Chapter - II

Actors in Palestinian Movement

The Fedayeen\(^1\) Movement After the 1948 War

After Israel occupied 77 per cent territories of Palestine in the 1948 war and temporary truce was effected between Arab states and Israel by the U.N. Mediator Count Folke Bernadotte, a Government of Palestine was set up in Gaza with Egyptian assistance under the leadership of Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini the leader of the Arab Higher Committee. It made attempts to retain its preeminence in the Palestine struggle and also to counter King Abdullah's annexation and incorporation of the West Bank.\(^2\) The avowed aim of that Government was to create a free and democratic State enjoying complete sovereignty which would allow all citizens to enjoy freedom and rights.

The All-Palestine Government (APG) as it was called, constituted one of the most interesting and instructive political experiments in the history of the Palestinian national movement.\(^3\) The Government

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1. The word "Fedayeen" (Arabic) means those who sacrifice. In the Arab context it means the Palestinian guerillas.
3. See, "How the All-Palestine Government was established in Gaza in 1948", Filastin, no. 30 (August 1963), pp. 6-11.
was headed by Ahmad Hilmi Abdul Bagi. Hilmi's cabinet consisted largely of followers of Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini but also included representatives of the other factions of the Palestinian ruling class and a number of prominent Palestinians. Jamal al-Husseini became foreign minister, Rajai al-Husseini (the former head of Arab office in Jerusalem) became defence minister, and Michael Abcarius (a senior civil servant in the British administration) finance minister, while Anwar Nussaiba, (a former judge) became Secretary of the cabinet. There were twelve ministers in all.\(^4\)

During the first week of its life in Gaza, the All Palestine Government revived the Holy War Army that is, the Mufti's irregular forces which had played a major part during the unofficial phase of the Palestine war, and began to mobilise with the declared aim of liberating Palestine. On the diplomatic front, the new government sought international recognition and even designated a delegation to represent it at the United Nations even though the world body had not acknowledged it. Besides, any member of the Palestinian people was declared eligible for a Palestinian passport, and within

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a short period some 14,000 of these documents were issued, mostly to notables and businessmen from the Gaza Strip.5

A Palestinian National Council was convened under the Chairmanship of the Mufti in a semi-derelict school building in Gaza on 30 September 1948. Only half of the 150 delegates who had been invited made it to Gaza, partly because of the restrictions on travel imposed by the Transjordanian and Iraqi armies which were in control of central Palestine. A series of resolutions were passed, including the adoption of a Provisional Constitution, the original flag of Arab revolt of 1916, and Jerusalem as the capital. Finally, a declaration of independence was also signed by the delegates and issued to the Press. It asserted the right of the Palestinian people to a free, sovereign and democratic state with borders defined as "Syria and Lebanon in the north, Syria and Transjordan in the east, the Mediterranean in the West, and Egypt in the South".6 Had the All Palestine Government been allowed to function it could have carried on the task of further liberation of Palestine through guerilla warfare and

5. Ibid., p. 42.
international diplomacy at the U.N. Its case could have been considered at least for the possession of 43 per cent territories of Palestine allotted to the Arab State under the U.N. partition plan.

But the contrast between the claims of the All-Palestine Government and its capability reduced it to the level of a paper tiger because of the silent conspiracy of Arab states. It claimed jurisdiction over the whole of Palestine, yet it had no administration, no civil service, no money, and no real army of its own. The Arab states failed in their historic responsibility to support the All-Palestine Government which could have exercised sovereignty over Gaza and the West Bank with its capital in East Jerusalem (23 per cent territories of Palestine).

In the Jordanian-occupied West Bank, King Abdullah was declared the "King of Arab Palestine" (West Bank) and three months later it was ratified by a "Palestinian convention" held in Jericho. The so-called leaders formally swore allegiance to Abdullah. Britain had inspired and encouraged Transjordan to annex the West Bank in its diplomacy to see that Palestine is wiped off the world map.
Consequently, King Abdullah was assassinated by a Palestinian in 1952.

The Palestinians were frustrated by the half-hearted attitude of the Arab countries towards their problem and the liberation of Palestine. The Husseini group decided to launch Fedayeen raids; and by 1951 they started active operations. The increase in the encounters between the groups of the Palestinian Fedayeen and the Israelis forced the latter to adopt a policy of armed retaliation. In 1955, large-scale Israeli raids on Fedayeen bases in Gaza were engineered. The armed Fedayeen raids and Israeli retaliations became a pretext for the war of October 1956.

After the war of 1956, the United Nations Emergency Forces were stationed in Aqaba and Gaza to prevent hostility between the Arabs and the Israelis. The Fedayeen activities were restricted. Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini's activities were curbed.

The Mufti was constrained to develop close contact with President Nasser's adversaries including the Muslim Brotherhood. When the Brotherhood was

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suppressed in Egypt, the Mufti's activities were also banned and he left Cairo for Beirut in 1959. There was mutual rivalry between Abdul Karim Kassem, the Iraqi Prime Minister, and President Nasser. Premier Kassem supported the Mufti's plan for the creation of a separate Palestinian entity. That would have embarrassed President Nasser and King Hussein, who were controlling the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, respectively. Premier Kassem also supported Mufti's plan for armed struggle to liberate Palestine for which a small Palestinian Army was trained by the Iraqi Government. But Kassem was overthrown by the coup d'état of 1963 and the Baathists came to power. The Mufti lost support from the Iraqi Government as the Baathists were busy consolidating the new regime. Finally, the Mufti was superseded by the emergence of Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) led by Ahmed Shukairiy under the auspices of the Arab League in 1964.  

The Formation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation

In January 1964, an Arab summit conference which was held in Cairo to discuss the question of diversion of Jordan River water also accepted the principle of projection of the "Palestinian entity". Accordingly, the Palestinian National Congress met in Jerusalem on 28 May 1964, and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was officially created. It was led not by the Mufti but by a noted Palestinian jurist Ahmed Shukairy, the Palestinian representative at the Arab League who was elected as President of the PLO. It was also decided that Shukairy would appoint the first PLO Executive Committee comprising 14 members. Hikmet el Masri, Nicola el Durr and Haidar Abdel Shafei were elected vice-presidents. Abdul Rahman el Siksek became the Secretary-General.

The Arabs and the Palestinians were sharply divided on the manner Shukairy was selected by the Arab summit conference in January to represent the Palestinians and to supervise the creation of Palestinian entity. When Shukairy was chosen by selection, he too applied the same principles of

selection and appointed the representatives who attended the Palestinian Congress at Jerusalem. He selected 200 delegates but in fact 360 delegates attended the conference. He rejected the idea of holding general elections among the Palestinians on the ground that they were spread throughout the Arab world. 10

Shukairy was opposed by the oldest Palestinian organisation, the Arab Higher Committee for Palestine; under the leadership of Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini. The Mufti demanded an election among the Palestinians for the post of PLO President and decided to boycott the Jerusalem meeting. In a statement he charged Shukairy's proposed entity as a faked one which would lead to the liquidation of the problem. 11

Further controversies arose on the two drafts which Shukairy had submitted on the question of creation of the Palestinian entity. One was "the Palestine National Charter" which laid down the national rights and obligations of the Palestinians and the other one was the proposed constitution for the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. 12

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 The Arab World, 5 March 1964.
The Palestine National Charter expressed the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people for a homeland. Its limits were the "boundaries existing under the British Mandate" (Article 2). The Charter also said: "The Arab Palestinian People, the rightful owners of its homeland, is an indivisible part of the Arab nation" (Article 3). The Jewish citizens from Palestine descent were regarded as Palestinians if they wanted to live loyally and peacefully in Palestine (Article 7).

The Charter gave three slogans: National Unity, National Mobilisation and Liberation. It was up to the Palestinians to decide about their political, economic and social systems after liberation (Article 10). It also declared that the fate of the Arab nation, if not the fate of Arab existence, was dependent on the fate of Palestine (Article 13). The partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel was null and void since it contradicted the right of self-determination under the U.N. Charter. Zionism was called an imperialist, racial and fascist movement (Article 17 & 19). It further said that the PLO did not practise any regional sovereignty on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and confined

13 For the text of the Palestine National Charter 1964, see The Arab World, 4 November 1964.
its activities to national popular level in the fields of liberation, organisation, policy and finance (Article 24). The PLO would not interfere in the internal affairs of any of the Arab regimes (Article 26). Article 24 was inserted to please King Hussein and President Naseer who were administering those areas which originally belonged to Palestine.

