

**DIALOGUE
WITH
FATEH**

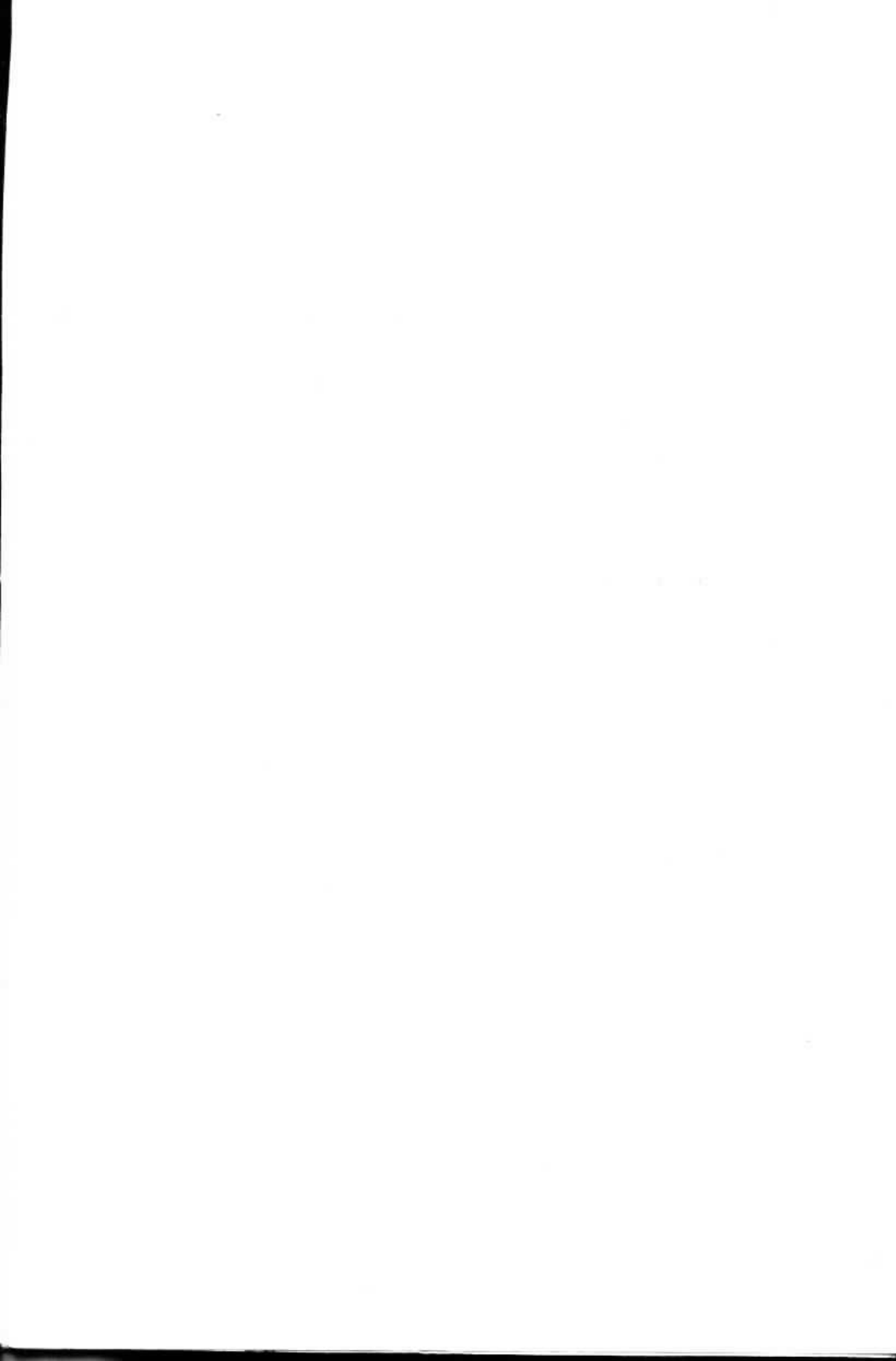


A Dialogue with FATEH

The Palestine National Liberation Movement, Fateh

FOREWORD

The following dialogue between one of the leading revolutionaries of the Palestine National Liberation Movement, Fateh, and the Editor-in-Chief of AL-TALI'A (Vanguard) magazine took place in the second quarter of 1969. The «dialogue» sheds light on the Palestinian Revolution, what it thinks, how it operates, how it confronts the present and how it sees the future.



Question — It would be advisable in my opinion to begin this dialogue from the point of the present position in the battle with the enemy. May we know how Fateh views this position? Perhaps you will agree with me that to arrive at this knowledge we must be aware of both the strong points and the weak points on the enemy front as well as on ours. When I say «ours» I mean the Palestinian front in particular and the Arab front in general.

Answer — Naturally, scientific analysis of any position must cover the weak points as well as the strong points — the positive and the negative. Starting our discussion with the Palestinian position, Fateh is of the opinion that many positive results have been achieved, but at the same time we are meeting with certain negative aspects.

The most prominent positive result achieved is perhaps that new trend represented by the meeting together of large, highly influential groups to undertake commando action. This association has taken the form of the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command (PASC).

This step, if given the required opportunity to work in an atmosphere which is remote from previous susceptibilities, will have a great effect in consolidating commando action.

The Palestinian Armed Struggle Command is an actual body which goes beyond the previous structure of the Military Co-ordination Bureau and the commando organisations because it tends to be an actual command consolidating four large contingents of the resistance movement: the Popular Liberation Forces, the Saika Forces, the Assifa Forces of Fateh and the Popular Democratic Front Forces. If we add to these the Palestine Liberation Army which has entered the armed struggle in accordance with the PLO Executive Committee's recent decision, we have a considerable force actually comprising over 90% of the combatants under this Command. All this indicates the participation of the fighting revolutionary groups in a national front within the frame of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). In point of fact, these positive developments have deprived the enemies of Palestinian action of any justifications they may have had for trying to show that there are discrepancies among the forces of Palestinian action. This position, however, is faced by a counter-position. I wish to make it quite clear that by this counter-position I do not mean the position of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). As we see it, the PFLP will inevitably concur in this new form of the front when it comes to understand the true position. It is not a matter of Fateh or anybody else assuming exclusive control of the Command.

Q. — Would you please explain what you mean by your last remark: understanding the true position?

A. — It is no secret that the PFLP's failure to join the PLO and ultimately PASC

rests on certain bases connected with what have become known as «representation proportions». Naturally there are those who are trying to exploit this with the object of maintaining this situation and preventing the accession of the PFLP. To this end they resort to a spurious argument accusing Fateh and others of trying to assume exclusive control of the PLO and PASC. I am in a position to affirm here that the matter is not one of exclusive control in any way. It is precisely in response to Palestinian and Arab opinion which you yourself, like so many other patriots, have expressed and called upon Fateh to implement. The object which we and the rest of our compatriots have aimed at is to bring together the greatest possible number of influential organisations within the frame of a consolidated national front and a united command.

Q. — We have not ceased to insist on the unity of action for the organisations at least if not full unity on the basis of common tactical and strategic objectives. Do you not agree that this has become a vital necessity?

A. — Exactly. We therefore believe that extrinsic differences concerning the enemy, proportions and profit and loss accounts in the building of a national front for the Palestinian people will undoubtedly all disappear if our brothers of the PFLP understand the true position which they should take regarding their combative structure vis-a-vis the PLO and the new Palestinian Armed Struggle Command.

Generally speaking, the building of the national front through the PLO and the military command consolidating commando action constitute the essence of the positive aspects of this stage.

Q. — What about the negative aspects?

A. — In our opinion the negative aspects essentially consist in the positions adopted by the small organisations which arise from time to time and which are used in attempts to undermine the main forces engaged in Palestinian action. What shall I say? This is enough, I should think.

Q. — I do not believe it is enough. What you say is extremely serious and I am of the opinion that the Arab peoples are entitled to be made thoroughly aware of this matter so that they may adopt an understanding attitude towards it. It is not enough to speak in general terms or in the passive voice, as this would be tantamount to making accusations without factual basis or without evidence or specification of responsibility. The battle cannot countenance such a state of affairs and we should steer clear of it. Any details or clarifications?

A. — The matter is serious indeed. Well, there are for instance certain limited groups which have tried to put in the field what is called «Fateh of Islam», recruiting for the purpose dubious elements under certain commands whose accounts have been totally closed by the Palestinian people. Their aim is to undermine Palestinian action in the name of «Fateh of Islam» or other small organisations which have been formed lately for reasons altogether un-

connected with the resistance movement. It is to be regretted that they are being formed with the support and assistance of certain forces. This is all the clarification I can make at present.

Q. — But how do you face this situation?

A. — We are sure that, once we have completed the building of the front and the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command (PASC) and both have begun with all their weight and effectiveness to occupy their true position in the Palestinian movement, this abnormal state of affairs will come to an end through persuasion.

This is about all concerning the Palestinian position. I believe that there are other negative factors connected with aid which is sometimes withheld and sometimes subjected to heavy restrictions. Other instances are the policy of repression and the attempt by some to link Palestinian action with the official Arab position. This is dangerous in more ways than one. First of all, it purports to impose a sort of hegemony by confining material aid to the official Arab position, and at the same time to isolate commando action and the Palestinian revolution from the Arab masses. The important thing is not to have a contribution collector but that the Arab citizen should feel that he reacts with this revolution through his personal contact with the militant forces. I must add that certain Arab quarters are waging a concentrated psychological war against the commandos and, I must say, particularly against Fateh. Believe me, I do not say this out of arrogance or narcissism. It is based on important considerations which actually exist. They believe that if they succeed through their

planned rumours and machinations in undermining Fateh, then it would be easy for them to undermine the entire commando action, on account of Fateh's popularity and its great magnitude as a militant force. Strangely enough, this campaign began to increase and gather momentum after Fateh had made its entry within the frame of the PLO. Fateh pressed for national unity, while as a basic force in Palestinian action it was treated as an obstacle to unity. It was stressed — and rightly — that Fateh was called upon to work for unity. This unity had several forms. It was possible to have a national front in which the PLO would be one of the parties and not the entire frame of the national front, as its covenant provides when it says that it is a national front grouping together organisations and individuals. It was possible to disregard this provision and to treat the PLO on the same footing as any other organisation, such as the Popular Front for instance. Fateh would then enter the national front on a level of fundamental equality with the Organisation. This trend was not opposed by Fateh; on the contrary, we were prepared to follow it to the end. However, there was another view regarding the PLO, an objective view which considered the welfare of the Palestinian people before that of Fateh. According to this view, the PLO represents for the first time official Arab commitment to the Palestinian people. To regard the PLO as a private force would result in weakening the PLO itself and dissolving this commitment. The question arose as to whether it was possible for the PLO to be the national front, the general frame, particularly since it

had never been organised in the political sense, consisting as it did of a basic military force which was the Liberation Army and the Popular Liberation Forces. It was decided that the PLO was a suitable background for the national front which would group together all Palestinian forces, and that our insistence on entering it on a level of equality was possibly unrealistic, besides the fact that it would paralyse the PLO. This would create a situation where these equal forces would under all circumstances have to agree unanimously on any action or decision. Failing such unanimity, any small organisation would be in a position to oppose any decision, thus creating a vicious circle by veto from this or that organisation. The idea which won acceptance was that the PLO should have a backbone, or what in other fronts is termed as the leading force. This does not at all mean that the others should lose their existence within the PLO or within the front, since the decisive factor is not the presence of four members representing the PLO and five members representing Fateh, but Fateh's magnitude in the Palestinian arena and its reflections within the front. The voice of any organisation's representative would have the weight actually carried by that organisation in the field of action. Thus, if we plan to carry out a big operation, the decision and prevailing opinion concerning that operation would lie with those who have the material stature to support the operation. Consequently it is not a matter of imposing this or that opinion, but of determining what this or that organisation is capable of contributing, what its actual magnitude in action

is, and what opinion it holds on which the executive decision will depend. I believe that where good faith prevails, both subjectively and objectively, in the relations of a sound front, it would be possible for the party having relatively fewer representatives to obtain the execution of a good and understandable resolution submitted by it regardless of any other considerations.

So much for the Palestinian position. To sum up, we find that there are strong positions, such as the growing popularity of the movement which the Palestinians are seeking to join in numbers far exceeding the present capacity of Palestinian organisations, and the development of operations in size, quantity and type. I believe that the future will enable the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command to take more positive action, thereby imposing itself on the field of responsibility.

There remains the existing line which I believe is connected with the solutions suggested for the area. It is the subject of the smaller organisations, and this is a new danger facing commando action.

Q. — In your review of the negative aspects, I note your emphasis on the manifestation represented by the rise of new small resistance organisations from time to time. Undoubtedly this is an unhealthy manifestation which is causing increasing concern among the Arab masses looking forward to the unity of the Palestinian struggle in the military as well as in the political field. It is to be noted that this manifestation comes at a time when efforts are being directed towards building the Palestinian people's

front and its commando forces, with certain important results already achieved. This manifestation requires a quick and effective remedy. It is not sufficient to recognise its existence: it is imperative to learn its causes, roots and objectives. Would you please clarify this matter? How does Fateh explain this manifestation? How does Fateh evaluate it and, again, how does it propose to deal with it?

A. — There is no doubt that this is an absolutely unhealthy manifestation. We believe that this manifestation has connections in various forms and shapes within the commando action itself, with the aim of subverting it. The method of subversion used is neither open nor direct, but underhanded and indirect. The smaller organisations are intelligent in their own way. Each of them has certain specific mottoes as if to lead the masses into believing that these mottoes are not adopted by the existing Palestinian action contingents. For instance, «Fateh of Islam» raises the motto of Islam with the specific aim of suggesting to the masses that Fateh is anti-Islamic. Thus «Fateh of Islam» appears, according to its allegations which it itself fully knows are untrue, as wanting to fill this gap in Palestinian action. Much the same is true of other organisations. I have mentioned «Fateh of Islam» in particular because it used the name of Fateh, but there are other small organisations existing today on the basis that Fateh and other true commando organisations have a regional outlook or that their outlook is not clear. Other small organisations are engaged in leftist overbids which are altogether unrealistic. These are roughly the new forms adopted by these organisations.

Q. — To determine the size of this manifestation, how many new organisations have been formed this year 1969?

A. — Three, claiming a religious or regional basis, or engaged in leftist overbids. As to the manner of dealing with this manifestation, we are of the opinion that our people does not believe in violence as a basic principle and mode of behaviour to settle differences, particularly since Palestinian action has not yet achieved its final form. Consequently we have followed, and are still following with revolutionary patience, the method of persuasion and direct discussion, because we believe that the base of these small organisations is undoubtedly noble, and that bad motives and deviation come from the leadership. It is therefore necessary to by-pass the leadership and descend to the level of the base for direct discussions to set forth the extent of the danger presented by these small organisations. We must not tire of talking to the base until we have deprived its leaders of every justification for the formation of these organisations and their continued existence.

