

Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine - PFLP

Study Guide

International Center for Palestine Studies

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The Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine was published by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in 1969 and was the political report of their second Congress. It remains one of the foundational texts of the Palestinian revolutionary left. You can use this study guide alongside your individual or collective reading of the Strategy. You can download a digital copy or buy a physical copy of the Strategy via foreignlanguages.press. You can download this study guide via palestinestudies.net.

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This study guide of the Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine provides short, bullet point summaries of the chapters accompanied by stimulating questions for further study and discussion. We hope this guide will provide the reader help and guidance while studying this historic document and applying its methods to today's reality.

If you have any feedback for this guide or wish to involve the ICPS in your (collective) study of the Strategy, please get in touch through info-icps@protonmail.com or any of our social media. We welcome all initiatives that develop our collective understanding about the Palestinian and international liberation struggle, and we are happy to provide you with resource persons and additional information.

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PFLP Introduction to this edition

The Strategy is both a historical document and a living political program.

While many changes have taken place since the publication of the Strategy in 1969, the basic strategy outlined in this text has been confirmed to be true, especially in regard to the enemies of the revolution – Zionism, Israel, imperialism, and Arab reaction – and what happened at the Madrid conference and Oslo accords.

The Palestinian Authority represents certain sectors of the Palestinian capitalist class who undermine the national liberation movement.

The PFLP has always been internationalist in ideology and practice.

Ghassan Kanafani: “The Palestinian cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause for every revolutionary, wherever they are, as a cause of the exploited and oppressed masses is our era.”

Questions

Which changes on a world level have impacted the Palestinian people and the liberation struggle since the Strategy’s publication in 1969? And on an Arab level? On the Palestinian level?

Which constants do we observe in the Palestinian, Arab, and international arena? What have been the fundamental changes and what has remained largely the same?

How is the Palestinian Authority undermining the national liberation movement?

How can we theorize and practice internationalism in the twenty-first century?

What are your thoughts about Kanafani’s statement that, “The Palestinian cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause of every revolutionary, wherever they are, as a cause of the exploited masses in our era”?

1) Importance of political thought

A basic condition for success is to have a clear perspective of the enemy and the revolutionary forces. Taking up arms alone is not enough.

Our people have been waging a long fight against Zionism and colonialism. We have fought and are still fighting with everything we have. However, until now, our people have not triumphed.

“Scientific revolutionary thought is clear thought whereby the masses are able to understand their enemy, his points of weakness or strength and the forces which support and ally themselves to the enemy. Likewise, the masses should understand their own forces, the forces of revolution, how to mobilize, how to overcome enemy’s points of strength and take advantage of the weakness of the enemy, and through what organization, mobilization, and political and military programs, they can escalate their forces until they can crush the enemy and achieve victory.”

Revolutionary political thought must: 1) be scientific; 2) be so clear as to be within the reach of the masses; 3) go beyond generalities.”

Questions

Why do we engage in discussions about political theory?

Why did the Palestinian people’s struggle not achieve national liberation and self-determination before 1967?

What were and are the differences and similarities between the Palestinian people’s struggle for liberation, and that of the Filipino people? Or the Indian people? The South African people? The peoples of Turtle Island? Etc.

What distinguishes scientific revolutionary thought from bourgeois and liberal thought?

What does it mean to develop “a clear vision of the battle before us”?

What is meant by “revolutionary political thought must go beyond generalities”? And how can we do that?

2) Who are our enemies?

After one victory, we belittle the enemy's power and think the struggle will be won quickly. After one defeat, we imagine our enemy is an invincible force. We need to be scientific and understand that our struggle is a prolonged one.

Israel:

- Israel is a political, military, and economic entity using force to prevent the Palestinian people from regaining their land.
- It possesses technological superiority over us.
- It has a great ability to mobilize its soldiers.

World Zionist Movement:

- Israel is part of the world Zionist movement.
- Zionism is a racial religious movement.
- Zionism provides material support to Israel.
- We have to study Israel and the Zionist movement carefully, and also read studies with politics we do not agree with in order to reach a deeper understanding of the enemy. There are conflicts inside Israeli society and between Israel and the world Zionist movement. We have to study these conflicts.