The constitution for the projected "Palestine Liberation Organisation" says that all the Palestinians are natural members of the PLO, who exercise their duty in the liberation of their homeland (Article 2). It provides for the "National Assembly of the Palestine Liberation Organisation" which would represent all the Palestinians irrespective of their ideological affiliations (Article 5). The National Assembly would elect an "Executive Committee of the Liberation Organisation" with 15 members who, in their turn would elect a president, two vice-presidents and a secretary-general. The president of this committee would represent the Palestinians at the Arab League (Article 11, 12 and 14). It also suggested that the Arab States should give opportunities to the Palestinians to join the Arab armies (Article 18). It further provides for private

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14 For the text of the PLO Constitution, see The Arab World, 5 March 1964.
Palestinian contingents to be formed in accordance with military needs and plans decided by the Unified Arab Military Command in agreement with the concerned Arab States (Article 19). These two drafts submitted by Ahmed Shukairy were accepted by the Palestine National Congress with minor amendments made by the sub-committees.

The Jerusalem Congress, however, aroused heated arguments amongst the Arab countries. The Palestinian representatives from Syria supported the ruling Baath Party plan to demand full sovereignty over all parts of Palestine. The Syrian Baath party voiced its criticism of the Jerusalem Congress. Beirut's pro-Baathist paper Al-Ahrar called the resolutions of the Palestine Congress as "the Shukairy Congress." Al-Baath of Damascus in its editorial labelled the resolutions as extremely serious and pointed out the drawbacks of the decisions arrived at. Serious ones among them were: (a) Shukairy's plan for a "Palestine entity" lacked three necessary elements for ensuring such an entity, above everything else the army, the elected authority and sovereignty; (b) Arbitrary selection of representatives by Ahmed Shukairy; (c) Announcement of the birth of a liberation

15 The Arab World, 2 June 1964.
16 Al-Ahram, 3 June 1964, quoted in The Arab World, 3 June 1964.
organisation before the approval of the bases on which the Organisation was to stand; (d) Absence of a military committee; and (e) Decision to appoint the Head of the Executive Committee and leave him the choice of naming its members and considering the conference a National Assembly.\(^{17}\)

Since Ahmed Shukairy subordinated the Palestinian resistance to Arab regimes, he was supported by President Nasser, President Aref of Iraq and King Hussein. The Saudi Arabian Government opposed him because he had opposed Saudi Arabian stand in the U.N.

Though the formation of the PLO was a step towards the liberation of Palestine it was not of much significance. The PLO did not seriously believe in "revolutionary violence" by the masses. The Palestine Liberation Army was to be at the disposal of the Arab armies and would act according to latter's sweet will. Moreover, the PLO adopted a bureaucratic framework with hierarchies. Neither did it believe in people's war nor in politicising the masses for the national war of liberation. Sacrificing Palestinian claim over Gaza and the West Bank for the sake of friendly relations with Egypt and Jordan was

\(^{17}\) Al-Baath, 2 June 1964, quoted in The Arab World, 3 June 1964.
a mistake committed by Shukairy. The Congress did not give priority to armed struggle though there was plan to create the "Palestine Liberation Army" (PLA) within a period of two years. No resolution was adopted for the creation of the PLA. Shafik el Hout, sub-editor of Beirut's weekly Al-Hawadith, later on revealed that, although the creation of an army was recommended by one of the Congress sub-committees, it was not submitted to the Congress with other recommendations at the last session in Jerusalem. Some of the delegates discussed the matter with Ahmed Shukairy but did not get any satisfactory answer. Later on they took up the matter with Bahjat el Talhouni, Chief of the Jordanian Royal Cabinet, who told them: "You may be right in your demand for a (Palestine) army. But if you insist on it, we (Jordan) would have to withdraw our army from the West Bank and leave the area to the responsibility of your army." Then, Hout said, "the matter was left hanging in the air." He described PLO as "a house without walls or a roof".

The military recommendations had a limited scope. They called for the opening of military training camps for Palestine refugees and suggested that the Palestinians be allowed to join Arab military

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18 The Arab World, 5 June 1964.
academies. There was much speculation among the masses about the projected Army. It was hoped that it would be like the "Algerian Liberation Army". There was also a plan for the creation of Fédayeen (commando) groups within the framework of the Arab Unified Command and under its supervision. The Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) was created but was placed under Arab armies. It could not function independently.

The Arab regimes were more concerned about their own interests rather than those of the Palestinians. It was obligatory on the part of Egypt and Jordan to leave Gaza and West Bank in the greater interest of Palestinian liberation. Shukairy might not have been able to ask for these two areas for the Palestinians lest he might have lost the support of those two regimes. 19 These two areas could have been made bases of the Palestinians in order to launch the liberation struggle. The PLO led by Shukairy could not achieve anything. Neither did it start a guerilla war nor did it prepare the masses for a war of liberation. He only made Press statements from time to time. The officers of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) were drawing

19 Mehmood Hussain, no. 8, p. 19.
attractive salaries under the Arab Armies. Most of the PLA contingents were stationed in Egypt. It depended upon the Arab armies to defeat Israel and consequently it had to face humiliating defeat along with the Arab Armies in the war of June, 1967.

However, the official PLO, from 1965 till June 1967 war, gained limited international recognition as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, reaffirming the Palestinian national independent identity. But it remained a traditional organisation and was used by Arab regimes in the inter-Arab feuds and differences. The PLO developed good relations with China which accorded full diplomatic status to it. 20 It gave more weight to diplomacy than to armed struggle; and Shukairy's diplomacy was very much like music without instruments. He was discredited and criticised for making naive statements like "we will throw the Jews into the sea". Finally Ahmed Shukairy resigned from his office on 24 December 1967, paving the way for the guerillas, who had become popular for launching a protracted people's war against Israel, to take over the PLO.

20 Ibid., pp. 78-79.
Emergence of Fedayeen Groups

Yasser Arafat, a student of engineering and a young dynamic Palestinian student leader of Cairo, organised the Palestine Students Federation in Egypt after the Palestinian tragedy took place in 1948. He was helped by Abd al-Fattah, Isa Hamud and Khalil-al-Wazir (Abu Jihad) in his mission. Some of the members of the Federation participated in the guerilla attacks against Israel and the British installations in the Suez Canal zone in 1950-52. Yasser Arafat (code named Abu Amar) was born in Jerusalem on 24 August 1929 and had participated in the 1933-39 uprising while he was at school. Following the Zionist terrorist attacks and the tragedy of 1948, his family came to Gaza as refugees. Arafat started his guerilla activities against Israel from the Gaza Strip.

No one is sure about the ideological or organisational orientation of the Palestinian Students Federation. But Arafat was close to the Communists. It is said that its activities in the 1949-54 period were influenced and inspired by the Husseini leadership. It was alleged by some Arab regimes that

Arafat's group received clandestine military training in the Muslim Brethren's underground military units. It was a calculated design to defame Arafat and Al-Fatah. Arafat had undergone training in the Egyptian military camp as an officer of the Egyptian army. The Palestine Students Federation was banned by the Egyptian Government in 1954-55 at the time of suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood and leftists. Yasser Arafat and some of his colleagues had launched fedayeen raids against Israel which was used as a pretext by the latter for the 1956 war. Arafat was expelled by the Egyptian authorities and left for Kuwait. It was in the Gulf or Arabian Peninsula that they started preparation to get organised.22

Arafat, worked as an engineer in Kuwait, saved major part of his salary and began preparation for the armed struggle in 1958. Al-Fatah (the Palestine National Liberation Movement) was also formed the same year. It was a clandestine body. Young revolutionary Palestinians were in the forefront. They had underground cadres, secret indoor military training and a fund of $3,000.23 They acquired some old rusty weapons, came back to Palestine, and sent scores of reconnaissance missions into the occupied territory (Israel proper).

The liberation of Algeria stimulated Al-Fatah in 1962. Al-Fatah launched its first operation on 18 August 1964. Al-Fatah fedayeen were on a reconnaissancre mission to Gesher, a Zionist kibbuts in the Jordan Valley, where the clash occurred. It was, of course, a minor operation, which passed unnoticed by the Press.

On 1 January 1965, when the world was celebrating the new year, Al-Fatah's armed wing, known as Al-Assifa (The Tempest) which consists of the fedayeen from refugee camps, launched a remarkable operation and blew up the main water pump in Eitan, a moshav in the south near Kiryat-Gat. After six days, 11 Al-Fatah Fedayeen attacked the main installations in the 2,600-ft-long Eilbaum Tunnel which was built by the Israelis to divert the Jordan River waters.

Immediately after these operations, pro-Egypt paper Al-Anwar branded the fedayeen as terrorists and agents of CENTO working in collaboration with the Zionist circles. It also charged that the new group had launched its attack inside Israel with

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
the knowledge of the Israeli authorities so as provide an excuse for Israel to make an aggression on the Arab countries. 26

The insurmountable odds that Al-Fatah faced from 1958 to 1966 were: popular cynicism, inter-Arab governmental conflict, limited resources, a defeatist apathy on the part of the Palestinians, and a calculated campaign of innuendo and criticism in the Arab Press to project the image of Al-Fatah as a group of foreign supported adventurers and members of the Muslim Brotherhood. 27 Sometimes they were accused of being supported by the Syrian Baathist regime to subvert the official PLO. Al-Fatah came out with leaflets at the birth of armed struggle. On the night of 31 December 1964, these were distributed in Beirut and Kuwait and carried a political statement in the midst of new year revelries:

Sixteen years have elapsed while our people live detached from their cause which has been shelved at the United Nations as a problem of displaced refugees whereas the enemy plans, with all his means, on the local and international levels, for an extended stay on our homeland, ignoring the Heroic Palestinian.