Q. — How does such discussion take place?

A. — It takes place through information media, and sometimes through direct contact. It is believed that many of the militant young revolutionaries, once they know the truth, will join the true Palestinian action forces which have proved their effective presence in the struggle against the enemy.

Q. — Has any positive result been achieved in consequence of this discussion?

A. — Some positive results have actually been achieved, and it is believed that, with further discussion and greater and deeper contact, more positive results will follow.

Q. — The method of discussion which you have adopted in dealing with the manifestation of small organisations now being formed on the Palestinian field leads us to a specific question: Why do you not continue to use this same method with the PFLP, which in your opinion is a truly cammando organisation, to overcome the obstacles which stand in the way of its participation in the PLO or in the front, and in PASC? I believe that I am right in holding Fateh responsible for the realisation of this participation, considering that Fateh represents the greatest weight in the field of Palestinian action.

A. — As regards the PFLP, we constantly hold discussions with it, and we on our part will not stop this discussion. It was we who first began the discussion before the PFLP was split resulting in the separation of the National Liberation Front, known as Ahmad Jibril's Group, from the PFLP. Then intellectual developments took place within the PFLP which split it further into two divisions, the one declaring itself to be Marxist-Leninist under the leadership of the **Al-Hurriah** magazine group and Nayef Hawatmeh and calling itself the Democratic Popular Front, and the other advocating Marxism under the leadership of Dr. George Habash, but their method of action is different from that of the others. These circumstances of division within the PFLP constantly

hampered our discussions. Instead of trying to talk the PFLP into entering the frame of the unity of Palestinian action, we had to talk them into restoring talks among themselves first. This was a very important aspect which took much of our time, particularly when we wanted to speak frankly. When matters reached the point of conflict between the two divisions, it took considerable effort on our part to stop armed clashes between them in the streets of Amman and elsewhere. It was necessary to exert every effort to prevent armed clashes between groups of the PFLP. The dialogue was therefore continuous, but it could not bring about the desired union between the PFLP and Fateh or PASC unless the basic problem was solved within the contingents of the PFLP itself. Thus the discussions lasted long days and nights, centering around the unity of the PFLP itself. We succeeded in preventing armed clashes, as we succeeded in distinguishing between the Democratic Popular Front, the Popular Front originally representing the Arab Nationalist Movement, and Ahmad Jibril's group which took the distinctive name of «General Command». At the first stage of the discussion we succeeded in establishing these verbal differences in nomenclature among the three divisions. This stage lasted more than two months... nearly three months. When it came to discussing the constitution of the National Congress of the PLO, none of the members of the PFLP was in a position to discuss the National Congress but certain groups in the Front demanded postponement of the meeting. Others, like Ahmad Jibril's group, demanded a higher proportion of representatives, while a third

group, the Democratic Popular Front, refused at first to regard the PLO as common ground for the meeting of all groups, but later abandoned this position and joined PASC. Thus you see that the dialogue with the PFLP has never been interrupted, but has involved matters of first priority concerning the PFLP itself. After matters had been settled within the PFLP and after the meeting of the National Congress and the election of the new leadership, we made attempts to contact the three groups of the PFLP. The Democratic Popular Front applied to join PASC, and the condition imposed by the PLO Executive Committee was that the Democratic Popular Front should recognise the PLO's National Covenant in writing. The group submitted its application and declared that it considered itself to be bound by all the terms of the National Covenant (as a minimum programme) in respect of relations within PASC.

Our contact with the General Command group continues. As to the Arab Nationalists Movement, the PFLP, we established contact with them through the PLO Executive Committee directly. At that meeting all the reservations which the PFLP had on the subject of the PLO were put forth, and it was understood that no difference existed on the subject of joining the PLO except on the level of broad generalities. It was agreed to hold another meeting to discuss all these matters in a specific manner. Another meeting was also held between Fateh and the

PFLP to persuade the latter to join PASC as a first stage. PASC does not impose any conditions, nor does it involve any susceptibilities, because it has to do only with unified military action which has no direct connection with the PLO and its present form, but is connected with the military effort itself. Our brothers of the PFLP were of the opinion that the whole structure of the National Congress should be revised to enable them to join PASC. This meant that we were to go back to the first discussion when it was proposed that the coming together within the National Congress should be on the basis of equivalent proportions for the Front and all other organisations. The discussion went on about the subject of the small organisations and how they were to be represented. The PFLP stipulated that all small organisations should be represented in equivalent sizes within the Congress. This would restart the discussion about the front and what structure it should have. Generally speaking, the dialogue is still going on and will continue.

Q. — We hope so, as we hope that through this dialogue you will achieve positive results, the minimum limit of which, in my opinion, is unity of action. There is another point which I like to discuss: it concerns the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command. As I see it, this Command comes after what was called the Military Co-ordination Bureau. The first question here is this: Is the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command, as its name implies, a more advanced formula in the unified field of resistance action than the Co-ordination Bureau? The second question is: If the name expres-

ses the actual fact and if therefore PASC is more advanced than the Co-ordination Bureau, in what ways is it more advanced? The third question is: Is PASC, in Fateh's opinion, the last and final step towards the unity of resistance action or are there further steps to be taken? How do you conceive these steps, within publishable limits, of course?

A. — The Palestinian Armed Struggle Command is an important step towards the unity of commando action. Furthermore, it is undeniably more advanced than the Co-ordination Bureau.

The Co-ordination Bureau was a sort of gathering which included representatives of the various organised groups. To tell you frankly — for we believe that we should discuss our affairs with the utmost frankness — the Bureau unfortunately confined its activities to co-ordinating relations among the commando organisations and attempting to settle problems which might arise among military operation or military plan, or any joint action to be planned and executed under a single command, although the organisations had of their own accord undertaken joint operations on the field of battle to face enemy defiance.

True, the Co-ordination Bureau was a first step forward, but I believe, as practical experience has shown, that it was neither sufficient nor satisfactory, nor was it specific enough for any person who wanted to give the Palestinian people a general command for their armed struggle. When the Palestine Liberation Organisation's new Executive Committee was elected, it set out to lay down new bases for closer relations

among the organisations taking part in the National Council and the leadership of the Liberation Organisation. Care was taken to avoid setting up a command merely on paper, or one of a purely ceremonial character with a resounding name, or one that simply inherited the Co-ordination Bureau. What was needed was a real command which was effective in action, and which grouped together all the contingents taking part in the leadership. It may appear as a unity of information, or a mere title, but, as we know, every action requires first a thorough objective study of the actual situation and of the possibilities, followed by a third stage consisting in the actual implementation of the plan. We may say that we have almost completed the first two stages and are now entering the third stage: that of implementation of the plan.

Q. . . Can we infer from this that we are about to witness joint resistance operations participated in by all the forces of the organisations affiliated to the Liberation Organisation under the unified Armed Struggle Command?

A. — Yes. Training for the operations will take place under a unified command and will be participated in by Fateh's Assifa forces working side by side with the Liberation Army forces, the Saika forces and the forces of the Popular Democratic Front. All the forces will undertake combined operations according to unified standards and considerations of efficiency, potential and circumstances of operation. Thus in some cases within the framework of the plan a particular group may be chosen to undertake a specific operation consisting entirely of, let us say,

Saika elements, or a group consisting of Saika, Assifa and Liberation Army forces working together, and so on, as the command may deem suitable considering training, efficiency, knowledge of the land, etc.

I do not disclose a secret when I say that the Armed Struggle Command will commence its functions on an important scale very shortly.

Nor do I disclose any secret when I say that the recent operation which resulted in the occupation of Al-Hammeh (May 2, 1969), was undertaken on the basis of a plan made by the Armed Struggle Command.

Although the operation was executed by Fateh's Assifa forces alone, yet the plan was the result of a new thinking on the part of the Armed Struggle Command itself.

Q. — I notice that you have used the term «new thinking» in connection with the planning for the Al-Hammeh operation. Does this mean that, in your opinion, the Al-Hammeh operation represents a new development in resistance action?

A. — Undoubtedly the Al-Hammeh operation was a turning-point and a new development in commando action.

Q. — How ?

A. — As you know, our commando action was confined to the traditional rule of «hit and run» in guerrilla warfare. Although adherence to this rule is necessary, particularly in the beginning, we have

actually practised a limited type of confrontation with the enemy in some of the phases during which the hit-and-run rule prevailed. Such confrontation took place on a relatively large scale in connection with the Israeli aggression against Al-Karameh in March 1968.

After Al-Karameh, we undertook other types of limited confrontation, as in Karantal and Wadi Al-Kalt for instance.

This limited confrontation was an introduction to the Al-Hammeh operation. What does Al-Hammeh operation mean? It means the occupation of an enemy-controlled position for a limited period of time during which the enemy's forces and potentialities in that position are wiped out. Thus with the Al-Hammeh operation we enter a new phase in the guerrilla war, the phase of occupying certain positions and completely wiping out all enemy forces there. Naturally, we select these positions carefully on the basis of extremely complex considerations with the object of striking at the greatest possible number of targets, considering the political, military, economic and psychological effects of such occupation and mopping-up operations within the enemy camp.

This phase is in itself a preparation for the next phase which is now occupying the attention of the planning and strategic thinking authorities in the resistance movement. I am referring to the phase of occupying positions, mopping them up and holding them. This phase will begin once we have completed the transfer of all our bases into the occupied territory, at which time there will be full, deep and ef-

fective engagement of all forces within the occupied territory.

Q. — This means control of what in guerrilla terminology is known as «liberated areas».

A. — Exactly .

Q. — There is no doubt that, once the resistance movement has succeeded in wresting «liberated areas» from the occupying enemy, it will enter the phase of total liberation war. But allow me, since we have undertaken from the outset to face our problems with frankness for the purpose of taking a real and firm stand, to raise here one question. It takes into consideration the often repeated allegations by certain Western press observers and by Israeli sources themselves that Israel has achieved success against resistance operations through the use of electronic defences and electrified wire around certain occupied areas, and also that Israel has discovered a number of resistance cells inside the land. Although I am convinced that there are intentional exaggerations in this kind of talk for the purpose of achieving a psychological effect, yet there is the specific fact that such electronic defences and electrified wire have actually been installed, and that there are cells which have fallen into enemy hands. Consequently, the question here is this: To what extent has all this actually affected resistance operations and the required development towards the liberated areas stage which you have mentioned? Naturally, historical experience assures us that no liberation movement in any land has failed to face such obstacles or failed to overcome them in the end.

A. — Naturally... not everything the enemy or Western observers say in this connection is true. Exaggerations are made with the express intention of influencing us psychologically.

But as honest and responsible people we must admit that **some** of what is being said is true. We neither deny this nor try to conceal it. On the contrary, we face it and endeavour to take it in our stride. In the past, when we began our armed struggle before the war of June 1967, we did so with limited numbers, but today we are pursuing the struggle with a human, technical, military and organisational force which is altogether out of proportion with that of the past. In any event, we have not for a moment lost sight of the fact that the enemy whom we are facing possesses considerable power and potential, especially since the whole experience of imperialism in the area is placed at his disposal. The enemy has learned from Nazism and from America's experience in Vietnam. We all know that Dayan stayed for some time with the American forces in Vietnam before the June war to familiarise himself with America's experience in facing the Vietnamese Liberation Army and its guerrilla operations. Moreover, the enemy is constantly developing its arsenal and taking advantage of colonial experience against the people's armed resistance in all parts of the world. You are therefore in the face of an enemy who possesses advanced science, advanced technique and advanced experience. To face this, the resistance movement must be armed with advanced science, advanced technique and advanced experience. We keep this fact in mind night and day.

As a matter of fact, the question of Arab tendency to support Palestinian resistance has been raised in this connection. The resistance movement is now totally self-reliant. Arab attitude, Arab science and Arab experience still have a long way to go towards serious and effective participation or even helping Palestinian resistance to solve the problems facing it, and they are now insistently called upon to contribute their part. There is for instance the electronic line established by the enemy. There are the fortifications and other installations set up along the frontiers, the small area of our land, the organisation of the occupied territory dividing Palestine into special security zones. Thus Nablus is a special security zone comprising air fighters, helicopters, armoured vehicles, infantry, parachutists and communication units, the whole constituting a security unit capable of moving with all speed in times of danger. The first thing that Israel did on the Western Bank and in all occupied areas was to construct a wide network of roads assuring the security units of extreme mobility towards any area where any clash or resistance operation took place.

The secret of Israeli mobility lies here and not, as the enemy claims, in the strength of its intelligence system. I am in a position to declare here from experience and with full responsibility that what is being rumoured concerning the strength of Israeli intelligence is a myth. Israel does not possess an advanced intelligence system, but it is admitted that it makes use of the scanty information received, which it immediately communicates to its various units for their use.

The fact to be stressed here is that the resis-

tance movement is in need of Arab support on the level of scientific knowledge and technical know-how - to enable it to face and outwit the Israelis' developed science and know-how.

Q. — Naturally this is an urgent duty which is incumbent upon all scientific and technical institutions in the Arab homeland. One possibility is the formation of a technical bureau manned by Arab scientists and experts on a voluntary basis. However, I note that you have not replied to my specific question about the effect of the electronic defences and electrified wire on resistance action and the extent of this effect. Does it, for instance, prevent entry into the occupied territory at the required rate?

A. — It has not prevented entry. It has, however, affected entry operations and has consequently led us to change our entry tactics. We continue to enter as evidenced by the constant attacks made by our forces. Not a single day passes without our forces undertaking more than one operation within the occupied territory.

Q. — In this connection, how do you estimate the enemy's losses as a result of your operations? I recall that in a discussion with Guevara while he was in Cairo in 1965 he said that the estimation of the enemy's real losses is one of the most complicated problems for any armed resistance movement or guerrilla war.

A. — This is true, and it is for this reason that we in Fateh — you may have noticed this — have adopted the policy of not mentioning the full number, as reflected by the communiqués of Assifa before it joined the Armed Struggle Command. Although this sort of statement is conven-

tional, yet it is less heavy on the ears than saying that we killed 10 or 20 and injured 30 or 40. Also, it has been agreed within the Armed Struggle Command not to mention the number of men killed or injured, although in many cases we are sure of the actual figures. This, however, does not prevent us from estimating enemy losses for each of our operations on the basis of reports submitted by the combatants taking part in that operation. Each combatant submits to his command a detailed written report about the operation and the losses involved, and the estimate is always taken as the average of all these reports. We do this to avoid falling in the error of exaggeration, since we know that our people are very sensitive on this point.

Q. — Now permit me to move to another point which in my opinion is of extreme importance: that of Fateh's understanding of the relation between military action and political action, and consequently between the military command and political leadership. Which shall direct the other? Which shall have the authority to make decisions? Whose opinion shall prevail in the event of a difference on major issues? You are undoubtedly aware of the criticism directed against Fateh for having confined itself to purely military action without linking it with specific political objectives along specific lines and with the organised popular mobilisation of the Palestinian masses. This criticism, in my opinion, is highly significant and calls for comment on your part, particularly since Fateh was the first to open the way for armed resistance in the Palestinian field.

