

Hawatmeh, Nayef. Selected Statements Relating to the PDFLP 'Gradualist Programme'. Various Sources, March 1974.

I. "Statements by General Secretary Hawatmeh of the PDFLP defending the establishment of a Palestinian national authority in territories liberated from Israeli occupation" [Beirut, 24 February 1974]. *al-Hurriya* (Beirut), 4 March 1974.¹

We know that American imperialism seeks a settlement of surrender and liquidation to the detriment of the rights of the people of Palestine, a settlement that would, once again, expose our people to the dangers of dispersal and subjection, caught between Zionism, expansionism and subjection to the Hashimites. Imperialism believes that the interests of the Palestinian people are best served within the framework of Zionist expansion, with Israel not returning to the borders of 4 June 1967, and that they are best served by dissolving the Palestinian people once more in the proposed united kingdom and in places of their exile in the Arab countries and abroad. Imperialism further presents schemes for dissolution, resettlement and relocation in the countries of the region. Our position with regard to these schemes is clear.

Yes, we are Arabs but we are, at the same time, Palestinians. Just as every Arab people has a full right to an independent national existence, so the Palestinian people too has a full right to an independent national existence and to fight all schemes which agree with American imperialist schemes, for these latter seek to obliterate our national existence and refuse to grant it prior recognition.

Knowing all this, we still find opportunistic currents of thought which at times counsel wisdom and at others call upon us to remain within the framework of nationalist unity, such as took place with the regime of King Hussein. We also find leftist opportunist Palestinian opinions attempting to obscure their true positions, which do not in the least lead to a clash with imperialism, Zionism, and Arab and Hashimite reaction, by putting forth bombastic slogans ("The whole of Palestine at once", "Palestinian territories liberated from occupation are to go to the regime of King Hussein"). Our answer to these currents of thought is: They shall not succeed in directing the attention of the revolution from its objectives at this stage. Our people, our revolutionary bases and all the van-guard of the revolution know well that

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they must submit a pragmatic programme which puts the Palestinian people as a whole, the revolution as a whole and the movement for Arab national liberation against the American-Israeli-Hashimite solution of surrender and liquidation, together with any other solution presented by any Arab country which ignores our people's national and historic rights at this stage.

The Palestinian opportunist forces, both of the right and of the left, which are again attempting to dissipate the energies of our people and destroy its independent national existence in preparation for placing our people in a situation similar to the one obtaining between 1948 and 1967-these forces shall not succeed in their schemes and shall not divert us to take up a stand whose end is already well known to us. These currents are in essence currents of surrender because they succumb to the present balance of forces. Despite their revolution-ary phraseology, these currents of opinion are willing to surrender to imperialist-Zionist-reac-tionary schemes. Their point of view can be stated as follows: How can we create a national authority on our Palestinian territories in the shadow of the present balance of power? The other alternative to this logic is to surrender to imperialist solutions and offer our occupied Palestinian territories again to the regime of King Hussein. We are violently opposed to this and we maintain the following: We are fighting to end occupation and to stand effectively against imperialist solutions. We are fighting for our people's right to establish its national authority on its own land after the occupation has been ended. We also maintain that the logic of events in the world today demands that we inflict more defeats upon imperialism and racist regimes, whether in Palestine, Rhodesia or South Africa. And while these regimes came into existence at a certain historical stage, our own age is witnessing the end of that stage. We are entering upon a new age whose basic feature is further defeats for imperialism, local reaction and racist regimes. To inflict further defeats upon these regimes, we must follow a correct international policy which enables our people to become self-reliant and stand on its own land. This is a necessary step if the struggle is to continue on the long path ahead, the path of a long popular war of liberation. We know the road well and shall not allow these opportunistic currents, both of the left and of the right, both in the Palestinian and in the Arab fields, to lead us astray by endangering the rights of our people and making us surrender.

These opportunistic forces do not have a leg to stand on. At times they claim that a national authority would not have the means necessary for economic subsistence and would not be able to survive on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. To these opportunists we answer that we are not at the stage of searching for a homeland. Over there is our homeland, even if it is a desert with nothing but thorn and sand. There is our homeland, whether it has the

economic means of survival or not, although we should bear in mind that the economic potentialities of Palestinian territories occupied after 1967 are greater and more promising than those of many African and Asian countries, for example, Democratic Yemen. If we adopt this lunatic theory, half of Africa and the greater part of Asia would have been bound to fight to keep imperialism in their countries until such time as their economic means of subsistence would have allowed them to become independent.

