

ABU IYAD

FATEH

— *There is a widespread feeling that the Palestinian resistance movement is in a quandary. Do you agree? And how do you envisage the way out of it?*

— It is true that the resistance movement is passing through a crisis. It wouldn't be useful to discuss in great detail the conspiracies against the movement, for conspiracies against any sincere and genuine liberation movement are to be expected. What happened in Jordan before September is a clear indication that a plot to annihilate the Palestinian resistance was being planned. It is a broad subject which neither of us wants to tackle now.

In my opinion, the nature and essence of this crisis are to be found in the internal situation, whether on the level of the major organizations, of the relations between them, or of the task as a whole. Let's take Fateh as an example. Any problem within Fateh reflects, one way or another, on the entire resistance movement. Fateh's lack of a clear political line and of any stand on fundamental issues must have an effect on the other organizations and the overall movement. This is why I say that the internal crises of each organization and of the resistance movement as a whole are interrelated. And it is why I believe that the quandary of the movement stems from within.

The broad outlines of the crisis seem to me as follows: *One*: The first point is the absence of a single clear political line embracing all organizations. Discussing minimum and maximum political programs consumed a great deal of our time, and to continue this discussion would be a further waste of time. But agreement on a minimum political program and work toward its realization are possible in the light of the policy of the resistance movement itself. An examination of the political program presented by Fateh to the eighth National Council shows it to be satisfactory; had Fateh really acted in accordance with this program, and had the other organizations respected it, we would have found ourselves with a lucid political line for all Palestinian action.

Two: A distinctive aspect of the crisis is the relationship between the groups within the resistance movement, a relationship built upon organizational rivalry. At a glance, this might seem a simple matter, but anyone who has lived through such rivalry has felt the effect of its organizational problems on the development

of Palestinian action. Even in historic and critical decisions, the leadership of the various groups used to put hierarchical gain before the general good. Had the political line been clear, and organizational relations absent from the scene, the crisis of the resistance movement would not have been as great.

Three: The third point is the lack of frankness toward the masses—and the disrespect implied thereby. Those in positions of authority may, in certain cases, find it difficult to be candid with the people; but we must arrange our own circumstances in such a way as not to fear frankness. True, for many reasons I cannot pronounce my opinion of some Arab regimes. But if our situation had been organized to deal with this matter, I could now do so without paying a heavy price.

Those who have no faith in the masses may think that plain-speaking to them is a case of political auctioneering, mere words. But in fact it means clarification of all the issues raised by the resistance. Many things happen that the people do not understand. If we had tried to explain the reasons for certain actions, we would have won over the people to our side once and for all. They would have refused either to stand against us or to be neutral.

In my opinion it is necessary to discuss these three points; they have not yet been treated in a clear and sincere fashion.

— *In the light of this discussion, don't you agree that the official Arab position and the programs followed by the Arab states have so far represented a greater force than that of the resistance movement, and that it is this Arab force which plays a major part in weakening the movement to the point where it cannot execute its plans?*

— Your question is related to the third point which I have just mentioned. The internal conditions of the resistance movement, or of the main groups within it, have become so complex that financial matters, the interests of the organizations, and relations with the regimes usually predominate, at the expense of the masses. Neither did the resistance leadership attempt to control these conditions, which gave the Arab states an excuse to interfere and influence all the decisions of the movement.

At the moment we feel that there is some justification for compromise with the Arab regimes: our financial situation, our expenses, and our relationships force this upon us. But if matters proceed as they are doing now, I believe the result will be total collapse, for there is a real contradiction between the Palestinian revolution and many—if not all—of the Arab regimes. This contradiction should prompt us to prepare our own organization in such a way as to affect, rather than be affected by, Arab policies. At present, when we are deciding on any given issue, we tend to ask: Does this decision please such-and-such a state or not? I believe that this is the beginning of tragedy for any revolution anywhere—when its decisions become a function of its relationships.

Therefore, I agree that the official Arab scene influences in one way or another

the way in which we conduct our affairs; and we must remedy this fault, little by little. For if we deceive ourselves now by saying that we are conscious of being restricted, the Arab mentality will later be able to restrict us without our awareness. We would ultimately become tools without realizing it. Acting less than being acted *on*, we would lose our very *raison d'être*.

— *You said that the program presented by Fateh and approved by the eighth National Council contained a minimum program from which a single political line could acceptably be drawn. This program contains strategic points, but we believe that the problem does not consist in defining basic strategy for Palestinian action, but rather in everyday policy. For example, how should we deal—on a daily level—with the Arab regimes? How can we preserve the independence of Palestinian action through these daily contacts? Differences of opinion arise in these matters, and not on the accepted principle of independence from the Arab governments.*

— When I brought up the question of a political program, I meant that any such program should contain general lines. The everyday leadership of the Palestinian action is responsible for interpreting these lines, and it is necessary to translate the program into more detail accepted by all. Before approving the general program, anyone was free to raise his voice in the Council and request more detail, so as not to fall out in the future. Or the Executive Committee should have met to draw up these details. In this way, the present temporary crisis could have been averted.

In my opinion, there would be no problems if we really wanted to agree. Even if an objection arose, we should deal with it together in such a way as to benefit the Palestinian cause. Mediation is one example: opposition to mediation could have been expressed by the Popular Front, the Democratic Front, or from within Fateh itself—I do not object to that, provided that the opposition was voiced in agreement with the leadership in order to give the delegation a source of strength. The proper tactic for such opposition should not take the form of a press conference held by a representative of the particular organization member in the Central Committee; instead, the conference should be given by someone from the organization itself. However, the relationship between the organizations is not clear nor based on any obvious principles, each one trying to preserve a separate identity. Attempts at national unity are not taken seriously by any of them. I don't want to give detailed examples, but I think that this is why tactics take precedence over accepted strategic stands.

— *Another issue was and still is the cause of much conflict. Despite agreement on basic strategy, there is dispute over the daily policies of the resistance. There are two trends within the movement: one insisting on the necessity for a national program; and another asserting that every national program necessarily contains an element of class struggle from which it cannot be divorced. What is your analysis of this?*

— Despite the fact that the opinions on this matter are sound and each has its own logic, it still remains that the maxim upon which Fateh was originally founded is that Palestinians cannot liberate their land alone. Fateh attempts to combine its strategy on the Arab scene with its known tactics, to avoid assault or failure at the very beginning. If we care to analyse the topic scientifically in relation to the reality of the Palestine case, we find it impossible to raise any other banner at this time than that of national liberation.

The whole question bears on Palestinian circumstances, the geographical and political dispersion of the people, and their scattering among many ideologies. All these factors are in turn related to the psychological crisis suffered by the Palestinian people for seventeen years before the eruption of fedayeen action. It is impossible to unite the scattered parts except by means of a national liberation movement asserting that the present stage is one of national liberation.