Questions

Why is it important to have a clear and scientific analysis of our enemies?

How did Israel become an enemy of the Palestinian people? How was Israel created? Which states or entities are comparable in their nature with Israel?

What are the contradictions and struggles within Israel?

Which states or entities are comparable in their nature with Israel?

What are the characteristics of the Zionist movement?

What is the history of the Zionist movement? And the history of the Zionist movement in your own country?

What is the relationship between Israel and the world Zionist movement? What are their contradictions?

3) Who are our enemies? (Part II)

World imperialism:

- Imperialism robs the riches of underdeveloped countries. The Arab world is rich in natural resources and constitutes a big consumer market.
- Imperialism aims at crushing every revolutionary movement.
- Israel is an imperialist base in the Arab world – they form an organic unity with each other.
- ““Why not try to win America to our side in the battle instead of allowing it to remain on Israel’s side?” is an erroneous and dangerous opinion because it is unscientific, unrealistic, and far from being accurate.”

Arab Reaction represented by Feudalism and Capitalism:

- Arab capitalism depends on world capitalism – it is not an independent unit, but a comprador.
- Arab reactionary governments may superficially support national liberation movements to settle some of their own conflicts with imperialism. But their main conflict remains with the mass movement in their own country.
- Arab reaction is an offshoot from world imperialism.

Our enemies are Israel, Zionism, world imperialism and Arab reaction.

These enemies are technologically superior, superior in production, and therefore militarily superior.

The enemy has long experience of fighting people’s movements and “has the power to defeat such movements.” (!) The nature of the battle is a life-or-death struggle.

Questions

What is the relationship between world imperialism, Israel, and the Zionist movement? How has this relationship changed over the last century?

What are the contemporary objectives of world imperialism in the Arab world?

Why can we not win imperialism over to our side? What is the difference between idealism and materialism (philosophical)?

Why are Arab states normalizing their relations with Israel? What is the history of normalization and what are its consequences?

What is the relationship between Arab governments who normalize with Israel and the people they govern in their own country?

4) Forces of the revolution

It is essential to view forces of the revolution from a class perspective.

It is wrong to say that the entire Palestinian people is without a territory.

There are clearly defined classes in Palestinian society. Exploiting classes: represented by colonialism, feudalism, and the bourgeoisie.

Exploited classes: workers and peasants.

Rightist thought in Palestine tries to eliminate the class view – e.g., “our classes have not crystallized yet,” or “in the national liberation struggle, there is no room for class struggle”.

National liberation battles are also class battles: “If the saying that national liberation battles are national battles is intended to mean that they are battles waged by the overwhelmingly majority of the nation’s masses, then this saying is true, but if it is intended to mean that these battles are different from the class struggle between the exploiters and the exploited, then the saying is untrue.”

The revolutionary classes of Palestine are the workers and peasants, who today fill the miserable camps. Together with the downtrodden petit bourgeoisie.

“Here are the particular daily living conditions which drive people to fight and die because the difference between death and life under such conditions is not much.”

Questions

What does it mean to view something “from a class perspective”? What are other perspectives?

What is the difference in living conditions of Palestinian workers and peasants on the one hand, and the Palestinian bourgeoisie on the other hand?

What is your own class background?

What is the class background of your organization?

Why does rightist thought in Palestine try to eliminate the class view?
What is the material basis for this rightist thought?

Is there a difference in the nature of rightist thought in Palestine and the Netherlands (or Germany, the US, or Philippines, etc.)?

Do miserable living conditions automatically create revolutionary activity? What is the relationship between objective conditions and the subjective conditions?

5) Palestinian Petit Bourgeoisie

The Palestinian petit bourgeoisie comprises craftsmen, students, teachers, junior employees, small shopkeepers, lawyers, engineers, medial staff etc. and is/can be very numerous.

The petit bourgeoisie does not live within specific class conditions but moves between and through the bourgeoisie and proletariat in both living conditions and politics.