In your reply to this criticism, I hope that you will elucidate a number of points. First, how was

Fateh formed, or what were the objective circumstances which gave rise to Fateh and led to the adoption of the armed struggle line? Secondly, does Fateh consider that armed struggle is an end in itself? To put it more correctly, is it a strategic aim or only one of the means to the end which it seeks to attain through its struggle? If it is one of the means, what place does it occupy among the various means? Thirdly...

A. — One by one, please.

Q. — Do you not agree that it is preferable for me to give you first a complete idea about this matter instead of discussing it piecemeal?

A. — I agree, but may I ask you to clarify further the second point in your question? The point regarding the circumstances which attended the formation of Fateh and its adoption of the armed struggle line is clear enough. It is the second point as to whether Fateh considers armed struggle to be a means or an end in itself which needs further clarification.

Q. — What I mean is this: Does Fateh in its conception of the methods for fighting Zionism and its Israeli manifestation stop at the method of armed struggle alone or does it consider that besides armed struggle there are other essential methods which are vital for the management of the effort? In other words, is Fateh impelled by a purely military concept or by an all-pervading political concept armed with a whole variety of skills, including military skill?

A. — All right. As a matter of fact, Fateh was initially a reaction to a combination of Arab situa-

tions and errors which characterised Arab politics and Arab political parties. All this made many Palestinians of the younger generation feel that party politics and disunion did not provide the right setting for the solution of their country's problem. The fifties presented an odd situation in which all young Palestinians, with rare exceptions, were members of some party or political movement, and those who were not so affiliated were held in disrespect and regarded as a burden on society. The affiliations of the young Palestinians ranged from the extreme right to the extreme left. There were some who believed that the problem could be solved by religious means, while others regarded communism as the right path. Still others took a nationalist direction through the nationalist parties which at that time were represented by the Baath Party and later by the Arab Nationalist Movement which began its activities with vengeance, blood, steel and fire. Our youth who mingled with all these parties and movements but found that they did not provide the way for the liberation of their country detached themselves consciously from such parties and movements. This detachment originally involved party affiliations rather than ideological matters. I believe that we have now reached a stage where the entire world is experiencing rifts in the left. We hear of a left and a left of the left, and we may still hear of another left. Thus the objective circumstances were those of an Arab homeland in great ferment. In the beginning, the Palestinian people gave expression to this ferment through the formation of a number of secret organisations. It may also be said that the success of the Algerian revolution had much to do with this trend of thought, since our young Palestinians came

to feel that they were not of a lower mettle than their Algerian brothers and that they too were capable of raising the banner of armed struggle and of putting it into effect as well. But the Arab situation as a whole was against this, and consequently the young Palestinians were inevitably led to resort to secret action. When the Palestine Liberation Organisation was formed, it was believed by some that the purpose of the Organisation was to absorb the discontent which had begun to permeate all sections of the Palestinian people and to give expression to the Palestinian people's unrest and its determination to build a Palestinian national revolutionary movement. In brief, the formation of the Liberation Organisation was at first an attempt to circumvent this true revolutionary unrest. This is the reason why at first we objected to the Organisation. It was much too superior and overbearing. It did not spring from below, but was imposed from above. Under these circumstances, secret Palestinian action began to be considered. Admittedly, secrecy has its drawbacks as well as its advantages. If we analyse these organisations, we find that many of them are part of a plan to undermine the truly revolutionary movements. Some organisations were formed by a number of Arab embassies, while others were formed by certain Palestinians whose historical rôle had ended at a point beyond which they were incapable of advancing. At the same time, a number of Arab parties were trying to form secret organisations in a vain attempt to keep pace with the truly revolutionary groups. Fateh believed that words were no longer of any avail and that it was imperative to launch a serious and effective struggle, even with modest possibilities at first. This is how we began.

Q. — At that starting point, what exactly was Fateh?

A. — At that time Fateh was a group of young Palestinians who revolted against the situation then prevailing, a situation characterised by disunion, particularly after the secession coup, and the defeat suffered by the Arab parties in undertaking any real act of struggle. The young men who dissociated themselves from this situation and revolted against it were the founders of Fateh.

Q. — What was the social nature of these young men who founded and led Fateh in the beginning? To my mind, they were mostly, if not wholly, educated Palestinians the majority of whom sprang from the middle class.

A. — Naturally they were essentially educated Palestinians. They reasoned that some way must be found to change the existing situation, and it was therefore necessary to take action, that is, to embark upon an armed struggle. Under the circumstances, this action had to rely on extremely modest potentialities.

It is no longer a secret that at the time there were two points of view, the one asserting that no armed struggle could be undertaken before Fateh had achieved such popular and military entrenchment as would enable it from the beginning to undertake strong action capable of continuing without interruption, and the other stating that it was necessary to commence action even with the most modest potential, which was bound to grow and develop in the course of action. The second point of view prevailed, and we began to act.

As in every truly revolutionary undertaking, Fateh faced a strong attack at the outset. In each country this attack took the form of an accusation directed against Fateh according to the circumstances of that country.

Naturally, some countries regarded Fateh as reactionary, etc., while other quarters accused it of being communist, Marxist, and what not.

Q. — While in reality it was ?

A. — As I have already mentioned, it was a national liberation movement. In brief, it was decided to launch action — armed struggle — in spite of inadequate potential. Before the commencement of military action, we used to publish a magazine called **Our Palestine** which expressed the opinions of the younger generation without openly referring to Fateh or Assifa. When this magazine wrote that the Palestinian people would inevitably establish itself as an independent entity which had its own will and identity, we were accused of regionalism. This accusation originated from the parties which had nationalist dimensions, but these parties have now begun to reconsider their attitude towards this matter. In the face of all these accusations, in addition to those alleging that we were Nazis or Fascists, we saw the necessity for identifying ourselves before the Palestinian people in particular and the Arab people in general with an armed action on a progressive national level which would lead the nation on the right path to liberation. Thus, as I have said, the point of view advocating immediate action in spite of inadequate potential at the time prevailed. At that time, the rise of Fateh as a militant force coincided with

the appearance of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Q. — Before proceeding to another subject, I should like to know, if I may, what financial resources Fateh had for undertaking its military operations initially. However inadequate its possibilities were, there was undoubtedly the question of financing.

A. — The movement was financed from purely Palestinian sources. In view of our secretive policy — a policy which we carried to an extreme in the beginning, we decided not to take a single millieme from other than Fateh members. It may now be said — this is no longer a secret — that we followed the policy of obtaining employment and business activity in the oil-rich Arab regions, like the Arabian Gulf. This was possibly one of the reasons which created a particular kind of atmosphere around Fateh, but this did not deter us because our aim was to achieve self-sufficiency for the revolutionary movement in everything, particularly the financial aspect. Our members used to deprive themselves even of the barest essentials needed by a person working in the Gulf area because they were anxious to save the greatest possible portion of their income or salaries for the benefit of the movement — one-half at least, and often more.

Before starting operation — this secret may now be disclosed — we imposed on every member the requirement of paying to a special fund a large sum of money which he was to secure by any means, even by borrowing if need be. The reason for this was that before starting our armed struggle opera-

tions we took into account even the worst possibilities, such as the possible failure of the movement and the death of a large number of comrades, and it was incumbent upon us to assure their families of a certain sum of money which would help them to survive irrespective of all else. We deposited this fund in trust with a group of reliable Palestinians for disbursement, particularly to martyrs' families, in the event that any untoward thing should happen to Palestinian action or to the movement.

Q. — Fateh began its armed struggle on 1 January 1965, did it not?

A. — Yes, on 1 January 1965, after the decision was taken to commence operations in spite of inadequate potential.

Q. — May we know something about Fateh's first military operation? What exactly was its objective, both militarily and politically?

A. — The first operation was a clash with an Israeli military patrol. But the first operation that was really significant for Fateh was the next one which struck at the Jordan tributaries diversion lines. In 1965, as you know, the main subject of discussion for which summit conferences were held was this diversion. We saw that from this diversion point it was possible to start the Palestinian revolution, a revolution which would continue and produce its effect on the colonialist racial Zionist presence in our country, and from there to develop the diversion scheme into the supreme cause: liberation. This was to be done by striking at Israel's diversion operations with our then modest means. We performed the

operation during which the first Assifa combatant, our brother Mahmoud Hijazi, was taken captive. He was tortured and tried, and is still bravely suffering torture in prison until this day. The reason why he was taken captive was that his rifle was rusty and unfortunately did not help him.

Another unfortunate incident in this operation was the death of our first martyr, Ahmad Musa, not by enemy fire, but by an Arab bullet upon his return following the completion of the operation. The orders issued to him and to all men in the contingents which were sent for the first time into the occupied territory commanded them to refrain under all circumstances from engaging Arab troops upon their return, even if fired on. They were to die, if need be, without firing a single shot at any Arab soldier, who was totally innocent and a brother to us. Our aim was to prevent our commandos from killing any Arab, even in self-defence, and to ensure that commando action shall from the start draw a clear picture of the bloody tragedy which our Palestinian people is suffering.

Q. — What was the reaction to your first operation?

A. — We felt the response which the Palestinian and Arab masses had to our action. In fact, the response was mostly favourable, if we except certain groups and voices, some of whom adopted the line of direct attack, as in the case of certain Arab papers in which the combatants read while returning from their heroic operation an accusation to the effect that CENTO agents had been operating in the

area. Others, also adopting a direct line, admitted that the operation was good and worth-while, but blamed it for failing to co-ordinate in advance with the free Arab countries, some demanding a joint plan between the commandos and the Arab governments at the time. A third group said that the timing was wrong, and others said that it was a matter of one or two adventures which had ended and there was no future in such action.

But the operations succeeded one another, and so did the communiques ... the third communiqué, the fourth, the fifth ... The tongues of accusation and criticism became silent to a large extent, and popular response widened.

Alongside the inadequacy of our arms and the lack of support from the national forces which were expected to back our armed struggle, official Arab quarters for the most part fought Fateh in various ways. For instance, the Unified Arab Command issued recommendations and circulars which fell into our hands, calling upon the Arab countries not to encourage the commandos and not to publicise any military operation carried out by Fateh's Assifa forces.

Q. — What, in your opinion, was the purpose or motive behind this?

A. — I believe that it was an attempt to dissociate the masses from armed struggle. At that time we were faced by a conspiracy of silence in most Arab countries the aim of which was to prevent the masses of the people from adopting the principle of armed struggle and from giving it all they could. To be fair, we must mention that some Arab papers

tried to publish Israeli communiques about our operations where they were not in a position to publish Fateh's military communiques.

Naturally we did not stand helpless before the wall of silence which we endeavoured at all times to penetrate through all means. For instance, we issued secret publications which were distributed throughout the Arab homeland, but in spite of the great number of copies which we distributed, the circulation was essentially limited in view of the vastness of the area.

Q. — How long do you think this wall — the wall of silence — continued to stand? How did it collapse? When? Was it after or before the June 1967 defeat?

A. — In reality it was before the June 1967 defeat, when the Israelis committed their aggression against Sammu Village (November 13, 1966), with the result that the Jordanian masses rose as one man to proclaim their strong support for commando action and to demand that it be given full freedom of action. The demonstrations, which spread all over the country, took everybody by surprise because they were spontaneous, not planned in advance, and expressed the true feelings of the people. The national and progressive forces were not capable of comprehending the full significance of these demonstrations, nor were they agreed on a unified programme to reap their fruits. They soon lost momentum and measures were redoubled against commando action. Adverse propaganda through press conferences and radio broadcasts announced that the subject of the commandos was not peculiar to Jordan alone, that the position

to be taken with regard to it was a general Arab position, and that this position was being taken in compliance with the orders of the Unified Arab Command. Naturally this Command was subject to organised exploitation because it comprised at the time, in addition to Jordan, several other régimes.

However, the most important thing in all this was that the conspiracy of silence which had been woven around the commandos collapsed, even through the action of the counter-measures themselves. The number of detainees in some Arab countries reached a very high figure. They were not all members of Fateh, any patriot suspected of having any connection with or of supporting Fateh or commando action was put under arrest.

Q. — What took place after the June defeat?

A. — We all know that the defeat engendered a state of bewilderment among the Arab masses who at the same time rejected any notion of surrender. The enemy may imagine that their victory of 10 June put an end to the Six Days' War, as the Israelis call it, but on the very next day, 11 June, Fateh's Assifa men carried their arms into the occupied territory for the first time after defeat. The value of the 11 June initiative lay in the fact that it ignored all attitudes of despair and bewilderment and gave effect to the determination of the Arab people in general and the Palestinian people in particular not to give up but to continue fighting the enemy without respite.

Thereafter our patrols closely succeeded one another inside the territory. I may be divulging a secret when I say that the great majority of Fateh lead-

ers entered the occupied territory to join those who were already there for the purpose of organising the resistance of the Palestinian masses.

It was not easy at first, and many difficulties had to be overcome. In training for instance, we faced the difficulty of combat training under enemy occupation, in spite of the absolute secrecy which we imposed. The enemy was very active in deploying its communications and observation posts at a time when our observation posts and communications had not yet the capacity for effective confrontation which they now have. Consequently, the enemy from time to time discovered training cells in the mountains and took ruthless action against them. The commandos were not capable of hitting back effectively at the time because the arms which they had were of a very archaic type dating back to past wars and revolutions. Naturally this resulted in some casualties during training.

Q. — With due regard to military secrets, how then did you face the problem of modern armament?

A. — As a matter of fact the setback here brought an advantage in the matter of armament. After the defeat we sent special contingents to the occupied battle areas with the specific object of collecting the greatest possible amount of Arab arms abandoned in large quantities. It may be said in all frankness that, after the defeat, Fateh took a quantity of arms which far surpassed, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the amount it had taken throughout its period of struggle and even after the Arab countries' recognition of the Palestinian resistance movement and its effort. This was our main source of supply.

Q. — But the need for arms to carry on resistance recurs and increases with the growing breadth and depth of its operations, and it is therefore necessary to find other sources. According to historical experience in all resistance movements, one important source of arms supply is always the enemy side itself, the arms that are captured. Did you take this into account? If so, what was the approximate proportion?

A. — Enemy arms are a basic element in guerrilla warfare, an element which we have taken and will continue to take into consideration at all times. To be realistic, I must tell you frankly that we still consider that the quantity of arms which we have taken from the enemy is not sufficient, and I estimate its ratio to total armament at not more than 10%. Naturally, this ratio will inevitably be doubled and redoubled, and this matter is part of our calculations and plans.

Q. — With your permission, we shall now return to the general trend of our discussion. How did you face the situation and its difficulties and complications immediately following the defeat?

A. — We concentrated mainly on battle training for guerrilla warfare on the one hand, and on the reorganisation of former cells which existed under Arab rule — I mean Jordan — as well as the formation of new cells to face the requirements of the situation after the whole of Palestine had fallen under Israeli occupation. The response to reorganisation and the appeal to join the resistance movement was so great that it exceeded all expectations, and the people's immense enthusiasm provided us

with great potential.