Next comes the question of the Arab citizen—the Lebanese, the Jordanian from East Jordan, the Syrian. The Arab citizen may hold certain feelings toward the Palestinian case which lead him to regard it as a basic cause, but he still has daily preoccupations. Can Fateh or anything else prevent this citizen from struggling with his own everyday problems? I do not believe that Fateh objects to the conflict within the Arab region or through the liberation movements in the Arab world being a class conflict or a struggle to solve daily social problems. Fateh feels that it is completely responsible for crystallizing the conception of national liberation in the minds of Palestinian and Arab citizens. Let the Palestinian case and the Palestinian revolution fall within the program of the militant Arab, whether as the slogan of protecting the revolution or of fighting under its banner. What is important is to have a strong and not merely illusory relationship between the Palestinian and the Arab militant. We must clear up this matter, because allowing it to remain as a problem renders us unable to dissolve organizational fanaticism through discussion. And if we want to solve the problem, we must consider two propositions: firstly, the Arab struggle may take any form it chooses, from a class struggle to the solution of daily social problems; and secondly, the totality of the struggle simultaneously serves the Palestinian resistance, which must not succumb, but must continue to raise the banner of national liberation. There is no solution to this problem except through enlarging the scope of action for the Arab citizen and the Arab organizations.

Even if Fateh wished to form Arab organizations, it should grant them plenty of opportunity to deal with everyday affairs; otherwise such organizations will disintegrate. That is why we made a formal distinction between Palestinian and Arab action. The reality of the situation and its essence suggest a dynamic cohesion of the two fronts; the Palestinian and Arab struggles are united—as they should be—in the tide of the Arab revolution.

— *To make this point quite clear: there is a national and a social struggle in the Arab world, but there is also a movement to emphasize the priority of the former over the*

latter. It is imperative for the Palestinian movement to clarify this point in any program it may formulate, so as to specify with whom to establish relations and ally itself in the future, and to avoid the necessity for alliances in each region according to the particular stage reached.

— I don't want to talk about the program as it was published in the press; instead, I would like to bring up some of Fateh's basic material which was not given a wide audience. One clause states that the Palestine National Liberation Movement (Fateh) is an integral part of the Arab and world liberation movements. It occurs in the basic principles and was approved again at Fateh's last conference, and is sufficient to clarify the meaning of Palestinian cohesion with Arab liberation.

But does this mean that the Arab liberation movement has only national goals? Its social goals are very clear, and I don't see any contradiction. I would say there is only an apparent contradiction. More precisely, there is a specialization which serves the present stage. I still say that if we want to struggle on the Arab level or on the basis of class conflict, we should not mention anything called the Palestinian revolution. It is possible for us to become integrated into Arab parties and movements and to fight on the Arab level, and we did so from 1952 to 1965. The younger generation was divided, struggling on all Arab fronts; I think Fateh was a reaction to that, a reaction to the defeat of the [Palestinian] individual confronted by Arab circumstances and by Arab parties which were not responsible enough to struggle sincerely or to convince the Palestinian that this was the way to his land.

Attention should be focused on the Palestinian case because of its special aspects; but in reality there should be vast Arab masses in support. Thus the problem is resolved, for Fateh considers itself part of the Arab liberation movement, a part of its national and social program. The differences between the two are an illusion, for the existence of Israel and its attempts to liquidate the Palestinian cause will, in the long run, affect the whole Arab world.

— *The Palestinian position, you stressed, is of extreme importance because it has always been a topic of discussion. We believe that the source of conflict lies in the organizational interpretation of this correct ideological stand. There are in fact two positions: one calls for the establishment of a supporting Arab front; the other insists on the necessity for a daily dialectical relationship with the Arab national movement. What is your estimate of the course steered by the Palestinian resistance movement between these two lines?*

— Although you describe this position as important, I consider it to be a simple matter. My opinion is contained in Fateh's basic principles, though I think the specific article of the by-laws was not widely circulated and I shall accordingly try to make it clear, especially since Fateh was for a long time dubbed regionalist, isolationist and so on—I don't care much for names and slogans.

For example, the matter of the supporting Arab front or of organizing the

Arab masses—this is not the question. If the goal is clear in the mind, labels cease to be important. A short while ago we spoke of the program issued by the National Council, how it was limited to broad lines and how it led to disagreement when details were discussed. In my opinion, the important element in dealing with this problem is practice itself and I believe that Fateh's historic value lies in its persistent identification of commitment with practice. The value of labels disappears in the face of commitment to these principles.

I still cannot tell you which of the two positions proved successful; we have not yet witnessed any results. So far there is no clear relationship between the Palestinian revolution and the Arab masses. But let us first discuss Fateh's position. In this case, the Arab supporting front had no ideological content and was consequently limited to the idea of being a mere gathering of militants. Initially, the Arab citizen rushed to the Palestinian revolution; then he began to feel that the supporting front gave him no role beyond that of a fund-raiser; finally, he failed to interact with the revolution. It is true that there were Arab citizens fighting inside Fateh ranks, but this relationship took on no special organizational form which might eventually have yielded effective results.

As far as the other organizations calling for Arab mobilization are concerned, I don't think they succeeded. They gave the Arab citizens slogans and the concept of a limited struggle, but these had no more success. Had they done so, on the other hand, the Palestinian resistance would not now have all these problems. The failure of both fronts goes back to their practice; Fateh gave neither the ideology nor the required effort to the front.

I don't know the reason for the other groups' failure. One may conclude that they were not really serious in making of the Arab masses a true organization. To form a popular Arab organization, it is not enough to have ten men from Iraq, five from Egypt, six from Saudi Arabia. That's not the way to organize the Arab masses. Without doubt there is a fault in setting up the front, in the relationships, or in practice; and I would emphasize the latter.

— *In terms of practical experience, the problem has another side : the Arab national movements. From what you have seen, how do you judge the response of these movements to the task of preparing themselves and their nations to support the Palestine struggle in an effective way?*

— Our own self-criticism should not be taken as denying the responsibilities of the Arab liberation movements. Our discussion has dealt with the spontaneous and unorganized masses, but the Arab liberation movement, as represented by the national progressive parties, shares a great part of the responsibility for negligence. In many meetings with our brothers in these movements, I remember their concentration on blaming the Palestinian revolution. Of course, no one can deny the negligence; we denounced our own practices before September [1970]. But these parties and national and progressive forces failed to understand how

they could benefit from cohesion with the Palestinian revolution. They neither strove for such a union, nor did they indulge in constructive criticism of our activity. Instead, they took up negative positions; to our negativity they responded in kind. The Arab liberation movement was transformed into splinter groups, striking out in all directions. If we were to put aside the Palestinian revolution and turn our attention to the Arab liberation movements, we would find its factions and parties in dreadful disarray. Yet it demands unity of the resistance.

There have been practical experiences bearing on this point. In more than one Arab sector it used to be difficult to unite those with the same ideology for the space of one meeting, let alone during a drawn-out struggle. At a meeting one would come up against a veto directed by one group at another. If this situation is ignored, the Arab liberation movement will be mortally wounded, as others have been before throughout the world. I would say that it is not only the Palestinian revolution that is in need of urgent review; the same goes for the Arab liberation movement, if it is to overcome its organizational and ideological fanaticism, and not lose its *raison d'être*. If such a thing were to happen, the way would be open for a reactionary tide to engulf the region.

We will, then, need many years to regain the strength to renew the liberation movement, and this constitutes a danger to the whole area. In my opinion, the negativity of the resistance movement toward the larger Arab liberation movement is matched only by an equivalent reaction in the opposite direction. But the latter is the more dangerous, for the Arab liberation movement is supposedly better qualified, longer experienced and more aware. As such, it was for the movement to initiate the much-needed and improved new relationship.

