Arafat

From Defender to Dictator

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In memory of David

Something is happening to him, he talks to himself.
—Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*

Arafat through Arab Eyes

Most Western biographers of Yasser Arafat admit a measure of failure in the titles of their books. As in hundreds of other works which deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict and related Middle East problems, and thousands of articles by news correspondents and academics, they resort to words such as 'mystery', 'myth' and 'hard to explain'. This is also true of the single Israeli and Arab attempts to record his life and achievements.[A-1] There is an implicit wish to excuse the incomplete nature of their efforts, often combined with the suggestion that they have solved a difficult riddle. Nor is this unclear picture helped by Arafat himself. He has cooperated with several biographers, particularly the British writer Alan Hart and the Egyptian author Rasheda Mahran, but he has told them contradictory stories and has steadfastly refused to write his own life story.

That Arafat's life is still wrapped in mystery is very odd indeed. He has been in the limelight for the better part of four decades and he is neither unavailable nor shy. In addition to cooperating with biographers, he has probably given more

interviews than any other politician alive. Yet, to this day, there is no consensus about his place of birth and who his mother was.[A-2] Major political issues such as his possible involvement in terrorism and what drove him to sign the much-criticized Oslo Peace Accord are subjects which Arafat admits, denies or interprets selectively, and are therefore infinitely more difficult to track.

There are many reasons why this picture needs to be clarified. Arafat is one of the leading public figures of the twentieth century. His actions have influenced the lives of millions of people, and the need to decrypt him, to set the confused historical record straight and understand the complex relationships which have produced today's Middle East is overwhelming. Moreover, the man is still very much with us, not only in his unique looks, attire and behaviour, but as a partner in a faltering peace process which threatens to disintegrate, with far-reaching consequences for Palestinians and Israelis, the Arab and Muslim countries and indeed the rest of the world. Knowing the real Arafat allows us to fathom the past. More importantly, we need to understand the man and his actions in order to prepare for an uncertain future.

Re-examining Arafat's life is timely. Judged by how the West now views him, he has undergone one of the fastest transformations of any public figure in recorded history. In a mere four years he has moved from rejected 'terrorist' to Nobel Peace Prize winner and respected international statesman. In the process the new Arafat, the world's only President of a difficult-to-define Authority rather than a country, has been forced to assume a new persona more in keeping with this transformed image.

Genuine or not, today's Arafat is probably an extension of what has always existed; even politicians find it hard to reinvent themselves after the age of sixty. For a biographer, the assumption of this new personality and the critical survival issues that Arafat faces offer an opportunity. It allows us to judge him without the veil of secrecy forced on him when he was not accepted, and it enables us to see him from different and more revealing angles at a critical time. This makes it possible to determine whether his man-of-peace mantle was always there and what kind of real person will emerge in the future. Some of the questions whose answers eluded previous biographers—whether he would maintain his dictatorial inclinations, for instance, and whether he knew of the corruption of his aides—are now disturbingly out in the open, and the tests and challenges presented both by the Israelis and by Arafat's own people are likely to reveal other important facets of his private and public character.

Moreover—and especially because of the direct involvement of the Palestinians in determining Arafat's future—there are compelling reasons for a fellow Palestinian to write his biography. Having read the works of most, if not all, of his Western biographers and found them lacking, I am convinced that the bafflement which most of them admit and the mistakes which many of them have made are the results of two things: a cultural divide which foreign writers cannot bridge, and occasionally a lack of understanding of today's Middle East and its politics. Even his Arab biographer, Dr Rasheda Mahran, was an admirer with whom Arafat was said to be romantically involved, and the Israeli Dany Rubenstein, though independent and totally honourable, understandably sees major elements of

Arafat's life through the perspective of his own country. The assertion that no satisfactory biography of the man exists is justified.

Nor are biographers with extensive first-hand knowledge of the Middle East – news correspondents and other specialists in Arab and Palestinian affairs—able to surmount the huge barriers which stand in the way of understanding Arafat's character: culture, propaganda, secrecy and lack of knowledge. Even after years of involvement in the Arab world, most of them only appreciate Arab culture in broad terms, lack the necessary regional knowledge, never get to meet the ordinary man in the street and go out of their way to popularize or glamorize Arafat. This is not to speak of journalists whose judgement is coloured by the need to continue to work with him. In the process vital ingredients of the story, such as his relationships with Nasser, the Mufti of Palestine and the former Iraqi leader Abdel Karim Kassem, and their claims to Palestinian leadership and Arafat's loyalty, are either ignored or demoted. And, although Arafat has often been accused of corruption, no biographer has attempted to explain its nature. The man himself is clean—his punishing work schedule gives him no opportunity for personal indulgences—but he follows the time-honoured methods of an Arab tribal chief, which includes buying others. This use of sanctioned corruption should be distinguished from personal corruption.

To begin with, Arafat's home life and upbringing make him a complex subject. On top of that he is fundamentally Arab and Palestinian; despite the occasional use of what he considers idiomatic English phrases he is an unworldly man with a stronger traditional Islamic outlook than most people realize, and he is a born master of double talk. Foreigners, most of whom depend on local people to interpret Arab ways for them, seldom encounter this type. To appreciate his personal complexes requires knowledge of the Palestinian social structure; to know him is to go back in time, perhaps to another century; and to understand him is to fathom the native bazaar mentality which made him. Even assessing the importance of the effect of his Egyptian accent on his Palestinian constituency and his relations with other Arab countries demands a considerable understanding of inter-Arab prejudices and politics. Among all the Arab leaders of modern times he stands as the most contradictory, a living merger of seventeenth-century Arab thinking and today's street wisdom coupled with an amazing natural ability to handle the most demanding television interview and the Western attitude behind it.

I know both sides of Arafat. I grew up near Jerusalem in the biblical village of Bethany, the grandson of a renowned Muslim judge and a village headman. Both my grandfathers dealt with issues which, in microcosm, resemble what Arafat has had to face and with which he continues to grapple. Like him, both men were practitioners of the art of the possible, natural improvisers with enquiring minds who never tired of inventing solutions and 'legalizing' them by creating a necessary consensus acceptable to others. My father was a correspondent for the *New York Times*, the *Daily Mail, Newsweek* and *Time*, an expert in reporting the Middle East—including the sudden emergence of Arafat in the 1960s—to the outside world. I myself have devoted most of my life to explaining the Arabs to the West and vice versa. Personally and by osmosis, Arafat's journey through life—at the time of writing he is sixty-nine and I am sixty-two—has been my journey. I do

know where the man came from, what made him, where he fits in the Arab scheme of things and why he deserves praise, sympathy and condemnation. Modesty aside, I am qualified to judge him.

Against such a background, I had to decide whether to write this biography with or without Arafat's assistance. I opted for the latter after meeting him and receiving his offer of help. My knowledge of the man excluded cooperating with him in person unless I was ready either to assume unnecessary risks or to accept constraints on the resulting work. Biographies by writers who have depended on Arafat and his loyalists for help and accepted their version of events tend to be more misleading and lacking than most. Even biographers disinclined to accept the Arafat version of events have wasted too much time in debunking what he said.

When interviewing him, as a Palestinian writer I would have been under pressure to reveal more of my purpose and direction than an outsider, and I would have been subjected to attempts to recruit me as part of 'the cause'. This would have offered two unpalatable choices. Either I would succumb to his charm and demands on my Palestinianness, or I would betray him through refusing his call on my identity and 'responsibility' or pretending to accept this call and then lying to him. For example, despite evidence to the contrary, Arafat still insists that he was born in Jerusalem. Accepting his version of the story, to him the duty of all loyal Palestinians, would have cancelled my independence and vitiated my purpose. Rejecting his account of history, either openly or after feigning the opposite, would—according to his logic—have represented a betrayal worthy of punishment. It would have made writing this biography far more dangerous.

Honesty demands an admission that other factors contributed to my decision to maintain my independence. Whatever the shortcomings of previous biographies, a number of them do raise the appropriate questions about their subject, and many contain a considerable amount of basic information which, intentionally or otherwise, expose what is needed to complete the picture. This is not to speak of the sudden availability of hundreds of people who have known him and spoken to him in informal circumstances which are more telling than structured interviews. Lastly, for the first time many of his old friends and associates are beginning to speak, both in his defence and against him. On and off the record and on a non-attribution basis I have spoken to dozens of them: members of his cabinet, Arabs, Israelis, outsiders, writers, journalists, diplomats, CIA agents, shop owners, police officers and members of the Palestinian Legislative Council.

Fundamentally, it is in the criteria by which the man should be judged that I separate myself from other biographers, friendly or critical. My Arab–Palestinian perspective of his personal background is but one element in what is essentially a political biography which is concerned with personal details only in relation to their influence on Arafat as leader of the Palestinians. I differ from other biographers by identifying his strategic decisions and their importance, implications and results; the considerable amount of new evidence which I have uncovered has enabled me to do so. This revealing information demystifies him, and my personal judgement of the man provides an assessment of what his leadership has produced for the Palestinian people, unarguably the essence of his life story. Only a loyal Palestinian is capable of making such a judgement.

Chapter 1

The Making of a Palestinian.

The facts of Yasser Arafat's birth, shrouded in mystery and confused by contradiction for over four decades, are now established beyond doubt. Mohammed Abdel Rahman Abdel Raouf Arafat Al Qudua Al Husseini, to give Arafat his full original name, was born in Cairo of Palestinian parentage on 24 August 1929. Mohammed Abdel Rahman was his first name; Abdel Raouf his father's name; Arafat his grandfather's; Al Qudua is the name of his family; and Al Husseini is the name of the clan to which the Al Quduas belonged. The sequence of names has nothing mysterious in it; at this time it was still the accepted pattern.

The confusion surrounding the structure of his name, its change to Yasser Arafat and indeed much of what happened in his early years has greatly engaged biographers and chroniclers. The importance of these details has been misunderstood, deliberately inflated and dramatized to mystify and on occasions glamorize his early life. In fact the Mohammed Abdel Rahman element—the combining of Mohammed and another name—though not unusual throughout the Middle East, was more common in Egypt among religious families and remains so to this day. The Mohammed part is often dropped, as in the cases of Mohammed Anwar Sadat and Mohammed Husni Mubarak, and what is more interesting was Arafat's decision not to use Abdel Rahman either. The dropping of an old clan name (Al Husseini in this case) or an old family name, and exclusive reliance on a more recent innovation (I myself never used the clan name Hammad and stop at Aburish, a name adopted by my grandfather in 1912), is an unsurprising general practice. What is significant is Arafat's adoption of the name Yasser, about which more later.

Arafat himself has further muddied the waters. His reluctance to explain certain things to biographers is an example of the perverse gamesmanship common to political leaders who did not assume power through an open political process. In contrast, the reasons for the mystery surrounding his place of birth are straightforward and understandable. Early in his career, when the young Arafat sought to establish his Palestinian credentials and promote his eventual claim to leadership, he could not afford to admit any facts which might reduce his Palestinian identity. Indeed, that is why he dramatized it by describing himself as 'the son of Jerusalem'. While it is impossible to assess the importance of this decision after so many years and so many changes in the political picture of the Middle East, it was probably a wise move. Admitting his Egyptian birth, and that his father was half Egyptian, could have affected his chances of success, particularly during periods when the Palestinians were inclined to separate themselves from the rest of the Arabs, whose efforts on their behalf had disappointed them. In the 1950s and 1960s, before he rose to prominence and

became subject to scrutiny, Arafat insistently perpetuated the legend that he had been born in Jerusalem and was related to the important Husseini clan of that city, the leading political family in Palestine and claimants to a lineage that stretched back to the prophet Mohammed. This is what he told dozens of journalists and writers with diverse interests and agendas—people like Milton Viorst, Elizabeth Ferber, Christopher Harper, William Stewart, and Janet and John Wallach.[1-3] It was a myth-making exercise which was eventually overtaken by events—the discovery of documents showing his actual place of birth.

This tale reveals something else about Arafat, too. It suggests either that he had not counted on success and being put under the microscope in the manner of the famous and important, or that he was in the habit of creating legends without giving much thought to their long-term consequences, even when they could lead to accusations of lying. Now, after relatively recent revelations by some biographers and because his leadership position is firm enough to withstand questions about his origins, Arafat has changed his story. On the subject of his birth, loyalist biographer Alan Hart admits Arafat was born in Cairo; but he did so only after Janet and John Wallach had unearthed an Egyptian birth certificate[1-4] and Andrew Gowers and Tony Walker had discovered Arafat's personal files at the University of Cairo.[1-5] The rest of the material on his early years, which once obscured his origins, has also been amended by those who have written about him.

Arafat's father, Abdel Raouf Arafat Al Qudua Al Husseini, was a small-time textile merchant and one-time policeman with the administration of Ottoman Turkey who moved his family from Gaza to Cairo in 1927. Portraits of the man, mustachioed, wearing a fez, looking serious to the point of reverence and staring at the camera from behind thick glasses, are representative of a particular class of Palestinian in the 1920s. The moustache confers dignity; the Turkish fez denoted belonging, or pretending to belong, to the *baquat* (notables) class of people, whom he emulated; and smiling or looking happy was not in keeping with his assumed dignity or status—I am always amazed by how severe my own ancestors appear in similar photographs. The total absence of pictures of Arafat's mother or sisters is in keeping with Abdel Raouf's social position; his was a traditional Muslim household where women occupied a secondary position and were seldom photographed. Finally, the fact that there are no pictures of the infant Yasser confirms the family's conservative inclinations and modest circumstances. Most of these families could not afford cameras; more important items like radios came first.

The posed photographs of Arafat's father exaggerate the basic facts. The Gaza Husseinis were only on the edge of being notability and, despite the similarity of name, unrelated to the real Husseini notables of Jerusalem, the family of Hajj Amin Al Husseini, the then Mufti of Palestine and leader of the Palestinian nationalist movement for the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, the Arafats of Gaza were not related to their namesakes in the Palestinian towns of Nablus, Safad and Lydda and, in a part of the world where family legend abounds, there is very little to recall about their history. So the Arafat Al Qudua name belongs exclusively to Gaza, where to this day there is an Al Qudua Street. But the existence of the street appears to indicate where Yasser's ancestors had lived

rather than to celebrate lofty social position or heroic achievement by any of them—in the same way, the area of Bethany where my family lives is called Housh Abu Rish, or the Abu Rish district.

Nor was Abdel Raouf, though a totally honourable man who on occasions tried to extend his commercial activities and dabble in the import-export business, a big-time merchant as stated by some members of the Arafat family when interviewed by journalists and biographers. Still, as with the claim that he had been born in Jerusalem, the Husseini name was to be used by Arafat during his formative leadership years, and the extent to which the real Husseinis helped with his pretence will be discussed later. What is of immediate concern is the purpose of Abdel Raouf's move to Cairo with five children at a time when people seldom left their countries and when the mere act of resettling in a town 30 miles away was tantamount to emigrating, with the attendant social trauma and admission of failure. People moved when they could not make it where they were, and in a highly traditional, static society it took a long time for them to be accepted.

Like many people with aspirations but without the ability to make it on their own, Abdel Raouf was chasing a dream: he left Gaza for Cairo in pursuit of a land inheritance. His Egyptian mother was from the well-known Radwan family (because of the geographical closeness, marriage between Gazans and Egyptians was comparatively common), and he believed that much of the valuable land in the district of Abbasiya in Cairo had belonged to her and, after her death, should have become his property.[1-6] The land had not in fact been in the Radwan name for 150 years, but the area in question was large enough and valuable enough for Abdel Raouf's law suit to merit coverage in several Egyptian newspapers. And despite what appears to have been a morbid preoccupation with the subject, Abdel Raouf managed to support his family in a comfortable manner and to house them in a spacious apartment in the Sakakini district of the city, then a mixed neighbourhood which had many Christian, Jewish, Armenian and Lebanese residents. This confirms the general impression of Abdel Raouf, for though not an aristocratic Husseini nor rich, he seems to have been a solid, old-fashioned family man who was anxious to provide well for his family. One thing is clear: regardless of success or failure, the family never depended on outside financial help.

Cairo was where Mohammed Abdel Rahman (today's Yasser) and his younger brother Fathi were born, and it was where their young mother, by all accounts a comely, decent homemaker, died of a kidney ailment in 1933 when Yasser was five. Abdel Raouf, the hard-working, dream-chasing merchant, was left with seven children: daughters Inam, Khadija and Yusar and sons Khalid, Mustapha, Mohammed Abdel Rahman and Fathi. He remarried soon afterwards, but it ended in divorce after a few months: one of the reasons for the break—up was his children's hatred of his new wife,[1-7] to this day a common Arab reason for divorcing a second wife. Although he was a strict disciplinarian the burden of bringing up seven children without maternal supervision became too heavy; the oldest daughter, Inam, was still in her early teens and unable, as tradition would have dictated, to raise her younger brothers and sisters, so Abdel Raouf decided to send the two youngest ones to their maternal relations in Jerusalem.

This is Yasser Arafat's direct connection to Jerusalem. His mother was born Zahwa Abul Saoud, a member of a well-known, old Jerusalem family which

produced men of learning, teachers and religious figures. Although not wealthy, numerous or politically important, the Abul Saouds were a substantial notch higher on the social scale than the Gaza Al Husseinis and obviously in a better position to take care of the children than Abdel Raouf's Al Qudua relations in Gaza. By all accounts, Arafat's maternal uncle Selim Abul Saoud welcomed him and his brother Fathi as members of his family.

We have only a general picture of the type of life Arafat led in Jerusalem. As with other aspects of his life, the lack of clarity is clouded further by the passage of time and the massive changes which have taken place in the Middle East. Writers unequipped to understand or relate to the atmosphere in the households of families like the Abul Saouds have only been able to speculate. What we know is that Uncle Selim lived in the old city, an area steeped in tradition where people very seldom sold houses—properties were kept in the same family for centuries. His own house was near the Wailing Wall, the Dome of the Rock and the Mosque of Omar, but was unfortunately demolished to make room for Jewish worshippers after the June 1967 War and the occupation of the whole of Jerusalem by Israel. Furthermore the Abul Saouds, always small in number, have all but vanished, and those who remain in Jerusalem are reluctant to speak of young Yasser for fear of contradicting what he promotes or any part of his legend. And Arafat himself, having had to amend many of the stories he spread about his childhood during his early career, now refuses to discuss his Jerusalem period. This is why the size of the house, a measure of the status of the occupants, is unknown. Furthermore, although they kept their old houses, in the 1920s and 1930s the truly rich families moved outside the crowded old city where most of the houses were small and lacked modern amenities. So while Arafat's stay in Jerusalem and the happy atmosphere which surrounded it are established beyond question, the precise location of the house, its size—and a big house would be remembered—and what Uncle Selim did for a living remain unknown.

What little is known about young Yasser during this period suggests a hyperactive, intelligent child who, despite being undisciplined, was capable of easy achievement and of endearing himself to the people around him—what might be called a naughty charmer. He attended the ordinary local school but, because the school no longer exists and such establishments did not keep organized files anyway, his scholastic record is not known. There are no friends from that period who remember him under any of his names. At home, his uncle did not beat Yasser[1-8] as his father had done; in fact, he doted on him and his brother. By all available accounts Selim Abul Saoud took care of his wards in a modest but comfortable manner, and in turn the children were fond of their uncle and his wife.

Arafat liked Jerusalem much more than he did Cairo. Important in terms of his later pretensions and achievements is the attachment he appears to have developed for the atmosphere of Jerusalem—the alleys, shops and smells of the old city and the religious aura created by the Muslims, Christians and Jews who not only lived there as neighbours but responded to the Holy City in a special way. According to many of his close associates, Arafat remembers and relates to Jerusalem's uniqueness much more than to the Cairo of his daydreaming father, his mother's traumatic death, his hated stepmother and a community of

expatriates who hunddled together for mutual support. Jerusalem would become the place of Arafat's mental birth. It was the home of the respected family which gave Arafat a substantial name in keeping with his father's pretensions, and provided him with emotional warmth. This is why the original misrepresentation of his place of birth deserves our sympathy. An attachment to love and comfort is understandable, and the Arabs accord family background greater importance than most. A normal child, not least one who had been wounded by dislocation from his roots and the loss of his mother, would relate to both.

The happy days in Jerusalem came to an end after four years, in 1937. Abdel Raouf recalled Yasser and his brother Fathi to Cairo and the supervision of their eldest sister, by then in her late teens. By all accounts, the energetic Inam did an excellent job with the boys and she maintains an endearingly close relationship with her two youngest brothers to this day. However, home life under Abdel Raouf was never happy: despite the hopelessness of the situation, the old man continued to squander his income in pursuit of his elusive inheritance, and to his children he remained a remote, forbidding disciplinarian. Moreover, a third marriage proved as unsuccessful and short-lived as the second and, despite Inam's efforts to create a model home life, it contributed towards a deterioration in the relationship between the children and their parent. This is why Arafat now rarely mentions his father, and why he did not attend Abdel Raouf's funeral in 1952 or visit his grave after his dramatic return to Gaza as head of the Palestinian Authority.

It was during this period that the first signs of the Arafat we know today began to surface. During the formative and often rebellious years of nine to fifteen Inam tried her utmost to protect her brothers from their strict father, but when her efforts failed Yasser often fled briefly to a family of Cairo relations, the Awad Al Akhbars. Although the purpose of running away was simply to avoid confrontation with Abdel Raouf and possible punishment, it also exposed Yasser to a heavier Islamic atmosphere. Al Akhbar spent hours reciting the Koran and recalling the sayings of the prophet, and succeeded in making his young relation memorize a great deal of both. But Koranic learning, though essential to mastering the Arabic language, was separate from overall scholastic achievement, and the side-effects of his uneasy home life showed in the young Arafat's neglect of his school work.

Too hyperactive to be studious, he now found an outlet for his ever-present energies through running a gang of neighbourhood children. He bullied and organized them, taking pleasure in ordering them around and marching them up and down the streets while hectoring them like a tough, rough-speaking sergeant from the films of that time. It was tantamount to creating a small army at an early age and it reveals a great deal about his natural ability to command, be it through persuasion or coercion. Inam and his brothers loved Yasser and what he did. He was the one family member with imagination and flair, but his father saw no benefit or amusement in his son's activities and this undoubtedly widened the gulf between them. His admiring biographer Alan Hart notes Arafat as saying that he paid little attention to his studies; other biographers take a harder line and speak of him being 'a bad student', extending this to support a contention that he had a questionable education.[1-9] The evidence suggests his father would have agreed

with them. Despite all his faults the elder Arafat showed considerable interest in his children's education.

Since the Oslo Peace Accord of 1993 Arafat has taken to recalling from this time only that Muslims and Jews lived amicably together in the Sakakini district of Cairo, and that he himself had close contact with Jews; but there is no evidence to support this selective bit of remembrance beyond the fact that the neighbourhood was indeed a mixed one. Furthermore, the one trait which Abdel Raouf managed to transmit to his family without conflict was a deeply religious outlook which was strengthened by Yasser's occasional escapes to the Al Akhbar household. This and the attachment of the children to their Abul Saoud background—particularly in view of the Abul Saouds' and Al Akhbars' traditional anti-Jewish Islamic stance—would have precluded all but the most perfunctory of contact with non-Muslim neighbours, particularly Jews. Christian and Jewish children would have been reluctant to join the ragtag army of young Yasser because an army needed an enemy, which in this case would have been either the Crusaders or the Jews; only the children of Muslim families would have joined him.

Eventually, the more important development which was to have a lasting influence on Arafat's life pulled him in the opposite direction, into severing whatever contact existed with Jewish neighbours, and it originated in the place he loved so much, Jerusalem. The end of the Second World War provided direction to the restlessness of the Palestinian-Egyptian teenager. Beginning in 1945, Palestine, which had become a British mandate territory after the First World War, was on the boil. The Jewish claim to it, contained in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, set against the justified, solid determination of the Arabs to keep it, was surfacing as the major international issue of the times, one which preoccupied Arabs of all ages and political persuasions. For Arafat this general picture was more intense than for others, augmented as it was by the arrival late in 1946 in Cairo of Hajj Amin Al Husseini, the Mufti of Palestine, undisputed leader of the country's Arabs. He was a man whom Arafat came to adore and emulate, and whose name he later used as his own.

Others saw the austere Mufti from a distance, but young Arafat had direct personal access to him from the age of seventeen. Among the Mufti's entourage was Sheikh Hassan Abul Saoud, the head of the Abul Saoud family of Jerusalem and a distant maternal relation whom Arafat called 'uncle'. A Palestinian nationalist leader whom the British administration in Palestine had exiled to the Seychelle Islands, Sheikh Hassan was the Mufti's chief assistant and adviser.[1-10] But, although an undoubtedly talented Muslim cleric and a graduate of Al Azhar University, the leading centre of Islamic learning, he owed his elevated position mainly to his membership of the Shafi' school of Sunni Islam to which most Palestinians belonged. The Mufti came from the Hanafi school, a minority sub-sect which had risen to prominence under the Ottoman Empire, which was also Hanafi. He had sought Sheikh Hassan's support in the early 1920s to appear non-partisan to the Shafi' Palestinians and because the unassuming Abul Saoud did not represent a challenge to his leadership. Indeed Sheikh Hassan, despite his position, was more of a religious figure than an aspirant to high political office.

Family ties were stronger then among Arabs than they are today, and Sheikh Hassan valued family connections and loyalty. He knew of the unhappy situation

in the Arafat household and took Abdel Raouf's family under his wing. To young Yasser this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and he had a mature understanding of what it meant: he made greater efforts to endear himself to the Mufti than did his brothers. The legendary Arab lack of organization was evident among the Palestinians in Cairo; in particular, chaos surrounded the Arab Higher Committee, the Mufti's political organization. Yasser turned himself into a voluntary assistant to Sheikh Hassan and wasted no time in making himself indispensable. He hand-delivered important letters from the Arab Higher Committee to visiting Arab leaders and the offices of the Arab League, the grouping of Arab countries, set up in 1945 to promote economic and political cooperation; he collected money from sympathetic donors; and he reported on pro-Palestinian activities in Egyptian schools and universities. All these functions were extremely helpful in giving him an understanding of the workings of Arab politics. In between, he was at Sheikh Hassan's side, doing everything from sharpening his pencils to providing him with cold drinking water and spreading his prayer rug; in the process he was privy to what the old man said and did, becoming the custodian of secrets which were not usually entrusted to someone of his age.

Despite his preoccupation with politics, Arafat still managed to enter King Fuad I (later Cairo) University in 1947, probably with financial help and a push from Sheikh Hassan and the Mufti, who had become admirers of the energetic young activist. But being a politically active Palestinian in exile was more to his liking than academic pursuits. The many pictures of Arafat during this period show a young politician in the making, always at student political meetings and Palestinian gatherings. The bulging eyes and protruding lower lip are clearly visible, and his hair has already started to recede. The possessor of these less-than-attractive physical attributes wears an expression of perpetual surprise—the eyes seem to betray wonder at what he is seeing and to be transmitting it to a restless mind. Arafat is always conservatively attired in these photographs, mostly wearing a tie and a nondescript grey suit, and accompanied by Palestinian students from important political families. At the university he participated in debates, helped to organize Palestinian students in Cairo and, using his influence with Sheikh Hassan, got some of them local scholarships. By the end of 1947 he began participating in the more important activity of buying arms and shipping them to the Mufti's Arab partisans in Palestine.**(1-11)**

Arafat may have been neglecting his studies, but he was certainly broadening his experience. Arms buying, collecting and shipping to Palestine was a task only for the able, well-connected and trusted. The arms in question were rifles, light machine guns and sub-machine guns discarded in the Second World War—the rusty leftovers of the British, German and Italian armies who had fought over the Western Desert. Sheikh Hassan, acting on the Mufti's orders, organized the procurement of thousands of such weapons mostly from Bedouins in today's Libya and sent them to the Holy Strugglers, the Arab irregulars of the Arab Higher Committee who were already fighting the better-equipped and better-trained Jewish forces in Palestine.

Once again, Arafat's stories of his involvement in an important activity do not totally correspond with the facts. That he participated in this unique effort is undoubtedly true, and a most revealing and impressive achievement for someone

of nineteen, but he was not the major player in this field of his myth-making. Many others did the same, and Arafat's presentation of himself as the innovator of this activity is utterly false. In fact, because my Uncle Ibrahim was one of the leaders of the Holy Strugglers and my father was a Mufti supporter who worked closely with them, I knew many others who were equally if not more deeply involved in the efforts to arm the Palestinians with Second World War weapons. Nor is there substantial evidence that Arafat was very close to the leader of the Holy Strugglers during this period. This was the Mufti's cousin and then frequent visitor to Cairo, the most honoured Palestinian hero of them all, who later died fighting in the battle of Jerusalem – Abdel Kader Al Husseini. That the two knew each other is true—they often found themselves in the Mufti's Cairo offices at the same time—but Abdel Kader's close associates were an older group of men, most of whom had fought with him in Palestine during the 1936–9 Arab revolt against the British. Furthermore there was no reason for the commander of a militia such as Abdel Kader to view what Arafat had to offer as something special.

The culmination of Arafat's political activities in Cairo occurred in 1948, when the British withdrew from Palestine and the first Arab-Israeli war broke out. Although he could have remained in Cairo near his important relation, and his age and the demands of university life would have justified it, he could not wait to abandon his studies and join the fray. He eventually managed to reach the southern part of Palestine around Gaza with a number of his Palestinian classmates. For unknown reasons he did not get to Palestine as a member of the Mufti's forces, the Holy Strugglers, but with units of Al Ikhwan Al Muslimeen (the Muslim Brotherhood), the original Egyptian Islamic fundamentalist movement which despatched its own armed irregulars to retrieve and protect Muslim rights and honour in Palestine.

This is a very curious landmark in Arafat's life. For while the Mufti and Muslim Brotherhood cooperated on many matters, only the religiously committed ended up fighting in Palestine with the Brotherhood, and there were very few Palestinian fighters among them. It is further evidence that Arafat's Islamic upbringing had taken hold, confirms that he was accepted as an Egyptian, and renders more credible the allegation that the Arafat household were members of this organization.[1-12] It also renders implausible his supposed close friendship with Abdel Kader, who saw the Brotherhood as competitors, and it certainly makes his claims of friendship with the Jews in the Sakakini district less credible.

The record of this period is even more muddled and Arafat's performance in Palestine, like most of his early life, is also subject to exaggeration—though never total invention or fabrication as some biographers have stated or implied. That Arafat fought bravely in the area around Gaza, the battleground of the regular Egyptian army and Egyptian irregular forces, is confirmed by many who were with him. They speak of him being utterly fearless and often going on personal forays without authorization or support. However, that falls short of his claim to Alan Hart that he personally stopped the advance of a column of ten Israeli armoured personnel carriers by knocking out the first and the last and trapping the rest.[1-13] The Israelis did not have ten armoured personnel carriers in that sector, if anywhere. Furthermore, the various testimonies which state that he operated only in the Gaza theatre belie his later version that he was a special military assistant

to Abdel Kader Al Husseini during the battle of Jerusalem.[1-14] Abdel Kader's deputy commander at the time was named Kamel Irekat and his other military assistants were also known; these facts are not in dispute and were common knowledge to everyone who lived around Jerusalem at the time, including myself at the age of thirteen. Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood forces, to which Arafat belonged, never got to the Jerusalem area and certainly did not fight there during the critical early months of 1948. Because of a lack of logistical support, they returned to Cairo in early 1949 at the same time as Arafat. His version of events is not an exaggeration but a rewrite of the record, and it is clear that he began spreading stories to embellish the myth of himself as a hero and to benefit from the lustre attached to the legend of Abdel Kader. Arafat did this more often later, during his early leadership days, when he needed to create a story line to support his pursuit of Palestinian primacy.

The young veteran who returned to Cairo after the 1948 Arab defeat in Palestine was even more restless than the student who had left it only a few months before. He took his time before re-entering the school of civil engineering at the university, and was full of war stories which he related to others voluntarily but with considerable emotion. Some were true, and indeed heroic, but, as usual with him, many were adapted or invented, such as tales of his fighting in Jerusalem. This aside, he never deviated from the conclusions he had drawn from his brief fighting experience. Arafat believed that the Arab governments who had fought the Israelis—Egypt and Jordan, supported by Iraq and Syria—had lost because of corrupt and incompetent leadership and that, left alone, the Palestinians would have won the war. It was these two beliefs which propelled him forward and which, because he was reluctant to admit other influences, many accept as the basis of his political philosophy to this day.

The anger which Arafat directed at the Arab governments differed from Palestinian anger in general. Traumatic as his military experience in Gaza must have been, his family did not suffer from the Arab defeat in the way most Palestinians did—he was not a child of Al Nakba or the disaster, as Palestinians call the 1948 defeat, nor did his father lose the source of his livelihood (of the former region of Palestine only the West Bank and the Gaza Strip remained unoccupied by the Israelis, and up to seven hundred thousand Palestinians were dispossessed). Those who became refugees or were directly affected by the defeat, particularly those who lived in the centre of the country, knew that Palestinian leadership was as corrupt and incompetent as that of the rest of the Arabs. But Arafat's first-hand experience of these things was under Egyptian tutelage and it did not affect his attitude towards Palestinian capabilities—only towards Egypt and the other Arab governments.

Was there anything new in his perception of the reasons for the Arab defeat? Attributing it to the inadequacies of their governments was what most inhabitants of Arab countries did. Corruption was very near the surface in the Arab Middle East. It showed clearly in the way the Arab armies behaved, and Arafat's proximity to the Egyptian army fighting in Palestine probably produced disturbing evidence of this. It took no special talent to determine that Egypt's forces suffered from lack of training, out-of-date weaponry and an absentee officer class who readily

abandoned their men to play squash or return to Cairo to see their favourite belly dancer.