It may now be said that this training and cell reorganisation stage ended precisely on 29 August 1967 and a new stage began: that of the commencement of organised and relatively large-scale resistance.

Q. — Why precisely 29 August 1967?

A. — Before that date we had gone a long way towards completing our training and had organised our major cell systems. The important thing was that we had completed the operation of transferring the greatest possible quantity of arms abandoned in occupied Arab territory.

I should like here to clarify an important point. It was possible to postpone the commencement of organised large-scale resistance a few weeks after 29 August 1967 to enable us to complete the training of greater numbers and the establishment of wider cell systems, and to develop further the level and quality of our organisations, but we were compelled to launch resistance on that date by an operation in Jerusalem and other operations in Tulkarm and other areas.

Q. — Why?

A. — For a number of important considerations. First of all, it was not sound from the political, military or psychological angles to immobilise the organisations and fighting forces after we had reached such a degree of training, organisation and armament. Secondly, immobilisation would have ex-

posed us to greater danger. Thirdly, the enemy had begun to be aware and to molest some of our secret bases.

Accordingly we decided to strike to avoid being taken by surprise in the event of a counter-attack by the enemy. We actually began and Fateh remained alone in the field, carrying on armed resistance, until December 1967, when some of our brothers of the Popular Front joined us in the struggle from the first half of January 1968. Thereafter the operations continued, and small organisations were formed one after the other until we reached the situation which I have already described. These are the main points concerning the formation of Fateh as well as its thinking and action, within publishable limits.

Q. — Before proceeding to another subject, I should like to know, if I may, how the decision of 29 August 1967 was taken, and who took the final and binding decision in the matter. In other words, was the decision taken on the basis of a political view and a full analysis of the situation in all its aspects, or on the basis of a purely military view to forestall a possible counter-attack by the enemy, or the wish to avoid immobilising the cells and combatants who were eager for military action? By whom was the decision taken? Was it by the Organisation's political leadership or by the combatants' military command? May I request that the reply include, if possible, a more complete definition of the relation between political action and military action in Fateh?

A. — Thank you for giving me by this question

the opportunity of explaining Fateh's understanding of this important matter. You are undoubtedly aware of the accusation directed against Fateh to the effect that it is concerned with military action alone, that it is a group of nationalist adventurers — this has actually been said — whose sole concern is to strike and kill and terrify the enemy, and that it is imprisoned within this antiquated circle from which it does not wish to come out to the wider political horizon.

To tell you the truth, I am still unable to understand the reasons on which this accusation is based. Is it possible in any armed resistance, guerrilla war or liberation movement for military action to exist separately from political action? We in Fateh see clearly that no military action is of any value unless it serves a political line and forms part of an all-inclusive political plan. Fateh's first nucleus arose as a political entity under the circumstances of a political situation which it rejected and opened for itself a different political path in the belief, which it still holds, that it is the right path leading to the goal. From this political line taken by Fateh grew the military action of armed resistance as an embodiment of this political configuration. Military action is a sequel to Fateh's political action in its true perspective. In a liberation movement, political policy springs from the mouth of the rifle, and we in Fateh are fighters in the political field as well as in the military field. Each of these fields serves and complements the other within Fateh's general strategic plan. Thus we do not differentiate between political action and military action, and to emphasise this we refrain from sending to the armed

resistance field any combatant unless he passes through our political organisation.

Q. — Does this mean that all Assifa combatants first passed through the stage of political membership in Fateh and linked themselves with its political organisation which then submitted them for military action?

A. — This is the basic principle which is now in full application. But, to be honest with you, an exception to this basic rule has been made under certain specific circumstances on the basis of political appreciation. I do not wish to conceal from you the fact that, in spite of the compelling circumstances which led to this exception, it caused us some problems which I am not now in a position to disclose or discuss. These problems deepened our belief in the necessity of adhering to the basic rule that Fateh men should first be politicians and then fighters. The exception was made during the first difficult period following the defeat when we were compelled to accept fighting volunteers directly without passing through the membership of Fateh's political organisation, but we soon returned to the application of the basic rule about two months after the Al-Karameh Battle. Fighting volunteers are no longer accepted directly but through our political organisation. This will show you that political organisation and political thinking is the leader.

Q. — One question for further clarification: When a particular operation is under consideration, the fighting force may have an idea. Is its military command permitted to carry it out directly, or is it first discussed on the political level along with the military considerations, the final decision to be taken

by the political leadership?

A. — It would perhaps be advisable for me to reply to this question by giving you an actual example which has been kept secret until now but there is no longer any harm in revealing it. When we decided that the time had come for the launching of organised large-scale armed resistance, what happened? Our brothers inside, mostly military and political figures, wanted resistance to start on 20 August 1967, but those outside had a different idea. What did we do? We called the entire political leadership including those who were inside, like Brother Abu-Ammar, specifically for the purpose of debating the matter on the political and military levels with such thoroughness as to take into account all circumstances and considerations. We asked those inside to accept postponement of operations until the leadership arrived at a decision, instead of the suggested 20 August. Consequently operations did not start on 20 August, and as a result of the discussions the situation became ripe for the commencement of armed resistance. This took nine full days, and therefore resistance did not start until 29 August. This proves that we never undertake any military action except in the light of a general political line, for although resistance drives are of a military nature, yet they are at the same time political drives with planned political objectives. Where they are confined to purely military operations they become acts of demagogues, of adventurers. These false impressions, which have now been obliterated as proved by actual circumstances, may have resulted from the fact that, in facing the then existing political circumstances, we stressed that our basic

method of fighting was armed struggle. Well, would you be surprised to learn that Fateh has no professional soldiers or military commanders? All combatants in Fateh, on any level, were originally university students, engineers, cultured persons or workmen. We have only a very small number of traditional militarists. This was regarded by some as a drawback for which we were blamed. Thus our first dispute with some of our brothers in the Organisation's Liberation Army concerned this very point. They used to ask us: «Where are the officers? The lieutenants? The captains? The majors?» etc. Our reply was that we were waging a war of liberation in which the men and the leaders were learning how to make war by actually making war. This would enable the army and its commanders to become a real and effective force in undertaking and leading the armed struggle in the long run according to plan. We do not have a single military commander who studied at a military academy. All our commanders have received their training in battle and have learnt the art of war by making war with the enemy, by experiencing and practising war daily.

Fateh's General Command has its Central Committee. Naturally, there is a sort of distribution of responsibilities and specialisation. There are those who have political duties and others who have military duties, but all constitute one integral whole. When we began action in 1965 we issued a political statement, and we published another after 1967.

In this connection, there is one point which I would like to make clear. This is probably our first chance to announce that there is no such thing as

Fateh's Military Wing, as mentioned in the press and radio broadcasts.

Q. — How? What about Assifa?

A. — This is precisely the point. How did the term «Assifa» originate? The basic and only thing we have is Fateh. However, when we began military operations in January 1965 — I have already explained that the majority in the conference which we held for this purpose were of the opinion that it was necessary to start in spite of inadequate means because potentialities could not grow except through action, while a minority disagreed with this opinion — the minority whose opinion had been rejected demanded that action be taken initially under a name other than Fateh, so that if the first operations should fail the result would have no effect on the continuity of Fateh and the completion of its preparations for the resumption of operations. Thus we used the name of Assifa to launch the first operations under its banner without referring to Fateh. We did not mention Fateh or identify it with Assifa except after about the tenth military communiqué and the success of the operations. Thereafter we decided that the name of Assifa should continue because it had become a historic name and because in reality it was synonymous with the original name of our movement: Fateh.

Q. — I do not know whether information concerning Fateh's organisational structure is today regarded as secret. It is up to you to determine this. What interests me is the kind of relations governing action among the combatants on the various levels in Fateh, from the base to the summit.

A. — Fateh's organisational structure is a secret indeed, but, regarding the kind of relations, I can assure you that, following the complex circumstances of Fateh's secret emergence and after it had become fully prepared for organisation, these relations changed from extreme centralisation into a type of revolutionary democracy governed by specific organisational rules which were binding on everybody from the base to the summit without distinction.

Q. — There is another point. I have noticed from my contacts with you that you are all intent on stressing the collective character of Fateh's leadership. Then came your decision to designate Brother Abu-Ammar as Fateh's official spokesman. What is the main idea behind this decision, and what are its repercussions on the principle of Fateh's collective leadership and its applications?

A. — As you have said, collective leadership in Fateh is a basic and essential principle which has been arrived at, not because we are fond of revolutionary expressions, but as a result of the conflicts suffered by us and by our young men who have had previous party experiences where individualism was one of the causes of failure or setback. Thus we have strongly reacted against individualism in all its forms and have been brought up to prefer, both subjectively and objectively, the principle of collectivity — the collectivity of leadership in particular. This collectivity is perhaps one of the reasons why Fateh has maintained its unity and cohesion in both organisation and action. Fateh was formed as a secret movement and consequently none of its leaders was known to the public. Their

names were kept secret, and had it not been for personal contacts which were inevitable in the process of implementation none of them would have been known by name. Thus we were compelled to bring to light a few names, but there are members of our collective leadership whose names have remained unknown and who nevertheless may be better and purer than the rest of us whose names have been revealed because the requirements of our work have so dictated. With the expansion of our field of action and our success in justifying the existence of our movement and in proving its ability to shoulder responsibilities, we had to present to the masses a responsible person to be an authority, particularly since we noticed that certain publications and statements had begun to appear in Beirut under the name of Fateh, while in reality they had no connection with Fateh, nor did they express our opinion. Who could stand openly before the public and announce in the name of Fateh that this statement comes from Fateh and that does not? There was none. Moreover, the Israeli press and broadcasts had begun to concentrate on the name of Brother Abu-Ammar considering that he was one of Fateh's leaders inside the occupied territory and at the same time a leading combatant who shouldered both political and military responsibilities. We took a decision at a meeting of the leadership to designate him as Fateh's official spokesman. He himself was not present at the meeting, and he heard of the decision in the same way as many others did. There may have been a special reason for selecting him in addition to other reasons connected with his steadfastness in the fight. He is a man of few words, the least spoken of us all. The press has sometimes tried to lead him

into discussion but he always succeeded in extricating himself except where it was really necessary to speak out and to clarify Fateh's position. It was actually suggested during the meeting of the leadership to designate three official spokesmen for Fateh, but none of them accepted. Since Brother Abu-Ammar was the only member who was not present in the meeting, his designation was announced and he had to comply with the decision. As a matter of fact, the combatant in any liberation movement always prefers secrecy unless the imperative requirements of the movement dictate otherwise. You know the extent of the difficulty which we faced in nominating some of our colleagues in the leadership to the Palestine Liberation Organisation's Executive Committee in its new form because the nomination involved the announcement of their names. Thus there is no connection between Brother Abu-Ammar's designation as an official spokesman for our movement and the principle of collective leadership. The designation was made in response to urgent requirements.

Q. — You have stated in the course of the discussion that military action is subject to Fateh's political lines and is intended to serve these lines. May we know the principal characteristics of these lines?

A. — Fateh's political lines cannot be isolated from the objective circumstances in which Fateh was formed and under which it operates. Generally speaking, it is a national liberation movement which aims at mobilising the resources of the Palestinian people in their armed struggle to liberate the whole Palestinian territory from Zionist colonial settlement.

When we say that Fateh is a national liberation movement — this was announced from the very beginning, although perhaps in an inaudible voice — we mean that it regards itself as part of the general Arab revolution which has begun to take shape in certain sections of the Arab homeland. It also regards itself as part of the world liberation movement against imperialism although, for objective reasons and circumstances of which the Arab citizen is well aware, its effective and conscientious pursuit of this clear-cut political line has been confined to Palestinian territory. Fateh is sometimes taken to task — this will perhaps clarify the political line indirectly — for advocating the liberation of the territory alone, without reference to the human individual or society. We say that this is absurd, because the liberation of the territory cannot but lead us to the liberation of the human person. Every revolution which raises the standard of liberation and practises the armed struggle technique must necessarily be of a progressive nature. We have never heard in the whole history of the world that an adventurer has successfully opposed colonialism. During the stage of formation, Fateh willingly agreed to gather together all the young Palestinians who had been caught in the whirlpool of party politics in their attempt to give expression to their feeling of pain as Palestinian refugees. By so doing, it opened the door, without any complexes, before all these young men to reconsider their until then unproductive political activity and to take up the type of political activity that was productive, effective and armed with power. Fateh opened the door before all these young men who had been harbouring views and ideas connected with this or that group to bring them to-

gether within the frame of armed struggle which purifies the soul, does away with prejudices and leads along a truly progressive revolutionary line. Thus Fateh took it upon itself from the beginning to bring together all these people from the extreme right, as I have said, to the extreme left. Through reaction in the melting-pot of the revolution and through armed struggle, a truly revolutionary young generation cannot but arise and be prominent.

Q. — What was the condition for their joining Fateh in view of the diversity of their ideological and party affiliations?

A. — That they should dissociate themselves in all consciousness, not from their ideas, but from their party affiliations; that Palestinian youth should believe in liberation and in armed struggle. This was a basic condition. In this connection we must make a distinction between strategy and tactics. Everything that Fateh has announced or will announce maybe more connected with the requirements of the immediate stages of the national liberation movement than with long-term strategy. Let us take as an example the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Arab countries, a principle announced by Fateh as an obligation to which it commits itself. Fateh has been reproached for adopting an allegedly «rightist» policy, but I say that this policy is objectively sound since it requires Fateh not to concern itself with who shall become prime minister in this country or that. However, there is in reality an interconnection between Palestinian action and Arab action, and consequently we have always proclaimed that we are part of the Arab re-

volution. Where does this interconnection come from? We believe that none of the progressive policies announced by the Arab nation is capable of implementation except through our battle and the liberation of Palestine. Even the socialist régime and union cannot be achieved except through a real battle for the liberation of Palestine because the Arab nation's entire productive effort must necessarily be channelled towards this battle, regardless of whether this productive effort has or has not yet given forth its fruit. The important thing is that it should be directed towards the battle, for how can we build a progressive society in our country while we are having to allocate all our income and productive effort to the procurement of military hardware for use against the colonising aggressor? Therefore this policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Arab countries does not preclude interconnection between the Arab countries and Palestine. It is calculated to make its contribution towards the ripening of the concrete circumstances favouring the Palestine liberation movement with the full force of Arab effort without subsidiary disputes, and at the same time to create a revolutionary atmosphere around the Arab frontiers with the enemy and among the Arab people in the vicinity of these frontiers. The same contact may spread even to remote Arab lands to create a revolutionary atmosphere in which the whole Arab nation will fight side by side with the Palestinian people. In this way the Arab nation's aspirations and revolutionary concepts will materialise through a real battle inside Palestine itself. Let us take Jordan or Lebanon as an example. All national and progressive forces, irrespective of their ideological beliefs, can act. There are some who hold

that the small bourgeoisie has fallen and is no longer entitled to take part in the struggle, but Fateh has realistically progressed beyond such contentions as a result of its experiences. It believes that every Palestinian has a right to take part in the fight, irrespective of his situation. However, the leadership of Palestinian action must be placed in revolutionary hands which will not sell, bargain or divert this action to serve the interests of any reactionary forces. This is extremely vital. Nobody has the right to restrict action to a particular class. Besides, such restriction would weaken the liberation movement. There are classes or sections of classes now which were unknown in the days of Karl Marx. Did Marx study a class called the «displaced persons' class» which has appeared among the Palestinian people? The displaced person was a labourer who used to work as such in his country, but now he no longer works as a labourer. The displaced person was a farmer who is no longer engaged in farming. How do we evaluate this or that one? There is thus the displaced persons' class which imposes its presence and which cannot be defined according to traditional standards, although its circumstances and origin may be of a revolutionary character. It is a problem which we are treating without any complexes or fears.