— *You have defined a general framework for the relation of Palestinian action to Arab circumstances. But Jordan is a special case. Does your general definition apply to Jordan too, or are special dealings called for?*

— First I want to comment on the general definition, because every revolutionary movement in the world possesses a broad framework. I would emphasize the practical element in this framework; what is more, a true belief in the framework eliminates the concern for detail. Let us discuss Jordan from this standpoint.

I believe—and have often reiterated—that the Jordanian regime has no wish to coexist with us. Moreover, the regime is well aware of my belief. It is the only reactionary Arab regime built on solid foundations and dedicated to certain principles. Its supremely ingenious tactic was to bide its time while we made our mistakes; then, in September [1970] and later, it struck the fatal blow.

The Jordanian regime must be studied, primarily to define the enemy it contains. Our enemy in Jordan is the ruling family in particular, and the agents bound to it and imperialism alike through ideology. I regard Wasfi al-Tal* as

*Prime Minister of Jordan from September 1970 until he was assassinated in Cairo on November 28, 1971 by an underground Palestinian organization.

an agent by ideology rather than employment; if a progressive nation were to try to “buy” him, it would not succeed, for Tal is an agent who believes in his cause.

We were able to pinpoint the enemy on one front, and we must now discuss this front. It is necessary to examine the structure of Jordanian society and to try to mend it by means of a national front comprised of all Jordanians and Jordanians of Palestinian origin. The situation should be approached scientifically, and the front given a real, not merely formal, part to play. Its duty should not be to issue statements on national occasions, but to study—for example—the problem of the bedouin and how King Hussein was able to have them fight and die for him.

We saw their ferocity in September; they wanted to kill the fedayeen because they believed the fedayeen were infidels, unbelievers, criminals. They were well indoctrinated, and everyone who lived through September felt the hatred in the soldiers’ hearts. The Jordanian soldier did not give the impression of one who performs a duty imposed on him; rather, he seemed to be doing what he himself wanted to do. King Hussein indoctrinated the army, and was subsequently able to appear as if in answer to its demands.

He gave the army the task of striking at the fedayeen, a decision that deserves further study. Some of the brothers made the mistake of raising slogans such as “popular liberation war against the Jordanian regime”, which only led to daily skirmishes with Jordanian soldiers and citizenry.

I imagine that such slogans please King Hussein and Wasfi al-Tal very much, for they give the regime an opportunity to build up Jordanian society along Israeli lines, with every citizen feeling that hawks and savages lie in wait and that safety depends on the [protection of the] regime.

Despite all that has been said about the chauvinism of the Palestinian unions and the regionalism of the revolution, these were not alone sufficient to provoke the Jordanian citizen into [local] national fanaticism. This only occurred after September when the number of dead in his village was liable to have reached ten or more. It became commonplace for one small settlement to be presented with fifteen corpses, each possessing fifty or sixty relatives; of course, such a village soon turned hostile.

In my opinion, then, the definition of the enemy is very important, and our slogans must be designed to avoid the major error of antagonizing our people. We must concentrate on attacking and destroying the makeup and power of the regime—given that, we may call this war anything we choose. The problems of the bedouin and the fellaheen (although the scientific meaning of this term is not appropriate here)—both constituting the masses of the regime—should be treated separately. We know that the vengeance for the murder of a member of a clan falls upon the entire Palestinian action. The gravest mistake we can make is to strike at the manifestations of the regime which lack influence and do not represent the real centers of power nor the true enemy in Jordan.

The enemy is the ruling family, a group of individuals, and the powerful forces

of the establishment. Thus, if we were to come across ten soldiers guarding an arms depot, it is our duty to blow up the depot and spare the soldiers. In my opinion, anyone faithful to his intellect and to the long struggle in Jordan should not hope for any form of coexistence with the regime. This hope had become like that of "tomorrow we will return"—it is a hope merely. We would be mistaken to believe that the regime will yield to any Arab pressure, for it has a well-known, non-Arab source of support. The United States contributes arms, dollars and everything else necessary for its survival. King Hussein is now putting his affairs in order, for he has the arms, the army, the organization: he lacks nothing. He does not care about the West Bank because he knows it will not be returned. His current endeavor is to halt any real revolution in the East Bank. That is his duty, and he is performing it to the full. To demand the return of the West Bank and Jerusalem are trivial matters for his regime.

Some may ask why we preach non-coexistence with the regime and what the advantages are to do so. The slogan is important. If a citizen in Amman has a gun or a bomb to use, and if he is aware that his leadership takes an unambiguous stand on non-coexistence, then he will realize that to help destroy the regime is not a useless and vain self-sacrifice. It is abhorrent that anyone caught with a bomb in his possession should face execution, while his leaders shake hands with King Hussein. And here lies the importance of the political decision. What we have said also goes back to the earlier subjects of defining the enemy, of knowing the strongpoints of the regime, and of avoiding a popular liberation war, in a general sense, against Jordanian soldiers and citizens.

The problem of reaching a final decision was the pre-September tragedy, and continues to be our fundamental difficulty. Undecided, we can never regain our strength in Jordan. While in Amman I tried everything to retain part of our presence in Jordan, but I felt that the regime had already committed itself, on ideological grounds, against the resistance. Neither will the regime make the ideological mistake of allowing the resistance to re-enter the country.

However, the resistance has many strengths with which to prevail against the Jordanian regime, and against all the Arab regimes too, should they seek to obstruct the Palestinian revolution. For what do we fear now? In the past, we used to be anxious for our overrated institutions. But now there is nothing to fear.

— *What prevented the Palestinian revolution from taking the decision you describe until now?*

— Different points of view. One says that fighting the regime is a difficult task and that the Arab states are not serious about joining the battle with us. Having emerged from one battle, we should not enter others. Therefore, if we could reach agreement with Amman it would be to our advantage; and if we failed, it would still be in our favor, in terms of Arab and world public opinion. We would have tried our best, and could look for ways to fight the regime.

This is the viewpoint which refuses a final decision, and I say that it is wrong. The whole matter rests on experience. Asked about the biggest mistake before September, I would say that Fateh's leadership, in particular, had no complete experience of the 1957 events in Jordan. Had we lived as ordinary citizens then, had we been inside the prisons and suffered, we would take a different attitude to the regime. Before September it was our minds that opposed the regime; after September, our emotions. Before September, we approached the regime from the top, and were not oppressed—in fact, the opposite was true. The king used to wait twenty days at a time for a meeting with us, and we used to pound the table in front of him. We did not feel threatened; we were the masters of the situation. Our opinion was that, despite the nature of the regime, it treated us better than any other Arab government, even the progressive ones. This hope—this slender hope—was a mistake. The point of view was wrong.

— *You spoke of the necessity to establish a Jordanian national front, to study the Jordanian situation and to understand it with precision. How do you envisage the role of the resistance movement within this front and its relationship with it?*

— The true national front would be one to prepare a definite plan of action in accordance with the problems of the Jordanian citizen, whether native or naturalized. This should be a complete national and political program. The relationship of the resistance to this front should be similar to that with any Arab liberation movement—one of cohesion based on the understanding that each would not substitute for, but complement, the other.

