

Yasser Arafat: The Man And His People

By Grace Halsell

As The Link went to press, the Israeli army had just invaded South Lebanon for the express purpose of crushing the resistance of the P.L.O.

Commenting on this massive aggression, author Grace Halsell recalled the words of Yasser Arafat, quoted on page 4: "No one can destroy four million Palestinians."

Yasser Arafat is of small build, with a quick eye and economy of gesture. Meeting him for the first time, one is struck by his "presence" when he enters a room. All eyes center on him. One is aware of the strength of his leadership and the aura of authority he has maintained for so long. At the same moment, one is aware of the warmth of personality.

Waiting for my first meeting, I sat some distance from his desk and when he entered I stood to greet him and I expected him to sit behind the desk. Instead, he chose a chair in front of the desk and pulled me toward him, to an adjoining chair. He likes, and is most persuasive in, eye-to-eye conversation. And he likes to have the person with whom he talks near enough to touch. His thinking is precise, also flexible. He is a good listener, and he is not verbose.

Grace Halsell is author of 11 books, including A Biography of Charles Evers, Bessie Yellowhair, Soul Sister, and her latest, Journey to Jerusalem, the account of her visit to the West Bank, where she lived with Palestinian and Gush Emunim families.



Arafat speaking at United Nations in 1974 when General Assembly took up the question of Palestine

Of his growing-up days, Arafat said he was a normal youth, in that he liked poetry and girls, games and laughter, but that he became imbued with one idea. This idea became as much a part of his life as the air he breathed. His goal, his overriding ambition, for which he would sacrifice all else, was freedom, for himself, as a Palestinian, and for all Palestinians.

He was born in Jerusalem in 1929 into a family that was well-off, and distinguished, in the bourgeois tradition. His family had property. Even a car.

"Even a car." I had heard a Palestinian use that expression in describing Arafat's background. He wanted to stress that Arafat was not born poor, that he took on the burden of the poor by deliberate choice. He wanted to show that Arafat, who earned a degree in engineering at Cairo University and established a successful engineering firm in Kuwait,

could have enjoyed wealth and the amenities of life.

Instead, he made a different choice.

He would give up possessions, not own a car. Indeed, on assuming control of the P.L.O. in 1969—five years after the organization was created—his first act was to sell the two limousines that had been at the disposal of his predecessor, Yahya Hamouda.

Arafat is one of the best known leaders in the world today, and yet he does not own a beautiful home—he has no home. He does not buy expensive suits. Or shoes. "He lives very austere, very simply, very modestly. He does not care about personal privileges like others. He could have them if he wanted, but he does not care about them," Mahmoud Labadi, P.L.O. spokesman in Beirut, told me. And what salary does he give himself as chairman of the P.L.O.? "Nothing," Labadi said. "Personally, he takes nothing. He does not get anything for his personal needs. He does not have a bank account. He just lives and works. Usually people bring him some fatigue clothes. And boots. They buy them. He doesn't bother about such things.

"The most simple soldier in the fields lives as well as Arafat," he added.

He lives—at times—in refugee camps, and at times in a Beirut apartment. "In his bedroom he has one bed. It is like a student's room in a dormitory. He has a TV set, two very inexpensive, straight-back couches made in a P.L.O. factory. He has just the bedroom, that is all he has. He lives only in one room. The flat has three or four rooms, and

About This Issue

Despite his worldwide recognition as Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, little is known of Yasser Arafat's early life, his education, his politics, his religion, his living habits, etc. Interviewers who ask Arafat about his personal history are told politely that in the resistance movement it is more urgent to speak of the common struggle for independence than of the private details of one's individual life.

Understandable as this may be for the members within a resistance movement, for those on the outside the background of a leader is an important gauge of character, ability and political intent. So, to profile the P.L.O. leader for *The Link*, Grace Halsell went twice to Beirut, first in late December 1981, and again in April 1982. Over a period of five weeks she met privately with the Chairman and conducted interviews with close members of the Arafat family and longtime colleagues within the Fatah party of the P.L.O. She stayed with Palestinian families in the refugee camps in South Lebanon prior to the Israeli invasion in June, and visited P.L.O. hospitals, schools, orphanages

and factories in and around Beirut. (*Details on relief efforts for victims of the recent conflict appear on page 16.*)

And, yes, she asked the questions most Americans ask about Arafat: Why doesn't he recognize Israel? Does he want to push Israelis into the sea? Why the acts of violence? But most of the time she tried to answer the more penetrating question: Who is this man on whom world peace so much depends?

The current book selection, *Warriors at Suez* by Donald Neff, is reviewed on page 14, and offered at a 30 percent discount in our Books to Order section on page 15.

Our September/October issue of *The Link* will focus on the rising impact of Islam on world politics.

John F. Mahoney,
Executive Director

his bodyguards stay in the other rooms. So he has no privacy. The privacy is only in his one room when he shuts the door," Labadi continued. "He has a table where he eats sometimes with others. He has a movable desk (on wheels) that can be used when he is in bed. Nearby is a kitchen. There is an old woman who cooks for him. He always has someone to take the meals with him."

Arafat's security guards, living in the same flat, include Abu'l Tayeb, who told me: "He polishes his own shoes, he sews on any missing shirt buttons, and he never makes a personal request. He wants nothing for himself." Abu'l Tayeb stressed what others had told me, that Arafat keeps before him the picture of the Palestinian widow, the Palestinian orphan, the Palestinians who live in misery, cramped together 10 to 15 to a room in shantytowns and refugee camps, a people who are unwanted in any "host" country and, since being driven from Palestine, have not been

permitted to return to their native land. They are a people desperate for those "human rights" which the United States upholds for all peoples except, apparently, the Palestinians.

"Someone wanted to install an air-conditioning unit in Arafat's flat," Abu'l Tayeb related. "But he immediately talked about the refugees, saying that they needed better food and more schools and better homes, and he ended up saying, no, he did not want the air conditioning."

Arafat has made one exception to owning items that would, on the surface, seem superficial. Doctors had urged him to get some form of strenuous exercise each day—reportedly to guard against heart attacks—and a friend donated a stationary bicycle, which Arafat keeps in his bedroom.

Rising about 7 a.m., after having sat at a desk or talked with visitors or aides until perhaps 4 or 5 a.m., Arafat pedals the stationary bike for 15 minutes. Then he is ready for the day's activities.

Arafat, whose full name is Rahman Abdul Raouf al-Qudwa, likes to say he was a product of the revolution, since the spirit of Palestinian nationalism was on the move at the time. Since 1917, Palestinians had been active on different levels—with resolutions, strikes, appeals, political pressures, all aimed at securing their freedom. After getting free of Ottoman-Turkish rule, the Palestinians found themselves under British domination.

"In 1947," Arafat told me, "I joined in the struggle for Palestinian freedom." He served as a soldier under the command of Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni, a relative on his mother's side—and one of Palestine's well-known national heroes.

Arafat and other Palestinians were fighting against newly arrived Zionists who were usurping Palestinian land. And they were also fighting against the British rulers in Palestine who supported Zionism, a colonialistic, imperialistic, European movement to gain an "empire" out of Arab lands.

The European Zionists would never have succeeded in their colonialistic scheme to confiscate Palestine had it not been for the holocaust. As a result of the holocaust, there were homeless Jews in Europe. "They must go to Palestine," the Zionists said.

British leaders and President Harry Truman agreed that the Jews who had suffered under Hitler should be given land on which to live. King Saud of Saudi Arabia pointed out that since the Nazis—not the Arabs—had persecuted the Jews, the Germans should give the land. However, the Zionists, who planned an on-going expansionist program, held out for Palestine and, pressuring President Truman, they got what they wanted.

The United Nations voted to partition Palestine, to give 56 percent of the land to the Jews, who numbered 32 percent of the population, and to leave the rest to the Palestinians.

In 1948, when fighting temporarily stopped, Arafat left Jerusalem to resume his university studies, which he had begun earlier in Cairo. While in college he was active in student politics and was known as an effective political organizer. Elected chairman of the Palestinian Student Union in Cairo, Arafat became an official delegate of the General Union of Palestine Students to the International Union of Students Conference in Prague. He was graduated from college in 1956.

That same year, when the Israelis, British and French attacked Egypt in

late October, Arafat briefly fought in the Egyptian army with the rank of lieutenant. After this "Suez war," Arafat began work as an engineer, first in Egypt, and later in Kuwait, where he opened his own engineering firm, contracting with the government to build such projects as streets and drainage canals.

