

THE PALESTINIAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS AND THE WORLD PRESS



*Al-Fateh
Palestine National Liberation Movement*



Selections from May 1968 to March 1969

*The opinions and conclusions reprinted
in this booklet do not necessarily reflect
the views of the Palestine National
Liberation Movement, Al-Fateh.*

FOREWORD

It was in the summer of 1967 that the first discussions arose at the U.N. Security Council concerning the right terminology that should be used to refer to Palestinians carrying out armed resistance in Palestine. Israeli Ambassador Yosef Tekoah insisted on the word 'terrorists'. He was supported by many of the western members of the Security Council. Those same members earlier were either involved in or expressed admiration of the resistance of European people to the German occupation. Those members saw no similarity between the two cases of the Nazi occupation of Europe and the Zionist occupation of Palestine. Nevertheless, the discussion turned against the Israeli spokesman, and the word 'terrorists' was struck off the U.N. documents and was replaced by the more objective term «Freedom Fighters.»

Little by little world public opinion has been changing. It is becoming more objective in viewing the Palestinian freedom fighters.

This booklet is an attempt at informing the reader of what is happening in the world's image of the Palestinian freedom fighters, the sole representatives of the Palestinians, by reproducing to the reader word by word articles which he may not have access to otherwise. It will open to him a door to a new world, that of changing trends in the world and of possible hope for the implementation of peace based on justice in Palestine.

Force the faith of al-Fatah

THE GUARDIAN, May 3, 1968

BEIRUT

David Hirst

The Palestinian guerrilla movement is now the great unknown quantity in the future of the Middle East. In January, 1965, in the first of many enigmatic military communiqués, al-Fatah announced that its military wing, al-Asifah, «had completed its mission in occupied territory.»

It was this event, virtually unnoticed at the time, rather than the coming to power of Major-General Salah Jadid and his wild young junta, which marked the beginning of the process leading to the June war. The coming months may show whether as a result of guerrilla action, the war should be reckoned to have been as great a disaster for Israel as it was for the Arabs.

Since June, the highly secretive al-Fatah has gradually been shedding its veil of mystery. Among other things, it has published a number of essays, written well before the war, explaining something of its strategy. Al-Fatah's ultimate aim is the liberation of Palestine, but it is clear from these essays that it has no reason to be displeased with what it has achieved so far. The essays discuss the movement's strategy on three levels—Palestinian, Arab and international.

In its prewar writings, al-Fatah conceives as its task to bring about a regeneration of the Palestinians, to re-establish their identity as a people. Scattered for 20 years in their Arab diaspora, the Palestinians have lost all sense of common purpose; indeed, says al-Fatah, the ironic situation has arisen in which the Palestinians «are further removed from their own struggle than the other Arabs.»

AT ALL COSTS

Al-Fatah's formula for regeneration is a simple one : continuous armed action at all costs. This is the hard core of its philosophy, constantly reiterated. If the «vanguard»—al-Fatah—sets a resolute enough example, it will sooner or later bring the people as a whole into a «popular liberation war.»

Totally committed to armed action, al-Fatah scorns conventional political debate. It has no official views on the ordering of society. That is a question to be tackled after liberation. The only concern of the Palestinians at present is «to be or not to be.» At most, politics is an aspect of military strategy.

If al-Fatah foresees an important role for the downtrodden and dispossessed, that is not because it is Socialist in outlook but because it recognizes their fighting potential. By opting out of Arab politics—which is an original and, for some Arabs, a heretical thing to do, al-Fatah wants to unite under its banner those Palestinians who, through force of circumstances, have mistakenly given their first allegiance to other Arab causes as an indirect means of promoting their own.

There is no doubt that al-Fatah, by actually doing something where others have merely talked, has got off to a good start on the Palestinian front, giving the Palestinians a will of their own which they have not enjoyed since Israel was created.

The guerrillas — or fedayeen, « men who sacrifice themselves » — have set an inspiring example, and other Palestinians have been flocking to join their ranks. According to al-Fatah sources, the bulk of them are rejected; al-Fatah reckons to take only the best material and the fact that it can get it, in the shape of educated young men, it regards as a measure of its appeal. Arab intellectuals are perhaps less ready than most to get their hands dirty.

Al-Fatah's apolitical approach is paying off, too. In the early stages there appear to have been quarrels in the leadership with Moslem Brothers, or at least men of that stamp, making themselves strongly felt. But now there are apparently a high proportion of Christians in al-Fatah's upper echelons.

Similarly, al-Fatah, as the original and most successful guerrilla body, is able to get most of its way with rival groups, set up under the auspices of non-Palestinian parties or regimes, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, in the laborious process of unifying commando operations.

While mainly concerned to put the Palestinians in the forefront of the struggle, al-Fatah does not neglect the Arab World as a whole. On the contrary, the Arab role in the Palestinian struggle is a delicate question to which al-Fatah, right from the outset, has obviously devoted much thought.

Al-Fatah wants to involve the Arabs in the liberation struggle — but in its own way. Its prewar writings are tactful about it, but in effect its Arab strategy is directly at odds with the strategy which President Nasser of Egypt had generally managed until June to get

accepted as the orthodox one, which is that the Arabs must complete the revolutionary transformation of their society before taking on Israel. For al-Fatah this is mere procrastination; it dismisses as a dangerous illusion the idea that time and historical necessity are on the Arabs' side.

It maintains (this is before June) that the Arabs cannot win the kind of quick conventional war for which the revolutionary regimes are preparing. Among other things, this is because it is the very existence of Israel, as a source of Arab divisions, which prevents the Arabs from achieving the degree of military strength and coordination required for conventional warfare.

It is therefore al-Fatah's aim to «entangle» the Arab States not in the kind of war which they cannot win but the «popular liberation war» which they can. The Palestinians are the spearhead, but they cannot do without a «supporting Arab front» and here al-Fatah, which clearly distrusts all Arab officialdom, is at pains to stress that it is relying on the people rather than their governments to bring it into being.

Al-Fatah argues that the man in the street, and especially the Palestinian subject of King Hussein of Jordan, cannot but take a simple black-and-white view of guerrilla operations; he will regard it as patriotism to support them and treachery to oppose them — and judge his Government accordingly. It follows therefore that al-Fatah «pledges not to raise arms against any Arab soldier or ruler, leaving it to the Arab people themselves to deal with anyone who stands in the way of armed revolution.»