26 Al-Anwar (Beirut), 3 January 1965, opined in The Arab World, 4 January 1965.

27 A Dialogue with Fatah (Palestine National Liberation Movement, Fatah), pp. 31-7. This pamphlet, published by Al-Fatah in 1969, is a dialogue between a leading spokesman of Al-Fatah and the Editor-in-Chief of a Cairo magazine, al-Talah.
In the light of this distressing fact and because of the adverse effect of the lapse of time, the Assifa forces (of Fatah) have been launched forth to reiterate to the enemy and the world at large that this people (of Palestine) did not die and that armed revolution is the road to return and to victory. 28

Al-Fatah started action in order to prove to the world that the Palestinians, after 16 years of exile, were not dead as a nation. The currents and cross-currents of Arab politics had suppressed their voice and once again they had risen with arms to say "no" to the status quo. After all, how long the Palestinians in the refugee camps would look to the Arab regimes for emancipation?

The aim of Al-Fatah was to regenerate the social, territorial and political unity of the Palestinians through armed struggle. In order to achieve that aim, a single revolutionary framework was necessary to present a struggling Palestinian personality to the world public opinion. Without this the Palestinian cause might have been lost under the Arab tutorship and it might have emerged as a secondary cause that could have been settled along with other Arab problems by the big Powers who, more or less, controlled the destiny of the Third World.

Four important events had an important bearing upon the growth of Al-Fatah and the fedayeen movement. In November 1966, the Israelis attacked the village of Samu in the West Bank which broke the "wall of silence" with which Jordan had surrounded this liberation movement.\(^{29}\) The demonstration that followed the attack not only revealed the people's awareness of the existence of a fedayeen movement but also pressurised the Jordanian Government to arm the fedayeen. \(^{30}\) Secondly, the War of June 1967, proved the ineffectiveness of the conventional Arab armies. Despite the state of bewilderment among the Arab masses, the Palestinians rejected the idea of surrender and began to prepare for a protracted people's war for national liberation. Thirdly, on 20 August 1967, Al-Fatah coordinated its military and political lines of actions and decided to begin large-scale guerilla operations in the occupied territories. The most important date in the history of Palestinian fedayeen struggle was 21 March 1968: the battle of al-Karameh. The Israelis crossed the Jordan River and entered the village of al-Karameh.

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29 A Dialogue With Fatah (this is a dialogue in 1969 between a leading spokesman of Al-Fatah and the Editor-in-Chief of one of the Cairo magazines, al-Talith), Palestine National Liberation Movement, Fatah publication, pp.31-37.

Al-Fatah fedayeen confronted them directly and inflicted heavy casualties on the Israeli army. Al-Fatah said that the law of guerilla warfare, "when enemy advances, we retreat", was deliberately violated by the fedayeen. The Jordanian soldiers also joined this struggle against the Israelis. This raised the morale of the fedayeen, Palestinians and the Arab masses in general. Limited large-scale confrontation was tried again at al-Hammah on 2 May 1969, when al-Assifa forces briefly occupied the Israeli-held town. 31

Karameh had been written into a martial song broadcast for a long time by Al-Fatah's radio, "Voice of al-Assifa", which Egypt allowed to establish after this battle. 32 The Battle of Karameh was an armed propaganda and was successful in seizing the imagination of the Arab masses. The word "Fatah" became a symbol of the new Arab revolution, the biggest thing that happened since the Egyptian revolution of 1952; and it started evoking the type of emotions which Nasser had produced after the nationalisation of Suez Canal Company in 1956. 33

31 Ibid., pp. 192-3.
32 "Fath's Abou Ammar : No personality Cult", quoted in The Arab World Weekly (Beirut), 7 December 1968, pp.10-11
Since the Egyptian Revolution of July 1952, the Arabs have seen the currents and cross-currents of coups and counter-coups, revolts and counter-revolts. But they had proved to be futile. These things had ceased to stimulate the Arab masses. Even the impact of the Algerian revolution had faded away. The Arab area wanted a revolution by the deprived people, the dispossessed. The fedayeen seized the historic opportunity and launched people's war.

The PFLP

In August 1965, a few months after the beginning of the operations of Al-Fatah, the radical elements of the Arab Nationalist Movement under the leadership of George Habash started fedayeen operations under the name of "The Palestine Liberation Front". It consisted of three military groups: the Abdel Kader Husseini, the Izziddin al-Kassam and the Abdel Latif Chourou groups.

George Habash was the founder of the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) in the early 1950s. In the beginning, the ANM's programme was to recover

34 Ibid.
Arab rights in Palestine. It neither had clear-cut ideology nor a social content. The ideological and Marxist commitment of the ANM came much later. Over a number of years, its operations expanded from Libya to South Yemen. In all these countries, the ANM faced Government opposition. Habash started his activities among the students of the American University of Beirut where he himself was a student of medical science. In the beginning of 1968, he was sentenced to six years' imprisonment in absentia by a Libyan Security Court on the charge of conspiring to overthrow the monarchy. The ANM Marxists were held responsible in August for organising an armed uprising against the North Yemeni Premier, Lt.-Gen. Hassan Al Amri. They were also accused of conspiring against President Qahtan Al Shaabi of South Yemen. 36

When Habash was arrested in Damascus, Lt.-Col. Abdel Karim Al-Jundi, Syria's Chief Intelligence Officer, said: "The bird is finally in the cage. Even if God comes down from heaven to earth, he would not be able to release him." 37

37 Ibid.
Palestinian fedayeen made a daring attempt and kidnapped Habash from a Syrian security car which was proceeding to a military court for questioning. Earlier in 1968 when he was behind the Syrian bars for six months, the Marxists inside the ANM were trying to turn it into a pan-Arab revolt against the reactionary as well as the so-called progressive regimes.\textsuperscript{38}

The ANM believed in the unity of action among the Arab states extending from the Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean to fight imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction. Later on it advocated socialism and took credit for introducing the socialist laws in Iraq in 1964 when its members were in the Cabinet of the then Premier, Lt.-Gen. Taher Yahya. The ANM became a competitor of the Baath Socialist Party in Iraq and Syria and faced difficulties in those States.\textsuperscript{39}

After the defeat of the Arab Army in the June 1967 War, the radical elements condemned the leadership of the ANM for cooperating with the regimes which were responsible for the defeat. The Palestinian group in this movement formed the "Palestine

\textsuperscript{38} See, Mehmood Hussain, no. 8, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
Liberation Front" in August 1965. In November 1967, the Palestine Liberation Front with its three military groups merged with two other organisations, Abtal al-Awadh (Heroes of the Return) led by Ahmed Zaarour. Thus the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) came into being.\textsuperscript{40} One more group, called the Movement of Free Officers and set up in Jordan, joined the Front in 1968. Since then three splits have taken place. The first split within the newly formed organisation took place in November 1968, when the Ahmed Jebreel group broke away and called itself "Section 'A' of the General Command of the PFLP". After that the Zaaour group left the organisation and called itself "Section 'B' of the General Command of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine". The worst split was in December 1968, when the ANM itself started cracking from within over ideological differences. The leftist group, led by Nayef Hawatmeh, wanted to transform the ANM into a Marxist organisation. The split became apparent in the ANM Congress in February 1969. The Hawatmeh group left the PFLP to form the "Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine" (PDFLP), also known as the DFLP or PDF. The PFLP is now the number two organisation in the PLO, next to Al-Fatah.\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
The Other Groups

The Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDLP) or DFLP or PDF is the third biggest organisation.\(^{41}\) The strength of the Al-Fatah is estimated to be about 15,000 — as many as that of all other organisations put together. Al-Saïqa, which initially was a major organisation set up by the Syrian Baathist Party, has been reduced to an insignificant small group representing Syrian Government's interests. There were other smaller groups also. The Iraqi ruling Bathists set up a fedayeen group known as the Arab Liberation Front (ALF). The Palestinian Popular Liberation Forces (PPLF) constituted the fedayeen who came from the Palestine Liberation Army created by Shukairy's old PLO. The Arab Movement for the Liberation of Palestine (AML), led by Ahmed Zahrour, came into being after the split in the PFLP and is known for its allegiance to Nasserism. Others were the "Front for Palestinian Popular Struggle" (FPPS), led by Abou Garbiya (Nasserite), and the PFLP General Leadership, led by Ahmed Jebreel.\(^{42}\) The tenth organisation was the Action Movement for the Liberation of Palestine organised by I. Sartaoui, who had defected from Al-


\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 57.
Fatah. Some of the smaller groups merged with bigger ones. The total strength of the guerillas is estimated to be 30,000.

