



THE WORLDVIEW OF HABASH'S 'POPULAR FRONT'

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ABSTRACT

Of the three prominent Palestinian organizations that are not the handiwork of Arab states - Fatah, Naif Hawatma's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) - the PFLP is most notable for its ideological dogmatism. This is evident in its efforts to shape an internally consistent worldview, and its striving to reduce as far as possible the dualism that has colored PLO doctrine since 1973 due to the disparity between the precepts of the Palestinian Covenant and the constraints of reality. Indeed, in the past decade the PFLP's principal objective has been to demonstrate that its final goal - the liberation of all of Palestine remains valid and is actually attainable, in spite of external events. What the PFLP seeks is to remove all nagging doubts and to restore the lost sense of certainty. This has caught the PFLP in a web of contradictions and inconsistencies, albeit to a far lesser degree than, say, the Fatah. Thus, the PFLP's rivals are not far from the truth when they accuse it of having shifting dogmatism. On the twentieth anniversary of its founding, we shall examine the foundations of the PFLP's ideological and operational worldview today. Special emphasis will be placed on how the radical Palestinian orientation grapples with obstacles in the path of realizing its goals

* The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT).

THE FINAL GOAL: THOUGH IT TARRY, IT WILL COME

In PFLP thought, the premise and the conclusion are coterminous: the liberation of Palestine. For the PFLP this concept is axiomatic and unassailable; moreover, that the goal appears unrealizable in no sense diminishes the belief that it will be ultimately achieved. The PFLP's conceptual outlook is deductive; its program, including its means and tactics, is an outgrowth of its axiomatic goal. Not only the future of the Palestinians, but the amelioration of all the ills of the Arab world depend on the process of the liberation of Palestine. Since, in this view, the Palestinian revolution constitutes a lever for the Arab revolution, it must be the central focal point of the Arab interest. The same 'zero-sum game' that is being played by the Palestinians and Israel, with nothing less than survival at stake, is also underway between the Arabs and Israel: 'in this region either a Zionist empire will be created, or a united Arab society.'

Although its final goal has been deferred to the distant future, the declaration of it has not become a ritual. Meanwhile, the attainment of the goal is assured by unrelenting efforts - however impeded by circumstances - to forge the appropriate conditions for its realization. Given this, 'victory is inevitable in the historical long-range, even though every revolution experiences bitter and vexatious circumstances. In periods of low ebb for the Palestinians and the Arabs the PFLP considered itself entrusted with the task of 'keeper of the seal', as it were, of safeguarding the final goal by attempting to awaken the Arabs to mend their fences and enhance the balance of forces with Israel. From its very inception the PFLP has urged forbearance suitable to a long range popular war. This approach stems primarily from the magnitude of the missions the organization has pegged to the straggle against Israel, beginning with the desire to transform that struggle into a catalyst to effect a radical shakeup throughout the Arab world.

The multiplication of missions is reflected in the multiplication of enemies: not only external foes such as 'Israel, world Zionism and world imperialism under US leadership', but also an internal enemy which must be persecuted unflinchingly: 'Arab reactionism'. The PFLP's worldview rests on three pillars: Palestinism, Arabism and Marxism-Leninism. A contradiction exists between Palestinian uniqueness (wataniyya) and an Arab identity whose ultimate aim is

Arab unity (qawmiyya) and, in turn, between these two elements of national identity and Marxism-Leninism which is based on class rather than national division. Indeed on the theoretical level the contradictions between these principles are irreconcilable if the logic of each is stretched to its limits. However, it is precisely in this realm where the PFLP sees its paramount doctrinal contribution: its success in developing a formula - theoretical and practical alike encompassing all three elements.

The Palestinian Nexus: Palestinian Identity and PLO Independence

Asked to enumerate the accomplishments of the PLO, George Habash cited as its paramount achievement its role in 'crystallizing the national (wataniyya) struggle-identity of the Palestinian people; reinforcing the cohesiveness of the Palestinian people; and its struggle with the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Only someone who had lived through the period of the hypocritical Arab attitude towards the Palestinian question prior to the creation of the PLO, he added, could grasp the magnitude of the achievement. Hence his unshakable conclusion that the PLO constitutes a great historic accomplishment that must be preserved. For the PFLP, the concept of the distinctiveness of the Palestinians has the force of a Euclidean postulate, for to the Palestinian people has been entrusted a unique pioneering task - in the struggle against the Zionist enemy and against (the Zionist) entity in Palestine. Though it is self evident to the PFLP that in the absence of the pan-Arab national dimension, which is reflected in the need to mobilize all the Arab revolutionary forces Palestine could not be liberated, yet even here, the PFLP stresses, extreme care must be exercised to ensure that Arabism does not overshadow Palestinism. Given these fundamental principles, the PFLP's zealousness for the independence of the PLO becomes readily comprehensible. Notwithstanding all the vicissitudes which have marked the PFLP's relations with the PLO leadership, it still regards the PLO as the legitimate mother organization as long as Arafat's PLO does not commit the ultimate heresy of actually sitting down to negotiate directly, on a bilateral basis with Israel, the PFLP will not countenance the creation of an alternative PLO. A PLO that commits itself to such a settlement will no longer be worthy of its own name - and under these conditions the PFLP will support the transformation of the pro-Syrian 'Salvation Front' into a new PLO. For the time being however is concerned with the need to rectify the deviation of the influential leadership. Professing itself

amenable to the restoration of the unification of the organizations in the PLO, the PFLP nevertheless insists that the renewal of 'national unity' under the aegis of the PLO be conjunctive with the latter's return to a 'liberation approach' and its rejection of a 'settlement-based approach'. In line with this, the PFLP set as its condition for joining the Salvation Front the latter's functioning as no more than a temporary modality aimed at returning the PLO to the straight and narrow path .

Consequently, it strongly rebuffed the demand of unmistakable offspring of Syria (such as Sa'iqa, Abu-Musa and Ahmad Jibril) to build up the Salvation Front as a substitute for the PLO. In this view, the existence of two PLOs would constitute an irrevocable split which would undo that organization's principal achievement.

When the vision of the 'democratic state' in all of Palestine was first mooted in the Palestinian arena at the end of the 1960s, the PFLP cited two reasons for rejecting it: first, it perceived the 'democratic state' concept as conflicting with the vision of 'Arab unity', since an additional Palestinian state would only intensify the already existing split. In those early days the impression had not yet faded of the pronouncedly pan-Arab content of the old Arab Nationalists Movement (in Arabic: Harakat al-Qawmiyyin al-Arab) from which the PFLP had emerged. Moreover, the fact that its breakaway rival, the Democratic Front of Hawatma was among the first proponents of a 'democratic state', was certainly instrumental in generating PFLP opposition to the idea. Underlying the second reason for the PFLP's rejection of the 'democratic state' concept was its belief that the final goal must be enunciated without any embellishments. The PFLP viewed the reformulation of the goal as submission to external pressures which, while initially taking the form of verbal revision only, would eventuate in a change of actual content. However, it was not long before the PFLP itself, at the beginning of the 1970s, also embraced the vision of the 'democratic state' - albeit under the rubric of a 'popular democratic state', in conformity with its Marxist-Leninist worldview. This shift in orientation reflected the PFLP's conclusion that a Palestinian state which would restore Palestine to a state of pristine Arabism was not necessarily a stumbling block on the long road to the longed for Arab unity. To the

contrary, it could well be a milestone on that trek. Its ready adaptability, moreover, indicated that the PFLP was at least partially amenable to considerations of tactics and maneuver.