It is remarkable, though perfectly logical, that the regime which stood most resolutely opposed to independent Palestinian action is now, in spite of itself, the one paying the highest price in tolerating, if not actively supporting, it. The transformation wrought in Jordan is the spontaneous one which al-Fatah looked for, working its way upwards from the mass of Palestinians through the army to the King and, perhaps most significant, to at least one prominent member of his hardcore Transjordanian entourage.

Because it is spontaneous, it is probably irreversible. If al-Fatah is able to preserve strict discipline over its members there is no reason why it should seek to overthrow Hussein.

COME CLEAN

Egypt, too, has finally come clean on gurrilla warfare. For several months it had been gradually shifting its interests from the official Palestine Liberation Organisation to the unofficial al-Fatah and earlier this month President Nasser declared his country's readiness to arm

and assist the guerrillas. Ironically, it is the Syrian neo-Ba'athist, the first to patronise the guerrillas, who now seem to be getting cold feet.

The point at which the guerrillas are most likely to come into collision with Arab regimes is when the latter see a serious opening for a political settlement. Admittedly this opening looks exceedingly remote at present, but paradoxically, if one does arise it is the guerrillas who, by softening up Israel, will have done the trick.

Al-Fatah itself, however, is emphatically not interested in merely getting back what the Arabs lost in June. It is looking beyond the «liquidation of the traces of aggression» to what was always its aim of total liberation, and it has publicly said so in an implicit challenge to Hussein and Nasser, who are still in search of a political solution.

On the international level, it is al-Fatah's aim to «discredit in action the Zionist misrepresentation whereby world opinion is led to believe that the conflict in the Middle East is between the Arab States as States and Israel as the Jewish State, and to make foreign States take account of the presence of a Palestinian Arab people with a lawful claim on Palestine.»

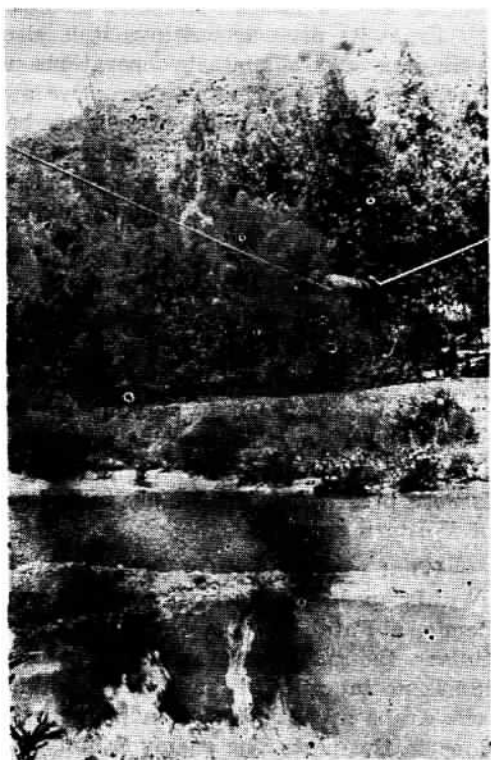
From its pre-war writings it is clear that al-Fatah was from the beginning aware that its operations would provoke mixed feelings among many Palestinians, disruptive as they were bound to be of the settled prosperity which they were beginning to enjoy under King Hussein, and an al-Fatah representative admitted to me that his movement now enjoys the strong sympathy rather than the active support of these same Palestinians under Israeli rule.

NEW SUPPORT

Nevertheless, the view that al-Fatah is a genuine resistance movement comparable to those of German-occupied Europe is gaining some support in the outside world. The al-Fatah representative assured me that his organisation is building up cells inside original Israeli territory as well as the occupied areas but he did not see why al-Fatah should deprive itself of the military convenience of bases beyond Israel's present borders simply to make a political point for the benefit of Western sceptics.

What exactly does al-Fatah mean by the liberation of Palestine? To this question, which it would be unwise to dismiss as merely academic, al-Fatah gives a very general answer. It wants for the Palestinians the self-determination to which all peoples are entitled. But it has no intention, it says, of «pushing the Jews into the sea»; Jews and Arabs are capable of living peacefully side by side as they have done in the past. The enemy is not the Jews but the Zionists.

Clearly, however, in the context of Israel this distinction is hopelessly blurred and in practice if ever the Palestinians came within reach of their goal they would have to show a superhuman restraint and the Israelis — or rather the Jews as they would then have to be — a longforgotten meekness to make peaceful coexistence possible. But if al-Fatah is less than frank about the practical implications of its ultimate goal, it is following a lesson only too well taught by the Zionists themselves.



*In a training base of
Al-Fateh*

ARAB GUERRILLA

DEFENDS USE OF FORCE

The Times , December 4 , 1968

AMMAN

Dana Adams Schmidt

Yasir Arafat, the leader and spokesman of Al Fatah, the largest and most active Palestinian guerrilla group, called out to his departing visitor: «We are expecting a big Israeli attack.» It was an afterthought and his voice was almost gay, as though he welcomed the prospect.

This man—his revolutionary pseudonym is Abu Amar—has come to symbolize the Palestinian nationalist movement as it has grown since the Arab-Israel war of June, 1967. Abu Amar has become almost a legend, perhaps because he is the only Arab guerrilla leader whose identity has been disclosed, and his men have become heroes in the Arab world.

Abu Amar and his men have succeeded in establishing themselves as an autonomous strictly Palestinian force, mainly in Jordan, partly in territory occupied by Israel, with sources of support in surrounding countries.

At one point in the interview conducted mainly through interpreters, Abu Amar spoke up in English. «Our ideological theory is very simple», he said. «Our country has been occupied. The majority of our people have been kicked out by Zionism and imperialism from their homes.

«We waited and waited and waited for the justice of the United Nations, for the justice of the world and the governments gathering in the United Nations, while our people were suffering in tents and caves. But nothing of this was realized. None of our hopes. But our dispersion was aggravated.

«We have believed that the only way to return to our homes and land is the armed struggle. We believe in this theory without any complications and with complete clarity, and this is our aim and our hope.»

Abu Amar has brown, rather soft eyes, a prominent nose, thin

black moustache, receding chin, a pleasant smile, and a quiet, good-natured voice.

It was chilly in the small, bare room of the private house which Al Fatah uses as headquarters, and he wore a thick brown sweater, with a tattered red notebook in its left pocket, and the olive green field jacket and black-and-white checked headdress which have become something of an unofficial Al Fatah uniform.

