses.

You all know about the recent conference of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front. One of the resolutions relates to POLISARIO and the revolution of the Saharan people and recognition of the Saharan Republic. The PLO is a force in this Front and is supposed to safeguard and push this Front forward to be the force that pushes Algeria, Libya, and Syria to carry their responsibilities.

However, in Morocco, the representative of the PLO there declares that the PLO does not agree with this resolution. Immediately, Abu Al-Adeeb<sup>6</sup> visited Morocco and reversed this declaration. In Algeria, the PLO representative said we are with the resolution. Do you want your revolution to be in such a shaky condition? How can we then demand that Libya, Algeria, and Syria implement the resolutions, including those pertaining to the Palestinian revolution?

The political program of the PLO is clear. It does not allow Khaled Al-Hassan<sup>7</sup> to establish a confederation with Jordan. We participated in the adoption of the political program; we discussed for long hours and there was no mention of European-American-Soviet-Palestinian-Israeli negotiations!

On the contrary, the program reaffirms the Tripoli Pact and links the aim of this stage with the strategic aim very clearly. This was the basis of agreement. We accept tactical aims, but they must be in line with the process of total liberation. Moreover, the political program does not recognize "Israel" or the possibility of negotiating with it.

The organizational program specifies that all organizations are to be represented in all institutions of the PLO, including the Executive Committee. The program says that the position of the Palestinian Revolution is not decided by this or that person, but collectively; the decision is to be taken by the majority and the minority must submit to the majority. We were in the minority in our opposition to the negotiations with Jordan, yet we submitted to the majority. This is our understanding of national unity that serves the interests of the Palestinian revolution.

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6 Abu Al-Adeeb: Fatah central committee member and one of their international representatives. Also an official and speaker of the PNC.

7 Khaled Al-Hassan: Cofounder of Fatah, PLO Executive Committee member, and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the PNC.

## **European Initiative – the more dangerous**

The Israeli flag has been raised in Cairo; but in the land of Palestine, you cannot yet find another Khazindar daring to recognize the “autonomy”. Thus, Camp David faces a deadlock; when this became clear, some European officials started to talk of Palestinian rights. These Kreisky, Brandt, and d’Estaing, what is their aim?<sup>8</sup> How come their conscience has been awakened now?

Britain, the country which issued the Balfour Declaration? It is because they want to save Camp David, to divide the Palestinian ranks. There is a long chain of conspiracy. The traitor Shawwa comes to Beirut to discuss the “total autonomy” plan; another plan is “self-rule” in Gaza first. Kreisky, Brandt and Schmidt sing yet another tune about the Jordanian-Palestinian state, and this is the most dangerous!

In 1981, there will be Israeli elections. There are indications that the Labour coalition might win and present a different form of “autonomy”, i.e. the return of 70-80% of the West Bank to Jordan and the establishment of a Jordanian-Palestinian state. In this case, we shall face an acute crisis, due to the patriotic facade that has been offered to the Jordanian regime by the PLO. The Jordanian regime will then say that fourteen years have passed since the 1967 war and not one meter of Palestinian land has been regained.

Give me a chance to regain eighty percent of the Palestinian land... the Jordanian regime will rely on the cover offered by the Baghdad Summit and its resolutions. Thus, in addition to Palestinian national unity, we have the task of exposing all these political maneuvers.

## **Support our masses in occupied Palestine**

It is not enough to talk of supporting our masses in the occupied homeland. How do we really support our masses inside? With what political line? Which forces will offer the support? Is it through the Palestinian-Jordanian Joint Committee, the activity of which has resulted in consolidating representatives of the Jordanian regime, like Anwar Nusseibeh and Anwar Al Khatib?

Genuine support to our masses inside is achieved through two main elements. First, a clearly defined political line. I daily ask myself what

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<sup>8</sup> The heads of state of Austria, West Germany, and France respectively in 1980.

happens to our masses demonstrating against occupation in the homeland, when they hear of a confederation with Jordan or the European Initiative. This is not an idle question. We sense from those who come from the occupied homeland that this political wavering affects negatively on their morale. Genuine support is achieved by supporting the patriotic forces through the Palestinian National Front. Events have shown that it is the vanguard of the struggle of our masses inside.

Second, safeguarding the revolution in Lebanon through the close alliance with the Lebanese National Movement and the Lebanese masses. We must speak of the support to the LNM with sincere conviction in the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, to the international progressive forces, before we speak of the Palestinian revolution. Regardless of the shortcomings in the Palestinian resistance or the LNM, we must remember that despite all the conspiracies directed against us since April 13, 1975 (the start of the Lebanese civil war) – the Phalangists, the Chamounists, the Cedar Guards, the Israeli invasion, Saad Haddad's ministate – we are still steadfast in Lebanon. We must also realize the dangers of the situation in Lebanon if things stay as they are.

### **The Lebanese Army**

There is a force in Lebanon that has not yet exercised its power and we shall confront it. This is the Lebanese authority. It is planned that the army be built up to forty thousand soldiers and the security forces to about eighteen thousand. Johnny Abdo (head of the Second Bureau – the military intelligence) his budget and his men – this is the plan yet to be implemented and it is a dangerous force.

How do you picture “Israel” liquidating us? It attempted in March 1978, but failed despite all its planes, tanks, and bombs. The results were limited, but here a question arises: What does it mean for “Israel” to liquidate us? It means to follow us to Beirut and up to Nahr Al Bared camp in the north.

It is true that “Israel” was capable of pushing the revolution back twenty kilometers, but the revolution did not end. For the revolution to be liquidated, the patriotic Lebanese and the Palestinian armed presence must be crushed. “Israel” cannot implement this task; it only paves the way; it strikes at civilians, uproots thousands from Saida to Beirut; it creates a desperate, vindictive atmosphere among the masses. At that moment, the reactionary forces will point to the Palestinian revolution as the cause of this situation and the Lebanese authority will say

“Security before bread”. Who will then confront these conspiracies? The Palestinian revolution cannot alone, neither politically nor tactically. Only the conscious Lebanese Nationalist Movement can achieve this task as it has in the past.

We in the Palestinian revolution must deal with the LNM frankly and fearlessly. Experience has taught us that if Lebanon becomes a patriotic state, it will become the Hanoi of the Palestinian revolution. However, the process of liberation will not begin until there is an Arab revolutionary upsurge all around Palestine.