Negative 'Gradualism' and Positive 'Gradualism'

Like all the PLO organizations, albeit with greater reluctance than the others, following the Yom Kippur War of October, 1973 the PFLP assented to the idea of 'gradualism'. Under this concept the attainment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza posited as an interim goal towards the achievement of 'democratic state' throughout Palestine. At the same time, the PFLP rejected out of hand any concession whatsoever as a quid pro quo for securing this interim goal - a move which would block any possible transition to the final goal. In accepting the idea of 'gradualism' what the PFLP had in mind was a unilateral process in which Israel would be forced to carry out a stage-by-stage withdrawal. A settlement with Israel, even if it were to entail minimum Palestinian concessions, as was suggested by the 'phased strategy', was nevertheless perceived as a contradiction in terms. In principle, the PFLP holds that a sharp distinction must be drawn between negative 'gradualism', which spells finis to the liberation of Palestine' and is actually intended to act as camouflage for a settlement with Israel; and positive open-ended 'gradualism', as necessitated by the prolonged confrontation in which each phase constitutes a building block for continuation. As befits an organization defining itself as Marxist-Leninist, the class explanation serves as a universal code to decipher reality. In the PFLP's view, the period since the adoption of the 'phased strategy' has demonstrated that negative 'gradualism' accrues to the Arab and Palestinian bourgeoisie (i.e., the Fatah leadership), while positive 'gradualism' is invigorated with the revolutionary strength characteristic of the working classes.

No less an authority than Lenin himself is cited by the PFLP in order to justify the need to adopt the 'gradualist' approach and to distinguish between tactics and strategy. Expressly because the confrontation is protracted, it is urgent to define current goals as temporary measures. However, a distinction must always be drawn between the primary (strategy) and the secondary (tactics); the two must not become blurred. Tactics always derive from strategy, never the reverse. 'The Palestinian Right' (meaning the Fatah) suffers from the 'tyranny of tactics' syndrome, (Tughyan

al-Taktik), in which, flying in the face of logic and reality, strategy becomes the handmaiden of tactics.

The 'gradual deterioration' - as the PFLP phrased it - of the PLO leadership under Arafat commenced with the events of 'Black September' in Jordan, was accelerated by the October, 1973 war, and was rendered irreversible by the PLO's expulsion from Beirut towards the end of 1982. The 'Amman Agreement' (February, 1985) thrust the PLO leadership into the abyss, only a step away from incontrovertible treachery. Hence the PFLP's position that the open and unequivocal disavowal of the Amman Agreement by the PLO's influential leadership is a sine qua non for commencing negotiations aimed at relaunching the PLO on the broad revolutionary road. Although the Fatah's accomplishments in staking out the PLO's revolutionary course in its early years cannot be denied, as the difficulties and the obstacles grew the PLO leadership faltered and its resolve and steadfastness weakened.

Indeed, the twisting road followed by the PLO leadership is seen as confirmation of the PFLP's class analysis, which typifies the 'national bourgeoisie' as spineless and vacillating. Even when the PLO resolved to embark on the road to a settlement, its fear of the wrath of the masses led it to adopt a public 'yes-and-no' approach in order to leave itself room for retreat. However, the PFLP has from its very inception designated itself to replace the Right on the leadership and to push the latter to 'base' - from leader to the status of the rank and file. Thus, while the 'national bourgeoisie' is not to be ostracized from the course of the revolution, it must be deprived of its position of seniority as it has exhausted its leadership potential.

The PFLP posits two principal stages in the decline of the PLO leadership. From 1974-1982 (the period between the Yom Kippur War and the Lebanon war) the Right conceded the PLO's national goals while adhering to the solution advocated by the Soviet Union - and requiring its participation in their attainment. The PLO's concessions, then, remained within the parameters of the Soviet approach. Beginning in 1982, however, the PFLP holds, the PLO leadership embarked on a course ultimately leading to an exclusively American sponsored settlement. The PLO's vacillations are reflected in the contraction of its objectives: from the sacrosanct goal of a

'democratic state' in all of Palestine, the 'Right' then reduced its demand to a Palestinian state in part of Palestine - provided it was independent - and, in the wake of 1982, took yet another step in this direction by seeking a Palestinian state dependent on the good graces of Jordan. Thus, having abandoned irrevocably the path of 'liberation', the 'Right' can at best bring about a state in part of Palestine - a development which would mark the utter demise of the PLO's strategic goals. For the PFLP this would be a highly doubtful marginal gain, certainly not worth the price of the irreparable damage it would entail.

The PFLP view the crisis wrecking the PLO as primarily internal. The traditional leadership is clinging to the vestiges of power, even though the desperate situation calls for a change of guard. As George Habash put it, 'The crisis of the Palestinian revolution originates in the democratic forces (i.e., the Left headed by the PFLP) not being represented on the leadership in a manner commensurate with the acute failure of the bourgeoisie (i.e., Fatah). In this view, the PLO's rehabilitation depends above all on internal realignment tantamount to 'a revolution within a revolution'. The PFLP's stand with respect to the unity of the organizations is designed to translate this slogan into practice: since it considers the Amman Agreement the height of the 'Rights deviation from the path of revolution, the PLO leadership must publicly wash its hands of it as a precondition for any dialogue. This demand was the PFLP's condition for rejoining the PLO at the 18th Palestinian National Council (PNC) meeting in Algiers April, 1987.

It is noteworthy that throughout 1983 the PFLP had demanded the unconditional ouster of Arafat prior to any discussion about restoring PLO unity. However, the combination of Soviet persuasiveness and the PFLP's desire to demonstrate its independence of Syria following the siege of Tripoli, apparently induce the PFLP to relax its ultimative stance. In this connection it found itself concurring with the assessment of Hawatma's Democratic Front that obstructing Arafat organizationally (by demanding collective leadership) and politically (by demanding that he disavow his current policy, as distinct from his immediate ouster would generate a process which would enin his fall from power. The PFLP's revised approach was reflected in the Aden-Algeria accord (July, 1984), to the intense displeasure of the overtly pro Syrian organizations, which continued to insist on Arafat's removal. Since the spring of 1984, the PFLP has ceased to

center it: moves on the personal demand to have Arafat ousted. Also conscious of Arafat's lofty position in the eyes of most Palestinians at the symbol of their aspiration for independence, the PFLP has no wish to make itself a target for their abuse by identifying totally with the stand of the Syrians and their Palestinian satellites. Instead, it works for Arafat's gradual removal from all positions of influence by means of its political and organizational demands.