Arafat's personal experience was augmented and given final shape by the teachings and attitude of the two political organizations to which he was connected. This mattered considerably more than his pure 'anger towards his Arab brothers', which Israeli biographer Dany Rubenstein believes 'shaped his political course'.[1-15] Both the Arab Higher Committee of the Mufti and Sheikh Hassan, and the Muslim Brotherhood under the religious zealot Hassan Al Banna, came out of the 1948 Arab–Israeli War condemning the unpreparedness of the Arab armies and the corruption of the regimes behind them without admitting that they were guilty of the same faults. However justified, both political organizations exaggerated the legend of a stab in the back, the existence of a corrupt Arab leadership with less commitment to the war than to making money out of commissions on arms purchases. Both organizations celebrated the qualities of the individual Arab soldier while questioning the qualifications of the officer class. Both issued pamphlets and leaflets to that effect – mostly rehashes of revelations on the subject made by enterprising Egyptian journalists; Arafat, once again a student activist but how a proud one with first-hand military experience, helped prepare some of them and distribute a great many more.

The second of Arafat's allegations—that, left alone, the Palestinians would have won the war—was adopted by the Arab Higher Committee. The Mufti had objected to the participation of the Arab regular armies in the war for fear of diminishing his claim to exclusive leadership of the Palestinians. But the Muslim Brotherhood, which viewed fighting in Palestine as the duty of all Muslims and not the restricted domain of the Palestinians, did not accept this. The one thing both organizations agreed on was to hold the Arab governments responsible for the dismal performance of their forces. Like the leading perpetrator of this claim, the Mufti himself, Arafat managed to accommodate the contradiction between the positions of the Arab Higher Committee and the Muslim Brotherhood. He adopted the Higher Committee's stance of separating the efforts of groups like the Muslim Brotherhood from the failure of the Arab armies, and he heaped praise on the Arab fighters who belonged to popular movements and distinguished them from the governments of their countries. Then, as later, Arafat believed what he preached to the point of blindness. A more enquiring, educated mind would have realized that the Palestinians were no match for the Israelis. There were many reasons for this, including the quality of the Mufti's leadership, the unsuitability of the arms which he and Hassan Abul Saoud provided, and lack of attention to the most fundamental military training.

In Arafat's case, blaming defeat exclusively on Arab governments and believing that the Palestinians would have won alone produced a contradiction that the Mufti would not accept. The latter was Palestinian through and through, but Arafat, with his Egyptian birth certificate, passport and accent, had fought with the Muslim Brotherhood and continued to have a close association with them. A year or two earlier he had taken to calling himself Yasser Arafat, and had abandoned using most of his given names altogether. This, along with years of residence in the Sakakini district of Cairo, concealed his Palestinianness.

Indeed, the adoption of the name Yasser and the dropping of his other names was a confirmation of where he belonged. Yasser bin Ammar was a celebrated Muslim warrior and companion of the prophet Mohammed, and calling himself after this great historical figure must have enhanced Arafat's religious credentials. Years later, the rest of Yasser bin Ammar's name was appropriated when Arafat assumed a *nom de guerre* and became Abu Ammar, 'father of Ammar', in keeping with the Arab tradition of being father of someone as a sign of respect. The greater the name one 'fathered' the higher the respect one was due, and there was no greater respect accorded than to those who emulated the heroes of early Islam.

The issue here is whether Arafat's condemnation of the Arab governments reflected an Egyptian or Palestinian outlook. Judged by the activities he undertook, and again in keeping with later contradictory behaviour, it was both. On returning to Cairo, Arafat joined the Egyptian Union of Students. This was a significant step: the students were in the forefront of political agitation aimed at remedying the causes of the 1948 defeat and punishing King Farouk for it. Membership of this body was closed to Palestinians, so Arafat's joining meant that he was an Egyptian acting against the Egyptian government. This move, however, did not cancel his Palestinian identity, because what the Egyptian students were calling for—the purging of the Egyptian government and forcing it away from Western control and tutelage—coincided with what the Palestinians were demanding.

But simultaneously Arafat became a member of the Federation of Palestinian Students. Belonging to both organizations was highly unusual, reflecting a deep restlessness in Arafat and an urge to be involved in the Arab politics of the day regardless of country or ideology. It also implies that Egyptian problems were very close to Arafat's heart, something which later events confirmed. After joining the Federation of Palestinian Students, Arafat once again worked directly for Sheikh Hassan and the Mufti and preached the gospel according to the interpretations of the Arab Higher Committee. Whether with Egyptian or Palestinian students, his attachment to the Muslim Brotherhood continued and, because the Brotherhood was committed to an inclusive Islamic picture which was bigger than a mere Palestinian or Egyptian identity, this was the bridge which Arafat used to accommodate his Palestinian and Egyptian selves without manifesting a conflict of loyalty.

If mere membership of both organizations revealed the chameleon in the man, then his election to the chairmanship of the Federation of Palestinian Students confirmed it. In 1951 Arafat became a friend of Salah Khalaf, who was later to become one of his closest associates, and the legendary Abu Iyad, subsequently of Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization but then a card-carrying member of the Muslim Brotherhood and a student at the principal centre of Islamic scholarship, Al Azhar University. The Brotherhood had expanded its non-Egyptian base and enlisted many Palestinian students and activists. It was Abu Iyad, the literature student from Gaza who never pursued personal glory, who used his membership of this organization to gather support for Arafat and get him elected as chairman.

Was Arafat himself a member of the Brotherhood? There is no solid evidence, though many biographers and news correspondents accept it. There is proof,

however, that the Islamists supported his election and that he won on a platform which incorporated many of the Brotherhood's demands. Biographers Hart, Gower and Walker, Rubenstein, and even the Egyptian Rasheda Mahran attribute his success to Muslim Brotherhood backing, some in more direct terms than others. But none of them has been able to unearth any evidence that he was a card-carrying member.

Arafat the young politician was a natural publicist. Intense, elusive, small at 5 feet 4 inches, delicate and impulsive, he was always late for meetings and highly disorganized, but full of ideas and energy. Some time in 1949, acting as speedily on an appealing idea as he does today, Arafat began publishing a magazine called *The Voice of Palestine*. Full of polemics and promises to fight 'the Zionist entity, the cancer in our midst, the agent of imperialism' and its Western supporters, it was Arafat's handiwork—short on reasoned analysis and in-depth reporting and, except for Abu Iyad's later efforts, of a deplorable standard of writing. Significantly, though, the meagrely educated young man would not be discouraged by his poor showing. In fact, he never worried about the quality of what he did. Though to this day an uninspiring public speaker whose style is to repeat himself in an old-fashioned way unique to Muslim cultures, he made frequent speeches which were unreasoned but highly emotional and left him so exhausted that he would cry openly. To his studies or the development of his natural mechanical aptitude (he could build ham radios and repair car engines of automobiles) he paid little attention; he was devoted to politics, but without any specific ideology. He succeeded in making a name for himself by continuing to help needy Palestinian students and to use his contacts to gain them entry into Egyptian universities. Much-needed financial help was obtained for Palestinian families, many of whom he also visited on a regular basis to help them with 'difficult' tasks such as paperwork. The man is still genuinely touched by human misery; this commendable attribute is revealed by the expression of despair sometimes seen on his face, and when confronted by poverty and the results of violence he is often near tears. Despite all that he has seen and the violent activities in which he has undoubtedly been involved, his emotional make-up allows him to separate distant events from individual suffering.

Here it is important to understand the significance of what Arafat had achieved when he was elected chairman of the Federation of Palestinian Students and later, in 1953, of the much larger General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS), a similar but older organization with branches throughout the Arab countries. Though these achievements may appear only peripheral to many of Arafat's Western watchers and biographers, they were considerable. Above all, after the Arab Higher Committee GUPS was probably the most important Palestinian political organization of the time, and student organizations in the Middle East provided the talent for future leadership.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s success in Palestinian politics, within or outside Palestine, was still the exclusive domain of the establishment families. Members of these families, including some Husseinis, Toukans, Dajanis, Alamis and Ghosseins, were in Cairo at the time, and the chairmanships of the Federation of Palestinian Students and GUPS were important positions to which many of them aspired. So Arafat's success deserves analysis with this consideration in

mind. In fact, this is a good place to examine the nature of his leadership at this early stage of his life, especially since these student elections were freer than any he would ever face in the future and the odds were stacked against him.

There is little doubt that his relationship with Sheikh Hassan Abul Saoud made a difference, but, although he nurtured it carefully, it does not account fully for his later more substantial successes. His strange connection to the Muslim Brotherhood has already been mentioned: he manipulated it to advantage, directly and through card-carrying members, most probably without ever joining the organization. But, even combined, these two reasons are not enough to explain Arafat's success, particularly when many establishment Palestinians who coveted the student posts had their own close links with the Arab Higher Committee and the Muslim Brotherhood, and some were related to the Mufti.

The existing evidence supports the contention that Arafat possessed three distinct advantages over all his competitors. Then as now, he was endowed with near-superhuman energy. He was a tireless worker who always seemed to be everywhere, and for the most part his rivals shunned hard work. He was also more convincing than the rest: not a better public speaker, but endowed with that rare quality of being able to talk people into following him and doing his bidding. Thirdly, he was fearless at a time when timidity and lack of assertiveness were the trademark of others. None of his competitors would have dared speak to Palestinian leaders in the way he did, nor would they have started magazines without knowing how they were going to finance them. Biographers who attribute his success to being all things to all people, and to having misled different political groups with different agendas, are offering too simplistic an interpretation. It is true that he was a chameleon, but he was never subservient and made a virtue out of being stubborn and uncompromising; on occasions he resorted to browbeating people, while others found him actually using his fists.**(1-16)**

His early success was a reflection of a single-mindedness which others did not possess, an extension of the inherent qualities he used to charm his Uncle Selim and which made him the leader of the neighbourhood gang of kids. These were the qualities which he moulded to meet more complex situations for the rest of his life. In addition, his experiences in Palestine in 1948 made him a great story-teller, with a facility to amuse people and make them laugh. He was a natural improviser, and what he related touched his listeners in a very special and endearing way which overcame his curious looks, his lack of physical stature, his dismal performances on the podium and the obvious fact that he was exaggerating or telling outright lies. Of course, he was also an ascetic non-smoker and non-drinker who showed little interest in women at a time when fashionable young men thought smoking was smart, drank whisky, ogled belly dancers and frequented whore-houses. And finally Arafat was a great salesman, an Arab Billy Graham.

While there are conflicting dates for Arafat's graduation from university, his biographers Gowers and Walker, who conducted the most thorough examination of his academic background, have determined that he finished the first year of his university course in 1950 with nothing more than a pass grade. Obviously, at twenty-two he was already lagging behind; this fact and the statement made to me by a former classmate that he had to repeat the required mathematics course for

three years explain Arafat's reluctance to discuss his higher education. He just scraped through, graduating in civil engineering in 1956.[1-17] This is scarcely surprising given his continued obsession with politics and utter lack of interest in any other career. Indeed, he continued to chair GUPS and involve himself in other political activities until the end of 1956—it became his full-time occupation.

Unfortunately for Arafat, his commitment to 'the cause' during this period is marred by the record and his own admissions. Some time in 1953–4 Arafat applied for admission to the University of Texas, which is interesting on many counts. Obviously the anti-Americanism he preached in articles and speeches was not serious enough to deter him from wanting to go to America; it was no different from the anti-Americanism of most Arabs, which has always fallen short of boycotting the USA or taking concrete action against it. Arafat himself puts a good face on things and pretends that after being accepted by the University of Texas he decided not to go after all, but there is ample reason to doubt his story. Having gone to an American university in the early 1950s myself, I know what the entrance requirements are: there were three which Arafat probably could not meet. The first is proficiency in English. But his weak academic performance and the fact that he actually improved his poor command of the language while in exile in Tunis in the 1980s suggest that thirty years earlier his English would not have been good enough. In addition at that time the Americans required both a clean political slate and proof that foreign students had the means to support themselves. The University of Texas does not maintain a file on old applications, but it is unlikely that Arafat could meet these requirements, particularly the last. However, his wish to leave Cairo did not end there, and he then applied to emigrate to Canada.[1-18] It is not known how far this application went, and Arafat's early inclinations to admit it have been supplanted by a more recent wish to overlook the subject.

Still in Cairo, his activities continued unabated. Suddenly there was more to them than pamphleteering, making speeches and establishing political contacts. In the early 1950s the corrupt and extravagant Egyptian monarchy under King Farouk was falling apart. His people were also demanding the immediate withdrawal of the British troops which were occupying the country's Canal Zone on the basis of a treaty signed in 1936 by Egypt and Britain, which was anxious to safeguard the short sea route through the Canal to India. When the Egyptian governments of the time—and they came and went in quick succession—failed to negotiate a new treaty which called for immediate British evacuation, the Egyptian people took matters into their hands and followed the lead of radical groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the fascist Young Egypt. These organizations and others began sending volunteers to harass the British forces occupying a long strip of land along the Suez Canal known as the Canal Zone.

Arafat had gone to the Canal Zone late in 1950 with units of the Muslim Brotherhood. This curious event adds to the legend of Arafat, the divided Palestinian–Egyptian. Unlike the war in Palestine, the fighting along the Canal Zone was an all-Egyptian affair in which, except for a handful of non-Egyptian members of the Brotherhood such as Abu Iyad, other Arabs and Muslims did not participate. Arafat had resorted once again to his Egyptian persona to accommodate the urge which burned in his political psyche. He continued to do so

on and off for the next couple of years, but in 1952 two major events occurred in his life—a formative political one and a revealing personal one. The political event was the overthrow of the monarchy by the Egyptian army, and the eventual emergence of Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser as leader of Egypt and the Arab world. The personal one was the death of his father in Gaza, the city to which Abdel Raouf had returned as a broken man after losing the legal battle for his inheritance.

The total effects of Nasser's assumption of Egyptian and Arab leadership will be detailed throughout this book and represent a major influence on the development of Arafat and the PLO, but the death of his father was a simple matter which can be judged by the way Arafat subsequently behaved. Even with the benefit of hindsight and having learned enough about Arafat's relationship with his father to accord him considerable understanding and sympathy, I find the fact that he did not attend his father's funeral unacceptable, particularly in Arab and Muslim terms. To Arabs and Muslims death is 'the great uniter', the one thing people have in common. Reverence for it and for the dead person is supposed to supersede all feuds, misunderstandings and quarrels. Yet Arafat, to this day a religious person who prays, does not eat pork or drink alcohol and has made the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca, still ignored his father's funeral. Nor has he ever tried to excuse this act of omission.

The 1952 army coup in Egypt was a popular one. It eliminated much of the need for the disaffected and disenfranchised to cluster around opposition parties and induced them to support the new government. King Farouk was sent into exile and a fatherly general by the name of Mohammed Naguib took over the running of the country. Naguib, a pipe-smoking, conservative officer and gentleman of the old school, was reputed to be on friendly relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, and the militant organization supported him. Even today, Islamic movements appeal to conservatives and militants at the same time.

It soon became clear, however, that the true leader of the officers who had overthrown Farouk was a charismatic colonel by the name of Gamal Abdel Nasser. The maxim of revolutions devouring their infants asserted itself, and there was a one-year power struggle between Naguib and Nasser. With the army solidly behind him Nasser eventually triumphed, despite Muslim Brotherhood support for Naguib.

There are two questions to be asked about Arafat during this period of turmoil: did he support Naguib against Nasser, and was the latter an acquaintance of his as many of Arafat's friends and associates have asserted? There is no record of what Arafat did during the struggle for Egyptian leadership, but there is little doubt that his natural sympathies lay with Naguib, the choice of the Muslim Brotherhood. Furthermore, in 1953, acting on orders from pro-Nasser officers, the secret police deported Abu Iyad, then in his last year at Al Azhar University and Secretary General of GUPS, to Gaza. With him went two Palestinian activist friends of Arafat and members of the Muslim Brotherhood, Selim Za'anoun and Fathi Balawai.[1-19] The exile of his friends and political associates in this manner could not have endeared Nasser to Arafat, but it suggests that he himself was not a member of the organization.

There is also nothing to substantiate the claim that Arafat knew Nasser beyond a possible chance meeting at a student gathering in 1954 or 1955, though Nasser had offered his services to the Mufti and volunteered to resign from the Egyptian army in order to fight with the Arab Higher Committee irregulars in Palestine in 1948.[1-20] Arafat's uncharacteristic inertia during this period suggests that Nasser and the band of officers who had ousted Farouk did not tolerate activists. Furthermore, the fact that Arafat was not deported along with his friends implies that the authorities considered him to be Egyptian rather than Palestinian or both. The second explanation gains added weight in the context of what happened in 1954.

The Muslim Brotherhood continued to agitate and conspire against Nasser well after the issue of Egyptian leadership had been settled. Nasser responded by outlawing the organization and imprisoning many of its members. Refusing to bow to the ways of the new Egyptian leadership, the Brotherhood made an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Nasser in October 1954 while he was making a speech in Alexandria. Nasser, just as courageous and as capable of pulling off a piece of theatre as Arafat, continued with his speech and used the attempt against his life to dramatize its contents. The wave of arrests which followed was wider than anything that had been seen hitherto in modern Egypt.

Among those detained during the sweep against the Muslim Brotherhood was Yasser Arafat. This, the first of many arrests and periods of detention, lasted over two months. Today Arafat says that he was released after the intercession of Egyptian army officers whom he had known in Palestine and during the anti-British Suez campaign,[1-21] but it is impossible to verify his statement. It is more likely that he was arrested because of information in the extensive Egyptian police files, but that it revealed nothing to justify detaining him any longer and he would have been freed anyway. It was the leadership and the hard core of the Muslim Brotherhood whom the police were after: these figures were well known, and they excluded Arafat.

After his release, in the first expression of what was to become a habit, Arafat resorted to convenience and tried to find common ground with the Nasser government. Nasser's adoption of Arab nationalism meant a militant stand against Israel, which in turn meant active support of the Palestinian paramilitary groups, the fedayeen ('self-sacrificers'), who were conducting raids against Israel from the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip. This is where Arafat the irrepressible went, and where his activities added to the legend of the fearless fighter and leader of men. Both accolades were deserved: the record of Arafat's personal penetration of Israeli lines and commando activity is rock-solid. It was in Gaza that he met the talented and methodical Abu Jihad, the *nom de guerre* of Khalil Al Wazir, another Palestinian member of the Muslim Brotherhood who headed a small group of fedayeen and was later to become Arafat's deputy commander after the formation of Fatah in Kuwait. Arafat also re-established contact with the Abu Iyad group and became leader of the Palestinian fighters. Although there was no room for individual leadership and they acted as a team, Arafat was its moving spirit and it was a group which placed Palestine and its problem ahead of all else. Abu Jihad himself had been born in Ramla and was a refugee in Gaza: although he was an Islamist, his Palestinianness came first. Abu Iyad, also a Gaza refugee but

originally from Jaffa, started viewing his earlier Muslim Brotherhood association as something that had been aimed purely at helping the Palestinian cause. The unselfishness of both men and their acceptance of Arafat's primacy was to remain with them until the very end.

Arafat, responding to this atmosphere and his Gaza roots, all but gave up his Egyptian inclinations—certainly the political aspect of his Egyptianness. He had overall Egyptian supervision of the guerrillas, but complained bitterly that Nasser kept them on a tight leash for fear of Israeli reprisals, which limited their effectiveness. When the Egyptians decided to place the interests of Egypt first and took to exercising even stricter control over the fedayeen, Arafat became even more Palestinian; in a way Nasser forced it on him. Later, when the Egyptians curtailed the guerrilla activity altogether and imprisoned these Palestinians who refused to obey their orders, including Arafat's comrade Mohammed Yusuf Al Najjar, Arafat resigned himself to returning to Cairo.

In 1955, life in Nasser's capital was confining. Arafat was without his friends, and the prison and Gaza experiences must have left an imprint. Moreover, his chances of endearing himself to the Nasser government or acquiring another serious student leadership role all but vanished when the Arab Nationalist Movement, which had been based in Beirut, began operating in Cairo.[1-22] This organization competed with Arafat's earlier efforts; it was secular, committed to Nasser's Arab nationalism and had a large following among Palestinian and Arab students. Arafat maintained contact with his Gaza group and lay dormant until the Egyptian government, in the midst of a major diplomatic crisis over the evacuation of British troops along the Suez Canal, decided to send all young men of his age for military training. As an Egyptian citizen Arafat was, according to *Time* magazine of 13 December 1968 and other sources, trained as a bomb disposal officer. It was a relatively brief course lasting only three months, and he finished as a first lieutenant. But it was followed by another period of inactivity, brought about by the popularity of Nasser and his use of it to neutralize all political action except what originated with him.

In August 1956 Arafat made his first journey overseas in the company of Abu Iyad and Zuheir Al Alami, another member of the executive committee of GUPS. They travelled to Prague to attend a meeting of the International Students' Congress. During this journey and in Prague, Arafat once again showed his flair for the dramatic and unusual. Without forewarning his companions, he donned an Arab *kuffiya* during the sessions of the conference.[1-23] It was a white one, unlike the chequered ones which were to become his trademark in the future, but it served its purpose and the presence of the odd—looking young man with an easy smile, impeccable manners and a faraway look, wearing this native headgear, was one of the highlights of the conference. But there was more to this than most of the other delegates realized: during the 1936–9 anti-British rebellion the *kuffiya* had been the emblem of the Palestinian fighters, the undeniable symbol of Palestinianness. There was more drama as they wandered about the city; Arafat and Abu Iyad cried openly on seeing Israeli Jaffa oranges on sale, which were unobtainable in Gaza and Cairo.[1-24]

The Suez Canal crisis exploded into open warfare soon after the delegation's return to Cairo, in October 1956. France and Israel conspired with Britain to

attack Nasser and reduce him to size. Their military campaign ended with Israel occupying the Gaza Strip and the Sinai peninsula, and Britain and France occupying Egyptian cities along the Canal Zone. At this time the Israelis summarily executed several hundred Gaza-based fedayeen.[1-25] The short-lived affair gave rise to another Arafat exaggeration—that he served in the office of the then Egyptian Chief of Staff, Abdel Hakim Amer. That he was called to active duty is true, but the rest is highly doubtful, certainly not a matter of record and denied completely by a former adviser to Nasser.

For Arafat and his band of Palestinian activists, what followed the Suez affair was considerably more important than the event itself. The United Nations, United States and USSR undertook moves which eventually obliged the invading forces to vacate Sinai and the Gaza Strip, but only after the installation of a United Nations Emergency Force, or UNEF, as a buffer between the Israelis and the Egyptians. This move, accepted by Nasser, was aimed at one thing only: stopping whatever was left of the Palestinian guerrillas from conducting raids against Israel from Gaza. The Egyptians immediately began to round up those who violated their agreement with the UN. This blow to Arafat and his Palestinian colleagues, the forced cancellation of whatever plans they had to reinvigorate the fedayeen and conduct an armed struggle against Israel, was made worse by the most important fall-out from the war. The Arab masses, seeing in Nasser another Saladin who was willing to fight the West, gave him their undivided support. Suddenly Arafat and his friends were operating in a vacuum, neutralized by an unexpected UN presence and the emergence of a pre-emptive force, Nasser and his Arab nationalism. What else could they do but seek greener pastures?

Arafat's first choice was Saudi Arabia and in 1957 he applied for a Saudi visa, but the paperwork took too long and he abandoned the idea.[1-26] Instead he got a visa to Kuwait based on his acceptance of a job as a civil engineer with the Ministry of Public Works. This was to be the beginning of another phase, another life. Arafat's Egyptian days were over. Fatah and the PLO followed.

Chapter 2

Fatah and the Road to 1967.

The first question to be asked about Arafat and the group of friends who eventually gathered in Kuwait is whether they went there to escape Nasser's repression and lead ordinary working lives or to start a political movement. The answer is yes to both and no to each. There is little doubt that the pressure to which they were subjected dictated moving out of Nasser's orbit of direct influence—Egypt, itself, his fellow UAR member Syria and Egyptian-occupied Gaza—and to avoid countries where he exercised a certain degree of indirect control, such as Lebanon, where the Muslim and Orthodox Christian elements of the population formed a strong pro-Nasser constituency. But though their subsequent involvement in politics after settling in Kuwait came as no surprise, there is nothing to suggest that it had been planned or was the sole impetus

behind their decision, or that their Cairo activities had produced a specific political agenda. Politics was in their blood and on their minds, but they went to Kuwait because Egypt was no longer welcoming, other Arab countries considered them dangerous radicals, and so they had nowhere else to go or work.

Although at that time the oil-rich haven contained more than fifty thousand Palestinians, including some who later became sympathetic to Arafat, there is no record of Palestinians being involved in politics beyond the usual concern for events in their place of birth. Arafat's preference, indeed, had been for Saudi Arabia, a country which never tolerated politicking by its own citizens or outsiders. Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest that his job as an engineer with the Ministry of Public Works and later with the Kuwait City Municipality was not to his liking or that he saw it as a vehicle for something else.

In 1960 he obtained a job as a schoolteacher for his friend and political associate Abu Iyad, who wasted no time in joining him. Abu Jihad, who had left Gaza to teach in Saudi Arabia, was already in Kuwait working as a teacher. Most teachers and civil servants in Kuwait were Palestinians, and increasingly Arafat's friends and political associates secured Kuwaiti government jobs. The routine for settling there was always the same: intercession with the local authorities to secure a job, then obtaining a visa on the basis of the offer of employment. This was how they reunited as a group of kindred spirits with shared experiences in Gaza and Egypt. Unlike pro-Nasser Palestinians in other Arab countries, such as members of the Beirut-based Arab Nationalist Movement, they had experienced the Egyptian leader's repression and the limitations that he placed on Palestinians who wished to fight Israel.

What is more interesting than the mechanics of moving to Kuwait and the immediate plunge into politics was what motivated the people who controlled the job offers and the visas to accept them. Kuwait's population in the late 1950s was substantially smaller than it is today, with only about half a million native Kuwaitis, and for an outsider to secure employment in the country depended on the sponsorship of an important Kuwaiti citizen or company. It is safe to assume that people with influence sponsored Arafat and his friends. After all, though all of them were endowed with natural intelligence, Arafat had a dismal academic record and no meaningful work experience; Abu Iyad never finished his course at Al Azhar University; Abu Jihad's university credentials were not much better; and no member of their original group possessed anything resembling impressive qualifications. As to who helped them get jobs, as on many other aspects of their early Kuwait days the original Arafat group have been uncharacteristically silent.

How they obtained their visas clouds the picture further. Kuwait was not then an independent country and remained a British protectorate until 1961: it was that country's embassies in Cairo and other capitals which granted visas to work there. The British officials in charge of visas were as careful as their US and Saudi counterparts—the ones who had denied Arafat a visa for America or took their time in issuing one to Saudi Arabia. The backgrounds of applicants for jobs in Kuwait were always thoroughly investigated, creating in this case an unusual situation: Kuwait chose to hire and grant residency to relatively unqualified people with a history of political involvement, when it normally placed emphasis on qualifications and frowned on political activists. The job application forms

completed by Arafat and his friends emphasized the importance of educational qualifications, while Kuwait's attitude to political activists is attested to by its occasional arrest of expatriates who preached one ideology or another and its refusal to grant visas to members of the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM), members of the pan-Arab Ba'ath party and many others. The mystery deepens in the light of the treatment of the pro-Nasser ANM members whose appearance in Cairo had overshadowed Arafat and his friends and sealed their fate.[2-27]

In fact not a single member of the original Arafat group—Abu Iyad, Abu Jihad, Adil Abdel Karim, Mohammed Yusuf Al Najjar, Khalid Al Amira, Abdel Fatah Lahmoud and later Khalid Al Hassan—who eventually became the founding members of Fatah appears to have experienced any difficulty or delay in entering Kuwait, when many more qualified Palestinians and others did. The Palestinian writer Audeh Butrus Audeh subscribes to the conspiracy theory and says the British granted them visas because they were anti-Nasser.[2-28] While there is no way of verifying or refuting this, there is ample evidence that in the late 1950s the West did use the Muslim Brotherhood to undermine Nasser and to promote right-wing policies based on Islam.[2-29] This underlies the possibility that members of this group were indeed accorded special treatment, but because they belonged to a fully fledged conspiracy. To have promoted a relatively unknown and unorganized group as a counterweight to Nasser and his anti-British politics would seem highly unlikely.

Many of the founders of Fatah, including Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad, had been card-carrying members of the Brotherhood, and others, including Arafat, had a close association with it. To advocates of the conspiracy theory this proves their allegation of Kuwaiti and British connivance. But one could argue the opposite case: all Palestinians were preoccupied with politics and, because members of this group had similar conservative backgrounds and nationalist inclinations, they could have been seen as benign and acceptable. Unlike the highly educated ideologue members of the ANM, they were unsophisticated and not extreme in their outlook.

Also, in contrast to other Palestinian groups of the time Arafat and his friends were exclusively Sunni Muslims. The total absence among them of Christians, by tradition the worldly, radical intellectuals of Palestinian politics, calls attention to other harmless aspects of their character. Although this was to change, most of them performed the Muslim prayers five times a day and fasted during the holy month of Ramadan, and not one of them drank alcohol or gambled. They behaved in an old-fashioned Arab way, and this pleased their hosts. It showed in their shapeless Western suits, cheap trousers and sports shirts; in their favoured rice-based Arab food mixed with lamb, which left them hefty at an early age; and in the fulsome praise they directed at each other in their greetings and forms of address. To cap it all, they played backgammon and smoked hookahs.

Except for the West German-educated Khalid Al Hassan, and this was to show in his later attitude, and Abu Iyad and Abu Jihad who both had natural but as yet undeveloped intelligence and instincts, none of them was learned enough or possessed enough intellect to understand the international ramifications of the problem which had occupied them in their youth and would occupy their future lives in Kuwait and elsewhere. Beyond this, none of them belonged to the

Palestinian notability, until then the source of leadership for all political movements; Arafat's Abul Saoud connection was the most they could come up with. One could say that they were too ordinary to be revolutionaries and too socially unimportant and uneducated to have been considered useful by the British against Nasser and other Palestinian groups. None the less this does not preclude the possibility that they were helped because of their essentially right—wing Islamic politics or because they were anti-Nasser refugees or both.

Moreover, reading too much into the largesse they received from Kuwaiti merchants and officials and the help they got in obtaining jobs is unjustified. It was true that the Kuwaitis, along with other conservative Arab regimes, were anxious to fend off the danger of Nasser's brand of Arab nationalism, which preached subordinating their independence to the creation of a greater Arab entity. This could have led them to view with sympathy people who opposed Nasser—but there was no deliberateness behind what the Kuwaitis did to make this a substantial political decision which proves a conspiracy against Nasser. However politically active—and Palestinian political clusters existed everywhere—unorganized groups like Arafat's were not as potentially dangerous as organized doctrinaire ones. Other Palestinians were shunned by the traditional regimes and by Kuwait because they belonged to organizations with threatening ideologies and were more cohesive and hence more of a danger.

The three major Palestinian political organizations in the late 1950s were the Arab Higher Committee, still under the leadership of the Mufti of Jerusalem, the Arab Nationalist Movement, led by the Christian ideologue Dr George Habbash, and the Islamic Liberation Front. The Mufti, who stayed in Cairo until 1959 and then became a self-imposed exile in Beirut, was the traditional claimant to Palestinian leadership. In 1949 in Gaza he had formed an All Palestine government, which still occupied a seat at the meetings of the Arab League. Arab support for him was open and official but, weary of his meddling ways, the Arab governments merely accorded him status and kept him and his followers in check. The Mufti's relationship with the new pretender to Arab and Palestinian leadership, Nasser, was an uneasy one. The Mufti was not by nature a follower, and the pan-Arabism of the young Egyptian leader which was popular with the Palestinians threatened to supplant him.**(2-30)**

The Mufti eventually left Cairo after a policy quarrel with Nasser which drew accusations from the Arab Higher Committee accusations that the new Arab leader was seeking a peaceful solution to the Palestinian problem based on UN resolutions. To the Mufti this was something which undermined the Arab-Palestinian right to all of Palestine. The break with Nasser came two years after the latter's pressure on Arafat and his friends forced them to leave for Kuwait and after they had severed direct links with the Mufti, who until 1958 tried to cooperate with Nasser.

George Habbash, the founder of the ANM, was a leader outside the traditional mould and he definitely operated above the folk mentality. A medical graduate of the American University of Beirut and a member of the Greek Orthodox Church, he was well-read, urbane and a firm believer in Nasser's Arab nationalism. Habbash was a man with a keen awareness of the world and its ideologies and problems, and the way they affected the Arab–Israeli conflict. Believing in Arab

nationalism at the time meant working to unite all the Arab states from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf into one vast country strong enough to face imperialism and its offspring, the state of Israel. Though the ANM placed the Palestine problem ahead of all else, this belief accounts for the presence of many non-Palestinians in its ranks. To Nasser, Habbash and their followers unity came first; indeed it was a prerequisite for eliminating the causes of the 1948 defeat and for liberating Palestine. Naturally Habbash's ideology precluded cooperation with the traditional regimes of much of the Arab Middle East and which were held responsible for Arab backwardness and military ineffectiveness. Instead it advocated their overthrow and the incorporation of their lands into one country under Nasser, or else persuading them to follow Nasser's policies and accept his leadership.

The third organization, the Islamic Liberation Front (ILF), was another Palestinian-led group with Arab membership. The fortunes of the ILF, which advocated a pan-Islamic solution, rose and fell in proportion to the support they received from those Arab governments in the habit of supporting Palestinian groups against each other in order to weaken and contain them. While popular when the Arab Higher Committee and Habbash's Arab nationalists did not meet people's expectations, it never figured seriously and proved to be short-lived.

It is no wonder that Nasser supported Habbash and promoted him against the self-centred Mufti and the ILF. Habbash was beginning to build a popular base among the Palestinians, and was already a help in blunting the challenge to Nasser's popularity and authority posed by the Muslim Brotherhood and their sympathizers. He was also a Christian, and thus did not represent a challenge to the Egyptian leader's primacy. Although an observing Muslim, Nasser was a totally secular leader and, unlike the rulers of countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, did not consider Habbash's Christianity a problem. He needed Habbash's solid following of Palestinian and Arab intellectuals and appreciated the inherent appeal of Habbash's clean ways and clear thinking to Arabs from all walks of life, including Palestinians in refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Nor were the Arab divisions affecting the Palestinian problem confined to infighting between the various claimants to Palestinian leadership. Until 1958, which saw the union of Syria and Egypt into the United Arab Republic (UAR) and the overthrow of the monarchy in Iraq, the division among the Arab states was a clear-cut one between the Nasser-led radical believers in Arab unity and the conservative regimes. The latter were committed to maintaining the regional status quo and limiting their commitment to Palestine to supporting the decisions and declarations of the Arab League, the discredited organization behind the disastrous Arab involvement in the Arab–Israeli War of 1948.

