

# KANAFANI: SYMBOL OF PALESTINE



George Hajjar

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Dedicated to the memory of  
the Iraqi revolutionary, Basil  
Al-Kubaissi, who was cut down  
by Israeli agents on the streets  
of Paris, April 6, 1973.

*The weak do not fight.  
The strong fight for an hour, perhaps.  
The stronger fight for many years.  
But the strongest fight all their lives.  
Such men are indispensable.*

Bertolt Brecht.

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## Contents

<b>Part I</b>	<b>The Roots</b>	
1)	The Pursuit of Bread	1
2)	The Search for Identity	23
<b>Part II</b>	<b>The Bride</b>	
3)	Devotional Nasserism	47
4)	Palestinian Solitude	75
<b>Part III</b>	<b>The Journey</b>	
5)	Palestinian Revolutionism	105
6)	Confessional Marxism	133
<b>Part IV</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	
7)	A Child Is Born	159

## Preface

Shortly after the assassination of Ghassan Kanafani on July 8, 1972, I set out to write a biography about him. Unhappily, not all the pertinent data was made available to me. I had, therefore, to alter my strategy and write a study based mostly on Kanafani's writings, what I knew about him and was able to gather from casual observers. The research was carried out in the fall of 1972, the writing in the winter of 1973. In March of 1973, I circulated the manuscript among some comrade intellectuals of Kanafani's circle and anxiously awaited for their critical evaluations and helpful suggestions. Unfortunately, none came after six months of waiting.

Consequently, I decided to issue my study without being able to include something substantive regarding Kanafani's party life, the role he played in the internal struggles and splits of the P.F.L.P. and also the mystery surrounding his assassination.

One last word: I wrote this book not as "Operation Glorification or Deification", but because Ghassan Kanafani was the first modern Palestinian Arab writer to die for the cause of Arab revolution, martyred on the altar of criminal negligence.

October 5, 1973,  
Karoun, Bekaa Lebanon.

## Introduction

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"You have seen our elders, simple militants or party workers, white beards on the black rock of their faces: Did it remind you of the snow on your mountain peaks? Not bad if so: It's the snow of experience that no sun will ever melt, and we respect it even if the dialectic of logic isn't always on their side. The elders are our museums, our libraries, our history books — the present and the past. They speak well, too: The struggle, that is the "big lie" that becomes the truth. They have known how to believe in that lie so as to make it come true, in spite of their doubts and for all the ineffaceable marks of colonialism on their minds and their bodies. They can rejoice only when dreaming of the future, but already they are astonished by the present."

Amilcar Cabral

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## CHAPTER I

### The Pursuit Of Bread

*An individual is born into a society that bears a specific physiognomy; his formative years are deeply influenced by its traditions; he is shaped by it as a thinking human being.*

George Lukacs

Although Acre withstood the Napoleonic siege of 1799 (from March 19 to May 20) and played a decisive role in the frustration of Napoleon's strategic plans in the Middle East for the demolition of the British empire, it nevertheless fell prey to a Zionist onslaught within two days — May 16-18, 1948.

In the first instance, Acre's inhabitants stood firmly as a united citizenry and bravely defended their city. In the second case, the "elite" fled and left behind a disorganized, disarmed and leaderless citizenry that surrendered its city very swiftly.

This historic anti-heroism had nothing to do with the character of its people, the degeneration of the Arab personality or the "invincible power" of the Haganah (Jewish Army) forces of emerging Israel. The rapid conquest of Acre and the expulsion of its inhabitants were related to two principal factors: 1. The United Nations Partition Resolution of November 29, 1949, which recognized the establishment of an Arab and a Jewish state in Palestine and specifically included Acre in the "Arab State" to be, a fact that gave a sense of security and assurance to the citizens of Acre; and 2.

The fall of Haifa which was regarded as the citadel of Arab defense on April 22, 1948, and the subsequent exodus of the Arabs from the city to their partial and temporary settlement in Acre, bringing to Acre the contagion of panic and the meaning of Zionist terrorism. The combination of fear and panic, the ill-preparedness of the Palestinians, the abolition of independent Arab local government under the British occupation and mandate (1917-1948) and the suppression of Arab political activities by the mandatory authorities converged and crystallized at a most inopportune juncture in modern Palestinian history and operated to the absolute disadvantage of the Palestinian masses in general and the people of Acre in particular. The result was a foregone conclusion. Israel had to be born on the ashes of Arab Palestine and the dispersion of its people.

Here was a city of approximately 15,000 inhabitants. They were a melange of Arabs and the descendants of Greeks, Italians, Crusaders and almost 500 Jews. Jews did not live in Acre in large numbers not because they were not permitted to do so, but probably because of religious proscription of the city. Indeed, the Bible specifically prohibits Jews to live in Acre because it is a strange city that falls outside the borders of the "Holy Land." Apparently, this classification of Acre "as strange" was arrived at after numerous attempts on the part of ancient Israelites to conquer the city. Moreover, the Talmud forbade the eating of its vegetables for fear that their leaves would carry "the accursed atoms of its soil" and thereby contaminate the "righteous" Israelites. The Talmud also banned the burial of Jews within Acre's territory on the grounds that "AKKO" or "Until Here" is a city of "infidels". Talmud or no Talmud, now, according to the 1970 census, 40,000 Jews live in Acre.

The Zionists — a messianic political sect of Judaism — sought to establish a "Jewish home" in Palestine to further God's will and that of imperialism by "the ingathering of the exiles". Thus in this land of prophets, quacks and interlopers, God, man, American, British and Soviet arsenals united in holy matrimony and implanted the Zionist cancer in the heart of the Arab homeland. The hapless inhabitants of Palestine and Acre were mere spectators in a well-scripted play that was

enacted before their very eyes. They could only watch as the unfolding drama inexorably moved towards their foretold extinction and the grand proclamation of Israel. Since most decisions concerning Palestine were made outside of Palestine and without the knowledge and consultation of the Palestinians, they had only three choices to act upon: submission to the conquering enemy, panicky flight and self-rescue, or heroic resistance and death in the battle-field. But unfortunately for the resisters, panicky flight predominated. Consequently, more than 700,000 people left with less than their personal belongings in most instances, over 200,000 accepted submission to conquest and Zionist servitude, while thousands resisted sporadically in groups or fell individually before the enemy's juggernaut. In the midst of this mass exodus and confusion, Acre became a forlorn city of 3,500 people! It is believed that this incredible "other exodus" occurred because most, if not all, Palestinians who left, anticipated the liberation of the homeland by "the heroic Arab armies" in a matter of days, if not hours. This belief led most escapees to camp in nearby places awaiting the day of return which never came and turned into a mirage as the Arab armies retreated, the Arab states negotiated and the Palestinian "leadership" ensconced itself in distant and secure places in Amman, Cairo, Beirut and Damascus.

The Kanafani family of Acre, whose third son, Ghassan, is our subject matter, left as did others in the midst of chaos. According to Anni Kanafani, Ghassan's Danish wife, the family departed on April 9, 1948, the day of the massacre of Deir Yassin at the hands of Zionist-Irgun terrorists and the twelfth birthday of Ghassan. In other words, the Kanafanis left about 5 weeks before the fall of Acre and certainly before any significant disturbances took place in Acre itself. Prior to April 9, the only important recorded incident in the city's history of the preceding month is a potential confrontation between the Haganah and the people of Acre that was averted on March 17, 1948, when the Haganah turned back its convoy of supplies to Naharia, rather than submit to a meticulous and thorough inspection of its cargo by the local branch of "The Palestine National Committee". If anything, this "small" victory should have raised the morale of the people and given

them a feeling of momentary triumph. Nothing else besides this episode and flamboyant speechmaking by local commanders of the "Arab Liberation Army" took place in Acre. But turbulence and widespread terror had become rampant throughout Palestine in the aftermath of the Partition Resolution (November 29, 1947). The Kanafani family, following in the footsteps of most middle- and upper-class Palestinian families, departed relying on the Arab armies to do their own fighting while they watched prayerfully on the sidelines. Put bluntly, when the ruling classes of Palestine — the effendi and comprador — had abdicated politically by becoming absentee landlords and agents of foreign powers and corporations, its feeble client class, the petit bourgeoisie of small entrepreneurs and professionals such as lawyers and doctors, were incapable of assuming the leadership of the national movement and of struggling along with the masses to defend and safeguard the homeland. As a dependent, parasitic social stratum, the petit bourgeois sought private safety in Arab countries and left the peasants on their own to defend the country or to scurry for their own individual safety in an orchestra of organized chaos. In this set of circumstances, Muhamed Fayez Abdul Razak Kanafani, lawyer and father of Ghassan, consequently packed his six children, his wife Aisha and some of their belongings and headed for safety in Lebanon before the breaking of the storm.

Ghassan Kanafani was 12 years old when he was uprooted from his homeland. His family settled briefly in Saida, then moved to Ghazia, Lebanon, which as Kanafani saw it in his writings was "a little closer to the borders of Palestine". Within a year, the family moved to Zabadani, then on to Damascus, Syria, where the father still resides and practices law. The family had spent whatever little savings it had accumulated before departure from Palestine as the elder Kanafani had just built himself a new home in Acre and a building in Jaffa; but when liberation didn't come and their savings were running low, the father resorted to selling groceries on the streets of Damascus while the children sold newspapers and engaged in sundry other activities. In those formative years, there was nothing exceptional about young

Kanafani's life, other than his calmness and sarcasm according to his childhood friends. He led the life of a refugee child — a life of precarious subsistence; he was a studious pupil and tried, on occasion, to act as a child lawyer by standing in front of government house in Damascus offering his services for a pittance.

The paucity of information regarding Kanafani's early life makes it somewhat problematic for the present writer to make any conclusive remarks as regards the influences that impinged upon him, or to proffer any definitive evaluative statements regarding the development of his personality and the environment in which he lived. Hence, it isn't possible for the writer to present a psycho-environmental analysis, but I am in the position to render an account of Kanafani's works, deeds and activities on the basis of his writings and interviews obtained from his political and literary friends and critics.

At the age of 16 (Ghassan was born on April 9, 1936) Kanafani acquired his Brevet, the partial high school, educational passport in the Arab World to a teaching position in the elementary school system. Since UNRWA (United Nations Works and Relief Agency) was among the very few outlets for Palestinians to find employment, Kanafani sought and found work in UNRWA's school system in Damascus. He taught at UNRWA's "Alliance School" for three years while he continued his high school education. In 1955, he obtained the baccalaureate which qualified him to enter the University of Damascus, but because of economic reasons he joined the overflowing caravan of Palestinians to Kuwait in the autumn of 1955. For the next four years he taught in Kuwait city and returned every summer to Damascus to replenish his intellectual and emotional needs. In 1955, while teaching in Kuwait, he enrolled at the University of Damascus as an affiliating student. He passed the first year, failed the second and bid farewell to university education.

Kanafani's teaching career lasted for 8 years altogether. It left permanent imprints upon his character, personality, style of work and political aspirations. As one of two teachers in a school of 1200 children (the other was Samia Haddad, the future wife of Dr. Wadi Haddad of Popular Front renown), he was simply overwhelmed by the amount of work he had to do

and overburdened by the kind of problems his pupils encountered in their daily living – problems of clothes, food, shelter, disease, in addition, to scholastic problems and emotional and cultural deprivations. The images and impressions he gathered during this period and that of far away Kuwait, left indelible marks on his mind. The Alliance School's "inmates", their yearning for the homeland, their life of poverty and hunger constituted the raw material out of which he weaved the short stories he wrote in the 1950's and the first book he published in 1961, – *The Death of Bed Number 12*. Recalling that dark period, he wrote: "He who observes people dies of grief; he who observes himself explodes in fury". Kanafani did not only observe himself and the people, he consumed himself in his project of self-liberation and his peoples' deliverance from the abyss of dispersion and depersonalization. Thus, his remaining 17 years could be interpreted as a continuously smouldering volcano whose furious explosion (July 8, 1972) ended an imploding universe and took him back to the womb of mother earth where he would commune with the martyrs he idolized and immortalized for us. Meanwhile, Kanafani the uprooted person from Palestine, had to discover his roots, to relate to others of like-mind, to gird his loins in order to negate the death of exile, build a safe harbor for his rudderless ship and put an end to the collective demise of his people's life, personality, consciousness. In sum, Kanafani's life had to revolve around the fall, the search for paradise lost, the attempt to bend hell and reconquer heaven.

As a young school teacher-student, Kanafani didn't seem to have been greatly affected by the political environment in which he lived. For instance, the Baath Renaissance Party which was rapidly becoming a strong oppositionist socialist party after its fusion with another splinter social democratic party, did not arouse his interests, nor did the significant parliamentary gains it scored as a result of the 1954 election. Moreover, the Syrian Communist party, whose leader, Khaled Baghdash, was elected to the Syrian Parliament in 1954, had no attraction insofar as Kanafani was concerned. The only political party with which he vaguely identified was the disintegrating Syrian National Socialist Party. He divulged his

identification with the party in an interview he gave to its official organ *Al-Bina*, (1970). In answering the question, "What political movement did you join in your early youth?" he replied:

In my early youth most of my friends were members of the Syrian Nationalist Party. I cannot recall now why I didn't join them then ... perhaps the nature of my life and the instability of my position had something to do with it. But what I would like to stress is that in my relationship with those friends, priority was given to them because of the high intellectual level in which the literature of the party was written.

Kanafani is indirectly saying that his primary concerns in the mid-50's were more literary than political, whereas in the 1960's the two became inseparable and complemented each other. This interpretation is reinforced by another interview he gave to *Asiasa* (a Kuwait liberal-radical journal) in which he stated:

My political position springs from my being a novelist. Insofar as I am concerned, politics and the novel are an indivisible case and I can categorically state that I became politically committed because I was a novelist, not the opposite. I started writing the story of my Palestinian life before I formed a clear political position or joined any organization. I do not find any duality between my commitment and the writing of novels because I feel something very important is missing if I were not politically involved and I would feel greatly diminished if I had not been a novelist at the same time.

This self-disclosure on the part of Kanafani enables us to understand his perspective in the 1950's and how he evolved from a short story writer into a political commentator, and how the two positions interacted with and enriched each other. *Al-Rai* (opinion), the weekly journal of the Arab Nationalist Movement, was Kanafani's first literary outlet. Its editor, Hani El-Hindi, encouraged the young nationalists to

write in the journal and helped them form in 1957 "The Bond of Life and Literature" in which Kanafani was a member. How he was recruited into the ANM is not clear. What is known, however, is that Kanafani was a friend of Fadle Naqib, whose brother, Ussama, was a prominent supporter of the ANM. Consequently, this friendship and Kanafani's literary and political interests led him directly into ANM circles where he imbibed the political ideology of the movement, articulated his views and broadened his intellectual and moral horizons.

Stated briefly, the ANM was the first political homeland for Kanafani: Palestine was its cause celebre and *raison d'être*. Its slogans - Unity, Liberation, Revenge - appealed enormously to Kanafani, who submerged himself in the affairs of the movement and the dissemination of its ideology. The school room, whether in Damascus or in Kuwait was converted into a propaganda forum. *Palestine Hour*, which was broadcast by radio Damascus, was infiltrated and taken over by Kanafani to spread the gospel of the elect. The Palestine wing of the Damascus International Exhibition (1957) was seized and turned into a People's Exhibit that depicted the life of the dejected and hopeless and offered them an avenue of meaningful salvation through revolution and Arab unity. Young Kanafani and the upstart ANM were posing themselves as an alternative to the "established leadership" and calling upon the Arab nation to overcome its dismemberment and unite under one banner from the Arab Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean, from Algiers to Cairo, from Damascus to Baghdad.

Arabism, the new vibrant prophecy, and its historic locomotive the ANM, required prophets and apostles to proselytize it and carry its message to the faithful in every conceivable and communicable form. Kanafani excelled in the art of writing short stories: He soldiered for the cause by the use of his pen and tongue and out came pouring within the span of some 18 months 18 published short stories (*Al-Rai* June 24, 1957 to December 8, 1958) and countless speeches in schools, educational clubs and political demonstrations organized by the ANM against the Baghdad Pact powers, their American and European sponsors and their local Arab agents. But in the heady days of the Suez War (October 29 to

November 6, 1956), and the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) between Egypt and Syria (February 21, 1958) Kanafani was teaching in remote Kuwait where the tidal wave splashed the citizens and touched them as spectators, not as participants in epochal history-making; but Kanafani always came to Damascus to quench his summer thirst. However, the social distance contained Kanafani in his Palestinian procrustean bed which enabled him to maintain a Palestinian-Arab perspective in his literary writings, in contradistinction to a pan-Arabian world view. Thus, the focal-point of his stories is Palestine, its heroes and its defiled soil with occasional and subordinate forays into other Arab territory

It should also be added, that since "martyrdom road" was being covered by the blood of martyrs and self-sacrificers, especially between 1955 and 1957, Kanafani's Palestinianism had been well nourished in advance of the advent of Arab unity.

At any rate, here is a glimpse of the world of Kanafani where "nails are hammered and fail to be implanted". In his first published short story, "Until We Return", (*Al-Rai* No. 125, June 24, 1957, pp. 10-11), Kanafani portrays the loneliness of a man struggling through sand dunes of the Negev desert on his way back to his verdant farm in Palestine. The nameless hero reminisces over the past beauty of Palestine he knew and the joyous memory of his prosperous farm and loving wife. By crossing the desert, the hero is attempting to overcome the Wall of China that separates him from the land. Though he is "so thirsty that he could no longer feel that he had a mouth left", he marches on until he sees the land from a distance, smells its fragrance, and suddenly like a divorcee that opens her "hope chest", memory seizes him, propels him to carry on, and impels him to "slip into the empty fields cautiously as he derives from the smell of the soil an invincible feeling that helps him to grip his knife in animalistic readiness", to pounce on the enemy at the bat of an eyelash. Finally, the hero arrives at his former farm, and remembers how "the Jews hanged his wife from the old tree", while he was tied to a tree opposite watching the horrendous scene. "incapable of doing anything". He stops,



remembers, weeps and departs, then "a thunderous explosion" blows to bits the house and the whole area becomes obliterated.

In the second story, "He Buried Himself", Kanafani's hero is a nationalist barber, Abu Othman, from Ramle and formerly from "the fire mountain", Nablus.

The story opens very dramatically. The evicted citizens of Ramle are standing hands up in an endless line under the summer sun facing swashbuckling Israeli soldiers. A villainous Israeli captain approaches Abu Othman and demands to know who is the beautiful little girl standing beside him. "My daughter Fatmah", Abu Othman quiveringly blurts out. Instantaneously, the captain shoots her in the head. Abu Othman without uttering a word or making a sound goes to bury his daughter and returns to stand in line only to find out that his wife had been shot to death as well. He caresses her, goes to bury her besides Fatmah and returns again to the line, only to be informed this time that his turn has come unless he reveals all he knows. He promises to do so and asks that he be permitted to go across the street to his barber shop to bring "the documents". Until this moment, we know nothing about Abu Othman. We see the unexplained action of a mad Israeli captain. Why this brutality we ask? Suddenly, the truth of Abu Othman is revealed. He enters the headquarters of the Israeli Command in Ramle opposite the line, "and the people heard a powerful explosion that destroyed the whole building in which the body of Abu Othman was lost in the debris."

The thread that stitches the entire series of those action-oriented stories is Al-Feda, self-sacrifice, and heroic death in the defense of the CAUSE. It is quite clear that Kanafani's heroes are engaged in bravado revolutionary politics, in self-salvation, not in collective revolutionary action and social liberation. But from Kanafani's point of view, his people need exemplars, torch bearers and heroic individuals ready to sacrifice themselves in order to redeem the nation, inspire the people and instil in them the spirit of resistance. That is, Promethean men are in need to detonate the consciousness of the masses and galvanize them into action against the enemy. This line is amplified in "The Cannon". Here we have Saïd Al-Hamdouni, a revolutionary

from the era of the 1936 uprising. He lives in Sulma, and every villager knows Saïd. The villagers think that he still has the gun he fought with in 1936 and, consequently, all feel secure that their town will be defended whenever, the occasion arises. However, as the story unfolds, we learn that Saïd is not only a source of inspiration and assurance to his people, but also a modern man who has kept abreast with technological development. Saïd has purchased a cannon without letting anyone in town know and he and his children have payed for it on the installment plan by selling their blood to a hospital in a nearby town.

In "He Knows Me Not", the same line of heroism is stressed with explosive clarity. After a prolonged battle against the enemy, Muhamad Hammad, the lone soldier who had fought with Abdul El-Kader El-Husseini in the battle of Kasstal, runs out of ammunition. Muhamad refuses to surrender as "the Jews want to capture him and take him prisoner". He is strapped with a plastic bomb and only one shot remains in his pistol.

"The Jews surround him. He cannot escape or hide. They close in on him. Seconds before they pounce on him, he fires his last shot into the plastic bomb. His body and those of the Jews around him fly in the air. The people of his town hear the explosion. They come to the scene. The martyr is so burnt up and torn into so many pieces that the people of Kasstal couldn't find anything of him to be buried!"

Martyrdom and the celebration of heroes are not the only themes that preoccupy Kanafani in the 1950's. The other themes such as impotence, bitterness, loss and contrition underly all of his writings as well. To get out of this condition of anomie, Kanafani seizes on another theme: The creation of the good man and, therefore, the making of the good citizen — soldier who will fight the enemy not only in Palestine, but also in Lebanon and Jordan.

The theme of impotence-contrition is illustrated in the following stories. In "The Land of Oranges", Kanafani writes the story in the form of a letter to a nameless brother and prefaces it saying the letter is semi-factual, semi-fictional. The

story begins on the eve of the Haganah invasion of Acre in mid-May, 1948.

"It became apparent", the story-teller announces, "that the attack is coming. The following day a huge trolley truck stopped in front of the house. Your father catapulted your brothers into the back of the trolley on top of our belongings ... the car moved and beloved Acre slowly disappeared beyond the horizon ... As we moved toward Ras El-Nakoura in Lebanon, we passed fields of oranges and olive trees. Vague feelings of fear were eating us. The car was speeding over the good land and the echo of cannons could be heard in the background as if it were a farewell salute"

The imagery and the poetry of the language are very moving as we move from Acre to the borders of Lebanon. At the border a shattering shock awaits us. The child from the land of oranges buys an orange and while he is paying for it, he sees a column of "men" surrendering their guns to the Lebanese gendarmes in exchange for the status of refugees. He throws away his orange. He sits still in his knee-length trousers and sheds a wave of tears. The father stands silent. The mother holds the orange in her hand, countless other people gaze at the dilapidated road waiting for a savior to come and offer solutions to the problems of each. The procession moves on. The Kanafani's land in Saida and in a few weeks they spend their savings. Starvation threatens, then the father returns with money and Ghassan Kanafani notes:

We easily understood that he sold the gold which he brought to your mother when he wanted her to be proud that she was a wife. And we moved to Ghazia where your brother sat on a high rock smiling for the first time, awaiting the triumphant army. After that we believed the truth in all its bitterness and sullenness returned to our faces ... And I saw a dried, dessicated orange.

In "The Man Who Couldn't Die" the story centers around Zeinab, a peasant woman who was evicted by the Jews when

Ali, her landlord, sold "his land". The story unfolds with her encountering Ali in a service cab. Previously Ali had been shot in the neck by her son. She now declines to exchange greetings with him.

The story emphasizes the love of peasants for the land, and their inability to stop its sale by the landlords whose callous philosophy was: You're worth a piaster if you own a piaster. Zeinab's husband had taught the peasants folk-wisdom: "They found tens of kilos of gold in Pharaoh's tomb. What is Pharaoh's worth?" In the car Zeinab recalls for herself her life under Ali's dominion. The car arrives at the end of its run. Ali and Zeinab step out, she looks at him closely, smiles, and walks away muttering: "Ali must be ashamed of his scar. He must feel shame every time he stands before the mirror to shave. He must feel like spitting at his own face every time he looks at it."

In "A Bouquet of Flowers on Khayam's Tomb", Kanafani portrays the heroism of a raped Palestinian Leila who refused to leave Haifa and died heroically for its defense. He writes in the first person and describes his journey to Khayam's tomb through Arab Iran. On the way he meets a beautiful Iranian woman who reminds him of Leila. One of Omar Khayam's poems was about the road to the Iranian woman's heart: "Oh love! If you and I could only agree with fate to annihilate this stamp of despair in this world and destroy it into small pieces ... then we can reconstruct it anew to our hearts' desire." At the end of the journey, the hero discovers his futility and suffers from a bout of contrition for escaping to Iran to place a bouquet of flowers on Khayam's tomb rather than return to Haifa in search of Leila's tomb.

In "Man And Principle", Kanafani begins to expound his vision of the "New Man". The lecturing Kanafani declares that:

The individual in society is the brick in the building. And on the basis of his goodness or the lack of it, we can determine whether or not society will continue to grow and ascend upward. It is impossible to expect a civilized society without highly cultured individuals. In the same fashion, it is impossible for a tall building to stand without

solid rocks at the foundation. The individual, therefore, is the starting point. I do not mean though that the individual is not affected by society. What I insist upon, however, is that new qualities are required of every individual whose society is passing through a critical stage ... We need to create a new man whose qualities would be compatible with those of the new society.

Among the required qualities, Kanafani enumerates the following: The balanced and correct evaluation of time as a value; the realization that experimentation and continuity are essential; the belief that people are capable of solving their problems. The man who embodies these qualities is the "ideological man" whose burden is the exposition of this ideology and the inculcation of exemplary conduct in the Gandhian sense of abstemious living, simple taste, and good public behavior. Kanafani insists that "the awakened sectors in his homeland and the educated elite must lead the nation and participate seriously in the making of its future". Why? Because, "The Arab nation is undergoing a crisis that must be surmounted so that this nation can attain its potential plateau of greatness wherein the personality of the individual can be attained". He concludes his homily on this thought — provoking remark: "A magician was expelled from his city. He froze time in it and decided that the city shall not be allowed to return to life until its youth destroyed its ancient ramparts".

It must be underscored that in the making of the new man, Kanafani is an individualist par excellence who believes that his individual must undergo a process of self-transformation in order to become an "ideological man", the virtuous exemplar. This type of individual makes his appearance in two brief plays, "The Immortals" and "Stronger than Despair", and in two short stories, "A Decisive Resolution" and "The Road to a Traitor".

In "The Immortals", Kanafani sets a stage wherein historic folk-heroes such as Saladin and contemporary heroes such as Abdul Kader El-Husseini engage in dialogue about battles they waged against Arab enemies. In the presence of Algerian, Syrian and Jordanian revolutionaries, El-Husseini is asked by

Saladin why he went to battle in Kasstal when he knew he was going to be defeated. El-Husseini replies that the choice was between a "heroic defeat and an insulting one". He says he chose the heroic path because a life of living defeat is sordid and empty. But as a leader he thinks that leadership requires more than bravery and wisdom: it requires love of the people, and in his opinion, Nasser is the incarnation of his model man. Now since the hero is with us, the revolution, which is "a people wanting to practice its life", is possible and its actualization can be realized if men carry their rifles, follow the established road and stop philosophizing, because "philosophy as a language is the by-product of feelings of emptiness and inability on the part of men to act".

In "Stronger Than Despair", Kanafani puts us in communion with two Arab revolutionaries in a Jordanian prison. One is engaged in the display of his self-importance and the other is making a farce of his fellow prisoner's posturing, and the Jordanian authorities' imbecility. The consolation and solace of both prisoners, we learn finally, is that they discovered that "the isolated cell is a school in miniature where self-pride lasts one day and where a man must engage in a stubborn struggle against despair and overcome it by his desire to seek freedom". We are informed that "the fighter was not struggling to go to prison or lose his freedom, but was struggling to gain greater freedom for himself and others."

The expansion of the consciousness of the ideological man and the identification of the enemy as British, American and Arab, continue besides the idea of self-sacrifice on the part of the individual. In "A Decisive Resolution", the hero dies in Tripoli, Lebanon, in the 1958 Lebanese Civil War not only in order to save his comrades and make it possible for the revolution to continue, but also to state that the real killer is the American empire working through president Chamoun to turn Lebanon into a bastion of finance capitalism and a farm for CIA operations against the Arab nation. In "The Road to a Traitor", a man from Lydda is on his way back home from Kuwait, planning to kill his brother for squealing to the Israelis on his cousins who landed in Zionist dungeons as a result. On his way home, the Jordanians — the British

half-breeds — seize the Lydda man as he attempts to infiltrate into occupied Palestine and imprison him for his "anarchistic tendencies". Suddenly, it dawns upon the Lydda man that the traitor is within and that the fish stinks from its head. Pursuing the same line of unmasking Arab traitors, our best example may be found in "A Heroine From My Country" — the story of a woman ANM activist, Nadia Salti, who participated in the blowing up of the British Cultural Center in Amman in 1958. At her trial Salti was very defiant and contemptuous of the royal court. She refused to plead "not guilty". In his "broadcast image", Kanafani makes her a liberated ideological woman who howls: "Men! Understand that women in my country know their role ... They know they must offer something on the altar of freedom". And when the prosecutor attempts to persuade Salti that she will hang unless she changes her plea, she screams:

My people are fearless and the gallows to each person among us is the instance that precedes the dawn of a new day for all of us ... Prosecutor! Understand that when one of us enters the nation's battle of destiny, he takes into consideration all possible results. But above all, he places his confidence in the determination of the people to win victory.

The trenchance of Kanafani's pen and the intensification of his functional role as an "ideological man", lead him to take on UNRWA, his first employer, and the USA, the sponsor of Israel, in "The Stolen Shirt" for which he won the first prize in a short-story contest conducted by "The National Cultural Club", of Kuwait. In his portrayal UNRWA is largely financed by the USA as conscience money on behalf of guilt-ridden protestants; UNRWA's guards are naturally American blond men who engage in illicit blackmarket trade by deferring the dates of distributing the meagre rations UNRWA offers to Palestinian "refugees". The Arab agent of the American guard is asked by a starving fellow refugee, "You always leave the camp and go somewhere. Do you go searching for Solomon's ring?" The agent curtly replies, "No. I go looking for work but there is no work". "And without

work how do you obtain flour to feed the children?" There is no answer to this query, other than, "My American friend is a highly organized man. He loves punctuality and hates people who cannot keep time. He is always on time and when he promises to deliver something, he does." The wise peasant in the camp nods his head understandingly. "The American sells flour surreptitiously while he tells us hungry old men, women and children in the camp that the rations will be arriving in ten days."

The logical extension of Kanafani's literary outpourings is an absolute political commitment. A life of powerless refugeeism has to be overcome and this cannot be achieved without Arab unity whose vanguard is the UAR. Hence the assured road back to Jerusalem becomes the UAR and Nasser, the folk-hero who will eliminate all obstacles to liberation. That is, the "Palestinian" will be frozen in his particularity, and the "Palestinian other" will submerge himself in the life-activity of the Arab nation with a view to creating the new man. However, the new man cannot be created in a vacuum: He is to be born in the process of struggle for nationhood within a nationalist-unitarian vision of reality. Thus, Kanafani embarks on a heuristic endeavor to clarify his own vision and chart a plan for his political life as an "ideological man". His political outlook is to be found in two unpublished notebooks: The "Arab Case in the Era of the UAR" and "Marxism in Theory and Practice: A Debate". The notebooks are undated, but it is clear that both were written at the height of the Nasserite tidal wave and the Nasser-Krushchov confrontation over the question of nationalism and communism and their derivative policies (1959-60). In other words, Kanafani sets out to write his notebooks, against a background of conflict between the Soviet Union and Arab Communist parties — an environment that gives the notebooks a flavor of virulence, self-justification and apologia. Stated simply, the conflict was over Iraq's position in the nationalist movement and whether or not it was going to join the UAR. Premier Kassem and the communists preferred procrastination on the question of merger with the UAR and contended that federation rather than union would be their desired objective. The nationalist wing led by Abdul

Salam Aref argued for immediate union and the adoption of Nasserism as an ideology. The dispute culminated in a coup d'état against Kassem that failed, and the "reign of terror" returned to Iraq insofar as the nationalists were concerned. Anti-communism, which is always a handy club, was revived by the Arab nationalists and the Soviet Union and the communist parties were equated with Zionism, Imperialism and Arab reaction as enemies. The upshot of this conflict impelled Kanafani to make a cursory study of Marxism and its failure to implant itself in the Soviet Union and to write a private apologia on behalf of Nasserism.

The starting-point of Kanafani is that nationalism is a permanent factor of civilization rather than being just an evanescent bourgeois, historical phenomenon in the life of the nation-state. His article of faith is stated thus:

Nationalism is the complicated product of a prolonged human evolution. It is the sanctuary of each civilization that appeared during the process of that evolution. For a human being, being a nationalist is to select nationalism as a medium to carry out his humanity's message to the world because nationalism is not an isolated package placed outside the global current absorbed by a privatized life. On the contrary, the nation for the individual is a cell that encompasses humanity's highest ideals where he lives a national life, realizes his personality, strives against the enemy, records his victories and services to humankind, evaluates things in accordance with his historical personality and derives from it the confidence to struggle for a better tomorrow.

From the "nationalist" premise, Kanafani deduces a vitalistic philosophy which he adopts from Walt Durant's analysis of Marxism. Here is a brief resume of his vitalism:

The truth is that there is no such thing as being solely material or solely spiritual in a completely separate sense. There is life and life includes matter, spirit, thought and all sorts of things besides each other and life looks upon things as intertwined and interrelated without disposing of

a single aspect. Life is the fundamental truth, and matter is its external cover, and this position is not distant from materialism and spiritualism.

Flowing from these two positions — nationalism and vitalism — is the idea of societal solidarity in agricultural states where "the divisional distance between groups in our country is not a sharp contradiction, and it can approach social assimilation without making a revolution based on class hatred that would undermine social peace in the homeland"

To these three perceptions — nationalism, vitalism and social solidarity — Kanafani counterposes dialectical and historical materialism, class struggle and internationalism. His analysis is descriptive and empirical, not analytical and evaluative. He understands that Marxism adopted the Hegelian triad—thesis, antithesis, synthesis — and translated it into historical materialism which means the evolution of history is determined by the mode of production and the "relations of production". The historical stages — primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism — are elaborated upon with little or no comment. But after 24 pages of hand-writing, he concludes that "revolutionary communism is the overthrow of life's profound systems. It is the expulsion from this world of allegedly bourgeois false conceptions such as nationalism, the family, religion and the nation. It is the radical, decisive uprooting of the traditional mode of property-owning." Since Kanafani regards historical materialism as a mere theory of history based on economics, rather than a philosophy of history based on a materialist conception of life and its processes, he argues that "history is too rich to be explained by a single factor or from one particular point of view". Although this world is a world of nations, not classes, he nevertheless concedes that the theory of class struggle may be applicable in industrialized, but not in agricultural societies. However, the crucial point is that the workers have countries and they have partaken in wars in the defense of their homelands in violation of the communist clarion call, "Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains!" Thus, in the world of European nations, not only capitalists but also the workers become

exploiters of colonial people, rather than their brothers and comrades-in-arms. Kanafani, therefore, posits the unity of the colonial people as a whole against the industrial unity and defines their task as being that of liberation not divisive class struggle. To illustrate this point, he relies on an Asian communist renegade, Sultan Khalifa, who contended that "Asian society's hatred must be directed against the colonialists, not against fellow-citizens in the stage of national liberation". Consequently, cosmopolitanism and internationalism are "the isolation of man from his national historic victories. And since history is half of the future of the nation, what becomes of a man without a national home?" At this juncture, he wonders why a man like Karl Marx ever became an internationalist. "Was his internationalism", Kanafani ponders, "the product of the residues of the Jewish soul in the depths of Marx? A product of the long years of persecution the Jews suffered and felt lost in this world?" Perhaps! Kanafani conjectures.