Organisational Unity of the Fedayeen Movement

Before the June 1967 war only three organisations were in existence: the PLO; Al-Fatah; and the Palestine section of the Arab Nationalist Movement, known as the Heroes of the Return which later on became the PFLP.

The PLO was discredited for acting as an official organisation of some of the Arab regimes. The PLO was considered as a Ministry of Foreign Affairs without a State and a "sponge to soak up Palestinian." The PLO suffered from bureaucratism and corruption. Its Palestine Liberation Army was acting as a part of the Arab armies. A PLA officer earned 60 Egyptian pounds per month besides many other allowances. This army required the permission of the country where it was stationed to operate from there against Israel. The PLA had about 10,000 men under arms. Majority of the units of the army were stationed in Egypt. The PLA was totally discredited in the June 1967 War.

43 Ibid.
The disaster of June 1967 created a new situation for the Palestinians and a new chapter for the fedayeen movement. After Ahmed Sukairy's resignation on 24 December 1967 the PLO underwent metamorphosis. Under Yahya Hamouda's transitional leadership the PLO opened its doors for the guerrilla organisations to participate in its activities. Following the battle of Al-Karameh in which Arafat's guerrillas had inflicted defeat on the Israeli army, Al-Fatah had become the symbol of Arab revolution winning the confidence of not only the Palestinians but also the other Arab masses.

At the fourth session of the Palestine National Council (PNC) held in Cairo in July 1968 representatives of the fedayeen movement were invited to join the PNC. They introduced the process of democratisation through resolutions which were passed separating the legislative and the executive. The resolutions also provided for direct election of the Executive Committee which, in turn, would elect its Chairman. The PLO passed from the tutelage of Arab regimes into the hands of the guerrillas. A real turning point for the PLO followed in a few months' time heralding cataclysmic changes.

On 1 February 1969, the fifth session of Palestinian National Council (PNC) was held in Cairo. It elected its new Executive Committee for the Palestine
Liberation Organisation and the committee, in turn, elected a new Chairman, Yasser Arafat (Abu Ammar), who was also leader of the Al-Fatah. The National Council was inaugurated by President Nasser who pledged full support to the Palestinian movement. Arafat injected a new dynamism into the PLO. He outlined the PLO's role in all aspects: political, military, ideological and otherwise. He established till this date, the basic role, structure and composition of the PLO.

The PLA command boycotted the fifth session of Palestine National Council. But Yasser Arafat met the contingents directly as a result of which the PLA Chief of Staff, Brig. Misbah Budeiri, agreed to receive orders from the new Executive provided it would adhere to resolutions of the previous PNC held in Cairo in July 1968, in which the PLA command had participated. There was no difficulty in it since those resolutions had been endorsed by Al-Fatah.

Arafat took over the charge of the PLA as he was named by the PLO Executive Committee as the Head of the PLO's Military Section. The following members were elected to the 11-men Executive Committee:

45 "Revolutionary Leadership for PLO", Ibid., pp. 2-3.
Yasser Arafat, Farouk Al Kaddoumi, Mohammed Ali Majjar and Khalid Al Hassan from Al-Fatah; Youssef Al Borji and Ahed Al Shehabi from Al-Saiga; Hamed Abu Sittah from the old PLO Executive Committee, Ibrahim Bakr, Kamal Nasser and Yasser Amre were the independent members. 46 Abdel Majid Shouman represented the Palestine National Fund. Since the PFLP was undergoing an internal crisis, it did not participate in that National Council. 47

Al-Fatah leadership took over the PLO on the condition that the Palestine National Charter of 1968 would be upheld in its revised form and Al-Fatah would be allowed to maintain its identity. Al-Fatah had 33 representatives in the 105-member Palestine National Council.

The revised Palestinian National Charter included many important changes and differs from the original Charter of 1964 on several issues. 48

Article 6 of the revised Charter considers the Jews, who used to live under normal conditions in Palestine until the Zionist invasion of the country,

46 Ibid. Ibrahim Bakr and Kamal Nasser were independent but pro-Fatah. Dr. Hamed Abou Sittah and Yasser Amre were pro-Saiga.

47 Ibid.

48 For the revised Palestinian National Charter (1969), see Mehmood Hussain, no. 8, appendix III, pp. 122-126.
as Palestinians. It dropped the condition that they may be accepted back in Palestine after liberation "if they are willing to live loyally and peacefully in Palestine". The most significant amendment in the Charter was the insertion of the revolutionary kernel stipulating that "armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine; it is therefore a strategy and not a tactic." Article 10 was inserted to emphasise that the "Commando action is the nucleus of the Palestine popular war of liberation" and it should be properly mobilised and protected.

Article 15 of the new Charter calls upon the Arab nations to mobilise all its military, human, material and spiritual resources for the liberation of Palestine which is a pan-Arab duty. Article 24 of the 1964 Charter, which said that the PLO did not practise any regional sovereignty on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, was dropped.49

The PLO is the political co-ordinating body of the fedayeen organisations. For co-ordination in the military field, the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command (PASC) was formed in March 1969. In the beginning Al-Fatah, Al-Saiqa, the Arab Liberation Front

49 Ibid. The Gaza Strip and the West Bank were occupied by Israel in June 1967 War.
(ALF), the PDF, the Popular Liberation Forces (PLF),
the General Command of the Popular Front Section A,
the Popular Struggle Front (PSF) and a small group
known as "The Arab Palestine Organisation" joined
this co-ordinating body. In 1970, the PFLP also became
a member of the PLO.

Although the various fedayeen groups had agreed
to work within a unified command, they were divided
because of mutual rivalries. The co-ordination among
them was loose, and as a result each organisation
functioned independently and planned its own fedayeen
activity. There was a competition among them to launch
independent attacks on the enemy. Every organisation
informed the PASC only about its area of action.
Thus the PASC was reduced to the status of an infor-
mation office through which the fedayeen communiqués
were issued, sometimes even without verification.

These problems were discussed in the seventh
meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC) which
was held at the Assembly Hall of the Arab League Head-
quarters in Cairo in the first week of June 1970.
It adopted the following decisions: (1) Establishment
of a Central Committee to co-ordinate the fedayeen
movement; (2) Establishment of a unified Military
Command; and (3) Establishment of the Commando-Jordanian Committee and the Commando-Lebanese Committee.\textsuperscript{50}

The Central Committee was composed of the following: (1) Eleven members of the Executive Committee of the PLO; (2) Representatives of 11 fedayeen organisations which had signed the Sixth May Declaration defining the principles of inter-commando solidarity and unity. The PFLP also agreed to join the Central Committee; (3) The head of the Palestinian National Fund; (4) The Speaker of the National Council, Yahya Hamouda; (5) The Commander of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), Brig. Abdel Razzal Al Yahya; and (6) Three independent personalities to be chosen by the PLO Executive Committee. The chairman of the PLO Executive Committee was also chairman of the "Central Committee". It was responsible for taking policy decisions when the National Council was not in session. Its powers were intermediate between the legislative and policy-making powers of the National Council and the executive powers of the PLO Executive Committee.\textsuperscript{51} The possibility of the overlapping of powers at most of the levels was not ruled out.

\textsuperscript{50} "Central Committee for Commandos", The Arab World Weekly, 6 June 1970, pp. 4-5. The PFLP agreed to join the Central Committee of the PLO.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
The "Military Command" established by the PNC replaced the earlier Palestine Armed Struggle Command which was under sharp criticism. The Commando-Jordanian and the Commando-Lebanese Committees were designed to strengthen the solidarity with the Arab masses in these two countries to protect the fedayeen against the possibilities of a military crackdown by the local authorities.

The groups which have emerged are: Palestine Liberation Front (1977) led by Abu! Abbas, Communist Party of Palestine, Popular Liberation Front (1977) led by Abdul Fattah Ghanem backed by Libya, Black June - also called Fatah Revolutionary Council-led by Abu Nidal, Popular Struggle Front (1968) led by Samir Ghusha and Palestine Liberation Front (1977) led by Talaat Yaquoub.

Among these groups only Abu Nidal faction came into prominence. Abu Nidal was a member of Al-Fatah and left the organisation to start his Fatah Revolutionary Council. This group carried out some of the most spectacular guerilla operations like the Black September Organisation. Abu Nidal is a staunch Marxist-Leninist. For sometimes it was believed that he was backed by Syria and Libya. But there is no concrete proof. Nevertheless, Abu Nidal remains one of the
deadliest guerillas the history has ever witnessed. According to the secret reports of the CIA he was the most dreaded guerilla, placed as number one in the 'wanted' list of the U.S. State Department.

Syria organised a split within Al-Fatah in 1983. The rebel faction of Al-Fatah was led by Abu Musa who was backed by Syria. But Musa's rebellion failed as Yasser Arafat is the most popular leader of the Palestinians. As the Syrian forces fought the PLO fedayeen in Lebanon in 1976 President Hafez Al Assad lost his credibility as a champion of Palestine cause. Any Syrian move to change the PLO leadership is condemned by the Palestinian people. Arafat called it a Syrian conspiracy to liquidate the PLO having failed to do so in 1976. Arafat has displayed democratic spirit by including Abu Nidal in the Palestine National Council - their Parliament-in-Exile.