— *Given your analysis of the crisis, what are the basic duties of the resistance movement in the coming stage?*

— I shall approach the present, urgent duties of the resistance by concentrating on its internal conditions, firstly at the organizational level. Criticisms published in the press and aired on panel discussions were mere words, never translated into practice. Each organization should arrange its affairs to prevent disproportion, negligence and continued fear for the relationship with the Arab regimes. We can then move on to deal with the overall relations between the organizations.

Each of the groups should rebuild itself internally so as to proceed from the stage of self-criticism to that of correction. It should then define its position on the question of national unity. When these tasks have been accomplished, all the relationships can be brought into line through the struggle for national unity, which will involve two principles: first, we must clarify our professed program, so that instead of referring to a "clear political line", we may speak of a "clear political program based on a clear political line"; second, we must ensure that the coming stage is an opportunity for elevating ourselves above organizational fanaticism, for developing to the utmost, and for preparing all the cadres—espe-

cially the fanatics, for we leaders made them so—for action. This is the meaning behind a true reconsideration of our internal conditions. Previously, we were faithful to neither unity nor separatism; had we adhered to one or the other, the revolution would have divided into two clear-cut parts: government and opposition. But we always sit together in harmony, thinking that all is well; this must change.

There is another point, related to the Palestine Liberation Organization: it is not yet clear what the organizations demand from it. By the PLO I do not mean the material entity for whose planning and existence the leadership must account, but the framework we occupy. This framework has a constitution, by-laws, institutions and Arab relationships. Do the resistance groups see the PLO merely as a pretext for getting together once every six months? Is it a means for giving vent to our anger, for speaking and launching programs?

According to the fourth National Council, the PLO is supposed to be a national front comprising organizations and individuals, but we have never used it as such. Our duty is to promote our public image through the PLO. All the groups should revert to more or less covert activity, in the sense that there is no need for separate offices in the same country belonging to Fateh, the Popular Front, and the PLO. I mean that we should give the PLO a purpose. We must allow open activity on condition that the opinions of the organizations meet within the auspices of the PLO. Each group should concentrate on putting its own house in order and leave the contentious public issues to the PLO. We do not mean to damage the PLO, but to coordinate the organizations through it, so that no one can say we have burdened it with all our negativity. It is important to practice what we preach, and this is difficult—very, very difficult. We can raise slogans of the struggle, we can say we will fight Israel, the Arab regimes and Jordan. But the slogans will remain slogans for as long as our own affairs are not in order. And meanwhile, the slogans give cause for disquiet, for through them the people can become enslaved.

Part of the correction of our own circumstances consists in clear alliances, in knowing how to choose an ally and to avoid an enemy. We defined the Jordanian enemy, but we must also establish relations with our friends. The issue here stems from nationalist thinking. Our only allies in the world are the forces of anti-imperialism, and it is vital to join them, as a matter of ideological principle. We must enter into cohesive relationships with them in order to guarantee the continuity of the revolution, its allies and forces.

To summarize, we must first look to our own circumstances, then define our allies, and finally move on to confront the enemy. The principal enemy is Israel. Yet the revolution has suffered great losses from the Arab regimes, notably that in Jordan. Martyrs, detainees, and captives represent a part of this loss. The reputation, morale and spirit of the Palestinian people were shattered. The internal front in the West Bank was hit, and Gaza was destroyed. Speaking objectively of the damage done to the revolution, I must conclude that the Jordanian

regime, as well as some of the other Arab regimes who either lent their support or remained silent, is responsible for it.

Clearly, then, we regard Jordan as a natural extension of Israel, and the makeup of the enemy front becomes obvious: Israel, Jordan, plus all forces dedicated in practice to imperialism and our annihilation. This is a vast array. I do not claim that we shall be able to shoulder the entire burden alone, but I do say that if we organize ourselves we may extend a courageous and honorable hand to all movements of liberation in the Arab world. We can help them to overcome present obstacles and opponents. We should also build up sincere relations with these movements and should be prepared to exchange help; but a real intention to establish such cohesion must first exist. Besides concentrating on our internal conditions and our alliances, we should support the Arab front, for it is the most important front on which we struggle.

Another matter is our attitude toward those regimes which accept the concept of peaceful settlement. We must study this relationship and define our place in it, wherever it may be. Looking at the problem scientifically, one finds that the justification used for attacking us in Jordan before September was to a large extent the resistance movement's effective opposition to peaceful settlement. No one can deny this fact. It could be that in September we paid the price for this opposition, for the reactionary regime in Jordan exploited the contradiction between us and the progressive regimes to its own advantage, striking a blow at the movement. Our internal problems are the touchstone of the resistance; if there were no positive aspects to our makeup, our declarations would be no more than emotional speechifying, devoid of significance.

At present, a region such as Lebanon offers a certain irony. Everyone talks of an expected strike at the fedayeen by the Lebanese regime. Did we benefit from our experience in Jordan? Did we organize ourselves, at least as far as our side was concerned, in such a way as to persuade the regime that we could not be crushed? Did we get together with serious intent to study the situation? In the past, for example, we used to say that the blame for the massacre lay with childish leftist slogans, and with Fateh because it failed to take a final decision as regards the Jordanian regime. Much talk of this kind was heard during and after September, but did we seek a change? An officer in the liberation army—theoretically and practically answerable to the leadership of the PLO—insults his leaders through the press, regardless of whether they are right or wrong. How then does an ordinary citizen regard the leadership, and what respect would he have for the revolution?

At the same time, there is the problem of the relationship between the groups in the case of an issue like that of mediation. Everyone is entitled to his opinions, but I am against the way in which those opposed to mediation presented their views, for it divided the spirit of the Palestinians. Imagine how in a single refugee camp one section could come out against mediation and the leadership, the other backing their leaders and condemning the detractors. Such a state of

affairs would ultimately destroy the resistance and its work—the loser would not then be one group alone, but the movement as a whole. Hence my stress on internal matters. I would also emphasize that if the policy is correct, and the program properly conceived, both commitment and practice through that commitment will necessarily follow. The two points go together. If we do not act quickly, then we shall be wringing our hands again—this time over our experience and mistakes in Lebanon. And we shall revert to trading accusations and evading our responsibilities.

— *We have seen, then, that urgent action is called for. But if no group takes the initiative in recognizing its duties and transforming them into a plan of campaign, the entire issue will remain unsolved. It seems obvious that the group with the largest share in the leadership—Fateh—should be the one to take this initial step. Do you agree? And how can it be done?*

— It is true that Fateh is, historically speaking, responsible for the initiative. If Fateh does not take it, no future historian of the Palestinian revolution could blame any of the other groups. This is a fact. In my opinion—and I am speaking now as a Palestinian, not as a responsible leader in Fateh, so what I say may sound strange—Fateh has the choice of two paths. It will either take the initiative, first to correct its own circumstances and then to pursue our goals with a clear plan and policy; or it will fall—and I mean that literally. And if Fateh falls the entire Palestinian movement will do the same.