In the realm of doctrine and principle the PFLP is unrivaled in consistency and resolve. As long as it formulates its criticisms of the Fatah in ideological terms, the dividing lines between the two trends of 'gradualism' are perfectly clear. However, since not even the dogged consistency of the PFLP is a match for the convoluted situation in the real world, the organization sometimes finds itself unable to practice what it preaches. No better illustration of this is to be found than the PFLP's attitude towards the Fez Plan. Shortly after the plan's adoption at the Arab summit conference in Fez, (September, 1982) the PFLP denounced it in the following terms: The 'Fez Plan', or the so-called Arab Peace Plan, basically constitutes a unilateral initiative of Arab reactionism without any quid pro quo, as it declares readiness to recognize the Zionist entity, accords the Reagan Plan great leverage, derails the Arab military option, and places all its cards in the hands of the American administration.

This was an approach consistent with the PFLP's basic principle, which would never countenance even a hint of a possible settlement with Israel. Yet within a matter of days, at the sixteenth PNC session (February, 1983), the PFLP was to affiliate itself with the concluding statement which declared the Fez resolutions to be 'the minimum for the political activity of the Arab states'. True, PFLP spokesmen stated off the record in the behind the scenes discussions of the Political Committee that they had objected to the seventh clause of the Fez Plan, which implies recognition of Israel. Still, whatever the excuses adduced by the FPLP (such as the need to maintain PLO unity, and Syrian pressure) with the aim of resolving the contradiction, its action assenting to the resolutions of the 16th PNC) is irrevocable. Furthermore, the PFLP is demanding that the PLO annul the resolutions of the 17th PNC, held in Amman, in favor of those passed by the 16th PNC (which, as noted, incorporate the Fez resolutions) the legitimate common denominator capable of uniting all the organizations. Another striking instance

demonstrating that even the PFLP is sometimes forced to abandon its own principles the face of the actual state of affairs (in this case, its relations with Moscow), is to be found in its readiness to express a positive, albeit qualified, attitude towards the Soviet plan to resolve the Middle East conflict (in the resolutions of the 15th and 16th sessions.)

As noted, the PFLP offers its own explanations and excuses in order to resolve such contradictions and demonstrate its unwavering allegiance to its principles. In the first place, it maintains, this initiative is not of its own making but is that of third parties. Second, the US and Israel in any case firmly reject both the Fez Resolutions and the Soviet plan, and will continue doing so in the future. Third, even if a miracle occurs and a political process is launched according to these guidelines, they are sufficiently undemanding in terms of concessions to Israel, so as to leave open the possibility of leaping from them to the 'democratic state' through Palestine at a future date. A concrete example of this line of argument may be found in the remarks of Habash's deputy, Abu Mustafa, who declared in an interview: 'We believe that the Soviet stand, which calls for an international conference to solve the Middle East crisis, whose center is the Palestinian question, is correct line with which to confront the American exclusivity in the region'. Asked whether the PFLP would cease its struggle against Israel when the later returned the West Bank and Gaza. He replied with a firm negative, explaining that those areas were too small to hold all the Palestinians; hence the only complete solution of the Palestinian problem involved all of Palestine. For as Mustafa explained, the guarantee that the struggle against Israel will persist is the Palestinian people's demand for return, since the majority of the Palestinians who are candidates for return originate from within the Israel of the Green Line.

There is clearly a substantial disparity between the principles of the PFLP's positive Gradualism', which rules out any settlement and the organization's readiness to support, however reluctantly, programs which embody a 'tiny' settlement with Israel. The shift in orientation becomes more palpable if we recall that in the wake of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1978, it was the PFLP that spurned the entire gamut of PLO Organizations to adopt the 'Tripoli Document' (December, 1977) which rejected any possible settlement or negotiations with Israel. The PFLPS demand that the 'Tripoli Document' be vested with the force of an authoritative PNC resolution was

torpedoed by the Fatah. Today, however, the PFLP is calling for the renewal of PLO unity on the basis of the resolutions of the 16th PNC meeting(1983)which incorporated a positive reference of the Fez resolutions and to the Brezhnev Plan. Whereas in the past any form of Settlement was considered anathema because it flew in the face of the final goal, today a certain kind of settlement is regarded as permissible based on the supposition that a phased and temporary settlement of the kind being mooted will move the Palestinians another notch on the way to the 'liberation.'

Patently, then, even the dogmatic PFLP is not immune from changes necessitated by the constraints of reality. Its fluctuating Stands make the PFLP a target for frequent attacks by the Abu Nidal organization, which professes to doubt whether George Habash still advocates the liberation of all of Palestine. The PFLP itself is wracked by constant agonizing and self questioning, and from time to time seems to suffer ideological qualms of conscience. It maintains that, at the time it assented against its own better judgment to the Phased plan which embodies incipient acquiescence to a Political process, and to the 'Arab Peace Plan' drawn up in Fez, the premise underlying its acceptance was this - provided it constituted the absolute outer limit of Palestinian concessions - was the necessary price to be paid for maintaining the integrity of the PLO. Yet as time passed the PFLP found, according to its own testimony, that the pragmatic Palestinian and Arab camp was exploiting these concessions as a jumping-off point for still more concessions. With reference to the phased plan, the PFLP found that the Palestinian Right is seeking to make it the preface to a settlement, if it has deluded itself to thinking that it will have a part such a settlement. As for the Fez plan, it became apparent to the PFLP that the pragmatic camp was positing the Amman Agreement as consistent with the Fez resolutions - the latter as a means to the former - hence its own assent to those resolutions was being cited as grounds which could justify any form of settlement. The upshot is that PFLP leaders frequently express regret for, and even disavowal of, their past assent in this regard. Thus, from time to time, the PFLP declares that since the Fez resolutions had been so distorted and so void of their actual content, it considers itself free to demand the formulation of a fresh position, disclaiming those resolutions and free of any obfuscation.

The Arab Nexus: Arabism in Thought and in Deed

The disintegration of the Qawmiyyun al-Arab and the outgrowth from it of the PFLP was emboldened by a reversal in the order of priorities. Whereas the Qawmiyyun al-Arab had held that Arab unity was the road and the precondition for the return to Palestine (according to the slogan: al-Wahda Tariqal-Awda), the PFLP, having assimilated the lessons of the failure of Arab unity, called for the confrontation with Israel to be advanced (with the assistance of 'bases of concentration' and 'national regimes' in the Arab confrontation states, which the PFLP dubs 'countries of the ring' because they ring Israel). For all that, in its authoritative resolutions, the PFLP continued to emphasize its unwavering adherence to 'realizing Arab unity and establishing the single popular democratic Arab state.'

Still discernible in the PFLP's references to Arabism is the ideological residue of the Qawmiyyun al-Arab. This holds that the existence of a single Arab nation is an incontrovertible historical fact grounded in unity of language and history, and in 'uniformity of mental and cultural qualities'. The current fragmentation into separate countries is temporary, a kind of deviation, and is not in the nature of evidence which could refute the existence of a single Arab nation. Unity itself will be engendered by the conjunction of the socialist-oriented revolutions from the various parts of the Arab world. Hence, no contradiction exists between the establishment of a 'popular-democratic state' in Palestine, and complete Arab unity, since the latter will actually be the product of the liberation and subsequent merger of the various regions. Once Palestine is integrated into the overall Arab union, there will be no reason to fear that the Jewish majority will leave its imprint in the democratic Palestinian state, should it choose to remain there. Arab unity will be marked by progressiveness, with the superseding of the bourgeoisie as the class bearing the vision of liberation and unity by the working class as the sole bearer of change in the Arab world.