Political positions must be taken to expose the reactionary forces and pave the way for the growth of the Arab mass movement. Here is the painful mistake committed by the Palestinian revolution. The word has the effect of the bullet – why does the Palestinian revolution not expose the conspiring and the incapacity of Arab reaction? Saudi Arabia alone could pressure the US administration. If Saudi Arabia stopped the oil flow or even decreased its production, it would shake the world. However, Saudi Arabia, that claims to oppose the Camp David agreements, increased its oil production from 8.5 to 9.5 million barrels daily. Iraq also increased its production. Imperialism increases its conspiracies – and Saudi Arabia offers it a bonus! These are the facts they attempt to keep from the masses. If the revolution speaks of these facts daily, the Saudi masses will one day definitely arise against these policies and establish a patriotic regime that knows how to support the Palestinian revolution and how to frighten US imperialism, at least to halt its aid to the Zionist entity.

Our role in the Arab arena is immense. We must support the Arab mass movement, the LNM, the masses in Egypt, POLISARIO, PFLO, the National Democratic Front in North Yemen etc. Moreover, we have the task of confronting the impotence of the Arab regimes. This way we will at least be serious with ourselves concerning principled and strategic issues.

Why does the revolution not play this role and confront every deviationist policy and expose every incapability?

Here, it must not be understood that we want to wage new battles. Concerning the disagreement between us and the Iraqi regime, we want to draw attention to the fact that our relation with the Arab Liberation Front and the Lebanese Ba’athists is a relation based on the struggle and we will protect it, because we stand in the same trench. We do not create battles for no reason. The disagreement with Iraq is that during the Shah’s rule, the Iraqi regime did not utter as much as half a word concerning the islands or the Shah’s reactionary regime. However, when the Khomeini



authority came to power, Iraq fabricated battles with the new regime to the extent of proclaiming it as a national enemy. This is not the only thing. The Iraq regime summoned Makkawi, who collaborated with the British in Yemen in the time of colonialism, to Baghdad. He has an office in Cairo, but now the Iraqi regime wants to keep him under their wing in order to antagonize the progressive regime in PDR Yemen.

### **The Iraq “National Charter” eradicates Palestine**

Suddenly, we face a new “National Charter” based on facing dangers caused by the Soviet Union! I read this “National Charter” three times. The first time, I did not believe my eyes! The word Palestine is eradicated, as is any word of Camp David and imperialism! I wondered, those who wrote this charter, what were they thinking of?

Naturally, this is a cover for their impotence because they are incapable of doing anything for Palestine. As a matter of fact, it was not us who severed relations with the Iraq regime, but we do have standards when it comes to matters of principle. When they sent us an invitation to the “People’s National Conference” held in Baghdad, for the purpose of ratifying this charter, we refused. They replied that the PFLP would pay a high price for this refusal.

I regret that the Iraq regime has come to such a state. In 1978, they called for unity, and we were the first to applaud such a position. If Iraq genuinely will defy the enemy again, we will also applaud again. On the other hand, we will maintain a clear position concerning any force that tries to direct our battle away from its real aims.

On the international level, our position must be clearly within the revolutionary camp, with the socialist community and against imperialism, Zionism, and reaction.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, the most important thing I feel compelled to say on this occasion is that the role of the working class and its ideology must be expanded in the Palestinian revolution, because the working class does not allow for such deviation. I will give one example that concerns you all. The PLO Executive Committee agreed to a five-million-pound project in the camps, related to very essential problems such as water, shelters and bread. I will not go into the way in which this decision was taken and the struggle to get it approved, but now four to five months have passed, and the decision

has not yet been implemented. Letters are being written from the camps drawing attention to the fact that implementation has not begun.

Let us struggle to increase the role of the working class and the real proletarian leadership, not the vanguard that, once in leadership, tails the bourgeoisie and forgets its masses. We want the leadership that remains among the workers and the peasants and lives as they live and raises their voices, carrying their pains!

**Long live the Palestinian and Arab working class!**

**Long live the Palestinian revolution!**

## **Crisis of the Palestinian liberation movement: roots and solutions (1983)**

*George Habash delivered the following lecture to a group of Palestinian and Arab cadres and intellectuals assembled in the building of the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists in Damascus on October 31, 1983. The lecture was originally published in PFLP Bulletin #69, 1983.*

First of all, I want to thank the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists – not because they gave me the opportunity to speak today, but because of the subject they specified for discussion at this critical time. Regardless of the controversy about the primacy of the word or of matter, I believe all of us agree about the role of the word – the role of theory and analysis, the role of determining programs based on this analysis.

In this critical period of the revolution, the task shouldered by the General Union of Palestinian Writers and Journalists is that of the word. The role of the word is to find a way out of the crisis we are currently facing in the Palestinian revolution, in the PLO, in Fatah and, if I am not mistaken, in all the organizations of the Palestinian revolution. Afterwards, I hope that my talk will be viewed as a humble contribution to the subject we are discussing. I do not say this out of modesty but based on my understanding of the size and importance of this question, which requires the collective Palestinian mind and consciousness to find answers to the subject at hand: The Crisis of the Palestinian revolution: roots and solutions.

Before dealing with the essence of the question, I emphasize that there are no rapid, magical solutions to the crisis. After providing the clear vision and analysis, and determining the roots and solutions, the Palestinian revolution will not be able to find its way out of this crisis without a long process of accumulative struggle. The outcome of this would be a change in the class structure of the leadership of the Palestinian revolution, a correction of its political line and in its organizational and military programs.

I know very well that all the diseases in the Palestinian arena – in the fields of finance, administration, and discipline – are now the subjects of intense discussions among our people. But allow me to say that all these diseases will be corrected in the process of reform we are working on in the political, organizational, and military programs.

Permit me to talk in the language of the concrete political situation

we are living in, instead of speaking theoretically, without this being interpreted as an underestimation of the great importance of theory. I feel it is preferable to concentrate our talk on the political implications.

### **Historical achievements not subject to discussion**

Before talking about the crisis, allow me to speak about the great achievements of the Palestinian revolution. I believe that we as Palestinian people, as Palestinian organizations, and as Palestinian and Arab intellectuals, commit a mistake if we do not see the other side of the march of the Palestinian revolution, i.e., its achievements. The Palestinian revolution has made great and historical gains. I will mention the ones I believe are accepted without any discussion:

First: crystallization of the militant national identity of the Palestinian people and the rallying of their struggle around the PLO, their sole, legitimate representative. Whoever experienced the history of the Palestinian question after 1948, realizes the significance of this point. The PLO represents the national entity, embodying the Palestinian national identity that encompasses all Palestinian nationalist classes, groups, and personalities. Thus, the PLO constitutes a great historical achievement we must preserve. Is this fact open to discussion? Perhaps, but to me it is indisputable.