The proliferation of small guerilla groups is tolerated by the mainstream PLO. The guerilla operations of these groups exert pressure on the Arab Governments and the big or Super Powers. Through such pressures the PLO is in a better position to bargain.

52 The author's discussion with Yasser Arafat in June 1983.
peace. In other words, these smaller groups help the PLO in its diplomacy to bargain with the Arab regimes and Super Powers.

The Structure of PLO

The vast majority of world states today recognise the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The PLO is not an organisation in the strict sense. It represents the basic structure of the Palestinian state.

The Supreme Constitutional body of the PLO is the Palestinian National Council (PNC) the Legislative body which has 451 members representing the Palestinian people on a broad basis. This legislative organisation which was the Parliament-in-exile decides its policies and programmes and elects the Executive Committee of the PLO. The term of each 'cycle' of the Council is three sessions and is convened regularly in bi-annual ordinary sessions upon the request of the Executive Committee or a request from a quarter of its members. The PLO is headed by a Presidential Office composed of a Chairman and a Secretary, all are elected directly by the Council.

While convened in ordinary sessions, the Palestine National Council (PNC) considers the reports of the Executive Committee on the Political situation and the achievements of the PLO and its organs including the report of the Palestine National Fund; the recommendations of various committees, and any other issues approved for consideration.\textsuperscript{54} The Executive Committee takes on all the responsibilities of the PLO in accordance with the directives and resolutions passed and laid down by the National Council. It is bound to implement these resolutions. Members of the Executive Committee\textsuperscript{55} are each responsible for a department (or ministry) and they are individually and collectively responsible to the National Council. At the April 1981 National Council meeting, it was decided that the Chairman of PLO should also be elected by the National Council. It voted unanimously for Yasser Arafat. The present Executive Committee consists of the following 18 members. They are: \textit{viz.:-}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Yasser Arafat, Chairman
  \item Faruq Qaddumi (Abu Lutf)
  \item Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen)
  \item Jamal al-Surani
  \item Abdallah Burani
  \item Muhammad Zuhdi al Nashashibi (1990)
  \item Shafiq al-Hut (1990)
\end{itemize}


\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
The Chairman of the PLO executive committee continues to be the supreme commander of the Palestinian forces and head of the Military Department.

The Central Council

The National Council in its 11th ordinary session, held in Cairo between 6-12 January 1973, established a Central Council from its own membership to follow up and implement its resolutions. It has been formed to conduct business between National Council sessions, which are held every two or three years. While the existing strength of the Council is 75 members, it had only 21 members when it was created. 57

The Central Council meets at least once every three months to review the execution of PNC resolutions and discusses the political situation and the develop-

57 Khalid El-Sheikh, no. 54, p. 64.
ment of the Palestinian question. Its sessions are headed by the Chairman of the PNC. The distribution of the membership of the Central Council is as follows:

1. The Executive Committee of PLO - 18 members
2. The Presidential Office of PNC - 4 members
3. The Independents and Communities - 25 members
4. Chairman of the Standing Committees - 4 members
5. The representatives of the resistance Organisation - 14 members
6. The representatives of trade unions - 12 members. 58

Under the leadership of Chairman Yasser Arafat, the Committee has led the Palestinian people to successive victories. It has preserved the Palestinian identity and carried the Palestinian cause into new strides and dimensions. As of today almost every state, including the United States and Israel, recognise PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The greatest achievement of the Executive Committee under Arafat was the proclamation of the Independent State of Palestine and the signing of the peace deal with Israel on 13 September 1994.

As a Government, the PLO has organised various departments to execute the decisions and programmes of the Executive Committee. These departments take

58 Ibid., pp. 64-65.
care of the needs of the Palestinians. The major departments which function as ministries are: (i) The Political Department (the External Affairs Ministry) (ii) Department of Mass Organisations (iii) Departments of Education, Health, Economic and Social Affairs and (iv) Department of Information and Culture.

The Political Department

The role of Political Department is of utmost importance. It is the External Affairs Ministry the diplomatic arm of the PLO. Its primary task is to safeguard and promote the political interests of the Palestinian people in their struggle to regain their inalienable national rights in an independent Palestinian State. Its primary task was to translate the guerilla warfare and mass resistance into diplomatic victory. It succeeded in its "persistence diplomacy with a revolutionary spirit" and ensured the recognition by more than 125 countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. This department is under the leadership of Faruq Qadoomi (Abu Luft), an unarmed guerilla, a soft-spoken suave gentleman, who never compromised on principle. He is the head of this department since its inception in 1974. It is to the credit of his department under the direct supervision

59 Ibid.
of Arafat that more countries recognised the PLO than the state of Israel. The other functions and responsibilities of the department include: to represent PLO at international level, to conduct matters relating to the relations of PLO with other states, to assign representatives and ambassadors; and to manage the foreign missions and offices of the PLO all over the world. Of the 92 missions and offices the PLO operates all over the globe, most of the offices have the status of Embassy. Two offices are accredited to U.N. at New York and Geneva, and in third to the UNESCO at Paris. It has a bureaucracy consisting of a Director General, directors, diplomats and administrators to execute the policies of the Executive Committee of PLO. When the Oslo Accord was signed Faruq Qadoomi, however, gave his dissenting opinion.

Department of Mass Organisations

The objectives of this department were: to satisfy the needs of organising the Palestinian masses and to promote the economic and social interests of the Palestinian working masses who are most of the time exploited and exposed to economic and financial discrimination, and to promote the intellectual and professional capabilities of these workers. This department looks

60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., pp. 68-89.
after the interests of students, teachers, workers, women, lawyers, doctors and medical staff, farmers, writers, creative artists, youth and journalists. These groups maintain their unions whose leaders are democratically elected under the supervision of the department. The representatives of mass organisations occupy 26 per cent of the PNC seats.

Department of Education, Health, Economic and Social Affairs

In the field of education, the PLO's education department made a good deal of progress. It opened schools at refugee camps and in areas of Palestinian concentration. The PLO encouraged the Palestinians to establish six universities at Hebron, Nablus, Bethlehem, Gaza and Abudies (near Jerusalem). The Palestinian revolution has concentrated particular attention on developing social and health care. Three institutions in these areas serve as examples of the PLO's achievements: the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS), SAMED\(^62\) (Workshops of the Children of the martyrs of the Palestinian Revolution) - now the PLO's economic institution headed by a dynamic leader Ahmed Qurie (Abu Ala) and Beit as - Soummud and Souq al-Gharb, PLO orphanages. The Palestinian Red Crescent was founded in Jordan in 1969. Its aim was, from the beginning, to

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provide medical care for the Palestinian people and for the fedayeen. About 3,000 patients on average are cared for every day. Apart from hospitals and out-patients departments, the PRCS runs a school of nursing, a training centre for medical and technical assistants, a central laboratory and a central blood bank in Beirut. 63

The Palestinian Red Crescent has observer status within the International Red Crescent and is a full member of the Arab Health Organisation. It also represents the PLO at WHO. The House of Children of Steadfastness (Beit as-Sommud) was founded by the general Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) during the Lebanese civil war. During this time a remarkable childcare system was developed in the house - that of the 'alternative mother' and the 'alternative family'. It meant that groups of eight children, usually brothers and sisters, were cared for and looked after by a mother in family units. This House of Steadfastness provides a wide range of activities for its children including sports, painting, embroidery, instruction, music learning and folk dancing etc. 64

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63 Ibid.
64 Ibid
the critics of the PLO. Starting as a small institution providing vocational training and job opportunities, SAMED has developed into a multi-faceted economic organisation encompassing industries which manufacture textiles, clothes, blankets, construction equipment, plastic products and food processing. It expanded its manufacture to over 30 countries in Asia and Africa with investments and commercial projects in many more. SAMED products are popular even in the European countries. It has also established agricultural projects and pilot farms in Sudan, Uganda, Somalia, Guinea, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Guinea Bissau with a gross area of over 30,000 acres of land. It has a film production unit. SAMED's dynamic leader Ahmad Qurie (Abu Ala) spearheaded the PLO's diplomacy through economic activities. Qurie is a principal architect of the Oslo Peace Accord.

**Finance**

Many people are puzzled about where the PLO gets its money from. Many millions of dollars are needed to finance all its organisations and institutions. As stipulated by article 24 of the Basic Law, the first PNC resolved that a Palestinian National Fund be established and managed by a Board of Directors. Article 25 of the Basic Law stipulates the sources
of the Fund's revenue to be: a fixed tax levied on Palestinians working in various Arab countries (5-10 per cent of income) to be collected through special regulations. Palestinians in other countries make voluntary contributions. The Arab League also has a PLO support fund into which Arab states make payments, and various Arab states give the PLO financial backing over and above this. But the Arab states' financial contribution had dwindled over the years, as they often failed in their commitments. It is the Palestinians themselves who provide most of the finance. All incoming funds are administered by the National Fund (Finance Ministry) and distributed according to the political resolutions of PLO Committees. Contrary to what is generally speculated about the finances of the PLO, the organisation faces stringent and difficult financial position, even after signing the Peace Accord.

