THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBERATION AS REVOLUTIONARY THEORY AND PRAXIS: THE POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE AND THE NEW PALESTINIAN LEFT, 1967-1976

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS

BY

MICHAEL PEDDYCOART

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE 2022

For Caroline

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Note on Transliteration and Translation

In the interest of simplifying the reading of this dissertation, I have opted for a modified version of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*' transliteration system, excluding all diacritical marks except for the *ʿayn* (ʿ) and the *hamza* (ʾ). Full diacritics for non-English sources can be found in the footnotes and bibliography. For names, places, and terms that have a commonly used spelling in English (e.g., Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasser, George Habash, Beirut, etc.) I have used that spelling. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Abstract

Histories of leftist and anti-colonial movements among revolutionaries in the Global South during the early second half of twentieth century have been extensively surveyed and theorized. "Liberation as Revolutionary Theory and Praxis: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the New Palestinian Left, 1967-1976" contributes to these extant narratives by examining the often-ignored intellectual history of Palestinian leftists in the 1960s and 1970s through the lenses of revolutionary theory and praxis, media theory, gender, and cultural production. In this dissertation, I demonstrate that the idiosyncratic Marxism-Leninism practiced by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the foremost leftist organization among the Palestinian guerrilla factions of this period, did not mimic contemporary revolutionary movements in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia. Instead, the PFLP contributed to the global leftist discourses that influenced their ideologies by advancing a nationalist liberatory vision of class struggle shaped by the unique Palestinian experiences of statelessness and diaspora.

My dissertation argues that the PFLP produced a unique model for popular struggle in the region as it developed into a vanguard party capable of mobilizing a new proletariat class composed of the Palestinian refugee masses. This intellectual and practical evolution in the organization emerged from a process of internal political fragmentation, experimentation with utopic visions of liberation achieved by the Palestinian people themselves rather than Arab governments, and the crystallization of mass politics through the Front's social and economic development programs. In the first chapter of the dissertation, I employ the PFLP leadership's extensive writings in its official Arabic biweekly organ, *al-Hadaf* (The Target), and other widespread publications at the time, most notably *Shuʾun Filastiniyya* (Palestinian Affairs), to

posit that the Popular Front refashioned basic Leninist doctrines of revolutionary vanguardism and Maoist interpretations of people's war to serve the nationalist and anti-imperialist aspirations of the Palestinian masses in the refugee camps. In the next chapter, I show how the PFLP rejected the dominant discourse among Arab leaders of nonviolent engagement with Western audiences and instead pioneered violent media spectacles grounded in the Front's materialist historical analysis of global resistance. Marshaling archival material from government archives, the British Library, PFLP publications, and international press coverage, I also argue that the PFLP's members were torn over the efficacy of such radical operations and their ability to shape international public opinion. In the final chapter, I analyze previously untapped literary sources and art criticism produced by PFLP intellectuals to demonstrate that the Popular Front was deeply invested in cultural gatekeeping and the cultivation of original Palestinian revolutionary aesthetics as necessary praxes that complimented armed struggle. Though ideological rigidity prevented the PFLP from ever growing into a grassroots movement with wide appeal, and the destabilizing consequences of its violent operations weakened the Front's local and international political relevancy, my dissertation illustrates that the PFLP nevertheless left an indelible mark on secular revolutionary tradition in the region and greatly contributed to the complex collage of left-wing thinking produced by post-colonial thinkers in the Global South.

Acknowledgements

Writing this dissertation during a global pandemic would not have been possible without the intellectual and emotional support of a vast network of mentors, friends, and family. I count myself very fortunate to have had an amazing dissertation committee. All that is good in this dissertation can be traced back to the diligent guidance of these professors. Orit Bashkin, my dissertation chair and advisor, has been instrumental in my growth as a scholar. As someone with an encyclopedic mind for the craft of history writing, Orit always pushed me to dig deeper into my sources and provide my readers with richer insights into the lives of my subjects. Her in-depth comments on my chapters ensured that I treated this history with the care it deserves. Ghenwa Hayek pushed me to engage more deeply with theory throughout this project and to always think about not only how, but why I was employing these sources. Moreover, Ghenwa took my emotional concerns about graduate life seriously and always made me feel heard as an advisee. I am thankful for Darryl Li's unrivaled ability to always meet me where I was in my development as a writer and thinker. He often understood what I was trying to argue better than I did and helped me see why my work mattered.

Beyond my committee, I greatly benefitted from the mentorship and guidance of many other bright lights in the academic community. Abbas Milani at Stanford showed me how kindness, class, and curiosity could be combined in the figure of a public intellectual. His warmth toward me has made all the difference in my life. Fred Donner convinced me to apply to the PhD program. I will always be thankful for his belief in me. Kay Heikkinen, Ari Almog, and Saeed Ghahremani served as wonderful guides throughout my study of Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian. Mark Bradley was an exemplar of what kind leadership should look like in academe. Hakan Karateke and W.J.T. Mitchell were patient mentors during my pedagogical training. I am

also deeply grateful for Amanda Young, NELC's department administrator, whose exceptional organization and professionalism helped our cohort navigate a period of profound programmatic and administrative change at the university.

In my decade of living in Chicago, I have been blessed with truly wonderful colleagues and friends who continue to help me grow as a thinker and human. I would like to thank Mohsin, Zach, Fahad, Usama, Shaahin, Colin, Stephanie, Erin, Andrew, Sam, Allison, Annie, Pelle, Sami, Carl, Eilin, Maryam, Ali, Kyle, Adam, Anna, Kara, and Thalia. Your friendship and generosity gave me in abundance the community and humanity that graduate school can often lack. A special thank you to my friend Antonio, who has been there for me through the highest highs and the lowest lows during my time in Chicago. I hope he forgives any errors with my Arabic transliterations and translations in this dissertation. Late in the program, I was also introduced to a wonderful group of colleagues outside of Chicago with shared interests in intellectual history. My chapter drafts greatly benefited from the close readings and thoughtful comments made by Zaib, Charlotte, Roy, Sam, Aden, and Disha in this group. The pandemic brought a great deal of isolation and self-doubt. The encouragement of my dear friends from college, including Walker, Keith, Christine, David, Joe, Ali, Danielle, Lizzie, Tiff, and Arjun, brought much-needed perspective and joy. I miss you all terribly.

Research for this dissertation was generously supported by The Nicholson Center for British Studies, The Joyce Z. and Jacob Greenberg Center for Jewish Studies, and the University of Chicago Humanities Division Fellowship. My language training was made possible through the support of the American Councils' Critical Language Scholarship Program and the Department of Education's Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship. I would also like to thank the kind librarians and staff at the University of Chicago Library, the British Library, and

the British National Archives for their assistance in finding sources for this project. A special thank you to Jamal Braich in Beirut for helping me track down some particularly difficult-to-find copies of *al-Hadaf.*

To my parents, Steven and Ana Maria Peddycoart, and my sister, Natalia: Thank you for keeping me grounded through this long process and loving me unconditionally. The most difficult thing about Chicago was always how far it took me away from you all. The best thing about Chicago was meeting my wife, Caroline. She has made this city feel like home, even during the darkest days of the pandemic, and encouraged me to keep going during the many times I wanted to quit this project. Her piercing intellect, effortless kindness, and deep love made my time in graduate school among the best days of my life. I dedicate this dissertation to her.

Introduction

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) has been described by some scholars as a Palestinian Marxist-Leninist revolutionary organization. Others have questioned the group's commitment to Marxism-Leninism, calling it "skin-deep" or lacking a "political basis and concrete substance."[1] Some writers have labelled it a violent radical nationalist group.[2] Still other historians have called it a socialist revolutionary movement and part of the Arab New Left.[3] The PFLP, for its part, has called itself at different points in its history a national liberation movement,[4] a proletarian Marxist-Leninist Party,[5] an anti-colonial revolution connected to other anti-colonial struggles throughout the Global South,[6] and the vanguard force of a popular peoples' war against Israel, Western powers, and reactionary Arab regimes.[7]

The PFLP is and has been, at various moments, all, some, and none of these things.

The task of writing an intellectual history of the PFLP is therefore a rather complicated endeavor, fraught with risk of slipping into inaccurate labeling and generalizations. Yet this task is nevertheless a necessary investigation into an organization that has all too often been reduced

[1] Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 232–33; see also Mirko Aksentijevic, "Reflections on the Palestinian Resistance," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, no. 1 (1972): 115, https://doi.org/10.2307/2535976.
[2] Harold M. Cubert, *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East* (London: F. Cass, 1997), ix.
[3] Sune Haugbolle, "The New Arab Left and 1967," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 502.
[4] *Al-Niẓām al-Dākhilī [Internal Regulations]* (al-Jabhah al-Shaʿbīyya li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, 1971), 4–6.
[5] *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]* (Amman: Dāʾira al-Āʿlām al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [Information Bureau of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine], 1970), 9; Jūrj Ḥabash, *Al-Thawra Wa-l-ʿUmmāl [The Revolution and Workers]* (Amman: al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, 1970), 7.
[6] al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, "Nashra Dākhiliyya Tuṣaddiruhā Al-Lajna al-Tanẓīm Wa-l-Ittiṣāl al-Khārijī Fī al-Jabhah al-Shaʿbīyya Li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [An Internal Report Issued by the Foreign Relations and Organization Committee in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine," *Al-Munāḍil al-Thawrī [The Revolutionary Fighter]*, no. 6 (July 1973): 77–78.
[7] *Al-Masīra al-Tārīkhiyya Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical March of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, 2nd ed. (al-Dāʾira al-Thaqāfiyya al-Markaziyya, 2011), 80–81.

in Western scholarship and journalism to a radical terrorist group, one these writers claim cynically viewed violence as an end in itself. The intervention needed here is to allow for the PFLP to speak for itself to reveal its own ideological inconsistencies but also to shine light on those moments of purpose and intellectual clarity that the Front exhibited at various points in its early development. Moreover, there remains a pernicious stubbornness in English-language scholarship on PFLP history, in particular, and Arab intellectual history, in general, that only looks at Arabic sources as "primary documents" and omits, intentionally or otherwise, Arabic-language scholarship on groups like the PFLP, often with the unsubstantiated and blanket claim that this scholarship does not meet a minimum threshold of academic rigor or citation convention. However, one finds ample evidence to the contrary as not only do many of these secondary sources – the foremost being the PLO journal *Shuʾun Filastiniyya* [Palestinian Affairs] – provide invaluable analyses of the PFLP and other Palestinian leftist groups, but they also offer sober and often hard-hitting critiques of these organizations' historical shortcomings.[8]

My dissertation examines the intellectual, ideological, and social platforms developed by the Marxist-Leninist Palestinian armed resistance group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), during the organization's political zenith in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. With origins in the 1950s pan-Arab nationalist and student-driven Arab Nationalist

[8] ʿAwaḍ Khalīl, "Masār Al-Yasār al-Filasṭīnī Min al-Mārksiyya Ilā al-Bīrīstroykā [The Path of the Palestinian Left: From Marxism to Perestroika]," *Shuʾūn Filasṭīniyya*, no. 212 (November 1990): 19–61; Ghāzī al-Khalīlī, *al-Marʾa al-Filasṭīniyya wa-al-thawra: dirāsa ijtimāʿīyya maydānīyya taḥlīlīyya [The Palestinian Woman and the Revolution: a social, field, and analytical study]* (Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1977); Khadīja Ḥabāshna, *Muqaddimat ḥawla wāqiʿ al-marʾa wa-tajribatihā fī al-thawra al-Filasṭīnīyya: maʿa dirāsa maydānīyya li-tajribat al-kawādir wa-al-ʿanāṣir al-nisāʾīyya, 1967-1971 [Introduction to Women's Reality and Their Experience in the Palestinian Revolution: With a field study of the experience of the women's cadres and elements]*, 2nd ed. (Amman: Azminah, 2015); Bāssem Sarḥān, "Taqlīdiyya Al-Marʾa al-Filasṭīnīyya Fī Lubnān Wa-Mushārikatihā Fī al-Thawra (Dirāsa Awaliyya) [Traditionalism of Palestinian Women in Lebanon and Their Participation in the Revolution (First Study)]," *Shuʾūn Filasṭīniyya*, no. 6 (January 1972): 142–55; al-Haytham al-Ayyūbī, "Afkār Al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya Li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn al-Siyāsiyya Wa-l-ʿAskiriyya (Min Shubāṭ 1969 Ḥattā Kānūn al-Awwal 1972) [The Political and Military Throught of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (From February 1969 to December 1972)," *Shuʾūn Filasṭīniyya* 44 (1975); al-Haytham al-Ayyūbī, "Dalīl Al-Bāḥithīn [Researchers' Guide]," *Shuʾūn Filasṭīniyya*, no. 44 (April 1975): 136–46.

Movement (ANM), the PFLP quickly emerged after the 1967 War as one of the most influential secular Palestinian revolutionary forces after Yasser Arafat's Palestinian National Liberation Movement, more commonly known by its reverse Arabic acronym, Fatah. In early September 1970, the PFLP entered unto the world stage when its members hijacked four commercial airliners, forcing three of them to land at Dawson's Field, a former Royal Air Force landing strip in eastern Jordan. After releasing most of the passengers and keeping the rest as hostages, the Palestinian hijackers blew up the three empty planes in front of international press on September 12, 1970. Yet, while the PFLP and its founder, George Habash, have become synonymous in western collective memory, because of operations of this kind, with hijackings and pre-September 11, 2001 terrorism, the group represented for many in the Global South during the 1970s a crucial ideological New Left voice.[9] The New Left was a global, though largely uncoordinated, political movement in the 1960s and 1970s that broadly advocated for the advancement of social, economic, and civil reforms via modified Leninist and Maoist doctrines that emphasized the role of a revolutionary vanguard and cultural revolution, respectively.[10] These Marxist-Leninist and Maoist ideologies appealed to the PFLP's radicalized situation within the Palestinian liberation movement, and the Front adopted New Left rhetoric to critique pro-Soviet rivals and communist parties as anti-democratic and anti-revolutionary traditionalists. As argued by Sune Haugbolle, scholars have heretofore largely ignored the New Left within the Arab world and instead have focused mostly on the decline of secular Arab nationalism, defined predominately in terms of Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasser's brand of socialist pan-Arabism, after the 1967

[9] For more on recent theorizations of the concept of the Global South, see Anne Garland Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South: Race, Radicalism, and Transnational Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2018); Duncan M. Yoon, "Bandung Nostalgia and the Global South," in *The Global South and Literature*, ed. Russell West-Pavlov, Cambridge Critical Concepts Series (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[10] Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che*, The Haymarket Series (London: Verso, 2002).

War. As a result, Haugbolle posits that these same scholars oversimplify the complex relationship between nationalism, socialism, and revolution within the region.[11]

While the PFLP largely lost prestige within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to Hamas and Fatah after the First Intifada and Oslo Accords, analyzing its intellectual and social history remains crucial to our understanding of the Arab world during the sixties and seventies for several reasons. First, I argue that we can only come to understand the global revolutionary *zeitgeist* that accompanied the rise of the Arab New Left by treating the PFLP as both recipients of and contributors to an international discourse concerning the application of Marxist, Leninist, and Maoist teachings to the post-colonial challenges faced by the Global South during this period. Second, in trying to understand the role and symbol of the *fida'i,* the self-sacrificing commando of the Palestinian popular armed struggle, in the complex revolutionary self-imaginings within the Palestinian community, scholars must consider the PFLP's synthesis of armed struggle and class consciousness as their intellectual contribution to attempted social reform in the Arab world at this time. Third, the PFLP occupies a complex liminal space along the intersections of local, national, transnational, and global understandings of revolution and therefore challenges scholarly efforts to demarcate the ideological scope of the Front's mission and those of similar groups.

My study addresses a general lacuna in the field of Palestinian intellectual history concerning the post-1967 ideological traditions of Palestinian thinkers, litterateurs, filmmakers, artists, and politicians. As an intellectual and social history, my dissertation addresses the general dearth in English scholarship that treats the PFLP as a primary subject of study.[12] When

[11] Haugbolle, "The New Arab Left and 1967."
[12] A few studies of the PFLP do exist in English, including Walid Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World: Habash and His Comrades from Nationalism to Marxism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975);

discussing the role of Palestinian liberation groups in acts of solidarity with other Global South revolutionary movements, scholars often eclipse the crucial role of the PFLP by flattening the complex and heterogenous intellectual composition of the PLO and instead indiscriminately apply Fatah's far less leftist doctrine to the entire organization. This flattening not only erroneously takes for granted the extent to which Fatah controlled the platform of the PLO but also ignores the ways in which the PFLP pushed the organization further to the left during the 1970s.

Throughout this dissertation, I frame the PFLP's historical contributions to Palestinian leftist ideology as the result of the dialectical relationship between the organization's theory and praxis. Far from being armchair Marxist-Leninists, the PFLP's intellectuals firmly believed that theory needed to be tested and refined through practice and experience. In this dissertation, I will use praxis and practice interchangeably to refer to those actions that Karl Marx once hailed as "those human sensuous activities," which removes theory from mysticism and contemplation and grounds it in the experience of everyday life.[13] The PFLP wielded leftist critique, whether of Arab reactionism, the Israeli occupation, or American imperialism, as a material force that guided the consciousness of a social group, in this case the revolutionary Palestinian masses, which itself was a material force long before it embraced Marxist-Leninist theory because of its lived experience of struggle. As explained by philosopher Nikolaus Lobkowicz, the salvific power of this kind of praxis emerges from history rather than abstract absolute knowledge.[14] In the Palestinian context, this means that Marxism-Leninism became a compelling framework for

Cubert, *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East*. The merits and shortcomings of these works will be discussed in the literature review section of this chapter.

[13] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 143–45.

[14] Nikolaus Lobkowicz, *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 275–77.

liberation precisely because it met the masses at a moment when its struggle, meaning praxis, against occupation and defeat crystallized into the Palestinian revolutionary materialist dialectic. Much like the activity of the 1871 Paris Commune concretized the Hegelian dialectic, the Palestinian revolution of the sixties and seventies gave form to a synthesis of Palestinian nationalism and Marxist-Leninist class struggle that emerged from Palestinian history and the actuality of Palestinian action.[15] This point about the dialectical relationship between theory and praxis is important because in order to understand the PFLP's relationship with the masses when it came to Marxist-Leninist thought, one must not view the Front's ideologies as objective schemes that were fully formed, articulated from its politburo, and then applied. Rather, in practicing armed popular revolution within and outside of Palestine, the PFLP and its followers constantly reinvented what it meant to be part of the Palestinian Left. Even Lenin understood praxis as a means of reinventing the revolutionary dialectic, wherein the move from theory to practice constituted a philosophical move rather than an abandonment of philosophy altogether.[16] By understanding Palestinian leftist thought as a philosophy emerging from the transition from theory to practice, one should no longer think of Palestinian Marxism-Leninism as the clumsy and derivative application of a Western European industrial theory to an anticolonial nonindustrial context, but rather as a new living form of theory constantly reshaped by Palestinian experience. Palestinian leftist thought and practice embodies what Edward Said called "traveling theory," a useful enabling condition of intellectual activity that involves the representation and institutionalization of a theory that is different from its original context as it is transformed by its new uses, position, and time.[17] As I argue in this dissertation, Palestinian

[15] Raya Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre, and from Marx to Mao*, 1st Lexington Books ed. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), 199.
[16] Dunayevskaya, xvii–xviii.
[17] Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 157.

Marxism-Leninism, as developed by the PFLP, was an original ideological intervention that was sometimes connected to the scholastic study of Marx, Lenin, and Mao, but more fundamentally was informed by the lived experiences of resistance and struggle produced by Palestinian historical realities that began long before the PFLP's creation in 1967.

A Brief Institutional History of the PFLP

After witnessing the crushing defeat of Arab forces in the 1948 War, many members of the new generation of Arab students became united in their anger at what they perceived to be Arab leaders' betrayal of Palestinian liberation and increasingly viewed pan-Arab nationalism as the best means for defeating imperialism and Zionism. With the exploding regional Palestinian refugee crisis and accelerated brinkmanship between Cold War powers destabilizing the Arab world, the immediate post-1948 era opened the regional political field, allowing populist and socialist leaders to challenge the hegemony of conservative regimes. With the success of Egyptian Free Officers revolution in 1952, the pan-Arab socialist Egyptian president Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasser captured the ideological imagination of this new generation of students. The Arab National Movement (ANM), the PFLP's institutional precursor, was not immune from Nasser's charismatic influence during its early years in the 1950s. The ANM was a pan-Arab nationalist movement that had its own origins in the late 1940s at the American University in Beirut (AUB). In addition to Nasserism's meteoric rise, AUB professor Constantin Zurayq's contemporary writings and lectures on Arab unity, progress, and civilization had a profound effect on the political consciousness of a group of students that had directly participated in the 1948 War. This group included George Habash, Wadiʿ Haddad, Hani al-Hindi, and Ahmad al-Khatib, who participated in a literary organization at the university called *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa*

(the firm bond), founded in 1918. Habash, born in 1926 to an Eastern Orthodox Palestinian family of wealthy merchants in Lydda, was enrolled as a medical student at the American University of Beirut during the 1948 War.[18] Haddad, born 1927 in Safed, was also from an Eastern Orthodox family and met Habash while attending AUB for medical school. Hani al-Hindi was born in Damascus to a prominent military family and attended AUB in 1949 after serving in the Arab Salvation Army during the war. Ahmad al-Khatib was a medical student from a modest family living in Kuwait and attended AUB on a government grant.[19] These four young men would go on to represent the traditional nationalist branch of the ANM in the late 1960s that prioritized the Arab national struggle for political independence and unity.[20]

Beginning in 1955, a variety of forces began to firmly push *al-ʿUrwa* students into the Egyptian sphere of political influence. Student protests at AUB against the Baghdad Pact, a US-led regional defense initiative to curb Soviet influence in the Arab world, led to the expulsion of most of the students in *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa*, whereupon Nasser accepted them into Egyptian universities. In the same year, the famous Palestinian writer, editor, and politico, Ghassan Kanafani, at that time a literature student at the University of Damascus, was also expelled for

[18] Much has been written on the life of George Habash, who served as the political and intellectual heart of the ANM and PFLP from their inceptions until his death in 2008:Māzin Yūsuf Ṣabbāgh, *Jūrj Ḥabash: ḍamīr Filasṭīn*, al-Ṭabʿah 1 (al-Zalqā [Lebanon]: Mukhtārāt, 2009); Jūrj Ḥabash and Georges Malbrunot, *Al-Thawriyyūn Lā Yamūtūn Abadan [Revolutionaries Never Die]*, trans. ʿAqīl al-Shaykh Ḥusayn (Bayrūt: Dār al-Sāqī, 2009); Ghassān Sharbal, *Asrār al-Ṣundūq al-Aswad: Wadīʿ Ḥaddād, Kārlūs, Anīs al-Naqqāsh, Jūrj Ḥabash [Secrets of the Black Box: Wadiʿ Haddad, Carlos, Anis al-Naqqash, George Habash]*, al-Ṭabʿah 1 (Beirut: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis lil-Kutub wa-l-Nashr, 2008); Eli Gallia, *G'org' Ḥabash, Biyografyah Poliṭit [George Habash, A Political Biography]* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2017); Lamā Ḥabash, *Shihādāt fī Zaman al-Ḥakīm [Testimonies from the Time of the Wiseman]*, al-Ṭabʿah al-ʿArabīyya 1 (Amman: Dār al-Shurūq lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 2010).

[19] Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World*, 17–20.

[20] Abdel Razzaq Takriti, "Political Praxis in the Gulf: Ahmad al-Khatib and the Movement of Arab Nationalists, 1948-1969," in *Arabic Thought against the Authoritarian Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Present*, ed. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 108.

his affiliation with the ANM (George Habash recruited him in 1953) and began writing for the movement.[21]

With his nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956 and eventual triumph in the subsequent crisis, Nasser further cemented his popularity among the members of the Arab Nationalist Movement, which officially adopted this title at its first conference in that same year. Under Egyptian patronage, the ANM expanded its influence, attracting new members among students from Libya, Sudan, Iraq, North and South Yemen, and Bahrain. Two young recruits who would have a profound influence on the theoretical tenets of the group were Muhsin Ibrahim and al-Hakam Darwaza. Muhsin Ibrahim, born in 1936 to a poor family in South Lebanon, acquired a sharp intellectual acumen at a government school in Sidon and the teacher's college at AUB, one that would drive the ANM's and Front's ideological shift toward Marxism in the coming decades. Darwaza, who was the same age as Ibrahim, grew up in a wealthy mercantile Palestinian family and was the nephew of ʿIzzat Darwaza, an early pan-Arabist historian and a leader of the Palestinian national movement during the 1930s.[22]

After the creation of the United Arab Republic (UAR), the short-lived political union between Egypt and Syria, in 1958, the ANM moved its weapons training operations to Syria, where its international recruits gained expertise in armed struggle before exporting these skills back to their local revolutions. The ANM in 1958 also increasingly became invested in Lebanese politics as the country erupted into civil war. Following the 1956 Suez Canal crisis, Lebanese president Camille Chamoun refused to break ties with the Western powers that had attacked Egypt, drawing Nasser's ire and that of many of Lebanon's Sunni Muslims, who wanted the

[21] Muhammad Siddiq, *Man Is a Cause: Political Consciousness and the Fiction of Ghassān Kanafānī* (Seattle: Distributed by University of Washington Press, 1984).
[22] Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World*, 24–25.

Lebanese government to join the UAR. However, this political union was adamantly opposed by Chamoun and many Lebanese Maronite Christians. Following a series of popular uprisings under the leadership of Saʿib Salam and a leftist revolt under the leadership of Kamal Jumblatt that threatened Chamoun's government in Beirut, Chamoun called for an American intervention under the Eisenhower Doctrine. Witnessing the simultaneous collapse of the pro-Western Iraqi government during the 14 July 1958 Revolution, the Eisenhower administration, in coordination with its British allies, initiated Operation Blue Bat, which led to the landing of 55,000 US troops in Beirut under the pretense of saving Chamoun's government. In reality, the US military intervention was designed to impose a more stable successor to Chamoun, a change which Lebanese Parliament swiftly carried out on July 31, 1958 by electing Fuʾad Shihab to the presidency.[23] Habash, Hawatmeh, and Muhsin Ibrahim all partook in weapons smuggling during this conflict and fought against the supporters of Chamoun.[24] The US's overt use of gunboat diplomacy to impose its political preferences in the region would leave a lasting impression among these future PFLP leaders, who in the sixties and seventies identified the United States as the premier imperial backer of its political and class enemies.

The ANM's enthusiasm for the UAR was short-lived, however, as Syria seceded from the UAR in 1961, driving the Arab nationalists in the movement to blame the "feudalist-bourgeois alliance" in the Syrian government.[25] In the shakeup after the dissolution of the UAR, Nasser called for a unified Arab national movement on July 23, 1962, under the purview of the ANM, which would ostensibly be under his political control. Yet by the group's 1963 congress, the ANM was already experiencing the first of many splits as its membership became divided

[23] Fawwaz Tarabulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, Second edition. (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 136–38, http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/11160245.
[24] Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World*.
[25] Cubert, *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East*, 45.

between pan-Arabists and Palestinian provincialists. The pan-Arabists, who were largely non-Palestinian and leftist, wanted to continue the organization's close alliance with Nasser's government. The provincialists, largely Palestinian and anti-leftist, remained bitter about the UAR split and wanted to break with Nasser to focus on goals pertaining directly to the liberation of Palestine. To maintain organizational cohesion, members at the 1964 ANM Congress formed the Palestinian Action Command (*Qiyadat al-ʿAmal al-Filastini*), tasked with forming groups to carry out operations and intelligence-gathering missions across Israel's borders. These groups included *al-Shabab al-Thaʾir* (Vengeance Youth) and *Abtal al-ʿAwda* (Heroes of the Return).[26] However, under the cautious leadership of Habash, the Palestinian Action Command held back from escalating its armed operations against Israel too quickly, lest Nasser be drawn by the ANM into a premature war with Israel. Ghassan Kanafani, now a part of the Palestinian Action Command, coined a phrase that captured the cautious operational ethos of the Palestinians in the ANM at this time: "Above zero, but below entanglement" (*fawq al-sifr wa taht al-tawrit*).[27]

1967-1968 marked a new intellectual era for the political left, both internationally and within the Arab world. Globally, these years witnessed the radicalization of leftist movements, as pivotal events like the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. assassination, Tet Offensive, May riots in France, and the October Tlatelolco massacre in Mexico drove leftists across the globe to reject polite political engagement with their governments in favor of popular revolutionary tactics.[28] Locally, the defeat of the Arab forces in the 1967 War precipitated a final split between Nasser and the ANM as the group focused its efforts on popular long-term armed struggle and a "Palestine-first" doctrine. Discussed further in the next chapter, the political destabilization and

[26] Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, 80.
[27] Sayigh, 110–11.
[28] Robert V. Daniels, *Year of the Heroic Guerrilla: World Revolution and Counterrevolution in 1968* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 3–15.

collective trauma caused by the 1967 War greatly opened the field of ideological possibilities among Palestinian revolutionaries, as the shock of defeat encouraged guerrilla groups to critique and restructure the theoretical underpinnings of their movements. At this juncture, the Palestinian branch of the ANM adopted the name of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and aligned its expectations with those of Fatah, which called for the Arab governments to lend their full support to the *fidaʾiyyin* lest they be targeted by the same revolutionary forces. Yet despite this broadly defined consensus on the role of popular armed struggle in liberating Palestine, 1967 also witnessed the beginning of many splits within the PLO, generally, and within the PFLP, in particular. Young members of the ANM, led by Muhsin Ibrahim and Nayef Hawatmeh, wanted to condemn Nasserism as a "petty bourgeois" phenomenon and pushed the PFLP to issue a "Basic Political Statement" at its August 1968 conference.[29] The document was harshly critical of Nasser and resulted in Egypt completely cutting off aid to the PFLP. George Habash, who at this time represented a more traditionalist form of leadership within the party, was in prison in Syria during this conference and so was unable to rein in the younger Arab nationalists. Two months later, Ahmed Jibril, who had led the PFLP while Habash was behind bars, seceded from the party and formed the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (PFLP-GC), citing the lack of autonomy within the group from the tutelage of ANM traditionalists. By the time Habash escaped from prison in November 1968, the schism between the younger, and increasingly leftist, members and the older Arab nationalists was irreversible. Several months later, just prior to the PFLP's February 1969 meeting, Nayef Hawatmeh and his followers seceded to form the Popular *Democratic* Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP, known

[29] Asʿad AbuKhalil, "Internal Contradictions in the PFLP: Decision Making and Policy Orientation," *Middle East Journal* 41, no. 3 (1987): 361–78; Muhammad Y. Muslih, "Moderates and Rejectionists within the Palestine Liberation Organization," *Middle East Journal* 30, no. 2 (1976): 127–40.

after 1974 as the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine). In response to these departures, the PFLP in the years 1969-1972 defined its primary task as "building a working-class leadership in the Palestinian movement" modeled on Fidel Castro's movement in Cuba.[30]

The beginning of the seventies also ushered in an acceleration in the organization's hijacking operations against commercial airliners. The PFLP had begun its hijacking operations as early as 1968, when operatives from the group forced an El-Al plane in Italian airspace to land in Algiers. The PFLP's stated rationale in targeting this civilian carrier was that these same El-Al planes had been used during the 1967 War to ferry military personnel and supplies and so were valid military targets.[31] Helena Cobban argues that the advent of hijackings by the PFLP also began in 1968 as a recruiting tactic designed to counter the embarrassment the group had been subjected to by Fatah for withdrawing its forces just prior to the March 21, 1968 Battle of Karameh, in which Fatah fighters had successfully held off an vastly larger Israeli force and gained international prestige.[32] However, as I argue in Chapter 2, the PFLP continued to escalate its foreign operations (*ʿamaliyyat kharijiyya*) to target international commercial airliners in Europe, Lebanon, and Israel long after the Battle of Karameh as part of a larger campaign to shape international public attention toward the Palestinian refugee crises.

The September 1970 forced landing of four commercial airliners at Dawson Field in Jordan stands as the organization's most sophisticated and famous operation. The spectacle of these four empty planes being blown up in front of the international press would imprint an

[30] Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: People, Power, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 145.
[31] "Bayān Nāṭiq Bism Al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn Ḥawla al-Ṣibgha al-ʿaskariyya l-Sharika al-ʿAl—al-Nahār, Bayrūt, 24/7/1968 [A Statement by a Spokesperson of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine on the Military Nature of the Company El Al—al-Nahar, Beirut, July 24, 1968]," in *Al-Wathāʾiq al-Filasṭīniyya al-ʿarabiyya l-ʿām 1968 [Palestinian Arabic Documents for 1968]*, 1st ed. (Bayrūt: Muʾassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīnīyya, 1970).
[32] Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation*, 146.

indelible link between the *fidaʾi* movement and plane hijackings within Western media imaginings of the Palestinian liberation movement. Furthermore, the embarrassment that the operation caused to the Hashemite Monarchy would trigger the 1970 Black September civil war in Jordan, which resulted in thousands of deaths and the expulsion of the PLO from the kingdom. Within the PFLP, the harrowing experience during this conflict lent credence to the growing body of voices that argued that the organization's external operations did not conform to Marxist-Leninist tactics and even hampered the organization's declared task of building a socialist, proletarian organization. By the 1972 PFLP conference, these voices decisively won out, resulting in Habash announcing that the Front would henceforth stop hijackings.[33] Habash's proclamation soon led Wadiʿ Haddad to split from the organization and carry out more violent attacks under the auspices of the PFLP-External Operation (PFLP-EO). The mainstream PFLP continued to distance itself from Haddad's group's operations until his death in 1978.[34]

The 1972 PFLP conference also marked the launch of the Front's concerted effort to win over a mass base of support. The party joined a "united front" with Fatah and other *fidaʾi* groups in a political campaign to win supporters in the occupied territories as well as the refugee camps in Lebanon, where the PLO had relocated its headquarters. The collective experience of death and expulsion during the Black September War explains in part this rapprochement between the PFLP and Fatah. However, this cooperation was short lived as the 1973 War between Egypt and Israel and subsequent peace talks brought old ideological differences to the fore. The split centered on each party's attitude toward the Geneva Mideast Peace Conference, with Fatah being open to participation and the PFLP being adamantly against the entire endeavor. A last-minute effort to save the alliance between the two parties was made at the Palestinian National Council

[33] Cobban, 148.
[34] Ḥabash and Malbrunot, *Al-Thawriyyūn Lā Yamūtūn Abadan [Revolutionaries Never Die]*, 105–20.

in June and July 1974, where a 10-point program for compromise on the peace process was hammered out. However, the program quickly fell apart in September of that same year, when the PFLP resigned from the PLO Executive Committee, claiming that the PLO leadership had deviated from its mission and that the Front would rejoin the masses to correct this deviation.[35] The following month, Habash traveled to Iraq at the head of a PFLP delegation comprised of Jibril's PFLP-GC, the Iraqi-backed Arab Liberation Front (ALF), and the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF) at the invitation of the National Command of the Baʿath Party. The visit resulted in the creation of the "Front of Palestinian Forces Rejecting Surrenderist Solutions," better known as the Rejection Front, on October 10, 1974. The Rejection Front was quickly drawn into violence on April 13, 1975, when 27 of its supporters in Beirut were ambushed and killed in the Christian suburb of ʿAin al-Rummaneh while returning from a rally in West Beirut. Western commentators would subsequently use this date to mark the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War.[36]

The Lebanese Civil War further exacerbated the ideological differences between Fatah and the PFLP, with the former advocating very limited involvement in the war and the preservation of the PLO while the latter called for a pan-Arab alliance in the country with the Lebanese left. However, the scale of violence during the civil war eventually drew both groups completely into the conflict and undermined the position of the Rejection Front. Former rejectionists, after experiencing the harrowing tragedies of civil wars in both Jordan and Lebanon, increasingly became amenable to the notion of a "Palestinian entity, however truncated."[37] During the summer of 1976, Syrian-backed Christian Lebanese militias attacked the

[35] Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, 416.
[36] Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation*, 149.
[37] Cobban, 150.

Tel al-Zaʿatar refugee camp to drive the Baʿathist, but anti-Assad, al-Saʾiqa group from the region. The ensuing massacre of some two thousand Palestinians resulted in the expulsion of al-Saʾiqa from the PLO and coincided with Fatah's withdrawal of support for the Lebanese leftists in the war, much to the outrage of the PFLP. A split between Ahmed Jibril and Abu Abbas within the PFLP-GC further weakened the Rejection Front. In the end, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's November 1977 visit to Jerusalem signaled that the PLO would not be included in peace talks, and rejectionism lost its relevance within the organization. The Marxist PFLP had long bemoaned the Sadat presidency, which it viewed as the driver of the Arab states' turn to neoliberalism and rapprochement with the United States and Israel.[38]

In 1978, the mainstream PFLP lost the support of the Iraqi government as it entered reconciliatory talks with conservative Arab regimes, and the Front responded in kind in August of that same year by formally withdrawing its pro-Iraqi stance. The signing of the Camp David Accords by President Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin the following month represented the final nail in the coffin of the Rejection Front. George Habash also signaled his recognition of the changing times, accepting the failure of the PFLP to challenge Fatah and even appearing publicly as a respected PLO elder statesman at Arafat's side. The 1979 Iranian Revolution ushered in a new era of anti-Western revolutionary politics, albeit under an Islamist framework. In the early days of the revolution, Habash and the PFLP embraced Khomeini's movement as an allied force against US interests in the region.[39] However, Khomeini's subsequent liquidation of leftist elements within the Iranian Revolution, notably *Fedayeen-e*

[38] Ḥabash and Malbrunot, *Al-Thawriyyūn Lā Yamūtūn Abadan [Revolutionaries Never Die]*, 135–51.
[39] "Kul Al-Daʿm Lil-Thawra al-Īrāniyya Fī Maʿrakatihā Ḍidd al-Imbiriyāliyya al-Amrīkiyya [Full Support for the Iranian Revolution in Its Battle Against American Imperialism]," *Al-Hadaf* 11, no. 465 (December 1, 1970).

Khalq, and backing of PFLP's Islamist rivals quickly led to a cooling of relations between the Islamic Republic and the Front.[40]

In 1980, Habash suffered a massive stroke, leading to a bitter succession struggle within the party that lasted until he was able to restore order after his recovery. Habash would continue to control the increasingly politically irrelevant PFLP until his death in 2008. Despite this decline, the PFLP had served as a powerful influence within the PLO in terms of political commitment to popular struggle and infused the organization with pan-Arab and leftist liberation ideals that tempered Fatah's "Palestine first" ideology.

On the Field of Palestinian Nationalism and Leftism

A social and intellectual history of a group as ideologically complex as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine resides at the intersection several related subfields, including those focused on Arab nationalism, the Arab left, Marxist historiography, Maoism, Palestinian nationalism, Arab and Palestinian literary and film studies, Global South/Third World studies, transnational studies, and gender theory. Regarding pre-1948 Palestinian nationalism, Rashid Khalidi's *Palestinian Identity* stands out for its sophisticated analysis of the late-Ottoman and post-WWI origins of Palestinian national consciousness. According to his argument, early Palestinian nationalism centered on the elite urban families, including the Khalidis, Nashishibis, and the Husseinis, and their contributions to debates on Zionism in the local press during this period.[41] Other scholars, like Salim Tamari, have also focused on Ottoman influence over

[40] In recent years, the Iranian government has increased aid to the PFLP to encourage the latter's pro-Assad stance in the Syrian Civil War.
[41] Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

Palestinian proto-nationalism and the ways in which self-imaginings of national space and identity were conceived along pre-existing administrative and imperial lines.[42]

Most of the scholarly work on this period focuses on Mandate Palestine and the linking of the proto-nationalist movements that came out of the Arab renaissance, or *Nahda*, of the late nineteenth century to the fledgling Arab nationalist movements born just prior to 1948.[43] The PFLP's precursor was the pan-Arab and leftist ANM, which had its own origins in the Marxist political landscape created by joint Jewish-Arab parties during this period. In the early twentieth century, the Jewish diaspora introduced Marxist ideas to Ottoman Palestine, forming institutions like Poalei Tzion to organize Jewish labor and provide protection for the Yishuv. However, with the Second and Third Cominterns' condemnations of Zionism as bourgeois and anti-revolutionary, Po'alei Tzion was doomed to split into smaller groups, the most important of which, for this study, was the Palestinian Communist Party (PCP). This joint Arab-Jewish party also experienced its own internal splits over the relationship of the party to the Comintern and the role of Zionism. According to Musa Budeiri, while Jewish members in the party during the 1930s viewed their communism as class-based and centered on the mobilization of a largely Jewish proletariat in Mandate Palestine, Arab members, under the influence of ascendent Arab national discourses, viewed their communism as being anti-imperial.[44] These internal divisions would be further exacerbated by the outbreak of war in 1948 and the creation of the state of Israel, when MAPAM combined three components of the Jewish Zionist left: Unity of Labor

[42] Salim Tamari, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
[43] Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Tarek El-Ariss, ed., *The Arab Renaissance: A Bilingual Anthology of the Nahda*, Bilingual edition (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2018); Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
[44] Musa Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party 1919-1948: Arab and Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2010); Māhir al-Sharīf, *Filasṭīn Fī Al-Arshīf al-Sirrī Lil-Kūmintirn* (Damascus: Dar al-Mada, 2004).

(Ahudat Ha‘avodah), Workers of Zion (Po‘alei Tzion), and Hashomer Hatza‘ir, and the Arab membership parties, the PCP and the National Liberation League (NLL), coalesced into Israel’s communist party (MAKI). Because of MAPAM’s Zionism, the party was able to survive the deradicalization of Marxist thought in Israel as it integrated workers and the military under a framework that treated leftism as a utilitarian tool for advancing Zionist nationalism within the new state. MAKI, however, with its explicitly anti-Zionist stance and pro-Arab membership, failed to garner a solid foothold within the Knesset during the next few decades.[45] This assessment bore out in the political developments that followed the war. The NLL and Maki merged after the 1948 partition in areas controlled by Israel, although the NLL continued to operate independently in Gaza and the West Bank for a short while before being stamped out in the former by Egyptian authorities and subsumed into the Jordanian Communist Party in the latter. However, the Palestinian communists’ support for the partition plan, stemming from their alignment with the Soviet pro-partition position, alienated them from most of the Palestinian public, which increasingly turned to the ANM and its message of national liberation and unity for its ideological leadership in the lead up to the 1967 War.[46] Though beyond the scope of this dissertation, recent scholarship demonstrates that the Palestinian communists were not alone in taking up Moscow’s line on partition. Other communist parties, notably Khaled Bakdash’s

[45] Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*, vol. 2, The Contemporary Middle East (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Joel Beinin, *Was the Red Flag Flying There?: Marxist Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel, 1948-1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
[46] Khalīl, “Masār Al-Yasār al-Filasṭīnī Min al-Mārksiyya Ilā al-Bīrīstroykā [The Path of the Palestinian Left: From Marxism to Perestroika],” 20.

Syrian-Lebanese Communist Party, overcame strident internal divisions to officially support the 1949 UN Partition Plan.[47]

In addition to these political developments in Mandate Palestine, the Arab region, situated at the end of its direct colonial experience, was also experimenting with Marxism, typically in the mode of formal communist parties. Regarding leftist ideological precursors to the ANM, the most important pre-Nasser endeavors took place in Egypt and Iraq. As evinced by the work of Joel Beinin, Zachary Lockman, Marilyn Booth, and Anthony Gorman, Egyptian workers' movements had experimented with collective action and even political anarchy as early as the late nineteenth century.[48] Later, in 1947, the Egyptian Movement for National Liberation, founded by Henri Curiel, a Jewish communist of Italian origin, joined with another leftist group, Iskra, to form the Democratic Movement for National Liberation (DMNL), which distinguished between Jews and Zionists in Palestine as their counterparts in the PCP had done. This party competed with the Egyptian Popular Vanguard for Liberation, another leftist party, which attacked the DMNL for its support of Israel. Beinin's works on communist parties in Egypt during this period and their alliances with workers unions in the nation's burgeoning textile industry remain the authoritative text in this context.[49] The printing press also served as a powerful medium for the spread of leftist ideologies in Egypt and the region at large during this period, with periodicals like *al-Fajr al-Jadid* (The New Dawn) offering a platform for

[47] Sune Haugbolle, "Dealing with Dissent: Khalid Bakdash and the Schisms of Arab Communism," in *The Arab Lefts: Histories and Legacies, 1950s-1970s*, ed. Laure Guirguis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 86–89.
[48] Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987); Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman, *The Long 1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence, Subterranean Resistance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).
[49] Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*; Beinin, *Was the Red Flag Flying There?*

revolutionary political thought.[50] For a general overview of the origins of the Arab Left throughout the region and a complete, albeit somewhat outdated, survey of early communist political parties, Tareq Ismael's *The Arab Left* and *The Communist Movement in the Arab World*, remain widely cited as reliable reference texts by most of the new scholarship on Arab communism and early Baʿathism, a pan-Arab nationalist ideology developed by Michel Aflaq, Zaki al-Arzusi, and Salah al-Din al-Bitar in the 1930s and 40s.[51] These and similar works on the Arab left at this time tend to focus on these group's global interactions as well as their local worker and student organizing strategies, although their historical narratives often take Nasserist and Baʿathist claims of ownership over revolutionary Arab politics at face value.

The Iraqi communists and, later, the Iraqi Baʿathists would serve as important political allies to the ANM and PFLP, respectively. While the ANM and PFLP were both initially suspicious of formal communist parties, they did draw inspiration from the popular appeal of such parties for Iraqi workers and farmers. In addition, scholars like Orit Bashkin have examined how Arab leftists in Iraq were engaged in ideological discourses that went beyond the region, particularly in debates about fascism during WWII.[52] The ANM and PFLP, following the example of their Iraqi comrades, would participate in their own global intellectual networks to address the contemporary issues of their day, including postcolonialism, popular resistance, and women's liberation. At this juncture, however, revolutionary ideologues still conceived of leftist resistance in terms of party politics and military coups.

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[50] Rami Ginat and Meir Noema, "Al-Fajr al-Jadid: A Breeding Ground for the Emergence of Revolutionary Ideas in the Immediate Post-Second World War," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 6 (November 1, 2008): 867–93.
[51] Tareq Y. Ismael, *The Communist Movement in the Arab World* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005); Tareq Y. Ismael, *The Arab Left*, 1st ed., vol. 4 (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1976).
[52] Orit Bashkin, "The Barbarism from Within—Discourses about Fascism amongst Iraqi and Iraqi-Jewish Communists, 1942-1955," *Die Welt Des Islams* 52, no. 3/4 (2012): 400–429; Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, "Labor and National Liberation: The Trade Union Movement in Iraq, 1920-1958," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (1983): 139–54; Oles M. Smolansky, "Qasim and the Iraqi Communist Party: A Study in Arab Politics: (Part One, 1958-1959)," *Il Politico* 32, no. 2 (1967): 292–307.

The field examining post-1948 Palestinian nationalism has also benefited tremendously from new scholarship regarding the condition of Palestinians that remained within the "Green Line" borders of the new Israeli state. Both Shira Robinson's *Citizen Strangers* and Maha Nassar's *Brothers Apart* examine the partnerships between Palestinian citizens of Israel and the political left in the face of Israel's attempts in the decades following the 1948 War to establish a liberal settler state. Both books highlight the important roles played by the Communist Party of Israel (MAKI) and the National Liberation League (NLL) in creating cooperative spaces for Palestinian and Jewish members to present a unified critique against the state's treatment of its Palestinian citizens. Nassar's book highlights the remarkable ability of young Palestinian writers within Israel to connect with Palestinians from the occupied territories and diaspora at international youth conferences.[53]

On the other side of the Green Line, scholars studying post-1948 Palestinian nationalism have employed a variety of methodologies. Prominent anthropologists have used ethnographic research to map the ways in which collective memory in Palestinian communities preserved landscapes that were dispossessed post-1948 through the use of village histories, public ceremonies, and iconographies of martyrdom.[54] Other scholars have instead chosen to focus on the experience of Palestinians living in the Hashemite-controlled West Bank between 1948-1967 and the participation of Palestinians in Jordanian leftist parties and governments, particularly the National Socialist government of Suleiman Nabulsi elected in 1956.[55] This post-1948 period also

[53] Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Maha Nassar, *Brothers Apart: Palestinian Citizens of Israel and the Arab World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017).
[54] Rochelle Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Tamir Sorek, *Palestinian Commemoration in Israel: Calendars, Monuments, and Martyrs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015); Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[55] Kimberly Katz, *Jordanian Jerusalem: Holy Places and National Spaces* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005); Frances Susan Hasso, *Resistance, Repression, and Gender Politics in Occupied Palestine and Jordan*, 1st ed.

marks what Helga Baumgarten periodizes as the first phase of Palestinian nationalism, which coincided with the pan-Arab nationalist discourses that intellectually colored movements like the ANM at this time.[56] Pan-Arab national thinkers like Satiʿ al-Husri and Constantin Zurayq were extremely influential on the thinking of the ANM's first generation of leadership.[57] The shared colonial experience in the Arab world along with the shock of Israeli victory in 1948 led young Arabs across the region to increasingly advocate for a pan-Arab (*qawmiyya*) version of nationalism in contrast to narrower, patriotic articulations of similar ideals (*wataniyya*).[58]

Though certainly present since the earliest phases of Palestinian nationalism, collective commemorative practices as a medium of national expression came into full maturity during what Baumgarten calls the Fatah-dominated phase of Palestinian nationalism following the 1967 War.[59] Images and stories of martyrs, *fidaʾiyyin*, destroyed villages, place names, and keffiyehs found their way into calendars, schoolbooks, icons, and folk songs. Together, these symbols became part of Palestinian national mnemonic practices and communal invocations of the past, both of which were seen as forms of resistance against the cultural erasure of the Palestinian people by the governments of Israel and the neighboring Arab states. Scholars like Laleh Khalili and Tamir Sorek have analyzed these Palestinian commemorative practices in Israel, including memorials of the 1956 Kafr Qasim Massacre, Land Day, and al-Aqsa Day that honor Palestinian

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(Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005); Betty S. Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan: The Street and the State*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005); Amnon Cohen, *Political Parties in the West Bank under the Jordanian Regime, 1949-1967* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); Avshalom Rubin, *The Limits of the Land: How the Struggle for the West Bank Shaped the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2017); Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

[56] Helga Baumgarten, "The Three Faces/Phases of Palestinian Nationalism, 1948–2005," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34, no. 4 (2005): 25–48.