Reliance on the 'National Regimes and on 'Bases of Concentration'

Since the PFLP considers itself to be the repository of Arabism, and since it is aware that on its own the Palestinians' armed struggle is incapable of effecting the liberation of Palestine, it is only natural that the organization make certain demands from the Arab world. Thus, it is

essential that 'the course of the liberation of Palestine rely on Arab strategic depth. Taking a sober eyed view of the situation in the Arab world, the PFLP identifies two potential points of support:

(1)The 'national regimes', of which Syria, expounding the most militant line among the states bordering on Israel, is the leading representative. Siding with it are more remote countries: South Yemen (which prior to the internal chaos which wracked it in January, 1986 was viewed by the PFLP as the prototype of an Arab Marxist regime), Algeria and Libya. Whereas an existential struggle is underway with the 'reactionary regimes' in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states, which are ranked together with Israel as enemies, relations with the 'national regimes' are to be based on 'alignment and struggle' (Taha-luf-w-Sira') as the PFLP terms it. In other words, the areas of agreement and disagreement must be defined: what is essential will be treated as such, and what is secondary will be relegated to its proper place. The areas of dispute must not be allowed to override the areas of agreement.

(2)The establishment of 'concentration of support bases' (qu'idat 'rtikaz) in the 'ring' countries around Israel, there by creating extraterritorial zones under the control of the Palestinian revolution, akin to an 'Arab Hanoi'. The freedom of action which these bases are designed to provide is immeasurably greater than what the 'national regimes' can permit. In consequence, an alliance of action is required with the latter, entailing compromise and preference of the principal contradiction' (the confrontation with Israel and the USA over 'secondary contradictions' resulting from the PFLP's relations with these regimes. By contrast, the fate of the extraterritorial zones in the 'reactionary regimes' will be decided by force of arms. The bitter fact is that a 'national regime' in Syria, jealous of its sovereignty, bars others from using its territory for launching operations against Israel; but the PFLP, swallowing its chagrin at this state of affairs, refrains from a head-on clash with Damascus on this issue. As against this, the establishment of 'bases of concentration' entails a bitter and protracted struggle with the 'reactionary regimes', albeit one which dovetails with the effort to win over the local inhabitants and incite them to revolt against their rulers. The PFLP does not view this as gross intervention in the internal

affairs of Arab states, since according to its pan-Arab conception, the entire Arab world is a platform for its activity.

In the PFLP's perception, this approach, which is based on the creation of conditions in the Arab world, enabling progress to be made towards the liberation of Palestine, is actually a fusion between the Palestinian revolution and the Arab revolution. And both revolutions benefit: the actuality of the liberation of Palestine and of Arab unity is maintained by virtue of the fact that a process towards their realization has been set in motion, even if that process is partial and gradual. At the same time, this concept simultaneously confronts the PFLP's three sworn enemies: Israel, Arab reactionism, and Western imperialism led by the US, which backs them all.

Syria as the Prototype of a 'National Regime'

The problematics of the PFLP's attitude towards Syria as a 'national regime' provide a concrete illustration of the relations entailed by the 'alignment and struggle' approach. Against the backdrop of the insoluble problems in the Arab world, the PFLP considers Syria to be 'a formidable bastion in the face of the Zionist enemy' and as 'playing a paramount role in confronting the American plans. The underlying reasons cited by the PLFP for the importance of Syria rest on two assumptions and one conclusion: the Lebanon war demonstrated, on the one hand, that Israel is not invincible, but on the other hand it once more emerged incontrovertibly that the Palestinians alone are no match for it. The inevitable conclusion, then, is that it is incumbent upon the Palestinians to rally around the Syrian banner as a militant focal point and as the keeper of the flame of the Arab struggle against Israel. Syria's notion of 'strategic parity' strikes a responsive chord within the PFLP. In the organization's view, Syria demonstrated in practice, by its undermining of the May 17, 1983 agreement between Lebanon and Israel, that it is capable of forcing Israel to retreat without even the semblance of a concession.

The PFLP pinned considerable hopes on Syria in the wake of the Lebanon war. Indeed, by opting to base itself permanently in Damascus, it seemed to be sending a clear signal that it wished to throw in its lot with Syria. For the Palestinian revolution to recover from its exile from Lebanon, the PFLP maintained, Syria must serve as its prop. It was these considerations that motivated it

to join the Salvation Front. Its assumption was that Syria would enable the Palestinians to preserve the Palestinian gun in Lebanon and to utilize that arena which, it said, had become the 'focal: point of the Arab-Zionist struggle', in order to fight Israel. The aftermath of the Lebanon war enhanced that country's standing in the eyes of the PFLP, who began to talk of it as a 'second pillar' of the Palestinian revolution (the 'first pillar' was the West Bank and Gaza). On the other hand, the Jordanian arena, which prior to the Lebanon war ranked high in the PFLP's perception, now assumed a minor status, although it did expect Syria to allow it to infiltrate Jordan from Syrian territory.

In the PFLP's view, the positive lessons of the Lebanon war, outweighed the negative ones. It saw the war as the first 'popular war' in modern Arab history and one, moreover, in which Israel had sustained considerable losses and had been unable to attain a good many of its objectives. Moreover, unlike the aftermath of past wars, Israel for the first time withdrew unconditionally and without any political quid pro quo, principally because of the internal dispute that was consuming Israel from within. Furthermore, the war had underlined the US posture as a threat to the Arabs and underscored the USSR as their friend. Nevertheless, the PFLP also found negative lessons in the war: the weakness of the Arab world had been exposed, and the dead end in which the 'bourgeois leaders' were caught was plain for all to see; the tendency towards political deviationism within the PLO had intensified; the revolutionary alternative to the Arab and Palestinian 'bourgeois' leadership had not yet crystallized. Yet even the shadows contained a bright side, as they heralded the end of the era of the 'bourgeois' leadership and signaled the necessity for an extensive realignment of forces.

Precisely because the PFLP had pinned its hopes on the Syria of Hafez al-Asad after the Lebanon war, its disappointment and frustration were all the more intense when Damascus did not prevent the Shi'ite organization Amal from striking repeatedly at the refugee camps outside Beirut. George Habash even went so far as to state publicly that Syria had given Amal a green light to execute a plan aimed at 'liquidating the armed Palestinian national role in Lebanon.' That Habash had removed himself all the way to Algeria in order to condemn Damascus, and that PFLP spokesmen were at pains to deny his denunciation, only deepened the morass into which PFLP-

Syrian relations had fallen. Not even the PFLP's support for a Pax Syriaca in Lebanon on the lines of the 'Damascus Agreement' (June 17, 1985) - according to the Salvation Front the status of representative of the Palestinian side proved to be of any avail. Its support for the Syrian settlement in Lebanon notwithstanding, Amal kept up its barrage of the refugee camps, and Syria did not lift a finger.