But 1958 changed all that. Although Nasser had assumed Arab leadership after the Suez War of 1956, he was reluctant to accept the unification of Syria and Egypt under his leadership and form the United Arab Republic because of the lack of preparation behind the union. But Syria's leaders insisted on the merger to save their own country from a Communist takeover. The emergence of the UAR strengthened Nasser's hand and elevated the notion of Arab unity to an attainable goal which appealed to the Arab in the street. It threatened to snowball,

overwhelm the traditional pro-West regimes, envelop the rest of the Arab Middle East and indeed create a country big enough and militarily strong enough to challenge Israel. More specifically, the creation of the UAR as a country capable of attaining military parity with Israel was especially significant to the Palestinians, who still dreamed of an Arab military victory. Nasser's popularity among the Palestinians soared. Naturally the monarchies and sheikhdoms threatened by this prospect did everything they could to obstruct Nasser, which included heavier reliance on the West and the use of Islamic groups to undermine him.

The overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy on 14 July 1958, soon after the formation of the UAR, by a radical clique of army officers led by General Abdel Karim Kassem added to Arab divisions. Initially thought to be a pro-Nasser movement, the Iraqi revolution evolved into a populist independent regime in a major wealthy Arab country. The new Iraqi leadership sought closer ties with the USSR and the Communist parties within the Middle East. Iraq now became another magnet for the affections of the Arab masses: in addition to the popular Nasser-led call for unity and the traditional Islamically inclined pro-West supporters of limited Arab cooperation, Kassem's Iraq became a third force, a socialist regime which shunned Arab unity schemes but had a greater commitment to egalitarianism and to liberating Palestine. Suddenly the Palestinians had several places to look to.

The new regional realities demanded a Palestinian response. Habbash thought the UAR would overwhelm all who stood in its way, and agreed not to operate within its boundaries. He stuck to his ideology and worked to undermine the other countries and annex them to Nasser. The Mufti, who had petitioned to join the UAR in 1958 but had been turned down by Nasser, who feared being drawn into a premature confrontation with Israel, switched sides: he saw the Kassem government as a possible source of salvation for the waning fortunes of his Arab Higher Committee and out-of-date leadership. Suddenly, all Palestinian political movements 'belonged' to established Arab regimes—even the ILF depended on Saudi financial help to survive.

In political terms, this explains the presence of Arafat and his anti-Nasser conservative Sunni Muslims in Kuwait. They lived in comfort but without any political patronage—certainly none that afforded them anything beyond survival—and they watched the Palestinian problem being toyed with between competing Arab countries with dismay. In 1959, with Habbash and the Mufti advancing different political programmes to win the affection of the Palestinian people and the ILF in decline, the Arafat group, though still not a structured political entity, began organizing to make its own appeal to the Palestinian people.

There is no official date for the setting up of Fatah, and the resulting confusion among historians and news correspondents is justified. Harakat Tahrir Filastin, its Arabic acronym reversed into Fatah to match the Koranic word for 'conquest', came into being by degrees. This accounts for the absence of a fixed date of birth and the different dates given by some of its founding members. It began to publish the monthly magazine *Filastinuna, Nida' Al Hayat (Our Palestine, The Call of Life*) in 1959, shortly before it adopted the name Fatah. But it did so in an undercover way; like many dissident publications, it was printed in Beirut but would not reveal its backing or the names of editors and contributors and instead gave a PO box number. The people who published *Filastinuna* were those who created and

led Fatah, and, since Fatah evolved rather than came into being by decree or through a single declaration or announcement, 1959 is as appropriate a date as any to use for its emergence.(2-31)

Filastinuna was edited by Abu Jihad, the most methodical member of the group and, being the only one with a flair for writing, also its foremost contributor. But the dynamo behind it, the moving spirit of the group who pushed this project forward, was Arafat. He insisted on writing his own inelegantly phrased articles, used his own money to finance it and supervised the magazine's production. Once again, and despite Abu Jihad's superior efforts, Arafat was the impetous, energetic, fearless innovator. With little justification, he claimed expertise through his editorship of *Sawt Falastin* in Cairo, and was able to talk others into backing him. Abu Jihad showed no resentment.

How many issues were printed in Beirut is unknown. The old Fatah leadership speak of a circulation of over five thousand, but this is an overstatement. While it was distributed in many Arab countries it did not reach ones with strict press censorship, such as Egypt and Syria, and others frowned on its Palestine First stance. Within certain literary and political circles there was considerable speculation as to who was behind it, but its overall impact was limited by its lack of quality. It certainly did not reach the average Palestinian.

As with *Sawt Falastin, Filastinuna* was high on passion and calls for the eradication of Israel and deficient in standard of writing and depth of analysis. Although Nasser's popularity and widespread Arab belief in his unity schemes prevented counter-ideas having a broad appeal, neither this nor its amateurishness detracted from the nature of the magazine's message and its uniqueness. In a major departure from other Palestinian movements, the Fatah group advocated the liberation of Palestine through an armed struggle to be carried out by the Palestinians themselves, which it called the Children of the Catastrophe. Instead of following or depending on the Arab regimes and their armies, it favoured an independent Palestinian policy and arming the Palestinians to liberate their country. To Fatah, liberation came before Arab unity, and liberation was considered the first step towards unity instead of the other way round. The Fatah programme, as articulated in *Filastinuna*, promoted a Palestinian nationalism without revolutionary ideology and was a vague call to arms—it was far less clear than what Habbash and others were advocating. In fact, the Fatah programme was so thin that it left unanswered the vital questions of how the liberation of Palestine was to be achieved by Palestinians against an enemy as strong as Israel, and the exact relationship between a Palestinian armed struggle and the admitted eventual need for total Arab support—Arafat has never been able to answer this question. But it was a new story line, and its adoption took place after considerable heated debate.

It was all Arafat's invention, an extension of the anti-Arab governments line he adopted after 1948 and which was strengthened by the division in Arab ranks. Time and again he lamented the lack of Arab action, using phrases such as: 'Violence is the only solution' and 'Liberating Palestine could only take place through the barrel of a gun.' His justification for his hard line included pointing out the ineffectiveness of the Arab regimes and their Palestinian followers, dramatic stories of how the Palestinians were being mistreated by fellow Arabs,

and analysis of how this was creating a unique sense of Palestinian identity which needed to express itself. The humiliation of the Palestinians and their relegation to the status of unwanted refugees, and the lack of Arab activity to recover Palestine, were very much on his mind, and all the recollections of the Fatah meetings which took place at the time, mostly late at night in members' homes, show him leading the way. Although Nasser had created a border guard in Gaza and sponsored the fedayeen, he still kept them under his control. Arafat scoffed at the efforts of the Arab governments and their caution and made fun of them,[2-32] often using another of his talents, telling jokes. But he shunned ideology and commitment to individual Arab governments in favour of a flexibility aimed at giving the Palestinians room for manoeuvre. It was his ally and close friend Abu Iyad who articulated this vital aspect of the 'philosophy' of Fatah: 'We were convinced that the Palestinians could expect nothing from the Arab regimes.'[2-33]

According to Fatah, the Palestinians had to lead. But they knew that they needed Arab support, so they placed themselves in a position to receive it without alienating anyone, and decided to go for diversity of backing to avoid being dictated to. The need to maintain independence from the Arabs meant that the Palestinians could act in accordance with the interests of the separate identity being forced on them, and the decision to be flexible in dealing with the Arab governments meant working with all of them. Logic would suggest that this amounted to playing the Arab governments against each other, but Fatah denied this and promised not to interfere in their internal affairs or politics. Arafat was the severest critic of Arab governments among the Fatah group, but amazingly he also led in not wanting to alienate any of them.

Interestingly, in keeping with their nationalist but unrevolutionary approach, Fatah followed strictly traditional lines regarding two vital aspects reflecting political conditions in the Middle East. Its condemnation of the West for helping create Israel and continuing to support it held nothing new. Fatah's statements resembled official Arab proclamations—more in the nature of protests against Western impartiality than warnings. Unlike the ANM it issued no serious threats to Western business interests in the region, and no statements which might jeopardize its presence in Kuwait. And there was not a single word about the social issues of the time and how they contributed to the maladies and weaknesses of the Arab regimes and their ineffectiveness. Nor did Fatah's call for eventual Arab unity differ from what was generally accepted by the established regimes, and it contained nothing to frighten those who saw in unity an encroachment on their sovereignty. Instead there was total subscription to the idea of Palestine and the rights of its people, angry nationalistic rhetoric, and subsidiary devotion to Palestine's Arab and Muslim character. This was openly anti-Nasser, but it also ended the Fatah group's links with the Muslim Brotherhood because it conflicted with the idea of an Islamic identity to the Palestinian problem and the call to jihad—a holy war to recover Palestine. Even Abu Iyad's relationship with the Brotherhood came to an end.

The Fatah 'policy', however new and vague, was a precise response to the political conditions of the time. After the Suez War Nasser openly admitted the limits of his power, saying that '[He] had no plan to liberate Palestine.'[2-34] In Iraq in 1958 Kassem, at least initially, was doing nothing except promoting general

plans aimed at wresting Arab leadership from Nasser's hands. The conservative regimes—Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the oil sheikhdoms—conducted sporadic quarrels with Nasser. They pointed out the emptiness of his plans, because they relegated the Palestinian problem to a secondary position after Arab unity and Nasser's personal ambitions, and would take centuries to achieve. Even the ILF and the Muslim Brotherhood's constant calls for an Islamic jihad made little sense, and the Brotherhood was in any case more concerned with staying alive in the face of a regional onslaught against it by Nasser.

Meanwhile the brittle relationship between the Arabs and the Palestinians hit an all-time low. Both sides knew that cooperation between them was necessary—the result of a historical, unalterable Arab oneness—but simultaneously, and mostly in private, they accused each other of gross inadequacy before and during the 1948 War and of continued lack of commitment to the cause of Palestine in the years which followed. The Palestinians resented being treated as second—class citizens by all the Arab regimes except Syria; this was countered by the Arab governments' accusations of Palestinian irresponsibility, attempts at dragging them into another war, meddling in their internal affairs and being more interested in amassing wealth and getting others to fight for them than in saving their country. Only Fatah's plans, eventually contained in a document called *The Structure for Revolutionary Construction*, encompassed the Palestinian complaints and answered some of the Arab protests. The other Palestinian movements, which were beholden to specific Arab regimes, followed their financial backers. Naturally this, despite Nasser's overwhelming hold on the Arab people, limited their scope for action and left the door open for Fatah and its new approach.

This situation underlines Fatah's later success. But there was more to the Fatah position than what its programme stated or what was implied in bulletins and articles in *Filastinuna*. There was the history of the original advocacy of Palestinian responsibility for their 'problem' and how the Fatah call represented its natural culmination. It was this and Arafat's appreciation of it which allowed a small band of men to rise to the occasion and to promote Palestinianness as never before. Their efforts eventually determined the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Fatah's rise must be seen in the context of the times. The seeds of conflict between the Palestinians and the rest of the Arabs as to who was best equipped to assume primary responsibility for the Arab–Israeli problem began to grow in the mid-1930s. This is when the Palestinians, already disenchanted with the rest of the Arabs because of their obvious lack of success against foreign control, stopped calling themselves Southern Syrians and began to see themselves as a separate and special case, the would—be victims of Zionist plans to build a national homeland on their land. In 1936 the Palestinians decided that the Palestine problem concerned and affected them more than the rest of the Arabs. This feeling had originally surfaced after the defeat of the occupying Turks in the first World War, and was a result of the subsequent Arab failure to create an independent Syria in 1921 and of the later relegation of the new Arab states to Western dependencies. It began to take concrete form after the Palestinian General Strike of 1936. The relatively successful anti-British civil disobedience campaign was brought to an end by the intercession of Arab leaders from Jordan, Iraq and Saudi

Arabia who subordinated the Arab interests in Palestine, the fate of the territory and its people, to their special relations with Britain.

This crystallized the Palestinian sense of isolation and separateness, feelings which were encouraged by the Mufti and the writings of the Palestinian historian Aref Al Aref. Promoting Palestinian nationalism rather than relying on the Arabs enhanced the Mufti's political position with the people whose territory was promised to the Jews, and in promoting this the Mufti intercepted any attempts to marginalize him and made a solid bid for Palestinian leadership. However, unlike Fatah's use of the 1948 defeat, the Mufti's Palestinianness came too early and he never found a way to act without Arab support or to capitalize on the divisions within Arab ranks. Al Aref, a highly respected historian, judged the Arab leaders and found them so corrupt, so committed to their own narrow interests and so lacking in the right qualities that he began to promote Palestinian self-reliance.

The Arab defeat by Israel in 1948 and the open betrayal of the Palestinians by King Abdallah of Jordan's Arab Legion and the Iraqi army, which also often refused to fight the Israelis, contributed to the emergence of an angry Palestinian identity. The considerable number of secret Arab attempts to settle the problem with Israel without consulting the Palestinians or informing the Arab people also added to Palestinian anger and their sense of betrayal. King Abdallah continued secret negotiations with Israel which had begun much earlier; President Husni Zaim of Syria used the American CIA to make his own peace offers; Charles Malik and Camille Chamoun of Lebanon developed their own settlement plans; King Farouk of Egypt's brother-in-law, Colonel Ismael Shirine, and the Egyptian Prime Minister, Mohammed Nakrashi, wanted out of the conflict to devote themselves to Egypt's problems; and Nuri Said of Iraq advocated accepting whatever Britain had to offer by way of a solution. Later, though supreme in his leadership of the Arab masses after the Suez War, Nasser made the Palestinian problem secondary to the elusive long-term aim of uniting the Arabs under his leadership. Nasser had come to power with CIA help, and suspicion lingered that he would accept an American-brokered solution to the problem. This is why the Muftis fled from Cairo.

It was true that the Arab governments had kept the Palestinian problem alive for fear of their people's reaction, and this accounts for the secrecy in their negotiations with Israel. The Arab people, without any prompting, were more committed to the Palestinian cause than their leaders were, but Arafat's group did not believe this could last long. Habbash, who also knew of the plans of some Arab leaders to settle the Palestinian problem, believed the masses would be steadfast and would overthrow anyone who gave up Arab rights in Palestine. Arafat, however, believed Arab leaders were capable of fooling their own people and of making peace at the expense of the Palestinians. Habbash thought time was on his side and revolution was on the way; Arafat feared the consequences of delay and wanted to thwart all attempts at making peace.

In retrospect it can be argued that for most of the twentieth century the Palestinians have conducted a struggle to seize responsibility for the fight against Israel. This is why, educated or not, Yasser Arafat must be credited as the one Palestinian leader who had the foresight and courage to capitalize on the disaffection of his people with the rest of the Arabs and to give their feelings some solid content. It was Arafat who had donned the *kuffiya*, the symbol of the 1936

Palestinian rebellion, in Prague and later adopted a chequered version of it in Kuwait. It was his amazing personal feeling for what mattered which led him to adopt the name Abu Ammar, thus attaching himself to the all-pervasive Islamic tradition which had such great appeal to the ordinary Arab and Palestinian. It was also he who provided the example for members of his group to adopt *noms de guerre* which used 'Abu (father of)', in keeping with a fading tradition which was dismissed by the more modern thinkers of the Arab Nationalist Movement and even the Mufti's Arab Higher Committee.

In fact, as with the way he managed his chairmanship of the Federation of Palestinian Students and GUPS, it was Arafat who gave the participants in Fatah a sense of purpose beyond their small number, importance and means. Its founders remained committed to the idea of a collective leadership and this remained so until 1968, but it was an unnatural situation, particularly in view of Arab belief in individuals and their genius. Though he was later punished and came close to being ejected from the organization for acting on his own, Arafat was the dominant figure within Fatah from the start. None of the other members matched his energy and inventiveness. With the backing of Abu Iyad and Abu Jihad—they often stopped him from taking impulsive decisions and foolish actions—he overwhelmed the conservative members such as Khalid Al Hassan who wanted closer coordination with the Arab countries. Recalling their first-hand experiences in Cairo and Gaza, Abu Iyad and Abu Jihad agreed with Arafat that the staunchest anti-Israeli Arab leader, Nasser, was not to be trusted.

In 1959 and 1960, after steering Fatah into adopting his hardline policy, it was Arafat who divided his small Kuwait group into cells and saw to it that no one cell or member of it was privy to the activities of the rest. He eliminated doubters who questioned his overstated plans to conduct an armed struggle by forcing some of the original Fatah members like Yussuf Amira to resign. As with the adoption of the independent position, initially he appealed to them in the gentlest of voices. But stubborn ones who failed to be converted were subjected to verbal lashings after he lost his temper: Arafat berated, insulted and abused them in the way known as *radih*, the preserve of street Egyptians. On occasion he threatened some with physical violence. He did this despite paying lip service to the idea of collective leadership, and he got away with it because Abu Iyad and Abu Jihad were with him—the former to strengthen his arguments and make them credible, the latter to prevent him turning into a raving lunatic. He was the initiator, innovator and pusher, but he needed Abu Iyad and Abu Jihad to complement him.

More than anyone else, Arafat put into action the two strategic decisions which guaranteed Fatah's continued existence and guarded its independence: he refused to join in Arab feuds and he detached the business of raising money from becoming politically dependent on the donors. Ignoring Arab feuds was a difficult option. In 1959 Nasser, though still making perfunctory moves and promises to maintain his leadership position, including arming Palestinians in Gaza though insisting on controlling them, suggested the creation of a Palestinian entity[2-35] and got the Council of the Arab League to consider his proposal. In 1960 Kassem accused Nasser of inactivity in the sphere of liberating Palestine, and of not providing Palestinian fighters with enough support and freedom. Determined to outdo his Egyptian rival, the Iraqi leader began arming and training Palestinians

in his own country and announced the formation of a Palestinian Liberation Army. He went further than Nasser's proposal for an entity and called for the creation of a Palestinian government in exile,[2-36] Jumhuriayat Falastin Al Khalida or the Eternal Republic of Palestine. Cooperating with Kassem, whose policies were relatively close to those of Fatah and whose success would have enhanced the chances of the Fatah exiles, must have been hugely tempting. But Arafat and his supporters steadfastly refused to do so. This was a difficult decision and there was more to it than avoiding confrontation with the most popular Arab leader of the time, Nasser. It was in line with Arafat's basic thinking of refusing to create a Palestinian entity because that would end his flexibility of action, and avoiding entanglements in Arab feuds and anything that smacked of ideology or dependency. He was happy playing the chameleon. Kassem was a leftist, somewhat unlslamic, and Fatah would have had to follow Iraq.

There were many other occasions when the prospect of a rich Arab government's financial backing with strings attached must have been equally tempting, and King Hussein, who had succeeded to the throne in 1952, was not averse to helping Fatah against Nasser. But Arafat would not succumb and only accepted money which did not place constraints on his freedom of action. The final chapter on the possibility of cooperating with Kassem came in 1962, when the Iraqi dictator, like other Iraqi leaders before him and Saddam Hussein in 1990, pronounced Kuwait part of Iraq and threatened to invade it. In a decision which sheds a different light on Arafat's 1990 support of Saddam and makes it more complex than the adoption of a simple anti-Western position, Fatah refused to consider the potential rewards of siding with Iraq and supported the independence of Kuwait.[2-37]

When Fatah started, its small membership spent their own money to keep it alive and Arafat gave more than most. In 1960–1, the second strategic decision which faced them concerned raising money to support their expanding activities. It was the energetic Arafat who developed the plans for fund–raising and assumed responsibility for it. His approach was simple and direct. His first target was the wealthy Palestinians who resided in Kuwait and other oil-rich countries—people with an interest in promoting a conservative, independent Palestinian movement. In Kuwait he found a ready benefactor in Tala'at Al Ghosein, a successful businessman whom the Kuwaitis had appointed ambassador to the USA and other countries. Arafat used his friendship with this man's cousin, Jaweed Al Ghosein, who had been his classmate in Cairo, to obtain financial help from him. After that there was Hani Al Qadoumi, a relation of an early Fatah activist, Farouk Al Qadoumi, and Arafat succeeded with him as well. Then came the very wealthy Muhsin Al Qattan, with whom Arafat established a direct line and from whom he received considerable assistance. Later, beginning in 1963, there was Hani Abul Saoud, a relation of Arafat's on his mother's side who later became head of the Kuwaiti Investment Fund. He provided both direct help and a means of reaching wealthy Kuwaitis.

But Arafat did not limit himself to the wealthy, and Fatah managed to endear itself to the thousands of Palestinian professionals working throughout the Gulf. This did not mean turning donors into Fatah members—Fatah was not organized enough to accommodate that—but it demonstrated the soundness of Arafat's original decision regarding the existence of a separate Palestinian identity which

shunned ideology and wanted to express itself through a Palestinianness committed to 'armed struggle'. During this period, but again without compromising his independence, Arafat received some financial help from the Mufti, who was fearful of the success of Palestinian radical groups and was still committed to opposing Nasser.

The circle of contributors expanded and Arafat, a past-master at getting introductions to the rich and powerful and adept at selling ideas to them and pleasing them, met some members of the Kuwaiti royal family. He charmed them into donating to his cause by inflating the prospects of armed struggle and providing them with a way of contributing to Palestine. While some of them may have regarded their financial assistance as a way of supporting a political group committed to containing Nasser, there is no evidence whatsoever of Arafat deviating from his original neutral position among the ever-feuding Arabs, though this was to change in the years to come. The early success in collecting money from Kuwaiti royals was followed in 1961 by decision to expand into Qatar and to appeal to its royal family. Qatar too was under British control, but Arafat found a willing partner in Mahmoud Abbas, who was to become better known as Abu Mazen of Oslo Peace Accord fame. Arafat travelled to Qatar and got Abbas and other successful Palestinian businessmen in the country to help him. He also managed to get hefty, unconditional donations from the Qatari royal family.**(2-38)** Soon afterwards, he and Abu Jihad travelled to Libya, then still under King Idriss, and the Qatari performance was repeated.

Arafat the student leader and instinctive strategist was also a fund-raiser par excellence, a very successful salesman. As would be expected, particularly in the Middle East and in small political movements, those who raised money had plenty of say about how it was used. But Arafat went beyond that. His characteristic sense of what mattered, enhanced by having watched the Mufti's effective use of money to control the Arab Higher Committee, committed him to using it selectively. This was a trait which almost destroyed him but eventually elevated him to power. To him, money was a tool of power, and power ensured the means to raise further money.

During this period of intense debates, establishing sources of financial support and laying the foundations for an organization, Arafat lived alone. Housed in the Solaybiahat district of Kuwait in a small bungalow provided by the Ministry of Public Works and originally built for British officials,**(2-39)** he led the lonely, confined life of an expatriate bachelor and had little contact with the local community; to this day no Kuwaiti friends are known of. He had a small garden outside his modest quarters, but there was a high fence around it, in keeping with the Islamic rules about protecting women, to prevent him from looking at the neighbouring houses. The strictures went further and precluded inviting large groups of people for an evening meal or a barbecue, two common activities in Kuwait. This did not bother him, for he never showed any particular interest in food or the comforts of life. Arafat often ate standing up, nibbling at whatever was within reach; his favourite foods were honey on toast and cornflakes mixed with tea. He very often slept on couches in friends' houses, if not on the floor. At home, his only source of entertainment was watching cartoons such as *Tom and Jerry*

and *Road Runner* on Kuwaiti television, a way of unwinding which he has kept to this day.

Arafat's bungalow, sparsely furnished, reflected the austere life of the occupant. It was not as impressive as the house occupied by his younger brother Fathi, by then a practising doctor in Kuwait, and, not unexpectedly, it was smaller than the houses occupied by some of his married colleagues. The bungalow's only distinguishing characteristic was the number of sports cars parked in front of it. He had two or three at a time but his favourite was his American–made Ford Thunderbird, which he was fond of driving at high speed. It was an ugly piece of design with crude lines and high fins, and he whizzed around in it wearing large, American–style dark glasses and waving to people as if wanting to be noticed. Kuwait was a place where this kind of behaviour was frowned on. People remember a hip young man jangling his car keys in his hand with a spring in his step, a ready smile and a willingness to talk to strangers. Yet there were no women in his life at the time; Kuwaiti society was even stricter than it is today, and the only 'available' women were ones who went there on brief visits to entertain a sheikh or a wealthy businessman. Moreover, Arafat himself displayed no interest in female companionship, and in any case his official and unofficial work and political activities occupied most of his time. When not watching television at home he was with the group, but, interestingly and unlike some of the other Fatah members, there is no record of him reading anything beyond a daily newspaper. The facility to relate to ideas, grasp and extend them was the more admirable because he acquired these ideas through listening to people.

As he has done throughout his life, Arafat later exaggerated his achievements—in this case the degree of his business success in Kuwait. According to him his unofficial work, over and above the demands of his official position, consisted of being a partner in a contracting company; he claims to have been very successful and to have quickly become a millionaire. This is not true.[2-40] To begin with, he did not create a construction company or become partner in one, and there is no name for the so-called company. Like most civil servants in Kuwait he moonlighted, and he did so in partnership with an Egyptian civil engineer by the name of Abdel Muaz. Arafat was the contact man and salesman and Abdel Muaz carried out the actual work.

Because of the merciless heat, civil servants in Kuwait work only half a day. During the oil-boom years, many of them also offered their services on a private basis because there was a shortage of small companies to undertake maintenance and minor private building work. This was a common practice, and the people who carried out such work did so with the knowledge of their government employers, who saw their activity as alleviating a skills shortage. The small projects that Arafat undertook, however, yielded thousands instead of millions of dollars as he later insisted on mythologizing. Still, with his salary of $30,000 a year, free housing and modest needs, Arafat did indeed lead a comfortable life which allowed him to give money to Fatah, own sports cars and make one holiday trip to Europe. Here, Arafat is guilty of a misplacement of emphasis; it was not his construction work but politics was which the yardstick of his success.

But there is more to this story than simple exaggeration: Arafat has always used the untruth that he became a millionaire in Kuwait to answer questions about his

subsequent use of Fatah's money as if it were his own. Even in June 1997 he told interviewer Larry King of the Cable News Network, 'I have never received a salary. I am still spending the money I made in Kuwait.'

The two events which were to transform the fortunes of Fatah, force it into involvement in Arab politics and elevate it from a marginal organization to a serious contender for the Palestinian leadership occurred in 1961 and 1962. The first was the break-up of the UAR in September 1961, while the following year saw the success of the Algerian revolution and the granting of independence to that country by France.

The secession of Syria from Nasser's United Arab Republic and its reversion to an independent country diminished Nasser and Habbash, affected the public's perception of their leadership and brought the bandwagon of Arab unity to a screeching halt. Those who believed in Arab unity as a necessary first step towards liberating Palestine were confronted with stark evidence of its failure. Journalists and historians listed the reasons behind the failure and, more importantly, why Arab unity might not work in the future. Even Nasser slipped into talking about a 'combined Arab will' and 'a unity of purpose' and stopped promoting actual union.

The Algerian revolution demonstrated the success of keeping an identity alive through reliance on Islam and the use of a guerrilla army against a superior conventional force. Superficial analysis of these events amounted to a vindication of Fatah: Arab unity was proved to be beyond attainment and the Algerian revolution was a model to be copied. Even today Arafat's partisans, including former special adviser Bassam Abu Sharif, attribute foresight to Arafat and condemn Arab nationalism as having been nothing more than 'windy rhetoric'.**(2-41)** But others more learned and impartial have carefully analysed the background to the break–up and produced more complex answers. They suggest it was a combination of unique factors that led to the dissolution of the UAR and that the Algerian analogy was not pertinent to the conditions governing the Arab–Israeli conflict.**(2-42)**

The rights and wrongs of these assertions matter less than the effects of these developments in the Arab world on ordinary Arabs and the way Arafat's unerring instinct turned the events into Fatah victories. Not for the first time, the natural strategist in the man demonstrated an uncanny sense of timing and a superhuman ability to move into the breach.

Late in 1961, Arafat and some of his colleagues made their first trip to Syria as representatives of Fatah. Kuwait was too far removed from the Arab–Israeli conflict, but Syria was not. Allying himself with an independent Syria bordering on Israel offered many advantages and a chance to start the armed struggle, even though it amounted to a decision to forgo neutrality and take sides. The new Syria which emerged from the UAR was anti–Nasser, and among the many things it did to maintain its reclaimed independence was to try to undermine him through taking a more militant stand vis à vis Israel. The new Syrian leaders, like many before them, considered Palestine part of Syria. In an act which demonstrated the oneness of purpose between the Palestinians and Syrians, they were already supporting small Palestinian guerrilla groups conducting raids into Israel—among others a group calling itself the Palestine Liberation Front, led by a Palestinian

officer in the Syrian army, Ahmad Jibril. Above all, Syria was a safe ally because it did not have enough money to 'buy' Arafat and it had over a hundred and fifty thousand Palestinian refugees who, unlike the Palestinian civil servants and businessmen in Kuwait and the rest of the Gulf, represented potential recruits for Arafat's plans to create a Palestinian fighting force. Whatever the pertinence of his Gaza and Egyptian experiences, it was in Syria that Arafat first became a guerrilla leader, and he had to take sides in an inter-Arab dispute to do it.

The Fatah visitors to Syria (they kept their Kuwait jobs just in case) had one advantage, money. Arafat and his associates, including some who are still with him and who were party to the decision to 'investigate' Syria, make false statements about how poor they were when they arrived in Damascus, and most biographers accept their word. This is another myth-making exercise aimed at concealing the financial source of their success and an attempt at attributing it exclusively to their own talents. Syria was host to a considerable number of Palestinian political groups and aspirants to leadership but, according to three former members of Fatah, Syrian-backed and independent Palestinian groups did not have the financial resources to compete with Arafat. The Palestinian writer Audeh Butrus Audeh, an Arafat critic, speaks of the mystery of the source of money, of how Arafat exercised total control over the Fatah war chest and how he bribed people to join him.**(2-43)** Dr Tayseer Kamleh, a Palestinian political activist who was a member of the Syrian-sponsored Committee for Popular Mobilization to Liberate Palestine and who later became a Fatah spokesman, confirms the existence and importance of money but refrains from describing what Arafat did as a bribe.

According to the eyewitness accounts of Kamleh and others, Arafat offered Palestinians willing to join Fatah as recruits to be trained in Syria 18 sterling a month. This was at a time when Syrian soldiers and Palestinians belonging to pro-Syrian Palestinian paramilitary formations were receiving one-third of that.**(2-44)** Furthermore, there were many Palestinian officers in the Syrian army of the 1960s and the line between their official Syrian positions and their membership of Palestinian resistance groups was a vague one, but they too did not have many followers for lack of funds. What is beyond question is that Syrian support for the Palestinians included allowing them to use the country's territory to carry out raids against Israel. In reality, in 1962 and 1963 Fatah did not, could not, send infiltrators into Israel. They spent a considerable amount of time in Damascus while shuttling back and forth to Kuwait and using elaborate excuses to keep their jobs there. Arafat and his colleagues busied themselves recruiting and building a structure. In fact, though successful in raising money and keeping the source of much of it a secret, the Fatah which was divided between Kuwait and Damascus had no more than two to three hundred civilian members and no fighters.

Money and salesmanship worked, the young men of the refugee camps flocked to join Fatah and Syria was accommodating. Late in 1962 he began sending some of them to train in Algeria with the help of the new President, Ahmad Ben Bella, whom Abu Jihad had met and befriended when the Algerian lived in exile in Cairo. By 1963 things were looking even rosier. In February that year the Kassem regime was overthrown by a group of mostly Ba'ath army officers led by Colonel Abdel Salam Aref. Though the Ba'athists were believers in Arab unity they were

independent from Nasser and their policy included a commitment to help create a Palestinian fighting force. A month later, encouraged by their comrades' success in Iraq, Ba'ath army officers in Syria overthrew the elected government of their country and replaced it with a more pro-Palestinian military regime.

Both countries provided Fatah with training camps and facilities, but the Iraq-based training came to an end late in 1963 when the country's government decided to impose an indoctrination programme for the Fatah recruits. Arafat would not accept this; he wanted exclusive control over the training and indoctrination of his fighters. The Syrians were less rigid. Arafat at first worked with Colonels Abdallah Shawkawi and Ahmad Sweidani, but soon he dealt directly with members of the army and Ba'ath party commands, who helped him as much as Ben Bella did.

The problem in Iraq was a small hiccup in a much larger picture. By late 1963, it was time to settle in Syria. Arafat was the first to leave Kuwait, using the disguise of a lowly official and driving an unsuspicious Volkswagen; the others followed. While the commonly accepted story gives a later date for the beginning of Fatah's regional activities, two witnesses state that they started in early 1964. At that time Arafat began sending civilian infiltrators to advance the Fatah fortunes in the West Bank, then under King Hussein's control, having been annexed by Jordan in 1949. Arafat did so with official Syrian approval and help,[2-45] and only the lack of success of these efforts could have led him to avoid mentioning this afterwards. He also sent emissaries and organizers to Gaza. They caused problems for Nasser's security apparatus and some of them were arrested by Colonel Tala' at Al Alfi, acting on the Egyptian leader's orders. Others went to Beirut, then the centre of Middle East journalism and home for many Palestinian thinkers and activists—throughout Lebanon there were two hundred thousand Palestinian refugees.

Nor was Arafat the chameleon above cooperating with revolutionaries or with countries which espoused alien ideologies. Abu Jihad was in Algeria getting up training camps, first under Ben Bella and later his successor, Houari Bu Middien. Khalid Al Hassan and his brother Hani, both German-educated, established firm connections with left-wing Palestinian students in that country and in other parts of Europe. They even received donations from students and sent some of them to Syria and Algeria for training. Simultaneously, this was the period which saw Arafat's first attempts to obtain help from non-Arab friendly countries regardless of their politics. At the beginning, this took the form of sending Palestinian visitors sponsored by the Algerians, Syrians or Iraqis to Communist China, Cuba and other socialist republics with an interest in helping an ostensibly anti-Western revolutionary movement. In fact, the tireless Arafat travelled to China with Abu Jihad to attend a meeting of the Afro–Asian Solidarity Conference. The Fatah members in Damascus, Algeria and other places took every opportunity to meet foreign visitors to these countries and to ask them for support, as when Abu Jihad met and charmed Che Guevara in Algiers. In fact, Arafat's political acrobatics went as far as using money raised from the pro-West oil-rich Arab countries to buy arms from Communist and socialist countries.