We are now at a historic crossroads. Let us beware of falling into the same errors. We must struggle decisively and in all clarity in order to propose a national programme and fight for its victory by means of armed struggle, of mass struggle and of all other forms of organised struggle. This programme must be pragmatic and must mobilise all our people and all forces of the revolution, pitting them against the solutions of surrender and liquidation proposed by the US, the Zionists and Arab and Hashimite reaction. It must enable our people to frustrate any Arab policies based on concessions or on weakening the Palestinian and Arab fronts in the common struggle. While warning against falling into error, we must also warn against attempts to deceive our Palestinian masses in Lebanon, Syria and elsewhere. For there are some who claim that if the masses in the occupied territories succeed in gaining their right to self-determination and establishing a national authority, the masses in Lebanon, Syria and elsewhere would have nothing left because they are the masses who belong to lands usurped in 1948. Those who propagate such false opinions fail to realise that deceit never goes very far. The struggle for the right to self-determination, for wresting the occupied territories from occupation and for establishing a national authority therein are gains won by all the Palestinians who belong to a single people. This national authority would make it possible for our masses in Lebanon and Syria to consolidate, organise and fortify the struggle to return to their homeland and further to wage a long war of national liberation until the imperialist, Zionist entity is finally defeated, no matter how long this takes.

II. "Press statement by PDFLP General Secretary Hawatmeh Analysing the Palestine Question" [Beirut, 14 March 1974]. *Le Nouvel Observateur* (Paris), 25 March 1974.

The PDFLP is a leftist organisation and our approach to all problems is based on a leftist and class view. From that basis, then, I want to stress precisely that we know that the solution to the Palestinian and Israeli question will require an entire historical period, exactly as the birth of Israel was the product of a long, historical period. The creation of Israel resulted from a long period of collaboration by the Zionists with imperialism at a time when the entire Middle East was under the hegemony of imperialism and feudal Arab regimes. And prior to that dual control system the whole region was under the yoke of the backward Ottoman regime.

Ultimately, the result of this domination was the birth of Israel and the hegemony of colonialism in the area. But following World War II, an international counterforce brought the beginnings of defeat for imperialism as the socialist bloc grew in strength, together with the establishment of the Chinese People's Republic and the national liberation movements.

In the Middle East, following the creation of Israel, we witnessed a chain of events directed towards moving away from colonialism and towards making gains for Arab national liberation movements. These developments have brought about by confrontation between the Arab national liberation movements and the state of Israel with its imperialist allies.

This confrontation can take various forms, sometimes interrupted by ceasefires or temporary solutions. The confrontation will also be affected by the development of the Arab movements and internal Israeli movements. But we believe that the solution of the Israel-Palestine problem and the Israeli-Arab problem can only come when the vestiges of the past historical period have disappeared.

The transformation of the Middle East region into a democratic and progressive region will surely take place and this transformation opens the possibility of a peaceful solution to the problems. But the prospects for this possibility will be affected by developments inside Israel. Regretfully, we see that, until now, these developments are very small and so we believe that the possibility of a real peace is still very far in the future.

Any real solution to the Middle East problem must be based on the elimination of the expansionist and aggressive lines in Israel coupled with the

recognition of national Palestinian rights. Until now however, the major currents in Israel are in contradiction with these two points. We must note, for example, that the results of the October War in Israel are in opposition to these two points as is very clear in the programmes of both the Likud and the Maarach.

Golda Meir's communiqué to the Knesset designed to get support for her cabinet also demonstrated opposition to these two key points. She reaffirmed her government's refusal to return to the pre- 1967 borders, assured the Israelis she refuses to recognise the rights of the Palestinian people to have an independent government in Gaza and the West Bank and also announced her refusal to sit with representatives of the Palestinian people at Geneva.

The Meir position very clearly demonstrates the expansionist and aggressive nature of the principal political force in Israel and thus makes the entire situation much more complex. In addition, it makes the whole Middle East the target for more suffering rather than offering hope for a real solution.