The PLA

Under Yasser Arafat's leadership the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) was given a new orientation. This regular military force (PLA) which was constituted

65 Khalid El-Sheikh, no. 54, p. 66.
from Palestinian personnel recruited in the Arab armies, was made up of three contingents: Ain Jalot Forces stationed in Egypt, Al-Qadisiyyah forces based in Iraq and Hitten Forces stationed in Syria. It improved its performance erasing its June 1967 war records. The PLA participated along side the Egyptian and Syrian armies in the October 1973 war, registering victories. It was engaged in various battles in defence of the Palestinian Revolution in Lebanon and against Israeli military incursions in Lebanon and Jordan. PLA units also participated in the defence of PLO and Yasser Arafat's leadership during the 1982 battle of the siege of Beirut as well as the battle of Tripoli in 1983. The name of PLA was, however, changed during the 16th session of PNC at Algiers (in 1983) to become the Palestinian National Liberation Army (PNLA). The PNLA, at present, is represented by 44 seats in the Palestine National Council.66 After the Oslo Peace Accord was signed some of the PLA units were trained as policemen by Jordan, Norway and some Arab countries for taking up the responsibilities of Palestinian Police. Following the Interim Agreement signed between Israel and the PLO on 4 May 1994, the Palestinian Police took over the charge of the Gaza Strip and Jericho in

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66 Ibid., pp. 66-67.
the Palestinian self-rule area. As per the later agreements between the PLO and Israel in August 1994 the Palestinian Police presence is allowed at the border check-points.

Throughout in exile till 1993, the PLO established the embryonic structures of the future Palestinian State. This embryonic structure of Palestinian Government shifted to Gaza from Tunis along with Yasser Arafat on 1 July 1994, following the implementation of the Peace Accord. The PLO head quarter has been based in Gaza taking over the administration of self-rule area of Gaza-Strip and Jericho. On 29 August 1994 another PLO-Israel agreement was signed through which the PLO took over the charge of education, health, social welfare, tourism and taxation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. And these political institutions and organs of the PLO have been planted in their mother land and prove categorically that this future state would be democratic. Elections are in the offing. The PLO is the first liberation organisation which created democratic structures in its own ranks. And it has held true to these structures. Yasser Arafat is the President of the state of Palestine. The PLO has set up a Council of 24 members, which is the cabinet of Palestine National Authority running the administration. The
PLO is the first quasi-state institution in the history of Palestine which genuinely practices democracy - and this is a major reason why the Palestinian people regard PLO as their sole legitimatic representative. Eric Rouleau, the leading Middle East reporter for four decades, rightly feels that:

the PLO is the only group that has ever claimed to speak in the name of the Palestinian People. No other group of whatever ideology has ever come forward. Not one. Not even Hamas is doing that today - Hamas is challenging the PLO, it's saying the PLO is wrong, but it has never presented itself as being the legitimate representative of the people. To my mind this is unique in history.67

Ideological Commitments of the Fedayeen Groups

The Palestine Liberation Movement is basically a national liberation movement which may be followed by a social revolution after the goal is achieved. Its primary task is to recover the lost land and to ensure the return of the displaced and dis-integrated Palestinian community. Al-Fatah has proclaimed that the liberation movement wants "to create the new Palestine of tomorrow, a progressive, democratic and non-sectarian Palestine in which Christians, Moslems and Jews will worship, work, live peacefully and enjoy equal rights.... Our Palestinian revolution

still stretches its welcoming hand to all human beings who want to fight for, and live in a democratic, tolerant Palestine, irrespective of race, colour or religion."^{68} According to Al-Fatah's original declaration as drafted by Y. Sayegh, even the word 'atheists' was included alongside Christians, Moslems and Jews.^{69} A democratic and progressive Palestine rejects by elimination a theocratic, a feudal, an aristocratic, and authoritarian or a racist-chauvinistic form of government... and it would provide equal opportunities in work, worship, education, political decision-making, cultural and artistic expression."^{70} According to Clifford Geertz, the function of ideology is "to render otherwise incomprehensible social situations meaningful (and) to so construe them as to make it possible to act purposefully with them...."^{71} Al-Fatah used this formula to win over the support of the Palestinians and other Arab masses, both the "right" as well as the "left".^{72} In terms of substantive

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69 The author's interview with Fathi Abdul Hamid, the PLO representative to India in 1975.
71 Clifford Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System", in David Apter (ed.), Ideology and Discontent (New York, 1964), p. 64.
Ideology there was widespread agreement within the resistance elite over the fundamental goal of a secular, democratic Palestine. But there were differences of opinion over how such a society be governed and its resources allocated; and on this question, the Marxist outlook of the PFLP and PDFLP challenged the comparative liberal-pragmatic orientation of Al-Fatah.\(^{73}\)

Al-Fatah

\textit{Al-Fatah} has not defined its ideology in explicit terms. It is opposed to formulating any ideological programme in general and maintains strict neutrality with regard to the ideological and political conflicts which divided the contemporary society, including the Arab world.\(^{74}\)

\textit{Al-Fatah} has explained why it has not defined its ideology. It is of the opinion that the Palestine National Liberation Movement (\textit{Al-Fatah}) "is neither a Party nor a Front. It is simply a movement." "The Party has a fixed social ideology and the Front groups organisations within the context of a specific

\(^{73}\) Inid., p. 78.

\(^{74}\) Simha Flapan, "Terrorism vs Peace", \textit{New Outlook}, Vol. 12, No. 2 (104), February 1969, p. 35.
plan of action. The basic element of a movement is dynamism. It accepts basic principles as well as assumptions but subjects its thoughts to practice and experience. Through motion and dynamism the movement builds its intellectual content. 76

Al-Fatah says that it has certain basic principles and concepts. Its intellectual content can only crystallise through dynamic and pragmatic experience. "Its dynamism is cybernetic. This cybernetic dynamism is essential for the success of an active movement like Al-Fatah." 76 Al-Fatah says that theory is an outcome of experience and practice is a real test for thoughts and positions. Everything is judged through practice. Al-Fatah through its dynamism translates all its concepts and policies into practice, modifying and altering them to the point where it can build its intellectual content. "Thus, as a Movement, Al-Fatah refused to be static and cannot delineate the man of the future through metaphysical reasoning." 77 It thinks that by defining the ideology it may become static which will hinder its growth. It, therefore, wants to be dynamic and to build up its concepts and policies through experience and practice.

75 "Al-Fatah as a Movement", Fatah, 1 October 1969, p. 2.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
Al-fatah appointed a special committee in 1958 to draft its guiding principles. The summary of the draft is as follows:

1) Revolutionary violence is the only available means of liberating the homeland.

2) The violence must be exerted by the masses.

3) The object of this revolutionary violence is to liquidate the political, economic and military institutions of Zionism over the whole of the territory of Palestine under Israeli control.

4) This revolutionary action should be independent of all party or State control.

5) This revolutionary struggle will of necessity continue over a long period.

6) It is an Arab revolution spearheaded by the Palestinians.  

As compared to the Marxist fedayeen groups, Al-Fatah's stand seemed to be conservative. It does not make a fundamental break with the past though it has adopted all modern political ideas that suit the prevailing situation – except the Marxist ideology of scientific socialism. There were two wings, "rightists" and "leftists" in the organisation. The former was led by Khaled el Hassan and the latter by late Abu Iyad (Salah Khalef).

78 Gerard Chaliand, no. 41, pp. 67-68.
79 Ibid., p. 70.
Yasser Arafat is the spokesman of the organisation. He acts as an arbiter between the factions. 80

In spite of the charges levelled against Al-Fatah, it is difficult to say that it is a conservative movement. It might have followed Arab social ethos as a policy to win over all sections of the Arab East but its practice has a definite independent left orientation. It has implemented the Maoist military strategy of people's war without uttering the name of Mao Zedong.

Al-fatah explained its leftist stand in a very short article called "Al-Fatah and the Left" published in the Fatah. 81 It explained its leftism as follows:

Notwithstanding the variegated definitions of the Left in general, it can be safely stated that all genuine leftist movements seek to end man's exploitation of man, start by refusing a given condition or structure and proceed to change it by resistance or struggle and revolt. 82

The apex of struggle is armed struggle. Al-Fatah is more leftist than anything since it intellectually rejects a status quo or given condition and wants to change it through armed struggle. Within this frame of reference, Al-Fatah accused the Communist

80 Ibid.
81 Al-fatah and the Left, no. 75
82 Ibid.
Party in Jordan, for instance of being rightist because it had failed to join the national movement which has taken up arms to change the status quo. Al-fatah also justifies its leftist stand, by citing examples of various revolutionary experiences and how they vary from one another. There are variances in socialist experiences from Yugoslavia to Poland and from Russia to China.