He might have continued in business and been a wealthy resident of Kuwait. He was offered a passport of that country, but turned it down, choosing to travel with only a Palestinian identification card.

Unlike many heads of state who ascend to power by birthright or force of arms, Arafat has proved his leadership. For 14 years, a record almost unparalleled among world leaders, he has been elected and reelected to his position. He has always supported debate as a means of reaching decisions; he has protected and sustained the democratic process, and he has given leadership to a people in a tragic diaspora—about a million of them under Israeli military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza

"The Palestinian people in their totality have been greater in their sacrifices and their humanism, more than those who came and claimed to be the leaders of these people," Arafat continued. "It is the people, not the leaders, who show optimism, determination, consciousness of victory."

If the Palestinian people are greater than their leaders, I asked, how did they acquire such determination, such optimism for the future?

"You know why?" Arafat asked, his eyes sharply focused on me. "It is the holy land. It is the *terra sancta*. It is not by chance that it is holy for the Muslims, the Christians, the Jews. You will not find one prophet of the three religions but who was born in this area, or who passed through Palestine. This is our heritage. It is not by chance that the people have this spirit—their character, their strength are based on faith and we have this prophecy.

"Our heritage is one of openness, of acceptance, of living—regardless of race or creed—in peace," Arafat said. He pointed out that the Zionist state of

Christian or Muslim until we go to bury him," Arafat said. "And even then we have the only cemeteries in the Middle East where persons of all religions may be buried."

Arafat talked of the need of reconciliation between Arabs and Jews. The Jew as Jew and the Arab, he insisted have no quarrel. It is the Zionist who creates dissension, war and hatred between the two.



Arafat greets Stephen Barham of the Greek Orthodox Church and member of a 14-ministerial delegation to Beirut in April 1982.

Was he, I asked, always able to make a distinction between the Jew and the Zionist?

"Definitely," he emphasized, "Judaism is a part of our heritage. Islam is a part of our heritage. Christianity is a part of our heritage."

As an example of how the two peoples can work for peace, Arafat discussed his good relationship with Chancellor Bruno Kreisky of Austria, a Jew who became the first European statesman to recognize the P.L.O. Then Arafat pointed to a nearby aide, William Nassar. "He is one of my assistants. According to the Jewish religion, he is a Jew." (While Arafat mentioned only Nassar, another P.L.O. leader said "We have at least two Jews working with us," and he added that Arafat and other Palestinians trusted them with their top secrets).

"And even inside Israel, we have good relations with many groups," Arafat continued, mentioning in particular the Peace Now group and the meetings P.L.O. leaders have held with Uri Avnery and Mattityahu Peled, both long active in an Israeli group called New Outlook.

"Our Palestine National Council voted



During a two-week visit for talks with leaders in the Middle East in 1977, U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim met with the P.L.O. leader.

Strip and close to three million living in involuntary exile. When I suggested to Arafat that in the current difficult time, he instilled hope and courage in his people, he abruptly and sharply cut me off: "No. I will give you a very important truth. In the rest of the Middle East there are many places where the leaders are more important than their people, but among the Palestinians, the people are greater, more important than their leaders.

Israel cannot be a democracy since it was created as a "Jewish state" where only Jews are wanted, and where only Jews have first-class citizenship.

Palestinian Christians and Palestinian Muslims, having lived in Palestine in peace for hundreds of years, have created within the P.L.O. a secular society—in which Christians, Jews and Muslims are equal under the law.

"We do not know, and we do not care whether one of our soldiers is

United Nations/David Burnett

P.L.O. Foreign Information Dept., Beirut

to open dialogues with the democratic or progressive forces," Arafat said, adding that in four National Council meetings, in 1974, 1977, 1979 and 1981, "we kept repeating our willingness to meet with others." As for being open to dialogue, he added, "This is our heritage."

Arafat said the Israelis were not born arrogant, but that they had been made arrogant by America's Phantom jets and bombs and by the billions of dollars in military weapons. He said the annual American aid to the Israelis amounts to \$1,000 for every Israeli man, woman and child. "There are the official grants and the indirect aid. So much comes from untaxable donations by the American Jews. Those who should pay United States taxes are not paying them, but giving the money to Israel, and taking the deductions."

Arafat, speaking in English and in a low-key, soft voice, referred to Prime Minister Begin as America's "spoiled baby," and said the Zionists still insist on carrying out an idea of building an empire by force and power. "Yet, first of all, it is not their power. It is American imported power. For how long will it continue? For 30 years more? Let it be 50 years more. The history of nations cannot be counted by a few years."

Asked about other groups within the P.L.O. who reportedly are not willing to take so moderate a position, Arafat

replied: "We have democracy, and we have to respect all views. Any theory, we have to respect it. It is one of our strengths in this democracy. Everyone can express his thoughts, feelings."

"We have continued to offer solutions (to the Israelis)," Arafat said. "In 1968, we said we were ready to establish a state where Jews, Christians and Muslims can live together on an equal footing, but this idea has been rejected. In 1974, we said, 'Okay, we are ready to establish our independent state on any part from which Israeli forces withdraw.' And this has been rejected, too."

The greatest tragedy of the prolonged conflict between Zionists and Arabs, Arafat suggested, "is the revengefulness. And they (the Zionists) are pushing us in the same direction."

By late April 1982, Arafat was being pushed by the Zionists in two directions. The Israelis were shooting and killing students who dared to raise a Palestinian flag in the West Bank. And they were sending warplanes to drop bombs over Lebanon.

During what might be called a "working lunch" to which I was invited, I joined Arafat and a half-dozen aides, some military, some civilians, in one of the P.L.O. Beirut offices. In the beginning, we all sat in a semi-circle of chairs in front of Arafat's desk. I knew this was not his regular office, only one he had temporarily borrowed. The desk

held only one telephone, on which Arafat intermittently talked. In making return calls Arafat dialed the number himself, without asking any assistant to do so. Arafat was attempting to prevent all-out war between Palestinians and Israelis, even though a cease-fire agreement had been broken by the Israeli bombing raids.

How did he feel, I asked, knowing more bombs might fall at any moment? Perhaps on the building in which we sat talking? Did he have a philosophy that sustained him?

"I would be patient, even though my patience tires of the patience; I will be patient even on matters that are more bitter than patience," Arafat replied, first in Arabic, then in English.

Labadi, the spokesman, pointed out that the word *patience* in Arabic has two meanings, one being a desert cactus, "sabra." "And the cactus has thorns that prick you," Labadi explained.

Arafat added: "Not only are there thorns. The taste (of patience) is bitter."

Was it better, politically, Arafat was asked, for Palestinians to be struggling for their freedom inside the occupied territories, that is, in the West Bank and Gaza, or from outside occupied Palestine—in "host" countries such as Lebanon?

"It is a joint struggle. No one can separate us. It is true that there is strong cooperation and coordination between the Palestinians inside and outside our occupied territories. And we have a great confidence in their wisdom."

"I will tell you a story," he continued. "Some years ago, in 1967, when we declared we would continue our struggle, I went there, by myself, to the occupied territories. There was a big battle in Jenin. And the Israelis sent their forces, their army, to Jenin. French journalists asked Moshe Dayan about this big battle. What is going on? He said, you are asking about resistance? This Palestinian resistance is like an egg in my hand, I can smash this resistance easily."

"But no one can destroy four million Palestinians."

The men around him seem at ease, and he likes to joke with them, and he has a sharp sense of humor—which is good for relieving the stress under which he constantly lives.

A sliding door opens into an adjoining room, in which lunch is to be served. Arafat and the men surrounding him—in addition to Labadi, Ziad Abdel Fattah of the Palestinian news agency called WAFA, and adviser for Israeli affairs and others—move to the table, and

Top leaders of the P.L.O. join Arafat and a large gathering of Palestinians and Lebanese at a military parade marking the 17th anniversary of the Palestinian revolution.



P.L.O. Foreign Information Dept.—Beirut

Arafat uses a large spoon to ladle soup for me and his other guests. I note that he eats no meat; rather, after a bowl of soup, he takes only rice, topped with yogurt.

Palestinians who associate with him day by day report that he eats whatever is set before him, generally a bowl of soup, along with bread and olives and yogurt. They all agree that he eats little, and takes small notice of how the food is prepared. Once Professor Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, formerly of Chicago, who now heads up the new Palestine University in Beirut, related, "I went to his apartment one morning. He was in a bathrobe, and seated at a kitchen table, facing a large box of American breakfast cereal. He had been ascertaining its vitamin content, and he touted the virtue of that cereal to me."