I maintain, objectively and without sectarian fanaticism, that even in their criticism of Fateh all the other organizations should be guided by a desire to protect the Palestinian movement, and despite organizational ambiguities, anyone can see that the movement stands or falls with Fateh. One must hope that in future everyone grasps this vital connection, so that improvement and transformation will be reflected in the Palestinian movement as a whole.

The problem always begins with fear of correction. Overwhelmed by difficulties and mistakes, one is convinced that nothing can be done. But any process of restoration starts with small steps before gathering momentum; and I believe that such a process within Fateh can prevent us from going over the edge. It can provide the answer to all those who say that the resistance movement has failed. It can heal the current psychological split among young Palestinians—and I speak from experience. The youth no longer ask themselves whether Fateh or the Popular Front represents the foundation; they are concerned now whether the action in which they take part is properly conceived. They are not pleased with the general picture of Palestinian struggle. Hence I say that if Fateh is not able to cure itself, its negativity will be reflected in the Palestinian movement and the end will be in sight. No sincere nationalist could wish for that.

— *Do you think that the present organizational structures of the Palestinian movement are adequate to perform the duties you have outlined? Or do you think there is a need to change or substitute these structures?*

— The Palestine Liberation Organization is the basis for national unity. This being so, the framework should be arranged in such a way as to include the organizational relations at which we aim. The form national unity takes should not be wider than the framework, while organizational relations must be founded on clear principles according to the overall structure. This presupposes the re-evaluation of all the PLO's institutions.

The PLO acts as a symbol for the dispersed people looking for a forum. If we accept that this is so, we may shape the symbol or the framework in any way we please. Therefore, the fault lies neither with the National Council nor the Executive Committee, but in the roles assigned to them. The National Council should be the popular legislative body for the Palestinian people: but in reality, its resolutions have followed autocratic and undemocratic principles. The leadership is "cooked" behind the scenes and selected without reference to the Council. The blame must thus not be put on the Council or its powers, but on the fact that we gave it no role. As for the Executive Committee, it is an organization founded on the bases of representation, conciliation and embarrassment.

I can describe the general lines, if not the specific details, of a substitute. Firstly, it would be a continuation of the National Council as it stands, but invested with a genuine part to play; but this cannot be achieved if the process of organizational representation remains in its present form. The process should be changed and the Council become representative of the broadest organizational base. In other words, a real popular presence should be included. There are many organizations with a seat in the Council who do no more than raise a hand at the appropriate time. There can be no objection to having fifty members from Fateh, on the other hand, provided each has a clear role; otherwise, ten would be better.

The Council should have a certain freedom of choice and decision. When an Egyptian journalist at the Council asked me about the "new resolution" I had proposed, I remember telling him I wanted no such thing; instead, I was asking members to *read* their past resolutions. I challenge anyone to assert that the Executive Committee ever brought Council resolutions to any meeting and studied them. One becomes ashamed and wonders why we are quarrelling over the formulation of resolutions, sometimes even over their wording.

We shall be able to give the National Council and the Executive Committee their proper status only when the members of the former are selected on the basis of their ability to offer something new to the Palestinian revolution and to represent a broad base. Change can occur only when the guiding light is quality, and not organizational quotas. Most important is our conviction that the National Council must play its part.

We come now to the Executive Committee. It can become the arm of the

Council only by means of the scheme I have discussed—an open scheme, not limited to organizations and not based on conciliation. If the scheme is adopted, a leadership to which all were committed could be found for the Palestinian people, and each of us would feel that he had discovered his true leaders.

Although the Executive Committee has representatives from most of the organizations, and although the independents have revolutionary qualities, it is still impotent because of the circumstances we are passing through. It might be asked what the Executive Committee had done within the PLO. What has it renewed? Even in the offices, it has proved unable to renew the furniture. Why? There is no review of past Council resolutions, no concentration, no regulations. But who judges whom? When I hear criticism of the Executive Committee, I feel that Fateh is on trial, and I must defend it with fanaticism, right or wrong.

All of us make this mistake. If, within the organizations, we reach the conviction that the program of Palestinian action through the PLO must be based on strong foundations and clear lines, then our conviction will be reflected in the institutions of the PLO, which can play a practical part in leading the Palestinian people. The present situation is one of formal institutions without value—mere meeting-grounds for the leadership to agree or disagree as a matter of routine.

— *It is true that the PLO is a symbol. But since the fedayeen organizations joined, it has become divided between the identities of an institution and a revolution, and this affects the freedom and movement of the fedayeen groups. What is your reaction to this?*

— I believe that those who established the PLO and sought an organization for the Palestinian people did not contemplate or plan real revolution and resistance to Israeli occupation. A struggle—sometimes public, sometimes secret—was waged between the concepts of an institution and a revolution, before the latter entered the PLO. In my opinion, there are symbols representing the institution idea within the National Council, and those who have attended its meetings will have witnessed this concept at odds with the revolutionary trend which the PLO tried to adopt in order to advance its programs.

For example, the democratic Palestinian state as an idea was considered blasphemous, a desecration, as it were, of the PLO's holy principles, which were manifested by nationalist thinking and a vision of protracted liberation war. Another example is the refusal to allow other Arab citizens to participate in the Council on the grounds that the PLO is a Palestinian organization and that the Jordanians and Syrians have their own. Although weak and ineffective, the concept of the Council as an institution entered into all its resolutions. I see these problems as important in terms of the Council's constituents, for we need new, young intellects willing to develop and change old attitudes that governed the course of the PLO, its leadership, and its planning before 1967.

The leadership of the organizations is able to make the PLO a merely formal symbol, with the leaders expressing definite and varied tendencies: for example, by spending time in Cairo, showing “intellectual strength”, exhibiting theoretical opinion, providing some justification for mistakes, or simply holding discussions. It is also capable of transforming the National Council into a true legislative force, able to judge the leadership and select it in a manner calling for the participation of all Council members. The fundamental requirement, then, is to turn the PLO into a vehicle for the Palestinian revolution rather than for the concept of an institution for the Palestinian people. This is a responsibility of all the organizations.

— *There is another aspect to conditions within the PLO. You spoke of resolutions that remain unenacted, but there are others whose contradictory nature damages the effectiveness of Palestinian tactics. An example is the memorandum prepared at the end of July and presented by Palestinian delegates to the Arab governments: later events contradicted its contents.*

— As I said, the calamity occurred not through failing to act on the resolutions but omitting to read them. The contradiction arises from the fact that some members, including some in the Executive Committee, do not understand the resolutions, yet approve them. The events following the memorandum bear this out, for essentially they contradicted the visits of al-Saqqaf* and al-Khouly.** They demonstrated that some members do not take these resolutions and memoranda seriously, regarding them as mere tactics belonging to a certain stage.

For example, after the Jerash and Ajloun incidents [in July 1971], we wrote an inflamed memorandum and we sent out delegations; then we relaxed into relationships that contradicted these steps. Imagine—someone from Algeria, Kuwait, Libya, defends our memorandum with vigor, only to be surprised by the news of forthcoming mediation. Surely this will have a negative effect on such a person. Boumedienne himself, as well as the Arab governments, asked us if we agreed, and we signed the memorandum. The Revolutionary Command Council met in Algiers and resolved to support it word for word. But then different proposals came from the Tripoli Conference*** with demands flying in the face of the resolutions of the Algerian government.