There may be some who find fault with Fateh for failing to adopt a Marxist-Leninist line or something of this sort which would enable it to be described as progressive. My reply is that, if we examine the background and previous practices of those who now advocate this line, we find that these practices and background are remote from Marxism-Leninism. Fateh, which has never called itself Marxist-

Leninist, was the first to practise armed struggle, the first to open the long way to this battle. However it may be, words alone are useless: actual practice is the real criterion. We assert that Fateh has many practices whose connection with progressive thought is stronger than that of the self-styled partisans of this thought. The important thing in any revolutionary movement is not the mere announcement of an idea, but its actual implementation. No idea is of any value unless it is put into actual practice.

Q. — This leads us to the question of Fateh's social structure. To put it more clearly, it was evident during Fateh's early formation that the prevailing element in its social structure was that of educated persons in the sense that most of its members and leaders were educated Palestinians. The question now is this: After the great evolution and expansion which Fateh has undergone, is the prevailing stamp still that of educated persons or has this stamp changed with the entry into Fateh of other social groups, such as workers, farmers, artisans, etc., after June 1967?

A. — This is all closely and organically connected with the main policy which Fateh has consistently upheld: that of national liberation. The policy of national liberation is necessarily a broad one which accepts under its banner all the national forces, groups and classes which believe in national liberation. Nevertheless, one cannot under the circumstances deny the fact, which is quite in evidence, that the prevailing classes and groups in the armed struggle today are those of the revolutionary educated workers and farmers without distinction.

Q. — In the formation of its members for the struggle, does Fateh concern itself with political formation along with fighting military formation? Do you find the opportunity while you are in the thick of your armed struggle to bring up politico-military cadres in special schools set up for this purpose? How does this take place, if such schools do exist?

A. — Naturally, the formation of political and military cadres for Fateh is a fundamental matter without which it could not have continued to exist or to develop and grow stronger. with regard to national liberation, the thinking of our cadres is open to the Palestinian reality and to its problems and aims, in addition to the Arab reality and the international situation. Similarly, we give concentrated attention to the enemy reality because thorough knowledge of the enemy from every angle, including politics, economics, parties, ideologies, armed forces, etc., is a basic thing for every combatant in Fateh. Also, in the course of bringing up our cadres, we are aware of world experience in national liberation, believing in the necessity of benefiting from this experience, but also believing at the same time that, to achieve real success, we must draw from our own circumstances and reality a national experience which would enrich world experience. We have been studying world revolutions and liberation movements and have published them in booklets which are distributed regularly and periodically to our cadres who discuss them freely at regular intervals. As to your question about cadre schools, we do have them but, to tell you the truth, we are dis-

satisfied with them and are now considering possibilities for their development and reinforcement. The work of some of them has been interrupted for reasons beyond our control during the phase of transition and development of our operations.

Q. — As a matter of fact these transitional operations which you have just mentioned remind me of certain opinions stated about Palestinian resistance. I personally do not agree with these opinions, but I shall present them to you for your comment. Briefly, these opinions state that the guerrilla war, or the revolution, should spring from inside the occupied territory, while in fact, according to these opinions, Palestinian resistance takes place from outside the occupied territory. Naturally these are conventional opinions which do not take into account the nature of the objective conditions underlying the Palestinian resistance movement. I do not wish here to give you my detailed opinion, but I am anxious to know your opinion as well as the possibility and extent of mobilisation of all Palestinian forces inside and outside the occupied territory?

A. — I believe that these opinions confuse two things: the armed liberation action led from the outside — in the present case it involves only part of the leadership — and a mass revolution actually originating from the inside. This fact is historically well-known in all national liberation movements.

As regards our revolution, the Palestinian people are revolting under objective conditions which are different and quite distinguishable

from those of any other revolution in the world. Why? Because the people is disunited socially, politically and geographically. This situation inevitably imposes new, unconventional techniques and forms of struggle. Nevertheless we do not, in the general concept, constitute an innovation among world revolutions. Let us consider the Yugoslav revolution for instance. In that revolution, there were vast areas and natural fortresses — Montenegro, as I recall — where the revolution was led under Tito from inside Yugoslavia itself. This is one example, but there is another, the Algerian revolution, which was mostly led from the outside in spite of the vastness of the land and its natural fortifications, and notwithstanding the fact that the whole Algerian people was inside, but this did not prevent the revolution from going on and triumphing in the end.

In our Palestinian revolution, we are both inside and outside, which is normal. On the inside we are in our occupied country because we do not recognise the Zionist Israeli presence. Consequently we are in a perfectly natural situation which one cannot compare — as some Western papers try to do — to French resistance against the Nazis which was led from London. The external part of our leadership is separated from the occupied territory by a few meters.

The Zionist colonial settlers in our country have expelled part of our people from part of the land. As a result of this expulsion, it was inevitable that those who had stayed behind and kept their land should take up resistance. Where is the point of issue of our revolution? It is in the Western Bank and

the Gaza Sector, both of which are parts of Palestine. We do not recognise a land called Israel, and the revolutionary movement must take place there because we regard it integrally as Palestine. It is part of the group of Arab lands surrounding Palestine all of which constitutes one single unit: the land of the Palestinian revolution. Our bases are located all throughout this land, and many of them are inside the occupied territory. Without these bases we could not at any time have undertaken any military action. Without them, our revolution would be as isolated as a stranger. Our internal and external bases provide the revolution with continued reinforcement by reason of the situation of our people as I have already indicated.

Q. — In this connection, do you not agree that there has been constant neglect of the Arabs inside Israel and lack of appreciation of their difficult circumstances?

A. — Frankly, I cannot say that there has been neglect or lack of appreciation. The proof is that we all recognise that the greatest and most striking contemporary Arabic poetry is that of our brothers in the occupied territory, like Sameeh Al-Qassem, Mahmood Darweesh, Tawfeeq Zayad and others. Every one of them has enriched the Arab revolution in general and the Palestinian revolution in particular with the noble word which expresses human feeling and which urges the combatants on in their struggle.

At the same time, we fully appreciate their circumstances and do not try, either directly or indirectly, to embarrass them or to give the fascist

Zionist power any grounds for intensifying the oppression which they are facing with courage. We do not ask them to carry arms, nor do we expect them to do so.

Furthermore, we deeply appreciate the demonstrations — of which we and the whole world have heard — recently carried out by Palestinian men and women in Nazareth and the neighbouring villages in Upper Galilee. This furnishes proof of their adherence to the land and country in spite of all the torture, acts of terrorism, detention, imprisonment, expulsion from homes, forced residence, confiscation of the means of livelihood, etc. All such acts have been copied by the Zionists from the Nazis.

Thus we are not trying to organise them along the lines of Fateh because we are aware, as I have told you, of the Zionist brutality which dominates their treatment.

Q. — But what about the Palestinian Arabs in the occupied territory after 1967?

A. — I do not need here to say more than that mobilisation does exist, and is effective. The best proof of this is the daily demonstrations and the many and varied forms of passive resistance to the occupation. At this point we must refer with high appreciation to the Palestinian woman's part in the struggle which has reached the point of armed resistance. Israel's Nazi prisons are full of thousands of our people, both men and women, who reject the occupation and resist it by all means, suffering in the process the worst forms of mental and physical torture. In connection with prisons, let me tell you a story which took place more

than two months ago at the prison in Nablus. Under pressure of world opinion, Israel permitted a Red Cross mission to visit our sisters detained in Nablus prison. The entire group of women received the mission with a patriotic song which the prison wardens vainly tried to stop. The women went on singing with a defiance which inflamed the whole prison, and very soon the male inmates joined in with a thunderous effect which echoed all around the prison area. In view of this courage displayed by the men and women of Palestine, the members of the Red Cross mission could not hide their deep feeling.

The fact is that one of the most important results of the Palestinian armed revolution has been the emergence of the Palestinian woman in her role as a combatant on an exactly equal footing with the Palestinian man in action and sacrifice, carrying arms, transporting them and effectively using them in battle. The main thing in all this is that, through the revolution, the Palestinian woman has set aside all the traditions by which we were brought up in the old Palestine. For the sake of her country's liberation, she is willing to brave torture, imprisonment and even death. This is where Israeli intelligence has failed, since its psychological propaganda has been based on the assumption that ancient tradition rules out the Palestinian woman as a fighting force. This is where the Palestinian people, both men and women, have triumphed over enemy propaganda. The enemy has launched accusations of rape, etc., but has been powerless to stop the Palestinian woman from joining the revolution and taking up arms in the face of the enemy.

Q. — This is natural. In the course of armed na-

tional resistance true equality between man and woman is always realised through struggle and resistance to the enemy. This has happened in all colonised or occupied countries where armed liberation revolutions have taken place on a background of underdeveloped social relationships, such as Algeria, the underdeveloped regions of Yugoslavia and Vietnam, and now Palestine.

A. — This is true.

Q. — With your permission, we shall now move on to another point. From reading Fateh's statements and documents and from discussions with its leaders like you and Brother Abu-Ammar as well as others whom we do not need to mention, it is quite clear that Fateh is emphatic in making a careful distinction between Judaism and Zionism and that, while fighting Zionism, it bears no ill-will towards Judaism as representing a human group and a religion. What does this mean in actual practice?

A. — It means that the Palestinian revolution is fighting racialism, Fascism and colonialism and that consequently it is entirely free from racialism, Fascism and colonialism. It therefore does not take action nor does it bear arms against the Jews as human beings and as an integral part — or so it ought to be — of human society. It is against the racial Fascist Zionist movement which is occupying the homeland of the Palestinian people for the purpose of settling therein, thus proving that it is a colonial movement closely connected with imperialism. It is this movement with its concepts and organisations which elicits our enmity, and we are determined to

fight it to the end.

This movement has two basic lines in its strategy:

The first line rests on the exploitation of what has happened to Jewish individuals and groups in Europe at the hands of the Nazis with the object of strengthening the persecution complex in the minds of the Jews so that they may easily fall in the net. Under the effect of this complex and other factors which are beyond the scope of this discussion the organisations in charge of the movement impel them to emigrate to Palestine, imbuing them with the evil spirit of revenge.

The second line is based on the assumption that the Jews cannot be accommodated in Palestine except through expansion, not only at the expense of Palestine itself but also at the expense of the neighbouring Arab countries.

These two lines of Zionist policy interact with each other under all circumstances. The best proof of this is that when immigration becomes slow in any year, Zionism and its organisations resort to the formation of secret societies manned by their own terrorists under cover of the Nazi emblem, the Swastika, to start a Jew-baiting campaign with the object of spreading terror and strengthening the persecution complex among them to such a degree that they are impelled to emigrate to Israel. It has been possible to lift the veil off the face of these societies and to reveal their organic connection with the Zionist movement, as has happened in Brazil and various

other parts of the world where anti-Semitism has broken out in a conspicuous manner. We therefore base our word and deed on a deep consciousness of the distinction between Judaism and Zionism, and in this we are faithful to our long heritage, our Arab heritage and history. Even in the darkest ages we, Arabs, lived with the Jews in harmony and on a level of equality without prejudices of any sort. But no sooner had the Zionist movement come into existence than it began to poison the atmosphere, lay obstacles and subject our people to all the barbarous methods which it had learned from the Nazis, not to mention its colonialist usurpation of our homeland and the dispersion of the Palestinian people. The Zionists have put into effect their racial colonial plan under the slogan that God's **Chosen People** must dominate the earth. That Zionism takes every step to exploit religion most ruthlessly and to the greatest possible extent is quite evident. It has even gone the length of distorting and faking religious books to lead the Jews in all parts of the world into believing that their place is in the land of Palestine. In this connection we note the concurrence of all the dominant Zionist parties, which are non-religious. Take Dayan for example. He proclaims that he is non-religious, and yet following the occupation of Jerusalem he hastened to the Wailing Wall to kiss it. Why? To exploit religion and religious observances in trying to convince the Jews. Thus we are aware that the subject of the Jewish religion and the Jews is separate from that of Zionism and its racial colonial movement. Consequently, when we announced that the aim of our struggle was to build a democratic Palestinian state, it was not a tactical move on our part but the embodiment of a principle and the true

expression of our strategy. We are convinced that among the Jews there are excellent individuals with whom we can co-exist in peace. It is our belief that those who resist this line of ours are the Zionists themselves. Take for example the Zionist Israeli press. Every resistance operation is reported on the front page with such comments as: «These are the Fateh terrorists who want to set up a democratic Palestinian state». They always do this even when the operation is not ours.

Q. — What precisely is Fateh's concept of the democratic Palestinian state?

A. — We have always believed and declared, and continue to declare, that armed struggle is not an end in itself, but a means to a great humanitarian end. It consists in the belief that this portion of the world map called Palestine, which since 1917 or thereabout has been a land of wars, revolutions, fighting and blood, is perfectly entitled to live in peace and to enjoy its existence like the rest of mankind, and that it is high time for the bloodshed to stop. Thus we have taken up arms to arrive at a genuinely peaceful solution for the problem, not a spurious peace imposed by aggression and racialism. This peaceful solution cannot be arrived at except within the framework of a democratic state in Palestine. What are the details? I believe that the national struggle in the course of its development will take care of the details, but this is the broad strategic line which governs all particulars.

Q. — Within the context of this broad strategic line, will the democratic Palestinian state accept the

Jews as citizens on an equal footing with the Arab nationals?

A. — Naturally we accept the Jews as citizens on an equal footing with the Arabs in everything. The meaning of the democratic Palestinian state is clear: it will liquidate only the racial Zionist presence inside Palestine.

Q. — To clarify further this point, the importance of which you undoubtedly appreciate like myself, I again ask you more specifically: Is the right of citizenship guaranteed by Fateh to those Jews whose thoughts and acts are against Zionism and the Zionist state and who declare their agreement to Fateh's objective of establishing the new democratic Palestinian society? Is this right of citizenship guaranteed to such Jews regardless of whether they were in Palestine before or after 1948?

A. — I affirm once again that Fateh as a national liberation movement with human dimensions guarantees this right to every Jew who not only works against Zionism but has also purified himself of all Zionist thinking so that he has become convinced that Zionist thinking is an intruder on human society.