[57] Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World*; Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation*; Cubert, *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East*.

[58] For a discussion of the complex differences and harmonization between *waṭanī and qawmī* nationalisms in a slightly later Iraqi context, see Orit Bashkin, "Hybrid Nationalisms: Waṭanī and Qawmī Visions in Iraq Under ʿAbd al-Karim Qasim, 1958—61," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 2 (2011): 293–312.

[59] Baumgarten, "The Three Faces/Phases of Palestinian Nationalism, 1948–2005."

steadfastness (*sumud*) in the face of Israeli aggression. Such memorials were and are created to remind the state that the Palestinian victims of these events were Israeli citizens and should have been protected.[60] Other scholars, like Rochelle Davis, have centered their studies of collective memory on the Palestinian countryside, where families collected village histories and yearbooks to preserve place names and bear witness to the destruction and displacement experienced by the 1948 generation.[61] The literature on Palestinian commemorative practices has also benefited from the digitization of visual cultural and political materials from the Palestinian resistance movement, notably Liberation Graphic's *Palestine Poster Project.*[62] Anthropologists have also produced an immense amount of work on the experience of Palestinians in the UNRWA camps in both the post-1948 and 1967 contexts.[63] The harrowing experiences in these camps became a galvanizing force for the recruitment efforts of the PFLP and other popular liberation movements.

At the same time, the newly politically conscious generation of post-1967 saw Palestinian nationalism as an ideology in conversation with transregional struggles in the Global South against imperialism, capitalism, and patriarchy. Reflecting this pivot of the Palestinian Left to the international theater, scholars have turned to global history and have begun to assess how Palestinian nationalists found ideological kinship with freedom fighters in Cuba, Guatemala, Algeria, Congo, China, Japan, and Vietnam and added the images of Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Vo Nguyen Giap, Ho Chi Minh, and Patrice Lumumba to their pantheon of revolutionary

[60] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine*; Sorek, *Palestinian Commemoration in Israel*; Robinson, *Citizen Strangers*.
[61] Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories*.
[62] https://www.palestineposterproject.org/; See also Zeina Maasri, *Off the Wall: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[63] Ilana Feldman, *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018); Julie Marie Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps*, The Ethnography of Political Violence (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Ted Swedenburg, "Imagined Youths," *Middle East Report*, no. 245 (2007): 4–11.

symbols. Scholars like Paul Thomas Chamberlin, Yezid Sayigh, and Abdel Razzaq Takriti have contributed excellent narrative political histories of the participation of Palestinian cadres in these transnational leftist networks.[64] Akhil Gupta, in his article "The Song of the Nonaligned World," cogently describes the transnational nature of this type of Palestinian nationalism when he explains, "There is something paradoxical about the fact that nationalism should need *trans*nationalism to protect itself."[65] As pan-Arab nationalist ideologues, groups like the PFLP increasingly saw the success of their national liberation as tied to global alliances centered on values of social justice and colonial emancipation. As such, these groups also enjoyed close relations with other separatist civil rights groups like the US Black Panthers, and scholars like Alex Lubin and Michael Fischbach have recently produced much needed studies of the political symbiotic relationships between Black and Palestinian liberation movements in the sixties and seventies. However, while these studies do contribute to our understanding of sub-state alliances in this period and complicate the formal picture of transnationalism, they both predominantly rely on US archives at the expense of Palestinian historical materials.[66]

The fallout from the 1967 War also coincided with and contributed to a regional evolution within leftist discourse that became known as the New Left. Sune Haugbolle, unlike earlier scholars of the Arab left, has traced the origins of the ArabNew Left back to the 1950s, when Arab Marxist-Leninists became increasingly critical of formal communist parties, labelling

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[64] Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Abdel Razzaq Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman, 1965-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*.

[65] Akhil Gupta, "The Song of the Nonaligned World: Transnational Identities and the Reinscription of Space in Late Capitalism," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (February 1992): 67.

[66] Alex Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation: The Making of an Afro-Arab Political Imaginary* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Michael R. Fischbach, *Black Power and Palestine: Transnational Countries of Color* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

them as anti-democratic and anti-revolutionary.[67] Instead these individuals began to look beyond the statist models of the Soviet Union, drawing inspiration from Ernesto "Che" Guevara's writings on *foquismo* and Mao Zedong's *On Guerilla Warfare* (1937) and *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung,* or "Little Red Book" (1964).[68] Studies of the Arab New Left also emphasize the post-colonial position of these "new" leftists and their enthusiastic participation in tricontinental anti-colonial solidarity movements, popularly labeled as the "Spirit of Bandung," named after the 1955 Bandung Conference. This meeting purportedly gave birth, depending on which scholar is referenced, to transnational solidarity, Third-Worldism, and/or the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Recent scholarly collaborative efforts have also coined the term "Bandung humanism" to describe the processes of "human becoming" that emerged from the transnational discourses in the Global South at this time.[69] Robert J.C. Young, an advocate for the centrality of Bandung to post-colonialism and tricontinentalism, posits, "If colonial history, particularly in the nineteenth century, was the history of the imperial appropriation of the world, the history of the twentieth century has witnessed the peoples of the world taking power and control back for themselves. Postcolonial theory is itself a product of that dialectical process."[70] However, more recently, scholars have begun to critique historian's anachronistic application of the Bandung spirit to inaccurately assess the motivations of transnational actors who participated in

[67] Haugbolle, "The New Arab Left and 1967"; Ismael, *The Arab Left*., 108-125.
[68] For histories of China's foreign policy in the region during this period, see Hashim S. H. Behbehani, *China's Foreign Policy in the Arab World, 1955-75: Three Case Studies* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1981); John Calabrese, *China's Changing Relations with the Middle East* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991); Hafizullah Emadi, *China's Foreign Policy toward the Middle East*, 1st ed. (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1997); Yāssīn al-Ḥāfiẓ, "Taʾqalam Al-Mārksiyya al-Lenīniyya Wa Masʾala al-Niḍāl al-Qawmī Fī al-Buldān al-Mutaʾakhira [The Adaptation of Marxism-Leninism and the Issue of National Struggle in Underdeveloped Countries"," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 38 (April 18, 1970).
[69] Hong Liu and Taomo Zhou, "Bandung Humanism and a New Understanding of the Global South: An Introduction," *Critical Asian Studies* 51, no. 2 (April 2019): 141–43; Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox, 1st ed. (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 168.
[70] Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

international networks with local emancipatory objectives in mind.[71] In the case of the PFLP, the transnational networks in which it participated were always placed in service of the organization's primary local objective of the physical liberation of Palestine.

Anthropological research has also demonstrated the important role that women have played in Palestinian nationalism since 1948.[72] In its earliest phases, Palestinian nationalism - like many other nationalisms - often portrayed women as the passive symbols of lost Palestine or as the mothers of a new redemptive nation. Tied to these female images was the notion of *sumud*, quiet steadfastness in the face of oppression. Palestinian nationalists constructed, and continue to construct, *sumud* as decidedly feminine quality, though many nationalists laud it as a form of resistance. In Palestinian literature from and about this period, women were tied to the land of Palestine, while exile and active resistance remained under the purview of men.[73] However, with the post-1967 rise of Fatah and popular armed struggle, images of *fidaʾi* women increasingly entered the public sphere, challenging earlier nationalist notions of feminine passivity. Though Leila Khalid's image, as the armed and keffiyeh-ed freedom fighter, immediately comes to mind, we also know that women participated in less militant but nevertheless active roles within the

[71]For more on postcolonial studies' problematic relationship with Bandung, see Robert Vitalis, "The Midnight Ride of Kwame Nkrumah and Other Fables of Bandung (Ban-Doong)," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 4, no. 2 (August 7, 2013): 267; David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, 1 edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2004), 30.
[72] Rosemary Sayigh, "Gender, Sexuality, and Class in National Narrations: Palestinian Camp Women Tell Their Lives," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 19, no. 2 (1998): 166–85; Rosemary Sayigh, "Encounters with Palestinian Women under Occupation," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 10, no. 4 (1981): 3–26; Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinian Women: Triple Burden, Single Struggle," libcom.org, accessed December 12, 2018, http://libcom.org/library/palestinian-women-triple-burden-single-struggle-rosemary-sayigh; Julie Marie Peteet, *Gender in Crisis Women and the Palestinian Resistance Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Amalia Sa'ar, "Feminine Strength: Reflections on Power and Gender in Israeli-Palestinian Culture," *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2006): 397–430; Amalia Sa'ar, "Postcolonial Feminism, The Politics of Identification, and the Liberal Bargain," *Gender & Society* 19, no. 5 (October 1, 2005): 680–700.
[73] Ghassān Kanafānī, *Umm Saʿd* (Qubruṣ [Cyprus]: Dār Manshūrāt al-Rimāl, 2016); Ghassan Kanafani, *All That's Left to You: A Novella and Short Stories.*, Interlink World Fiction, Palestine (Northampton: Interlink Books, 2004); Ghassān Kanafānī, *Rijāl Fī Al-Shams [Men in the Sun]* (Bayrūt: Maṭbaʿat Karkī, 1963).

popular national parties.[74] May Sayigh, a member of Fatah and former Secretary General of the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW), recalls how this union promoted the educational and labor advancement of Palestinian women and succeeded in convincing Arafat, despite widespread male resistance in the party, to arm Palestinian women fighters. With this collective organizing (and a little help from the guns), the GUPW was able to improve the status of Palestinian women both in the party and at home, even going so far as to publicly beat husbands in Amman who were found to be domestic abusers.[75] The new role of women in the national movement found its artistic expression in the prose of authors like Ghassan Kanafani, Sahar Khalifeh, Liana Badr, who wrote female characters as active participants into formative events within Palestinian nationalism, notably the 1948 War, Black September, and the 1982 Siege of Beirut.[76]

The field of Palestinian studies has greatly benefitted from an expanding body of scholarship on literary theory and comparative analysis addressing Palestinian publications around and after 1967, and a dissertation on the PFLP requires a deep understanding of the Front's role in this lettered milieu. In particular, recent scholarship in English has begun to look in depth at the relationship of resistance and commitment literature (*al-adab al-muqawim wa-al-adab al-multazim*) to the cultural zeitgeist of the left in the Arab world, particularly with regard to the influence of writers like Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir on intellectuals in

[74] Leila Khaled and George Hajjar, *My People Shall Live: The Autobiography of a Revolutionary* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973); Sarah Irving, *Leila Khaled: Icon of Palestinian Liberation*, Revolutionary Lives (London: Pluto Press, 2012).
[75] May Sayigh, Interview translated by The Palestinian Revolution, 2016, 2011.
[76] Kanafānī, *Umm Saʿd*; Ghassān Kanafānī, *ʿĀ'id ilā Ḥayfā* (Bayrūt: Maṭbaʿat Karkī, 1969); Orit Bashkin, "Nationalism as a Cause: Arab Nationalism in the Writings of Ghassan Kanafani," in *Nationalism and Liberal Thought in the Arab East: Ideology and Practice*, ed. Christoph Schumann, vol. 10 (London: Routledge, 2010), 92–112; Saḥar Khalīfah, *Wild Thorns* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1985); Liana Badr, *A Balcony over the Fakihani* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Interlink Books, 1993).

Egypt, Lebanon, and Palestine.[77] Verena Klemm traces the genealogy of Marxist commitment literature in the Arab world to a time much earlier than that of the French existentialists, citing Salama Musa (1887-1958), Luwis ʿAwad (1915-1990), ʿUmar Fakhuri (1895-1946), and Raʾif Khuri (1912-67) as the real pioneers in this genre.[78] Within the lifespan of the PFLP, authors like Kanafani were writing about this topic as early as 1968.[79] Kanafani's own oeuvre fits into the canon of Arabic resistance literature and his central role as editor-in-chief for the PFLP's monthly *al-Hadaf* testifies to his belief in the crucial relationship between popular armed struggle and revolutionary spheres of readership. Joseph Farag's recent work on the role of the short story in Palestinian liberation discourses has begun to unpack the intersection between genre, activism, and commitment outside the paradigm of the novel.[80] Salma Khadra Jayyusi's work on *fidaʾi* poetry and translation from this post-1967 period has also made a much needed intervention in the field by highlighting the contributions of lesser known Palestinian poets and writers to this revolutionary spirit.[81] Other scholars, like Saree Makdisi and Elizabeth Holt have investigated how the postcolonial milieu within the Arab world during the mid-twentieth century informed and shaped literary production in the region, sometimes at the behest of the very postcolonial clandestine forces from which Arab nationalist writers sought to escape.[82]

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[77] Yoav Di-Capua, *No Exit: Arab Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Decolonization* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018); Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987); Jean-Paul Sartre, *What Is Literature?*, Harper Colophon Books (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).
[78] Verena Klemm, "Different Notions of Commitment (Iltizam) and Committed Literature (Al-adab Al-multazim) in the Literary Circles of the Mashriq," *Arabic & Middle Eastern Literature* 3, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 51–62.
[79] Ghassān Kanafānī, *Adab al-muqāwamah fī Filasṭīn al-muḥtallah, 1948-1966 [Literature of the Resistance in Occupied Palestine, 1948-1966]* (Bayrūt: Maṭbaʿat Karkī, 1966).
[80] Joseph R. Farag, *Politics and Palestinian Literature in Exile: Gender, Aesthetics and Resistance in the Short Story*, vol. 2, SOAS Series on Palestine Studies (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017).
[81] Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).
[82] Saree Makdisi, "'Postcolonial' Literature in a Neocolonial World: Modern Arabic Culture and the End of Modernity," *Boundary 2* 22, no. 1 (1995): 85–115; Elizabeth M. Holt, "'Bread or Freedom': The Congress for Cultural Freedom, the CIA, and the Arabic Literary Journal Ḥiwār (1962-67)," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 44 (January 1, 2013): 83–102.

Until this point, I have surveyed scholarship pertaining to the historical, political, and cultural milieus in which the Palestinian left, broadly, and the PFLP, particularly, evolved. A final discussion of the state of the field concerning the PFLP as the primary field of study bears mentioning here. In English, the scholarship on the PFLP largely deals with its institutional development within the PLO and/or its status as an international security issue (largely defined with US and UK foreign policy objectives in minds). Harold M. Cubert's monograph on the PFLP largely falls into this latter category, with his historical and ideological analyses of the group often reading like policy memos. While the work is meticulously researched, relying on documents in Arabic, Hebrew, and English, Cubert's analysis leaves much to be desired in regard to its discussion of the local social impact of the PFLP's policies and ideologies.[83] Likewise, Helena Cobban's oft-cited book, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization*, though well researched and including the welcomed addition of her journalistic interviews with PFLP leaders, often treats the Front as a fringe group and downplays its contributions to the shaping of PLO politics in the 1970s. Cobban's work also seems to only utilize PFLP publications that have been translated into English, with glaring omissions of *al-Hadaf* and the *PFLP Bulletin* in her footnotes.[84] Walid Kazziha's 1975 *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World: Habash and his comrades from Nationalism to Marxism*, addresses some of the deficiencies of the other two works by including an in depth examination of the gradual leftist ideological shift within the organization. However, Kazziha's former membership within the PFLP shines through as evinced by his uncritical willingness to accept the party's official line on Marxism without investigating the implementation of these ideologies amongst the Front's supporters. The book is also outdated, having been published at the beginning of the Lebanese Civil War, and reflects the

[83] Cubert, *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East*.
[84] Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation*.

optimistic attitudes of the times toward revolutionary and leftist discourses. [85] In Arabic, the scholarship on the PFLP that I have consulted remains limited primarily to retrospective biographical sketches of and interviews with the organization's senior leadership.[86] One of the interventions of my dissertation is to bring the Arabic publications produced by the PFLP back into the secondary historical literature on the organization while also moving methodologically away from purely biographical "big men" histories of the PFLP toward a social and intellectual analysis of the Front's writings.

Sources Consulted and Methodology

My dissertation engages with sources from a wide variety of archives to produce a narrative about the PFLP's ideological and social evolution that is guided by theoretical rigor while remaining unbound by the strictures of any one discipline. Broadly speaking, the project is an intellectual and social history and, as such, relies on "traditional" archives of party-produced pamphlets, periodicals, and monographs. "Traditional" remains in scare quotes since any scholar of modern Palestinian history can speak at length about the sordid history of the repeated destruction and relocation of the PLO archives and the geopolitical barriers against equitable or

[85] Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World*.
[86] Sharbal, *Asrār al-ṣundūq al-aswad*; Jūrj Ḥabash and Maḥmūd Suwayd, *al-Tajriba al-niḍālīya al-Filasṭīnīyya: ḥiwār shāmil maʿa Jūrj Ḥabash [The Palestinian Struggle Experience: A Complete Conversation with George Habash]*, al-Ṭabʿah 1 (Bayrūt: Muʾassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīnīyya, 1998); Shuyūʿī Miṣrī, *Mawqif min muhimmāṭ al-niḍāl al-Filasṭīnī: dirāsah naqdīyah li-uṭrūḥāt al-Jabhah al-Dīmuqrāṭīyya wa-Munaẓẓamat al-ʿAmal al-Shuyūʿī fī majallat "al-Ḥurrīyya" al-Bayrūtīyya ḥawla mahāmm al-niḍāl al-Filasṭīnī baʿda Uktūbir 1973 [A Position on the Tasks of the Palestinian Struggle: A Critical Study of the Proposals by the Democratic Front and the Communist Action Organization in the Beiruti Magazine 'Al-Hurriyya' Regarding the Tasks of the Palestinian Struggle After October 1973]*, al-Ṭabʿah 1, Mufakkir al-ʿArabī (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ṭalīʿah, 1974); al-Maktab al-Siyāsī al-Jabha al-Shaʿbīyya li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn Dāʾirat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Dirāsāt, *al-Wāqiʿ al-Filasṭīnī al-rāhin wa-āfāquhu al-mustaqbalīyya fī iṭār al-buʿdayn al-ʿArabī wa-al-dawlī [The Current Palestinian Reality and Its Future within the Framework of the Arab and International Dimensions]*, al-Ṭabʿah 2 (Dimashq: Dār Kanʿān lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 2002); Jūrj Ḥabash, *al-Khiṭāb al-tārīkhī lil-Duktūr Jūrj Ḥabash fī al-muʾtamar al-waṭanī al-sādis lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbīyya li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical Speech of Dr. George Habash at the Sixth National Conference of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, al-Ṭabʿah 1 (Dimashq: Dār Kanʿān, 2001).

reliable access to these sources.[87] When possible, I use the Front's writings, notably its Arabic-language monthly magazine, *al-Hadaf,* to map the intellectual and ideological evolution of the organization. Though published in a mostly biweekly fashion since 1969 with some interruptions during the Lebanese Civil War, finding complete copies of *al-Hadaf* issues from the seventies is particularly difficult. At the time of writing, no research library contains the complete set of *al-Hadaf*'s hundreds of publications. To make matters more difficult, the global pandemic, Lebanon's hyperinflation crisis, and the tragic 2020 Beirut explosion made archival research at Beirut's Institute of Palestine Studies, where I hoped to find many unavailable copies of *al-Hadaf,* impossible. As such, I had to pursue other avenues to access the Front's magazine. Through a fortuitous set of events, I was able to acquire the physical originals of over seventy issues of *al-Hadaf* from the period between 1969-1981, from a private collector in Beirut. At the time of writing and to the best of my knowledge, these *al-Hadaf* originals represent the largest extant collection of its kind for this period in the world. While these magazines are technically published material, in that the PFLP circulated them as a guerrilla publication to their supporters around the globe, their use in this dissertation constitutes the first scholastic engagement with these issues outside of official histories produced by the PFLP.

To situate these *al-Hadaf* articles within the international conversations with which they were engaged, I also explore the textual world of the Arab New Left, which was deeply engrossed in the writings of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Mao Zedong, Frantz Fanon, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Patrice Lumumba. Drawing on the work of Fadi Bardawil, my dissertation also unpacks how Palestinian leftist history functions as global history

[87]For particularly poignant discussions of the troubled nature of resistance movements' archives, see Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 7; Ann Laura Stoler, "On Archiving as Dissensus," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 38, no. 1 (2018): 43–56; Gil Z. Hochberg, *Becoming Palestine: Toward an Archival Imagination of the Future* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2021), 1–36.

rather than just a constituent part of it. Not only was the Front engrossed in the intellectual circles of the global left, but their own cadres drew members from across the globe.[88] To supplement these sources, my dissertation also refers to the personal and official writings of the party's founders, George Habash and Wadiʿ Haddad, as well as to the writings of prominent members, including Muhsin Ibrahim, Leila Khaled, Ghassan Kanafani, and Mahmud al-Rimawi to map the ideological shifts of the organization's leadership at the height of the organization's political influence.[89]

At the same time, my dissertation engages with the revolutionary literary practices of the PFLP and its offshoots in the 1970s. In the sea of increasingly complicated acronyms produced by political splits in this period, I instead focus on the *fidaʾi*-Marxist-Maoist-comrade *zeitgeist* as it was experienced by my historical interlocutors and trace the ways this *zeitgeist* was translated into poetry, prose, painting, and film.[90] This work requires mapping of the "gatekeepers" of revolutionary literary and artistic production in the 1970s, those editors, authors, prizewinners, and literary societies that Pierre Bourdieu argues shape the field of cultural production into a structure that distributes "prestige" capital.[91] I also investigate how the PFLP participated in international cinematic collaborative efforts as a way of promoting their platforms and increasing their notoriety among potential foreign backers and recruits. My dissertation expands upon

[88] Fadi A. Bardawil, "When All This Revolution Melts into Air: The Disenchantment of Levantine Marxist Intellectuals" (Ph.D., United States -- New York, Columbia University, 2010).
[89] Ḥabash and Suwayd, *al-Tajribah al-niḍālīyah al-Filasṭīnīyya*; Jūrj Ḥabash and Georges Malbrunot, *Les révolutionnaires ne meurent jamais* (Paris: Fayard, 2008); "Bayān Shubāṭ 1969: al-Khuṭwa al-Awlā nahwa Infiṣāl al-Yasār ʿan Harakat al-Qawmiyyīn al-ʿArab [February 1969 Statement: The First Step Toward a Leftist Secession from the Arab Nationalist Movement]," in *Limādhā? Munaẓẓamat al-Ishtirākīyyīn al-Lubnānīyyīn? Ḥarakat al-Qawmīyyīn al-ʿArab min al-Fāshiyya ilā al-Nāṣirīyya, "taḥlīl wa-naqd." Qaddama lahu Muḥsin Ibrāhīm [Why the Organization of Lebanese Socialists? The Arab Nationalist Movement from Fascism to Nasserism, 'Analysis and Critique]*, al-Ṭabʿah 1 (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ṭalīʿah, 1970); Khaled and Hajjar, *My People Shall Live*; Kanafānī, *Adab al-muqāwamah fī Filasṭīn al-muḥtallah, 1948-1966 [Literature of the Resistance in Occupied Palestine, 1948-1966]*.
[90] Dina Matar, "PLO Cultural Activism," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 38, no. 2 (2018): 354–64.
[91] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson, 1st edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

previous work dealing with revolutionary Palestinian cinema by examining how leftist motifs in this body of film tied Palestinian filmmakers into a world of countercultural artistic production.[92]

To examine the PFLP's transition to plane hijackings in the late sixties and early seventies, part of my archival research took place at the British Archives in Kew. I accessed all the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's records on the PFLP's 1970s hijackings, which includes records from the Aviation and Telecommunications Department and their negotiations with the PFLP hijackers of British Overseas Airway Corporation (BOAC) Flight 775 on September 9, 1970. This file also contains records of the Foreign Office's coordination with international powers, including several Arab states and Israel, in preparing a response to the hijackings. Not only do these records of the negotiations between the Foreign Office and the PFLP help explain how the leftist Arab group was able to successfully force a prisoner swap, but it also reveals the nature of the nascent party's ideologies surrounding international public opinion at that time. The British government's records, primarily those of the Home Office and Prime Minister's Office, also provide ample information about Leila Khaled's brief imprisonment in the UK following her failed 1970 hijacking. As shown in the second chapter of this dissertation, these records contain information about Khaled and the six other Palestinians that were released as part of the deals made with the PFLP during the Dawson Field hijackings.

One of the methodological conundrums of my project is what precisely to call the members of the PFLP. They themselves referred to each other as *rafaʾiq* (comrades) or *fidaʾiyyun* (liberation fighters), but uncritically using these terms, with their pro-Marxist and revolutionary connotations, might make my project read like an apologetic for the Front.

[92] Nadia G. Yaqub, *Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution*, First edition. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018); Bashshār Ibrāhīm, *al-Sīnimā al-Filasṭīnīyah fī al-qarn al-ʿishrīn, 1935-2001*, al-Ṭabʿah 1. (Dimashq: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah, al-Muʾassasah al-ʿĀmmah lil-Sīnimā fī al-Jumhūrīyah al-ʿArabīyah al-Sūrīyah, 2001).

Similarly, while the governments in the US, Europe, and Israel have often labeled the group and its members as terrorists, the use of such a polemical and loaded word in the post-September 11th context runs the risk of leading my audience to assign anachronistic attributes to the group or, worse still, to view the ideological and social platforms of the Front as somehow beyond the pale as subjects of legitimate academic study. To be sure, in the cases where the PFLP and its affiliates committed violence for political means against civilian targets, the use of the word terrorism has denotative merit. Yet, as argued by Raymond Williams, defining a word is only one limited way of interacting with it and the more worthwhile endeavor is to trace the ways in which " certain words, tones and rhythms, meanings are offered, felt for, tested, confirmed, asserted, qualified, changed."[93] My dissertation dedicates considerable work to unpacking the revolutionary vocabulary of the PFLP in order to deliver precise and deliberate language to my audience in my own analysis.

The *Ludwig Rosenberger Library of Judaica* at the Special Collections of the Regenstein Library contains a number of PFLP produced documents that were used in this research, including an original pamphlet entitled "A strategy for the liberation of Palestine," produced by the PFLP's Information Department in 1969.[94] The collection also includes a pamphlet produced by a PFLP-offshoot, The Democratic People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DPFLP), entitled "Towards a democratic solution to the Palestinian question," which provides context for the competing visions within the Palestinian Left regarding a democratic socialist state in Palestine that extended equal rights to people of all faiths and ethnicities.[95] Finally, the *Ludwig*

[93] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 12.
[94] al-Jabhah al-Shaʻbīyah li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, *A Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine* (Amman: The Dept., 1969).
[95] Democratic People's Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DPFLP), *Towards a Democratic Solution to the Palestinian Question* (Québec: Presses Solidaires, 1970).

Rosenberger Library of Judaica also contains an edited and translated body of basic PFLP political documents concerning armed resistance compiled by Leila S. Kadi in 1969, which helped map the Front's efforts at providing political and military technical support to its members.[96]

In addition to these physical documents, I have also explored the available online archives for the PFLP, including the organization's official website. These collections include a few issues of *al-Hadaf*, and the PFLP's quarterly English publication, *The PFLP Bulletin*, for a few of the years between 1969 and 1982. I also had access to the mostly complete digitized series of *Shuʾun Filastiniyya* [Palestinian Affairs], the PLO's quarterly magazine, which contains articles authored by PFLP members and Palestinian social scientists on the ideological and political debates occurring between the various *fidaʾi* groups during the 1970s. In addition to these PLO-produced publications, I also employed Arabic and English news articles from the period, including those from prominent publications like *al-Nahar* (Beirut), *al-Ahram* (Cairo), *The New York Times,* and *TIME* magazine to provide my readers with regional and international context for the events described.

Chapter Overview

My first chapter introduces the formation, structure, and leadership of the PFLP from its ANM roots until the Front's transformation into a Marxist-Leninist party in the early seventies. I utilize the Front's official statements from its numerous conferences in this period and the party's official pamphlets and manifestos to map the complex intellectual genealogies within the PFLP and numerous schisms that resulted from debates over the organization's interpretation and

[96] Leila S. Kadi, *Basic Political Documents of the Armed Palestinian Resistance Movement.*, vol. no. 27, Palestine Books (Beirut: Palestine Liberation Organization, Research Center, 1969).

practice of Marxism-Leninism. The Front was charismatically led by one leader, much like Fatah, for most of its political lifespan, with the organization firmly in the control of George Habash (minus those periods that corresponded with his episodic stints in prison). However, the intellectual and political contributions of Habash's comrades, including Muhsin Ibrahim, Nayef Hawatmeh, Wadiʿ Haddad, and Ghassan Kanafani left indelible marks on the organization, particularly regarding its Marxist orientation and the organization's participation in international operations. In fact, the exit of some of these individuals at various points in the Front's history serve as markers of intellectual watersheds in the party's history and a discussion of the vicissitudes of the PFLP's leadership will serve as a framing narrative for the thematic discussions of the subsequent chapters.

This chapter also reconstructs the intellectual history of the PFLP and the processes by which the Front adapted international revolutionary theories to have them speak to local Palestinian conditions. The members of the PFLP participated in readership landscapes that spanned the Global South from the mid-1950s to the late-1970s as both eager consumers of and astute contributors to a rapidly expanding body of work that was critical of Western imperialism and capitalism. In addition to canonical leftist texts from Marx, Engels, and Lenin, Arab leftists and their global counterparts were also exposed to the writings of Mao Zedong, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Frantz Fanon, and Ho Chi Minh. These latter writings animated lively discussions in the periodicals of Arab leftists across the globe and one need only look at the international orientation of *al-Hadaf*'s main articles to see that the PFLP was directly tapped into these discourses of the global New Left. The Front also produced several treatises on the role of the local Arab proletariat in the armed struggle against Zionism and Western imperialism. These treatises demonstrated the Front's commitment to refining its intellectual identity and practice of

Marxist-Leninist theory by reorienting the PFLP's mission to include social reforms alongside its militant program of popular warfare. This experimentation with radical social reform as an aspect of Palestinian revolutionary praxis is reflected in the numerous PFLP writings on its programming for women's training and mobilization, education, public health, and collectivized farming. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the limits of these programs and the extent to which local political realities affected the Front's ability to actualize its vision of a working-class social revolution.

In the second chapter, I examine the relatively quick transition in the character of the PFLP from an offshoot of a student literary and political movement to a sophisticated armed struggle front with a lengthy international operational reach. More broadly, the chapter considers why the Front valued taking its political struggle into the global theater and directing their political messaging to an international audience. However, unlike the plethora of security studies that have been published on the ramifications of plane hijacking, I instead investigate how and why the PFLP chose to link its intellectual commitment to Marxist-Leninism with strategies that centered on mass spectacle and the kidnapping and killing of civilian targets.[97] Furthermore, I use previously unstudied opinion pieces from *al-Hadaf* to show how divided the PFLP's base was on the efficacy of airline hijackings as a method for drawing Western attention to the plight of Palestinian refugees. I also look at the late writings of Ghassan Kanafani published in the aftermath of Black September, which reveal the sophisticated theorization of international military operations happening within the Popular Front's leadership ranks.

[97] World Peace Through Law Center, *Convention to Deter Aircraft Hijacking*, 13 vols. (Geneva, Switzerland: The Center, 1969); S. K. Agrawala, *Aircraft Hijacking and International Law* (Bombay: N. M. Tripathi, 1973); David Raab, *Terror in Black September: The First Eyewitness Account of the Infamous 1970 Hijackings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

In addition to PFLP official statements and *al-Hadaf* articles, I also utilize international diplomatic archives concerning the PFLP's hijackings. To this end, I have scoured the extant files at British National Archives in Kew on the PFLP's 1970 hijackings, finding evidence of the extent to which the Front was able to shape the behavior of its powerful Western enemies in the UK and US. These documents reveal some of the PFLP's early strategic sophistication and adaptability as well as their considerable leverage over state actors relative to their small size. Beyond these official political documents, I explore the social and cultural ramifications of these hijackings on the leftist discourses occurring in PFLP intellectual circles, both in the Arab world and abroad. My preliminary research reveals that the topic of hijackings was hotly debated not only in the popular press, but in more esoteric publications like the *New Left Review.*[98] Furthermore, my dissertation challenges "mastermind" narratives that attribute these operations to a handful of well-known operatives like Wadiʿ Haddad, Carlos the Jackal (Ilich Ramírez Sánchez), and Leila Khaled and instead analyzes how these attacks were really the products of sophisticated international networks of revolutionary institutions. Particularly noteworthy among these networks were those that mobilized low-ranking women and children across state borders to carry out high impact military operations at a scale unrivaled by the PFLP's contemporaries in the PLO.

The final chapter concern's the PFLP's experimentation within the field of art and literature as a space of revolutionary praxis. As the extant scholarship has not treated the PFLP as a culturally productive institution, this chapter makes the important intervention of explaining how the PFLP curated and promoted certain extant forms of committed art to lay claim to

[98] "Ghassan Kannafani, On the PFLP and the September Crisis, NLR I/67, May–June 1971," New Left Review, accessed April 30, 2019, https://newleftreview.org/issues/I67/articles/ghassan-kannafani-on-the-pflp-and-the-september-crisis.

revolutionary aesthetic authority. Other scholarship continues to fixate on the dour images of PFLP members as the more militant, politically radical, and nihilistic counterparts of their Fatah rivals and thereby completely glosses over the rich aesthetic contributions that the Front made to Palestinian art and literature during this period. In addition, literary scholarship on Ghassan Kanafani is also guilty of divorcing Kanafani the artist from Kanafani the PFLP member and *al-Hadaf* editor. I argue that not only is it impossible to separate the two aspects of the author's identity, but that for one to truly understand his impact on the literary scene in the Arab world at the time requires a familiarity with *al-Hadaf* as an influential cultural engine. As demonstrated in the chapter, the final section of each issue of *al-Hadaf* was titled *Thaqafa wa-Adab* (Culture and Literature) and featured serialized Palestinian novels, contributions from international leftist writers, cultural and literary criticism, and poetry.

At the same time, this chapter does not ignore Kanafani's own works, but instead situates his writings within the framework of the Front's official ideologies and revolutionary rhetoric. Western scholarship on Kanafani's work has focused extensively on those writings that have been translated into English, primarily *Return to Haifa* [ʿAʾid ila Hayfa] (1969) and *Men in the Sun* [Rijal fi ash-Shams] (1963). While these works are monuments within Kanafani's oeuvre, I argue that some of his other stories, including *Umm Saʿd* (1969), *ʿAn al-Rijal wa-al-Banadiq* [On Men and Rifles] (1968), and *Ma Tabaqa Lakum* [All That's Left to You] (1966) offer rich material from which to explore a variety of themes that reflect the ideological preoccupations of Kanafani and his Front, particularly the social consequences of armed struggle and the role of youth and women in this struggle.

Some Final Notes

A dissertation is, among many things, an exercise in refining one's research scope to produce a work that distills years of research into a digestible manuscript and yet also demonstrates the breadth of one's scholastic maturation. As such, I think it is useful to point out the limitations of this project and acknowledge what it can and cannot do. This dissertation is an intellectual history of the PFLP's development of its Marxist-Leninist theory and praxis from its founding to the height of its leftist intellectual experimentation in the mid-1970s. However, this dissertation does not explore the demise of the PFLP's intellectual influence on the Palestinian Revolution during the later years of the Lebanese Civil War nor its loss of political prestige alongside other *fida'iyyin* organizations during the 1987 First Intifada.[99] This dissertation traces the evolution and elasticity of ideology within the PFLP over time, noting the international, regional, and local influences that forced thinkers within the organization to compromise as the dialectic between theory and praxis shaped the Front's platforms. However, this project is not a comprehensive history of the PFLP. It eschews chronicling many of the events in the Arab world that the PFLP shaped and the reader seeking a comprehensive account of intra-PLO relations over the course of the sixties and seventies will need to look elsewhere.[100] I hope that the reader forgives these shortcomings and engages with the thematic organization of the chapters to witness the complex evolution of radical Palestinian leftist thought and practice. As the first work of its kind, this dissertation reveals how the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine interwove theorizations of Palestinian class structure, anti-colonialism, anti-capitalism, and popular warfare with

[99] For more on the decline of the PFLP and the Palestinian Left in the political sphere, see Adam Riaz Khan, "Unravelling the Palestinian Left," *Strategic Studies* 28, no. 1 (2008): 59–84, https://doi.org/10.2307/45242450; Manfred Sing, "Brothers in Arms: How Palestinian Maoists Turned Jihadists," *Die Welt Des Islams* 51, no. 1 (2011): 1–44.
[100] Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*; Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation*.

working-class programming mapped onto the complex spheres of gender, youth activism, political violence, and art to leave an indelible ideological mark on the Middle East and the world.

Chapter 1: Palestinian Leftist-Revolutionary Nationalism: An Intellectual History of the PFLP's Ideological Formation

This chapter traces the intellectual genealogies and ideological development of the PFLP during its first decade of existence (1967-1977) and how the Front attempted to translate these ideologies into tangible social praxes. I argue that this period represents the Front's most experimental years in terms of political, social, and revolutionary thought and practice, as well as the organization's transition into a Marxist-Leninist ideological phase and development as the primary leftist force within the PLO. Yazid Sayigh calls the first part of this period the "Maoist phase" of the Palestinian Left, in reference to Palestinian leftist factions' "radical" slogans and emphasis on a popular people's war. I eschew using this description as the PFLP consistently referred to itself as a Marxist-Leninist group after 1969 and viewed Maoism as associated with its primary leftist rival and former splinter group, the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP). For its part, the PFLP viewed the official beginning of its identity as a Marxist-Leninist proletarian organization as the Front's second conference in February 1969.[1] However, the PFLP was more intellectually complicated than just a Marxist-Leninist organization and an honest assessment of their ideological development needs to take into account the influence of Arab nationalist thinkers, Global South revolutionary leaders, and regional political constraints on the evolution of the Front's thought. To this end, the chapter begins with an examination of the PFLP's post-1948 roots in the pan-Arab nationalist

[1] Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim, *The Cold War and the Middle East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 129; *Al-Masīra al-Tārīkhiyya Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical March of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, 87–89.

organization the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), which had its own origins as a student movement at the American University of Beirut (AUB). It then looks at the seismic effect of the 1967 War on the thinking of the ANM leadership and the ascendancy of the *fidaʾiyyin* as military and ideological alternatives to statist models for Arab and Palestinian liberation. A substantial portion of the chapter is then dedicated to the crystallization of Marxist-Leninist thought in the PFLP after a series of internal political schisms in the late sixties. In the final section, the chapter explores how the consolidation of the PFLP's leadership and ideological platform in the early seventies empowered the Front to apply its idiosyncratic form of leftist Palestinian nationalism to various socio-economic experimental programs within the Palestinian camps.

The PFLP, as theorists and practitioners of this blend of nationalism and leftism, were a generative intellectual source of modern Arab secular thought that shaped political realities on the ground in the Middle East while also being shaped by these same events. The PFLP attempted, albeit very imperfectly, to implement theory and praxis that it viewed would realistically deliver Palestine's liberation after a long and bitter popular struggle.[2] As I demonstrate in this chapter, the PFLP emerged as a group that was committed to inculcating a deep understanding of Marxist-Leninist social theory amongst its membership as a necessary precursor to participating effectively in the armed struggle. George Habash clearly stated this symbiosis between theory and praxis, when in a 1970 speech to the PFLP's military cadres he explained, "There is a clear necessity for a person who can be a fighter capable of military leadership and using a complex armed tool, provided that it does not remain a mere outlet and tool but rather that he understands the hidden political horizons behind this tool and the political

[2] Khalīl, "Masār Al-Yasār al-Filasṭīnī Min al-Mārksiyya Ilā al-Bīrīstroykā [The Path of the Palestinian Left: From Marxism to Perestroika]," 21.

goals that mobilize this tool."[3] Habash believed that this commitment to political ideology was what separated the PFLP from Fatah, because the Front gave revolutionary momentum to the Palestinian resistance movement by mobilizing the proletarian masses in the camps.[4] When looking back on the Front during the seventies later in life, Habash would reflect on the centrality of ideology to the quality of the PFLP's membership:

> The true difference between the PFLP and Fatah, beyond numerical size, was that every member in our organization [PFLP] had to attend at least one meeting a week to have an idea of the Front's political line and the latest developments within the Palestinian cause. Every member had to be committed to the political plan…This general understanding was missing within Fatah. Fatah was a party that gathered various types of associates in its ranks, and their quantity was more important than their quality.[5]

Habash's comparison represents far more than intra-PLO jockeying for revolutionary prestige. His observation reveals that the PFLP viewed political commitment as fundamental to operational success for the organization as both a party and as a guerrilla military entity. The concept of personal refinement permeated all aspects of the Front's application of Marxism-Leninism theory to its actions in the real-world, as evinced by the PFLP's mandated period of critical analysis after every military operation.[6] From the perspective of Fatah and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, the PFLP's insistence on political and ideological commitment to radical social change as a requirement for participation in the Palestinian revolution was an impediment to its more diplomatic approach to relations with the Arab states. Yasser Arafat was

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[3] *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]*, 5.
[4] Oriana Fallaci, "A Leader of the Fedayeen: 'We Want a War like the Vietnam War,'" *LIFE*, June 12, 1970, 34.
[5] Ḥabash and Malbrunot, *Al-Thawriyyūn Lā Yamūtūn Abadan [Revolutionaries Never Die]*, 112–13.
[6] Ḥabash and Malbrunot, 108.

noted to be particularly frustrated in the lead up to Black September by the graffitied leftist slogans in Amman of PFLP and PDFLP supporters that read "Power, Absolute Power to Workers and Soldiers" and "Yes to the Revolution, No to the Regime."[7] In Arafat's view, such leftist slogans needlessly aggravated the Jordanian regime and prevented Fatah from pursuing a policy of coexistence with the Hashemites. The PFLP, for its part, viewed Arafat's willingness to cooperate with the Jordanian government as capitulation to the forces of global imperialism, leading Habash to even accuse Arafat of being in the American camp in the mid-seventies.[8]

In terms of the application of Marxist-Leninist theory to the lived conditions of revolutionaries, Ghassan Kanafani summed up the need for this synthesis of theory and praxis within the Palestinian revolution in 1971, arguing, "The resistance is not some theoretical laboratory for idiomatic sophism, but rather it is a struggle in its finest forms, wherein theoretical positions are translated immediately into fighters, bullets, and martyrs…"[9] In this regard, the PFLP consistently punched above its second-place political status within the PLO and its short membership rolls as it shaped events in the region from the 1970 Dawson Field hijackings and Black September War to the Lebanese Civil War. To be sure, the PFLP's armed operations (*ʿamaliyyat*) contributed significantly to this outsized influence, but I also show in this chapter how the Front's intellectual leaders shaped what the horizons of Palestinian liberation could look like as they incorporated leftist theories of class, gender, and nationalism into preexisting liberatory discourses that focused on the physical restoration of Palestine.[10] Though the PFLP at times prominently took the reactionary position in intra-Palestinian politics, it was often the other

[7] Shafiq al-Hout et al., *My Life in the PLO: The inside Story of the Palestinian Struggle* (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 83.
[8] al-Hout et al., 224.
[9] Ghassān Kanafānī, "Manṭiq Al-Taʿab Wa-l-Istinkāf Dākhil Harakat al-Muqāwama [The Logic of Fatigue and Haughtiness within the Resistance Movement]," *Al-Hadaf* 2, no. 91 (March 13, 1971): 9.
[10] For more on the PFLP's operations and their influence on regional and international public opinion, see Chapter 2.

Palestinian factions that were forced to respond to the Front's bold ideological and social experimentations.[11] As a result of the PFLP's influence, the Palestinian resistance movement (*harakat al-muqawama al-filastiniyya*), as the *fida'i* factions often referred to themselves collectively, was more secular, more vanguardist, and more ideologically dynamic than it otherwise would have been in the late sixties and seventies. In this chapter, I contextualize the Front's influential intellectual contributions within their disparate and complex ideological genealogies and demonstrate how the resultant Palestinian-leftist-nationalist thought that emerged from these genealogies was a major force in Palestinian liberatory discourse.

Like other Marxist-Leninist revolutionary groups in the Global South in the sixties and seventies, the PFLP advanced constructive claims about a world in which the working and peasant classes could actualize a true liberation of Arab societies from the forces of global neo-colonialism and capitalism. The Palestinian Left demonstrated clearly what Fredric Jameson called Marxism's understanding of the future as something structurally inherent in the present. In analyzing its struggle against the occupation in terms of class conflict, the PFLP understood that victory could only be achieved by revolutionary means effectuated by the historical agent of the proletariat class.[12] Reading the PFLP this way requires scholars to step outside of the melancholic episteme that has led many contemporary writers to associate this period's revolutionary movements with "the vanquished of history."[13] When narrative histories of the PFLP simply read, or back-project, the group as defeated leftists, as several studies have done, they run the risk of obfuscating the particular historical contexts in the late sixties that enabled

[11] Michael C. Hudson, "Developments and Setbacks in the Palestinian Resistance Movement 1967-1971," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1, no. 3 (1972): 68.
[12] Fredric Jameson, "Introduction/Prospectus: To Reconsider the Relationship of Marxism to Utopian Thought (1976)," in *The Jameson Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 362.
[13] Enzo Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia: Marxism, History, and Memory*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), xv.

the Front's thinkers to envision new utopic liberatory horizons for the Palestinian people despite the dire political realities created by the 1967 defeat, the Palestinian refugee crisis, and the cementing of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.[14]

Similarly, to question whether the PFLP was truly Marxist-Leninist in its ideology, as some scholars have done, seems, from a historiographical perspective, to be a fraught task. When isolating the arguments of a given ideological treatise by the PFLP, scholars can risk promoting what intellectual historian Quentin Skinner calls a "mythology of prolepsis," wherein the historian is more interested in a work's retrospective significance than in its meaning for the historical agent.[15] Leftist scholars and scholars of the Left, with all their familiarity of the concept "Marxism-Leninism" as it is understood today, may inadvertently ignore the inapplicability of current understandings of Marxism-Leninism to the historical material produced by the PFLP. Borrowing from Skinner's framework, I argue that scholars cannot say that an agent, in this case the PFLP, failed to present some idea, in this case Marxism-Leninism, if presenting that idea (and its attendant contemporary significations) was never the agent's intention in the first place.[16] Instead, I argue that the PFLP's intellectual production should be understood within the teleological and optimistic frame of this period's revolutionary zeitgeist. I take this approach for historiographical purposes rather than to paint the PFLP's thinking with more sophistication than it exhibited or to avoid addressing any naiveté present in the multiple evolutions of the Front's ideology. As Richard Whatmore once noted, a historian must understand their historic subjects as people who operated within certain dominant discourses at the time whose grammar, rhetoric, and assumptions determined the ideological paradigm used by

[14] Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, 232–33; Aksentijevic, "Reflections on the Palestinian Resistance," 115.
[15] Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 22.
[16] Skinner, 28.

authors to frame and express their arguments. Only then can the historian assess the degree to which the utterances of these historical actors uphold or challenge these dominant discourses.[17] As this chapter demonstrates, the PFLP's Marxism-Leninism in its first years was shaped by the dominant leftist discourses emerging in the Global South, but it also often pushed against these discourses when they failed to articulate solutions to the uniquely Palestinian collective experiences of ongoing exile and occupation.