As events in 1964 were to demonstrate, everything was subordinated to Arafat's single goal of keeping an independent Palestinian movement alive. On Nasser's

initiative, and nominally to respond to Israel's plans to divert the waters of the Jordan River to irrigate the Negev Desert, the first Arab summit conference was held in Cairo in January 1964. Unable to respond to the Israeli threat militarily, the Arab leaders passed the buck and voted to set up the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) under the leadership of Ahmad Shukeiri, a Palestinian diplomat for hire who had represented Syria and Saudi Arabia in international forums and at that moment was an official of the Arab League. In May 1964 the new PLO held a conference at the National Hotel in Jerusalem, issued a National Covenant which committed it to the idea of an armed struggle and appointed itself the representative of the Palestinian people, the guardian of their interests in the Arab world and internationally.

This was a greater challenge to Arafat and Fatah than anything that had existed before. The backing of all the Arab countries for the creation of the PLO as an umbrella organization under which all Palestinian groups operated or should operate (though some, like the ANM, did so reluctantly and in a limited way) presented Fatah with two options. It could either join the new structure and relinquish its independence, or dissolve itself and disappear.

Cleverly, Arafat did not attend the Jerusalem meeting for fear of being pressured into accepting decisions not to his liking. Instead, and using a ploy which was to become one of his trademarks, he let a delegation of Abu Jihad and a dozen Fatah members attend. Abu Jihad's group watched the elaborate proceedings and excitement in Jerusalem without participating; they acted merely as observers, and nothing escaped them.

The PLO which came into being as a result of a combined Arab decision formalized the maladies which had given rise to Fatah. Above all, it was Nasser's brainchild and had been created to work with the Arab countries, to satisfy the Palestinians while keeping them under control.[2-46] Moreover, the composition of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the parliamentary-style body which came into being in Jerusalem and which purported to control the PLO, weakened the appeal of the organization. The PNC members were appointed and, although the Arab Nationalists and other doctrinaire groups were supposed to be represented, it was a distinctly elitist assembly with little support among Palestinians in refugee camps and in the West Bank and Gaza. Finally, a Palestine Liberation Army was formed under the PLO. This move, which was supposed to appeal to ordinary Palestinians and Arabs, was no more than a gesture; the prospective fighting force was to be financed by the Arab governments and to obey their orders. In fact 'armed struggle was not part of the original program of the PLO' or its army,[2-47] and the organization underscored its demerits by promising more than it could deliver. This showed clearly when another Arab summit in September 1964 put the PLO and PLA under total Arab control and stressed Nasser's 'unity of action' approach.

Arafat used Abu Jihad's clear analysis of what the PLO stood for to neutralize all opposition to his hard-line policies within Fatah. At first Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad had a difficult time controlling an angry, ranting and impulsive leader who hankered for immediate action, including violence, to undermine the PLO. Then, acting together, the three cleverly used the Jerusalem proceedings to prove that reliance on the Arab governments meant reverting to policies which had failed in

the past. The leader of the conservative wing of Fatah, Khalid Al Hassan, could not counter their argument; this solidified the position of the Arafat-led 'crazies', who made him the de facto leader of the whole organization.

What followed was more deliberate, an anti-PLO campaign which rightly accused the new organization of being beholden to Arab regimes and of not representing the average Palestinian. But this was not enough for Arafat, who saw another opening and moved to capitalize on the Syrian and Saudi reluctance to back the PLO. Syria considered the organization too traditional and shackled to be effective, and wanted a more revolutionary stance. Arafat had a meeting with the country's leaders, including the behind-the-scenes leader of the 1963 coup, General Hafez Al Assad, praised his government's misgivings and presented himself as a natural expression of their doubts. For its part, Saudi Arabia had accepted the PLO and Shukeiri with reluctance and wanted something like an old-fashioned organization under the Mufti instead. After guaranteeing Syria's willingness to continue to house him and provide him with support, Arafat courted Saudi Arabia, by then emerging as a new power within the Arab camp and determined to cut Nasser down to size for trying to control neighbouring Yemen and threatening the stability of the Arabian peninsula.

In this instance, Arafat the opportunist managed to use the leader of the conservative wing of Fatah and a man whom he had considered a competitor, Khalid Al Hassan, to establish a direct link to Saudi Arabia through the country's Minister of Petroleum, Ahmad Zaki Yamani. Even at their first meeting Arafat talked the dapper Yamani into giving Fatah a considerable sum of money.[2-48] Later in 1965, Yamani arranged for Arafat to meet King Faisal, Nasser's chief rival among Arab leaders, and came back with millions instead of thousands. The Fatah contacts with Yamani and Faisal made Nasser furious: he attacked Arafat's organization publicly and prevailed upon Lebanon to control Fatah's attempts to infiltrate Israel from its territory.[2-49] Then he announced several measures aimed at strengthening the PLA and resistance groups in Gaza, and put his Voice of Palestine radio under PLO control. Nasser's response was as useless as Shukeiri's repeated attempts to entice Fatah into joining the PLO and Habbash's efforts to cooperate with it so as to avoid the fragmentation which would vitiate the potential of all Palestinian movements. Meanwhile, the Saudis continued to provide Arafat with enough money to pose a challenge to the PLO and Nasser's hegemony over the Palestinian problem.

The battle lines were drawn. While Arafat spoke of Israel as the enemy and declared that 'one enemy at a time was enough',[2-50] instead of remaining above Arab divisions Fatah was at their very centre. Nasser still commanded unrivalled loyalty at street level, and the raging battle for control of the fate of Palestine received little press coverage and escaped most people; but the Fatah challenge to Nasser's leadership was stronger than ever before. Abu Iyad, Abu Jihad and Arafat were the trio at the top of Fatah, but in addition there were Qadoumi, Adwan, the Al Hassan brothers Hani and Khalid, Abu Mazen and a cabal of important money men whom Arafat always accorded special treatment. They were men possessed with the idea of independent Palestinian action and, though they never attacked Nasser publicly while heaping scorn on Shukeiri,[2-51] their plans called for prevailing against both men. The only thing Nasser could do to outmanoeuvre

them and to prevent Habbash and others from joining them was to embark on partial or total hostilities against Israel, and that he was not prepared to do.

Fatah's success against Nasser gave its members breathing space, and they used Syrian, Algerian and Saudi support to build a structure worthy of their challenge. In a clear attempt to pre-empt the PLO they conducted a half-hearted and unproductive raid against Israel in December 1964.

While sympathetic to Nasser, the Lebanese government could not control the refugee camps on its territory. Fatah moved in, and training camps there were added to the ones in Syria and Algeria. Thousands of refugees volunteered, as well as Palestinian students from Europe and many who joined Fatah from the West Bank and Gaza. The actual training consisted of an improvised programme borrowed from the Algerians and whatever the Fatah leadership knew of the teachings of the Algerian revolutionary Franz Fanon, Che Guevara, the Vietnamese General Giap and Mao Tzedong. The trainees learned how to use light weapons, mostly Kalashnikov assault rifles, and received indoctrination covering refugee problems, Palestinian and Arab history and the philosophy of Fatah. There was much about how the PLO was full of corruption and nepotism and had been created to control rather than support the Palestinian people.[2-52] The propaganda against the PLO was effective because the organization did nothing beyond building a small army, the PLA, which joined the Arab armies in their idleness. Shukeiri issued unrealistic threats to throw Israel into the sea, which reduced him to an object of mockery and further eroded the standing of the organization he chaired. But however impressive Fatah was at organizing and preparing a challenge to the PLO, an inactive Nasser and an Arab Nationalist Movement without the wherewithal to act independently, the realities of the Fatah military training programme told a different story.

In this context, Arafat was guiltier than others. Because of his volatility his colleagues had refused to appoint him Fatah's military commander and awarded the post to Mohammed Yussuf Al Najjar. But Arafat used his propensity for hard work to make himself Najjar's partner and, as usual, assumed responsibility for training. So while not alone in planning the training programme in Lebanon and Syria, Arafat oversaw it and has to be held responsible for the failure to create an effective Palestinian guerrilla force. However inventive and determined to lead he was, he could not bring himself to take measures aimed at breaking the unmilitary habits of people who belonged to a backward society.

To succeed, to turn illiterate refugees into modern fighters, Arafat would have to have instilled a strong sense of discipline. This would have included punishing recruits for not subscribing to the most elementary of command structures and making them accept the notion of belonging to an organization instead of being individuals. He was not willing to do so for fear of alienating them, and showed particular favour to the very few people who came from notable families. Moreover, Arafat himself has never been an organized person and what he did reflected his ways. Thirdly, and significantly, he was happy enough to turn the recruits into members of Fatah; to him, having followers was the most important issue. This exposed a new trait in the man: he placed more faith in acceptability and followers, particularly the elite, than in military training and competent people.

And it confirmed the existence of an old trait: his statements on the recruits' level of military competence were wild exaggerations.

Yet, despite the obvious unpreparedness of his 'troops', Arafat could not resist the urge to start the armed struggle. Once again his impulsiveness was not matched by that of his colleagues, many of whom wanted to wait until further training and preparation had been carried out. He prevailed, though the vote of the Fatah leadership was only five to four in his favour—perhaps a reflection of their doubts about his organizational abilities and his overblown reports. This showed clearly in the first military communiqué, issued on 31 December 1964—the one which covered the raid from Lebanon mentioned earlier. It was a communiqué which reflected enthusiasm rather than facts. Issued under the name of Al Assifa (The Storm), which was designated the military wing of Fatah and used as a cover to protect the main organization against official reprisals, it was released before confirmation that the foray had actually taken place. In fact, this alleged raid into Israel never did take place because its perpetrators had been arrested by the Lebanese security forces the night before.[2-53] Three days later, on 3 January 1965, and in an act aimed as much at the PLO as at Israel, Fatah finally managed to infiltrate commandos into Israel from the West Bank, reach the village of Beit Netopha and place sticks of dynamite at a water diversion canal. But the timer did not work properly and the dynamite was discovered before it exploded.

A month later, and once again acting without proper planning, Arafat despatched another group to infiltrate Israel through Jordan and the West Bank, but the raiding party was intercepted by a Jordanian army patrol which killed one of its members, Ahmad Musa. Even today Fatah uses this incident to claim that the first martyr of the Palestinian armed resistance was killed by Arabs. This is not true: other Syrian-based groups, including Ahmad Jibril's Palestine Liberation Front and the Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Palestine, had already lost men in direct combat with the Israelis. Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and Israel were all aware of the military ineffectiveness of the initial Fatah forays, but the group's efforts, particularly in attacking a water diversion installation, were a stunning propaganda success. As a result it was Fatah which above all others became associated with the idea of armed struggle.

It was 1966 which was to test and change the fortunes of Arafat. In Syria, a coup within the 1963 coup (it was carried out by one faction against another) took place and led to the emergence of Chief of Staff General Salah Jedid as Syria's strong man behind an ineffective president. In Lebanon, the country's largest bank, INTRA, collapsed after a conspiracy against it by the government and its Central Bank.[2-54] Because INTRA was Palestinian-owned and managed, Fatah used the incident to demonstrate Arab perfidy in dealing with the Palestinians.

A short time after these events Arafat easily ousted Najjar as Fatah's military commander; the latter had six children and feared for his home life. Immediately afterwards, Arafat's expansion of military activity backfired. He was arrested in April for trying to blow up Tapline, the line carrying Saudi oil to the Mediterranean. This irresponsible act of sabotage was typical of the man, who could never understand why Arab interests could not be subordinated to Fatah's total freedom of action. Although this endangered relations with the Syrians and

the Saudis and enraged his colleagues, he made up for Palestinian disapproval by personally participating in the continuing infiltration raids into Israel from Lebanon. He was the one original Fatah member who did this and, however modest the outcome of his forays, they were testimony to his courage. It earned him considerable admiration within Palestinian ranks, was noted by other resistance groups and stopped some Arab governments from punishing him.

What was to become a pattern in the future eventually tripped him. On 2 May 1966 he was suspended from his position as military commander for refusing to accept the principle of collective leadership, organizing raids on his own and misuse of funds.[2-55] Though the details of the charges against him remain a secret and it was a severe blow to his progress, the incident was to be overshadowed by what subsequently happened. One week after his suspension, on the night of 9 May 1966, he was at a house in the Mezzah district of Damascus when a murder took place. The consequences of this event and Syrian suspicion that he was personally involved have haunted him to this day.

The subject remains so sensitive that all three of my sources of the story, people who occupied important positions in Damascus at the time, spoke about it off the record and stipulated that no mention of their previous positions or nationalities be made. Arafat had gone to the house to negotiate with Yussuf Orabi, an ambitious young Palestinian who was serving as an officer in the Syrian army but doubling as a leader of the Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The specifics of what the two were negotiating are not known, but Orabi was a close friend of Hafez Assad, later Syria's President and then Minister of Defence and second only to General Salah Jedid. In fact, Assad was grooming Orabi for leadership of the Palestinians. There is speculation that the ostracised Arafat wanted either Orabi's support against the rest of the Fatah leadership or to form a new movement with him.

The meeting was attended by five people and an argument ensued which turned violent. Orabi fell or was pushed out of a third–floor window and died immediately. Another pro-Syrian Palestinian had been shot dead inside the house. Arafat was not at the scene of the crime when the police arrived, but soon afterwards he took refuge in the house of Colonel Munib Al Majdoub of the Syrian police. From there he sent word to his friend, the country's leader Salah Jedid. Majdoub told Arafat not to worry and sent him home, but he was subsequently arrested by police loyal to Assad, as was Abu Jihad who had returned to Damascus from Algeria. On Assad's orders they were kept at the Dammour air base and then moved to the Al Mezzah prison where they were kept in solitary confinement. Assad appointed a three-man panel to investigate the case.

The panel found Arafat guilty and Assad wanted him sentenced to death, but Jedid would not approve the sentence. Eventually Jedid released him and closed the file. Fatah's story was that the intercession of the remaining Fatah leadership was behind the release. Abu Iyad and Qadoumi had indeed rushed to Damascus from Kuwait, met Assad and accused him of using an accident to undermine Fatah; but in reality this effort had no effect, and it was Jedid who was behind Arafat's release.

This incident was to have consequences on the future of Fatah, Syrian politics and the Arab–Israeli conflict, and therefore merits further analysis. Throwing

someone of Orabi's size out of a window—and he was a stocky man—would have been beyond the physical powers of the diminutive Arafat. Even had he done such a thing, it was unlikely that he would have gone straight to the home of a police officer when he had ample opportunity to escape. Moreover, Arafat has insisted that he left the building during the argument and before the actual incident, and he was definitely not there when the police arrived.

Orabi's death came close to widening the chasm among a Syrian leadership already quarrelling over whether to support Fatah or the Syrian-sponsored Al Sa'iqa, another Damascus-based Palestinian force operating under the aegis of the PLO. Jedid saw no problem in backing both, but Assad considered Fatah unruly and wanted it out of the picture. Like many others in Syria at the time, and as this case proved, Assad was running his own private police force and saw Arafat as the inevitable single leader of Fatah. Though Arafat's accusation that Assad wanted to destroy Fatah through implicating him in a murder case is impossible to prove, it appears feasible. The importance of the case lies in its results; it soured relations between the man who became Fatah's and the PLO's supremo and his accuser, who in 1970 rose to power in Syria and was still there nearly thirty years later. The Orabi incident shaped and continues to influence relations between these two men.

The period from 1965 until the 1967 War is among the most complex of Arafat's chequered career. Time and again he was tested by the conditions within Fatah, in terms of the organization's relationship with other Palestinian groups and the attitude of the Arab governments—even friendly ones whose interests inevitably clashed with the behaviour of the dashing military commander. It was under the weight of this overwhelming pressure that the real Arafat we know today began to surface.

With the support of Abu Iyad and Abu Jihad, soon after the Orabi case was closed Arafat was reinstated as Fatah's military commander. Nobody could equal his zeal or energy. In running the military and other operations of Fatah in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and beyond, Arafat the fast learner emulated the Syrian Deuxième Bureau, the dreaded secret police which kept the country's people in line, and his mentor, General Salah Jedid. Though endowed with an incredible memory, Arafat kept personal files on all the important people within the Fatah organization, which became known as the black files. He used what he knew when necessary—which meant frequently—and to great effect. He always tried to reason and turn people who were opposed to his policies, but whenever that failed he would recite their misdeeds and give them their own black file to read: more often than not there were accusations of financial misdeeds, whoring or cowardice. This would turn most of the accused into subservient followers, but Arafat always saw to it that they were offered money or jobs which made them more beholden to him.

His coercive methods were secondary to the public image he was creating for himself. Whatever misgivings some of the Fatah members might have had about his judgement, there was no resisting the allure of his status as the one Fatah leader who was consistently ready to place his life on the line. He continued to infiltrate Israel personally from both Jordan and Lebanon, and only physical impossibility kept him from participating in every raid. When going to Lebanon and Jordan he began to perfect the use of pseudonyms and disguises including

those of an Egyptian tourist, a Pakistani businessman, a shepherd, a lost old man and a Dr Mohammed. Wearing disguises appealed to something in his psyche; to this day he recalls some incidents with relish and a broad smile.

The number of raids and their results are subject to considerable contradiction—anywhere from thirty to three hundred raids and ten to two thousand Israeli dead and wounded. Some writers and analysts conclude that the infiltration campaign had no impact,[2-56] but this is to judge them by the narrow yardstick of what they achieved militarily. It was the communiqués of Al Assifa which reported, exaggerated and occasionally invented individual raids, and which, accurate or not, served Arafat's purpose. He knew he was not capable of defeating Israel,[2-57] but he was using the raids for something else.

In conducting an armed struggle, regardless of its pinprick nature, Arafat was keeping alive the idea of a Palestinian armed resistance and the hopes of the Palestinian people. This placed him and Fatah ahead of all other Palestinian groups including the PLO. In using Jordan, Lebanon, Gaza and eventually friendly Syria as a base from which to infiltrate Israel he was exposing these countries' positions of weakness. The Lebanese authorities arrested him while he was preparing for a raid late in 1966, but released him without realizing his identity. The Jordanians were on the lookout for him, but never managed to capture him. Egypt was embarrassed when his Gaza followers attacked the Kosovom settlement.[2-58] On a number of occasions, the Syrians physically intercepted Fatah members when they tried to cross directly into Israel. But the Arab countries' angry reaction did not compare with the panic shown by the Israelis, who increased their border patrols and responded with military threats.

Meanwhile, the popular results of his efforts were forcing the rest of the Palestinian movements into responding. Shukeiri never tired of sending emissaries to Fatah to ask them to join him, and when this failed he tried to turn the PLA into a guerrilla organization. George Habbash, after repeatedly advising against these raids because they were based on an analogy with Algeria which he regarded as unsound,[2-59] followed the unsuccessful feelers he put out to cooperate with Fatah by opting to initiate armed resistance. Even people committed to action and with a solid record of having never wavered from that stance, like the Syrian-backed Ahmad Jibril, began trying to forge an alliance with Fatah. None of this worked. Unlike some of his colleagues, Arafat persisted in attacking Shukeiri and saw him as his immediate target instead of Arab leaders. He turned down cooperation with other Palestinian groups because he knew he could not control them. More importantly, he knew that the eventual outcome of the Fatah campaign would be to drag the Arab countries and Israel into war.[2-60] This frightening manifestation of a Samson complex, the willingness to bring the house down on everyone, was very much Arafat's personal work. Others within the Fatah group—and once again Khalid Al Hassan was in the lead—cautioned against the organization acting irresponsibly. But Arafat would not budge. It was not cynicism; Arafat genuinely believed the Arabs would win a war.

While it is impossible to judge accurately, the infiltration campaign by itself probably would not have led to war. Other important factors contributed to the Arab march towards disaster. Jordan and Saudi Arabia, once again quarrelling with Nasser, had unleashed a propaganda campaign which accused him of

cowardice and hiding behind the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) which was still positioned between him and Israel as a result of the Suez War of 1956. Syria, ever ready to fight to the last Egyptian soldier, was anxious to battle Israel and it too criticized Nasser harshly. In that explosive environment, the raids acted like a trigger.

The Israelis, who could never measure their responses to any Arab provocations, retaliated against Jordan and then attacked a Syrian water diversion scheme in early 1966. Their massive campaign got out of hand on 13 November that year, when they carried out a major raid against the West Bank village of Samu', killing more than 60 people and razing 125 homes. The pressure on King Hussein to hit back was intense, but he transferred the blame to Nasser and increased his accusations of cowardice. Arafat thought things were going his way and extended his activities.

From early 1966 until May that year, and against a background of persistent skirmishes on the Jordanian and Syrian borders, the Israelis issued repeated threats against Syria. Though he still refused to take them seriously, Nasser changed his mind when the USSR, on 13 May, advised him of an impending Israeli attack on Syria.[2-61] On 16 May Nasser, faced with the prospect of losing his leadership of the Arabs, finally acted. He demanded the removal of UNEF and sent the Egyptian army into the Sinai peninsula, the former buffer zone against Israel. When the Jordanian and Saudi taunts continued, he had no option but to close the Straits of Tiran to prevent Israeli shipping entering the Red Sea. Whatever hope remained of avoiding a war disappeared. Even King Hussein recognized this and rushed to Cairo to sign a defence pact which placed his army, along with those of erstwhile enemies Egypt and Syria, under the command of Nasser. All diplomatic efforts to defuse the situation failed. Israel hit on 5 June 1967.

Chapter 3

The Consolidation of Power.

The results of the 1967 War reach far beyond the physical defeat of the Arab armies and the governments behind them. It is the defeat's devastating psychological and sociological effects which elevate it to one of the most dramatic events in Arab history, a turning point in Arab thinking in the twentieth century and the single shock which more than any other changed the nature and future of the Arab–Israeli conflict. But for Arafat and Fatah, the war provided an opportunity to snatch victory from the jaws of Arab defeat.

The overwhelming nature of the military defeat is encapsulated in the name the Israelis gave it and its adoption by the rest of the world. The Six-Day War which began on 5 June 1967 was just that—the total defeat by Israel of the combined forces of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, the Palestine Liberation Army and elements of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti armies in a matter of six days. Israel heeded the UN call to cease hostilities after its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, all of Sinai and the strategic parts of the Golan Heights, geographically areas more than four times the

size of Israel when the war started. The Arab countries accepted defeat and followed suit.

The war began and ended before some Arab soldiers had had a chance to join their units and before tens of thousands of Arab volunteers, most of the Iraqi army and any of the Algerian forces had had a chance to participate. It was so quick and decisive that there was an element of unreality about it. It resembled a sudden accident: the aftershock of the event exceeded its momentary impact.

Israel had told the United States of its plans to carry out a pre-emptive strike,[3-62] but the Johnson Administration, including the CIA, expected a better Arab showing. Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the PLO and even the USSR, the entities which, by commission or unwittingly, drove Nasser into a corner and indirectly provoked the war, found themselves with little to say. Only King Hussein's peripheral statements praising his fighting men are remembered. When an utterly devastated Nasser refused to allocate blame and offered to resign on 9 June 1967, the reaction at street level, combined with huge demonstrations in Egypt and the rest of the Arab world, forced him to rescind it. The colossal magnitude of the defeat found the average Arab unwilling to saddle Nasser with exclusive responsibility for what had happened. In the end, all Nasser could do was to cashier some generals, including the Commander in Chief of his army, Field Marshal Abdel Hakim Amer, and to order an investigation into the causes of 'the disaster'. In fact, no one was interested.

However generous the feelings of ordinary Arabs towards Nasser, things would never be the same again. In 1948 the majority of the Arab people, disenfranchised as they were, had been able to blame their defeat on corrupt, incompetent and non-representative governments, defective weapons, Western plots and 'Jewish control of the world'. In 1967 there was no denying Nasser's popularity and, though undoubtedly a dictator, he embodied their feelings and expressed their dreams. Furthermore, the Arab governments had convinced themselves that they were ready for conflict. So the war discredited Nasser and the ideal he stood for, Arab nationalism, the ideological magnet for most of the Arabs. This time the Arab people lost the war, and though most shied from explaining it in terms of their social and organizational backwardness, they analysed it enough to know that something was drastically wrong. Their low level of social development and inability to master technology could not produce armies which were capable of defeating Israel.

In signalling the end of pan-Arabism, the 1967 War also heralded the end of secularism and the march towards modernity and parity with the rest of the world. To a minority, the results of the war vindicated the traditional pro-West regimes and their non-confrontational policies. It justified their inherently defeatist attitude, which called for making peace with Israel. But to many more, the stress and hopelessness which followed the war meant an inevitable reversion to the usual religious solution, Islam. The major powers, as committed to manipulating an unstable, defeated people as ever, used what the war produced to further their own aims and designs. Every move made by the USA and the USSR turned the Middle East more than ever before into an arena for superpower rivalry. America wanted to impose a peace based on the new realities which favoured Israel, while the Soviets tried to capitalize on Arab weakness to strengthen their position with

Nasser, Iraq, Syria and the rest of the anti-Western Arab bloc by resupplying them with military hardware.

The disheartened Arab masses could not countenance espousing once again the policies of the traditional regimes. They would not accept the total defeat suggested by the Western-sponsored solutions, had little faith in the USSR remedying the situation through supplying its client states with new weapons, and knew that a reversion to Islam would take years to produce results. However deep and fundamental their sense of defeat, the Arabs desperately needed something to lift their spirits, keep their hopes alive and soften the impact of the huge blow to their cultural being. Only the Palestinian call to resist stood between them and utter despair and self-disgust.

The Fatah leadership knew this, but once again it was Arafat who acted on it and moved to halt the rot consuming the Arab soul and to fill the natural political vacuum which the war had created. He did this with a speed which dazzled his admirers and detractors alike. This time his impulsiveness incorporated a rare sense of what was needed and how to capitalize on it. Rightly, he converted the situation into an opportunity for Fatah by transforming himself and his group into the symbol of Palestinian resistance and Arab rejection of total defeat. In so doing, Arafat became the second victor of the 1967 War. In a pure sense, because he triumphed over the pan-Arabists, defeatists and Islamists his victory was greater than the Israeli one.

Fatah was the only Arab organization to come out of the 1967 War intact, still in a position to do something through its cohesiveness, ample finances and size. Even the Palestine Liberation Army of the PLO saw action and suffered losses on the Syrian, Jordanian and Egyptian fronts. More importantly, the identification of the PLO with the Arab governments condemned it. And it was no different for the Arab Nationalist Movement, which had depended on Nasser to the extent of neglecting to build an international network and secure independent backing.

The sudden focus on Fatah gained added momentum when on 28 June the Israelis, in a move which contradicted the repeated statements of Prime Minister Levi Eshkol before the start of hostilities,[3-63] announced their intention to annex the Arab sector of Jerusalem. This decree followed steps aimed at changing the character of the city and guaranteeing permanent control of it by the victors. Among other things, the Israelis razed the Magharba district of the old city, including the house of Arafat's uncle Selim Abul Saoud, after giving its residents twenty-four hours' notice of eviction; they also expropriated narrow strips of land which hitherto had separated Jerusalem's Arab and Israeli sectors. The Magharba neighbourhood was adjacent to the Al Aksa Mosque, and, responding to what they considered an open assault on the Islamic character of Jerusalem, the Arab people and governments called for a jihad to remedy the situation and commit themselves to following those who believed in the armed struggle. There was no one else to turn to; however small the chance of success, the Fatah fighters carried rifles and represented an inherent Arab determination to resist and retain a measure of honour.

Israel's precipitate moves in Jerusalem and other places could not have come at a better time for Arafat. Like a genie let loose from a bottle and anxious to assume form, he had already sneaked into the West Bank one week before the Israeli

annexation of Arab Jerusalem, on 21 June.[3-64] A day or two after the shooting ended, showing little if any shock and longing for action, he had prevailed on Fatah members, including some who were so demoralized by the Arab defeat that they wanted to accept a Palestinian state made up of the West Bank and Gaza, to back his adventure. Once again he relied on the support of Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad, and the three irrevocably recommitted Fatah to the idea of armed struggle. He travelled in disguise from Syria into Jordan and crossed into the West Bank with a small group of followers, including Abdel Aziz Shahine and Abdel Hamid Al Qudsi.

While Fatah had followers in some Palestinian towns, their numbers were too small to provide Arafat with protection. Most of them were in any case still reeling from the shock of defeat and had advised him not to come. The Israeli annexation of Jerusalem did not affect Arafat's presence in the West Bank, but it justified it and went a long way towards converting those who doubted the wisdom of his daring though unorganized move. Every Israeli act of arrogance played into Arafat's hands.

There is no denying the electrifying effects of Arafat's appearance in the West Bank. Initially there was a whisper campaign among West Bankers about the mysterious presence of a figure whom they all admired but very few of them knew. Later the daredevil nature of his activities was blown out of all proportion and trumpeted by the Damascus-based Fatah, which transmitted the news to the rest of the Arab world. Exaggerations aside, his presence undoubtedly did take courage, particularly since he did not know the terrain.

Nor were his ambitions modest. Once he had made contact with the few Fatah followers willing to work with him—and that always meant obeying his orders—he divided the whole region into southern, central and northern sectors (Hebron, Jerusalem and Nablus), instructed the local Fatah to start a recruitment programme and build a cell structure, and prepared himself to lead a mass insurrection against the Israeli occupiers.

He did not do any of this during brief, clandestine meetings, but used his mastery of disguise to move from town to town under the nose of the Israeli army and hundreds of informers. He once conducted one of these meetings within yards of an Israeli army local headquarters in Ramla, and on another occasion, in Nablus, he escaped dressed as an old woman.[3-65] He worked day and night, snatching quick catnaps and constantly changing the venue of meetings to prevent discovery. His non-stop movements were exceeded only by the restless workings of his mind, as in transmitting a message to the Damascus Fatah to start a recruitment campaign among the three hundred thousand Palestinians who had been displaced by the new war.[3-66] It could be said that Arab hopes and dreams resided in his person.

That Arafat believed in the imminence of an insurrection is attested to by everyone who knew him at the time, and he kept the idea of an impending uprising alive by claiming that a widespread sabotage campaign signalling better things had already started. It was true that it had begun, but it was too small and sporadic to be effective. Yet his activities went beyond overstating the prospects, and even though he was constantly on the run the larger picture and other results of the war were very much on his mind.[3-67] He bombarded his Damascus-based

colleagues with suggestions regarding recruitment, finances and Fatah's relations with the PLO.

Arafat had told his Fatah colleagues that they came out of the conflict blame–free because Nasser could not fault them for pushing him into war with Israel without this admission backfiring. Blaming Fatah would have led the Arabs to accuse Nasser of not having wanted to fight Israel. Arafat also sensed the predicament of the PLO and realized that the Arab Nationalist Movement too had suffered for following Nasser. Furthermore, he grasped what initiating an armed struggle would do for the psyche of the Palestinians and Arabs; and he knew that Fatah was the only guerrilla organization committed to it and in a position to start it. He was right on all counts, and in this context his exaggerations were necessary to keep the idea of armed resistance alive.

There could have been no greater testimony to his prescience than the fact that soon after his infiltration of the West Bank the PLO set up the Revolutionary Command Council to begin a rival guerrilla campaign. The ANM also rushed to maintain its position by starting armed resistance in the West Bank a month after he did.**(3-68)** Shukeiri knew that one of Arafat's aims was to undermine and replace him, and Habbash knew that the days of depending on the Arab countries were over. Arafat the man of action and natural publicist had outflanked them, and all they could do was follow his lead. In fact, that was all the Palestinians and Arabs as a whole could do.

Arafat's performance, which dazzled the Arab world, catapulted Palestinianness into the limelight as the new popular alternative to Arab nationalism and forced his Palestinian competitors to emulate him, was in essence a propaganda success. He knew this, but lack of substantial military success was secondary to appearing to resist and to pre-empting others. On the ground, a combination of factors denied him the fruits of the daring and timely move to the West Bank, and his hopes for an armed uprising never got off the ground.

The refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the Gaza Strip had always proved fertile grounds for the recruitment of Fatah fighters, but the ordinary people of the West Bank were reluctant to join him. To them their new Israeli masters were no worse than the pre-war Jordanian administration—in fact the Israeli police treated them better. In addition there were economic benefits, and before the war thousands of West Bankers had flocked to Israel to work. Furthermore, unlike refugees crying for someone to represent them, the people of the West Bank had their own leadership based on old regional, tribal and family associations. These rich and influential local leaders wanted to maintain the positions of power which Jordan had bestowed on them and resisted any attempt by Fatah to supplant them. They did not trust Arafat's organization, viewed it as a danger to their powerbase, and saw King Hussein as their protector. Finally, the Israelis ran an effective security and intelligence apparatus, rendered more effective because Arafat could not pay much attention to security at the cost of creating a legend. Using hundreds of informers in the West Bank and Jordan, the Israelis managed to infiltrate Fatah and intercept its plans to organize, thus keeping Arafat and his group on the run.

When Arafat's salesmanship was not enough to overcome these huge, unexpected barriers, his sense of frustration surfaced and he resorted to old

tactics. He threatened locals and tried to browbeat people into supporting him, but this too did not work because the Israelis were there to protect them. When he met local leaders he was dismayed to find them more concerned with the narrow issues which perpetuated their control of their flock. Furthermore, Arafat's personal characteristics did not help and, unlike the Gazans who accepted them and the desperate refugees who overlooked them, the West Bankers did not like his Egyptian accent and ways and found them alien.