Recently Arafat has suffered from gallstones, and his doctor suggested a special diet including plenty of juices. Arafat said he did not think he could keep to any special foods, "but I will drink the juices." Then he put in an order through his housekeeper that whenever juice was served to him it also be served to his guards, though, of course, they could also have something else.

Traditionally, an Arab serves his guest, at any time of day, a cup of thick, strong coffee. And, one may find at the end of a day that he or she has drunk as many as 10 or 12 cups of coffee. Arafat, who never smokes or drinks any alcoholic beverages, has also forsworn coffee. Instead he drinks an herbal tea, with no caffeine. Once in a past-midnight visit to his office, I along with other guests was offered a choice of coffee, regular tea or a herbal chamomile tea. With childlike enthusiasm Arafat urged me to drink the chamomile: "It's flowers," he said. It's made from flowers. It helps you sleep."

Arafat, however, sleeps no more than three or four hours a night, and often less. On long journeys, Arafat takes advisers in multiples of twos or threes, so that if one grows numb from sleeplessness another replaces him. The stories of his never tiring, while all around him succumb to fatigue, are legend. Hassan al-Kharoof, a former guerrilla fighter, who now frequently travels with Arafat as a P.L.O. photographer, told me how he urged Arafat, whom he devotedly calls "Father," to take more rest.

"He will sit in a plane, maybe going to a place like Peking, for 17 hours, and then continue working until 3, 4, or 5 in the morning," al-Kharoof said. "I tell

him, 'Go to sleep, Father. It is late.' Then he gets in the bed and sleeps five minutes and something comes into his head, and he is up again, working, thinking."

Arafat has the greatest love and admiration for Palestinian children. When he feels depressed or in despair, he travels to the Martyr's children's school in the mountains above Beirut and spends hours with the young Palestinian children, sons and daughters of Palestinian martyrs. The children surround him, like a grandfather. Among them he is no more a leader; he forgets all the pressures and demands of his job,

his blood-kin. I learned from his brother, Fathi, a medical doctor and head of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, that their father Mohammed Abdul Raouf, a textile merchant, died in 1952, and that their mother had died when Arafat was four and Fathi was two months. At times, Arafat lived as a child with an uncle in Jerusalem. In addition to an older sister, Um el-Mou'minine, tall, stately, with red hair, who is sometimes referred to as the "mother" in the family, Arafat has another brother, Jamal Abu Raouf, who lives in Cairo.

Arafat states emphatically that for



Associates often describe the "velvet" side of Arafat, shown here with members of martyrs' families—the sons of Abu Hassan, *above*, and the wife of Matia Ibrahim Nasser, *below*.

and he is a happy and smiling man.

He feels a special responsibility for the sons and daughters of martyrs. Often he visits the families of those who died in the battlefield and regularly visits the martyrs' cemetery and places flowers on the graves of fallen comrades.

Whenever he attends a mass rally or event, small Palestinian children come up to him with flowers. Many of the newly born Palestinian children carry his name: Yasser.

Arafat gives no special significance to

him all Palestinians are one family, and for this reason he gives little thought to his blood-kin.

As an example, a wife among a group of American Christian ministers, on a visit with Arafat, mentioned that the previous evening they had been entertained in the home of "your brother, your wonderful brother."

"Brother?" Arafat asked, sharply, "What brother?" Before the startled woman had time to say the name Fathi, Arafat turned to the aides and guards

surrounding him and informed the woman: "These are my brothers."

Those who follow Arafat as their leader often point out that he has characteristics of "velvet and steel." As for his gentle nature, they say he easily cries over the death of a loved one. Dr. Hatem Hussaini of the Palestine Information Office in Washington relates: "When the sad news of the assassination of the Lebanese leader Kamal Junblatt came during the meetings of the Palestine National Council in Cairo in 1977, Arafat stood at the podium to eulogize his close ally and friend. The Council was in total silence. Arafat uttered Junblatt's name, then broke into tears. He could not speak, and left the podium full of deep sadness and shock."

Of his tough nature, Dr. Hussaini said: "Arafat is strict with his aides and co-workers. He tries to impose discipline and respect for the laws and regulations

of the revolution. He has personally sent a number of aides and heads of office to imprisonment for violating the regulations of the P.L.O.

"Palestinian courts pass sentences on violators of the law, and Arafat personally approves the Court's decisions. Once he approved the Court's decision to execute two Palestinian commanders for committing crimes of rape and theft. It was a harsh decision, but he approved it to enforce the law and to give credibility to the Palestinian judicial system."

Those who know Arafat well say he is as thoroughly versed in the Bible as the Koran. In fact, once Arafat, referring to a Christian on his staff, remarked, with a smile of satisfaction, "I know the Bible better than he does." He invariably, in speaking of the heritage of the Palestinians, mentions that Christ was a Palestinian, and he likes to say, "We

sent a Palestinian, St. Peter, to Rome. And he won the hearts of the people."

Yusif Bandak, who arranged for a group of Christian ministers from the United States to travel to Beirut to meet Arafat, has this to say about Arafat's spiritual qualities: "He is a religious man, respecting and revering Christ as well as Moses and Muhammad. In his political life he has brought a stronger cohesion to the Palestinian family of Christians and Muslims. Though he created an army of freedom fighters, he really believes that the power of the Word is the decisive influence in reaching your goal."

"Arafat hates violence," Dr. Said Dajany, born in Jaffa, Palestine, in 1902 and a retired doctor of medicine, told me. He predicted that in time, "Arafat will be recognized as a world leader of righteousness. He has a very kind heart."

P.L.O.: Building A State

In Beirut I visited offices of the new Palestinian "state" that will, I believe, operate one day in the homeland of the Palestinians.

The P.L.O. has built a government-in-exile. I found a government with real infrastructure: a National Council that functions like Parliament and an Executive Committee—each member with his portfolio—that operates like a Cabinet. The P.L.O. has its own state department, welfare agency, education department, think tank, press agency, radio network and tax-collection system.

The P.L.O., Arafat has said, is "a future government-in-exile, a state." He added, "All we need is a piece of land." Even without the land, the Palestinians have succeeded in creating a better organized governmental structure than is to be found in neighboring countries, and in the words of the distinguished Georgetown University professor, Hisham Sharabi, the Palestinians have the only true democracy in the Middle East.

The P.L.O. is a well-financed organization that owns and manages businesses ranging from a Belgian

charter airline to a string of industrial plants turning out shoes, shirts, processed foods and furniture. The P.L.O. now takes in and spends more money than several nations represented in the United Nations. Its total budget approaches a billion dollars annually and the P.L.O. is better off financially than ever before.

The Arab League and Summit commitments to the P.L.O. total \$500 million annually, including aid for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

Palestinian workers around the world also pay a "liberation tax" ranging from 3 percent of their income in Syria to 10 percent in Saudi Arabia. Arab countries also pay private subsidies to individual P.L.O. factions as well as providing military equipment.

Many donations roll in. Building contractor Kamel Abdel Rahman, who founded a huge civil engineering firm in the Middle East, left an estimated \$110 million to P.L.O. social welfare programs when he died in 1981. It was revealed in March 1982, that an American Jewish newspaperman, Fred Sparks, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1951 for his reporting from postwar

Europe while working for *The Chicago Daily News*, bequeathed \$30,000 to the P.L.O.

The P.L.O. also receives indirect aid from the United Nations, whose Relief and Works Agency will spend \$235 million in 1982 on food, housing, educational and medical aid for 1.6 million Palestinian refugees.

P.L.O. officials say the organization's funds are banked abroad in Switzerland, West Germany and Mexico. To keep the funds growing, P.L.O. financiers invest money in the European market, plus a few blue chip stocks on Wall Street. Other investments include a mechanized farm built with East Germany's help in Syria, cattle ranches and farms in Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, Zaire and Guinea.

For all that, there is no sign of corruption at the top of the P.L.O. The organization's treasury, the Palestine National Fund, gets high marks from almost everyone in the P.L.O. for its efficiency. "We have the most honest finance department in the Middle East," said Dr. Walid Kamhawi, a former fund chairman.

The National Fund, professionally

run with computerized accounts in Damascus, supplies audited figures to the Palestine National Council, which has to approve the budget.

"Every Palestine Fund check that is signed has to have two signatures—mine and Arafat's," Salah al-Dabbagh, 1982 fund chairman, told me. "So" he added with a smile, "I can't play with the money and neither can he."