Second: The battle of Beirut, where the great steadfastness provided an example by bringing about the longest war in the history of the Arab Israeli conflict. This example must not be dismissed. The war in Lebanon revealed the deficiencies of all the Arab regimes. I say this based on our deep interest in serious Arab-Palestinian confrontation. The purpose of this is to make these regimes stand with full responsibility against the Zionist danger, and to make use of the lessons of the battle of Beirut. The battle of Beirut and its aftermath revealed not only the crisis of the Palestinian revolution; it also revealed very clearly the impotence of the Arab nationalist regimes – their inability to combat the enemy even when the Palestinian revolution provided the opportunity to do so during ninety days of fighting.

We in the PFLP endeavor to strengthen the alliance among the Palestinian revolution, the Lebanese National Movement, the Syrian regime, and all Arab nationalist regimes, based on our view that the conflict in the area is between the forces of Arab national liberation on the one hand, and imperialism, Zionism, and reaction on the other.

I am not advocating a narrow Palestinian approach, saying: “This is

what we did as Palestinians. Where were you as Syrians, Libyans, or Egyptians?” I condemn this approach very seriously. What is required is an examination of all the lessons of the battle of Beirut. We are required to deal with the following: One, the crisis of the Arab nationalist regimes – roots and solutions; and two, the crisis of the Arab national liberation movement – roots and solutions. It is totally unacceptable to lose sight of this question, to lose the lessons of the battle of Beirut, which were a source of pride for all the Arab masses. I know how the masses, in every country without exception, welcomed the Palestinian fighters when they evacuated Beirut. This was not merely an emotional position; it had great significance. The battle of Beirut revealed the deficiencies of the Arab governments. And it also revealed the deficiencies of the Palestinian revolution.

### **The crisis of the Palestinian revolution**

Did the crisis of the Palestinian revolution begin after our departure from Beirut? No, its roots extend further back. Knowing the Palestinian situation, with all its primary and secondary contradictions, I can say that after Beirut this crisis reached a qualitatively new stage. The major reason for this crisis is the rightist political line, which emerged and reached a peak, especially after Beirut. At this time, it began to seriously threaten the Palestinian revolution with involvement in the US reactionary plans proposed as solutions to the Palestinian problem. If we try to escape from this fact, we will not grasp the destructive effects of this political line. Let us take some examples to show what we mean.

Despite the great moral and political victory we achieved after Beirut, the great defect that had taken place in the balance of forces was apparent to any political observer or Palestinian leader. Accordingly, we can conclude that the Palestinian revolution is unable to achieve its national objectives by depending on forms of political struggle as the primary and basic method. Unfortunately, the influential elements in the PLO leadership laid down their answers to all the problems that confronted us after Beirut, and pointed out the real perils threatening the Palestinian people and vanguards. Based on their assumptions, these influential elements reached the following conviction: “We did everything possible; this is the outcome of eighteen years of struggle; let us take what can be taken regardless of the size of our share.” How can we otherwise explain the position towards the Reagan plan?

From when the Reagan plan was proposed on September 1, until the

Palestine National Council was held, all of you read statements saying: “There are positive points in the Reagan plan” and “The plan can be discussed”. In spite of the dialogue that took place during the PNC session, and the emphasis on the importance of a clear political line, brother Yassar Arafat went to the political committee meeting and said his famous word: “Say ‘laam’ to the Reagan plan”, which means do not say “yes” and do not say “no”. After that, we said: Our masses cannot understand such a position, we cannot mobilize them on this basis in order to continue the revolution and overcome the difficult circumstances. Therefore, such a position is rejected.

Yet some people registered their reservations on the text of the resolutions adopted by the PNC session, because these do not give them the freedom of political movement and maneuver they wanted.

We in the PFLP made our reservations from the other angle because the text was not sufficient. We believe that it is better to totally reject the Reagan plan, instead of rejecting it only because it is not a sound basis for a solution to the Palestinian problem. You all know that the resolutions of the PNC did not deter those who think about dealing with imperialist schemes. All of you know of the negotiations that took place in Jordan after the PNC. As a result of the broad opposition, including the Central Committee of Fatah, a joint statement with the Jordanian regime was not issued. Still, is it not our right to question what it means that the chairman of the PLO Executive Committee approved the proposed statement and said to King Hussein, “Give me the opportunity to consult my colleagues”?

The examples are many. Everyone can ask himself: What is the meaning of the series of political positions taken by the influential forces in the PLO after our evacuation from Beirut? On the Reagan plan? On strengthening relations with the Jordanian regime? On continuing relations with the Camp David regime of Egypt? What is the meaning of the contacts with Zionist forces undertaken not only by Issam Sartawi, but by the Chairman of the Executive Committee? Does all this have a political content or not? Certainly, it exhibits a political line. I will give a final example of this political line:

### **The relationship with the Syrian regime**

I want to be courageous and clear on this subject. I hold the official leadership of the PLO responsible for a big part of the deterioration of the relations with the Syrian regime. There are some Arab nationalist

regimes who are waiting for the opportunity to contain us, but this is one thing; how the official leadership of the PLO dealt with the relations with the Syrian regime is another.

Prior to the battle of Beirut, there was a delegation from Fatah to discuss the strategic relations between Fatah and Syria. Why did this step not succeed? The point lies in the leading circles. The delegation reached an agreement with Syria, but the individualist leadership put this agreement in the bottom drawer. Later the Israeli aggression took place.

During the war, all the Palestinian organizations, without exception, had a united view about the impotence of the Arab regimes, but we in the PFLP furthermore distinguished clearly between this fact and on the other hand opening a battle with the nationalist regimes, Syria in particular. In spite of the pain that we suffered during the battle as a result of the nationalist regime's shortcomings, we did not lose sight of the constellation of contradictions, that there are nationalist regimes with shortcomings on one hand, and reactionary regimes directly or indirectly participating in the plot on the other.

How did the influential leadership in the PLO act on this question? It started to shun the Syrian regime and daily made contacts with Saudi leaders. Afterwards, the idea of all the leaders of the Palestinian revolution was to go to Damascus and discuss all issues and intensify the alliance after reviewing the previous stage. On the contrary, the individualist leadership decided that brother Arafat should be in Greece. This was a clear affront to the Syrian regime.

Thinking responsibly concerning the relation with Syria requires evaluating not only the geographic factor, but also the constellation of contradictions and the position and role of Syria in this context. In light of the importance of relations with Syria, the PFLP raised two main slogans after our evacuation from Beirut: "To deepen national unity", and "To strengthen relations with Syria."