In the end, many of the small number of people who answered his call to resist were discovered, arrested and imprisoned before they could do anything, and more still were deported to Jordan. This made other would-be recruits more reluctant, but it made Arafat redouble his efforts—still without paying proper attention to security considerations. His third course of action was to fight back by eliminating some who were collaborating with Israel openly and offering others generous bribes. Between June and September 1967 fewer than thirty collaborators were killed, but, significantly, he accepted the tribal-familial nature of West Bank society and included no local leaders among the victims for fear of a backlash. As with his wish not to alienate Arab governments, Arafat has always been reluctant to confront the Palestinian establishment. On the matter of bribes, he persisted in spending more money than Fatah could afford. Both actions backfired on him. To many local people eliminating collaborators was a step too far, and to some radicals sparing traitors just because they were leaders smacked of a bourgeois mentality. In any case, being poor, most of them resented his attempts to buy their loyalty or that of their traditional leaders.

Generally, Arafat's behaviour in the West Bank did not detract from his overall standing with the Palestinians outside the West Bank and the rest of the Arabs. His activities gave them a much-needed psychological lift, although they created problems for Fatah insiders who were aware of the situation. Many among the Fatah command in Damascus still believed in committee rule and objected to his autocratic ways and misuse of funds. Some members rejected the elimination campaign; others lost faith in his organizing skills; and most found his huge expenditures counterproductive. Not for the first time, his traditional opponent, Khalid Al Hassan, objected that Arafat was unfit to command and demanded his removal. Al Hassan was joined by others, including Arafat's younger brother Fathi.[3-69] But the pro-Arafat group within Fatah, led by Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad, mustered enough support and prevailed because they rightly placed considerable faith in the propaganda value of being perceived to resist—and Arafat was managing that magnificently.

It was a predictable victory which made Arafat aware of where the balance of power lay and unbothered by the debate over his behaviour; at least he was consistent, and continued in his ways. In the West Bank he promoted himself and, instead of using his real title of field commander, encouraged people to call him commander in chief of the Fatah forces. He even made false claims about the existence of thousands of people under his command in Jordan and Syria who were readying themselves to enter the West Bank. And he still tried to enlist people by offering them inflated salaries.

After three months Arafat bowed to the inevitable and withdrew from the West Bank to join most of his colleagues, who had moved from Syria to Jordan and set

up camps in the Jordan valley. It was the combination of Israeli pressure on the West Bankers and their overall lack of responsiveness that threw him into King Hussein's arms.[3-70] Ordinarily the King would not have been unwelcoming, but his acceptance of armed guerrillas on his soil has to be judged in terms of the Arab state of mind and Arafat's success in creating an irresistible aura around the Palestinian fighters. The conflict between the Jordanian and Palestinian identity is an inherent one and, unlike other Arab countries, Jordan had much to lose by supporting a Palestinian movement committed to wresting the West Bank from it. But the 1967 War had changed everything, and Fatah's use of Jordan as a base was also legitimized by the decision of the Arab Summit Conference in Khartoum in September 1967. The Arab leaders, including King Hussein, agreed to bury their differences and committed themselves to no negotiations, no recognition and no peace with the Israeli state. Though not as strident as Fatah, the decision of the Arab leaders was tantamount to adopting the idea of an armed struggle, and they followed Arafat's lead. These considerations left King Hussein with no choice but to accept the presence in Jordan of a force over which he had no control.

Behind the scenes the Arab leaders realized that the 1967 War had changed the nature of the Arab–Israeli conflict irrevocably in favour of Israel. But, as in the aftermath of the 1948 War, they could not admit this openly for fear of alienating their people and being removed from office. Despute this, King Hussein began a series of contacts with Israeli leaders aimed at a final settlement of the Palestinian problem, the return of territories occupied in 1967 and the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement. Using the excuse that he could not deliver peace by himself, the Israelis turned him down. This limited Hussein's options.

Simultaneously, there were several moves by the UN, the USA and the USSR, all of which called for a permanent peace following an Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in the war. A more subtle and serious attempt to escape the rigid Arab attitude came from Egypt. The journalist Ahmad Baha' Eddine, a close associate of Nasser, advocated in an article in *Al Musawar* magazine of 13 October 1967 the limiting of Arab ambitions to recovering the land lost in the war and the setting up of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza as an interim aim. This plan, in essence an attempt to bridge the gap between the true thinking of Arab leaders and the demands of their people, died after generating more debate among intellectuals than among the Arab masses. The following November, Nasser in principle accepted United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 242, which called for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied during the 1967 War in return for a comprehensive peace settlement; but this too was stillborn. Nasser himself diminished its chances of acceptance by trying to please the Arabs through describing it as a tactical move; the Israelis used this as an excuse and rejected it.

For Arafat, the Khartoum resolutions outweighed Hussein's efforts, the peace proposals, Baha' Eddine's semi-official plan and Nasser's personal acceptance of UNSC's resolution 242; at least he used the three nos of Khartoum in this manner. Deciding that the Arabs were stuck with the decisions they had adopted at this conference because it was too soon to effect a radical change in direction that would be acceptable to the Arab people, he turned the rejection of the other proposals to advantage and produced two more victories to enhance the image his

West Bank campaign had created. First, he expanded his propaganda efforts in Jordan and succeeded in creating an atmosphere of hope which crippled the secret contacts which King Hussein was pursuing with Israel.[3-71] He followed this with open warnings, articulated in Fatah's press announcements and pamphlets, against any Arab leader who would accept a negotiated peace. Second, he trumpeted the Khartoum declaration as the work of Nasser, put an end to the Baha' Eddine suggestion and forced Nasser himself into adhering to his public stance, keeping silent on resolution 242 and speeding up his rearmament programme to plan for another war. Meanwhile, Israeli actions continued to play straight into his hands. Harsh measures were taken against refugees in Gaza: tens of thousands of them were moved to more secure camps, and many resistance fighters in detention there and in the West Bank were believed to have been executed.

Nasser needed time to rearm and he decided to establish a link with those in a position to keep the Palestinian issue in the limelight while he did so. He contacted Fatah and Arafat through his friend and adviser, the journalist Mohammed Hassanein Heikal, some time in November 1967. Heikal asked Arafat and his colleagues to continue their armed struggle and promised them Egyptian help. It was a singular triumph for Arafat's instincts and political skills. Not only had he stopped all Arab moves towards a negotiated peace, but he had become a Palestinian leader to whom Nasser deferred.

Arafat's success in having Nasser contact him was followed by another inevitable development to which he had contributed substantially. In December 1967 the executive committee of the PLO, acting with tacit Arab approval, finally decided to remove Shukeiri from office. The catalyst for the move was the protest resignation of Abdel Majid Shoman, the chairman of the Arab Bank, then and now the largest non-governmental financial institution in the Middle East, and at that time of inestimable value to the PLO; but many others too had decided that Shukeiri had outlived his usefulness. Shoman's resignation confirmed the growing disaffection of the Palestinian establishment with the PLO, removed Arafat's main competitor from his seat of power and enhanced Fatah's position. Nevertheless the all-powerful PLO executive committee still shied from considering Arafat as a replacement for Shukeiri and elected a colourless lawyer by the name of Yahya Hammouda instead. Arafat did not protest; he knew things were going his way. He accepted Hammouda's suggestion that Fatah should join the PLO as a member organization in the name of national unity, but not before Fatah was given 33 seats on the Palestine National Council, out of a total of 105 seats and 57 allocated to all the guerrilla groups.

Because of his commitment to Arab nationalism, Arafat's chief competitor, George Habbash, had no option but to accept Fatah's superior position. Suddenly Fatah was the most important component of the PLO, and in a move aimed at confirming its primacy in January 1968 Arafat invited seven guerrilla groups to join him in establishing a joint command for guerrilla action against Israel. Though most had no intention of following his lead, they had little choice but to bend to the overwhelming power of his image and accept his offer. This is what mattered to him—he regarded the fact that the proposed organization never exercised effective control as irrelevant.

Meanwhile, Arafat needed no prompting to live up to what Nasser had asked of Fatah, to keep up the pressure on Israel. He despatched groups of Palestinians to train in Egyptian military and intelligence schools. Five hundred volunteers from the West Bank were sent to training camps in Syria, Iraq and Algeria. Special emphasis was placed on the training of educated young expatriate Palestinians from Europe and other countries. Fatah's money-raising activities in the oil-rich states were intensified and became more successful than ever. It established firm links with Palestinian workers', students', professional and women's organizations throughout the Middle East. Within Jordan itself, Fatah training centres were opened in several refugee camps.

Raids against Israel from Jordan, Lebanon and occasionally Syria were increased. Arafat was behind every single move, and most of the time it was as if the other groups did not exist. Nine out of ten Fatah followers who infiltrated Israel were either killed or captured and their training was still poor, but Arafat the military commander would not stop and personally joined some of the forays to encourage others. His men bombed markets, attacked border posts, dynamited telephone lines, stopped some Israeli farmers from harvesting their crops and stirred up urban protests and strikes.

Compared to guerrilla movements in other parts of the world Arafat's campaign was not producing many casualties, but the numbers were still too high for Israel. His activities were unbalancing the country and costing it a great deal of money at a time when it could not afford it. Foolishly Israel responded in a disproportionate way, by blowing up the homes of suspected guerrillas, imprisoning hundreds of people and crossing the River Jordan to attack guerrilla bases. The Israelis were playing into Arafat's hands: the harsher their measures, the more they confirmed the soundness of his judgement.

Between December 1967 and the end of February 1968 the Israelis increased their attacks on the Fatah encampments across the River Jordan. Using a combination of commando raids and their unopposed air force indiscriminately, they inflicted heavy losses on both the estimated thousand guerrillas belonging to all groups and on the civilian population. Arafat the courageous military leader with a human touch was there after every raid, inspecting the rubble of destroyed buildings, comforting the wounded and the families of victims, and urging people to hold the line. One of the towns subjected to repeated Israeli attacks was Karameh. Located on the main road connecting the West Bank with Jordan, it had been a small village until 1948 when refugees made a large camp there and trebled the number of its inhabitants. *Karameh* means dignity in Arabic and its name, together with its strategic position and the presence of refugees, contributed to Arafat's decision to make his headquarters there with his three hundred Fatah fighters.

On 15 February 1968 the Israelis attacked the town with heavy shelling and air raids, which killed an unknown number of civilians including several schoolgirls.**(3-72)** As usual with this type of Israeli activity, the results were the opposite of what was intended: the Karameh-based guerrillas increased their raids into Israel and fired more rockets against Israeli positions across the Jordan. Israeli frustration began to show when they planned a major operation aimed at the total eradication of the guerrilla presence in Karameh. Arrogantly, they made no effort to keep their

plans secret. News of their extensive preparations, which included the presence of heavy armour and thousands of soldiers, was transmitted to Arafat by the Jordanian government, his own raiders and Palestinian sympathizers in the occupied West Bank.

Arafat was now faced with one of the major military decisions of his career. The Jordanians, including the pro-Fatah divisional commander of the Jordanian Arab army, Major General Mashour Haditha Al Jazzi, advised him to withdraw to the hills to avoid military confrontation. They were supported in their view by many members of the Fatah leadership and most of the Palestinian guerrilla groups operating under the ephemeral joint command structure including the Arab nationalists—the former ANM who, in keeping with their new commitment to armed struggle, had changed their name to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Everybody argued that the avoidance of confrontation was intrinsic to guerrilla tactics, cited the teachings of Mao and Giap, together with facts and figures about Israeli strength and the results of the 1967 War, and believed that holding a conventional military line would play into the hands of the Israelis. Arafat would not budge. He saw any withdrawal as an acceptance of defeat, which would cancel his achievements and tarnish his image. 'We want to convince the world that there are those in the Arab world who will not withdraw or flee,' was his final answer.[3-73] His stubbornness was clever and studied, aimed at maintaining his reputation, inspiring his fighting men, appealing to the Arab world beyond and fostering his new position. For though the PFLP and others withdrew their contingents, the Jordanian army bowed to his will to avoid accusations of cowardice and prepared to offer him help.

On the night of 21 March, the Israelis struck in force. Paratroops, tanks, armoured personnel carriers, helicopter gunships, jet fighters and bombers were used in the biggest single military action since the 1967 War. General Moshe Dayan, Israel's Minister of Defence, predicted that the whole operation would be over in hours,[3-74] but the Israelis were in for a surprise. The ill-trained and poorly equipped Palestinians heroically held their ground and used the rocky terrain effectively against an estimated fifteen thousand-strong Israeli force. For a few hours the Palestinians fought alone, compensating for their lack of heavy weaponry with impressive improvisations and dramatic individual sacrifices. The Jordanian artillery and armoured units stayed behind and held their fire, but when the pressure on the guerrillas intensified, the Jordanian field commander, General Al Jazzi, took the initiative and ordered his troops into the fray.[3-75] At this point, the Israelis decided not to press their attack and withdrew. The Jordanian artillery destroyed some of the bridges behind them and inflicted considerable damage.[3-76]

The statistical results of the attack on Karameh indicated an Israeli victory. They had suffered twenty-eight dead and seventy wounded while Fatah had lost over a hundred men, the Jordanians twenty, and there were many more Arab wounded. But Arafat and his fighters had made their point, and left an indelible mark on the history of the modern Middle East. The Arabs had performed much better than in 1948 and 1967: an equivalent loss ratio during these wars would have made them prohibitive for Israel and might have led to its containment or even defeat. Furthermore, whatever the casualty figures, the manner of the Israeli

withdrawal (they left behind at least one tank, an armoured personnel carrier and several trucks) supported the emerging picture of triumphant resistance. To reinforce this image Fatah paraded with relish what the Israelis had left behind, and stories of individual heroism, including the death of seventeen Palestine fighters who had refused to surrender after being forced into a cave, restored a shattered Arab sense of *karameh*.

Before delving into the substantial results of the real, propaganda and psychological victory of Arafat and his men, the question of Arafat's personal performance during the battle, a hotly disputed element in previous reports and biographies, needs to be answered. The Israelis and later some Jordanians (former Prime Minister Zeid Al Rifai') have claimed that he fled.[3-77] This is not true. Not only are there many supporters who testify that he fought bravely and constantly urged his soldiers on during the battle, but Israeli intelligence sources appear to confirm this.[3-78] Moreover, not only has the man never lacked for courage, but had he run away this would have been publicized by his many Palestinian competitors and critics and in particular the PFLP, who suffered because they withdrew their forces. George Habbash, who was away in China during the battle, would certainly have pointed this out. More tellingly, even Arafat's severest detractors, those who have become critical of him because of his later behaviour, testify that he led his men bravely during the battle. The veteran correspondent John Cooley has documented the fact that Arafat personally supervised the defence preparations prior to the attack.[3-79] Lastly, he, Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad later used their command roles during the battle of Karameh to advantage and, whatever Arafat's propensity for hyperbole, he would have been reluctant to endanger his credentials and career through open lying.

However impressive his battlefield performance, Arafat's propaganda made more of it than the facts justified, both in terms of what was needed to enhance the reputation of Palestinian fighters and of building a personality cult around himself. In no time at all, the alleys of refugee camps and the streets of Amman, Damascus, Beirut and other Arab capitals were full of pictures of the martyrs of Karameh and, more interestingly, of their leader. The same pictures, though not displayed publicly, found their way into many homes in the West Bank and Gaza.

In the photos Arafat occasionally wore a cap, but more often he was under his *kuffiya*, painstakingly shaped, whenever time allowed, to resemble the map of Palestine—the exercise took nearly an hour every morning. He donned the American-style sunglasses, which gave him an air of mystery and which he still wore indoors, and he was in military fatigues. In many photos he carried a stick, an improvised field marshal's baton; not only did it distinguish him from people around him, it was also something which he could use constantly as a symbol of his power and to point out the locations of heroic acts or Israeli atrocities. Hidden from people, but always around his neck, was a pendant containing a *sura* from the Koran. And though he was without the now standard stubble, he soon became a familiar face and name throughout the Middle East and the rest of the world. He was Mr Palestine, the man who symbolized the country and its people.

To the pictures of heroism which lifted the gloom of the Arab masses, he added slogans which immortalized the occasion. 'If I Fall Take My Place', 'I Am Fidai [self-sacrificer]', 'The Palestinians Are a Revolution', 'Revolution until Victory', 'We Shall

Return ('*Adoun*)' and 'In Soul and Blood We Sacrifice for Palestine' replaced the inter-Arab recriminations over the 1967 defeat. It was a propaganda blitz similar to that which accompanied the deeds of the RAF during the Battle of Britain in 1940, and it created an image which troubled the conscience of the world.

Arafat himself supervised the propaganda effort, all the way from the down-to-earth call to arms to the use of the *kuffiya* by his men in every picture and the selection of the self-aggrandizing photographs of himself. He showed exceptional talent and was inventive enough to become a natural interpreter of what his Arab audience wanted and an instinctive manipulator of the international media. For example, unlike him his fighters wore their *kuffiyas* around their necks instead of on their heads; this is the way a shamed desert Arab wears his *kuffiya* until avenged. Among other inspiring resorts to symbolism, this clever cultural association hooked into his 'Revolution until Victory' and other slogans. Unlike the propaganda effort surrounding his infiltration of the West Bank, the difficult publicity task of turning defeat into victory, this time he actually had something to celebrate. He had been vindicated; coming after his successful efforts to intercept Arab moves towards peace and to have Arab leaders defer to him, his decision to stand and fight gave him a stunning victory. The world's media provided the rest: an interview with Arafat became a much sought after journalistic coup and he studiously divided his time between reporters on the basis of their national origins.

After Karameh, volunteers from all over the Arab world flocked to Jordan to join Fatah. Ten thousand Egyptians rushed to the Fatah offices in their country to offer their services.**(3-80)** Small numbers of Germans, Scandinavians, French, South Americans and nationals of other non-Arab countries were also drawn to Arafat's magnet. Arafat was an easy name to pronounce and remember, and so was Fatah. To the Arabs, the religious background to both names (Arafat is the mountain from whose top Muslims making the hajj stone the devil, and Fatah was a religious conquest) recalled visions of glory destroyed by the 1967 War but still dormant in the damaged recesses of their historical memory. To a world tiring of Israeli victories and sledgehammer tactics, the two easy, memorable names became a symbol which transcended the realities of what had happened in a small, dusty town in the middle of nowhere.

Moreover, the celebration of Arafat and Fatah went beyond appealing to the damaged Arab psyche on street level and to revolutionaries, leftists and adventurers from all over the world. The Palestinian establishment in the West Bank and elsewhere joined the refugee camps in recognizing the existence of a new national movement to fill the vacuum created by the destruction of the old ones that the Mufti and Shukeiri had represented. Not a single Arab leader, regardless of his true feelings, could do anything but appear to support Arafat and his fighters. Some Arab governments stepped up their financial contributions and encouraged the collection of money for Fatah by non-governmental organizations. Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other wealthy countries contributed unknown millions of dollars in direct assistance, and Arab businessmen everywhere competed with each other in the lavishness of their generosity. Syria, Iraq, Algeria and Egypt expanded the guerrillas' training facilities. From 1969, help came from the new governments of the Sudan and Libya, which had been taken over by

General Ja'afar Numeiri and Colonel Qaddafi respectively. Donations and offers of assistance came from as far away as Pakistan and Malaysia. Even the man who had most to lose, the aspirant to West Bank and Palestinian leadership, King Hussein, pretended to have been behind the decision of his army to fight, gave Fatah his unqualified support and declared: 'We have come to the point where we are all fedayeen.'(3-81)

Arafat was always a much better military commander and propagandist than organizer. For while he managed to expand the ranks of Fatah hugely, and the presence of foreign volunteers made his troops sound like an international brigade, both the training and organizing of the new volunteers was woefully deficient and Fatah's structure could not cope. Arafat monopolized the business of meeting the hundreds of new recruits. He ensured that he was photographed shaking their hands and embracing them, and resented others doing it. He went further and started a militarily nonsensical programme to train ten-to thirteen-year-old refugee children. The idea had good propaganda value, but he seemed more interested in that aspect than in the actual training and began dismissing the advice of Abu Iyad and Abu Jihad. He paid more attention to image-creating than to building a sound military structure or incorporating the thousands of new members into a military system that could live up to that image. In fact, the influx of the new volunteers destroyed whatever organizational hard core had existed before and contained obvious security dangers, particularly in using people from the West Bank and Gaza. He also continued to spend money without the slightest attempt to establish sensible financial controls or a system of accountability. According to a former colleague who wished to remain anonymous, most of the money Arafat sent to the families of those who lost their lives fighting in Karameh never reached them because Arafat loyalists pocketed it. Once again Abu Iyad, Abu Jihad and others complained, but stopped short of challenging Arafat openly.

He still favoured cronies, sycophants and members of leading Palestinian families and placed them in key positions at the expense of more competent people. Even though he continued to work a twenty-hour day, he found time to visit Amman to meet wealthy Palestinians to add to the list of those he had cultivated before. He was always at home in the company of the rich and influential, and easily talked them into making contributions or increasing payments. In Jordan as in Kuwait, his appeal to them was always embodied in one specific fact: unlike other groups, he was not conducting an ideological struggle which excluded their class and saddled old political families with the consequences of social decay which weakened the fabric of Palestinian society and its ability to fight Israel. His favourite saying was: 'The revolution belongs to all of us.' But he still thought Fatah could succeed without taking positions on social issues and inter-Arab conflicts, and, as ever, he could not be bothered with organization. Almost in spite of Arafat, Abu Iyad addressed himself to organizing Fatah's intelligence apparatus while Abu Jihad tried his best to improve the level of military training.

The effect Karameh had on the Arab masses and those willing to fight for the Palestinian cause was coupled with a dramatic change in Arafat's fortunes within Fatah, the PLO and the larger Arab arena. If success has a thousand fathers, Arab successes have many more. Immediately after Karameh a number of Fatah

members, chief among them one Mohammed Msweida, began issuing communiqués about their role in the battle and claiming credit for successful raids into Israel which were supposed to have followed it. Although Arafat received most of the credit, this competition for headlines threatened to undermine Fatah's overall achievement. The Damascus-based Fatah leadership, though uneasy about some of Arafat's activities, wisely stepped in and appointed him the organization's official spokesman. From then on only he could issue communiqués, military and otherwise, and every item of news carrying the imprint of Al Assifa, the military wing of Fatah, had to have his personal approval. The control of information was added to his control of the Fatah finances, which placed him in an unassailable position of personal leadership which suited him and which he used most effectively. After Karameh there was no way to criticize Arafat, even for the two men closest to him, without damaging the image of the Palestinian resistance and the cause it represented. Unfortunately the veto on criticism merely encouraged Arafat to overlook his lamentable shortcomings.

Arafat has always been proud of his manipulative abilities and was determined to continue to be all things to all Arab leaders. Karameh left the conservative regimes with no choice but to bow to the feelings of their people, but in this case responding to their people also suited them. They followed their people's wish to support Fatah because it provided them with a way out of their obligations to the Palestinian cause, through committing what amounted to a financial act of absolution. Moreover, given that the newly acknowledged leader of the Palestinian cause had no interest in regional and social issues, Arafat was not a threat to them. Some Arab leaders saw another reason to back Arafat: they wanted to administer a final blow to the one leader still capable of undermining them, Nasser. Saudi Arabia led the way: the government grants and popular donations were followed by the imposition of a 7 per cent tax on the income of Palestinians working in that country, which was remitted to Fatah. Kuwait and the Gulf States followed suit, and all the conservative regimes began allocating air time on their radio and television stations to publicize the achievements of Fatah. It was support without direct involvement, and at its core was acceptance of Fatah's notion that the Palestinians were capable of liberating their country.

Arafat assessed the reasons for their help correctly. The Arab leaders' wish to appease their people and to reduce Nasser enabled him to extract the maximum concessions from them, but as ever without appearing subservient. The calls on their generosity were disguised demands rather than appeals from a needy party. According to a former Fatah leader, Arafat couched everything in positive terms, and instead of threatening Arab leaders told them that increased donations would predispose him to praise them. Most of the grants and other gestures made by these regimes were announced after Arafat's visits to their countries, and each was made to look like a personal victory for him. His penchant for publicity never allowed announcements of new Arab aid to be made until he had attached them to a story which told of his uncanny ability to represent the Palestinian cause. For example, a substantial Kuwaiti donation was accompanied by a story about how the Emir of that country had cried after hearing of the heroism of Karameh fighters who had attacked an Israeli tank with nothing but stones in their hands.

And, of course, pictures of Arab leaders receiving Arafat and embracing in the manner of a victorious hero were used on a regular basis.

Iraq and Syria, though reluctant to cede Arab primacy in the conflict with Israel to an exclusively Palestinian entity, also responded to the pressure of their people and accepted Fatah. However, both regimes saw this as an interim step towards an eventual integration of the Palestinian resistance into a larger Arab scheme. Syria in particular never relinquished its control of Palestinian groups capable of supplanting Fatah; it increased its support for the competing Al Saiqa guerrillas and forced Fatah to share training facilities with others. Not to be outdone, the Iraqis too redoubled support for their home-grown Palestine Liberation Front and positioned it as an alternative to Fatah with a commitment to the larger Arab struggle. However, whatever their misgivings about Arafat, neither country could escape providing him with support. The success of his propaganda machine made denying him Arab help tantamount to treason, and he accepted whatever they offered him without reluctance or argument over the differences between him and the donors. By mid-1968 most of his assistants were devoting a considerable part of their time to publicity work, and the Fatah renaissance was attributed to the energies of one man.

The biggest problem for Fatah was its relations with Jordan and Nasser. In Jordan, Arafat's success made the King uneasy over the possible loss of the West Bank, which he still claimed as part of his country. The Jordanian people and their King had difficulty reconciling support for the guerrillas with their anti-social attitudes and lack of discipline, which represented a threat to the authority of the state. The pride that Karameh gave Palestinian guerrilla groups was used by some of them to justify thuggish behaviour. A couple of months after the battle, on 28 May 1968, a serious clash occurred between the guerrillas and the Jordanian army, when armed Palestinians raided a police station to free some of their comrades who had been detained for criminal activities including theft. The ensuing firefight resulted in an unknown number of dead and wounded and a Jordanian government crisis which led to the resignation of the cabinet. After that, confrontations between the two sides became regular occurrences, but most people still maintained their overall support for Arafat and his men. The government of Jordan, with two-thirds of its population of Palestinian origin, was too weak to do anything else.

The one Arab leader who could still block Fatah's and Arafat's claim to primacy in the fight against Israel was Nasser. The Egyptian leader continued to command an unrivalled street following and he was both fascinated and taken aback by what had happened. Nasser was an army officer who could accurately judge Israeli military strength and what had happened at Karameh, but he was also a master propagandist who appreciated the significance of Arafat's achievement and the need to go along with it. To biographer Jean Lacouture, 'He couldn't watch without anguish the rising star of a man who might sooner or later become what he had been from 1956 to 1967.'[3-82] Whatever misgivings Nasser had, he was always honest when it came to admitting defeat. He swallowed his pride and invited Arafat to Cairo.

During their first meeting, which was arranged by Mohammed Hassanein Heikal and which Arafat attended accompanied by two Fatah stalwarts, Abu Iyad and

Farouk Qaddoumi, Nasser ironically asked Arafat, 'How many years do you need to destroy Israel and set up your state?'[3-83] When the Palestinian leader had no answer, Nasser told him to think about peace[3-84] and advised him to consider a Palestinian state comprising the West Bank and Gaza. Prophetic as his words were, Nasser knew that peace was elusive and unacceptable to the Arab people, to whose wishes he always responded and tried to defer, and this made him follow up with several magnanimous moves. First, Nasser advised Arafat to maintain the independence of Fatah and to keep it out of Arab entanglements. Then he had the name of the Voice of Palestine radio broadcasts from Cairo changed to Sawt Al Assifa (*Voice of the Storm*, the Fatah military organization) and gave control of this apparatus to Fatah to use as it wished. Thirdly, Nasser attempted to push Fatah on to the international stage and invited the Palestinian leader to join him on a planned visit to Moscow.

Although Arafat never lost sight of the need to live with the two other Arab camps—the conservatives, and Syria and Iraq—everything Nasser did pleased him. His true reaction to the idea of making peace and creating a state in the West Bank and Gaza is not a matter of record, but he assured Nasser that Fatah would remain above Arab feuds, promised judicious use of the radio facilities and accepted the invitation to Moscow as a member of an official Egyptian delegation, carrying an Egyptian passport and using the name of Muhsin Amin. By all accounts, Arafat appreciated Nasser's generosity, liked him and, most unusually for him, trusted him. He addressed him as 'Mr President' while Nasser, although only fifty-two, assumed a fatherly role and called the thirty-eight-year-old Palestinian 'Yasser'. In Moscow in July 1968, Nasser went out of his way to ensure that Arafat was accorded special treatment.[3-85] The two men's need of each other transcended the differences in their thinking and became a strategic alliance. Arafat was free to act, while Nasser rebuilt his army and made up his mind.

The elevation of Arafat by Nasser was followed by his de facto promotion to Fatah leadership. Unable to deny his value and effectiveness as a leader and as their designated official spokesman, his detractors within Fatah joined his supporters and began referring to him as 'The Leader' and on occasions as 'The Old Man'. This fell short, however, of his being a confirmed, elected leader or a chief executive, and even his closest associates thought of Fatah as subject to the decisions of an executive committee made up of ten members of the old guard. They refused to accept the paramountcy of one individual. Despite that, there was no way to stop Arafat; money and publicity had elevated him and everything he did took that into consideration. Fatah itself was still more of a symbol than a military fact, and it was Arafat, the visible, memorable face of Fatah, who was the physical embodiment of this symbol and what it stood for. His was the voice heard by the Palestinians, the Arabs and the world beyond. Before 1968 was out he had been on the cover of *Time* magazine and was being referred to as 'the leader of the Palestinian guerrillas'; and the French government under General de Gaulle had become the first major non-Arab country to accept a permanent Fatah representative. With his Fatah base secure and with his recognition by the rest of the world gaining momentum, the time to assume leadership of all Palestinian resistance groups—and there were more than 30 of them—had come. The part-time soldier turned a partial military victory into a huge diplomatic one.

Leadership of the PLO was his for the asking, and he had to decide between supplanting an organization backed by the Arab countries or assuming its leadership. When he opted for the latter course of action, Arafat took a major step towards compromising Fatah's original independent position, tilted towards accepting indirect control of his movement by the Arab states, and made interference in their internal affairs inevitable. Once again the chameleon had changed his colours.

Arafat's assumption of the chairmanship of the PLO in February 1969, though an inevitable move which was arrived at in stages, was 'legalized' by the fourth Palestine National Council which convened in Cairo for this purpose. Yahya Hammouda, the interregnum chairman, ceded the reins to Arafat and stepped aside. The event took place against a background of considerable myth-making and genuine activities which explain a great deal about Arafat's future behaviour and the way he eventually controlled all decision-making and concentrated power in his hands. Significantly, the same meeting which confirmed him as chairman of the PLO amended the Palestinian National Charter adopted in Jerusalem in 1964 by replacing the commitment to Arab nationalism (*kawmia*) with a reference to Palestinian statehood (*watania*).

Using his new official status without restraint or consideration for the thinking and feelings of others, in particular without consulting King Hussein, Arafat now ordered several thousand members of the Palestine Liberation Army to move to Jordan. The King had no option but to accede to the move, and followed his tacit acceptance of it by arranging to meet Arafat for the first time—a curiously late event in view of the latter's position as the uncrowned King of the Palestinians within Hussein's own country. It was obvious that Arafat was still trying to reconcile the conflicting elements in Fatah's philosophy while charting the direction of the Palestinians with total disregard for the requirements of other governments and what was acceptable to the Arab people.

Shortly before he became PLO chairman Arafat gave five interviews to a three-man reporting team from *Time* magazine, which eventually appeared as a cover story on 15 December 1968. Because he repeated and embellished what he had said in other interviews, and because his picture on the cover of *Time* was the largest single publicity event in his experience so far, the statements he made, coming when they did, amounted to a close-range examination of the emerging Palestinian leader which revealed more about the man and his myth-making than ever before.

The first thing noticed by the *Time* interviewers (whose unedited file has been made available to me) was Arafat's desire to look and behave like a general. With his sunglasses on, he reminded one of them of General Douglas MacArthur and his Second World War promise of returning to conquered territory, while another interviewer compared him with a latter-day Saladin fighting the infidels. Arafat interrupted the questioning repeatedly to issue orders, sign little pieces of paper and receive people who whispered in his ear and received knowing nods in return. Everything was in his hands. He moved stiffly in the manner of an officer and sat diminutively behind a large desk with a detailed map of Palestine as a backdrop. He wanted to give the impression of someone conducting a war, someone in the

middle of battle, and when followers interrupted the interviews he dramatically pointed to spots on the map.

On the subject of the leadership of Fatah and the Palestinians, Arafat sounded as if he was protesting too much. Objecting to personal glorification, he repeatedly refused to answer questions about his background and insisted that Fatah was a movement and not one person. 'I am only a soldier,' he said several times. But when pressed to clarify his personal history, he rehashed old stories about being born in Jerusalem and how he had fought there during the 1948 War. He refused to answer any questions about Fatah's finances and who controlled them, including a specific one about whether Fatah was run by a syndicate of wealthy Palestinians. His evasion of issues took the form of turning them into jokes or light-heated anecdotes, or into redirecting them to the interviewers: 'You should write about Israeli attacks on our civilians instead of asking about what I might do in the future.' He refused to answer questions as to whether Israeli civilian targets were legitimate. The most he would say was that the Israelis did not discriminate; he recited a number of valid examples and supported them with statistics and pictures. His talents as a story-teller and his command of detail, including the dates and even the time of day when the attacks had taken place, were most impressive.

During the first interview he would not answer questions about his connection to the Husseinis of Jerusalem. When the question was repeated, he insisted that he was one of them, a member of the Gaza branch of the family. When the *Time* interviewers later asked the Mufti for confirmation, he supported Arafat's claim. After some digging prompted by the recollections of many old Jerusalemites who refuted the statements of the old and new Palestinian leaders, the correspondents concluded that the Mufti had his own reasons for not telling the truth. Recognizing that his leadership days were over, the Mufti's answer was no more than a pretence that Palestinian leadership was still 'in the family'. This encouraged Arafat's persistence in advancing this myth and strengthened the bond of a conservative, anti-ideological commitment to Palestinian identity between the two men.