Several of the men in the room carried Soviet-made light automatic weapons.

Abu Amar was born in Jerusalem in 1929. When the Arab-Israeli fighting of 1948 ended he found himself a refugee in Gaza, together with his parents. He managed to go to Cairo to study engineering. As chairman of the Palestinian Student Federation from 1952 to 1956, and later of the Palestine Alumni Federation, he helped, in his own words, to «lay the basic foundation for our movement».

While studying he also acted as a leader and trainer of Palestinian and Egyptian commandos who fought the British in the Suez Canal area. He served in the Egyptian Army as a demolitions expert, and fought the British and French at Port Said and Abu Kabir in 1956.

Abu Amar observed: «Israel usurped our land in 1948, and has continued her expansion and usurpation ever since. We believe this Jewish structure called Israel will continue expansion on every occasion it may find.

«Occupation of the land after June 5 did not stop the resistance. On the contrary, the Palestinian revolution became stronger as a result, and the occupation of any new parts of the Arab world will never mean at all that the revolution or the resistance will stop. On the contrary, occupation will encourage resistance and make it bigger and stronger, so that it will continue until victory.»

Abu Amar has kept Al Fatah free of ideological or organizational ties with any political party, and has taken the lead in trying to unite all commando groups.

Al Fatah, by all odds now the largest, most active and fastest-growing commando group, has active forces estimated at about 5,000 men, plus as many in training in Jordan, Syria and Egypt, and a reserve of perhaps 15,000 men in all Arab countries. It cannot accept all volunteers; its resources are insufficient.

Tactics as taught by Al Fatah are in the classic guerrilla tradition. Men are told to avoid costly confrontations. Their main task is to lay mines, to ambush isolated vehicles, and to fire rocket weapons at military objectives from sure cover. Fatah weapons, and generally

those of the commandos, are the best that money can buy. Many Palestinians give 5 per cent of their salaries for this purpose.

In his interview Abu Amar explained why the commandos reject a political solution of the Palestine question.

«We understand that the political solution means surrender », he said, «From our point of view it means the Arab States would have to sign a political document legitimatizing that which the Israelis have taken, and legitimatizing the conditions they have imposed.

«We did not lose the war on June 5. We only lost a battle. It was like the Battle of Dunkirk. The Dunkirk operation didn't cause the British to lose World War Two.»

If he were to win, Abu Amar was asked, what would be his attitude toward the Jews ? «We are not against the Jews», he replied. «On the contrary, we are all Semites and we have been living with each other in peace and fraternity, Muslims, Jews and Christians, for many centuries.

«We welcome with sincerity all the Jews who would like to live with us in sincerity in an Arab state as citizens having equal rights before the law and constitution.

«It is one of the aims of our movement to liberate the Jews themselves from the domination of Zionism, the Zionism that represents neo-Nazism, which is racial and working for the interests of imperialism and monopoly.»



Yasir Arafat, the Palestinian leader, declares that occupation of the Arab world will encourage resistance .

NOTHING TO LOSE BUT THEIR LIFE

The Observer, London, 29 December 1968

JERUSALEM

Gavin Young

SILVER-HAIRED Arab intellectuals, with the gentle demeanour of professors of poetry, advocate more guerrilla bombs. An Israeli writer at a party reddens over a glass of brandy to denounce Arab barbarity, forgetting the bombs his compatriots set off 20 years ago.

Dangerously and pitifully, like a ship adrift, the Middle East plunges towards 1969 in grief and frustration unprecedented since 1948. Wherever they were this Christmas, peace and goodwill were not here.

Astronauts may rocket upwards. Human beings of the 'hot' front between East and West Jordan are becoming armed troglodytes. A week or two ago I talked to Palestinian commando and Jordanian officers among hissing pressure lamps and field telephones in bomb-proof caves overlooking Israeli kibbutzim in the Jordan valley. This week, shirt-sleeved Israeli settlers in the valley showed me massive reinforced bunker dormitories they run to, when the commando rockets start coming in.

In Amman, people wait almost eagerly for Israeli air raids. Here, Israeli housewives hesitate to take their kids to the cinema: could there be a slab of plastic explosive under the seat ?

Behind the gunfire, the international search for peace goes on. So, inexhaustibly, does the universal grasping at straws.

There is to be a Nixon Administration in the United States. Arabs hope for American Republican pressures on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. Israelis wonder what Mr Gromyko was hatching with President Nasser in Cairo last week. Peace, one would guess. War, according to many Israelis, to whom Nasser is a pawn in the hands of mischievous Russians. Mr. Eban, the Israeli Foreign Minister, said this week that Nasser's attitude has become 'more rigid'. There is a width of mistrust in the Middle East that crushes the soul.

The trouble is that time is not with the peace-makers. For

example, the Israeli retention of Jerusalem is a cardinal stumbling block to a peace settlement. No Arab leader could accept it as part of any package deal. Though many Israelis say Jerusalem is not negotiable, it seems just possible that some arrangement might work that would give East and West Jerusalem a dual sovereignty—Arab and Israeli, respectively—with a joint municipality. Liberal Israelis here do not rule this out.

Yet the Israel Government has already absorbed hundreds of acres of Arab East Jerusalem into its frontiers. Plans are being completed to set up Israeli national police headquarters and the Ministry of Justice there. Thus, with time, an already agonising problem has immeasurably increased. In the offices of Teddy Kollek, the Israeli Mayor of Jerusalem, officials are straightforward about it, «We've taken those acres for political reasons,» one official said bluntly. This is how time works against the Arabs.