The petit bourgeoisie is an ally to the revolution, but not its basic material, those are the workers and peasants. They are our ally in the main conflict with the enemy, but we fight their attempts to assume leadership of the revolution.

Our relations with the petit bourgeoisie can be difficult and should be treated with delicacy. “We must know when and how to accept [the petit bourgeoisie] as an ally and when and how to fight against it.”

We strike an alliance with the petit bourgeoisie when it serves the revolution, and we fight them “when the masses are capable of feeling and understanding the reasons for this fight.”

Questions

What does it mean that the Palestinian petit bourgeoisie is a revolutionary class and at the same time “not its basic material”?

How do we handle the petit bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class and at the same time do not let them lead the revolution?

What is the relationship between the petit bourgeoisie and imperialism?

What can happen to the national liberation movement when it is led by the petit bourgeoisie? Are there historical examples of this inside and outside of Palestine?

What is the difference between the ultra-left, the right-opportunist, and the revolutionary attitude towards the petit-bourgeoisie?

What was the relationship between the PFLP and Fatah during the Palestinian revolution? How did they struggle with each other? How

did this struggle influence the revolution? How did the relationship between the PFLP and Fatah develop over time?

How do we analyze the modern Palestinian resistance factions? What are the differences between them? How are they united and on what are they divided?

6) The Palestinian Bourgeoisie

The Palestinian bourgeoisie is essentially a business and banking bourgeoisie. It is interconnected with the interests of imperialism.

Strategically, the Palestinian bourgeoisie is against the revolution. There may be different tactical or temporary positions, or some exceptions. But in the long-term strategic view, they are against the revolution.

After the Israeli invasion on 5 June 1967, the Palestinian bourgeois leadership sat down with Israeli leaders to make a deal. “These attempts would have been successful had they not been foiled by the escalation of commando action.”

The Palestinian bourgeoisie living inside Palestine is “not among the forces of the revolution.” The Palestinian bourgeoisie living outside Palestine “sometimes supports commando action” but will be opposed to the armed struggle when it starts to clash with imperialism.

The bourgeoisie is a numerically small class, only 0.5-1% of the population. “Moreover, this is not the class which takes up arms or is ready to fight and die in defense of the freedom of the country and the people. Consequently, any attempt to picture this class analysis of the forces of the revolution as leading to the dissipation of the nation’s forces and driving these forces into an internal conflict would be scientifically untrue. In the light of this analysis the revolution does not lose any effective fighting force: on the contrary, it gains clarity of view...”

Questions

What is the current composition of the Palestinian bourgeoisie? In which economic sectors are they most active?

What is the relationship between the Palestinian bourgeoisie and imperialism? And between the Palestinian bourgeoisie and Israel?

Is the Palestinian Authority a political expression of the Palestinian bourgeoisie?

Is there still a difference between the Palestinian bourgeoisie living inside and outside Palestine?

What are the political tasks of the revolutionary movement in light of the official Palestinian leadership's collaboration with Israel?

Are there alternative leaderships contesting the role of the Palestinian Authority?

7) Organization and Mobilization of Palestinian Revolutionary Forces

We need political organization armed with the theory of scientific socialism and take inspiration from the revolutions in China, Vietnam, Cuba, and the October Revolution.

Our positions regarding the relations among Palestinian political forces are:

- 1) Palestinian national unity is a basic factor for the mobilization of the forces of the revolution.
- 2) National unity means a front of all revolutionary classes: workers, peasants, and petit bourgeoisie.
- 3) We must mobilize the workers and peasants in “one single revolutionary political organization armed with scientific socialist theory.”
- 4) The petit bourgeoisie will not join this revolutionary organization but instead fill Fatah and the PLO.
- 5) We must work to establish a national front with Fatah and the PLO to struggle against the enemy.

“The Palestinian revolution which is fused together with the Arab revolution and in alliance with world revolution is alone capable of achieving victory. To confine the Palestinian revolution within the limits of the Palestinian people would mean failure, if we remember the nature of the enemy alliance which we are facing.”

Questions

What is scientific socialism?

What is the relationship between national liberation and socialism?