1948 and the Arab Nationalist Roots of the Popular Front

After witnessing the crushing defeat of Arab forces in the 1948 War, many members of a new generation of Arab students became united in their rage against conservative Arab leaders' betrayal of Palestinian liberation and increasingly viewed pan-Arab nationalism as the best means for defeating imperialism and Zionism. With the exploding regional Palestinian refugee crisis and accelerated brinkmanship between Cold War powers destabilizing the Arab world, the immediate post-1948 era opened the regional political field, allowing populist and socialist leaders to challenge the hegemony of conservative regimes. With the success of Egyptian Free Officers revolution in 1952, pan-Arab socialist Egyptian president Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasser captured the ideological imagination of this new generation of students. The PFLP's leaders, including Habash, Haddad, al-Hindi, and al-Khatib, who politically came of age as students at the American University in Beirut (AUB), were not immune from Nasser's charismatic influence during its early years in the 1950s. Indeed, as argued by former ANM member Walid Kazziha, these students had been primed to embrace the ascendant pan-Arab Nasserist nationalism of the

[17] John Greville Agard Pocock and Richard Whatmore, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Revised edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), viii–ix.

1950s under the tutelage of two highly influential professors: Qustantin Zurayq and Satiʿ al-Husri.[18]

Professor Qustantin Zurayq's contemporary writings and lectures on Arab unity, progress, and civilization had a profound effect on the political consciousness of an entire generation of students reeling from the fallout of the 1948 defeat. Born in Damascus in 1909 to a Greek Orthodox family, Qustantin Zurayq went on to study at AUB and later earned an MA from the University of Chicago and PhD from Princeton University in 1930 at the age of twenty-one. He served the next fifteen years as a professor at AUB and from 1954-56 was appointed the acting president of the university.[19] Zurayq emphasized the human ability to change real world conditions through a sober assessment that distinguished him from the panicked analyses of later political commentators, particularly after the 1967 War. He advocated an Arab nationalism that was based on Enlightenment ideals, framing science and reason as cultural tools to combat wishful thinking.[20] In the post-1948 climate of defeat, Zurayq's teachings bolstered a new drive for the unification of Arab lands based on solidarity among the Arab peoples rather than agreements between the governments and ruling dynasties that had failed them. This move toward a more grassroots pan-Arab nationalism marked a rejection of the position of contemporary Arab nationalists like George Antonius, who put their hope in the initiative of the Arab monarchies. In contrast, Zurayq called for a "select elite of Arab youth" to organize and unite politically and commit themselves to a pure political doctrine.[21] This call would fall on the

[18] Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World*, 11, 48; Asʿad AbuKhalil, "George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists: Neither Unity nor Liberation," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, no. 4 (1999): 94, https://doi.org/10.2307/2538395.
[19] Constantine Zurayk, *The Meaning of the Disaster*, trans. R. Bayly Winder (Beirut: Khayat's College Book Cooperative, 1956), vii–viii.
[20] Kassab, *Contemporary Arab Thought*, 67–69.
[21] Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World*, 11.

receptive ears of George Habash, Wadiʿ Haddad, Hani al-Hindi, and other young Arab nationalists at AUB.

While the ANM and PFLP inherited their humanist and rational pan-Arab nationalist orientation from Qustantin Zurayq, Satiʿ al-Husri imparted the decidedly secular nature that dominated the Palestinian Left by the early 1950s. Born in Yemen to a prominent Syrian family, Satiʿ al-Husri served a distinguished career as an educator, first in the Ottoman government and later in independent Iraq and Syria. Notably, al-Husri was one of the first Muslim Arabs to advocate for a secular doctrine of Arab national unity based on bonds of loyalty and identification with the Arab nation.[22] Though French in his personal tastes and education, al-Husri was particularly influenced by German romantic nationalism with its emphasis on linguistics. For al-Husri, shared Arab history and Arab language linked individuals together within the framework of an Arab nation-state built on ethnicity and shared culture.[23] Drawing heavily from German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte's 1807-1808 *Addresses to the German Nation,* al-Husri argued that speaking directly to the Arab youth, united by a common language, would help achieve national liberation. Furthermore, al-Husri defined the nation as a cultural rather than a political entity, distinguishing him and his followers from more state-focused Arab nationalists like Zurayq.[24] Al-Husri's achievements in explicitly distinguishing between various forms of Arab nationalism were equally important to the future nationalists in the ANM and PFLP. For instance, al-Husri defined patriotism (*al-wataniyya*) as love of the fatherland (*al-watan*) and a feeling of inward commitment to it (*irtibat batini*) and nationalism (*al-qawmiyya*)

[22] William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist; Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati' al-Husri* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), ix–x.
[23] Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*, 1st edition (Stanford University Press, 2008), 66.
[24] Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist*, 86–88.

as a love for the nation (*al-umma*, here meant secularly) with a similar inward commitment toward it.

The progenitors of the Palestinian ANM branch that would eventually become the PFLP all began their careers as student organizers at AUB. This group included George Habash, Wadiʿ Haddad, Hani al-Hindi, and Ahmad al-Khatib, who participated in a literary organization at the university called *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa* (the firm bond), originally founded at AUB in 1918. The AUB organization drew its name from the short-lived eponymous magazine published in 1884 by the Islamic modernist reformers Jamal al-Din Afghani and Muhammad Abduh in Paris. Eventually banned by British authorities in Egypt and India, the nineteenth century magazine called for Muslim unity against British colonialism. Afghani and Abduh had in turn taken the name *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa* from Surah al-Baqarah 256.[25] These themes of unity, struggle, reform, and unbreakable loyalty would resonate with the young founders of AUB's *ʿUrwa*.

Beginning in 1949, Habash and al-Hindi began meeting with people from Syria and Egypt with similar goals and ideologies and together formed *al-Kataʾib al-Fidaʾi al-ʿArabi* (Legions of Arab Redemption). The Egyptian members of the group provided paramilitary training while those from Beirut and Damascus contributed to the organization's ideological framework, which has been described by some scholars as fascistic and prone to glorifying violence.[26] The group carried out several attacks in Syria but were broken up by Syrian intelligence after an attempt on Syrian president al-Shishakli's life in 1950. Around this time, Habash became the president of an increasingly politicized *al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa*. *Al-ʿUrwa* members were a dynamic force on AUB's campus, collecting clothes for Palestinian refugees,

[25] Amjad Dhīb Ghanmā, *Jamʿiyya Al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqā: Nashatuhā Wa Nashāṭātuhā [al-ʿUrwa al-Wuthqa Association: Its Formation and Activities]*. (Bayrūt: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis lil-Kutub wa-l-Nashr, 2002), 40.
[26] AbuKhalil, "George Habash and the Movement of Arab Nationalists," 93.

organizing protests to commemorate the 1948 *Nakba,* and inviting nationalist guest lecturers from regional universities, including Baʿathism's preeminent theorist, the Syrian intellectual Michel Aflaq. Baʿthism, with its emphasis on national struggle, renaissance (*baʿth*), and historical responsibility (*al-masʾuliyya al-tarikhiyya*) resonated with these young nationalists at AUB, who viewed themselves as inheritors of the Arab national struggle tasked with rising to the challenges presented by the *Nakba.*[27] During this period, Habash and his cadre advocated a two-part plan for achieving the emancipation of the Arab world. In the first step, the Arab world would unite into one state and expel imperialism and Zionism from the region. In the second step, the Arab nationalists would implement socialism and democracy as vehicles for advancing Arab society.[28] However, it should be noted here that these calls for socialism and democracy did not amount to a formalized adoption of Marxism-Leninism nor a theorization of the Palestinian working class. These developments would come much later under the influence of a younger faction of PFLP leaders in the late 1960s.

Lessons of the 1967 *Naksa* and the Birth of the PFLP

One cannot emphasize enough the effect of the June 1967 War, known by the defeated Arabs as *al-Naksa* (the setback), on the acceleration of leftist thought within the Palestinian national liberation movement. The swift defeat of Egyptian, Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese, and Iraqi forces and the loss of the West Bank, Gaza, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights left the Arab intellectual world despondent and grappling for answers. Moreover, the Arab defeat in 1967

[27] For Baʿthism's major themes, see Mīshīl ʿAflaq, *Al-Baʿth Wa-l-Turāth [Renaissance and Heritage]*, 1st ed. (Baghdād: Dār al-Ḥurriyya lil-Ṭibāʿa, 1976), 5.
[28] Cubert, *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East*, 43.

reified Palestine's central position as a bellwether for the overall condition of the postcolonial Arab struggle for national unity and sovereignty against new forms of international imperialism. So long as Palestine remained occupied, the Arab world could never truly move forward from its colonial past. In a basic political report issued by the PFLP a year after the conflict, the organization's leadership reflected, "After the 1967 defeat, 'Arab affairs' were no longer isolated from the Palestine issue, and all that happens within these countries touches daily on the Palestinian cause."[29] Thus, the task that faced the PFLP and their intellectual interlocutors in the Arab world was to determine the root causes of this most recent defeat, and it was in this search for answers that scholars across the Middle East turned their critical analysis inward toward Arab society and politics with an unflinching rigor that had been absent in the reflections following the Palestinian and Arab failures of the 1937 Revolt and the 1948 *Nakba*.

In pursuit of answers for June 1967, thinkers from across the region issued scathing critiques of the militarist nationalist governments that had failed Palestine as well as the ineffective communist parties that had struggled to offer a compelling model for national liberation.[30] Sadiq Jalal al-ʿAzm, the Syrian philosopher, was a new professor at the AUB during the 1967 War and published in 1968 a widely read assessment of the conflict's effect on Arab society, *Self-Criticism After the Defeat,* which became a standard of the self-critical genre of essay writing that emerged after the war. Though critical of Arab state leaders for their role in the defeat, al-ʿAzm left his most biting opprobrium for young Arab revolutionaries, who he claimed were fixated on the outward trappings of socialism because of the ideology's connection

[29] "Al-Taqrīr al-Siyāsī al-Asāsī Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya Li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's Basic Political Report]," in *Al-Wathāʾiq al-Filasṭīniyya al-ʿArabiyya l-ʿām 1968 [Arabic Palestinian Documents for 1968]* (Bayrūt: Muʾassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīnīyya, 1970), 655.
[30] Mashhur Sirhan Ittayem, "The Palestine National Struggle: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Transformation of Ideology." (Ph.D., American University, 1977), 228–99, http://search.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/302861534/citation/6EE08CEE904344C9PQ/2.

to anti-colonialism and its romanticized image in the press. According to al-ʿAzm, these youth lacked any fundamental commitment to the lifestyle changes demanded by such an leftist ideology and instead shouted theoretical slogans while harboring conservative social, religious, cultural, ethical, and economic values.[31] In focusing all its energy on the threat presented by Zionism, al-ʿAzm claimed that the Arab Left eschewed questions of class consciousness and revolutionary democracy entirely, thereby maintaining and even bolstering the preexisting social, religious, and economic institutions of power. This ideological inconsistency and hollow progressiveness, according to al-ʿAzm, resulted in the complete erasure of the distinction between right-wing reactionary and left-wing scientific socialist standpoints in the mind of the revolutionary. In essence, al-ʿAzm correctly recognized that leftist political posturing in the absence of substantive progressive policies doomed Arab society to a stagnant and chauvinistic form of nationalism that was incapable of facing the threats presented by Zionism, neo-colonialism, and neoliberal capitalism.

Even an organization with revolutionary credentials like the ANM undermined its political credibility in the aftermath of June 1967 with ideological inconsistencies. In particular, its ties to a defeated Nasser and its resistance to expanding guerrilla warfare made it appear weak and ineffective in the eyes of the Palestinians displaced by the war. In response to this criticism, the leadership of the ANM in early July 1967 began applying class analysis to its own self-criticism. In a statement issued by its the National Executive Committee, the ANM explained:

> Through the military defeat that the [Arab] armies suffered and the paralysis that struck the progressive regimes and the popular movements, it has become quite clear that the horizon to which the petite-bourgeoisie was leading the Arab revolution until now was

[31] Sadiq Jalal al-ʿAzm and George Stergios, *Self-Criticism after the Defeat* (London: Saqi, 2011), 78–79.

not a horizon of this long, drawn-out war with neocolonialism with all its bases throughout the Arab lands, the foremost of which is Israel.[32]

"Petite-bourgeoisie" became the preferred epithet used by young leftists within the ANM to tar any older leaders they deemed insufficiently progressive or simply too nationalist in their orientation. However, the precarity of the Palestinian resistance movement necessitated a closing of ranks across generations, albeit temporarily, and it was in this context that the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was formed in December 1967. At this early juncture, the PFLP operated, as its name implied, as a frontal apparatus under which its member parties kept their individual character and leadership. These groups included The Heroes of the Return (*Abtal al-ʿAwda*), The Palestinian Liberation Front with its various branches (the Martyr ʿAbd al-Tayyif Shuru Branch, the Martyr ʿAbd al-Qadr al-Husayni Branch, and the Martyr ʿIzz al-Din al-Qassem Branch), and the National Front for the Liberation of Palestine (The Vengeance Youth; *al-Shabab al-Thaʾir*).

At its founding, the PFLP exhibited little of its later Marxist-Leninist orientation, although it did emphasize the leading role that the Arab masses would take in the liberation of Palestine because of the Arab governments' failure in the 1967 War. In later years, the PFLP would say that its founding statement, issued in *al-Hurriyya* on December 11, 1967, was born out of the Palestinian resistance movement's need to take up the fight, and the PFLP's founders did not envision the statement to serve as the basis for a complete political or ideological program nor was the document preceded by any long theoretical discussions regarding the

[32] "Bayān Siyāsī Li-Ḥarakat al-Qawmiyyin al-ʿArab Hawla 'al-Ṣirāʿ al-Maṣīrī Bayn Ḥarakat al-Thawra al-ʿArabiyya Wa Bayn al-Istiʿmār al-Jadīd' Fī al-Ḥurriyya 4 Wa 11 Wa 18/9/1967 [A Political Statement by the Arab Nationalist Movement on 'the Fateful Struggle between the Arab Revolutionary Movement and Neo-Colonialism' in al-Hurriyya 4, 11, and 18/9/1967," in *Al-Wathāʾiq al-Filasṭīniyya al-ʿArabiyya l-ʿām 1967 [Palestinian Arabic Documents for 1967]* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīnīyya, 1969), 681.

Front's class structure.[33] As will be explored in the next section, the pressure to form a comprehensible ideological program for the PFLP would come later as the result of pressures brought on by internal and generational political schisms. In December 1967, with the sting of June still very fresh in the Palestinian revolution's memory, however, the PFLP's raison d'être was simply to continue leading the masses in the physical fight against Israel that the Arab states had largely abandoned. The Front at this time only briefly gestured to the class composition of these masses, addressing its founding statement at one point to the "peasants on the blazing earth" and the "poor and oppressed in our cities, villages, and the miserable camps" and recognizing them as the "material and leadership of the resistance [*madat al-muqawama wa qiyadatuha*]."[34] Phrases of this kind praising the masses are repeated throughout the statement and direct addresses are made at regular intervals to "our Palestinian masses (*jamahir shaʿbina al-filastini*)," "our fighting masses (*jamahir shaʿbina al-munadil*)," and the "masses of our Arab nation (*jamahir ummatina al-ʿArabiyya*)." However, the PFLP also included the professional classes, merchants, and intellectuals among these mobilized masses in this opening statement, thereby blunting some of the biting anti-elite rhetoric that would come to characterize the Front's communications as it moved further to the left. In fact, the PFLP's vision of the relationship of these elite classes vis-à-vis the working class was still paternalistic in late 1967, as the former group was entrusted with communicating the achievements of the armed revolution and its goals "without exaggeration or embellishments."[35] This paternalistic dynamic betrayed the intellectual inheritance of the Front's more conservative ANM founders, including Habash and Haddad,

[33] al-Ayyūbī, "Dalīl Al-Bāḥithīn [Researchers' Guide]," 137.
[34] "Al-Bayān al-Sīyāsī al-Awal Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, al-Ḥurriyya, Bayrūt, 11/12/1967 [The First Political Statement of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, al-Hurriyya Beirut, 11/12/1967]," in *Al-Wathāʾiq al-Filasṭīniyya al-ʿArabiyya l-ʿām 1967 [Arabic Palestinian Documents for 1967]* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīnīyya, 1969), 999, 1000.
[35] "Al-Bayān al-Sīyāsī al-Awal Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, al-Ḥurriyya, Bayrūt, 11/12/1967 [The First Political Statement of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, al-Hurriyya Beirut, 11/12/1967]," 1001.

whose high educational attainment privileged intellectual-led, rather than worker-led, liberation in the Arab world. This centering of a highly educated cadre at the core of the Front's leadership, as discussed later in this chapter, would eventually be translated into a more developed Leninist vanguardist theory of the Palestinian revolution under pressure from the PFLP's younger and more radically leftist members. However, the PFLP from its founding often viewed the Palestinian masses romantically and abstractly, preferring to invoke their symbolic authority than sharing actual executive decision-making power with the "material of the resistance."

However, the PFLP's founding statement did include some notions of a proto-vanguardist revolution, though the Front at this time seemed to think of the vanguard capaciously as a movement of Palestinian revolutionaries that would inspire a broader Arab front against colonialism. The PFLP even went so far as to call the fight over occupied Palestine an "active part of the march of the Arab revolution against world imperialism and its agents' forces."[36] Such language suggests that the Front at its founding was still firmly operating within the pan-Arab framework of its ANM founders, albeit shifting away from a Nasser and Egypt-centered anti-colonial struggle toward a non-statist Palestinian mass movement against Zionism that was no longer a microcosm of pan-Arab postcolonial liberation but rather a precondition for the broader movement's realization. This reorientation of the Palestinian branch's role within the ANM echoed the conclusion made by the Palestinian Regional Conference of the ANM under Habash in September 1967 that there was an "…urgent need for the continued independent existence of a Palestinian branch enjoying the highest degree of cohesion, clarity and solidarity."[37] This newfound independence and consolidation of the Palestinian branch elevated

[36] "Al-Bayān al-Sīyāsī al-Awal Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, al-Ḥurriyya, Bayrūt, 11/12/1967 [The First Political Statement of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, al-Hurriyya Beirut, 11/12/1967]," 1001.
[37] Kazziha, *Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World*, 85.

the PFLP leadership to fully autonomous positions of authority at the head of a frontal apparatus for national liberation and reminded younger, more leftist members of the PFLP that neither the organization's leaders nor the post-1967 precarity of the Palestinian resistance movement would suffer any lack of ideological cohesion.[38] However, as will be explored in the following section, once the initial shock of the 1967 defeat wore off, the ability of the leadership to maintain this ideological cohesion would quickly evaporate, resulting in several internal schisms and a dramatic shift leftward in the organization's ideology.

Another effect of the 1967 defeat on the fledgling PFLP's worldview was a sobering of the organization's temporal scaling of the eventual liberation of Palestine. The 1967 War had been filled with the triumphant and delusional grandstanding of Arab leaders and writers claiming that Israel would be defeated in a matter of days; the Egyptian journalist and social commentator Mohammed Hassanein Heikal famously wrote on June 2, 1967 as the editor-in-chief of the daily *al-Ahram*, "Whatever happens, and without trying to anticipate events, Israel is drawing near [to] almost certain defeat."[39] In contrast, the opening statement of the PFLP repeatedly emphasizes the "long-term and bitter" struggle facing the Palestinian masses on the road to liberation. While still retaining a materialist view of history with a belief in the teleological inevitability of a triumph over Zionism and colonialism, the PFLP's emphasis on the long-term struggle showed the increasing influence of Maoist writings on people's war and protracted conflict with the revolution's class enemies. Alongside workers and peasants, Mao's "Asian proletariat," the PFLP imagined also including members of the Palestinian petite-bourgeoisie, essentially white-collar professionals, in its protracted struggle. Habash claimed that

[38] Kazziha, 84; Khalīl, "Masār Al-Yasār al-Filasṭīnī Min al-Mārksiyya Ilā al-Bīrīstroykā [The Path of the Palestinian Left: From Marxism to Perestroika]," 21.
[39] Cited in al-ʿAzm and Stergios, *Self-Criticism after the Defeat*, 36.

this Palestinian petite-bourgeoisie was more revolutionary than its non-Palestinian counterparts in the Arab world and Europe because this group of revolutionaries had lost their traditional class power under the occupation and exile.[40] This was both a seismic theoretical and pragmatic intervention by the PFLP in Arab leftist thought. By classifying refugees as the base of the Palestinian proletariat, the PFLP not only built on Lenin and Mao's adaptation of Marxism for non-industrial contexts by reconfiguring forced exile as a class condition, but also expanded the socio-economic spectrum of talent from which the Front could recruit fighters.

In addition to this important intervention in class analysis, the PFLP also expanded on Mao's work on popular war as a nationalistically productive catalyst. Just as Mao had conceived of guerrilla warfare against Japanese occupying forces in the Second World War as an integral part of Chinese national political development, the PFLP viewed armed resistance against Israel as a politically productive medium for shaping Palestinian national identity.[41] We see evidence of this synthesis between Lenin's stages of revolution and Mao's protracted people's war explicitly in the PFLP's own assessment of the June War:

> The Arab and Palestinian masses in the Arab and occupied lands are watching today all the circumstances that surrounded Arab and Palestinian action prior to June 5 and afterward and realize that, due to the nature of the stage through which they are passing, the objective conditions have matured to the point that they have made room for raising the slogan of popular armed struggle and its practice until its last stage in the long-term bitter battle, at the end of which the desires and security of the masses will be realized.[42]

[40] Ittayem, "The Palestine National Struggle," 236.
[41] Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 43; For more on military action as a productive arena for national identity and culture, see Joseph Andoni Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 101.
[42] "Al-Bayān al-Sīyāsī al-Awal Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, al-Ḥurriyya, Bayrūt, 11/12/1967 [The First Political Statement of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, al-Hurriyya Beirut, 11/12/1967]," 999.

The tone of this passage is utopic—the masses will ultimately prevail—but it nevertheless frames the inevitability of this successful future as the culmination of an unspecified period of hardship in which "struggle and practice," rather than nationalistic misrepresentations of military superiority, achieve liberation. Younger members of the PFLP, like Nayef Hawatmeh and Muhsin Ibrahim, particularly emphasized how Egypt, Jordan, and Syria's "short-term military adventure" against Israel in 1967 had led to the defeat because the petit-bourgeois leadership of these countries failed to form a radical political, military, and economic struggle against "neocolonialism with all its bases, centers, and interests and its base of class forces."[43] The PFLP thus emphasized long-term struggle not for the sake of drawing out the war for liberation, but out of a recognition that the June 1967 defeat was the symptom of very complex network of colonial and class alliances between the US, Israel, and the reactionary Arab regimes.

The PFLP also believed this long-term struggle to be an all-encompassing form of Palestinian national life, going so far as to declare, "Oh peasants on the blazing earth, oh you poor and oppressed in our cities, villages, and wretched camps: There is no path before you other than resistance nor is there any choice."[44] The PFLP thus viewed the revolutionary landscape as one in which peasants, workers, and refugees would be intimately connected to the vicissitudes of the armed struggle's fortunes. Moreover, the PFLP's closing of any other possible way of life to the Palestinian masses meant that the Front positioned itself as the only organization that could usher the Palestinian nation into its new revolutionary phase. By placing itself as the revolutionary guide of the masses, the Front was staking a claim on organizational authority within the Palestinian resistance and beginning to articulate its vision for an organic relationship

[43] "Bayān Shubāṭ 1969: al-Khuṭwa al-Awlā nahwa Infiṣāl al-Yasār ʿan Harakat al-Qawmiyyīn al-ʿArab [February 1969 Statement: The First Step Toward a Leftist Secession from the Arab Nationalist Movement]," 165.
[44] "Al-Bayān al-Sīyāsī al-Awal Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, al-Ḥurriyya, Bayrūt, 11/12/1967 [The First Political Statement of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, al-Hurriyya Beirut, 11/12/1967]," 1000.

between the *fidaʾiyyin* in its official membership and the Palestinians living in the camps and Occupied Territories. This proclaimed organic relationship between fighter and civilian within the occupied lands was a localized application of Ernesto "Che" Guevara's notion of *foquismo*, in which a highly mobile but small force of commandos would strike at occupying forces while receiving material support, hiding places, intelligence, and communications through a network of villages.[45] In return, the armed commandos would protect these villages, when possible, from violent reprisals by the occupying forces, though in practice civilians in the *foquismo* model were expected to assume a great deal of existential risk in the service of the larger revolution. This precarious civilian position within the vanguardist-*foquismo* synthesis was explicitly laid out in the PFLP's opening statement, where the Front offered this sobering assessment of their pact with the Palestinian masses: "We who are in the field of armed battle do not promise you rosy dreams, but instead more fighting, steadfastness (*sumud*), political mobilization, and more protection of the unarmed masses against revenge with all our energies."[46] The Palestinian revolution led by the PFLP would therefore serve as the crucible in which Palestinian civil society would develop the prerequisite resilience and political consciousness under the tutelage of the PFLP's members *qua* vanguard (*taliʿa*) on the long path to national liberation. The PFLP also stipulated that its members only retained the status of vanguard so long as their actions, struggles, and behavior reflected this status and communicated the member's commitment to the Palestinian base outside the organization.[47] However, the PFLP's efforts to communicate their vanguard status to the masses often faced resistance from local Palestinian leaders in the Occupied Territories, who viewed leftist *fidaʾiyyin* as a threat to their own traditional land-based

[45] Ernesto Che Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. J.P. Morray (BN Publishing, 2012), 80–86.
[46] "Al-Bayān al-Sīyāsī al-Awal Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, al-Ḥurriyya, Bayrūt, 11/12/1967 [The First Political Statement of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, al-Hurriyya Beirut, 11/12/1967]," 1001.
[47] See Article 17, *Al-Niẓām al-Dākhilī [Internal Regulations]*, 18.

wealth and political power. Even when these leaders and local populations expressed sympathy for the Palestinian resistance, the fear of Israeli reprisals often prevented villages and towns from providing material support to the guerrillas. In the revolution's forward bases in Jordan and Lebanon, which were often imbedded near local civilian populations and within metropolitan centers like Amman and Beirut, the guerrillas' imposition of checkpoints, searches, and barricades frequently disrupted daily life and alienated would-be supporters of the resistance.[48]

While the PFLP's inaugural statement made many mentions of "the masses" and identified them as the base of the Palestinian revolution, a more detailed assessment of class, history, and revolution would come later as the divisions between the young leftist members in the PFLP and the older conservative leadership cadres escalated. The 1967 *Naksa* would remain the founding watershed for the revolutionary phase of the Palestinian resistance movement, acting as a universally accessible collective memory across the various *fida'iyyin* organizations. However, the 1967 defeat would also form a new site on which the right and left wings of the PFLP would grapple over the ideological orientation of the Popular Front's armed struggle.

Schism and the Move Toward a Marxism-Leninism and Nationalist Synthesis

The momentary political unity within the PFLP afforded by the shock of June 1967 quickly cracked along the same generational and ideological fissures that had characterized the ANM prior to the 1967 War and the creation of the PFLP. Problems began on March 19, 1968, when George Habash and seventeen other PFLP members were arrested by the Syrian authorities in

[48] Abbas Kelidar, "The Palestine Guerrilla Movement," *The World Today* 29, no. 10 (1973): 414–15.

retaliation for the destruction of a Saudi petroleum pipeline in the Golan Heights.[49] In Habash's absence, the Front was left under the leadership of Ahmed Jibril, a co-founder of the PFLP from the Gazan town of Yasur, who was considerably more politically conservative than Habash. At this time, the younger non-Palestinian former ANM members within the PFLP also became more vociferous in their critique of Nasser, tarring him as a member of the petite-bourgeoisie. As a group whose political coming of age was defined by 1967 rather that 1948, this generation was frustrated by what they viewed as the ANM's dated enthrallment with state-led pan-Arab nationalism as a liberatory framework for Palestine. Moreover, they viewed the traditional leadership of the PFLP (Habash, al-Hindi, Haddad, al-Khatib) as unwilling to democratize the decision-making process of the Front or to fully embrace the Marxist-Leninist class analysis of the *Naksa* that was increasingly gaining traction amongst graduates in the Arab world.[50] Ghassan Kanafani, a figure whose age and prestige placed him at the intersection of the warring generations within the PFLP, contended that the Arab world had been stymied by the older generation's paternalism (*ubuwa*), characterized by its general stifling of the younger generation, which he described as knowledgeable and capable of carrying out democratic thought and revolutionary action.[51] At the head of this younger internal faction were Nayef Hawatmeh and Muhsin Ibrahim. Although the two men were Jordanian and Lebanese, respectively, they managed to move into the national executive committee of the ANM's Palestinian branch (the ostensibly independent PFLP), though the Front remained at this point under the direct political influence of the ANM. The Hawatmeh faction came to be known as the *Hurriyya* group because

[49] *Al-Masīra al-Tārīkhiyya Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical March of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, 74.
[50] Haugbolle, "The New Arab Left and 1967."
[51] Ghassān Kanafānī, *Afkār ʿan Al-Taghayyīr Wa "al-Lugha al-ʿAmyā'" [Thoughts on Change and the "Blind Language"]* (Dār al-Nadwa, 1968).

many of its young members were actively involved in the ANM Palestinian branch's Beirut-based newspaper, *al-Hurriyya.*[52] Without Habash's customarily reconciliatory presence, the *Hurriyya* group was able to push for a PFLP conference in August 1968 where they would release a "Basic Political Statement" that would apply a class analysis to the 1967 defeat and the current condition of the Palestinian resistance movement.[53] ʿ

The "Basic Political Statement" of August 1968, a widely circulated brochure, demonstrated a more explicitly materialist historical narrative style than the PFLP's founding statement from December 1967. Class analysis was at the fore of the August 1968 Statement as its authors identified the United Arab Republic (Egypt), Syria, Algeria, and Iraq as petit-bourgeois regimes that had taken leadership over the Arab national liberation movement during the 1950s and 60s. These regimes had taken the mantle of Arab national leadership from the preceding feudal and bourgeois-comprador classes, which in the PFLP's estimation had betrayed the Arab masses by allying with the forces of global capitalism and imperialism.

Born from the defeat of 1948, these petit-bourgeois regimes, according to the PFLP left wing's political report, had attempted to reform their societies and economies by implementing state-supported light manufacturing, land reform, higher peasant wages, electrification, organized nationalist armies, and other modernizing projects. However, these regimes, because of their petit-bourgeois class interests, had failed to sufficiently remove their nations from the global capitalist market and to incorporate the working classes into the national leadership,

[52] The Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) would keep *al-Hurriyya* as its official organ after its split from the PFLP in 1969, leading the PFLP to create a new official magazine, *al-Hadaf*, under the editorship of Ghassan Kanafani.
[53] Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation*, 144; "Bayān Shubāṭ 1969: al-Khuṭwa al-Awlā nahwa Infiṣāl al-Yasār ʿan Harakat al-Qawmiyyīn al-ʿArab [February 1969 Statement: The First Step Toward a Leftist Secession from the Arab Nationalist Movement]," 156.

thereby dooming these states to fail again in 1967 as their feudal-bourgeois predecessors had in the 1948 War.[54]

Unsurprisingly, the August 1968 Statement infuriated Nasser, leading the Egyptian president to cut off all financial aid to the PFLP. Ahmed Jibril was left in the unenviable position of serving as the PFLP's envoy to Egypt, but he was unable to change Nasser's mind about resuming assistance to the Front. When his attempts to move the PFLP away from the influence of its original ANM leadership —which increasingly was adopting its own leftist class analysis of 1967, though not to the radical degree that the *Hurriyya* group called for—Ahmed Jibril, along with his followers, seceded from the PFLP to form the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-GC) in October 1968.[55]

With the departure of the Jibril group and Habash's escape from prison on November 11, 1968, the battle over the PFLP's ideological orientation shifted leftward as the self-described radical Marxist-Leninist democratic revolutionaries of the *Hurriyya* group vied with the increasingly leftist, though still nationalist, ANM leadership represented by the likes of Habash, Haddad, and al-Hindi. At issue between the two factions was a disagreement over the nature of the PFLP's strategic relationship with Arab governments and members of the Arab petite-bourgeoisie. The progressive wing (*al-janah al-taqaddumi*), as the *Hurriyya* group referred to themselves, rejected what they called the PFLP right-wing's refusal to interfere in the internal affairs of Arab states and this group's willingness to accept the petite-bourgeoisie as the leaders of the Palestinian and Arab movements for national liberation. According to the *Hurriyya* group, these conservative ANM veterans, governed by petit-bourgeois thought, had failed to escalate the

[54] "Al-Taqrīr al-Siyāsī al-Asāsī Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya Li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's Basic Political Report]," 657.
[55] Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation*, 163.

fight in 1967 and its immediate aftermath to a class struggle against US-led neocolonialism as the Palestinian revolution's new archenemy, along with its Israeli "forward base" in the region and its Arab bourgeois reactionary allies. The "progressive wing" further argued that these class limitations within the PFLP's leadership had prevented the Front from pursuing a radical proletariat-led horizon, along the paths modeled by revolutionary China, Vietnam, North Korea, and Cuba. In line with this reorientation of the Palestinian Left away from Soviet influence toward a decentralized sense of camaraderie with fellow Global South revolutionaries, Hawatmeh's cohort claimed that the traditional Arab communist parties, in clinging to Stalinist themes on national revolution, had fatally slipped into political irrelevance.[56]

In the lead up to the PFLP's February 1969 Conference, the *Hurriyya* group urged in an official statement the Arab national liberation movement, which contained the Palestinian resistance movement, to create a radical political, economic, and military program that mobilized the widest possible popular mass among workers, the poor, peasants, and soldiers for a long-term struggle against neocolonialism. Without providing any detail on the economic front, this progressive wing wanted to pivot away from what it viewed as the insufficient reforms of the nationalist regimes in the Arab world (Egypt, Syria, Iraq). Instead, Arab economies, under the leadership of the proletariat, should move toward a comprehensive implementation of heavy manufacturing and large-scale farming in order to break the Arab world free from "the web of global capitalist markets and their rules, which are dedicated at the global level to a class position that forms a permanent trap for national liberation movements when they do not take up a radical economic approach that frees them from the vicious cycles of an underdeveloped

[56] "Bayān Shubāṭ 1969: al-Khuṭwa al-Awlā nahwa Infiṣāl al-Yasār ʿan Harakat al-Qawmiyyīn al-ʿArab [February 1969 Statement: The First Step Toward a Leftist Secession from the Arab Nationalist Movement]," 160–61.

economy."[57] However, the February 1969 Statement discussed very little in the way of the concrete steps that the PFLP should take toward achieving this radical economic restructuring other than removing its "petit-bourgeois" leadership, whose class interests prevented it from acting against its "consumerist" tendencies and implementing unspecified policies aimed at "austerity, physical health, reducing consumption, and striking against the new class privileges of the wealthy."[58] Also missing from this analysis was any discussion of how these reforms would be implemented by a diasporic Palestinian revolutionary movement whose base of support lay in refugee camps spread across a region made up of vastly different economic and political models. Lofty economic demands and ill-defined class terms reflected in this language have led some scholars to conclude that the Palestinian Left had a weak comprehension of Marxism, often using Marxism, scientific socialism, and theory of the working class interchangeably. According to such scholars, Palestinian leftist thinkers often identified the current phase of the revolution as firmly in the age of "colonialism and imperialism" and not in the age of "socialism's triumph" as traditional Marxists had argued since the October Revolution.[59] The political scientist Michael C. Hudson, writing a few years after these events, offered a more nuanced critique of Palestinian resistance movement's leftward shift, claiming that this movement was always made up of nationalist rather than social revolutionaries. Nevertheless, Hudson admitted that there were attempts by radical elements in the movement to "implant an ideology that would transcend local, parochial or liberal-bourgeois nationalism."[60]

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[57] "Bayān Shubāṭ 1969: al-Khuṭwa al-Awlā nahwa Infiṣāl al-Yasār ʿan Harakat al-Qawmiyyīn al-ʿArab [February 1969 Statement: The First Step Toward a Leftist Secession from the Arab Nationalist Movement]," 162.
[58] "Bayān Shubāṭ 1969: al-Khuṭwa al-Awlā nahwa Infiṣāl al-Yasār ʿan Harakat al-Qawmiyyīn al-ʿArab [February 1969 Statement: The First Step Toward a Leftist Secession from the Arab Nationalist Movement]," 163.
[59] Khalīl, "Masār Al-Yasār al-Filasṭīnī Min al-Mārksiyya Ilā al-Bīrīstroykā [The Path of the Palestinian Left: From Marxism to Perestroika]," 29.
[60] Hudson, "Developments and Setbacks in the Palestinian Resistance Movement 1967-1971," 76.

However, such analyses either heavily discount or oversimplify Leninism's important intervention in the Global South, wherein the colonized and formerly colonized world's struggle against imperialism and neocolonialism was a necessary precursor to building class consciousness and achieving a democratic revolution at the social and economic levels. Lenin had also argued that a purely nationalist or political critique of imperialism did not go far enough to attack the economic basis of imperialism and thereby only operated at the level of bourgeois reform and pacifism.[61] Documents like the February 1969 Statement—in lumping the US, Israel, the Arab bourgeoisie, and the insufficiently revolutionary Arab petite-bourgeoisie together as the class enemies of both the Arab national liberation movement and the Arab working class—were unequivocal about the role of Marxism-Leninism in economically attacking the sources of Palestinian peril after 1967:

> These toiling masses are the fundamental social force capable, by the nature of their class interests, of confronting the difficulties placed by colonialism against the work of building the material basis of national economic liberation: austerity, physical health, reducing consumption, and striking against the new class privileges of the wealthy. From here, it is clear that radical national mobilization toward a long-term war against all forms of colonialism must emerge from a radical class ideology: the ideology of the working class—Marxism-Leninism.[62]

The February Statement equates radical Palestinian national mobilization as a fundamentally economic practice. It grounds its ideological evocation of Marxism-Leninism in an actual materialist analysis. Though it remains somewhat vague about concrete policy, the statement

[61] Vladimir Ilich Lenin, *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Mansfield Centre: Martino Fine Books, 2011), 93.
[62] "Bayān Shubāṭ 1969: al-Khuṭwa al-Awlā nahwa Infiṣāl al-Yasār ʿan Harakat al-Qawmiyyīn al-ʿArab [February 1969 Statement: The First Step Toward a Leftist Secession from the Arab Nationalist Movement]," 163–64.

attempts, more than any preceding official PFLP document, to outline what economic praxes could concretize Palestinian class struggle: austerity, reducing consumption, striking against privilege. One need not stretch the imagination very far to see how these calls for austerity and reducing consumption translated extant Palestinian communal values like *sumud* into a more explicitly Marxist-Leninist lexicon, calling to mind Marx's condemnations of commodity fetishization and Lenin's critiques of the extractive economics of imperialism.

Reflecting this Marxist-Leninist shift, the PFLP increasingly characterized their nationalist struggle as an anti-capitalist struggle, viewing imperialism as an extension of capitalism.[63] As Hisham Shirabi reflected several years later during his tenure as the editor of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, the 1967 War exacerbated extant class divisions within Palestinian society as the "horizon of vision" of the well-to-do Palestinian classes and the Israeli occupiers aligned, resulting in the double exploitation of the poorer Palestinian classes. Moreover, the relative ease with which wealthier displaced Palestinians assimilated to local economies in Jordan and Lebanon compared to their impoverished counterparts widened economic inequality within the diasporic Palestinian society. This inequality, in turn, meant that the Palestinian toiling classes experienced the loss of homeland in a "material sense," in contrast to the "sentimental" feelings of loss that characterized the upper Palestinian classes and operated at the level of "rhetorical patriotism, impotent anger, sad longing, all abstracted from any kind of political commitment or action."[64]

In the absence of a concrete economic program, however, the progressive bloc's manifesto effectively parroted the military and political goals of their more conservative

[63] Haugbolle, "The New Arab Left and 1967," 507.
[64] Hisham Sharabi, "Liberation or Settlement: The Dialectics of Palestinian Struggle," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, no. 2 (1973): 34, https://doi.org/10.2307/2535479.

comrades while peppering their demands with the formal economic and class language of the Marxist-Leninist canon. Internal to the PFLP, many of the leaders from the Palestinian branch of the ANM viewed this ambiguous and shallow use of terms as evidence of the left-wing's immaturity and intellectual naïveté. The PFLP traditional leadership's dismissal of the left-wing was reflected in their own favored name for the self-styled "progressive wing" of the PFLP, whom they frequently referred to as the "leftist adolescents (*al-murahiqin al-yasariyyin*)." Furthermore, the PFLP's senior leadership viewed dogmatic adherence to any theory, leftist or otherwise, without adapting such theory to the lived condition of the Palestinians as completely unrevolutionary. Reflecting this attitude and the PFLP's variegated sources of intellectual tradition, the Syrian Marxist-Leninist intellectual Yassin al-Hafiz, in a 1970 *al-Hadaf* article commemorating the hundredth anniversary of Lenin's birth, quoted the following from Mao Zedong's writings on dogmatic interpretations of Marxism-Leninism:

> Those who believe that Marxism is a dogma belong to the category of foolish and ignorant people. To people of this kind, we must say without equivocation: "Your dogma is useless." Or, if we use a sentence that is less polite: "Your dogma is less useful than shit." We know that dog shit can fertilize the fields and human shit can feed dogs, but dogma? That can neither fertilize the fields nor feed the dogs.[65]

The "right-wing" leadership thus emphasized the need for adaptive ideologies that allowed for the kind of flexible implementations that it believed the PFLP "left-wing" made impossible. Reflecting the PFLP's emphasis on ideological flexibility, Ghassan Kanafani described the dogmatic "adolescents" within the Palestinian left in terms only slightly less acerbic than Mao's:

[65] al-Ḥāfiẓ, "Taʾqalam Al-Mārksiyya al-Lenīniyya Wa Masʾala al-Niḍāl al-Qawmī Fī al-Buldān al-Mutaʾakhira [The Adaptation of Marxism-Leninism and the Issue of National Struggle in Underdeveloped Countries"," 11.

> The petit-bourgeois intellectuals, who are short-tempered and quick to fatigue, who always are in a hurry, proceed along the path of struggle like locusts (*al-qabut*). They never stop, arbitrarily and purposelessly jumping around and using all manner of colloquial conventions and slogans to open the door to one stage and shut the door to another under the weight of emotional and subjective assessments made outside the deeper context of a slow but steady shift in the balance of power in favor of the revolution's forces.[66]

However, this same "right-wing" of the PFLP was also willing to admit that it had very few substantive objections to the program being advocated for by the *Hurriyya* group and believed that the Front's unity could be preserved while embracing many of the left-wing's proposed radical programs. Habash would later lament the PFLP's inability to survive internal ideological and differences at that time and looked forward to a moment when, as he said in 1970, "We will become capable of treating our leftist adolescence and the right-wing reactions to it through ideological struggle without being forced into auto-amputation, as some of our comrades thought in that period."[67] When the *Hurriyya* group under Nayef Hawatmeh broke away from the PFLP on the eve of the February 1969 Conference to form the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP), the remainder of the PFLP under Habash's leadership responded by reaffirming its own leftist orientation. Contrasting itself to the secessionist "adolescent café intellectuals," the PFLP at the February Conference argued that it was the true representative of the proletariat in the refugee camps and officially adopted

[66] Kanafānī, "Manṭiq Al-Taʿab Wa-l-Istinkāf Dākhil Harakat al-Muqāwama [The Logic of Fatigue and Haughtiness within the Resistance Movement]."
[67] *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]*, 32–33.

Marxism as the Front's political ideology.[68] Reflecting this new Marxist orientation, the traditional former-ANM Palestinian leaders within the Front created a politburo under Secretary-General George Habash, with Hani al-Hindi serving as Secretary of Security and Wadiʿ Haddad serving as the head of the Special Apparatus (the covert operations branch of the PFLP).[69] Despite its official adoption of a leftist ideological program, the composition of the PFLP senior leadership, which would effectively remain under Habash's cohort's control for the next three decades, demonstrated that pan-Arab nationalist influence would remain firmly entrenched in it's the Front's intellectual DNA. Since this restructuring of the PFLP's official political doctrine as a synthesis of nationalism and Marxism-Leninism was born from internal splits rather than from external pressure, it ensured that the Front restored a great deal of ideological and political cohesion within its ranks that would result in deeper explorations of leftist praxis in the arenas of labor, gender, social work, and agriculture.

The period bookended by the exit of the PDFLP in early 1969 and the escalation of the PFLP operations into large-scale warfare in Jordan during the events of Black September in late 1970 was a particularly intellectually generative time for the PFLP in terms of constructing its idiosyncratic leftist ideology. With the consolidation of the Front's leadership under Habash, the PFLP set out in earnest to define the key tenets of Palestinian Marxism-Leninism. As a result of these efforts several key themes emerged that would highlight the PFLP's synthesis of traditional Arab anti-colonial nationalism with a class-conscious popular struggle and, to a lesser extent, a socio-economic revolution within Palestinian society. First, the PFLP centered its early writings in the 1970s on defining the class composition of its base and theorizing the proletarianization of this base. Second, to align the Front's composition with the Leninist prescription for highly

[68] Ittayem, "The Palestine National Struggle," 231.
[69] Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, 232.

organized and hierarchical party structures, the PFLP solidified its internal regulations and attempted to apply a more democratic ethos to the organization's decision-making apparatus. Finally, though stymied by the vicissitudes of armed conflict in Jordan, Lebanon, and the Occupied Territories, the PFLP did attempt to build some civil institutions aimed at expanding the Palestinian revolution to the social sphere. However, while the PFLP made some progress in expanding its leadership role within local women's movements, public education experiments, and public health initiatives, the precarity of the organization's security situation and the relative conservativism of its senior leadership prevented the Front from actualizing its most radical ideals.

The Revolution and the Palestinian Worker

On the evening of May 1, 1970, Dr. George Habash delivered a speech to an audience of over three thousand people packed into the ʿAwda Camp near Amman's Jabal Hussein district. The occasion of the speech was a celebration of International Workers' Day organized by the PFLP. Habash's words were transcribed and published the following week by the Front's Central Media Office in *al-Hadaf*. At the opening of this address, Habash rhetorically posed a series of questions about why the PFLP would celebrate Workers' Day or center its movement on the mobilization of the working class. He then unequivocally asserted, "We celebrate Workers' Day because we believe that the working class is the leader of the revolution for liberation, and it is only through its theory, positions, and concepts that one can achieve victory and liberation."[70] However, unlike the Front's earlier conference and founding documents, Habash's speech

[70] Ḥabash, *Al-Thawra Wa-l-ʿUmmāl [The Revolution and Workers]*, 7.

represented an attempt by the PFLP to truly explain the working-class foundation of its movement and define the concrete steps that the Front was taking to integrate this class into its political and ideological structure without resorting to "sophistic verbal concepts suspended in air."[71] The PFLP's preoccupation with the working class in the late sixties and early seventies emerged against the backdrop of a growing and increasingly mobile working class in the Arab world. The creation of OPEC in the sixties and the swift rise of petrodollar economies in the Gulf had led to an expansion of the labor market as migrant workers from Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon went to work in the oil industry. The remittances these workers sent back to their home communities, in turn, expanded new opportunities for local labor, accelerating ongoing processes of urbanization.[72] At the same time, the end of the 1967 June War was followed by Israel's rapid reliance on inexpensive Palestinian labor from the Occupied Territories, which swelled the ranks of the local working class as peasants and farmers left the fields to pursue economic opportunities in Israeli cities on both sides of the Green Line. Habash nodded to this changing economic landscape in his speech, noting how Palestinian workers in Tel Aviv had been radicalized by their mistreatment at the hands of their Israeli bosses and clients, who regularly used the epithet "Stupid Arabs" (Habash provided both the Hebrew and Arabic versions of this phrase: *aravim hamur* and *ʿarabi hamar*, respectively).[73] Additionally, expanded access to university education for needy students also increased the size of the highly educated and politically active labor pool, which was willing to view itself as a nationally and socio-economically oppressed class.[74]

[71] Ḥabash, 17.
[72] Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*, 2:144.
[73] Ḥabash, *Al-Thawra Wa-l-ʿUmmāl [The Revolution and Workers]*, 10.
[74] Hasso, *Resistance, Repression, and Gender Politics in Occupied Palestine and Jordan*, 21.