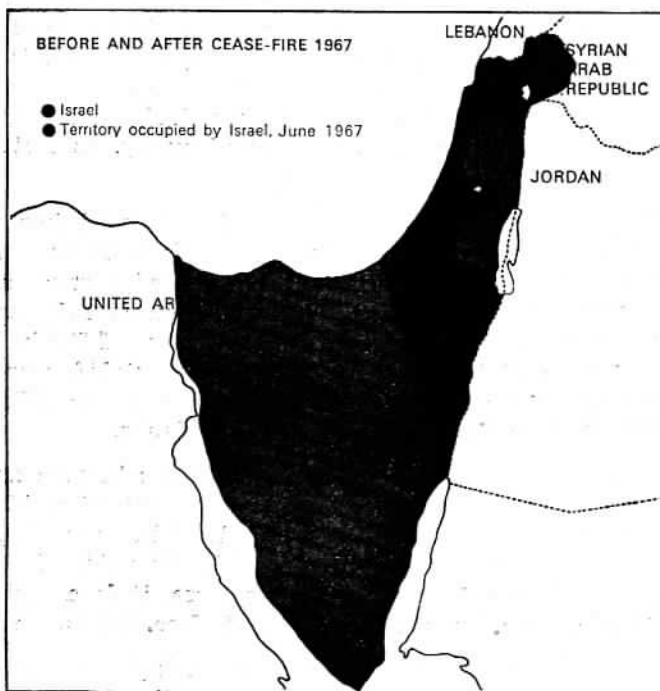
It means something else to Abu Amar, the spokesman and joint leader of the largest Palestinian commando organisation, El Fatah. «In time,» he thinks, «the Israelis in Tel Aviv will come to disapprove of their casualties as the American public thought of theirs in Vietnam. Israel is not just an occupying force, it is a society and wants to live in peace. Israelis have plenty to lose. We have nothing.»

Except their lives. Fedayeen casualties are high. Israelis tend to dismiss the almost daily attacks from across the Jordan as minor irritants. But the guerrilla sorties, the shelling, the potential of El Fatah and the other groups keep Israeli troops and farmers in constant tension and often in action. It has created an undercurrent of doubt and anxiety—not crucial as yet, but distinctly unsettling.

Reservists are unenthusiastic about serving longer periods each year. People in the exposed Kibbutzim, though patriotically determined, tell me they are worrying about the effect of shelter life on their children.

The tougher the Israeli security forces are obliged to be in the occupied territories, the greater Palestinian sympathy for the Fedayeen becomes. It is easy to overestimate the Fedayeen. Their own leaders are quite modest. «This is only the beginning,» they say. Where, Israeli civil servants and their wives are starting to demand, does it end ?

Who can tell ? For years the Palestinians have felt themselves treated as tiresome children by the Arab Governments. Today they see their chance. They know they have already become a very potent political factor. King Hussein, even Nasser, must pay very careful attention to their views. The realistic Israelis would like to talk to them. But they cannot.



The Palestinians now see their dream of autonomy within their grasp. The West Bank will probably not satisfy them forever, though it would by something to be getting on with. But nothing can happen before an Israeli withdrawal. That is why King Hussein, unable to neutralise the Fedayeen short of a bloody civil war, was quick to deny last week that he was considering a new status for the West Bank before a peace settlement.

On the other hand, Israeli hopes of wooing the West Bank into their orbit and away from Hussein seem quite unrealistic. That this might happen is the West Bankers' nightmare. The senior Israeli who told me he thought many Palestinians preferred Israeli occupation to King Hussein evidently doesn't know his Palestinians.

The Arab who argues that the Egyptian and Jordanian Armies can win back lost lands in the next few months is clearly equally misled. By now, most Arab ears are glued to radios, eager to pick up news of the latest Fedayeen exploit. It is becoming a job to know from the radio exactly what each incident amounts to. The Arabs play them up, the Israelis play them down.

Politicians are just as hard to fathom. Things this week do not seem much more hopeful as a result of Mr Eban's exhortation to King Hussein to show in his attitude to peace talks that sovereignty in Jordan does not reside in Cairo. It looks as if Eban expects Hussein to make a separate deal with him.

Yet King Hussein is quite obviously sitting on a political mine-field at home. Even Nasser, anxious above all to recover Sinai, is beset by impatient students and others as he pursues a peace in which fewer and fewer Arabs believe. Both leaders are in a box together.

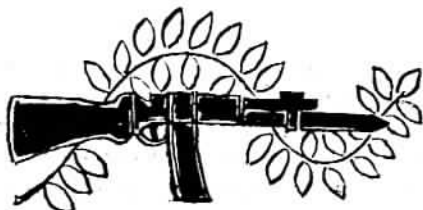
Egypt today is like a man suffering from deep neurosis. There is desire for peace to regain lost land, but little confidence in it. There is also a desire for war to remove the humiliation of Israeli occupation, but no practical means of waging it.

Nasser's position is stronger than Hussein's. His prestige, though diminished, is still great. Jordan is small. Every flicker of political tension is as immediately apparent as nerves on the face of a thin man. Egypt is sprawling, seemingly lethargic, like one of those enormous Egyptians who occasionally swim the English Channel. But the neurosis is there none the less. In both countries it drastically restricts the options open to the leadership.

Perhaps something of value has been gained since the June war. The Israelis have learned a little about Arab psychology, as the Germans learnt something of British psychology after Dunkirk. The Arabs, in trauma, have also acquired a new realism. They are learning, one sees, to understand their own passions.

This last week of 1968 is a bitter time. The casualties mount ; tanks, guns and aircraft batter each other on the front line. Diplomats debate whether Hussein can last or not. Israeli security police search the boots of Arab cars and the handbag of the Israeli bank manager's wife at the entrance to the Jerusalem cinema.

The Middle East needs leaders who combine acute political expertise with vision. It is easier to say that than to find them.



MARCHING TO THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

The Times, London, 15 January 1969

AMMAN

Geoffrey Sumner

At the end of the dirt track leading to the guerrilla training camp stood the sentry, warily raising his loaded sub-machine gun. The sight is commonplace in Jordan these days as the Palestinian guerrilla organizations continue to gather momentum, except that this sentry was little more than 4ft. tall. He was only 12, a member of Al Ashbal—the cadet organization of the guerrilla movement Al Fatah.

When Arab guerrilla leaders philosophize, as they do increasingly, about waging a 100 years' war against Israel, they think primarily of these children, who stretch stiffly to attention at the end of their training sessions as they chant the credo of Al Fatah: « I have shattered the manacles limiting my freedom and I have arisen like a hurricane to break out of my prison and free my country.»

There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of *ashbal* (lion cubs) in Jordan today. Every refugee camp has its patch of ground which serves as drill square, gymnasium, political instruction centre, and rifle range for boys aged six to 14.

After their daily lessons in the refugee camp schools, the *ashbal* run to parade in double ranks, the tallest on the right, the shortest on the left. For several minutes their instructors drill them. The movements are simple but, like everything else about *Al Ashbal*, highly political. When they are ordered to stand at ease, they shout «Asifa», or hurricane, the name of Al Fatah's guerrilla wing. When they stamp to attention, they roar « Fatah », composed of the initials of the Arabic for Palestine Liberation Movement—reversed because in their correct order the initials spell «death», but backwards they produce «triumph».

