

We wanted to form a broad national popular front including all fighting Palestinian organizations. Since we were not able to achieve this aim due to Fatah's rejection of this formula, the ensuing developments, like the Palestine Liberation Front's withdrawal and the withdrawal of some independents, served to advance the idea of transforming the PFLP into a working class party, and making the PLO the broad popular framework.

Concerning our aspirations and expectations, we didn't imagine that liberating Palestine would be a short picnic.

Based on our understanding of Zionism, its ideology, practice and alliance with imperialism, we knew well that the liberation process would be tough, bitter and historic. Experience has proved the importance of constantly clarifying



this fact to our masses, so that they understand the complexity of this process and are prepared to fight a long-term battle until liberating the homeland.

Do you think that the initiative to form the PFLP was correct at that time? Did you arrive at a correct balance between the Palestinian and the Arab nationalist dimension in the Palestinian struggle. Or did the decision come too late?

I think it came late. We, as the Palestinian branch of the Arab National Movement had thought of practicing armed struggle and people's war against the Zionist enemy since 1964, as evidenced by the 1964 of the martyr, Khaled Abu Aisha, whom the PFLP considers its first martyr.

We deeply believed in the necessity of armed struggle as a method for which there is no substitute in liberating Palestine. At the same time, we saw the need for coordinating with the Nasserite leadership, because we could not envision a comprehensive confrontation of the enemy camp without a connection between Palestinian action and the Arab national liberation movement which was then headed by Nasser's Egypt... We prepared to start the armed struggle, but at the same time we understood that this was subject to coordination with Nasser's Egypt.

I remember a meeting with Abdel Nasser in early 1964, when we as vanguard forces had started to realize the dilemma of Nasserism despite the masses adherence to Nasser's leadership. I had two proposals at the meeting, after presenting a long analysis of Nasserism's. The first suggestion dealt with the armed struggle in South Yemen where the October revolution had started in 1963. At that time, we did not envision its triumph without Nasser's support... I reviewed the early period of the armed struggle and the need for supporting it. The second suggestion dealt with the Palestinian armed struggle, the necessity of initiating it.

Nasser's response to the first suggestion was that he expressed readiness to give support; he suggested starting gradually, after having seen if the conditions are suitable... Concerning the Palestinian issue, I still remember his exact words. He said that «the issue of «Israel» is more complicated than many people think. As I have said on many occasions, I don't have a plan to liberate Palestine, for the battle against Israel is at the same time the battle against US imperialism.» The discussion between us was honest, clear and cordial. Nasser stressed that armed struggle against the Zionist enemy needs deep and long thinking, and finding suitable conditions. It was obvious that he was not enthusiastic or approving of my suggestion to initiate armed struggle against the Zionist enemy. But to us, this issue was very important, so we arrived at a formula with Nasser allowing for preparations for armed struggle.

To us, this meant to start training, reconnaissance, moving arms, etc.

Over the past two decades, the Front has passed through several stages. Can you evaluate these?

The first stage was the formative one which I spoke about when telling how the PFLP was formed as a framework for the Palestinian people's movement, not only as a political party, and how the circumstances following the 1967 defeat gave birth to this idea.

The second stage started with the withdrawal of the Palestine Liberation Front, to establish what has become the PFLP-General Command. As a result of their withdrawal, the PFLP became the Palestinian branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement, because the remaining component (Heroes of Return) was a secondary organization with origins in the ANM as well. As a result, a qualitative transformation occurred in how the PFLP viewed itself. It was no longer a united front of all the classes and stratas of the revolution, like the Vietnamese or Algerian models. Instead, this chance receded, and the Front became mainly an essential organization among the organizations of the Palestinian revolution. One can ask why we maintained the same name... In its first year, the Front succeeded in accumulating a big record of political and military struggle, and it acquired the people's trust.

We aspired to maintain this record, but we realized that we