What is the relationship between Palestinian liberation and socialism?

How do you relate to socialism?

Should the Palestinian movement speak more about socialism?

Should the socialist movement speak more about Palestine?

What is the difference between a revolutionary political organization and a non-revolutionary political organization?

What is the meaning of national unity? What is the role of the united front?

What is the current role of the PLO? How has it changed over the years?

What is the relationship between the factions inside and outside the PLO?

8) Forces of the Revolution on the Arab Level

The liberation of Palestine requires the mobilization and concentration of all revolutionary forces in Arab countries in general, and the Arab region surrounding Israel in particular.

The current crisis of the Palestinian resistance stems from it existing under conditions in Arab lands who support the UN instead of the resistance.

The only path leading to victory is the expansion of armed struggle against Israel and all imperialist interests in our region.

Making a heroic stand is not important: liberation and victory are what is important.

The current stage/task of the Arab peoples is that of democratic national revolution with a class perspective.

The relation of armed struggle with Arab capitalist and feudal regimes on the strategic level is one of conflict, notwithstanding any tactical or temporary exceptions.

It is important to analyze the role of the Arab regimes in the June 1967 defeat. “The June defeat confirmed the gross error in our perspective of things.” There were gross errors in the evaluation of who are the enemies and friends of the revolution.

Following the First World War, “the national liberation movement ... was led by feudalists, aristocrats and members of the bourgeoisie.” They aimed at “nothing more than obtaining an outward form of independence which would place it [the Arab bourgeoisie] at the top of the power pyramid.”

When conflict grew between the masses and the bourgeoisie, a new leadership erupted consisting of “educated young men, professions and free army officers who mainly belonged to and acted through the petit bourgeoisie.” This new leadership was able to unite and mobilize the workers, peasants, and petit bourgeoisie under the leadership of the latter. The Nasser regime is the most crystallized example of this.

The major revolutionary achievements by these new regimes put the opposing camp led by the US in a state of alarm. The resulting conflict exposed the inability of within this classes’ nature to triumph over the imperialist-reactionary – Zionist – Israeli camp.

“These regimes support commando action but only as a revolutionary tactic [instead of strategy] to exert pressure on [not overthrow] imperialism and Israel” in order to implement UN resolutions.

Relations with these regimes must be alliance and conflict at the same time.

There are two strategies in the face of the struggle against the enemy:

- The strategy of the petit bourgeoisie: traditional war strategy.
- The strategy of the working class: guerilla warfare and popular liberation war.

Questions

What is the current revolutionary leadership in the Arab countries?

What is the class composition of current Arab states and governments?

What is the legacy of the revolutionary governments in Arab countries?

What are the different political blocs and alliances in the Arab world?

How have different Palestinian political parties related to different Arab governments and organizations throughout the last decades?

What was the role of the pan-Arab movement in general, and the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) in particular?

What is the current role of imperialism in the region? And how are different Arab states and organizations connected to it?

Who are fighting against Israel, imperialism, and reaction in the Arab region?

Which current Arab governments support (Palestinian) armed struggle against Israel and imperialism?

Is the current stage of the Arab peoples still democratic national revolution? If yes or no, why?

What is the current pan-Arab perspective?

What is the current socialist perspective for the Arab world?

9) Forces of the Revolution on the World Level

The international arena is a basic factor in determining peoples' destinies.

During First World War conflicts among colonialist-imperialist powers were the principal manifestation on the world stage. After the Second World War the principal manifestation was the struggle between the imperialist camp led by the US and the socialist forces and persecuted peoples.

Conflict among imperialist powers continues to be governed by the more important conflict between imperialism and the forces of revolution.

A new technique for colonization is neo-colonialism. This consists of (US) pacts and defense treaties and an economic policy which includes local social forces participating in the profits derived from exploitation.

Our first friends on the world level are the enslaved peoples, national liberation movements, and the socialist camp.

Questions

How is the current international arena shaped?

What is the current principal contradiction on the world level?

Which powers belong to the imperialist camp under leadership of the US?

Is the US still the leader of the imperialist camp?

Are there multiple imperialist camps?