Q. — How does Fateh now view Israeli society? Does it still view this society as a solid aggressive, reactionary, racial, colonialist block or does it find that certain progressive forces and trends — though still small and feeble — that are against aggression, Zionism and racialism have begun to appear in this society? In the event that Fateh feels

the existence of such forces and trends, what is its opinion and position with regard to them?

A. — There is no doubt that Israeli society as it actually exists is a colonialist, imperialist, racial society which we are exerting every effort to liquidate and to establish instead a non-racial democratic society which will be open to humanity and the world. Israel is actually a society which is closed to humanity and to every liberation movement in the world, and has never stood beside any liberation cause. When we say that we want to co-exist with the Jews in a non-racialist democratic Palestine it follows that we call upon all progressive forces, if they do exist, to strengthen their position. There are some in Israel who claim such progressiveness, but in reality it is a false progressiveness based on Zionism, racialism and colonialism.

This, however, does not prevent us from admitting that there is a small progressive nucleus which has begun to emerge, and we feel it. It demands the liquidation of the Zionist body politic, and we are sure that once its voice begins to be heard and to find response there it will face more violent torture and persecution than those faced by the combatants of Fateh. It is therefore true that there are progressive beginnings — small beginnings — which we hope will grow and become stronger and will assert their belief in the Palestinian people's right to live on its own land. When I say the Palestinian people I mean the whole people with all its communities : Christians, Moslems and Jews, but without the Zionist state which is connected with colonialism, without racialism, without Zionism, without religious fanaticism.

Q. — Following the principle of complete frankness to which we have committed ourselves in this discussion, I take the liberty of addressing to you this question: There are those who, notwithstanding their appreciation of Fateh's heroism and its pioneering efforts in the Palestinian armed struggle, say that it has begun to take interest in publicity for itself and it acts so that on paper and in radio broadcasts it has come to look bigger than its real size. What are your comments?

A. — I do not wish to begin by recording that this saying is not objective and is completely untrue. But let us examine the matter calmly, step by step. Has Fateh begun to take interest in information matters? The answer is emphatically in the affirmative, but if it should be alleged that it is more interested in information than in military matters, then this would constitute a basic error in the imagination on which such sayings are based. Why? Because to us, as a resistance movement, information is a type of political action which accompanies and supports military action, and not an act of publicity. Publicity essentially revolves around persons, an attitude which we reject and even resist because it is prejudicial to our struggle and our movement. If there are cases of this sort — unfortunately there are — responsibility therefore is not attributable to Fateh but to some of our brothers in the Arab press who are led by what they call «journalistic requirements» and the desire for sensation to be sometimes over-enthusiastic. We in Fateh disapprove of this, as we have told them frankly on several occasions. We have even told them that we regard sensationalism

in some of our Arab newspapers as a disease which should be eliminated. Brother Abu-Ammar, in his capacity as Fateh's official spokesman, has talked to them quite frankly on this subject more than once in connection with their habit of publishing his photograph regardless of whether the occasion did or did not call for such publication, while the combatants as a group and as a movement are not treated in the same manner. I should like to assure you once again that the publication of our leaders' photographs greatly embarrasses us in our work because it restricts their freedom of movement. The three or four leaders whose pictures have been published are extremely embarrassed. This is not an attempt to defend them, but the requirements of our work compel us to take this position. On the other hand, I wish to assure you that the publication of a photograph of one or more of our members does not give rise among our leadership or the movement in general to any sensitivity of any sort, because the collective structure of our movement is so deep that the individual is completely integrated into the collectivity. Therefore to us the photograph of Abu-Ammar or any other of our members is the photograph of Fateh as a whole.

Q. — You have said that information in Fateh is not an act of publicity but a political act. What do you mean by this?

A. — I mean that it is part of the total battle. It is not a matter of mere military communiqués that are issued and published without constant and rational clarification of Fateh's thought and ob-

jectives. We must not forget the important fact that before the June war we were in a sort of blockade as regards information because all the doors of information and of contact with the Arab masses to clarify our thought, aims and fighting techniques were firmly closed in our face, but now these doors are open, and it has therefore been incumbent upon us to lay our political thinking and the principles of our struggle before the masses and to deepen them as far as we could, otherwise we would have been grossly negligent of our duties to our movement and our all-embracing Palestinian struggle. This has necessitated the establishment of contacts and the divulgation of names. The fact that some newspapers deviate — I stress the word «deviate» — in their presentation of all this for reasons of sensationalism or individualism cannot be blamed on Fateh, however remotely.

Q. — Let us take Fateh's information activity as a political act directed to all non-Arab peoples of the world .. the capitalist world and the socialist world. What are Fateh's main lines in this field?

A. — Our main step consists in presenting ourselves to the peoples of the world as a national liberation movement which combats racialism and colonialism and distinguishes in its struggle between Judaism and Zionism, and consequently as a part of the human movement, while Zionism, which we have undertaken to fight and liquidate, is the enemy of all mankind and not of the Arabs alone. If you review all that has been published recently about Fateh in the foreign press, both Western and Eastern, you will realise how successful Fateh's plan

in this connection has been. If we have failed — although it is not our fault — in respect of the press in the socialist camp which has not sufficiently clarified Fateh's aims, the reason for this failure is not attributable to us but to the press of the socialist camp itself which has not given us much attention. In saying so I mean only to express a kind reproach and not to censure or cast reflections on the socialist camp and its press.

Q. — Does Fateh, within the framework of its political information policy, consider taking measures to win over world Jewish opinion that is against colonialism and Zionism? If so, what steps have been taken towards this end?

A. — Naturally this is of interest to us, and our interest springs from our fundamental view which distinguishes between the Zionist and the Jew, between Zionism and Judaism. Consequently we try to establish all sorts of relations with all those Jews who do not take part in the entrenchment of the closed racial colonialist Israeli society — the Zionist society. But words alone are of no value if they are not put into actual practice, and I shall therefore cite to you Fateh's actual practices in this field. Take for example the Second International Conference for the Support of Arab Peoples held in Cairo early this year (1969). I believe that all the circles, forces and personalities, both Arab and foreign, including Jews, who attended the Congress testified that Fateh's position as a matter of principle with regard to this matter saved the Congress because it urged every progressive Jew outside or inside Israel to work for the liquidation of Zionism and its body politic and to call for the set-

ting up of a democratic Palestinian state.

Let us take another actual example. In February 1969 the Palestinian Theatre Troupe presented a play in Rabat, Morocco, for the benefit of Fateh. The Moroccan police wanted to forbid Moroccan Jews from attending the performance for fear that they might be molested by the enthusiastic Moroccan audience, but our comrades there took it upon themselves to ensure the protection of the Moroccan Jews during the performance and persuaded the police to allow them to attend so that from the play they might learn the truth about Israel's racial and inhuman reality. In the theatre, the Moroccans made contributions to Fateh in support of its armed struggle. Among the contributors was a Moroccan Jewish professor at the Engineering School of Mohammad V University called Ibrahim Al-Sarafati, who donated one thousand dirhems and said that as a Jew he was making this contribution to Fateh in support of its struggle for the setting up of a democratic Palestinian state. He presented to us a letter written in French explaining his position and why he was making the contribution to Fateh itself. His wife translated the letter into Arabic and gave her wedding ring as a contribution to the resistance movement against Zionism and its racial policy.

Such attitudes favouring Fateh have now become common in many European countries.

At this point I must make the important remark that this new approach to the Jews who are against colonialism and Zionism would never have taken place had Fateh not actually

taken up arms. In other words, this approach has been made possible by the armed struggle for liberation. Had this approach been made before Fateh had resorted to arms it would have been received under the then existing circumstances of recession by a strong attack from Arab opinion in general and Palestinian opinion in particular. Thus this strategic approach has been made possible by the force of Fateh as a national liberation movement and political and military strength.

Q. — This is true to a very great extent. I have other remarks which I wish to present to you for your comment. These may be presented as follows: From the time Fateh began its armed struggle in January 1965 until June 1969, I notice that there were two stages, the first being the difficult start and the trail-blazing work before the June 1967 war when Fateh was isolated as a result of the blockade imposed around it and was haunted by accusations of adventure and ...

A. — This was outside its control ...

Q. — Of course. After June, the blockade fell and Fateh became open to the Arab masses and the Arab homeland. Then came the Battle of Al-Karameh in March 1968 in which Fateh asserted itself both politically and militarily. From then on it embarked upon its great experience in resisting the enemy. As you have said, this started in August 1967. Now can you explain to me the precise benefit derived by Fateh from these two stages and from its experience after August 1967? Have the results of the experience gained been reflected in specific changes in Fateh's resistance techniques and activities?

A. — The basic benefit derived by Fateh from the first stage was the formation of its first cadres, or what may be called «the nucleus of the true Palestinian struggle», which later gave rise to the ever expanding and increasingly growing armed resistance movement. The experience which we stressed most and actually gained during that stage was bringing up the fighting individual to shun individualism and egotism and completely merge himself with the collectivity, and to endure himself to the most arduous work of struggle and sacrifice under difficult and strained circumstances. At that stage you entered and began a battle with little support. Even the forces which were supposed to be your allies did not back you at that time. Under these conditions Fateh was able to rid itself of all the diseases of the society from which it had emerged, such as individualism, ostentation, and escape from responsible action into pointless discussions. When the post-June War stage began, Fateh had benefited from the previous stage and had prepared itself for the new stage with politically and militarily successful cadres. Nevertheless there have been some mistakes. These mistakes may be attributed to the fact that the interchange between Fateh and the Palestinian and Arab masses after the June War was so vast that Fateh's real capabilities in organisation and arms during the period which immediately followed the June War were not sufficient to absorb the huge numbers of volunteers. A difficult period which was full of problems had to pass before we could bring these problems under control and enter the stage of organised and large-scale resistance in August 1967.

At all stages there is one reality elicited by the experience gained: it is that any pioneering group believing in a thing which springs from the will of the people and insisting on and fighting for that thing will inevitably attain its goal in spite of all sacrifices and difficulties: I do not know whether I have sufficiently replied to your remarks.

Q. — I believe this is sufficient. All the same, let us try to go on from the ground on which Fateh now stands, since it has achieved world renown and has become synonymous with Palestinian armed struggle. From this ground, how does Fateh address itself now to the Palestinian people in general and to the other resistance organisations in particular?

A. — I have no objection to answering your question, but in replying I am afraid of being taken to assume the rôle of a preacher, a rôle which I refuse to take in view of my upbringing in Fateh. I do not want to stand on a platform and say: «Brethren, do this, don't do that.» Therefore, with your permission, I wish to re-word the question as follows: «What can Fateh offer under the existing circumstances in which several resistance organisations operate? How, in spite of all these circumstances, is it possible to establish healthy relations for the benefit of Palestinian liberation action?» Do you agree to this wording?

Q. — I do. Please proceed.

A. — I believe that there is a fact which should be admitted by all our brothers in the various commando groups. Such admission must, however, be

preceded by an admission from Fateh itself that not everything in Fateh is perfect and flawless. And because there are mistakes in Fateh, every other resistance group is expected and bound by duty to help Fateh see its mistakes and to assist it in eliminating these mistakes in which any national liberation movement is apt to fall, particularly since he who examines matters from the outside has a greater sense of objectivity than the inside observer. Similarly, our brothers in the other commando groups must admit that all colonialist and Zionist circles and the intelligence systems of all imperialist powers in the world, in addition to other anti-revolutionary forces, are working within the same plan to undermine and disfigure Fateh. Naturally, it is difficult for them to fight Fateh with direct and palpable physical means, and they therefore resort within an intelligent plan to waging a psychological war against Fateh from the inside as well as from the outside. At times they try to sabotage Fateh by magnifying it on the publicity level, and we are aware of this. At other times sabotage is attempted through the surreptitious injection into Fateh of elements to make statements which do not express Fateh's beliefs. In some instances the sabotage plans are based on the attempt to misinterpret the essential methods followed by Fateh in its relations with the Arab countries for the purpose of using this misinterpretation as a weapon with which to fight Fateh. From all this, it is expected that our brothers in the other groups understand that to do away with Fateh would undermine the entire Palestinian commando action and the whole Palestinian people's movement, and even the Arab progressive movement as a whole.

Q. — I believe that we can now reach the point where I hope you will explain Fateh's view of the existing Arab position regarding the battle and the relation with the Palestinian armed struggle movement from another angle. I do not know whether it would be advisable to divide discussion on the point into stages. This naturally is left to you.

A. — There are several remarks in this connection. The first and basic remark to start with is that we have not truly and effectively mobilised all Arab potentialities for the battle. Not infrequently we feel as if the Arab being in some of its aspects does not live the raging battle in all its dimensions.

Q. — What do you suppose is the reason for this?

A. — In my opinion the participation of the Arab masses in the battle means that these masses live the facts going on around them and that they understand all these facts objectively without any sort of concealment or exaggeration. It is necessary that these masses be given their true rôle. When a country is occupied by an invader, the masses' rôle is obvious: the mobilisation, training and arming of the people, and their participation in the battle in various ways. The Arab masses have not yet been given this true rôle, and although we have regained much of our military strength in our official conventional armies yet this also is not enough.

This is a fact which must be mentioned. It is not shameful to avow it, but it would be shameful to hide it, because we are all expected to live for the

battle. This is the first remark. In other words, if you meet the masses anywhere in their daily life you will find them eager for the fight.

The second remark is that there is a difference between the Arab countries surrounding Israel and those that are more remote. If we feel the separation between the man who lives at the front and the man who lives in the city in the same country near the frontier, how much greater the separation becomes in the remote areas? Therefore I say that the remote Arab masses should know the truth about the Zionist peril, that it covets not only specific areas in Palestine or in this or that Arab country, but the entire Arab nation. Consequently, it is not right for the Arab who lives in an Arab land that is remote from the regions surrounding Israel to say that this is not his battle, and it is my belief that the Arab masses even in those areas that are geographically remote from the battlefield want to take part in the fight with all their potentialities.

I must add that it is the duty of every responsible national leadership in each country to influence the position of its government — I shall not say more — so that it will participate effectively in the fight.

The third remark concerns Palestinian resistance. It is incumbent upon Palestinian resistance to develop its internal activities and to escalate its operations more and more. These responsibilities should be shouldered by the Arab peoples. We should like to ask: «Is the escalation of resistance a mechanical operation? Is it a matter of pressing a button for resistance to escalate and releasing the button for

Palestinian resistance to drop?» No, it is not a mechanical operation. It is one of reaction by the Arab people, the giving of the Arab people's experiences to the combatants who have truly and genuinely taken up the fight after twenty years of stagnation. Has the Arab nation offered to Palestinian resistance all that it requires?