As long as there are such differences over the social content of these experiences and as long as every social content is inevitably changing with time, it is not easy to predict the future and define, outright, a theoretical social content for the Palestine revolution. 83

Even if it has not defined its ideology, Al-Fatah believes that the social content for the Palestine revolution is bound to safeguard two basic objectives:

1. Doing away with man's exploitation of man.
2. Implementing social justice.

To accuse Al-Fatah of having bourgeois inclinations just for not restricting the Palestine revolutionary struggle to the class of peasants and workers is, to say the least, unfair. 84 Those who make such accusations ignore the fact that Al-Fatah represents a peculiar but wider class - the class

83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
of uprooted, displaced and oppressed Palestinians. It, therefore, embraces all the Palestinians who aspire for a homeland.

Al-Fatah's left orientation is based on the analysis of the Arab situation and the nature of the Palestinian struggle. Al-Fatah's argument is that certain classes which were unknown in the days of Marx have emerged in history. Marx did not study a class called the "displaced persons' class" which has appeared among the Palestinians. These displaced persons were labourers and farmers in their country, but this class cannot be defined according to traditional standards, although it may be of a revolutionary character.  

Al-Fatah has also given a reply to the argument that it has failed to adopt a Marxist-Leninist line or something of that sort which would enable it to describe itself as progressive. Its reply is that those who talk of Marxism-Leninism now were far from it if their background and previous practices were examined. On the contrary, Al-fatah, which never called itself Marxist-Leninist, was the first to practise armed struggle. Al-Fatah claims that actual practice and not words should be the real criterion.

85 A Dialogue With Fatah.
86 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
There are many Marxists in Al-Fatah. Hence to say that Al-Fatah is a "right" organisation is to undermine its character in the context of historical situations. Its political orientation may have been influenced by the traditional ethos and religious faith which are common in the Arab countries. The "Voice of al-assifa" (Fatah Radio) and its fedayeen communiques used to start with "In the Name of Allah, the magnificent, the Merciful..." This is the Arab culture and social norm of the Arab masses, and Al-Fatah could not maintain distance with them. Those who thought that Al-Fatah was a conservative organisation were proved wrong. The Black September Organisation, created by Al-Fatah from its ranks, carried out the most spectacular guerilla operations against Israel, Arab regimes and Western countries. Behind the facade of Arab social ethos Fatah proved to be a truly Arab revolutionary organisation which did not compromise with the strategic interests of the Palestinians. Its flexibility is a short term tactics. Because "whatever Al-Fatah has announced or may announce would be connected with the requirements of immediate stages of the national liberation movement than with long-term strategy." 87

87 Ibid., p. 52.
Al-Fatah is of the opinion that it represents a revolutionary movement that did not allow itself to be bogged down in the sticky incompatibilities of ideology. According to it, "the revolution makes the ideology and not vice-versa." Fatah's approach has stood the test of time. While the collapse of Marxist regimes signalled the sad demise of their ideology, it is Yasser Arafat's understanding of history which heralded a new Arab revolution in the most difficult situation. The "cybernetic dynamism" and steadfastness of Al-Fatah, which leads the PLO, are too formidable. Revolution is the most creative thing in history. Arafat is a creator like Lenin, Mao, Castro or Guevara. He is a creator in modern times, for he has combined revolution with modern democracy and international diplomacy.

Revolutionaries all over the world pin hope in the "cybernetic dynamism" of Al-Fatah. Those Palestinians who criticised it on the basis of its ideological stand were the ones who were used by some of the reactionary regimes which fought the PLO openly or tried to Sabotage the Palestinian revolution. Al-Fatah took the correct and independent stand for which it incurred the wrath

88 "The New Arab Revolt on the Move", no. 33.
of several Arab countries.\textsuperscript{89} When the Arab regimes discovered the true revolutionary nature of Al-Fatah some of them conspired to weaken it. Al-fatah proved itself to be the most modern and a unique organisation in the history of 20th century revolution.

PFLP

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestins (PFLP) is a breakaway group from the Arab Nationalist movement which was founded in the early fifties. The ANM talked in terms of Arab unity aiming at recovering Palestine. It was a national, anti-colonial struggle and was close to Nasserism. In 1962, the ANM held a congress in which socialism and class-struggle were adopted as a part of the ideology of the movement. It believed in Nasser because he talked of unity and raised the prestige of the Arabs after the Suez Crisis of 1956. But the War of June 1967 proved the hollowness of the nationalist regime of Nasser and his ideology.

The June 1967 defeat was analysed by the radical wing of the ANM in its weekly organ \textit{Al-Hadaf}. It said that after the First World War, Britain and

\textsuperscript{89} After the September 1970 confrontation between the Fedayeen and Jordanian Army, restrictions are imposed on all the Fedayeen organisations in Jordan. The Saudi Arabian regime and Gulf States have stopped financial aid to the PLO after the Gulf War. Syria fought the PLO and Arafat openly in 1976 and 1983 in Lebanon.
France occupied Iraq and other parts of the Arab homeland.\textsuperscript{90} It was followed by the national liberation movement of the masses against imperialism. In Palestine, it was led by feudalists and the large bourgeois aristocratic families represented by Haj al-Amin Husseini and the Arab Party in Palestine. Shukri al-Kuwatly and the National Party led the movement in Syria. This was the case in the other Arab countries also. The Arab masses realised, in the light of events in the 1940s, that this class sought nothing more than superficial independence and that it would collaborate with imperialism in the exploitation of the masses.\textsuperscript{91} The contradiction between the feudalist and aristocratic bourgeois leaderships on the one hand, and the masses, on the other, began to crystallise. It was characterised with violence. The masses at this stage were led by the intellectual, professional and free officer groups who belonged to the rising small bourgeois class. In 1948, Israel was created and the Palstinians tragedy took place. The reality of the superficially independent regimes was exposed. Many of these regimes were overthrown by the national military and political organisations whose members belonged to the small bourgeoisie. Thus the contra-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{90} Al-Hadaf (weekly organ of the PFLP) published "PFLP's Statement of Policy and Strategy", translated in The Arab World Weekly, 16 August 969, pp. 16-19.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
diction existed between the workers and farmers—led by the small bourgeoisie, and imperialism, Israel and Arab reaction.92

The accomplishments of the nationalist regimes like Nasser and others prompted a mobilisation in the hostile camp under the U.S. leadership which aimed at striking down the revolutionary march by all means. This needed a similar mobilisation in these Arab regimes in order to rise to a new revolutionary level which would ensure the deployment of all the resources of the masses, political, military and economic, so that imperialism and Zionism could be defeated. But these petty bourgeois regimes continued to move within plans and programmes dictated by the class nature of these regimes. The socio-economic and military transformation of these countries remained within the ideological orientation of this class and it was this ideology and its whole programme, says the PFLP, that were defeated in June 1967.93

The June 1967 defeat was further explained by the PFLP. The petty bourgeois theoreticians gave an excuse that it was because of the technical,

92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
scientific and cultural superiority of Israel and the support of American imperialism that the Arab regimes were defeated. If technical superiority was the criteria then how could the Vietnamese people confront America's half a million soldiers in addition to half a million puppet regime troops? It is because of the proletarian and poor-peasant class orientation of the revolutionary regimes that Vietnam and Cuba could fight imperialism. They placed the resources of the country at the service of the struggle to overcome the problem of national liberation and liquidate all class privileges — material and cultural — and construct a solid base for economic and political independence by heavy industrialisation, mechanisation of agriculture and electrification. The vast toiling masses were mobilised in people's militia, partisan groups and the ranks of the regular army for the defeat of imperialism and its allies. But in the Arab petty bourgeois regimes the economy could not withstand the Zionist-imperialist attack because it was mainly a "consumer economy" geared to light industry.

95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
After the closure of the Suez Canal, this economy sought the help of the reactionary "oil regimes". The petty bourgeois ruling class feared the masses as much as it feared feudal-bourgeois alliance. It failed to build a national economy developing independently from the capitalist world market, and therefore could not sever all relations with the imperialist camp - especially the USA. This class, therefore, could not accept the Vietnamese or the Cuban way of people's war to defeat imperialism and Israel lest it may have to renounce the class privileges. It fought them through the military establishment which resulted in the humiliating defeat of 1967.