We note, too, that a majority of the Israelis have moved to the right, supported by the rightwing and the centre-right which seek to push the Israeli people even further to the right. But we also know that the Israeli right and centre-right wings are not the only forces in Israel and in the area.

International pressures must be taken into account. Thus, the actual situation may impose on Israel the need to lessen its expansionist and aggressive tendencies, but because this shift is not the result of a political and intellectual change in Israel, the situation becomes complicated again.

The starting point towards a real solution is the starting of changes within Israel and further democratic and progressive developments more antagonistic to imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction. But we do not foresee a quick solution; we know that achieving real peace will take a long time. But we also know that certainly an essential factor to help in arriving at a real solution will be the acquisition by the Palestinians of some of their national rights, at a later stage.

Heading the list of those rights are the rights of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza to form a national independent state and that of the Palestinian refugees to return to the homes taken from them in the past period. This was approved by the UN in its resolution (194) in 1948.

The implementation of these rights will open the way to a democratic dialogue between democratic and progressive Palestinians and their Israeli counterparts, allowing both forces to search for a radical democratic solution to the problem. But we see the Israeli government, in alliance with the Jordanian regime and the United States, refusing to acknowledge the rights of the Palestinian people and thus not even helping bring about a partial solution, much less a long range one.

For ourselves, in the Palestine Liberation Organisation, we stress that the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and the return of the refugees would represent big steps towards a democratic solution to the problem in the future. But when the forces of the right in Israel refuse to discuss these points they gamble with the future of the Israeli people. Personalities like Ben-Aharon and Eliav, who are Zionists, plus people of the Zionist left and democratic anti-Zionists in Israel serve the interests of the Israeli future 1000 times more than do Meir, Dayan, etc. This is so because Meir and company follow a policy that contradicts the historical current in the Middle East and the world. Meir, Dayan and the Israelis who support them have based their position on maintaining a military power superiority in the region at a time when the future of the region will not allow such a superiority to exist. These people have taken a road which leads them against the historical currents in the area. Unfortunately, Meir still thinks with the same mentality as was held by those in the closed, isolated ghettos who believed that building a fortress equipped with military power could assure their survival.

The October War was an example of this type of false reasoning. We do not maintain that the Arabs won a big victory in that war but we do state that the October War proved Israel's reliance on military force cannot succeed in preserving its future.

Developments in the modern world do not serve the interests of the right-wing tendencies in Israel. Today, worldwide pressure is mounting against imperialism and racist states like South Africa, Rhodesia and Israel. But we know, very well, that the Palestinian problem is very complex, much more complex than that of Vietnam or of Rhodesia and South Africa. The complexity of the Middle East problem derives from such reasons as the troubled history of the area, the development of capitalism in the 19th and 20th centuries, the effect of that capitalism upon the Jewish people, the conflict between European and Jewish capitalism, and the nature of the Israeli presence in Palestine, based, as it is, upon the uprooting of the Palestinian people and their expulsion from their native land. In Vietnam, Rhodesia and

South Africa, the people remained on their land while the Palestinians are a people expelled from its homeland, deprived of their national identity, whose rights have been trampled upon by Israel, the United States and Jordan.

We say, very clearly, to the Israelis that we struggle for peaceful relations between Palestinians and Israelis. We believe, by all historical precedents that living in peace means arriving at basic and democratic solutions to questions inside a united, democratic state where Palestinians and Israeli will live together with the same rights and responsibilities.

But we know that instituting this united, democratic state is impossible in this period. Therefore, we say that the study of the future relationships between Palestinians and Israelis can come only after the national oppression of the Palestinians, resulting from the loss of their national rights, has been lifted. Then, the Palestinian people will be in a position to study the future relations between themselves and the Israeli people. But now, the Palestinian people are uprooted and expelled and unable to carry on such discussion. For example, when the Vietnamese people were asked about their future relationships with the United States, they replied by saying that they could only discuss their future relations after they had their own rights.

The question of the Israeli state is a question for the future, which can be discussed with Israeli Zionists like Ben-Aharon and Eliav plus all the democratic and progressive forces opposed to Zionism and imperialism. At the present time, the possibilities of a fruitful dialogue between the Israeli people and the Palestinian people depend upon the establishment of an independent, national Palestinian state and the restoration of their rights to the Palestinian refugees. Without these steps being taken, no real peace will be possible.