With wide and varied political contacts around the world, P.L.O. diplomats today outrank fedayeen ("self-sacrificers") as a political weapon. The P.L.O. has offices in most of the major capitals around the world. And its diplomats and representatives generally have lived in these countries and are well-versed in the language and customs of the country they represent. One example is Dr. Hatem Hussaini, who took his university degrees in Washington, D.C., and later opened the Palestine Information Office there. The P.L.O. enjoys observer status in the United Nations General Assembly and is recognized by more than 100 countries—more than recognize the state of Israel.

What do the Palestinians do for their government and how does this "state" function for them? How democratic is the government-in-exile?

The Executive Committee

A 15-member "Cabinet," the P.L.O. Executive Committee coordinates all activities of the government-in-exile. Since 1969, Arafat has headed the Executive Committee, which is in permanent session and whose members work on a full-time basis.

The Executive Committee performs four major functions in which it: officially represents the Palestinian people; supervises the various bodies of the P.L.O.; issues directives, draws up programs, makes decisions on the organization of the P.L.O.; and executes the financial policy of the P.L.O. and prepares its budget.

Two thirds of its members form a necessary quorum and decisions are made by majority vote.

The 1982 Committee includes Arafat and two other leading members of Fatah, along with representatives of five other commando organizations and seven independents. As in a Cabinet, each member has his own portfolio, such as foreign affairs, information, occupied territories, education, culture and defense.

Members representing Fatah include Chairman Arafat, Farouk Kaddoumi,

P.L.O. "secretary of state," and Mahmoud Abbas. Other members include: Ahmad al-Yamani, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (P.F.L.P.); and Talal Naji, representing another group called P.F.L.P.-General Command; Abdel Rahim Ahmad, the Arab Liberation Front (A.L.F.); Yasser Abed Rabbo, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (D.F.L.P.); and Muhammad Khalifeh, Saiqa (Syrian controlled).



Arafat with his people

The five breakaway commando organizations, like any party not in power, represent the opposition, and are often a disruptive, warring faction. More extremist than Fatah, their representatives often call for more drastic, more violent measures to achieve the Palestinian goal of independence.

Nevertheless, Arafat keeps them on his team. As an example, Talal Naji, representative of the extremist P.F.L.P.-General Command, recently was named director of the P.L.O. educational department, one of the most important and most prestigious jobs in the Palestinian bureaucracy.

Independent representatives in the P.L.O. Cabinet include Hamed Abu Sitta, Muhammad Zuhdi al-Nashashibi, Abdel Muhsin Abu Maizar, Dr. Ahmad Sidqi al-Dajani, Jamal al-Sourani, Dr. Hanna Nasser and Dr. Salah al-Dabbagh.

The National Council

The "Parliament" or "Congress"—the P.L.O. National Council—by means of a yes/no vote publicly elects members of

the Executive Committee after a list of candidates has been widely discussed behind the scenes between the various currents in the National Council. Because it elects the Executive Committee and constitutionally holds the supreme authority for formulating P.L.O. policies and programs, the National Council is the most important institution within the P.L.O.

As the highest representative body the Palestinians possess, how democratic is the 320-member P.L.O. National Council? First, it must be realized that the Council operates under the most extreme difficulties since it represents a people living in a diaspora, with about a million under Israeli guns, and therefore with muzzled voices, unable to cast ballots in any Palestinian elections or to send representatives from the West Bank and Gaza to the Council.

Council members, who have two-year terms of office, are nominated by a committee of the preceding Council, after wide-ranging consultations between it and the commando organizations, the Palestinian unions and professional organizations, and independent representatives—women as well as men—in all walks of life. The aim is to secure a representative seating of Palestinian parties, the political wings of the commando movements, and individuals.

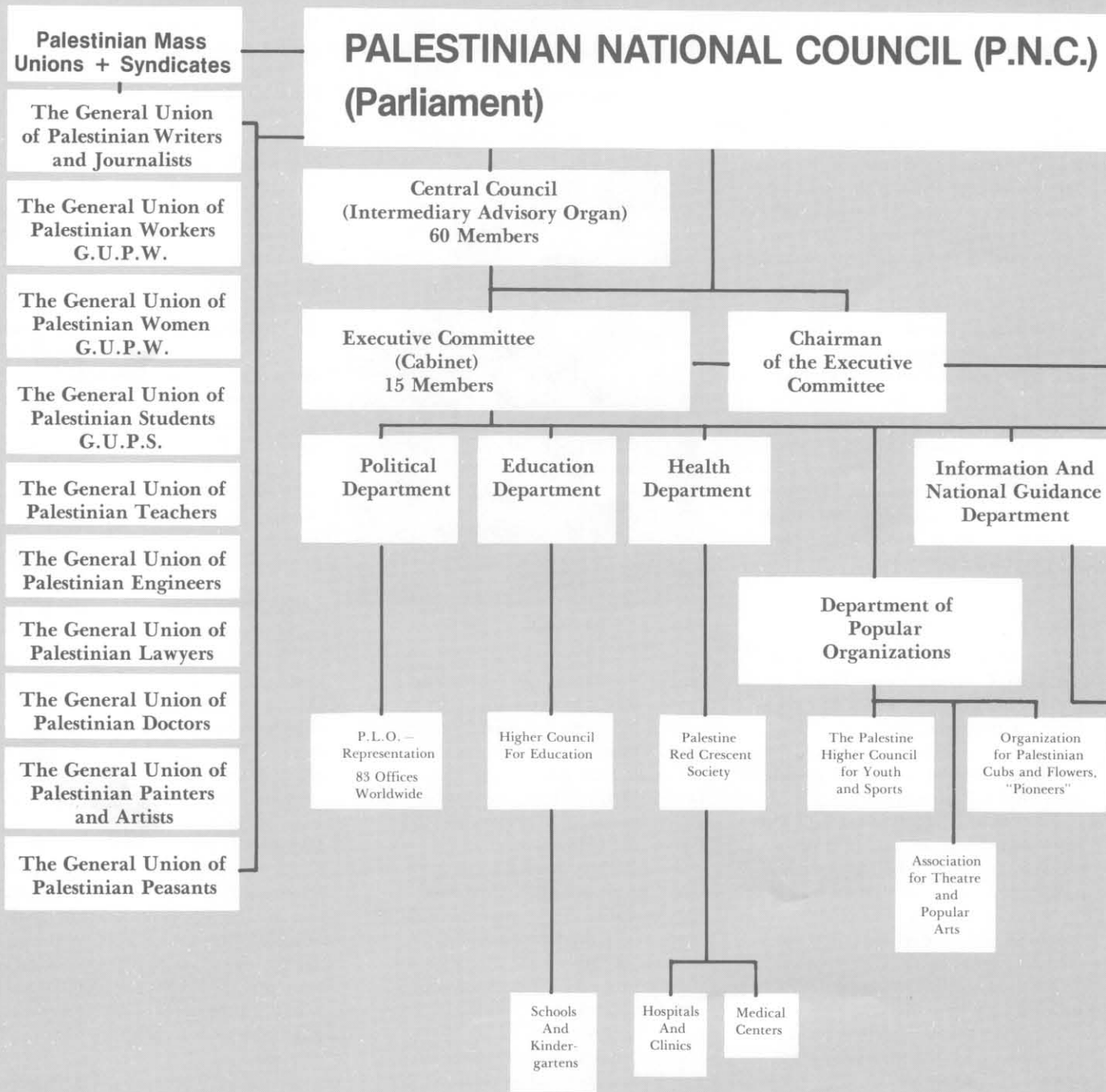
The Council elects officers including a chairman—in 1982, Khaled Fahoum of Damascus held this post—two vice-chairmen and a secretary. The Council meets at least twice a year and emergency sessions also are called (formerly a meeting might have been in Cairo; in more recent years, it is usually Damascus). During regular sessions, the Council considers: the report of the Executive Committee on P.L.O. activities, the report of the Palestine National Fund and the P.L.O. budget; the recommendations of various Council committees; and any other issues submitted. Two-thirds of its membership constitute a quorum and decisions are reached by a majority vote.