Al Ashbal has no uniform except the cast-off ragbag clothing supplied through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. But here and there a boy proudly wears the black and white chequered headcloth adopted by many Al Fatah fighters, or more prestigiously a camouflaged Castro cap given by a brother or cousin already in the fedayeen movement.

Al-Ashbal
training



The first task of the *ashbal* when building a camp is to dig a slit trench for mock battles in which they play at storming an Israel outpost. A major component of popular culture in the Arab world these days is the highly stylized and coloured account, published almost daily in the newspapers, of how this or that commando section overran an Israel position «killing all the Zionists inside with blades», or «repulsing gigantic reinforcements including helicopter gunships».

Acting out this legend is the favourite sport of the *ashbal*. While one group plays at being Israelis, squatting impatiently in the trench, a dozen others leopard-crawl over the sandy earth in three groups, two holding unloaded submachine guns and rifles, the third clutching stones to represent grenades. When the attackers are within a few feet, the grenade carriers toss their stones into the trench. An adult instructor fires live rounds from his Chinese-made pistol to simulate the fighting as the *ashbal* leap into the pit, shrieking: «*We are from Fatah ! We have come to kill you all !*»

In their camps, the boys nail up cardboard from ration boxes with slogans childishly scrawled in coloured crayon. One says: «Our revolution is a drop of blood, a drop of sweat, and a drop of ink.» Al Ashbal accepts only boys who unfailingly attend school.

They are taught to dismantle, clean, and reassemble rifles, pistols, and machine guns. They are taken to the hills to fire live ammunition—at first aimlessly, for the pleasure of firing, then at targets. They learn how to fire a Decteriov light machine gun at aircraft; in pairs, with one kneeling boy supporting the gun's bipod with the barrel only 6in. or 7in. above his head as the live rounds crack out, or singly, lying on the back with legs up in the air, feet braced against the bipod.

At weekends the older *ashbal* go on 10-mile route marches. As they march off they shout: «*To Palestine, to Palestine !*»

The *ashbal* show none of the listlessness so often seen in the children of the refugee camps. The Palestinian grudge, nursed by the parents with inward rage, has become for the new generations a spur to work.

The instructors are either former schoolteachers or wounded guerrillas. Sometimes Al Fatah men returning from missions visit the *ashbal* to render poetically phrased accounts of their experiences.

In addition, the *ashbal* receive political instruction. «We tell them that the days when the Palestinians sat in their refugee camps with their spirit broken have gone», said one instructor. «We teach them that the Palestinian people are a great people and that they have the strength, in the end, after many battles, to win back the land.

«The little ones must understand who we are struggling against—that we are not fighting the Jews but Zionism, which is a political imperialist movement. We teach them that behind Israel is American imperialism. We teach them that we are not struggling for the love of struggling, but for the love of the land.

«Our greatest mistake is that we waited 20 years before starting these camps.»

A boy aged 12 stepped from the ranks. Standing to attention in muddy Wellington boots, with thumbs down the frayed seams of his trousers, he said his code name was Shaa Boob, which means roughly «the one who turns peoples hair grey with fright.» In 1948 his parents left their home in the Beisan Valley, now in north Israel. The boy lived with his family in the refugee town of Karameh, on the east bank of the River Jordan, until last March, when an Israel division crossed the river and all but flattened the town, which had been a major guerrilla base.

«When we saw the tanks coming we ran and hid in a cave,» said Shaa Boob. «The Israelis came and shot at our cave. One bullet hit my little sister in the throat. From that day I have been with Al Fatah.

«I am ready to fight now. But my officers say I must wait until I am 18. By then Al Fatah's revolution will be enormous. I shall be just in time to fight in the last great battles.»

The boy scrupulously avoided speaking of the Jewish people, referring only to the Zionists and the Israelis. The only point at which he talked of the Jews was when he said, without prompting. «We are fighting for an Arab government in Palestine, but the Jews can stay and live with us and have men in our government. We are fighting not only to liberate the Arabs of Palestine from Zionism but also to rid the Jews of the tyranny of Zionism.»

Like most *ashbal*, he has never seen his family's home. How did he imagine it ? «It is something like this country, but better», he said. «People have told me it is a land flowing with milk and honey.»

On a Raid With Al Fatah

Life Magazine, 20 January, 1969

As 1968 ended, the Arab-Israeli conflict was again dangerously heating up, and spreading beyond the Middle East. Arab gunmen attacked an El Al jet in Athens, and the Israeli reprisal at Beirut Airport again brought the crisis into the U.N.

Behind this menacing chess game of attack and reprisal was a new commando movement in the Arab world. Palestinian refugees, who were long the political pawns of the Middle East, have launched a virtually independent guerrilla war with considerable support from neighboring lands and abroad. LIFE'S Beirut Bureau Chief Bill Wise and Photographer Terence Spencer accompanied men of Al Fatah, the largest commando group, on two raids into Israel.

ESH SHUNA, JORDAN

Bill Wise

We knelt together in the darkness. Walid, a slender 19-year-old Palestinian clenched a handful of dirt in his fist. His other hand held a Russian Kalashnikov automatic rifle. «This is our land,» he whispered fiercely. «The Jews took it from us. Now we are going to take it back.»

Photographer Terry Spencer and I had just crossed the shallow Jordan River with Walid and nine other Al Fatah commandos. We crouched tensely 200 yards inside Israel. Smoke from a still smoldering Israeli tank, knocked out the night before by another Al Fatah operation, momentarily obscured the lights of a kibbutz.

Ours was only one of a half-dozen missions being carried out by Al Fatah commandos that night. A few hours ago we had shared a meager meal and a last-minute briefing with our hosts. After a short trip in a Land Rover, most of it without lights, we started walking so briskly that my knees were wobbling before we had covered the three miles to the Jordan River.

A commando gave me vital last-minute instructions which did

nothing to reassure me. «If we are ambushed crossing the river,» he whispered, «swim to the right. If you are hit, don't cry out or we are all finished. Try to get to the fighter nearest you and we will try to get you back. If you get separated and have to come back alone you may run into one of our missions or a Jordanian army patrol. If that happens shout the word 'saheb'. It means friend.»