The most interesting part of the interviews dealt with Arafat's view of his position vis à vis the rest of the Arab leaders. To him they were all 'brothers', and he steadfastly refused to hold any of their past history or political decisions against them. 'The Palestinian problem is an Arab problem which preoccupies all Arab leaders,' was the way he put it. Regardless of their ideology or behaviour, he held the same attitude towards the thirty or more Palestinian groups operating in Jordan at the time. Obviously he favoured consensus, particularly at a time when all Arab leaders and Palestinian groups seemed to be supporting him. There was a measure of glibness in dismissing what other guerrilla groups advocated and how they behaved: 'We have the same aim, the liberation of Palestine.' His own idea of how he was going to achieve victory through marshalling Arab power and resources was judged to be vague, confused and inadequate. He had a goal but no plan to achieve it, on either the Palestinian or Arab level.

Arafat's attitude towards the United States and the Western powers surprised his interviewers. He studiously stopped short of accusing them of supporting Israel in a way which justified labelling them an indirect enemy. He still used

words similar to those of other Arab leaders, even to the extent of appealing to Western leaders to follow even-handed policies: 'All we want from them is neutrality.' The United States was a great power: 'I almost went there, you know.' He overlooked Nasser's quarrels with the West and appeared to believe that Western interests dictated neutrality in the Arab–Israeli conflict. Arafat showed little understanding or appreciation of the history and reasons for Western backing for Israel. To him, backing Israel was harmful to Arab relations with the West, and that came before other considerations.

Above all, it was in his discourses on Palestinian suffering that he made the most impression. He had pictures of Israeli bombings, of houses which had been razed, of weeping widows and mutilated bodies, together with the names and ages of victims. His voice would go lower and thicken and he would stutter with obvious emotion when talking about them. His conclusions were equally impressive: all he wanted was for 'the Palestinians to be like other people and have no need for Arafat'.

To the *Time* interviewers he was a guerrilla leader, an intense and committed advocate of an armed struggle against an undoubtedly superior force. He was not especially charismatic—his looks and unworldiness were barriers—but his manner was extremely attractive and he made a sympathetic spokesman for his people. Even when using a translator, his gestures and sad smiles told a lot. Considering the atmosphere which existed throughout the Middle East and the absence of a viable alternative, despite the occasional promotion of a lie he was the best the Palestinians, the Arabs and the West could hope for.

Late in 1968 Arafat expanded Fatah's presence in Syria, and he moved hundreds more of his ill-trained and poorly led fighters into Lebanon where he set up a command centre in the Fakhani district of Beirut. His raids into Israel from Lebanon and occasional forays from Syria produced results similar to the ones conducted from Jordan. Though Arafat's men were willing to continue to infiltrate Israel and die doing it, their military performance was hampered by Israel's use of Bedouin trackers, the building of an electric fence on the Jordanian side, the existence of informers on the Lebanese border and the Syrian government's wish to control the guerrillas. That they existed mattered more than what they achieved. Judged by Fatah's own figures, which changed frequently, there were more than four thousand raids in 1967 and a probably exaggerated nine hundred Israeli dead and wounded. The raids and the Israeli reactions to them served their purpose of maintaining Fatah's image for Arafat and giving Nasser time.

Simultaneously, in November 1968 the PFLP, operating under the direction of Habbash's associate Dr Wadi' Haddad, better known to Palestinians as 'The Master', carried out the first of many spectacular plane hijackings: an El Al plane flying from Rome to Tel Aviv was directed to Algeria. A month later the PFLP attacked an Israeli aircraft at Athens airport. The Israelis refused to accede to the demand to release Palestinian fighters in their prisons and retaliated by attacking Beirut airport and destroying thirteen parked aircraft. The Lebanese were being drawn into the conflict without having any say in the matter.

In Jordan, their stronghold, many of the Fatah fighters and most of the guerrillas belonging to other groups had moved into the major cities and turned themselves into unruly armed gangs beyond the control of the local authorities.

King Hussein had a difficult time controlling his Bedouin army, and many Jordanian politicians called for the reimposition of discipline and the rule of law to keep the frequent clashes between the guerrillas and his soldiers under control. In Lebanon something similar was happening. The clashes between Arafat's men and the Lebanese security forces caused many deaths, government crises and serious divisions within a country whose political structure, based as it was on delicate sectarian divisions, could not accommodate too much stress.

The intercession of Nasser favoured Arafat and kept both situations under control. In November 1969 the Egyptian leader brokered what became known as the Cairo Agreement between Arafat and the Lebanese government: it guaranteed Arafat considerable freedom to use Lebanese soil to attack Israel. The combined popularity of the Egyptian leader and the overwhelming Palestinian presence stopped Jordan from curtailing the activities of the Palestinians. Nasser still needed him.

It was remarkable that Arafat managed to ride the results of Karameh and assume the leadership of the PLO at a time when the unsoundness of his policies, the results of his lack of organization and the presence of a hooligan fringe among his fighters were beginning to take their toll. His fighters in Syria could not misbehave because they were under the strict control of that state and its army; but the ones in Jordan were out of control, while in Lebanon the Palestinians were creating a 'country' of their own which they named the Fakhani Republic after the area in Beirut which they occupied. Arafat's disinclination to control other factions of the Palestinian resistance, and his attachment to consensus among the Palestinians, was exposed and undermined by the hijacking to Algeria and the worldwide damage it inflicted on the Palestinian image. Nor did the Israeli retaliation endear him and his Palestinian fighters to the suffering Lebanese. The behaviour of his men within Jordan, totally inexcusable and guaranteed to alienate most of the Jordanians, was a taste of worse things to come.

Amazingly, the course of events produced no serious response in Arafat. His concerns were still the continuation of the raids against Israel, imposing himself on the PLO and consolidating his control over it. Under pressure from some of his close associates, including Abu Iyad and Aby Jihad, he created two organizations to coordinate action between the various guerrilla groups and to control the behaviour of Palestinian fighters in Jordan and Lebanon. But the idea of making the Unified Command of Palestinian Resistance and the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command effective, like the idea of organizing anything, never engaged him. He gave up on both without offering them enough backing.

In late 1968 and early 1969 the raids into Israel increased to over 120 a month. In 1969 Nasser started a war of attrition against Israel, sending commando raids of substantial size and effectiveness across the Suez Canal. But the Israelis responded with punishing air raids deep into Egypt. The Egyptian efforts to engage Israel were soon proving too costly. Along with an Arab inability to establish an eastern front—a joint command incorporating the armies of Syria, Iraq and Egypt—the Egyptian failure enlarged the image of the Palestinian resistance. Arafat was justified in his assertion that his were the only effective forces battling Israel, and continued to have a ready Arab audience.**(3-86)**

Within the PLO, Arafat used the divisions in the PFLP, which was split into three different groups, to reduce their representation in the Palestine National Council to 20 per cent of the seats; he also relegated other groups to the status of marginal also-rans.[3-87] Arafat's dominance over the PFLP capitalized on its narrow ideological base and its rejection by most Arab states, and was aided by the split with Nasser over its objections to his moves towards peace and its involvement in hijackings. After subduing the PFLP and prevailing over its popular but uncompromising leader, George Habbash, Arafat initiated moves to turn the PLA into a guerrilla fighting force beholden to him and ended its semi-independent status as a regular army. Everything he did was aimed at gaining undivided control of the PLO and, by continuing the raids, at enhancing his reputation as leader of the Palestinian resistance. By mid-1969 he had achieved both of these goals.

The heroism of the fighters who kept Arafat's claim to undivided Palestinian leadership intact could not diminish the pressure on him to change his ways in line with the thinking of the Arab countries and the international community. Early in 1969, in a curious move which again exposed Arafat's Islamic inclinations, he and Abu Iyad founded a Fatah offshoot called Islamic Fatah.[3-88] But the negative reaction to this organization on the Palestinian and Arab level forced them to disband it. Soon afterwards, bowing to Arab pressure, Arafat publicly and for the first time announced his opposition to hijackings. These concessions fell short, however, of convincing him of the need for a united guerrilla movement. Then, in a crucial decision, he dealt Habbash another defeat when he rejected a PFLP approach to unite with Fatah because Habbash had demanded sharing and strict control of funds.

Beyond the Palestinian sphere, whatever hope Arafat had of his raids producing an Israeli response which would lead to a recognition of Palestinian identity vanished when Golda Meir became Israeli Prime Minister in March 1969 and declared that 'there are no Palestinian people'.[3-89] Soon afterwards, on 31 July, Nasser accepted the basic principles of the peace plan drawn up by the US Secretary of State William Rogers, which called for a comprehensive solution to the Arab–Israeli problem based on the principle of land for peace.

Acting before thinking, Arafat used the Cairo-based Sawt Al Assifa radio to attack Nasser's acceptance of the Rogers Plan. Utterly shocked, Nasser retaliated by shutting the radio station down. However, once again a random incident came to Arafat's help when a crazed Christian fundamentalist, Michael Rohan, set fire to the Al Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem. The outcry in the Arab and Muslim worlds drowned the Arafat–Nasser feud and led to the convening of a Muslim heads of state conference in Morocco, which produced calls for saving the Muslim holy places in Palestine and promises of support for those who were most actively fighting for Jerusalem.

Despite the reprieve, Arafat's reaction to peace moves by Nasser and other Arab leaders exposed the fact that he was operating on two conflicting levels. For it was Arafat, to his people the uncompromising Palestinian leader smarting from the blows of Meir and Nasser, who was making his own moves towards meeting the international requirements towards peace. At first secretly, but later openly, Arafat called for the creation in Palestine of a democratic state of Muslims, Christians

and Jews.[3-90] The idea had been advanced by a small offshoot of the PFLP, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) in 1968. The carefully formulated DFLP plan was genuinely based on egalitarian socialist beliefs, but Arafat aimed his version of it at 'freeing the Jews from the yoke of Zionism'. In responding to criticism of a move which contradicted his avowed total liberation policy, he later described his democratic state idea as an attempt to blunt the criticism of those who worried about the total butchering of the Jews of Israel.

The attractive but impractical call for a multi-religious democratic state was less telling than the secret negotiations taking place in Paris between one of Arafat's trusted lieutenants, Nabil Sha'ath, and Lora Elian of Israel's Labour party.[3-91] What these negotiators discussed remains wrapped in secrecy to this day, but whatever it was it certainly ran counter to Arafat's declared aims and exposed his cynicism. Palestinians were fighting and dying because he had promised them total victory. Considering that he was conducting secret negotiations with Israel aimed at a compromise, his objections to Nasser's and Hussein's acceptance of the Rogers Plans meant only that he wanted to be the sole arbiter and custodian of the fate of his people.

Meanwhile, the results of his legendary lack of ideology and organization were a living contradiction of what Fatah had espoused openly. The vague line he drew between remaining independent and working with the Arab countries became fainter when he accepted the chairmanship of a PLO which needed Arab financial support and had to accommodate the Arab governments more than Fatah had ever done. The behaviour of his followers in Lebanon and Jordan was clear interference in the affairs of two Arab countries. In fact, the presence of thousands of armed men in Jordan ostensibly to fight Israel but beyond the control of Arafat represented a greater threat than Israel to King Hussein and Jordanian stability, while what was happening in Lebanon posed a risk to the delicate balance of the country but affected the Israelis rather less.

Terrorism overseas and hijackings, though committed by other groups, became commonplace and Arafat did nothing to stop them. His lack of attention to detail allowed Fatah and other groups to be infiltrated by the Israelis.[3-92] The secret negotiations between Nabil Sha'ath and the Israelis, unreported for several years, made a mockery of his 'Revolution until Victory' slogan. That he spoke with a firm Palestinian voice and stood in the way of others deciding the fate of the Palestinian people is undoubtedly true; along with continuing to fight Israel, this undoubtedly endeared him to his people and made him an acceptable leader. But it is impossible to speculate positively or negatively on what might have happened had he not achieved this and had the Palestinian issue reverted to the direct custodianship of the Arab governments. There were two achievements in this period which are beyond question: his capture of the limelight and the attention which he drew to the Palestinians' plight. But, perhaps more tellingly, the organization he commanded was flabby, corrupt and unprepared for the task which it purported to face.

Chapter 4

From the Jaws of Victory.

By 1970, Arafat had to confront the results of the two events which had elevated him to the chairmanship of the PLO and the leadership of the Palestinians. The Arab defeat in the 1967 War had provided him and Fatah with the opportunity they needed to assume the dominant Arab position in the conflict against Israeli, and he capitalized on the ripe situation. In the process he had become part of the Arab established order, which undermined the independence of Fatah and saddled it with the responsibility of reconciling its advocacy of Palestinianness with an overall Arab position. The Karameh victory had left him unable to cope with what followed: his talents were not sufficient to adapt to the unexpected opportunities it generated. He found it impossible to transform the PLO into a cohesive organized force and to elevate it to an entity capable of giving permanency to the fruits of success.

Despite the call for the creation of a democratic state of Muslims, Christians and Jews, the total lack of Israeli response to all peace moves meant that the PLO's real aim was the defeat and dismantling of the Zionist state. Total or partial success in the declared aim of creating a multi-religious state depended on the Jews of Israel accepting Palestinian rights, and the Israelis would not entertain that. Arafat and the PLO could not abandon the idea of an armed struggle to achieve a change in the Israeli stance towards them without undermining their new position of primacy. A serious shift in position, such as clarifying the idea of a democratic state as a viable political alternative to the idea of armed struggle, would have weakened their mass appeal and reduced them to just another Arab entity, like most of the Arab states which secretly or openly sought a way out of the conflict. And the armed struggle waged by Arafat and the PLO consisted of infiltrating territory occupied by Israel, causing as much human and material damage as possible, then retreating to sanctuaries in Jordan and other Arab countries.

Despite the standard name given it and which I myself use, the war that Arafat was waging against Israel was not true guerrilla warfare. Unlike the then recent examples of the Algerians and the Vietnamese, and the resistance against the Japanese in China and the Germans in Yugoslavia during the Second World War, Arafat was operating not on home ground but from safe bases outside Israel. This fundamental difference eluded him.

The raids were intermittent, bothersome and costly to Israel without being dislocating, and they followed prescribed patterns. But the Israeli responses were now more controlled and in proportion to the raids' success, and differed substantially from the usual counter-insurgency measures that central governments use to fight guerrillas. Having failed in his efforts to organize the people of the West Bank, what Arafat was conducting against Israel was what might be called semi-conventional warfare. The Israelis replied mostly with artillery and air attacks, essentially aimed at interception and halting rather than eliminating the source of the problem. For the time being they had abandoned the sledgehammer tactics of Karameh and were following a policy of making the raids

too costly to continue. Both sides were going by rules improvised to meet a unique situation.

The distinctive characteristics of this limited conflict, in particular the fact that one side relied on the goodwill or acceptance of other governments whose territory was being used, meant that outsiders had as much to say about the hostilities as the PLO and Israel. The government most immediately affected was that of Jordan. This is where Arafat was based and where most of his raids originated, so the Israeli response was directed against Jordan, its people and infrastructure, and at forcing the government to stop backing or tolerating the presence of the PLO.

The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza were another factor in what was happening. They represented a natural component of the PLO, a prospective guerrilla movement against Israel, and their leaders could pre-empt the PLO and promote themselves as an alternative partner in a negotiated solution involving the Palestinian people. Thirdly, there were the rest of the Arab states, all still at war with Israel and some, like Egypt and Syria, with territory under Israeli military occupation. Except for Syria and distant Iraq and Algeria, the Arab countries wanted out of the Arab–Israeli problem in a serious way which went beyond surrendering its future fate to the PLO and Arafat. Finally there were the United Nations and the rest of the world, weary of a conflict which contributed to regional instability and contained the potential for superpower confrontation, but unable to come to terms with having to deal with a political entity with questionable credentials and a vague programme—the PLO.

Arafat's response to the complicated situation facing him, the need to take all these factors into consideration, was very much in character. 'We were not dealing with the total issue, we couldn't, so we concentrated on continuing to represent the Palestinians and staying alive,' is the way his former lieutenants and a member of the cabinet in Arafat's Palestinian Authority described the situation which existed at the beginning of 1970. This explains why all efforts towards adopting a clear policy which would make sense to the rest of the world became secondary. According to the same source, Arafat knew that a total or even partial military victory against Israel was impossible, but continued to promote the idea to his people in order to maintain his position as leader. This has been interpreted as telling his people something while knowing better, and has produced accusations of cynicism. But that is too simple and convenient an explanation for what he was doing. By tying himself to what his people wanted and consolidating his and the PLO's paramountcy in the Arab–Israeli conflict, he was following a safer course of action within the Palestinian and Arab spheres.

There were so many Palestinian groups operating under the PLO umbrella in Jordan that no two authors or journalists are agreed on their number or the figures of their membership. Certainly there were more than thirty of them (I have a list of thirty-one), and the confused membership tallies show that some of them, for instance Fatah, had fifteen thousand men under arms while others, such as Al Ansar (The Partisans) numbered somewhere between fifty and a hundred. Some, like the PLA, were backed by Arab funds allocated for that purpose through the Arab League or donated in an open, acceptable way. But most had connections to Arab and outside countries, which used them to advance their wish to put pressure on Arafat and influence the outcome of the conflict.

Libya, Syria, Iraq, the USSR and China sponsored specific groups. Others, including major ones with several hundred members like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command (the PFLP–GC is not to be confused with the PFLP), received simultaneous Libyan, Iraqi, Syrian and other support. There were groups whose members came from other Arab countries – among them were the Lebanese Fidai' Front and the Organization of the Arabs of Sinai—and Marxist-Leninist, Maoist and Arab socialist groups. Others were extensions of parent organizations—Al Assifa and Force 17, for example, were part of Fatah—but had special duties and responsibilities. Some, especially the PFLP and DFLP, established connections with guerrilla organizations throughout the world, including the Baader-Meinhof gang in Germany, Action Directe of France, the Italian Red Brigades, the Japanese Red Army and the less well-known guerrillas of the Turkish Liberation Army and Colombian, Nicaraguan and Armenian groups. Regardless of origin, sponsorship, political direction or connection with international terror groups, all guerrilla groups operated under the umbrella of the PLO; they made the PLO.

The need to control groups with such diverse aims, backing and connections is obvious, but Arafat never understood this requirement. This is why the attempt to place all of these entities under the Armed Struggle Command, and other similar organizations which came and went without leaving a mark, never got off the ground. He created these bodies, then ignored them. But there was another element which contributed Arafat's attitude in the face of this uncontrollable diversity. As already seen, he favoured consensus, which meant accepting all groups as long as they paid his leadership position at least lip service. Regardless of how small or unimportant they were, he felt safer with them within the fold and feared alienating them or the power(s) behind them. This superseded any need to discipline them or to reject them on the basis of their ideology or the damage they might inflict on the parent organization, the PLO.

There is no better way to explain this naive, simplistic attitude than to show how he handled the plane hijackings organized by Wadi' Haddad of the PFLP. Though Arafat eventually condemned the hijackings and stated that he was against them, he undertook no spontaneous moves to stop Haddad and his group, who operated in the open and occupied seats on both the Palestine National Council and the executive committee of the PLO. Only when these bodies forced him to speak out did he do so, and then only perfunctorily. In fact, he considered PFLP leader George Habbash one of his major sources of support.

Arafat's failure to act against Haddad exposed his limited horizons. To Arafat, the hijackings helped introduce the name of Palestine to the world and contributed to the creation of the Palestinian identity which he valued above all else. He found them beneficial and could not see the damage they were doing the Palestinian cause. His handling of hijackings was indeed cynical: he wanted the benefits, yet rejected these acts when speaking to the world media or Arab leaders. He behaved the same way towards other groups; he wanted the benefits of their actions without assuming responsibility for them. In Jordan this was to cost him dearly.

The September 1970 civil war in Jordan, which has come to be known as Black September after the terrorist group it spawned, is often represented as the natural consequence of the existence of a Palestinian state within, but not beholden to, the

Jordanian state. In fact, despite signs to the contrary, including the proclamation of a Republic of Palestine by the residents of certain refugee camps such as Al Wahdat, there was no Palestinian state. There was nothing beyond a name, the PLO, behind which the various Palestinian guerrilla groups operated and sheltered. The erratic presence and the organizational dislocation[4-93] of the PLO, the inevitable results of Arafat's loose policies, inability to plan and lack of judgement, determined the nature of the civil war and its consequences. The confrontation between Jordan and the Palestinians was inevitable, given the inability of a nation state to accommodate the presence of a massive foreign rabble. Above all, it was Arafat's refusal to define the nature of the Palestinian presence in Jordan which was to eliminate any chance of some agreement acceptable to both sides—one which might have allowed the PLO to remain in Jordan without eroding the authority of the Jordanian government.

Between mid-1968 and the end of 1969 there were no fewer than five hundred violent clashes between members of the various Palestinian guerrilla groups and the Jordanian army and security forces. Serious incidents included the kidnapping of Arab diplomats and unfriendly Jordanian journalists, unprovoked attacks on government offices, rape and the humiliation of army and security officers.[4-94] The Palestinians, who were legally entitled to set up road blocks, molested women, levied illegal taxes and insulted the Jordanian flag in the presence of loyal Jordanians. Historians and biographers differ in their analysis of these events. To Arafat's biographers Janet and John Wallach, Arafat could have controlled the Palestinian rabble;[4-95] King Hussein's biographer James Lunt believes that Arafat could not impose discipline on his followers;[4-96] and the historian Charles D. Smith believes that Arafat was unwilling to challenge the groups behind them.[4-97] The best way to answer this important question is to judge Arafat in terms of what he did to control the groups operating under the PLO umbrella, including his own Fatah fighters.

Arafat's lack of attention to creating and giving support to a joint command capable of controlling what came to resemble an armed mob is a matter of record. What matters is that it was intentional. The loutish, high-handed behaviour of Palestinian fighters increased dramatically after Karameh. The situation had become unmanageable as early as November 1968, when King Hussein demanded that the Palestinians curb their activities within his country and reached the first of many agreements with them towards this aim. (It was followed by the February, August and November 1969 and February and July 1970 agreements.) The Fourteen-point Agreement, as it was called, contained modest demands, among them that the PLO should refrain from enlisting Jordanians wanted for service in the country's army; that armed Palestinians should not enter cities in military dress; that there should be an end to the Palestinian right to build road blocks; and that civil disputes should be settled in Jordanian courts.

It was Arafat, initially as Fatah's field commander and later as PLO chairman and military supremo, who violated the articles of these agreements. Under his direction, and despite the protests of many Fatah leaders, the PLO created its own police force and courts and arrested and punished people without deferring to the apparatus of the state.[4-98] Arafat ignored the fact that Fatah's armed members continued to set up road blocks and subject innocent citizens to indignities.

Opting for consensus and not wishing to offend the components of the PLO, he refused to act when DFLP fighters raised Communist red flags over mosques and offended Muslim sensibilities throughout the world. He violated all the agreements repeatedly and without considering the feelings of the Jordanian people, the effects on the host government or the other Arab governments which were watching these developments with dismay. Even after the repeated clashes between February and June 1970 with the Jordanian army which resulted in eight hundred to a thousand casualties, he refused to make any determined moves towards controlling his fighters. He went beyond violating agreements and acted contrary to what common sense dictated, paying no attention to one of the most basic rules of guerrilla warfare and armed resistance: the need to have the local population on your side. The blame for the Jordanian mess which led to Black September rests with Yasser Arafat, the one person who was capable of defusing the situation.

There is more to Arafat's behaviour than boredom with the routine of organizing anything, the wish to maintain a Palestinian front and his misplaced belief in consensus. After Karameh the PFLP stole the limelight. Whatever view the world had of the hijackings, they represented singular triumphs to the Palestinian people—certainly something more tangible than the raids across the Jordanian and Lebanese borders produced. In a way the PFLP was supreme, and its advocacy of activity aimed at disrupting Israeli life, regardless of that activity's nature and where it took place, guaranteed it a high level of popular support. Arafat, the master of drama, believer in consensus and a naturally jealous person, could not ignore the possibility of sharing such support. He felt that he had to go along with the PFLP, that he could not oppose Habbash publicly and needed his backing, even though the PFLP was committed to undermining the Jordanian government and replacing it with a friendlier regime. The DFLP, too, called for replacing the Jordanian monarchy. Because of the size and importance of these movements—second only to Fatah—Arafat felt that if he moved against them he would lose his position. Furthermore, he feared curbing smaller groups in case they joined or sought the protection of the PFLP or DFLP. It was his lack of willingness to adopt a statesmanlike position and think of the long term consequences rather than his own popularity that determined his course of action.

Moreover, undermining the Jordanian government was agreeable to him for a different reason. Jordan was the weakest of the Arab states which had accepted the Rogers Plan and similar peace initiatives by the United States and the United Nations, and Arafat, unable to pressure the others into a change of position, hoped to force Jordan into a retreat which would influence them. Without a change of policy in Jordan or the PLO, a clash between supporters and opponents of the Rogers Plan became unavoidable.[4-99]

There were two more reasons behind Arafat's behaviour. Despite the advice of leading Fatah and PLO figures, including Abu Jihad and Kamal Adwan, against pushing King Hussein too far, Arafat persisted in misjudging the nature of the Jordanian regime and the ability of the King to use force against the Palestinians. Arafat believed that Hussein would not dare undertake an armed confrontation with the PLO for fear of public reaction and the possibility that his army would not support him.[4-100] Furthermore, Arafat believed that no Arab country, including the ones which had also accepted the Rogers Plan and with which he was

quarrelling, would allow Hussein to use force against the Palestinians, even if internal conditions within Jordan pushed him to do so. In both cases he overestimated his position within the Arab world.

The third element contributing to Arafat's misreading of the situation was the proximity of Syria and the presence in Jordan of seventeen thousand Iraqi troops who had been stationed there since the 1967 War. General Salah Jedid, who was still in power in Syria, was a supporter of the Palestinian cause and an admirer of Arafat. To Arafat, the long, indefensible border between Jordan and Syria meant that direct Syrian military intervention would be possible, or at least one using the thousands of Palestinian fighters still stationed in that country. Added to this, the Iraqi regime was a most vocal opponent of the Rogers Plan and Arafat expected it to back him to the extent of putting its forces at his disposal.

What Arafat failed to take into consideration was the degree of commitment in Israel and the United States to maintaining Jordan and assisting Hussein. In 1969, still trying to reach agreement with the PLO but keeping his options open, King Hussein had three meetings with the Israeli Minister of Defence, Yigal Allon.[4-101] The Israelis offered Hussein all the assistance he needed to crush the Palestinians. Simultaneously Henry Kissinger, who had replaced William Rogers as US Secretary of State, offered American help in any endeavour aimed at eliminating the PLO's presence in Jordan.[4-102] Meanwhile Nasser and most of the Arab leaders, wiser than Arafat in the sphere of international affairs, knew that Israel and the USA would come to Hussein's aid. But Arafat was dizzy with success and, because his stubbornness over Karameh had served him well, would listen to no one. By mid-1970 there was no turning back, and only Hussein's decision to act was needed.

If Arafat showed little understanding of the dynamics of Jordanian politics and the inevitable involvement of outside powers in determining the outcome of the contest for control between the Palestinians and the country's government, then King Hussein is certainly guilty of prevaricating to the extent of convincing Arafat that he, Hussein, was acting out of weakness. The King did not know which way to jump, and he changed direction frequently and substantially. He also feared an army mutiny, a popular uprising in support of the PLO and the reaction of Arab countries.

In February 1970, taking advantage of a visit by Arafat to Moscow, Hussein issued a decree limiting the scope of PLO operations in Jordan and reimposing the rule of law. The Eleven-point Declaration led to bloody Palestinian–Jordanian skirmishes and dozens of deaths. Upon Arafat's return the King demonstrated a sudden loss of nerve. He rescinded his decree, described it as a misunderstanding and fired the man who had recommended it, his Minister of the Interior Mohammed Rasul Al Keilani. But this conciliatory move did not work, because Arafat could not put into effect the promises he had made in return for Hussein's concession. Not only did the skirmishes continue, but the PFLP and DFLP continued to advocate the overthrow of the monarchy and demanded the dismissal of Hussein's uncle and Chief of Staff, Sharif Nasser bin Jameel, and his cousin and commander of the Jordanian armoured forces, Sharif Zeid bin Shaker. In May, once again bending to the storm, King Hussein fired his two relations.

What followed the series of concessions to Arafat and the PLO bordered on farce. In a singular triumph of inventiveness, King Hussein asked Arafat to form a government and become his Prime Minister.[4-103] An amazed, almost speechless Arafat turned him down because he had no plan for Jordan, or for incorporating the PLO into a functioning nation state with or without Hussein. With this refusal Arafat, who survives on improvisation and constantly turns turmoil to personal advantage, was left with no option but to continue to contribute to the existing untenable chaotic state of affairs. Unable to control his followers or assume power, he was cornered into trying to maintain the status quo. As if to underscore the absurdity of the situation, immediately afterwards, in June, there was yet another failed attempt by renegade guerrillas to assassinate Hussein by ambushing his motorcade. And in an act of utter stupidity the guerrillas killed Jozza bin Shaker, the King's cousin and sister of the dismissed General Zeid.

In July Hussein had a meeting in Cairo with Nasser, in which he shocked the Egyptian leader by detailing unacceptable guerrilla activities, including the proliferation of cars without licence plates and acts of vandalism against bakeries which left some of his people without bread. Nasser needed little persuading. He himself had been humiliated in Jordan—at one point Palestinian demonstrators had paraded a donkey with his picture on it. The Egyptian President, totally convinced that Arafat was failing a major test of leadership, gave Hussein tacit approval to reimpose his authority. Arafat, though undoubtedly aware that he could not stand up to a Nasser – Hussein alliance, still failed to respond. As if daring them, in August he convened a Palestine National Council meeting in Amman which openly debated the issue of replacing Hussein. Exploring new avenues, but still unable to formulate sensible plans, Arafat was involved in several contacts with Jordanian army officers to stage a coup d'état, including a serious one with Colonel Said Maraghe. The door for Hussein was wide open and the PFLP wasted no time in providing him with ample excuse.

On 6 September 1970 the PFLP, acting on the instructions of the Master, Dr Wadi' Haddad, carried out the most memorable hijackings in history. They began with the simultaneous diversion to Jordan of a Swissair DC-8 and a TWA Boeing 707, which was followed six days later by the hijacking of a BOAC VC-10. The aircraft were forced to land at Dawson Field, 30 miles from Amman, which was quickly renamed Revolutionary Airport. Meanwhile another PFLP hijack team which had failed to board an El Al plane managed to hijack a Pan American Boeing 747 to Cairo and blow it up, while the media recorded the incident for a gasping world audience.

The dichotomy between the thinking of the PFLP and the world reaction which followed is most vividly demonstrated by the show—a modern circus with aircraft replacing animals—which surrounded the event. That the hijackers and planners of the escapades meant no harm to the passengers and had the sole aim of advancing the cause of the Palestinians through dramatizing their plight is undoubtedly true. Statements read by the hijackers and repeated by a PFLP 'reception committee' waiting to greet the passengers made this abundantly clear. Everything was done to make the ordeal of being on a hijacked plane easier. Elderly passengers were helped off planes. All were provided with food and assured that they would not be harmed, including some who had dual Israeli–American

nationality and a rabbi.[4-104] Furthermore, efforts were made to acquaint them with the Palestinian problem and explain what was happening—a kind of crash course aimed at convincing them that their hijackers were freedom fighters and not terrorists. Much of the routine was carried out in front of cameras, and PFLP spokesman Bassam Abu Sharif used a megaphone to relay what was said to the passengers aboard the planes to the world media. In fact, the whole episode was reduced to a media spectacular and camera footage of the event leaves no doubt that the Palestinian participants were enjoying their sudden notoriety. Abu Sharif resembled a guerrilla cheerleader, but the world beyond, including the Arab states, condemned the event and there were very few cheers. Even the eventual release of the hostages failed to eradicate the impression of a tribe which had lost its direction as well as its head.

On the surface, the demands of the PFLP were simple enough: the freeing of would-be hijackers who had failed in their efforts and were serving time in European prisons. But there was a bigger, undeclared reason which coincided with Arafat's thinking: to protest against the Arab leaders' acceptance of the Rogers Plan and to undermine them. Not for the first time, the attitude of the guerrillas coincided with that of Israel. Their short-sightedness was helping their enemy because Prime Minister Golda Meir too had turned down the Rogers Plan, fearing an Arab–US attempt to force her country to evacuate the territories occupied in 1967. The same PFLP spokesman, Bassam Abu Sharif, admits in his memoirs, *Tried by Fire*, that the Rogers Plan was the main target of the guerrillas.[4-105] Of course, there were some gains to be made from the effort and the media attention it was receiving, and the PFLP and DFLP, later to be joined by Arafat and Fatah, declared the airport 'a liberated area'. With little idea how to liberate the rest of Jordan, this marked another aspect of the absurdity on the ground.

The Jordanians were divided on what to do about the hijackers. Prime Minister Abdel Munim Al Rifai', a staunch PLO supporter who had repeatedly stood by the Palestinians while trying to get them to behave, remained adamant that a settlement should be negotiated. Other Jordanian politicians, notably former Prime Minister Bahjat Talhouni, former deputy Prime Minister Akef Al Fayez and the popular politician Ibrahim Izzedine, supported him. On the other side, advocating a crackdown, were Crown Prince Hassan, former Prime Minister Wasfi Tel, the dismissed trio of Sharif Nasser bin Jameel, Sharif Zeid bin Shaker and the former Minister of the interior Mohammed Rasul Al Kilani, politician Zedi Al Rifai (Abdel Munim's nephew) and most of the senior officers of Hussein's army. Although Hussein was in touch with the United States and Israel and had prepared for confrontation to the extent of dismissing several army officers with PLO sympathies and organizing a special force to deal with the situation,[4-106] the outcome of the crisis depended on the PLO leader.