Without this formula, we saw no possibility for finding a way out of the situation in the aftermath of the battle of Beirut. On this basis, we invested all our efforts for brother Arafat to come back to Syria and make Syria his headquarters for leading the work.

Brother Arafat returned to Syria, but what happened then? A series of decisions were made, whereby Abu Zaim was appointed deputy commander and Abu Hajem responsible of the revolution's forces in Lebanon! Does this stem from responsibility towards a decisive point in the march of the revolution? Does this exhibit vigilance concerning the independent Palestinian national decision-making? We struggle for the

independence of Palestinian decision-making based on our understanding of the dialectical relationship between our independent decision and the Arab nationalist and progressive forces and regimes.

### **Palestinian rightist policy entered a qualitatively new stage**

We must now carefully determine how to classify these positions taken after Beirut. Do they signify the Palestinian right wing's definitive shift into the enemy camp? Are these positions merely a continuation of the unprincipled maneuvering we have known in the Palestinian arena since 1970?

My answer to the first question is no, the Palestinian right did not move to the enemy position. Why? First, due to the nature of the proposed US solution for the Palestinian problem. Second, due to the extent of nationalist and popular opposition to the US solutions.

My answer to the second question is also no, this is not a mere continuation of the unprincipled maneuvering we have seen in the past. For the first time, we are facing real willingness to cooperate with the US solution when a share of these solutions is offered to the Palestinian bourgeoisie. Therefore, we are facing a qualitatively new stage which began after our evacuation from Beirut, but with roots extending back to the seventies.

The Palestinian bourgeoisie took up arms, having ambitions and dreams which I believe were genuine. They began to face difficulties as well as becoming a politically recognized force on the Arab and international levels. Based on these conditions, the Palestinian bourgeoisie adopted the position that corresponds to its class nature: to accept a share in the settlement. The rightist approach is greatly responsible for the outcome of two main stages: our experience in Jordan, and the stage of settlement.

### **The Jordan experience**

For a period of time in Jordan, we experienced the phenomenon of dual power. For a while the power of the resistance was stronger than that of the Jordanian regime. Dual power is a temporary phenomenon, later to be decided in favor of the revolution or the Jordanian regime. Why was it settled in favor of the regime? It was because of the political line adopted by the influential leadership. At the same time, the Palestinian left bears a share of the responsibility commensurate with its size, weight, and participation in the leadership of the revolution.



Our experience in Jordan clarifies the necessity of defining the enemy camp and the camp of friends. Concretely, the leadership disproved the possibility of neutralizing Arab reaction. I remember well that in Jordan, a number of Palestinian fighters refused to fight the regime, because they were not mobilized on this basis: that reaction is a part of the enemy camp.

### **The stage of settlement**

The settlement path is a destructive one in the Palestinian arena; we find it at the roots of the crisis.

This requires a few short words about the struggle between the Arab people and the Zionist movement. How do we view this conflict? What is its nature? Can it be settled without one of the parties to the conflict being eradicated? Will this area be a Zionist empire or a united, progressive society in which Arabs and Jews can live in peace? How do we view Zionism? Can we, if we wanted, coexist with Zionism?

At a time when the Soviet Union has formed a committee of scientists and representatives of public opinion to expose Zionism, it is peculiar and to be condemned that the Palestinian right establishes contacts with Zionists.

Can we separate “Israel” from the Zionist movement? Is “Israel” not the material, economic, military, and political embodiment of the Zionist movement? Is it possible to defeat Zionism without defeating “Israel”? Was Nazism defeated without the defeat of Hitler’s regime?

These issues have been raised without receiving sufficient attention, but now we understand that they lie at the heart of the roots of the problem we are facing today.

### **Two approaches to fighting the Palestinian right**

During this period, it has become clear that there are two approaches to fighting the Palestinian right. One approach is to wage this battle, while at the same time concentrating on the importance of the PLO’s role and the necessity of adhering to it as a main weapon in facing the enemy. The second approach shares with the first approach an awareness of the dangers of the right wing and the necessity of confronting it. Beyond that, there are several points of difference on theoretical, political, and organizational issues. Although we assign primary responsibility for the crisis to the Palestinian right, we will not make the mistake of being

unable to correctly determine the constellation of contradictions in the Palestinian arena.

Next we must examine these secondary contradictions, which I hope will not become primary contradictions, between the forces that want to save the Palestinian revolution through an organizational and political reform. The first point of disagreement, which I begin with because it is dangerous, is on using the method of armed force. We disagree totally with this method because we see its destructive effects in the Palestinian arena. We cannot find any justification for it. Whatever the intentions and desires for reform, the effects of this method are destructive to all. This will lead, whether we like it or not, to divisions and containment. This error is comparable to a crime – whoever begins it is criminal; whoever thinks of it is criminal; whoever plans it is criminal; whoever fuels it is criminal.

There is no example of how another national democratic revolution solved its contradictions that applies to our revolution. The contradictions inside the Palestinian revolution must be solved through democratic dialogue and struggle on the political and mass levels. Others may give some examples to say that this is not an uncontested principle; the Algerian revolution may be mentioned in this context. But allow me to ask: In light of the particularity of the Palestinian problem, the presence of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and the diaspora, is it possible in the present situation to solve contradictions through internal fighting?

Let us suppose for the sake of discussion that the situation in Tripoli ends in favor of the protest phenomenon (led by Abu Musa and Abu Saleh). Is this going to solve the question in the occupied territories or in Jordan, and in what way? It is preferable to deal with these questions now. This is the first question concerning the differences between the two approaches for confronting the right.

### **The downfall of the right or of its programs?**

Then comes a theoretical question on the basis of which we can determine many issues: What is the position of the right in the Palestinian arena? Did it become non-nationalist? Is the non-nationalist right merely some individuals or strata of the bourgeoisie? What do we mean by the downfall of the right? Does it mean we are in the process of a complete political and class polarization? Or do we mean the downfall of the program of the right? Assuming the programs of the right are abolished,

can the revolution continue with the same leading elements? Or must a change take place in the PLO institutions commensurate with the size of the national democratic forces? Can we dodge these questions? If we do so now, can we dodge them after one month, or one year?

I believe, for example, that there is a difference between a reform movement inside Fatah, which will automatically reflect itself on the PLO, and a movement that seeks to conquer Fatah. If the protest phenomenon faction says: We are Fatah, and there is no other Fatah but the traitors, this raises a series of questions. If they say: We want a radical change in Fatah, this would be another issue.

There are two factions in Fatah; this is the reality. The Central Council (August session that dealt with the internal crisis) distributed its document to both factions.