In the aftermath of its schismatic period from 1968–1969, the PFLP, through Habash's speech, sought to assure this politically conscious base that its politburo, fighters, and central executive committee recognized that the contemporary experiences of the Palestinian people, in alignment with those of other great revolutions in the world, all pointed to the necessity of a working-class Palestinian revolution. In breaking down what he calls the PFLP's "scientific" conclusion about the nature of the Palestinian revolution, Habash asserted:

> We have given the revolution a hundred and one definitions. However, all these definitions do not differ in their one fundamental essence: every revolution in history is a revolution of the exploited against the exploiters, a revolution of the oppressed against the oppressors, a revolution of the poor and the miserable against those that cause their poverty, misery, and misfortune.[75]

Whereas earlier PFLP communications had emphasized the central role of Israel and neocolonialism in oppressing the Palestinians, Habash's words marked a shift toward a more capacious division of the world into revolutionary and anti-revolutionary camps. Habash, in applying a strictly materialist analysis of the Palestinian crisis, thereby identified *anyone* who exploited the Palestinian people, be it Israeli occupiers, American companies, or Arab capitalists as enemies of the Palestinian revolution. This more overtly Marxist orientation appeared elsewhere in Habash's address, as he identified the Arab "bourgeois-capitalist-feudalist" class forcing the Palestinian working class, which had "no means of production, no capital, no land, no machines" to live in inhumane exploitative conditions in which they are forced to "sell their labor at the lowest prices."[76] Contrary to the claims made by some scholars that the PFLP shallowly culled global revolutionary leftist writers for practical information on guerrilla tactics

[75] Ḥabash, *Al-Thawra Wa-l-ʿUmmāl [The Revolution and Workers]*, 8.
[76] Ḥabash, 9–10, 17.

while largely ignoring their calls for social and economic justice, Habash's speech demonstrated a deeper understanding of the material origins of Palestinian exploitation.[77] As a people in exile, the Palestinians working and peasant classes were deprived of land and capital, not simply as the result of some abstract post-feudal material dialectic, but also in unique rapid and dramatic successive dispossessions in 1948 and 1967 that distinguished them from other post-colonial proletariats.[78] Moreover, unlike many contemporary PFLP documents, this address to Palestinian workers was largely devoid of any lengthy discussion of armed popular conflict and instead focused, without explicitly calling the Palestinians a proletariat people (the PFLP would begin using this term widely after this address), on the historical materialist linkages between the physical destruction of Palestinian society, represented by the Israeli occupation, and its socio-economic destruction, represented by Israeli, foreign, and Arab capitalists' exploitation of this society. Indeed, Habash's speech marked the beginning of the PFLP's most important ideological intervention within the Palestinian liberation movement: the synthesis of classical pan-Arab nationalism anti-colonial struggle with Marxist-Leninist class struggle at a practical scale within the resistance movement.

Critics of this last assertion might argue that the PDFLP, or at least the *Hurriyya* group from which it was born, were the true innovators of this Palestinian nationalist-leftist synthesis. To be sure, even Habash's address reveals the indelible mark of the *Hurriyya* group's February 1969 statement, as he drew careful distinctions between the exploited Palestinian working class and the exploitative Palestinian bourgeoisie, whom he described as a fundamentally anti-revolutionary force. Recall that one of the main critiques by the *Hurriyya* group against Habash

[77] Hudson, "Developments and Setbacks in the Palestinian Resistance Movement 1967-1971," 78; Sayigh and Shlaim, *The Cold War and the Middle East*, 126–27.
[78] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 22.

and his cohort was that the latter group were members of the petite-bourgeoisie who were too willing to work with elements of the Palestinian haute-bourgeoisie and other capitalist classes within the Arab national liberation movement. In response to this critique and to distance the post-schisms PFLP from Palestinian elite economic classes, Habash offered in one of his speech's most biting lines a refutation of the possibility of solidarity with the Palestinian bourgeoisie: "There can be no unified class between the blood of the martyrs — the blood of the working class in the Occupied Territories — and a wedding dress that costs one hundred thousand dinars."[79] However, unlike the PDFLP, the PFLP was more willing to explore opportunities for other types of cross-class solidarity, outside the polar ends of the Marxist class spectrum, in the interest of national liberation, thereby making its nationalist-Marxist-Leninist synthesis more lasting and appealing to a broader base. Habash acknowledged in 1970 that "the student, the lawyer, the shop keeper," all members of the petite-bourgeoisie, could contribute to national liberation so long as they recognized the revolutionary leadership of the working class.[80] A far cry from the *Hurriyya* group's blaming of the 1967 defeat on the Arab petite-bourgeoisie, Habash's speech allowed for an alliance between the pre-1967 nationalist school of revolutionaries, represented by the ANM, and the new nationalist-Marxist-Leninist hybrid revolutionary school, led by the PFLP.

Creating a Revolutionary Cadre

The PFLP continued to theorize its role as the head of a working-class revolution between 1969–1970 as it sought to evolve from a frontal guerrilla apparatus into an institutionalized and highly

[79] Ḥabash, *Al-Thawra Wa-l-ʿUmmāl [The Revolution and Workers]*, 14.
[80] Ḥabash, 20.

organized working-class party, albeit one with extensive operational and military capacities. In September 1969, the PFLP's Central Committee created the Front's Cadre School, a joint military and political educational program for the organization's fighters. The first classes of the Cadre School opened on February 1, 1970, and its first graduating class completed the full program by June 21, 1970. The Cadre School embodied the Front's move toward the melding of practical tactical and strategic military training with ideological and political educations as its contribution to elevating the effectiveness of Palestinian resistance fighters. As George Habash remarked in a speech at the first graduation ceremony of the Cadre School:

> The employment of the theoretical and practical potential and energy that the members of this class possess, in the service of our revolutionary work, both military and political, theoretical, and practical, inevitably raises the level of the apparatus of *fida'iyyin* work and that of the popular resistance, as well as the various apparatuses of the party and the Popular Front. [81]

This emphasis on the symbiosis of the theoretical and the practical within the fighting cadres reflected the Front's anxiety about its fighters' effectiveness after a series of military setbacks in Gaza and the West Bank,[82] in which large numbers of PFLP operatives had either been killed or captured by Israeli forces. At the heart of these defeats, in the estimation of the PFLP's leadership, was the fighting cadres' lack of class consciousness. Instead, prior to the creation of the Cadre School, many of the Front's fighters had ideological commitments "tantamount to spontaneous commitment and class commitment," which meant that they could lead military

[81] *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]*, 16.
[82] See Chapter 2 for detailed account of PFLP's military misfortunes in the Occupied Territories, 1967-1970.

operations, but were unable to create "a revolutionary climate, center, or party."[83] While fretting about their fighters' ability to tie political consciousness to their military operations, the PFLP Central Committee also recognized that the university graduates within its ranks (café intellectuals of PDFLP ilk) lacked the real-world experience of guerilla warfare to connect with the fighting cadres. The leadership complained that these intellectuals spoke in a language that was foreign to that of the fighters and completely disconnected from their daily struggles.[84] To address this issue, some of these intellectuals were sent to train in the Front's forward bases in the Jordan Valley with the mission of creating battle-hardened PFLP scholars. However, the Front's leadership soon admitted that this experiment had quickly failed due to "the nature of the intellectuals and the shortness of fighting-breath among some of them."[85]

Disappointed with the softness of its intellectuals, the Popular Front then reversed its initial experiment by taking battle hardened fighters from its earlier campaigns within the Occupied Territories and sending them to the fledgling Cadre School to receive a formal political education in Marxism-Leninism. The instructors at the Cadre School adapted their ideological curriculum to the experiences of these fighters, moving away from purely theoretical and philosophical discussions toward examples of Marxist-Leninist principles applied to the reality of Arab experience. In keeping with its commitment toward the synthesis of armed and ideological struggle, this leftist education was supplemented by continued class-conscious military strategy from elsewhere in the Global South, as lessons in military strategy, guerrilla

[83] *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]*, 4–5.
[84] Sharabi, "Liberation or Settlement," 39.
[85] *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]*, 7.

tactics, and long-term people's war were taken directly from the writings of Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Ernesto "Che" Guevara."[86]

In the eyes of the PFLP's leadership, the Cadre School was seen as a crucial vehicle for helping the Popular Front transition from a petit-bourgeois organization into a proletariat Marxist-Leninist Party. Moreover, it was through the education of these fighters that the PFLP most explicitly worked at defining its ideological concepts. In his speech at the inaugural graduation ceremony of the Cadre School, George Habash addressed this need for conceptual clarity by defining what the Left meant to the PFLP Central Committee:

> The Left means life amongst the masses, with wretchedness, misery, and deprivation. We make ourselves wretched to make the masses happy and we die to protect the masses and enable them to succeed against their class enemies. The wretched and deprived masses, the oppressed masses, and the exploited masses, these are the ones in our conscience and in our understanding: the workers, peasants, and petite-bourgeoisie living in the cities, here in Amman and most of the deprived masses in the camps: those wretched, miserable, and anguishing camps of the Palestinian homeless. Indeed, this picture that we see and live daily requires us to note here that the class that stands above all the other revolutionary classes is the working class.[87]

For the PFLP, being leftist required fighters and party leaders to share the experience of the revolution's base: the working class. However, the PFLP's adaptation of traditional Marxist-Leninist understandings of the working class—as either mobilized urban industrial workers or rural peasantry—was inflected by the Palestinian collective experience of exile. As a result, the

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[86] *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]*, 9–10; Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive*, 19–20.
[87] *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]*, 20.

Palestinian toiling masses*, qua* revolutionary base, could encompass refugees of all economic classes, including workers, peasants, the unemployed, and petit-bourgeois intellectuals, whose shared experience of exile in the refugee camps sufficiently radicalized them to participate in the Palestinian revolution. Collective experiences of suffering in these camps, in the *fida'i* military bases, and on the front lines of the Front's battles became the metric for class solidarity, which the PFLP viewed as necessary for its transformation into a proletariat party.

PFLP: A Proletariat Party?

The question of what a Palestinian proletariat party should look like became the central issue for the Front's ideological development at the beginning of the 1970s. After the split of the Hawatmeh group in February 1969, the senior leadership of the PFLP took the charge by the PDFLP that the Front was a petit-bourgeois party very seriously. This sentiment was evinced by the Front's reference to itself in its 1971 Internal Regulations—a PFLP constitution of sorts—as a radical petit-bourgeois organization going through a state of transition. In this document, the PFLP viewed its radical petit-bourgeois status through the prism of vanguardism, arguing that the Front could mobilize politically conscious elements from the working class, peasantry, petite-bourgeoisie, intellectuals, and soldiers as a vanguard for a future truly working-class party led by the proletariat.[88] This "big-tent" conceptualization of the proletariat masses by the PFLP allowed it to address the widest possible heterogenous base within Palestinian society while still maintaining a class-based ideological metric for claiming political authority against their rivals.

[88] See Article 4, *Al-Niẓām al-Dākhilī [Internal Regulations]*, 6.

This worldview was particularly evident in the Jordanian sphere, where the PFLP had to contend with the influence of patrician West Bank elites who worked under the supervision of either the Hashemite regime or the Israeli occupying forces. Even after the events of the 1970 Black September War, PFLP leaders like George Habash continued to attack such leaders through the rhetoric of class struggle. In an impromptu speech delivered to students at the Arab University in Beirut on March 18, 1973, George Habash singled out two Palestinian politicians, Anwar Nusseibeh and Muhammad ʿAli al-Jaʿbari, as strangers to the PFLP's proletariat base, arguing:

> By the masses I do not mean people like al-Jaʿbari and Anwar Nusseibeh, for they do not belong to the masses of our Palestinian people. They are the dregs of the 4 per cent that are always to be found in the class formation in all backward countries. The masses of our Palestinian people are the 96 per cent.[89]

Al-Jaʿbari, a notable West Bank Islamic jurist and politician, was likely singled out by Habash because he had successfully run for the office of mayor in Hebron the year prior despite the PLO's boycott of these elections. At issue, in the eyes of the PLO and the PFLP, were that these elections had been conducted under the auspices of the Israeli occupation authorities. In the case of Anwar Nusseibeh, the West Bank politico had benefited politically under the Hashemites during their occupation of the West Bank and had been very critical of the PLO during the Black September conflict. What is important to note here is that the PFLP thought capaciously about its proletariat base and was unconcerned with limiting its mobilized masses to working and peasantry classes. In identifying its base of support, commitment to the Palestinian revolution,

[89] George Habash, "Speech by the Secretary-General of the Central Committee of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, George Habbash, at the Arab University, Beirut, March 18, 1973.," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, no. 4 (1973): 175.

rather that formal class affiliation mattered more to the PFLP, as evinced in the same speech by Habash when he explained, "The masses of our Palestinian people are the poor masses of our people in the camps, the working class, the peasants, the students, revolutionary intellectuals, doctors and lawyers, all honourable patriotic people."[90]

However, both the vanguardist and broad class lenses through which the Front saw its political orientation were always inflected with the pan-Arab nationalist pedigrees of the PFLP's Central Committee. Whereas prior to 1967, the ANM had defined pan-Arab national unity as the political, social, and economic unity of the Arab states against the forces of neocolonialism, the PLO, immediately after the 1967 War, tried to define national unity as coordinated action between the leadership cadres of the various guerrilla groups. The PFLP, in the seventies, began to define national unity in class terms. No longer represented as a union among states, national unity for the PFLP represented cohesion among the Arab working class under the framework of a unified program.[91] This program would be defined by a proletariat-party created by the PFLP in February 1969: the Arab Socialist Action Party (ASAP).

Yezid Sayigh has argued that the PFLP created ASAP to affirm its ANM roots in defiance of the *Hurriyya* group's accusations of nationalist chauvinism as well as to confirm the leftward evolution of the Front's ideology. The PFLP was supposed to be merely a branch of the party and a part of its central leadership, but the Iraqi, Syrian, Jordanian, and Saudi Arabian branches of ASAP were so minute as to make the party and the PFLP virtually the same entity. Sayigh points to these structural details about ASAP to argue that the PFLP's professed mission to become a Marxist-Leninist party lacked a political basis and masked the Front's continued

[90] Habash, 175.
[91] *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]*, 35–36.

"rightist" and "bourgeois" character.[92] His analysis, however, based on PFLP documents and interviews from the 1980s, eschews more contemporary accounts from the late 1960s and early 1970s in which the PFLP truly grappled with how an organized, disciplined, and mobilized Palestinian proletariat party might be achieved. For example, in its February 1969 report on the organization's political and organizational strategy, the PFLP affirmed, "Scientific socialist thought is what makes the working class conscious of its existence, conditions and future, and therefore it is able to mobilize the forces of this class to the highest limits."[93] Likewise, even as late as 1972, ASAP reports continued to describe the party's official orientation as Marxist-Leninist and defined its struggle not in nationalist terms (Arabs vs. Israel), but rather in class terms with the expressed goal of "overthrowing capitalist regimes, bourgeois dictatorships, and feudalists" through the actualization of socialist slogans like "he who does not work does not eat" and "from each according to their abilities and to each according to their actions."[94] To be sure, the ASAP quickly faded from political relevance but, contrary to Sayigh's assertion, there was no simultaneous abandonment of Marxist-Leninist principles within the PFLP. Instead, the Popular Front continued to explore ways in which the Front could serve as an organization that could facilitate leftist political, economic, and educational reform within Palestinian society.

Experimentation with Social Revolution: PFLP and Gender, Education, and Social Work

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine viewed itself as a national framework through which the Palestinian people could realize their goal of liberation by confronting backwardness

[92] Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, 233.
[93] *Al-Istirātījiyya al-Siyāsiyya Wa-l-Tanẓīmiyya [The Political and Organizational Strategy]* (Amman: al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, Dāʾirat al-Iʿlām al-Markazī, 1970), 26.
[94] *Ḥizb Al-ʿAml al-Ishtirākī al-ʿArabī - Lubnān: Al-Niẓām al-Dākhilī [The Arab Socialist Action Party - Lebanon: Internal Regulations]* (Beirut, 1972), 5–6.

(*takhalluf*), poverty, and exploitation via a democratic and socialist revolution.[95] Yet to what extent did the PFLP pursue practical steps to change Palestinian society at the grassroots level in accordance with Marxist-Leninist principles? Up until this point, I have examined the political discourses happening within the PFLP and between the PFLP and its various rival factions over theoretical concepts and ideological definitions. In this section, I will examine how the PFLP experimented with revolutionary *praxis* as it sought to create a democratic and socialist Palestinian society that would be better equipped to pursue the Front's primary goal of the physical liberation of Palestine.

Women's liberation and participation was a major preoccupation for the Front as it sought to combine its class-based armed revolution with progressive social revolution within Palestinian society. Though its respective membership was numerically smaller than that of Fatah, the PFLP played an outsized roles in the discussion of women's liberation and their role in the revolution. As argued by Julie Peteet, though the PFLP may not have differed substantially in practice from Fatah in advancing women's causes, it did appear to have a "more coherent analysis recognizing the moral dimension of the issue and the need for consciousness raising."[96] Despite the outsized impact of the Palestinian Left on the development of the Palestinian women's liberation movement, surprisingly little attention has been given in Western scholarship to women guerillas (*fidaʾiyyat*) in the PFLP. An early important milestone in the Palestinian women's movement preceded the creation of the PFLP by a few years, when in 1964 the PLO established the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) to organize the national resistance efforts of female members. The creation of the GUPW signaled the transition within the Palestinian women's movement from involvement exclusively in social charities to political

[95] See Article 7, *Al-Niẓām al-Dākhilī [Internal Regulations]*, 8.
[96] Peteet, *Gender in Crisis Women and the Palestinian Resistance Movement*, 164.

activism in the broader national liberation struggle. In the wake of the 1967 War, the leadership of the GUPW, like that of the rest of the PLO, became dominated by members of the guerilla (*fidaʾi*) political factions, who viewed the social transformation of Palestinian society as coterminous with political and armed revolution against the Israeli occupation.[97] As such, the GUPW's membership ratios mirrored those of the party membership in the PLO, with Fateh taking most seats and therefore dominating the agenda of the union. Fateh members with close ties to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat came to control the leadership of the GUPW, including Salwa Abu Khadra, a member of Fateh's Revolutionary Council and GUPW General-Secretary, and May Sayigh, a notable Palestinian poet and General Secretary of the GUPW from 1974-1985. However, after the 1970-1971 Black September War between the Jordanian Hashemite Monarchy and the PLO's *fidaʾiyyin* that resulted in the latter's expulsion to Beirut, a new generation of leftist women came to influence the GUPW. In addition to May Sayigh, Palestinian Marxist party members like the PFLP's Leila Khaled and DFLP's Nihaya Muhammad joined the Women Union's new headquarters in the Fakahani district of Beirut. Non-Palestinian women committed to Palestinian liberation were also welcomed into the upper echelons of the union including Jordanian filmmaker and author Khadija Abu Ali (Fatah; née: Habashneh) and Jordanian sculptor Mona Saudi (PFLP).[98] This new generation of women would prove to be deeply influential over the trajectory of the GUPW's political development, particularly those members from the PFLP and DFLP, who would push for the complete integration of women into the armed cadres of the PLO.[99]

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[97] Amal Kawar, *Daughters of Palestine: Leading Women of the Palestinian National Movement* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 29.
[98] Soraya Antonius, "Fighting on Two Fronts: Conversations with Palestinian Women," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 8, no. 3 (April 1, 1979): 26–45; Kawar, *Daughters of Palestine*.
[99] Ḥabāshna, *Introduction to Women's Reality*; Sarḥān, "Traditionalism of Palestinian Women in Lebanon," 159–67.

In the first years of its existence, the PFLP touted its ability to primarily recruit women from the younger generation, and an examination of the photos of the training camps in Lebanon and Jordan from 1968-1975 included in *al-Hadaf* shows that the Front wanted its image to be that of progressive youth. Young women can be seen marching in formation, leaping through obstacles courses, and performing drills with rifles in front of large audiences.[100] This PFLP focus on recruiting women in their late teens and twenties is unsurprising considering that the primary demographics from which they recruited were universities and the PFLP- and GUPW-sponsored vocational workshops that taught refugee women professional skills.[101] According to Souad Dajani, the inability of Palestinian families to sustain themselves in the wake of the 1948 dispossession created "openings" for women that raised their awareness of their social and political situation through these workshops. The expansion of the Israeli occupation in 1967 resulted in the "proletarianization" of Palestinian men and women as they were stripped of their lands and livelihoods and forced by their circumstances to join the Israeli labor force alongside Palestinian men.[102]

Though the military exploits of PFLP women would garner a lot of media attention in the early seventies, the Front's female members also participated in a wide array of non-violent resistance against the Zionist settler-colonialism.[103] For example, female students from Nablus, Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Gaza took part in volatile demonstrations in 1969 against the occupation. The Front's leadership lauded these collective actions as being "side by side with the

[100] "Al-Marʾa al-Filasṭīniyya Fī Lahīb al-Kifāḥ al-Mussalaḥ [The Palestinian Woman in the Blaze of the Armed Fight]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 6 (August 30, 1969).
[101] Sarḥān, "Traditionalism of Palestinian Women in Lebanon," 142–55.
[102] Souad Dajani, "Between National and Social Liberation," in *Women and the Israeli Occupation*, ed. Tamar Mayer (New York: Routledge, 1994), 38; Amal Samed, "The Proletarianization of Palestinian Women in Israel," *MERIP Reports*, no. 50 (1976): 10–26, https://doi.org/10.2307/3010884.
[103] See Chapter 2 for more detail on the role of Palestinian women in the PFLP's military operations (*ʿamaliyyat*).

armed operations of the men of the resistance in every part of the Palestinian lands."[104] At the Gaza protest, which was aimed at ending arbitrary arrests, eleven women were killed by enemy bullets. The Gaza protests marked a new chapter in Palestinian women's collective action, in which the righteousness of *sumud* was replaced by the female heroic ideal represented by the women in the register of the revolution (*sijil al-thawra*), a secular adaptation of extant practices regarding martyrdom remembrance.[105] Reflecting this point, *al-Hadaf* characterized the demonstration as a "competition between two generations in the struggle against the usurper - A generation that believes in the living 'past' and a generation that hastens to craft the future upon the size of its hopes and ambitions," suggesting a progressive telos in line with the Front's Marxist ethic and in which a new generation's awakening signaled the end of the previous generation's bourgeois responses to the occupation.[106] This juxtaposition of the revolutionary younger generation of women against a more stagnant older generation paralleled the increasing generational ideological tensions within the Front that eventually led to its schismatic period in the late sixties.

Contemporary studies of the Palestinian female revolutionaries, like Khadija Habashneh's *An Introduction to Women's Reality and Their Experience in the Palestinian Revolution*, were particularly laudatory of the PFLP's relatively progressive stance within the PLO toward training women revolutionaries.[107] In the book, Habashneh explains that the PFLP initially struggled with articulating a clear program for women within the organization and instead issued generic theoretical proposals about the equality of men and women, which although going beyond the mores of Palestinian society at the time, remained outside the realm

[104] "The Palestinian Woman in the Blaze of the Armed Fight," 11.
[105] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine*.
[106] "The Palestinian Woman in the Blaze of the Armed Fight," 11.
[107] Ḥabāshna, *Introduction to Women's Reality*.

of practice. To address this weakness, the PFLP began circulating a booklet in 1970 under the title "The Revolution and the Issue of Women's Liberation."[108] The booklet espoused equality between men and women in rights and duties and offered an economic analysis for the oppression of women grounded in class struggle. However, the booklet also effectively erased the differences in men and women's lived experience in its analysis by positing that there was no separate revolution for men and women, but rather one revolution for all people. The booklet reduced women's freedom to economic empowerment, going so far as to say, "the sewing machine is one of the weapons of the PFLP against Zionism, along with the Kalashnikov, and it is a tool of emancipation for women, in that economic liberation forms the foundation for the liberation of women."[109] This specific lauding of the sewing machine was connected to the women's workshops and professional training centers established by the PFLP as early as 1969 as loci for recruitment in the camps. Regular contributors to *al-Hadaf,* including Stephen Beckman, a radical leftist Swedish writer and PFLP affiliate, had lauded the revolutionary significance of the sewing machine for women, arguing, "Sewing machines are one of the weapons of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine against Zionism alongside Kaloshnikovs and Carlos' [submachine gun]...These women, when they learn to sew, can play a role in society…when women have employment like men, men will not be able to say that she must do whatever he wishes."[110] Though Beckman claimed to advocate for economic empowerment and gender equality, his and other articles demonstrated the PFLP's continued division of revolutionary work into gendered spheres. Men were not encouraged to take up the

[108] *Al-Thawra Wa Qaḍiyyat Taḥarrur al-Mar'a [The Revolution and the Issue of Women's Liberation]* (Amman: al-Jabha al-Sha'biyya li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, 1970).
[109] Ḥabāshna, *Introduction to Women's Reality*, 71.
[110] al-Khalīlī, *al-Marʾa al-Filasṭīniyya wa-al-thawra: dirāsa ijtimāʿīyya maydānīyya taḥlīlīyya [The Palestinian Woman and the Revolution: a social, field, and analytical study]*, 126.

sewing machine alongside their female comrades nor were women being invited to lead trade unions or politburos. In a nod to the more conservative elements of the PFLP base, the Front also explicitly rejected what it called Western understandings of women's liberation, which it claimed focused on the commodification of women by sexualizing them and transforming them into capitalist consumers.[111]

The Front was deeply preoccupied with affirming practice as the "decisive criterion" for its theoretical propositions and so outlined policy goals in "The Revolution and the Issue of Women's Liberation." Some of these aims were both ambitious and vague in their scope, including a call for the maturation of ideological and political growth for the Front's women's cadre and the crystallization of the women's cadres' organizational role in the internal regulatory and leadership bodies of the PFLP at all levels. Other goals were more programmatic, calling for women's outreach efforts in the camps and villages to identify social problems and the expansion of a women's movement in universities and schools that would replace the "autocratic and bourgeois" women's movements found there. The Front also called for literacy and women's health education campaigns in the camps and villages as well as the coordination of the women's cadres' activities with those of the Front's youth and student organizations to broaden the organizational relationship with the Arab and Palestinian masses. Finally, the booklet proposed a rather detailed list of ways for women to become involved in the Front's military operations (*ʿamaliyyat).* These proposals included calls for the training of women in the use of different weapons, citing the party's mantra that all political members are fighters, and all fighters are political members. In addition, the Front proposed the building of bridges with the female masses in the countryside and cities of the Occupied Territories to train them for military actions against

[111] *Al-Thawra Wa Qaḍiyyat Taḥarrur al-Mar'a [The Revolution and the Issue of Women's Liberation]*, 6.

the enemy as well as espionage, intelligence-gathering, and logistical operations. These same women's military cadres would supposedly also encourage passive resistance (*sumud)* in these territories through public strikes and demonstrations.[112] Here, the Front seems to have broadened its call to action by relying on gendered notions of passive resistance, refashioning domestic spaces as revolutionary sites of nationalism and militarism, thereby recasting politically unaffiliated women in camps as auxiliary extensions of the Front's political activism.[113]

Women were also vital contributors to the expansion of the PFLP's social and political activities in refugee communities as they set up workshops and professional training centers for women that became epicenters of recruitment for the Front in Jordan and Lebanon. These PFLP workshops, which differed little from those of the GUPW and Fatah, were set up in the Schneller, Wahdat, Husein, Baqaa, Madaba and Zarqa camps in Jordan. In Lebanon, women's production centers were set up in Burj al-Barajneh, Sidon, Tyre, and Baalbek. Like Habashneh's study, al-Khalili's report identified these centers as important loci for the political education and mobilization of women and empowered Palestinian women by freeing them from financial dependence on men.[114] These workshops provided one to two months of work-related courses to women in sewing, embroidery, and first aid, along with political instruction and weapons training. According to one study from this period, the typical workday at one of these workshops was organized as follows: an hour for the study of Marxist-Leninist theory, two hours of practical studies, an hour of weapons training, education, and first aid. Sweaters, sewing, and

[112] Ḥabāshna, *Introduction to Women's Reality*, 72.
[113] Julie Marie Peteet, "Women and the Palestinian Movement: No Going Back?," in *Women and Power in the Middle East*, ed. Suad Joseph and Susan Slyomovics (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 137.
[114] al-Khalīlī, *al-Marʾa al-Filasṭīniyya wa-al-thawra: dirāsa ijtimāʿīyya maydānīyya taḥlīlīyya [The Palestinian Woman and the Revolution: a social, field, and analytical study]*, 125–26.

embroidery produced by these workshops were sold at discounted prices in the camps to pay for raw materials and cover the full-time salaries of the workshops' instructors.[115]

Palestinian women intensified their social efforts in the Lebanese camps with the transfer of the PLO's headquarters to Beirut after Black September, investing resources in vocation centers and kindergartens in the ʿAyn al-Hilweh camp and al-Badawi camps. The Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Foundation, established by the PFLP in the Burj al-Barajneh district of Beirut following the assassination of the author in July 1972, also included a kindergarten. During the Lebanese Civil War, PFLP-run schools like the Ghassan Kanafani School provided children with a safe space to study as the Front provided security services to the students and teachers.[116] The school's administrators focused on creating what they called a non-traditional curriculum that focused on revolutionary education for both girls and boys. As one teacher at the school noted, this revolutionary curriculum was designed to fill the gaps in the instruction provided to students in the UNRWA schools in the camps, which she claimed failed to teach anything about Palestinian history or geography. The topics taught at the Ghassan Kanafani School, primarily by women comrades in the Front, included Arabic language, mathematics, history, geography, and society. As noted in one *al-Hadaf* exposé on the school, lessons were adapted to reflect the revolutionary ideals of the PFLP and instill children with radicalized political consciousness. In Arabic class, explanatory sentences like "The boy took the apple" were replaced by "The young man carries the rifle." History and social studies lessons focused on themes of mobilization and guidance. Even coloring classes at the kindergarten level focused on teaching children the colors

[115] Ghāzī Khūrshīd, "Al-Muqāwama al-Filasṭīniyya Wa-l-ʿAml al-Ijtamāʿī [The Palestinian Revolution and Social Work]," *Shuʾūn Filasṭīniyya*, no. 6 (January 1972): 119.
[116] Lamīs, "Madrasat Ghassān Kanafānī: Ḥaithū Yubanī Ṣarḥ al-Mustabal [The Ghassan Kanafani School: Where the Future's Edifice Is Built]," *Al-Hadaf* 8, no. 376 (November 6, 1976): 32–34.

of the Palestinian flag and their meanings.[117] Though under the supervision of a male director, the teaching staff of the Ghassan Kanafani school was almost entirely female, demonstrating the central role that women in the Front played in the education, mobilization, and radicalization of the Palestinian revolutionary Left's next generation of fighters.

However, for all the PFLP's public professions of ideological commitment to the women's issue, one cannot stress enough the small scale of actual women's participation in the Front's leadership circles and general membership. Furthermore, despite the PFLP's incorporation of a limited number of educated middle-class women into its cohorts, the faction was never able to expand its women's liberation mission to a broader base. According to Khadija Abu ʿAli's interviews with members of the Front, the organization of women in most areas, except for some training camps, was experimental and often came up against the "backward reality" (*al-waqiʿ al-mutakhallif*) in society. The PFLP often used the term "backwardness" in its communications to obliquely refer to firm patriarchal control that characterized most family structures in the refugee camps and which prevented young women from joining the Front's co-ed training bases.[118] Yet the PFLP could not blame Palestinian conservative society entirely for the limited scope of its women's cadres, as Abu ʿAli claims that some PFLP leaders prevented their own wives from participating in the party's operation or even from working in general.[119]

Even for those women who were able to join the ranks of the Front, the party's Marxist-Leninist ideology often failed to translate into tangible programming for women. Ghazi al-Khalili's 1977 study concludes its section on the PFLP by admitting that "the declaration of the

[117] Lamīs, 33–34.
[118] *Al-Thawra Wa Qaḍiyyat Taḥarrur al-Mar'a [The Revolution and the Issue of Women's Liberation]*, 25, 33; "Al-Taqrīr al-Siyāsī al-Asāsī Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya Li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's Basic Political Report]," 656; Ḥabash, *Al-Thawra Wa-l-ʿUmmāl [The Revolution and Workers]*, 12–13.
[119] Ḥabāshna, *Introduction to Women's Reality*, 73.

commitment to Marxism-Leninism as a method and way of thought does not solve the problem and does not offer any practical solutions if this commitment is not accompanied by the implementation of a clear plan of action for women's work in a backward society like our own."[120] Sometimes, the Front's own Marxist-Leninist orientation was used to create an environment that was hostile to the limited number of women who joined the cadres. Julie Peteet argues that patriarchal control found in the camps, villages, and cities extended to the political arena where ridicule, censorship, and negative labeling were used to keep women from escaping existing gender norms and advancing in the ranks. Within the PLO, the term "loose woman" was used against female members who interacted with men "too easily," thereby stifling their fledgling political participation. In leftist parties like the PFLP and PDFLP, the term "bourgeois" was used to silence women when they tried to distinguish women's issues from general nationalist or class issues.[121] As was the case with many Marxist-Leninist organizations around the world at that time, the PFLP's insistence on class as the superior hermeneutic for assessing the efficacy of social policy often came at the expense of serious inquiry into the ways gender intersected with class to form pernicious and often ignored forms of exploitation within Palestinian society.

The PFLP also made some inroads into social work, which complimented its ideological mission to raise class consciousness and knowledge of Marxism-Leninism among the Palestinian masses with tangible social programming and institution building. The PFLP viewed its social work not as charity but rather as a gateway for achieving its dream of a left-wing Marxist-Leninist Party led by the Palestinian proletariat. It aimed, therefore, to have each of its social

[120] al-Khalīlī, *al-Marʾa al-Filasṭīniyya wa-al-thawra: dirāsa ijtimāʿīyya maydānīyya taḥlīlīyya [The Palestinian Woman and the Revolution: a social, field, and analytical study]*, 126.
[121] Peteet, "Women and the Palestinian Movement: No Going Back?," 141.

programs serve both the masses' material needs as well as what the Front viewed as their ideological deficiencies. For example, the PFLP viewed medicine as an important literal front in the effort to court the masses and bring them into its ranks. Recall that two of the Front's founders, George Habash and Wadiʿ Haddad, were trained physicians who had initially been radicalized in 1948 while serving in medical clinics set up in 1948 for Palestinians displaced by the war.[122] However, in keeping with its Marxist-Leninist orientation, the PFLP viewed most Arab doctors as tools of the bourgeois classes since their services were focused on urban centers of capital accumulation like Beirut, Amman, and Cairo rather than in the villages and camps where they were most needed. In response, the PFLP formed mobile medical centers in 1969, which began providing services to the Front's bases and surrounding villages and towns. In addition to medical services and the creation of medical records for PFLP fighters and supporters, these mobile clinics also offered workshops to peasants on methods of collective farming.[123] Thus, the PFLP blurred the lines between the physical and economic care of its followers, preferring to view all its social services as part of a broad continuum of entry points for raising the political consciousness of the Palestinian masses. Many of these mobile clinics were shut down after the Black September War and the Jordanian government's subsequent suppression of all *fidaʾi* activity within the kingdom.

The PFLP also set up stationary medical clinics focused on public health education and preventative medicine. These clinics were also established in 1969 and provided medical care to the camps around Amman and to rural populations. More serious cases could be referred to the Front's official medical headquarters in Amman, which contained a pharmacy and was staffed by

[122] George Habash discussed this moment of radicalization in an interview with the journalist and fellow former doctor Oriana Fallaci. See Fallaci, "A Leader of the Fedayeen: 'We Want a War like the Vietnam War.'"
[123] Khūrshīd, "Al-Muqāwama al-Filasṭīniyya Wa-l-ʿAml al-Ijtamāʿī [The Palestinian Revolution and Social Work]," 115–16.

specialists. Known as "The Amman Clinic Group," this PFLP network of preventative care facilities was supported, both financially and in terms of medical equipment, by donations from progressive governments from around the world. The PFLP's Young Women's Apparatus, a social services branch of the Front that mobilized young, educated women to work with refugees in the camps, spearheaded a series of preventative care and hygiene lectures that were carried out at these stationary clinics and in home visits within the camps.[124] These stationary clinics were also shut down in Jordan after Black September. In Lebanon, the Front established Tel al-Zaʿatar Camp Medical Center on December 5, 1970, which provided general first aid and consultations with doctors several times a week. By 1971, this clinic was serving 20-25 patients a day and the total number of patients that visited the clinic between 1970-1971 reached 1,575 individuals, or about 810 families according to the clinic's own statistics on patient records. The Tel al-Zaʿatar Camp Medical Center was funded by donations from the Front's supporters and its own budget, which it secured through donations gathered by the clinics central committee and from token payments collected by the clinic for its services, usually in the amount of one Lebanese lira. At this center, the Front performed a variety of essential medical tasks for the refugee population including organizing medical records for families, providing medical treatment, securing medicine when possible, raising health awareness via public education provided by doctors and social workers, and visiting the sick in their homes to raise awareness around preventative medicine. The PFLP also set up other clinics in Lebanon like those that it had operated in Jordan, including medical centers in the Shatila and Burj al-Barajneh camps. The Popular Front's clinic in ʿAyn Hilweh Camp, opened in November 1969, was able to treat about fifty patients a day and hired a female doctor in October 1971 who specialized in women's and

[124] Khūrshīd, 116.

children's health to work on-site full time.[125] As non-state actors, PFLP medical and social workers at these clinics were attempting to build alternative, more just societies to those operated by the conservative governments in Jordan and Lebanon. Far from being a negative ideology — one formed purely in opposition to Israel, the United States, the Hashemites, etc. — the PFLP's Marxism-Leninism had elements of utopic vision that made positive claims about the way the world could and should be organized to serve the poor and working classes.

The PFLP also made some attempts at organizing peasants within collective farming programs. The Front recognized that peasant farmers, particularly those in the Jordan Valley region, suffered a double form of precarity, both from the exploitation of local large landowners and from the danger of Israeli aerial bombings in the region. In response, the Front attempted to establish a *foquismo* arrangement with the Palestinian peasantry based on the Cuban model, wherein villagers would provide material support to the guerrilla fighters in return for political education and military protection from enemy reprisals.[126] To this end, PFLP members in bases located near agricultural regions began in 1969 to provide lectures on the benefits of cooperative farms and offered to market a portion of the peasants' crops grown in these cooperatives. In return for the remaining income produced by these crop sales, the cooperative farms would provide the PFLP's bases with the supplies its fighters needed. The PFLP also recognized that the fees paid by peasants to use communal ovens owned by large landowners constituted a form of class exploitation, and so began building ovens to be shared by the guerrilla bases and the peasants. These experiments in collective farming continued until July 1971, when Jordanian authorities finally pushed the last remnants of the Palestinian resistance movement out of the

[125] Khūrshīd, 116–17.
[126] *Al-Masīra al-Tārīkhiyya Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical March of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, 71–72.

country. The Hashemite government then took over the collective farms and punished several of the farmers who had cooperated with the Front's collectivizing experiments.[127]

In addition to the elementary education programs established by the PFLP, like the Ghassan Kanafani School previously mentioned, the Front also expanded the adult education services it provided in the camps during the early 1970s. The PFLP hosted literacy classes at social clubs in the class as well as certificate programs and continuing education night classes. In the Front's night school for certificate students in the Shatila Camp between 1969-1970, twelve to fifteen teachers were recruited from local universities to teach 350 men and women. Like its elementary education programs, the PFLP guided the curriculum of these night schools with the goal of teaching subjects it claimed were not approved by the UN Agency schools, particularly Palestinian history and geography as well as current political events in the Arab world. In addition to these night classes, the PFLP also established socio-cultural clubs, sports clubs, and ensembles for Palestinian folk artists in the camps.[128] As sites of experimentation, the refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon provided the PFLP in the early seventies the opportunity to explore the social and economic revolutions that it viewed as vital to the survival of its military struggle against the occupation. Unlike the non-leftist factions in the PLO, the PFLP viewed the social, political, and military realms as intertwined spheres of human activity that had to move in more progressive directions to empower Palestinian society to actualize the physical liberation of Palestine. In its adaptation of Marxism-Leninism, the PFLP believed that the separation of the socio-economic revolution from the people's long-term military struggle would doom both to failure.

[127] Khūrshīd, "Al-Muqāwama al-Filasṭīniyya Wa-l-ʿAml al-Ijtamāʿī [The Palestinian Revolution and Social Work]," 117–18.
[128] Khūrshīd, 119.

Conclusion

The evolution of the PFLP from a nationalistic guerrilla front in 1967 to a more ideologically sophisticated leftist organization in the early seventies capable of blending nationalist, Marxist-Leninist, Maoist, Guevarian, and Palestinian intellectual traditions was marked by a persistent dialectical relationship between the Front's theory and praxis. At its origin, the PFLP was incredibly invested in the intellectual world of Arab nationalist thought, reflecting the idealistic youth of its leadership and the academic milieu from which it emerged. The shocking Arab defeat in the June 1967 War brought a much-needed sobriety to the worldview of the factions within the Palestinian resistance movement, not least the PFLP, which embraced guerilla warfare early on as revolutionary praxis. This armed struggle in turn shaped the Front's thinking, as its younger members emphasized the need to deepen the base for this fight by radicalizing and mobilizing the displaced Palestinian masses. This dialectic between praxis and ideology was neither smooth nor consistent, as evinced by the volatile schisms in 1969 that threatened the viability of the PFLP's role as the primary vehicle for synthesizing Palestinian national liberation with a scientific socialist revolution. Yet the ability of the Popular Front's senior leadership to absorb the criticism of its younger, more leftist members and adapt their Marxist-Leninist ideology into a more sustainable, albeit more conservative, form of popular armed struggle meant that the PFLP continued to influence events in the region at a level that belied the organization's relatively small membership.

Moreover, the PFLP expanded the horizons of possibility for Palestinian liberation at both an operational and utopic level. Operationally, leftist thinkers in the PFLP expanded the literal and theoretical frontline of the Palestinian people's struggle, identifying international

imperialism, US-led neocolonialism, capitalistic exploitation of labor, and Arab reactionary politics as nodes of hostility to a future liberated Palestine that were just as dangerous as the ongoing Israeli occupation. As George Habash reflected at a press conference in Beirut in October 1974, "The palace-dwellers who are linked to imperialism, and those who join with imperialism in exploiting the wealth of peoples and the toil of workers — these regimes and social forces, immersed as they are in a life of luxury, can never follow this course of the revolutionary political line."[129] Such sobering assessments by the PFLP leadership continued to lead to the conclusion that the defeat of these political and class enemies of the Palestinian people would require a long-term people's struggle with a revolutionary endurance that could far outlast the short-sighted military forays of Arab regimes against Israel in 1948 and 1967. In effect, the PFLP was one of the first groups to theorize the sheer scale of the endeavor of Palestinian liberation, placing it within a temporal process that thought about revolution in terms of generations rather than in years or even decades.

At the level of utopia, the Popular Front's ideologues demonstrated that they could frame their Marxist-Leninist theory not only in negative terms (i.e., identifying the class enemies of the Palestinians) but could also provide a constructive vision for the type of Palestinian society that a scientific socialist revolution could achieve. Though limited in scale and tangible outcomes thanks, in part, to the constant state of warfare and displacement that the Front found itself in throughout the seventies, the PFLP's experiments with women's liberation and mobilization, revolutionary education, healthcare, and collectivized farming, nevertheless, represented explorations into the characteristics of a future Palestine. This utopic Palestine, according to

[129] George Habash, "Statement Issued by General Secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Dr. George Habbash, at a Press Conference in Beirut, October 25, 1974 [Excerpts]," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 4, no. 2 (1975): 176.

PFLP thinkers, would be led by a working-class party made up of the politically educated masses who were free from labor exploitation, patriarchy, and economic precarity. Though the PFLP often failed to live up to the ideals represented in this vision, the organization's willingness to frame liberation in these capacious terms indicated that it could develop leftist thought in a Palestinian context through innovative and self-critical theory and praxis.

Chapter 2: The Revolution Will Be Televised: The PFLP and International Public Opinion

On August 29, 1969, Leila Khaled, a twenty-four-year-old operative for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), along with her fellow Haifa-born comrade, Salim Issawi, seized TWA Flight 840 on its Rome – Athens – Tel Aviv route. After the first round of refreshments on the flight had been served, Issawi leapt up to the cockpit, informing the flight crew that the plane had been taken over by the Che Guevara Commando Unit of the PFLP and that the flight was now under the control of a new captain, Shadiyya Abu Ghazala, the code name designated for Khaled in honor of one of the PFLP's earliest female martyrs.[1] Shadiyya Abu Ghazala, born in Nablus, was a schoolteacher who studied at ʿAin Shams University in Cairo and was a member of the Palestinian Women's Union and the Palestinian Students' Union. She was killed at age twenty-one while preparing a bomb for the PFLP on November 21, 1968.

Issawi's main task was then to protect Khaled, who herself was armed with a pistol and grenades, as she ordered the crew to fly the plane to the airport at *al-Lydd* (Lod; Lydda). Upon nearing her birthplace for the first time since her forced exile in 1948, Khaled communicated with the Israeli airport tower over the flight radio in English, proclaiming, "Here we come again. Shadiah Abu Ghaselah [sic.] has come back to life. There are millions of Shadiahs who will be returning again and again to reclaim the land."[2] Khaled's defiant broadcast demonstrates that the Front's tactical organizers were aware of the powerful communications platform that flight radios could give Palestinian guerillas seeking to communicate directly to Israeli and global audiences. By evoking familiar motifs of martyrdom through the figure of Abu Ghazala and that

[1] "The Palestinian Woman in the Blaze of the Armed Fight," 10.
[2] Khaled and Hajjar, *My People Shall Live*, 66.

of return (*ʿawda*) through the promise of millions of Abu Ghazalas, Leila Khaled's communications with the tower crew functioned primarily as a direct act of resistance, and not as a media stunt or bluff as portrayed by some writers.[3] When the tower operators continued to address the flight crew as TWA 840, Khaled, in another act of resistance, ended radio communications until they agreed to address the flight as "Popular Front, Free Arab Palestine." This performative exchange with air traffic control, however, was also a political media preamble to the mission's primary goal, and after viewing the Israeli tanks waiting for them on the tarmac and the three Israeli Mirages tailing the airliner, Khaled directed the crew to fly the plane into Lebanese airspace after a brief "seven-minute tour of the fatherland."[4]

Having lost the Mirages at the border, Khaled then ordered the TWA flight to land at the airport in Damascus, where Issawi blew up the cockpit of the plane after it had been emptied of all passengers and crew. Khaled recalls that the PFLP photographer from the Front's biweekly magazine, *al-Hadaf*, who had been parachuted by the Front into Syria to film the landing and explosion, forgot to remove the lens cap of his camera in the moment's excitement.[5] The presence of the *al-Hadaf* photographer suggests that the PFLP was already thinking about how to capitalize on visual media to raise awareness about the plight of the Palestinian people while at the same time curating an image of agential power for the Front, thereby raising its revolutionary stock amongst the Palestinian masses in the camps and potential financial backers. The PFLP was therefore able to disrupt Israeli and Western commercial interests and cast this act to its multiple audiences as a form of Palestinian triumphant resistance par excellence.

[3] Irving, *Leila Khaled*, 33. Sarah Irving's chapter on the 1969 TWA hijacking relies heavily on Khaled's 1971 memoir, *My People Shall Live.*
[4] Khaled and Hajjar, *My People Shall Live*, 66; Irving, *Leila Khaled*, 33.
[5] Khaled and Hajjar, *My People Shall Live*, 67.

This episode from the PFLP's early period of experimentation with large scale foreign operations (*ʿamaliyyat kharijiyya*) displays many of the features that would come to dominate Palestinian leftist discourses, politics, and practices related to their popular armed anti-colonial and anti-capitalist struggle during this time. The spectacle of a young Palestinian woman commanding a Boeing 707 underscored the Front's early commitment to melding armed struggle with social empowerment along gender and youth axes. Khaled's use of the radio and the references to photography point to the development of a new Palestinian revolutionary aesthetic, curated by the Front's leadership and aimed at communicating PFLP leftist ideology and political programming to audiences not only in the Arab world but also in the United States and Western Europe. The PFLP's leadership, in other words, was aware that it had to address an international audience made up of both sympathizers and antagonists to their cause, which for all the organization's Marxist-Leninist references and gestures at globalized solidarity always remained the physical liberation of Palestine.

Palestinian revolutionary intellectuals, particularly Marxist-Leninist ones, by the nature of their positionality within an increasingly globalized world, also faced an imperative of convincing an audience outside their local base - be it their enemies, allies, or global media - of the righteousness of their cause. This outward turn in the service of locally defined revolutionary outcomes, on a practical level, acted as the vanguard's way of ensuring the durability and security of these outcomes by "normalizing" them, in effect taking what were once aspirational and imagined goals and turning them into real conditions of victory that eventually, in an ideal sense, would end the need for the revolution.