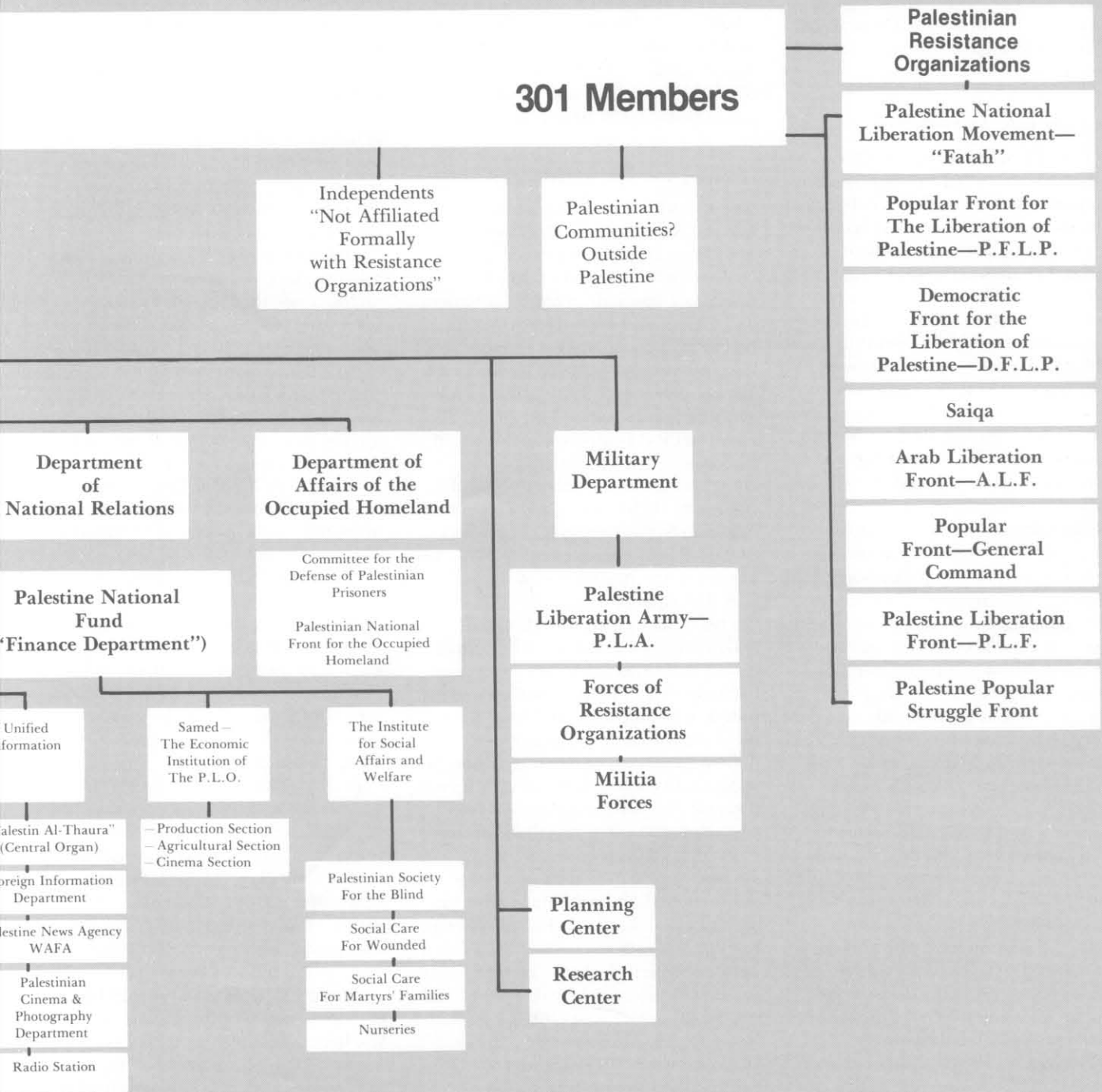
Arafat seeks always to achieve and strengthen a Palestinian consensus. He spends hours, sometimes days, in negotiations with Palestinian leaders of smaller factions to reach agreement. At the National Council's meetings, he leaves an important discussion and seeks angry members to regain their confidence and bring them back to the meeting.

"We are practicing a type of liberal democracy of which we are very proud," Arafat has said. As an example, a

(Continued on page 10)

P.L.O. STRUCTURE





(Continued from page 7)

Council moderate, Issam Sartawi, a United States' educated surgeon, now living in Paris, was severely criticized by extremist factions within the Council after Sartawi held talks with progressive Israelis. Disavowed by the Council extremists, Dr. Sartawi handed in his resignation, but Arafat refused to accept it, and reminded the Council that Sartawi no less than the extremists had freedom of speech.

The Economic Arm—Samed

The Council oversees the P.L.O.'s economic arm, called Samed, meaning "steadfast," that represents a Palestinian economy within the Lebanese economy. Not exclusivist, nor isolationist, it employs Lebanese as well as Palestinians at all levels of skill.

Samed started in 1970 with two sewing workshops and has grown into a sort of P.L.O. Incorporated that grossed \$40 million last year. Its chairman, Ahmed Abu Ala, says Samed employs 5,000 workers, paying them at least the Lebanese minimum wage of \$200 a month. With Samed, he adds, "We are building the nucleus of a public sector of a Palestinian national economy."

In a visit to the Samed furniture factory, in the Burj al-Barajneh refugee camp near Beirut, I watched Palestinian craftsmen producing desks, chairs and sofas that are used in all P.L.O. offices and also are exported to a half dozen countries.

On his initial visit to the Burj al-Barajneh workshop a decade ago, Arafat, recognizing such factories to be a means of training and employing Palestinian workers, said "I want to see at least one factory in every refugee camp."

Samed now has 42 small factories turning out such products as ready-to-wear clothes, lingerie, shoes and plastic goods, as well as tents, blankets and uniforms for P.L.O. commandos.

Samed has trained 20,000 workers, many of them women. In a visit to the Ghassan Kanafani crafts shop (named in honor of a gifted Palestinian writer reportedly assassinated by the Israeli Intelligence), I found a woman, Nawal Iskandarani, in charge. She directs a staff of 50 workers and also designs souvenirs in memory of fallen heroes. When I asked her favorite, she pointed to a memorial plaque for the Palestinian martyr, Majed Abu Sharar, who, she said, was "a great man. Kind and cultured. He and Kanafani were among 20 of our top P.L.O. leaders who were assassinated by the Israeli Intelligence."

In addition to Samed workshops, the

P.L.O. Social Welfare Department provides another example of how the Palestinian government reaches out to serve the people. This department, which began in 1965 when four people decided to care for the widows and children of Palestinians killed in fighting, now has a \$114 million budget for health care, education and pensions for Palestinians and Lebanese. The system supports 30,000 families that receive an average of \$100 a month. It also assists Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

Medical and Educational Assistance

The Palestine Red Crescent, organized like the Red Cross, renders medical services to the Palestinian community, civilian and commando alike. It operates 7 hospitals in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, and several clinics in the border villages of South Lebanon. Each hospital has an operating room, x-ray section, laboratory, out-patient clinic and emergency room. The society also has 4 medical complexes in Syria and Lebanon, each with an outpatient clinic, dental clinic, laboratory and pharmacy. It has organized 25 popular clinics in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Sudan. Each refugee camp in Syria and Lebanon has at least one of these.

A Red Crescent Rehabilitation Center, with its own workshop that makes artificial limbs, crutches, polio splints and braces, has become known for its success in helping patients adjust to loss of hands, arms and legs. After the initial medical treatment, the patient begins his or her rehabilitation using up-to-date techniques in exercise therapy; the patient is then fitted with and trained to use a prosthetic device.

Visiting the center, I was impressed to see how "graduates" such as a Palestinian named Hamed helped others in need of rehabilitation. Hamed spoke in English and told me he had been the victim of Israeli shellings. Hamed, who could walk effortlessly with an artificial leg, fitted an artificial limb for Rashid Hussaini, 19, whose left leg had been blown off when American-made F-16's had bombed Beirut in July 1981. Hussaini talked to me in Arabic and Hamed translated his words for me. Having pulled on the artificial limb, almost as one would a boot, the youth stood to proclaim, "This leg will be as strong as steel! And I will continue to fight the Zionist aggressors!"

Through its Organization for Martyrs' Families, the P.L.O. assumes responsibility for the welfare of the children of

Palestinian fighters killed in battle. The organization provides workshops with vocational training for orphans or children from fatherless families. And it also offers ready-made clothes and furniture for refugee families at low prices.

The P.L.O. puts great emphasis on education and as a result, Palestinians have the highest level of education of all third-world countries.

Through its educational section, the Palestine Planning Center has evolved a philosophy of Palestinian education and it has designed educational materials for Palestinian children. It organizes summer programs and courses for Palestinian teachers, and is building model kindergartens.