A similar dilemma confronted the PFLP, and the Salvation Front as a whole, in the form of the Syria-Jordan rapprochement. Following the Amman Agreement, the PFLP had lambasted the Jordanian-PLO partnership, but Syria's new moves were showing up the organization as both impotent and as guided by a double standard. Its vehemence against Arafat gave way to restraint when it came to Syria. As long as Syria treated Arafat like a pariah, the PFLP and Syria, for all their differences, could proceed together along the same road. However, once it became evident that Syria was out to undercut the independent Palestinian presence in Lebanon, indeed, to assail the very existence of an independent PLO, the PFLP's restraint could be only interpreted as granting Palestinian approval of Syria's actions. The question was how long the PFLP could exercise restraint, and when it would reach the conclusion that its relations with Syria were no longer tenable. What made the PFLP's distress even more acute was that Syria had been posited as one of the linchpins of the organization's strategic thinking after the Lebanon war; yet, disappointingly, Syria was following its own course of action, oblivious of the role assigned it by the PFLP.

It would seem that the attitude the organization should adopt towards Syria, with all that this implies for issues such as the Salvation Front, the 'war of the camps', relations with the Fatah and the restoration of PLO unity, is a main source of the internal dispute festering at the PFLP's senior level. Outwardly, the PFLP speaks with one voice - generally that of George Habash - as befits the principles of 'democratic centralism' and 'iron discipline' which are foundations of the PFLP's internal constitution. Nevertheless, signs of the dispute simmering within the organization sometimes boil over into public view. At one pole is the approach typified by Ahmad al-Yamani (code named Abu-Mahir, he served in the past as the PFLP's permanent representative on the PLO executive committee). Al-Yamani has close ties with Syria and it was

not by chance that he was appointed secretary of the Salvation Front. Adherents of this approach are enthusiastic opponents of the need to deepen relations with Syria, and preach a formula of coexistence between Syria and the Palestinian revolution even at the expense of the latter. At the opposite pole is the approach identified with Bassam Abu-Sharif (former PFLP spokesman and editor of al Hadaf which advocates keeping distance from Syria, fearing the rage of Damascus. Thus, Bassam Abu-Sharif opposed the PFLP's entry into the Salvation Front and it was not surprising that he chose to leave Damascus after Front was established in mid-1985. Finally, Abu-Sharif pursued its attitude to its logical end by joining Arafat as a close political adviser.

The orientation represented by Abu-Sharif calls for the most effort to be invested in restoring PLO unity; unlike the rival approach, it does not insist on Arafat's ouster as a sine quo non for negotiations with the Fatah. The fact is that Bassam Abu-Sharif has always maintained an open channel with the Fatah and Arafat alike, even during periods of a total impasse in relations between the PFLP and Fatah. That the Syrians suspected him of collaborating with the Fatah was only natural. By taking a midi line between these two extremes, George Habash has managed to preserve unity within his organization. Although the actual balance of forces within the PFLP is a closed book, there is no doubt that as long as Habash is alive and active - however poor his health - he will go on calling the shots.

Jordan as the Prototype of a Reactionary Regime

The crushing defeat sustained by the PLO in September, 1970 in Jordan undermined the PFLP's confidence in its basic assumption that 'the road to Palestine will pass through Amman. Jordan's natural attributes as a jumping-off point into Palestine - its geographical proximity to the West Bank and the massive demographic Palestinian presence on the East Bank - proved to be insufficient. Although the PFLP continued to call vigorously for the extirpation of the Hashemite regime and the creation of a 'democratic national government in Jordan which would operate shoulder to shoulder with the PLO against Israel, eventually it was forced to acknowledge its inability to realize so far-reaching goal. Beginning in the latter part of the 1970s, it focused its effort on curtailing the evolving dialogue between Hussein and Arafat. Again and again the

PFLP warned against Hussein's intention of gradually depriving the PLO of its standing as the representative of the Palestinians. Like the mainstream in the PLO, the PFLP also recognized that, realistically speaking, a close affinity must inevitably prevail between the two Banks. Yet precisely for this reason it considered the assurance of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza a precondition for a confederation with Jordan, Manifestly, this was to be a non-Hashemite Jordan, for it was the PFLP's belief that only with such a state would coexistence be a viable proposition.

But the PFLP's worst fears were soon to become reality in the form of the Amman Agreement (February 1985) which marked out parameters for cooperation between Hussein and Arafat. As for Arafat's readiness to agree to the formation of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation for negotiations and to a confederation with Jordan - but without making these contingent on the independence of a Palestinian state - the PFLP viewed these as the shameful concession to Jordan of half of the Palestinians birthright. The PFLP was unshakable in its conviction that the Amman Agreement constituted a milestone en route to the annulment of the Rabat resolutions which had granted the PLO exclusivity in representing the Palestinians; to them, it was as clear as day that with this accord the PLO was being sucked into an arrangement of which the US was the chief promoter and which would mean the extinction of the PLO's independent standing and autonomous goal. The PFLP found untenable the Fatah contention that its coordination efforts with Jordan were actually aimed at preventing Jordan from making a separate settlement. To the contrary, the PFLP maintained that the linkup with Jordan would go a long way towards preparing the ground for a unilateral Jordanian move for the infamous Jordanian option. This, for the PFLP the Amman Agreement was the heart of the policy urged by the advocates of 'settlement' among the Palestinians; hence also its absolute insistence that the Fatah disavow the agreement openly and unreservedly as a condition for the PFLP's entering into a dialogue aimed at internal reconciliation.

The Iran-Iraq War

Like the 'war of the camps', the Iran-Iraq war and the resultant disarray in the Arab world created a situation to which the PFLP's ideology did not have a ready-made response. When the war

broke out the PFLP denounced the Iraqi aggression against the 'Iranian revolution of the masses' and lauded the 'progressive Islam' which characterized that revolution. The PFLP explained that the Iraqi aggression against Iran was yet another among the plethora of signs that Iraq was being swept into the camp of 'Arab reactionism' whereas Iran had staked out a place 'in the camp hostile to imperialism and supportive of the struggle of the Palestinian people'. Like Syria, then, which also styled itself as the keeper of the flame of Arabism, the PFLP took a position against an Arab side. Moreover, this non-Arab side being backed by the PFLP was burning with the fire of Islamic fundamentalism which was anathema to the Marxist-Leninist PFLP; in the West Bank and Gaza, for example, the PFLP treats the fundamentalists, as its mortal enemies.