What is the role of countries like Russia, China, and Iran on the world stage?

What are the conflicts among the imperialist camp?

Who today belong to the international revolutionary camp?

Who are the leading revolutionary forces in the world? Which states are revolutionary? Which organizations in the world are fighting for national liberation and/or socialism?

Who are the revolutionary forces in imperialist countries?

How has neo-colonialism manifested itself in Palestine, the MENA region, and the exploited peoples?

What is the NGO-ization of resistance?¹

¹ On the NGO-ization of resistance, see also Arundhati Roy's "The NGO-ization of resistance". For specific studies about the NGO-ization in the Palestinian movement, see the work of Tariq Da'na.

10) Facing Imperialist Technological Superiority

The enemy's scientific, technological, and organizational superiority is not a light matter.

In military terms, this superiority means: quick and massive mobilization, high standard of training, high quality of military leadership, surprises in arms and fighting plans, overall superiority in arms and modern warfare, and the ability to move with shock-speed.

We have failed to defeat Zionism because of our weaker political, economic, social, scientific, technological, and organizational, and military structures.

We cannot defeat the enemy through a conventional war.

The basic requirement of a good army is not modern arms but the human element.

We face military superiority with guerilla warfare and popular liberation war.

Through guerilla war we avoid direct confrontation and prevent the enemy from exercising its full technological superiority.

Guerilla war is the first stage in a protracted war.

The revolutionary army will triumph by uniting with the organized masses; allying itself with world revolutionary forces; and gaining experience through struggle and the party.

Questions

Is Israel still technologically superior to the Palestinian people?

What does this technological superiority consist of?

Which weapons, strategy, and tactics does Israel (and the Zionist movement, imperialism, and Arab reactionary regimes) use against the Palestinians?

How does Israel use its weapons outside of Palestine?

What has been the historical development of the Palestinian war of liberation?

Did guerilla warfare provide a first stage of a protracted war? Has there been a break / multiple breaks in the history of Palestinian military resistance?

What are the current characteristics of the Palestinian resistance?

How do we view the Intifada's in light of guerilla warfare and its unity with the organized masses?

What are the perspectives of the Palestinian and anti-Zionist resistance forces, including the forces in Gaza and Lebanon?

11) The Aims and Significance of the Palestinian War of Liberation

For the Palestinian people, the rise of Israel has meant the expulsion from their homes and lands. We are thrown in the camps of misery and poverty, scattered in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

Israel constitutes a colonialist expansionist presence. This matter is not up for discussion.

Israel was first established on the borders of the UN resolution on 1947. Then it expanded to beyond those boundaries. And finally, it expanded to the whole of Palestine, the Egyptian Sinai and the Syrian Golan Heights.

The truth about the nature of Israel has been distorted by: 1) the connection between the rise of Zionism and the persecution of the Jews in Europe; 2) the rise of Israel and the Nazi treatment of Jews in WW II; 3) the existence in Israel of forces calling themselves progressive and socialist, and the Soviet Union supporting the establishment of Israel.

The Palestinian liberation movement is not a racial movement against the Jews. It is against Zionism and the interests of imperialism.

The aim of the Palestinian liberation movement is to establish a democratic national state in Palestine.

A basis strategic line in our war with Israel must aim at unveiling the misrepresentations of our struggle that Israel is spreading around.

“Our national, long-term liberation struggle will mean fusion in a new way of life which will be our gateway towards progress and civilization.”

Questions

What is the nature of Israel? Why does the PFLP write in this document that the nature of Israel is “not up for debate”?

What role do the distortions about the nature of Israel play in today's politics and Palestine organizing?

How do we unveil the misrepresentations of our struggle by Israel?

What is the current goal of the Palestinian liberation movement? What are the goals of the different factions / wings of the Palestinian movement?

What is the role of the (national) liberation struggle in the building of a progressive society and conscious social humans?

12) General Remarks

“The correctness of any theoretical analysis is contingent upon its success on the field of practical application.”

As we stress our strategic lines as a guide to action, we also assert that we do not understand them in fixed static forms.