In the light of that historical situation and class analysis of the petty bourgeois Arab regimes, the PFLP adopted Marxism-Leninism as an ideology to fight imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction. The PFLP is led by Dr. George Habash who describes himself as an "Asiatic Marxist-Leninist". During 1969-72 when the PFLP organised special guerilla operations Habash was called "Mao Zedung of Middle East". His role within the PLO has been that of an opposition leader. However, George Habash, with his Greek Orthodox Church family background, gave

98 Ibid.
99 Mehmood Hussain, no. 8, pp. 32-35.
a new dimension to the Palestinian revolution. He presented a totally secular character of the resistance. The Western and Zionist critics failed to identify the Palestinian movement as a communal movement of the Muslims. Habash also deserves credit for internationalising the Palestine question through guerilla operations in Europe. He is the one who often speaks the unpalatable truth within the movement. His dissidence increases Arafat's bargaining power in international diplomacy.

The PFLP trains its cadres within the framework of Marxism-Leninism. As often happens in such movements there were splits on ideological ground in the PFLP also. The radical left wing group led by Nayef Hawatmeh and theoreticians, like Mohcen Ibrahim and Mohamed Kichli, who are connected with the journal, Al-Hurriya (Beirut), broke away and formed the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) which is also known as DPLF or PDF. The fedayeen groups which are opposed to Yasser Arafat get the encouragement from the Syrian President Hafiz al-Assad who provides them sanctuary in Damascus.
The split within the PFLP occurred on the occasion of the first clandestine PFLP Congress which was held in Jordan in August 1968. The Hawatmeh group presented its ideological programme on the following points:

1. The nature of the Palestinian national democratic revolution in an underdeveloped country.

2. The inability of the petty bourgeoisie to carry the revolution through to its logical conclusion.

3. A critique of the Palestinian national movement as expressed in its various organisations. Critique of its relations with the Palestinian masses and the Arab masses in general.

4. Critique of the attitude of the Arab States towards the Palestinian national problem.

5. A proposal for the creation of a national front based on a minimum programme, but to be independent of any control.\(^{100}\)

Though the left wing minority managed to get the programme accepted by the Congress, it remained a dead letter.\(^{101}\) It, therefore, came out of the PFLP and formed the PDFLP. Both the organisations claim that the Palestinian revolution is a part of the Arab revolution. \textit{Al-Fatah} also believes in the same dictum. Not only do they want the liberation of Palestine, but also a liberation of the whole

\(^{100}\) Ibid.

\(^{101}\) Ibid.
Arab world and the establishment of a socialist and classless society. In contrast to Al-Fatah which only emphasises the nationalist phase of the revolution, PFLP and PDF emphasise the national liberation as well as the class struggle. Al-Fatah, of course, does not fit into the traditional jargons of the fashionable Marxist analysis. Both PFLP and PDF had criticised Al-Fatah for having "bourgeois leadership" acceptable to the Arab regimes. But the reverse has been proved true. While some Arab regimes conspired and fought Al-Fatah leadership openly, they developed good relations with the Marxist leaders. The gulf between the theory and practice has often been a sickening aspect of the Marxist movements since Lenin's time.

PDF claims that it alone represents the workers, peasants and poor refugees of Palestine. Indulging in the characteristic Marxist epithets it charged the PFLP representing in its leadership and in its ideology sizable sectors of the "Jordanian and Palestinian bourgeoisie." It also charged that PFLP had gone closer to Iraq and Egypt. It is, therefore, of opinion that PFLP leadership is not very much

102 John Gerassi, no. 94, pp. 231-2.
dissimilar to Al-Fatah. Like other Palestinian organisations, it criticises the Jordanian Communist Party for adopting a reformist line and blindly following the Soviet foreign policy.\(^\text{103}\) Marxism was less appealing specially in the Palestinian context because of the Soviet Union's support to the case of Jewish state at the U.N. in 1947 and its support for the Palestine partition plan. Consequently, the Palestine Communist Party that existed before 1948 withered away. The Communist movement of the Arab east also suffered a great setback. However, Palestinian communists, emerging in the aftermath of June 1967 war, presented a better image as they launched guerilla warfare closely on the footsteps of Al-Fatah.

The PDF's ideological training programme includes a study of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao Tse-tung, Giap and Guevara. Al-Fatah and PFLP also supply these literatures to the cadres in the training camps. Al-Fatah is considered a nationalist movement: so also PFLP in spite of its Marxist-Leninist overtones. But PDF is the only organisation which is not purely nationalist. It claimed that it is not "close" to any of the Arab regimes. It used to control the Information Department of the PLO. It displayed its creativities in this field. The PDLFP put forward the idea

\(^{103}\) Mehmood Hussain, no. 8, pp. 35–36.
that the Jews should be considered as a nationality.\footnote{Gerard Chaliand, no. 41, p. 86.}

It may, therefore, be said that the PDF, like the Soviet Marxists in 1947, was confused on this issue because Judaism is a religion like Islam or Christianity and not a nationality. However, it cooperated with Arafat in the resistance as well as in his diplomatic efforts to establish the peace process. Marxism-Leninism might have collapsed where it became a system not dissimilar to an autocratic system — but it still has its relevance in the national war of liberation.

**Al-Saiqa (The Thunderbolt)**

Al-Saiqa is an organisation backed by the ruling Syrian Baath Socialist Party. The Ninth Congress of the Baath held in 1966 had decided to set up such a group but it started functioning effectively only after the June 1967 defeat. Soon it became one of the dominant organisations because of the material help which it received from the Syrian Government. Its leader was Mahmoud al-Masaita.

The Baath, which is a pan-Arab movement, does not accept Marxism. Instead, it believes in pan-Arabism which, it says, offers a better solution to the Arab problems. The political development of Al-Saiqa was much less significant, although
militarily it had made sufficient progress. Theoretically, its political standpoint was said to be roughly that of Al-Fatah's "left-wing". Al-Saïqa, however, considered Al-Fatah to be at a low ideological level and regarded itself closer to the PDFLP\textsuperscript{105} though it does not accept Marxism. Since its ideology is Baath socialism, and since it is also an inter-Arab movement, it was a rival of the Arab Nationalist Movement. It was also a rival of the PFLP led by Dr. George Habash. "It holds the view that since the Baath has been able to rid itself of its historically outdated leaders it is time that the Arab Nationalist Movement did the same thing.\textsuperscript{106} However, Al-Saïqa believed in establishing a unitary, democratic Arab State in Palestine, with the future prospect of a Greater Arab Socialist State which would include the whole of the Arab East.\textsuperscript{107} Its cadres were trained in the Political Officers' Training School in Syria which imparted training on the basis of experience of people's war in different countries.

Since Al-Saïqa's ideological orientation remains close to the Syrian Baath it is said that it sought to bring the Palestinian struggle under the control

\begin{footnotes}
\item[105] Ibid., pp. 79-80.
\item[106] Ibid.
\item[107] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
of the Syrian regime. Ideologically it was doubtful whether the Syrian regime could pursue the path of people's war, which required a lot of sacrifice and endangered the class privileges of the ruling elite.

The influence of Al-Saiqa declined in 1976 when the Syrian army sided with the Christian militia in Lebanon and launched attack on the Palestinian forces of the PLO. Al-Saiqa lost its importance. Genuine members of this group deserted Saiga and joined other guerilla groups. The Syrian influence on the PLO came to an end, specially after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The Syrian troops were silent spectators to the Israeli invasion.

Moreover, Syria backed the Shia Amal militia in organising a siege of some of the Palestinian camps in Lebanon between 1985 and 1987. Many Palestinians starved unto death. Out of acute hunger they started eating cats, rats and dogs. Because of this inhuman situation imposed on the Palestinians, Syria and its satellite Al-Saiqa lost their influence on the Palestinians. Syria has been equated with Israel by Palestinias. Earlier, the Syrian influence over the PLO greatly diminished after it set up a

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108 Mehmood Husain, "Camp War in Lebanon", in Democratic World (New Delhi), July 1987, p. 10.
splinter Al-Fatah group led by Abu Musa to oust Yaser Arafat from the leadership of Al-Fatah and the PLO in 1983. The Syrian army fought the PLO forces led by Arafat in Tripoli in Lebanon. All the major fedayeen organisations including the PFLP led by George Habash supported Yasser Arafat's leadership and condemned Syria. Al-Saïqa lost its numerical strength and was reduced to an insignificant organisation. The Assad regime purged the genuine leaders of Saïqa who opposed his anti-Arafat tirade.

After the PLO - Israel Peace Accord was signed on 13 September 1993 in Washington, Syria has been harbouring and supporting 10 Palestinian dissident groups and leaders opposed to the Accord who are based in Damascus. Prominent among the dissidents is Ahmad Jebreel who leads the PFLP - General Command, a relatively small fedayeen organisation. But since the peace process has succeeded the PLO dissidents have gradually become less effusive.

Despite the ideological differences the main actors of the Palestinian fedayeen movement remained united under the democratic structure of the PLO and Cybernetic dynamism of Yasser Arafat's leadership.
He was the only leader acceptable to all the groups. The fedayeen justified their differences by calling it Palestinian democracy. Yasser Arafat emerged as a great Arab leader - second only to Nasser - who could win the overwhelming support of the Palestinian and other Arab masses, if not the Arab regimes. No other leader had ever led such a difficult and complex revolution.