

PFLP-DFLP: For Left Unity

In our last issue, we printed the PFLP-DFLP communique announcing the formation of a joint political-military leadership on June 25th. In this article, we aim to clarify the political-theoretical reasons and perspectives for left unity in the Palestinian arena. The article also presents the background for the PFLP and DFLP having taken this step towards unity. In the following pages, we print a representative sample of the response there has been to this step from other political forces and from our masses.

The formation of a joint leadership between the PFLP and DFLP, as the beginning of a scientific process leading towards total unity, is a strong indication of the revolutionary development and political maturity of the two fronts. This step opens the way for a revolutionary alternative to existing factionalism and provides a scientific basis for responding to both strategic and immediate issues facing the Palestinian national liberation struggle. Unity on a sound revolutionary basis is the key to overcoming the crisis facing our revolution and to making the internal democratic reforms which are an important prerequisite for any revolutionary change.

Strategic perspective

The importance of left unity in the Palestinian arena is based on the political-theoretical premise that our people's struggle, like any national democratic revolution, needs a strong vanguard leadership to be victorious. Ultimately this means the unity of the left forces into one united communist party. Such a party would be the leading force in a united national front and would moreover insure the continuity of the revolutionary process in the interests of the Palestinian working class and dispossessed masses.

With this as the long-term perspective, it is the duty of all Palestinian left forces to find what concrete steps can be taken to catalyze the process of left unity. Due to the specifics of the Palestinian situation and struggle, different constellations of left-wing forces have emerged. Thus today we find the Israeli Communist Party-Rakah and the Jordanian Communist Party, both of whose memberships is primarily Palestinians. There are other left-wing forces struggling under occupation, as represented by the Sons of the Village and the Progressive Nationalist Student Movement in the 1948 occupied territories, and the Palestinian Communist Party on the West Bank and elsewhere. There are also the revolutionary democratic organizations that have developed within the ranks of the Palestinian armed resistance and the PLO.

It is our view that the optimal starting point for the process of uniting the Palestinian left is among these revolutionary democratic forces. The unification decision taken by the DFLP and PFLP is a very important step in this direction; at the same time, it is but one step. The process upon which the PFLP and DFLP have embarked is open to other revolutionary democratic organizations, trends and individuals who are committed to a line that correctly combines the tasks of preserving Palestinian national unity and at the same time furthering working class ideology. Expanding the unity process requires an open dialogue to bring the political positions of these forces closer to one another. We hope that by taking a practical step the PFLP and DFLP have made a push in this direction.

Certain factors already exist which make the work to unite the revolutionary democratic forces now present in the PLO's ranks a realistic and desirable task; the most important of these factors are:

- All these forces have adopted Marxism - Leninism as their theoretical-ideological framework and guiding principles. This means that all are, in principle, committed to representing the interests of the working class within our revolution.
- All these forces accept the concept of transformation from a revolutionary democratic standpoint to the standpoint of the working class.
- As a result, there is a closeness between the political line of these forces, especially on central issues. This closeness varies in degree among the respective forces, yet overall there is a political line which is quite distinct from that of the right wing in the PLO.
- All these forces, in general, share a similar political strategy for the Palestinian national liberation struggle, which goes beyond the perspective of other Palestinian national organizations.

Strengthening the Palestinian revolution

In addition to the strategic necessity of uniting the left forces into a single Palesti-

nian communist party, there are also more immediate reasons why Palestinian left unity, and especially that of the revolutionary democratic forces within the PLO, is needed. The Palestinian national struggle must be insured against wrong practices and policies, against deviations or compromises that could undermine our people's unity, national rights or goals. By uniting, the revolutionary democratic forces can more decisively influence decision-making in the Palestinian revolution. Besides acting as a guarantee for the revolution's continuity, left forces, by virtue of their unity, can make a more substantial contribution to the daily organizational work and mass mobilization which strengthens the revolution as a whole.

The positive effects of unifying the left forces are qualitative, not merely quantitative. The importance of uniting the DFLP and PFLP, as an example, does not lie in just acquiring, say, twice as many members in one organization. Rather such unity creates a new objective situation in the Palestinian arena and the PLO. It constitutes a force that far surpasses the political weight and effectiveness of the respective components combined but working separately. It constitutes a force with a broader range and stronger appeal on the mass level, and with more influence on the political and military levels. In this way, the unity of the left forces will bring about a change in the internal balance of forces in the Palestinian arena.

Moreover, the unity of the revolutionary democratic forces, and eventually the left as a whole, will have a significant positive impact on the Palestinian revolution's alliance with the Arab national liberation movement, and with other progressive forces on the Arab and international levels.