As we descend from the realm of theory to the republic of practice, we learn that the UAR is Kanafani's model state where socialism is being implemented without disturbing the social peace and from whence the message of Arab unity will emanate. Since Unity is "the quintessence of the Arab nationalist", it becomes for him the criterion by which friend and foe are identified and evaluated. It is an "ideological conception" which means "populism, or the participation of all individuals, irrespective of their status, in the battle for Arab unity". It also means "revolutionism", which is the "telescoping of time and the taking of battle to the streets, not to the salons and conference tables of emperors. The masses mustn't wait. They derive quick benefits from their victories". Finally, unity means "objectivism not emotionalism", that is "the continuous planning of battles to be waged against the enemy." Who is the enemy? It is: a) imperialism, b) Israel, c) the reactionaries, opportunists and provincialists, d) the communists.

The imperialists are against Arab unity because its attainment requires their expulsion from the area and the restoration of Arab rights, resources and land to the Arabs. The animosity between the two is thus preordained and

Kanafani formulates the struggle between Arabism and imperialism in terms of the "backwardness complex" of the Arab and the "superiority complex" of the Westerner. That is, the vehemence with which the struggle is being waged is reduced by Kanafani to psychological dimensions. For this reason, he defines Israel as an autonomous entity acting independently of imperialism and working through it whenever mutual interests coincide rather than being an extension of imperialism and having an organic relation with it.

At any rate, cooperation between the two is frequent because the Jewish state is a racist, expansionist state whose very existence will be endangered by the consummation of Arab unity. Indeed, Kanafani declares that "Arab unity spells the end of the Jewish dream for a land of return and the beginning of a new diaspora". Therefore, the Israelis and imperialists work closely together and realize their aspirations by allying themselves with Arab reactionaries, opportunists and provincialists. Kanafani's psychologism enables him to interpret such collaboration in terms of self-interest and as an attempt on the part of Arab reactionaries to maintain their social and financial positions. With reference to the communists, Kanafani states that they are opposed to Arab unity because "they think with a Soviet strategic mentality — a mentality that refuses to recognize that the struggle is national not class struggle". And since they hope to attain power for themselves with whatever means they can muster and attach the region to "communist slavery", it becomes incumbent upon nationalists to frustrate communist goals and objectives and expose them as the enemies of Arab nationalism. Put bluntly, Kanafani thinks that the motivation behind the Soviet Union and Arab Communist parties in their opposition to Nasser's UAR is "a denominational motivation" in order to defend Russia, the alleged "workers' homeland and shield of peace".

Needless to say, Kanafani describes his opponents as treacherous and calls for their outright suppression. Because of this blind metaphysical deification of nationalism and hero-worship of Nasser, Kanafani dismisses all federationist, functionalist and confederationist plans for Arab unity — as

opposed to Nasser's fusionist schemes — as tricks, maneuvers and game-playing. That is, he employs all the blistering tactics of Nasserism that prevailed until the UAR collapsed like a house of cards (September 28, 1961) and the whole dream of Arab unity evaporated as Nasser's "statesmanship" prevented him from stopping the secession of Syria.

Lastly, Kanafani does not stop at his refutation of communism as an ideology and his indictment of Arab Communists as foreign agents; he carries the battle all the way to the doorstep of the Kremlin in order to demonstrate that communism is "incompatible with the nature of man, and the spirit of our era". Though he concedes that the Soviet Union made giant industrial strides under communism, Kanafani nevertheless marshals fragmentary evidence to prove that nationalism, religion and the family still prevail there, which is true enough. But since he begins with the presupposition that communism is intent on the annihilation of his beloved trinity — nationalism, religion and the family — and it has failed to do so, this proves conclusively that communism is against man's nature and that it cannot achieve for him a happier tomorrow. The UAR, therefore, not the Soviet Union, is the place where one's creativeness and genius can develop in a nationalist-socialist environment as opposed to an oppressive internationalist-communist milieu of the Soviet Union.

## CHAPTER II

### The Search For Identify

*You are asking me to become your slave again, Sir. That I was. I am no longer. I am what I intend to be: a citizen in my homeland.*

Abu Salem

Ghassan Kanafani lives in two worlds: The world of Palestine and the world of Arabism. The world of Palestine is the world of abysmal oblivion and exile, where shame and infamy are the overriding sentiments; where anomie and the world of make-believe predominate; where the stomach is one's sovereign universe; where alienation from self, society and one's fellow-man is one's daily bread in a mound of shifting sands standing on the shores of the roaring ocean of life. On the other hand, Arabism is the world of promise, hope and expectation. It is a vision and a world-view that gives the believer a feeling of self-certitude and a sense of belonging to a great people. Its folk-hero is President Nasser, a brown giant that sits astride the Nile Valley breathing fire and brimstone. "Europe! Your machines and cars will rust and come to a standstill; America! Go and take a drink from the Mediterranean to quench your predatory instincts and if this is not enough, go and take a drink from the Red Sea also! "It is the world of non-alignment where brown, black and yellow stand before the sun of Anglo-Americanism, attempt to eclipse it and declare to the world: "We are the subject not the object of history". Hence, Arabism to Kanafani, is overpowering power, the road to and the guarantor of a triumphant return to a New Jerusalem! Meanwhile, the

Palestinians have a desert to cross, an atomized world to overcome, an abandonment complex to understand and uproot before the coming of Palm Sunday, Crucifixion and Resurrection. Consequently, the critical issue is understanding the present's overbearing burden and grasping the question of estrangement wrought by others, precipitated by the Palestinians themselves and given momentum by the historic process. Thus, the function of the writer is to penetrate the Palestinian consciousness and to decipher its conundrum.

In Kanafani's Palestinian world there are two sub-worlds: his private world and his literary world. The private and literary worlds inevitably interact with the Arabist World, reinforce and enlarge each other. But only the literary and Arabist worlds are the central features of Kanafani's politico-literary life until Palestine Palm Sunday, the Karama era of 1968-70, when the Palestinian resistance movement faced head on, the Israelis and routed them the famous battle of Karama, (March 21, 1968). The Arabist world, however, is ascendant for about a decade (1958-68) and begins to lose its pre-eminence only after the downfall of Nasserism (1967-70). Although the replacement of Nasserism by a Palestinized version of Marxism-Leninism starts as early as July, 1967 on the part of the Arab Nationalist Movement only a ramshackle house of Marxism emerges by 1973, on dubious foundations and fragile structural steel.

In early 1960, Kanafani returns to Beirut at the request of the ANM. His apprenticeship of the 1950's ended by his appointment as literary editor of *Al-Hourriah*, the official organ of the ANM. During the 50's (probably in 1958) he developed diabetes, a debilitating disease that put Kanafani in a race with death for the ensuing fourteen years. As if diabetes were not enough for the frail, wiry, little man, gout assailed him, (1963-64), and joined with diabetes in an odious partnership of constant destruction. Only a man of Kanafani's moral fibre and nerves of steel could have sustained himself under these prevailing circumstances and led an abundant and a productive life. Perhaps part of the explanation lies with his wife, Anni, who must have made a significant difference in his struggle for life. For there she was, a Danish woman, a stranger

to Palestine who fell in love with Kanafani and his revolution and became for him a true Palestine in microcosm.

Here he stands in front of Ghalayini's Restaurant at Raouche, Beirut, Lebanon, in the twilight of a September day in 1961. He grasps the hands of a woman he met only the week before on her way from Denmark to Damascus, Beirut, Cairo, Copenhagen. "Anni", he declares in his shocking manner, "I am in ill-health, I have no money, I have no passport, and I have no future. Will you marry me anyway?" Anni is stunned, but the slender blonde accepts and Kanafani takes the first step (November 19, 1961) in a thousand miles journey back to Palestine. The Kanafani's produce two children: Fayez (August 24, 1962) and Leila (October 3, 1966). The family unit for Kanafani becomes a place of harmony and cooperative labor. It is the only place where he feels at "home", back in Mother's womb, shielded from the storm, unaffected by the vicissitudes of time. Anni is the permanent nurse, the ever-loving, trusting wife, and a bread-winner as well. The children and the neighbors' children are playmates, counselors and brotherly rivals. The friends are the admirers, constructive critics and occasional wheeler-dealers. This idyllic abode is Kanafani's vision for a happy Palestine, a united Arab homeland, and a peaceful, populist world. This child that lives in Kanafani lives along the side of the sabre-rattling Kanafani, the exponent of Arabism, revolutionism and revolutionary violence. The child in Kanafani is the sensitive person, the perceptive, precocious, young writer who portrays his people's journey through exile and attempts to contribute to the reconstruction of their peoplehood and the obtainment of their own homeland in Palestine.

At *Al-Hourriah* in Beirut, Kanafani becomes the oracle of Arab literature and the defender of the short-story, novel and play for about three years. "Every creative act", he pontificates, "must be the product of a dual interaction: our heritage and humanity, civilization. We cannot separate our souls from our land and heritage. At the same time, we cannot deny the impact of Western civilization and its achievements upon us!" Starting with such open-mindedness, Kanafani advocates the absorption of some Western approaches and



sometimes Western themes, while in his own case, he adopts modern techniques but maintains completely Arab contents. That is, since he feels that poetry is the only historically continuous strand of Arabic literature, he endeavors to nourish and promote the new art forms such as the short-story and novel. He writes that:

The thinkers suppose that writers are marginal story-tellers who write about infantile things to entertain adolescents. This charge could be true if the short-story remained confined to the 'schools' collar'. But the short-story is capable of imparting to others the feeling of misery, despair, happiness, hope, human interaction, etc. Put more clearly, the short-story can and must become a means of communication between the individual and his humankind.

In order to overcome the "schools' collar", the Arab short-story, Kanafani contends, must "introduce the human body into the picture". The objective of describing the conditions of the human body, he points out, is to "understand the psychological state of a given person or phenomenon in its actual state". As to the novel and the role of literature as a whole, Kanafani believes that "it must express deeply felt personal experiences; it must cultivate human sensibilities; it must challenge and criticize; it must prepare the people for the revolution or deepen the revolutionary consciousness as if it were written for a revolutionary country; it must harp on the lute of hope; it must express 'reality' or escape therefrom and confront the future; it must expose feelings of guilt and the pangs of conscience". In other words, Kanafani embraces "the critical realist" perspective as opposed to the "Modernist" outlook, which stresses style and technique in the perceptual world; the inwardness of the depersonalized person; the experiences of sexual perverts; the insignificance of the collective, the absurdity of life. "The critical realist perspective" is best expounded in Lukacs' *Realism in Our Time*:

Let me say here that, in any work of art, perspective is of overriding importance. It determines the course and

content; it draws together the threads of the narration; it enables the artist to choose between the important and the superficial, the crucial and the episodic. The direction in which characters develop is determined by perspective, only those features being described which are material to their development (p.33).

More specifically, Lukacs defines perspective objectively as pointing to "the main movements in a given historical process. Subjectively — and not only in the field of artistic activity — it represents the capacity to grasp the existence and mode of action of these movements" (p.55). In his writings between 1961 and 1965, Kanafani is the "critical realist" par excellence. But his writings in the Post-June War period, verge on and sometimes attain the status of "socialist realism" as in *Umm Saad* (1970). Lukacs contrasts this trend to "critical realism":

Socialist realism differs from critical realism, not only in being based on a concrete socialist perspective, but also in using this perspective to describe the forces working towards socialism from the inside. Socialist society is seen as an independent entity, not simply as a foil to capitalist society, or as a refuge from its dilemmas — as with those critical realists who have come closest to embracing socialism. Even more important is the treatment of those social forces leading towards socialism; scientific, as against utopian, socialism aims to locate those forces scientifically just as socialist realism is concerned to locate these human qualities which make for the creation of new social order. The revolt against the old order, against capitalism — the point of contact between critical realism and a socialist perspective — becomes a subordinate element in this wider context (pp. 93-94).

Kanafani as "the critical realist" of the early 1960's is the guide not the preacher, the critic not the apologist, the participant-observer, not the mere rabble-rouser and propagandist of Arab League-like belle letterists. In brief, he is

the agitator of the spirit, not the olympian spectator sitting in an ivory tower.

Between 1961 and 1965, Kanafani published three books of short-stories, one novel and one play, in addition to his countless literary and political reviews and articles. The first of these was *Bed Number 12* which has been interpreted in *Palestine Affairs* (No.13, pp.137-221) as an expression of Kanafani's permanent "fear of death". But the 17 stories of the book deal incidentally with death. What the book essentially deals with is the world of reminiscences and recriminations and periodically, self-incriminations. From the first story "The Owl", to the last story "Crucified Sheep", we move thematically from photograph, to memory, to contrition, to infamy, to professional lying by children, to heroism, to death, to the assertion of identity, to wealth, to psychological projection, to party politics, to the teaching profession and the role of the intellectual, to legends, to prostitution, to the desert, to water and finally to civilization symbolized by the car that consumes water which thirsty sheep require to survive. It would be of little value to retell each story separately to show what Kanafani is trying to do, namely to describe a decomposed society wherein the individual is an ecological being, not a person or a citizen in a commonwealth of man.

Put simplistically, Kanafani is in search of a community for himself and his people, and *Bed Number 12* is no more than a declaration of identity and a feeble call to maintain oneself in the face of overwhelming adversity. For what choices does the "refugee" have when he is called "an alien" in his homeland and when he is forced to live continuously on the verge of starvation? He can either attempt to stamp out his past, attempt to escape from it, or try to relive it and weave legends out of it to maintain his self-respect. The past, in other words, can either be an instrument of freedom or slavery. If the "refugee" selects to free himself, he must obviously take from the past those heroic deeds that give him self-assurance and enable him to see how he reached his present miserable lot and see if he can do something about it. The past can also be a means of enslavement if one uses it to cling tenaciously to outmoded ideas and practices without thinking or taking into

account the new reality. Finally, the past can be suppressed if the "refugee" abandons his folkways and tries to submerge himself in the new environment — a status that can be achieved by slavish adaptation and small-time imitation of his surrounding universe. The characters portrayed by Kanafani in *Bed Number 12* undergo all the trials and tribulations of a people in dispersion, each trying to seek a place for himself in an insensitive world. Thus, the most important story in *Bed Number 12* is the title story.

The story "Bed Number 12" is, interestingly enough, not about Palestinians at all, but about an Omani who goes to Kuwait in pursuit of wealth in order to redeem his honor. Now the Omani, Muhamed Ali Akkbar, had asked for the hand of a beautiful woman and had been spurned by her parents because of his poverty. His sister, Sabikka, had told him that the girl's father had died two days before the marriage was to be arranged, and that the father had willed that his daughter not wed Muhamed Ali. In order to console her brother, Sabikka underscored the fact that the father had confused him with Muhamed Ali, the thief and highway man, and that this was the sole reason for his refusal to let his daughter marry him. Muhamed intuitively understood what was going on and set out for a new land to build himself a new future.

Like most "aliens" in Kuwait, Muhamed does menial work for a while, saves money enough to open himself a little shop and starts to accumulate money. Suddenly, his little thriving world collapses when he gets sick and learns that he has "a cancer of the blood." At the hospital, he is placed in Bed Number 12, and the nurses and doctors refer to him as No. 12 or only Muhamed Ali. On his dying bed, he insists on being addressed in his full name: Muhamed Ali Akkbar. He declines to respond to No. 12 or only Muhamed Ali. He expires uttering his name in full, declaring his identity. As Muhamed Ali fights death he tells us that death "is not at all a case of the dead person, but a case for the rest of us who are awaiting our turn with bitterness, so we too can become a little lesson to living eyes". Although Kanafani contends that "we must transfer our thinking from the beginning to ending points",

and "that all thinking must start with the point of death", he is nevertheless saying that individual death is nothing new. But we must deal with the problem of extinction and immortality in the collective sense without projecting onto others our qualities of misdeeds, and without compressing them into our own "skins, patterns, ideas". That is, if Kanafani fears death, it is not for his own death in particular, but the collectivity to which he belongs. This feeling is more clearly revealed in the legend of the "Six Eagles and the Child" when he points out that the eagles (symbolizing the fedayeen) were killed by the police in the village because they had nested on a rock near the police station and their shrieks had annoyed the police. The villagers spin all sorts of stories about the eagles and their demise. Suddenly, an eagle returns with the springtime and life flourishes anew. In the story "Mid-May", the idea of fearing collective death is all-pervading. To corroborate this stance, Kanafani's hero states that he has been silent for twelve years while Israel — the negation of Palestinianism — has progressed by leaps and bounds. "Mid-May" or Israel's birthday, merely interposes itself like "a merciless yoke on my chest and infamy sticks to my bones anew". In another story "My Funeral", the hero repeats the same thought but expresses the hope that "a new sun shall rise as we struggle for a future which we shall proudly proclaim was of our own making".

The central theme of *Bed Number 12* is elaborated upon in practically every story of the collection as Kanafani swings back and forth between memory of the past and promise of the future. However, the feeling of bitterness is ever present, and it propels the heroes to individually stand up, rather than resign to fate and succumb to the temptations of "the civilized world" — a world whose conscience dictates that "water" must be given to cars while "sheep die of thirst in the desert".

In the second collection of 10 stories, *The Land of Sad Oranges* (1963), Kanafani waxes eloquent in declaratory protest against the death of his people. Here the direct approach is adopted, the political stance is taken, the fighters are put on the screen. Reminiscences are still with us in "papers" from Ramle, Attira and Gaza. What is new here,

however, is the refusal to leave the Arab homeland and seek greener pastures, as in Sacramento, California. "No, No, No", the hero says, "I will not go to a land distant from the odor of defeat. I shall stay and wean a generation of the bread of defeat".

In "More Distant Than the Border", Kanafani states the dispersion story unabashedly:

Sir! Do you wish to know something about me? Is that important for you? If so, count on your fingers then: I have a mother who died under the debris of a house her husband built for her in Safad; my father lives in another country and I cannot see, follow or visit him: Sir! I also have a brother who is studying humiliation in UNRWA's schools; I have a sister who is married and lives in another country and she cannot see me or see my father; I have another brother too, Sir! but we don't know where he is ... Do you wish to know my crime, Sir? Do you really want to know or are you just curious? I have spilt the contents of my soul on the head of the State's employee, and I told him that I didn't want to sell my homeland. I must have done it in either a moment of madness or reason; I don't know. And they placed me in an isolated cell so that I would admit that it was a moment of madness on my part ... But in the isolated cell, I became absolutely convinced that my deed was the only moment of reason in my entire life.

Kanafani's lamentations reach high crescendo as he states his case before the sovereign conscience of a deaf world. His hero declares:

Then Sir, I am a sordid pig for wanting to recover my country. But I do not feel as such if you wish to know the truth ... and if I proclaimed the truth in a louder voice, they will place me in prison. And if they put me behind bars, who will open the doors, Sir? You? No, not even anyone higher than you in position or status. Do you know why, Sir? Because I am in reality a commodity of a rare kind, for you will ask yourself if you should by chance hear of the news, 'and what will I gain if I release him?'

And the answer is 'nothing!' For I am not an electoral vote; I am not a citizen in any way shape or form; and I do not come from a state that occasionally asks about the news of its folks ... and I am forbidden to protest ... and what shall I gain by screaming? Nothing! And what will you lose if I remain behind bars? Also nothing!

Continuing with the same line of protestation, Kanafani asserts that 'you have attempted to dissolve me like a cube of sugar in a cup of tea ... but I still remain in spite of all things'. And he zeroes in on the invisible enemy in outrageous defiance:

You have attempted my dissolution, Sir! You have attempted that with continuing effort. Will I be conceited if I say you will fail? Yes, you have won to a large extent, don't you see that you have been able to transform me from a man into a circumstance? I am not above that level, but I am perhaps below it. And because I am a circumstance, we are being pulverized in a shocking manner. It is a fantastic deed sir, even though it took a long period; but sir, to dissolve a million people at the same time and make them standardized non-beings is not an easy operation. For this reason, I believe you will permit me to take my time to recover. You have deprived a million people of their individual qualities and now you do not need to distinguish among them in order to classify them. You are now before a circumstance. Should it occur to you to call it thievery, then do. Thieves we shall be ... why then all this fitful fatigue, exhaustion, and complicated theorizing regarding us?

As if the nail has not been hammered enough into the head of a desensitized humanity, Kanafani takes up the cudgel again:

Sir! I wish to say also that they are a commercial circumstance. They have a touristic value, for each tourist must go to the camps, and the refugees must stand in line to be photographed with sullen faces so that the tourist

can feel a little sorry for them and return to his home saying 'visit the Palestinian camps before they become an extinct race'. And the refugees, Sir, have a leadership value too for they are rich material for nationalist speeches, for humanitarian considerations, for political auctioneering ... And, Sir, you know they have become an establishment with a political life that gives profits to right and left!

What Kanafani hopes for is that his passionate outcries will be heard and their reverberations will have a contagious effect. Unfortunately for him, however, we are told in "The Forbidden Weapon" that an old soldier returns to his home town and the people drive him out because "the villagers think that a weapon in the hands of a soldier is an alluring invitation to kill, and who can guarantee that a soldier wouldn't fire at people if conceit and superiority overtake him?" Moreover, in the story "Nothing", a border guard fires at an enemy post and kills two enemy soldiers. His superiors decide he must be insane and they commit him to a mental hospital where a learned psychiatrist, after posing only a few routine questions, diagnoses the guard's "illness" as "a nervous breakdown". What is significant in these stories is that a beginning is being made on the road to self-recovery, a trend further developed in "A Dead Man in Mosul". The story is about a brilliant young student who is totally apolitical, if not completely anti-political. But when the Iraqi revolution occurs, he starts to think that the road back to Lydda may be via Baghdad. And when the revolution deviates from its pan-Arabist path and becomes solely provincial, the nationalists take up arms to correct its course. The young student participates in the struggle to overthrow the deviationists and dies on the streets of Mosul in the defense of Palestine. In other words, the heroes in *The Land of Sad Oranges* are no longer living on memories only; they are beginning to participate in the making of a new reality. And as revolutionary pioneers, they begin to put in military appearances commensurate with the idea of declaratory protest and personal rebellion. But the rebellious impulse does not begin to assume collectivist implications until we reach *World Not Ours* (1965) and the era that opens up with the commencement of armed struggle.

Meanwhile, we have *Men In The Sun* (1963) which made Kanafani a highly celebrated novelist in the Arab world though it is no more than a long story of 106 pages in relatively large print. The novella consists of four Palestinian characters: Abu Keiss, an old man, Asad, a young adult, Abu Kheizaran, a smuggler and Mirwan, an adolescent of 16, who has to feed a family and make a future for himself. Poverty, dispersion and the promise of a better future in Kuwait unite them. Each has his own story to tell and each story is more saddening than the other. Here we have Abu Keiss whose aspiration in life is to move from a mud hut to a cement house. He wants to educate his children and buy himself a few olive trees because he can't forget his "ten lost olive trees in Palestine, or his house, youth and home town". Then, there is Asad, a man without work and future. He is a virile young adult, lost between the abyss of camp life and the prospects its abandonment would bring him. He borrows money from his uncle in order to go to Kuwait and try a new life. His uncle lends him 50 dinars because he wants him to marry his daughter, Nidda, for the sole reason of having said a prayer with his father at their birth. Asad doesn't love Nidda, though he cannot reject the advance dowery, so he swallows his pride and humiliation; takes the loan and heads for Basra in Iraq to be smuggled to Kuwait.

Mirwan has a more heart-breaking story to tell: His older brother, Zakariah, who used to support the family, marries in Kuwait and forgets his folks. The father, facing idleness and poverty, leaves his family, divorces his wife and marries a woman with an amputated leg because she has a cement house and some income from charities. Because Mirwan is the oldest, he has to support his mother and the other four children. He sets out for Kuwait. The three, Abu Keiss, Asad and Mirwan, symbolize three Palestinian generations. They accidentally meet each other in the smugglers' market in Basra. Mirwan encounters Abu Kheizaran, after a desperate attempt to find a smuggler that would take him to Kuwait for 5 dinars. Having failed, Abu Kheizaran takes pity on him, agrees to his price and tells him that in Kuwait "money comes before morals". Abu Kheizaran, a Palestinian, meets Abu Keiss, and Asad who reach an accord to be smuggled in the

August heat of Iraq into Kuwait for 10 dinars. Abu Kheizaran is an old soldier who has lost his manhood in Palestine, and all he cares about now is money-making and a periodic boast about his heroism as a soldier in the Arab Liberation Army in 1948. Now that the arrangement is made, the four take off to Kuwait and the passengers agree that they're to hide inside the truck's empty water tank in the frying heat of the desert when they arrive at the borders. Abu Keizaran had warned them that the journey will be a little tiresome, but they're travelling cheap with a fellow Palestinian who was going to make certain that they reach their destination. On the way he assures them further that they're certain to arrive because he works for a respected "pilgrim", and he is an "esteemed driver" at the borders. One of them sits beside Abu Kheizaran for the 150 kilometers safari and two sit on top of the water tank. Every few kilometers new seating arrangements are made until they reach the border when the three travellers have to enter the empty water tank so that Abu Kheizaran can clear his papers through customs within five minutes and drive on to the gold mountains of Kuwait. A customs official, Abu Baqr, kids Abu Kheizaran about the latter's sexual exploits in Basra and his alleged adventures with the famous prostitute "Kawakib". Abu Baqr tantalizes Abu Kheizaran: Is it your bullishness or the scarcity of men that makes you Kawakib's successful lover? Abu Kheizaran is outwardly flattered, but inwardly pained by Abu Baqr's gauntlet. The gibberish he exchanges with the customs officials in their air-conditioned station delays his passage more than expected. He nonchalantly returns to his truck but is intuitively fearful for the life of his clients. He drives off and moments after he stops and calls upon them to come out of his horrible furnace. No one answers. He ascends to the top of the truck, opens its turret and finds them burnt from the heat. Pangs of conscience torture him as he drives to a desert garbage heap, drops them off penitently and leaves. But moments afterward, he remembers that he hadn't been paid. He returns, robs the corpses and takes their personal effects. Abu Kheizaran resumes his journey; overcome by the whole affair. He screams in a quivering voice: "Why, why didn't you knock at the walls? Why didn't you shout? Why didn't you howl?"

Why? Why? And suddenly the entire desert echoed with the same cry."

The credibility of the story and its daily truth is what makes it compelling. For Kanafani is stating without equivocation that the escapist option or dependence upon others cannot resolve the problems of his fellow Palestinians, whereas self-reliance is most likely to do so. Evidently, the Palestinians have been spectators in the determination of affairs concerning them, and instead of seizing their own destiny, they are adding to their own collective annihilation by following private pursuits. Abu Kheizaran represents the defeated generation, and his three clients the lost one. However, Kanafani is calling for a generation of rebels in order to rectify the errors of the past and to present a unified voice which will enable the Palestinians to challenge their slavery.

*Men In The Sun* must be considered a realistic appraisal of the plight of "the deceived" generation of Palestinians who are trying to escape their past and establish a new life elsewhere with a view to numbing their conscience and eventually stamping it out. Instead of achieving their individualized solutions, the escapees are choked to death on a desert road on the way to the promised land of Mammon. The relevance and importance of the novella lie, therefore, in its critical realism, its detached, dialectic moralism, and its accurate depiction of an exiled people attempting to find for itself a place under the sun. Furthermore, because of the novelty of *Men in the Sun*, the rarity of novels about Palestinians (only two novels had been published before 1963, and both written by Lebanese — one George Hanah, "*The Refugee*," 1952, and the other by Issa Naouri, "*House Beyond the Borders*, 1959), the authenticity of Kanafani's voice, and the hunger of the Arab people for material on Palestinians, Kanafani's novel catapulted him into the limelight where he unchallengedly remained for the next decade.

The Palestinian, as a speck in the dust, may be an object of pity, charity and humanitarian considerations in the gilded halls of the U.N. and international "care" agencies. But for Kanafani, the Palestinian as the rebel not the refugee, is the true Palestinian. The features he foresaw for this idealized rebel appear in *The Door*, a play Kanafani published in 1964.

To the casual reader, the play seems to be an attack on religion and a call for atheism. However, it is not an attack against religion as such, but a statement of rebellion against tradition and the established order. It is also a statement of faith in the capacity of man as a self-determining agent and a declaration that the examined, not the accepted life, is a profoundly fulfilling one. Thus the revolt against the gods, of order is legitimate and essential to the liberation of man. The paragonic rebels in this case are Aad, the King, and his progeny, Shaddad, and Mirthed. Aad's defiance of the god ends in his self-immolation. His son, Shaddad, resumes the struggle and builds a city, Irm, which is intended as a substitute paradise on earth. But Shaddad is unable to inhabit it because the god, Hibba, is opposed and threatens to destroy both Shaddad and his city. The mother of Shaddad, a woman who embodies tradition, attempts to persuade her son to obey the gods, and to walk in their path of righteousness as a loyal subject. She initially urged her husband, Aad, to seek forgiveness and to stop challenging the gods. But her heedless husband was destroyed in the process of struggle against the Gods, a situation that engenders in her firmer beliefs that strengthen her faith in the omnipotence of the gods. Consequently, when her son, Shaddad, ascends to the throne, she pleads with him not to repeat his father's mistakes. "Why all this pettiness and self-pride? Why not jettison those nonsensical ideas about the gods and begin to think of finding a queen for yourself? "Mother", Shaddad pointedly howls back:

Even Father's paradise could not quench my thirst or give me a feeling of self-sufficiency. Your paradise does not deserve obedience, and Hibba, your god, does not deserve the holy bread offered and incense burnt on his altar. Your heaven does not inspire me with enthusiasm or your priests with the truth. Mother, you have decided to live without questioning, leaving everything to the wisdom of Hibba. Mother, you live by habit only, not by reason. I do not believe in Hibba, nor do I aspire to reach his heaven. I do not fear his hell. I do not wish to live by habit.

The mother reminds Shaddad that he is marching in the

footsteps of his father on the road to self-destruction and that he ought to repent, rather than philosophize. But philosophizing is the mission Shaddad has embraced, and he informs his son, Mirthed, that the "unknown" arouses no interest in him but "the known does". "Son", Shaddad confides,

We all came into being in spite of our noses; then we started to look for justifications for it. We invented Hibba and built altars for him; we invented humankind, and we said to ourselves, there, you see, we have a choice. What lies! Tell me, Mirthed, you can choose the kind of meal you wish to eat, the woman with whom to have sexual intercourse, etc ... but can you really choose what is truly important? I mean, can you really choose time, yes time? Think well. Time! Can you really choose it? Were you ever able to choose when to be happy or miserable? If not, what choice is there?

Mirthed replies calmly, "Life, if we place it as the alternative to death". Shaddad shouts back,

No, No. Death because it is the only remaining true choice for us. You can not choose life because it was given to you, and my son, what is given is not an act of choice. The choice of death is the true choice, but it is not a choice unless you select the appropriate time rather than have it imposed upon you. Death then is the only choice and the only act of freedom we can exercise.

Since Shaddad wants to choose the time of his own death, he sets out for his forbidden city, Irm; Hibba's army meets him at the gates and destroys him. His son, Mirthed, ascends to the throne amidst the splendor of heathen worship and the pageantry of ancient monarchy. The mother is initially pleased that her grandson bent a knee to tradition, but he suddenly disappoints her when he announces that "the seeds my father planted are growing like olive trees". That is, Mirthed resumes his father's battles and adds dialogue of humanly invented mutual opposites: life vs death, God vs man, love vs hatred, marriage vs adultery, etc. As Mirthed

struggles on earth, his father, Shaddad, confronts Hibba, the god, in an assembly of the dead and challenges him there as well. Hibba turns out to be a most revealing god.. He admits to Shaddad: "You have conferred authority upon me so I would govern you by lies, and I would have the last words. In spite of this, I will tell you something very important. There is no power and there is no final word if you do not give me power and the last word!" "Nonsense", Shaddad blurts out, "Look what you did to these miserable people around us". "But", Hibba rebuts, "I did not judge them, I only suggested things and that was because of my long experience". "Who governs them?" Shaddad demands to know. "Those who live in other rooms govern you and others", Hibba answers. "And how can they judge me without knowing me?" Shaddad asks. "Because they do not know you", Hibba says cold-bloodedly. And the dialogue continues in this vein until we reach the conclusion that dualism must be merged in unified monisms, the most important of which is freedom. That is, the autonomous individual must be self-affirming and the only humanly valuable aspiration is freedom. Our dethroned hero, Hibba, proclaims the new faith: "I speak of a disinterested freedom, a freedom without return, a freedom which is itself a return!" According to this humanly inspired philosophy, the kingdom of freedom is a selfless kingdom of freedom, a resilient kingdom without thrones and ordered hierarchies. It is a kingdom of the living, not the living dead. It is a republic of equal individuals, not of superiors and inferiors and its resilience depends on the vigilance or negligence of its guardians.

With the publication of *A World Not Ours* (1965) Kanafani's Palestinian world of reminiscences comes full circle. It is the culmination of the period of private Palestinianism, the initial appearance of the Palestinian personality and the take-off era of a collective Palestinian consciousness. *World Not Ours*, a collection of 15 stories, is one of the most neglected books Kanafani ever wrote. After establishing his identity in *The Death of Bed Number 12*, expressing his vehement protests in *The Land of Sad Oranges*, parading the life of escape via Kuwait in *Men In The Sun*, and finally after proclaiming his rebellion against tradition in

*The Door*, Kanafani pulls together the apparently divergent strands of his thought into a coherent whole and offers the book as a portrait of a world not of our own making. Although some literary critics such as Ballal, Hassan and Ihsan Abbas intimate that Kanafani had a morbid obsession with death, and imply that he was an existential absurdist in the period 1961-65, they nevertheless overlook *World Not Ours*, which, if analysed carefully, could give some substance to the existential thesis, at least, in terms of the subject matters it poses. But since *World Not Ours*, has very little to say about important existential topics such as nausea, absurdity, the futility of life, suicide, sexual abnormalities and other over-personalized, narcissistic preoccupations such as self-love, pity, contempt, it would be best to dismiss it, as does F. Al-Mansour, "as adding nothing creative or new or anything enhancing to the growing reputation of Kanafani, the talented short-story writer". But *World Not Ours* would be a gold mine for those unfamiliar with Kanafani's writings or are attempting to learn something about a world in which the individual is a mere atom in an infinite universe, an ant in a huge ant-mountain, a speck in the global dust, yet a person living in a sub-world of his own, in a world imposed from outside, from which he can hardly escape.

*World Not Ours* opens with the story "Walls of Iron". It is the story of a caged bird continuously fluttering and vainly trying to escape the impenetrable walls of its prison. The bird spends several months adapting to his cage and resigns himself to the reality of coddled confinement. Abruptly, the owner transfers the bird to a new cage and the fluttering starts all over again as adults and children toy with the bird and admire its beauty. But the children begin to reflect on the wonders of release for the bird and the joy freedom would bring him if he were to get go. Unfortunately, the children's wish is not complied with, and the bird is retained and kept in his cage.