However, in the Palestinian context, this effort by intellectuals to advocate on behalf of the Palestinian people before international institutions like the United Nations has

historically been met not only with the exclusion of these Palestinian experiences from Western narratives regarding the Israeli occupation, but also, as argued by anthropologist Lori Allen, the "obliteration of their [the Palestinians'] own analyses of the causes of those experiences [, which] have reflected and enabled their material and political dispossession for over a century."[6] For Palestinians, the stakes of winning the war of international public opinion are not rhetorical or semiotic. They are existential. As demonstrated by Rashid Khalidi, Palestinian leaders have understood this dispossession not as the result of international neglect in the face of Zionist settler colonialism, but rather a colonial war waged against an indigenous population and abetted by the great powers, particularly the United States and Great Britain.[7] As such, the PFLP's operations were designed to take the battle for liberation globally to capture the attention of government agencies and media outlets that would rather overlook imperialist continuities in a supposed postcolonial era.

And yet, as demonstrated by Allen, the communicative abilities of Palestinian intellectuals have been disparaged in these international forums, in effect continuing the tradition of blaming the victims and "merely reiterating the old canard that the Palestinians never lose an opportunity to lose an opportunity."[8] Recognizing this epistemic burden, in which the political experience of military occupation is seen by their Western interlocutors to "infect their knowledge production," Palestinians within Western-academe, like Fayez Sayegh and Edward Said, have had to make use of "…the credible terms of the dominant discourse…," notably the language of colonialism and liberation, in order to be "heard" by American audiences.[9] In

[6] Lori Allen, "Subaltern Critique and the History of Palestine," in *A Time for Critique*, ed. Didier Fassin and Bernard E. Harcourt (Columbia University Press, 2019), 155.
[7] Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917-2017* (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, 2020), 9, 14.
[8] Allen, "Subaltern Critique and the History of Palestine," 156.
[9] Allen, 154.

contrast, the PFLP refused the credible terms of this dominant discourse and instead tried to communicate internationally through the medium of televised and photographed violence. The Front expanded this violence to the point that it threatened Western civilian targets in the liminal space of long-distance air travel enabled by Cold War technologies that kept commercial planes in the air for many hours at a time. An additional side effect of this increased distance in flights was the PFLP's ability extend its bases of operation to post-colonial non-pro-Western centers in Damascus, Algiers, Aden, and Baghdad while affording these "unknowing" hosts plausible deniability in the diplomatic fracases that followed these hijackings. As Chandra D. Bhimull suggests, the post-colonial phenomenon of continuous airline routes between far-flung capitals in the Global South represented the continuation of a process that began the in late 1930s in which the imperial metropole was increasingly separated from empire as the boundaries between foreign territories and former colonies blurred under the auspices of commercial air travel.[10] The PFLP's decentering of these attacks created new transnational geographies that eroded post-colonial systems of state borders enforced by the Cold War hegemons. Following Khaled's performative politics, this article examines what happens when, as argued by Frantz Fanon, "those values which seemed to ennoble the soul…" seem, in the eyes of the Palestinian *fidaʾiyyun,* "…worthless because they have nothing in common with the real-life struggle in which the people are engaged."[11] I argue that the PFLP rejected the dominant epistemologies that rendered civilian targets as apolitical, and instead casted them under a new revolutionary episteme as complicit sources of material and human support for the PFLP's listed enemies:

[10] Chandra D. Bhimull, *Empire in the Air: Airline Travel and the African Diaspora*, *Empire in the Air* (New Nork: NYU Press, 2017), 125–26.
[11] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 11.

Israel, international imperialists, and Arab reactionary regimes, thereby creating new arenas for Palestinian popular armed struggle.[12]

The insightful new works on the Palestinian resistance underscore the transnational networks within the Global South and Europe established by the PFLP in an effort to garner material, ideological, and political support for its ultimate goal of liberating Palestine from occupation.[13] However, scholarship on the PFLP has paid little attention to how the Front thought about its reception in the capitalist West, represented primarily by the United States and the United Kingdom, an issue that the group explicitly grappled with at all levels of the organization at great length during the height of its activities. To be sure, some recent scholarship has examined the perceptions of the Palestinian revolution by leaders of the American Civil Rights and Black Power movements and transnational communication between these groups and the PLO's leadership. However, this scholarship tends to rely on the English-language archives produced by these American movements.[14] When discussing the organization's hijackings, scholars all too often portray the PFLP's interactions with Western audiences as simply acts of extremist violence motivated by ideological rigidity and naïve bifurcations of the world into allied and enemy fronts based on the logic of Cold-War and/or Israeli-Palestinian Conflict axes. Under this framework, plane hijackings and other operations are rendered as acts of wanton brutality where the violence is the point rather than the medium of the group performing these acts. These military histories tend to assess Palestinian guerrilla action purely through their numerical outcomes (casualties, prisoners taken, vehicles destroyed,

[12] For the PFLP's official taxonomy of their enemies, see *al-Nizam al-Dakhili [Internal Regulations]* (al-Jabhah al-Shaʿbiyya li-Tahrir Filastin, 1971).
[13] Notable examples include Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive*; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*; Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation*.
[14] See Fischbach, *Black Power and Palestine*; Lubin, *Geographies of Liberation*.

etc.) and afford Palestinian military and political leaders little to no voice in explaining their strategic or tactical motivations when compared with the Israeli counterparts.[15]

In this chapter, I argue that we can reimagine these acts, in addition to being acts of political violence, as the results of rational calculations on the part of Palestinian revolutionaries aimed at shaping facts on the ground and influencing Western perceptions of the conflict. Although perceived by historians as the root cause for Black September, the Jordanian civil war, and the PLO's subsequent expulsion from the kingdom, these operations enabled the PFLP to generate a dialogue with global powers that it could control. I thus explore how these acts of violence came to be understood in conjunction with the limitations of the "non-violent" channels of international communications available to Palestinian revolutionaries and the very real epistemic barriers within Western media that render Palestinian demands for liberation, independence, and dignity unacceptable and often incomprehensible to Western audiences.[16] The nature of its global operations occupied the Popular Front's strategic and political thinking from its inception, and the debate regarding the efficacy of addressing international public opinion featured prominently in PFLP publications, interviews, and speeches. In the first two years after the 1967 War, the Popular Front would struggle in creating international and even local visibility for itself as political infighting, ideological heterogeneity, and strategic missteps resulted in low recruiting numbers and relative obscurity in comparison to Yasser Arafat's Fatah among Arab and international audiences.[17] All of this would change, however, on September 6, 1970, when a series of high profile international hijackings by the PFLP would place the Front squarely into

[15] See Chaim Herzog and Shlomo Gazit, *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East from the War of Independence to the Present*, Rev. ed. (London: Greenhill, 2004); Col Trevor N. Dupuy, *Elusive Victory: The Arab-Israeli Wars, 1947-1974*, 1st edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).
[16] Allen, "Subaltern Critique and the History of Palestine," 155.
[17] For the ramifications of the 1967 War on internal divisions in the Palestinian liberation movement, see "Al-Taqrīr al-Siyāsī al-Asāsī Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya Li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's Basic Political Report]," 655–57.

Western discussions of the Palestinian liberation movement, trigger a war between the Palestinian *fidaʾiyyun* and the Hashemite Monarchy in Jordan, and, perhaps most consequentially, result in the PLO's expulsion to Lebanon, where the organization became one of many important catalysts for a fifteen-year civil war. Yet, as George Habash would recount years later, "The main goal of the plane hijacking operations was to extract the plight of the Palestinians from collective forgetfulness and to display it to the international public view because it was not known in Europe or the United States."[18] This concern about Palestinian plight fading from international consciousness would help transform the PFLP from a small poorly-funded group facing limited operational success in the Occupied Territories to a group capable of capturing Western media attention through the televised seizure of commercial planes.

At the end of this chapter, I examine how the PFLP attempted to justify their operations politically and strategically, paying attention to how the Front thought about international public opinion and how the ensuing debates within its own ranks over the value of addressing such a global audience would shape how the organization conceived of its locally focused, national revolution for liberation within the context of increasingly globalized media and political networks. It also looks at how the PFLP's leadership came to view peaceful appeals on behalf of Palestinian liberation as epistemologically incomprehensible to viewers outside the region and claimed that calls for debates and dialogue with their adversaries and the rhetoric of non-violence obfuscated power and media-access asymmetries within the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

[18] Ḥabash and Malbrunot, *Al-Thawriyyūn Lā Yamūtūn Abadan [Revolutionaries Never Die]*, 108.

A Note on the Term "Terrorism"

Terrorism, as a term, has been wielded with such disparate polemical, legal, moralistic, and casual uses in the twenty-first century as to render its academic use politically fraught and denotatively ambiguous. In the United States, the September 11, 2001 attacks and subsequent "War on Terror" carried out by the George W. Bush and subsequent administrations have also added a religio-political dynamic to terrorism as news broadcasts, government laws and memoranda, legal texts, and popular media have reinforced a pernicious American perception of terror as an act predominantly committed by Muslim operatives. As a result of this flawed perception, scholarly efforts at correcting the fluid popular use and political weaponization of the term by subjecting terrorism to critical inquiry have largely come from studies of events involving jihad groups or other Muslim political organizations. In his work on *mujahids* (those who participate in jihad) in the Bosnian War, the anthropologist and legal scholar Darryl Li has clearly outlined the consequences of using terrorism as a polemical tool, arguing "…to call someone a terrorist is to deny any political dimension to their use of violence - and, paradoxically, only serves to reconfirm that this violence is political, even as it takes moralistic forms (as 'evil') or technocratic ones ('extremism')."[19] As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the PFLP was aware of both the moralistic and technocratic meanings its operations took on in Western media as it struggled to legitimize its actions to this audience in the language of national liberation and wartime rules of engagement. This critical examination of terrorism as a concept also offers a much-needed corrective to "terrorism studies," previously under the purview of dubiously credentialed security "experts," not by discarding the term, but by "centering a critical

[19] Darryl Li, *The Universal Enemy: Jihad, Empire, and the Challenge of Solidarity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2019), 25.

analysis of empire," as argued by Li, or as political philosopher Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson, drawing on the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Michel Foucault, explains, "…with a consideration of the contexts within which terrorism is embedded and becomes meaningful."[20] In the volatile global political landscape of the 1960s and early 1970s, the PFLP came to be marked as a terrorist organization by Western governments precisely in the context of several Global South resurgences against neo-colonialist ventures spearheaded by the United States and former European colonizers, as exemplified by recent or ongoing revolutions in Vietnam, Algeria, and Cuba.[21] The historical contextualization of terrorism should not, of course, be misconstrued as an attempt to "justify" terrorism, but rather, as some scholars have argued, should be used to dispel contemporary societal readings of terror as "inherent and inalienable fanaticism."[22]

Darryl Li's work on the ambivalent relationship between universalism and violence also provides a useful framework for examining the relationship between ideology and practice in relation to PFLP operations. Universalism, in the context of jihad as practiced in the Bosnian conflict, came in the form of a message directed at all humanity that had to "regard itself as self-evidently compelling enough not to require coercion, yet valuable enough to preserve and defend by force."[23] In other words, the *mujahids* in Bosnia were attempting to speak to a universal audience, but were willing to fight and die for a particular vision when members of this audience

[20] Li, 26; Verena Erlenbusch-Anderson, *Genealogies of Terrorism: Revolution, State Violence, Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 3.
[21] In his New Year's speech in 1967, Fidel Castro presciently predicted that 1968 would be "the year of the heroic guerilla, see Daniels, *Year of the Heroic Guerrilla*, 3. Daniel's book focuses less on the anti-colonial aspects of revolutionary movements in 1968 as he includes domestic leftist and anti-war movements based in the United States and France from that year alongside anti-imperialism movements in Vietnam and liberalization movements in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. In addition to glaring omissions from that year: Tlatelolco Massacre (Mexico), Battle of Karameh (Jordan), the book also suffers from an almost exclusive reliance on English-language secondary literature and news sources, resulting in an analysis of 1968 that remains silent on the experiences of non-American participants in these struggles.
[22] Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law*, Cambridge Studies in International and Comparative Law. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 308.
[23] Li, *The Universal Enemy*, 136.

rejected the "universality" of this vision. In a slightly different paradigm, I argue that the PFLP purported, for reasons of political legitimization amongst its allies in the Global South, to use violence in the service of universal ideals (Marxism-Leninism, Third World solidarity, socialist revolution, pan-Arabism), even though what they primarily cared about was a particular and circumscribed national goal – the liberation of Palestine.

In discussing terrorism as political action that responds to imperialism, as Li and others have suggested, scholars can best think of the PFLP's operations and the international responses to these operations as legitimizing and delegitimizing practices, respectively, that are engaged in a discursive relationship with one another. In other words, the PFLP's efforts to raise public awareness of the plight of the Palestinian condition and the seriousness of the Palestinian revolution through hijackings shaped the way the Western media and government actors sought to delegitimize these actions through normative and juridical appellations of the category terrorism to these operations. This Western reaction, in turn, shaped the ways in which PFLP leaders pushed against these appellations through published counterarguments aimed at legitimizing these operations via the language of national liberation and anti-colonialism. This discursive process is discussed further in the chapter in the section on the PFLP's debate on the importance of international public opinion, which took place over several issues of its official organ, *al-Hadaf*, between 1970-1971.

Finally, terrorism, as it has been studied in the Palestinian sphere, has largely been concerned with post-9/11 American understandings of terrorism as globalized Islamist militant action, reflecting a process best theorized by Foucault, wherein contemporary formations of terrorism are "not merely a repetition of historical precedents but their reinvention for new and

changing purposes."[24] This reinvention of terrorism under a post-9/11 episteme allowed Israeli and US officials to instrumentally treat al-Qaeda, Hamas, and the Palestinian Authority as interchangeable entities in a global "War on Terror," thereby recasting all expressions of Palestinian national struggle as legitimate targets for state violence.[25] Historically, this episteme elided a secular precedent from a much earlier September attack, when a series of televised aviation seizures in 1970 produced a then new, but now almost forgotten, association amongst Western audiences between hijackings, radical leftism, and Arabs.[26] As such, part of the historiographical work of this chapter is to unburden the study of airline hijackings from their current connotations and resituate them in their earlier secular anti-colonial and anti-capitalist discourses.

PFLP Operations Before Black September (1967-1970)

From its announced creation on December 11, 1967, until the Dawson's Field hijackings in early September 1970, the PFLP experimented with several commando operations aimed at drawing international attention to the plight of the Palestinian people. However, during this early phase, the Front was more preoccupied with establishing organic ties between the Palestinian people's struggle and the general Arab anti-colonial struggle; moves that were in line with the ethos of the PFLP leadership's Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) roots. These efforts in late 1967 largely took the form of establishing military bases in the Jordan Valley region, the forests of Jerash,

[24] Erlenbusch-Anderson, *Genealogies of Terrorism*, 14.
[25] Derek Gregory, "Palestine and the 'War on Terror,'" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 1 (2004): 184.
[26] Ilan Pappe has made an initial effort to historicize the *longue durée* of the process of "terrorizing" Palestinian effort. See Ilan Pappe, "De-Terrorising the Palestinian National Struggle: The Roadmap to Peace," *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 2, no. 2 (August 25, 2009): 129–36.

ʿAjlun, and the Golan Heights in addition to secret military cells amongst ANM members in the West Bank and Gaza. Establishing bases within these last two occupied regions seems to have been the Front's priority, as the group's political and military officers attempted to replicate the Guevarian model of *foquismo,* wherein highly mobile vanguard cadres based in the countryside would wage a protracted rebellion against the occupiers through the material and human support of the local civilian population.[27] From the outset, however, the Front's efforts in the West Bank and Gaza resulted in dramatic military failure. In September 1967, the Front sent political and military cadres into the West Bank to organize PFLP operations in the region, but many of these cadres were soon discovered by Israeli forces and arrested. Between October and early December of that year, the PFLP was able to establish a small secret presence in the West Bank under the leadership of Abu ʿAli Mustafa and carried out several raids against Israeli military patrols in those months. These initial small successes were soon reversed when, on the day of the Front's official announcement of its founding (December 11, 1967), the military leadership directed an attack on *al-Lidd* Airport. On the way to the airport, however, the attack group struck a mine field, resulting in the wounding of one of its members and his subsequent capture by Israeli forces. The interrogation of this captive led to the arrest of 46 members of the Front's West Bank military apparatus the following week and by the end of the year, 138 PFLP members were in prison.[28]

In occupied Gaza, ANM leaders failed to create a national front with communist comrades in July 1967 and instead established the Vanguard of Popular Resistance as a frontal framework for the ANM to establish a military apparatus in the strip. The organization met some

[27] Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, 80–86.
[28] *Al-Masīra al-Tārīkhiyya Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical March of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, 65–67.

initial success, capturing the seal of the governor of Gaza and using it to forge identification cards for Palestinian *fidaʾiyyun* as well as Egyptian officers and soldiers. Beginning in October 1967, the ANM leadership in Gaza was able to begin armed operations under the leadership of Captain ʿUmar Khalil ʿUmar and his deputy, Ramadan Suleiman Daud. They began publishing at this time a local newspaper, *al-Jamahir [The Masses],* and recruiting widely among workers, students, teachers, and doctors as well as among soldiers from the Palestinian Liberation Army who had remained in Gaza after the June defeat so that the group's membership quickly swelled to over a thousand members. This initial success was short-lived, however, as on January 24, 1968, an official from the Vanguard of Popular Struggle was arrested who had in his possession PFLP membership lists for the Gaza Strip. 67 of the 71 total members of the military apparatus were swiftly imprisoned.[29]

One of the PFLP's first exposures to the importance of international public opinion came in the form of a missed opportunity regarding the most important event for the visibility of the *fidaʾiyyun* movement prior to the Black September War: The Battle of Karameh. On March 21, 1968, less than a year after the creation of the PFLP, a large Israeli military force of about 1,300 troops, backed by scores of tanks, heavy artillery cover, and repeated aerial sorties, attacked the Jordanian village of al-Karameh with the objective of killing and capturing all the Palestinian guerrillas associated with PLO, whose forces were headquartered in the town. This assault was part of a larger series of cross border retributive attacks that the Israeli government organized in response to Palestinian *fidaʾiyyun* ambushes and bombings against Israeli military and civilian targets in the Occupied Territories following the 1967 War. Many of these Palestinian operations originated in bases on the East Bank of the Jordan River, and so these Israeli reprisals were also

[29] *Al-Masīra al-Tārīkhiyya Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical March of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, 69–70.

designed to punish the Jordanian government for hosting PLO groups and thereby drive a wedge between King Hussein and the *fidaʾiyyun.* Though the Israelis succeeded in destroying the village as well as killing or capturing some 300 Palestinian and Jordanian fighters, the Palestinian forces, with assistance from the Jordanian military, were able to inflict serious enough casualties on the invading army to force its withdrawal before it could arrest senior PLO leaders, including Yasser Arafat and Abu Iyad (nom de guerre for Salah Khalaf).[30] In the immediate aftermath of the battle, all three sides - Palestinian, Jordanian, and Israeli – scrambled to promote their respective narratives of victory, but Fatah emerged as the party most adept at projecting itself as the triumphant protagonist of the clash. News of the Palestinian guerrilla's heroic stand against the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) spread rapidly throughout the Arab and international press, accompanied by images of the Palestinian martyrs' portraits and captured Israeli tanks being paraded through the streets of Amman. In the wake of the Arab defeat during the 1967 Six Day War, Karameh created a veritable explosion of celebration in the Arab world and raised the political stock of the Palestinian liberation movement as a serious revolutionary force in the region. As posited by political scholar W. Andrew Terrill, the story of Fatah's victory at Karameh met the Palestinian people, specifically, and the Arab world, broadly, at a moment in which their collective psyche was most receptive to this narrative's form.[31] As an immediate result of this successful narrative, thousands of fresh recruits poured into Jordan to become *fidaʾiyyun* in Fatah's ranks, initially overwhelming the Palestinian guerrilla group's recruitment capabilities.

[30] Abu Iyad was, after Yasser Arafat, was one of Fatah's most prominent leaders and the longtime head of its security and intelligence arms. For his first-hand account of the Battle of Karameh, see Abu Iyad and Eric Rouleau, *My Home, My Land: A Narrative of the Palestinian Struggle*, trans. Linda Butler Koseoglu (New York: Times Books, 1981), 57–60.
[31] W. Andrew Terrill, "The Political Mythology of the Battle of Karameh," *Middle East Journal* 55, no. 1 (2001): 94.

Yet the PFLP, for several historical and strategic reasons, largely missed out on capitalizing politically from the "victory" at Karameh, much to the chagrin of the organization's political leaders. In an interview with the Institute for Palestine Studies, George Habash argued that during the PFLP's time in Jordan, his movement pushed for national unity, "in all meanings of this word," and for an alliance with the Jordanian masses represented by the Jordanian National Movement.[32] Habash observed social conditions within Jordan during this period that suggested the possibility of solidarity between the PFLP and the Jordanian masses beyond a narrowly defined liberation movement and under a broader leftist and Arab nationalist ideological framework. However, one should note that the PFLP's ideological posturing failed to compete with the powerful image of Fatah's underdog struggle and seemingly impossible victory at Karameh. This "spectacle," was far more than simply a product of mass dissemination through information technologies like the television, as theorized by Guy Debord, but rather actualized a Palestinian revolutionary *Weltanschauung* by translating it into the material realm, rendering Palestinian liberation "a world view transformed into an objective force."[33]

Failing to recognize the power of the spectacle, the PFLP withdrew from Karameh on the eve of the battle and thus failed to benefit from the wave of goodwill among the Jordanian masses toward the *fidaʾiyyun* that accompanied the post-battle images of Fatah martyrs and captured Israeli armor. Habash himself was not present at the meeting where the decision to withdraw was made, as he was still at the Sheikh Hassan Detention Center in Damascus, leaving Ahmed Jibril,[34] leader of the PFLP's Syrian-backed Palestine Liberation Front faction, at the

[32] Ḥabash and Suwayd, *al-Tajribah al-niḍālīyah al-Filasṭīnīyya*, 48.
[33] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994), 12–13.
[34] Ahmed Jibril (b. 1938) was born in town of Yasur, near Jaffa. He grew up in Syria and served in the Syrian military until he was expelled in 1958 for his suspected communist activities. He joined George in 1967 to establish the PFLP but broke away from the group in 1968 over disagreements with Habash's more revolutionary Marxist position.

helm of PFLP decision-making at this important juncture.[35] Habash had been arrested days prior on March 19 by Syrian authorities, along with seventeen other PFLP members, under the pretense of punishing the Front for the destruction of a Saudi petroleum pipeline in the Golan Heights. The Syrian authorities also had suspicions that the ANM was planning to carry out a coup against the government in support of the pro-Nasserist Jamal al-Atassi. On November 11, 1968, a PFLP group led by Wadiʿ Haddad was able to assist in Habash's escape from prison to Beirut.[36]

Under Jibril's leadership, the PFLP opted to withdraw from the village prior to the engagement, citing the Maoist proscription against direct engagement with large military forces.[37] Brigadier General Saʿd Sayel, who at the time of the battle was the commander of the 1st Engineering Division of the Jordanian Army, offered an account in *Shuʾun Filastiniyya*, the Arabic language quarterly published by the PLO's Research Center, that highlighted this strategic disagreement between Fatah and the PFLP. According to Sayel:

> There was then a meeting [likely on March 18, 1968] in al-Karameh of the leaders of the organizations, and there was disagreement over whether they should remain in al-Karameh or withdraw from it. I had learned recently that the organizations that were for staying were Fatah and the Popular Liberation Forces. However, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – before its split – refused to give up on the strategy of guerrilla warfare and for that reason decided to withdraw from al-Karameh.[38]

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[35] Yazid Sayigh, "Turning Defeat into Opportunity: the Palestinian Guerrillas after the June 1967 War," *Middle East Journal* 46, no. 2 (1992): 264.
[36] See footnote 10, *Al-Masīra al-Tārīkhiyya Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical March of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, 74.
[37] Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, 178; Abu Iyad and Rouleau, *My Home, My Land*, 58.
[38] "Shahādat Al-ʿAmīd Saʿd Sāyīl [Testimony of Brigadier-General Saʿd Sayel]," *Shuʾūn Filasṭīniyya*, no. 8 (April 1972): 208.

Although associated with radicalism and political violence in Western media in later years, the PFLP, according to this description, clearly distinguished between popular armed, guerrilla struggle and direct military confrontation with the Israeli military. Fatah's leadership, in defending the village, may have played a factor as well in the PFLP's decision to withdraw, as the latter group would have had a difficult time controlling the development of the conflict once it started. According to Yezid Sayigh, the PFLP was affirmed in its decision to withdraw by General ʿAmir Khammash, commander of the Jordanian Army and Hasan al-Naqib, commander of the Iraqi expedition force in Jordan, who both advised Arafat on March 13, 1968 to avoid direct confrontation with the IDF as it might allow the Israelis to establish a beachhead on the East Bank.[39] Yet Arafat's gamble for the political capital to be gained by this military venture transformed Fatah's tactical decision into a seemingly prescient strategic master stroke. As Fatah's leadership would later explain, this political capital was "revolutionary fusion with the masses…closeness and confidence between al-ʿAsifa forces [Fatah's military branch] and the brave Jordanian army…and eliminat[ion of] those elements hostile to the armed resistance movement in the east bank of Jordan."[40] Clearly, Arafat saw the potential, as had George Habash, for solidarity between the PLO and the Jordanian masses and military. One can only offer conjectures as to whether the PFLP would have remained and fought alongside Fatah had George Habash been free from prison during March 1968. Instead, the decision to retreat "cost the PFLP dearly in terms of grassroots and official Arab support. Compounded by the subsequent secession of Jibril in mid-1968 and the Front's leftist faction in February 1969, the

[39] A token Iraqi Expeditionary Force had been stationed in Jordan since the conclusion of the June 1967 War.
[40] Quoted in Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, 178. See also Sayigh, "Turning Defeat into Opportunity," *Middle East Journal,* 264.

Karameh episode condemned the PFLP thereafter to a permanent second place after Fatah in Palestinian politics."[41]

Some PFLP leaders during this period challenged portraying the public relations outcome of Karameh in such simplistic terms, wherein any media gains for Fatah were tantamount to a political loss for the Front. Leila Khaled accused the Arab governments' post-Karameh enthusiasm for Fatah as a coverup for their own incompetence and described Fatah's general celebrity as "…a folksong, a fashion, a fetish."[42] More authentic, in Khaled's eyes, was the July 23, 1968 hijacking by PFLP operatives of an El Al Boeing 707 flight from Rome to Tel Aviv, which they forced to land in Algiers. Other PFLP leaders, unlike Khaled, did not view these Palestinian revolutionary actions as competitive salvos between PLO factions vying for public attention, but saw any operation that highlighted the plight of the Palestinian people as a boon for the entire resistance's cause. George Habash, for instance, recounted that he was delighted to hear both about the outcome of the Battle of Karameh from his cell in Syria as well as the PFLP's successful July 1968 hijacking.[43]

Before looking at the development of the PFLP's early hijacking operations, one should note a larger shift in the ethos of the Front's use of political violence. In many ways, the PFLP's early international operations (*ʿamaliyyat dakhiliyya*) in the Occupied Territories were some of their most violent and reflected the immediate post-1967 thinking of the Palestinian resistance movement, which still thought of Palestinian liberation as a narrow conventional struggle between Israel and the Palestinian people. Moreover, the PFLP's failed experiment with *foquismo,* evinced by the deafening absence of a grassroots uprising in the West Bank and Gaza

[41] Sayigh, "Turning Defeat into Opportunity," 264.
[42] Khaled and Hajjar, *My People Shall Live*, 48.
[43] Ḥabash and Malbrunot, *Al-Thawriyyūn Lā Yamūtūn Abadan [Revolutionaries Never Die]*, 79.

led by guerilla vanguards, indicated to the PFLP leadership that the impact of these early raids would never evolve from minor tactical wins to major strategic achievements.[44] In contrast and as will be seen later in this chapter, the PFLP's plane hijackings, though infinitely grander in logistical scale, demonstrated a restraint in violence as the Front intentionally avoided killing airline hostages. To be sure, the Front continued operations during this period that resulted in the loss of human life, but the group's brief foray into international plane hijackings was marked by a more complex understanding by the Front's leadership of the importance of the optics of restraint when dealing with an increasingly larger international audience.[45]

To understand the shift in the Front's operational strategy from focusing on raids into the interior of occupied Palestine to carrying out logistically complex hijacking operations in the international arena, one must understand the profound, albeit secretive, role that one of the PFLP's founding members, Wadiʿ Haddad, played in the organization. Known in western media as "the Maestro of Terrorism," most notably for his leading role in several hijackings and his recruitment and training of the Venezuelan Illich Ramírez Sánchez (Carlos the Jackal), Haddad remained shrouded in mystery throughout his life, both out of a tactical necessity for the security of his operations as well as out of a personal ascetic rejection of publicity. Born in Safed to a Greek Orthodox family in 1927, Wadiʿ Haddad later attended the medical college at the American University in Beirut alongside his future comrade, George Habash. Like Habash, Haddad was profoundly affected and politically radicalized by the events of the 1948 War and mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, which happened during their medical

[44] *Al-Masīra al-Tārīkhiyya Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical March of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, 71–72.
[45] "Bayānāt Wa Taṣrīḥāt Rasmiyya Min Al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya Ḥawl Nasf al-Ṭāʾirāt Fī Maṭār al-Thawra [Official Statements and Declarations by the Popular Front Regarding the Blowing Up of the Planes at Revolution Airport]," *Al-Hadaf* 2, no. 60 (September 19, 1970): 4.

training, and both men volunteered as medics in the Palestinian refugee camps that were established in Lebanon. The two doctors also founded the pan-Arab nationalist Arab National Movement (ANM) in response to the Nakba in the late 1940s as a means for achieving the liberation of Palestine and unity of the Arab nations into an entity capable of defeating colonialism and Zionism in the region. So dedicated were the members of the ANM to this vision that its young founders entered a pact wherein they promised to forgo marriage until the unity of the Arab world and the liberation of Palestine was achieved. However, in 1958, while Haddad was in Jaffar Prison in Jordan for his political organizing activities, the short-lived United Arab Republic was established between Syria and Egypt under Egyptian president Gamal ʿAbdel Nasser's leadership. Erroneously sensing impending Arab unity and victory, Haddad's comrades all married while he was in prison. Three years later, with the UAR experiment having largely collapsed, Haddad was shocked to be greeted by his comrades and their wives. He soon thereafter married a teacher at the Palestine Institute in Damascus, Samiyya Nematollah.[46]

The collective Arab defeat in the 1967 War would lead to the formation of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine by the ANM's former Palestinian members. In 1968, the committee for special operations in the Front, known simply as the "Foreign Arena" (*al-Majal al-Kharaji*), was created under Haddad's leadership to target Israeli economic, military, and human interests overseas.[47] Not all members of this committee were members of the Front and Haddad often recruited from among former comrades in the ANM as well as non-Arab militants. The committee gathered intelligence on potential targets, trained hand-picked militants for each operation, procured weapons, and handled all operational finances. George Habash later

[46] Samiyya Nematollah Haddad came up in an Arab nationalist environment and was a colleague of Wadiʿ's future comrade, Ghassan Kanafani. Sharbal, *Asrār al-ṣundūq al-aswad*, 31.
[47] Sharbal, 41–42.

explained in an interview that Haddad did not have any special training prior to the advent of these operations, but rather studied the experiences of other revolutionary movements, particularly in Yemen, and received some logistical support from the Iraqi government.[48] Much to the consternation of some of the leaders within the PFLP, who were largely based in Amman prior to 1970, Wadiʿ Haddad insisted on working in Beirut for security reasons, often out of several secret apartments in order to elude Israeli strikes. Some leaders in the PFLP viewed these security measures as undue expenses considering the Front's early financial precarity, but Haddad's close brush with death after one of his Beirut apartments was struck by four Israeli incendiary bombs in 1970 indicates that his anxieties were warranted.[49]

Though the PFLP leadership may have been divided at this time about the financial efficacy of the "Foreign Arena's" budget, there seems to have been full consensus behind approving the Front's first hijacking in exchange for prisoners in July 1968. According to Lebanese journalist Ghassan Charbel, who conducted a number of interviews with Haddad's colleagues, Haddad had to recruit a Palestinian pilot to assist with the planning as no one in the committee at the time knew how to read flight schedules and flight maps used by commercial airlines.[50] Eyewitnesses among the flight crew of the hijacked planes during the 1970 Dawson's Field operation would later express their admiration of the PFLP operatives' familiarity with the aircrafts technical features and their ability to call the bluffs of pilots who attempted to falsely claim that the plane's fuel reserves prevented the crew from obeying the PFLP's orders.[51] Such

[48] Ḥabash and Malbrunot, *Al-Thawriyyūn Lā Yamūtūn Abadan [Revolutionaries Never Die]*, 111.
[49] The attack on Haddad's home happened while he was planning for the September 1970 hijackings. Incidentally, Leila Khaled was staying as a guest at his home along with Haddad's wife and son, Hani. All four individuals were able to escape, though Habash's wife and son had to be treated for shrapnel wounds. The journalist Ghassan Sharbal says that the Haddad's maintained residences in the al-Mazraʿ, al-Hamraʾ, and Verdun districts of Beirut. Sharbal, *Asrār al-ṣundūq al-aswad*, 29–30, 42–45.
[50] Sharbal, 46.
[51] Raab, *Terror in Black September*, 13.

testimonials underscore the effectiveness of the detail-obsessed planning for which Wadiʿ Haddad was known.

The July 23, 1968 El Al hijackings in many ways would become a strategic template for the PFLP's later international aircraft operations. At a press conference in Beirut claiming responsibility for the hijacking the same day, PFLP spokespeople urged the Algerian government, which they claimed had no prior knowledge of the operation, to hold the Israeli passengers in order to negotiate the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israel. The statement also called on the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to form a commission for investigating the conditions of Arab prisoners in Israel and charged El Al with transporting arms and "mercenaries" into the country.[52] These last two calls to action in the statement reveal a couple of things about the PFLP's attitudes toward the function of hijacking operation at this early junction in the organization's development. First, the call for the ICRC to investigate the plight of Palestinian prisoners in Israel indicates that the PFLP understood that forcing a prisoner swap with Israel through a hijacking created an image of parity between the PFLP and its primary enemy and drew international attention to the *existence* of Palestinian political prisoners and the ongoing occupation, even if the means for drawing this attention also received international condemnation. The Front often pointed to this lack of international coverage of the Palestinian condition in its press conferences, describing itself as an organization under a information blockade (*muhasara iʿlamiyyan*).[53] The PFLP trust in the ICRC as an impartial arbitrator later led the Red Cross to serve a crucial negotiating role at the height of the PFLP's hijacking operations. This PFLP confidence in the Red Cross may have stemmed in part from the ICRC's contemporary central role in securing the release of Palestinian prisoners taken

[52] "Algeria Detains 21 Israelis from Hijacked Plane," *New York Times*, July 24, 1968, 1, 16.
[53] Sharbal, *Asrār al-ṣundūq al-aswad*, 45.

during the Battle of Karameh and held in Israeli prisons in Nablus, Tulkarem, Jenin, Ramallah, Hebron, Jericho, Gaza, Ramleh, Damoun, and Beit Lid (Kfar Yona).[54] Second, the PFLP's classification of El Al as an airline providing military support to their enemy, demonstrates that the PFLP had at least a partial understanding of international norms regarding acceptable wartime targets. The PFLP military leadership would later publish explanations of how El AL pilots also served as Israeli military reserves and should therefore not be classified as civilians, noting, "For the difference between the civilian and the military man is the difference between those who use armed force and those who do not."[55] By troubling El Al's commercial designation with these ulterior violent motives, the PFLP spokespeople were attempting to legitimize the hijacking as a legally sanctioned wartime engagement rather than an act of terror against purely civilian targets.

The PFLP's next major attack on a civilian aircraft came on December 26, 1968, when two PFLP *fidaʾiyyun* attacked an EL AL Boeing 707 at the Athens airport, killing one passenger and badly damaging the plane. These commandos were captured and sentenced to fifteen years in prison by a Greek court. The aftermath of this operation soon revealed a pattern in Israeli responses to PFLP operations. Holding the Lebanese government responsible for the Athens attack because the two attackers had resided there, the Israeli military attacked Beirut airport on December 28, 1968, destroying thirteen airliners belonging to the Lebanese Middle East Airlines and Trans-Mediterranean Airways. However, this retributive operation had the unintended consequence of strengthening solidarity between the Lebanese masses and the Palestinian

[54] "International review of the Red Cross: July," *International Committee of the Red Cross*, no. 88 (1968): 357.
[55] Information Department of the PFLP, *The Military Strategy of the P.F.L.P.* (Beirut, 1970), 85–56; For an earlier reference to El-Al's military nature by the PFLP, see "Bayān Nāṭiq Bism Al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn Ḥawla al-Ṣibgha al-ʿaskariyya l-Sharika al-ʿAl [A Statement by a Spokesperson of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine on the Military Nature of the Company El Al]," in *Al-Wathāʾiq al-Filasṭīniyya al-ʿarabiyya l-ʿām 1968 [Palestinian Arabic Documents for 1968]*, 1st ed. (Bayrūt: Muʾassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīnīyya, 1970).

fidaʾiyyun based there.[56] This spectacle of civilian jetliners burning on the tarmac, captured in color by international media outlets, also had a morale-decaying effect in the Arab world as they harkened back to black-and-white images of grounded Egyptian and Syrian jets destroyed by Israeli fighter pilots during the 1967 War. The PFLP was aware of the raw visual effect of such images and would quickly adapt and replicate them into a form of political messaging with startling effectiveness less than two years later at Dawson's Field.

On February 18, 1969, the PFLP continued its external operations with an attack against an El Al Boeing 720 during its takeoff from Zurich. In response to the ensuing media coverage that described the operation as a terrorist attack, George Habash held a press conference on February 22, announcing:

> The official goal in continuing the Front's operation against Israel overseas is as follows: We want the people, from friends to foes, to realize what is clear to us – We were banished from our country and our people have lived in wretched camps for twenty years, and so it is incumbent upon us to fight for our rights…We did not bomb civilian targets, but rather it is the enemy Israeli government that does this, and we want Israel to know that we are capable of responding to every attack against our people.[57]

Habash couches his justification both in the language of retributive justice ("fight for our rights…") as well as in the language of legitimate wartime targeting ("We did not bomb civilian targets..."). This language regarding the latter point about the legitimacy of targeting the commercial carrier El Al mirrors the explanation given by Habash to journalist John K. Cooley

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[56] John K. Cooley, *Green March, Black September: The Story of the Palestinian Arabs* (London: Cass, 1973), 148; "Bayān Al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn Ḥawla al-Iʿtidāʾ al-Israʾīlī ʿalā Maṭār Bayrūt [Statement by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Regarding the Israeli Assault on the Beirut Airport] (al-Anwar, December 31, 1968)," in *Al-Wathāʾiq al-Filasṭīniyya al-ʿArabiyya l-ʿām 1968 [Arabic Palestinian Documents for 1968]* (Bayrūt: Muʾassasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīnīyya, 1970), 978–79.

[57] Quoted in *Al-Masīra al-Tārīkhiyya Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical March of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, 98.

in the same year, in which he argued that El Al had been used during the June War and throughout General de Gaulle's embargo on Israel to transport military material as well as Israeli military pilots coming back from US training sessions on the use of Phantom fighter jets.[58]

However, the PFLP had trouble in maintaining its innocence with regard to civilian targeting in its operations, as evinced by the February 20, 1969 Jerusalem Supersol supermarket bombings that the Front conducted just days after the Zurich operation. Two Israelis were killed, and twenty others were wounded. When questioned about the attack by United Press International, Habash changed his line of reasoning, claiming that attacks against Israeli civilians were permitted as answers to the "acts of savagery by the Israelis against Arabs in the occupied territories, especially the unknown acts in villages."[59] Habash's shift to a blanket justification for PFLP civilian targeting in response to unnamed Israeli actions against Palestinian civilians demonstrates a broad conception of operational time for the PFLP, in which retributive operations could tap into distant or recent historical wrongs against the Palestinians to explain the validity of PFLP targets. It remains unclear whether the unknown acts Habash referenced in the villages harken back to atrocities from the 1948 conflict, the ensuing military governorship, the 1967 conflict, or events contemporary to the 1969 operations.

The Revolutionary Family: Women and Children in PFLP Operations

The Zurich and Supersol bombings also highlighted the increasingly prominent role women were beginning to play in the PFLP's armed operations, a development that would push the image of the Palestinian female fighter, culminating in the international notoriety of Leila Khaled, to the

[58] Cooley, *Green March, Black September*, 146.
[59] Cooley, 148.

forefront of the Western press's portrayal of the Palestinian militant left.[60] Amina Dajbur, a teacher from Gaza prior to her displacement in June 1967, participated in the Zurich attack along with three young men, leading *al-Hadaf* to praise her as "a model of the consciousness of Palestinian women, the integrity of their orientation, and their testament to the strength of the revolutionary struggle and thought."[61] In the case of the Supersol bombings, several women were involved in its planning and execution, including Ahsan al-Barnawi, ʿAbla Taha, ʿAssam ʿAbd al-Hadi, Zalikha al-Shahhabi, Rashida ʿObideh, and Rasmea ʿOdeh. Ahsan al-Barnawi came from a family of PLO affiliated women. Her Fatah-affiliated sister, Fatima Barnawi, was arrested on October 19, 1967 and sentenced to life imprisonment for attempting to blow up the Zenon Cinema in the Israeli quarter of Jerusalem. According to the PFLP, ʿAbla Taha, from Hebron, was arrested while pregnant and subjected to a 40-hour interrogation followed by seven months of detention, during which she was hit and tortured by Israeli sex workers in the Jerusalem prison under the supervision of Israel special forces officer, Munshi Golan. After being released at the end of 1968, Taha immediately went back to participating in PFLP operations and planning.[62] ʿAbd al-Hadi and al-Shahhabi, both early members of the Palestinian National Council, reported being arrested, tortured, and subsequently deported to Jordan for staging sit-ins and hunger strikes that same year to protest the killing of Palestinian women. These women had been shot by Israeli soldiers outside a Gaza prison when these women tried to storm the prison after being denied visitation rights with their detained husbands.[63] Rasmea ʿOdeh and Rashida ʿObideh were

[60] The two best studies on the military roles played by women in the PFLP in Arabic from this period are Ḥabāshna, *Introduction to Women's Reality*; al-Khalīlī, *al-Marʾa al-Filasṭīniyya wa-al-thawra: dirāsa ijtimāʿīyya maydānīyya taḥlīlīyya [The Palestinian Woman and the Revolution: a social, field, and analytical study]*. See also *al-Hadaf* 1 no. 10 (September 29, 1979): 5, 12-13; *al-Hadaf* 2, no. 106 (June 26, 1971): 16-17.
[61] "The Palestinian Woman in the Blaze of the Armed Fight," 10; al-Khalīlī, *al-Marʾa al-Filasṭīniyya wa-al-thawra: dirāsa ijtimāʿīyya maydānīyya taḥlīlīyya [The Palestinian Woman and the Revolution: a social, field, and analytical study]*, 125.
[62] "The Palestinian Woman in the Blaze of the Armed Fight," 10–11.
[63] Kawar, *Daughters of Palestine*, 30–33.

the highest profile participants in the Supersol bombing, the details of which would figure prominently in Rasmea ʿOdeh's 2014 trial for immigration fraud in the US and subsequent revocation of US citizenship and deportation to Jordan.[64] According to Rasmea ʿOdeh, she was arrested in the aftermath of the bombings, physically and psychologically tortured, threatened with rape, and denied proper medical attention.[65] Rashida ʿObideh, Leila Khaled's early idol and eventual comrade, was born in Jerusalem and was the most prominent female leader in the PFLP prior to Khaled's rise to fame in 1970. Known for her skill with weapons and her acerbic wit, ʿObideh acted as both a recruiter and tough trainer for would-be female fighters in the Front. According to Khaled, ʿObideh once upbraided a young female recruit for using a lack of parental consent to get out of training, remarking, "Sister, if at twenty-five, you still have to depend on your mother's approval, you do not belong in the Popular Front. You should go back home and ask your mother to find you a husband and prepare an attractive dowry for you."[66] Under the exacting demands of its external operations, the PFLP could not afford to indulge in traditional mores regarding familial authority at the expense of tactical discipline.

In addition to high profile operations led by women, the PFLP also began in 1969 to experiment with the mobilization of children in its armed operations overseas. The PFLP's training of these child fighters, *al-Ashbal* (lit. "the lion cubs," though the term is also commonly used as shorthand for "brave youth"), to participate in bombing operations would shock Western

[64] "United States v. Rasmieh Yousef Odeh," Pub. L. No. 233 (2017). Rasmea ʿOdeh was tried for lying on her immigration forms about past criminal convictions. ʿOdeh's defense maintained that she had misunderstood the questioning on her immigration forms and had been tortured after the bombings while in Israeli custody, resulting in posttraumatic stress disorder. The presiding judge, Gershwin A. Drain did not allow testimony regarding these prior experiences in prison to be submitted during the trial. The case eventually made its way to the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, which vacated ʿOdeh's conviction and sent the case back Judge Gershwin for a new trial. In March 2017, ʿOdeh accepted a plea deal wherein she would serve no prison time in exchange for losing her US citizenship and deportation to Jordan.

[65] Soraya Antonius, "Prisoners for Palestine: A List of Women Political Prisoners," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 9, no. 3 (1980): 46–50.

[66] Khaled and Hajjar, *My People Shall Live*, 54.

audiences, though awareness in the United States of this phenomenon would not reach its zenith until the coining of the term "RPG children" to refer to these youth during the Lebanese Civil War. Though the high-profile hijackings orchestrated by revolutionary notables like Khaled and Haddad would increasingly make for internationalized televised spectacle, the exploits of *al-Ashbal* fighters also preoccupied the press as early as the late sixties. The PFLP's largest training camp for young fighters was based in the Shatila Camp on the outskirts of Beirut, where each class of graduating fighters was celebrated by their community in week-long festivities. During the graduation ceremonies, khakied children's cadres put on exhibitions of their weapons training and military maneuvers before applauding crowds of parents, fellow refugees and their officers, further cementing the bonds of mobilization between the Front and the civilian Palestinian populations in both Lebanon and Jordan.[67] To many outside viewers, such celebrations might come across as the PFLP's cynical or fatalistic denial or manipulation of these children's innocence. However, such ceremonies often captured the "people's war" Maoist ethos that the Front was trying to project to its base, as these armed children challenged notions of the Palestinians as a defeated people and captured the imagination of their communities about the sorts of revolutionary redemptive horizons that were possible. The sight of disciplined, committed child fighters had an inordinate affective and inspiring effect on their Palestinian adult audiences, probably nowhere better captured than in the fictionalized emotional description of one of these graduations by a cub's father in Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Umm Saʿd*.[68]

The PFLP's "cub cadres," moreover, had a lethal operational effectiveness that belied the very young age of its fighters. On September 8, 1969, the PFLP launched coordinated bombing

[67] "Ṭufūlat Filasṭīn: Min al-Tasharrud Ilā al-Taʿbiʾa! [Palestine's Childhood: From Vagrancy to Mobilization!]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 19 (November 29, 1969): 5.
[68] Kanafānī, *Umm Saʿd*, 69–75. This work was originally published in 1969.

operations by their "cubs" against the Israeli embassies in The Hague and Bonn, as well the El Al offices in Brussels. A twelve-year-old, Khaled ʿAbd al-Razzaq, born in the Tulkarem refugee camp in 1956, along with a sixteen-year-old comrade named ʿAdil, participated in the bombing of this final target, throwing two grenades through the office's open door and injuring four individuals.[69] Though ʿAdil was captured by Belgian police, Khaled managed to escape and sought refuge in a number of Arab embassies before finally being smuggled to Paris by an unnamed Belgian socialist and friend of the Front. He was then transported by a Frenchman to Iraqi officials who transported him to Baghdad, where he was met by the secretary of the president and then transported to his home base in Amman. Khaled's circuitous escape from Europe demonstrates the sophisticated international network that the Front had already put in place by late 1969 as well as the inordinate amount of trust placed by the PFLP in its youngest operatives. Khaled's interview with *al-Hadaf* immediately after the operation presents the image of a mature yet troubled youth who described his political radicalization as the result of witnessing his mother die to bullet wounds during the 1967 War in front of him, his siblings, and father. He joined the PFLP training camp in October 1968.[70]

The PFLP, aware of the shock value of the site of armed children engaged in operations in the heart of Western Europe, capitalized on the spectacle of the September 8 operations by placing them in the context of a what the organization viewed as a long-term struggle against Zionist and imperialist interests in the region, interests in which any Western tourist might, to their own peril, be found complicit by the Front. A day after the attacks, a spokesman for the

[69] "Al-Shibl 'Khālid' Yataḥaddath Lil-Hadaf ʿan Tajribatihi al-Muthīra Fī ʿAmaliyyat Brūksil Wa ʿan Firārihi [The Cub 'Khaled' Speaks to al-Hadaf about His Exciting Experience in the Brussels Operation and His Escape]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 10 (September 27, 1969): 4–5; "Arab Boys in Teens Bomb 3 Israeli Offices in Europe," *New York Times*, September 9, 1969. The *New York Times* gives ʿAdil's age as sixteen.
[70] "Al-Shibl 'Khālid' Yataḥaddath Lil-Hadaf ʿan Tajribatihi al-Muthīra Fī ʿAmaliyyat Brūksil Wa ʿan Firārihi [The Cub 'Khaled' Speaks to al-Hadaf about His Exciting Experience in the Brussels Operation and His Escape]," 4–5.