It is important that we read resolutions and have faith in them. If I do not believe in one of them, on the other hand, I should reject it. But if it has been approved by all, then I should respect it and carry it out, regardless of my personal convictions. Contradictions leave an unpleasant memory within the Palestinian movement and bear witness to the type of individualism condemned by the

* 'Umar al-Saqqaf, Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

** Muhammad Sabri al-Khouly, personal representative of the Egyptian President.

*** On June 20-22 establishing the United Arab Republics of Libya, Egypt and Syria.

revolutionary, but which largely rules the mentality of the resistance. This is part of the crisis through which we are living.

It is true that we, as Arabs and Palestinians, suffer from individualistic traits. Nevertheless, there are critical decisions which should not be taken by individuals but by a collective will that has studied and discussed them at length, and becomes the judge. If individualism continues to dominate the revolution, progress will simply be that much more difficult.

— *The Liberation Army is a basic institution within the auspices of the PLO. What is your estimate of it over the years? And what is your diagnosis of the present crisis within the Army and its relationship with the Executive Committee?*

— The Liberation Army is part of the tragedy of the Palestinian movement—a tragedy connected with many issues we have discussed, concerning the reality of the resistance and its internal situation. In addition to these, there are various other reasons for the crisis in the Liberation Army. Meanwhile, if final decisions are not quickly taken, the Army will become a threat to the resistance no less dangerous than the Jordanian regime.

It may seem strange to make such a comparison, but I do so with the conviction that what brought the Liberation Army to such a pass can be determined by enquiring into its formation. The previous PLO leadership was anxious to establish a tangible entity for the Palestinian people—structurally through popular organizations, and militarily through the Liberation Army. However, the initial makeup of the Army was not effectively studied, with the result that the leadership was willing to make many concessions simply in order to ensure its birth. Thus, the Army became no more than a formality.

No doubt the motives behind its creation were nationalistic, but much was conceded. The agreements between the Arab states and the PLO—concluded without regard for whether or not the Palestinian side could honor them—give the impression that the Liberation Army does not exist. One section stipulated that no soldier could be moved from the Arab host country without the permission of that country's army commander. Another asserted that the Palestinian chief of staff could not be replaced without consulting the host state and securing the approval of the other Arab countries concerned.

These were indications that the Army did not belong to the PLO, that it had no independent will. It had no disciplinary problems in the past because circumstances did not permit the PLO to enter the battle for independence; previous leaders were satisfied with the situation, and the officers were pleased with their conditions, their salaries and their way of life. Some of them used to work for various intelligence services; others collaborated with this or that state. They accounted to no one for their actions. This is why there was no apparent crisis in the Army—it was hidden from sight.

But the problem began to emerge when some groups from the resistance joined

the PLO with the intention of freeing the will of the Liberation Army. They were struck by the Arab circumstances which denied its development. In a certain state the fedayeen would outnumber the Army by ten to one; yet the fedayeen recognize no agreements, while the army submits to them. Why? In the past, I believe, the Army was only a formal expression of the Palestinian people's aspirations, and with the passage of time it became the tool of the host country, that being the reason for its protection there. That state did not care if thousands of fedayeen were outside an agreement; it was concerned only that the Army be kept subject so that, when the occasion was ripe, it could be used as a cudgel to strike at the fedayeen.

And this is the most dangerous aspect of the Liberation Army. Certainly, it contains nationalistic officers and men, but the question is not one of nationalism alone. There are those who believe that cooperation with the intelligence, and work for it, represent a nationalistic act; but as a Palestinian leader, I feel it constitutes a danger to the Palestinian movement, for the will of such a person will no longer be bound to mine—indeed, it will no longer be his own, but tied to others'. That is the danger. The present conflict between Abdel Razak Yahia* and Othman Haddad** is not the problem; it goes much deeper than that and centers on the issue of the Army's subservience to this or that state. This is the real struggle. If an Arab state feels that the leadership of the army on its soil is not subordinate to its will, it seeks to destroy every element of the opposition. This happened to the Liberation Army. To realize this is to understand that all the other problems are secondary to this central point.

Let me pose a question: What motivates a captain in the Army, when ahead of him stretch seventy administrative levels before reaching the Executive Committee, to issue a statement against his leadership? On what support can he rely in condemning his superiors? Can we say that he may depend on fifty, a hundred, two hundred, armed men? This is not possible, for the other faction or the other commander will have thousands. Do we conclude that this officer is in contact with his top commander? This too is impossible, for he relies on a more powerful force. The danger is that the Liberation Army, knowingly or not, depends on a command other than its own.

Our people must understand that such is the reality of the Liberation Army. The will of the officers is dissipated and consciously or unconsciously incorporated into that of another. And—I am not sure—but I believe it is conscious, completely so. Here lies the responsibility of the political leadership, which has two choices: it can enter into a struggle with the entire Liberation Army so that it cannot be said that we are unable to fight because of local or general Arab circumstances; or it can abandon the Liberation Army—and there are hundreds of ways to do this, including putting an end to finance and supplies.

* Former Commander in Chief, PLA.

** Former Chief of Staff, PLA.

The choice must be made. I know that it is not an easy one, especially in view of its connection with the Arab situation, but this battle must be fought. It is an aspect of the internal conditions we have spoken of—an important aspect. And if we cannot score a victory for the Palestinian revolution in this confrontation, we shall be unable to enter any other struggle.

One danger of allowing the current state of affairs to persist is the emotional impact on the psychology of the ordinary Palestinian. He does not keep abreast of events, nor does he grasp the Army's real problem; he has heard of it over the years, but knows little about it or its potentialities. The Army lacks reality, and this is exploited by its mentors to influence the people. It became even more dangerous when it adopted the policy of distributing arms to all comers, simply to gain popularity.

There is also the risk of exploiting the image of the Army and its semi-organized popular branches—the Popular Forces of Liberation, and the Special Forces. Ultimately, all these became part of the game. There is always the fear of a confrontation which could provoke internal strife. But for how long will this fear restrain us? We should make the decision, and announce that we will have nothing more to do with the Army, whatever the consequences. We should come to a clear understanding with the Arab states. We should tell them: "Either we rule this army, or you take it with our blessing". It is possible to take such a decision without a struggle, through a campaign to alert the people and let them understand the condition of the Army, concealing nothing. The people should know that this army is not ours; only then will the power of its image as it has been exploited, and its popular backing—which included both sincere nationalists and mercenaries—evaporate.

— *It goes without saying that what we have discussed so far is intended to enable the Palestinian movement to face up to its problems. There are certain topics which we should dwell upon, foremost of which is the continuing desire to make arrangements for the failure of political settlement. In the light of the present state of the resistance, what must it do to counter international activity in search of a negotiated peace?*

— More than four years have passed since the introduction of the Security Council resolution, its riders, and the initiatives that followed. It is amazing that the colonial powers and Israel have not accepted the concessions of the Arab rulers on many issues considered vital to the citizen. For example, it is no longer surprising for anyone to talk of negotiations. Some officials speak of settlement without incurring the denunciation they deserve.