In "The Hawk", Kanafani harps on the world of "otherness" as well. Here we have two guards in a large apartment building who are angry at each other, and one of them takes the conflict to a school-teacher in the building. The complainant, Mubarak (the blessed one), is an old man who refuses to learn the name of the tenants and calls every

one of them Abdullah, or the Slave of God. Mubarak's difficulties with Jidan concern the fact that the latter, instead of cleaning the toilets himself, has hired another man to do the job for him. Since Mubarak knows the tasks each guard has to perform, he is unhappy because Jidan does not carry out his responsibilities fully though he gets his work done. The school-teacher is a little surprised by the story. He visits Jidan and enquires about his behavior. He discovers that Jidan is a proud man who doesn't think he should clean the dirt of others and tells the school-teacher his life story stressing the period when he used to go gazelle hunting with the hawk, Nar (fire), who used to chase the gazelle mercilessly until it caught him, clawed him in the eyes and prevented him from seeing further. The blinded gazelle simply fights to survive in a closed circle – he is the easy prey of the hunter who comes chasing after him in cars with modern rifles. Jidan is not satisfied by only telling his story; He draws conclusions from it. "School-teacher", he asks broodingly, "Do you know that gazelles love to die at the places of their folks and hawks do not care where they die? Do you school-teacher?"

The world of slavery begets boredom, indifference to life and sometimes it generates self-pity and day-dreaming but redress is possible. It is elaborated upon in "Kafr Al-Manjam" (Gold City) where Ibrahim is a model student who always passes with distinction. He often asks his colleagues what they think about boredom. Ibrahim only fails once and he commits suicide because he can no longer find meaning in life. But, while some escape reality by suicide, others build castles in the air instead. In this same story, the waiter, an old man who works in a Damascus restaurant, advises a suicidal youth that he will provide him with a boat to travel to the city of his dreams where beds are made of gold. Over a cup of bitter coffee, the youth is dissuaded from suicide and takes off instead for Kafr Al-Manjam in a dream. Upon arrival, the youth carves himself a cave of gold and starts to fill his sacks with it. He is amazed to find out that the more gold he expropriates, the more gold there is. He becomes bored again and the idea of living in a cave of gold becomes repugnant to him. He awakens with the last sip of coffee, smiling and saying: "No ... Ibrahim, my classmate, will not return from



Kafr Al-Manjam." In "Ten Meters Only", Kanafani takes up the question of relationships in this atomized, enervating world as a substitute for one's private universe. He states that "each thing loses its meaning when the individual becomes accustomed to it; but when a woman enters my house ... something human and new occurs and this is something that deserves my attention". The idea of bridge-building or relation formation with others juxtaposes "civilization" and humanity along the same lines. Then Kanafani points out that "it is comical that a man places himself in a car, thereby profiting from civilization, yet the distance between himself and his humanity remains in a decrepit state".

The idea of bridge-building pervades most of the remaining stories in *A World Not Ours*. In "Slipping", the relations between the school's principle and teachers are absolutist and autocratic. They are based on the superordination - subordination concept, and as a result, they are transactional, not genuine human relations. Such autocratic relations are also illustrated in the relationship between a cobbler and a richman. The latter is living in an exclusive area where the affluent live side by side. The cobbler has a little shack-shop where the rich have their shoes repaired and shined. Since the rich have no perception of the cobbler's humanity, they indifferently throw their refuse on top of his shop from their high verandas. Finally, the shack collapses and the cobbler is killed by the garbage heap. The cobbler's wife is awaiting the return of her husband the evening he dies, and when he fails to come home, she decides that he must be so busy that he has to work at night. When she learns, however, that he isn't coming back for a while, she declares: "He will return in the summer when the garbage dries up." In "One Glass Box" the hero, who can't establish human relations with women, goes to a house of prostitution where he finds a philosophic prostitute. The hero is astounded when the prostitute whom he selected after declining several solicitations, tells him that "half of your life is looking at others and the other half is others looking at you." He is puzzled when she asks him what does he know about "the glass box in which we live". "What glass box?" the hero enquires. The prostitute smiles, shaking her head and gives

him a good time. Afterwards, the wise prostitute explains to the hero that "a human being should not be ashamed to come to cheap prostitutes like myself to relieve his self-destructive deprivations", and she underlines, semi-seriously, a very important point to the hero. "The women on the top floors of this glass box world are polite wives, not specialized prostitutes, who give part of themselves to the columns of the deprived because of humanitarian considerations." Before this awesome philosophizing, the startled hero states self-scoldingly: "I felt infamy crawling in my bones, and life appeared to me so debased and so narrow that it is incapable of being broad enough to satisfy man and his hunger." "Yes," our hero concludes reflecting on the prostitutes, "We live in one glass box. We move inside it. We never leave the box. We merely move from one floor to another. We never leave."

Being caught in "the glass box", doesn't help; indeed it mutilates the life of the drummer in "The Thirst of the Serpent". The drummer is a man who marches at the head of every wedding party leading the procession from the bride's house to that of the groom's. He is the indispensable man of the town. No person can envision a wedding taking place without the drummer's presence. During the passage of time cars become the fashion and even the poor have to use them. The town dispenses with the drummer, who decides to stone the first wedding party of a relatively poor man who didn't invite him to his wedding, and he is taken to prison for his misdeed. The writer muses at the end: "As regards the drummer, the past is a box of thick wood locked by a thousand locks and the keys have been thrown into the darkness of the ocean". The drummer's predicament, however, is quickly compensated for in "Half of The World", in which Abdul Rahmanguoges out one of his eyes in order to see half of the world, because others with two eyes cannot see anything. Consequently, his truly blind friends begin to say that Abdul Rahman "can only see half of the truth now", whereas he insists that they "cannot see and what you see is divided. But I see the truth in its fullness". "What is the truth?" his interlocutors demand to know. "Joy, that is the only truth", he proclaims. He continues, "Sadness has no existence and there is no justification for it". This philosophy

of joy makes mockery of wealth, order and the law in "The Donkey". Massoud Bey is a self-made powerful man. He is extremely rich, and his wishes are the law of his city. One day he is speeding and kills a donkey. Two police officers, who don't know his Beyship, arrest him. The story captures the headlines of newspapers, the Bey is exposed, and becomes the butt of everybody's ridicule in town. "The Invincible Bey", who started his life as a cab driver, crumbles with his empire, and "The Donkey", whose owner never dared claim him, is posthumously celebrated for his accidental destruction of the Bey.

Relation-formations move from the elemental to the transactionalist, and finally, to the truly human in "The Lion's Stone Head". The story is about a poor magazine publisher with an old house and a large family. He has enormous debts and no friends who can help him out. As a publisher, he is visited by curious foreigners, one of whom is James, a young English man, whose intellectual interests have brought him to the Arab world. He visits the publisher and almost imposes himself as his guest. Then another British person, Rose, comes and she ends up staying with the starving publisher and his family sharing their pittance. Amer, an Arabized Italian from a rich family, attempts to woo Rose, but the latter discovers that she and James both come from London, from the same district. They fall in love, marry and become good friends with the publisher. With love, joy, family and developing human relations now replacing hatred, sadness and isolation, "A World Not Ours" begins to crack. And we start a new world on a very hopeful promise in "The Bride"

The "Bride" turns out to be a Czech rifle that was captured from an Israeli soldier in the War of 1948 by a volunteer fighter. As a loyal soldier who was fighting heroically in the defense of his home town, "Al-Shaab", Riad turns over the rifle to his superior officer so that the high command can ascertain its origin and find a better rifle to fight the enemy. The officer, instead of pursuing the matter further, flees town and sells the rifle to an old man for 100 dinars. The heroic soldier, of course, never anticipated the sale of "The Bride" because he trusted his commander. The

soldier keeps searching for it aimlessly, until he sees it months later with the old man who had purchased it with money received by marrying his daughter to "a rotten old man". The soldier immediately jumps the old man saying, "This is my bride, I want it". After a little struggle, the old man tells the soldier what had happened and how 40 men of "Al-Shaab" had all died heroically in the absence of such "Brides". The soldier leaves the scene. Then Kanafani writes: "I have not been able to find out the name of the bride who was sold for the price of the Bride and I do not know what the old man did with his new rifle-Bride. And I do not know whether my hero is the only remaining fighter of the people of Al-Shaab." One month before the publication of *A World Not Ours*, on January 1, 1965, soldiers from Al-Shaab (the people) obtain "Brides" and fire the first shots which launched the modern Palestinian revolution.

### CHAPTER III

## Devotional Nasserism

*I fell in love with the revolution and lived for its sake. And as I stood 'witness' to its downfall, I was afraid. I was unable to grasp or envision its defeat, and, at the same time, I was unable to betray myself. I committed suicide!*

Vladimir Mayakovsky

The world of Arabism for Ghassan Kanafani was the world of Nasserism and the United Arab Republic (UAR). It was an all-encompassing world for the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) in which Kanafani's role was that of the expositor-propagandist, the intellectual proconsul in a province, the field-marshal poet laureate transmitting good tidings to the faithful, bludgeoning the infidel, cajoling the onlooker. He was a bishop in the Church triumphant.

To the ANM and to Kanafani, their commitment to Nasserism was not a question of mere fanaticism or blind religiosity. On the contrary, it was a commitment to the salvation of the Arab nation, and they adhered to Nasserism because it provided the wherewithal for the attainment of that objective. Moreover, the ANM-Nasser tandem was the convergence-point of pan-Arabism that took a few years to develop. And when it did, it commenced as a marriage of convenience that turned into a long honeymoon which ended in bitterness and a feeling of betrayal as the dream vanished with the collapse of the groom's "impregnable" castle, the destruction of his flying machines and the surrender of his

courtyard. The self-deluded bride was jolted by the sight of catastrophe; she abandoned her prince, attempted to recover her sanity and returned to her plebeian origins and prepared to launch a Spartacist revolt of the poor against the enemies of light. In relating the story of Arabism Kanafani's neophytic evangelism and his function as a provincial Heykal, writing in Beirut will be focused upon. The chief ideologist of Arabism, Mohamed Hassanein Heykal, was editor-in-chief of Al-Ahram in Cairo, explaining the edicts of the Holy See to the World in general and the Arab world in particular, whereas Kanafani's role was that of the local expositor.

The ANM consisted of groups of intellectuals and students whose social backgrounds predisposed them to react to the violence wreaked upon the Arab nation as a result of the creation of the state of Israel. They did not begin with political manifestos, intellectual blueprints or mass organizations. They were unable to form sham parliamentary parties or to join tribal organizations that worked for the preservation and enhancement of private or class privileges in an atmosphere of stasis or thoroughgoing corruption and political debauchery. Consequently, the young nationalists embarked on a conspiratorial career that lasted for nearly three years and culminated in the elimination of their para-military organization, Katib Al-Feda Al Arabi (1948-51).

In 1951, the two prime-movers of the movement, Doctors George Habash and Wadi Haddad, moved from Beirut to Amman, Jordan, whereas their erstwhile Comrade, Hani Al-Hindi, languished in a Syrian jail, accused of attempting to assassinate Adib Shishakli, a military officer. Between 1952 and 1954, the nationalists viewed with alarm the rise of the military to power in Egypt (July 23, 1952), not because they favored the monarchy, but because they feared "the military elite" and its conspiratorial strategy — a mode of operation which they had recently repudiated labeling it "terroristic adventurism". The nationalists had opted for mass organization as the correct road to Arab unity and regeneration of the Arab nation, and they seemed to suspect "the special relationship" the leadership of the Free Officers' Movement had with the U.S.A., and its stress on the internal

problems of Egypt, rather than those of the Arab nation. They were not happy either when the military abolished all political parties by decree. However, between 1954 and 1958, the position of the nationalists changed: The Egyptian colonels started to emphasize the role of Egypt as a focal-point in the Arab world and proclaimed a revolutionism that embraced liberation from the yoke of imperialism and unity of the Arab people. In other words, the anti-imperialist position of the two groups, especially the fight against the Baghdad Pact and the Tripartite aggression against Egypt (the Suez War, 1956), launched by Britain, France and Israel against Egypt with a view to toppling Nasser and reoccupying and de-nationalizing the Suez Canal enabled Nasser and the ANM to reach a modus operandi via his faithful follower, Abdul Hamid Sarraj of Syria. The relationship was further augmented with the formation of the UAR (February 21, 1958) which the ANM regarded as "a nucleus of a wider national state that would create a better life for future generations", according to Basil Al-Kubaisi. Since the ANM had no grass roots movement in Syria (it had been forced to transfer its headquarters from Amman to Damascus after King Hussein suppressed the opposition parties in April, 1957), it favored the Nasserite decree of March 12, 1958, which dissolved all political parties and hoped to build "a viable political organization to defend the Union". The ANM then, became the willing tool of Nasserism and defended its unitarian conception of Arab unity, its flexible positive neutralism and "socialist cooperativist" construction. Moreover, the ANM fervently participated in the battle against Communism and accused the Arab Communist parties of being foreign agents, importing foreign ideologies.

However, with the disintegration of the UAR in 1961, the UAR-ANM focus shifted from a predominantly nationalist perspective to a perspective with a socialist-nationalist content that was imbued with an incipient theory of class struggle and a profounder understanding of the structure of society, its social forces, history and evolution. The old nationalist perspective to which most nationalists subscribed was lyrically articulated by a Syrian Greek Orthodox Christian, Michel Aflaq. He conferred a capital role on Islam

in "the eternal mission" of the Arab nation and regarded it as a manifestation of the Arab genius, a superior form of its civilization. In "To The Memory of the Prophet", Aflaq, the founder of Baath Socialism, declared:

Islam is the motor which sets in motion the latent forces of the Arab nation; this nation then overflows with warm life, sweeping away the obstacles of tradition and convention to renew its bond with the Universe. It is overcome with wonder and enthusiasm with new words and splendid actions; and unable to contain itself, under the impulse of its ecstasy, overflows into other nations by its thought and by its action. In this manner it attains by its thought and by its action. In this manner it attains universality ... The duty of Arabs is to spread through the world their qualities and their virtues until other peoples can grow to resemble them or raise themselves up to their level.

The new perspective of socialist-nationalism was embodied in the UAR Charter (May 21, 1962) which was promulgated on June 30, 1962. The Charter may be summarized thus :

- 1) Revolution is the only course the Arab struggle can assume for the nation to free itself from its shackles and rid itself of the dark heritage which has burdened it.
- 2) The Arab revolution is the implement and reflection of the Arab struggle which must be well-equipped by three powers. These are: a) consciousness based on the scientific conviction arising from enlightened thought and free discussion, unaffected by the forces of fanaticism and terrorism; b) free movements that adapt to the changing circumstances of the Arab struggle, provided that these movements observe the objectives and the moral ideals of the struggle; c) clarity and perception of the objectives which never loses sight of them and which avoids being swept away by emotion and diverted from the high road of the national struggle thus wasting a considerable part of its energy.

- 3) Freedom is to be had by the country and the citizen.
- 4) Socialism is both a means and an end. It is based on self-sufficiency and justice.
- 5) Arab unity is the restoration of the natural order of the nation. It is a unity based on language which forms a unity of mind and thought; it is a unity of history which creates a unity of conscience and sentiments; it is a unity of hope based on the unity of both future and fate. As a "unity of objectives", the new Arab unity will move the revolution from its political phase to that of the social revolution.
- 6) The UAR is the framework of the new revolution of Arab unity. Hence:

The first duty of the popular revolutionary leadership is to the Arab nation, a duty which means that the great part of the responsibility for this pioneer revolutionary action devolves upon the popular revolutionary leadership in the UAR, since natural and historical factors have laid upon the UAR the responsibility of being the nucleus state in the endeavor to secure liberty, socialism and unity for the Arab nation.

- 7) Because of some very radical changes that have taken place in the world, such as the rise of the nationalist movements in the post-war period, the power achieved by the Communist camp, the scientific and technological advances that have been made and the increasing weight of

new social forces the world over, it becomes incumbent upon the Arab nation to adapt itself to changing reality and join the van of human progress.

This ideological perspective, based on nationalism, socialism and Arab unity is Kanafani's ideological frame of reference. Kanafani is deliberately appointed to the editorship of Al-Mouharir, the Nasserite mouthpiece in Beirut, in 1963, on the recommendation of the ANM leadership.

The appointment was a significant milestone in the political life of Kanafani, catapulting him from an obscure literary editorship in an ideological journal into the limelight

and communication with the journalistic elite of Beirut and the huge Nasserite readership of Al-Mouharir in Beirut and other Arab provinces. The appointment is said to have been arranged by Muhsin Ibrahim, the Lebanese Nasserite ideologue, who wanted to ease Kanafani out of Al-Hourriah and maintain his strong grip over it, and propagate the socialist, pan-Arabist, Nasserite line as distinguished from a combination of a Palestinian, pan-Arabist line. To put the matter more specifically, Palestine for the Ibrahim group was one of several Arab areas under foreign occupation that had to be liberated; whereas for the Habash-wing in which Kanafani was a member, Palestine was the focal-point and Nasserism was the vehicle for its liberation. That is, the Ibrahim-Nasserite line was ideological, whereas the Habash-Nasserite line was instrumentalist. Thus, Ibrahim espoused and promoted the development of the "social question", whereas Habash advocated the nationalist question and vacillated between the nationalist-socialist poles.

Coincidentally, the editorship brought Kanafani a Lebanese citizenship which enabled him to obtain a passport in the Second Spring of the Arab nation — when the forces of secession and separatism were overturned in Iraq and Syria; when revolutionary Algeria in the Arab West was successfully fending-off a neo-colonialist invasion;<sup>2</sup> and when republican Yemen, with the aid of the UAR was threatening to set the Arabian peninsula aflame, dethrone the Saudi family and expel the British from Aden and the Arab Gulf. Fortunately for Kanafani, he makes his political debut at a time of heightened tension and feverish activities, an environment that befits his aggressive impulses, abrasive character, lashing tongue and abusive pen. He sits regally in his editorial office, reviling the enemy, bringing to task the critic, exposing the wavering friend. But unfortunately for Kanafani, his demi-God, Nasser, went into a twilight zone within two years (1965), then erupted in defiance in a kind of a swansong (November 66-May 67) that was followed by the catastrophic debacle of June '67. Thereupon, Kanafani moves from Al-Mouharir to Al-Anwar (July '67) and remains the editor of its supplement until the PFLP founded Al-Hadaf on July 26,

1969. But Kanafani continues to write his "Behind the Scenes" weekly column for the Al-Anwar daily until March 8, 1970. Meanwhile, Nasser tries to rebuild his armed forces and reestablish his leadership by returning to the policy of "the unity of ranks" among the Arabs, not the unity of oppressed against oppressors. On July 23, 1969, Nasser declared his famous "war of attrition" against Israel, then bolted destiny (July 23, 1970) by accepting the Rogers proposals, a decision that led to "Black September", when King Hussein with general Arab acquiescence wiped out the Palestine resistance movement in Jordan as a prelude to its complete annihilation in the Arab homeland. In the midst of this horrendous hurricane, Nasser died, millions mourned over him and thousands engaged in public self-flagellation.

The immediate battle that brings Kanafani to the forefront is the Nasserite-Baathist dispute over the Tripartite Declaration (April 17, 1963) in which the Baath is accused of *betrayal and high treason against the Arab nation*. The Tripartite Declaration had been signed between the UAR, Iraq and Syria in the euphoric period shortly after the Baath took power in both Iraq (February 8, 1963) and Syria (March 8, 1963). The Declaration read in part:

The delegations were inspired by belief that Arab unity is an inevitable objective which derives from a common language which is the carrier of culture and thought, a common history which is the maker of sentiment and conscience, a common popular struggle which determines and shapes destiny, common spiritual and human values emanating from divine revelation and common social and economic concepts based on freedom and socialism ... the three revolutions (July 23, Ramadan 14, March 8) converged on this point: the reaffirmation of the fact that unity is a revolutionary act which derives its concepts from the faith of the masses, its strength from their will and its aims from their aspirations to freedom and socialism.

According to the Declaration:

Unity is to be established in accordance with the desires of

the people, on the basis of democracy and socialism, and that it is to be a real and solid unity which takes into consideration regional conditions and so strengthens the bonds of unity on a foundation of realistic understanding rather than perpetuating factors conducive of division and separatism.

In less than three months (July 18, 1963) the Nasserite elements in the coalition with Baath conducted a putsch against their former partners. Baath ruthlessly suppressed the uprising and indiscriminately aimed its guns on all potential enemies. The Declaration joined the scrap heap of Arab constitutional history, and Nasser and the Baath unleashed against each other a fratricidal war that culminated in their mutual defeat in 1967 and put an historic end to the effective reign of the Arab petit bourgeoisie which they had represented in the Arab world, from the 1950's onward. Here is a flavor of the war of words waged by Nasser:

We do not consider that the UAR is bound to the present Fascist regime in Syria by any common aim. This ... is impossible when the other regime is built on fraud and treachery, is non-unionist and non-socialist, but rather secessionist, inhuman and immoral. We do not consider that the Damascus Government represents the Syria with which we signed the Tripartite Union Agreement. Indeed this Agreement did not bind governments but revolutionary nationalist Arab forces.

Syria and the Syrian people are poles apart from the present Fascist regime ... We have therefore decided that this agreement is valid only if the true Syria is a party to it but that the Agreement does not bind us in the least to the Fascist Ba'athist regime ... Our acceptance of this Fascist regime as a partner in Union would be tantamount to a betrayal of the cause of Arab Unity and of the Syrian people, who alone possess the right to settle the issue ... We cannot, nor can the Syrian people, presume to (unite) under the shadow of scaffolds, blood baths and collective massacres.

The Baathist rebuttal placing the odium for the failure of Union on Nasser states:

The Secessionists once claimed that they wanted no union with 'Abd al-Nasir. It grieves us, therefore, to hear him now proclaiming no union with the Baath. Unity soars above party personalities. It is a historical destiny whose disruption constitutes a historical crime. The National Revolutionary Council insists on the implementation of the Charter and considers its abrogation, whether conscious or otherwise, to be tantamount to Secession.

Taking his clues from Nasser, Kanafani plunges into the fray with the ardor of the true believer. He interprets a Baath intra-party conflict as a "capricious continuation of the illusionism of Baath". And he continues: "Baath wants to govern at any price; by bilateral unity with another state if such a unity strengthens it; without unity, if forced to do so; with Bitar (A Baathist Prime Minister) if that suits it. The Baath road begins with the cheap maneuvers at the expense of the Arab future and ends with isolationism and fascism" (October 3, 1963). As to Baath relations with the people, Kanafani adds. "Baath gauges the sincerity of people by the degree to which they are committed to the use of Soviet weapons against the Kurds. They are trying to distort the Cairo model and Baath refuses to interact with Cairo." Baathist "deviationism has reached such proportions that it squelches the national forces that participated in the making of the April Declaration while it lessens its grip on reactionary forces and allies itself with them". (October 4, 5, 1963). In a long article entitled "Fascists", Kanafani accuses the Baath in Syria and Iraq of "repression against the progressive forces with a view to impairing the national health by destroying the fabric of society and the unitarian forces within it". The Baath "pretends" that it is trying to establish a "single party system", and in the process it "persecutes the opposition" though the latter does not stand in "fundamental contradiction" with "the vague theory of Baath". If anything, Baath has "no program, no theory and no doctrine" to justify it to "act like a Communist Party" (October 7, 1963). When

Syria and Iraq declare that they are about to form "a military unity", Kanafani dismisses it as "a forged passport whose aim is national deviation and falling into line with imperialist reactionary schemes east of Suez in order to stem the revolutionary tide of the UAR which reached its summit in the April 17 Declaration" (October 9, 1963). To further legitimize "the military unity", Baath announces that the project has the full backing of Cairo. Thereupon, Kanafani declares, "This is a scandalous and an atrocious lie, and a rightist bourgeois stance, a romantic phenomenon", and he reminds the Baath that only a few weeks before they had classified Cairo's rulership as "a personalist, bureaucratic, opportunistic, reactionary, separatist, dictatorship" (October 10, 11, 1963). Shortly thereafter, Kanafani returns to the same theme contending that "Baath sacrifices truth for the purpose of its ownself-tranquillity", and he adds, "since Baath is afflicted with the malaise of conceit which dictates that personalist standards shall replace objective considerations, it is not impossible for Baath to choose the narrow personalist, selfish view to maintain its power" (October 18, 1963).

The interneccine verbal war against Baath continued unabated for nearly three years. It reached its peak, however, in October-November 1963, immediately after the *Sixth Congress of Baath* (the Congress was held from October 5-23, 1963) which issued its famous seven resolutions on October 27, 1963. The Baath resolutions open with a preamble bristling with fury and recrimination against Cairo. First of all, Baath asserts that "the April 17 Declaration was the result of the new objective forces achieved by the popular masses under the leadership of our party". Baath underlines the following: "Cairo was unable to recognize the new objective circumstances of Arab struggle, so it refused to cooperate and interact within the framework of unity and announced its withdrawal from the Declaration".

The Baath resolutions embrace: 1) "The principle of collective leadership" as an equilibrium between centralization and democracy; 2) the socialist objectives of the revolution are to be embodied in the social structure of the party which will depend on the workers and peasants to

carry out the revolution; 3) in order to prevent opportunist infiltration of the party, power temptations on the part of power-seekers, or the emergence of an ideological elite without responsibility, Baath will permit and encourage mass criticism of the party and guarantee democratic procedures; 4) the party is "the vanguard of the fighting people" ... representing the general will and the ambitions and needs of the people; therefore, it will rule the country by means of a party government under the leadership and directorship of the party; 5) the party adopts "scientific and revolutionary socialism" as its ideology within "the national framework"; 6) democratic socialist change can only be achieved by man's participation; and finally, Baath defines "the socialist forces of the revolution":

The bourgeois middle class is no longer capable of playing any positive role in the economic field and its opportunism has made it a new ally of imperialism. The Congress considered that the workers, peasants and educated revolutionaries (military and civilian) and the petit bourgeoisie are the forces which will make — if united — the socialist revolution in its first phase.

The proclamation of such daring resolutions was clearly an attempt on the part of Baath to eclipse the UAR Charter of 1962 and bypass it as an historic document and a framework for the Arab revolution. The sudden conversion of Baath to "scientific socialism" must be regarded not only as a challenge to Nasserism as such, but also as a turning-point in Baath history which marked the ascent of a new generation of ideologists to power, who, in due course, (February 23, 1966) were not only prepared to repudiate the traditional leadership of Aflaq-Bitar, but also to expel them from party ranks and offer themselves as an alternative mass party to Nasser's "personality cult" and his amorphous political organization, the Arab Socialist Union. In other words, the portrayal of Baath as a party and Nasserism as a one-man show was calculated as a provocative and direct attack on the whole Nasserite world-view. Although factionalism overtook Baath as a result of its new position, especially as regards its leaders,



Kanafani is nevertheless infuriated by the arrogance of Baath and its intellectualist, "opportunistic" posturings. His first reaction to the Baath resolutions states that: "The declaration is a restatement of traditional socialism. It is an attempt to outbid Nasserism. It is plagued with ambiguity. It is a flippant declaration" (October 29, 1963). Lest we be deceived by this mildness, Kanafani dubs the declaration (October 30, 1963) "an improvised counterfeit, a formalistic transformation". Then he proceeds to point out that "for ten years Baath claimed that it made unity a popular slogan. It seceded from the UAR and claimed it would look for a better way to unity. Now we enter a new stage: socialist pretensions (socialism is already being practiced in two Arab states, Algeria and the UAR). But the declaration will constitute no dangers. It is a mere nuisance that may cause some confusion."

Kanafani considers the declaration democratic socialist, not Marxist, and refers to the history of European social democracy as a history of abdication and concessions to capitalism. And since Baath professes to have a heritage of its own, and Marxism to it is "an instrument of analysis", such a position illustrates that Baath is "a group of adolescents whose ideational confusion and intellectual poverty propelled them to resort to a theory that might put an end to their poverty and despair" (October 31, 1963). Kanafani intimates that "so-called Baathist socialist transformation has failed to link itself with an advanced Arab locomotive where the socialist experiment is in operation qualitatively and quantitatively". Secondly, it abandoned the tripartite objective of Arab unity which could have "pushed socialist transformation within its natural unitarian framework and undermined provincialism and its animosity towards unity" (November 4, 1963).

Kanafani's indictment of the Baath is augmented by his gloating elation over Baath's inner decomposition which manifested itself in the overthrow of the Iraqi wing on November 18, 1963. He had long maintained that Baath would not last in either Syria or Iraq and when it showed signs of cracking in Iraq, he said, "the Baath will collapse because it runs the state with the logic of the rabble, wages war against its citizens and criticizes the UAR" (November 14, 1963).

Apparently, an intra-party dispute within Baath circles was in part responsible for its violent overthrow, but Kanafani attributes Baath's downfall solely to a power struggle between civilians and militarists rather than to a Nasserite conspiracy or other factors as well. He states that "personalist ambitions" among the contenders for power, "allow one person to imagine he is the Baath idea and its embodiment when there is no Baath and no idea. Thus, in the absence of party organization, privatized bloc formations take place and their loyalties are not to party and country, but to individual leaders" (November 18, 1963).

In the conflict, the military officers claim "they are the true ideologists who can govern the country more effectively than the civilians and wage a war of extermination against their fellow citizens, the Kurds". On the other hand, the civilians claim that they represent the party, whereas "the military bureaucracy, which is overflowing with private interests and riddled with contradictions", does not. Therefore, the soldiers must return to their barracks and leave the governing to "the civilian authorities" (November 22, 25, 1963).

As Kanafani attacks Baathism, he expounds Nasserism as "a method of revolutionary thinking which sees events from the point of view of the masses and works for them with a committed revolutionary mentality". The Nasserite approach always emphasizes action in the service of the working masses, the rif (countryside), peoples' houses and services to peasant and lawyer. It gives company shares to workers, freedom to all, and above all, it "frees the human will from the pressures and arbitrariness of class power". (October 3, 1963). Nasserism also means power which negates "the legend of Jewish military superiority", and this is verified not only in the prowess of the UAR soldiers in Yemen (October 22, 1963) but by the official Cairo declaration (November 7, 1963) that states that "the UAR's air force is capable of carrying out offensive and deterrent operations throughout the Middle East relying on one central base and one command". Then Kanafani day-dreamingly boasts:

The planning military mentality which stands behind the

UAR is, without a doubt, at the expected level of time and preparedness. It is a mentality that takes into considerations the rapid technological changes that have occurred and are likely to occur in the future. It keeps abreast with military doctrine. Hence, Cairo's efforts in the field of rocketry, its fuels, range and guidance system do not fall under the rubric of military exhibitionism, but come under the overall strategic plan which is drawn by a conscious military mentality that knows that the sciences of rockets and space are the skeletal bones of the military strategy of the foreseeable future (November 7, 1963).

Kanafani's praise of Nasserism and its "constructive power" is most eloquent on the occasion of the inauguration of the Aswan Dam, in mid-May, 1964. The "Aswan is the May of Water", he says. "It is a fitting answer to the May of blood. It is the story of our generation, the song of our time, the pride of future generations" (May 15, 1964). To celebrate the epochal event, Krushchov, the then Soviet premier, was on hand, and Mr. Krushchov did not only declare solidarity with Nasserism, but specifically stated that the UAR had embarked on "the path of socialist construction" by peaceful means. In other words, since Nasserism adopted the non-capitalist road to development, local communism was no longer relevant and Arab communists had better join Nasserism in its attempt to carry out the revolution. To Kanafani, this was an earth-shaking admission that Nasserism, not communism, was "the wave of the future" in the Arab world. But Soviet endorsements and flirtation with liberation movements and communists did not guarantee the continued flow of American wheat supplies. Indeed, America threatened to cut them off and did so briefly, on the flimsy pretext that the Egyptians downed a U.S. civilian plane and permitted African students to sack and burn down the U.S. Information Office in Cairo. For the next two to three years, Washington renewed its commercial deals with Cairo on a six-month basis. Meanwhile, Kanafani averred:

The true reason is that Cairo plays a vanguard role in supporting the African liberation movements, especially

in the Congo. What angers America is not the loss of two men by accident, but the surprising revelation that Africa is not for sale for American foodstuffs. We prefer liberty to bread. We are not prepared to sacrifice the African future. We are ready to engage in the battle of life for Africa's sake (December 28, 1964).

The Second Spring of the Arab nation was short lived (1962-63), though participants and observers thought it would be everlasting. The first signs that the Spring was going to be brief was, of course, the Baathist-Nasserite dispute which ended with the mutual repudiation of the Tripartite Declaration of April 17, 1963. And since Algeria and Baathist Syria and Iraq refused to partake in the formation of Arab Socialist Unions, a la Nasser, though the ANM attempted to do so in Syria and Iraq, it seemed inconceivable that the Spring was likely to endure in view of the multiplicity of enemies the Arab nation had within and without its borders.

But the Nasserite leadership was inebriated with its own wine, enabling it to make ringing but hollow declarations. As it retreated into a self-enclosed Egypt, it advocated peaceful co-existence and socialism in one country while it paraded itself as the major Arab striking force against all potential enemies, including America and Israel. However, reality was rapidly catching up with Nasserism: Israel was about to complete the Canal system it had been working on for several years to divert the Jordan River and to irrigate its parched Negev desert at Arab expense. Instead of using his so-called air umbrella and mobilizing the Arab nation to stop the diversion, Nasser called for a summit of kings and presidents which was in effect a declaration of his military bankruptcy and a confession that the Arab states were no match for the Israelis. Thus a period of reconciliation came into being, and "the unity of objectives" was replaced by "the unity of ranks". Put succinctly, during the summitry period (1964-66) the "Arab revolution" was abandoned. The summits created the so-called Arab Unified Military Command, the Palestine Liberation Organization and the various committees that aimed at the resolution of Arab internal differences in Yemen, Morocco and Algeria. All these things however came to

naught but summitry, gave respite to the right-wing and weakened the revolutionary forces. Let us see how Kanafani construed this latest development, and how he thought that Nasserism committed no wrong.

In his weekly column "Behind the Scenes" (September 7 1964), Kanafani posed the critical question, "What Did the First Summit Accomplish?" "It was impossible for the summit", he answered, "to be a substitute for the revolution". Moreover,

it was incapable of becoming historically a transformation instrument of Arab reality ... But the period between the two congresses was an indictment of Saudi Arabia before Arab public opinion. In the meantime, the period was an indication that the revolutionary forces were not prepared to tie down the revolutionary Arab tasks for the interests of the summit's logic.

That the summit was no "transformation instrument" is an understatement. Was it not a truce with reaction, an abdication of responsibility on the part of Nasserism, and an implicit 'yes' to Israel's projected water diversion schemes? What did Arab public opinion learn that it didn't know about Saudi autocracy? Did not the Arab masses see Nasser in full view embrace both Feisal and Hussein, thereby, legitimizing their dictatorships in front of their eyes? Did not Nasser, in fact, agree to curb the revolution in Yemen to accommodate the Saudis and placate the British in the Gulf? Who was responsible for the creation of the PLO, and the trusteeship the Arab League was about to impose on the Palestinian people? Many other questions could have been raised, but Kanafani was in no mood at the time to examine critically the results of summitry, let alone the underlying rationale behind its foundations. What is so mind-boggling about Kanafani in retrospect is that he believed so naively in Nasserism and was prepared to justify every Nasserite maneuver. Otherwise, he could not have written that:

The progressive bloc at the summit, insisted on the diversion of the Jordan tributaries and its resolution

carried. Furthermore, it was agreed that should Israel attempt to stop the diversion of the tributaries, she will face collective, deterrent Arab action. On the question of the Palestinian entity, the progressive bloc also exercised an effective role which depended on revolutionary logic that rejected half-solutions, compromises or in-betweens ... Cairo also stressed the essential role of oil and challenged the conference to face its tasks and to act seriously ... And Cairo declared that her presence in Yemen was both necessary and inevitable as long as the revolution was threatened ... Cairo demonstrated at the summit that she continues to believe that the revolutionary Arab masses must find the true, historic formula for effective unity and that Cairo did its utmost to help preserve the unitarian progressive forces in Syria.