Arafat, unprepared for the snowballing confrontation despite the multitude of signs that it was reaching a climax, proved unequal to the task facing him. Very early in September, in a move which further alienated Nasser, he had rushed to Baghdad to obtain the Iraqi government's promise of assistance against Hussein even though he was able to articulate the final purpose of such assistance. Even after the PFLP destroyed the hijacked planes on 15 September, he remained a

prisoner to the image he had created for himself and his people. Except for the meaningless suspension of the PFLP from joint command of the guerrilla forces, he demonstrated no inclination to act against it or its leaders. Initially, he concentrated on reaching the King. Later he reached an agreement with Hussein through intermediaries, then rejected it and demanded ostentatiously that the King leave the country within twenty-four hours. He then began broadcasting appeals on the improvised PLO radio calling for the overthrow of the monarchy. In reality there was no determining what his true position was: he vacillated between wanting a final confrontation and trying to avoid it, but still without much thought as to what might follow. Characteristically, he began preparing for the consequences of his actions by attributing what was happening to 'outside influences' and other standard accusatory phrases which had become a habit with him. His behaviour confused his supporters and enemies alike, and encouraged Hussein to put his own plans into action.

The day after the destruction of the hijacked planes King Hussein declared martial law, dismissed Rifai', recalled Field Marshal Habis Al Majali to active duty and appointed him commander in chief, and entrusted the formation of a military government to the Palestinian-born General Mohammed Daoud. Arafat stormed around Amman making statements but there were no last-minute moves to salvage the situation, even after the Arab governments showed little inclination to stand in Hussein's way.

The fighting began the following day, with a Jordanian artillery barrage against the PLO stronghold of Zarqa. Within hours similar attacks were being directed against several areas of Amman, including the strategic Jabal Al Hussein, and on refugee camps such as Al Wahdat which had raised the flag of the Republic of Palestine. For the first time Arafat used the word 'genocide' to describe what was happening to the Palestinians, while urging his fighters to resist. The Palestinians acquitted themselves well, helped by his undoubtedly inspiring personal courage and steadfastness. But Arafat's first disappointment came when Iraqi army units which he had counted on refused to come to his aid and were seen retreating to a distant safe area. But Arafat took the Iraqi 'betrayal' in his stride.

On 18 September Arafat's men were still acquitting themselves well and the Jordanian army was failing to make any substantial progress, despite Hussein's expectations of an easy victory. The Arab countries and the Arab League issued appeals for a cessation of hostilities but did little else. By the end of the day, lack of organization and coordination was beginning to show and some Palestinian fighting units were running out of ammunition. By early morning on the 19th armoured units of the Palestine Liberation Army, complemented by regular units of the Syrian army operating under thin disguise, crossed into northern Jordan in a drive towards Amman. Arafat the propagandist rose to the occasion and declared northern Jordan a liberated area. The Arab League called for an extraordinary meeting of heads of state. Israel urged Hussein to continue and, in line with the secret agreement between them, code-named Sandstorm, placed its forces on alert. The United States announced that naval units were converging on the eastern Mediterranean to reinforce the Sixth Fleet as a precautionary measure.

The fighting in the streets of Amman was bloody. Neither side took any prisoners; both sides committed atrocities, many innocents were raped and killed,

and most of the city was ablaze. In other parts of the country, besieged refugee camps were running out of food and water. Wherever possible people lived in shelters, while others abandoned their villages for the safety of empty spaces. No fewer than five thousand soldiers and officers of the Jordanian army defected to the PLO, but most did so individually: the fact that there was no defection by whole units left the army's organizational structure intact and enabled it to continue fighting, and did little to strengthen the PLO.[4-107] After an initial setback, the Jordanians counter-attacked the invading force from Syria and pushed it back. When Hussein sent his air force against it, the Syrian air force commander and Minister of Defence, Arafat's enemy General Hafez Al Assad, refused to use his aircraft and the Syrian ground forces had to withdraw. What lay behind the Syrian move was Assad's calculating conviction that the use of his air force would bring the United States and Israel into the conflict,[4-108] the one thing Arafat never understood.

In the midst of the fighting, on 22 September, an Arab League delegation nominated by Nasser in a hurriedly convened meeting in Cairo arrived in Amman. It was headed by the Sudanese President, Ja'afar Numeiri, who was accompanied by the Tunisian Prime Minister, the Kuwaiti Minister of Defence and the Egyptian chief of staff. The following day, with Arafat on the move to avoid capture but remarkably still in total command of the Palestinian forces, the Arab delegates hammered out an agreement with PLO leaders Abu Iyad and Farouk Qaddoumi, who had been taken prisoner by the Jordanians and were released by Hussein to act as negotiators. But no sooner had the Arab delegates returned to Cairo than Arafat rejected the agreement and renewed his calls for the overthrow of the monarchy.

The rejection of the agreement was vintage Arafat. Given that the PLO fighters were losing some ground and running low on ammunition, it was a supreme act of daring which undermined Abu Iyad and Qaddoumi, made him more popular with the anti-Hussein Palestinians and forced the Arab delegation to return to Amman to locate him. Because the Jordanian forces kept him in hiding and on the move, the Arab peace-makers resorted to sending messages and signals. Eventually they appealed to King Hussein to restrain his fighters in certain areas and made an open radio appeal to Arafat to contact them. When he did, they told him that Nasser had ordered them not to return to Cairo without him.[4-109] According to Arafat's version of events, he left disguised as a Kuwaiti sitting on the plane next to the Kuwaiti member of the delegation, the Defence Minister Sa'ad Al Abdallah. However, many Jordanians continue to claim that no disguise was needed, that King Hussein knew of Arafat's departure and welcomed it as a way of ending the fighting.[4-110] In either case the strutting, fuming Arafat who arrived in Cairo was still full of histrionics and initially insisted, against all advice, on keeping his sidearm.

Because his military Prime Minister General Daoud had defected and disappeared rather than speak against the Palestinians or respond to the pleas of Nasser, on 27 September King Hussein arrived in Cairo. He too wore the uniform of an army general and carried a pistol. It took considerable effort to convince the two men to join in the deliberations of the Arab League without their weapons.[4-111]

As expected, the meeting lacked any form of decorum. Hussein accused Arafat of conspiring to overthrow him and produced tapes of radio broadcasts as proof. Arafat retaliated by pounding the table, gesticulating and screaming: he accused Hussein of being an agent of imperialism and conspiring with the USA and Israel against the Palestinians. When it came to invective, Hussein's efforts were no match for the talents Arafat had acquired on the streets of Cairo. The Libyan leader General Qaddafi, never one to miss participating in a quarrel or to utter singular stupidities, accused Hussein of being a lunatic like his father (Hussein's father, King Tallal, had been forced to abdicate because of mental illness). King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, disheartened by the vulgar recriminations and incoherent rantings, declared that all Arab leaders must obviously be mentally unbalanced.

It was left to an ailing, tired Nasser, who had suffered several heart attacks and had been ordered by his doctors to rest and avoid exertion, to hammer out an agreement. At the end, there was a frosty handshake between Arafat and Hussein. Just hours later, after saying goodbye to all the departing Arab leaders, Nasser suffered another heart attack, collapsed and died. The one man with the stature and authority to enforce the agreement was gone. For Hussein this represented an opportunity to finish what he had started.

The most remarkable aspect of the September 1970 civil war was the failure of the Jordanian army to win an outright military victory. The overall level of casualties was high—the estimates range from three thousand to fifteen thousand dead and many more wounded—and the army did manage to dislodge the Palestinian forces from several districts of Amman and small cities such as Zarka and Al Salt. But the PLO forces still occupied important parts of the Jordanian capital, the town of Irbid and the whole northern section of the country, Ajlun. Given a background of Israeli and American psychological support for Jordan—Nixon ordered the Sixth Fleet to the Mediterranean and Israeli planes buzzed Palestinian positions—and the material assistance supplied to Hussein by some Arab countries,[4-112] the fact that the Palestinians fought alone attests to their bravery and determination and raises a serious question about Arafat's lack of design. Whether he wanted to overthrow the monarchy—and would have been capable of it—is a question that can never be answered, but he certainly failed to capitalize on the performance of his fighting men. He acted strictly defensively and with no specific direction. In the process, he compromised the heroic performance of the Palestinians. It was the reverse of Karameh; this time a potential military victory was turned into defeat. This time, the Arabs did not rush to embrace Arafat.

Hussein had the advantage of a simple plan which called for the ejection of the Palestinians from his country. Soon after returning from Cairo he formed a new government and appointed a hard-liner, Wasfi Tel, to the premiership. Tel, a former British army officer, was a calculating man of method who had the distinction of having drawn up the only militarily sound Arab plan in the 1948 War. Late in 1970 he established contact with the two new Arab leaders at the helm in Syria and Egypt, Hafez Al Assad and Anwar Sadat, and determined that they would do little to help Arafat. Assad had overthrown the government headed by Salah Jedid and was fearful of outside intervention in Jordan, while Sadat, who firmly believed that Arab military victory against Israel was unattainable, had

succeeded Nasser. Both represented more moderate approaches and were reluctant to come to the rescue of the Palestinians in the manner of the former regimes in these countries. With his Arab flank thus covered, Tel moved in for the kill.

Arafat had returned to Jordan and set up headquarters in Ajlun in the north. From there he sent Tel and Hussein repeated messages professing moderation and promoting a policy of live and let live. His pleas amounted to too little too late, and Tel refused to consider any of his suggestions. Meanwhile Hussein was expanding his contacts with the Israelis, and by the beginning of November 1970 he had held several meetings with them in London and Tehran.[4-113] The final Jordanian move to liquidate the Palestinian resistance took place in July 1971.

Having thrown Palestinian fighters out of Amman and the major towns in a series of deliberate dislodgements, the Jordanians eventually forced them into the corner of the country bordering Israel and Syria. In July the Jordanian forces, reorganized and with their spirits uplifted by the prospects of victory, hit the Palestinians with everything they had. Using tanks, aircraft and heavy artillery they pushed Arafat and his fighters into an indefensible triangle. The Palestinians were outmanoeuvred and outgunned, and this time the prospect of outside military assistance did not exist. Arafat's screams of genocide drew Arab protests and led to the closure of the Iraqi and Syrian borders with Jordan and suspension of aid by Kuwait, but these measures could not alter the desperate plight of the Palestinian fighters. Two weeks of fighting produced another three thousand Palestinian dead. The ferocity of the Jordanian onslaught and the savagery of Hussein's vengeance-seeking Bedouin troops (they gratuitously executed the Palestinian commander, another Abu Al Iyad) forced some of the Palestinian fighters to flee across the River Jordan and seek asylum in Israel.[4-114] Meanwhile, Israel capitalized on the Arabs' preoccupation with fratricide to administer another defeat to the Palestinians. The Israelis successfully carried out a massive campaign against the people and refugees of Gaza, which led to the arrest of thousands and the demolition of hundreds of houses belonging to suspected resisters.

Arafat had no way out of his military and political predicament except to leave the country. After several unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with Hussein through a trusted friend, former general Radi Abdallah, he sent an urgent appeal to the leading Palestinian member of Tel's cabinet, Munib Masri, to rescue him. The latter travelled to northern Jordan in the company of the Saudi Ambassador to Jordan, Fahd Al Koheimi, and talked Arafat, who was hiding in a cave, into returning to Amman to meet King Hussein. But Arafat knew he could not face Hussein to negotiate what amounted to terms of surrender. On reaching the town of Jarrash in the company of Masri and Al Koheimi he asked to be driven in the direction of the Syrian border.[4-115] After crossing into Syria he soon moved to Lebanon with two thousand of his fighters to avoid being under the control of President Assad, a man forever opposed to independent PLO action and determined to place the Palestinian resistance under his country's control. Yasser Arafat may have been defeated but he remained arrogant and unrepentant.

When a Fatah convention was held to review what had happened in Jordan in November 1971, Arafat refused to accept any criticism of his conduct and, in what

was later to become familiar behaviour, he stormed out of the meeting three times. He used his awareness of his unassailable position as a symbol of Palestinian resistance to put the blame on others, including Abu Iyad and Abu Jihad, respectively the man who had negotiated an agreement with Hussein and the PLO's leading organizer who had called for better Palestinian conduct in Jordan. If the convention showed Arafat at his worst, then his triumph over those who held him personally responsible for the disaster in Jordan allowed him to perpetuate another myth; years later he still attributed his Jordan problems exclusively to 'outside influences' and declared, 'We made no mistakes in Jordan.'[4-116]

Though the Arab house was divided, the defeat in Jordan total and the one in Gaza hugely damaging, there was a little-noticed but bigger victory which would eventually lead Arafat to a fundamental change of direction and save him from oblivion. In the West Bank and Gaza, atrocities committed by the Jordanians against the Palestinian fighters, the brutal treatment of Palestinians in refugee camps and the humiliation of all Palestinians severely damaged these territories' link with the Jordanian monarchy. One out of every fourth or fifth Palestinian family in the West Bank was directly affected by these events, and the rest saw King Hussein as an enemy of the Palestinian people.[4-117] Even pro-Hussein politicians such as Anwar Khatib, a former mayor of Jerusalem under Jordan, asked for Hussein to step down. Without exception, opinion polls revealed that the people of the territories had gone against Hussein and the Arabs and adopted a Palestinian identity. The major barriers standing between the people of the West Bank and the PLO, the Jordanian claim to their loyalty, and their attachment to an Arab rather than a Palestinian approach to their problem—had been eliminated. The suffering of the people of Gaza at the hands of the Israelis, coupled with lack of faith in Sadat's Egypt, produced the same results there. In the middle of all this, no one paid attention to Yasser Arafat's humiliation of Abu Iyad and Abu Jihad.

Arafat's failure to generate an uprising against the Israelis immediately after the 1967 War was followed by Israeli and Jordanian failures to capitalize on the political vacuum created by the war. Two mistakes and the lack of a consistent coherent policy stood in the way of Israeli success. At first the Israelis attempted to cooperate with local notables without paying much attention to their popular standing. Chief among the West Bankers towards whom they paid special attention was Sheikh Mohammed Ali Al Ja'abari, mayor of Hebron and a former member of several Jordanian cabinets. The Israelis overlooked their various decrees banning political activity and allowed Ja'abari to form a Committee for Public Affairs, a group of notables willing to work with them. Members of this committee were a discredited lot, however, who commanded no respect and whose pre-1967 work with the harsh Jordanian administration and association with King Hussein counted against them. The Israelis further undermined their position vis à vis the people of the West Bank and Gaza by expropriating land in Jerusalem, Hebron and Gaza and announcing plans to build settlements. Both Israeli actions helped Arafat's cause.

Overall, whatever plans Israel had for the occupied territories were vague, cynical and short-sighted. The Israelis were opposed to the idea of a separate Palestinian entity, and even their occasional offers of local autonomy never got off

the ground because they could not accept the principle of the Palestinians deciding their own fate on any level. They favoured cooperating with King Hussein because he was an alternative to the PLO who would concede more, but they could not bring themselves to do anything to make such cooperation a viable choice acceptable to even the most moderate of Palestinians. Beyond the pliant Ja'abari they conducted negotiations with several groups of local leaders, notably those of Nablus,[4-118] but had nothing to offer to secure their cooperation. The banning of several popular opposition groups, such as the Higher Islamic Council and the Communist-led National Guidance Committee, reduced the Israeli effort to an attempt to impose an antiquated leadership on the people of the occupied territories. This was something which the intelligentsia of the population and through them the ordinary people, for whom they interpreted such matters—rejected. Israel's only success was in integrating Palestinian workers into the Israeli economy; the number working within Israel's pre-1967 borders continued to grow, and by 1970 there were over thirty thousand of them.

Jordanian efforts aimed at maintaining a connection with the occupied territories, and at presenting Jordan as a country to which the Palestinians should adhere in order to produce a settlement of the conflict acceptable to them, were equally unsound. Jordan too depended on local Palestinian leaders to advance its cause without much attention to their popular standing. In addition to the ephemeral support of Ja'abari, the Jordanians could count on the loyalty of the mayor of Bethlehem, Elias Freij, and the mayor of Gaza, Rashad Shawa. But whatever popularity the three mayors possessed was nullified by their inability to produce benefits for the people as a result of their varying degrees of cooperation with Israel, which Jordan initially supported. Moreover, the Jordanian rule of the West Bank before 1967 had been harsh and dictatorial, and the post-1967 Jordanian efforts to retain a position in the occupied territories consisted of funding the mayors to promote pro-Jordanian sentiments. The mayors did little beside pocket the money and perpetuate the image of a corrupt Jordan which paid little attention to the feelings of the people. Finally, even those mayors found it difficult to side with Jordan after the Black September Civil War. On top of all this, Israel's lack of policy occasionally found it opposing the pro-Jordanian mayors' modest demands and vitiating their effectiveness.[4-119]

The lack of success which accompanied the Israeli and Jordanian efforts opened the door for some of the local leaders to act. For instance, a Christian lawyer, Aziz Shehadeh, a journalist, Mohammed Shalbiya, and a member of an old political family, Dr Hamdi Al Taji Al Farouqi, had begun to advocate a separate Palestinian state comprising the West Bank and Gaza soon after the Israeli occupation in 1967, and were encouraged to step up their efforts by the Black September disaster in Jordan.[4-120] But three things stood between them and success. First, because of Israel's uncompromising stance the people of the occupied territories misjudged their intentions. They could not differentiate between honest advocates of peace and collaborators trying to accommodate Israeli designs. Second, they had no backing whatsoever: the Arabs were behind the PLO, the Israelis were against their ideas and pro-Jordanian mayors saw them as competitors. Lastly, Arafat himself, stunned by his original failure in the West Bank and cleverly learning from it, did everything to discredit and frighten them. From 1969 he used

Radio Al Assifa in Cairo, the transmitters at his disposal in Damascus and Baghdad, and PLO publications to issue warnings to them and to ask the people to refrain from following them. In November 1970 he met some of them in Jordan and threatened them in person.[4-121] The threats were real enough to make it impossible for some of them to travel or to get their opinions published in local newspapers.

Arafat's efforts blocked all attempts to create a local leadership capable of negotiating the fate of the West Bank and Gaza. The later efforts of a broad-based West Bank coalition calling itself the Palestine National Front, presented to the PLO in advance in recognition of its primacy as an act of respect, achieved no more than Shehadeh, Farouqi and Shalibya had. Arafat refused to tolerate any local initiative which might lead to settlement with Israel for fear of being marginalized. In fact, he devoted considerable energy to stifling the development of local leadership in the West Bank and Gaza. He successfully equated compromise with treason.

With the Arabs discredited, Israel and Jordan ineffective and the people of the occupied territories unable to act on their own, this time the only organization that held any appeal for the Palestinians under Israeli occupation was the PLO. Arafat knew this and used it with his customary speed. He made much of 'the betrayal' of Jordan, lack of Arab support and Israeli behaviour, and the agony they generated among the Palestinians of the occupied territories. Every move by the Jordanian or Israeli governments was seized on by Arafat's propaganda machine and broadcast to his new constituency. In addition, peace moves by Arab governments, like Sadat's diplomatic efforts towards a dialogue and Hussein's ongoing secret negotiations, played right into his hands. This time people showed no reluctance in joining him; using his newly acquired knowledge of conditions on the ground with remarkable effectiveness, he began cultivating instead of threatening the local leadership. He sent them money while knowing that most of them would never use it for political purposes, and finally he succeeded in bribing them. If Israeli actions presented him with an easy target, and the marginalization of the ordinary people by Jordanian policies which favoured the elite helped him, it was the death of Nasser which paved the way for Arafat to fill the ideological void. After the Black September civil war, all he had to do was prove that the Palestinian issue was still alive and well and in loyal Palestinian hands. He seized the all-important propaganda scene by coining unrealistic new slogans like 'Haifa before Jerusalem'—Haifa, after all, was in pre-1967 Israel—but to people without hope they were effective.

In the absence of a base from which to conduct serious raids against Israel, the Palestinians and the rest of the world needed proof that armed resistance had not died. How to maintain his Palestinian position became a problem, as was convincing the rest of the world which supported Hussein and his ambitions. This was the beginning of terrorism and secret diplomacy.

Palestinian terrorism falls into two categories. In the first category, what the PLO, Fatah, PFLP, DFLP, PFLP–General Command, Al Saiqa and other major groups undertook always had a clear political purpose behind it. Whether or not the acts were justifiable or acceptable in principle, the arguments for and against them were always reduced to people's perception of whether this was terrorism or

the work of freedom fighters. The second category of terrorist activity, the work of the lunatic fringe of Abu Nidal, Abul Abbas and others, consisted of random acts of violence carried out by people totally lacking in political acumen but committed to a destructive activity without understanding its consequences. The Fatah campaign of terror, like those of the PFLP and DFLP, was elaborately political.

On 28 November 1971, an organization which was to leave an indelible mark on the history of political terror and the modern Middle East committed its first murder. Four armed Palestinians, operating in broad daylight and without the benefit of masks, shot dead the Jordanian Prime Minister, Wasfi Tel, as he returned to Cairo's Sheraton Hotel from an Arab League meeting. The assassination itself was followed by a gruesome ritual as one of the killers knelt down, lapped up some of Tel's flowing blood and shouted several times that he and his accomplices belonged to Black September. The following month the group tried to assassinate Jordan's Ambassador to London, Zeid Al Rifai', a leading politician who had supported King Hussein's crackdown on the Palestinians. There was no let-up, and in February 1972 members of Black September blew up a West German electrical installation and a Dutch gas plant.

These four acts of terrorism revealed a great deal about the organization behind them. Black September's fearless members were willing to defy major Arab governments, including the very important Egyptian one. The attempt to assassinate Rifai' in London demonstrated that they had international connections. And the attacks against the West German and Dutch installations indicated that the plans of the new terror group went beyond eliminating individuals and included a threat to the economic infrastructure of the West on its home ground.

The reaction to the attacks followed clear-cut lines. Because they acted as a safety valve for Palestinian frustration, the majority of Palestinians applauded them. Most of the Arab states either sanctioned Black September or looked the other way,[4-122] and this was confirmed in a dramatic way when the the Egyptians released Tel's assassins on phoney technical grounds. The West took hurried steps to protect its airports and industrial complexes and began to draw up protective measures. And Israel, utterly stunned by the Palestinians' ability to rise from the ashes, resorted to increased aerial attacks on PLO bases and began developing plans for responding to the new threat on a global basis.

In 1972, what amounted to a full-fledged war of terror between the Palestinians and Israel complemented the escalating situation on the ground. In January, PLO raids from Lebanon against northern Israel prompted an Israeli incursion into that country and aerial attacks against PLO bases there as well as the first attack against Syria since the 1967 War. The Syrian aerial response came close to starting a full-scale war. Later PLO cross-border activities resulted in similar land, air and sea clashes and further Israeli incursions which occasionally involved thousands of men. The Palestinian issue was alive, the raids against Israel and Black September terror tactics were successful; the United Nations and the rest of the world were left in no doubt that the defeat in Jordan had not finished off the PLO or Arafat's leadership.

Countering and containing the acts of terror was what preoccupied everyone, rather than the message which Black September sent out. In May 1972 there was

another hijacking, of a Belgian Sabena plane flying from Vienna to Tel Aviv. Later that month, using their international connections and relying for assistance on members of the Japanese Red Army, the PFLP carried out an attack on Lod airport in Israel which left twenty-four dead. On 9 July, the Israelis hit back by assassinating PFLP spokesman Ghassan Kanafani and his niece in Beirut. Two days later, a bomb at a Tel Aviv bus terminal wounded eleven people. On the 19th, a letter bomb came close to killing Kanafani's second-in-command, Bassam Abu Sharif. On the 25th, Black September attacked an oil refinery in Trieste in north-eastern Italy. The cycle of violence had to end with war or escalate into some senseless act of outrageous proportions, and it did.

On 5 September 1972, during the Olympic Games, the Munich Massacre entered the vocabulary of the world. This Black September operation, code-named Ikrit and Byram after two villages in Galilee razed by the Israelis, generated shock waves which no one could ignore. Two Israeli athletes were killed when hooded Palestinians raided the Olympic grounds and took another eleven as hostages. Later, in a twenty-three-hour drama, a German attempt to lure the kidnappers failed and in the ensuing shoot-out nine more Israeli athletes, five of the eight gunmen and a German policeman perished. The three surviving kidnappers were captured by the Germans but freed later after the hijacking of a Lufthansa plane. Pictures of the hooded gunmen were flashed all over the world; they became the masked face of Palestinian resistance, the face of terror.

These statistics were nothing compared with the worldwide impact of Munich. The victims were athletes participating in the most international event of them all, and the media coverage was greater than that for the hijackings. The world could not overlook the challenge of Munich and, through passing judgement on it, passed judgement on PLO terror as a whole. The question of how Munich came about, and why, had to be answered. So did the matter of the culpability of the PLO and Arafat.

Immediately after their ejection from northern Jordan and before their move to Lebanon, in August and September 1971, the PLO had met in Damascus to lick its wounds and decide on a course of action.**(4-123)** The recollections of a member of the PFLP command who participated in the meetings, and the length of time it took to reach a decision, attest to the lack of agreement on what was needed to keep the flame of resistance alive. Moderate Khalid Al Hassan, who had acted as de facto foreign affairs spokesman for the PLO, was firmly opposed to the use of terror tactics. Arguing against him were Abu Iyad, Abu Jihad, Kamal Adwan, Ali Hassan Salameh (Abu Hassan), George Habbash of the PFLP and the DFLP representatives. Arafat straddled the fence but was dead set against any such acts taking place under the name of the PLO. In fact, except for suggesting the use of a new name, the final decision to create the Black September Movement was carried without his vote.

Black September thus came into being without Arafat's explicit approval. It was a conglomeration of the leading Palestinian resistance groups, and the PFLP in particular provided it with all the expertise at its disposal and volunteers. But could the actions of Black September have taken place without Arafat's knowledge and approval? Amazingly, the answer to this question is a qualified yes.

It was the strength of Palestinian feeling which cornered Arafat into accepting the idea of a terror organization; the master of consensus, whose leadership of the Palestinians during the civil war in Jordan had diminished him, could not do otherwise and survive. What followed the creation of Black September showed him at his disorganized worst. The killing of Wasfi Tel in Cairo was carried out under the direction of Ali Hassan Salameh[4-124] a handsome, ambitious, whisky-drinking young skirt-chaser who had been trained in guerrilla tactics in Egypt. Despite the protest resignation of Khalid Al Hassan, this event had broad-based Palestinian approval and is therefore not one by which to judge Arafat's association with terrorism. What followed it does deserve examination.

According to my informant and two others who participated in the terror attacks of the early 1970s to the extent of planning one of them, Black September had no single leader. Salameh was determined to endear himself to the 'Old Man' and became something akin to an adopted son, but Abu Iyad and Mohammed Yusuf Al Najjar were also determined to leave their mark. Najjar was not after personal glory, but Salameh and Abu Iyad were, and the latter in particular was determined to erase the stigma attached to him by Arafat for reaching an agreement during the fighting in Jordan which proved unacceptable to the PLO and its leader. This produced rivalry both for the leadership of Black September and for credit for the various operations. For example, insiders confirm that Trieste was definitely Salameh's work, but, despite accusations against him which ultimately cost him his life, Munich was the responsibility of Abu Iyad, and many of the hijackings which followed were the work of the PFLP assuming the name of Black September.

Even after more than twenty years no evidence has been uncovered to suggest that Arafat was personally involved, or that he approved any one single operation. But he was in a position to stop the operations, at least most of them, and that he did not do. Nor was he averse to seeing the various members of Fatah and the PLO compete with each other as to who conducted the more successful acts of terror: it weakened them and made them more dependent on him. Certainly he knew who the culpable trio were and was content to see them burn themselves and reap the benefits. By not acting against the attacks committed in the name of Black September across the board, he gave them his implicit approval. In particular his close association with Salameh, a seriously flawed show-off who wore unbuttoned silk shirts and tailored suits, surrounded himself with eighteen guards at a time and listened to Elvis Presley's *Love Me Tender* every day, suggests a wish to control events without direct involvement. Whatever tacit approval Arafat gave these activities was obviously tactical; in combination with efforts to organize the occupied territories and raids from Lebanon it was aimed at guaranteeing the paramountcy of the PLO and himself as its head. Once this was accomplished, he acted against the organizers of terror. This was cynicism pure and simple.

On 1 March 1973, an eight-man Black September hit squad shot their way into the Saudi Embassy in Khartoum where a farewell party was being held for American chargé d'affaires J. Curtis Moore. They took the guests hostage and made the usual demands for the freeing of prisoners in several countries. It was an affront to Sudan's President Ja'afar Numeiri, the man who had saved Arafat during the fighting in Amman, an insult to the Saudis, who had continued to fund the PLO, and a direct threat to American diplomats. The negotiations with the

semi-literate terrorists got nowhere and the grisly episode ended with the cold-blooded murder in the embassy basement of Moore, the American Ambassador, Cleo Noel, and the Belgian chargé d'affaires, Guy Eid. This atrocity forced Arafat into the open.

That the terrorists were in radio contact and receiving instructions from Beirut during the day-long siege is undoubtedly true. But the Israeli claim that Arafat personally gave them orders,[4-125] has never been verified and consequent events suggest it was untrue. The Israelis failed to produce the so-called tapes of Arafat issuing instructions; the American monitoring of the operation produced nothing to incriminate him; and, although the real planners of the hideous episode remain unnamed, Arafat used it to disavow terror and the unknowns behind it. In fact, the suspicion of some biographers that he began to oppose terror and the clear but subdued statements made by certain historians[4-126] are considerably more credible. Arafat's emissary who was despatched to the Sudan to mend relations with that country speaks of him 'being livid to the extent of reciting swear words like a psalm' and claims that the PLO leader used the incident to order the cessation of all terrorist activity.

However, acts of terror by some Fatah elements continued without Arafat's sanction and he had no control over some small groups. Indeed there was a long list of PLO and Israeli acts of terror from Bangkok to New York, culminating in March 1973 in Operation Spring of Youth, the assassination by an Israeli hit squad in Beirut of PLO leaders Kamal Adwan, Mohammed Yusuf Al Najjar and Kamal Nassar. By then Arafat had definitely decided against terror, and even the murder of the popular PLO leaders and the subsequent calls for revenge by close colleagues would not induce him to change his mind. The Palestinian response to Spring of Youth was carried out by a small Fatah faction and independent groups committed to undermining his new policy. Although other Fatah leaders, notably Kamal Adwan before he died, wanted to use force against the renegades who refused to obey Arafat, the latter had opted against this course of action for fear of exposure and an internal conflict which would have divided the PLO and rendered it totally ineffective. Ironically, the refusal of some to obey him was one of the results of Arafat's failure to place all the Palestinian forces under an effective single command.

To this day, the PLO has extensive files on all terrorist operations which took place during this period. They are kept in a secret office in Algeria. In 1990 an offer made to me in association with the foreign editor of the French newspaper *Libération*, Mark Kravitz, to publish the contents of these files came to nothing when certain Palestinian groups issued threats against anyone involved in doing so. The offer to me came from Fatah through Arafat's political adviser at the time, Bassam Abu Sharif; it implied a wish to set the record straight and absolve Arafat.

Whatever the level of Arafat's past approval of acts of terror, his efforts to negotiate a solution to the Palestinian problem through diplomatic efforts were solid and extensive. He acted though secret and highly personal contacts about which very few people knew and which would have affected his standing with the various branches of the PLO, the leadership of Fatah and a Palestinian people which had trustingly followed his call for an armed struggle. Arafat's change of heart in favour of diplomacy came earlier than the record indicates, perhaps while

he was still in Jordan, but he could not reconcile it with his open advocacy of an armed struggle. However, his personal assumption of responsibility for this came later and was an undoubted act of courage. From 1970 he acted as the sole arbiter of military, political and public relations matters,[4-127] but, unlike other acts which exposed a dictatorial tendency, the commitment to peace was not aimed at buying people's loyalties or advancing his personal position. It was kept secret because most Palestinians were against it. (Neither Abu Iyad nor Abu Jihad knew about most of these efforts, but the two men were forever hampered by their loyalty to Arafat and the fear that acting against his efforts would destroy the PLO as a whole.)

The courage behind his pursuit of peace aside, it is worth noting that it represented a major policy change which he adopted without consulting others. Though he cynically used the results of the terror campaign to strengthen the PLO and his personal position, Arafat knew its limitations. Munich in particular was counter-productive and inexcusable on any human level. But terror worked, and confirmed the impossibility of erasing the Palestinian identity. Comfortable in having achieved this aim—the world's acceptance of the Palestinians as a people deserving of consideration and a necessary component in any solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict—he followed it with steps to integrate himself and the PLO in all attempts towards a negotiated settlement. To Arafat, what was happening within the Palestinian and Arab arenas dictated a move in the direction of peace, which he accepted and acted on. He could not reveal this change of direction without running the risk of being replaced by militants whose attitude was more to the liking of the Palestinians.

In March 1972 King Hussein, unlike Arafat a man who has always tried to impose external considerations on internal conditions, floated the idea of a United Arab Kingdom. With Israeli connivance,[4-128] he offered the Palestinians autonomy within a state made up of Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza to be headed by him. The unsoundness of the plan—its utter unacceptability because of Hussein's unpopularity with the Palestinians, particularly after the Black September civil war—did not detract from its appeal to outsiders. In addition to Israel, the United Nations and the United States saw merit in Hussein's proposal; but the Arabs reacted angrily—Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Algeria severed diplomatic relations with Jordan and declared their support for the PLO. Without Arafat's approval, PLO elements concocted an plot to assassinate Hussein, which failed. The imprisoned leader of the assassination squad, Abu Daoud, told the world sordid tales about Black September, claiming that it was no more than a front for Fatah.