Today more than 90 percent of Palestinians can read and write. In 1977-78, slightly more than 40,000 Palestinians graduated from secondary schools in all areas where Palestinians concentrate; of these, slightly more than 10,000 students entered universities in the Arab world or elsewhere. In the same year, a total of slightly more than 60,000 Palestinian students were pursuing a higher education.

More than 200,000 Palestinians are college graduates—an achievement that accounts for the high representation of Palestinians in the professions.

Palestinian scholars estimate that Palestinians, about 2.5 percent of the Arab world's population, provide about 10 percent of its graduate manpower. Each year an estimated 70,000 Palestinians are enrolled as college students, a ratio of about 11 per thousand of population; the British figure is 8 per thousand.

In the spring of 1982, the P.L.O. announced it will set up its own university which will provide it an opportunity to create a more Palestinian-oriented higher education. The P.L.O. "open university," patterned after such institutes of higher learning in Britain and Japan, will have its own television and audiovisual production unit.

Arafat has said: "We have 26,000 engineers, 80,000 primary and secondary teachers, and 5,000 university professors." He often remarks on the joy he feels when he visits a Palestinian school. "In the eyes of our youth," he says, "I see the future of Palestine."

Palestinian Professor Muhammad Hallaj, a visiting scholar at Harvard University, has said that the P.L.O. structure is developed to the point now where the thrust for an independent state is irreversible.

The facts seem to indicate that this is indeed the case.

Fatah: The Armed Resistance

From 1948, when the Zionists forced them out of their homeland, until the mid-1960's, the Palestinians lived with the hope that the Arab nations would fight and win a war that would recover Palestine for them.

The Arab states gave some attention to the Palestinians. Indeed, it was the Arab League that in 1964 created the P.L.O. But, while the Palestinians wanted the Arab nations to fight with them, in a joint effort to recover Palestine, the Arab League wanted no such effort.

The Arab states then, as now, did not want to be drawn into a war with Israel. While adamantly opposed to Zionism, other Arabs did not wish to die to fight it. It was only the Palestinians, by and large, who would "resist" with fervor the takeover of their homeland. Because they "resist" Zionism, their struggle for freedom is called the Palestinian Resistance.

Unlike other freedom fighters, such as those who fought for freedom in America, France and Algeria, the Palestinians have struggled under the most unfavorable circumstances, having no established territory from which to launch their attacks against the usurpers of their homeland. From the start of their resistance until today, the Palestinian commandos have never had any secure internal bases from which to fight.

Palestinian leaders learned, in time, that they, who lacked a military tradition, could not depend on Arab neighboring nations, with weapons and standing armies, to do their fighting. The Palestinians—and the entire world—saw how Israel thoroughly trounced Egypt, Syria and Jordan in the 1967 war.

Arafat said the war taught two lessons: first, that the then-existing Arab regimes could never destroy Israel in any conventional war, and second, that the Palestinians must take the lead in managing their own affairs. He would lead the struggle through an organization to be called Fatah—"conquest."

After the 1967 war, Arafat, using

various disguises, moved into the occupied territories—the West Bank and Gaza. For six months he lived in Nablus and held meetings in a small cafe. Palestinians living there today recall seeing him walk openly about the streets and they say it was a simple matter to arrange meetings with him. In those days he recruited key men for Fatah, and laid the foundation for its successes. He and other top leaders set three goals: 1. A small, relatively cohesive group would direct Fatah. (Interestingly, five leaders who formed Fatah remain the undisputed leaders in 1982. They include: Arafat; Khalil al-Wazir, today deputy commander of the Forces of the Palestinian Revolution; Farouk Kaddoumi; Abu Ayad; and Khalid al-Hassan. Few if any nations today can claim such a long record of unified, consistent leadership.)

2. Fatah's goal would be simple: the liberation of Palestine. With such a broad appeal, Fatah would encompass supporters and recruits from nearly all political and ideological perspectives. Palestinians, rich and poor, moderates, conservatives, extremists, educated or unschooled, could understand the goal and support it.

3. Fatah would avoid inter-Arab quarrels, and thus could receive aid and arms from diverse Arab regimes, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Kuwait, Algeria, Syria, Iraq. Arafat explained his position this way: "Since we do not interfere with the internal affairs of the Arab countries, where we have no ambitions, since we have in common with them and with the Arab people the objective of ending the Israeli occupation, we see no reason for a conflict between us."

Fatah fighters used two techniques: "smashing the shield"—with attacks on the border towns and settlements; and "bending the spear"—keeping the Israeli forces busy along extended front lines in order to weaken their striking force.

"We carry out two kinds of actions, commando and guerrilla," Arafat explained. "The commandos infiltrate

(occupied Palestine), perform their mission and then return to their bases. The guerrillas remain in their zones, move about, disguise themselves and attack (across the border into Israel)."

Arafat's first test as a military leader came in the battle of Karameh, fought on March 21, 1968.

Abu'l Tayeb, a native of Jaffa, was 22 and a commando in that battle. He relates: "The Israelis moved across into the East Bank of the Jordan River to destroy an entire Arab village—the village of Karameh. Arafat, our commander, arranged the Palestinians into three positions, and gave instructions to allow the Israelis to penetrate until they had occupied the town. At that moment, we attacked them from all sides, we compelled them to fight on our terms. We automatically cancelled out their two greatest weapons, their air force and artillery.

"Palestinians possessing only hand grenades—and knowing they would be killed—threw themselves at tanks to destroy and stop them. As soon as two or three of the tanks were knocked out, the other tanks were stalled. Instead of encircling us, the Israelis found themselves encircled," Abu'l Tayeb said.

"Their attack had started about 4 or 5 a.m., and the battle continued 12 hours, when the Israelis began to collect themselves and withdraw. It was a great victory—to see them withdraw," Abu'l Tayeb said. "Arafat personally was commanding and directing all operations of the battle. He gave to all of us fighters good military planning and the example of unparalleled courage. In all battles, victory depends on a leader."

"This movement [Fatah]," Professor Hisham Sharabi wrote, "was able after the 1967 defeat, when despair, anguish and shame engulfed the entire Arab world from Rabat to Baghdad, to raise the banner of defiance."

By 1969, Fatah succeeded in gaining control of the P.L.O., and Arafat held power in both organizations. He could

now move militarily, through Fatah, and diplomatically, through the P.L.O.

Thereafter, Arafat stressed that armed struggle must be coupled to feasible political objectives. All Fatah's officers would have a two-fold role: political as well as military. And Arafat stressed that the initiative for solving Palestinian problems must always remain in the hands of Palestinians.

Other commando groups have not remained independent, but rather are linked to the ideology of certain Arab states. The Baathists of the Saiqa group give allegiance to Syria, while the rival Baathists of the Arab Liberation Front (A.F.L.) give allegiance to Iraq. Other small left-wing guerrilla groups have, at times, made provisional links with Libya and Algeria.

Rather than engage in ideological disputes, Arafat has kept his mind set on his one goal: the return of Palestinians to Palestine. He has used diplomacy in his struggle against Arab radicalism and Arab ideologies that call for destruction not only of the Zionist state, but of other, uncooperative Arab regimes that place restrictions on Palestinian operations against Zionism. To this end, some of the commando groups have moved against objectives outside Israel.

Arafat and other Fatah leaders condemned such generalized acts of terrorism. When the radical extremists among the Palestinians created the havoc in 1970 that threatened to topple the government in Jordan, King Hussein moved

his well-trained army against all Palestinian encampments, killing hundreds and driving all the fedayeen—Arafat among them—out of Jordan. The crushing blow became known as "Black September." Arafat and others moved on to Lebanon.

I asked a Catholic priest, the Rev. Ibrahim Ayyad, 70, born in Jerusalem, about the terrorist acts.

This revolution is not
merely a gun but:
A scalpel of a surgeon
A brush of an artist
A pen of a writer
A plough of a farmer
An ax of a worker.

—Yasser Arafat

"In the very beginning, the hijackings brought the attention of the world to our cause. The hijackings awakened the public awareness of the Palestinians. The people had to ask, Why are they doing this? Are they crazy or do they have a cause? But afterwards, to continue, no. We condemned such acts. And there has not been any of that in recent years."

Father Ayyad believes no cause in the world more just than the Palestinian cause. The Catholic priest led a militia of young soldiers in the defense of Jeru-

salem in the 1940's, and Arafat served in his militia. Today, the soft-spoken, diminutive black-robed priest conducts shuttle diplomacy between the Pope in Rome and Arafat in Beirut, and one day soon, it may be predicted, the two leaders will meet, and it is believed the Pope will recognize that Palestinians have a right to a home state.