With the exception of the period when fedayeen activity stimulated mass action, we may say that the years since the June war have constituted a recession for the resistance, as well as for the Arab liberation movement. All the events in the area were leading up to a settlement, of which the plan now being put forward is only a small part. That is to say, the Security Council resolution and

all that it entails—the recognition of Israel, a peace treaty, and so on—do not represent the real concessions, for they are the sum of Israeli and American desires. Now we can say that the atmosphere for settlement was created with the attack on the resistance in September.

Of course, the attack also included the Arab liberation movement in more than one region and gave rise to a recession which the citizen saw as an attempt to force him into retreat. The ordinary man began to despair, and his slogan became “What is the use?” He was alienated from national affairs, as if to him they were but secondary matters. And this attitude was the result of various governments obliging him to live in a state of “no war-no peace”, having disseminated pessimism and a sense of the futility of struggle against brute fact.

I would say that the peaceful settlement hoped for is far more dangerous than we know and read about. The real hazard is the peaceful settlement which refuses admission even to the remnants of the resistance and which spurns a national spirit—nothing progressive or revolutionary, but simply a national spirit. This peaceful settlement demands submission and compromise at all times. It is the settlement which satisfies Israel and, as its foremost supporter, the United States. It requires the Arab citizen to be in a state of confusion.

Yet those responsible for directing and leading the people are moving toward settlement, without realizing that the Arab will to resist, manifest since 1948, is declining with each passing year. Why does the will of the Arab citizen dwindle? Because he is not militant? Not at all—rather because we destroy him; we destroy his spirit. We want him to be willing to accept everything. The nationalist forces have never lived through such an aura of recession as now. But still the opponents are not satisfied, because some sparks of life are yet to be found within the resistance and the Arab liberation movement. This is why I stress that the resistance movement must defend itself, partly by exposing the “settlement” and aligning with all forces that stand to gain from non-settlement and are concerned with their defence against this reactionary tide.

The duty of the resistance may not be easy. Many nationalists have come to power and ruled but, in my opinion, they blunted the will of the people by failing to give them a role. The present circumstances do not allow me to be perfectly frank, but I do maintain that many revolutionaries in power have obstructed the masses’ task. Even the worst regimes in the world have become stronger than the people. There is virtually no Arab state in which the masses are the predominant force. In some, for example Sudan, the masses became confused and went astray, having once been organized and strong. [President Jaafar] al-Numeiri is my friend, and he reproached me for a word I said against the regime.

More than one Arab region lacks a mass movement. The tragedy of the whole situation is symbolized by the ability to move most freely in a country such as Lebanon, whose sectarian regime is the only one to allow demonstrations, even of only ten people. Meanwhile, the Arab mass movement has vanished elsewhere

not because the Arab is incapable of political action, but because of psychological pressure, suppressive measures, imprisonment, beatings, executions, which oblige him to be a mere observer. What is asked of us is to face a more dangerous enemy than the challenge of peaceful settlement; we must confront the real requirements of such a settlement. In spite of all that I said about the masses and attempts to destroy them and push them to the edge of despair, I am confident we can prevent settlement if we regularize our own affairs, form a strong front, and lend an honorable hand to all the militants in the Arab world in order to put up an opposition equal to the task. The Arab man performs miracles when he can see a ray of hope and a clear path in front of him.

Despite the gloomy picture I can see, I believe that a great process of correction and change is in the offing. We are at the centre of this change and, along with others, we must work in the manner required to confront concessions beyond the comprehension of the ordinary Arab citizen.

— *Currently, certain activity in the West Bank could lead either to a Palestinian state or to Palestinian involvement in political settlement. What is the way to counter this tendency?*

— These activities are not new but used to be covert, owing to the threat of the resistance. After the conspiracy of the Jordanian regime against the resistance, however, they were resurrected and began to take place in public, exploiting a weakness in the Palestinian people of the West Bank and Gaza—their fear of returning under Jordanian rule.

The activists were extremely clever in their manipulation. Of course, our people in the West Bank hear the radio broadcasts and they observe and dissect the unbalanced Arab situation which we discussed a short time ago, including the concessions hoped for and granted. All these factors combine to form a trend in the West Bank which the clever agents exploit to fill in the remaining gaps in the plan for peaceful settlement sought by Israel. The missing link is the Palestinian people, and as such is vital to the planners of the settlement, for when the Palestinians have signed the resolution, their job will be done. No matter how strenuously the Arab states or Hussein try to claim that they represent the Palestinian people, they will always exist in their own right. If the Arab situation changes—and it is impossible for it to remain as it is now—it will do so in accordance with the honorable individuals among the Palestinians who say: We did not sign.

America and Israel insist on the full participation of a Palestinian body in signing the settlement—the settlement as they desire it to be, not as it is presented. For as they see it, the settlement would give the Palestinians a kind of autonomy which meant nothing except that they had become a tool in the hands of Israel which, in turn, would be at liberty to claim that the problem was resolved and at an end. What is more, the events in the West Bank are dangerous. The risk does not lie

in the Sahour meetings, in the municipality elections or in the many statements on the Palestinian state and self-rule, but rather in the purpose behind this weak state, because its planners envisage it as a bridge between Israel and the Arab states.

At present there is an unacknowledged bridge. You may be surprised, but I have information to the effect that all merchants apparently marketing Palestinian vegetables and oils are in fact dealing with non-Palestinian goods; they are not even cultivated on Palestinian soil, or by Palestinian labor, but are Israeli products exported as if the output of the West Bank. Israel has established several factories under Arab names which export merchandise to Jordan and other countries.

Those who live in East Jordan will notice a strange thing: there are many Israeli-produced canned and uncanned goods in the country, although they are not marked as such, and carry the name of an Arab factory. If such a thing can happen even before America and Israel achieve their peaceful settlement, what will happen afterwards? Regrettably, the Arab League is at present receiving West Bank merchants, believing what they say, and allowing them to export citrus fruit which is 'Arab' only in name.

I shall not speak of the crime perpetrated by Jordanian rule in creating this situation, nor of the regime's responsibility for the ambivalent trend in the West Bank which is exploiting public resentment for its defeatist purposes. It is not enough simply to expose these things; the important question is how to deal with them.

I repeat that we have no alternative but to put our own house in order. Once we have laid strong foundations, then we can reveal our knowledge and the masses will respect our stand. At the moment we have only a nominal right to represent the Palestinian people. When we began in Fateh we were only ten, twenty, and we said: "We represent the Palestinian people". We said this as we took up arms, and we created respect for fedayeen action. If this respect is not recovered soon, those working for a peaceful settlement will crush all their opponents. And if its advocates accomplish their plans without a word of opposition from us, then the greater part of the settlement issue will have been resolved.

Let me ask, who in the resistance supports these people? We do not support them, yet we remain silent. Why? We must reorganize ourselves and reinstate the fedayeen, so as to silence and repulse them. This does not mean that we should remain mute until these reforms are complete; we must expose their plans from this moment on. Our people are worthy and if we carry out an information campaign against this plan, exposing these individuals fearlessly and in a revolutionary manner, we shall make a positive advance.