Kanafani concludes this massive self-indictment by pointing out that "the very presence of progressive forces at the summit constitutes an offensive against reaction" and states, "the summit was not a point of retreat from offense to defence but an offensive of a brand new kind" (July 6, 1964).

After three summit conferences relating to the Jordan River diversion question, countless speeches and declarations, Kanafani still maintained that the UAR was playing "scalpel politics", which exposed Arab reaction and "punctured the pustules of the Arab body politic whose disease was concealed by a thin skin of lying and deception" (September 20, 1965). But "lying and deception" exposed all Arab states, including Egypt, when Israel diverted the Jordan and launched a savage attack against Syria in July of 1966 in "retaliation" for guerrilla operations conducted inside Israel, but emanating from Syria. Neither Syria nor the Arabs answered in kind. In fact, Arab silence prevailed, and the incident prompted the following comment from Kanafani: "The responsibility extends from Cairo to Baghdad by way of Damascus accompanied by something called the Arab Unified Command." This concessional allocation of responsibility with its implied criticism was, however, overshadowed by his attack on the adventures of Al-Assifa, (Fateh), who precipitated the Israeli attack when the Arab armies were in "no position to be implicated in a battle, at a time when

complicated Arab circumstances did not permit the Arabs to wage battle". This apologetic line which was propagated by Nasser and shared by the ANM and Kanafani postulated the superiority of Arab arms over Israel. Thus Kanafani advised the leadership that:

its first task was to reduce Israel to its true size by destroying the legend of Israeli superiority. This legend had been part of Israel's psychological warfare against the Arabs: Israeli land is forbidden to Arabs whereas Arab lands are open to Israel ... Just observers believe that the Sinai War smashed the legend of Israeli military prowess in battles the Israelis waged face to face against the Egyptian army.

Finally Kanafani points out that an operation "reducing Israel to its size" will serve three purposes: a) it will deter further Israeli attacks on Arab territory; b) it will raise Arab morale which is necessary for liberation; c) it will force the superpowers and others to look at the Mideast situation more objectively and force them to realize that Israeli "retaliatory actions" will not be met by Arab silence but will ignite a war that would engulf the whole region. A military operation of this magnitude is necessary, Kanafani insists, so that "the illusion would be set aside, that Israel could occupy the West Bank or conquer Syrian territory" (July 18, 1966). In less than a year Israel shattered Arab illusions. She did not only take over the West Bank and the Golan Heights, but also Sinai and in addition destroyed Nasser's "Mideast umbrella".

One important footnote regarding Arab summitry is worth underlining. It comes to us by courtesy of an American observer of the Mideast scene, Malcolm Kerr:

A longstanding Western myth holds that the Palestine cause unites the Arab states when they are divided on all else. It would be more accurate to say that when the Arabs are in a mood to cooperate, this tends to find expression in an agreement to avoid action on Palestine, but that when they choose to quarrel, Palestine policy readily becomes a subject of dispute. The prospect that one Arab

government or another may unilaterally provoke hostilities with Israel, arouses fear among others for their own security, or at least for their political reputation.

Kanafani's poor political judgments should not appall the reader. Those judgments were not his alone, but those of most of his contemporaries as well. What is startling, however, is that very few foresaw the handwriting on the wall for Nasserism and the petit-bourgeoisie it represented. Since Nasserism scored a number of historic achievements (the Suez Canal Nationalisation and the building of the Aswan Dam) which dazzled the nationalists, very few writers, outside the Egyptian left, suspected its ability to carry the revolution through to the socialist stage. And since no one with universal moral authority in the nationalist movement cast aspersions on Nasserism or doubted its validity, it was, therefore, inevitable to see Kanafani among those faithful exponents unable to distinguish between Nasser's general political sentiments, which were nationalist, and his political system — Nasserism — whose principal concern was the maintenance and enhancement of its power, not on the basis of political organization and public accountability, but on the basis of a state apparatus operated by the military and intelligence services. Stated differently, the confusion of all, including Kanafani's, stems from the fact that Nasser was a folk-hero widely loved and admired throughout the Arab world from the fact that Nasserism as an ideology and a state-system seemed to be very effective. Therefore, Kanafani, like most Arab nationalists, thought that Nasserism was applicable everywhere in the Arab world, and Arab unity was most operational within the framework of the UAR. He didn't realize consequently, that Nasserism outside Egypt was a trend, not an organized movement or a revolutionary party — though the ANM saw the need for party organization and aspired to become the UAR's complement and organized arm in the Arab world. But Kanafani couldn't conceive of Nasserism as a mere sentiment, a passing torrent of mass enthusiasm, a messianic faith without an episcopate. Hence, his unquestioning faith in Nasserism was a sincere conviction in its truth as an ideological system and its viability as a political doctrine. For this and other reasons, he didn't apply

his critical mind to it, but to its bastardized offshoot, the Palestine Liberation Organization, (PLO), created January 13, 1964, but without distinguishing between Nasserism and Shukairyism or Palestinian political feudalism.

Kanafani the analyst, as opposed to Kanafani the polemicist soldiering in the service of Nasserism, lives up to expectations in dealing with the question of the PLO. But his ideological blinkers and the ANM attachment to Nasserism prevented both Kanafani and the ANM from perceiving an alternative to both Nasserism and the PLO. That is, had most of the ANM leadership had the intellectual and moral equipment to make an intelligent evaluation of Nasserism and endeavor to offer an alternative to both Nasserism and the PLO by way of armed struggle, the ANM would have not only seized the historic initiative to launch a war of national liberation and rally the Arab masses behind it, it would also have eclipsed and perhaps undermined the alliance between the Palestinian petit-bourgeoisie and Arab reaction, an alliance that has had serious repercussions for the Palestinian resistance movement and the Arab world as a whole since 1965. Thus, the ANM lost an historic opportunity to chart a new course for the Arab nation and open new horizons for Arab liberation. It too, as it turned out, belonged to the old era of nationalism, not the new epoch of socialist revolution in the age of imperialist disintegration.

In the summer and fall of 1963, the term "Palestine entity" was being bandied about and those who favored it were regarded somewhat progressive. Kanafani was initially skeptical about the "entity". "The question", he wrote, "is not a question of entity. The entity is a mere expression, a new tune chanted from the roof tops while Rome is burning". He added: "The personality of the entity will remain ludicrous ink on ludicrous paper as long as the entity has to be subjected to the story of 'general security' of reactionary Arab governments" The problem, therefore, according to Kanafani, is

a problem of organization, or the emergence of a solid Palestinian organization, underground or above, in the name of a front or party, coalition or club or even satan

does not matter. What matters is the appearance of a revolutionary organization that would put an end to all schemes, plans, trusteeships, governments and projects whose objectives are the pulverization of the Palestinian people (October 17, 1963).

The model organization for forming a Palestinian liberation movement was, of course, the Algerian Liberation Front, "a front that polarized Algerian society and concretized its power in a single fighting organization that transcended all individuals and parties" (June 1, 1964). Yet in spite of this stance, Kanafani still relied heavily on the Arab military to liberate Palestine. In answer to the question "Who will recover Palestine?" he writes:

Only a military force, a military force that is self-sufficient, united and strong, pressuring Israel on all fronts is the solution. Brave commandos, courageous Palestinian groups are necessary things in the battle to recover Palestine, but such activities do not recover Palestine because we are living in the age of rockets ... It is possible for a Palestinian to be a terrific fedai, a heroic fighter, but this is not enough, however painful the admission of this truth may be. Palestine has already become one single Arab battle, whether we like it or not, whether or not the Arab states wished it ... Therefore, if we the Palestinians want war to win victory, not to commit suicide, we must strive to force the Arab states to face their responsibilities on their own fronts; then we Palestinians can fight in the vanguard (November 30, 1963).

It is patently evident to the close reader of Kanafani that the role he foresaw for the Palestinians in the liberation of their country, was an ancillary or subsidiary role, rather than being the critical, decisive and vanguardist role. To the ANM and to Kanafani Nasserism, in 1963-64 especially, was the road to the new Jerusalem, not Palestinianism by way of Amman, Damascus and Cairo. Consequently, Kanafani looked upon the "impending battle" over the Jordan River

Diversion Plan, which didn't take place, as the turning-point in the battle for the liberation of Palestine. He predicted (December 19, 1963) that:

from here on, and for the next few years to come, if the battle does not take place within the next two years, a new disaster awaits us that would be no less dangerous than the 1948 disaster, because Israel would have established its roots in Palestine in the heart of Arab dignity and the security of the entire Arab homeland.

Meanwhile, since Kanafani had hitched himself to the Nasserite bandwagon, he could only urge the driver not to veer off the road and to plead with him not to bypass the sign posts of Palestinianism. Hence, Kanafani's only options were to appeal to the Palestinians to form their own political infra-structure within the framework of the PLO, and to try to make certain that the PLO responded to Palestinian needs and aspirations. For this task, he mobilized his forceful pen against Shukaïry, "the Palestinian leader" appointed by Nasser.

We have no objections to the preparatory committee chosen by Mr. Shukaïry, but we wish to remind Shukaïry that he did not respect the promise he made to the revolutionary forces in Lebanon. He ignored Palestinian organizations that were fighting long before anyone ever thought of the entity. We are not against the entity nor are we against working for it or within it. We are not in favor of the creation of a revolutionary organization that would be free of contradictions. But all of us must be against the logic of compromises in the structure of the PLO and against the abundant anti-revolutionary logic of Shukaïry (May 6, 1964).

As the date for the PLO's first congress approached (May 28, 1964), various groups, including the Baath, put out draft proposals regarding the composition of the PLO, its internal rules and charter. Kanafani ignored all drafts except that of Baath, which argued that "the Palestinian entity would be vacuous if it were not given sovereignty, army and people and

land to govern over". In its proposals, Baath insisted that "Palestine couldn't be recovered unless the parts of Palestine under Arab tutelage, Gaza and the West Bank, were turned over to the Palestinians to be used as a sanctuary for the Palestinian revolution and to win international recognition for the Palestine entity". Instead of welcoming such a proposal, Kanafani condemns it:

The logic that stands behind this talk is the logic of reactionary separatists. It is a logic that considers the recovery of Palestine as having no relationship with Arab unity. The very opposite is true, however. It is a logic that does not answer the Arab disaster by way of abolishing its causes, but by way of sanctifying the causes in a very negativistic form ... The encirclement of Palestinians and their isolation as an excuse for providing them with a launching geographic pad, is a logic that conduces a new disaster in the case of Palestine at all levels ... What we need is an historic, national conviction to cope with the problem of Palestine, i.e., Arab unity first (May 21, 1964).

During and after the Congress, Kanafani continuously assailed Shukaïry and the way he managed the Congress:

We must stand against every error, challenge and deviation. We must expose every gap that promises to turn the Congress into a catastrophe, in the present or near future ... The Congress did not defend its right to autonomy ... It is impossible for a Congress to simply improvise and quickly declare the formation of a liberation organization and swear allegiance to it before its specialized committees ever meet. Such practices must not only be challenged and the dangers they imply exposed, but must also be denounced and faced from the start with force and resolution (May 30, 1964).

Kanafani felt that the newly proclaimed PLO was a betrayal of Palestinian hopes and aspirations. "What the Palestinians want", he declared, "was military preparedness, an organization based on 'revolutionary foundations; an

autonomous organization' (June 1, 1964). But what they got was an organization of notables, whose inauguration was blessed by King Hussein, sitting on his throne in Jerusalem — an organization that placed all power and authority in the hands of Shukairy, who isolated the Palestinian vanguard by putting a strange article in the constitution that stipulates that "PLO members cannot be members in other organizations" (June 3, 1964). That is, the flamboyant Mr. Shukairy and the upper echelons of a bygone Palestine placed themselves in the leadership of the PLO at the behest of the Arab League, and they resolved not to permit the Palestinian people to meddle in their own affairs. Furthermore, since party politics was considered anathema in Nasserite circles, it seemed obvious from the outset that the "independentists" would prevail and the politicians would be excluded. For the next few months, Kanafani always returned to the PLO subject underlining its shortcomings and insisting that it be politicized and taken over by the progressives. This line continued in varying degrees for the next few years.

The inherent contradictions that Palestinianism and Nasserism entailed for Kanafani and the ANM were not discerned by either party or seriously looked into prior to the June War of 1967. But there was a strong faction in the ANM headed by Muhsin Ibrahim that sought complete merger with Nasserism and won victory at the 1965 ANM congress. Though the resolution was never carried out in earnest, it did not deter Kanafani from pursuing his Palestinianism while continuing his defense of Nasserism. A visit to India and China in 1965 strengthened Kanafani's Palestinianism by the contrasts the two countries offered. In as much as India depressed him, China elated Kanafani. He wired Al-Mouharir in Beirut: "There Are No Flies In China; the only flies I saw were on the walls of the British Consulate in Shanghai". Kanafani must have been deeply honored and influenced by an interview he obtained from the Chinese Foreign Minister, Marshal Chen Yi. He published a verbatim account of it in Al-Mouharir, (November 18, 1965), prefacing it thus: "Chen Yi is rooted in the leadership of China as all the leaders of China are. He wore a simple, homely, characteristic uniform. Behind his dark glasses one could see that he was looking at

you and the world with the look of a peasant who fought his way to the top of power". Chen Yi told Kanafani that "great power Chauvinism" has led the Soviet Union and the USA to "agree on the partition of the world", after the Soviet Union had betrayed communism. He stressed China's commitment to the world revolution and stated that "Moscow and Washington are trying to liquidate the Palestine question by bargaining", whereas China was ready to help liquidate imperialism in the Mideast.

Kanafani went back for more when he accepted to speak at the Afro-Asian Writers' Conference in 1966. Here for the first time, he encountered the writers of the Third World and revolutionary writers from every corner of the globe. However, nothing impressed him as much as the Vietnamese writer who read his speech to the conference, and then distributed to his fellow writers shrapnel souvenirs from the remains of an American plane the nationalists had downed the week before. Kanafani was deeply touched by the episode, and when his turn to speak came, he stood up and said to his colleagues that he couldn't read his speech because he had no souvenirs to give them afterwards. He cried and promised to do so at the next conference!

In the twilight stage of the nationalist-socialist phase of Nasserism, an abrupt cascade of activities took place between 1965 and 1966. The most salient events were: Kosygin's visit to the UAR, the division of the Arab world into progressive and reactionary blocs, the disintegration of summitry, the rise of the Islamic pact, the failure of the UAR and Iraq to implement the unity agreement of May 26, 1964, the diversion of the Jordan River, the reconciliation between Syria and the UAR, the repudiation of the Jeddah agreement (signed between Nasser and Feisal, August 25, 1965) on the Yemen question, the smothering of the nationalist movement in Jordan and the wheat dispute between the USA and Nasser. The convergence of these events and other internal factors forced the Arab progressives to re-evaluate and define their positions vis-a-vis each other and their potential enemies. The lines were drawn anew; the Arab nation returned to "the unity of objectives" period. The whole area sprang to life again and the re-evaluation crystallized in an Egyptian-Syrian

alliance of mutual defense (signed November 7, 1966). Witnessing this new environment and being equipped with the antennae of Maoism after his two visits to China, Kanafani develops a political Palestinianism. His inchoate political synthesis appears in four major articles he published in *Al-Mouharir* and its Palestine supplement between June 30, 1966 and July 11, 1966.

In "The Jordanian Wall Before Palestine", Kanafani starts with the proposition that the major obstacle to Palestinian liberation is the artificial state of Jordan, a state created by British imperialism to serve Western interests in the Mideast region. Besides, Jordan has colluded with Zionism and seized Palestinian territory in agreement with the Israelis, with whom Jordan has an implicit accord to come to its succor when required or deemed appropriate, by either party. Therefore, to secure a Palestinian sanctuary, Amman must be "converted into an Arab Hanoi". To achieve this purpose, "every nationalist element, every political party, every organization, every little apparatus, every commando formation, must unite under the umbrella of liberation whose first goal is Amman". Prior to the attainment of this goal, "every Palestinian martyr we loose on the borders of Israel, before finishing off the Jordan story, is a waste of life and History will hold us accountable to it. Every comando — to be more decisive — who crosses the borders of Israel now is not crossing the road of true martyrdom". Since the road to Amman is "two-thirds of the way to Tel Aviv", it follows that "Jordan and nothing before it is the battle for Palestine. And every effort to avoid confronting this reality is a means of losing the Palestinian case, for which loss history will never forgive us". If the liberation of Palestine is via Amman, "Who is to pay the bill for Israel's brutal reprisals, the Arabs or the Palestinians?" Kanafani answers unequivocally:

The only side that has to pay the bill by blood, sweat, tears, stones, roads, bridges, factories, fields and the taste of Israeli retaliation is the Palestinian people whose remaining land unified by an act of free will after the 1948 disaster, and turned the West and East banks of the Jordan into one single state.

The new strategy which relies on an autonomous people and an independent organization in a national front for the liberation of Palestine will have very serious repercussions according to Kanafani:

strategically, there is no prior option to the Jordan option or anything that equals it in value; nationally, there is — at the level of initiative and long-range perspective — no one more competent and obliged to commence the battle, other than Jordan; at the Palestinian level, there is no alternative area to Jordan that the Palestinian people can fill; internationally, there is no easier justification than a war of liberation a given people wages for its legitimate lands from the only remaining area it still controls; provincially, no one may be permitted to engage in idle talk about separating the two banks of the Jordan; at the Arab level, there is no minimum hope for the liberation of Palestine without guaranteeing that Jordan is on the front line; tactically, there is no way that these conditions can be achieved without the Palestinian people altering the situation in Jordan.

From China Kanafani brings with him the idea of the national front, the vanguard party, the self-reliant people, the theory of armed struggle, the identification of the class enemy. And he brings with him patience too, as he writes in a Chinese-like metaphor: "Liberation movements are not like adding machines, they are chandeliers of ice that start with ice drops, which in turn will grow into mountains and glaciers and sweep all asunder in the springtime without the aid of ledgers and adding machines."

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1) In the opinion of the author, the First Spring of the Arab nation occurred in 1955-56, when the whole world trembled as the sleeping Arab giant awoke, expropriated the Suez Canal, broke the Western arms monopoly, halted the



tripartite invasion of Egypt and rebuffed Nato's overtures to join its Mideast extension, The Baghdad Pact.

2) The Algerian-Moroccan War which was ostensibly a border war, was instigated by the U.S. in order to tarnish the image of revolutionary Algeria, undermine her elan and force her to become a regionalist power, not a pan-Arab pan-African republic. It was "settled" in 1964 with the aid of the Arab League and the organization of African Unity.

## CHAPTER IV

### **Palestinian Solitude**

*The letter is a bullet; the word is a rifle; the poem is a cannon. NO, NO, there is no separation between literature and commitment. Any writer who cannot become a battering ram on the road of liberation is incapable of infusing his work with compelling meaning for the revolution. Literature remains polished words if the writer merely practised revolution in the salons and bars, especially after the third cup. The writer cannot be a revolutionary instrumentality if he talked revolution on street corners and remained only an eating mouth, a motionless body and a prattling tongue.*

Abu Salem

With the publication of *What's Left For You* (September 1966), Kanafani enters a new stage in terms of his intellectual and moral developments. His heroes of the 1950's had sought individual martyrdom, and his people throughout their dispersion had chafed in the pursuit of bread and identity. In the mid-60's, however, the heroes are groping for a revolutionary strategy and the Palestinian people are looking forward to commencing collective revolutionary action. The world of Palestinianism, in other words, is progressively becoming the world of auto-emancipation, the world of self-knowledge, knowledge of the enemy and knowledge of the Palestinian "minority" living under Israeli suzerainty. It is

a world in which the Palestinian individual is going to be playing the principal part in the struggle for self-determination; it is a world proclaimed, not attained; and the question is how and with whom will self-determination be attained. The political aspect of the question will be elaborated upon in the third part of this essay where revolutionism and marxism are the focal political doctrines. In this chapter, however, we are concerned with the literary works and studies Kanafani wrote and published between 1966 and 1970. These are *What's Left For You; The Resistance Literature in Occupied Palestine (1966); In Zionist Literature (1967); Palestinian Resistance Literature Men Under Occupation (1948-1968); About Men and Guns (1968); Umm Saad (1969); Returnee to Haifa (1970)*. The key that opens the gate of this period is the beginning and development of the revolution. Each book appears to be an impressionistic chronicle of the year in which it was written, as if Kanafani had a deadline to meet or had a feeling that fleeting moments would escape him unless he recorded them instantly. It seems as if Kanafani was a man of imagination with a deadline.

In the two worlds of reason and imagination, the man of imagination has the edge over the man of reason when it comes to sensing the spirit of the time and detecting its shadowy broad outlines. That is, the man of imagination and intuition has a greater capacity to feel and observe because he is moved more by images and symbols of reality than by the perceptual-conceptual apparatus of reason. But the man of reason is the superior sovereign because he sees the inner-connections, dynamics and contradictions of things in their evolution, development and particular manifestations. Reason gives order to disorder and chaos; imagination is a receptacle, a relay station that gathers the data and places it at the disposal of reason. Imagination is a boy scout, a reconnaissance party, an advance column of the revolution. Hence, the union of reason and imagination in a given individual or nation is what makes him a true "philosopher-king" and the nation a truly great nation. But woe betide a nation, a movement or an individual that lacks either aspect of the formula. As regards the Arab situation,

only rudimentary features of imagination and reason can be said to be operational, and the few individuals who exercise either are detested by the power-wielders, but loved and admired by their fellow-practitioners and the cadres and masses of the revolution. Kanafani was among those pioneers of the imagination who sensitized a whole generation of Palestinians to the revolutionary project. He was a bridge that linked the world of dispersion with the world of the revolution via auto-emancipation. But unhappily for him, the party — the resistance movement — which should have constituted the world of reason and its construct, was incapable of grasping the revolutionary formula and assimilating it. Therefore, revolutionary sorcery based on atavistic sentimentalism overtook the "revolution" whose fate was preordained from the outset. Consequently, between September 1970 and July 1972, Kanafani refurbished his world of imagination and set out anew searching for the new party that would embody the reason-imagination formula while attempting to reactivate the batteries of reason in the remnants of the resistance movement. He was struck down before the process was completed, and we cannot be certain that he could have completed the journey in its full intellectual, moral and emotional aspects. He was assassinated at the introduction of the new world, and at the denouement of the old. Let, therefore, the men of reason and imagination seize the torch that awaits them as olympian runners and continue the journey to the summit of freedom.

Unlike the traditional Arab who is moved to action by a monistic tribal-familial feeling, Kanafani's hero, Hamid, in *What's Left For You*, is moved by the dual feelings of tribal-familial, and national. Coming in the aftermath of *World Not Ours*, in which the outside world determines and oppresses our world, *What's Left For You*, in effect, tells the Palestinian and Arab people, "You have nothing to lose but your chains;" you must seize your destiny with your own hands or remain slaves. In the case of the Palestinian who has lost his land, his home, and his family, what else is there for him to lose besides his debased life? Shall he set out to liberate himself and his country, and perhaps, in the process,

his fellow Arabs, if not mankind? *What's Left For You* provides the answer to these questions.

The book opens dramatically with a man confronting the boundless desert at sunset. The sun is like a honeycomb hanging above the horizon, about to plunge into the sea and the unknown. Slowly the desert and the night become Hamid's inhospitable companions. "Before him, and within his ken, the body of the desert breathed. He felt his body ascend and descend above its chest. And in the heart of the black wall which stood behind the horizon, the gates of heaven started to open one after the other and the stars appeared with a chilling shine." At this point, Hamid knows he will not return to Gaza, to his school and his two-room house, and the "silvery seashore of Gaza retreated before darkness". Now on his own in the desert, Hamid feels like "a woolen ball whose first knot was tied to his house in Gaza for 16 years and now he is being undone, letting himself unroll in the night". "Repeat After Me", he states in an internal monologue, "I married you off to my sister, Mariam, to my sister, Mariam — for two guineas — everything is delayed". Here Kanafani, throughout the seventy-five pages of *What's Left For You*, employs the cinematic techniques of flashback and simultaneity. As Hamid begins to cross the desert, he recalls telling his sister, Mariam, that he had intended to leave Gaza. "She smiled and her lipstick stained mouth appeared like a bleeding wound suddenly opened under her nose: 'Where will you go?' she whispered and left her mouth open as if to enjoin, 'You cannot leave'. 'I will go to Jordan by way of the desert', the brother announces. 'Are you fleeing from me', asks the sister, who had to be married off to "a rotten man" who had impregnated her. "Yes", he nods his head declaring: "You were everything to me. Now you're stigmatized and I am deceived ... Oh, had mother been here! "

We shift to a new scene. Mariam, the former spinster, is in a room with her newly acquired husband, who has a wife with five children. "Your brother-in-law, Hamid, intends to leave Gaza", she tells Zakariah, who is a school-teacher. "Hamid says many things, let him", Zakariah nonchalantly replies. Then Zakariah continues: "He is threatening us, why don't

you tell him we are heedless of him? Do you know that the desert can gobble up any person ten times Hamid's size? Do you know that he has to cross four borders before he reaches his destination; our borders, then their borders, then their borders, then Jordan's borders?" Zakariah walks in the direction of Mariam, posing the following question: "Are you sure he's not telling you a silly joke?" Silence prevails and the atmosphere of the room appears to be choking her and she feels very tense. She opens the door and shortly afterwards is slightly relieved. Then she looks at the clock which "resembles a small coffin" in the room. She remembers asking Hamid how much he paid for it: "I didn't buy it, I stole it" he had told her. The clock ticks away the seconds, breaking the silence of the night. And with the clock, the symbol of lost time, hanging in the middle of the room, we have the five characters of *What's Left For You*: Hamid, the desert, Zakariah, Mariam and the clock.

Hamid is a man of 26. He and his sister are forced to leave Jaffa in the War of 1948. Their father dies in the war; their mother is missing for a few years. Luckily, she finds where her two children are living with the help of a radio station. The mother is living in Jordan and she cannot afford to come to Gaza to visit Hamid and Mariam. Zakariah is a Palestinian also. His infamy has little to do with the betrayal of his wife and children in favor of a spinster with a two-bedroom house and a stove, but more with the betrayal of Salem, a Palestinian revolutionary leader in Gaza. Salem has carried out a revolutionary deed against the Israeli occupation of Gaza. The Israelis, as usual, have rounded up all the males of the neighborhood where the incident has taken place, lined them all up against the wall and threatened to shoot them collectively unless the names of the "evil-doers" are revealed. Fearing death, before the Israeli Captain screams his final orders to shoot, Zakariah kneels before the Israelis and promises to reveal the names. Thereupon, Salem, the true revolutionary, steps forward before Zakariah is given the opportunity to disclose anybody's name, and takes full responsibility for the deed. The Israelis pull Salem to the sidelines and fire one shot into his head. The Captain returns to the line warning the Arabs to learn their lesson and

disperse. Hamid is completely shattered by the cold-blooded murder of his Comrade Salem. He begins to hate Zakariah, the treacherous teacher, who ends up marrying his sister. Unable to live with the double shame of family stigma and homelessness, he starts to look for a solution which he thinks he will find if he returns to Mother, the land and the parent.

Meanwhile, Zakariah "the Rotten", is trying to go to sleep as Mariam shows him a note Hamid has sent her with the baker: "I will leave at sunset. I will write you from Jordan if I arrive." "Zakariah", Mariam cries out, "We deceived him, let's confess it. He's been walking for three hours now and I am counting his steps with the seconds of the clock." Zakariah doesn't share her sorrow as she ruminates:

It is impossible for you to hate me, Zakariah. You cannot do that; you're everything that is left to me. Hamid has left and the only trace I have of him in this room is the clock which pounds like a cane that has lost its direction. And nothing is left for me but to count its seconds, yet you are asleep within inches from me ... but distant as death.

Zakariah turns over wondering why she cannot go to sleep. "Haven't you fallen asleep yet?" "No, but tell me Zakariah, how long does it take a man to walk all the way from Gaza to Jordan?" "Ten times I told you", he blurts out. "But you didn't", she interrupts. "Twelve hours", he says angrily and points out, "if he knows the road well and if he doesn't come across any patrols in the first hour". The dialogue continues amidst recriminations which clearly reveal the gap between them and the past of both. Then Zakariah falls asleep and Mariam stays up worrying about her brother and reminiscing over her past youth in Jaffa, where she had had an opportunity to marry Fatehi, brother of Fatehia, who was a close girl friend of hers, and didn't because her father had said there would be "no marriage before the cause is won". Other fond memories come to mind regarding her mother and brother Hamid. Abruptly, the narrator zeroes in on Hamid struggling through the sand dunes on his way to Jordan. We hear Hamid reminding himself:

From hell to hell, what have you done, you stupid Hamid, other than throw yourself to the wind? What is it that you want to tell your mother? Would it not have been better had you slain Mariam on your knees? And thrown Zakariah into hell and wiped your bloody hands on your face and the walls of your house and remained there? But, Hamid you were too cowardly to do that. No, No, it wasn't cowardly but absurd, absurd. And absurdity is cowardice also. Do you wish to place your mother between you and Mariam and turn her into a wall of forgetfulness? To you mother was always an absent knight ready to unsheathe her sword in the face of every obstacle that stood before you. You relied all of your life upon her. What is it you want from that illusory knight to whom you've given a wooden horse out of your failure and inability to cope with life? Sit here under this deep heaven and think intelligently: Gaza is now gone and has disappeared behind you with the night. The woolen ball that enfolded you has been undone completely and you are no longer a spindle, but who are you?

Hamid is astonished by his own reflections, especially when the thought occurs to him that he could very well arrive in Jordan, find his mother married, ready to introduce him to her husband and wondering if there were a woman in his life. As he recollects himself, the ghost of Salem, the martyr, appears before his eyes, and the final scene in Salem's revolutionary career is relived: "On his face, he wore the solid, self-confident features of those whose faces know they will die in a public square under the eyes of all people. And he died for something all people respect and venerate." Hamid, who was somewhat active in the resistance, knew that his turn could be next. But sister Mariam had reassured him that the Israelis wouldn't kill him because he was not doing anything illegal, thereby adding a "new humiliation" to Hamid. However, sister didn't know Hamid's role in the affair. The thought of the enemy springs to mind and the possibility of encountering them in the desert. And poor Hamid is weaponless. What can he do, or should he do, if the enemy discovers him "infiltrating" sacred territory? Hamid promised himself to fight savagely with all his might whatever the odds.

He continues to walk, then suddenly he sees something looking in the dark. He holds his breath to avoid being sighted, but he feels "armed with a will to fight and ability to surprise the enemy". The enemy, as it turned out, is a lost soldier who must have strayed away from his nearby base. The soldier doesn't see Hamid. He is carrying a signal revolver, a long knife plus his sub-machine gun, and is walking in the direction of Hamid without knowing it. He falls into Hamid's trap thinking he is jumped by a fellow soldier who is playing a game on him. Hamid disarms the Israeli soldier, throwing away his gun and revolver but he keeps his long knife. As the soldier realizes that this is no game, Hamid throws a handful of sand in his eyes blinding him momentarily and disorienting him in order to lord it over him. Now the Israeli begins to feel what it means to be on the receiving end, but he still feels arrogant and certain of his final victory because he knows that he is on his home ground. Hamid and the Israeli are unable to communicate. There is no common language, but the knife in Hamid's hands aimed at the soldier's stomach. Hamid frisks the Israeli and seizes his identity card and papers. Since everything is written in Hebrew, he is unable to distinguish between the papers, and the sky isn't sufficiently lit to enable him to see things closely anyway. The hostage soldier and Hamid sit gazing at each other and conducting interminable self-dialogues. Hamid informs his non-Arabic speaking Israeli captive:

We are moving in a hollow circle and time couldn't be against both us equally. Perhaps they are closer to you than I could imagine, but you're much closer to me than they could imagine and as you can see, the story is that of distance and perhaps time also. Well, as you can see, time is meaningless to me. As to distance, it is in my favor because you're closer to my knife than I am to their guns. And there is another valuable point to remember, which you should take into consideration. You, to be killed right here within steps of them, within steps of your camp, perhaps. If so, this will be a much more dangerous deed than my being killed. For who am I, but an enemy who assaulted your fortress alone and weaponless ... Things are

proportional here and they're in my favor as well. This is strange for a few minutes ago everything in this world appeared to be going against me and things in Gaza and Jordan were working against my interests. And I stood here, right here, within my area surrounded by losses from every side. Come, let me tell you something important: I have nothing to lose now, that is, you have lost the opportunity to convert me into a gain.

At dawn Hamid peruses the soldier's documents again. He reads Jaffa stamped on one of them in Latin letters and presumes the Israeli soldier must have come from Jaffa, his home town. He wonders whether the captive could have been the Israeli who killed his father back in Jaffa, or Salem back in Gaza. The Israeli is waiting for a lightning miracle to happen and secure his rescue from Hamid unharmed. Hamid sits self-assured that Salem's cause shall be avenged and a new page in the history of Palestine shall be written.

Back in Gaza at sunrise, Mariam is still sitting counting the seconds of the clock. She is seized by a feeling that her brother has encountered trouble. She resolves to name her offspring in Hamid's honor. Zakariah wakes up murmuring and rubbing his eyes: "Are you still thinking about your little brother?" Instead of answering she asks, "What time is it?" At this point, she feels the first kick of her baby. She is elated. She tells the news to Zakariah which he finds depressing, not exciting. Since he is a professional baby-maker, number six only means to him more mouths to feed. In order to lessen his burden, she asks Mariam to abort the foetus. She is infuriated. He calls her a prostitute and threatens to divorce her if she refuses to abide by his wishes. "Abort the little bastard", he shouts, "or I shall start counting I divorce thee".

The heat of the desert is filling the air; the Israelis are searching for their missing soldier; Mariam is locked in battle with Zakariah for the life of her unborn infant: Hamid is proudly facing his prisoner, clutching his knife fearlessly. Everyone is hemmed in. The Israelis are closing their circle, "but they will be sitting helpless watching a play being staged against an empty desert background. They will suddenly find out that the story is really taking place right here and they are mere spectators" who cannot stop the unfolding drama at

sunrise. The Israelis begin to appear near the hilltop now; Mariam is being kicked in the stomach and thrown across the kitchen table where she finds a butcher's knife, plunges it into her husband's abdomen, and pins him down until he bleeds to death; the clock pounds on, proclaiming that time has now a new meaning; the desert witnesses a new martyrdom; heroic death and heroic birth take place at the same time, Mariam is liberated; the land is enriched by the blood of Hamid who falls like a soldier fighting for the cause; the unaborted foetus is to be born into the new world of the revolution. The 'liberation' locomotive is placed on the right track.

Now that self-liberation is on the agenda and a new course of revolutionary action is being charted, we can press onward with a deeper knowledge of self and the enemy. The critical question in the new quest for self-knowledge is the knowledge of one's history, not in order to escape from reality, but in order to have a greater understanding of the revolutionary project, to know what stage we are in and what strategy and tactics are appropriate for this particular stage and what alliances are necessary to propel the revolutionary locomotive forward. *About Men and Guns*, (which was written between 1965 and 1968) offers us a partial glimpse of past actions and implies what ought to happen if the revolutionaries intended to write a new history. The book consists of an introduction with eight "portraits" of deeds that have taken place. The ninth is to be written by men carrying the gun whence "comes political power".