"Arafat is a peace-loving man," Father Ayyad told me. "The Western media is wrong to call him a 'terrorist.' The real terrorist is Menachem Begin. I was in Jerusalem when he blew up the King David Hotel. Ninety-three persons were killed, Britishers, Arabs and some Jews."

The priest said that Arafat often talked with him about Mahatma Gandhi, the nationalist leader of India who sought through non-violent means to end British colonialism in India. "He, too, wishes to achieve freedom without war. He still is holding the olive branch," Father Ayyad said.

Among a scattered people long neglected, embittered, apathetic, Arafat built self-respect, self-reliance, pride—and most of all, he has given the Palestinians a new hope for ultimate justice.

"We are all in this struggle," Arafat said of the four million Palestinians. Then he told me: "I remember, when I was in the United Nations, while making my speech, dozens of demonstrators held signs saying, 'Arafat, Go home.' I replied: "'This is what I am trying to do.'"

A Conversation With Yasser Arafat

Q. Is the P.L.O. a terrorist organization?

A. You have refused to see the organized terrorism of the Zionists, who have attempted to destroy an entire people, and to say to the world: There are no Palestinian people.

You do not see the fascist characteristics of Begin, who blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem killing 93 persons, and who planned the massacre in the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin, in which 254 men, women and children were shot, pushed into a well, and cov-

ered with dirt. When Red Cross officials came to this village, they found the bodies, a few of them still breathing, and they have reported this terrorism to the world. You in the West have become so blinded by Zionist control in your media that you give one of the foremost terrorists, Begin, a peace prize.

The Israeli authorities call our comandos "terrorists" but all movements of national resistance have been called this—in France, for example, during the Nazi occupation. Our aims are military and economic. Reprisals against civilians have only been made in

answer to Israeli attacks: it was after the bombing of Irbid and Kafr-Kasr that a bomb was left in Jerusalem, and after the bombing of Salt that the attack on Tel-Aviv took place.

What is your definition of a terrorist? of terrorism? Is it not terrorism to drive a people from their homes under threat of death? Is it not terrorism to murder men, women and children who cling to their land, their olive trees? Is it not terrorism to shoot students who demonstrate for their freedom?

Is it not terrorism to imprison, hold without charges and to brutally torture

one out of every five Palestinian youths in the occupied territories? Is it not terrorism of an entire people that they, being forced to live under "emergency laws," have no right to protest? Don't you know that the Israelis are not forced to open their prisons for the world to know about this widespread and systematic torture?

Several hundred of our leaders in occupied Palestine were, one by one, over the past decade arrested at midnight, black sacks were put over their heads, and they were driven to the



Palestine Information Center, Washington, D.C.

borders and expelled from their homeland, where their forefathers have lived for thousands of years. Our mayors in the West Bank are bombed, and their legs are blown off—by Israeli terrorists. Our mayors, democratically elected by our people, are expelled from office.

Is it not terrorism to send bulldozers to knock down Palestinian homes; is it not terrorism when armed gunmen storm Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, shooting and killing Palestinians worshipping there?

I classify most of the steps taken by the Israeli government against Palestinians since 1948 as terrorist actions. As part of their systematic terrorism, the Israeli Intelligence in the past decade has assassinated 16 of our outstanding leaders.

When an Israeli official was shot in Paris, the Zionists said the P.L.O. did it. The P.L.O. had nothing to do with that murder. But what kind of people is it that can mourn only when an Israeli is shot? Is not our beloved Naim Khader, killed by the Israelis in Brussels in 1981, or our beloved Abu Hassan, killed by the Israelis in Beirut in 1979, equal to any Israeli? Do we not also mourn? Are we not also human?

We Palestinians have struggled for our honor, our dignity, our homeland since before 1948, and our cause was as

just then as it is today, but until we begin our armed struggle in 1965, our cause was consistently ignored.

We have no airplanes, no bombs to drop from the air, we have no ships, and yet we face the organized terrorism



Palestine Information Center, Washington, D.C.

of the Israeli-American war machine. We are fighting with our hearts, sometimes with only small stones. Was David, facing Goliath, the greatest terrorist of his day? The tactics of "terrorism" that we use are those the Americans used in their fight for freedom, that the French used in their fight for freedom, that the Algerians used in their fight for freedom. They are tactics against occupation, repression and oppression; they are legitimate means, for we have no other weapons, by which to survive.

Q. It is often said the P.L.O. wants to drive the Israelis into the sea. Is this true?

A. The P.L.O. has never advocated the annihilation of Israel. The Zionists started the "drive the Jews into the sea" slogan and attributed it to the P.L.O. We have repeatedly made suggestions of how Christians, Muslims and Jews can live together, in peace, in the Holy Land. In 1969, we said, we want to establish a democratic state where Jews, Christians and Muslims can live all together. The Zionists said they do not choose to live with any people other than Jews. They want a state only for Zionist-Jews. This, we believe, is as racist a concept as Hitler's idea of a state only for his kind.

We said to the Zionist-Jews, all right, if you do not want a secular, democratic state for all of us, then we will take another route. In 1974, I said, we are ready to establish our independent state in any part from which Israel will withdraw.

We, the victims, have offered two solutions: I have not said that we are

going to throw anybody into the sea. We are offering options while the Zionists are offering only more annihilation, more oppression and new slavery to my people. They say we want to drive them into the sea. This is their guilt speaking, for having driven us from our lands—into the desert.

Q. Why don't you recognize Israel's right to exist?

A. You have to put into your consideration that it is the Israeli side who started this violence. The Zionists are the aggressors. The Zionists are the occupiers. Why are the victims of this aggression asked to "recognize" the occupiers? Up to what boundaries, up to what limits of their aggression do you yourself "recognize" the Zionists? To the borders given them in 1947?

Our people have been kicked out of our homeland and 60 percent of our people are living as refugees, homeless, stateless, in refugee camps, in very bad, very serious, very complicated circumstances.



P.L.O. Foreign Information Dept., Beirut

They have been struggling, to live normal lives, but they are denied the right of nationhood and they must have identification cards and do not have the right to hold passports as Palestinians, and having no passports, they are not seen as first-class people by others, who are citizens of a state.

We, too, want our flag, our industries, our schools, our universities. We too want to be recognized. The Zionists who have stolen our orchards and farms and who refuse to allow our students to write poems about Palestine or to show the Palestinian flag, even the Palestinian colors, are denying us our human rights.

Begin is saying that "we will not recognize the Palestinians and we will not recognize the P.L.O."

Zionist Mr. Kissinger exacted a pledge from the United States that it would not negotiate with the P.L.O. But why not

talk with us? Your own State Department people have pointed out that the agreement not to negotiate does not mean you can't talk with us. Why do you refuse to see us?

As long as you refuse to see us, to have a dialogue with words, there can be only one dialogue, and that is a dialogue through armaments.

I do not choose war.

But thus far, you give us no choice.

Q. Often one reads that the Israeli Jews are protecting the Christians of the Holy Land. Is this true?

A. What a big lie. Arab Christians, like Arab Muslims, are persecuted and oppressed by the Zionists, and are second-class citizens in the "Jewish" state. The so-called "Jewish" state is a Zionist state. I do not recognize anything in Zionism that in any way is an expression of the noble Jewish religion, which we consider as part of our heritage and ethos, the same as Islam and Christianity.

We Palestinians are not fighting against Jews, but against Zionist ideology and institutions that have separated Jews from Palestinians and allowed the Zionist ruling elite—Jews from Poland and other Western countries—to dominate and persecute the Palestinians. Every Christian as well as every Muslim is a second-class citizen in the so-called "Jewish"-Zionist state.

We are struggling for the creation of a new society where Jews, Christians and Muslims can coexist with equal rights.

In my United Nations speech in 1974 I emphasized this theme when I said: "...I should return with my people out of exile to live (in Palestine) in one democratic state where Christian, Jew and Muslim live in justice, equality and fraternity."

Q. Why do you hope for final victory?

A. Israel's weak spot is the fact that it is engaged in an unjust war. Our struggle is beginning to prove this to the world.

All experience has proved that nationalism is a more powerful lever than prosperity. The essential effect on the armed struggle has been to restructure an uprooted and atomized society which had lost the desire to struggle. In this sense, the resistance, by its action, has re-created a sense of identity, and awakened the Palestinian national consciousness.