Front described the "cubs" bombing attacks as the last set of PFLP operations that would try to avert foreign casualties.[71] Coupled with the highly organized nature of the simultaneous embassy bombings, the Front's press statement had the effect of highlighting the group's ability to strike with impunity while also projecting an organizational mien of taxed patience and forbearance in the face of international indifference and continued Israeli occupation in the region. The escalation in the frequency and scale of operations in the year following the operation would demonstrate just how willing and capable the PFLP was of following through on its operational promises.[72]

Capturing the Press: The Road to Dawson's Field

One of the PFLP's most audacious operations that greatly heightened the tension between the emboldened Front and the Hashemite Monarchy in Jordan, which was under increasing international pressure to clamp down on *fida'iyyun* operations in the kingdom, came just months prior to the outbreak of the Black September War. On June 10, 1970, PFLP operatives under George Habash cordoned off the Inter-Continental Hotel (later known as the InterContinental Jordan Hotel) and the Philadelphia Hotel in downtown Amman for two days, threatening to blow up the buildings, which held ninety foreigners (including thirty-five journalists), if King Hussein refused to dismiss al-Sharif Nasser bin Jamil, his uncle and the commander of the Jordanian army. George Habash later recounted that the Front was concerned that the Hashemite Monarchy

[71] "Arab Group Warns Travelers to Avoid Israeli Jets and Ships," *New York Times*, September 10, 1969.
[72] Between late 1969 and mid-1970, the PFLP continued to escalate its international operations with increasing frequency. On November 10, 1970, the Popular Front attacked a bus full of El Al passengers at the Munich airport, killing one and injuring eleven others. On February 24, 1970, George Habash announces that the PFLP would continue to target El Al aircraft everywhere, though attempted attacks in March of that year were thwarted by increased security measures. Cooley, *Green March, Black September*, 149–50.

was determined to drive out the Palestinian resistance from Jordan by force, despite a ceasefire brokered between the Jordanian government and the *fidaʾiyyun* by the Iraqi government a week earlier.[73] In an attempt to explain the Front's actions to the hostage journalists on June 12 prior to their release, Habash delivered an impromptu speech in which he apologized to the detainees for the discomfort caused by the takeover of the two hotels, though he quickly added that their momentary discomfort was trivial in comparison to 22 years of Palestinian suffering in the camps. Addressing a broader international audience in English through his captive press conference, Habash had a stern warning for those who suspected that the PFLP was not up to the challenge presented by the Jordanian regime's violent crackdown:

> Here, we felt that we have all the right in the world to protect our revolution. We remembered all the miseries, all the injustices, our people, and the conditions in which they lived, the coldness with which world opinion looks at our cause and felt that we could not permit them to crush us.
>
> We will defend ourselves and our revolution by every means, and anything that protects our revolution is right. This is our line of thinking. …We felt that we have the full right to put pressure here [at the two hotels] on the reactionary regime, America, and all forces, and this will be a trump card in our hand. I am speaking very frankly to you, and I should also be frank and tell you that we were really determined. We were not joking.[74]

Habash's declaration here is premised on a Palestinian revolutionary episteme in which strategic expediency and existential precarity lend actions like hostage-taking, considered morally reprehensible within non-revolutionary epistemes, a logical and righteous legitimacy. Where

[73] Ḥabash and Malbrunot, *Al-Thawriyyūn Lā Yamūtūn Abadan [Revolutionaries Never Die]*, 92; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, 252.
[74] Jūrj Ḥabash, "Thawratunā Hiyya Sharīʿatunā Al-Akḥlāqiyya [Our Revolution Is Our Moral Code]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 47 (June 20, 1970): 6–7.

verbal appeals and images of miserable refugee camps fail to capture Western attention, let alone action, violence and the threat of violence become a bridging discourse between the world as viewed by the PFLP and the world as presented by Western media, one which Frantz Fanon described as pushing the colonialist bourgeois language of "nonviolence."[75] In a meta maneuver, the PFLP's taking of Western journalists as hostages was a *literal* grabbing of international public opinion through the very mechanism that helped convey its hegemonic ideologies. As argued by Lori Allen, these hegemonic ideologies form structures of thought that maintain the domination of Palestinians, and so historical actors, like the PFLP, were sometimes better positioned and motivated to challenge the epistemologically contingent nature of these exploitative and inconsistently applied standards of engagement.[76] When Habash said, "We were not joking," he was not simply asking for the PFLP to be taken seriously by the US, the Jordanian regime, and Western media. As he emphasized in his speech, he was also speaking *frankly*, translating the Front's emphasis on violence as a legitimate revolutionary discourse against Zionism-*cum*-international colonialism into digestible summations of the Front's truth for a Western audience: Anything that protects our revolution is right – We have the full right to put pressure here – We are not joking.

Despite the scale of these operations and its bold assertions of revolutionary legitimacy, the PFLP, prior to September 1970, was still struggling to secure political relevance and financial stability. In its nascency, a period political scientist Asʿad AbuKhalil labels as the organization's "idealistic" years, the PFLP made a "principled" commitment to rejecting government

[75] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 23.
[76] Allen, "Subaltern Critique and the History of Palestine," 154.

donations.[77] In these idealistic years, *al-Hadaf* would publish a list of the individual donations (many of which were no more than 100 Lebanese lira) that the Front had received on the first page of every issue along with an explanation of how the Front provided receipts to each of its donors.[78] Such practices revealed an ethos of financial transparency in an era before international terrorism financing laws made such actions impossible, even if they also disclosed the relative poverty of the organization in comparison to Fatah. Oriana Fallaci, an Italian journalist, left little doubt about the Front's precarity on the eve of Black September during an interview with George Habash that was published by *LIFE* magazine in June 1970. Describing the harsh living conditions of PFLP members, Fallaci explained:

> In any sense it's a tough life. The *fedayeen* [*fidaʾiyyun*] who belong to the Front have no regular salary like those who belong to Al Fatah; at most they get a subsidy of $5 a month and transport every 30 days to visit their families. Their few military bases are ill-equipped and insufficiently supplied: the daily fare is boiled beans, meat once a week if all is well. Any free time left over from military training is filled with study of Marxist and Leninist classics. There is no question that the Palestinian resistance is a socialistic movement aided by China and the U.S.S.R. But the Front is so poor that it doesn't even have a headquarters or a telephone, so a *fedayeen* who joins the Front does not do it for material gains. That would explain why there are only 1,600 or so members.[79]

However, George Habash seemed unfazed when questioned about the Front's meager recruitment numbers, replying:

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[77] AbuKhalil, "Internal Contradictions in the PFLP," 370–71. Abu Khalil argues that the PFLP was later corrupted by the influx of Gulf money that poured into the organization following the Dawson's Field hijackings in September 1970, leading the organization to become overly bureaucratic, political pliant, and secretive in regard to its finances.
[78] See, for example, *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 35 (March 28, 1970): 2. A survey of these donation disclosures from other issues reveals that the PFLP was receiving regular small individual donations from places as far flung as Brazil, the United States, and Europe, as well as collected donations from international Palestinian student and worker unions.
[79] Fallaci, "A Leader of the Fedayeen: 'We Want a War like the Vietnam War,'" 32.

> It doesn't mean anything to have a lot of *fedayeen,* perhaps recruited with money as an incentive: 100 men with clear revolutionary ideas fight better than 1,000 mercenaries. We wouldn't accept many people even if we had the money Al Fatah has; we would continue to hold that the strength of the *fedayeen* is not in their numbers but in their quality. Especially when one is forced to rely on terrorism, as you call it, to wage one's war.[80]

Indeed, there was a good deal about the PFLP's recruitment structure beyond finances that lend credence to Habash's claim that the Front was focused on quality, rather than quantity, when building its cadres. The organization's early bylaws reveal that the PFLP subjected their recruits to a thorough vetting process that required a three-month to year-long training period, endorsement by two current members, acceptance by a PFLP cell, and approval by the party's highest ranks.[81] Indeed, less than three months after Habash's interview with LIFE, the PFLP demonstrated how such a small, but highly committed, group of idealogues could force the world's leading powers to the negotiating table and forever change Western perceptions of the Palestinian *fidaʾiyyun* movement.

The Dawson's Field Hijackings at "Revolution Airport"

What distinguished the PFLP's September 1970 Dawson's Field hijackings from its earlier commando operations was, in part, a paradox between its tactical achievements and the lasting and dramatic political liabilities it dealt to the Front. In the short term the aviation seizures were a major coup for the Front in that they secured the release of many of its members, most notably Leila Khaled, and made the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine a household name,

[80] Fallaci, 34.
[81] *Al-Niẓām al-Dākhilī [Internal Regulations]*, 24–25.

momentarily removing the organization from Fatah's shadow. In the long term, however, the televised spectacle of the jets ingulfed in flames in the Jordanian desert would lead to the collapse of the PFLP's most important operational base outside of Beirut, the death of hundreds of *fida'iyyun* during the ensuing Black September War, and the relegation of the Front to pariah member status within the PLO and their eventual self-imposed exile as "rejectionists" vis-à-vis diplomatic efforts to address the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

To understand the PFLP's escalation in operational scale in September 1970, one needs to take a wider view of the Cold War machinations taking place in the region in the lead up to Black September, and the crisis that these diplomatic maneuvers presented to the Palestinian revolution. Foremost among these was the Rogers Plan, named after its chief architect, then-US Secretary of State William P. Rogers. The Rogers Plan, developed over the course of October to December 1969, was a US-led framework for ending hostilities between Israel and the Arab States, primarily with concern to the ongoing War of Attrition between Egypt and Israel. Under the plan, the Arabs would accept "permanent" peace with Israel based on a "binding agreement" in exchange for Israel's withdrawal from Arab territories occupied during the 1967 War and called for any solution between Israel and the Arab states to contain a "just settlement" of the Palestinian refugee question.[82] The Rogers Plan, however, was ill-fated from the beginning. Golda Meir's government resented the plan and exploited US National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger's rivalry with Rogers to push the Nixon administration to distance itself from the State Department's peace settlement. For its part, the Soviet Union felt the plan did not offer enough

[82] Craig. Daigle, *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 48.

US concessions in the region and provided no timeline for Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, making the plan essentially dead on arrival.[83]

Despite the failure of the Rogers Plan, Secretary Rogers was able to broker a ceasefire agreement, albeit a short-lived one, between Egypt and Israel on August 7, 1970. This agreement sent shockwaves through the PLO, particularly the PFLP, which viewed the ceasefire, which did not include the Palestinians as an independent political force in the region, as a prelude to the liquidation of the Palestinian resistance movement.[84] In a speech given in the lead up to the official ceasefire at a press conference with foreign correspondents at the al-Badawi refugee camp near Tripoli, George Habash left very little doubt about the Front's position on Rogers' diplomatic efforts:

> It is our clear perception that these solutions can only take place on the corpse of the resistance movement. In other words, the liquidation, butchering, striking, and pulverization that will end the resistance movement is conditioned fundamentally on these solutions running their course.[85]

Considering this perceived existential threat to the Palestinian resistance, the timing of the Dawson's Field hijackings as a disruptive act and reminder to diplomats of the Western continued influence of the *fidaʾiyyun* on the world stage begins to make sense.

Little is known about the operational planning for the September 1970 hijackings. Wadiʿ Haddad, the operation's architect, headed a group known simply within the PFLP as "The Organization [*al-Nizam*]" which began in 1968 as a special committee for the Front's overseas operations. According to Haddad's son, Hani, not all members of "The Organization" were part

[83] Daigle, 65.
[84] Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive*, 109.
[85] Jūrj Ḥabash, "Al-Muqāwama: Lā Lil-Istislām Wa Sa-Yuqātil al-Fidāʾiyyūn Ḥattā al-Naṣr [The Resistance: No to Surrender and the Fedayeen Will Fight Until Victory]," *Al-Hadaf* 2, no. 53 (August 1, 1970): 4.

of the Popular Front. The committee was responsible for choosing targets, picking the cadres responsible for operations, the training of these cadres, procuring weapons, transporting the operatives and renting places for them to stay while on assignment.[86] According to Hani Haddad, the "Revolution Field"[87] operation, the PFLP's preferred name for the Dawson's Field mission, was initiated at the behest of Dr. Habash, who sent a letter to Wadiʿ Haddad asking him to "ignite the region [ashʿil al-mintaqa]" in order to derail the Rogers initiatives.[88] The events that Haddad orchestrated indeed ignited the region, although the ensuing inferno would burn the PFLP along with the operation's intended targets.

On September 6, 1970, the PFLP hijacked TWA Flight 741 from Frankfurt and Swissair Flight 100 from Zurich and forced them to land at Dawson's Field in the Qiyyʿan Khuna region of Jordan. On the same day, Leila Khaled and Patrick Arguello failed in their attempt to hijack El Al Flight 219, resulting in Khaled's arrest by British authorities and Arguello's death. The PFLP also hijacked Pan Am Flight 93 and redirected it first to Beirut and then to Cairo, where it was emptied of its passengers and blown up on the tarmac.

What is remarkable about the September 6-9 hijackings is that they were largely effective in forcing major European powers to meet the immediate demands of the PFLP. The PFLP seems to have been particularly adept at breaking the resolve of the involved nations in maintaining a united front in hostage negotiations with the Front. Internal records from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office indicate that the British government was extremely frustrated by the speed at which the West German and Swiss governments contemplated cutting

[86] Interviewed in Sharbal, *Asrār al-ṣundūq al-aswad*, 42.
[87] These operations are sometimes referred to in Arabic sources as *ʿamaliyyāt Qiyyʿān Khunā* after the region where the airstrip was located.
[88] Sharbal, *Asrār al-ṣundūq al-aswad*, 49.

unilateral deals with the PFLP to secure the release of their own nationals.[89] For Britain, the case of prisoner exchanges with the Palestinians was complicated by several factors. First, during the initial forty-eight hours of the crisis, the British government had trouble determining whether there were any British nationals on the first three hijacked planes and were therefore more amenable to the unified negotiations being promoted by the United States and Israel. Further, the PFLP's separation of Israeli and US-Israeli duel citizens from the rest of the hostages as part of the Front's ploy to put pressure on the Israeli government troubled British officials as an overtly anti-Jewish maneuver by the organization.[90] The British government also seemed to have had a large degree of confidence in their ability to buy time prior to September 9, 1970, as internal, ICRC, and Israeli intelligence reports indicated that the PFLP would not stick to its threats against the hostages if the group's initial deadline for having its demands met lapsed.[91]

However, with the seizure of BOAC Flight 775 on 9 September by PFLP sympathizers after its departure from Bahrain, the British government's calculus for negotiations completely changed. The British were aware of this final hijacking as it was in process, as British diplomatic officials were at the airport to meet the plane when it landed in Beirut to refuel and pick up PFLP representatives before leaving for Dawson's field. However, these British officials, along with the Lebanese military, were powerless to stop this progression of events other than to prevent one of the PFLP's operatives, the Jordanian sculptor Mona Saudi, from bringing aboard her recently published collection of Palestinian children's drawings for the hostages to read on their way to Jordan. Saudi, likely operating under the *nom de guerre* Shadiyya Abu Ghazaleh, had that

[89] "Telegram No. 558 from Douglass-Home to Foreign and Commonwealth Office," September 9, 1970, FCO 14/778, 43A, The National Archives of the UK.
[90] "Telegram No. 804 from Tel Aviv to Foreign and Commonwealth Office," September 9, 1970, FCO 14/778, 61A, The National Archives of the UK.
[91] "Telegram No. 558 from Douglass-Home to Foreign and Commonwealth Office."

same year published an anthology of Palestinian children's art from the camps titled *In Time of War: Children Testify.* One attaché to the British Embassy in Beirut remarked that Saudi insisted on bringing aboard "expensively produced volumes of not very good children's drawings." The Lebanese authorities eventually blocked her from bringing these books on the plane, fearing that they might contain explosives that would lead to the plane's destruction on Lebanese soil.[92] With a British airliner filled with British nationals now under PFLP control at "Revolution Airport," Her Majesty's Government suddenly found itself in a difficult position. On the one hand, the Foreign Office was under incredible pressure domestically to cut a unilateral deal with the Front to secure the swift release of all British nationals.[93] On the other hand, Israel, with backing from the United States, continued to resist calls by the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and West Germany to participate in good faith in any prisoner exchange negotiations. The Israeli government had also been earnestly seeking the extradition of Leila Khaled from British custody, a request that the Foreign Office was able to resist, particularly after the hijacking of BOAC flight 775 forced the British government to view Khaled as their main bargaining chip in deliberations with the Front.

To make matters worse, the phased release of European passengers by the Front coincided in an escalation of fighting between PLO cadres and the Jordanian military that would eventually erupt into the short, but bloody war known as Black September. Early on, the PFLP, as a gesture of goodwill and seriousness in striking a prisoner exchange deal with the European powers, released all the women, children, and elderly passengers from the airliners without condition. According to the PFLP, this early release of these passengers was also designed to

[92] See "Letter, A.J. Sindall to Foreign and Commonwealth Office," September 12, 1970, FCO 14/780, 232, The National Archives of the UK.
[93] "Telegram No. 317 from Foreign and Commonwealth Office to Amman," September 15, 1970, FCO 14/781, 301, The National Archives of the UK.

combat the international Israeli diplomatic campaign that aimed at stirring up international public opinion against the Front's operations.[94] The rest of the hostages were moved, after a rather miserable stint in the sweltering planes at Dawson's Field, to more comfortable accommodations at the Intercontinental Hotel in Amman.[95] However, with the outbreak of fighting between the PLO and the Jordanian Army, several of the hostages, particularly the dual US-Israeli passengers, had to be repeatedly moved from one PFLP safe house to the next as the Black September conflict devolved into street fighting and the Jordanian government's shelling of the civilian neighborhoods where the PLO cadres were based.[96]

The British government also seems to have been impressed with the organizational consistency and tactical precision of the PFLP's operation. J.P. Tripp of the Near Eastern Department, in a report sent to Sir P. Adams on September 15, 1970, detailed his office's assessment of the PFLP's ongoing strategy at the time. Tripp argued that the PFLP's release of most of the hostages at the beginning of the crisis was not due to a lack of nerves but rather a strategic calculation about the viability of being able to control roughly 400 passengers. Furthermore, Tripp believed that the PFLP limited their final group of captives to only men to make the threat of harm to them more credible to their international audience. By holding dual-nationals of the United States and Israel, the PFLP had also calculated that the US would diplomatically reign in any Israeli considerations of military reprisals against Palestinian targets. Finally, Tripp's report claimed that the PFLP, which he called "a small and determined group whose planning has been realistic even in the face of unforeseen setbacks…" believe "…(with

[94] "Bayānāt Wa Taṣrīḥāt Rasmiyya Min Al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya Ḥawl Nasf al-Ṭāʾirāt Fī Maṭār al-Thawra [Official Statements and Declarations by the Popular Front Regarding the Blowing Up of the Planes at Revolution Airport]."
[95] For an eyewitness account from one of the hostages of the conditions on the planes at Dawson's Field, see Raab, *Terror in Black September*, 59.
[96] "Telegram No. 585 from Amman to Foreign and Commonwealth Office," September 15, 1970, FCO 14/781, 323, The National Archives of the UK.

reason) [they] have carried out a feat even more remarkable than the Israeli raid on Beirut airport in December 1968…"[97] This remarkably sober assessment of the Front's understanding of the power of the spectacle in the age of televised news reveals that the PFLP had not forgotten the lessons learned during their earlier operations nor their ability to accurately assess the diplomatic motivations of a wide array of foreign governments. Just two years after the Israeli military had destroyed Arab domestic airliners on camera in Beirut in reprisal for a PFLP aviation attack, the Front had flipped the script and produced the live color footage of American, British, and Swiss airliners burning in the Jordanian desert, forcing these powers and eventually the Israelis to the negotiating table.

The PFLP and International Public Opinion

The consequences of the September 1970 Dawson's Field hijackings for the Palestinian resistance movement, most notably its traumatic losses during Black September, forced the PFLP into its most significant period of strategic and ideological introspection since the Front's internal schism over competing leftist ideologies in February 1969.[98] While the September operation had achieved the PFLP's goal of thrusting the Palestinian revolutionary movement into the international limelight, it also led to the PFLP's swift expulsion from its main base in the Jordanian camps, its newfound pariah status within the PLO, and diplomatic estrangement with its most important international backers in China and the USSR.[99] Yet while many scholars and

[97] "Letter from J.P. Tripp of the Near Eastern Department to Sir P. Adams," September 15, 1970, FCO 14/781, 298A, The National Archives of the UK.
[98] Fuʾād Maṭar, *Ḥakīm Al-Thawra: Sīrat Jūrj Ḥabash Wa-Niḍāluhu*, 1st ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Nahār lil-Nashr, 2008), 146–47.
[99] Roland Dannreuther, *The Soviet Union and the PLO* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 44; AbuKhalil, "Internal Contradictions in the PFLP," 375–76.

political commentators have pointed to the 1970 hijackings and subsequent civil war in Jordan as evidence of the PFLP's strategic immaturity and propensity for gross tactical miscalculation, such sweeping chastisements overlook the PFLP's complex internal debates regarding the public relations efficacy of such operations. Moreover, opinion pieces and essays by both the Front's ideological leaders and its diasporic supporters published in the immediate aftermath of the September events demonstrate that the PFLP had a sophisticated understanding of the operation's impact on international public opinion. This understanding incorporated dissenting views from within the Front and demonstrated an organizational maturity in terms of its ability to act on its professed commitment to the Marxist notion of self-criticism (*al-naqd al-dhati*).[100] Following the Leninist call for revolutionaries to analyze and contextualize past mistakes as a means of improvement, the Front embraced this form of criticism as an essential component of revolutionary perfection.

As part of this self-critical process, Ghassan Kanafani's essays from this period reflected on the limited efficacy of attempting to shape international public opinion for the Palestinian cause. Kanafani's essays mirrored the atmosphere of frustration within the Palestinian resistance movement about its inability to speak to the international community on its own revolutionary anti-colonial and liberationist terms.[101] Kanafani and the PFLP's disappointment in Western media channels as a viable peaceful means for communicating Palestinian goals created further incentives for the Front to double down on violent spectacle as its primary outlet for reaching Western audiences. As Palestinian writer Fawaz Turki observed regarding Western media several years after the September events, "None of them seems to realize that to rob the

[100] See Article 14, *Al-Niẓām al-Dākhilī [Internal Regulations]*, 14–15.
[101] Ghassān Kanafānī, "Amn Al-Thawra Fī Khaṭar [The Revolution's Safety Is in Peril]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 49 (July 4, 1970): 4–5.

Palestinians of that [right to be heard], is to leave them with nothing except violence. And violence will be the only thing left for the Palestinian to insure a hearing for the voice of moderation."[102]

Immediately after the September 1970 hijackings, the PFLP mobilized its internationally distributed Arabic organ, *al-Hadaf,* to deliver the Front's official position on the success of the operation. On September 19, 1970, the magazine praised the operation as a strike against imperialist interests and a public spectacle that was wildly popular with the Palestinian masses. In the weeks after the hijackings while the PFLP was still mired in the fighting of Black September, *al-Hadaf* published a series of letters from around the world congratulating the organization on its victory against its enemies. Letters came from a wide array of partner organizations including the Committee of Supporters of the Palestinian Revolution in Detroit, the Arab Revolutionary Youth in Detroit, and Supporters of the Workers Party in Hyderabad, along with letters from Colombia, Brazil, Canada, and Baghdad. The letters generated the sense that the operation was supported both by Palestinian diasporas across the globe and fellow radical parties in the Global South.[103] At the same time, the PFLP's official statement on the operation in that issue highlighted the international public relations *raison d'être* for the planes' seizure and destruction, arguing that they occurred "…at the time when the Zionist and imperialist media apparatus launched a media campaign aimed at distorting the image of the Front's struggle, depicting this struggle as inhumane and misleading international public opinion in relation to the legitimate goals for which the plane hijacking operation was implemented."[104] This

[102] Fawaz Turki, "The Palestinian Estranged," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 5, no. 1/2 (1975): 89, https://doi.org/10.2307/2535684.
[103] *al-Hadaf* 2, no. 60 (September 19, 1970): 4.
[104] "Bayānāt Wa Taṣrīḥāt Rasmiyya Min Al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya Ḥawl Nasf al-Ṭāʾirāt Fī Maṭār al-Thawra [Official Statements and Declarations by the Popular Front Regarding the Blowing Up of the Planes at Revolution Airport]," 4.

preoccupation with international public opinion and the Western powers "media siege" stood at the center of the ensuing internal debates regarding the operation's efficacy that took place in the magazine's pages over the following year. What makes the 1970-1971 *al-Hadaf* debates about the hijackings particularly interesting, moreover, is the democratized and grass roots nature of this dialogue. Rather than only presenting the ideological positions of the Front's leadership (Habash, Kanafani, Haddad, etc.), *al-Hadaf*'s editorial board also solicited the reactions of its far-flung readership, publishing their responses under an op-ed series entitled "Observations Regarding the Importance of International Public Opinion."

At the center of this series was a particularly heated exchange between ʿAlaʾ al-Din al-Samraʾi and ʿAbd al-Jabbar ʿAlwan, two Palestinian readers based in the United States, on one side, and Muhammad Abu Tarbush, a Palestinian reader based in Durham, England, on the other. al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan argued that there had historically been little effort within the Palestinian revolutionary movement to "persuade this or that sector of international public opinion on the justice of the Palestinian people's struggle for the sake of national liberation from colonialism and Zionism."[105] The two opinion writers also offered a taxonomy of international public opinion, separating the forces of the world into friendly public opinion that supported the Palestinian cause without condition, neutral public opinion that supported the Palestinian cause on the condition of securing Israeli interests as well, and, finally, hostile public opinion, which included colonial governments (the United States and Israel) and reactionary Arab regimes (Jordan and Lebanon). However, for al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan, the pursuit of international approval for the Palestinian cause was a fraught venture because of what they called the pro-

[105] ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn al-Sāmrāʾī and ʿAbd al-Jabbār ʿAlwān, "Mulāḥaẓāt Ḥawla Qaḍīyyat Al-Ihtimām Bi-l-Raʾy al-ʿāmm al-ʿālamī [Observations Regarding the Importance of International Public Opinion]," *Al-Hadaf* 2, no. 82 (January 9, 1971): 8.

Zionist media's censure of Palestinians, and they both urged the Palestinian resistance to couple media activities with what they viewed as the ultimate implement in the revolution's public relations toolkit: armed revolutionary activity.[106] al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan reveal a certain cynicism about the Palestinian revolution's ability to persuade the public within each of these international categories through rhetorical prowess alone. To support this claim, the two authors pointed to the parallel success of the Vietnamese revolution in winning the respect of certain progressive sectors of the US population, not through any media effort, "…but rather as the result of brilliant heroism that led to increased contradictions within the colonial base and American society itself."[107] Under this understanding of armed action as a form of radical public influence, the PFLP was encouraged, like the Vietnamese, to exploit the burgeoning anti-war movement in the United States, not through direct appeals to the New Left in the United States on the basis of shared ideology, but rather by inflicting high economic and personnel costs on a hegemonic power through unconventional warfare.[108] And yet, according to Joe Stork, the editor of the MERIP Report during this period, the PFLP's faith in the American New Left was overly optimistic as the latter group's momentary interest in Palestine following the September 1970 events, motivated primarily by the accompanying threat of US military intervention in Jordan, was soon overshadowed by this New Left's general lack of action around the question of Palestine and Israel.[109] The notable exception to this rule was Noam Chomsky, who in the face of

[106] al-Sāmrāʾī and ʿAlwān, 9.
[107] al-Sāmrāʾī and ʿAlwān, 9.
[108] Michael R. Fischbach, *The Movement and the Middle East: How the Arab-Israeli Conflict Divided the American Left* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2020), 121; Pamela E. Pennock, *The Rise of the Arab American Left: Activists, Allies, and Their Fight against Imperialism and Racism, 1960s-1980s*, Justice, Power, and Politics (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 79–80.
[109] Joe Stork, "The American New Left and Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, no. 1 (1972): 64–66, https://doi.org/10.2307/2535973.

widespread criticism wrote critically of US and Israeli policies regarding the Palestinians.[110] However, Arab and Arab-American familiarity with Noam Chomsky's positions on Palestine and Israel was quite limited, even several years after the 1970 Dawson's Field hijackings.[111]

Not all *al-Hadaf* readers shared al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan's analysis. Three weeks after the publishing of the two men's opinion piece, *al-Hadaf* featured a highly critical rebuttal by Muhammad Abu Tarbush, a Palestinian reader based in the United Kingdom. Abu Tarbush attacked al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan on the inconsistency of their arguments, positing that the two writers' claims were based on personal belief rather than on Marxist theory. On the original article's point about the influence of Vietnamese military heroics on the American public, Abu Tarbush claimed that it contradicted the two authors' original position that it was impossible to influence the neutral sector of society through any means. He also posited that al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan demonstrated defeatist tendencies whenever the two men gestured toward the importance of international public opinion while lamenting a purported Zionist control of modern media technology.[112] Though this last accusation uncharitably characterized the two men's arguments, since al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan were mainly critiquing Arab governments' attempts to ingratiate themselves with the American public through outlets that had consistently demonized Arabs, it did identify the common motif of the "media siege" in the PFLP's defense of the September 1970 hijackings. Based on the premise that American media intentionally blocked coverage of the condition of Palestinian refugees, the PFLP argued long before Black September that it was time, in the words of George Habash, "…that [the world] realized we exist."[113]

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[110] For Chomsky's first monograph on the issue of Palestine, see Noam Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East? Reflections on Justice and Nationhood.*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).
[111] Edward W. Said, "Chomsky and the Question of Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 4, no. 3 (1975): 91–92, https://doi.org/10.2307/2535556.
[112] Muḥammad Abū Ṭarbūsh, "Mulāḥaẓāt Ḥawla Qaḍīyyat Al-Ihtimām Bi-l-Raʾy al-ʿāmm al-ʿālamī [Observations Regarding the Importance of International Public Opinion]," *Al-Hadaf* 2, no. 85 (January 30, 1971): 20.
[113] Fallaci, "A Leader of the Fedayeen: 'We Want a War like the Vietnam War,'" 33.

What is particularly noteworthy about Abu Tarbush's article is that it explicitly referred to the September plane hijacking operation as one oriented toward garnering media attention. Abu Tarbush took issue with al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan's general condemnation of the ineffectiveness of "Arab media," saying that such a critique glossed over the crucial differences between Arab state media efforts and the media-oriented methods of the Palestinian resistance movement, of which the PFLP's hijackings stood out as the most dramatic example. Again, Abu Tarbush posited that the two writers' cool and overly generalized attitude toward the efficacy of media relations contradicted their simultaneous assertion that the goal of any media action should be to explain and justify the policies and goals of the organization and the actions that the organization deemed necessary for achieving those objectives. In response to this contradiction, he asked, "…If one finds no interest in international public opinion – as [al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan's] article suggests, then why waste time? Why don't these organizations reject any justification for their actions?"[114] Arguing again through this straw man representation of al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan's article, Abu Tarbush nevertheless was able to provoke a response from the two authors, forcing them to grapple more explicitly with the idea of hijackings *as* public relations campaigns.

In a response to Abu Tarbush penned by al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan in *al-Hadaf* two months later, the two men attacked their critic's misrepresentation of their article, claiming that their critique was always about the "uselessness of discussions, commentary, and interviews [aimed at] hostile public opinion" and not, as Abu Tarbush suggested, about the plane hijackings, which the two men viewed as the "…creative implementation of a method for striking the enemy at its

[114] Abū Ṭarbūsh, "Mulāḥaẓāt Ḥawla Qaḍīyyat Al-Ihtimām Bi-l-Raʾy al-ʿāmm al-ʿālamī [Observations Regarding the Importance of International Public Opinion]," 20.

weakest points."[115] For the two men, the hijackings fell into the category of a tactical military operation rather than one soliciting international public good will. Emphasizing this final point, al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan closed their rebuttal of Abu Tarbush with a reprioritizing of traditional armed resistance over media relations, declaring:

> …When innocent blood is spilled in Amman by the puppet [Hashemite] regime, and when Arab nations from the Atlantic to the Gulf are humiliated by scum like Moshe Dayan, and when the resistance organizations slaughter one another, and when the enemy scum burns our children with napalm bombs, one does not ask "What are people saying about us?" This is the essence of the importance of public opinion after it is stripped of embellishment and sophistry.[116]

This rebuttal rejected the pursuit of rhetorical persuasion as an adequate response to existential crisis and recategorized hijackings back into the realm of popular struggle. In these men's analysis, the point of seizing planes was to strike back at enemies, to cause material damage, and to inspire terror amongst the Front's foes rather than engage in an elaborate and sophisticated symbolic mode of communication with an international audience. And yet, in what can be thought of as a radical interpretation of communication theorist Marshall McLuhan's famous adage, "the medium is the message," the PFLP's destruction of the commercial airliner, as a medium, produced a powerful message, which was "…the change in scale or pace or pattern that it introduce[d] into human affairs."[117] In essence, by making passenger planes, a medium of conveyance once completely outside the realm of warfare, into a space vulnerable to the

[115] ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn al-Sāmrāʾī and ʿAbd al-Jabbār ʿAlwān, "ʿAwda Ilā Masʾalat Al-Ihtimām Bi-l-Raʾy al-ʿāmm al-ʿalāmī [A Return to the Issue of the Importance of International Public Opinion]," *Al-Hadaf* 2, no. 91 (March 13, 1971): 20.
[116] al-Sāmrāʾī and ʿAlwān, 20.
[117] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2001), 7–8.

vicissitudes of armed conflict, the PFLP created a new order in power relations where a relatively small movement could impose its presence on a global hegemon like the United States. The PFLP hijackings, under this framework, internationalized Palestinian precarity by making all Westerners open to a new form of precarity, what Lebanese journalist Ghassan Charbel once called "the victim's right to choose the method of resisting her executioner."[118] The resulting effect was a transformation from a petition for recognition of the Palestinian crisis on humanitarian terms set by Western powers into an imposition of Palestinian presence by the PFLP through the televised destruction of airliners.

However, while some of the PFLP's supporters abroad were willing to separate the Front's foreign operations from the communications mission of the organization, the PFLP's ideological leadership was far less willing to circumscribe hijackings so strictly within purely militaristic bounds. Ghassan Kanafani, as the organization's primary ideologue – alongside Habash – prior to Kanafani's assassination in 1972, perhaps did the most to theorize the rhetorical and "audience-oriented" influence of PFLP's hijackings. Two months prior to the 1970 events at "Revolution Field" – as the PFLP referred to Dawson's Field – Kanafani identified the Front's need to combat what he viewed as the dual threats of Zionist propaganda and the competing announcements of other factions within the Palestinian resistance movement. The PFLP's ability to break through the surrounding media noise, according to Kanafani, would constitute the organization's entrance into worthwhile "counter-intelligence activity."[119] Even with the benefit of hindsight, the intellectual continued to emphasize the public relations aspect of the September hijackings. In an interview with the *New Left Review* in May 1971, Kanafani argued that in the face of the US-brokered Roger's Plan – which the PFLP viewed as a

[118] Sharbal, *Asrār al-ṣundūq al-aswad*, 18.
[119] Kanafānī, "Amn Al-Thawra Fī Khaṭar [The Revolution's Safety Is in Peril]," 4.

"surrenderist" peace settlement between Egypt, Jordan, and Israel premised on the liquidation of the Palestinian resistance – the Front had to derail the negotiations through dramatic action. With his characteristic wit, Kanafani explained, "I have always said that we don't hijack planes because we love Boeing 707s. We do it for specific reasons, at a specific time and against a specific enemy."[120] Under the cover of the impending Rogers plan, Kanafani explained, the Jordanian regime was able to stifle the Front's activities by force:

> They [the Jordanian military] were forbidding us to practice our *raison d'être*. They were preventing us making raids against Israel, and suppressing our political activities in the cities. So our own actions, including the planes, were not provocations; they were the movement of a revolution trying to escape from a circle in which it was trapped.[121]

Kanafani's language mirrors that of the "media siege" seen elsewhere in PFLP communications, wherein the gagging of the PFLP's message by external actors forced the Front to use extreme measures to make itself heard on the international stage. This language of resisting media silence on Palestine with armed action and public relations marks a natural continuation from Kanafani's writings in the late 1960s, when he warned of the "cultural siege" presented by Zionist literature *qua* propaganda and by great power Cold War intelligence machinations.[122] As a precursor to his later theorization of resistance literature, Kanfani's writings on Zionist literature already demonstrated his insistence on the overlap between the cultural and military fronts of the Palestinian anti-imperialist struggle.

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[120] Ghassan Kanafani, "Ghassan Kannafani, On the PFLP and the September Crisis," *New Left Review*, June 1971, 50.
[121] Kanafani, 52.
[122] Elizabeth M. Holt, "Resistance Literature and Occupied Palestine in Cold War Beirut," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, January 22, 2021, 1–2.

At the same time, Kanafani, like al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan, also emphasized the limits of courting international public opinion, particularly through traditional Western media channels. In his last essay written before his assassination on July 8, 1972, "On the Case of Abu Hamidu and the Issue of Cultural and Media 'Cooperation' with the Enemy," published that same month in *Shuʾun Filastiniyya,* the author critiqued past efforts by the PFLP to reach out to foreign journalists. Furthermore, he called for the boycott of televised debates with Israelis because such spectacles only served to give Western media networks the appearance of fairness while they continued to abet the occupation through favorable coverage of Israeli policy. For evidence, Kanafani pointed to a recent BBC-hosted debate between two Israeli students and two Palestinian students in Cyprus that gave the Arab students fair coverage but only within a framework that "endorsed Israel."[123] More importantly, Kanafani deftly described in this essay how the severity of the Palestinian popular armed struggle and the level of media attention toward the Palestinian cause were arranged in dialectical and inverted relationship:

> Any television network is unprepared to give any Palestinian, in the case of a quieting down of the revolution, one minute to express their opinion, but these companies are forced to open their networks to the voice of the resistance when the size of the fighting and politics of this resistance becomes so large that it enters, or touches, the daily frame of peoples' lives in the West. Thus, we no longer need to provide an entertaining scene of verbal sparring with our enemy – who is out to kill our people and remove them – for Americans, Swedes, or Germans eating hot dogs in front of the television screen. It

[123] Ghassān Kanafānī, "Ḥawla Qaḍāyāt Abū Ḥamīdū Wa-Qaḍāyāt 'al-Taʿāmul' al-Iʿlāmī Wa-l-Thaqāfī Maʿ al-ʿAdū [On the Case of Abu Hamidu and the Issue of Cultural and Media 'Cooperation' with the Enemy]," *Shuʾūn Filasṭīniyya*, no. 12 (1972), https://rommanmag.com/view/posts/postDetails?id=4396.

> makes no difference to them if the Arabs go to the desert or to hell, no matter how skilled the Arab debater is![124]

Kanafani's analysis suggested that Palestinian revolutionaries could only engage international public opinion through force, rather than persuasion. Such an assertion directly conflicts with the conciliatory communication efforts of diasporic Palestinian intellectuals like Fayez Sayigh, who Lori Allen argues tried to convey their case to the international community in terms and values those Western interlocutors could understand.[125] Ghassan Kanafani not only rejected such efforts as futile but went so far as to suggest that the only language shared by the Palestinian resistance and Western powers was that of violent force.[126]

Kanafani did not view this silencing of Palestinians only within a West-Arab axis put also as part of an inter-generational silencing of younger leadership. In his analysis of the causes for the Arab defeat in 1967, the author pushed against his contemporaries' arguments of inherent Arab backwardness (*al-takhalluf*), and instead pointed to the strategic suppression of the younger generation by older nationalist leaders, who "…have squandered and thwarted the younger generations who are themselves the bridge to the age."[127] Under this schema, the PFLP's initiation of the September 1970 hijackings can begin to be understood as the organization's rejection of a subaltern status under which they would be forced to "…formulate [their] critique in the credible terms of the dominant discourse" *and* as a new generation's attempt at imposing new post-1967 terms for discussing Palestinian liberation. [128]

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[124] Kanafānī.
[125] Allen, "Subaltern Critique and the History of Palestine," 156.
[126] In the PFLP's founding statement issued on December 11, 1967, the Front explicitly argues that the only language that "the enemy" understands is the language of revolutionary violence. See *Al-Masīra al-Tārīkhiyya Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical March of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, 65.
[127] Ghassan Kanafani, "Thoughts on Change and the 'Blind Language,'" trans. Barbara Harlow and Nejd Yaziji, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, Marxism and Critical Discourse, no. 10 (1990): 154.
[128] Allen, "Subaltern Critique and the History of Palestine," 154.

Conclusion

The PFLP's explosion of the airliners on live television on 12 September 1970 marked their simultaneous destruction of any compliance with previous hegemonic rules for public media relations and the beginning of a new rhetorical front in its struggle for national liberation. No longer just a party of ideological treatises and fiery speeches on the texts of Marx and Lenin, the PFLP had entered into what French philosopher and former revolutionary Régis Debray once called the "era of the videosphere: the age of the image, in which the book is knocked off its pedestal and the visible triumphs over the great invisibles – God, History, Progress – of the previous epochs."[129] The beginning of Debray's era of the videosphere, 1968, coincidentally corresponds with the beginning of the PFLP's foray into armed overseas operations. Moreover, Debray's claim of the triumph of the image over Marxist teleological principles of materialist history and progress maps onto the PFLP's increasingly radical reliance on the revolutionary power of the image (in this case, the explosion of jetliners) over that of the text. Debray classified this difference as a transition in rhetorical authority from the previous "graphosphere's" maxim, "I read it," to the videosphere's maxim, "I saw it on TV."[130]

Even Ghassan Kanafani, as an accomplished writer and editor, seems to have understood the limits of the lexical sphere and the power of the visual within a popular revolution. In recognition of the visual's authority in the coming age, the writer believed that the rejection of engaging the enemy on television was itself a revolutionary political act. Speaking on the meaning of the PFLP's refusal to debate Israelis on live television, Kanafani wrote just before his

[129] Régis Debray, "Socialism: A Life-Cycle," *New Left Review*, no. 46 (August 2007): 5.
[130] Debray, 26.

assassination, “The boycott of the enemy and the refusal to engage in persuasive dialogue with them through verbal sparring is, in itself, a position. It is a point of view. It is a form of clashing.”[131] Kanafani’s sober assessment reflected what the PFLP knew since September 1970: the Front would never win over international public opinion rhetorically. It could only command the world’s attention through the images of burning planes and hope that it paid attention long enough to recognize the Palestinian desperation behind such an operation.

[131] Kanafānī, “Ḥawla Qaḍāyāt Abū Ḥamīdū Wa-Qaḍāyāt ‘al-Taʿāmul’ al-Iʿlāmī Wa-l-Thaqāfī Maʿ al-ʿAdū [On the Case of Abu Hamidu and the Issue of Cultural and Media ‘Cooperation’ with the Enemy].”

Chapter 3: Revolutionary Literary Praxis: The PFLP and Resistance Literature in the Age of the Palestinian Revolution

In December 1969, the editorial board of the magazine *al-Hadaf* (The Target), the official Arabic-language organ of the Marxist-Leninist Palestinian national liberation movement, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), published an opinion piece titled "Poetry is a Vision in Action and Revolution is an Action in Vision." Founded in that same year in Beirut by PFLP politico, editor, and famed Palestinian author, Ghassan Kanafani, *al-Hadaf* served as the biweekly mouthpiece for the party's positions on a wide spectrum of issues, from international affairs and leftist political theory to women's liberation and literary criticism. The inclusion of this article in the magazine's first year of existence seems odd, however, as its author, the then-already-famous Syrian poet Adonis (born ʿAli Ahmad Saʿid Esber), a pioneer of Arab modernist verse and co-founder of the Beirut-based experimental poetry magazine, *Shiʿr* (Poetry), wrote it to argue that the poetry emerging from occupied Palestine was neither resistance nor revolutionary poetry, but merely verse derivative of earlier mid-century nationalist forms. This distinction seems peculiar in that it directly refuted the argument made by *al-Hadaf's* editor-in-chief, Kanafani, in his seminal literary study, *al-Adab al-Filastini al-Muqawim tahtul-Ihtilal, 1948-1968* [Palestinian Resistance Poetry under the Occupation, 1948-1968], which had been published the previous year. Kanafani's central thesis in this work posits that the social and political conditions of occupation in Palestine create an environment that compels the production

of revolutionary resistance literature (*adab al-muqawama*).[1] *Al-Hadaf*'s editorial board[2] seems to have been aware of the tension between Adonis' thesis and the PFLP's mission, guided by Kanafani's literary theory, to champion resistance literature as a revolutionary genre within Palestine. In an introduction to the article, the board accused Adonis of putting Palestinian poetry "on trial" in isolation from the circumstances of occupation under which these poets composed. Nevertheless, because of Adonis' call for new left-wing critical values, the editorial board remained "very ready to welcome" the article.[3]

What does this seemingly irreconcilable confrontation between two very different visions of revolutionary poetry tell us about how the Arab Left, broadly, and the Palestinian Left as represented by the PFLP, in particular, thought about the political and cultural stakes attached to literary criticism in the post-1967 period? How did the writers at *al-Hadaf*, particularly via the magazine's *Thaqafa wa Adab* [Culture and Literature] section, attempt to shape a new Palestinian leftist "field of cultural production," to borrow Pierre Bourdieu's concept, via a process of inclusion and exclusion that reflected the PFLP's broader Marxist-Leninist ideological commitments in the late sixties and early seventies?[4] The meeting of these two minds, Adonis' and Kanafani's, represented two visions of revolutionary literature and reflected a broader

[1] Ghassān Kanafānī, *Al-Adab al-Filasṭīnī al-Muqāwam Taḥtul-Iḥtilāl, 1948-1968 [Palestinian Resistance Literature under the Occupation, 1948-1968]* (Beirut: Maṭbaʿat Karkī, 1968).
[2] In December 1969, *al-Hadaf*'s board was comprised of Kanafani (editor-in-chief), ʿAdnan Sharara (managing director), and Mahmud Dawarji (artistic director). ʿAdnan Sharara, born in the Lebanese village of Bint Jbeil in 1932, was an expressionist painter who studied at the Institute of Fine Arts at the Lebanese University between 1965-1969. In the 1980s, he went on to study at the University of Paris and worked as an art professor at his alma mater from 1978-1972. Mahmud Dawarji grew up in the Burj al-Brajneh refugee camp in the suburbs of Beirut. In one account, Dawarji, as a young man, approached Kanafani looking for work. When the writer asked the young man what skills he possessed, Dawarji replied, "soccer." Kanafani, amused by the young man, immediately put him to work in journalist production. Mahmud Dawarji would go on to become a prominent editor and journalist. See Walīd ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, *Fī ʿAyn Al-ʿĀṣifa: ʿan al-Shahīd Abū ʿAlī Muṣṭafā [In the Eye of the Storm: On the Martyr Abu ʿAli Mustafa* (Dimashq: Dār Kanʿān lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 2012), 169.
[3] Adonis, "Al-Shiʿr Ru'yā Bi-Fiʿl Wa-l-Thawra Fiʿl Bi-Ru'yā [Poetry Is a Vision in Action and Revolution Is an Action in Vision]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 20 (December 1969).
[4] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," *The Polity Reader in Cultural Theory* 1 (1994).

grappling within the Palestinian Left over how to stake an authoritative claim on the production and criticism of art and literature that was inspired by and produced within the context of occupation and armed Palestinian revolution. Though both men viewed resistance and revolutionary poetry as synonymous in the Palestinian context, Adonis conceived of revolutionary-resistance poetry as a literary insurrectionary and innovative act on par with the social insurrectionary act of armed resistance. Adonis' primary concern was one of *revolutionary aesthetics,* that is, aesthetics that rebel against poetic conventions of form and lyricism to produce new transgressive forms that undermine bourgeois tastemakers and thereby truly liberate the art for the masses. In Adonis' own words, this new form of poetry "…appears to be a rebellion against the forms and methods of old poetry, a rejection of its attitudes and styles which have outlived their usefulness."[5] For Kanafani, however, resistance and revolution in art was as much about the lived social realities of the Palestinian artists under occupation as it was about artistic innovation. In his view, the Palestinian artist's duty in the time of revolution was an existential one centered on the preservation of Palestinian language, culture, and collective memory in the face of erasure by Israeli military and civilian institutions.[6] Kanafani's argument thus centered on *aesthetics of revolution*,[7] that is, poetic styles that, regardless of their novelty in form, derive their revolutionary character from the dire social circumstances that drive artists to produce committed literature (*al-adab al-multazim*), a genre with complex links to Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of *littérature engagée*. In short, this committed framework compels writers to

[5] Quoted in Muhammad Mustafa Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 232.
[6] For more on Palestinian national commemoration under occupation, see Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine*.
[7] For an early discussion of "aesthetics of revolution" as a rejection of conventional meanings and content, see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, *The Palestinian Wedding: A Bilingual Anthology of Contemporary Palestinian Resistance Poetry*, 1st ed. (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1982), 7.

reject "art for art's sake" and to instead produce works that aim at changing the social and political environments in which they live.[8]

Considering Kanafani's conception of resistance literature, part of *al-Hadaf*'s mission, in its first years, was to establish itself as an influential node and gatekeeper for a new wave of Arabic literary production coming out of the popular Palestinian revolution being led, in part, by the PFLP's political cadres. This mission, exhibited in *al-Hadaf* issues from Kanafani's tenure as editor-in-chief (1969-1972), was comprised of three interrelated objectives aimed at establishing the magazine and the PFLP, by extension, as authoritative voices on literature's revolutionary function, literary practice, translation, and publishing within the Palestinian revolution:

1. By showcasing literature and art produced by amateur poets in Palestinian refugee camps, *al-Hadaf* would demonstrate its close ties to the masses, which formed the social basis for the PFLP's political and artistic authority.
2. By publishing literary criticism and analyses regarding new poetry by notable Palestinian authors, *al-Hadaf* would demonstrate that the Palestinian revolutionary Left, represented by the PFLP, could participate in the types of sophisticated intellectual and artistic discourses that characterized parallel and competing Marxist and nationalist groups, including the Arab modernists.
3. By translating and publishing poetry and prose from fellow leftist revolutionaries throughout the Global South, *al-Hadaf* would reify the connection between the Palestinian revolutionary literary scene and international revolutionary artistic networks, paralleling the PFLP's transnational training missions with other revolutionary groups in

[8] Di-Capua, *No Exit*; Klemm, "Different Notions of Commitment (Iltizam) and Committed Literature (Al-adab Al-multazim) in the Literary Circles of the Mashriq."

the Global South and situating the PFLP's political and armed struggle within international anti-colonial discourses.

