

Fateh. *Critique and Auto-Critique*, 1965. Translated by *The Palestinian Revolution*, 2016.¹

In revolutionary movements, the concept of critique and auto-critique is understood differently than in sectors that are not committed to the line of revolution. This variance does not only result from divergence in analytical methods, but also from a contradiction in perspectives, goals, forms, and rules pertaining to critique and auto-critique in the revolutionary and non-revolutionary spheres. In capitalist societies, where authority is controlled by exploitative classes, the concept of free critique is oriented towards absorbing the anger of those being exploited. This is done through affording society a democratic atmosphere. As for revolutionary movements, the danger of mixing liberal critique and revolutionary critique lies in the possibility of deviance towards self-justifying tendencies, whereby critique becomes a way of attacking others and auto-critique is transformed into a defense of one's own mistakes and transferring responsibility from the self to the other or to fate and prevailing conditions.

Our concern here is to focus on the revolutionary concept of critique and auto-critique, highlighting its goals, forms, and rules in revolutionary movements. The interconnection between critique and auto-critique means that they should be approached as one conceptual unit in which rules and goals are shared. Nevertheless, explaining this unit requires distinguishing between criticizing others and criticizing the self.

The Concept of Revolutionary Critique

Revolutionary critique is an intervention that takes place, at a particular moment and in an appropriate manner, in relation to actions or words and their outcomes, with an eye to reinforcing positive results and refuting negative ones. Specifying the movement of actions or words, it assesses their compatibility with revolutionary principles. It further uncovers the contradictions that underscored them in the past, as well as those that persist in the present and that have formed within them anew. The process of auto-critique differs from the process of critiquing others in that it allows for intervening not just in the realm of actions or words and their outcomes, but also on the level of ideas and their implementation. Auto-critique could prevent the transformation of ideas into actions or words, thus avoiding arrival to a point whereby intervention to alter the outcomes of actions or words would be too late.

Clearly, the concept of revolutionary critique does not only aim at assessing negatives, but also at evaluating positives, in addition to providing

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constructive suggestions that could suppress negatives as well as reinforcing and elevating positives.

The Aims of Critique and Auto-Critique

In revolutionary movements, critique and auto-critique act as the real guarantors of freedom. That is the case when the process of critique takes place in accordance with revolutionary rules and principles. The purpose of critique and auto-critique is not only to correct mistakes and prevent them from spreading further. Constituting the sharpest weapon in the hand of the revolutionary movement, they strengthen it, raise its capacities and fighting efficacy, deepen its organizational roots, and develop its political line so that it can see matters through a clear lens, creating events rather than chasing after them. And since the core popular, political, organizational, and military principles of the revolutionary movement act as the baseline of critique, it follows that the aims of critique lie in preserving the strength and safety of these principles, protecting them from any intentional or unintentional attempt at distortion or deviation, and benefiting from any attempt at enriching and developing them. Without exaggeration, critique and auto-critique could be defined as “the life of the party... the bread without which it cannot live.”² The life of the revolutionary movement is not a goal in its own right; rather, it is a means towards achieving the goals for which it was launched in the first place. Accordingly, the role of critique does not end with the preservation of the life of the revolutionary movement, and it goes beyond that towards pushing the movement to achieve its objectives. For, critique and auto-critique provide the real guarantee for motion within the revolutionary movement. Despite the overlap and interconnection between the goals of critique and auto-critique, each of them has its own objectives that get realized through actual practice.

The Goals of Critique

1. Exposing all practices- in words or action- that contradict the core principles and axioms of, or that deviate from, the revolutionary movement in addition to protecting the general line of the movement on the popular, political, organizational, and military level.
2. Disposing of all worn out ideas that have proved their failure at the level of practical experience, and that have been superseded by the revolutionary movement in its dynamic march towards creating new realities.
3. Developing the movement’s concepts through constant assessment of practices and their positive and negative returns. This allows the dialectical relationship between revolutionary theory and practice to develop theory and push new practices into higher levels of perfection.
4. Constant and permanent emphasis on the correctness and healthiness of the relationship between the revolutionary movement and the

² Mao.

- masses, by means of guaranteeing correct revolutionary practices, especially when it comes to those spheres linking the revolutionary movement and the masses.
5. Raising the level of political and organizational awareness for the revolutionary movement as a whole, by grounding correct convictions through discussion, and analyzing practices- in words or action- and identifying the contradictions between them.
 6. Uncovering weaknesses, in individuals or within movement organizations and working towards ridding the movement of these weaknesses.
 7. Combatting all the illnesses that affect society, and preventing them from seeping into the organizational organs of the movement due to the fact that they contradict revolutionary concepts.
 8. Ensuring and emphasizing equal relations between the members of the revolutionary movement at all organizational levels.
 9. Deepening the spirit of bravery in confrontation amongst all members of the movement and destroying the spirit of backstabbing, insinuation and conspiracy.
 10. Combating the spirit of individualism, absolute centralization, and attempts at choking criticism.
 11. Accustoming all members in all organs of the movement to the fact that they are not above critique, and that they are not above error, and preparing them to accept and respect the opinions of others.

The Goals of Auto-Critique

1. Developing self-confidence through exposing personal flaws and mistakes publically, frankly, directly, and through commitment to correcting course.
2. Getting used to holding oneself accountable before judging others.
3. Protection from the traps of individual conceit and the arrogance that comes when one is fooled by victories and sees in them the positive aspects of the subjective self.
4. Winning the trust of others through giving them confidence and letting them know the truth of individual feelings towards them and towards the common bonds of struggle that tie each individual to the collective. These bonds derive from the principle that 'I cannot win the trust of others if I do not give them my own trust, and I cannot win their hearts if I do not give them my heart and love'.
5. Condemning individual ideas that the member discovers to be wrong before implementing them. This is so as to ensure that these ideas are not thought of again.
6. Getting used to daily evaluations of individual practices through silent critique, identifying positives and negatives, and correcting plans for future action.
7. Disposing of negative and bad individual habits and characteristics, and that the member feels the need of ridding themselves of. This

could take place through the process of self-purification, which is the highest level of dedicated auto-critique...