Recognizing the existence of another faction requires a dialogue; it requires stopping the fighting. If the answer is: We are Fatah, then we ask “which Fatah?” Nationalist Fatah? Or national democratic Fatah? Or national democratic revolutionary Fatah? For each of these cases, there would be a distinct political line.

If the other faction adopts the view that they are Fatah, then they must specify which Fatah. If they answer nationalist Fatah, then their alliance policy is understandable. (The reference here is primarily to alliances within the Palestinian revolution.) If they answer progressive nationalist Fatah, then their alliances are no longer understandable. If they, answer national democratic revolutionary Fatah, then they must radically deepen their alliances (with the left forces).

Therefore, despite our agreement on fighting the right, the other part of the problem remains: There are two approaches in dealing with the problem in Fatah, and two approaches to reforming the PLO. Concerning the crisis in Fatah our position excludes fighting and relies on democratic dialogue; it is necessary to recognize that there are two factions. The crisis could be solved on the basis of the Central Council’s document. Concerning the PLO, I fear that the Palestinian arena will become even more complicated than it is now if the approach that says, “We are the PLO”, prevails. If the issue concerns the PLO, then we would become a party to the political battle taking place. How do we understand the PLO’s crisis? How do we understand the solutions?

When one party or leader, outside the legal framework of the PLO, declares the downfall of this or that leader, we say this is a dangerous method and we reject it completely. (This is a reference to statements such as those made by Tareq al Khudra, commander of the Palestine

Liberation Army in Syria, that Arafat no longer represents him.)

### **Program of unity and democratic reform**

How do we understand things in the PLO? Allow me in this context to emphasize the program for unity and democratic reform presented by the PFLP and DFLP. I hope the motives for presenting this program are understood. Our motives are deeply national and stem from a deep sense of responsibility. I fear that in the poisoned atmosphere now prevailing in the Palestinian arena, some might suspect other motives. It may be said that it is an attempt to inherit Fatah, or that the two fronts are trying to promote their own role. However, no one who feels the reality of the danger threatening the Palestinian revolution could have such intentions.

The program for unity and democratic reform has two aspects: political and organizational. I have spoken about the political aspect. Now I want to point out the importance of the organizational aspect.

Previous experience in political work in the Palestinian revolution has taught me that even if the political program is adopted unanimously by all bodies of the PLO one cannot be sure it will be implemented if organizational guarantees are not provided. This requires deciding on the organizational program, which is supposed to include collective leadership and the participation of all nationalist forces on the basis of relative representation. It also requires determining precise guidelines for the decision-making process and for how the program should be executed.

It is said that the Palestinian arena is an oasis of democracy. This is true in the field of talk. In the past, the influential leadership told us: Say what you want, and we do what we want. This is freedom of speech, but not of democratic decision-making and participation. Whoever thinks that the organizational question is isolated from the political one is mistaken.

One more point remains: Whether the reform should take place through the legal institutions of the PLO. The following big question might be raised: What are the guarantees that this reform will take place through the legal institutions?

The guarantee will be by reviewing the leading institutions of the organizations. Our program includes this point, and on this a decisive battle should be waged to guarantee the process of reform. This program has no value unless it becomes the program of all nationalist groups, forces, and individuals because it correctly poses the issues. This is the challenge that awaits us all.

We propose this program for discussion, and we shall listen carefully to

all views. Then we can determine the points of agreement and differences without any detours or evasions. Then we begin by executing the points of agreement in the PLO. Without this, we will find ourselves facing a destructive right wing and destructive inter-Palestinian fighting.

Someone might ask: What is the significance of this program at a time when the situation is worsening around Tripoli? The fighting there might reduce the weight of this position to that of a feather. Our duty is to make this position as weighty as possible by crystallizing a broad mass current with extensions in the occupied territories, Jordan, and all places where the Palestinian people are present, in order to become a large force capable of cornering all deviations in the Palestinian arena.

### **Support for the Arab national liberation movement**

We will put this program to every group in the Arab national liberation movement. After we listen to their views, we will demand their support, because what is taking place in the Palestinian arena affects the entire Arab area. It is the duty of all Arab nationalists to participate in stopping it.

The course we are advocating is not the path of the PFLP-DFLP Joint Leadership, but the path of salvation for the Palestinian people. We are part of the Palestinian revolution. Our opinion was sought. We are presenting it in the program of unity and democratic reform.

The Arab national liberation movement and the socialist countries are torn over what is taking place in the Palestinian arena. If someone says, the socialist countries support the legitimacy (the present leading bodies) and nothing else; we say this is not true. If it is said that they support reform and nothing else, we also say no.

These countries see the importance of the PLO's role in confronting the US schemes, and also want unity and reform. Moreover, they think that any change should take place through the legal framework.

Whoever wants to oppose US imperialism until the end has to adhere to the PLO as a political weapon and defender of Palestinian national rights: the right of return, self-determination and establishing a Palestinian state on the national soil. The US and "Israel" say: No to the PLO, no to the Palestinian state. We want a united PLO that adheres to the national political line. Why unity? Because if one group can assemble one hundred members of the PNC, the next day the other group can assemble two hundred, for example. Somebody might say that this is blackmail in the name of unity, but I say no.

Finally, let us assume for the sake of discussion that the subjective factor with respect to the Palestinian revolution is correct and strong. Let us go even farther and assume that the democratic forces in the PLO hold the leading positions, led by a person like Ho Chi Minh. Is this enough for implementing our national rights? The answer is no. Why? Because there is a particularity of the Palestinian cause in view of the Zionist settlement in Palestine and the organic relationship between the Zionist entity and imperialism. This means that the Palestinian revolution cannot achieve its objectives without a dialectical relationship to the Arab revolution. Palestinian land cannot be liberated without bases for the Palestinian revolution in the surrounding countries. If we want the occupied territories to be liberated, we must create a significant shift in the balance of forces militarily. Through diplomatic struggle, we have gained the support of 120 countries, but this is definitely not enough to liberate the occupied homeland.

Thus, the Palestinian revolution must concentrate on its relations with the forces of Arab national liberation, especially in the surrounding countries, in order to become a factor for change in these countries. In the case that this change takes place, these countries will become bases for the Palestinian revolution through which it can lead the struggle for liberation. On this basis, the interconnection between the Palestinian crisis and the crisis of the Arab national liberation movement becomes clear, as does the relation between bringing about an advance in the Palestinian situation and for the Arab national liberation movement.