After providing some background on the regional and theoretical underpinnings for these new forms of Palestinian revolutionary literary praxis, I will examine each of these objectives in detail as illustrated by the articles from the *Culture and Literature* section of *al-Hadaf* and demonstrate how *al-Hadaf*'s primary mission of establishing a socially contingent literary practice of revolution resisted the Arab modernists' competing call for decontextualized revolutionary aesthetics.

In addition, upon examination of the "Culture and Literature" sections of *al-Hadaf* under Kanafani's tenure (1969-1972), I argue that the PFLP tried to advance a particular set of Palestinian aesthetics of revolution regarding resistance poetry, in particular, and all Palestinian art, in general, in an attempt to articulate the role of art in the age and space of Palestinian revolution and the Front's artistic authority vis-à-vis this artform. The PFLP viewed this bid for authority in the creative sphere as one that was fundamentally intertwined with its broader goal of claiming authority over the post-1967 popular armed Palestinian struggle. To an audience unfamiliar with the political embeddedness of poetry within Palestinian society, the stakes of the PFLP's poetic claims might appear exaggerated, but, as the Palestinian legislator and literary scholar Hanan Mikhail Asharawi writes, these poems, much more than speech acts, constitute "…a source of national pride, a symbol as well as a means of resistance."[9] However, the writers at *al-Hadaf* went beyond just semiotic discussions of poetry or its instrumentalization as a tool for resistance and also attempted to engage in debates on aesthetic form and innovation, in effect melding the nuances of Adonis' and Kanafani's respective literary calls to action. Literary

[9] Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, "The Contemporary Palestinian Poetry of Occupation," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7, no. 3 (1978): 83.

scholar Barbara Harlow offers one of the best synopses of this dialectical relationship between the political and literary functions of Palestinian poetry, which merits reproduction in its entirety here:

> Poetic language is not envisaged here as a rarefied or transcendent means of expression, detached from the political reality of struggle, but rather it is considered an integral part of the ideological foundations of the new social order, personal as well as public, the language of decrees no less than of love letters. The new language, the language made from the combined forces of resistance and poetry, is still to be forged. Neither armed struggle alone, nor cultural resistance by itself, can provide the necessary resources.[10]

This chapter focuses on poetry as part of this "ideological foundation" of the new socio-political world that the Palestinian revolution sought to establish in its homeland, specifically, and the Arab world, in general. This endeavor to shape local society through art according to the PFLP's Marxist-Leninist ideals was not only threatened by Israeli censorship and violence against Palestinian artists but, as will be demonstrated in this chapter, by the resistance of those who championed old poetic forms and conventions over innovations by younger poets and amateurs supported by the Front's literary initiatives. Ghassan Kanafani, as a literary critic, recognized how resistance literature created both a break from and continuation with a long Palestinian revolutionary past, explaining, "In this respect, current Palestinian resistance literature, like armed resistance, forms a new creation in a historical sequence practically uninterrupted during the last half century of the Palestinian people's lives."[11] In fact, Kanafani's own art was deeply shaped by the momentous times in which he lived and participated as well as by political

[10] Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 62.
[11] Kanafānī, *Al-Adab al-Filasṭīnī al-Muqāwam Taḥtul-Iḥtilāl, 1948-1968 [Palestinian Resistance Literature under the Occupation, 1948-1968]*, 11.

ideology. Scholars have demonstrated how the June 1967 defeat solidified an extant trend away from "dogmatic realism" by Arab authors who could no longer be romantic in their prose, exemplified by the modernist turns in works as early as Kanafani's 1966 *Ma Tabaqqa Lakum* (*All That's Left to You*). However, unlike his contemporaries, including al-Tayyeb Saleh and Sonallah Ibrahim, who would continue to develop their modernist styles, Kanafani's prose would return to its earlier realist form in his final years, a decision that Joseph Farag conjectures was attributable to the writer's and PFLP's increased commitment to Marxism-Leninism at that time.[12] As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Kanafani's familiarity and chronicling of the historical context out of which Palestinian cultural experimentation in the sixties and seventies emerged would form the basis of *al-Hadaf*'s critique of Adonis' 1969 contention that Palestinian poetry produced in the Occupied Territories was unrevolutionary.

Both Adonis and Kanafani's positions were greatly influenced by the intellectual milieus in which each writer operated. Born in the village of al-Qassabin in western Syria, Adonis fled to Beirut in October 1956 after being imprisoned for a year in Syria for his participation in the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. 1950s Beirut, with its cosmopolitan array of competing political, intellectual, and artistic ideologies, offered an open environment in which he could experiment with modernist poetry that escaped from meter, rhyme, and other traditional poetic conventions.[13] In 1957, Adonis, along with the Syrian-born Lebanese poet Yusuf al-Khal, founded the magazine *Shiʿr* (Poetry), which published original experimental Arabic poetry in addition to translations of works by well-known French and English poets, often alongside the

[12] Farag, *Politics and Palestinian Literature in Exile*, 2:93–94.
[13] For more on pre-civil-war Beirut's literary scene, see Robyn Creswell, *City of Beginnings: Poetic Modernism in Beirut* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Ghenwa Hayek, *Beirut, Imagining the City: Space and Place in Lebanese Literature* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

original texts.[14] According to Robyn Creswell, "Whereas the *Shiʿr* poets valorized 'worldliness' against the allegedly parochial space of the nation (*watan*), both Marxist and pan-Arab writers privileged the latter without presuming any incompatibility between the two commitments."[15] In light of this modernist rejection of the nation and its attendant preoccupations with liberation, Adonis' argument for art that surpassed or rejected the effect of one's social conditions was anathema to the post-1967 Palestinian Marxists' project of exploring the relationship between historical dialectical materialism and art, what Welsh Marxist theorist Raymond Williams called "cultural materialism."[16]

Enter Ghassan Kanafani, whose literary criticism, before his assassination by Mossad agents in 1972, centered on the claim that revolutionary art, by definition, was inextricably linked to the social conditions and struggles that shape and inspire the writers producing this art. Born in 1936 in Acre during the period of the British Mandate in Palestine, Kanafani witnessed as a small child the 1948 expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian families, including his own, from their ancestral homes. This experience, along with those formed while growing up in exile in refugee camps in Syria and attending United Nations Relief Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) schools would deeply influence the imagery and symbolism of his oeuvre over the next two decades. As a graduate student at the University of Damascus in the early fifties, he became politically involved with the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), a pan-Arab nationalist group comprised mostly of leftist university students in Lebanon and Syria. Over the first half of the sixties, Kanafani would work as an editor for several Arab nationalist publications, including the ANM's *al-Hurriyya* and later the Nasserist newspapers *al-Muharrir*

[14] Badawi, *A Critical Introduction to Modern Arabic Poetry*, 1.
[15] Creswell, *City of Beginnings*, 30.
[16] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 5.

and *al-Anwar*. After the 1967 War and ANM's split with Nasser, culminating in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's formation in that same year, Kanafani gave up his editorial positions at the other publications to head the PFLP's official bi-weekly organ *al-Hadaf* in late 1969. Kanafani would bring along the twenty-year-old Palestinian journalist Mahmud al-Rimawi, to whom Kanafani had been introduced at *al-Anwar* in 1968 by the famed *al-Adab* editor, Suhayl Idris, to serve as the editor for the *Thaqafa wa Adab* (Culture and Literature) section of *al-Hadaf*. Commensurate with the enormous responsibility given to the young al-Rimawi, Kanafani also gave his newest editor the *nom de plume* that al-Rimawi would use throughout his tenure at *al-Hadaf*: M. Sufyan. In a 2016 interview with the Ramallah-based newspaper *al-Ayyam,* al-Rimawi (M. Sufyan) claims that despite Kanafani's literary status, the PFLP's leading intellectual gave al-Rimawi complete freedom in running the *Culture and Literature* pages of the magazine. Moreover, al-Rimawi adds that Kanafani did not publish his own writing in this section and only rarely in other periodicals, preferring instead to release his creative works in complete monographs rather than in serialized form.[17] However, as the only consistently included section in the magazine, al-Rimawi's *Culture and Literature* columns figured prominently in Kanafani and the PFLP's vision of a Palestinian artistic revolution that was both local and global in its scope.

[17] Badīʿa Zaydān, "Ghassān Kanafānī...Dhikrayāt ʿan al-Shāb al-Wasīm al-Ladhī Aqaḍḍat Kitābātuhu Maḍājiʿ al-Iḥtilāl [Ghassan Kanafani...Memories of the Handsome Young Man Whose Writings Kept the Occupation Up at Night]," *Al-Ayyām*, July 26, 2016.

Regional and Theoretical Underpinnings for Palestinian Revolutionary Literary Praxis

At the center of Kanafani's, and therefore the PFLP's, theorization of the relationship between popular armed revolution and literary practice lies the key concept of resistance literature (rendered in Arabic by Kanafani both as *adab al-muqawama* and *al-adab al-muqawim*). An amalgam of intellectual traditions encompassing commitment literature (*littérature engage*; Arabic: *al-adab al-multazim*), socialist realism, anti-colonial discourses, and Palestinian post-*Nakba* literary motifs including *sumud* (steadfast resistance) and homeland (*al-watan*), resistance literature synthesizes Kanafani's thinking on the symbiosis between popular struggle and revolutionary literary practice. Though indebted to intellectual genealogies with origins in Europe, it bears emphasizing that Palestinian resistance literature was not simply a wholesale importation of European literary trends nor some crude refashioning of French critical theory forged in the particular context of the May1968 upheavals in Paris. Rather, and more usefully for the purposes of this study, Palestinian resistance literature and its attendant intellectual discourses should be thought of as a sort of "traveling theory," to borrow Edward Said's term, wherein ideas and theory are transplanted from a place of origin to a community where they are accepted and/or resisted, though never in an unimpeded manner. This act of "traveling" becomes a "usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity," as the fully or partly incorporated theory, in its transplanted spatial and temporal environment, takes on new meanings and usages.[18] Within Said's schema, Palestinian resistance literature betrays Gramscian and Sartrean elements, but also the indelible mark of regional Arab litterateurs, anti-colonial theorists from the Global South—notably Frantz Fanon and Palestinian diasporic intellectuals, including Said. In addition, recent work on the Lebanese New Left by anthropologist Fadi Bardawil employs an adaptation

[18] Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, 157–58.

of Said's traveling theory by engaging in what he calls "fieldwork in theory," which is a method that enables scholars to see "…not only how theory helps us understand the world but also what kind of work it does in it: how it seduces intellectuals, contributes to the cultivation of their ethos and sensibilities and authorizes political practices for militants."[19] By applying this fieldwork in theory to the PFLP's archive, this chapter outlines the contours of cultural and critical theories' "seductions" of the Front's intellectuals as evinced on the pages of *al-Hadaf.* In the section that follows, I provide a brief introduction to these various traditions to better contextualize the intellectual debates regarding resistance literature taking place within the Front.

In recent years, scholars of Arab intellectual history have applied the notion of "traveling theory" in their chronicling of the transmission of ideas of commitment and existentialism from Europe to the Arab world, primarily through the region's two publishing gateways: Cairo and Beirut. In 1948, French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre posed the question, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* in an eponymous essay, to which he responded with the argument that works of literature should communicate the ideals of the "free man" at the center of his existentialist society rather than simply exist as inert objects.[20] This question, according to historian Yoav Di-Capua, alongside Sartre's vocal support for Algerian independence from France, endeared the philosopher to young Arab thinkers in the late fifties as they engaged in existentialist (*wujudi*) discourses on individualism, alienation, cultural authenticity, solidarity, and "the new Arab man" in the wake of traditional colonialism's exit from the region. Young Arab intellectuals studying in Paris, most notably the Beirut-based writer Suhayl Idris, began engaging directly with Sartre and his ideas in the fifties and disseminated his theories via channels like Idris' *al-Adab*, which

[19] Fadi A. Bardawil, *Revolution and Disenchantment: Arab Marxism and the Binds of Emancipation* (Duke University Press Books, 2020), 8.
[20] Sartre, *What Is Literature?*

served as the region's most important literary magazine until the 1975 Lebanese Civil War.[21] As previously noted, Suhayl Idris would be deeply influential in the early editorial careers of Ghassan Kanafani and Mahmud al-Rimawi, who together formed the ideological leadership for the PFLP's literary theoretical contributions in the Palestinian sphere. However, Sartre's draw amongst Palestinian leftist thinkers had its limits as the French writer famously failed to provide a universal theory that reconciled Marxism, with its critique of individualism and its imperative for members of the Left to engage ethically in the world, and existentialism's emphasis on individual freedom. In addition, Sartre's and Simone de Beauvoir's highly publicized 1967 visit to Israel and subsequent failure to condemn racism and neocolonialism in Israel, as they had in Algeria, South Africa, and Rhodesia, severely limited the willingness of Palestinian and Arab writers to trace their intellectual genealogies back to these French philosophers.[22]

Closer to the Palestinian sphere, other Arab writers had already done considerable work in developing *al-adab al-multazim* in verse. In the 1950s, with the decline of formal colonialism and the onset of the global Cold War in the region, Arab poets began to move away from romantic styles and adopt more socialist realist language. Iraqi poets, most notably ʿAbd al-Wahhab al-Bayati and Nazik al-Malaʾikah employed declamatory verse as these artists, according to literary scholar Hussein Kadhim, "…envisioned themselves as participating at the discursive level in the Arab struggle for Palestine."[23] In this way, Palestine became an early muse for committed Arab writers everywhere, even prior to the 1967 War. Al-Bayati's *Qasaʾid ila Yafa* (Odes to Jaffa), his most famous collection of works from this period, blends images of Jesus, Prometheus, and the refugee to mark a thematic progression from death toward

[21] Di-Capua, *No Exit*, 3.
[22] Di-Capua, 12.
[23] Hussein N. Kadhim, "ʿAbd Al-Wahhāb al-Bayātī's 'Odes to Jaffa,'" *Journal of Arabic Literature* 32, no. 2 (2001): 88–89.

resurrection and renewal.[24] This language has the effect of tracking the hopes of both Palestinians and pan-Arabists in their liberatory aspirations and nodding toward the existentialist principle of individual redemption and freedom.

Among Palestinian revolutionary politicos and writers, the Algerian War for Independence and the country's liberation in 1962 formed another node of influence not only as an exemplar of how to mobilize a mass-based anti-colonial armed struggle, but also as a theoretical epicenter for Arab revolutionary cultural thought. In particular, the Martinican theorist and psychiatrist Frantz Fanon, who was deeply involved in the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) and served as independent Algeria's first ambassador to Ghana, articulated a theoretical justification for anti-colonial violence that would be enthusiastically adapted by revolutionary groups throughout the Global South in the sixties and seventies. Less known, at least in the West, however, were Fanon's thoughts on the relationship between culture and revolutionary struggle. In the following passage from his 1961 *The Wretched of the Earth,* Fanon explicitly outlines the transformative discursive relationship between liberation struggle and cultural production:

> We believe the conscious, organized struggle undertaken by a colonized people in order to restore national sovereignty constitutes the greatest cultural manifestation that exists. It is not solely the success of the struggle that consequently validates and energizes culture; culture does not go into hibernation during the conflict. The development and internal progression of the actual struggle expand the number of directions in which culture can go and hint at new possibilities. The liberation struggle does not restore to national culture its former values and configurations. This struggle, which aims at a fundamental

[24] Kadhim, 94.

> redistribution of relations between men, cannot leave intact either the form or substance of the people's culture. After the struggle is over, there is not only the demise of colonialism, but also the demise of the colonized.[25]

Fanon's argument emphasizes the ontologically transformative power of the revolutionary process, wherein the very culture of the liberated society changes to reflect the "new men and women," to borrow the existentialist phrasing, fashioned by the experience of this fighting process.

Echoes of this recognition of the culturally generative nature of armed conflict can be seen in Kanafani's two main literary studies on Palestinian literature: *Adab al-Muqawama fi Filastin al-Muhtalla, 1948-1966* [Literature of the Resistance in Occupied Palestine, 1948-1966] (published in 1966) and *al-Adab al-Filastini al-Muqawim tahtul-Ihtilal, 1948-1968* [Palestinian Resistance Literature under the Occupation, 1948-1968] (published 1968). In the opening lines to the latter work, Kanafani emphasizes the relationship between the rifle, his preferred synecdoche for revolution, and the "natural" desire of societies to be liberated:

> Armed resistance is not a shell but rather the fruit of a plant that drives its roots deep into the earth, and if liberation springs from the barrel of a rifle, then the rifle itself springs from the desire for liberation, and the desire for liberation is nothing but the natural, logical, and necessary product of the resistance in its broadest sense: resistance on the level of rejection and on the level of firm devotedness to the roots and positions. [26]

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[25] Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 178.

[26] Kanafānī, *Al-Adab al-Filasṭīnī al-Muqāwim Taḥtul-Iḥtilāl, 1948-1968 [Palestinian Resistance Literature under the Occupation, 1948-1968]*, 9. As noted by the author in the introduction to the later work, Kanafani viewed the two books as complements to one another and will therefore be treated here as together constituting the author's view of revolutionary-resistance literature during this period. Ibid., 12.

Kanafani's use of "devotedness" (*tamassuk*) here previews his later discussion of literary commitment (*iltizam*), while his description of society's desire for liberation as "natural" (*tabiʿi*) mirrors Fanon's ontological framing of the "form or substance" of culture as a sphere indelibly shaped by armed struggle. For both Kanafani and Fanon, the revolution does not operate merely on the political level – the literal overturning of an oppressive order and the replacing its institutions with a new political order – but comprehensively reorganizes the relationship between members of the liberated society on the social and cultural levels. Kanafani, with his own status as an intellectual in exile, intimately understood the relationship between the lived social experience of the artist and their commitment to a political ideology. In *al-Adab al-Filastini al-Muqawim Tahtul-Ihtilal,* which is ostensibly a literary theory text, Kanafani devoted a great deal of the book to citing statistics on the precarity and suffering of Palestinians under occupation, particularly regarding the Israeli government's concerted efforts to undermine the quality of education and Arab language learning in Palestinian schools. Far from superfluous, Kanafani's social study of Palestinian education highlights the value of resistance literature as a means of combatting this Israeli attack on Arab educational heritage, which Kanafani described as "…one of the ugliest means by which settler colonialism crushes the national movement and tries to rip it out by its roots."[27] Here, Kanafani's theorization of the role of resistance literature in the national liberation struggle begins to crystallize, recognizing the Palestinian struggle for cultural preservation as an existential one.

Palestinian Resistance Literature Under the Occupation also sought to situate Palestinians' political and literary presents in their appropriate historical context. One of Kanafani's main theses in these works posits that Palestinian resistance literature predates post-

[27] Kanafānī, 16–17.

1967 Palestinian armed revolution, going back to at least the 1930's, when anti-colonial Arab revolutionary leaders like the Muslim preacher ʿIzz ad-Din al-Qassam inspired early forms of Palestinian resistance poetry by Ibrahim Tuqan, ʿAbd al-Rahim Mahmud, and Abu Salma (ʿAbd al-Karim al-Karmi). Kanafani had thought extensively about the 1936-39 nationalist revolt in Palestine through the lens of class struggle, though his seminal work on the most important historical event in Palestinian collective national consciousness prior to 1948 was not published until 1972 in English by the Committee for a Democratic Palestine. According to Kanafani, ʿIzz ad-Din al-Qassam, both religious leader and guerrilla fighter, contained semiotic multitudes for the early development of Palestinian national armed struggle. Born in what would become Syria and later deeply involved in the Syrian revolt against the French in 1919-1920, al-Qassam exemplified the pan-Arab matrix within which the Palestinian anti-imperial struggle was situated.[28] Kanafani also interpreted the religious fighter's famous saying, "Die as Martyrs," in a "Guevarist" sense, though he was quick to admit that al-Qassam himself was probably unaware of "…the importance of his role as the initiator of an advanced revolutionary focus."[29] For the PFLP, placing Arab folk heroes and proto-nationalists like al-Qassam within global revolutionary theoretical categories like Guevara's *foquismo* accomplished two things. First, by tying a local popular historical figure that would be legible to the Palestinian masses, whom the PFLP was courting in its recruiting efforts, with a globally legible revolutionary figure like Guevara, Kanafani and the Front were adding both international prestige and regional legitimacy to their own perceived revolutionary and ideological genealogies. Second, by translating al-Qassam's emphasis on martyrdom, with its religious undertones, into a secular leftist

[28] Ghassan Kanafani, *The 1936-39 Revolt in Palestine* (New York: Committee for a Democratic Palestine, 1972), 37.
[29] Kanafani, 38.

revolutionary theory, "Guevarianism" or *foquismo,*" Kanafani rendered a group like the PFLP, with its global rolodex of revolutionary thought, as the natural inheritors of the liberation struggle initiated by al-Qassem. To this last point, Kanafani added that al-Qassam, as a Azharist (alumnus of al-Azhar), exemplified the "religious-nationalist" factor of the Palestinian revolt, thereby replacing any perceived ideological chasms between religious revolutionaries and secular revolutionaries, with the shared goal of Palestinian liberation.[30]

In the poetic-revolutionary sphere, the 1936 Revolt inspired poets to turn their verse into what Kanafani described as "direct political preaching." Ibrahim Tuqan, the Nablus-born poet, and brother to the famous resistance poet Fadwa Tuqan, employed his poems for a variety of committed purposes, including casting a spotlight on the complicity of big Arab landowners in the transfer of peasants' land to Zionist settlers and eulogizing the death of three Palestinian fighters at the hands of the Mandatory Government. Abu Salma (ʿAbd al-Karim al-Karmi), a Tulkarm-born poet and Tuqan's friend, committed several poems to shaming the Arab regimes he claimed had abandoned Palestine in 1936. Together, posited Kanafani, Abu Salma and Tuqan laid down "the foundations of Palestinian resistance poetry, which later, under Israeli occupation, became one of the most conspicuous manifestations of the endurance of the Palestinian masses.[31]

The poet ʿAbd al-Rahim Mahmud, born in the town of Anabta near Tulkarm, probably best personified Kanafani's call to leverage both the pen and the rifle in the service of the resistance. On the eve of the 1936 Revolt, in the presence of the visiting Saudi Emir Saʿud ibn ʿAbd al-Aziz, he recited the celebrated lines:

Have you come to visit the Aqsa Mosque,

Or to bid it farewell before it is lost?

[30] Kanafani, 37.
[31] Kanafani, 30–31.

These biting lines mirrored the acerbic wit and resentment levied by Abu Salma against Arab rulers. Following the UN partition of Palestine 1947 and the outbreak of another war, ʿAbd al-Rahim Mahmud joined the irregular army of Arab volunteers known as the Salvation Army as an officer and participated in several battles. On July 13, 1948, the poet was killed by an enemy shell at the Battle of al-Shajara, thereafter becoming known as the "martyr poet."[32] The killing of Palestinian litterateurs throughout the anti-imperial struggle against Britain and later Israel and the United States, including Kanafani's assassination in 1972, blurred the lines between the military and cultural aspects of the Palestinian Revolution in the minds of refugees, militants, and intellectuals alike. As will be demonstrated in the later sections of this chapter, the PFLP, under Kanafani's leadership and through the vehicle of *al-Hadaf,* operated at the forefront of both theorizing and experimenting with these political-military-cultural functions of literature.

Building on this pre-partition tradition of Palestinian resistance poetry, the literature produced in occupied Palestine in the years 1948-1968, according to Kanafani, was distinguished by the "rough, and vicious conditions that [this literature] defeated and survived, and which were the furnace in which it baked its artistic production day after day."[33] In Kanafani's analysis, the experience of occupation constituted the crucible in which a genre of resistance literature, one distinguished from other forms of Arab nationalist literature by its particular Palestinian sensibilities and commitments, could form. Several scholars have demonstrated that this uniquely Palestinian form of nationalism, albeit one with strong ties to notions of pan-Arabism and increasing commitments to international networks of anti-colonial struggle, had been

[32] Institute for Palestine Studies, "Abd Al-Rahim Mahmoud," in *Palestinian Journeys*, accessed December 3, 2020, https://www.paljourneys.org/en/biography/14589/abd-al-rahim-mahmoud.
[33] Kanafānī, *Al-Adab al-Filasṭīnī al-Muqāwim Taḥtul-Iḥtilāl, 1948-1968 [Palestinian Resistance Literature under the Occupation, 1948-1968]*, 10.

crystallizing in the region since the pre-World War I and interwar periods.[34] This periodization of Palestinian nationalism in the early twentieth century figured prominently in Kanafani's development of his resistance literature thesis from 1966-1968 and therefore it is no coincidence that the forward to Adonis' 1969 *al-Hadaf* opinion piece specifically critiqued the Syrian poet for getting the chronology of this resistance literature wrong.[35] Kanafani believed it was crucial to show that the revolutionary frame for examining history and literature applied to the past as much as it did to the present and that the commemoration of past revolutionary practices itself constituted an act of resistance. Commemoration as resistance features prominently in Kanafani's own work. He plays with memory and temporality in *Returning to Haifa* (*ʿAʾid ila Hayfa*), using the spatial anchor of Saeed's lost home in Haifa to compare generational interpretations of resistance across time. In his earlier 1965 short story, "The Child, His Father and the Gun Go to the Citadel at Jaddin" (*al-Saghir wa-Abuhu wa-l-Martina Yadhhabun ila Qalʿat Jaddin*), Kanafani was already playing with the commemoration of past generation's struggles and the revolutionary inheritance passed on to the younger generation in the face of continued occupation. In the tale's final lines, Mansur, the child, witnesses the slow death of his father from bullet wounds after a failed assault by a group of Palestinians against British and Jewish forces in a citadel. As a child observer of the violent events surrounding the 1948 War, Mansur's testimony, or that of Ahmad, the boy who witnesses the massacre of Palestinian civilians by Israeli troops in Kanafani's 1969 story, "He Was a Child That Day" (*Kana Yawmdhak Tiflan*), represents the trauma experienced by Kanafani and other PFLP leaders in

[34] Baumgarten, "The Three Faces/Phases of Palestinian Nationalism, 1948–2005"; Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*.
[35] Adonis, "Al-Shiʿr Ruʾyā Bi-Fiʿl Wa-l-Thawra Fiʿl Bi-Ruʾyā [Poetry Is a Vision in Action and Revolution Is an Action in Vision]," 18.

their own youth. [36] Many years after the *Nakba*, when asked by an Italian reporter and former doctor, Oriana Fallaci, how a pediatrician could become a killer, Kanafani's colleague, Dr. George Habash, would cite similar images of horror from his youth as the galvanizing moments for his political radicalization:

> It is a picture that haunts me and that I'll never forget. Thirty thousand human beings walking, weeping…screaming in terror…women with babies in their arms and children tugging at their skirts…and the Israeli soldiers pushing them with their guns. Some people fell by the wayside, some never got up again. It was terrible. One thinks: this isn't life, this isn't human. Once you have seen this, your heart and your brain are transformed…What's the point of healing a sick body when such things can happen? One must change the world, do something, kill if necessary, kill even at the risk of becoming inhuman in our turn.[37]

Habash's story and those in Kanafani's fiction demonstrate how memory and revolutionary literature could combat Western media's pathologizing of Palestinian violence by portraying the post-1967 *fidaʾiyyun* as the children of the 1936 and 1948 conflicts, thereby rendering the PFLP's armed struggle as a lived-out *bildungsroman*. Similarly, by providing a forum for prose, poetry, and literary analysis that embodied the collective formative experiences of the Palestinian people, *al-Hadaf's* final literary section helped its readers navigate their own political coming of age.

[36] Ghassan Kanafani, *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa & Other Stories*, trans. Barbara Harlow and Karen E. Riley, First Edition (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 98, 187–88.
[37] Fallaci, "A Leader of the Fedayeen: 'We Want a War like the Vietnam War,'" 34.

Poetry for and by the Masses

The PFLP, as a Marxist-Leninist organization, viewed the toiling Palestinian masses as its base of support, composed less-so of an industrial working class, per Marx's original vision, but instead by the thousands of Palestinian refugees residing in the camps established throughout the region in the wake of the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. Leaning more heavily on Leninist theory, the PFLP viewed these refugees, largely composed of former rural peasants, as a latent proletariat class waiting for a vanguard of armed intellectuals to unleash their revolutionary potential against the global occupying imperial forces, namely Israel, its Western backers, and the reactionary local Arab bourgeoisie regimes and capitalists.[38] The PFLP's Leninist orientation had several consequences. Like most Arab Marxists at the time, the PFLP leaned into the nationalist and anti-imperialist objectives of popular struggle as precursors to eventual realization of social progress and socialism.[39] However, this emphasis on Arab anti-imperialism had prevented groups like the Palestinian Communist Party from fostering class-based solidarity between Palestinian peasants and Jewish workers within a formal party structure during the Mandate period.[40]According to labor historian Joel Beinin, as a result of the failure of these early solidarity efforts and Marxism's dual failure to account for the mobilizing superiority of nationalism over class politics in the Palestinian-Arab context and to explain Zionism's settler-colonialist characteristics, formal Arab communist party politics gave way to mass-based popular mobilization.[41] Freed from the Comintern pressures for solidarity between Jews and Arabs during the early twentieth century, Palestinian leftists after 1948, and especially after Nasser's

[38] For more on Lenin's theory of imperialism and class and its relationship to the PFLP's political platform, see *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]*; Lenin, *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.
[39] Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East*, 2:141.
[40] Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party 1919-1948*, xvi–xvii.
[41] Beinin, *Was the Red Flag Flying There?*, 248–49.

political demise post-1967, were in a special position to mobilize an exiled base of Palestinian refugees focused on the first-order issue of national liberation. By making Palestinian refugees, who were mostly of agrarian-peasant origins, aware of their role as the primary vehicle for freeing Palestine, the PFLP side-stepped formal Marxist prescriptions for the development of a prominent middle class prior to the realization of a socialist revolution. Rather than being directed against the factory boss or large landowner, this new Palestinian resistance would instead be fought against larger categories of political enemies (Israel, the US, reactionary Arab regimes), reinterpreted by the PFLP as class enemies of Palestinian refugees, workers, and peasants.[42] Resistance literature, alongside the formal Marxist and Leninist writings read by the PFLP's cadres in the camps, would form the textual basis for this inculcating a new post-colonial class consciousness and national unity among Palestinians.

In addition to the political and military education of these masses, the PFLP also viewed art as a crucial arena in which the party's intellectual vanguard could forge ties with these refugees that, in turn, would result in higher recruitment for the armed struggle. As argued by Barbara Harlow, "Palestinian resistance poets [were] not only in conflict with Israeli occupation, but also with traditional social, political, and literary codes as well."[43] Under this multi-dimensional conception of poetic resistance, the PFLP's contention over the Palestinian revolutionary cultural field as a crucial front in the organization's anti-colonial struggle intersected with its class analysis of the perceived social and artistic conservatism that the Popular Front believed was holding back Palestinian society from achieving a holistic revolution.

[42] *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]*, 22–23.
[43] Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 64.

To this end, in the fall of 1969, the PFLP hosted the first in a series of "evenings of poetry" in al-Baqaʿa refugee camp, just 20 kilometers north of Amman. Set up in 1968 to absorb the large influx of Palestinians fleeing to Jordan in the 1967 War's aftermath, al-Baqaʿa was the largest refugee camp in Jordan at the time, housing 26,000 people in 5,000 tents and temporary shelters.[44] *Al-Hadaf* reported on the night's proceedings in a September issue from that year and, never missing an opportunity to tie leftist theory to praxis, called upon Arab poets to "come down" to the camps and recite their poetry to the masses. In the introduction to the article, the unnamed author explicitly frames this call to action in classist terms, writing:

> The Arab poet who writes on revolution and refusal, on the fighters that live in the mountains and the Jordan Valley, on the sleeping people, drugged with slumber…why doesn't he come down to the people? Or why doesn't he come down to those who place death on the same level as life, those who actually die instead of on the page. They die for the sake of freedom and for the sake of opening up the revolution.[45]

In keeping with Kanafani's theory of resistance literature, the article labels those artists who shirk interaction with society's most vulnerable classes as out of touch and, more damningly, as unrevolutionary. According to the article, the poet who valorizes the Palestinian revolutionary in romantic verse but fails to live up to the revolutionary exemplar of the people, who are dying for the revolution, has no part in the resistance. Indeed, the article laments that poetry remains "a prisoner of bureaucracy," trapped in a book, whereas it should be recited amongst the people as it was "in its greatest era."[46] Barbara Harlow posits that a western audience has "especial, if determined, difficulty" in acknowledging this internal struggle over literary authority, explaining

[44] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, "Baqaʿa Refugee Camp," n.d.
[45] "Laila Shiʿr Fī Mukhayyam Al-Baqaʿa [A Poetry Night in the Baqaʿa Camp]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 10 (September 27, 1969).
[46] "A Poetry Night in the Baqaʿa Camp."

that Palestinian resistance poets and commandos insist that "It is through the internal contradictions, the conflicts and dynamics within their own social order, as well as through the military and cultural confrontation with the external forces of hegemony which oppress that order, that revolutionary movements and their people discover and manifest their historicity, concretize their demand for access to the world historical order."[47] Within this schema, an organization like the PFLP, particularly because of its Marxist-Leninist ethos, has to address the class animosity, manifested in the literary chasms between them, within its own society *before* they can make demands on the global historical order for the liberation of Palestinian society as a whole from occupation. Inter-class artistic solidarity, in this regard, is not a complimentary goal to national liberation but rather a necessary precondition for realizing this liberation.

To demonstrate how established poets could put their revolutionary verse into revolutionary practice, the PFLP invited Baghdad-born poet Fawzi Karim, one of the most promising Iraqi poets of the 1960s, to present his poetry alongside amateur submissions by residents of the camp. Born to humble economic origins in Baghdad, Fawzi Karim, who was only twenty-four years old in 1969, had already participated in international poetry competitions, received a degree in Arabic literature from Baghdad university, and had worked as a teacher and editor.[48] Crucially, Karim had at that time politically exiled himself from Iraq and was living in Lebanon, creating another point of affinity between himself and the displaced masses at al-Baqaʿa. In juxtaposing Karim's performance with those of the camp poets, the PFLP aimed to combat what it called the prevalent notion that viewed the masses as "intellectually stunted."[49]

[47] Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 64.
[48] For more on the youth and poetry festivals as sites of transnational solidarity and resistance, see Maha Nassar, *Brothers Apart: Palestinian Citizens of Israel and the Arab World*, Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 163–65.
[49] "A Poetry Night in the Baqaʿa Camp," 18.

Rather than accepting the idea that these lower classes' lack of formal education precluded them from comprehending new literary forms, the PFLP instead viewed Palestinians in the camps as a culturally productive demographic from which "organic intellectuals," a concept originally developed by Italian political philosopher Antonio Gramsci, could emerge. These organic intellectuals, according to Gramsci, are not distinguished by their occupation but by their directing of "the ideas and aspiration of the class to which they belong."[50] For the PFLP, Gramsci's theory could adapt Lenin's call for a vanguard party to bring former workers and professional intelligentsia together in one unit by additionally calling for the vanguard to facilitate the emergence of organic intellectuals and tying them to the traditional intelligentsia.[51] The PFLP, as the revolutionary vanguard in the Palestinian context, took this role seriously as they used these poetry festivals to create bonds of revolutionary affiliation between professional poets, like Fawzi Karim, and the amateur or "organic" poets from the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon.

These ideas were also articulated at the time in an article by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish in the literary magazine *al-Tariq*. In it, Darwish called on poets to spread new poetry "amongst the masses in order for them to grow accustomed to it and free their ears from the bulky tones to which they are accustomed and which were handed down to them generation after generation."[52] Thus, revolutionary Palestinian poets, in parallel with the Popular Front's attempt to politically break away from what it saw as the prevailing post-1967 Arab spirit of defeatism, aimed to grapple with outdated poetic forms that no longer met the requirements of the revolutionary present, a process Barbara Harlow describes as "Poetry…contend[ing] not only

[50] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci.* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2003), 3.
[51] Gramsci, 4.
[52] Cited in "A Poetry Night in the Baqaʿa Camp."

with the outsider, the invader or aggressor, and the regressive effects of colonialism, but with the burden of its own past as well."[53] For the PFLP, poetry could only become revolutionary when it descended from intellectual ivory towers and spread amongst the Palestinians in the camps, both as verse that could inspire those participating in the struggle but also as a genre to be emulated by the masses as a form of oral transmission of the PFLP's vision of leftist anti-imperial resistance.

This PFLP policy of bringing lofty forms of art previously sequestered in urban centers down to the refugee camps, both literally and stylistically, extended beyond the realm of poetry. As examined by cinema scholars Nadia Yaqub and Bashar Ibrahim, the PFLP commissioned films (Iraqi director Kassem Hawal was a PFLP filmmaker, a close associate of Kanafani, and regular contributor to *al-Hadaf*) and organized mobile cinema festivals that toured guerrilla bases, refugee camps, and villages as part of the group's mass political education platform.[54] In January 1971, the PFLP hosted a screening of the classic 1925 Soviet silent film, *Battleship Potemkin*, near the Shatila Camp in Lebanon, charging 25 qirsh for admission.[55] Considered Sergei Eisenstein's cinematic masterpiece, *Battleship Potemkin* portrays Russian sailors mutinying against their officers in 1905 after being subjected to cruelty and worm-ridden rations, eventually inspiring an anti-Tsarist uprising in nearby Odessa. The film, with its overtly Marxist-Leninist motifs of class consciousness and montaged depictions of popular uprisings led by the hungry and destitute against the violent excesses of the ruling class, evoked a political climate with obvious parallels within the abject living conditions of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan. By screening such a film, the PFLP tapped into a visual, and therefore more

[53] Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 62.
[54] Yaqub, *Palestinian Cinema in the Days of Revolution*, 13, 127; Ibrāhīm, *al-Sīnimā al-Filasṭīnīyah fī al-qarn al-ʿishrīn, 1935-2001*.
[55] *Al-Hadaf* 2, no. 82 (January 9, 1971): 18.

accessible, artistic medium to breathe life into the revolutionary theory and fighting spirit they hoped to instill among the Palestinian masses.

The PFLP also sponsored traveling Palestinian theater troupes that circumvented Israeli censorship and risked imprisonment to bring politically charged plays into the Occupied Territories. The most prominent Palestinian troupe affiliated with the PFLP was Ibrahim Jbail's Dababis Theatre Troupe, which performed in Amman and throughout the West Bank. Jbail, who was deeply influenced by the writings of George Habash, organized theatrical work in al-Wahdat refugee camp and produced and directed several plays, including *Revolution of the Dead* (1969), *al-Turshan* (The Deaf Ones) (1973), and *Da'irat al-Khawf al-Dababiyya* (The Foggy Fear Circle) (1973). The last two plays were performed under the auspices of a union of construction workers in Ramallah, simultaneously solidifying the troupe's working-class Marxist ethos and allowing Jbail to circumvent the military laws limiting all cultural activities.[56]

Literary Criticism as Revolutionary Practice

The PFLP and *al-Hadaf*'s contributors, however, did not shy away from elite literary discourses, as evinced by the magazine's publication of numerous esoteric reviews regarding the region's rising poetic stars' *diwans* (collection of poems). For instance, in August 1969, *al-Hadaf* ran a full-page analysis by PFLP member Ibrahim ʿAlan of Tawfiq Zayyad's newly published *diwan*, *Bury Your Dead and Rise Up,* praising the poet for his adept handling of prominent twentieth-century Palestinian motifs, including nationalism, Arabism, and *sumud* (steadfastness in the face of oppression). Zayyad was a prominent communist activist and

[56] Samer Al-Saber, "Permission to Perform: Palestinian Theatre in Jerusalem (1967-1993)" (University of Washington, 2013), 61–62.

member of the Israeli Communist Party (ICP) who had long used his poetry to critique the economic discrimination and colonial violence levied against Palestinian citizens of Israel. Born to a working-class family and deeply committed to the advancement of workers and peasants, Zayyad embodied a new wave of Palestinian "organic intellectuals" endeavoring to link the masses toward a horizon of economic and political emancipation.[57] As such, Zayyad, though not a formal member of the PFLP, provided a compelling vehicle for the Front's literary critiques to explore the intersection of art and leftist political commitment.

ʿAlan's review demonstrates a distinct and keen focus on the socialist and Marxist themes within the *qasaʾid* (pl. *qasida*, elegiac poem) of Zayyad's *diwan*. In one *qasida,* "Ramadan Kareem," Zayyad depicts a familiar domestic scene of a large family gathered in the patriarch's home for an evening celebration during the holy month. ʿAlan notes that Zayyad expertly interweaves the familial images of women baking, children playing, and men sharing stories over coffee with disparate references to Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, Algerian fighter Djamila Bouhired, radio broadcasts of the Cuban Revolution, and the pre-Islamic poet ʿAntarah "ʿAntar" ibn Shaddad.[58] A devout member of the Communist Party, Zayyad's reference to the Russian cosmonaut pays tribute to the technological horizons possible under a socialist state, while the Cuban revolutionary broadcasts tie the Palestinian revolution into a larger global pantheon of revolutionary tradition. Djamila Bouhired, the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) fighter, already immortalized in Pontecorvo's 1966 *The Battle of Algiers* and Iraqi poet Nazik al-Malaika's eponymous 1958 *qasida*, was an important mid-century symbol of Arab and feminist anti-colonial struggle. After the FLN's victory over the French, Algiers became a

[57] Tamir Sorek, *The Optimist: A Social Biography of Tawfiq Zayyad*, 1st edition (Stanford University Press, 2020), 1–3.
[58] Ibrāhīm ʿAlān, "Al-Thawra Allatī Tadafan al-Amwāt Wa Tanahaḍ [The Revolution That Buries the Dead and Rises Up]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 6 (August 30, 1969).

"Mecca of Revolution" for many Arab and non-Arab Marxists and the epitome of what a popular guerrilla struggle could achieve against conventional European forces.[59] In addition, *al-Hadaf*'s audience in 1969 could easily draw parallels between Djamila Bouhired, who participated in the FLN's early bombing operations, and the PFLP's own female operative, Amina Dajbour, who was a key figure in the February PFLP attack at the Zurich Airport that same year.[60] In fact, many years after their respective commando operations were behind them, the PFLP's Leila Khaled and Djamila Bouhired would be pictured arm in arm with one another in January 24, 2009 at a ceremony in southern Lebanon, literally linking the two most prominent traditions of Arab female revolutionary activity together.[61] While the global evocations of the Soviet Union and the Algerian and Cuban revolutions bolster its themes of resistance, Zayyad's nod to ʿAntar's poetry is in line with the prevailing post-Nahda nationalist vogue to tie collective Arab heritage to pre-Islamic referents. ʿAntarah ibn Shaddad, both poet and warrior of hagiographical repute, presents a figure that embodies the symbiosis between popular artistic production and militant valor in the face of invasion, a potent combination that would be immediately intelligible and motivating to the PFLP's audience in the camps.[62]

However, ʿAlan identifies the most poignant moment in the *qasida*, in terms of its Marxist-Leninist commitment to fighting injustice, in the following lines that reproduce a variation of a known children's song:

Tomorrow is Eid

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[59] Jeffrey James Byrne, "Our Own Special Brand of Socialism: Algeria and the Contest of Modernities in the 1960s," *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 3 (2009): 434.
[60] "The Palestinian Woman in the Blaze of the Armed Fight."
[61] Ali Dia, *Algerian Independence Hero Djamila Bouhired*, 2009, photograph, AFP vis Getty Images.
[62] R. Blachère, "ʿAntara," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. P. Bearman et al., accessed November 10, 2020, <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.uchicago.edu/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_0685>. The figure of ʿAntar had cultural purchase beyond the Arab world as well. The pre-Islamic hero's exploits became the inspiration for Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's Symphony No. 2 (Originally written in 1868).

We celebrate

We would slaughter one of my father's cows

But my father does not own cows

So we will slaughter one of the master's cows

To which the elders in the poem reply:

Not one of the master's cows

Oh children

But the master

The master himself![63]

In a moment reminiscent of the famous Rousseau-attributed line, "*ils mangeront les riches*," Zayyad distills the Palestinian revolution to its materialist imperative of class struggle. ʿAlan, as an ideologue within the PFLP, praises such bold calls for the poor to rise and explicitly emphasizes Zayyad's "commitment" (*itlizam*) to the people and their fight, Arab nationalism, liberation ideology, and humanity.

The figure that most prominently represented this poverty and political potential in the collective Palestinian literary imaginary was that of the villager. Even the figure of the refugee, whose precarity and impoverished condition was captured nightly on news broadcasts, had intimate ties to the Palestinian village since most Palestinians displaced in the 1948 and 1967 wars came from rural backgrounds. As such, the village, as a spatially specific but temporally ageless image of national nostalgia, figured prominently as both a node of poetic production and as the subject of poetry composed to reify the Palestinian diaspora's ties to lost land, meaning lost homeland. Anthropologists have demonstrated that Palestinian villagers in refugee camps

[63] Quoted in ʿAlān, "Al-Thawra Allatī Tadafan al-Amwāt Wa Tanahaḍ [The Revolution That Buries the Dead and Rises Up]."

throughout the region put on public poetry performances, like those hosted by the PFLP in al-Baqaʿa Camp, to connect people, particularly the younger generations, to increasingly distant memories of home.[64]

The centrality of the peasant and village to the Palestinian artistic tradition was well documented by the foremost proponents of resistance literature, both theorists and artists. Peasants were idealized in Kanafani's writings on the 1936 Revolt and Palestinian literary traditions within the Occupied Territories, whose rural demographics were consistently cited in his theorization of resistance literature.[65] In his work on the 1936-39 Revolt in Palestine, Kanafani posits that the precarity of peasant land tenure under dual threat by Zionist settlers and predatory Arab feudal landowners led Palestinian peasants to develop proto-nationalist and class-based communal solidarities highlighted in Zayyad's above poem.[66] Similarly, the revolutionary potential of these rural masses' rage was poignantly captured in the final lines of Mahmud Darwish's famous 1964 poem, "ID Card (*Bitaqa Hawiyya*):"

But if I become hungry

The usurper's flesh will be my food

Beware…

Beware…

Of my hunger

And my anger![67]

[64] Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories*, 56.
[65] Kanafānī, *Al-Adab al-Filasṭīnī al-Muqāwim Taḥtul-Iḥtilāl, 1948-1968 [Palestinian Resistance Literature under the Occupation, 1948-1968]*, 15–17.
[66] Kanafani, *The 1936-39 Revolt in Palestine*, 24–25.
[67] Mahmoud Darwish, "Identity Card," *Poets from Palestine*, 1964, http://www.barghouti.com/poets/darwish/bitaqa.asp.