Here I wish to state frankly that the Arab people is ready to offer, but obstacles are being laid between the Arab people and Palestinian resistance. In other words, if Palestinian resistance had the chance of meeting the Arab masses away from all complexes, away from all formalities, then the Arab people would make a large contribution to Palestinian resistance in the fight. It is not true that Palestinian resistance is regional. When we say «Palestinian resistance» and «Palestinian people» — the purpose of these appellations is quite clear — it is not true that we are trying to separate the Palestinian people from their Arab nation, the one nation with the one destiny. The unity of the nation does not preclude the existence of an Egyptian people, an Iraqi people, etc., and the Palestinian people is therefore entitled to emerge after twenty years during which it was buried in the earth and made the object of a thousand accusations. The emergence of this people is the emergence of the whole Arab people. There is no conflict at all between the emergence of the Palestinian people and the fact that it is part of the big Arab nation. Thus Palestinian resistance is not regional, nor is it isolationist. It demands to be sponsored by the whole Arab people with all its potentialities. Take for example the subject of financial aid for the resistance

movement. Is there an Arab government which has made an allocation in its budget for Palestinian resistance? Frankly not one. On the contrary, even private contributions which the resistance movement used to receive directly from the Arab peoples have now begun to assume an official form which hampers the work. Every Arab country now thinks of forming a body called the «Commando Action Support Commission» which alone is empowered to collect contributions, and which is invariably headed by a cabinet minister or some other responsible state official, so that the operation is subject to government control. Thus, if the government wishes the commission to go on with its work, it will go on, and if it wishes it to stop, it will stop, and collection will stop, as if it were merely a matter of collecting money or new taxes from the people. We believe that the conduct of the operation in this manner does not make for interaction between the resistance movement and the Arab people. It is this interaction which is the essence of the operation.

These are my three remarks about the Arab situation. Now, what is our hope? Our hope is that the three remarks will disappear, that the masses will be truly mobilised for the fight, and that we avoid diluting the battle. What do we mean by dilution? It could be diluted for instance by confusing between political action and military action. The people should be made to understand in its true light the meaning of political action and military action, and the masses should be made to take active part in the operation rather than sit on the fence. I say that the participation of the masses is possible and necessary. We must believe in the rôle of the peo-

ple's army because if this army existed no enemy aircraft would venture into any Arab air space. There are many things which could be said in this context, and we hope that the subject of Palestinian resistance will be given its due share of attention, both material and moral. At the same time we cannot but tell the masses the truth without any misrepresentation.

Q. — In this connection I have three specific points: (1) Has it not become necessary to work for the setting up of an all-Arab popular front with the specific and only aim of protecting and backing Palestinian resistance? (2) What is Fateh's position with regard to the wish expressed by large numbers of non-Palestinian Arabs to join the resistance movement and participate in armed action? (3) This point concerns what may be termed as co-ordination, a subject which has arisen from time to time between Palestinian armed resistance and the regular Arab armies. Within the context of this point, there are those who advance the opinion that Palestinian resistance alone will not be able to liberate Palestine, and that consequently the intervention of the regular Arab armies is necessary. To what extent, in Fateh's imagination, is it practically possible to attain a stage in the struggle wherein two forces and techniques are used together: guerrilla warfare and movement of regular armies? All this of course without prejudice to the Palestinian resistance movement's freedom of action and independence.

A. — Among the intermediate goals announced by Fateh is the building of the Arab front. This is not the responsibility of Fateh alone, but also

and at the same time of the remaining Arab national forces. Fateh has tried more than once to establish contact for the purpose of building the front, but it seems that the multiplicity of Palestinian organisations has hitherto stood in the way of setting up this front in an organised manner.

In the matter of information Fateh has also appealed for the formation of an Arab front to support commando action, and in practice Fateh has regarded many young Arab forces in the Arab countries, particularly in national and progressive circles, as constituting this front. It is true that this front has not been organised, although such organisation is imperative, but, as I have already said, responsibility for this situation is shared by Fateh with the rest of the national and progressive forces. As a matter of fact we have noticed in some instances that response concerning the formation of the front is fraught with lack of conviction as a result of local differences in this country or that.

It is highly essential that we think of a practical plan for this front. I recall your repeated appeal in **Al-Tali'a** and **Al-Ahram** for the holding of a preparatory conference for this front to include all national and progressive forces in the whole of the Arab homeland, but what can be done when these forces are divided among themselves? There is for instance one Arab country, Lebanon, where the national and progressive forces have been unable to unite in one strong effective front, each wanting to have the exclusive credit of supporting the armed struggle, or Fateh in particular, without the participation of the others. Thus the various currents

inside the national and progressive forces in the Arab homeland prevent the establishment of this front. We hope that these forces will in the near future succeed in changing their attitude and in minimising the sensitivities and differences existing among them for the benefit of the Arab struggle in general and the Palestinian struggle in particular, and will, as you have so aptly put it, agree on a minimum programme to support and back the Palestinian armed struggle, regardless of whether it is undertaken by this or that organisation. The important thing is that it should be in both letter and spirit an armed liberation struggle, at least to enable us to prevent the recurrence of the treatment meted to us recently by one of the Arab states, and to understand our true position as reflected by this front.

Q. — I believe that even under the existing circumstances we are capable of surmounting all these problems and differences to arrive at the Arab front. This is the rôle of us all in the struggle. Our only pivot in building the front is the Palestinian armed struggle which has become the only true and practical road to the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state, at the same time rendering the greatest service to Arab national liberation from imperialist bases in their various forms. In the last resort Israel today is an imperialist military base in the form of a state directed against all Arab national and progressive forces without exception, irrespective of their thinking and their social and political views concerning other problems in the Arab homeland or in the individual Arab countries. The main thing is that they should support and back the Palestinian armed strug-

gle. I believe that the Palestine Liberation Organisation is now in a position to take the initiative of calling a preparatory conference for the Arab popular front.

A. — This is indisputable, and we fully support it. Fateh as part of the PLO is capable of taking active part in achieving this great and necessary objective.

You have referred to the question of non-Palestinian Arab volunteers for resistance action, and I take this opportunity to affirm on behalf of Fateh that Fateh accepts unreservedly any young Arab who wishes to volunteer. However, there are obstacles for which not we but official Arab attitudes are responsible. Once these attitudes permit, we are ready from this instant.

In this connection there is another important point which we should not ignore. It is that the number of would-be volunteers is great. For instance, we had 12,000 young applicants from one single Arab country. How can the resistance movement, with its present facilities, arm, train and feed 12,000 new young men? This again indicates the importance of the Arab front and its rôle in supporting, backing and enlarging the resistance movement. Through it all such matters could be organised so that volunteering would become a driving force instead of a burden on us.

Q. — A number of Iraqi and Sudanese brothers have communicated to me their desire to volunteer with their own arms.

A. — All brothers of this type are welcome.

We now come to the point concerning the possibility of co-ordination between the resistance movement and the regular Arab armies. In point of fact we have our own clear-cut concept of co-ordination from which we do not deviate. In our view, co-ordination is first of all anything contributed to the resistance movement by way of support, assistance and training. We do not refuse any of these things, but welcome them heartily. Moreover, we are not willing to be part of a regional co-ordination plan. In other words, if we find Arab régimes which have a serious plan for the liberation of Palestine and want us to be part of this plan, then we have no objection at all; but if certain Arab régimes want to contain us under the name of co-ordination and the preservation of their regional frontiers, then, frankly, we will refuse. We reject co-ordination in the sense of containment and hegemony.

Q. — You mean to say that, as you respect the independence of each Arab country, you want each Arab country to respect the independence of the Palestinian armed resistance movement.

A. — Exactly. This is to avoid entering into international labyrinths. So much about the subject of co-ordination and our view regarding the combination of guerrilla warfare with the movement of regular armies. There is one very important point. When we raised the banner of armed resistance and said that the Palestinian people wanted to undertake this operation ... let us examine the matter objectively and look back a little. When the banner was raised and taken up by the revolutionary vanguard

in Fateh in 1965, we were aware that the blowing up of a bridge or culvert could not be a decisive act in the liberation campaign, but we were also aware that the blowing up of a culvert could lead another ten young men to join Fateh. We were aware that the blowing up of a bridge could awaken another ten young men and get them to believe in this road to liberation. We did not live on the understanding that it was a matter of profit and loss. If we damaged one culvert for the Zionists, they would blow up ten of our wells ... one bridge, ten bridges. No, we did not view matters in the light of profit and loss in the short run, a view impressed upon us by the colonialists with the object of restricting our movement by forcing us constantly to think in terms of enemy reprisals. We believe that the Palestinian people's armed resistance will in any serious battle with Zionism inevitably lead to a popular battle for liberation on the entire Arab level. For further clarification I say that as regards classical computations in the war with Israel, at least during the present stage and under existing Arab circumstances, we might be the losers, but this does not mean at all that the Arab countries are not called upon to have strong armies. On the contrary, we want strong armies capable of defending the frontiers, but if we were to measure the Palestine battle on the basis of a tank for a tank, an aeroplane for an aeroplane, an airman for an airman, a tank driver for a tank driver, then undoubtedly the Zionist state which now exists on Palestinian territory is more capable than us because it is backed by world imperialist forces and because it arms itself through its own means and with greater scientific efficiency.

Q. — You are against mechanical computation.

A. — Exactly, this mechanical computation is positively rejected. Therefore we say that the armed struggle is for the moment required to be on the Palestinian level. However, it is a well-known fact that Israel cannot psychologically afford to lose a battle, not even a partial battle. It has to avenge itself at all times, because this artificial state cannot survive unless it is always victorious, and any defeat, though partial, affects its people's morale. This explains the constant Israeli threats. Any small operation on our part elicits from them a tenfold replication to frighten the Arabs and to instill into their minds that there is no use and that the Israeli army is an invincible legend. Therefore we must confirm our peoples in the belief that the classical battle is not the only battle. We as Palestinians earnestly wish the Arab armies to be on the highest level of strength and to co-ordinate with us in a double battle in which guerrilla warfare will play its part and the classical armies will play theirs. But are we really prepared for this now? And because we are not prepared now, must we allow those who are in the fight to feel that they are fighting in a vacuum? Here lies the seriousness of this proposition, the proposition that the Palestinian cause cannot triumph except with classical armies. We know — and the actual situation imposes on us this knowledge — that the classical armies are not now in a position to achieve this aim.

Therefore we must take it into our heads that our war is a guerrilla war which should develop into a popular liberation war in which the Arab masses will be prepared around Palestine to face the Zionist

enemy and its expansionist policy and war. Later on, a situation may develop in which the regular Arab armies will become capable of shouldering the burden. For the moment, we are living the present and its circumstances. Thus the Palestinian vanguard is the vanguard of the popular liberation war embracing the whole Arab homeland. It is this which frightens Israel, Zionism and all other enemy forces. Why? Because the accounting here would not be on the basis of an aeroplane for an aeroplane, or a tank for a tank, but of a fighting people embarked on a long-term war — this is what the enemy fears most — intent on defending its land and on putting an end to this Zionist presence. This information comes to us from inside the territory where they hear the Voice of Assifa broadcasts telling them that we are waging a long-term war. We do not say that our battle will end in victory for us after one or two years. We only say that it is a long-term war, and we firmly believe in this. We are sure that many of us will succumb. Thus you see that we are not against strengthening the regular Arab armies; on the contrary, we expect these armies to grow more and more powerful. However, these regular Arab armies are not an alternative for the Palestinian people's struggle and its fight on its own territory. They are not an alternative at all. The Palestinian revolution is not a tactical card in the hands of the Arab armies or Arab régimes, because if we regard it as a tactical card, it would be as if I were gambling and selling these men who are falling every day for the sake of a tactical plan sponsored by this or that Arab country. This is a basic factor. Even the efforts of regular soldiers is included within the frame of our armed struggle. I do not wish here to refer

to international conditions and the regular Arab armies' commitment through their respective states to the official international position, nor to the likely effects on us if we were to announce that it is a battle of regular armies alone.

Q. — I notice that in referring to the Arab countries you have used two expressions: the Arab countries surrounding Palestine, and the Arab countries that are remote from Palestine. This differentiation of yours must mean something: that each of these two categories of Arab countries has its own rôle to play in the battle, a rôle which differs from that of the other. What, then, is your evaluation of this rôle as regards each category? What has already been achieved, within this rôle? What has not been achieved, and why?

A. — To put it briefly, the real rôle of the Arab countries surrounding our occupied territory consists, as regards the armed struggle, in enduring all Israeli reprisals resulting from resistance operations, and in rebuilding their armed forces and developing their armies. This is what is taking place in the United Arab Republic, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. They are expected to bear the brunt of Israeli reprisals. Israel lies when it says that it strikes at commando bases on the Eastern Bank or elsewhere, while in reality its raids are directed against civilians, civilian vehicles and civilian residences with the object of impressing the Arab masses, in Jordan for instance, in an attempt to persuade them that giving shelter to the commandos is a desperate act which will cost them dearly. Israel is well aware that it cannot raid all commando bases for the simple reason that it does not know — and we will never allow it to learn —

their whereabouts. Israel also tries to lead world opinion into believing that resistance is useless and that world sympathy for the resistance movement is of no avail. This, then, is what the Arab countries surrounding Palestine are expected to do: to mobilise and strengthen their armies, to mobilise the masses and organise them for the battle, and to be prepared to bear all consequences connected with Palestinian resistance. The same thing happened in Morocco and Tunisia with regard to Algerian resistance, and in Egypt in 1956 when the country bore the consequences of its support for Algerian resistance and stood in the face of the 1956 Tripartite Aggression against Suez.

As for the other Arab countries that are remote from the occupied territory, their rôle essentially consists in constant material backing. They are remote from what may be termed as immediate danger and are therefore expected to substitute the mobilisation of the masses for the mobilisation of armies, and to furnish the frontier countries with the necessary financial backing. We are in the face of a Zionist state which receives from imperialism and world Zionism constant and strong support.

Q. — Two years after the defeat of June 1967, let us throw a glance at the international position with regard to the cause and the battle. What is your analysis of the present international position in relation to the Palestinian armed struggle which has asserted itself and exacted world recognition?

A. — This is a question which has always occupied our minds. The whole world — all the peoples of the world — have no respect except for the strong.

I do not mean those who pile up aircraft, tanks and powerful weapons. The strong are the organised popular groups which believe in their rights and work to regain them at any price, using the force which springs from their internal being regardless of the size of the opposing force. I believe that, starting from this concept, we have succeeded in making up for the past years, during the last twenty years, when our work and publicity centered around «the poor helpless refugees» who humbly stood in crowds before the offices of UNRWA. We have completely transformed the picture of these crowds into that of combatants who bear arms in quest of freedom. At first many used to ask: «What can this small, weak group do in the face of a state which is backed by imperialism and which has defeated Arab armies?» We were accused of being adventurers. But now, since Palestinian resistance has proved, both politically and on the battle front, that it is an influential and effective force in the area and is capable of survival and growth, the whole world and its information media have begun to open up politically before us. They are now before a new political development in the area which has taken up arms to liberate a homeland.

