

PALESTINIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

The establishment of the Palestinian Communist Party (PCP) was officially announced on February 10, 1982. The PCP was formed by Palestinian cadre who split from the Jordanian Communist Party; included in its ranks is the Palestinian Communist Organization of the West Bank and Lebanon.

The formation of this party is a positive addition to the left wing of the Palestinian movement, especially as it is a potential participant in the formation of a united communist party in the future.

Early communism in Palestine

The roots of Palestinian communism can be traced back as far as 1919, when the Socialist Workers Party (Mifleget Poalim Sozialistit-MPS) was first established. The leaders of this party were all Jewish, immigrants to Palestine from Eastern Europe who carried socialist ideology with them. The MPS was destroyed as an organization in 1921, following the May Day demonstrations in Jaffa, which aroused Zionist repression and exacerbated tensions between Jews and Arabs. The former members of the MPS who aligned with the Comintern then formed the Palestine Communist Party – *Palestinensische Kommunistische Partei* – PKP. Their first congress was held in September 1922. Until 1934, the main efforts of the PKP were directed to implementing the Arabization decision of the Comintern, i.e., intensification of party work among Palestinian Arabs in an attempt to organize Arab party members and encourage Arab leadership. Later the PKP became heavily involved in the 1936 revolt. However, under the pressure of British repression and because of the rising tensions between Jewish and Arab members, the organizational structure of the party was badly shaken.

In 1942, the PKP emerged from the underground for the first time, because of the easing of restrictions on communist activity due to the Soviet-British wartime alliance. Nevertheless, Arab-Jewish frictions continued and disunity between the two sides reached its climax during this period. Younger Arab leaders of the PKP, including Emil Habibi, Emil Tuma and Fuad Nassar, seized the opportunity to push for an all-Arab organization. Their efforts resulted in the formation of the National Liberation League (NLL) in 1943 in Haifa. (Sections of the NLL later became the Jordanian Com-



munist Party (JCP) from which the newly declared Palestinian Communist Party has emerged. The PKP, however, continued to exist and developed into the Israeli Communist Party, Rakah.)

The leaders of the NLL came from the Federation of Unions, the League of Arab Intellectuals and Marxist groups. Thus the NLL was not so much a communist party in the true sense as a democratic revolutionary organization lead by communist elements. The main objective bases for the formation of the NLL were:

- On the international level: the escalation of victories scored by the Soviets over the Nazi invaders increased enthusiasm for communism among Palestinians and curbed the distorted rumors spread by Zionism, Arab reaction and the colonial powers (Britain and France) about the Soviet Union.

- On the Arab level: the Arab communist movement witnessed a period of revival which contributed to the spread of communist ideology.

- On the Palestinian level: during World War II, thousands of Arab peasants were drawn to the cities to work in local industries set up by the British occupation forces. From 1939-42, the number of Palestinian workers almost doubled with the majority working in construction. Thus the rise of a Palestinian working class provided the basis for the foundation of the NLL and the beginning of Arab (rather than solely Jewish) communist activity in Palestine.

In addition to the objective factors that contributed to the formation of the NLL, there were two main subjective factors:

- The split in the PKP due to conflicts between the Arabs in the party and Jewish leaders, who sympathized with Zionist policies, and encouraged Arabs to work within Zionist institutions and defended settlements set up through Zionist programs.

- During the same period a number of social and political clubs were established in Palestinian cities. These clubs had close contact with the Arab leaders of the PKP. At the same time, in Haifa, the Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labor Societies was founded; this was to be transformed into the nucleus of a progressive Arab workers movement. These progressive nuclei played an important role in the formation of the NLL.

The most problematic policies of the NLL from 1943 until the formation of the Zionist entity in 1948 were:

- belief in the right of the Jewish people to nationhood

- not considering armed struggle as a basic line in the Palestinian national struggle (the NLL never took up arms against its enemies)

- considering the conflict between Arabs and Jews as a racial one, and not clarifying the reactionary and settler-colonial role of Zionism

- rejecting the partition plan, but later revising this decision

The Jordanian Communist Party

Between 1948-51, a period that witnessed concentrated aggression by the Jordanian regime against the Palestinian cause, the NLL struggled heroically against plans for annexing the West Bank to Jordan and for the preservation of the Palestinian identity. However, it revised its position concerning the annexation later on. A few months after King Abdullah of Jordan announced the annexation of the West Bank, the NLL held an emergency meeting (May 1951) and declared the establishment of the Jordanian Communist Party (JCP), composed of the NLL and some Marxist groups. This marked their explicit recognition of the annexation.

From 1951-57, the JCP struggled alongside other national and progressive forces in Jordan against the regime. However, their struggle was limited to reformist and parliamentary forms; in addition, they never put forward the assumption of state power as an aim. The regime took advantage of the wavering policies of the JCP and dealt it a crippling blow – thousands were arrested and massacres of democratic and popular forces were common.

Some positions taken by the JCP that reflect differences with the Palestinian resistance movement include:

- After the 1967 war the party called for a fortification of the interior front and the formation of a national council under the leadership of King Hussein; the JCP later withdrew this proposal.
- The party had its reservations concerning the Palestinian resistance movement, particularly the left-wing organizations in it.
- The JCP did not participate in armed struggle.
- The party supported UN Resolution 242

and considered it an appropriate basis for a lasting peaceful solution for the Middle East.