## **The crisis of the Arab national liberation movement: roots and solutions (1984)**

*George Habash gave the following interview to the PFLP's Democratic Palestine magazine in late November 1984. It was originally published in Democratic Palestine #1, November 1984.*

**Democratic Palestine: Comrade Habash, in PFLP Bulletin #69, we printed your speech on the crisis of the Palestinian revolution, where you touched on the relation between this crisis and that of the Arab national liberation movement. Today, we ask you to concentrate on the crisis of the Arab national liberation movement – its roots and solutions.**

George Habash: It is impossible to evaluate the present Palestinian crisis, or to foresee the future of the Palestinian revolution without seeing the real interrelationship between the Palestinian revolution and the Arab national liberation movement. To illustrate this, suppose that Egypt at present was ruled by the party of the working class. Suppose Egypt had a strong alliance with the Soviet Union. Suppose this was the case in other Arab countries surrounding Palestine. Then the situation of the Palestinian revolution would be completely different.

Concerning the Arab national liberation movement, we must distinguish between two features of its crisis. One is the class structure and leadership of that branch of the movement that assumed state power in a number of Arab countries. In this case, with the exception of Democratic Yemen, the crisis is structural. The second feature is the relative weakness of the working class and its parties. Concerning this branch of the movement, the question is a different one.

To explain the roots of the structural crisis, we must go back in history and see which class forces were leading the Arab national liberation movement at each stage, and what they achieved.

### **Anticolonial struggle**

Historically, we can trace the roots of the Arab national liberation movement back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. At that time, the aim was freedom from the Ottoman empire and having a united Arab state, especially in this part of the Arab world, the Mashreq.<sup>9</sup> No social

<sup>9</sup> Mashreq: the eastern part of the Arab world.

demands were raised at that time. The slogans were those of dignity, freedom, unity, Arabism, etc. By the way, certain Lebanese figures, including Maronites, played a positive role in the cultural movement that was a prelude to the political movement.

During the first World War, the leaders of the movement decided to cooperate with the Allies, hoping that after the French and British defeated the Ottoman Empire, the Arabs would have freedom and unity. Of course, before the end of the war, the Sykes-Picot agreement (to divide the area between Britain and France) was exposed by the Bolsheviks. When the war was over, the Arab national liberation movement found that the French and British had replaced the Ottomans. The traditional leaders of the movement, Hussein, Sharif of Mecca, and his sons Abdullah and Feisal (the Hashemites), decided to cooperate with the plans of the colonial powers, but the mainstream of the movement rejected this. The victory of the October revolution in Russia, and the new incentive it gave to the oppressed peoples, increased the Arab people's motivation for struggle.

From 1918 through the twenties, the movement tried to fight for the previous slogans, but as you know, the reality was that the area was divided. The leaders raised the same slogans – freedom and Arab unity. In practice, they began fighting the new form of imperialism in each country: fighting the British Mandate in Palestine, the French in Syria, and the British in Iraq. There was armed struggle: In Syria, the revolt led by Sultan al Atrash in 1925, and another revolt in the Alawite area in the north; in Palestine, the 1936-39 revolt; the 1919 revolt in Iraq, etc. Until the second World War, the struggle continued mainly against French and British colonialism.

The outcome of the second World War changed many things. Britain and France became secondary powers in relation to the US. There was the victory of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the socialist camp. There was a general change on the international level as seen in the United Nations Charter and the slogans of freedom, peace, self-determination for the people's, etc. On this basis, the Arab national liberation movement was able to attain some victories. Of course, we must evaluate the character of these in relation to the slogans that had been raised. These victories were limited to gaining independence in Syria and Lebanon, their joining the UN, having a flag and national anthem, etc. This was formal political independence without unity.

We can relate the nature of these victories to the class leadership of the movement at that time. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century



until the Second World War, the leadership of the national movement was in the hands of the feudalists and the emerging bourgeoisie. During the Second World War, the bourgeoisie had expanded, especially in Palestine and Lebanon, and in Syria to some extent, because it was in the interests of French and British imperialism to facilitate the growth of a local bourgeoisie; they needed more local production to supply the needs of their soldiers. Thus, in the late thirties, we saw a new phenomenon in the area – the growth of a bourgeoisie, which was, however, subordinate to the imperialist powers.

### **Demise of the feudal leadership**

1948 was a turning point in the history of the Arab national liberation movement. At this time it became apparent to the Arab masses that these feudal and bourgeois classes, which had received formal political independence, were not at all able to defend the people's real interests. What happened in Palestine in 1948 exposed the meaning of this independence: that it was superficial; it meant nothing in terms of the people's interests or ability to face the Zionist attack.

I experienced this time. Even without a class analysis, it was very easy for me and the masses to see that there was no independence, no dignity. One could see that these newly formed states must disappear in order to have a truly independent Arab state and the unity required to face Zionism in Palestine. At this time, we said, "Traitors, traitors, they only want to keep their thrones." There was broad popular rage against the rulers. The class leadership of the Arab national liberation movement, represented by the feudal lords, and this type of bourgeoisie, had failed. If the movement was to fulfill its aims, it would have to be reconstituted. It is thus not a coincidence that in the following period we witnessed the formation of the Ba'ath Party and the Arab Nationalist Movement, and the July 23 revolution in Egypt in 1952. These movements grew at this particular time to fill the vacancy created by the demise of the formal leadership.

In terms of class structure, the former leadership of the Arab national liberation movement was replaced by the leadership of the petit bourgeoisie, which was more related to the masses and their motives than the feudal lords and the bourgeoisie. The fifties and sixties marked a new era in the history of the Arab national liberation movement. Prior to the crisis it is now suffering, it achieved many positive things.

## **The rise of the petit bourgeoisie**

Concerning the crisis in the Palestinian revolution, when we say that the Palestinian bourgeoisie has failed and can no longer lead, we must at the same time remember that in the previous stage, the Palestinian revolution made real achievements under its leadership. The same applies to the new stage of the Arab national liberation movement, which was led by the July 23 revolution in particular. Before exhausting its role, the new leadership achieved many things. Why were our masses so enthusiastic in their support of Nasser's leadership? Due to many aims being fulfilled. In Egypt, the slogans were no longer only independence and dignity; they acquired a social touch. There was the law on land reform, distribution of land to the peasants, the start of cooperatives, nationalization of banks and foreign trade, the national battle to liberate Egypt from British colonialism, nationalization of the Suez Canal, the beginning of links with the socialist countries. There was Nasser's role in the Non-Aligned Movement, which at that time was clearly anti-imperialist.

Moreover, the atmosphere generated by Nasserism affected the whole Arab world. We saw the start of armed liberation struggles in Algeria, Yemen, and Oman, all supported by Nasser's Egypt. There was Egypt's unity with Syria, which was fully supported by the Arab masses. There was the downfall of the monarchy in Iraq and later Libya, and the defeat of the feudalist-subordinate capitalist coalition in Syria, etc.