In *About Men and Guns*, Kanafani doesn't quite go back to the beginning of the beginning in the struggle for Palestine, but only to the 1948 war. He puts us immediately face to face with the unpalatable reality of refugeeism in 1949. Kanafani writes in the first person regarding a telephone call he received from a self-righteous, charitable friend, who would like to do something for the refugees on Christmas eve like distributing dolls to refugee children. What the friend wants from the author is a propaganda campaign to make the attempt worthwhile. The author declines the "kindness" of the friend, but the latter's suggestion triggers the memory of the author, taking him back to 1949. "At that time, they told us that the Red Cross would distribute Christmas gifts among you", the

author recalls. As a child, he was excited to hear that someone was thinking of him and decided to line up with hundreds of children to receive "the great surprise". Since the child, Kanafani, was wearing a short pair of trousers on a cold December morning, he writes,

We stood trembling like a field of naked sugar cane jumping up and down to maintain the circulation of blood in our veins. And one million years after, my turn came and the neat nurse gave me a red square box. I ran home without opening it. Now 19 years after, I do not recall at all what was in that dream-box except one thing only: a can of lentil soup.

From a "can of lentil soup" and Western liberal charity, we move to the negation project that will put an end to both. Young Mansour (which means the victorious in Arabic) is trying to persuade his uncle to lend him his rifle, the "Martina", so that he can join fighters defending Safad. The uncle tries to dissuade Mansour saying that "the road between Majd Al-Kroum and Safad cannot even be crossed by goats", and asking why would he want to go there anyway: "Is there a scarcity of men there?" Mansour is convinced that he has a national duty to defend the homeland and not only his village, Majd Al-Kroum. His pious uncle is impressed by his devotion to the land, but isn't prepared to lend his old Turkish rifle to a "child". The persistent Mansour visits his uncle again after the latter completes his early morning prayers: "The men in Safad have besieged the fortress, I have come to borrow your rifle to go there, will you let me have it?" "And how will you obtain bullets for it?" the uncle asks. "I already bought them" "How many of them? About twenty. And with twenty bullets you wish to invade Safad's fortress?" the uncle indignantly remarks. "Will you let me have your rifle? I will return it within two days". "And if you die?", the uncle notes smilingly but mischievously. But Mansour doesn't smile or waver in his request because he has prepared answers to all possible questions his uncle could pose. "If I die, Hissam, my friend, will return your rifle; he is there and I guarantee that he will return it to you". The uncle,

half-reassured and impressed by the determination of his nephew, enters the house and asks Mansour to join him for breakfast, which the latter declines. Mansour screams and intimates that he will go to Abu Mustafa in Kisra to acquire another rifle if his uncle refuses to deploy his Martina in the defense of Safad. Silence follows but a silent dialogue continues on the faces of each participant. Then the uncle breaks the silence chidingly, "Have you told the old lady?" Mansour resents the reference to his mother declaring that he makes his own decisions. The uncle begins to yield and finally lets his nephew have the rifle. Meanwhile, we are introduced to Mansour's brother, Kassem, who is a medical graduate from the American University of Beirut. During the battle, Kassem becomes a doctor, but instead of putting his knowledge in the service of the homeland, he announces that he intends to open an office in Haifa and to say goodbye to Majd Al-Kroum and its "donkeys". Abu Kassem, his father, is appalled by the announcement, not because Kassem doesn't want to join in the defense of Safad, but because Kassem doesn't want to open an office in his home town so that the family's status could be enhanced. Kassem enquires about his brother Mansour and wonders where he can be. The father, who doesn't know that his younger son is fighting in Safad, tells Kassem that Mansour is out in the fields. "He is a true fellah who loves the land and walks daily through the fields inspecting the crops and pruning the olive trees". Above all, Abu Kassem says, "Mansour loves the village and its people". The doctor is unhappy that his brother is going to remain a fellah. He points out to his father, "By God, you are destroying that child. Tomorrow I will take him with me to Haifa and there he will learn how to make a future for himself". The peasant father is not impressed by his son's city talk. He holds the doctor's hand by the arm and shakes it forcefully. "Look at the Jews, whenever anyone of them comes to Palestine, he goes to the villages ... can't you see ... Why don't you live in the village and open a clinic here?"

This is a most striking and provocative story which clearly illustrates the struggle of four different generations of Palestinians with four different perspectives on life. On the one hand, we have the enthused young Mansour who is a

nationalist; on the other hand, the Uncle Abu Al-Hassan who is a traditionalist moved by religious motivation; also the peasant father who cares about the well-being of the family; and finally, the doctor son, who desires urban living, status-seeking and self-advantage. We have then three lost types, but since Mansour is for the revolution, there is hope and promise that all is not lost. Each of the four is then to pursue his desired mode of living reflecting Palestinian reality. The doctor, who should know better, goes to Haifa. He doesn't only open a clinic there, he also gets himself a Jewish girl-friend, Eva, immerses himself in pleasure-seeking and tries to forget that he is an Arab. The nationalistic Zionist outlook of Eva, however, forces Kassem to retreat further into his shell as he therapeutically tells her the story of his brother Mansour with embellishments. Eva's friendship is maintained and the medical doctor accumulates money to enrich his private life. At the same time, Safad is placed within our ken and we learn that,

Four thousand Jews were living here as city-dwellers not peasants for hundreds of years. They were a kindly people. They were the shop-keepers, who sold things to people and exchanged daily greetings with them. They knew Arabic and adopted Arabic names. Therefore, the Arabs called them Arab-Jews. Then suddenly comes a group of people known as Ashkanazi Jews. The latter built a new district for themselves and isolated themselves socially, but they quickly took over the town monopolizing its business and agriculture. Those people were the disrupters who collaborated with the British to take over Palestine.

In the first section of *About Men and Guns*, we are constantly reminded of individual heroic deeds and sporadic tribal fighting in the defense of villages. The 1948 war is portrayed as a non-war where the people don't participate as a collectivity; most of them seek either family or village solutions. That is, we are told that the people lack a national consciousness. In the second part, camp life is depicted with meticulous care and we are introduced into the "time of entanglement" where once proud people are fighting each

other to divide bread crumbs among themselves or rotten vegetables their children had stolen from vegetable markets. In this environment, the most virtuous action is self-preservation and everything else is secondary. This process of despondent living continues until the resistance movement, the key, begins to offer an alternative to the miserable and ugly life of the camps. The key and the search for other keys is the next period when the movement is set in motion with a view to opening new doors to the future. Thus, training and reconnaissance work commence, and fate decrees that "all Palestinian Arabs must become commandos and revolutionaries". Here again, we encounter another Hamid who stopped listening to old "Uncles' tales" and joined the revolution. Hamid undertakes a mission in which he explodes an Israeli tank with the help of two other comrades. He could have carried out his mission without blasting his ear drums, of course. But he came within ten meters of the Israeli tank instead of the allotted 100 meters because he was very anxious to be in the forefront of the revolution and to make certain he didn't miss the target. The loss of Hamid's hearing, insofar as the author is concerned, implies that the slate has been wiped clean and Hamid can now turn a new leaf in his life and listen to no more idle talk and nonsensical revolutionary sloganeering. He is now a practicing revolutionary.

*About Men and Guns* ends with an "observation", entitled: "Umm Saad says that there is a difference between one tent and another". In this early take-off on the revolution, we discern the impact it is already having on camp life. Umm Saad is a happy and honored mother because her son, Saad, joins the revolution. She claims that she isn't surprised that her son has selected the revolutionary road, and expresses the view that "had she had ten like him", she would be prouder still. She continues, "Cousin, I am tired. My life has been worn out in the camp. Every evening I say, Oh God! And here we are, twenty years have elapsed, and if Saad didn't go, who would?" In the ensuing two years, Umm Saad's life will be transformed as a result of the revolution.

The formative years of the new Palestinian resistance (1965-68) restored the feeling of self-confidence to a large segment of the Palestinian people. Kanafani was among those

Palestinians affected both as a participant and observer. Consequently, he set out to make his contribution not as a commando, but as an analyst, in addition to being a short-story writer, novelist and political journalist. The harvest of this endeavor consists of two pioneering introductory studies regarding Zionist and Arab literature in the occupied Palestine of 1948, plus a generalized and enlarged study of the Palestinian resistance literature under occupation.

Starting with the premise that ant eggs do not hatch eagles, Kanafani sets out to ascertain why it took the Arab "minority" in occupied Palestine so long to assert its personality. He discovers a multitude of reasons, the most important of which are: The departure of the urban Arab community, the low-level of educational attainment in the countryside prior to the Zionist take-over and the deliberate Zionist policy of keeping the Palestinians uneducated. Kanafani points out that the community did not only lose its territorial homeland and its social cohesion, but also its imaginative soul as well. And since the Zionists were determined to wipe out the whole community spiritually and physically, it was not too difficult to determine what educational policy they had designed for the rump Arab "minority" in its homeland: self-enclosed rural idiocy, reinforced by a military encirclement. Since the community was essentially uprooted, what remained behind were the city poor and the peasants whose number didn't exceed 220,000 in 1948. Kanafani's study underlines the community's continued intellectual impoverishment which he explains by the concept of "educational siege", a policy the Zionists had imposed on the Arabs with a view to altering their "souls" and converting them into "robot Zionists". According to Kanafani, the Zionist policy of "educational siege" consists of the following features:

- 1) Most of the Arabs who didn't emigrate, lacked, because of their social positions, the required educational level that usually produces a generation of artists and writers.



2) The neighboring cities that had provided homes for talented writers coming from the country-side, homes that had opened doors to communications and windows to knowledge, had been converted into forbidden enemy Jewish cities.

3) A boycott wall had been arbitrarily erected by Zionist authorities which had prevented the flow of Arab literature into occupied Palestine, thereby cutting off the community from modern currents of thought and the exchange of ideas with the Arab world.

4) The rapist military authorities imposed on the occupied community the kind of literature it can produce and disseminate, the genre that writers refused to produce.

5) The limited number of available publishers and their subjection to severe authoritarian surveillance, in addition to financial handicaps imposed on publishers under Zionist political control, did not permit the publication of books that expressed the feelings of Arab writers.

6) The low-level of knowledge of foreign languages in Arab circles, especially in the countryside, led to something comparable to a complete boycott of international literature and, therefore, deprived the community from interacting with anything outside of its defined military zones.

Since the Israelis sought to create a "class of domestics" out of the Arabs, it was not even necessary for them to offer the Arabs "equal but separate" school and vocational facilities. Hence, it took the semi-illiterate community a little over a decade before it sprang back to life and started to challenge Israeli tyranny and call things by their names. The development of resistance literature takes place, then, in this oppressive ambience and reflects the conditions of its siege and authoritarian regimentation. And the first manifestation and harbinger of things to come from the emerging Palestinian personality is a resurgence of folk poetry.

Initially, the Israelis encouraged and published young Arab writers who wrote placid love poetry. But this kind of poetry, stressing the erotic and libidinous, did not have much of an audience in a community frightened to death by its loss of identity, attempting to grapple with daily living in a circumscribed milieu. This period, which was characterized by shock and silent fear, was followed by a period of slow convalescence in which yearning for the "golden past" was uppermost in the minds of writers. As they became more certain of themselves, however, defiance was combined with yearning in a manner the Zionist authorities found astounding in their "happy domestics". Consequently, in less than five years of "peaceful" living, "the natives" began to convert poetry reading sessions, weddings and funerals into protest marches, demonstrations and denunciation of the enemy. The folk-poets did not only overflow with enthusiastic poetry, but they also constituted the backbone of the protest movement against military rule, the unjust expropriation of land, the expulsion of citizens from their positions and administrative detentions. By 1959, nationalist poetry became the dominant form of protest against the enemy, and a political movement, Al-Ard (The Land), was founded to articulate the demands of the community and assert its personality. In the process, a new generation of poets and writers surfaced and began to launch magazines to spread the word. The poets and satirists started exposing Arab collaborators and scoffed at the enemy in a most-sarcastic and mocking manner. The enemy was shocked by the "ungrateful natives" and responded by suppressing the magazines and imprisoning their editors.

Instead of undermining the movement, the repressive measures strengthened it and the sad poetry of yesteryear became a weapon of furious exhortation and armed propaganda of the tongue. The period of alienation was over, the enemy had better take notice. And the enemy did: It outlawed the Al-Ard movement and accused its members of being Communist-Nasserite dupes trying to overthrow "the Jewish state". What apparently the Israelis failed to grasp was that the children of the land, its fellahin, didn't remain in Palestine because they loved Zionist "technological superiority", but because they loved the country, considered

Palestine their own homeland, and stayed there regarding the Zionists as alien interlopers whose sojourn in Palestine wasn't going to last beyond a life-time. This fellahin leftism found its poetic concretization in three poets who subsequently became world famous. These were Mahmoud Darwiche, Samih Al-Kassem and Tewfig Fiadh. Kanafani cites many passages from these and other poets, offering a presentation of their work and portrayal of the historic setting in which they wrote. The anthologies are: *Resistance Literature in Occupied Palestine*, and its complementary work, *The Palestine Resistance Literature Under Occupation 1948-1968*. Both abound with samples from practically every known writer or poet, but no author is critically evaluated.

The Palestinian Arab did not only suffer from a loss of community, economic peonage and oppressive military rule, he also suffered from the constant deluge of Zionist literature that depicted him as dirty, stupid, banal, wicked, sly and sub-human. That is, the Palestinian had to face not only a "colon" mentality with its concomitant superior technology and arrogant posturing, he also had to face its cultural bombardments and resist the blandishments that "white niggeritude" offered. In his book, *In Zionist Literature*, Kanafani underscores the rise of Zionist literature, its evolution and the political use to which it is put the world over, without, however, evaluating its impact on the Arab community, or explaining how Zionist arrogance generated its counter-part, Arab verbal actionism, as a means of compensation for Arab "inferiority" in their self-chosen Babylonian captivity.

In *Zionist Literature* was the first study of Zionist literature ever written in Arabic according to Dr. Anis Sayegh, director of the Palestine Research Center. Kanafani makes no such claim, but claims I think accurately that "Zionism fought its battle with the literary weapon in a manner that equals if it doesn't surpass its political weapon". He contends that Zionist literature is an indivisible part of political Zionism, and that the latter put the former in the service of its political and military objectives, forging it into a formidable weapon of propaganda. Moreover, Kanafani points out that "it is no exaggeration to record here and now that literary

Zionism preceded political Zionism and begot it". And if Zionism were the by-product of racialism and fanaticism, it is important to note that Zionist literature was the precursor in both instances. Furthermore, the politicization of Judaism was also first expressed in literature under the pressures of national European chauvinism in the 18th and 19th centuries. But the union of literary and political Zionism since the formal beginning of the Zionist movement (1897) makes contemporary Zionist literature part of a well-organized propaganda symphony more than a creative artistic literature developing without central direction. On this point, Kanafani conjectures that "perhaps the Zionist literary experiment is the first of its kind in world history, where art is used in all its forms and at all levels to carry out the most gigantic and broad operation of forgery and deception which conduces results of the utmost gravity". In sum, Kanafani is of the opinion that "the collective brain-washing of the world in favor of Zionism which was achieved by artistic endeavors, is the worst abuse that has ever been perpetrated against art by artists. From Benjamin Disraeli's "David Ellory", to George Eliot's "Daniel Deronda", to Leon Uris' "Exodus", literature has been employed in a manner that breached the rules of rudimentary morality and artistic taste. And this growing defamatory trend in our era has been justified as a means of averting another holocaust, while merchandizing one that victimizes an innocent people that had nothing to do with European barbarity. At any rate, the subject matter of Zionist literature is the heroic Jew, not the wandering, pious, or usurious Jew, but the manly, noble, infallible, civilized Jew; the Hebrew Hero; the legendary soldier of power and purity; and the paragon of absolute truth, physically, mentally and politically. Its object of contempt is the feeble-minded, backward, uncivilized, reactionary, stupid Arab.

What is unique about the history of Zionist literature is that it reached its summit of output in periods when conditions improved considerably for the Jews and in periods when the Jews acquired political and civil rights. Put differently, Zionist literature was not the product of persecution as it is often facetiously alleged by liberal bleeding hearts in the West. On the contrary, Kanafani states that the

idea of "the promised land" became more widespread in the religious sense in the Andalusian Arab period between the 9th and 12th centuries which Jews still regard as their "golden age". Now what happens in the 19th century is that the Jews of Europe obtain political rights, a new situation, which from a conservative Jewish point of view, could inevitably lead into assimilation and, therefore, the loss of Jewish identity and uniqueness. Thus, the assimilationist-distinctivist debate raged in the Jewish community and resulted in its division into progressives and conservatives. The latter, or the distinctivist-wing achieved their triumph by founding the Zionist movement whose objectives were actualized by the establishment of the state of Israel. The literary Zionism which supported the distinctivist-wing put forward the chosenness and inherent superiority thesis of the Jews, which the Zionist movement cultivated and disseminated throughout the world. The same thesis is now advanced in contemporary Israel, and its citizens are portrayed as an invincible soldiery imbued with the martial spirit.

The transformation of the Jew from the Shylock of Shakespeare into the "infallible" hero of Uris begins with the attempt of Maria Edgeworth who wrote "Harrington" in 1817. Edgeworth's Jew is a "good Jewish fellow". In 1833, Benjamin Disraeli, a British Jew and a future Prime Minister, answers Edgeworth. "The good Jew of Edgeworth is the Jew being prepared for assimilation." "The Jew", Disraeli affirms, "is a man of pure blood and race" and must continue as a "distinctive and chosen" person. But other writers who took up the subject subsequently stressed the normal humanity of the Jew, not his uniqueness. This trend continued until George Eliot wrote "Daniel Deronda" (1876), where the Jewish heroes believe in the necessity of "participation in the making of the future of the world and the Jewish future. They also realize the great value of their heritage and make Palestine their desired political direction". Mordechai, the principal hero, is portrayed as a "political person and a social prophet" who continuously speaks about the Jewish state to which he finds no other alternative. Miss Eliot sets the tone of this socially conscious and humanly motivated Jew for the next century. She popularizes a Jew who epitomizes human

happiness, and contemporary Zionist propaganda has never tired of reiterating the same theme in its attempts to silence the enemy and convince the casual onlooker, while providing the faithful Zionist with "an angelic, redeeming image of himself". To enhance the stature of Zionist propaganda, however, Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern political Zionism, published "Altneuland" in which he argues that "Palestine has been awaiting the return of the Jew for centuries in order to reclaim the land and live on it". Now the clinching argument for Herzl's claim to Palestine is not the Jewish Biblical legend, but the fact that "the Jews will bring Western civilization and know-how to the region and spread its culture throughout Asia and Africa". But with the establishment of the state of Israel, a new and more sophisticated rationale is developed incorporating the approaches of both Eliot and Herzl and taking into account recent changes. The new approach is best illustrated in Arthur Koestler's "Thief in the Night", Leon Uris' "Exodus", and James Michener's "The Source". The three writers emphasize "Jewish superiority", which, in effect, does not only mean self-pride in one's achievements but also contempt for others: The Jew is placed at the top of the social pyramid, while the Arab is put at the bottom. The Jew is noble, the Arab is ignoble; the Jew is creative, the Arab is dull; the Jew is spirited, the Arab is listless; the Jew is courageous, the Arab is cowardly, etc. — The idea behind this classification is, of course, to justify the right of the Jews to Palestine instead of admitting that it is a right based on conquest, not justice and history. At any rate, the most effective weapon in the Zionist propaganda arsenal is the Jewish holocaust which is widely used by writers whose heroes often come from Europe fleeing the yoke of German or Christian persecution. No sooner the hero or heroine arrives in Palestine, he or she falls in love with a non-Jew and explains to the lover the point of view of the Jewish immigrant and why Palestine is the only place in the world where the Jews could recover their "normalcy". In these love affairs, the Arabs appear as hirelings of foreign powers who are trying to take over the beloved Jewish Palestinian homeland. To further rationalize their case and make it more coherent, the Jewish lovers resort to religion and

race, stressing their uniqueness, thereby hoodwinking their listener completely and winning his total approval and unquestioning allegiance to the Zionist cause.

The literary mercenaries of Zionism, whether Koestler, Michener, Uris or others, periodically play the game of Western journalistic objectivism in which their Arab heroes are fond of saying that "the Jews are the only salvation the Arabs have ... They are the only people who have brought light to this part of the world in the past few thousand years". Moreover, the Koestler ilk attribute the continuing defeats of "the Arabs to their lack of faith in a land they know is not theirs but that of the Jews. And the Arabs also know that the Jews created a verdant national home in Palestine out of pestilential swamps and arid deserts". In short, it is not unfair to state that the political and literary messages of Zionism are the same; the form in which the message is communicated is the only difference. Finally, what may be tragic for both is that neither is likely to survive the state of Israel, except in their dirges and mournful hymns to a bygone past. The demise of Israel is a question of time related to the historic resolve of the oppressed to emancipate itself, and it is not a question that "invincible" Israel can obviate by exploiting the consellation of power configurations and wrenching "peaceful settlements" from decadent Arab regimes.

The incubus which had paralyzed the Arab people's revolutionary potential was shattered in the June War of 1967. Consequently, *Umm Saad*, (1969) the symbol of the fellahin, had either to seize the time or remain the object of history made by others. Since her mental shackles had been smashed, she seized her destiny and joined in the revolutionary upsurge of the Palestinian Arab people in the post-June war epoch. The removal of the obstacles to auto-emancipation — Arab trusteeship, Nasserism, the dependence mentality of Palestinians — left Umm Saad no choice except her continued servitude or the proclamation of her peasant revolt. Who is Umm Saad? Kanafani tells us that she is a woman he knows very well; she is his teacher and a student at the same time; she is a member of that "crushed, impoverished class of peasants who were thrown into the camps of despair"; she is the raw material of the revolution,

the revolutionary school whose graduates have begun to map out revolutionary strategy and spread their wings before the sun of freedom.

During the few days of the June War, Umm Saad was not seen at all. But she reappeared when the dream of liberation faded, bringing back with her a grape vine and a sampling olive tree. She walked and faced her employer-author: "The war started on radio and ended on radio, and when it was over I wanted to break the radio but Abu Saad pulled it out of my hands. Oh Cousin, Oh what a shame!" Then Umm Saad presented her gifts: "You may know nothing about a vine but she requires little water. In fact, too much water spoils her. You say how? I tell you she draws her water from the moisture of the air and good soil and she gives without expecting a return". And the olive sapling needs no water either, "she absorbs her water from the depth of the land and the moisture of its earth".

Saad, the son, the vineyard and olive tree sapling symbolize the uprising of the young. He decides to join the revolution. He is caught at the border and needs an intermediary to obtain his release. Why? Mother has the answer:

For twenty years, we have lived in a prison. What is it we do in this prison other than walk back and forth. Cousin! There are all kinds of prisons. The camp is a prison, your house is a prison, the newspaper is a prison, the radio is a prison, the street cars and eyes of people are too ... our lives are prisons and the past twenty years were a prison. And you speak of prisons? All of your life you have been a prisoner ... but you have deluded yourself into believing that the prison bars of your house are flower pots that adorn the entrance to your prison ... prison, prison, prison. You yourself are in a prison ... Why do you then believe that my son Saad is a prisoner? He is in prison because he refused to sign a paper that says he is a good boy. Who of you is a good boy? All of you have signed these papers at one time or other, yet you are still prisoners.

Saad manages to obtain his release without signing any

documents his Arab captors wanted him to sign. The mayor called his action impudent; he calls it revolutionary. He joins the commandos. Umm Saad feels somehow left out because she too wanted to join but she couldn't: "The children are a humiliation. If I didn't have these two infants, I would have joined and stayed with the men in the new camps. I would cook for them and serve them with my own very eyes". Then she asks the author, who has contacts with the resistance movement, to put in a good word for Saad:

Please tell his commander not to make him angry. Tell him that Umm Saad makes you swear by your mother's honor to let Saad realize his dream. He is a good fellow, and when he wants to do something which he can't do, he becomes very sad. Please tell him to let Saad realize what he wants: He wants to fight. Why don't you send him to the battlefield?

While Saad is on a mission, a storm strikes and the camp where Umm Saad lives, Borj Al-Bara-Jinan, is flooded. She is not worried about the damage nature wreaks on her camp, but she is concerned about Saad who may be facing the storm and a hail of enemy bullets as well. In a few days Saad comes back home wounded and tells mother about the mission he and his comrades had carried out. The most significant aspect of the story is that Saad and his fellow commandos who had been encircled by the Israelis for about a week, had run out of food and had little ammunition left to try to break the siege. They saw an Arab peasant woman in the fields whose help they sought after they had decided she wouldn't inform on them. The woman gladly obliged and rendered whatever assistance she could. Umm Saad is truly overjoyed that there are mothers like her still in Palestine ready to help the fedayeen. Meanwhile, the revolutionary tempo mounts, and the Israelis carry out a retaliatory raid on Beirut airport on December 28, 1968. The Lebanese government doesn't defend its territory, but Umm Saad and the Umm Saads near the airport set out to do their share in the defense of Beirut. They remove the triangular nails the Israelis had dropped on the roads leading to the airport to prevent help from reaching the area. The

airport incident reminds Umm Saad of the story of Abd Al-Moulah and Fadle, the two Palestinians who were connected with the 1936 revolution. The latter was a revolutionary, the former a collaborator. Fadle is somewhat lost in the annals of history, while Abd Al-Moulah becomes a member of parliament and a highly honored guest at "revolutionary" banquets of Arab capitalists because of the "creative" role he played in aborting the revolution. Umm Saad feels a close kinship to Fadle and to those exploited peasants who are scrubbing the floors and stairs of buildings in Beirut, Cairo and elsewhere. Here she relates how the guard in a building where she had worked was used by the owner to cheat the poor floor sweepers for two Lebanese pounds each. Then she expresses her solidarity with the workers and yearns for the unity of the oppressed as she exclaims: "Oh, if the guard, the other lady and I could have united against the landlord". But now Umm Saad is the symbol of hope, not a sample of sadness and yearning anymore. She is part of an unfolding revolution, and to underscore the profound change that has taken place in her life, she buys a new veil and receives a necklace from Saad which is "a chain of metal that ends with an emptied sub-machine bullet". Umm Saad does not only become a happy and proud mother, she also becomes a happy wife because the irascible, brazenly furious Abu Saad is changing too. As she says,

poverty cousin, poverty ... is what turns an angel into a devil and vice versa. What could Abu Saad do besides fuming in the face of reality? He was trampled underfoot, trampled by poverty, by UNRWA, by the Zinc rooftop, by the boots of the State ... What could he do? But when Saad joined the commandos, Abu Saad was resuscitated, his spirit returned to him, and when Saad returned wounded, recovered and then went back to the front, camp life changed drastically for all of us. Abu Saad started to see me and see the children. Do you understand? You should see Abu Saad now, he walks like a peacock, he doesn't see any young man going by with a rifle without patting him on the shoulders, as if he has found his old stolen gun!

indeed, the vineyard branch is budding; the sapling olive

tree is taking roots; the revolution has become inevitable; the idea of freedom has seized the multitudes. A new tomorrow is dawning.

The shattering of Arab illusionism in the June war, the growth of the resistance movement in its aftermath and the spread of revolutionary ideology impel Kanafani's characters to take advantage of "Zionist Liberalism" and its "open door policy" by going back to occupied Palestine in search of national consciousness. Said S. and his wife perform this task in *Returnee to Haifa*.

On his pilgrimage back home to Haifa, Said S. drives his Fiat (June 30, 1967) through what was once called Marj Ben Amer and climbs the seashore route approaching Haifa from the South; when he "crossed the street and entered the main road, a whole wall crumbled before him and he lost his way behind a curtain of tears. Then he found himself saying to his wife, Safia, 'this is Haifa, Safia'." Homecoming has its tears of joy and pleasant memories, but homecoming for Said brings back a hidden burden on his mind that has to be relieved: It is his flight from Haifa on April 21, 1948. Since that flight, Said has been living in Ramallah for twenty years. Now that Ramallah is under Israeli occupation, the Israelis in a gesture of "open bridges" have permitted their conquered subjects to move "freely" in the "Zionist homeland." Safia pleads with Said to make the journey back to Haifa so that she can look at their old home and see if their abandoned infant, Khaldoum, is still living. At first, Said is very reluctant to reopen a closed door because he has already, through the Red Cross, the Truce Commission and friends and contacts, tried to determine what has happened to his 5-month old Khaldoum whom he abandoned when they fled from Haifa in a state of panic each scrambling for his life. "No Safia", he declares, "I do not want to return to Haifa. It is a humiliation. And it is doubly humiliating for both of us to return. Why torment ourselves?" Safia weeps profusely, but can't bury the newly born idea. Finally, she prevails upon Said to accompany her "because the Israelis will shortly close the borders when they discover that their calculations are wrong". Anyhow, by going back, Said hopes he will be giving himself an opportunity to have a look at "the illusory Jewish miracle". After he recovers

from the first shock of really being on the main street of Haifa, Said drives on directly to his old house. Both he and Safia step out of the car somewhat edgy and go to the house where they find an elderly Jewess living. The lady politely invites them in, stating that she has been waiting to see them for the past twenty years. Said assures her that he hasn't come to engage her in a political debate or try to reclaim the house. Besides, he knows that she is guiltless and he has come only to find out if his son, Khaldoum, is still living. "Yes, Doff! I do not know what his name was, but if it is of interest to you, he resembles you a lot". Two hours of idle chatter follow, but Said is not tuned into the discussion, he is reliving the past, the fall of Haifa and how its citizens were herded out under British auspices and Zionist bayonets. From the discussion we learn that the new lady of the house is Miriam Cohen who is a Polish Jew. She and her late husband were given the house by the Jewish Agency and were entrusted with the care of "Doff" whom they have adopted. Safia is appalled to see a foreigner living in her home and acting as if the house belongs to her. The two parties wait for "Doff" to return home. Then Said asks anxiously, "When will Khaldoum come home?" The Polish lady smiled mutedly, "He is due now, but he could be a little late. He is never on time. He is exactly like his father". The sarcastic reply provokes Said to ask himself privately. "What is fatherhood?" but Miriam wants to clear things before Doff arrives. "Listen Mr. Said", she says,

I want to say something very important. For this reason I wanted you to wait for Doff, or Khaldoum if you wish, so you would have a discussion with him and the issue would be resolved naturally. Don't you believe the question was a problem for me for the past twenty years? I have been puzzled and now let's get it over with. I know you are his father and I know that he is our son. Yet in spite of all this, we shall let him choose by himself. He is now a mature young man and we must recognize that he has a right to choose ... Do you agree?

Faced with this predicament, Said paces back and forth in the room furiously trying to assess the implications of Miriam's proposal. Since the discussion was in English and

Safia doesn't speak it, she demands to be apprized of what is happening. Said explains and she promptly states: "That is a fair choice. I am certain Khaldoum will choose his true parents. No man can deny the call of blood and kinship". Said burst out with bitter laughter:

What Khaldoum, Safia? What Khaldoum? What blood and kinship are you talking about? And you say it is a just choice! Safia, for twenty years they taught him what he ought to be, day by day, hour by hour, with food, drink and bed ... And you say a just choice! Khaldoum, Doff, or the devil if you wish, knows us not. Do you want to know my opinion? Let's get out of here and not return to the past. The party is over. They stole him.

Safia insists that her own son couldn't possibly deny her, and if he does he will be deceived; she has no intention of leaving before his arrival. While waiting Said attempts to console himself by telling Safia about friends who have remained in Jaffa and refused to leave, but suddenly Doff enters in military fatigues carrying his cap. Said leaps up and asks Miriam if this is the surprise for which she wanted them to wait. Doff is motionless for a moment, then Miriam walks toward him slowly and calmly says: "I would like to introduce you to your parents ... Your original parents". Doff is taken aback briefly; then he addresses Miriam, "I know of no other mother than you, as to my father, he was killed in the battle of Sinai 11 years ago, and I do not know any others". Stunned silence prevails and Safia cries like a spectator whose hero is being eaten by lions. Doff surveys the atmosphere dispassionately and without comment. Then Said asks Doff if he is in the army and whom is he fighting and why. Doff stands up and bluntly states, "You have no right to ask such questions. You are on the other side". A few minutes dialogue ensues in which Doff lectures his ex-father on the nature of man, and finally declares:

You shouldn't have departed from Haifa. And if this were impossible, you shouldn't have left a suckling infant in his bed. And if this were impossible you should have never

tired to attempt to return ... Do you say this was impossible too? Twenty years have elapsed, kind sir. What have you done to recover your son? If I were in your position, I would have taken up arms for that purpose. Is there a better reason? You are failures, failures, shackled by heavy chains of backwardness and paralysis! Do not tell me you've been crying for twenty years. Tears do not bring back the lost or missing or produce miracles. All the tears of the earth couldn't propel forward a small boat to carry two parents in search of their lost child ... and you spent twenty years crying ... Is that what you're saying? Is this your insipid, empty weapon?

After a long insulting lecture sprinkled by Zionist quotations justifying the state of Israel and advocating its continued existence as a "national home" for the Jews, Doff stops. Then Said replies: "The worst crime a man can perpetrate, whoever he may be, is to believe that the errors and weaknesses of others constitute his right to existence at their expense, and that these failings do indeed exonerate his own crimes and errors against them". The indignant father states the Palestinian case more poignantly: "You predicate your existence on an error we committed and a weakness we inherited. Suppose we rectify the error and overcome our weakness, what becomes of your existence then and of your arrogance as victorious Sabras?" Since Safia is unable to follow the verbal duel, she interrupts desiring to be part of it. Said tells her "The question before us, Safia, is what is the homeland?" And "What is it?" asks she. Said responds, "The homeland, Safia, is for this not to happen", and continues:

I have been searching for a true Palestine — a Palestine in which there is more than memory and past events ... I have found it in my younger Khaled, not in Khaldoum. As for Khaled, it is a cause for which he must bear arms and die for its sake if need be. As for you and me, we've been searching under the dust of our memories and now you see that we have found out what is under that dust ... A new dust also. We have erred when we thought that the homeland was the past only, but for our son Khaled, the

homeland is the future, this is the point of departure. This is why Khaled wanted to bear arms ... Doff is our infamy; Khaled is our remaining honor! ... Did I not say to you from the beginning we should not have come? ... And this requires a war? Let's begin the journey.

It is as clear as daylight that social liberation cannot be achieved without self-liberation, and that neither Palestine nor the Arab world can be liberated without an aroused multitude that has broken its chains. Who shall inherit the earth, Khaled or Doff? That is the question.

## CHAPTER V

### **Palestinian Revolutionism**

*Man is either a circumstance, a cause or a revolution. That is, he is either a cipher, a pleader or a liberator. I have elected to become what a man ought to aspire to become - a liberator. Therefore, the only dialogue I can have with the enemy is the music of the sub-machine gun and my battle cry in communicating with him is the conquest of the hill beyond the horizon where we shall build a New Jerusalem for a liberated mankind.*

Abu Salem

The partisans of both the Arabs and the Israelis who perceive the Arab-Israeli conflict in terms of race and territory contend that the demonic enemy precipitated the June War of 1967. The humbler, liberal-minded analysts, adjudge that both sides mistakenly stumbled into the war at the behest of "extremists" in each camp, who contributed the lion's share to bringing about the week's conflagration. But in my opinion, neither argument has much credibility or historic validity, because neither takes account of the global aspect of the war and the socio-economic forces that impinge upon the area. For these and other reasons, I do not see the war as a diabolical Zionist conspiracy undertaken with a view to overthrowing "progressive" Arab regimes as such, nor do I see it as a satanic Arab attempt to wipe out the Jews, dump them into the sea or to ship them back to Europe. The June War, in my opinion, was an integral part of the well-orchestrated, world-wide, counter-revolutionary offensive launched by America after the Cuban fiasco in what might be historically



regarded as *America's Last Decade* (1962-1972) as the impregnable bastion of world imperialism. The only difference, however, between the bloodbaths and the coups that had occurred in Indonesia, Ghana, Algeria, Brazil, etc., and the Mideast is that in the former cases, the forces of internal reaction had toppled the regimes from the inside and purged those "national democratic revolutions" of their "progressive" elements with the minimum of direct outside interference; whereas in the Arab situation of the Mideast the internal reactionaries had been either exhausted or defunct and couldn't be used as spearheads to reverse or stem the revolutionary tide. Therefore, America had to resort to the strategy of frontal assault, a role for which Israel had been prepared for many a year as the advanced outpost of imperialism and its striking gendarme in the Mideast region.