- The JCP advocates a reformist and pacifist line of struggle.

The Palestinian Communist Party

The recent declaration of the Palestinian Communist Party as an organization separate from the JCP comes with the maturing of various subjective and objective factors. Most importantly, it comes as a response to

the increased assertion of the Palestinian identity, which necessitates the existence of a Palestinian party separate from the JCP. Moreover, the difference in struggle conditions in Jordan and occupied Palestine contributed to the emergence of the PCP. The declaration of the PCP is additional proof of the fact that the process of history will move forward and the ranks of the working class will multiply.

The declaration of this party is a step towards correcting the path followed by the JCP with respect to the stands it has taken concerning the Palestinian cause. However, the degree of this party's success in the arena of Palestinian patriotic struggle depends mainly on the following:

- the degree of coordination with the Palestinian left-wing organizations, working towards forming a united Palestinian working class party
- recognition of the unity of the Palestinian people everywhere, and the unity of our working class (Note: the PCP says it represents all Palestinians, *except* those in Jordan and within the Zionist state)
- positive revision of the stands taken by the JCP with regard to (a) recognition of and coexistence with the Zionist entity, and (b) the position of the party concerning the adoption of armed struggle as a main line of struggle for the liberation of Palestine
- not overlooking the fact that it was the left-wing forces, developed in the process of national struggle, that deepened the democratic content of the Palestinian revolution and played the major role in spreading mass consciousness of scientific socialism, as well as organizing and mobilizing the working class; the PCP should not propose its political tasks so as to imply that it is the sole representative of the Palestinian working class

We eagerly await the announcement of the programs of the PCP, which will no doubt deal with the aforementioned points in depth and detail.

We welcome the creation of the PCP in the arena of Palestinian national struggle, because it is one of our strategic aims to build a united communist party, and such a process naturally entails the cooperation of all militant left-wing organizations. We support the PCP as a positive addition to the Palestinian left-wing movement – an addition that will no doubt add potential and impetus to our struggle for national and social liberation. We salute our comrades of the PCP and assure them that our hearts and minds are always open to all who commit themselves to the cause of the people.

PFLP GREETING

Comrades, leaders of the Palestinian Communist Party:

The Central Committee of the PFLP is pleased to congratulate you on the occasion of the foundation of your party, and sends comradely greetings.

The establishment of your party comes at a time when the aggression of imperialism and Zionism against the Arab liberation movement in general, and the Palestinian Revolution in particular, aims at eliminating these patriotic forces, thus realizing imperialism's military and economic domination over our Arab nation. By building offensive bases in the Arab region and carrying out maneuvers on Arab land, sea and air, US imperialism continues to threaten the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, as well as all Arab progressive liberation forces. In addition, the Zionist enemy's annexation of the Golan Heights, with the support of US imperialism, is only the beginning of attempts to bring steadfast Syria to its knees and threaten the Joint Forces in South Lebanon. This all contributes to creating a suitable atmosphere for the Lebanese fascists' plans, which are coordinated with the Camp David conspiracy.

Comrades: The Fahd plan, which has reached a deadlock, is the embodiment of the dangers facing the Palestinian Revolution and the Arab liberation movement. We consider this plan to be complimentary to Camp David. Its ultimate aim is recognition of the Zionist entity; Arab reaction and imperialism are working hard to brainwash our people into accepting this cancerous growth on our Arab land.

Confrontation of the 'autonomy' conspiracy requires the reactivation of the Palestinian National Front and the preservation of the unity of the Palestinian masses in the occupied territories, in order to enable us to practice all forms of struggle, especially armed struggle.

Confrontation of the imperialist, Zionist and reactionary plans requires Palestinian national unity within the framework of the PLO – the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people – on the basis of its political and organizational program. It also requires strategic cooperation between the Palestinian Revolution, the Lebanese Patriotic Movement and Syria, supported by the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front and relying on the socialist community, especially the Soviet Union – the faithful friend of the Palestinian people, the masses of our Arab nation and their patriotic and progressive forces.

Comrades: Some urgent tasks rest upon all patriotic and progressive forces in order to achieve our people's goal of the complete liberation of our land. They are: to struggle against the settlement trend, to concentrate on the popular liberation war, to open the Arab borders to struggle against the Zionist entity, to develop the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front, and to prepare to confront the Zionist enemy.

Comrades: The formation of your party, as one of the organizations of the Palestinian working class, contributes to the building of a united Palestinian communist party with the other Marxist organizations in the Palestinian arena. This is on the basis of complete commitment to the unity of the Palestinian people every place they are found, their unity of representation, the unity of our working class, rejection of coexistence with the Zionist entity and UN resolution 242, and considering armed struggle as our primary form of struggle in our battle for the liberation of Palestine.

Together on the road of struggle towards a united Palestinian communist party!

Together on the road to achieving the aims of our people for liberation, return to our homeland and the creation of a popular democratic state on all the land of Palestine!