After Iran successfully repulsed the Iraqis and even managed to penetrate Iraqi territory at several points, the PFLP reformulated its position on the war. It now called on both belligerents to cease the conflict, citing three reasons: It was depleting the resources both countries and weakening them irrevocably; it was creating an opening for the 'meddling of colonialism', meaning the US, in the region; and it was diverting attention and efforts away from the conflict with Israel. Thus from its original stance of total identification with Iran, the PFLP moved to a more neutral approach urging both sides to return to the pre-war borders. Although the PFLP continued to denounce the 'dictatorial fascist regime' in Baghdad, which it located within 'the reactionary Jordanian Egyptian-Iraqi triangle'. it now emphasized that the ouster of Saddam Hussein and his replacement by a 'democratic national regime' which would 'restore to Iraq its role in the Arab-Zionist conflict and against the designs Of imperialism', was the sole affair of the Iraqi nation. Implicit in this modified stance was the PFLP's opposition to the Iranian aim of persisting in the campaign until the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime. Besides its wish to bring a halt to the bloodshed and stem the depletion of resources, the PFLP expressed its apprehension that the Islamic revolution would spread to Iraq and lead to the establishment there of an Iran-backed regime.

Marxism-Leninism and the International Orientation

The PFLP defines itself as a Marxist-Leninist organization. It considers Marxism-Leninism to be a 'scientific method' enabling an accurate analysis Of the problems of the Arab world. The

system of class analysis, then, is meant to serve national goals. The PFLP fakes pride in its role as catalyst of Marxism-Leninism in the Arab world. The organization is at pains to ensure that its personnel are inculcated with this doctrine; according to George Habash, for example, two thirds of the members of the PFLP leadership have received a Marxist-Leninist education in the Soviet bloc.

Until the end of the 1970s the PFLP was most particular about terming itself a Marxist-Leninist organization and assiduously refrained from describing itself as Communist. The Communist Parties in the Arab world were in severe disrepute and were seen as Moscow's lackeys. The Communists emulation of Moscow's Stand on the partition resolution and on the recognition of Israel's existence was considered ignominious, in particular by the PFLP. However, ever since the Fourth Conference of the PFLP (April, 1981) this differentiation has been blurred and the organization has defined itself alternatively as Marxist-Leninist or Communist. Indeed, in recent years the PFLP has described itself as being in a process of transformation (tahawwul) into a Communist party which is to constitute the core for the unification of the Palestinian Left. The PFLP's expectation is that this core will grow into a 'United Leftist Arab Party'. Seemingly, this tendency is consistent with the growing trend within the PFLP since the 1970s, to regard the Soviet Union as its ideological and political patron.

The PFLP has undergone a mini-revolution in its attitude towards the Soviet Union. At the end of the 1960s the organization posited that from among the socialist countries 'the primary alliance should be with China, Vietnam and Cuba, whereas only the potential for an alliance exists where the Eastern European states are concerned'. Explaining the distinction it drew between the two camps, the PFLP stated that it hesitated to identify blindly with the Soviet Union because of the latter's stand on the Palestinian question. In those years it was also critical of Moscow's policy of detente vis-a-vis the West and it sided with China in the Sino-Soviet dispute. However, since the latter half of the 1970s the PFLP has cited signs of 'China's collusion with imperialism'. Clear evidence of this trend with respect to the Arab world was said to be evinced by China's support for the Camp David accords and its backing of Sadat personally. In a total reversal of stands, the PFLP began to spit into the well it had drunk from in its initial years,

suppressing its notion of the USSR's original sin of supporting Israel, and leveling withering criticism at the 'deviationist' Chinese leadership in its publications.

'The Occupied Territories - The First Pillar'

In its formative writings at the end of the 1960s the PFLP attached equal importance to the struggle within the 'occupied Land' and to the struggle for the creation of 'bases of concentration' in the Arab states bordering on Palestine. However, as George Habash explained, as the PLO ran into increasing difficulties in sustaining itself in an extraterritorial domicile outside Palestine, and in particular after its foothold in Lebanon was undercut, the 'occupied land gained dominance as 'the first and fundamental pillar of the Palestinian revolution'. The growing significance of the territory of Palestine on the PLO's scale of priorities had the effect of transferring into it the rivalries among the Palestinian organizations, and this organizational competition in turn magnified still further the struggle 'inside' as a paramount focal point of PLO activity. Yet even under these conditions the PFLP refuses to consider the possibility of restricting operations to Palestine alone, maintaining that the activity 'inside' must be supplemented by building external bases as 'Second Pillar'. When the need arises, the PFLP holds, these external bases can pin down part of the enemy forces and hamper their effective operation against the forces of the Palestinian revolution within the territories.

Moreover, in the PFLP's view the maintenance of the 'Palestinian gun' outside Palestine is a vital morale booster for the Palestinians 'inside'. As Habash put it. 'We feel that our activity on the occupied land must be the fundamental pillar. But let us not be content with this. We must not abandon our masses inside as prey to despair. Experience has shown that the maintenance of a fighting Palestinian gun outside has always constituted an exemplary moral and material standard for the masses of our people inside. Habash added that this was his principal lesson from the PFLP's experience in Gaza at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s: as long as Israel had to divide its effort between two fronts - the Jordanian until September 1970 and the Egyptian during the war of attrition the PFLP could put up a tenacious struggle. But the collapse of the external 'second pillar' would topple the 'first pillar' as well. Furthermore, the PFLP insisted on making a distinction between the effort preserve what already exists - namely, the

Palestinian-Arab character of the West Bank and the Gaza strip - and the onset of the process of their actual liberation. The need to rely on bases of concentration outside these areas remained as in the past a sine quo non for liberation.

The PFLP agrees with the Fatah as well as with the gloomy view of King Hussein (in his farewell speech to the PLO leadership in February, 1986) that the ground is slipping from beneath the feet of the Palestinians in the territories due to the Israeli measures of 'expropriation, settlement and creeping annexation'. It admits that above all else, the average Palestinian longs to be rid of Israeli rule. As George Habash puts it: 'I know the apolitical (Palestinian) resident who comes from the West Bank or Gaza. What do these people say? What is the principal problem as they see it? Their main problem is the occupation and the settlements issue. Habash goes on to acknowledge that this oppressive situation provides fertile ground for the viewpoint propounded by Hussein and Arafat, that the little that can be achieved is better than nothing.

George Habash rejects this approach out of hand - but for realistic-practical reasons, and not necessarily on ideological grounds. He does not believe that what Hussein and Arafat maintain is theoretically possible - namely, that a political process that will push Israel back is within the realm of practicability. The choice, then, does not lie between attaining something or being left with nothing, but between, on the one side, the certainty that nothing will be attained or that the concessions involved will be irreversible (that is, at the expense of the PLO and its goals) and, on the other side, the high probability that the 'national alternative' being proposed by the PFLP will prove fruitful in the long run. Habash declares his awareness that he has no immediate answer for the Palestinian's distress other than 'blood, sweat and tears', but he believes that this is the only road available to them. For the time being the Palestinians can consider their 'steadfastness' and achievement, one that is destined to prevent solutions based on American exclusivity.