Being an astute and a pragmatic politician whose own drawbacks were known to him, Nasser endeavored to swim with the counter-revolution wave rather than attempt to mount it or face it head on. He, therefore, averted an Arab-Israeli confrontation as far back as 1963 over the diversion of the Jordan Waters and preoccupied himself with the questions of economic growth, intra-Arab rivalries and the suppression of his opponents. He also mended his ways, vis-a-vis America, and welcomed its capital and oil cartels as partners in the exploitation of Egyptian resources and the building of the non-capitalist road to development. But since capital has no country but American loyalty, and its military wing — the pentagon — believes in true agents, not in unctuous friends, a collision was inevitable. Finally, the tempo of the counter-revolutionary offensive caught up with Nasser as the momentum of his bravado revolutionary actionism pushed him forward and led him directly into a war of one-sided annihilation, the result of which made him a prisoner in the imperialist fold. Hence, it could not be merely argued that Nasser fell into a well-timed Zionist trap. In my view, he was too clever for that and the stakes were much higher than his head. What happened to Nasser is that he leapt into the eye of the storm by embarking on a policy of "demonstrative diplomacy", thinking that he would be rescued by the interposition of the superpowers, thereby achieving a

diplomatic victory or at least a stalemate by which his leadership of the Arab world would be maintained, if not enhanced. That is, the whole affair to Nasser was a question of prestige, not of war aspirations against Israel or domination of anyone. That this interpretation is a closer approximation of the truth in the global context can be deduced from Nasser's defacto recognition of Israel as a permanent entity whose borders he closely safeguarded between 1957 and 1967, and from the historic declaration he made at the second PLO Congress in 1965 when he announced that he had "no plan for the liberation of Palestine". His domestic and external policies during the same period clearly show that he had nothing but peaceful intentions as regards Israel. If this is so, then how do we explain the turn of events of 1967? The answer lies in Nasser's perception of himself as prophet and leader. The prophet in him cried for war and revolution; the leader spoke of and practiced the policy of co-existence. Put differently, Nasser the man and Nasserism the ideology as distinguished from Nasser the president and Nasser the chief military bureaucrat were moving in opposite directions but in the spring of 1967, the prophetic-opportunistic aspect of Nasserism seized the reins of his powers as the prophet-statesman's calculations backfired in a rebound hurricane that effectively put an end to both the prophet and the leader. That Nasser was not deposed as a result must be attributed not only to the suppressive state apparatus he had built or to the moral credit he had accumulated between 1952 and 1967, but essentially to the law of inertia which has protected many a naked emperor and hordes of historical failures.

Kanafani, the apostle of Nasserism, did not only beat the war drums on the eve of the June War, he also welcomed the battle as the final hour of decision to cut down Israel to her "natural" size. He not only failed to anticipate the downfall of Nasserism and evaluate its historic disintegration, he also failed to emancipate himself from its maelstrom while he espoused a populist kind of Marxism as editor at *Al-Anwar* and *Al-Hadaf*. That is, Kanafani's commitment to Nasser was so great that he was never able to attack him by name, even after the latter formally accepted the infamous liquidationist

Roger's Proposals on July 23, 1970. In other words, Kanafani wrote and talked like an intellectual Marxist at Al-Hadaf, but remained a practicing Nasserite throughout his journalistic career. Although both he and the ANM started criticizing Nasserism with varying degrees of ambiguity in the aftermath of the June War, only sections of the ANM, but not Kanafani, publicly repudiated Nasserism and classified it as a petit-bourgeois ideology whose time had passed. Rephrased, Kanafani of Al-Anwar was a Janus-like character with one mouth hailing Nasser and another adoring the resistance and seeing no incompatibility between the two positions; whereas, the Kanafani of Al-Hadaf was the one-eyed gazelle whose body was in Beirut or Amman, while his head was in Hanoi or Havana. To make the analysis abundantly clear, let me state that I believe there is a fundamental difference between the verbal adoption of a given ism as an instrumentalist weapon and embracing a given ism as a world-view, a strategy and a set of policies, as well as internalizing its value system, aspirational psychology and emotional make-up. Moreover, I believe that Kanafani and the ANM embraced Nasserism in its totality and its full implications, and Kanafani died not fully emancipated therefrom; whereas the ANM as an historic political entity passed off the scene partly unrepentant. However, the residues of the ANM that formed the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, with whom Kanafani established a working relationship as a journalist, started officially advocating Marxism in August of 1968, though most, if not all members had no Pauline or Constantine conversions before or after the proclamation of Marxism as the PFLP's ideology. Put simply: The value system, the psychology, the tribal practices of the ANM and its super-secretive elitism continued with little abatement into the PFLP. In this chapter, we are only concerned with Kanafani's analysis of the resistance movement, the context in which it operated and the dangers it had to face.

The defeat of Nasserism in the June War of 1967 had an immediate and direct material effect on the life of Ghassan Kanafani. Since Al-Mouharir and its bi-monthly Palestine Supplement had been largely financed by Egypt, it was

decided that salaries would be reduced substantially under a new austerity program. Kanafani, who had by then become a famous journalist, left Al-Mouharir for Al-Anwar over a financial dispute which weakened his political position. At Al-Mouharir Kanafani was lord of the manor; at Al-Anwar he would be one of several editors in a family business with a string of journals of its own and a number of journalistic luminaries. However, it must have been heart-breaking for Kanafani to have left the Palestine supplement of Al-Mouharir (which he had edited between October 5, 1964 and July 6, 1967), because under his editorship the supplement was the unofficial voice of all Palestinians; it was their only forum.

In "Welcome Oh Battles" (June 1, 1967), Kanafani gloated over "Israel's dilemma" and pointed out that if "things remained frozen, the Arabs will have achieved huge victories materially and psychologically which appeared beyond our grasp before, according to the weak and deceived souls of that column of doubters and agents": Then Kanafani proceeded to enumerate several already accomplished "huge victories".

- 1) The reduction of Israel to its true size after she had convinced the world that she possessed the only striking force in the area for the past 19 years;
- 2) The return of hope to the Arab masses who had been exposed to campaigns of doubt and slander regarding the UAR forces since they went to the aid of the fledgling Yemen republic;
- 3) The clear stand of the entire Arab nation on the line of fire, whose resources, official and popular, will be placed at the disposal of the battle of liberation;
- 4) The emplacement of the Palestine Liberation Army, equipped with the most modern and powerful weapons, at its correct position, facing the state of gangsters, awaiting zero hour;
- 5) The expulsion of the UN Emergency Forces from

Sinai which meant the final elimination of the legend of doubt that was circulated by some and believed by themselves only because they repeated it so often;

6) The encirclement of Israel by closing the Gulf of Aqaba in her face and the exposure of her conceited allegations that she will not remain silent if her 'legitimate rights' were endangered in the Gulf;

7) The emplacement of the whole region on the verge of a decisive destinational war in which the Arabs hold the power position to act if Israel decided to carry out its threats against revolutionary Syria by firing one single bullet in the direction of any Arab border.

Kanafani concluded his article by stating that "the UAR will not retreat on the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba, nor will she agree to the return of UNEF" as announced by President Nasser. And since the massed Arab forces were to continue in the Sinai and elsewhere, "the battle of liberation could very well come if Israel dared to start the war". But if Israel didn't dare to do so, "the Palestinian commando organizations would drag her into battle after the Arabs had decided the time and place ... as our brave soldiers stand at the borders burning with longing to join in the battle". Well, the battle came on June 5, 1967, and Kanafani wrote on June 6, under the self-deluding title, "Let's destroy them".

America is then behind Israel as the Arab radars clearly show. Yesterday there was news that caused some shock and questions regarding the extent of the aggression and the false, counterfeit bravery of the Israelis ... But the dawn of today carries to the Arab people with its sun another sun that lights its road, and that of the great battle arena; it clarifies, exposes and uncovers everything, especially all those who attempted to conceal themselves yesterday behind the dust of battle and the fictional calming reassurances which they "reiterated continuously" ... Today, we shall not be satisfied with the repulsion of aggression and the disciplining and indictment of the aggressor before the world's conscience

... Today we shall uproot the cornerstone of aggression and its take-off point.

On June 7, Kanafani had not yet learned the full extent of the tragedy. He was still arguing "We shall fight to the end" because "the children of this nation must save humanity and civilization from the tatars of the earth" and assume their responsibility towards "civilization, history and human dignity". But by June 22, Kanafani had realized in part what had happened and started to write articles urging rapid actions at official, military and people's levels in order to prepare "each citizen to become a soldier in the forthcoming battle of revenge". Moreover, what was required was that,

the Arabs had to put all their military, political, economic and diplomatic powers in the service of the battle so that we could transcend the slogans of removing the consequences of Israeli aggression and proceed to uproot the Israeli entity from its taproots, to rid the Arab homeland of that poisoned dagger which was under the direction and guidance of the U.S. imperialism in order to divide our nation and plunder its bounties.

In "The Solution That Satisfies Us" (June 29 1967), Kanafani arrived at the conclusion that the Arabs must rely upon themselves in the defense of their cause while respecting world public opinion, because "the forces of tyranny and aggression are trying to bridle the UN and take her away from the path of justice and right". He conceded that the Arabs had called for and believed in peace, but they did not want peace at "the expense of their rights and dignity; and as long as there are forces of evil that perpetrate aggression against the Arabs, they must not continue their silence even if the whole world was turned into hell".

With Kanafani's departure from Al-Mouharir, the paper ceased publication of the Palestine Supplement. At Al-Anwar Kanafani was assigned the editorship of its weekly supplement and the writing of one daily editorial and a weekly column, "Behind the Scenes", which he had brought with him from Al-Mouharir. He also wrote "Word of Criticism", a weekly literary column under the pseudonym of

Faris Faris. Here Kanafani had a good deal of latitude, according to Said Freiha, editor-in-chief of Al-Anwar and its owner. But Kanafani had to work within the bounds of the "institution" whose rules he "always respected". Mr. Freiha's "institution" was favorably predisposed to Nasserism and Palestinianism and also had other deities and cared a good deal about its circulation. In political affairs, Nasserism was the decisive factor if and when it conflicted with Palestinianism. That is, Kanafani had a leash, but apparently he never had to bite it off when he worked for the ebullient Mr. Freiha.

In his daily editorial, "Light on Events", which appeared on page one of Al-Anwar, Kanafani dealt principally with current Arab questions on a day-to-day basis. His first editorial (July 4, 1967) took up the question of "geographic aggression and historic triumph". He stated that "UN decisions regarding the June War will have no bearing on the crisis because such decisions are mere formalities", and the only value the debate could have was to use it as "a means of justifying the resumption of fighting" on the part of the Arabs. His confidence in "the world's conscience" was weakening because "isolated right is a defeated fait accompli and justice is an empty rifle that has no meaning without bullets". The critical point of this and other numerous editorials was that fighting must be renewed; that Israel won a temporary victory that has to be undone; that the UN was a talking forum; that the U.S. was Israel's patron and protector; that the Arabs must unite and undertake concerted action in order to defeat Israel on the battlefield.

Strangely enough, the cease-fire, in Kanafani's view, was an "act of compliance with international opinion", rather than an admission of defeat on the part of the Arabs, and he contended (July 12) that it must be turned into a period of pressuring and exhausting the enemy while the Arabs recovered their "will to fight" and organized "a war summit" springing from the masses' readiness to fight, rather than a ceremonial summit for the heads of states to make hollow declarations. "The will to fight", insofar as Kanafani was concerned, was expressed in Nasser's speech of July 23, 1967, a speech which most commentators regarded "conciliatory" Kanafani wrote:

With a feeling of true leadership, Nasser addressed himself to the masses placing his finger firmly on the wound of the setback. We only have one choice: the road of struggle. He assured us that he is unafraid of assuming responsibility for the events of the past or the prospects of the future. It is an act of courage in itself to acknowledge what has happened, to realize what was required and to act accordingly for the present and the future ... What is absolutely certain is that we have chosen to fight and there is no power on earth which can turn the military aggression into a fait accompli. The voice of Nasser yesterday was more than the voice of the leader; it was the voice of history springing from the depths of the hemisphere's conscience; it was the mutual exchange of loyalty between the leader and the masses, via the blood of battle wounds and destruction; it was the roar of the giant as he moved forward before a new stage of determined Arab struggle (July 24).

Although Kanafani focussed on the necessity of renewed fighting in the summer of 1967, he nevertheless took cognizance of international circumstances, the woes of defeat and victory, the political and military solutions, as well as drawing a map of the past and future.

"The balance of power", Kanafani contends, "recognizes the legitimacy of piracy." This he explains by pointing to Israel's alleged commitments to both the U.S. and the Soviet Union, not to commence hostilities first. Since Israel did so, she not only violated her own pledges with impunity, she also contravened the principles of law and morality, a situation that implied serious repercussions for the conduct of international politics. Moreover, Israel "used prohibited weapons without being punished by the international community". What "prohibited weapons" Kanafani doesn't specify, but he alludes to the use of electronics devices as decoys. At any rate, he expresses surprise at seeing "contradictory positions" being adopted at the UN, and big powers "abandoning their pledges and commitments and submitting to armed pressure, the politics of the fait accompli

and sanctioning the use of force as a means of achieving settlement" (July 9). The lessons to be drawn from such international behavior are clear: The Arabs must not be afraid of the so-called "balance of terror" since the Viet Cong have shown how to bend it in their favor; the Arabs must rely on their own self-sufficiency and military competence and the mobilization of their masses; they must also realize that the Soviet Union regards "the battle, not only as determining the direction in which the Mideast shall move, but also as affecting its own destiny as well". Therefore, Kanafani expects the Soviet Union to be on the side of the Arabs, "not only to remove the consequences of aggression which implicated its Arab friends, but also to prevent the building of a bridge of aggression to Europe and the liquidation of the progressive current at this strategic crossroads to the world" (July 16, 1967). In the light of this analysis, Kanafani takes stock of the points of strength and weakness of both the Arabs and the Israelis and prescribes certain actions as a result. Since "the enemy knew that Arab forces would pulverize Israel within three days", Israel resorted to a pre-emptive strike and the element of surprise in order to score a victory before the arrival of Iraqi forces into Jordan, and she converted her narrow territory into "a point of strength to isolate the Arab forces". Stocktaking netted the following for Kanafani:

A) The points of Arab weakness:

- 1) Israel is attempting to alter the demographic make-up of the West Bank and Gaza in order to paralyze one million and a half Arabs;
- 2) Israel is exploiting what she believes to be the Arabs' short breath at the level of ideas, mass mobilization and economic stability;
- 3) Israel is attempting to promote political coups to disrupt Arab military preparedness, prevent a pre-emptive Arab round and hamper united, single-minded action; Israel is making preparations to draw the Arabs prematurely into another round of conventional warfare;
- 5) Israel is working to freeze the present situation until she is ready to introduce atomic weapons.

B) The points of enemy weakness:

- 1) The Arabs in the occupied territories are a burden on the enemy;
- 2) The land area under occupation is reasonably broad and enemy forces are overextended and dispersed;
- 3) Continued mobilization constitutes a heavy financial burden on the enemy;
- 4) Israel cannot engage in long-term warfare;
- 5) Since France will no longer supply Israel with weapons, the U.S. will become her sole arsenal and a period of time will elapse before the new weapons are absorbed;
- 6) It is not in the interest of Israel to advance or retreat. She is standing on a tightrope that prohibits speedy action at will unlike in the past.

C) The points of enemy strength:

- 1) Its strategic position has improved considerably;
- 2) It possesses military superiority;
- 3) It has a strong propaganda position the world over;
- 4) It mobilizes its citizenry in a much more effective and intensive manner than the Arabs; it has high morale based on its military position.

D) The points of Arab strength:

- 1) The aim of the military occupation was to achieve a political settlement which is not forthcoming;
- 2) The aggression did not achieve the hoped for victory nor did it lead the Arabs to capitulate;
- 3) The Arabs have two weapons, territory and people, which the Israelis lack;
- 4) The socio-economic ability of the Arabs to withstand war is abundant;
- 5) The Arabs' will to fight is now much higher than it was at anytime before.

Now that Kanafani has outlined the points of strengths and weaknesses of both Arabs and Israelis, what does he propose to do about it? He believes the Arabs under occupation must be "converted into a time-bomb", and the

enemy be made to pay dearly for the occupation. He also believes Arab "internal fronts must be strengthened by the formation of national political fronts" whose objective must be the launching of a war of attrition against the enemy on all fronts, and finally, in addition to continued military overhauling, a long-term war of liberation should be waged (July 23, 1967).

For the rest of the summer in particular and the next three years in general, Kanafani repeatedly dwelt on the above themes. He also periodically warned the leaders to beware of losing their credibility with the masses (July 30, 1967), and intimated that they would be in a race with mass fury if they failed to comply with the masses' desire to recover its dignity (August 13, 1967). And as if to foment trouble for Arab leadership, Kanafani started to assail "the political solution" and push for "the military solution" as the Khartoum Summit approached (August 30):

Fighting is not only a military necessity now, but also a psychological and civilizational necessity ... There is nothing that can be called a political solution; there is something called a political road towards a military solution ... The political solution cannot remove the consequences of aggression, but it will sanctify the Zionist presence in the absence of an Arab doctrine which would be the negation of the Zionist existence, chapter and verse (August 20).

Kanafani was not against "removing the consequences of aggression" at this stage, but he was against it as a strategy or as an alternative to the liberation of Palestine. What he didn't realize at this point, however, was that the Arab states' strategy was not the liquidation of Israel as a socio-economic entity, but the return to the June 4th borders by diplomatic means, and if need be, by military pressure. That is, the Arab states implicitly stated their readiness to recognize Israel, and this political stance manifested itself in the Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967 which ex post facto offered a peace settlement based on Israel's right of conquest and the Arabs' inability to defeat Israel. Kanafani did not

grasp the logic of Khartoum, nor did he draw the proper conclusions from it. Instead he rhapsodized, "Fighting in the life of this Arab generation will not only lead to muscle flexing and pressure in as much as it will open a new book; put a new mass instrument to work; create a new party, election and parliament; liberate a whole people, unify a nation; civilize a desert. It is not only a solution; it is an historic opportunity" (August 20).

At Khartoum, the Arab states under the leadership of President Nasser nominally agreed not to negotiate, recognize or sign a peace treaty with Israel. But instead of concentrating on the liberation of Palestine, they concentrated on the settlement of intra-Arab disputes, such as the Yemen civil war and on subsidies to be paid to the frontline states. Each participant promised to do its utmost diplomatically to pressure its friends to force Israel to withdraw to the June 4th borders. In other words, the Arabs returned to the period of summitry which entailed reconciliation between right and left, and in effect, made Feisal the King of all Arabs. Again Kanafani did not perceive the meaning and consequences of the new accord. He wrote, "Nasser resolved the struggle over realisms which were embedded in the Khartoum Conference. He declared with clarity that we are standing before two choices: The fact of surrender and the fact of fighting, and between negative and positive there is nothing before the Arab nation other than the choice of resistance" (September 1, 1967). Furthermore, Kanafani interpreted the conference's decisions as appropriate for "the present stage" in the struggle to recover Palestine, and he pointed to three salient underlying features of the conference which were not broadcast widely: Secret contacts were being made to hold a people's congress with a view to declaring the people's presence in the battle and as means of measuring the commitment of all to the cause of liberation; changes were to be carried out in the Syrian regime to accommodate the "national forces" (Nasserites); the Arabs decided not to observe closely the cease-fire line (September 5).

Kanafani's enthusiasm for Nasserism diminished somewhat as weeks and months went by without renewed fighting. On September 10, 1967, he called the June War "a

disaster" for the first time, though all Nasserites still considered it a "setback". He compared the "disaster" to the "setback of secession" Nasserism had suffered in 1961 when Syria seceded from the UAR in a military coup. He made the following contrasts between the two events: After the secession Yemen became the lung through which the Arabs breathed, while after the June war Southern Yemen became the Arabs' new lung and model of revolutionary democracy; the 1961 socialist decrees which precipitated the secession were comparable to the elimination of general Amer's militarism after June 1967, and the rise of mass democracy; prior to 1961, Palestinian action was almost nil, but the June War broke the glass house of the PLO and ushered in a new national movement which portended well for the future; the Arab political parties split and divided into factions then, while at present they are changing their political strategies and trying to form united parties. Stated briefly, Kanafani's evaluation of both the "setback" and "disaster" led him to conclude that the Arabs were much better off as a result of the "disaster". It seems that he arrived at the right conclusion for the wrong reasons. Undeniably, the Arabs were destined to be better off, not because Nasser had remained in power and a few minor changes were taking place, but because the class Nasser and his regimes represented had been defeated, and consequently a new social class had to leap into the arena and seize the reins of power to which Nasser and his ilk clung tenaciously. It took Kanafani and many others more than three years to grasp this rudimentary truth. For this and other reasons, Kanafani continued to expound and justify strategies within the context of Nasserism where Nasser held a pivotal role as "the representative of an historic Arab truth, in addition to being in a position that virtually expresses that truth". Within the Nasserite orbit, Kanafani thought roles should be allocated among the Arab states according to "the geography of the fronts", on the basis of military unity and the encouragement of commando operations. Not surprisingly, Kanafani began to note in the autumn of '67 that a "revolutionary bond" was replacing dispersion among the Palestinians and strengthening relations between them and the Arab people, and that "the new bond was going to

generate a bond of joint struggle that will lead to liberation" (October 1, 1967).

In the fall of 1967, a considerable number of Arab liberal and radical writers, including Kanafani, denounced the UN for its failure to uphold Arab rights and uphold justice. What is startling, however, is that while those critics universally condemned Resolution 242, none of them implicated Nasser in its formulation or its approval by the Security Council. In other words, the author of capitulation was exonerated and the UN became the scapegoat for his misdeed. It would be facile and irresponsible on our part to merely dismiss those literati and journalistic savants as ignorant simpletons or opportunistic hirelings or to accuse them of being Nasserite dupes. But could it be said that they must have been either intellectual morons or so delusional and pathological in their appreciation of Nasserism that they could not see the direct interrelationship between Khartoum, Nasser, Resolution 242, Jarring, Superpower interventions and so on? Kanafani's position typified the dilemma at hand. He writes in a damning manner regarding Arab "moderation" at the UN, yet he does not relate it to the real source, Nasser:

The position of the Arab states is a case of exaggerated moderation ... Whether or not this is a maneuver — if so, it is an error — or the truth — if so, it is an act of treason — we do not know, but in both cases it is valueless. And it is an illusory belief to think for an instant that it will turn a military defeat into a diplomatic victory ... No reduction of Arab legitimate rights can lead to the improvement of the Arab position. On the contrary, the Arab position will lose its forceful essence with such tactics ... Arab diplomats have been bad lawyers in a just cause and this truth means that we must change the method of advocacy, not the cause itself (November 19, 1967).

Kanafani's strident adoration of Nasser increases as Nasser claims that he has rebuilt his shattered army and was just about ready to plunge into battle again. "There is no doubt", Kanafani comments after Nasser had delivered a speech during a visit to the front, that "a speech of this sort is an historic document, not only because it means advancement and progress in the direction of carrying out the pledges President Nasser had made after he returned to power and repudiated its relinquishment, but because the speech means

that the battle has already commenced" (March 13, 1968). In another month Nasser made another speech. This time, however, he concentrated on the internal situation after a student revolt. Instead of trying to analyze why the revolt occurred, Kanafani *praised* Nasser for his readiness to wage battle by "building a solid internal front from which he will move from standing firm to refusal to deterrence, then on to victory against the enemy" (April 20, 1968). To convince the enemy that he intended to fight, Nasser announced in early winter of 1968 that the *Sinai Arab Organization*, a commando movement, had started its operations against the Israeli occupation. Immediately Kanafani hailed the announcement as a "turning-point in the nature of the confrontation against the enemy and a leap forward", and hoped that Syria and Jordan would replicate the move (December 22, 1968).

Because 18 months had already elapsed since the cease-fire was signed and no serious fighting had taken place, Kanafani was cheered by the announcement which in his judgment contributed to the betterment of the revolutionary climate the resistance had created through its sacrifices and brave deeds. He was also pleased to note that "Cairo regards the Security Council resolution as a matter related officially to the June 5th aggression and not as a matter concerning the Palestinian cause. That is, Cairo does not look upon the resolution as a deal that encompasses the aggression and the Palestinian cause at the same time". In sum, Cairo admitted that the Palestinians, if they so desired, had a right to reject Resolution 242. The recognition of the Palestinian right to determine their own stance vis-a-vis the Security Council or any other entity on the part of Cairo reinforced Kanafani's unswerving faith in Nasserism. But on the third anniversary of the June War, Kanafani placed armed struggle in center stage, and referred to the occasion as "merely another day as long as the causes for it remain the same and the operational answer is still being created ..." Two truths emerged however: "Israeli victory has not achieved its stated goals, and official Arab programs of liberation have failed to realize their announced tasks" (June 5, 1969). What remained in the arena then was foreign occupation and armed struggle. As Kanafani riveted his attention on the resistance as the only available

alternative, Nasser unleashed his air force in a "war of attrition" against the Israelis. Unobtrusively, Kanafani rethreaded his bearings and offered the following evaluation of "Arab air superiority"

Armies in this age cannot be built by magic wands, but in accordance with programmes of long-range planning in which specializations play the decisive role ... The Egyptian air force has traversed on a long steep road by moving its leadership from guided specialization to logistic operations and construction, to operations of advanced training and military preparedness ... In addition to the escalation of Arab war morale, Arab air superiority indicates some very critical things are in the offing which will show that Israel no longer has the upper hand in the skies ... Israel's psychology has been shaken and its feeling of invincibility is declining and morale is flagging among its citizenry (July 27, 1969).

On the question of Nasserism, the above line continued until Nasser accepted the Roger's Proposals on July 23, 1970. The proposals were an extension of Resolution 242, but in this instance, the Americans had Nasser's moral authority backing them, his expressed readiness to conclude a peace treaty with Israel and the implicit agreement that the Arab states would eliminate the resistance. By this time Kanafani had already been the editor of *Al-Hadaf* for a year, and the Popular Front had taken an irrevocable position on Roger's treachery. Thus Kanafani fired his artillery in Nasser's direction without naming him:

These who merchandize the resistance in exchange for American promises are not merely excusing capitulation, but are also attacking the resistance and placing us under siege by cutting military aid, closing the resistance's information offices in Cairo, closing down its broadcasting station and withholding its funds. The move to accept the Roger's Proposals is not an intelligent tactic; it is a concrete extension of 242; it is a surrender proposal that attempts to deceive the masses and conceal the truth;



it is an attempt to drive a wedge between the resistance and the masses and break their fighting will (August, 1, 1970, Al-Hadaf).

If Nasserism were the admirable friend of Palestinianism, imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction are its inveterate foes. If Nasser were "the historic Arab truth", Dayan is the antithesis of that truth and has to be expunged. If Arabism were the ideology of humanism and liberation, then Zionism is the ideology of racism and exclusivism, imperialism is the ideology of plunder, and Arab reaction is the state of debauchery. All must be liquidated. Kanafani then, looks upon Israel as an extension of the American empire and a tool by which the U.S. would like to continue its economic and strategic domination of the Mideast, while keeping the Arabs divided and weak. He also understands the organic relationship that exists between the U.S. and Israel and the symbiotic relationship that links them with Arab reaction, headed by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

On the internal question of Israel, Kanafani thinks that she will not be able to squelch the resistance and Israel will remain in mortal danger as long as there are free Arabs and Palestinians around. Put differently, Israel to Kanafani is an ephemeral phenomenon that will disappear as certainly as Arab unity will be actualized. Thus he dismisses as infantile notions the democratization and secularization of Israel or the takeover of the state by Afro-Asian Jews. Lastly, he feels that the new Zionism that is being fanned the world over on the question of Soviet and Arab Jews is a desperate Zionist attempt to keep Western Jews edgy and to make them support more generously Israeli expansionism and racial mythology. Therefore, the periodic trial balloons Israel sets afloat regarding "an autonomous Palestinian state" are treated with contempt by Kanafani and viewed as efforts to find more credible Arab agents and Arabs willing to serve as Israel's corvee labor in order to maintain Ashkanazi superiority in every department of Israeli life.

Doubtless, the June catastrophe tarnished the image of President Nasser and cost him a considerable amount of moral authority. His word no longer had the authority of law, and

his armed forces and fellow officers became the butt of jokes. The war effectively ended his reign as the unchallenged Arab leader of the past decade, but most Arabs could find no alternative to his lodestar. The Palestinians, who had been among his most dedicated disciples, still believed in his capacity to recover and liberate the homeland. However, Palestinian revolutionary nuclei had begun as far back as January 1, 1965 (Fateh), to assert their identity on their own initiative. Fortunately, however, they had an opportunity to develop their cadres and acquire some experience in relative peace since most observers regarded Fateh and other evolutionary groups, such as Avenging Youth of the ANM, as a mere nuisance before June, 1967. But in the twilight of Nasserism, people searched desperately for new heroes in conjunction with Nasser, and they found them in these and other groups which were destined to play a decisive role in the region. The new Messiah was the resistance, a revolutionary embryo that would not only constitute an alternative to Nasserism, but would present itself also as a new vision of reality, a new history and a new chapter in the long struggle for the emancipation of the Arab homeland. The historic value of the resistance would then be the transcendence of the present as an immutable reality and the opening of new horizons before the Arab masses. This historic leap which the resistance posited would not only surpass the various remaining remnants of past stages of the Arab national movement, but the resistance itself would become the cornerstone and the vanguard of the future movement, complete the process of national liberation and usher in a new age of freedom for the Arab people and for all mankind. At this juncture, the resistance's inestimable value was that it embodied the idea of armed struggle, expressing the hopes and aspirations of the oppressed. It also helped to maintain a revolutionary climate, offering a concrete example of things to come, sustaining the morale of the masses and inspiring them to action.

In the summer of 1967, Kanafani and his contemporaries only instinctively hoped that something would happen, but as I indicated previously, they banked on the revival of Nasserism, not on the birth of an alternative to it, to restore

Arab rights and dignity and liberate Palestine. What concerns us here, of course, is Kanafani's position and how it altered as the Palestine resistance unfolded, mushroomed into a mass movement, then crumbled giving way to professional funeral organizers marching to tuneful dirges of impotent mourners, speech-mongers and exhibitionist gun-wielders.

Kanafani perceptively explains to us some of the difficulties the Palestinians had to overcome before they could form independent organizations on their own. He stresses the feeling of dependence which refugeeism generates, and draws to our attention "the yellow card complex of the released convicts" the Palestinians had to endure as they moved about, or the feeling of being "narcotic smugglers" under permanent observation and inspection everywhere. The image of a tormented Palestinian, a multiple Zeus, is what we have to cope with according to Kanafani; except the legendary Zeus had only carried rocks of stone, whereas the Palestinian carries the rocks of occupation, dispersion, poverty, effacement and anguish even among his so-called fellow Arabs (August 11, 1968, *Al-Anwar*, Supplement). This Palestinian whose identity is in question is the raw material out of which revolutionaries had to be moulded. Thus Kanafani did not believe in the inevitability of gradualism and evolutionary transformation; he believed in instant conversion:

Am I a Palestinian? I heard you cry. Yes, my son, you are a Palestinian, but you have no country and your country is being born. It will be born! Do not believe, however, that man grows. No, man does not. He is born suddenly: A single word in one single instant opens his chest to a new pulsation; one single scene grips him from the protective ceiling of childhood and deposits him on the steep road leading to the mountain (February 4, 1968).

In the mundane, less poetic world of politics, the Palestinian has a dual heritage to grapple with: the officially sponsored organization of the Arab states, the PLO, and his own revolutionary legacy going back to 1919. During the period 1967-71 Kanafani concentrated his powers on the PLO

and the resistance movement and did his utmost to help propel the cause forward, a position he never abandoned for the remainder of his short life. But in the post-September massacre period (1970) and more specifically after July 13, 1971 when the resistance movement was extirpated in Jordan, Kanafani's literary-political world reverted to the epoch of martyrdom. It is crucial to stress here, however, that Kanafani, like others, confused the two stages of resistance and revolution, especially when the resistance reached its zenith in the spring and summer of 1970. That is, the theoreticians of the Palestine and Arab national movements did not identify three distinct stages – martyrdom, resistance and revolution in the revolutionary process, nor did they elaborate the various steps leading from one stage to another or the numerous features that characterized each stage, nor did they specify the preconditions for each stage and the kind of personnel and apparatus that were required to achieve it. In sum, Kanafani's theoretical muddling-through was not his alone but was also a reflection of the environment, a characteristic of the nature of the resistance and the intellectual and moral outlook of the leadership. For these and other reasons, Kanafani must be regarded as a mountain peak in his milieu, rather than be indicted for his failure to grasp theoretical issues for which he and others were ill-equipped. Let me state the issue bluntly: among the more prominent handicaps that afflict the Arab national movement, one finds that intuition, not reason, action, not reflection, tribalism not collectivism, dominate the thinking and practices of both the leadership and the cadres, let alone the mass of supporters and friends.

Meanwhile, Kanafani establishes himself firmly at *Al-Anwar* and starts taking up Palestinian questions more daringly in view of the prevailing circumstances. He criticizes the Palestine Liberation Organization for desiring to co-ordinate its activities with those of the Arab League. Such a course of action means:

The PLO will be incapable of taking any initiative ... The present circumstances are appropriate for the creation of a real liberation organization ... The PLO was previously a

prisoner of Arab action because it was its legitimate offspring, but now it can impose its free and legitimate existence besides not under unified Arab action ... This is an historic opportunity to make the summit conference adapt PLO plans. But the PLO must first unify the resistance, the struggle and the organization (August 23, 1967).

According to Kanafani, the only justification for the existence of the PLO is the liberation of Palestine, but if it became a burden upon the Palestinians it must be jettisoned and replaced by another organization. Now new criteria must be introduced to measure the PLO's importance. These are autonomy and revolutionary action. By such a yardstick, the PLO is an appendage of the Arab states, and has therefore to be bypassed. This was not Kanafani's judgment alone as regards the PLO. Indeed, most Palestinians shared it and felt that Shukairi had to be removed and the PLO revamped in order to cope with the crisis facing both Palestinians and Arabs. Thus the struggle for its control raged for several months and finally culminated in the dismissal of Shukairi (December 1967) and the PLO's takeover by Fateh and her allies in July of 1968. In February 1969, Fateh's own chieftain, Yasser Arafat, was elected chairman of the PLO, and since then Fateh has played a decisive role in the determination and execution of PLO policies. As one of the severest critics of the PLO, we would have thought that Kanafani should have been well rewarded for the pioneering role he played in exposing Shukairi and ridiculing the bureaucratic apparatus he led. But that was not to be the case because Fateh rejected Kanafani's nomination to the Palestine National Congress (June 16, 1968) on the grounds that he was opposed to armed struggle. What prompted Fateh to make such a presumption and veto the nomination and the PFLP to acquiesce, is difficult to ascertain, but the author is more than certain that Kanafani was always an advocate of armed struggle, though he periodically questioned whether or not the Palestinians alone could liberate Palestine.

