



# New Tasks of the New Stage of the

The Political Report of the  
PFLP's Third National Congress



This is the second edition of the English translation of the Political Report of the PFLP's Third National Congress which was held in March 1972. This edition also includes the preface written for the third Arabic edition of the report, which amends some erroneous ideas contained in the original document.

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## Preface to the Third Edition

This political-theoretical document was adopted by the PFLP's 3rd National Congress in March 1972. Together with other documents, it began to constitute an integrated guide to militant action for the PFLP leadership and rank-and-file, in facing the new stage of struggle embarked upon by the Palestinian revolution and the PFLP following the termination of the revolution's open armed presence in Jordan, in 1971.

In the period that elapsed between the PFLP's 3rd and 4th congresses, the PFLP underwent enormous qualitative changes in terms of internal structure, as well as ideological, political and organizational positions, in the process of transforming from a petit-bourgeois, revolutionary democratic organization into a modern Marxist-Leninist party. Moreover, the document at hand is considered essential material for internal party education. In addition, the PFLP's 4th congress adopted resolutions and directives about the necessity of undertaking a critical review of certain erroneous ideas, positions and expressions that have occurred in our basic documents, with a view to rectifying them. Taking these three considerations into account, the PFLP Central Committee, in its 4th session in January 1983, passed a resolution to the effect that such a review of this document be made and included in the preface of

the new edition, without making any alterations in the original text. This would preserve its character as a historical document which reflects the level of development and maturity of the PFLP's thinking and positions in a specific historical period.

Before reviewing the points in question in *Tasks of the New Stage*, however, we think it is worthwhile to draw attention to two remarks: (1) Rectifying certain mistaken ideas and positions is not the same as conducting an all-round, thoroughgoing critical evaluation. That is beyond the scope of this preface and should be carried out in the PFLP's literature which will continue uninterrupted as long as the PFLP exists. (2) There are certain erroneous ideas which have been corrected in this preface without indicating their exact position in the original text, because they occur in various places, on more than one page and under different titles.

## The Amended Ideas and Positions

### I. On the Arab Nationalist Regimes

It must be pointed out at the beginning that the class character of the Arab nationalist regimes is referred to in several places in *Tasks of the New Stage*, as petit-bourgeois. Thus, in the passage entitled «(d) The International Position and the Resistance,» it speaks of «the submission of the Arab nationalist and petit-bourgeois regimes to the will of the reactionary regimes...» In the chapter entitled «The Alliances of the New Stage on the Arab and International Levels,» it states that: «The correct position, with regard to the reactionary Arab regimes, is the one which considers them, objectively speaking, as an organic part of the enemy camp. However, the position in reference to the so-called nationalist Arab regimes (or more precisely the military, petit-bourgeois regimes) is more complex.»

Discussing the Arab nationalist regimes with respect to their class character and the trends of their motion and development, the 4th National Congress pointed out the following theoretical and material facts:

1. Despite being of petit-bourgeois origins, these regimes have a national bourgeois, not petit-bourgeois, class character,

for by dint of its position in the production process, its nature and internal structure, as well as the particular laws governing its development, the petit bourgeoisie is incapable of setting up a social system of its own, i.e., a petit-bourgeois system, even if certain of its sectors (or parties) manage to gain state power under certain historical conditions.

The fact of certain sectors of the petit bourgeoisie being in power does not mean that these regimes have become the representatives of the class interests of the petit bourgeoisie. Rather, they mainly reflect and represent the general class interests of the national bourgeoisie. Besides, these sectors of the petit bourgeoisie that are in power, do not remain unchanged. The growth of their economic and social interests will gradually move them to the positions of the bourgeoisie (which is, more often than not, bureaucratic). This shift severs their ties with their former petit-bourgeois origins.

2. The Arab nationalist regimes are not rigid or immutable. They move and change continuously according to the particular laws governing their development, as well as the general laws of social and historical development. Hence, the correct, scientific attitude towards these regimes is to view them in the context of their objective motion, position and concrete role in the Arab struggle for liberation.