The PFLP recognizes that the determination, endurance and forbearance it is demanding of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza will be mere words if they are not backed up by appropriate organizational frameworks. Indeed, the PFLP, like Hawatma's Democratic Front, is ready to allow the internal leadership in the territories broad freedom of action on operational

matters, provided that the leadership acknowledge in principle the authority of the PLO leadership 'outside'. Neither the PFLP nor the DFLP tire of demanding implementation of the resolution (adopted at the 16th PNC in February, 1983 concerning the need to activate the 'Palestinian National Front' and vest it with the lofty standing of the 'basic and active arm of the PLO on the occupied land'. Fatah, by contrast, fearing loss of its control over the leadership 'inside', is making every effort to render this resolution a dead letter. As a consequence, the Fatah finds it necessary to resort to the East Bank as a vital vantage point over developments inside the territories, even if this entails cooperating with King Hussein. The PFLP, then, advocates boosting the territories capacity for self-reliance, which implies delegating as many operational powers as possible, in the areas of both covert military activity and open popular political activity. This self-reliance is perceived as enabling the PA 'inside' to remain immune from the hardship it is experiencing 'outside'. Moreover, it obviates the reliance on the good graces of the 'reactionary' Jordanian regime, which is anathema to the PFLP.

Permissible and Forbidden in Overseas Terrorism

Unlike the Fatah, which in its 'Cairo Declaration' November 1985 renewed its freeze, dating back to 1974, on all forms of overseas terrorism, the PFLP does not automatically rule out such activity, though it does qualify its objectives. In principle, the entire world is an arena of confrontation for the PFLP, since its principal enemies include western imperialism and world Zionism. The initial reservations concerning overseas terrorism were expressed at the PFLP's Third Conference (March,1972) which ruled that 'enemy targets must be chosen... in a manner which will not elicit conflicting interpretations regarding the legitimacy and suitability of the choices. Although this was not explicitly stated, the restriction was in fact directed at the type of activity in which the PFLP had specialized until that time: hijacking of airplanes. Inevitably in such operations, foreign parties who are not a direct factor in the Arab - Israeli conflict will also be hurt. The fact is that following the adoption of this resolution, PFLP-initiated hijackings ceased.

However, this restriction fanned an internal dispute within the PFLP between advocates of Overseas terrorism of all forms (including continued hijackings), headed by Wadi, Haddad and

Fa'iz Jabir, on the one hand, and George Habash and his followers, on the other hand, who continued to perpetrate acts of terrorism overseas, but with the exception of airplane hijackings. This dispute flared into a full-fledged rift which ended with the breakaway of Haddad and Jabir from the PFLP in the mid-1970s. The two set up their own organization, which initiated, among other acts, the hijacking of an AirFrance plane to Entebbe in July 1976.

The resolutions of the PFLP's fourth - and to date, last - congress (February, 1981) reiterate its approach with greater clarity. After instructing its fighters to devastate the 'Zionist enemy' inside the 'occupied homeland' inter alia by means of infiltration from the Arab states, it directs them 'to continue delivering specific blows to the enemy outside (i.e., overseas), particularly against its commanders and its military and security cadres. On the face of it, the formulation admits of two possible interpretations: according to the narrow interpretation, this resolution, like its predecessor at the Third Conference, refers exclusively to airplane hijacking; but according to the broad interpretation, it refers to all overseas terrorism in which it is absolutely certain that outsiders will unavoidably be hurt. Hence, if an attack can be confined to Israeli targets abroad, in principle the authority for its execution exists.

The public reactions of authorized PFLP spokesmen to spectacular acts of overseas terrorism such as the hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship, the massacres at the Rome and Vienna airports, the series of attacks in Paris), together with additional solid information regarding the PFLP's policy on overseas terrorism, tilt the scales to the side of the broad interpretation. The bottom line, then, is that unlike the DFLP, which rejects overseas terrorism in principle, and in contrast to the Fatah, which has declared a freeze on such terrorism, the PFLP permits this kind of operation in principle. The condition for carrying it out is, according to George Habash, that these operations be 'judicious and carefully selected - meaning that they are to focus on Israeli targets abroad'. As for Jewish targets abroad, since in the statement cited above Habash subsumes the slaughter in the Istanbul synagogue and the operations in Karachi and Paris under the category of attacks against 'innocent persons' which deserve condemnation, it would seem that Habash would bar attacks on Diaspora Jews.

Israel's Image: Is the Class Division Applicable

As a Marxist-Leninist organization holding that the class division is universally valid, the PFLP wrestled with the question of whether the laws of class differentiation should be applied to various groups in the 'Zionist entity'. For the PFLP, this is a topic with both theoretical and practical ramifications: the one hand, if the PFLP rejects the application of the class division to Israel, it will be denying the central tenet of Marxism-Leninism; yet on the other hand, if applies the principle to Israel, that 'entity' will cease to constitute a wholly evil monolithic being, and the PFLP will be forced to distinguish in it between the progressive working classes and the reactionary classes.

The ruling of the PFLP's doctrinal arbiters is destined to resolve this dilemma. In their view, the 'Zionist entity', like any other society, does in fact consist of a group of classes. However, at the present time the element that binds it together - its being 'a settling society possessing a Zionist ideology' - is more powerful than the elements of class differentiation. According to the PFLP, all the classes in Israel are benefiting 'from the acts of plunder and suppression' against the Palestinians, hence the possibility of taking advantage of the class disparities and modifying them from within is negligible.

The PFLP's dismissal of the importance of the class division where Israel is concerned at this stage is consistent with its effort to blur as far as possible the class barriers within the Palestinian society. Although the PFLP seeks to oust the Fatah, which it considers the representative of the Palestinian bourgeoisie, from its position of leadership, it is careful to stress that it does not wish to oust it from the broad Palestinian consensus. Thus, for example - in the past the PFLP did not flinch from excoriating the Fatah dissidents led by Abu-Musa - although their opinion of Arafat similar to that of the PFLP - for having sparked a fratricidal conflict. This practical decision follows from the PFLP's perception that the current period is characterized by a struggle for national liberation in which the conflict with Israel constitutes he terms the 'primary contradictions which is shunting aside the significance of the 'secondary contradictions' within the Palestinian society. It follows that in the stage of national liberation, every nuance of Marxism-Leninism needs to be adhered to. As ideological authority for this approach, the PFLP

cites passages from the writings of Lenin, whereas in its early period, before dissociating itself from Chinese Communism, it drew inspiration from the writings and deeds of Mao TseTung who fought shoulder to shoulder with Chinese 'reactionism' (the Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-shek) until the Japanese invader was driven out.

In principle, the PFLP holds that Israel and Zionism are one and the same. This approach does away with the conceptual acrobatics engaged in by some leaders of the pragmatic current in the Fatah (such as Khalid al-Hasan who draws a distinction between the extensive Zionist Israel whose territorial expansionism expresses its entire essence, and a narrow Israel with which coexistence will be possible once it divests itself of the territorial assets it obtained in 1967. It is the PFLP's view that as long as Israel exists, no matter how shrunken, it constitutes the very core that harbors within it the 'evil spirit' of Zionism. The PFLP rarely refers to Israel by name; instead, euphemisms such as 'the Zionist enemy' or 'the Zionist entity' are employed, and the conflict is referred to as the Arab - Zionist conflict'. In his polemical wrangling with the 'Palestinian Right' (i.e., Fatah) George Habash formulated this approach succinctly: Can Israel be differentiated from the Zionist movement? Is Israel not the economic, military and political embodiment of the Zionist movement? Is it possible to sweep away Zionism without sweeping away Israel?