Our strategy represents a general view of the battle and its main trends. And it does not stop at the many details that are not (fully) mentioned.

As we stress Israel as an enemy force, we also stress that Israel is not a hegemonous entity. Instead, there are conflicts within Israel. And these conflicts can grow.

There are also differences and conflicts among the Palestinian (armed) organizations.

“Inasmuch as it is important and fundamental to see at every stage of the struggle the accurate and detailed picture which will enable us to determine our tactical step in a scientific manner, it is equally important and fundamental that our detailed tactical view at each stage be guided by our long-term strategic view.”

This document is the PFLP’s politico-strategic analysis as a guide for its action in the liberation war which the Front is facing and for which it is preparing.

Questions

What is the relation between theory and practice?

What is the current strategy of the Palestinian liberation movement? Is this strategy correct? Are there different or multiple strategies being presented towards the masses?

In light of the changes since the formation of the PFLP and the publication of the Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine, is the strategy here presented still valid? Are there particularly important points that have changed?

What is the role of the PFLP in the Palestinian liberation struggle? How is this different and similar to the PFLP in the 1960s and '70s?

What were and are the successes of the PFLP?

What were and are the mistakes of the PFLP?

13) Organizational Strategy

In the people's liberation war, party matters are not longer of secondary matter.

“Organizational strategy here becomes an integral part of the strategy of the battle and its view thereof.”

“The failure of leftist national parties and communist parties in the Arab world is the failure of these parties themselves and of their structure, formation, and adopted strategies, and not of the principle of the party's existence as a condition for the revolutionary presence.” No revolution in this century has succeeded without a revolutionary party leading it.

Questions

What does it mean to be part of a revolutionary party?

What is the current organizational strategy of the Palestinian revolutionary camp?

How do we organize ourselves and the masses?

What is the relation between the revolutionary organization and the mass organizations?

Why have the Palestinian and Arab leftist national parties and communist parties failed? What have been their successes?

Why have revolutionary parties in other countries (your own country?) failed? What have been their successes?

What is the current Palestinian revolutionary organization and/or movement?

How do revolutionary Palestinian parties relate to internationals? And to international revolutionary organizations?

14) No Revolutionary Party Without Revolutionary Theory

The PFLP adopts Marxist-Leninist theory as its basic strategic line for the building of the revolutionary party.

“Marxism has presented a dialectic scientific approach which has elevated the study of history, society, and political manifestations to the level of science... Marxism [is] the science which enables man to understand the progress of societies and history and to direct and influence them.”

Lenin developed Marx’s scientific study of capitalism in the era of imperialism. And all revolutions this century have arisen from the Marxist-Leninist theory.

“The essence of the Marxist view of human society is that is in in continuous motion and continuous change.” It is therefore dangerous to understand Marxism in a mechanical, idealistic manner because that deprives it of its ability to explain the living actuality.

The masses of our people will not base their position towards scientific socialism based on purely theoretical discussion, but on the basis of tangible results produced by this thought with regard to their fight against the enemy.

Questions

What is Marxism-Leninism? What is Marxism? What is Leninism? And what about Maoism?

What are dialectics? What are historic materialism and dialectical materialism?

What does it mean that “Marxism [is] the science which enables man to understand the progress of societies and history and to direct and influence them?”

What are examples of a mechanical or idealistic understanding of Marxism?

How should Marxism be translated to the masses?

15) Class Structure of the Revolutionary Party

The party can only be successful if its basic leadership is composed of the workers and peasants instead of the petit bourgeoisie. This is our second strategic line in the building of the revolutionary party.

Petit bourgeois structures prevail within the PFLP, as it is a spontaneous extension of the Arab Nationalist Movement. If we continue on this road, we will only grow in Amman and the towns. Instead, we should place our most efficient leading elements in the camps and villages.

Revolutionary intellectuals are necessary for building the party and the revolution. Intellectuals, “provide the revolution with a clear view.”