## **Class roots of the crisis**

Now, let us follow this petit bourgeoisie after its rise to power, remembering that things are dynamic; nothing is static. When it came to power, the petit bourgeoisie wanted to achieve the aims of the masses that were related to its own. Then, after a few years of struggle against imperialism, when this petit bourgeoisie started to acquire its own national market, a change occurred in its class interests. Through the public sector, the interests of this class grew. It obtained facilities and many privileges and was able to accumulate capital. At the same time, the old system was not completely destroyed. Sectors of agriculture and manufacture were still based on private ownership. This capital, which came into the hands of the bureaucratic petit bourgeoisie, was invested in partnership with the bourgeois and feudal classes that had been removed from power. Thus, a link was forged between the petit bourgeoisie and the classes it had removed from power. This led to suppression of the masses, hesitancy in

continuing the national democratic revolution, and diminishing the anti-imperialist trend.

This is what paved the way for the crisis that became apparent in 1967. Instead of the Arab regimes winning the war in 1967 or making it a prolonged war, which could uproot imperialism and Zionism, the war and its aftermath deepened the trend to the right. After 1967, at the time when the masses demanded that Nasser remain in his position, he had the chance to radicalize the Arab national liberation movement. However, the class and economic structure of the regime was stronger than Nasser's wishes. What happened in Sadat's era signified that the Arab national liberation movement, as led by the petit bourgeoisie, will come to an end. It will eventually reconcile its interests with those of Arab reaction, imperialism, and even Zionism. The results of the 1967 war were a much deeper setback for the Arab national liberation movement than that of 1948. In 1948, the Arab rulers were not able to liberate Palestine, but at least they refused to grant Zionism the legal right to occupy Palestine. Sadat, on the other hand, initiated cooperation not only with Arab reaction and imperialism, but also with Zionism.

Of course, other branches of the petit bourgeois Arab national liberation movement remained anti-imperialist to a certain extent. Yet what happened to the Egyptian regime is very likely to happen to the other national regimes, which have the same class and ideological structure. What happened with the petit bourgeoisie that gained power in Iraq? It began as anti-imperialist in 1968 and did many things for the national and popular interests. Now it is taking the same path.

There is only one exception to this rule, and that is the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. Here was also a nationalist revolution led by a petit bourgeoisie. The experience of PDR Yemen shows that if certain conditions are fulfilled, this class can achieve the aims of the national democratic revolution and embark on socialist construction. The required conditions include developing a party based on Marxism-Leninism and democratic centralism, having real democracy for the masses, being open to form a genuine popular front, and having strategic relations with the socialist community. Under these conditions, certain strata of the petit bourgeoisie can fulfill the tasks of the national democratic revolution in alliance with the working class, the peasants, and other oppressed strata.

However, PDR Yemen is not the main feature; the main feature is what happened in Egypt and Iraq. The crisis of the main branch of the Arab national liberation movement led by the petit bourgeoisie from 1952 until today is a structural one. It is rooted in the class nature of the

leadership. The petit bourgeoisie that assumed the position of a bourgeoisie cannot achieve real liberation or a national democratic revolution. It is not like the bourgeoisie in Europe or Japan. Rather it is fated to remain as a parasitic bourgeoisie, linked and subordinated to the international imperialist bourgeoisie. Moreover, the ethnic and sectarian conflicts in more than one Arab country show that this class cannot preserve national unity in its own state.

### **The working class parties**

The crisis of the other section of the Arab national liberation movement – the working class and its organizations – is a qualitatively different matter. It is not structural, because the working class and its parties can achieve the aims of the Arab national liberation movement. It is in their class interests to achieve the national democratic revolution headed towards socialism. Moreover, the international situation is conducive to this in view of the growing capacity of the socialist community and the structural crisis of imperialism. This has already occurred in other countries, a prime example being Vietnam, which also suffered partition. The Vietnamese revolution achieved liberation and unity and began socialist construction.

The crisis of the Arab communist parties, as reflected in their limited growth and achievements, is not structural, but related to certain significant mistakes in their political line. We dealt with this in the Political Report of the PFLP's fourth National Congress. For example, many communist parties regarded this stage as not being theirs. They thought that a national democratic revolution is usually the revolution of the bourgeoisie. They did not take into consideration that things changed radically after the October revolution. They overlooked Lenin's theory on the link between the national democratic and the socialist revolution, and the importance of the working class's leading role. When certain communist parties have this view, of course it has consequences. They took part in the Arab national liberation movement, but due to their theoretical assumptions, they did not aim to play a leading role. This complicated their situation.

In the fifties, when Nasser's leadership achieved successes, certain communist parties began to speak of the non-capitalist path of development, and the possibility of achieving socialism in this way. This means that the bourgeoisie can achieve socialism, which is a contradiction in itself. This was a very grave theoretical mistake. In Egypt, the Communist Party

dissolved itself, because they said that Nasser could achieve socialism.

There were also mistakes concerning the Arab national question, specifically on the questions of Palestine and Arab unity. Despite the clear theoretical position adopted by the international communist movement against Zionism, as a racist, colonial movement tied to imperialism, a change occurred in the Arab communist parties' position on the question of Palestine after 1948. This had negative effects on the national and mass level. Moreover, for a long period, the Arab communist parties failed to recognize the concept of an Arab nation, without taking into consideration the importance of this concept as a weapon in confronting the imperialist, Zionist, and reactionary plots.

This should give an idea not only of the roots of the crisis but also of how we should try to find solutions. Briefly, it is our duty to emphasize that the bourgeois leadership of the Arab national liberation movement is coming to an end. Accordingly, the working class and its parties must prepare themselves to achieve the tasks that have been put on the agenda, but not achieved, by the feudal, bourgeois, and petit bourgeois classes. These tasks can only be achieved by the working class – its party, ideology, strategy, and international alliances.

**Based on the battle of Beirut, some concluded that allying with the Arabs was useless. Why does the Front reject this narrow, Palestinian-only view?**

It would be a fatal mistake to adopt a narrow Palestinian line. This means that Palestine will not be liberated. On the contrary, the experience of Beirut confirms the PFLP's view that the Palestinian revolution is part of the Arab national liberation movement and the Arab revolution.

There are many facts that support our view. The first is the simple fact that the Palestinian people are part of the Arab nation. The Arab liberation movement did not intend to have Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon as separate states. It aimed at a united Arab state, for the simple reason that the Arab nation has most, though not all, of the factors that constitute a nation. The division of the Mashreq was the work of the colonial powers, as seen in the Sykes-Picot treaty. Are we to remain victims of what was proposed in this agreement?