We are in the current of history. Remember, history has never witnessed the failure of a popular revolution.

Book Views

Warriors at Suez: Eisenhower Takes America into the Middle East

By Donald Neff

Linden Press/Simon and Schuster, New York, 1981, 480 pp., 67 photos, 4 maps, \$17.95

By Henry G. Fischer

Donald Neff's account of the tripartite Suez invasion of 1956 inevitably invites comparison with Kennett Love's *Suez: The Twice Fought War*, which covers the same ground (in 50 percent more words) as well as covering Israel's 1967 invasion. Neff himself gives high praise to the earlier book, published in 1969, and rightly describes it as being "amazingly accurate," although he laments its "circular structure." All historical situations are circular, however—this one more than most—and Neff deals with it in much the same way, turning from one circuit to another. While he lacks Love's firsthand contact with the protagonists, such as Nasser and Ben-Gurion, he is able to draw on several memoirs that have appeared in the meantime, including those of Heikal and some veterans of the C.I.A. He has also had access to United Nations archives and the archives of the Eisenhower Library. But, despite the Freedom of Information Act, he has had little success in extracting information from the C.I.A. or the Department of State.

As the subtitle suggests, Eisenhower is the principal point of focus. Neff's portrayal of him is generally sympathetic, but it leaves, in the end, a rather negative impression. Eisenhower's inarticulateness is explained as a ruse and he is said to have been a skillful writer; on the other hand he is described as practicing golf shots minutes before he addressed the nation, while his speech writer and Dulles feverishly put together the words he was to speak, underlining the points of emphasis. He is said to have been interested in ecology, but the interest was only skin-deep, restricted to soil conservation; he insisted on the atmospheric testing of H-bombs and had

no qualms about the use of nuclear weapons in local situations, or the building up of a chemical and bacteriological arsenal. While he was extraordinarily steadfast in his opposition to the Franco-Israeli-British attack, timed to coincide with the conclusion of his campaign for re-election, he was quite ready to use the C.I.A. to subvert foreign governments of the smaller nations (Iran, Guatemala, Syria, Egypt), and to meddle in the internal politics of a larger nation such as Britain (to keep the Conservatives in power). He deplored the British attack because it spoiled "a great chance to split the Arab world." He abetted Britain in all of the principal steps that led to the hostilities, first in denying the Egyptians the financial aid he had promised in return for concessions made by them in negotiating Britain's withdrawal from the Suez Canal in 1954; secondly, in cutting off Western financing of the Aswan High Dam; thirdly, in disregarding the fact that Egypt's subsequent nationalization of the Canal was perfectly legal, treating it, like Eden, as something Nasser "shouldn't get away with"; and finally, again following the British, in freezing Egyptian credits.

The Suez crisis opened Eisenhower's eyes to some truths about the Middle East conflict that he had not been aware of: notably the fact that Israel's Arab neighbors consistently agreed to have United Nations observers on their side of the border, while Israel did everything in its power to keep such observers out (and ultimately succeeded). In the wake of the crisis, having helped Britain with the shortage of fuel and foreign credit caused by the war, Eisenhower professed himself willing to help Egypt as well (balancing this, of course, with a proportionate amount of aid to Israel, including military supplies that Egypt would not get). This promise was not kept either, and the Egyptians, who had suffered a far greater number of casualties than their combined attackers, were even denied medical supplies. Neff might have mentioned, as Love does, that the Egyptians were also turned down on a request to

Books To Order

release some of their blocked United States credit so as to buy desperately needed supplies. During the attack Eisenhower declared: "I don't fancy helping the Egyptians but I feel our word must be made good." To the end his distaste got the better of his good intentions.

In view of all these considerations the subtitle of Neff's book does not seem apt, for Eisenhower cannot really be said to have "taken us into the Middle East." He abandoned the Egyptians to the favors of the Russians and left the Israelis to make incessant trouble on their neighbors' borders, for they argued that the former armistice arrangements were now void (Neff, p. 416; and see von Horn's *Soldiering for Peace*). In the end Eisenhower's policy, or lack of policy, set the stage for the next war, in 1967, and this time Lyndon Johnson, who had tried to talk Eisenhower out of pressuring the Israelis, could be as indulgent to them as he pleased.

The author has succeeded in presenting a complex piece of history in a lucid, lively and readable manner. Some may, in fact, find it the most readable account to date, although I still prefer Love's greater detail and immediacy of reporting. And the new book has a few minor defects. Neff does not always clearly date the phases of the Suez operation, and this problem is not helped by the map on page 369, which inaccurately gives November 1 as the "start of the Anglo-French air raids," instead of October 31 (at 7:00 p.m.). The style is occasionally marred by modish expressions such as "flakiness," "workaholic" and "out of sync." Much more distressing than this, however, is a tendency to slip into Zionist cant. It may not be so misleading to refer to Sharm el-Sheikh as "the choke-point of the Gulf of Aqaba" (p. 431), but I am taken aback to find the West Bank described as "that protrusion across the Jordan River that lay in the heart of Palestine" (p. 332) or to read that: "The Gaza Strip protrudes like a probing finger into the southwestern side of Israel." These "protrusions" and "probings" imply that the victims are at fault in being still in possession of some remnants of their homeland. I doubt that Neff shares that sentiment, and his language probably simply reflects the degree to which all of us are saturated with Israeli propaganda.

Henry G. Fischer is Curator in Egyptology at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art.

New Selection

□ Donald Neff, *Warriors at Suez: Eisenhower Takes America into the Middle East*, Linden Press/Simon & Schuster, 1981, 480 pp., \$17.95. Reveals for the first time the bizarre nature of the Suez Crisis of 1956. This episode saw France, Britain and Israel in collusion to overthrow the Nasser regime without the knowledge of the United States until 24 hours before the attack. The author, an award-winning *Time* correspondent, reveals how Eisenhower's showdown against Britain, France and Israel ultimately marked the end of Britain and France as colonial giants and the beginning of Israel's repeated aggression against the Arabs. Our price, \$12.75. See review on page 14.

□ Uri Avnery, *Israel Without Zionism: A Plea for Peace in the Middle East*, Macmillan Publishing, 278 pp., \$1.95 (paperback). A remarkable description of Israeli politics, as presented by a member of Israel's Knesset and the sole representative of a party that believes in the transformation of the Jewish state into a pluralistic and secular one that is able to achieve reconciliation with the Arabs. Our price, \$1.70.

□ Dewey Beegle, *Prophecy and Prediction*, Pryor Pettengill, 274 pp., \$5.95 (paperback). Refutes the biblical claim of Zionists to the Promised Land by discussing what the Bible teaches about prophecy, especially concerning the predictions of events which already have occurred and those which are to come. Our price, \$5.25.

□ Jonathan Dimbleby, *The Palestinians*, Quartet Books, 1979, 256 pp., \$25.00. Explores the crisis of a people without a land, demonstrating that the "Palestinian problem" is not an abstract issue but an urgent human tragedy. Fully illustrated with moving, dramatic, often harrowing photographs by Donald McCullin. Our price, \$17.50.

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□ Ian Lustick, *Arabs In the Jewish State*, University of Texas Press, 1980, 400 pp., \$10.95. A systematic, scholarly analysis of the strikingly low level of Arab political activity in Israel. Author examines success with which Israeli authorities have coopted Arab elites, maintained the backwardness of the Arab economy, and promoted parochial rivalries within the Arab sector. Our price, \$8.50.

□ W.T. Mallison, Jr., *The Legal Problems Concerning the Juridical Status and Political Activities of the Zionist Organization/Jewish Agency*, William and Mary Law Review, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1962, 75 pp. A

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study of the Zionist Organization/Jewish Agency in the context of international and United States law. Our price, \$1.50.

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actions taken by the United States regarding the Palestinian cause. Our price, \$7.50.

□ Livia Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism*, Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1980, 68 pp., \$2.50 (paperback). Examines the 1953-57 diary of Moshe Sharett, founding member of Israel's Labor Party, his country's first foreign minister and its second prime minister. Our price, \$1.95.

□ Raymonda H. Tawil, *My Home, My Prison*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 265 pp., \$12.95. Autobiography of a Palestinian woman whose description of life under Israeli occupation mirrors the changing moods on the West Bank. Our price, \$6.50.

□ Evan M. Wilson, *Decision on Palestine*, Hoover Press, 244 pp., \$14.95. Well-documented analysis of the six years leading up to the creation of Israel. Based on author's personal experience and on infor-

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