Like Zayyad, Darwish ties destitution to future anti-oppressor violence, which presented a tidy materialist schema for mass mobilization in poetic form that the Popular Front was all too ready to adopt in its Marxist-Leninist teachings. In another example, ʿAli Muhammad Taha, a self-taught poet originally from the village of Saffuriyya, began publishing poetry in the early 1970's that utilized a non-heroic tone and atypical blending of high literary Arabic (*al-fusha*) and Palestinian dialect (*al-ʿammiyya al-Filastiniyya*) in order to depict his childhood home as "a place of prelapsarian innocence…[which] embodied, in Palestinian terms, that period before the 'great catastrophe,' *al-Nakba,* brought about by the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 and the consequent shattering and exodus of the Palestinian community."[68] These childhood memories of lost homeland, centering on the original sin of *al-Nakba*, figured prominently in Palestinian collective memory as traces of a lost paradise from which the diaspora had been estranged. However, there was a realignment of Palestinian literary commitments in the wake of the 1967 defeat toward depicting the revolutionary potential of a grassroots reclamation of lost Palestine. In this new agential zeitgeist that promised Palestinian redemption, the land was a both a sensual character intimately connected to each Palestinian and a cherished heirloom lost by the older generation but one that would imminently be recovered by the youth. Kanafani masterfully captured these two motifs in his most prominent works: the former sensual one in the opening lines of *Men in the Sun* (*Rijal fi al-Shams*) and the latter redemptive one in the figure of Saeed's *fidaʾi* son, Khalid, in *Returning to Haifa* (*ʿAʾid ila Hayfa*).[69]

Like the works of his Palestinian contemporaries, Zayyad's poem satisfied Kanafani's definition of revolutionary-resistance literature by grounding its thematic content to rural

[68] Ṭāhā Muḥammad ʻAlī et al., *So What: New & Selected Poems (with a Story), 1971-2005* (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2006), xiii.
[69] Kanafānī, *Rijāl Fī Al-Shams [Men in the Sun]*; Kanafānī, *ʿĀʾid ilā Ḥayfā*.

Palestinians' material conditions under occupation. At the same time, a *qasida* like "Ramadan Kareem" that introduces class warfare into Palestinian nationalist poetry engages in what French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu called the "deroutinization" of orthodoxy, whereby the state of the literary system (in this case, Palestinian nationalist poetry) changes because the range of possibilities within the field changes.[70] Where Arabism and *sumud* once prevailed as unifying motifs in this poetry, the blending of religious and secular Marxist imagery expands the possibilities of what this genre of revolutionary poetry can say. PFLP intellectuals, as Marxist-Leninists and as inheritors of the ANM's pan-Arab nationalist ethos, rejected any complete severing of ideology from the preexisting nationalist and cultural environments informing that ideological shift. Turning once again to Bourdieu's theory of cultural production, one sees that the PFLP, via *al-Hadaf*, attempted to understand and assess art by considering the discourses that surrounded the object and were the social conditions of its production.[71]

Not all *diwans* reviewed in *al-Hadaf*'s first year were able to meet this PFLP standard for the field of Palestinian revolutionary poetry. In a November 1969 issue, M. Sufyan reviewed the *diwan* of the young Walid Saif, a Tulkarem-born poet who in later decades would become a notable academician and television writer in Jordan. In his critique, Sufyan evaluates one particular *qasida*, "*Ibriq al-Zayt* (The Oil Jug)," in which Saif draws on the popular eponymous Palestinian story that takes the form of a dialogue between a grandmother and her grandson. The poem centers on memory and the intergenerational transfers of oral histories as the grandmother repeatedly asks her grandson if he has heard the tale of the oil jug. While Sufyan commends Saif for highlighting themes of struggle in the *qasida*, the critic faults the poet for individualizing this

[70] Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," 1994, 54.
[71] Bourdieu, 56.

struggle, particularly when the speaker in the poem reverts to lyrical lamentations of despair and confusion:

Holy fires of the colors

Creeping concealed like an eastern nun

As if she were the dreams of Scheherazade

Or the veils of maidens

…

Oh friend

Move the venerable door

And shower my blood with calls

The braids of delicacy and tenderness

Oh...Oh...I trembled

It was her face that I waited for[72]

Sufyan posits that this lyrical style and the dreamy vision sequences in the poem have no grounding in a specific reality, thereby violating the basic tenet of commitment literature that ties the artist to the reality of their social conditions. Furthermore, the *qasida*'s defeatist tone negates the Marxist-Leninist model of struggle, which far from focusing on its erosive tedium instead treats resistance as the logical precursor to the triumphant telos of national liberation and working-class victory. Here, Sufyan engaged in the sort of aesthetic critique that Adonis and the Beirut modernists called for, where revolutionary form and style matter as much, if not more, than revolutionary context and content. In Sufyan's estimation, while Saif more or less gets the *content* of struggle right in his poem, his lyrical *style* and decision to use Palestinian heritage via

[72] M. Sufyān, "ʿAn Al-Ghanāʾ Wa-l-Ruʾya Fī Dīwān Qaṣāʾid Fī Zaman al-Fatḥ [On Ability and Vision in the Diwan, 'Poems in the Time of Triumph']," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 19 (November 29, 1969): 18.

the story of the oil jug fails to perform an "analysis of the present" [*tahlil al-hadir*].[73] In other words, because Saif's poem fails to capture the ongoing popular struggle occurring within Palestinian society, with all its attendant national aspirations and of which the PFLP views itself as the vanguard, it does not capture revolution *as it is being lived* in the present. For Sufyan, the invocation of the past and lyricism in the Saif's poem is not at fault, per se, but rather the mismatch between Saif's stylistic choices and the real world conditions, rendering the poem "an object suspended in a vacuum if he [Saif] does not challenge the experience and suffering of the external world."[74] Sufyan, using *al-Hadaf's* rubric of resistance literature, does not condemn the *qasida*'s aesthetics but rather the absence of a link between these aesthetics and the lived realities of the Palestinian Revolution.

M. Sufyan's rejection of mismatched modern form and revolutionary content would continue to form the ideological core of his art criticism. In an *al-Hadaf* article entitled "On the Relationship between From and Content and the 'Relative Separation' Between Them," from July 1970, Sufyan upbraids the Egyptian literary critic Mahmoud Amin al-ʿAlim[75] for looking favorably on T.S. Eliot's influence on modernist Arabic poetry in Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq and for having the temerity to call the American-British writer a "reactionary but great (?!) poet."[76] For Sufyan, the cognitive dissonance between Eliot's politics (the poet in 1924 described himself

[73] Sufyān, 18.
[74] Sufyān, 19.
[75] Mahmoud Amin al-ʿAlim (1922-2009) was an Egyptian literary critic who was active in the Egyptian Communist Party in his early political life. In 1955 he wrote, along with critic ʿAbd al-ʿAzim ʾAnis wrote a collection of articles entitled *Fī al-Thaqāfa al-Miṣriyya* [On Egyptian Culture], a seminal text within twentieth-century Marxist Arabic literary criticism that posits that literature is a complex structure engaged in a discursive relationship with social reality. After the dissolution of the Egyptian Communist Party, he became secretary of the socialist al-Tanẓīm al-Ṭalīʿi (Avant-Garde Organization) as well as the head of the administrative board for the very influential publishing house ʾAkhbār al-Yawm. After Nasser's death in 1970, al-ʿAlim's political favor collapsed under the ensuing "Revolution of Rectification and spent most of the 1970s in prison or exile. See Mahmud Ghanayim, "Mahmud ʾAmin Al-ʿAlim: Between Politics and Literary Criticism," *Poetics Today* 15, no. 2 (1994): 321–24.
[76] M. Sufyān, "ʿAn Al-ʿAlāqa Bayn al-Shakl Wa-l-Maḍmūn Wa 'al-Ṭalāq al-Nasbī' Baynihumā [On the Relationship between Form and Content and the 'Relative Separation' Between Them]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 49 (July 4, 1970): 18. Emphasis by M. Sufyan.

in a letter to his mother as "reactionary and ultra-conservative") and his experimental poetics constitutes a violation of his own theory of the relationship between form and content.[77] Under Sufyan's theory, an artist's ideological commitments give them a complex understanding of human reality with all its inconsistencies. A true artist cannot use ready-made criteria to create their work of art or submit to certain aesthetic criteria but must instead choose an expressive approach that embodies (*yujassid*) their experience. "Artwork, within this understanding," claims Sufyan, "does not gain its privilege from abstract aesthetic value, but rather from embracing this value for progressive positive social values."[78] Put simply, content imposes form, "for form is the movement of living content."[79] In contrast to al-ʿAlim, the young Palestinian critic rejects the notion that modernist forms can serve as empty vessels that one simply fills with local content, and instead posits a dialectical relationship between the form and content, in which the content inspires the appropriate form, which in turn gives artistic kinetic energy to otherwise inert themes. Together, both form and content constitute the work of art, an entity whose unity, according to Sufyan, is consistently denied by contemporary Arab critics like al-ʿAlim, locally, and more broadly, by prominent British and Irish writers of the Auden Group in the 1930s.[80]

For Sufyan, critics like al-ʿAlim and his favored Eliot-inspired Arabic verse, particularly those of Egyptian free verse poet Salah ʿAbd al-Sabur, miss this dialectical relationship between form and content because "they think it makes sense – and is permissible – to take their artistic tools from reactionary writers and their intellectual vision from progressive writers and attach

[77] Cited in Louis Menand, "Practical Cat: How T.S. Eliot Became T.S. Eliot," *The New Yorker*, September 19, 2011.
[78] Sufyān, "ʿAn Al-ʿAlāqa Bayn al-Shakl Wa-l-Maḍmūn Wa 'al-Ṭalāq al-Nasbī' Baynihumā [On the Relationship between Form and Content and the 'Relative Separation' Between Them]," 18.
[79] Sufyān, 18.
[80] Prominent members of the Auden Group, or Auden Generation, included W.H. Auden Stephen Spender, Louis Mac-Neice, and Cecil Day-Lewis.

one to the other."[81] Under Sufyan's theory, such an operation is not only impermissible, but also systemically impossible because progressive vision, by which he means content, can only inspire progressive forms and not the other way around. Furthermore, though critics like al-ʿAlim might label Eliot's form as progressive or experimental, Sufyan claims that these poetic stylings were originally in the service of reactionary thought and therefore cannot be parsed from their conservative roots. For the Palestinian critic, reactionary Western forms are part and parcel of their reactionary contexts and progenitors. In Sufyan's own words, "What is required is that the artist stops playing the balancing game between methods created by a defeated civilization that is falling apart and content expressed by progressives *[taqaddumiyyun],* who believe in the future."[82] The Palestinian revolution, with its forward-looking content, demanded Palestinian-generated forms that reflected its progressive mission.

The language of Sufyan's literary critique mirrors that of the PFLP's political taxonomy of the competing forces in the region. In its political tracks, the PFLP Politburo refers to the Front and its allies as progressive revolutionary forces fighting against reactionary and fascist global forces led by Israel, the United States, and conservative Arab regimes.[83] In the Front's totalizing vision for the Palestinian revolution, this political taxonomy had to also encompass the social and literary spheres, not as ancillary spaces of resistance, but as fundamental elements of the Marxist-Leninist popular struggle that the Front was leading. Just as PFLP fighters were engaging in literal combat with forces it deemed reactionary, so too were the Front's authors and artists engaging in a committed struggle against art they deemed traditionalist and in the service

[81] Sufyān, "ʿAn Al-ʿAlāqa Bayn al-Shakl Wa-l-Maḍmūn Wa 'al-Ṭalāq al-Nasbī' Baynihumā [On the Relationship between Form and Content and the 'Relative Separation' Between Them]," 18; Khalil I.H. Semaan, "T.S. Eliot's Influence on Arabic Poetry and Theater," *Comparative Literature Studies* 6, no. 4 (1969): 472–89.
[82] Sufyān, "ʿAn Al-ʿAlāqa Bayn al-Shakl Wa-l-Maḍmūn Wa 'al-Ṭalāq al-Nasbī' Baynihumā [On the Relationship between Form and Content and the 'Relative Separation' Between Them]," 18.
[83] For instances of this type of language in the Front's institutional documentation, see articles 1,3,5,6, and 17 in *Al-Niẓām al-Dākhilī [Internal Regulations]*.

of imperialist interests. This symbiosis of the political and artistic realms in the PFLP's vision of revolution was evinced in Kanafani and Sufyan's inclusion of the "Literature and Culture" section within *al-Hadaf*.

Kanafani's close friend and colleague, Bassem Abu Sharif, who would become editor-in-chief at *al-Hadaf* after Kanafani's assassination in July 1972, was intimately familiar with the magazine's guiding mission. An ardent Maoist and high-profile participant in the September 1970 Dawson Field hijackings, Abu Sharif shared Kanafani's belief in the complimentary relationship between revolutionary literary practice and popular armed struggle. Like Kanafani, he too became the target of Mossad just months after his friend's death when he received a parcel at *al-Hadaf*'s offices containing a copy of *The Memoirs of Che Guevara* filled with explosives. The ensuing detonation destroyed Abu Sharif's left eye, damaged his hearing, and left his face permanently disfigured with chronic pain, for which he underwent numerous unsuccessful surgeries.[84] Concerning the international scope of the magazine's audience, Sharif explains that *al-Hadaf*

> …was meant to be a tool of the leadership to lead and guide the organization of the PFLP everywhere. Because it was weekly, its editorials formed the central political guide, that is, from the political leadership to an organization composed of tens of thousands spread out over a wide area from the Occupied Territories to the *Mahjar* located overseas in Latin America and North America.[85]

Though published only in Arabic, *al-Hadaf*'s editors intended its message to reach supporters outside of the Arab world. Abu Sharif's mention of the Palestinian *Mahjar* (diaspora)

[84] Ḥabash and Malbrunot, *Al-Thawriyyūn Lā Yamūtūn Abadan [Revolutionaries Never Die]*, 217.
[85] Bassām Abū Sharīf, *Ghassān Kanafānī, al-Qāʾid Wa-l-Mufakkir al-Siyāsī [Ghassan Kanafani, Leader and Political Thinker]* (Beirut: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis lil-Kutub wa-al-Nashr, 2015), 144.

in the Western Hemisphere, nods to spatially dispersed Palestinian people conceived broadly by intellectuals, artists, and revolutionaries as united in their preoccupation with return (*ʿawda*) to the homeland (*al-watan*). The notion of *al-Mahjar* also harkens back to a literary vestige of the *Nahda* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when émigré Arab writers from Ottoman-control Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine living in the Americas also participated in the *Nahdawi* intellectual renewal discourses of their Levantine contemporaries, albeit in the context of their exilic positionality in the Western world. Post-1967, *fidaʾiyyun* groups like the PFLP increasingly viewed the descendants of this early *Mahjar* as a demographic ripe for mobilization in the international Palestinian struggle against imperialism and Zionism. *Al-Hadaf* figured prominently in the PFLP's outreach efforts to Palestinian workers and students in the Americas and Europe as evinced by the Front's Central Committee on Foreign Relation's financing of the magazine's distribution in these arenas, often at great expense.[86]

This international scope of this mission statement indicates that the PFLP viewed itself as a universal tastemaker for revolutionary aesthetics, participating in Bourdieu's "deroutinization" of orthodoxy, or what the Front might call reactionism, in a struggle that then produces a new system whose unifying principle is this very struggle.[87] This new system, according to thinkers like Kanafani, Sufyan, and Abu Sharif, was the Palestinian revolution – in all its political, social, and artistic meanings– as the global exemplar of revolutionary practice and aesthetics par excellence.

[86] al-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn, "Nashra Dākhiliyya Tuṣaddiruhā Al-Lajna al-Tanẓīm Wa-l-Ittiṣāl al-Khārijī Fī al-Jabhah al-Shaʿbīyya Li-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [An Internal Report Issued by the Foreign Relations and Organization Committee in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine," 63–64. The PFLP often struggled to collect payment for the issues of *al-Hadaf* it sent overseas, particularly from countries of the socialist bloc, which often compensated the Front with in-kind payments, including cameras, amplifiers, tents, and backpacks.
[87] Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," 1994, 54–55.

Global Revolutionary Artistic Networks

Finally, in pursuit of linking the localized Palestinian resistance to the anti-imperial struggles occurring throughout the Global South, the PFLP wanted the "Culture and Literature" section of *al-Hadaf* to create networks of solidarity between Palestinian revolutionary artists and their international counterparts. To this end, *al-Hadaf* regularly published poetry in translation from Latin America and Southeast Asia as well as animated, if not always accurate, reviews of prose literature from these regions.[88] At first glance, this internationalizing of revolutionary literature does not appear all that different from the globalizing efforts of Arabic modernist poetry in the fifties. According to Robyn Creswell, the Beirut modernists' translations of contemporary European and North American poetry was part of the group's effort to resituate the Arab literary field within an international humanist framework. Moreover, groups like *al-Shi'r* attempted to reject the "indigenizing logic" of Western litterateurs that demanded that non-European literatures exhibit "symptoms of national or regional difference" and at the same time embrace the liberal project of world literature.[89] Some of this pressure to indigenize local art forms came from concerted efforts by the CIA-backed Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), an advocacy group which funneled money into literary magazines throughout the Global South in order to combat the perceived affinity of local intellectuals to communism by curating networks of artists it deemed to be sufficiently liberal.[90] Ironically, at the same time that the CCF sought to establish international links between anti-communist artists, it also encouraged the provincialization of local art out of the belief that art utilizing "traditional cultural forms" would be perceived by

[88] Of note is a 1969 review in the magazine of Gabriel García Márquez's magnum opus, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in which the author makes some astute observations about magical realism but erroneously places the novel in "the Republic of Peru."
[89] Creswell, *City of Beginnings*, 15–16.
[90] For an in depth discussion of the CCF's influence during this period, see Holt, "'Bread or Freedom.'"

local audiences as more "authentic" and therefore serve as better propaganda for the Congress than art inspired by a blend of global styles and forms. Some former-leftist Arab artists, like the modernist Iraqi poet Badr Shakir al-Sayyab, were aware of their participation in CCF funded publications, viewing these journals as vehicles for expressing their disillusionment with the behavior of Arab communist parties within the regional Cold War paradigm. For al-Sayyab, the participation of Kurdish Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) members in the July 1959 anti-Turkmen massacre in Kirkuk served as a catalyst for his own about-face against communism and, as argued by Elliot Colla, pushed the poet to view his writings as part of the Cold War effort.[91] Al-Sayyab's experience demonstrates that commitment within modernist writing was not necessarily predisposed to pro-leftist motifs and ideals, but often resulted from a complex matrix of the artist's personal experience, political commitments, and need for financial patronage.

In contrast, *al-Hadaf*'s curation of translated foreign works relied on two interrelated ideological standards. First, the editors at *al-Hadaf* chose to predominantly exhibit literature produced in what it called the Third World (*al-ʿalam al-thalith*), focusing on artists from places where armed leftist revolutions were taking place or had recently succeeded like Cuba, Vietnam, and Colombia. Second, the international works included in *al-Hadaf*'s "Culture and Literature" section tended to include overt references to Marxism or anti-imperial struggle.

In a September 1969 issue of *al-Hadaf*, under the telling subheading "From the Poetry of the Global Revolution," the editors included a poem by the Cuban poet Raúl Roa Kourí, entitled "They Arrived with the Dawn." Roa Kourí, at the time, was also a young diplomat in the new revolutionary Cuban government. As noted by an insert in the *al-Hadaf* article, he was the son of Raúl Roa García, the Foreign Minister of Cuba, and Dr. Ada Kourí, a famous Cuban cardiologist

[91] Elliott Colla, "Badr Shākir Al-Sayyāb, Cold War Poet," *Middle Eastern Literatures* 18, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 249.

of Arab descent and a member of the leftist Federation of Cuban Women. In the poem, Roa Kourí evokes images of Americans trapped in the quagmire of the Vietnam War, as demonstrated in the closing stanza:

If you had studied in New England

And went, every summer, on magnificent trips to Europe

Maybe that would help you understand

How the airborne battalion was defeated

By the conceited leadership of Major "Knickerbocker"

And so, he has gotten himself involved in this piece of land

Planted with Rice

Which carries a pleasing name

You did not comprehend what was explained to you in a polite Boston accent

Which has now become useless

Like the husk of rice[92]

The poem alludes to the American draft's class dynamics, in which New England elites made decisions that doomed troops brought from the lower classes to the Vietnam War's violent front line. By drawing links between bourgeois class objectives and imperial objectives (as the PFLP labeled the US's involvement in Vietnam), Kourí highlights the class victimhood of US soldiers in Leninist terms that link capitalism to colonialism. In addition, words like "defeated," "conceited," and "useless" render the US military endeavor as weak and ineffective against Vietnamese resistance, thereby inverting the major powers' Cold War logic that viewed the Global South as a passive arena for hegemonic geo-politics. Such an inversion was in keeping

[92] Raúl Roa Kourí, "Waṣallū Maʿ Al-Fajr [They Arrived with the Dawn]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 10 (September 27, 1969): 19.

with the PFLP's advocacy for popular guerrilla struggle as a tactical tool for addressing power asymmetries between occupying forces and local populations.

In another article from August 1969, *al-Hadaf* translates some lyrics from the famous Vietnamese songwriter and poet, Trịnh Công Sơn. Often compared in the US to his contemporaries Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, Trịnh Công Sơn was best known for his love songs and anti-war anthems, which won him young Vietnamese listeners' admiration and the South Vietnamese government's occasional censorship.[93] The *al-Hadaf* article includes some translated lines from Sơn's "Love Song of a Mad Person (translated in the Arabic as "Love Song of a Mad Woman"), in which the speaker recalls how her lovers died at various battles, fields, and jungles, often alone and without dignity. More importantly, Sơn's song speaks to some of the Vietnamese's common lived experiences during the war in a way that satisfies *al-Hadaf's* official motto, "All Truth to the Masses [*Kull al-Haqiqa lil-Jamahir*]," and Kanafani's theory of resistance literature as one whose works are grounded in shared resistance to oppression. The article's author also claims that the horrors of the Vietnam War caused Sơn to reject any distinction between "just and unjust wars."[94] While the PFLP very much accepted the justness of the popular armed struggle, this note was likely meant to draw attention to the injustice of interventionist and occupational wars, thereby allowing the Popular Front to draw parallels between the North Vietnamese resistance to US armed forces and the Palestinian resistance to the Israeli military. George Habash is famously credited with calling for the Arab resistance to turn Amman into an "Arab Hanoi," a motto that aimed to coordinate the efforts of the Palestinian

[93] For more on Trịnh Công Sơn's popularity in this period, see John C. Schafer, "The Trịnh Công Sơn Phenomenon," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 3 (August 2007): 597–643.
[94] "Min Aghānī Al-Thawra Fī Āsiyā: Aghann Ḥubb Li-Imraʾa Majnūna [From Songs of the Revolution in Asia: Love Song of a Mad Woman]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 6 (August 30, 1969): 18–19. The article simply notes the translator as "*al-Hadaf*."

revolution within a broad Arab progressive revolution against regimes like the Hashemite Monarchy, which the PFLP viewed as a reactionary and bourgeois puppet government serving the combined imperialist interests of the United States and Israel.[95]

The *al-Hadaf* editorial team's fascination with Vietnamese literary practices also extended beyond its wartime themes toward a general appreciation of the intersection of art, revolutionary politics, and history in that country. This affinity between Palestinian and Vietnamese revolutionary cultural practices mirrored the natural parallels the PFLP leadership saw between its own anti-colonial struggle in the Occupied Territories and the people's war conducted by the Vietnamese against invading US forces.[96] M. Sufyan, in particular, devoted considerable attention in the "Culture and Literature" segment of the magazine to praising Vietnamese revolutionary art, claiming that this "new socialist civilization" was creating art that was understandable to the people through the production of a dictionary of vernacular Vietnamese and the transposition of old folkloric myths into new socialist realist art.[97] In an exposé on Vietnamese cultural life from July 1970, Sufyan describes vivid Vietnamese murals, whose "strong expression, aesthetic beauty, and uncommon colors…are somewhat reminiscent of the posters of the first years of the October Revolution in Russia."[98] By linking the Vietnamese struggle to the original successful socialist revolution in Russia through a genealogy of shared aesthetics, Sufyan not only assigns leftist political legitimacy to Vietnamese artists but also defines the historical parameters by which the Palestinian revolution should judge its own concurrent artistic development.

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[95] AbuKhalil, "Internal Contradictions in the PFLP," 374.
[96] This perceived affinity between the Palestinian and Vietnamese revolutions was poetically captured by Mahmoud Darwish in 1973, who commented "In the conscience of the peoples of the world, the torch has been passed from Vietnam to us." Quoted in Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive*, 175–77, 186.
[97] M. Sufyān, "Al-Ḥayāh al-Thaqāfiyya Fī Viyetnām: Ashkāl Taqlīdiyya Wa Muḥtawā Jadīd [Cultural Life in Vietnam: Traditional Forms and New Content]," *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 52 (July 25, 1970): 18.
[98] Sufyān, 18.

Sufyan also drew attention to the fact that the artistic and political spheres were inextricably linked in the Vietnamese context by pointing to the prevalence of poets in the upper echelons of Vietnamese leadership, citing the poetic accomplishments of notable politicians like Ho Chi Minh and Xuân Thủy, a minister and head of the Vietnamese negotiating mission in Paris. Rather than the result of random coincidence, Sufyan posited that this Vietnamese penchant for poetic leaders came from the people's preference for "a political leader who is capable of expressing his thoughts and feelings in verses full of wisdom, humility, and sincerity."[99] What Sufyan seemed to be hinting at in his praise for this model of rhetorical excellence amongst leaders was an expanded view of the PFLP slogan "every fighter is a politician and every politician is a fighter [*kull siyasi muqatil wa kull muqatila siyasiyya*]," in which each Palestinian politico creates art and each artist engages in politics and fighting. In so doing, the revolutionary Palestinian artist becomes truly committed, arriving at what Friederike Pannewick, Georges Khalil, and Yvonne Albers call "the nexus of aesthetics and politics," where revolution is both a theoretical concept and concrete practice.[100]

al-Hadaf editors shared the Arab modernists' desire to be taken seriously as tastemakers engaged with international artistic discourses. Bassem Abu Sharif claims that Kanafani "founded *al-Hadaf* to be a light to the Palestinian and Arab revolutionaries, to link the national struggle to its national and international liberation dimensions. The Palestinian issue became the essence of international liberation, not just the essence of Arab liberation."[101] In pursuit of this goal, the magazine often used advertising for new publications and translations to demonstrate

[99] Sufyān, 18.
[100] Friederike Pannewick and Georges Khalil, eds., *Commitment and Beyond. Reflections on/of the Political in Arabic Literature since the 1940s* (Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2015), 9.
[101] Abū Sharīf, *Ghassān Kanafānī, al-Qāʾid Wa-l-Mufakkir al-Siyāsī [Ghassan Kanafani, Leader and Political Thinker]*, 144.

the PFLP's awareness of the most current trends in leftist art, both local and international. A case in point was a segment entitled "Cultural News" from August 1969, where *al-Hadaf* promoted a series of recent publications including an English anthology of Palestinian poetry featuring notable poets like Mahmoud Darwish, Tawfiq Zayyad, and Samih al-Qasim as well as a new *diwan* from Nablus-born resistance poet Fadwa Tuqan, entitled *The Night and the Horseman*. These Palestinian publications were listed alongside advertisements for Czech filmmaker Vladimir Leychi's new documentary on Palestinian refugees, *Watch Out*, and a French translation of Mao Zedong's poetry. Sometimes, the relationship between the advertised artists and the PFLP was explicitly acknowledged, as was the case with an announcement of Lebanese poet Zayyad Naguib Dhubyan's *Longing and Bullets,* a *diwan* that the editors claimed "fit into the framework of the resistance" and of which 250 copies had been donated by the poet to the PFLP leadership.[102] The breadth and diversity of these listed publications demonstrate that the PFLP viewed *al-Hadaf* as a literary node within a constellation of leftist Arab readership communities whose endorsement mattered in regional and global discursive constructions of a revolutionary cultural field. In such a field, the *qasida* of an amateur Palestinian refugee poet could respectably share the same page as the writings of Gabriel García Márquez, Mao Zedong, and Samih al-Qasim.

Conclusion

In light of these efforts by the PFLP to advance an *aesthetics of revolution* through *al-Hadaf* on several interrelated fronts, including amongst the party's social base in the refugee camps, within

[102] *Al-Hadaf* 1, no. 6 (August 30, 1969): 19.

regional intellectual discourses on literary criticism, and through translational acts of transnational solidarity with artists from across the Global South, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine effectively reified its position as a popular grassroots movement in practice as well as in name. By grounding its artistic authority in the masses, the PFLP advocated for seismic changes in literary production that supported armed insurrection within the media of verse, film, and theater. Unlike the modernists' aesthetics, which operated on a theoretical and abstract level that eschewed the local Palestinian context of occupation, the PFLP grounded poetic revolutionary merit in lived experience and thematic content. In so doing, the PFLP's cultural intellectuals, under Kanafani and M. Sufyan's editorial leadership at *al-Hadaf*, were able to speak directly to the artistic sensibilities, in all their political, cultural, and generational variants, of its Palestinian revolutionary audiences in the refugee camps. Moreover, by broadening the scope of its literary commentary to encompass committed literature and art produced within the interconnected Global South, the PFLP's *al-Hadaf* magazine became a site that situated Palestinian literary production within a nexus of other revolutionary artistic practices from across the globe. Finally, one should note that the PFLP did not view its literary engagement as an activity separate from its leftist socio-political programming or armed popular struggles but rather as part and parcel of a continuum of revolutionary praxis, wherein the pen and rifle functioned as equal tools in the Front's struggle for national liberation.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I argued that the Palestinian Left, represented foremost by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, developed its own idiosyncratic form of a nationalist Marxism-Leninism. In many ways, the PFLP and its ideological development fit within the broader backdrop of a global New Left: It eschewed formal affiliation with communism and the Soviet Union in favor of transnational solidarity with other leftist anti-imperial movements across the Global South.[1] It experimented with social revolutionary movements centered on student organizing, women's rights, unions, collectivized farming, and public healthcare while pushing against internal and external calls for dogmatic adherence to Marxist and Leninist tracts.[2] At the heart of these social programs were the Front's efforts to match its Marxist-Leninist ideological ambition with a set of praxes that exemplified its intellectual commitments by serving the refugee masses that constituted the PFLP's base. As such, the PFLP attempted to distinguish itself from other, more dogmatic Palestinian leftist organizations, primarily the PDFLP, by taking up Marx's call to find rational solutions to the "mysteries that mislead theory" in "human practice and the comprehension of that practice."[3] However, the Front, like its contemporaries elsewhere in the Global South, at times struggled to reconcile its primary nationalist objective of post-colonial liberation with its stated ideological commitments to class solidarity and mobilization. At the same time, PFLP members exemplified the revolutionary zeitgeist of the time through their belief that the precarity of the formerly colonized and exploited classes could

[1] Haugbolle, "The New Arab Left and 1967," 497–98.
[2] al-Ḥāfiẓ, "Taʾqalam Al-Mārksiyya al-Lenīniyya Wa Masʾala al-Niḍāl al-Qawmī Fī al-Buldān al-Mutaʾakhira [The Adaptation of Marxism-Leninism and the Issue of National Struggle in Underdeveloped Countries"."
[3] Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," 145.

not be corrected through gradual incremental reforms but rather by tearing down existing systems of oppression, often through violent means, and replacing them with a utopic society—along the lines once theorized by Jameson—led by the proletariat as agents of change.[4]

In pursuing this horizon of possibility for Palestinian society, the Front did have moments of success during its institutional apogee in the late sixties and early seventies. As I have argued in this dissertation, the PFLP identified its base as a new proletariat class comprised of the stateless Palestinian masses in the refugee camps of Jordan and Lebanon. Viewed within the long arc of international leftist thought, the PFLP's "Palestinian proletariat" departed from earlier, more strictly classist, notions of the proletariat, from Marx's original identification of the toiling masses in the industrialized working class, to Lenin and later Mao's theorization of the peasantry as the primary revolutionary forces in their respective countries. Building on these intellectual traditions, the Front identified the condition of forced exile and displacement as the binding agent for its proletariat class, which afforded the organization a "big tent" political framework in which workers, peasants, intellectuals, and sufficiently leftist white-collar workers could participate in the Front-led people's war against Israel, Western imperialism, and Arab reactionism. As I demonstrated in the first chapter of this dissertation, the PFLP also succeeded in surviving several internal schisms and regional rivalries to arrive at its own tempered brand of Marxism-Leninism. To the left of its political orientation, the Front successfully severed what it viewed as the sloganeering and immature cadre of café intellectuals led by Nayef Hawatmeh while at the same time incorporating this younger group's class analysis into its own eventual synthesis of pan-Arab nationalism and class-based revolution. To the political right, the Front was able to distinguish itself from its primary PLO rival, Fatah, by its insistence on commitment

[4] Jameson, "Introduction/Prospectus: To Reconsider the Relationship of Marxism to Utopian Thought (1976)," 362.

to leftist tenants and by championing a version of Palestinian secular nationalism that was willing to antagonize Arab regimes that the Front viewed as insufficiently invested in Palestine's liberation. To this end, the PFLP successfully broke out of Fatah's shadow and declared war against both Western imperialism and Arab conservative regimes with its swift escalation of international hijackings in 1970 and the triggering of the Black September War in Jordan. As I posited in Chapter 2, despite its relatively low membership numbers, the PFLP was able to force world powers to the negotiating table over prisoner exchanges, elevating its political stock among anti-imperial revolutionaries around the globe. As important as these diplomatic consequences of the Front's brinkmanship were tactically for the organization, the PFLP's also wielded the spectacle of aviation hijacking to raise awareness among the general Western public about the existence of the Palestinian refugee crisis and the operational reach of the Palestinian revolution. Finally, as I argued in the third chapter of this dissertation, the PFLP also cemented its revolutionary bona fides outside the realm of military operations by investing considerable intellectual capital into promoting and cultivating poetic, literary, artistic, and cinematic styles that highlighted the leftist orientation of the liberatory movement it claimed to lead.

However, many of these very achievements by the Front also drew attention to the PFLP's considerable weaknesses and limitations, both as developers of Palestinian Marxist-Leninist theory and agents of revolutionary praxis. For all its extolling of the virtues of the Palestinian proletariat class, the PFLP, by its own admission, struggled to inspire a grassroots revolutionary movement of any consequential size in either the Occupied Territories or the refugee camps.[5] The Front's ideological rigidity in many cases was confronted by extant nodes of power in Palestinian society: patriarchal conservativism hostile to the Front's reforms centered

[5] *Al-Masīra al-Tārīkhiyya Lil-Jabha al-Shaʿbiyya l-Taḥrīr Filasṭīn [The Historical March of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine]*, 114.

on youth leadership and women's liberation, landed and capitalistic elites with class interests hostile to the PFLP's leftism, and a precarious, displaced population that was often unwilling to take on the existential risks demanded by the Front in the service of vaguely defined long-term objectives. Despite the Front's critique of Fatah and other PLO factions' pursuit of "dirty" money from Arab regimes over ideological consistency, the PFLP soon learned the harsh lesson that movements live or die by the health of the balance book. The very same hijackings that raised the PFLP's public profile also proved to be serious liabilities for the organization as the wars they helped trigger cost the Front dearly in lives lost, imprisonment, and lost support from international backers in China, the USSR, and leftist organizations in the Americas and Europe. Like many revolutionary leftist movements, the PFLP proved more adept at abstractly theorizing its class-based movement from the comfort of tired genres of manifestos and political treatises than at effectively democratizing its intellectual production by incorporating working class, female, and general membership voices. Instead, the Front doubled down on the leadership of an increasingly narrow cadre of officials headed by George Habash, whose moderate nationalist-leftist ideology, once revolutionary in its destabilizing power, over time faded into institutional orthodoxy as loyalty to Habash's charismatic authority, rather than intellectual innovation and ideological commitment, became the PFLP's metric of membership.[6]

Nevertheless, this dissertation demonstrated that the PFLP's gradual ideological development produced a syncretic Palestinian Marxism-Leninism that was adept at learning lessons from both historical experience and complex intellectual genealogies situated both within the region and beyond. As I examined in the first chapter, the Palestinian New Left and PFLP were born out of the collective traumas of the 1948 *Nakba* and 1967 *Naksa.* The displacement of

[6] AbuKhalil, "Internal Contradictions in the PFLP," 364, 366.

hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees in 1948, had a lasting personal effect on George Habash and his comrades, whose witnessing of Palestinian refugees suffering in volunteer clinics transformed a cadre of medical students into a radical force that embraced political violence and guerrilla mobilization. The Palestinian communist elements that had dominated the Palestinian political left prior to 1948 quickly faded into irrelevance because of their allegiance to a pro-partition Soviet Union, leaving a political vacuum that the Palestinian members within the Arab Nationalist Movement were ready to fill. The 1967 June War furthered the Palestinian Left's disenchantment with statist models of resistance to Israeli expansionism, and Nasser's temporary fall from grace in the region drove this same Palestinian Left to seek new leadership for the revolution it wished to resuscitate from the ashes of *al-Naksa.* In the dissertation's first chapter, I examined how the PFLP's official creation in December 1967, far from coincidence, was a direct response to June 1967 and the start of a political shift in secular Palestinian society from pan-Arab nationalism toward a narrower Palestinian nationalism led by a vanguard of *fidaʾiyyun*. I demonstrated that early attempts by the Front to maintain a vague ideological platform while highlighting guerrilla militarism quickly gave way to demands by the PFLP's younger membership for institutional introspection and the adoption of an explicitly class-based analysis of the Palestinian revolution.

In the middle section of this chapter, I argued that these internal schismatic pressures, far from dooming the Front to permanent splintering, served as a catalyst for PFLP leaders to articulate a clearer Marxist-Leninist orientation for the organization and to explicitly identify the Palestinian proletariat, meaning Palestinian refugees, as its base of support. After the exit of the Popular Democratic Front cohort from its ranks, the PFLP, rather than resorting to reactionary conservativism, embraced many of the leftist calls made by Hawatmeh's cadre, as evinced by

George Habash's earnest efforts in 1970 to court the support of Palestinian workers directly and refashion the PFLP from a frontal military apparatus into a proletariat-led party.[7] As I surveyed at the end of this chapter, the ideological dynamism afforded by the consolidation of the Front's political leadership in the early seventies empowered the Front to experiment with social revolutionary praxes in the realms of women's mobilization, education, healthcare, and collectivized farming. In the case of women's liberation and empowerment, the Front demonstrated that it was more adept at capitalizing on the image of Palestinian women taking up arms in its ranks alongside men than at scaling the women's movement among its base in the camps or promoting female members to its upper leadership echelons.[8] Furthermore, like many of its contemporary Marxist-Leninist peers, the Front struggled to move beyond an economic analysis of women's oppression within Palestinian society, erroneously believing that a sewing machine and a Kalashnikov were sufficient tools for their liberation. However, as has been argued by the Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton, the shared language of class employed by groups like the PFLP still bolstered a practical sense of group solidarity, however much that language may have been intersected by divisions of class, gender, and race.[9] In terms of education, PFLP institutions like the Ghassan Kanafani School in Beirut and the Front's Cadres School exemplified how seriously the organization took its assertion that effective fighters could not rely on weapons training alone, but rather needed to substantively understand the tenets of Marxism-Leninism through the collective and continuous study of leftist tracts and the PFLP's own political publications. As highlighted in this chapter and throughout the dissertation, the

[7] Ḥabash, *Al-Thawra Wa-l-ʿUmmāl [The Revolution and Workers]*; *Naḥwa Al-Taḥawwul Ilā Tanẓīm Brūlītārī Thawrī [Toward the Transformation into a Revolutionary Proletariat Organization]*; *Al-Niẓām al-Dākhilī [Internal Regulations]*.
[8] Ḥabāshna, *Introduction to Women's Reality*, 72.
[9] Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 2007), 13.

PFLP's efforts at actualizing its vision for social revolution in the region were stymied by the organization's precarity in the face of government reactionism in the countries in which it was based. While I have demonstrated that the Front succeeded in setting up several sophisticated health clinic networks and farming collectives in the late sixties and early seventies, the ability of the Jordanian and Lebanese authorities to shut down these programs by force prevented these specific praxes from developing into sites of revolutionary change with institutional staying power.[10]

As I argued in the second chapter, the PFLP actions that made a lasting impression on both regional and global collectivized memory were not its social programs but rather its violent operations and televised airline hijackings. I demonstrated that the PFLP hijackings were an integral part of the intellectual development of the Front's world view as it used them to reinscribe international civilian spaces as new sites of revolutionary anticolonial struggle. This process involved attempts at retheorizing international carriers as legitimate military targets because of their perceived material and political aid to the PFLP's enemies. At the strategic level, as demonstrated by the diplomatic archives of the powers affected by the PFLP's hijackings, the Front wielded an outsized influence over regional events in 1970 that belied its small membership numbers. I have theorized that these hijackings, as a medium of communication, also broadcasted the desperation of the Palestinian crisis by generalizing Palestinian vulnerability into an internationalized precarity that could directly impact the lives of average Americans, Europeans, and Israelis.

Moreover, the PFLP believed that these operations matched the severity of the existential struggle in which they were engaged and forced their Western audiences to view the Palestinian

[10] Khūrshīd, "Al-Muqāwama al-Filasṭīniyya Wa-l-ʿAml al-Ijtamāʿī [The Palestinian Revolution and Social Work]," 116.

struggle as a state of war and not merely a political crisis. Ghassan Kanafani, on the eve of his assassination, concisely articulated how the PFLP's leaders viewed this new violent discourse as fundamentally more effective than the Western media's preferred sanitized and staged forms of dialogue in meeting the PFLP's goal of liberation:

> Sitting with the enemy, even in a television studio, is a fundamental error in the battle, and so it would be wrong to consider it a formal issue. We are in a state of war, and in the view of the Palestinians, at least, it is an issue of life or death. It is imperative that the Palestinian people abide by the conditions required by a state of war of this kind.[11]

Kanafani's words show that the PFLP, despite all its intellectual debates on the intersections of imperialism, capitalism, and class struggle, never deviated from its understanding of its raison d'être as leading a military struggle against the Israeli occupation and its international supporters. While this insistence on violent resistance often undermined the PFLP's claims of representing the sober strain of the Palestinian Left among Western audiences, it also exhibited the organization's keen understanding of the potential for media relations conducted under the auspices of non-violent discourse to erase the Palestinian revolution from public consciousness.

However, the acceptance of hijackings and civilian targeting as legitimate or even effective forms of shaping international public perception of the Palestinian crisis was far from given among the PFLP's base and international sympathizers. In this second chapter, I also showed that the PFLP openly published debates between members over the efficacy of these operations, demonstrating the organization's willingness to evaluate its own strategies and engage in earnest self-criticism. The al-Samraʾi and ʿAlwan *al-Hadaf* editorials discussed in Chapter 2 revealed that some supporters of the PFLP viewed the hijackings as purely strategic

[11] Kanafānī, "Ḥawla Qaḍāyāt Abū Ḥamīdū Wa-Qaḍāyāt 'al-Taʿāmul' al-Iʿlāmī Wa-l-Thaqāfī Maʿ al-ʿAdū [On the Case of Abu Hamidu and the Issue of Cultural and Media 'Cooperation' with the Enemy]."

military responses to provocations by Israel and the Hashemite Monarchy and as operations divorced from efforts to shape public opinion or media relations. Other readers of the Front's magazine, as represented by the 1970 writings of Abu Tarbush, instead emphasized that the Dawson's Field hijackings represented the Front's coordinated effort to break the "media siege" around the Palestinian refugee crisis and ongoing occupation. For these readers, this operation marked a shift within the Palestinian revolution's communicative practices from petitioning for recognition through traditional international institutions like the UN toward forcing western audiences to witness Palestinian resistance through the expanding medium of colorized nightly news.

In the final chapter of the dissertation, I moved away from the militaristic aspects of PFLP praxis, which have been studied extensively—albeit almost exclusively from the Western perspective—by historians and security analysts, towards the often-ignored cultural praxes that the Front placed on par with the armed popular struggle. By examining the long-running culture and literature section of *al-Hadaf* from this period, I argued that the PFLP used the magazine to cultivate poetic and artistic practices that not only embodied the ideological ideals of the organization's Marxist-Leninist orientation, but served, in and of themselves, as sites of resistance against the occupation and imperialism. By regularly publishing amateur poetry alongside the works of the greatest Palestinian and Arab litterateurs of their generation, Kanafani and M. Sufyan, the young editor of this section, created an egalitarian creative space in which the masses could represent themselves in the aesthetic modes that best captured their lived conditions rather than simply serve as subjects represented by the detached and dated methods of artists who were economically and politically alienated from this Palestinian proletariat.

However, the PFLP remained a small cohort made up primarily of college-educated intellectuals, and their literary praxes often took on the esoteric forms favored by this class. Nowhere was this trend more evident that in the literary critical essays and poetry reviews published by *al-Hadaf*, which dealt with such lofty and abstract topics as the relationship between form and function in art, the degree to which an artist's political commitments could be detached from the revolutionary forms their art took, and even critiques of contemporary surrealist and romantic poetic styles as insufficiently in touch with the lives of the proletariat. These essays revealed the PFLP's efforts to establish itself as an authority in the regional revolutionary literary scene. On the one hand, this process involved engaging with long genealogies of Palestinian poetic tradition and contemporary influential poets like Adonis and Darwish to legitimize the Front as a major player in this intellectual world. On the other hand, by critiquing some of these established poets and elevating new literary voices, *al-Hadaf*'s editorial board also sought to distinguish itself as a discerning tastemaker that could curate a new Palestinian leftist artistic landscape that reflected the PFLP's values of popular armed revolution, materialist historical analysis, and anti-imperialism.

As I highlighted in my study of the Front's consistent practice of translating poetry from around the Global South, the culture and literature section of *al-Hadaf* was also a vehicle for strengthening the PFLP's transnational ties with other contemporary anti-colonial revolutions. Frequent laudatory references by the magazine's writers to Vietnamese poetry's effectiveness in connecting aesthetics, war, and politics in an accessible medium exemplified how the Vietnamese resistance against the US invasion had become, by the late sixties, the revolutionary model, *par excellence*, for the long-term struggle that the Palestinian *fidaʾiyyun* sought to recreate in their occupied homeland. I showed that M. Sufyan was particularly impressed by the

centrality of poetry to the Vietnamese revolution, describing it as central to inculcating a new sense of solidarity that was "…not limited only to intellectuals and writers, nor to the poet himself, but was rather a language oriented toward the masses, the entire people."[12] Translations of Vietnamese works and others from Latin America and Eastern Europe reflect the cosmopolitan nature of the PFLP's leadership and its ideological indebtedness to the leftist movements that preceded it. Moreover, the ease of juxtaposition afforded by the medium of the magazine enabled the PFLP to place their preferred poets alongside internationally established literary greats, thereby visually creating a constellation of revolutionary literature for the Front's audiences that bolstered morale and instilled a spirit of national pride among the Palestinian masses.

As I hope I have demonstrated in this dissertation, the PFLP in the sixties and seventies was marked by the audacity of the socio-political horizons of possibility that it theorized and tested. The Popular Front truly believed that a class-based revolution and long-term people's war could achieve the physical liberation of Palestine where conventional warfare and diplomacy had failed. To the modern reader, the earnestness of the PFLP's belief in the power of ideological commitment to produce liberation might read as overly optimistic or even naïve. However, as posited by Eagleton, it is possible to think of ideological discourses of this kind as "…a complex network of empirical and normative elements, within which the nature and organization of the former is ultimately determined by the requirements of the latter."[13] The PFLP believed that Arab and Palestinian societies should be led by toiling masses and therefore arranged their historical understanding of the long chain of Palestinian dispossessions (the 1936 Revolt, the

[12] Sufyān, "Al-Ḥayāh al-Thaqāfiyya Fī Viyetnām: Ashkāl Taqlīdiyya Wa Muḥtawā Jadīd [Cultural Life in Vietnam: Traditional Forms and New Content]."
[13] Eagleton, *Ideology*, 23.

1948 *Nakba*, the 1967 *Naksa*) as the failures of an elite bourgeois and petite-bourgeois class in the face of colonial aggression. This materialist reading of history afforded by the Front's Marxist-Leninist ideology enabled the PFLP to articulate, albeit imperfectly and briefly, a self-critical framework for redeeming Arab and Palestinian society. Crucially, the PFLP's leftist intervention in the liberatory discourses of this period intertwined this societal redemption with the recovery of Palestine and thus reimagined the Palestinian people as the masters of their own national aspirations.

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