Of course, many years have passed since the partition of the area, and this has led some people to think that this idea of the unity of the Arab nation is no longer essential. Let us put this argument aside and concentrate on the practical reasons for the PFLP's rejection of any

narrow Palestinian trend.

First, the Zionist colonization and Israeli institutions have developed far beyond what we faced in 1948. In 1948, despite all their efforts, the Zionists were only able to gather 600,000-700,000 settlers in Palestine, this is despite the evacuation of Jews from Europe due to fascism. Today, Zionism boasts of more than three million settlers in Palestine.

Second, more than half the Palestinian people are living outside of Palestine, mainly in the surrounding Arab countries. In Jordan, there are over one million; in Lebanon, about half a million, in Syria about 300,000; in Egypt 50,000-100,000.

In this situation, how must we fight to liberate Palestine? Of course, our people in Palestine fight directly against the Israeli authorities and settlements. Close to two million Palestinians inside confronting the Israeli army can create immense problems for "Israel". This says to the world that we exist and have our rights; we will not accept Israeli control, imperialism, etc. However, we are up against Likud's line, insisting that all of Palestine is "Israel". Even the Labor Party concedes only part of Palestine, to be connected with Jordan. We are up against the enormously equipped Israeli army and militarized society. In view of these facts, if we direct our struggle against "Israel" only through the Palestinians inside, will we obtain our objectives? No! This explains the fact that in spite of eighteen years of struggle, we have not liberated one inch of Palestinian soil.

In order to liberate Palestine, Palestinians in the occupied land must fight, but there must also be a role for the Palestinians outside. Now we get to the essential point. Whenever we, as Palestinians, fight from outside, we have been overwhelmed by the following experience, both in Jordan and in Lebanon: "Israel" begins to threaten the regimes of these countries, saying, "We do not want the Palestinians operating from your soil. Either you take care of them, or we will do ourselves, by conquering your land." In Jordan, the result was that the regime made a direct attack to finish off the Palestinian revolution. In Lebanon, the reactionary regime tried many times to finish off the Palestinian revolution prior to the 1982 Israeli invasion. I think that the Palestinian revolution will face this same situation in any of the countries surrounding Palestine, unless we can rely on genuinely national democratic regimes that will say to "Israel": "The Palestinians have every right to struggle against you, and we have every right to support them. We will not curtail them for the sake of Zionism." Thus, the Palestinian revolution should have very close relations with the masses and nationalist forces in Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and Lebanon. Only

in this way can we continue our struggle.

Third, today, it is clearer than ever that Zionism aims not only at Palestine; it is aiming to establish a Zionist empire that would include all of Palestine, the Golan Heights, and South Lebanon. These areas would be within the borders of "Greater Israel". In addition to its territorial ambitions, "Israel" wants to be an imperialist force in the whole Middle East. Therefore, any Arab people seeking true independence must fight these expansionist and aggressive aims. What is happening in Lebanon is the prime example of this.

If this point can be made very clear to the masses through active propaganda and organizational work, things will change in the years to come. "Israel" will not retain its present position. We must clarify to the Lebanese people that "Israel" has specific interests in occupying the South and dominating all of Lebanon. We must convince the Jordanian people that it is impossible to have dignity or freedom alongside the presence of Zionism and "Israel". We must work to have the Egyptian people see things as they are; we must ask them if they have real freedom and dignity. We must make it clear to all Arab people that "Israel" is a tool in the hands of imperialism, ready to attack anyone that resists imperialism. If these things were apparent to all, there would not be a solely Palestinian revolution, which will fail totally. Instead, there would be a Palestinian-Arab revolution against Zionism and imperialism. This is the correct path.

Objectively, things are moving in this direction. Today it is clear for the Lebanese people that "Israel" is not occupying the South to safeguard its borders from Palestinian guerrillas. The Lebanese are now fighting "Israel" directly. This must take place in all the surrounding countries, whereby the aggressive Israeli policies would be confronted by the millions of the Arab masses. Then "Israel" would have no way to escape.

We will not be able to liberate one inch of Palestine until we have secured a base from which to fight, in an Arab country bordering Palestine. This joint Palestinian-Arab struggle is the key to liberating Palestine. It is equally in the interests of the Arab masses, for it is the only path to justice and genuine peace in this part of the world.

### **Jewish-Palestinian struggle versus Zionism**

I would like to go beyond the question to mention another important force that we must deal with when speaking of how to liberate Palestine. This is the Jews themselves, the democratic Jews, those Jews who are suffering

the effects of Zionism. To be honest, we have not done very well on this point. If we knew how to work, this could be a very important weapon in the hands of the progressive forces in this region. In fact, there are many Jews who are suffering, but the problem is that their leaders were successful in convincing them that the main contradiction is between the forces of Arab national liberation and all the Jews in "Israel". If we make it clear to Palestinians and Jews that the real enemy is Zionism, Arab reaction, and imperialism, the struggle to liberate Palestine would gain a new dimension. Let us join forces and fight for peace, democracy, freedom, and self-determination, for the Palestinians, for everybody. This would be the path for defeating Zionism and its plans.

**The correctness of the stand taken by the PFLP and DFLP, as seen especially in the Program for Unity and Democratic Reform in the PLO, was not enough to prevent the inter-Palestinian battle in Tripoli. What will we do to resolve the Palestinian crisis?**

We admit that when the sound of canons rose, the voice of our program was almost inaudible. However, we do not believe that the roar of canons will be the loudest indefinitely. Sooner or later, even the quarreling parties will conclude that internal fighting drastically damages the revolution. Moreover, the weight of our people's opinion, and that of our Arab and international allies, will bring the fighting to a stop. In this case, we can really look into the reasons for this crisis. Knowing the reasons, we can struggle politically for the reforms needed in our revolution, especially since the departure from Beirut.

The PFLP-DFLP program presented a clear analysis of this crisis, its roots and manifestations, and the methods of treatment: the needed political and organizational corrections. However, the question that we now face is whether or not it is a matter of a program. We cannot say that we did our duty by presenting this program and now the matter is finished. Some might think that since the fighting has stopped, everything is okay. This is not the case for us. When the fighting stops, the political struggle must be escalated. Not only we, also our people in general, have concluded that things cannot continue as they were before we left Beirut. There should be amendments in the political and organizational line, in every field.

Of course, we presented this program because we think it is correct, but we do not regard it as sacred or immune to changes. Let all Palestinian organizations and people take part in discussing this program. We are