I was still trying to get the pronunciation of *saheb* right when we reached the Jordan River. The opposite bank looked as if it had enough dark nooks and crannies to hide the entire Israeli army and a glance at my shadow and at the men next to me brought home just how visible we must be to anyone watching from one of those shadows 20 yards away across the water. At any moment I expected to hear the sudden stammer of an Uzi submachine gun that would mean disaster.

I thought of the total dedication and the courage of the men around me. A few days earlier Abu Mahmoud, a 40-year-old Palestinian carpenter, had been preparing to leave his wife, two small children, an aging mother and the single cramped room in Amman they called home. I had asked him why he was going to an Al Fatah training camp.

«It has been our dream to liberate our country and we have been waiting a long time to do it,» he said. «Al Fatah has opened the door of liberation and I must walk through it even if I die in the process.»

I had visited a woman in a wretched tent in Baqaa refugee camp. When told her son had been killed on an Al Fatah operation she looked grim but said, «I am honored that my son has died fighting with Al Fatah for our land.» One of her two remaining sons is now in an Al Fatah training camp with her blessing.

Our little group crossed the river safely and moved quickly on, dashing forward, then pausing briefly to listen before moving again. Every bush seemed somehow ominous and threatening. There is always a chance the Israeli has planted a new minefield no one knew about.

I remembered the three young men, each with a leg amputated below the knee, whom I had visited in a hospital in Salt. One of them, an 18-year-old named Pices, told me how he and his two companions had walked into an Israeli minefield, lain wounded for six hours waiting to ambush any Israelis who might have come to get their bodies and finally been found by others in their group and carried 15 kilometers to safety. Pices said he wanted to rejoin his unit as soon as he could get an artificial leg, but an Al Fatah leader told me he would be given a non-combat assignment.

Ours was a probing patrol, seeking to reconnoiter a safe route

past Israeli border defenses for future raids and for the endless supply and infiltration runs that support Al Fatah underground units based inside Israeli-held territory. The pace was lung-searing.

I remember the middle-aged, English-educated cardiologist, one of the leaders of the Ashbal Fatah youth movement, watching some of his young pre-guerillas descend a cliff by rope after an hour of calisthenics and a brisk five-mile hike. « We Palestinians have been a very soft people in the past,» he said, «but we have finally learned. We will never be soft again.»

In less than three hours we were back in Jordan, climbing, wet and exhausted, up the hill to where the Land Rover was hidden, mission accomplished. Others had been less fortunate. As we drove through a nearby village an ambulance blocked the narrow street. Members of another returning Al Fatah mission carried the bullet-riddled corpse of a comrade out of the darkness and loaded it into the ambulance.

«You see,» someone said, «he was hit from the front. He died going toward the enemy, not running away.» The fact seemed terribly important to them.

Al Fatah has restored pride, dignity and a sense of identity to the homeless Palestinians. «We are still fighting from a magic carpet,» said Abu Samra, a college-educated guerilla leader who quotes in rapid-fire order Churchill, Castro, French philosophers and Mao Tse-tung. «But now on the west bank of the Jordan we have a population in which we can swim like fish.»

On another evening Terry and I watched from a hilltop as a specialized Al Fatah rocket unit set up portable launchers; in the space of two minutes they sent eight 130-mm Soviet-designed rockets crashing into an Israeli army camp six kilometers away. Flames billowed from the target and there was a heavy secondary explosion. Then the lights went out and minutes later Israeli artillery opened up perhaps out of sheer frustration, against Jordanian army positions across the river.

An hour and a half later that unit was back in Jordan and the leader of the operation, 39-year-old Mohammed Jamal, was chanting a verse from an Al Fatah song happily to himself.

We have sworn;

We have moved.

All the world cannot stop us.

FATEH TAKES OVER PALESTINIAN CAUSE

The Daily Star , 6 February 1969

AMMAN

They have changed the guard at the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Fateh has taken over from the Palestine Liberation Army.

The change is not obvious at first glance. The uniforms are similar — camouflage fatigues, forage cap, rubber-soled boots. Only the badges differ. But in political terms it is deeply significant. It means, in effect, that Palestine a nation without a country, has had its first «change of government.»

The new «military regime» emerged from a four-day meeting in Cairo of the new Palestinian National Council, representing the 2,500,000 Palestinians living in exile or under Israeli occupation. It was a quiet takeover and democratic in that it reflected the near-unanimous wish of the Palestinian people and had the support of the majority of the Arab people.

President Nasser endowed the council with the seal of official recognition by attending and speaking at the opening session, pledging Egypt's unconditional aid and support to the Palestinian armed struggle for liberation. In so doing the Egyptian president regained much of the ground lost as a result of the Israeli armed victory of the Arab world... with a proviso, however.

«Before the six-day war, an Arab leader granted support to Palestinians by virtue of his personal position of power,» a Palestinian writer said. «Today his personal position of power depends, in a large measure, on his attitude and the support he grants the Palestine cause.»

For Palestinians, Fateh's takeover of their representative body means that their affairs — for the moment this means armed struggle — are in the hands of a younger, more dynamic, more militant and efficient group. Yasser Arafat, the active Fateh leader and official spokesman, who came out of anonymity last year, from the mists and battle dust of the Jordan Valley, has replaced the shrewd but

sedentary Jerusalem lawyer, Yehia Hamoudeh, as secretary-general of the PLO.

In the council, Fateh with 33 seats has the largest representation of the four fighting groups. The other three are the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) (six seats), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) (12 seats) and As Saiqah (Thunderbolt) (12 seats). Fateh also has strong support among the council's 37 independents. The new executive committee elected in Cairo is predominantly Fateh. It is chaired by Yasser Arafat, who is also in charge of military affairs. Four of its independent members are pro-Fateh.

Palestinians are pleased with the results of the Cairo meeting, despite the act that two of the commando groups (PLA and PFLP) refused to attend, following a dispute over apportionment of seats. A conciliatory committee was set up, however, and this problem will, it is expected, be settled in the coming days.

The most important aspect, Palestinians say, is that for the first time since their country was taken from them they have an organization they can really call their own. The PLO is now completely independent of all Arab governments. «Our ship is at last sailing under its own steam, manned by its own crew,» one of their leaders remarked.

For the area in general, Fateh supremacy means intensified, extended commando warfare unless a political solution is reached which satisfies the Palestinians. In his first statement after his election as secretary-general of the PLO, Yasser Arafat told the press that commando operations would be intensified «and cover the whole of occupied Palestine. Our struggle will develop into a popular war of liberation,» he said. He reaffirmed Palestinian rejection of a political solution and appealed to the «progressive forces» to support the Palestinian people.