“The intellectuals living among the downtrodden masses and combatants, their willingness to learn from them as much as they teach them, their ability to share with them the same living circumstances, their intellectual modesty, their establishment of comradely relations with the combatants and the poor and their avoidance of superior relations and of material and moral privileges constitute the way whereby the intellectuals can perform their part in the revolution, and the non-observance or non-exercise of these matters will deprive the intellectuals of all capacity for revolutionary action.”

Questions

Why should the basic leadership of the revolutionary party be composed of the workers and peasants instead of the petit bourgeoisie?

What is the class difference between the proletariat and the petit bourgeoisie in terms of revolutionary organizing? What are or can be the contributions of these classes to the revolutionary organization?

How did the PFLP practice its line of placing its most efficient cadres in the camps and villages? What was the result of this line?

Is there still a political practice of revolutionary cadres organizing in the camps and villages, both inside and outside Palestine?

What is the role of the revolutionary intellectual?

16) The Party and the Masses

The mass line is the PFLP's third strategic line in the building of the revolutionary party.

The members of the party must be generally examples of the vanguard in consciousness, activity, sacrifice, and discipline. Without these qualities, the party loses its role as revolutionary political organization.

The party must be "an organization for the masses, emanating from them, living in their midst, fighting for their causes, relying on them and realizing its aims through and with them and in their interest."

"Sometimes our organization or some of its branches confine themselves to purely internal activities: meetings, education, discussions, criticism, etc."

Revolutionary members are those who establish the best relations with the masses around them and serve them. "There are no grounds for claiming any revolutionary quality in respect of the member who does harm to the masses or isolates themselves from them."

The revolutionary party is a school where all its members and the masses change their current old and outworn habits into new, revolutionary ones.

Questions

What is the mass line?

How can we practice the mass line?

Win the context of the revolutionary party, what are the meanings of "consciousness," "activity," "sacrifice," and "discipline"?

What should be the relation between internal and external activities of the party?

What does it mean to harm the masses or to isolate oneself from them?

Which old and outworn habits should we change? And how do we change them into new, revolutionary habits?

17) Building the Combatant Party

Because our party wages armed struggle, this naturally reflects on the strategy of the party structure.

“The basic aim of the Palestinian national movement is the liberation of Palestine. This aim cannot be achieved except through armed struggle and a protracted popular liberation war.”

Within the organization, we have to integrate the two interrelated and fused aspects of the Palestinian national movement – fighting and political action, through the following points:

- “The military organization which does the fighting must have a mature political structure.”
- “The political organization must have a military structure.” The political organization who links itself with commando action without being truly prepared to join the fighting, “constitutes an obstacle in the way of revolutionary growth and forces the party to live under circumstances of constant conflict between the fighting cadres and the political organization.”
- The party leadership must be a politico-military leadership which possesses both political consciousness and the capacity to lead the fight.
- “Internal education of the party must aim at building the political and military structure at the same time.”
- “The basic effort of the leadership must be directed towards the issues of the combat, the solution of its problems and the fulfillment of the requirements for its escalation, steadfastness, and continued growth.”
- The party’s internal regulations must be based on the unity of the fighting and political organization.

“Every combatant is a party member, and every party member is a combatant,” is a basic strategic line for building the fighting party.

Questions

Why can the liberation of Palestine only be achieved through armed struggle and a protracted popular liberation war?

What is the relationship between the armed struggle and the political struggle?

What does it mean that “the military organization must have a mature political structure” and that “the political organization must have a military structure”?

What is your opinion on the relationship between the armed struggle and the political struggle? How can they best be incorporated into one movement or organization?

Which problems would or could occur between (revolutionary) political organizations who support armed struggle if they do not participate in the armed struggle themselves?

What is the meaning of a politico-military leadership?

What are your thoughts about the statement that “Every combatant is a party member, and every party member is a combatant”?

18) Democratic Centralism – Basis of Relations Within the Revolutionary Party

The revolutionaries who are united in an organization, need to define the manner in which they shall organize their work.

The PFLP adopts democratic centralism as the basic principle for their organization.