At any rate, in the first year of spasmodic armed struggle, Kanafani unwaveringly wrote in its defense and pleaded with

the resistance to master psychological warfare, train its cadres in intelligence work, democratize relations between the commandos and the leadership and go underground (October 19, 1967). He also urged that all Palestinians, irrespective of class, including the Arab Higher Committee of Haj Amin El-Husseini, unify under one umbrella, with the PLO and "the tens of small Palestinian organizations" (October 22, 1967). Since Kanafani felt a new age was dawning, he appealed to his fellow Palestinians to come forward and fight for the cause:

Dear Friend! You tell me you want to have a home, a wife and a child and you would like to leave the national cause and other human values to me. Do you know what you are doing? You are declaring your withdrawal from your self. You are looking feverishly for space and fresh air elsewhere, but this you will not find because you abandoned your mother. Friend! In your absence, someone seized the opportunity and raped your mother. Had you been here, you would have, at least, stood at the door. Your body would have shielded her ... Will you return and bear your cross! (November 12, 1967).

Many a Palestinian and Arab returned "home" to stand guard and to speak in a language of life that created life, and innumerable returnees gave their life in silence and without funeral processions and gun salutes, and they did it with smiles of life on their lips and fists clenched as they embraced mother earth in perpetual union and indivisible affinity.

The revolutionary phenomenon that appeared as a consequence of the June War was treated by the enemy as a paltry attempt launched by marauding Palestinians, but engineered and guided by the Arab states. The sporadic outbursts that occurred between August 18 (when Fateh initiated the first guerrilla operation after the June War) and mid-November 1967, were viewed by the international press as pressure points instigated by the Arabs to extract a better deal at the UN for themselves. Few, if any foreign and Israeli observers, expected the emergence of a genuine resistance movement. Such thinking was facilitated because Israeli racists pre-conceptually thought that the Palestinians were incapable of undertaking independent action on their own. As

a result, Israel claimed (November 15, 1967) that she had eliminated the few dozen or so infiltrators that had slipped into the occupied territories, captured the agitators that remained behind fleeing Arab armies and pacified the whole population of Palestine, a people that if left alone would rather live in peace and freedom under the Israelis than under the Arabs. Those false claims did not annoy Kanafani, but the silent treatment the international press accorded the resistance exasperated him. Consequently, he was among the first to write about "the information siege" the resistance had to confront, and proposed that the resistance commence foreign operations in Europe and America "to implant through such operations the name of Palestine in the world's consciousness, and to insist on her continued being, just as intensely as Israel tries to erase the name of Palestine from the dictionary of international politics" (November 22, 1967).

With reference to the resistance itself, Kanafani indefatigably called for the unification of the various groups that had sprouted since June, and warned that "multiplicity could become fatal if it led to competition and further fragmentation. He advised the commandos to coordinate if they could not unify their activities, and pointed out that differences among them could be exploited by the enemy if they gave conflicting reports regarding their operations and other activities (December 8, 1967). Moreover, as the resistance made an impression in the Arab world, self-appointed mentors such as Mohammed Heykal of Al-Ahram, started assigning roles to it. For instance, according to Kanafani, Heykal wrote:

The people's war which the resistance claims to represent cannot be expected to become the decisive factor in the outcome of the struggle for Palestine. The Palestinian is not the Algerian movement, and it would be unfair on our part to expect such an achievement from the Palestinians. Therefore, we would not be detracting from the movement if we stated the facts, nor would Cairo be disassociating itself from the resistance if we said so.

What is astonishing is that Kanafani did not condemn Heykal for his stance, but merely classified it as a viewpoint that regarded the resistance as a "tactic", as opposed to Fateh which asserted that the resistance was "a strategy of liberation" (January 24, 1968). To the question, "Can the Palestine resistance lead to the liberation of Palestine?" Kanafani answered equivocally in his so-called "dialogue regarding commando operations". He stated: "If the answer were positive, then considering the resistance a mere tactic is an error; but if the answer were negative, then the resistance itself must become a tactic placed in the service of a greater strategy." Kanafani's vacillation on the question is inexcusable, but his position must be understood in the context of the dual position he held on Palestinianism and Nasserism. Furthermore, it should be reiterated that it took Kanafani two more years before he made a decisive and final break with Nasserism. In the meantime, Nasser's frequent speeches and periodic military activities which outshone those of the resistance sustained his smouldering faith in Nasserism and nourished the hope that the two isms were complementary, not contradictory, in the stage of "the national democratic revolution". We must also underscore the fact that Kanafani did not address himself to the question seriously because he was too preoccupied agitating for changes in the resistance and trying to promote the cause.

Hence, his recurrent theme as we indicated elsewhere, is that the multiplicity of organizations is causing confusion and disarray among Palestinians, creating divisive and partisan loyalties rather than one single national loyalty. Hence, Kanafani advocates the "unity of the fighters" as a basic minimum and as a means of mobilizing the Palestinians on the "Gaza model" or unified action (February 28, 1969). Consequently, when moves were initiated by Fateh and the Front that aimed in the direction of the "Gaza model", Kanafani hailed them as harbingers of things to come, especially in the post-Karama era (March 21, 1968) of co-operation. In other words, when the resistance established its personality in the baptism of fire and gave Israel a bloody nose in the battle of Karama, Kanafani cried out: "Palestine

unite! We have nothing to lose but our exile," and he urged that Karama become a new starting-point:

On the sands of Karama and in the debris of destruction, the blood of fighters mixed in a rivulet of martyrdom. The battle itself enabled the fighters to realize their unique destiny, and firmly laid the foundations for their united and concerted action. It will enter history as a turning-point in the long struggle for Palestine, and the resistance will become the striking arm of the sacrosanct unity of fighters ... It is the right of the fighters to see themselves fighting under one flag and the right of the people who will pay in blood for its liberty to march jointly on one single road (March 31, 1968).

From "the unity of fighters", Kanafani proceeds to emphasize the Arab character of the resistance and to underline the necessity of advancing "the social question, the organic relationship with the masses, the minimum program of action and so on. He admonishes the resistance to beware of ambiguity regarding "national unity" which "opportunistic elements could use to climb to positions of leadership in the resistance, then start to liquidate it" (August 4, 1968). To strengthen the resistance's foothold among the masses, "a people's army" must be organized and all citizens must undergo "civil defense" training so that self-protection in the event of danger can become a mass responsibility (September 22, 1968). As regards "national unity", Kanafani finds sufficient "common grounds" to consummate it. Of these, he highlights "the priority all organizations professedly give to the liberation battle; the rejection of the political solution, the belief that armed struggle is the only road leading to liberation, and finally, the consideration of the battle as being both Arab and Palestinian" (October 20, 1968). Obviously then, the resistance has to opt for national or Arab, not provincial or Palestinized solutions, and has to form organizations in the crucible of battle, such as the Unified Command (April 6, 1969). With reference to the "social question", Kanafani will offer cogent arguments in its favor in the Al-Hadaf period.

In brief, the Al-Anwar period for Kanafani (July 1967 to July 1969) gave him a comparatively large readership to educate in the ways of the national struggle as he saw it. Palestinianism progressively became his focal-point, and he disseminated it with all available means at his disposal. He left Al-Anwar not for financial reasons, but because of ideological commitments. Thus, Kanafani abandoned the relative affluence of the big institution in favor of one desk and one assistant editor, Rida Salman, at Al-Hadaf, the ideological organ of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The Al-Hadaf era (July 26, 1969 to July 8, 1972) may be characterized as the epitome of Kanafani's Palestinianism. It signified the final step in his journey on the road back to Acre, the leap to ideological politics and martyrdom for the cause he cherished so much.

## CHAPTER VI

### Confessional Marxism

*For what is, in my opinion, central to the Marxian position is the capacity and willingness to look beyond the immediately observable facts and to see the tree of the future in the tiny shoots barely perceptible in the present. It is the combination of historical vision and the courage to be utopian - with the vision sternly disciplined by an analysis of tendencies discernible at the present time, and with the utopia rendered concrete by the identification of the social forces that may be expected to further its realization.*

Paul A. Baran

On July 26, 1969, Al-Hadaf, under the editorship of Ghassan Kanafani published its first issue. In this first editorial, "A Voice in the Service of the Revolution" Kanafani greeted all revolutionary groups in the Palestinian resistance movement and pledged to make Al-Hadaf their "expressive voice, defender of aims, guardian of the revolution and discoverer of dangers surrounding the resistance". He repudiated the commercial values of the "business press", offered Al-Hadaf as a "forum" and promised to make it "the eye, that accompanies the heroes of the resistance to the battlefield and records their actions".

From the outset, Al-Hadaf was intended as the official organ of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine replacing Al-Hourriah, the ANM journal, whose editors joined

the PDF defectors. The very creation of Al-Hadaf was one of the by-products of the split that had taken place in February, 1969, in the ranks of the PFLP. The split which resulted in the formation of the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDF) did not only result in loss of Al-Hourriah, the hitherto official organ of the PFLP — the successor of the ANM — but also the defection of a significant proportion of intellectual cadres, whom the ANM and the PFLP had educated and cultivated for nearly a decade. The intellectuals' revolt against the established leadership created a vacuum which Kanafani was called upon to fill and do battle with the exponents of verbal Marxism. Why did the division take place?

According to Nayef Hawatemah, Secretary General of the PDF, the split took place because "the right-wing group", headed by George Habash, Waddi Haddad and Hani El-Hindi, "refused to participate in the Palestine National Congress under the pressure of the left-wing" which he led. Furthermore, "the right-wing acted in a manner contrary to the revolutionary policy of the toiling masses that the August program (1968) had adopted by arresting members of the progressive wing on January 28, 1969" The critical issues as Hawatemah saw them were the following:

- 1) We must break off all relations of subservience with the Arab regimes whether they are progressive or reactionary;
- 2) We must criticize the other Palestinian organizations, especially the PLO and Al-Fateh, on the grounds that like the progressive Arab regimes they were led by the petit bourgeoisie and its ideology, which had proved its failure in the 1967 defeat;
- 3) We must call for a long-term war of popular liberation against imperialism and Zionism, and for the establishment of a Marxist-Leninist Party completely committed to the ideology favorable to the despondent peasants and workers (the Asian proletariat).

The Habash group which considered itself the central core of the PFLP and carried its immense majority dismissed Hawatemah's "contradictory" allegations as the mental output of "opportunist pockets and adolescent cafe intellectuals who subscribed to scientific socialism in name only." Moreover, in a sober-minded analysis, Habash returned to the starting-point: How the PFLP was formed, who were its constituent elements and how they evolved in order to point out that Hawatemah's secession was not warranted under the prevailing circumstances, nor was it going to improve the prospects of the resistance or hasten the process of socialist transformation. According to Habash, the PFLP was formed in October 1967, from a) the Palestinian branch of the ANM, Avenging Youth; b) the Heroes of Return, an organization the ANM set up in November 1966 and affiliated with the PLO with a view to obtaining "arms, funds, mobility and camouflage; c) the Palestine Liberation Front of Ahmad Jibril which was a Syrian centered organization composed of well-trained soldiers; d) a group of independents and of free officers discharged from the Jordanian army who had, it turned out, links with the Egyptian regime. Their leader was Ahmad Zarur who later formed the Palestine Arab organization, which endorsed the Roger's Proposals immediately after President Nasser accepted them.

Avenging Youth considered itself the backbone of the PFLP. It worked with anti-imperialist groups while it was "preparing itself to become a Marxist-Leninist organization operating within a progressive political program". Habash admitted that when the PFLP was founded, it "did not declare its commitment to Marxism-Leninism and such a declaration was neither possible at that time, nor was it thought of within the ranks of the ANM's branch in the Front. However, what was considered then was that Avenging Youth would be the Marxist-Leninist group within the Front's framework". As to the "August Program", it dealt with "the strategy of people's war, not the question of the revolutionary party or the national front, which would have included all the anti-imperialist forces". Put succinctly, "the PFLP was formed on the basis of an alliance between groups and organizations ... but without a proper organizational

set-up that could have transcended generalities". For these and other reasons, the Jibril-Zarur groups split (September 1968) not over central issues, but over minor "tactical stances" regarding Jordan and Syria. Because of their military outlook and lack of political experience, the first splitters thought that "the PFLP should collaborate with the Jordanian regime, not realizing that the latter was trying to contain the resistance, infiltrate and eventually liquidate it". With reference to Syria, however, Jibril's Palestine Arab Front did not only refuse to condemn the arrest of PFLP leaders by Syria in March of 1968 but also "adopted the Syrian view which stated that Syria's opposition to the Front was related to the presence of the ANM elements within its ranks and that Syria would be ready to support the Front whenever the latter directed its attention to commando operations only".

Since the Front had to maintain its independence from the Arab States and strengthen its organizational autonomy, it abandoned the Jibril-Zarur groups without any feeling of compunction, but with some regrets in view of their technological and military capabilities. Lastly, Habash viewed the Hawatemah split as a desperate intellectualist attempt on the part of acolytes who sought to make instant Marxist-Leninists out of a people imbued with the spirit of Medieval civilization, saddled with the burdens of backwardness, plagued by imperialist deprivations; and crushed by poverty, disease and hunger. In brief, Habash contended that it required time, patience and perseverance to produce Marxist-Leninists and overcome the heritage of dependence, despair and disgruntlement.

In the bitter debate that raged between former comrades, Kanafani did not play a direct role, but he was among those dismayed by its occurrence. Therefore, he initially cautioned against the use of violence among comrades, and urged all concerned "to let logic not violence guide us". He also noted that "it is essential that voices of dissent be heard and without delay, but we need disciplined dialogue within the framework of revolutionary values" (Al-Anwar, February 6, 1969). However, under the pseudonym, Faris Faris, he wrote a scathing attack on the separatists as well as a mordant piece of satire. He posed a critical question: "Is the left-wing of the left

a left?" And answered that "the right of the right is an absolute stupidity, whereas the left of the left is a rightist opportunism".

Kanafani explained that "the left means a complete understanding of the World, its history, evolution and future; and it is not a modification of a rightist understanding of the same". He said that "ideology could become pagan ritualism unless it is enriched by critical ideas" and that was precisely what "the self-appointed leftists don't understand. Hence they adopt self-liquidating, suicidal slogans that gradually lead them into rightist traps where they're finished off by simple innocence or sheer dishonesty ... There they begin to make concessions in the name of wisdom and their tactics and schemes culminate in treason" (February 23, 1969, Al-Anwar Supplement). Friends of the PDF who didn't know that Kanafani was the author, wrote Al-Anwar denouncing "the rightist, reactionary, fascist who was slandering the revolution". Kanafani replied saying that he spurned "the sandwich eating logic of the attackers" and swore by his dead father, who wasn't dead, that he was not only "a leftist, but the son of a leftist who hangs the photographs of Mao, Guevara and Lenin on the walls of his carpeted office" (March 9, 1969).

The PDF split occasioned an important debate in ANM circles and Mohsin Ibrahim, the one-time champion of Nasserism, published a book, *Why the Lebanese Socialist Organization?* in which he accused the PFLP leadership of fascism and other heinous crimes. It seems to the author, however, that the Al-Hourriah editor Mohsin Ibrahim, and the salon theorizers around him were guilty of a good deal of infantile leftism, factionalism and power-seeking, if not outright opportunism, tacit conspiracy with the Arab regimes and abdication of historic responsibility. Granted that the Front's leadership and cadres were not Marxist-Leninist theorists, but they were innovative practitioners who had arrived at the Marxist entrepot not by deduction and book-reading, but by practice in the crucible of battle. Moreover, they were fighting for a noble cause while attempting to learn the theory, adapt it to an Arab milieu and construct an organizational apparatus that embodied



Marxist-Leninist values and translated its strategy into action. However, if we begin with the same premise the Hawatemah-Ibrahim group posited, we must ask "Why was the Front incapable of being transformed into a Marxist-Leninist party, whereas their faction was? Besides, how was it possible for the self-appointed Marxist priesthood to become an elite without a party and glide into a schizophrenia of disembodied action? Did the taking of umbrage under the PLO and Fateh whom the PDF leadership had denounced vehemently, enhance Marxism-Leninism? Did the call for the rightist arbitration in the dispute help the position of the left? Is becoming a prisoner of the right and living under its trusteeship a revolutionary deed? Is Marxist sloganeering and textual recitation the essence of Marxism, or is revolutionary practice its quintessence? Was not the "Left" working indirectly for petit-bourgeois regimes by making more widespread the latter's distinctions between "honest" revolutionaries who practiced military warfare and "dishonest" ones who preached revolutionary Marxism? Many other questions could be posed, especially as regards personal ambitions and power struggles, but suffice it to say that ideology was used as a tool and a smokescreen to destroy the PFLP from within and to undermine its effectiveness. Whatever the intentions, the PDF split facilitated the continued ascendancy of the petit bourgeoisie in the resistance and relegated the PDF elite to the position of eunuch philosophers within the PLO hierarchy, giving the latter a legitimizing prop and a respectable leftist veneer. Finally, since the question of the split was regarded as ideological, let us then treat it as such.

The central points of dispute between the advocates of the Popular Democratic Front and the PFLP leadership revolved around three fundamental issues: The historic evaluation of the Arab Nationalist Movement; the role of the petit bourgeoisie in the national democratic revolution; and the PFLP and its possible transformation into a Marxist-Leninist party. Now among the first accusations leveled against the PFLP and its predecessor, the ANM and their leadership was that they were "fascistic". For the benefit of those Al-Hourriah historians, let us define fascism. Fascism consists

of four major features: traditionalism, authoritarianism, racism and absolutism, or the worship of violence and war. Admittedly, some "fascistic" propensities could be discerned in the ANM, but none of these characteristics predominated. For instance, the denial of class struggle and emphasis on vague poetic nationalism without a worked-out social ideology to ameliorate the conditions of the oppressed and poor could be cited as fascist tendencies. But such qualities are basically liberal and/or conservative, not "fascistic", if we bear in mind that the basic difference between conservatism and fascism is that traditional conservatism believes in prejudice, power, privilege, whereas fascism in its Nazi form believes in the subjugation of people, the supremacy of the Aryan race, the will to power. Therefore, under closer scrutiny, the ANM couldn't be classified as "fascistic" but rather should be classified as populist conservative in its early stage. Moreover, since the movement identified itself with Nasserism for several years, it should be studied and evaluated in terms of that "experiment". Here the evidence clearly reveals that the movement believed in the "non-capitalist road" to development, the existence of social class and the antagonism between the "people" and the feudal hierarchy. As a nationalist party, it saw in Nasserism the most effective social instrument for the realization of Arab unity. That such analysis was false, the June War proved beyond any shadow of doubt. What is ironic in retrospect, is that the "progressive wing" advocated "fusion" rather than "alliance" with Nasserism. As to what role the petit bourgeoisie should play in the democratic revolution, that is something to be decided upon the basis of facts. In principle, every social observer knows how vacillating and indecisive that social class has been historically. Therefore, its role should theoretically be subsidiary to that of the workers rather than being that of central leadership in the struggle of national liberation. However, in the Arab World, the petit bourgeoisie happens to be in control of the loci of power and it has done its utmost to maintain its privileged position. It periodically depends on "people" to enhance its role and occasionally depends on its intelligence and bureaucratic apparatus to maintain itself in office. But the petit bourgeoisie has been populist and

reformist, not radical and revolutionary. For these and other reasons, an alliance could be sought with it, if we established independent and autonomous working class organizations that could lead the struggle against Zionism, imperialism and Arab reaction. At this juncture in the history of the Arab nation, the PFLP assigned itself the historic task of formulating a working class strategy and set out to build a working class movement to implement it. Thus, the PFLP needed to transform its previous ANM self into a vanguard party, thereby either pruning, if not deliberately dropping the traditional and the Nasserite elements, and educating its cadres to become serious revolutionaries. The PDF proponents, however, contend that such transformation is impossible — an exact expression of their petit bourgeois ideology and sentiment — and argue that we must build a new party based on students, intellectuals and workers as the vanguard — a proposition that confers the historic mission of the working class, ipso facto, on the petit bourgeoisie, not the workers. The PFLP stands for "alliance" with, not subservience to, that social class. The unfolding of history shall determine the falseness or veracity of either position; the battle field already has.

In view of the confusion surrounding the ideology, strategy and tactics of the Front that Kanafani came to Al-Hadaf to expound, explain and justify, it would be useful to give a brief outline of the first Marxist-Leninist program that the Front enunciated at its Second National Congress (February 1969), "A Strategy For the Liberation Of Palestine". The Front starts with the premise that the world is passing through an epoch of people's war and social revolution — an epoch in which world imperialism is disintegrating and revolutionary socialism is replacing it under the resolute pressure of the oppressed and the socialist camp. At the Arab level, the program begins with the proposition that the Arab nation is one and indivisible — it is a nation-state in becoming, not in being. It regards Palestine as the pivot of the Arab homeland, an integral part that is presently under foreign occupation. It looks upon the workers and peasants as the two social strata who are objectively committed to the social transformation of the Arab World. To achieve that

transformation, the program prescribes a revolutionary party with a revolutionary ideology and an alliance with the progressive intellectuals, and nationalists forces. The Front's ideology embraces Marxism-Leninism as a means of analysis and a guide to action. It posits democratic centralism as a doctrine governing relations within party ranks whereby criticism, self-criticism, discussion and resolution of discussion are carried out under a collective leadership. The Front subscribes to a strategy of armed struggle based on revolutionary socialism. It identifies the enemy camp and the forces of the national front and of the revolution. It unhesitatingly pledges itself to fight imperialism wherever the latter has interests.

A) Here is the aim of the Front as spelled out in the 1969 program:

The Palestinian liberation movement is not racist or hostile to the Jews. It does not aim at the Jewish people. Its aim is breaking the Israeli entity as a military political and economic entity based on aggression, expansion and organic unity with the interests of imperialism in our homeland. It is against Zionism as a racist aggressive movement in alliance with imperialism which has capitalized on the suffering of the Jewish people to serve its interests and those of imperialism in this rich part of the world. the gateway to the countries of Africa and Asia. The aim of the Palestinian liberation movement is the establishment of a national democratic state in Palestine in which the Arabs and Jews can live as equal citizens with regard to rights and duties, forming an integral part of the democratic progressive Arab national existence which will live peacefully with all the progressive forces in the world.

The Palestinian liberation movement is a progressive national movement that stands against the forces of aggression and imperialism. The link between the interests of imperialism and the continued existence of Israel will make our war against the latter basically a war against imperialism. On the other hand the link between the Palestinian liberation movement and the Arab progressive

movement will make our war against Israel that of 100 million Arabs in their progressive, national and unitary struggle. The battle of Palestine today, and all objective circumstances surrounding it, will make the war a starting point for the attainment of the inter-connected aims of the Arab revolution.

Lastly, the Palestinian war will be, as far as the Palestinian and Arab people are concerned, an introduction of the Arabs into the civilization of the age and a transition from the state of under-development to the requirements of modern life. Through our war of liberation we shall acquire political awareness of the facts of this age, and we shall throw aside delusions and learn the value of facts. The habits of underdevelopment, exemplified in surrender, dependence individuality, tribalism, laziness, anarchy and extemporization, will change through the war of liberation into the realization of the value of time, organization, accuracy, objective thinking, the importance of collective action, planning, total mobilization, interest in education and acquisition of all its weapons, knowing the value of the human being, freeing woman — halt of the society — from the bondage of decadent habits and customs, the basis of nationalism in confronting dangers and the supremacy of this connection over tribalism and regionalism. Our long term national war of liberation implies our fusion in a new way of life and our starting point on the road of progress and civilization.

The enemy camp is defined as follows:

- 1) The enemy of the Arabs in the war of liberation is Israel, Zionism, World Imperialism and Arab reaction.
- 2) This enemy has definite technological superiority which naturally is converted to military superiority and a great fighting force.
- 3) The enemy has long experience in opposing the People's development towards economic and political liberation. It has the ability to abort revolutions.

4) The nature of the war of liberation, as far as the main military base of this enemy — Israel is concerned, is a war of life or death which the political and military leadership inside Israel will attempt to fight until the last breath.

The National Front and the forces that constitute the revolution consist of the following forces:

- 1) We consider Palestinian national unity as essential in the mobilization of all the forces of the revolution to resist the enemy camp. On this basis we should adopt a definite stand in this direction.
- 2) The form of national unity is the creation of a front in which all the classes of the revolution — workers, peasants and petit bourgeoisie — should be represented.
- 3) We should attend actively to the mobilization of workers and peasants in one revolutionary political organization armed with the ideology of scientific socialism. On this basis, we should actively attempt to unify all the left-wing Palestinian organizations which, through dialogue between them and through their experience, can commit themselves to such an analysis.
- 4) The petit bourgeoisie will not join an organization committed to scientific socialism and strong political organization. Thus, it will join those Palestinian organizations which raise general liberal slogans, avoid clarity in thinking and analyzing class structure, and exist in an organizational form that does not require of the petit bourgeoisie more than its capacity. In other words, the petit bourgeoisie will fill, in the first place, the ranks of El-Fateh and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
- 5) On this basis, and on the basis of our understanding of the basic conflict, the nature of the present phase and the necessity of national unity to assemble all the forces of the revolution to resist Israel, we should work for the

establishment of a national front with Al-Fateh and the PLO which can offer the war of liberation the necessary class alliance on the one hand, and protect the right of each class to view the war and plan for it in accordance with its class vision on the other.

The 1969 program was further elaborated and more clearly concretized in "The Tasks of the New Stage", which the Third National Congress promulgated (March 1972), and in which Kanafani played an important role. The Front assigned itself ten major tasks that had to be fulfilled in this era of general Arab capitulation. These were: 1) The construction of the revolutionary party that has to lead the revolution; 2) The creation of a national front as a strategy to achieve the tasks of the national democratic revolution; 3) The mobilization of the masses, the channeling of their enormous potential and enrichment of the Front's experience by interacting with them; 4) The promotion and use of armed struggle as the only means of liberating Palestine; 5) The Arabization of the battle and the stress on the national and class characteristics of the revolution; 6) The invocation and application of the "Law of struggle against and alliance with petit bourgeois regimes" and the emphasis on the tactical aspect of the alliance since those regimes are in the long-run strategically opposed to the revolution; 7) The adoption of new and flexible tactics in the occupied territories and the strengthening of bonds between the resistance inside and outside of Palestine; 8) The dethronement of the Jordanian monarchy and its replacement by a Jordanian-Palestinian national front; 9) The rejection of all liquidationist proposals and the reaffirmation of the proclamation that the resistance is the sole representative of the Palestinian people; 10) The avoidance of confrontation with Lebanon, but not at the expense of self-preservation or the sacrificing of revolutionary gains already achieved.

By assuming the editorship of Al-Hadaf, Kanafani formally made his final break with Nasserism and its journalistic outlets in Beirut, such as Al-Mouharir and

Al-Anwar. At Al-Hadaf, he had a new world-view, not a mere perspective to abide by; a responsibility towards a political movement, not a simple stewardship rendering an account to a cultural attache or a business man; an obligation to propound a Marxist point of view, rather than just singing the praises of Nasserism. By and large, Kanafani was a faithful and ardent exponent of his new avocation, especially if we take into consideration his Nasserite political legacy, his sophomoric predilections among purported semi-illiterates and his giant-like posturing in a world of political dwarfs.

Kanafani had no difficulty expounding the idea of the "national front", since he had been advocating "the unity of fighters" for some time on the grounds that "they have no fundamental differences as regards methods, objectives or ideology" (Al-Anwar, April 21, 1968). He nevertheless spoke in terms of "loyalty to the cause", not to persons or regimes. Therefore, when Algeria openly "adopted" Fateh, which regarded itself as "the backbone" of the resistance, and the People's Republic of Yemen recognized the Front as the "core" of the resistance, he denounced "both moves as equally wrong" and thought that Algeria and Yemen were sanctifying multiplicity, rather than cementing organizational unity or promoting co-ordination among several sectors of the resistance (May 5, 1968). He also criticized Fateh's "fusionist approach which stipulated that all groups merge under its leadership and called for a constructive dialogue regarding Palestinian national unity". The gist of Kanafani's position was that national unity cannot be imposed from above, but must be realized as the result of a "deep conviction in its historic necessity, revolutionary value, and destinal meaning". Thus he proposed that "secondary contradictions between the resistance's groups which are ideological should be subordinated to the principle contradiction between the Palestine liberation movement and the imperialist-Zionist rape of Palestine", and he advised the resistance to "respect the choice of fighters to join whichever organization they desired to fight with", and to protect each other because "whatever setback befalls any group is likely to have repercussions on all others" (Al-Hadaf, August 16, 1969). Developing his thesis further, Kanafani insisted that a proper

national front has to be based on "conditional relations" which required "a minimum political program" that recognized the ideological integrity of the component parts and the political organizational autonomy of each participant. The reasoning behind the idea was simple; the resistance cannot counter imperialist machinations and Zionist treachery by spontaneous and variegated reactions, but by concerted actions based on mass mobilization under the leadership of the vanguard party. Only within this broad national perspective, will the resistance be able to move from defensive into offensive strategy (February 16, 1971).

As the resistance disintegrated in the aftermath of the September 1970 massacre in Jordan, Kanafani advocated national unity as a means of stopping "retreat, doubt and vacillation" (April 10, 1971), but conceded that "national unity" had become "a mere slogan and a dialogue of the deaf" (May 15, 1971), though he never lost faith in the capacity of the resistance to continue and achieve "a national unity in the foreseeable future" (July 21, 1971).

The more strongly Kanafani propagated national unity, the more zealously Arab regimes pursued the path of capitulation; the more he called for decisiveness and determined action on the part of the resistance, the more rapidly its vacillating and retreating leadership succumbed; the more accommodating and compromising the resistance, the more rapacious and conspiratorial the Jordanian monarchy became; the more the revolutionary climate declined, the more quickly the Arab masses abandoned the resistance and their regimes returned to the status of ambivalent spectators in this drama of slow demise and consignment of the Arab petit bourgeoisie to historic limbo.

Arab reaction was always part of the enemy camp in Kanafani's world. Therefore, it is no news to him to see Saudi Arabia trying to contain and encircle the Yemen revolution in accordance with U.S. strategy which aimed at replacing British power in the Persian Gulf by a joint partnership between Iran and Saudi Arabia under American sponsorship (May 9, 1970). What was infuriating to Kanafani, however, was the attempt on the part of Saudi Arabia and Morocco to convert the Palestine question into a question of

holy places in the aftermath of Al-Aksa Mosque fire by calling for an Islamic summit conference to deal with the question. Kanafani politely reminded the assembled kings and presidents in Rabat that "the burning of Al-Aksa is a political deed whose aim is not the building of temples — for Zionism rarely concerned itself with spiritual affairs — but the completion of the process of Judaization of Palestine and the elimination of its Arab history". He condemned the conference for giving "certificates of good behavior" to a pack of imperialist agents who were plotting against the Arab nation in the guise of religiosity and for rendering service to "theocratic feudalism whose repressive policies crippled Arab progress on the Gulf" (September 27, 1969). Furthermore, the Saudi reactionaries "colluded with the enemy by paying him 24 million dollars to protect the Tapline" while going through the ritual of expressing support for the Palestine resistance (November 22, 1969). Besides, "the secret alliance" between the U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia "couldn't be concealed because America is supplying Saudi Arabia with arms and mercenaries" with a view to creating "a security belt around the region in order to maintain its unchallenged control" (December 10, 1969). It is interesting to note that Kanafani's accusations against King Feisal landed him in jail in November of 1971, on the initiative of the Lebanese Government whose press law prohibits the "slandering of Arab heads of state". Characteristically, Kanafani served his two-week jail sentence as a means of "compensation to his royal highness". He said he couldn't be subjugated or domesticated by the authorities and he wrote a diatribe in honor of the occasion in which he repeated the same charges against the King and added a few more adjectives to the list: "Prostrating agents of imperialist plunder", (November 27, 1971) the Saudis are absolutist, treasonous, tailist, reactionary, tribalist.

With reference to Jordan, Kanafani always considered King Hussein and the whole Hashemite Dynasty a foreign fabrication imposed on the Jordanian Arab people. However, what antagonized him most was not the ferocity of Hussein and the barbarity of his tribal soldiery during Black September, but Arab silence as Hussein massacred the

resistance and liquidated its remnants completely in July of 1971 without causing a ripple in the Arab sea of tranquillity. Thus, it was no revelation to Kanafani to witness the U.S. and Israel reverse their position on Hussein and pin their hopes anew on him to achieve a "political settlement" by implicitly blessing his "United Arab Kingdom" plan while the one pretended that it had no prior knowledge of it, and the other, Israel, condemned it outright. Such a charade did not deceive Kanafani who exposed the UAK tactic as part of "the partial settlement strategy" the U.S. called for and dubbed it "a plan that dovetailed beautifully with the Israeli-American schemes" (March 25, 1972). This line was further elaborated when Israel held elections in which only propertied electors with "dual loyalty" to Hussein and Israel were permitted to vote and get "elected" to give the UAK plan "representational legitimacy" and enable Israel to broaden its "open bridges" by indirectly invading the Arab world (April 1, 1972).

As regards Egypt, which in Nasser's days was classified "a national, progressive regime", Kanafani ridiculed Sadat's "year of decision" and mercilessly assailed Professor Nadim Al-Bitar for defending Nasserism. The latter according to Kanafani had accused the resistance of promoting "evangelical thinking, metaphysics, utopianism, moralism, tribalism, etc." and Al-Bitar had claimed that "the failure of the resistance lies in the secret of calling for a people's war in an area that was inappropriate for that purpose instead of working with and through progressive Arab regimes". In his rebuttal, Kanafani was ruthless and contemptuous of Al-Bitar. He leveled many charges against him, including that of his being "an aristocrat" who was "sermonizing from on high and suffering from pains of conscience". But Kanafani made a telling point: "For twenty years the Arab regimes had taught us how to applaud and nothing else. Therefore, it doesn't mean that we are incapable of fighting, nor does it mean we cannot emulate the Vietnamese. The hero in Vietnam is not the mountain, the tree, or the jungle; it is man's will to fight: it is organization and proper planning" (November 6, 1971). Hence if the resistance falls again for the line of Arab regimes, it too would be falling into line with enemy strategy which seeks to sanction its "faits accompli"

1) by upgrading the status of Jordan and strengthening Hussein; 2) by aborting the true resistance and offering a so-called Palestine entity; 3) by plotting against the resistance with Arab regimes and encouraging "national deviation" and presenting it as a "third force"; 4) by maintaining the status quo, while judaizing Palestine; 5) by intensifying the climate of "peace" and making certain that "the faits accompli" are irreversible (June 17, 1972).

In August of 1970, Ghassan Kanafani published his first and only political pamphlet: *The Resistance and its Dilemmas*. In it, he took up three principal issues: the political thinking of the resistance and its organizational and military dilemmas.