One of the first tasks of the refurbished PLO will be to set up a unified Palestinian military command known as the «Fedayeen Forces Command.»

Explaining Palestinian rejection of the 1967 United Nations resolution and increasingly militant attitude, a member of the council said that it was not out of «sheer bloody mindedness as many of our critics would have world believe. It is simply that we Palestinians cannot agree to a settlement based on the elimination of our country.»

«Frankly,» he added, «we have come to consider the U.N. as a kind a circus where so called representatives of countries perform acts and make speeches for the entertainment of the world audience.»

«How can anyone expect us to respect an organization that adopts decisions and resolutions that violate its own charter?» he asked. The

1947 U.N. Partition Plan for Palestine violated the U.N. Charter, peoples' right to self-determination and the principles of international law which the U.N. claims to uphold. «We rejected the Partition Plan, just as you or any self-respecting Englishman would reject a resolution to partition the British Isles. »

The 1967 resolution was a confirmation of that plan, he said, and worse, an attempt to legitimize further Israeli conquest and annexations of Palestinian land in 1949, 1956 and 1967.

«We reject the proposed political solutions based on the November resolution because it liquidates our case. To accept it would amount to national suicide. This does not mean, however», he added, «that we have decided to use violence from choice. We are fighting because nobody has listened to our voice or taken our case seriously.»

He and other Palestinians consider that a political solution of the Palestine problem, as distinct from the Arab-Israeli conflict, could be reached if the Israeli would come to terms with the Palestinians.

They say that the Israeli people must learn to differentiate between their short-term interests represented by the actual distribution of power in occupied Palestine and long-term interests that reflect the real potential of the country. It is essential, they say, for the people of Israel to come to an understanding with the Palestinian people.

As the Palestinians see it, the interest of the Jews lies more in the Jews of Israel being a part of the population of Palestine than of a State occupying part of Palestine.

«The situation in the whole area would change,» one of their policy makers said, «from the moment the Jews accepted the principle of living in understanding with the Palestinians, when they realized that their interests are identical with those of the Palestinians in Palestine and by extension with the rest of the Arab World.»



*Al-Fateh
training*

The alternative, he added, was that the Jews would continue to insist on having their ghetto in the area in which they live isolated, cut off from the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world, as «enemy intruders». He pointed out that since the Zionist State was created, the most it had achieved was «bare survival in a beleaguered fortress.»

«If the Jews chose to live with the Palestinians in Palestine, they automatically would have guaranteed security and equal rights with the inhabitants of the area, as they did before the West started interfering and Balkanizing the Middle East,» he said. «Now the question is whether the world wants to leave this problem festering until all Arabs become 'Zionists', having a dual loyalty to their own countries and Palestine and identifying themselves with the Palestinians.»

These were the factors the Big Powers should take into consideration in discussing the Middle East problem and before attempting to impose a solution.

A Fateh leader warned that so long as Israel and the world insisted on keeping in one of the countries of the area a small, artificial state based on religion and racialism, the problem would plague the Middle East and threaten world peace.

«So long as this situation, which is contrary to nature, is artificially and forcefully maintained,» he said, «the Palestinians in exile or living under Zionist occupation will have to continue to fight.»

He doubts that a solution can come from the U.N. or super Power's decisions, «After all, they created the crisis and are the cause of the chaotic situation here.»

«I believe,» he said, «that a settlement will be reached when the people of Israel have the courage, as the Palestinians have, to stand up and tell their leaders and the world they want to live, not as Zionists, Westerners or «supermen» in an enclave, but as human beings in a land that is part of the area.»



What
THE OBSERVER
thinks

**PALESTINE : STRENGTH
OF THE GUERRILLAS**

The Observer , 16 February 1969

The quiet exploration now going on between the Ambassadors of the United States, Russia, Britain and France at the United Nations for a joint initiative to be undertaken by the Big Four in the Middle East offers the best chance so far of achieving a *détente* between the Arabs and Israelis. The delay in getting this mounted has already greatly added to the danger that, by the time the Governments of the Middle East are ready to agree on the terms of a political settlement, the political initiative may have passed into the hands of the Palestinian guerrillas.

A year ago the guerrillas were of little political significance; but already they can scarcely be ignored—and soon they may be strong enough to dictate their terms to Cairo and Amman. Their strength lies in making themselves the effective spokesmen for the Palestinian Arabs—something they have not been able to achieve despite all their efforts since 1948.

Since the search for a settlement is essentially concerned with the future of the Palestinian Arabs as much as with Israel's future, it would be a mistake to suppose that any binding settlement is possible without their consent.

Planes Against Guerrillas

Herald Tribune , March 24, 1969

JERUSALEM

James Feron

When Israeli jets bombed and strafed three Arab commando bases in Jordan last week — one of them only seven miles from Amman, the capital — a new variation of postwar Israeli policy was unveiled.

It was not the first time that Israeli jets had struck commando bases, but it was the first time that no effort was made to justify the attack as a response to increasing border activity, infiltration, sabotage or terrorism.

A defense official was asked if Israel had adopted a policy of initiating military actions. He declined to label it but said, in any case, that it was not really new. He cited the attack against Karameh a year ago as containing the same concept with different techniques.

Costly Raid

It was on March 21, 1968, that an armored column crossed the Allenby Bridge over the Jordan River cease-fire line and attacked Karameh, then the largest Arab guerrilla training base in Jordan. It was a costly operation for the Israelis and it provided the Arab commandos with a degree of prestige that they had not been able to achieve on their own. And so the Israelis looked for new techniques.

They fortified their side of the river with sophisticated gear, intensified their patrols and the use of ambushes—and began to use air power against the guerrillas. Commando training bases came under jet and rocket fire. In recent months the Israelis have refined this technique, calling in aircraft the way they call in artillery to respond to relatively insignificant border clashes.

These brief raids, which usually last only ten or fifteen minutes, are not reported by the Israelis, nor are they confirmed or denied when newsmen learn of them. This unusual modesty is believed to have been encouraged by Western diplomats who believe the less said the better if a more peaceful climate is to be found for the region.