Background for the unification step

The decision of the DFLP and PFLP to form a joint leadership is the result of a long process which involved deep, extensive discussions. It is a result of the well-developed relationship between the two fronts, which has both an objective and subjective base. The PFLP and DFLP have a common origin as nationalist forces that adopted Marxism-Leninism. Thus, we share a common ideological and theoretical foundation for analyzing the social, political and class phenomena relevant to the present and future conditions of the Palestinian national liberation struggle. Today, there is increased closeness in our political views, which has evolved from the objective developments of struggle and from bilateral discussions over the past three years. There are also political and organizational matters on which an identity of views has not been reached. These matters will be re-

solved through continued discussions and dialogue between the two fronts on both the leadership, cadre and base levels.

Shared emphasis on unity of the left

The decision to take this unifying step, even though consensus has not been reached on every issue, is the result of the high priority given to the unity of the left by both organizations. This was reflected in the most recent congresses of the two organizations.

The political report adopted at the PFLP's 4th national congress in 1981, posited that one of our main tasks is to create a revolutionary democratic axis as a first step towards building a united Palestinian national front under the leadership of the working class and its vanguard party. The unity of the revolutionary democratic forces in the Palestinian arena constitutes an essential practical step in the process of uniting the Palestinian communist movement.

Also, the political, ideological and theoretical report adopted by the second congress of the DFLP in 1981, called on all democratic left forces to be an example and leader for all of our people, to protect national unity by rejecting all selfish or dogmatic, narrow organizational differences, and to initiate democratic unity as a solid nucleus for the broad national alliance within the PLO. The DFLP struggles to solidify the unity of all democratic forces on the basis of democratic, front relations...

The discussion process

In the first half of 1981, the DFLP and PFLP established special relations in light of the resolutions adopted by their respective congresses. However, these relations actually date back to 1979, when a series of meetings were held between the two leaderships in order to attain unified working relations. Since that time, the question of unification has been a point of discussion at all organizational levels of both fronts, and in joint meetings. All these meetings affirmed the need to continue and increase efforts to reach developed unified relations.

After the heroic battle of Beirut, it was logical and moreover a national duty for all Palestinian organizations, especially the left forces, to critically review our past experience and derive its main lessons. This was imperative in order to overcome all shortcomings and mistakes, and to develop the positive aspects as well. One of the main lessons harvested by both fronts, after a series of concentrated meetings involving the leadership and cadre of both, was the urgency of national unity and

the unity of the Palestinian democratic forces in particular, as a main prerequisite for protecting our revolution and achieving victory.

This demanded a qualitative leap forward in our bilateral relations, to give a new push to the unity process by establishing strong working relations that gradually develop towards the total unity of the two fronts in one body. To this end, various meetings were held between Comrades George Habash and Naef Hawatmeh in Aden, facilitated by the Yemeni Socialist Party and especially the highly appreciated efforts of Comrade Ali Nasser, General Secretary of the party, and President of Democratic Yemen.

The Aden agreement between the two fronts in early December 1982, aimed at organizing and furthering the relations, based on the fact that PFLP and DFLP constitute the two main left Palestinian organizations that are capable of playing an essential role in protecting Palestinian national unity, and at the same time are essential components in the strategic process of uniting the Palestinian left in one communist party.

The Aden agreement was approved by the central bodies of both fronts. It specified the steps needed for developing relations. Implementing these steps on all organizational levels required close cooperation between the two fronts. Therefore, a series of meetings were held between the two politbureaus and on all organizational levels to discuss the best means of achieving this step. These meetings were very positive and further clarified to both parties that the subjective and objective conditions were ripe for taking this step. In addition to meetings between the two fronts on all organizational levels, internal circulars were exchanged on the matter, and working papers on cooperation on all organizational levels were drawn up. In the same period, the political harmony prevailing between the two

fronts was also expressed through the issuing of joint communiques addressed to our masses.

For unity

As stated in the communique announcing the joint leadership, this step does not constitute an axis aimed against other organizations. Rather it is a unifying step aimed at consolidating the PLO's unity. It is a step in accordance with the PNC's resolutions. In this way, the two fronts offer a model for how to develop national unity while maintaining the broad framework of the PLO. This step is based on commitment to developing this framework in order to build a united national front to lead our revolution and achieve our people's aspirations.

In this way, the Palestinian left offers a new response added to its previous ones, as evidenced in the battles in the last war and especially the battle of Beirut, and in the political battle against all capitulationist plans after the war, and in the battle to preserve the unity of the PLO, as was seen at the last PNC, when our enemies everywhere were waiting for a split as one of the fruits of the Zionist invasion.

The formation of the joint leadership is to be followed by other steps on all organizational levels and in the mass organizations to prepare for total unification. This is not a process whereby the one front merges into the other, which makes it a unique, trailblazing experience in the Palestinian revolution. Rather, the intention is to fuse the two organizations into one. In this, we have taken inspiration from the experience of Democratic Yemen, where the unity of three parties - the National Front, the Popular Union Party and the Vanguard Party - into one organization paved the way for forming the Yemeni Socialist Party in 1978, as the vanguard party.