The prefatory note points out that the Front has been subjected to adverse propaganda from its inception because it is the vanguard sector of the resistance and the attacks have come from all Arab governments irrespective of their political complexions. He says among the odious adjectives heaped on the Front one finds: rightist, fascist, terrorist, extreme leftist, provincialist, pan-Arabist, Marxist-anarchist, nationalist-chauvinist, reactionary-atheist, etc. But such appellations will have no impact on the Front, Kanafani assures the readers. And since he's never inured himself to being in a defensive position, he moves on to underline the utter futility of engaging in debate without a complete and a critical frame of reference. First of all, he regrets selective perception, denominational dogmatism and provincialism as criteria for evaluating the resistance and proffers Marxist dialectics as a methodological means for solving the "riddles" of reality and for bypassing capricious approaches and mechanical experimentalism. Kanafani quotes Mao Tse Tung approvingly regarding the dialectical method and its implications: "Our task is like trying to cross a river, but we cannot cross it without a bridge or a boat and if we cannot solve the problem of the bridge or boat, every discussion regarding the execution of our tasks without solving the method of work is mere palaver." Consequently, Kanafani contends:

It is no longer acceptable nor is it possible that

revolutionary action could be a mere set of experimental practices unarmed by political thinking. At the same time let us state that political thinking or theory devoid of practice leads nowhere but to an empty shell of foul-mouthery. And if organization is the means of mediation between theory and practice as George Lukacs points out, then political matters stemming from theory and practice cannot be separated mechanically — as Lenin says — from organizational matters. Undoubtedly, the opposite is true. That is, the matter of organization is not a technical question, but part and parcel of the developing dialectical relationship between theory and practice. If organization is not the offspring of revolutionary theory it will end in a conspiratorial formula and whenever it is not a mediation between theory and practice it will end in an isolated grouping of factionalists.

Against this background of Marxist methodology, Kanafani delineates the central issues facing the resistance: the adoption of Marxism — Leninism, as a guide to action, the creation of a party apparatus, the diffusion of revolutionary practice. Starting with the Leninist dictum that “there can be no revolutionary party without a revolutionary theory” Kanafani asserts that “loyalty to revolutionary theory is not only a question of creativity, but also of interaction with the objective conditions by way of the dialectical relationship in which theory and practice exchange salutary experiences”. To him ideology informs the organization and defines its tasks; it “specifies the nature of relations among individuals, with the masses, between leadership and mass and within committees appointed by the party organs”. As to the organization or party apparatus, it “carries out campaigns of rectification to enrich the revolution through practice, a means by which it prevents the spread of such contagious diseases as the personality cult, adventurism, militarism, infantile leftism, opportunism, individualism, bureaucratism, etc ...”

At the Palestinian level, Kanafani discerns two deviationist phenomena without identifying the parties by name: a) One sector of the resistance “abolishes the importance of

revolutionary theory and moves more and more in the direction of mere practice, thereby trying to give practice the highest priority by impressing a military stamp on the resistance”; b) Another sector “wallows in theorizing under the name of the left” without engaging in any significant practice and turns Marxism into a scriptural fossil, instead of “adapting it to Arab circumstances”.

Kanafani rejects both these phenomena and insists that “revolution, even in its daily details, cannot advance if it were not provided with a strategic perspective, and the fundamental value of tactical moves — political and military — lies in its being put in the final analysis in the service of the strategic perspective”. If this were true, then what the Palestinian resistance movement lacks is a “strategic perspective” which must encompass “the national and class perspectives of the revolution” in its “national democratic stage”. By underlining the “national perspective”, Kanafani states that he is not being a nationalist-chauvinist trying to give the bourgeoisie “a justificatory framework to maintain its power and authority”. On the contrary, he is discussing “historic specificity and the joint destiny of the oppressed Arab classes whose principal concern lies in the battle of liberation and the defeat of the trinitarian enemy — Israel, imperialism and Arab reaction. Besides, such a discussion is an “objective fact which is imposed on the oppressed by virtue of being citizens of one Arab nation, a truth which is reinforced by the nature of the battle”. The relative absence of the Arab aspect in the battle of liberation, and the attempt to provincialize or Palestinize it, is the result of “the loss of class perspective in the analysis of objective circumstances”. In other words, Kanafani is saying that Palestine is an integral part of the Arab nation, and the petit bourgeoisie and Arab reactionary regimes, as well as the resistance, have stressed the provincial, not the national character of the revolution and overlooked the class character of Arab society. To Kanafani, the national and class perspectives are “inseparable”, not only because such a separation keeps the Arab national movement disunited and the class question confined to theorizing. Thus it must be clearly understood that “the national perspective is the obverse side of the class perspective”, and that any concession

regarding this dual "strategic perspective" reflects itself immediately on its obverse side. Rephrased since both national and class matters are indivisible, class capitulation during the stage of national revolutionary warfare constitutes the sacrificing of the reserve that prevents national capitulation and the opposite is true also. In the light of this rationale, Kanafani analyzes the first stage of the Palestine revolution and how Israeli strategy capitalized on the pitfalls of the Arab petit bourgeoisie and managed to thwart the emergence of a national revolutionary movement. He attributes most of the ills of the resistance (exaggeration, romanticism, arrogance etc.) to the spontaneous enthusiasm the masses accorded the revolution to the halo the Arab regimes surrounded it with, to the self-delusions the leadership nourished and to the absence of a vanguard party that could have cultivated a scientific understanding of reality had the party been on the scene. Now that the first phase of the revolution is over and the resistance is living in a "state of inactivity" a new strategy is required which would take into account "the organic relationship between the national and class struggles" under the leadership of a party that would confront the enemy by means of armed struggle and create anew a revolutionary climate that would effect qualitative changes in the area "by replacing empty propaganda with revolutionary organization and classical military practices with mobilized masses and armed fighters".

Since the proponents of provincialism make a passing obeisance to Arabism, but focus their attention on the "special character" of Palestine, Kanafani employs the same "special character" to strengthen the argument in favor of his "strategic perspective". He points out that the colonial settlers' state of Israel has meant the uprooting of the Palestinians, a situation that brings to the fore the national aspect of the response to the Zionist challenge; secondly, because Israel is an imperialist outpost in the Mideast and imperialism exploits the Arab people, a class reaction is inevitably involved; and thirdly, because the enemy and its sponsors possess technological superiority and the Arabs are backward and the Palestinians are approximately equal to the enemy in number, it follows that a protracted war of national

liberation, with immense Arab territory and resources and a huge population in the background, can achieve the supreme objective of eliminating Israel and imperialism simultaneously. Hence, the toiling masses are the candidate that will have to form the party of liberation and break the habits of tradition and servitude that paralyze Arab society. Meanwhile, Kanafani underscores the problems that have to be overcome if the vanguard party is going to offer a living miniature of the future it intends to create. These are:

personal relations dominating objective relations; the private opinion overcoming the scientific hypothesis and the family and tribal affiliations superseding comradely interactions; personality deification overriding collective leadership, and rampant anarchy reigning instead of democratic centralism. At the same time, arrogance vis-a-vis the masses instead of interaction with them rules supreme and stubborn personal argumentation resists the principle of criticism and self-criticism, with individualism and moodiness making a mockery of discipline.

If the vanguard party were not well-knit and guided by the scientific vision and suffused with Marxist organizational values it would fall prey to the environmental diseases of backwardness and become just another bureaucratic stupefaction living on the hymns of revolution, the inflation of personal egos, and the rhetoric of past grandeurs. Since the Palestinian resistance was fostered by the parenthood of the right, it couldn't possibly surmount the dilemmas that confronted it and consequently it was subdued by its Arab "friends", by its own "shortcomings and by a determined well-organized and technologically superior enemy". Well then, what is to be done in order to place the revolutionary movement on the revolutionary track? At this juncture of Arab history, the answer lies in "the revolutionary foco or cell" which has to play the dual role of fighting the enemy and politicizing the masses with a "view to hastening the maturation of objective conditions that would lead towards a revolutionary people's war". That is, the mass base must not mean a mere Palestinian translation of "the garrison state



idea, but a revolutionary cell — military and political at the same time — that subjects its political and military actions to the creation of a deeper and more comprehensive revolutionary climate". Put differently, the revolutionary foco must spread its contagion by creating the politicized soldier who can implant his roots in town and countryside and set an example to be emulated. Furthermore, when the bases are built within the broad framework of an "Arab strategic perspective" and an organizational network is established and based on class and nation, then a Palestinian national front in conjunction with a pan-Arabist front can be formed, thereby providing prerequisites that will make liberation feasible. Under these new conditions, the cohesiveness, technological superiority and high morale of the enemy would gradually erode and his forces would crumble as his advantages are turned into handicaps. In brief, if enemy power is derived from the smallness of the area in which military operations are conducted, from its lightning power of conventional warfare, and from the permanent mobilization of its vigilant citizenry, these advantages would be obviated when the strategy of people's war — where the Arabs have superiority of number, and enormous expanses of territories — replaces classical warfare which is presently accompanied by haphazard commando forays undertaken by the Arabs for political leverage and tactical advantages. Lastly, the fig-leaf morality of the Arab states must be incessantly exposed, the resistance's leadership unmasked, the whole organizational set-up of the Palestine and Arab national movements overhauled. Otherwise, surrender would continue, imperialism would re-establish its total domination throughout the Arab World and Arab reaction would determine the destiny of the Arab nation. In sum, the new cannot be born without pain; history cannot be written without blood, man cannot be emancipated except by man.

Needless to say, the revolutionary foco in Kanafani's view is the Popular Front, an organization whose operations inside the occupied territories and at the international level have become legendary. As its spokesman, he gave countless interviews to Arab and foreign correspondents in order to explain the Front's strategy and justify its deeds. Among the

most important interviews was one Kanafani gave to *The New Left Review* (May-June 1971 No. 67) after the multiple hijacking spectacle of September 6, 1970. He said that hijacking was a tactic not strategy: "We do it for specific reasons, at a specific time and against a specific enemy. It would be ridiculous to hijack planes at the present moment and land them in Cairo, for example, or in Jordan". The rationale behind the hijackings was to break out of the encirclement and the information siege that had preceded the liquidationist attempt which was inaugurated by the acceptance of the Rogers' proposals. Here Kanafani states the case bluntly:

The Rogers' Plan presupposed the liquidation of our movement, and this was now approaching in an atmosphere of Palestinian submissiveness. Therefore, something had to be done; first of all to tell the world that we are not going to be put on the shelf for the second time, and secondly, to tell the world that the days when the U.S. and reactionary Arabs could dictate to our people are over. Moreover, there was the question of morale, the fighting ability, of our own people. We could not let things remain like that when a massacre was on the way, even if we had sat down quietly on the steps of his Majesty's palace and kissed his hands.

In the period of revolutionary relapse, the focus do not only build bases at home, but also establish links with revolutionary movements the world over. Thus the Front's organic relationship with the Japanese Red Army which manifested itself in the famous Lydda operation (May 30, 1972) was an expression of international solidarity. To the Israelis and the imperialist press and the three Japanese Commandos were "murderers and mercenaries", to Kanafani they were freedom fighters trying to liberate mankind from imperialism:

The Japanese comrades volunteered for that part, which is not possible for an Arab fighter to carry out, for reasons

relating to the concentrated Israeli surveillance of Arab passangers in and out of the occupied territories.

The fact that the role of the three Japanese comrades was highly conspicuous does not mean that our Arab comrades were not there. As a matter of fact, five comrades from our organization in the occupied territories meticulously carried out their assigned tasks. We assure you that it would have been difficult for the Japanese comrades to carry out their task had it not been for the comrades from within who carried out theirs successfully.

Moreover, the participation of Japanese comrades in this operation is a symbol of the internationalist horizon of our struggle against this part of the imperialist chain. This, however, is not the first time in which non-Arab comrades participate in our operational activity. Many foreigners, as you would call them, have fallen martyrs side by side with our militants. The memory of a French martyr from Fateh is still fresh in the minds of many people over here. Let us call your attention to the fact that the group which carried out the Lydda operation bore the name of our heroic Nicaraguan martyr, Patrick Arguello. It is no secret to tell you that among our prisoners in the Israeli torture chambers are five foreign comrades.

The furore caused by the Deir Yassin Operation at the Lydda airport (May 30, 1972) — a war zone, in which ten Israeli customs officers were executed and 16 "foreign pilgrims" died, enabled Israel to move with impunity to avenge the death of its officers by the assassination of Kanafani who had nothing to do with the planning or execution of the operation. Indeed, all Kanafani did was to read the press statement which he helped draft concerning the

*Deir Yassin Operation. Consequently, the enemy press focused on him and made him appear as if he were the mastermind who deserved a gangland style of murder. And so it was on July 8, 1972, as he set out to the vegetable market with his niece Lamis Najm, five kilos of dynamite were used to*

destroy Kanafani and to scatter his body to the wind. But unlike some of his heroes, he wasn't buried in the debris and forgotten. His remains were collected by his comrades and buried in Beirut in the Martyr's Cemetery. And Kanafani was heard saying on behalf of Palestine:

Blessed son you have returned to my bosom.  
Be forever the productive olive tree and the lance,  
Keep your oil burning lighting the skies of Beirut and  
doing battle against darkness.  
Remain the rock that shields the orange trees from the  
night.  
Embrace me and let us melt into the eternity of Palestine,  
and make way for other generations to come to her  
defense!

CHAPTER VII

**A Child Is Born**

*Let fame trudge after genius  
like an inconsolable widow to a funeral  
march—  
die then, my verse, die like a common  
soldier,  
like our men who nameless died attacking!  
I don't care a spit for tons of bronze;  
I don't care a spit for slimy marble.  
We're men of a kind, we'll come to terms  
about our fame;  
let our common monument be socialism  
built in battle.*

Vladimir Mayakovsky

In the summer of 1970, Kanafani published the *Resistance and Its Dilemmas*, a political tract that predicated the continuity of the revolution on the foundation and development of the revolutionary foco. The new thesis postulated the creation of the ideological fighter in place of the mercenary commando or the conventional soldier. Unfortunately the resistance, however, was too intoxicated with its illusory power of "dual authority" in 1970 to heed Kanafani's call and those of others who foresaw the writing on the wall for the resistance movement and pleaded for the adoption of an Arabist revolutionary strategy. But its disintegration in the ensuing two years did not shake Kanafani's confidence in the capacity of the Palestinian revolution to continue, or in the ability of the Arab people to

determine its destiny. He remained editor of *Al-Hadaf* and expounded the Front's political line as he developed further the revolutionary foco idea in the post expulsion era of the resistance from Jordan (July 13, 1971). At this juncture, no reversion to the martyrdom period, as such, was envisioned and no sudden conversion on the part of disbelievers was expected. What was given top priority on the revolutionary agenda were the questions of the transformation of romantic rebels into serious revolutionaries, the energization and detonation of a revolutionary climate, and the formation of the vanguard party as teacher, guide and apparatus of the revolution. Kanafani didn't live long enough to complete his sketch of the new epoch, but he was able to draw its broad outlines.

The clue to the last period in Kanafani's intellectual development is Umm Saad, his symbol of the fighting peasantry. In an article he wrote in *Al-Hadaf* (January 15, 1972), Umm Saad bitterly complains about people "climbing the sapling revolution tree", breaking its branches and fleeing from the fire when the tree is struck by lightning. At the operational level, Umm Saad is appraising her employer-author that Walid, a so-called commando, had abandoned the revolution on the second day of battle in September 1970. Umm Saad's peasant wisdom impels her to state that "the crooked furrow is caused by the big bullock." Furthermore, Umm Saad is neither optimistic nor pessimistic about the prospects of the revolution. She thinks it will continue and recalls what had taken place in the uprising of 1936 and "the war" of 1948, and states "even the donkey doesn't fall twice in the same ditch". The castor oil of Walid and his ilk perturbs Umm Saad and impels her to ask: "What did we give and gain from the revolution? We should give our life and our all to the revolution as we become more knowledgeable, cleaner in mind and spirit, love each other, sacrifice more and become more brave and truthful." The revolution to Umm Saad is then a cleansing operation that makes the revolutionaries selfless comrades fighting for a noble cause, not mercenaries cashing in on the privileges, abusing and deriving private advantages from the revolution then abandoning it in the crunch

From Umm Saad, the solid peasant, Kanafani moves to a highly analytico-ideological study of the Palestine revolt of 1936-39 (*Palestine Affairs*, No. 6, January 1972) which he considers a true peasant revolt that was crushed not only by British imperialism and world Zionism but also by "the national leadership" with the collaboration of the Arab states. Kanafani singles out two factors that illuminate his research:

- 1) The effective presence of the Zionist movement which doubled the weight and domination of the national challenge, surpassing all other questions in importance. The Zionist challenge reflected itself upon the oppressed Arab classes who suffered daily from the Zionist invasion which was British supported;
- 2) The presence of a degree of contradiction between the feudal religious leadership and British imperialism which pushed the revolution forward, but in a manner compatible with the interests of both ruling classes.

However, the contradiction between the Arab feudal leadership and the British was not fundamental. From the British point of view, Zionism was a more appropriate agent and a more effective servant. Hence the Arab leadership raised progressive slogans and periodically advocated armed struggle as a means not of igniting the revolution, but for merely extracting class concessions from the British.

By and large, the Arab and Zionist leaderships were, then, competing brokers, not representative of antagonistic social classes with diametrically opposed interests. Indeed, Kanafani identifies a commercial-comprador sector of the Arab rural bourgeoisie which became a potent weapon in the hands of industrial Zionism by defending Zionist political interests on a number of occasions, including the question of accepting the Peel partition proposal of Palestine (July 7, 1937) which conceived the creation of two Palestines, Arab and Jewish. At any rate, in the absence of a powerful Arab commercial-industrial bourgeoisie, the Zionists played a

major role in the destruction of rural Palestine and its industrialization. The resultant dislocation was exacerbated by the Histadrut (federation of labour) attitude toward Arab labour — its exclusion of Arab workers from Jewish enterprises — in addition to peasant expulsions from the land and their replacement by the flood of Jewish immigrants from Europe. In other words, Zionism in theory and in practice was not based on the theory of Arab-Jewish fraternity or class solidarity, but on the notion of a settlers' garrison state based on the theory of apartheid with the proviso that the Arabs become a corvee minority rather than remain a helot majority. Under these circumstances, proletarian internationalism, which was the battle cry of the Palestine Communist Party, rendered it both irrelevant historically and innocuous at the time. That is, the peasants and the numerically small Arab working class had no effective leadership channeling their energies and making other class demands heard. Who was then to defend the peasantry, a class that looked on while the Zionists invaded its land, that lived under feudal property relations, that paid exorbitant tax rates and had to put up with repressive mandatory British authority? Essentially the peasants fell prey to the feudal religious leadership, but a substantial sector of that class was under the sway of revolutionary intellectuals and the Qassam movement. The latter had called for and practiced armed struggle, whereas the intellectuals agitated for revolutionary change and articulated mass feelings. Hence the occurrence of the uprising that precipitated a chain of events that commenced with the martyrdom of Sheik Izz El-din Qassam (November 12, 1935) and ended with the final defeat of the peasantry in the fall of 1939.

The Qassam movement, though nationally and religiously motivated, had a pan-Arabist perspective: It was organized and based on a village-town underground. It conceived of itself as a revolutionary elite whose role was the detonation of mass rebellion and the wrenching of Arab rights from the British and Zionist enemies. The movement, as Kanafani saw it, was informed by a religious-populist outlook, not by a dialectical nationalist-class Arabist perspective. Historically, the Qassam movement triggered a general strike in Palestine

that lasted from April 19, 1936 to December 11 1936 — the longest recorded strike in Arab history. Palestinian rebels were joined by fellow Arabs from neighboring states, especially Syria and Lebanon. But the Arab states, the Arab Higher Committee — the so-called representative of the Palestinian people — and the British and Zionists collaborated, in varying degrees, to smash the rebellion. According to Kanafani, the rebellion went through two principal stages: the general strike period and the stage of armed uprising proper (September 1937 to mid 1939). In the first period, the Arab Higher Committee (formed on April 25, 1936) was forced to jump on the mass bandwagon, not in order to conduct the rebellion, but in order to pacify and domesticate the rebels. Its opportunistic behaviour was demonstrated by the intercession of the Arab states whose mediator was Nuri El-Said (of Iraqi infamy) and the acceptance on the part of AHC of his proposals to trust "the noble British", abide by the wishes of Arab kings and amirs, and call the strike off. The Arab Higher Committee performed its ignoble task and contended that "submission to the wills of their Arab royal highnesses and eminences is part of our inherited traditions" and that "the order to cease the disturbances is in the interests of their children and for the safeguarding of Arab rights". Meanwhile, the British appointed the Peel Royal Commission which put forward the partition proposal (1937) that became the basis of the UN partition of Palestine in 1947. The outcome of these maneuvers polarized the Palestinian people: AHC and company were reconciled, the Qassamites and their followers were not. Consequently, the latter waged a peasant war for two years which was suppressed by the British, the Zionists and the Arab "peace regiments" that the Arab Defense Party of the Palestinian comprador class organized. Kanafani's two-phase analysis of the revolt and by whom and how it was destroyed would have given him a powerful analytical framework had he lived to write the history of the post-June war resistance movement, its evolution and its disintegration.

From his study of the 1936 revolt, Kanafani in 1970 deduced a simple formula: No revolution can ever succeed in the Third World unless it encompasses both national and class

perspectives; it has to be formed on the basis of a class alliance essentially between the peasantry and the lumpenproletariat in collaboration with the national and petit bourgeoisie and its leadership has to be of a working class peasant persuasion.

Now that Kanafani had determined his position empirically, he set out to write on revolutionary morality and organized underground revolutionary activity, the demolition of "the gods" and the embracing of the revolutionary party. All these accounts were published posthumously in *Palestine Affairs - Regarding the Case of Abu Hamido* (August 1972); *April Rose* (September 1972); and *The Blind and Deaf* (December 1972).

Abu Hamido is a Fateh commando whose execution was decreed by a "revolutionary tribunal" for having "raped two women". Fateh, on the orders of Yasser Arafat, the chairman of both Fateh and the PLO signed Abu Hamido's death sentence and asked the people of Hasbiya, Lebanon, to carry it out in the town square. The people of Hasbiya declined to do so and the whole affair provoked a widespread dispute in Lebanon and in the ranks of the resistance. The facts were easy to ascertain had Fateh investigated them seriously. Two young women befriended Abu Hamido and desired to join the commandos. Their brother shot and killed both of them thinking that they had been molested by Abu Hamido and his fellow commandos. Medical evidence demonstrated clearly that neither woman was violated and, in fact, "both died virgins".

Kanafani was appalled by the manner in which Fateh handled the case. He conceded that the mores and traditions of local inhabitants had to be respected, but he criticized Fateh severely for making a decision of such importance "without a scientific determination of the facts and without taking into account the political education and consciousness of its cadres". Kanafani believed the case of Abu Hamido was a travesty on justice in its ordinary sense if not in its revolutionary impact. He says, "The logic of punishment in the state system is different from that of the revolutionary situation." In the latter, revolutionary values based on deep personal convictions operate; in the former, retribution is

linked with institutional terrorism and deterrence. Hence, Abu Hamido cannot be judged on the basis of tribal or state values but on the basis of values cultivated by the resistance and embodied in its ethical code, political doctrine and revolutionary discipline. Since Fateh's members are not politicized, ideological fighters, but committed nationalists, Kanafani castigates Fateh for supposedly acting in a revolutionary manner while in fact it was submitting to tribal barbarism and applying "mechanical traditional values". Revolutionary conduct is the result of revolutionary practice and theory, Kanafani declares, but "we cannot expect to have an army of pious faithfuls and saints". Hence if transgressions occur, revolutionary punishment is meted out on the basis of revolutionary justice. Therefore, Kanafani thinks that Abu Hamido was made the scapegoat for the shortcomings of the resistance in preventing the isolation of the resistance from the Lebanese people and for its failure to integrate itself with the Lebanese countryside and national progressive forces with a view to withstanding the Zionist terrorizing of Lebanon. In this connection, Kanafani concentrates his attack on the "militariat" of the resistance that relates to "the masses from above and outside with no understanding of the revolutionary foco, its growth and potential fighting strength". When revolutionary values and conditions reach such a stage of development, then all Abu Hamidos can be judged in "consonance with laws concerning the education, discipline, conduct and consciousness of the revolutionary army."

The story of "April Rose" is factual, but the characters in it are fictional. It allegedly takes place in April 1970, when the Israelis drag Abu Kassem to Jericho to make him identify the mutilated body of his dead son, Kassem. Abu Kassem examines the body, realizes it is his son's, but as befits a revolutionary, he shows no emotions upon discovering the truth and denies knowing the body. The work of the cell is uninterrupted, but the Israelis keep a close watch on Abu Kassem and every conceivable suspect. Through his contacts, Abu Kassem becomes acquainted with Souad, the girl contact who helped form the cell for "Avenging Youth" of the ANM. The Israelis apparently succeed in tracing the place where Souad lives and meets her comrades to assign them military

tasks. They seize those present; but prudent Souad had suspected something the night before and stayed at Ziad's place without being able to contact the rest of the cell's members. Ziad, a former communist who gives refuge to Souad though he knows what she was doing, welcomes her to his home because she has addressed him as comrade and sought his help. Ziad plays the central role in the escape of both Souad and Tallal, the regional leader of the resistance. He dispatches his 10 year old son to Souad's previous residence with a delicatessen dish as camouflage. The son is totally unaware of what is going on. He arrives at the house and the Israelis hold him for questioning. When the son doesn't return as scheduled, Souad and Ziad conclude that the Israelis must have captured him and immediately arrange for her escape. Meanwhile, Abu Kassem is picking a bouquet of flowers from the fields as he makes his way to Souad's home. When he reaches his destination, the Israelis pounce on the old man accusing him of being Souad's lover and contact. Abu Kassem tries to explain to the Israelis that flowers are an expression of respect and affection, not sexual love; but they berate him as a dangerous lover-revolutionary. By mid-day, Ziad decides to go on the scene to rescue his son and investigate what is happening. He enters; the Israelis seize him also. By elliptical remarks with Abu Kassem, he learns that Tallal has not been caught, but is expected to come to the same house in the afternoon. The Israelis, though, unable to understand the coded language, refuse to let anyone depart. However, at the right moment, Abu Kassem and Ziad make the appropriate gestures which culminate in screams that alert Tallal who is downhill on his way to the house. In the confusion that follows, Tallal escapes, the cell is not broken and the Israelis obtain no evidence incriminating anyone except Abu Kassem's bouquet of flowers. The moral of the story is clear: underground revolutionary activity requires not

only military training and intelligence, but also political commitment.

Since cell-building and the creation of an ideological, revolutionary network are the prerequisites for the launching of the revolution, Kanafani gives us an overview of

revolutionary transformation in *The Blind and Deaf*. The blind man, Amer, and the deaf man, Abu Keiss, the symbols of the lost Arab and Palestinian masses, encounter each other at the shrine of the local Willie (holy man), who is supposed to be able to "heal the sick, cure the lame and enable the infertile women to become fertile". The Willie is the symbol of Arab leadership past and present, Palestinian and Arab, Fateh, PLO and all. Both Amer and Abu Keiss believe in the Willie and beseech him to grant them sight and hearing. Both recount the stories of their childhoods and how their mothers had carried them to all sorts of Willies, but to no avail. Finally, each in his own way, decides to make one last bid, at which time they encounter each other, stop believing in miracles and become friends. In honor of their meeting, Abu Keiss bestows on Amer the name of Abdul Atti, the Willie's own name, saying to him he was just as good, if not better, than "the real Abdul Atti".

Abu Keiss has been working for UNRWA for the past 20 years. He distributes rations to Palestinians and sees the same endless queues day in and day out. The new Abdul Atti sells bread in front of a bakery, where Hamdan, the 19 year old "boy", has been sweating it out for 10 years and acting as Abdul Atti's eyes to the world. The three have become good friends, but relations between Abu Keiss and Hamdan deteriorate when Abu Keiss proposes to Abdul Atti that they go together to "dig the grave of Abdul Atti, the Willie, and cut down his tree and burn it which could very well enable us to recover our lost faculties". The "boy" accuses Abu Keiss of infidelity, impiety and blasphemy against the gods, but Abu Keiss doesn't hear the accusations, which add nothing new to his treatment as a social leper. When Hamdan threatens to report them to the police if they carry out the act, Abdul Atti derogatorily quips that he hadn't known that "the Willie had appointed Hamdan to his gendarmerie". At the UNRWA office, Abu Keiss informs Mustafa, a co-worker, about his new friend Abdul Atti and how they met at the Willie's and he states: "I went to visit the Willie's tomb yesterday and I said to him, My Willie, my lord, I beseech you to return my hearing. I am deaf. Ha Ha! " Mustafa, the playboy, is annoyed by Abu Keiss's irreverence. He defends the holiness of the

Willie, expresses unquestioning faith in him and ridicules Abu Keiss's disregard of saints. The following day Abu Keiss visits his friends at the bakery to discuss the details of digging out the Willie. Hamdan refuses to co-operate and decides to watch what both intend to do, warning again that he will report them to the police. Meanwhile, Abdul Atti lapses into philosophic reflection:

This language which Abu Keiss discusses, the lingo of refugees, the language of despair which he cannot hear, but see, the language of despondency, which I cannot see but I can hear and quite often can feel in the loaf of bread, and whenever my palms excrete sweat and my blind eyes shed tears; it is a language, the real Abdul Atti cannot see or hear.

Hamdan tries to persuade Abdul Atti not to participate in the operation pointing out that the Willie had performed countless miracles. The exasperated Abdul Atti tells Hamdan, if this were true "why doesn't the Willie give you a shirt to put on your half-naked body, a pair of shoes for your bare feet and a father to support you?" The dialogue continues, then Abdul Atti suddenly states: "There is no need to destroy the Willie's tomb and to cut his tree. Such an operation will neither add nor subtract anything insofar as I am concerned. The Willie Abdul Atti is dead. He is finished, finished! Therefore, if we go and dig his grave and burn his tree that will be a mere ceremony and ceremonial acts are not important".

Both Abu Keiss and Abdul Atti rid themselves of the Willie, but will their lives now become empty because the bridges of illusion have crumbled, the rotten promises have evaporated and the gods have died? What should they do now since they have assumed responsibility for controlling their own destiny? Each goes his way wondering what he should do. Restless, Abu Keiss rises early the following morning and sets out for the bakery. From a distance, he notices Abdul Atti standing majestically in front of the bakery in a long white robe. "Behold", he exclaims, "do not move, Abdul Atti. Remain upright for another instant". Feeling that he has made a new discovery, Abu Keiss continues: "You appear like an old statue, the statue of justice with a sword under her

arms. Abdul Atti, the loaf of bread under your arm has greater meaning than the woman's sword and the seat you occupy in front of the bakery shall bring truer justice to the world."

With the downfall of the Willies, Abu Keiss and Abdul Atti converse endlessly. The only thing they can come up with is that "we must do something". Suddenly, out of nowhere comes the sullen, glum, previously hostile Hamdan smiling as if he were bearing new tidings. He is. His father has just been released from a life-time prison sentence out of which he has served twelve years. The bouyant youngster divulges part of his story for the first time in ten years. The three are elated by the news but Abu Keiss remains inwardly agitated. He goes to the office and learns that his desk-mate, Mustafa, had left for a week's furlough and returned sporting a khaki fatigue and displaying a revolver. The whole office atmosphere is affected: Mustafa, the frivolous philanderer, becomes a commando! But the arrogant Mustafa starts throwing his weight around and deriding his fellow workers. He confronts Abu Keiss demanding to know what he has done for his country? A little brawl ensues in which Abu Keiss forgets his own strength, pins down Mustafa and makes a fool of him at the office. However, victorious Abu Keiss is frightened by the prospect of revenge on the part of Mustafa, the guerrilla. Worried, he goes to visit the bakery and tells his compatriots about the episode with Mustafa. He requests Hamdan to consult his experienced father regarding the matter. Hamdan does and comes back to report that his father told him that he had learned a good deal in jail: He had met a comrade, a man of struggle who educated him in the ways of the revolution. "But what does this jibberish mean as regards Mustafa's prospective revenge?" Abu Keiss interrupts. Hamdan quotes his father as saying, "Oh, be not afraid of such revolutionary exhibitionism for Mustafa must be from the TUK-TUK crowd, the hip-gunners, the shoot-shoot-rabble". "What does he mean by TUK-TuK?" Abu Keiss inquires. "He means shooting", Hamdan replies and further states "father says that bullets are of two kinds: TUK-TUK and politics, and he says that Mustafa is of the TUK-TUK crowd. As for you Abu Keiss, according to Abu Hamdan, Abu Keiss has to learn "how to uproot his thorn by his own hands". Abdul Atti ponders, then



states, "Hamdan has found a new Willie." Witnessing how proud Hamdan is of his disclosures, they ask him if his father has joined the commandos again. Hamdan replies that he doesn't know, but reminds them that it would be instructive to let him relay his father's reaction as regards the Willie's story:

The Willies are like serpents in the zeer tales; whenever you chop off one head, seven heads replace it. Accursed be those incapable of casting off the serpents ... Many a person has destroyed the tombs of Willies, many have abjured their faiths, many have divorced their wives promising not to let anyone deceive them again. But all this is not important. What is important, however, is that if and when you destroy a Willie's tomb, his tree must be cut from its roots and no Willie after that should be permitted to enter through the back door.

The three discover the new revolutionary truth: concerted action by the masses and for the masses. Hamdan goes home, finds his father asleep besides his newly acquired bride — a Kalashnikov. His life is completely transformed; he joins the revolutionary party. The child is delivered. The future is guaranteed; the coming generation will hearken to its clarion call.

As Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian poet, wrote of Kanafani's martyrdom:

Death is always the companion of beauty.  
You are beautiful in death Ghassan.  
Your beauty reached its summit when death despaired of  
you and committed suicide.  
Death committed suicide in you.  
It exploded in you because you carried it for twenty years  
and you didn't permit it to give birth.  
Now it has fulfilled itself in you and you in it.  
And we have dreamt of you — you, death and the  
homeland —  
We've dreamt of you not knowing that we sang bad songs  
in our funerals.

And we didn't know whom to eulogize: All of us were subject to eulogy since we had surrendered ourselves to death.

Palestinians! Beware of natural death!

This is the only language which we stumbled upon among the shattered limbs of Ghassan Kanafani.

Why were you born in Palestine? Why did you commit such a sin?

... To be a Palestinian now means you must become inured to death and to interact with it;

... It means you must file an application form at the Kanafani Blood Bank.

## Epilogue

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The greatness of the Palestine revolution lies in its fighters, not in its political leadership. The fighters are the children of the poor, the camp dwellers, the wretched of Palestine. The politicians are, by and large, the middle class babbits, charlatans and opportunists; only a few of them are equal to the task of revolutionary leadership. The nobility, valor and heroism of the fighters are beyond question: they have written history in their blood; they have achieved self-liberation by the gun; they have restored Palestine and Arab dignity on the battlefield. But the political motives, commitments and integrity of the "intellectuals and leaders of the revolution", especially the institutional types and their ilk are NOT beyond question. Fortunately, those garrulous professors and their robot-like imitators are destined for the dust-bin of history. For this and other reasons, we call upon the fighters to ignore them and to take notice of Brecht's humanist song and to act in accordance with its perceptions.

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## Praise Of Communism

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*It's sensible, anyone can understand it.  
It's easy.  
If you're not an exploiter, you can grasp it.  
It's good for you; find out about it.  
The stupid call it stupid, and the rotten call it rotten,  
it's against what's rotten, and against stupidity.  
The exploiters call it a crime,  
But we know  
It is the end of crime,  
It is not madness  
but the end of madness.  
It is not chaos  
but order.  
It is the simple thing  
so hard to bring about.*

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Prise Of Communit

Faint, illegible text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.

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