As we know, the world is practically divided into three parts: the Eastern Camp, the Western Camp and the Third World. I believe we have succeeded to some extent in explaining our cause in these camps, though in varying degrees, and have won the constantly growing support of the peoples of the world. The Second International Conference for the Support of Arab Peoples held in Cairo with the participation of many forces of various trends from all parts of the world constituted a world

measure of the weight of our movement and struggle. All the delegations which attended the Congress affirmed their support for the presentation of the question by Fateh. Naturally, this was not derived from the Congress' policy but was the positive fruit of a political effort which preceded the Congress. The thing to which we aspire even more keenly is to find a deeper and wider response in the Socialist Camp and the countries of the Third World. Is it not strange that Western information media are more open to the resistance movement than socialist media for instance?

Q. — How do you explain this?

A. — I explain it by the default of Arab progressive forces because in this field they are expected to take the burden off the shoulders of Palestinian resistance, in addition to the responsibility of the country itself to some extent.

Q. — I think this explanation is not sufficient. Why do you not also explain it by the fact that the resistance movement has failed to present itself well in this field? In other words, why do you not explain it by saying that there are mistakes on your side as well?

A. — What mistakes does the other side hold against us?

Q. — They say that you make a non-objective separation between political action and military action, that you always prefer military action to any political activity, that you even denounce any political act undertaken for the Palestinian cause on any

level to vindicate the national rights of the Palestinian people and the Arab peoples as a bargaining affair.

A. — I believe that the matter is not as they imagine. It is a fact that socialist information is in default with regard to the resistance movement. I wish here to emphasise first of all that our discussion on this point is meant as a friendly reproach and not as an act of censure or attack against the Socialist Camp for which we have every friendly feeling, appreciating as we do the generous and valuable assistance furnished by it to some Arab countries. We would not be friends if we were not frank with one another.

The default, then, occurs in two points:

The first point is connected with the Palestinian question itself, with regard to which the Socialist Camp at first took a position which was unsound and unobjective in our view. This, however, may be attributed to the fact that, due to our peculiar circumstances at the time, we were not on good terms with this camp, particularly in 1947 and 1948. This is in addition to the Arab communist parties' failure at the time to explain the true situation and to present the question in its true light. The Socialist Camp viewed the matter on the consideration that any liberation movement should rest on the basis that, say, 60% of the local inhabitants believe in it, and that, since this was not the case, it did not consider that there was a Palestinian revolution. Let us assume that the Socialist Camp wishes now to apply this view to the present situation in the state of Israel. It will not find 60% of the local inhabitants who are

for the revolution and the termination of Zionist existence. We find that such a view in relation to the Palestinian question is unsound, because the subject here is basically one of a racial fascist state which has been founded on the manifest usurpation of another people's territory by colonial settlement and has been able through the methods of the fascist Zionist movement to drive out the original inhabitants, exactly as is happening in Rhodesia and South Africa. This is the true situation which we think the Socialist Camp has not understood well enough. Also, we have not seriously contributed towards explaining it to the Socialist Camp.

Q. — Therefore in your opinion both sides, ours and theirs, are at fault. How then do we remedy the situation?

A. — Both sides are indisputably at fault. To analyse the subject I say that there are two points, the first concerning the Socialist Camp's original position with regard to the Palestinian question. I wish also to declare for the record that one of the main factors which have greatly weakened the communist parties in the Arab area has been their erroneous position vis-à-vis the Palestinian question at the outset. This position has restricted their growth and expansion and confined them to a limited number which they do not exceed. This may not have been the case in Egypt as it was in the other Arab countries.

Q. — It was the case in Egypt.

A. — The second point is that, after June 1967, the Socialist Camp failed to understand our true position with regard to the Security Council's resolution of November 1967.

Q. — At this juncture it behooves you — to follow up your trend of thought — to explain why Israel refuses to comply with the resolution.

A. — The explanation is quite simple. The victor wants to achieve further results from his aggression. According to our enemy's calculations, the aggression was intended to end the existence of everything called Palestine or Palestinian. Many Arab régimes could have collapsed, and Arab conditions could have been forced into such a state of defeatism and apathy that they would recognise the Zionist existence. None of these ends was achieved as a result of the aggression, and the victory was therefore one on paper, on the map, and not a real one. Palestinian resistance has grown bigger and stronger. Some Arab régimes which were expected to fall have not fallen. Lots of things. The submissive peace which they appealed for has not been accepted by any Arab country. I think the Khartoum Conference achieved a positive result in one basic thing when it said no peace, no recognition, no negotiation. Therefore the aggression has achieved nothing. The Security Council's resolution provides for withdrawal but, naturally enough, they do not want simply to withdraw, they do not even want safe frontiers, because the Arab countries might accept safe frontiers — on paper. In reality they want more guarantees. What can they lose? They occupy lands which might solve their economic problems, because Zionist aggression is always connected with the needs of daily life inside Israel. If we refer to official Israeli records we find that in 1956 the unemployment figure in Israel was 36%. These are actual figures which appear in their yearbooks. In 1967 un-

employment rose to 39%, and they again took to war.

Q. — Is it not possible to say that the Palestinian resistance movement fears that, assuming the Security Council's resolution is put into effect — which I do not believe will take place — the Arab countries, or at least some of them, might change their position with regard to the resistance movement?

A. — As a matter of fact I have not consciously referred to the suggestion that, in the imperialist countries, the liquidation of Palestinian resistance is a condition for the implementation of the Security Council's resolution. I have abstained from referring to this matter because — and I am not saying this out of arrogance — resistance has become a popular movement which cannot be liquidated or driven back.

Q. — It would at least be faced with problems which are not easy to deal with.

— Even this ... In spite of its numerous internal gaps, Palestinian resistance has become the property of the Palestinian people and the Arab people as a whole, and it is neither easy nor simple to do away with a deep-rooted movement sponsored by the masses, a movement which is fundamentally compatible with the logic of the age. Naturally when colonialism thinks of implementing the Security Council's resolution it thinks of its own methods and interests, and these methods and interests require the suppression of Palestinian action and commando action at least by offering a symbolic alternative. Thus we hear from time to time about the proposed «Palestinian State» which is in reality intended to nullify the Palestinian people's liberation movement and its armed resistance, a Palestinian state which would

be completely subject to Israel and to colonialism and would embrace the Western Bank and Gaza with a passage connecting them. This is how they propose to settle the matter. Do you want a Palestinian state? There it is, and that is the end of the fight. According to our sources about the talks going on among the big powers in New York, such a spurious «Palestinian State» is actually under discussion. Strangely enough, it is the United States Delegation that is presenting and defending this proposal.

Q. — What is so strange about it?

A. — The strange thing about it is that the Americans who have continued to ignore the Palestinian people all these years are now showing so much interest in the Palestinian state.

Q. — Exactly as they have shown interest in the fate of socialism in Czechoslovakia. But why do you not hold talks about all these matters and differences in points of view with the Socialist Camp?

A. — All I can say is that we have asked and are still asking them to hold such talks. We are always ready to hold talks with all the forces of the world, and are open to any assistance or debate without complexes. But, as you know, such openness must necessarily be on both sides.

Q. — What is the position of the Third World countries and peoples with regard to you?

A. — As a matter of fact their position is highly sympathetic and is growing constantly. Naturally, the internal problems which are now facing the Third

World restrict its possibilities, and we are aware of this.

Q. — What about the peoples of the Capitalist World?

A. — We are constantly winning friends there. We may not be able to say that we have won an important portion of public opinion, but we continue to win, particularly in the North and in France and Britain. The new leftist generation fully supports us.

Q. — A week ago I had a talk with some Western journalists about resistance. I was told that there is an opinion in the world which fears that, if the present situation persists in the area with Palestinian resistance continuing to reject all peaceful solutions, the explosion may occur, and that this time it may lead to a world war. In their opinion, the Palestinian resistance movement is called upon to be conscious of its responsibilities towards the cause of world peace.

A. — Really, we are unable to understand these people. Sometimes they say that the resistance movement is weak and insignificant and that it is unimportant to get in touch with it and learn its opinion and position, and at other times its rôle becomes so great as to constitute a threat to world peace!

These people must define their position. Is the resistance movement weak and unworthy of being contacted or considered as having any weight, or is it a basic movement which has its weight in the area?

Does our resistance with arms to a racial fascist enemy who occupies our home constitute a threat to world peace, or does it constitute a threat to the colonialist and racist warmongers? We are a liberation movement. Why is such talk about world peace not tendered to the liberation movement in Vietnam for instance? Vietnam likewise could threaten to cause a world war. Why is this accusation specifically directed against us? What threatens world peace is the continued usurpation of the Palestinian people's rights in its land and home and the continued existence of such a colonialist Zionist structure in our country. There will be no peace and no progress in our country unless this Zionist presence is eliminated from the Arab homeland. The peoples of the world should understand that when the Palestinian people bear arms they work seriously to serve the cause of world peace.

Q. — That is, Palestinian resistance is waging a liberation war against colonialism and racialism, so that, like every other liberation movement in the world, it is rendering a concrete service to the cause of world peace. This is true. Let us discuss another matter. It has been remarked that during recent weeks some violent and unobjective criticism was made against the Soviet Union by the Fateh-sponsored Voice of Assifa. Do you not agree that differences in views should not obscure the important fact that the Soviet Union is a valuable friend and an objective ally to national liberation movements in the world, and that consequently such differences should be settled on the basis of friendship?

A. — We are fully agreed that our view of the Soviet Union must be based on the consideration that

it is a friend to the Arabs and that it has actually translated this friendship into material assistance and strong moral support to the Arab countries, particularly after the June war. However, this does not prevent us from indicating the difference in views with regard to the situation. I believe that in this connection it would be preferable to establish direct relations between the Palestinian people and the Soviet Union. The fact that these relations are not direct is not our fault.

The Soviet Union should appreciate our strong sensitivity to the meetings of the big powers, because as a people we have always had to face the determination of our destiny in our absence. In our criticism we wanted to explain to the friendly Soviet Union, which is taking part in the talks, this essential point which we believe finds support in its own principles. Our criticism was that of one who wanted to bring a friend closer, not to alienate him.

Q. — Then the criticism should have taken a different form without, for instance, comparing the Soviet Union to the United States and Britain.

A. — No, we did not compare the Soviet Union to the United States and Britain. Please read the criticism again to reassure yourself. We said that the United States and Britain contributed to the creation of the Zionist structure and are still giving it their strong support, while the Soviet Union, the friend of the Arabs, is expected to desist from its 1948 position concerning the Palestinian question.

Q. — Now, I wish to know your view of the enemy. How was this view before you took up armed resistance and how is it now?

A. — To begin with, there is a general fact which I must present. The Zionist movement has always aimed at convincing both us and its own adherents, and has largely succeeded in doing so, that it cannot afford any defeat, whether in a side battle with psychological effects on its own people or in a major battle leading to the liquidation of the Israeli set-up and the Jewish masses.

It is to be noted with regret that, inasmuch as before the 1948 war we grossly underestimated the Zionist soldier's courage and fighting spirit, this soldier's stature came to be magnified inordinately after the June war.

We feel that, as a human being, the man in Israel — particularly the soldier, with the exception of the leaders who are working within the plan of the colonialist Zionist movement — does not believe in this war except from the angle of self-defence. If we can by our behaviour reach the heart of this man to convince him that in reality we are not, as the Zionists would have him believe, barbarians who want to kill him and throw his women and children into the sea, then it would be possible to separate psychologically between the man and the Zionist, between the Jewish soldier and the colonialist Zionist military institution.

We have proposed to the Arab countries to declare officially that they are prepared to receive back all their Jewish nationals who have emigrated to Palestine and to restore to them their property and civil rights as Arab nationals of these countries on an equal footing with all other Arab nationals. If we succeed in doing this, and in making clear our true hu-

man position with regard to the Jew as a human being, we are certain that the colonialist Zionist military institution would collapse, for it would then be deserted by the Jewish soldier who is now acting under the influence that if he does not fight and shed Arab blood he is bound to be killed. We have a deep understanding of this matter. Take for instance an actual observation in connection with the Al-Karameh Battle. After the battle, about 300 Jewish officers and men who had refused to take part in the fighting were put on trial. Regrettably, we proceeded in our press to draw an untrue picture of these officers and men, calling them cowards and deserters, while if we had examined the matter carefully and read what they had written before and after the battle we would have discovered a great human significance in their behaviour; that they did not believe in war or aggression, or even in destroying Palestinian resistance. On this basis, if our information effort succeeds in revealing our truly human character, and if we are able to convince the Jewish soldier, the Jewish officer and the Jewish man in general that he is not in any way a target for our resistance, the target being Zionism and the Zionist structure, then the whole myth will peter out, our battle will be easier to prosecute and the liquidation of Zionism and its structure will be possible with less sacrifice.

I may have concentrated on the military aspect and the military institution. In point of fact this is a source of strength as well as of weakness for the enemy. Recently we met a foreign journalist with progressive ideas who had just left Israel and asked him about his main remarks. He said that there was understanding in certain progressive circles and even

in some non-progressive quarters, though small in size, of why the Palestinian bears arms and takes to resistance, and that Israeli intelligence hunted out such people and terrorised them. Unfortunately the scarcity of information in our press about what takes place inside Israel is the reason why such important facts are unknown to the Arab citizen. Thus the truth about Palestinian resistance has penetrated into the human conscience, and they no longer recoil at the idea of a Palestinian holding a grenade and throwing it at an Israeli patrol. On the contrary, they recoil at and often condemn the Zionist military authority's act of blowing up Arab houses and the ill-treatment meted out to captives and prisoners.

Our view of the enemy extends to include also its social structure and social conditions. Until now there has been no real assimilation or fusion in Zionist Israeli society. It is only a coalition of interests based on facing the danger as impressed on them by Zionism. All that those coming from Syria, Iraq and Europe have in common is that they feel persecuted and have to face the danger, neither more nor less. Such a conglomeration cannot be a viable human society. Moreover, Eastern Jews are generally treated as second-class citizens. There is a clear distinction between them and the European Jews (the Ashkenazim), and harmony between the two communities is uncertain and difficult, even groundless. The European Jews are alone first-class citizens enjoying all the privileges and high posts. Most of them were originally settled in Beersheba which, as you notice, is in the south. This cannot be a fortuitous manifestation, revealing as it does the rift and communal division in the depths of Zionist society, re-

gardless of what may appear on the surface to the contrary.

Generally speaking, all these and other factors which we do not wish to reveal guide us in our complicated plan to face the enemy objectively, that is, as it actually is, not as we picture it in our imagination. You may rest assured that we carefully take into account the points of strength as well as the points of weakness without ignoring the dynamic relation among all these points.

Q. — In concluding this dialogue for which I thank you as well as for the frankness with which you have expressed yourself, I wish to address to you a question which has been often put to me by some foreign friends: «What would be your position with regard to any act of persecution suffered by a Jew anywhere?» My reply has always been: «I would stand by him and support him against persecution.» What would Fateh's reply be if it were to be asked this question about the persecution of a Jew inside or outside Palestine?

A. — Our reply is clear and unequivocal. Since we welcome co-existence with the Jews after the liquidation of the Zionist set-up and the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state, it follows that we will stand by any persecuted Jew and will be prepared to give him a rifle and fight by his side.