Wholly consistent with its principled approach, the PFLP roundly condemns every meeting of Fatah personnel with Israelis who identify themselves as Zionists willing to recognize the determination of the Palestinian people. Nevertheless, the installation into practice of the principle of absolute identity between Israel and Zionism is also flawed by contradictions. For example, the PFLP sees a wide field 'for practical cooperation against Zionism and imperialism with certain trends in Israel, such as the Israeli Communist Party (Rakah), which reject Zion while not rejecting the existence of Israel itself. The excuse offered by the PFLP for this approach is that such cooperation stems from practical and concrete considerations and does not attest to any deviation from its opposition in principle to the existence of Israel.

At this point the difference between the practical approach to Israel within the Fatah, and that of the PFLP, is clear. Whereas the emergent tendency in the Fatah is to distinguish between groups within Zionism with which business can be conducted, and other groups with which such dealings are barred, the PFLP professes to see no distinction between currents within Zionism. Unlike the pragmatic wing in the Fatah, it does not search for any response from the enemy - the US and Israel - nor does it even wish for such a response. Hence it has no interest whatever in any internal differentiation within Israel. Habash has often declared that he prefers the Likud in power in Israel over the Alignment, since in his view the former says frankly what the latter actually thinks but conceals under a stylistic wrapping.

For George Habash the powerful shock that racked Israel in the wake of the Lebanon war is proof positive that Israel can be eliminated in a long-term process based on the principle of attrition. It is his belief that if the Arabs manage to prevent Israel from achieving a decisive blow in a lightning war, they can, by dint of their 'steadfastness and resistance', foment within Israel international tremors which will effect its disintegration: 'The 1982 war was indicative of the possibility of causing the Zionist entity to implode by dealing powerful blows from outside and causing it heavy losses.'

Habash is absolutely convinced that a war between Israel and Syria - initiated by the former with American assent - is on the cards; it is only a matter of timing. As for the more remote future, the PFLP's weekly occasionally discusses Israel's demographic hardship, a subject it turned to with great interest following the publication of the Professor Baki's Demographic Report to the Israeli Government. The PFLP takes heart from the emerging demographic trends - to which, it believes, Israel has no answer. At the same time, however, it cautions against a stand-pat approach while what it terms 'the laws of nature' take their course, urging instead that the issue be brought to a head and that Israel even before then, be overcome by brute force.

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Notes:

- .1G. Habash, in al-Hadaf (PFLP's weekly), June 9, 1986.
- .2G. Habash, Azmat al-Thawra al-Filastiniyya: al Judhur w-l-Hulul, Beirut, 1985 (henceforth: Azmat al-Thawra), p.18.
- .3G. Habash, in: al-Hadaf, December 19, 1983.
- .4G. Habash (no title), Collection of Speeches for the 18th Anniversary of the PFLP (Arabic), The ??? of PFLP (no place), 1986 (henceforth: Collection of Speeches, p. 4(.
- .5Azmat al-Thawra, p. 13
- .6Ibid
- .7Political Report of the 4th Congress of the PFLP, April 1981, in al-Hadaf, May 16, 1981 (henceforth: Political Report.(
- .8G. Habash, Collection of Speeches, pp.31-33.
- ‘ .9Political Report.’
- .10Azmat al-Thawra, p.80.
- .11G. Habash's Interview to al-Hadaf, December 19, 1983.
- .12Azmat al-Thawra, p.41.
- .13G. Habash's Interview to al-Hadaf.
- .14Azmat al-Thawra, p.72.
- .15Interview of Abu-Ali Mustafa, Deputy-General of the PFLP, to Kuwait's News Agency, April 4, 1983.
- .16G. Habash in: al-Mawaqif al-Arabi (Lebanon), January 13, 1986.
- .17Al-Hadaf, February 2, 1983; Abu-Ali Mustafa in: al-Yasar al-Arabi, December 29, 1982.
- .18Al-Hadaf, October, 1985.
- .19Filastin al-Thawra (Fatah's Abu-Nidal's weekly), May 6, 1986; June 3, 1986; June 24, 1986.

.20PFLP, al Hayaa al-Jadida, No.26 (no date, no place), p.114. The date of this publication is probably 1983 or 1984.

.21See, for instance, al-Hadaf, September 8, 1986.

.22PFLP, The Political report of the 4th Congress (in Arabic, version), April 1981 (no place), p. 152.

.23Ibid

.24Ibid p.155

.25Abu-Ali Mustafa to al-Hadaf, April 4, 1981.

.26G. Habash, Collection of Speeches, pp. 61, 86-87.

.27Ibid, p.88; G.Habash to al-Hadaf, June 9, 1986.

.28G. Habash, Collection of Speeches, p.58.

.29G.Habash to al-Hadaf, June 9, 1986.

.30al-Hadaf, June 3, 1985.

.31Al-Dustur (Jordan), al-Mawqif al-Arabi (Lebanon), December 13, 1986.

.32Al-Ray al-Aamm (Kuwait), March 20, 1986; al-Dustur (Jordan), December 16, 1983.

.33G.Habash to al-Hadaf, February 10, 1986, March 10, 1986.

.34PFLP, Announcement of the Central Committee in its 4th Congress, in: al-Hadaf, February 7, 1983.

.35Al-Hadaf, June 11, 1984; al-Kifah (PFLP's organ in the Gaza Strip), March 1984.

.36The Central Committee of PFLP, in: al-Hadaf, February 24, 1986.

.37Al-Hadaf, March 3, 1986.

.38G. Habash, Collection of Speeches, p. 13.

.39PFLP, The Political report of the 4th Congress (full version), pp. 44-46.

.40G. Habash, Collection of Speeches, pp. 55-56.

.41Ibid

.42Ibid, p.85.

.43Al-Hadaf, editorial, December 27, 1980; Abu-Ali Mustafa, April 4, 1981.

.44Al-Hadaf, March 3, 1986; G. Habash, Azmat al-Thawra, p.68

.45Ibid, p. 30.

.46PFLP, Announcement of the Central Committee in its 4th Congress, in: al-Hadaf, February 7, 1983.

.47PFLP, The Committee of Foreign Relations, The Political Report of the 3rd Congress (in English), Beirut, 1972, p. 63.

.48PFLP, Political Report of the 4th Congress (full version), p. 299.

.49Abu-Ali Mustafa to al-Hadaf, November 18, 1985; Announcement of the Politburo of PFLP, Kuwait's News Agency, December 3, 1985.

.50G. Habash to Kuwait's News Agency, October 5, 1986.

.51FPLP, al-Hayaa al-Jadidaa, p.114.

.52Azmat al-Thawra, pp. 18-19.

.53FPLP, al-Hayaa al-Jadidaa, p.114-115.

.54G. Habash in an article in Sabah al-Khayr (Lebanon), June 7, 1986.

.55Al-Hadaf, August 4, 1986.