«In the 1950s, a new stage of struggle began with the July 23rd revolution in Egypt as the center, led by strata representing the petit and middle bourgeoisie. These new class forces overthrew the subservient big bourgeoisie which was allied with the feudalists. There were political, economic, social and cultural achievements at this stage in Egypt and throughout the Arab homeland; several progressive, nationalist Arab regimes emerged, unlike the pre-1948 regimes. Yet these achievements remained governed by the nature, interests and abilities of the petit and middle bourgeois strata. Production remained generally capitalist in character, and relations of economic dependence continued, attaching these regimes to the imperialist world market. Under these conditions, the interests of the ruling class grew and intertwined with the interests of the old bourgeoisie and world capital, despite all claims to a 'third course' of development, and despite tactical relations with the

socialist community. This economic and class structure formed the base for these regimes' programs in the ideological, political and cultural spheres» (*Political Report of the PFLP's 4th Congress*, English edition, 1986, pages 111-112).

«This class secured its interests through controlling state power; it made use of the mass struggles to improve its own position in the world capitalist system and market; its interests grew and interlinked with those of the old bourgeoisie which it had overthrown without changing the mode of production. No sooner had this occurred than this class slowed down its progressive march, then stopped and began to retreat to a position of alliance with world capitalism, abandoning the masses and their interests. The transition of Sadat's regime to its current position of treason provides concrete proof of the course of this class» (ibid, page 112).

«This, of course, does not mean that the petit bourgeoisie, which now leads the masses' revolutionary struggle against imperialism, is ultimately bound to reverse and identify with imperialism. Far from it; there are revolutionary democratic forces in the petit bourgeoisie who possess certain subjective conditions, mainly unreserved commitment to Marxism-Leninism. These elements do have the ability to carry on with the struggle against imperialism and its local, reactionary allies, and to press ahead in the direction of radical, socialist transformation of the society. This happened in Democratic Yemen, Angola and Mozambique. There, the progressive forces managed to withstand the onslaughts of imperialism and reaction; they mobilized and organized the masses, and developed a strategic alliance with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. They are now pressing ahead to complete the national democratic revolution as a prerequisite for socialism, providing its material and technical base» (ibid, pages 47-48).

## II. On the Petit Bourgeoisie

In the passage entitled «a) The Position with Regard to the Arab Petit-Bourgeois Regimes» in *Tasks of the New Stage*, it says: «The position of the petit bourgeoisie, as a class which is not directly engaged in the process of production, is characterized by oscillation and instability...»

The above statement contains two clear-cut errors: The one lies in declaring the petit bourgeoisie to be a class that is not directly involved in production; the other lies in the assertion that the oscillation and instability of the positions of the petit bourgeoisie are due to its not being directly involved in the process of production.

The fact is, however, that despite its particular class nature, the petit bourgeoisie, like other classes, has its place in the system of social production; it has a relation to the means of production; it has a role in the social organization of labor; and it has ways of acquiring wealth and its share therein. This does not, however, imply that there must be uniformity, homogeneity and harmony among the various sections comprising the petit bourgeoisie, or among their positions and roles in the material production process. The petit bourgeoisie as a class indeed lacks homogeneity and internal harmony; for besides including sections that are not directly involved in production (such as teachers, doctors, etc.), it includes other sections that are involved (such as peasants, artisans, etc.).

As for the properties of oscillation and instability, these have their roots in the duality of the petit bourgeoisie's economic position, rather than being determined by whether or not this class is directly involved in the process of production. The petit bourgeoisie, generally speaking, owns lesser means of production. This is the factor it has in common with the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, however, the petit bourgeoisie works, produces and is a victim of the capitalist relations of production on the social level. This is the factor it has in common with the proletariat.

«The duality of the petit bourgeoisie's economic position is the primary and most profound underlying cause of his contradictory beliefs. On the one hand, he is a small proprietor; on the other, he is a worker. The masses of the petit bourgeoisie cannot but vacillate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. This has always been the case everywhere. The petit bourgeoisie, under capitalism, is always and apart from everything an object of class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The situation and form of this conflict varies in different times and countries, but the internal

dichotomy of the petit bourgeoisie, together with the opposing tractions exercised on him by the conflicting bourgeoisie and proletariat, force him to vacillate continuously. His past draws him towards the bourgeoisie, his future towards the proletariat» (Alexei Levkovsky, *The Petit Bourgeoisie and its Characteristics*, page 22).

### III. On the Zionist Enemy's Scheme for the Future of the 1967 Occupied Territories

When enumerating and analyzing the forms of activities in the 1967 occupied territories, as a result of the vacuum which ensued upon the political absence of the resistance there at that time, *Tasks of the New Stage*, in the chapter entitled «The Resistance inside Occupied Palestine,» refers to «political activities initiated under the direction of the Israeli occupation... to create a suitable atmosphere for the consolidation of the occupation, either directly or in the form of a puppet Palestinian state...»