— *Without doubt, the activities in the West Bank try to take advantage of Jordanian intimidation to deflect the Palestinian people from the correct path. Is it not necessary to raise forthright slogans for mass struggle against these trends, similar to those calling for the renewal of unity in both banks on nationalist and democratic foundations?*

— There is an answer to this question in the PLO memorandum to which you have referred. It contains this slogan of unity in both banks, which can form the beginning of a national front. In my opinion, the only slogan that can be raised at this stage is that found in the PLO memorandum.

In spite of the problematical circumstances now facing the revolution, we must stress two principles currently appropriate: firstly, the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. This issue must be, in addition to what you have mentioned, a focal point for all our political relations and publicity; it is a crucial matter. This right must also be upheld as a principle without any qualifications attached to it, thereby avoiding different interpretations as occurred in the case of the democratic Palestinian state. Yet to raise such an issue is not simple. If we give it international dimensions, it will afford us international foundations. We should concentrate on the fact that, in common with any other people, we have the right to self-determination. Subsequently, the leadership should be able to draw the broad outlines suitable to the particular stage and situation.

The second principle is related to the right of self-determination, and should be understood by our people. It covers the nature and significance of the unification of the two banks of the Jordan, and means that the revolution does not believe in the return of the present Jordanian regime. This attitude is acceptable to our people. If we blazon our right to self-determination through all our relations and publicity, we shall deprive the Arab states and the king's regime of the claim to represent the people of Palestine. And by means of the second slogan of rebuilding the unity of the two banks, we shall satisfy our people and give them the goal for which to struggle. I hope that the PLO memorandum may be distributed more widely and that the people may realize its true meaning, so that its contents may become the slogan for the future.

— *The resistance movement introduced the beginnings of a new and revolutionary education to the Palestinian and Arab people. The movement has been criticized for failing to continue this teaching, and for allowing its methods to be taken up by other, sometimes opposing, groups with influence on the Arabs. At times these groups confused the fighting man and thwarted his full participation. What is your reaction to this? What are your suggestions for intensifying revolutionary education among the Palestinian people?*

— In the first stage of the armed struggle to liberate Palestine, it was necessary to raise simple slogans and, at the same time, to translate them into practical mass action, for this was a critical period for the people. They sensed a certain apathy toward the slogans of the past eighteen years, and Fateh stood to gain from straightforward, general maxims.

Studying Fateh's political documents after 1967, we find only memoranda to summit conferences and the National Council. There is nothing more than a few slim booklets explaining simple concepts of armed struggle and some of the organization's slogans. Because of their generalizations, some of Fateh's commentary

on issues related to regional struggle were misunderstood, and gave the enemies of Fateh and of armed struggle the chance to make charges of regionalism, and so on. Had Fateh paid attention to educating the masses, and had it explained the concepts presented in broad outline, the present intellectual decline on the Palestinian scene could have been lessened.

The principle of the "stage of national liberation" is an example: had Fateh clarified its slogans of regional struggle, declaring that they did not contradict national struggle—had it made the dimensions of its relationship with Arab and world liberation movements clear—then it could have put a stop to the proliferation of organizations. Anyone with a sense of reason would have realized that there was no need for many organizations. Had we concentrated from the very beginning on politicizing our people and cadres, we could have averted the confusion of thought and the division between the Arab and the Palestinian peoples.

The question was raised, for instance, of the stage for national liberation and the conflict within Fateh. Fateh should have elucidated this principle in such a way as to show that there is no real contradiction between the activities of the Arab citizen in the Arab arena and those of the Palestinian far from the center of the struggle; that they are united within the Palestinian revolution.

If we had genuinely clarified all these matters, we should now have an ideological legacy to offer to the entire resistance movement—a legacy with effects on multiplicity and all the other problems from which we suffer. Were we able to lay down the issues in a manner to convince the ordinary Palestinian? I say no, and the proof is in the organizations as they stand now, for a common ideology is missing. We cannot say that there is an ideology called the "ideology of the resistance movement"; there are various ideas, theories, opinions, statements. Even within a single organization, differing or opposing trends can be found.

I think the Palestine Research Center can actively participate in unifying Palestinian thought, not through documentation, but by stressing those issues agreed upon and filling them out with additional opinions. It should try to bring the various points of view closer together through general conviction. This is the importance of the interviews published in *Palestinian Affairs**; through its pages we can relate attitudes one to another and extract issues on which there is agreement.

For example, the Research Center can collect everything written on a particular topic and of interest to the ordinary Palestinian; it can study areas of unanimity and present them in a book that represents a part of the thoughts of the Palestinian revolution. Such a program would be an enrichment, launching the unified education of the Palestinian Arab masses.

At present, no organization can claim to have produced a book which represents

* Arabic monthly published by the PLO Research Center.

the Palestinian revolution. Why? Because there is a trend within the revolution not to define an ideology but to stress and glorify the gun. Another tendency, too, is to introduce theories that may be valid as a guide in action, but are not sufficiently clear-cut to pass as features of the Palestinian experience. Can one say that the Chinese have succeeded because Mao Tse-tung is a genius? I cannot. Neither did the Russian revolution triumph because Lenin was a genius, but through theory put into practice. The revolution succeeded because the theory was correctly applied.

Every revolution needs theoretical guidelines to help in formulating an ideology. It is not necessary, however, to insist on one particular theory to the exclusion of others; if I examine the realities of the Russian experience and try to apply them to our situation, I may discover that some of them are inappropriate. Yet there are still anti-Marxist extremists who, in justifying retreat, seize on Lenin and point to him signing the Brest Litovsk treaty, withdrawing before the Germans, yielding concessions. They also remark that the Chinese retreated sixteen times. Such examples are evoked to convince the people. But if we consider the extent to which Fatch has wooed China, we see that its ardor exceeds that of the Popular Front, the Democratic Front and Sa'iqa. Why? Is China a phenomenon removed from the Marxist experience? No; but it developed the Marxist experience, adding what was appropriate to the Chinese reality.

I would reiterate my belief that the Palestine Research Center can make a serious start in dealing with specific topics. We can delay those over which there are differences, but study those agreed upon and formulate the beginnings of a philosophy for the people—one which goes beyond saying that the Chinese experience succeeded, the Russian experience succeeded—and beyond mere praise for Lenin and Mao Tse-tung.

We should study the reasons for these victories and their common problems, so that the people may have a real faith in them. We should not resort to such experiences only when seeking a way out of a tricky situation, nor should we justify retreat by pointing to these other retreats. Instead, we must accept both good and bad sides of the experience, accept it as a whole. This is how the Research Center can play its part. We should teach the people that it is no crime to have differing views, since discrepancies are possible within a single party or front.

Some say that the Algerians were cleverer than us. They say that the Algerian revolution was national, Islamic, socialist, and yet it solved its problems. In fact, I think such people oversimplify. We are at a different stage of struggle and our circumstances are not the same. Let the Palestinian leaders express their views with honesty and sincerity, and let us collect up these ideas and present them to the people as the "thoughts of the Palestinian revolution".

We should have the editorial courage to compile such a book and to distribute it among all our organizations, to let them witness the intellectual dialogue. No danger lies in the fact that, on the one hand, the Democratic or Popular Fronts

advocate class struggle, while I put forward national liberation, for they too discuss the stage of national liberation, albeit in a different context. This could be the dawn of a truly revolutionary Palestinian organization.