An Israeli Army official said this about the air power technique: «This is obviously not something which can eliminate terrorism. We have no doubt about that. But we feel that it is one measure which contributes toward disrupting the Arab terrorist organizations, their communications, their opportunities for planning and training, and even for storing material. We want to keep them on the run and to reach the conclusion that they are not safe from us anywhere,» he said.

Offensive Techniques

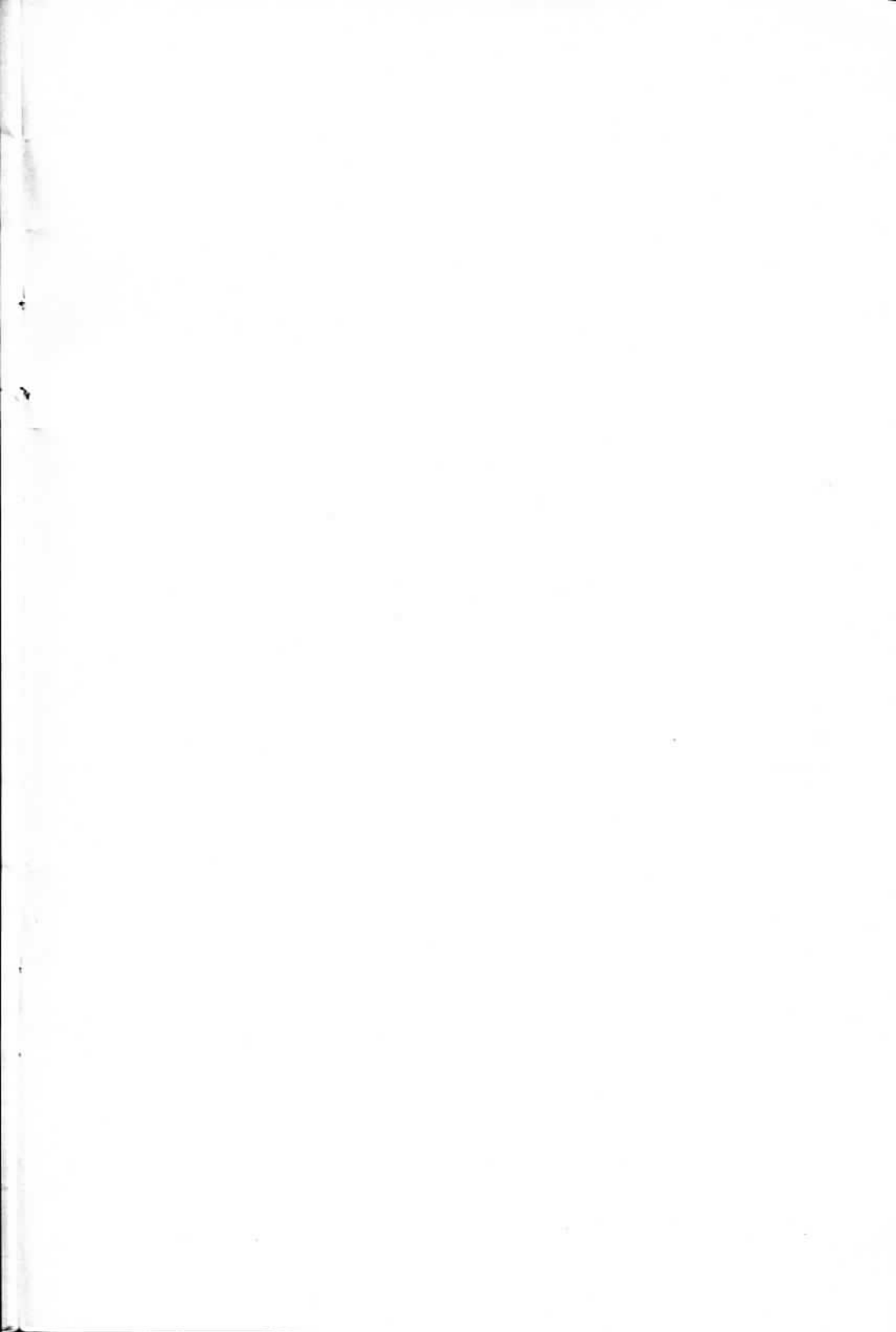
The Chief of Staff, Chaim Bar Lev, put the new strategy in perspective a few weeks ago at a luncheon with foreign newsmen in Tel Aviv. He said, in effect, that Israel had tried most of the defensive techniques — increased security both along the borders and internally — and was now moving over to offensive techniques.

The use of Israeli air power against Arab guerrillas attracts comparison with the use of American air power against Viet Cong guerrillas in Vietnam. There it was found to be of only limited usefulness. The number of guerrillas involved here, however, is only a fraction of the number in Vietnam. Bases here are more easily identified and attacked. The largely desolate terrain of the Middle East similarly offers jet pilots more visibility for ground attacks than is the case in Vietnam.

The Risks

There is a realization by some here, however, that the immediate gains of the air strikes, and especially the ease with which Israeli jets can strike into the Arab heartland, carry long-term risks. One is that the raids eat away at the established governments, whose inability to stop the attacks or hit back is dramatically exposed. Another is the corresponding increase in prestige for the commandos, who as a result of the attacks are viewed as Israel's most dangerous enemy. A third is the strengthening of Arab resolve to even the score some day, somehow.

Israeli leaders say they accept these risks, most of which have existed for many years. General Bar Lev said each of Israel's three wars had improved the nation's security position but none had solved it. The same, it would seem, applies to the day-to-day struggle.



«There is no doubt that al-Fatah, by actually doing something where others have merely talked, has got off to a good start on the Palestinian front, giving the Palestinians a will of their own which they have not enjoyed since Israel was created.»

David Hirst
May 3, 1968

«Reservists are unenthusiastic about serving longer periods each year. People in the exposed Kibbutzim, though patriotically determined, tell me they are worrying about the effect of shelter life on their children.»

Gavin Young
December 29, 1968

«Since the search for a settlement is essentially concerned with the future of the Palestinian Arabs as much as with Israel's future, it would be a mistake to suppose that any binding settlement is possible without their consent.»

The Observer
February 16, 1969

In their camps, Al-Ashbal nail up cardboard from ration boxes with slogans childishly scrawled in coloured crayon. One says: «Our revolution is a drop of blood, a drop of sweat, and a drop of ink.»

Geoffrey Sumner
January 15, 1969

«Al Fatah has restored pride, dignity and a sense of identity to the homeless Palestinians.»

Bill Wise
January 20, 1969