It is clear that *Tasks of the New Stage* here assumes the likelihood of the Zionist enemy creating a subservient Palestinian puppet state in the 1967 occupied territories, with a view to perpetuating the occupation. This assumption is erroneous and out of tune with reality. It is at loggerheads with scientific and objective understanding of the Zionist settler-colonial plan in Palestine: On the one hand, this plan aims at imposing Zionist colonial domination over the whole of Palestine, by liquidating the material and spiritual existence of the Palestinian people; and on the other hand, our practical experience with the Zionist enemy's policies in the occupied territories over the years is totally contrary to any such assumption.

The Zionist enemy's plan for the future of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip is obviously not unrelated to the Zionist settler-colonial plan for Palestine as a whole. On the contrary, the first is a link in the second and is designed to serve the Zionists' expansionist aims. The aggressive policies pursued by the Zionist enemy in the occupied territories since 1967 include economic subordination, settlement-building, and obliterating the Palestinian national identity, culture and

history. Added to this are the programs of the Likud and Labor Alignment, the two major Zionist blocs, for settling the so-called problem of the 1967 occupied territories: autonomy, the Palestinian-Jordanian state project, etc. Taken all together, these quite certainly conform to the Zionist objection to any form of Palestinian state, or any material Palestinian entity at all, even in the form of a subservient Palestinian statelet, as was referred to in *Tasks of the New Stage*. This is due to the threat which such an entity might represent to the Zionist colonialist presence in Palestine in the future.

### IV. On the Character of the Current Stage in the Arab Homeland

In several places in *Tasks of the New Stage*, the historical period which our Arab homeland is passing through is inaccurately referred to as being a stage of national democratic liberation.

The development of capitalism into imperialism on the one hand, and the emergence of the socialist system on the other, have had a qualitative effect on the characteristics of the historical development of the countries which entered into the capitalist stage at a later date. The effect is such that the national democratic tasks can no longer be thoroughly and radically fulfilled unless they are combined in one revolutionary process with the socialist tasks, through effective proletarian leadership of the revolutionary movement.

Imperialism controls the economic structure of the so-called third world so that it may serve the interests of world capitalism which has evolved into imperialism. This control has distorted and impeded the growth of both the bourgeoisie and the capitalist system in these countries. Accordingly, the third world bourgeoisie did not become a revolutionary industrial bourgeoisie, interested in establishing its own national market by removing the declining feudal relations of production and defending its internal market from the onslaught of foreign capital. Instead, this bourgeoisie has generally evolved into a parasitic comprador class bound to foreign capital with numerous ties. This culminated in its forming an unholy

alliance with the feudal class and the imperialist forces, to combat revolution in the underdeveloped countries. Thus, the bourgeoisie in these countries has not evolved into a motive and leading force of the revolution (as was historically assumed and as was the case in Europe), but into a counterrevolutionary force whose overthrow ranks high on the agenda of the revolution in underdeveloped countries today.

With the bourgeoisie having proved incompetent, there remains only the proletariat to lead and fulfill the tasks of the democratic revolution in the underdeveloped countries. Once the working class takes power in these countries, the democratic and socialist revolutions are combined and interconnected. As Lenin said:

«Kautsky, Hilferding, Martov, Chernov, Hallicup, Longuet, MacDonald and their likes of the champions of Marxism have not been able to understand the connection between the bourgeois national democratic revolution and the proletarian socialist revolution, for the former changes into the latter; the latter, while in progress, solves the problems of the former; and the latter reinforces the cause of the former. It is the struggle, and only the struggle, that decides to what extent the latter will succeed in outstripping the former.»

The experience of the revolution in Asian, African and Latin American countries testifies to the correctness of this thesis. Wherever national democratic revolutions were rigidly contained within a narrow framework, these failed to carry out their tasks and achieve their aims. Rather, they retreated from their previous achievements (as was the case in Egypt and Iraq). If the revolution, however, succeeded in overstepping its boundaries by embarking on the socialist revolution, it would be able to carry out these tasks and achieve its aims (as was the case in Vietnam and Cuba).

The overall character of the historical period our Arab homeland is passing through, despite differences in the level of economic and political development of the various Arab countries, is one of national democratic revolution interconnected with socialist revolution.



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