Democracy

- The first aspect of democracy means that all members have the right to know the party's strategy, its plans, and political positions. All members have the right to voice their opinion, even if their opinion may be wrong.
- The second aspect of democracy is collective leadership.
- The third aspect of democracy within the revolutionary organization is "the members' right to express their opinion of their leadership and its responsibilities and to grant or withhold their confidence in this leadership."
- Democracy is a "genuine desire to know the members' opinion, to live among them and to avoid isolation from them and their problems, by holding open forums and collective meetings, establishing comradely relations among all, and avoiding superior relations." Consequently, there can be no translation from responsibilities into moral or material privilege.

Centralism

- "Democracy without centralization will result in absolute anarchy."
- The first aspect of centralism the rule of the majority over the minority. "After the points of view have been discussed and the party (the majority) takes a definite position, it becomes the duty of every element in the party to sponsor this position and to defend and be fully committed to it until another organizational occasion arises for discussing anew the matters of work in the party congresses and planning bodies."

- The second aspect is the submission of the lower leadership to the higher leadership. “Naturally, this does not mean the central leadership’s intervention in every act undertaken by the party. It only means that it has the right to intervene when, in its judgement, such intervention is necessary to protect the workers’ interest.”
- The third aspect of centralism is “the leadership’s absolute power during the execution and the shouldering of full responsibility for the execution of what the party has democratically decided. When execution begins democracy ends.”

Questions

What is democratic centralism? Who developed the concept and what have been its fruits?

What is the difference between democratic centralism and horizontalism or ultra-democracy? And between democratic centralism other organizational forms?

What constitutes the democracy part of democratic centralism? How do we practice democracy within the organization?

What is the meaning of centralism within democratic centralism? How does centralism work within the organization?

What are common misconceptions about democratic centralism?

19) Criticism and Self-Criticism

“The practice of self-criticism converts error into benefit and negative attitudes into positive ones.”

Instead of covering-up errors when they are discovered, the leadership and members should accustom themselves to listening to, thinking of, and benefitting from criticism.

When engaging in criticism, there are three basic criteria which must be considered:

- The objectivity of criticism.
- The orientation of criticism towards correction, not demolition.
- Its dealing with basic matters instead of petty subjective issues.

Mao: “So long as a person who has made mistakes does not hide his sickness for fear of treatment or persist in his mistakes until he is beyond cure. So long as he honestly and sincerely wishes to be cured and to mend his ways, we should welcome him and cure his sickness so that he can become a good comrade.”

There is no need to be overall-critical about personal shortcomings of comrades and criticism should not embarrass them.

Our strategic lines for the building of the revolutionary party do not guarantee that there will be a time when the revolutionary party will live without problems: “such thinking is unrealistic and unscientific. Our ambition is to outgrow the problems of this stage of the organization’s life to face the problems of a more advanced and more revolutionary stage.”

Questions

What is criticism and self-criticism?

How are criticism and self-criticism practiced within the organization?

What is the difference between personal shortcomings and political mistakes?

Do you have good and/or bad examples of criticism and self-criticism?

20) The Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) and the PFLP

The PFLP was founded in 1967 by four groups: the Palestinian branch of the ANM, the “Heroes of Return,” the “Palestine Liberation Front,” and independent elements.

At its founding, the PFLP was not supposed to be politically based on scientific socialism, and an organizationally unified party.

In that light, “there is a definite objective distinction between the Palestinian ANM branch and the PFLP.”

However, since 1967, the “Palestine Liberation Front” and a group of independents have split-off from the PFLP. There is now an “almost complete identity between the ANM and the PFLP.

Our current line consists of “working for the fusion of the Palestinian branch of the ANM within the organization of the PFLP and at the same time working for the fusion of the ‘Heroes of Return’ within the PFLP as well.”

Our motto for this fusion is: “The Movement in service of the Front, and not the Front in service of the Movement.”

Questions

What was the Arab Nationalist Movement? How was it created and how did it develop over the years?

What is the history of the Arab Nationalist Movement outside of Palestine, for example in Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Oman, and Yemen?

What is the role of pan-Arabism today in the Palestinian liberation struggle and the Arab world at large?

How can the Palestinian movement today contribute to the development of a revolutionary anti-imperialist anti-sectarian Arab movement?