Hussein's plan failed when even the countries which saw in it a possible way out of the conflict did little to help him. Yet the plan was there, a possible solution to be used if the PLO failed or refused to move in a peaceful direction. In 1961 Habbib Bourguiba, the outspoken President of Tunisia, had promoted a return to the UN partition plan of 1948, which would have entailed Israel returning small areas of territory gained in the 1948 War. Now, in May 1973, the realist Bourguiba floated a new idea to achieve a lasting solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict. Bourguiba's scheme was dismissive of Hussein and Jordan and called for the creation of a Palestinian state which would include the occupied territories—the West Bank and Gaza—and Hussein's kingdom. But this too was rejected by the

PLO, because the organization and its leader were not yet ready to forsake the principle of armed struggle without Israeli acceptance of their position as representatives of the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, President Sadat of Egypt was using a combination of military threats and diplomacy to end the Israeli occupation of Sinai and to settle the conflict. He improved his relations with Saudi Arabia, America's leading Arab ally, sent special emissaries to Washington, lessened his dependence on the USSR and in 1972 ejected over ten thousand Russian military advisers who had been stationed in Egypt since the war of attrition in 1969. Sadat's coolness towards Russia and friendship towards America amounted to an acceptance of US policy, which called for a 'comprehensive and lasting peace' between the Arabs and Israel. In fact, Sadat was explicit in his offers to make peace; only the selfish politicking of Henry Kissinger, the head of the National Security Council who wanted to undermine Secretary of State Rogers, stopped him from achieving success.[4-129] Interestingly, Arafat's reaction to Sadat's moves consisted of implicit acceptance. Sadat's plans would not have realized more for the Arabs, but they accepted the PLO and Arafat as the representatives of the Palestinians; Sadat supported the notion of a separate Palestinian identity.

In Lebanon, a different but equally revealing situation was unfolding. Continued raids against Israel by the PLO from Lebanese territory were producing retaliatory Israeli raids which threatened the structure of the country. The Lebanese Christians considered the Palestinians an alien force and wanted to be rid of regional entanglements. They put pressure on their government to amend the agreements reached during Nasser's time, and specifically the Cairo Agreement which allowed the Palestinians use of Lebanese territory to attack Israel. The Muslims saw in the PLO an ally against the Christians: the PLO dashed repeatedly with the Christians, as well as with the army. But despite support from Muslim and leftist elements, the PLO's presence became precarious and their future uncertain.

Syria was another problem altogether. More than other Arab countries it sought direct control over the Palestinian resistance, and continued to control the Al Saiqa group and units of the PLA stationed within its boundaries. Initially the country was totally against the Rogers Plan, but from 1971 Assad signalled that he would no longer oppose the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 242[4-130] and began behaving as if he he might go along with Rogers in support of Sadat.[4-131] Syria's contradictory position and the animosity between its leader and Arafat eliminated it as a source of support for the embattled Palestinians.

The other militant Arab states, Iraq, Algeria and Yemen, had a lesser impact on what was happening because of their remoteness. They supported a PLO hard line, because Israel was not a threat to them. But all they could do was offer the PLO financial help and training facilities—and then only when they agreed with its policies. Their indirect support mattered little. The rest of the Arab countries, especially the oil—producing ones, were looking for a way out of the conflict but waiting for someone else to lead the way. There was nowhere for Arafat to turn within the Arab sphere. The decisions of Khartoum were in the distant past and Arafat had to make his own moves towards the forces which appeared to be determining the actions of the Arab states.

The collapse of support for the PLO on the Arab front was matched by substantial divisions within Palestinian ranks, another threat to the continuance of the PLO and Arafat's leadership. The DFLP led the way and accepted the principle of a Palestinian state consisting of the West Bank and Gaza as a first step towards a final settlement.[4-132] Two small groups, the Action Organization for the Liberation of Palestine and the Organization for Arab Palestine, supported the acceptance by most Arab governments of UN resolution 242 and initiatives towards peace negotiations. Elements of the Palestine Liberation Army stationed in Syria wanted Arafat dismissed for incompetence, while the rest of the PLA cooperated with the host countries, even Jordan, against his wishes. West Bank leaders sent a direct plea to Secretary of State William Rogers, asking for help in ending the Israeli occupation. The Israelis carried out municipal elections, which threatened PLO primacy; Arafat had a difficult time stopping the people of the occupied territories from participating in them. The Mayor of Bethlehem, Elias Freij, cast caution to the wind and declared that negotiations with Israel 'should be started immediately, before all the land is confiscated. If we wait until the Israelis take all our land, then we will be left without anything to negotiate.'[4-133] Fatah itself was divided on whether to attend a peace conference aimed at arriving at a final settlement.[4-134] Within Fatah there were also serious attempts, led by Marwan Mufid and Abu Yusuf Kayid, to replace Arafat. He was accused of incompetence and mismanagement and one Fatah leader, Haj Hassan, even wanted to kill him.[4-135]

Fighting on so many fronts weakened Arafat considerably. In particular, the lack of unity among the Palestinians and leadership crises within the PLO and inside its various components was occupying much of his time. Raids into Israel and retaliation against his forces were the order of the day, but Israel was getting the upper hand and leaving him with little room for manoeuvre. On several occasions he ordered all activity against Israel to cease, but was forced to rescind these orders when his fighters became restless and turned their attentions to their impotent leadership. The hitherto calm leader began to shout abuse at anyone who got near him, and his undignified outbursts became a part of PLO folklore. None the less, his anger was matched by his continued incredible ability for hard work and, remarkably, he showed no signs of despair. His passionate belief in what he was doing remained intact, and so did his inventiveness.

Arafat was in danger of losing the one thing he had always sought: the power to veto all attempts to solve the Palestinian problem without the full participation of the Palestinians themselves. Many recent revelations provide additional confirmation that the great improviser's decision in favour of a negotiated solution showed a remarkable instinct for events around him. It may have been cynical but it was also serious, and he never went back on it. Ever the manipulator, Arafat followed his pursuit of peace without turning his back on Fatah's original ideas. He knew he needed to produce some results before openly changing direction. It was a situation which suited him; his contradictory behaviour has always led him to adopt conspiratorial ways, and at this time he was in the middle of a conspiracy against Fatah's policies and the hopes of the Palestinian people who accepted and followed them.

In 1970, Arafat had told the USSR that he would participate in a peace conference in Geneva as long as the PLO was accepted as the representative of the Palestinian people. In January 1971, the PLO quietly let it be known that it was not totally opposed to Egyptian efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful solution.[4-136] The following year Arafat informed US Congressman Paul C. Findley that he would accept a Palestinian state comprising the West Bank and Gaza.[4-137] More tellingly, between 1971 and early 1973 the PLO Legate to London, Said Hamameh, published a series of articles in *The Times* supporting a peaceful solution based on a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. All these decisions were Arafat's alone. On occasions when Fatah and PLO members challenged his right to make such statements or adopt these policies he responded in one of three ways: he denied responsibility for them, feigned ignorance or, when pressed hard, threatened to quit and leave the PLO leaderless and rudderless. Hamameh insisted that he was acting in a private capacity, but he undoubtedly had Arafat's approval. The PLO chairman was adept at using aides to float ideas, which lessened the impact in the event of failure. It was Arafat's old friend Abu Iyad who opposed what the PLO's man in London was attempting, because it did not agree with the organization's declared policy. Arafat just blamed everything on Hamameh.

By late 1972, Arafat wanted to cooperate with his erstwhile enemy King Hussein in the latter's efforts to negotiate a solution which would guarantee him a primary position, but other members of the PLO command objected.[4-138] On discovering such strong opposition, Arafat retreated without much fuss. Soon afterwards he convened a huge Palestinian Popular Congress in Cairo, attended by Palestinian leaders from the occupied territories and the Arab countries. They confirmed him as a leader and symbol of Palestinian identity, something he always loved. He used this show of support to strengthen his personal resistance to all opposition, including that of Abu Iyad. It was a classic case of 'now you see him, now you don't'. He used secrecy and willing aides to move things forward by himself, but stopped when the challenge to his activities was too great. In the end, he tried to build an image of sufficient stature to overcome all challenges.

The semi-public moves towards peace by Arafat were cautiously made and showed nothing of the doggedness with which he pursued the undercover ones. The Nabil Sha'ath initiative of 1969–70 was a mere sample of what was to follow. Beginning in the early 1970s, immediately after the defeat in Jordan, Arafat approved contacts between Ali Hassan Salameh of Black September and the CIA's Beirut station chief, Robert Ames. Because the PLO was ostensibly committed to armed struggle and the USA held a firm line against terror, both sides kept this a close secret. But neither the original Sha'ath contact nor the Salameh-Ames one compared in importance with Arafat's effort to set up negotiations with America through US special envoy William Scranton.

Scranton arrived in Beirut in early 1973 on a fact-finding tour for the Nixon administration. Following the advice of his brother-in-law, Time Inc. President James A. Linen, he used *Time* correspondent Abu Said Abu Rish (my father) as an on-the-spot consultant. Hearing this, the Palestinian construction magnate Kamel Abdel Rahman, a contributor to Arafat's coffers and a close associate, asked Abu Rish to organize a meeting with the American politician. Scranton accepted but,

fearing exposure, had the meeting set up in a neutral place, Athens. The Palestinians were represented by Abdel Rahman's partner, the quiet, studious Christian businessman Hasib Sabbagh. It was the first high-level contact between the two sides, and Scranton reported to Abu Rish that the PLO's demands 'were modest'.[4-139] The contacts with Scranton continued for more than two years.

Arafat's performance between 1967 and the October War of 1973 was symptomatic of his strengths and weaknesses. His instincts were behind Karameh, but his attachment to consensus politics within Palestinian ranks and failure to understand Israeli and international politics produced a major defeat in Jordan. After that, his position of leadership was endangered by Arab and Palestinian adoption of new policies which did not agree with his and Fatah's proclaimed ones. His penchant to act alone and his inability to organize added to his problems. Never one to listen to others except under duress or when his position was threatened, he now became even more inclined to act alone, to undermine old colleagues and to rely heavily on incompetent aides.

Arafat realized ahead of others that any form of military victory was beyond his capabilities and those of the Palestinians. He opted for peace after the PLO had lost much of its support among the Arabs and had become divided internally. To his long-time associate Jaweed Ghosein what happened in Jordan and its consequences were clear: 'We established an identity, that's all.'[4-140] But even with the Palestinian identity firmly established and the decision in favour of peace in place, Arafat could not pursue peace openly because of what he had promised his people in the past. Admitting that he had been wrong or that the identity factor was not enough to change Palestinian fortunes was unpalatable to him. Very much like the Mufti before him, Arafat no longer distinguished between Palestinian national ambitions and personal glory. Others wanted to stop him from becoming a dictator; the October 1973 War solved his problems and paved the way for further consolidation of his hold on the leadership of the Palestinians.

Chapter 5

Selling Revolution, Buying Peace.

In hindsight, everything about the October War of 1973 was surprising. Above all, it was not inevitable; it happened because of Kissinger's ambitions as expressed in his attempts to undermine Secretary of State William Rogers,[5-141] Israeli lack of interest in peace efforts[5-142] and total refusal to accept UN resolutions and mediation attempts, and Sadat's ability to obtain Arab backing and create a rare instance of Arab unity and consensus. The war amounted to an act of despair on the part of its chief planner, President Sadat. Thwarted in all his efforts to secure a peaceful settlement, his patience running out, he now sought and achieved Arab backing to start a war he did not want. His junior partner in the effort, President Hafez Assad of Syria, was more committed to military action than Sadat, but it was the Egyptian leader who exposed the Israeli and American positions. This convinced the moderate pro-West Saudis and their Gulf allies.

Naturally, he could count on the support of the anti-West Iraqis, Libyans and Algerians. Jordan reluctantly followed the rest.

Preparations for the war took place at a time when Arafat too was trying his utmost to establish a dialogue with the United States. Between August and October 1973 he had sent four messages to that effect to Kissinger.[5-143] The latter rebuffed him; Kissinger did no more than arrange a meeting in Morocco between the American troubleshooter Vernon Walters and Arafat's associate Khalid Al Hassan, which resulted in a warning to the PLO to refrain from any terrorism against US interests. Kissinger never accepted the PLO as a partner in any moves to achieve peace. Meanwhile the USSR, aware that Arafat was 'playing' the Americans, provided him with only light arms and lukewarm diplomatic support.

Right at the beginning of October PLO leaders Abu Iyad and Farouk Qaddoumi, in Cairo to attend a non-aligned nations conference, were told by Sadat himself of the plans to start the war.[5-144] But Arafat the manipulator, though friendly with the Egyptian President, saw a conspiracy behind everything and was preoccupied with events close to home in Beirut. He did not believe Sadat's message, and other PLO leaders were no less sceptical. They only woke up to the truth when Sadat summoned Abu Iyad and Qaddoumi back to Cairo on the 4th and confirmed his original statement. At this point, it was too late for Arafat to join the fighting in a meaningful way; on his instructions the Palestinian fighting forces were already deployed holding defensive positions against repeated Israeli reprisals and increasing pressure from the Lebanese army and Christian forces.

On 6 October 1973, the Egyptian and Syrian armies launched simultaneous surprise attacks across the Suez Canal and along the Golan Heights. They were successful, achieved deep penetration of Israeli lines on both fronts and held the initial Israeli counterattacks in check for four days. The October War—to the Israelis the Yom Kippur War because it fell on the Jewish holiday—was one of the bloodiest clashes of armour in history. It cost the Israelis 2800 dead, 109 aircraft and 840 tanks.[5-145] Although Arab losses were greater and the tide of battle eventually turned against them, leaving the Israelis on the Egyptian side of the Suez Canal and nearer Damascus than before the war, it was a considerable Arab achievement which produced shock waves in Israel. As with the Karameh operation, the prohibitive scale of the Israeli losses would have produced a different result from that of previous wars if it had gone on longer than its eighteen days.

While the fighting raged, on 16 October Sadat announced that his war aims were limited to achieving an Israeli withdrawal from lands occupied during the 1967 War. The Israelis treated his statement with ridicule and refused to discuss it. On the 17th the Arab oil-producing countries backed Sadat's position, curtailed their production by 5 per cent and announced that they were considering further cutbacks until all the territories occupied in the 1967 War were restored to the Arabs. Three days later the United Arab Emirates decreased oil production by 10 per cent and forced the other Arab producers to follow suit.

These economic measures followed military moves by those Arab states capable of providing support: the Iraqis despatched an armoured expeditionary force of twenty thousand men to Syria, while Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Morocco also sent

reinforcements though in smaller numbers. The Egyptians were backed up by Algerian and Kuwaiti fighting units. The Palestine Liberation Army, operating under the command of host countries rather than Arafat, fought bravely on both fronts—though, despite the usual inflated claims, their activities were limited to small skirmishes and minor raids.

The Arab world had risen from the ashes. Arafat surmised this well before others did, and sent Kissinger another peace message in the middle of battle, on 10 October.[5-146] There was no response.

For organized Arab armies to engage Israel in conventional warfare and achieve success was the fulfilment of a national dream which Arabs everywhere celebrated. Radio and television stations had new songs written to celebrate the occasion; millions of Arabs wore victory smiles; others recognized each other on the streets of foreign cities and exchanged exuberant brotherly salutes and hugs; and mosques filled with people giving thanks to the Almighty. Sadat, the hitherto underestimated successor to Nasser, was dubbed 'the hero of the crossing [of the Suez Canal]'.

There was more to the war, however, than military performance and the healing of the Arabs' damaged psyche. Oil, the most important weapon in the Arab arsenal, was used and the embargo was still in effect when the shooting war ended. The damage being done to Western economies was another cause for celebration, because the Arabs on the street and at official level believed that this would prompt the West to pressure Israel into accepting a just solution. The USA and USSR supported Israel and the Arabs respectively, and resupplied them with huge quantities of weapons during the fighting. Towards the end of the war, when the military situation tilted in favour of Israel, the USSR threatened direct intervention; both superpowers put their forces on alert and came close to a full-fledged military confrontation. The importance of the Middle East and the inherent dangers of the Arab–Israeli conflict were elevated from the level of intellectual discussion to stark reality. The Middle East would never be the same again.

On the surface, the war was an all-Arab show which undermined Arafat's policy of exclusive reliance on the Palestinians and demonstrated the Arab nature of the conflict with Israel. None the less, the war was beneficial for the PLO and ensured Arafat's survival as leader. Because resistance movements feed on momentum and there had been no progress, an inter-PLO leadership crisis had been brewing: there was a call for an effective unified command and curtailment of Arafat's personal powers. His problems with the Lebanese Christians and the sporadic fighting along the Lebanese–Israeli border had weakened him. Suddenly the war marginalized these issues and the bigger picture which emerged looked more promising. In addition to dealing with the effects of the oil embargo, the USA and USSR wanted to eliminate the source of future confrontations. On 21 December 1973 both countries jointly, under Henry Kissinger (now Secretary of State) and Andrei Gromyko, convened an international conference in Geneva to formalize the truce ordered by the UN and to initiate steps towards peace. Sadat accepted the idea. Syria, angered by Sadat's response to superpower initiatives, at first boycotted the proceedings. The PLO was not invited.

Sadat went further and used his new status courageously: in January 1974 he agreed to a disengagement between his country and Israel. To him it was a first

step towards achieving the aims declared during the fighting without consulting others. He envisaged expanding the Geneva conference to include all parties to the conflict, with the PLO representing the Palestinian people, to achieve a comprehensive peace. Believing that the USA and USSR shared his vision and were willing to support him, he asked for the oil embargo to be lifted.(5-147)

Arafat's reading of the situation was similar to Sadat's, but the opposition of several Fatah leaders and other guerrilla groups denied him Sadat's freedom of action. With some success he pointed out the dangers to the PLO of being left out of an international conference. Even with an ambivalent PLO position behind him, he tried to follow openly what he had pursued in secret. Though this exposed him to criticism from many quarters, and most of the Palestinian people were unaccustomed to the idea of a peaceful settlement, he still went for a strategic shift in PLO policy. He wanted an American-brokered peace, and this is what he pursued.

To Arafat, the real danger to the Palestinian position lay in Sadat's new power to conclude a comprehensive peace agreement with or without Palestinian participation. Overall, Arafat covertly approved Sadat's promotion of peace and his adoption of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians, but the Egyptian President's new elevated role limited Arafat's options. The only way Arafat could guarantee a Palestinian stake in any peace initiative was by competing with Sadat. For Arafat, this meant presenting the primary party to the conflict, the Palestinians, as equal advocates of peace. He had finally to stop pretending to follow the armed struggle. Though it meant abandoning consensus politics and the idea of a united PLO, he wasted no time.

According to a former American diplomat stationed in Beirut at the time, 'The pursuit of peace occupied much of Arafat's time after the October War.' An Arab summit conference in Algiers in November 1973 adopted the ideas of the 'victorious' Sadat and cancelled the three nos of Khartoum. It accepted the idea of a phased approach against Israel to liberate the Arab land occupied in the 1967 War to pave the way towards a final settlement. To make this palatable to Arafat, the conference, despite Jordan's objections, named the PLO as sole representative of the Palestinian people. Arafat accepted the bargain.

In fact, Arafat used the resolutions of the conference to justify his past secret negotiations and asked two Palestinian moderates, Issam Sartawi and Said Hamameh, an Arab member of the Knesset, Ahmad Tibi, and others to increase their efforts to promote a peaceful settlement with anyone willing to listen. (Both Sartawi and Hamameh were to pay for this with their lives, in 1983 and 1978 respectively, and the later efforts of the PLO representative to Belgium, Nairn Kader, and other contacts bore no fruit.) Arafat undertook these steps with the cooperation of willing individuals, and without informing the collective leadership. Sadat and a minority of moderates endorsed his position, but his ideas were rejected by other Fatah leaders and militant Palestinian groups. The Israelis were adamant in their refusal to recognize the PLO as a negotiating partner, and Kissinger stuck to his rigid anti-PLO stance. With remarkable skill, and despite the odds against him, Arafat turned to bridging the gulf between his personal position and that of the official PLO.

In June 1974 Arafat convened the twelfth conference of the Palestine National Council in Cairo to obtain approval for the new policy adopted by the Arab states and endorsed by himself. He knew what was needed. To meet the challenge from within the PLO he increased the attention paid to the occupied territories and expanded the executive committee to include four pro-peace members from the West Bank and Gaza. No one could object to according the occupied territories greater importance; it was a stroke of genius which helped him pass his new programme against opposition from Fatah hardliners, radical guerrilla groups and the more militant of the Palestinian refugees in Arab countries.

The people of the West Bank in particular were more supportive of a peaceful settlement than diaspora Palestinians, who always clamoured for the right of return to land occupied in 1948. Arafat too realized that reclaiming lands occupied at that time was no longer possible, because the USA, the UN and the rest of the world were not willing to consider it. To augment the appeal to outside powers of what he was doing, Arafat managed to get a consensus for amending the original Palestine National Charter, which repeated the call for 'total liberation' sixteen times; he also gained approval for the idea of a phased settlement and the setting up of a 'national authority' in any part of Palestine, and a qualified agreement to participate in an international peace conference. His new position had nothing original in it—in the main it was an amalgam of the ideas of Sadat and the DFLP. But his espousal of these ideas followed a clear political line which put principle above expediency, which was unusual for him. It was an extension of his secret commitment to peace, reinforced by a belief that the war had forced the Americans to be even-handed, which would lead to greater efforts towards settlement.**(5-148)** This was Sadat's line; Arafat adopted it as an enticement to the USA to overcome continued Israeli refusal to recognize the PLO and used it to convert other Palestinian groups to his new policies. But this misreading of the American ability to accommodate him was a near-fatal error.

Between the end of the October War and the convening of the Palestinian conference, Arafat had continued his attempts to initiate negotiations with America. He added to the efforts of Hamameh and Sartawi and encouraged Salameh to expand his contacts with the CIA. Through Salameh, he offered PLO protection for American citizens and interests in areas where the PLO predominated, mostly Lebanon. The CIA accepted Salameh's undertakings without reciprocating. In June 1974, prior to the PNC conference in Cairo, Arafat sent a special emissary to meet former CIA chief Richard Helms, then Ambassador in Tehran. It was a one-sided dialogue: Helms listening without responding. Contrary to Arafat's belief that the Americans would accept his new direction, Kissinger still believed that the PLO was 'a largely terrorist group'. Meanwhile Israel was growing alarmed by Arafat's peace policies and the widening support for, and diplomatic recognition of, the PLO within the third world and Europe. As a result it increased its contacts with Jordan, including setting up a meeting between Hussein and the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin,**(5-149)** to hinder the PLO's assumption of the role of Palestinian negotiator. But the attitudes of America and Israel did not discourage Arafat, who believed that persistence would overcome the objections of both countries and marginalize Hussein.

Arafat's overtures to the USA and his seeming abandonment of the idea of armed struggle severely splintered the PLO. Habbash's uneasy relationship with him ended when the PFLP froze its membership of the PLO and created what came to be known as the Rejection Front. Backed by Iraq, Libya, Algeria and South Yemen, the PFLP was joined by the PFLP–General Command (PFLP–GC), the Arab Liberation Front and civilian Palestinian groups which included the General Union of Palestinian Writers and the General Union of Palestinian Students.

Arafat's opponents followed their verbal protests against his new policies with terrorist activity aimed at undermining them. In April 1974 the PFLP–GC carried out a raid on the Israeli town of Khiryat Shomonah which resulted in the killing of eighteen Israelis. This was followed by another incident at Ma'alot which left sixteen Israelis dead and sixty-eight wounded, mostly schoolgirls. More attacks and hijackings ensued, which Israel pointed to as an excuse for refusing to deal with the PLO and Arafat. All he could do to counter this strange convergence of interest between Arab and Palestinian militants and Israel was to ask his many intermediaries to emphasize his personal position and to point out that the PLO was an umbrella organization rather than a single cohesive entity. Essentially what he was trying to put across was that he and the PLO proper were not involved in terrorist attacks.

It was Syria which caused him the most trouble, not only because of its major role in the October War but also because of its proximity to Israel, the importance of its support for guerrilla groups and its close historical association with Palestine. And Syria took a middle position. Though it leaned towards negotiations, the fact that Sadat had reached a disengagement agreement with Israel without deferring to his erstwhile partner, the rest of the Arabs or the Palestinians dictated caution. Like Arafat, the Syrians were concerned that Sadat's inflated self-image would again lead him to act alone. For a while, Egypt, Syria and Arafat watched each other and ignored Israel.

Kissinger's policy of breaking the Arab consensus which had existed during the 1973 War by dealing with each country separately and offering each enticements peculiar to its conditions was succeeding. The oil-producing countries had lifted the embargo in March 1974 without achieving this move's overall aim of an Israeli withdrawal, even a partial one. The Arab states were divided between open and secret support of Sadat and the Rejection Front. And structurally the PLO no longer represented a broad cross-section of the Palestinians. Even the Palestinians in the occupied territories watched things with dismay. Although the proposals for the establishment of a national authority that would include them increased their importance, and they had supported the indigenous pro-PLO Palestine National Front in its efforts to achieve this, the divisions resulting from Arafat's policies confused them and despair had replaced their post-war sense of elation.

In fact, it was Arafat who was partly responsible for the divisions in Arab ranks. Without his blind support for Sadat, the oil embargo would not have been lifted since the Gulf states would have feared a backlash. He acquiesced with the decisions of the Arab summit conference because they confirmed his pre-eminence in the Arab arena and afforded him a way out of his immediate predicament, though without Israeli or US reciprocation for his moderate stand. Forsaking consensus, for the first time in PLO policy he pushed through changes without

fear of the consequences of division within Palestinian ranks. His wish to compete with Sadat and follow America was more important to him than anything else; it offended those who were quarrelling with the USA over Palestine and ended the unity among the Arabs. Like Sadat, he believed that America held '95 per cent of the cards' and America wanted a peace conference. His intermediate aim, therefore, was to participate in the Geneva conference. More than all the personal and political signs which Arafat had exhibited from his early days in Cairo, this confirmed him as a traditional nationalist leader, willing to work with the USA, rather than a revolutionary one opposed to its policies.

On 26 October 1974 another Arab summit in Rabat, Morocco, expanded the decisions of the November 1973 meeting in Algeria and gave Arafat what he wanted without any qualifications. The Rabat summit over-rode Jordanian objections and excluded that country by accepting the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, declaring that it should head 'an independent national authority on any part of Palestine land that is liberated'. An ecstatic Arafat declared: 'This summit conference has been like a wedding feast for the Palestinians.' Hussein bowed to the majority vote; but he still refused to revoke the 1950 union agreement between his country and the West Bank and he continued to fund groups and individuals opposed to Arafat. Kissinger, now committed to step-by-step negotiations between Israel and Egypt and Jordan, saw in the Rabat decision a step backwards and a danger to Sadat's efforts.

Rabat was followed by an invitation to Arafat, sponsored by most members of the United Nations (only the USA and Israel dissented), to address their General Assembly on 22 November. This was a triumph for his diplomacy. The PLO's acceptance by the Arab world and the United Nations bestowed on Arafat a stature which pleased most Palestinians and gave them hope. His famous gun-and-olive-branch speech to the United Nations, in which he repeated three times, 'Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand'—essentially an offer to Israel to choose between peace or war—marked one of the greatest successes in history of a national movement fighting for independence. It is remembered by Palestinians the way Americans remember the landing on the moon. For Arafat, the PLO and those who believed in the ability of the Palestinians to produce results for themselves it was a milestone, a point of no return in terms of following a peaceful option.

Although Arab and international acceptance were triumphs for Arafat and his supporters, they were less so for the Palestinian people as a whole. The price paid was the division in Arab and Palestinian ranks. The PFLP and Iraq, among others, immediately rejected Arafat's total reliance on diplomacy, and he needed to produce more concrete results than a mere propaganda success to make his stand palatable to the majority of his own people. With or without knowing it, Arafat was following in the footsteps of most Arab leaders in the twentieth century—the ones who deferred to foreign powers and valued pleasing them above the views of their own constituents. What would follow depended on the character and abilities of Arafat. He had failed to turn the opportunity of Karameh into a greater success—this time, would he manage to build on his diplomatic victories in the Arab League and the UN and do better?

Stories about Arafat dating even from this period tell us a great deal about his schizoid personality—the massive divide between the triumphant leader at Rabat and the UN and the crude street Arab. The habits and cultural legacies which characterize the man have always confounded people and inhibited him from following a consistent policy.

A few months before the Rabat and UN meetings President Tito of Yugoslavia despatched a film crew to record a Palestinian raid into Israel. Tito, a staunch supporter of the Palestinians, wanted to show a 'model raid' on Yugoslav television, perhaps to justify the considerable help he was giving the PLO. Arafat received the television crew in Damascus and promised to lead a raid himself. He instructed the Yugoslavs to wait for him at a certain spot near the Lebanese–Israeli border. They did so for two days, but returned to Damascus when he did not appear.

When the Yugoslav director complained about the wasted time, Arafat offered to organize a mock raid immediately. He instructed the crew to begin filming him sitting behind a desk in his headquarters. Cameras rolling, he shouted some orders and various young men ran in and saluted. He then indicated certain areas on a huge map of Palestine, after which the young men saluted again and departed. When he had finished, the director could not help himself. 'You're a good actor, Chairman Arafat.' Arafat's retort was to the point: 'I used to be, you know.'

In another incident, just before the summit conference at Rabat, the Moroccan security forces uncovered a Palestinian plot to assassinate several moderate Arab leaders and arrested two of the hit-men.**(5-150)** The plot's aim was to eliminate those Arab heads of state opposed to the acceptance of the PLO as the sole legitimate voice of the Palestinians. But was the plot genuine or was it a hoax intended to frighten these leaders? The Lebanese journalist Ali Ballout, who was in Rabat at the time, claims it was nothing more than an effective plot that never was. And three PLO leaders who were interviewed off the record responded to my enquiries by smiling and refusing to discuss it. In fact, according to a Lebanese journalist close to the Black September leader and Arafat associate Abu Iyad, the plot was a mixture of fact and fiction. A PLO hit squad had been despatched to Rabat, but the PLO itself tipped off the police and revealed its presence. Arafat's reaction was, 'What plot, against my own brothers?' However, the mere thought of assassins sent the right message to the Arab gathering and helped guarantee the desired result.

At the UN, a similar farce took place. Having rehearsed his speech which contained the general offer of peace and gave Israel a choice between the gun and the olive branch, Arafat wanted to deliver it carrying his gun. It took a great effort to talk him into leaving it behind and settling for an empty holster.**(5-151)** The man who was forcing Palestinian identity on the world genuinely failed to understand why it was unacceptable to speak in the UN General Assembly carrying a sidearm.

Arafat's antics and his mastery of the theatrical continued on his return from New York to Beirut. When leaders of guerrilla groups opposed to his policies asked for a meeting to demand reciprocity for PLO concessions, he arranged for it to be held in a building controlled by Fatah fighters. He then asked several of his 'boys' to hide on the balcony of the room where the meeting was taking place. When the discussions became heated, Arafat gave a prearranged signal and his men fired

volleys into the sky. Thinking the building was under attack by Lebanese forces or Israeli raiders, Arafat's opponents hit the deck. A smiling Arafat reclined in his chair and lamented that he was 'being held to account by nothing more than a bunch of cowards'.

By 1975 there was no movement on the diplomatic front. The USA and Israel considered Arafat's diplomatic success a setback to their efforts to reach a settlement based on Jordanian representation of the Palestinians (the Jordanian Option) and persisted in their refusal to negotiate with the PLO. Arafat was back in Beirut to confront the problems that had been temporarily overshadowed by the October War. He was faced with conceding yet more to satisfy America and Israel—what Sadat was urging him to do without any guarantee of success—or with trying to mend the broken fence behind him. It was a choice he would never have to make. The need to resolve the situation in Lebanon became more pressing than all other issues.

Like the conditions which had prevailed in Jordan before the Black September civil war, the PLO's presence in Lebanon needed urgent resolution. Arafat's Lebanese opponents, and even radical Palestinian groups, realized that America's and Israel's continued refusal to deal with him left him vulnerable. The unsoundness of what he had created in Lebanon began to undermine him. Arafat's inability to establish a solid base behind him—something whose significance he never understood—diverted his energies to mending fences rather than moving forward diplomatically. This new civil war, towards which his followers' misbehaviour contributed measurably, lasted longer and cost much more than the Jordanian debacle.

Beirut and Yasser Arafat suited each other. Like Arafat, the city had an international veneer and a tribal core. The only difference between them was his inability to match its glitter. Arafat's belief in the power of money and in using patronage to achieve his aims were elements intrinsic to Beirut. Oil money made Beirut what it was, a cosmopolitan fleshpot which substituted modernity for substance, and Arafat used oil money to create noise instead of organizing. Considerable sums donated to the PLO by the oil-producing countries, and increased after the 1973 War, were spent on creating a huge, inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy. He divided the Fatah forces into several unwieldy groups to satisfy the number of people who wanted to be commanders. He never managed to balance his successful image-building with any strenuous efforts to correct the weaknesses inherent in the make-up of his Palestinian constituency. (Instead of having two or three efficient spokesmen, he had twenty useless ones.) Yet, despite the similarities in Arafat's thinking and the atmosphere in Beirut, there was no possibility of Arafat succeeding there. Arafat and the PLO were always an alien presence, and there was nothing he could do to overcome it.

The Palestinians had been successful in Beirut even before the PLO arrived there after the 1970 defeat in Jordan. Thousands, mostly Christians, had assumed Lebanese citizenship and had become integrated in the growing service economy of the city. Many more remained Palestinian, but used the city as a centre of trade and banking for the rest of the Arab Middle East. There were Palestinian doctors, lawyers, teachers and entrepreneurs. The largest construction company in the country, CCC, was Palestinian-owned, as was INTRA, Lebanon's

biggest bank until its collapse in 1965. Beirut was a magnet for Palestinian talent because it was free and thriving and because the Palestinians had a natural advantage. Their second language was English, rather than French as spoken by the Lebanese, and as a result they stole a march on their hosts in dealing with multinational corporations. There were also three hundred thousand less educated and able Palestinians who remained in refugee camps and who provided Arafat with soldiers.

Arafat, the man who never believed in ideology or showed any interest in social issues, belonged to both camps. He maintained good relations with businessmen such as Hassib Sabbagh, Kamel and Muhammed Abdel Rahman, Said Khoury and Badr Al Fahoum, and kept in constant touch with others outside Lebanon such as Abdel Hamid Shoman in Jordan and Abu Abbas in Qatar. He continued to receive financial help from them while building a powerbase among the destitute of the refugee camps whom he enlisted as the backbone of his regular forces and militias. By 1975 the fighting forces reporting directly to Arafat numbered more than fifteen thousand, with many more in paramilitary formations. But there was considerably more to this presence than the sheer numbers of his fighters and the fact that he paid them more than other guerrilla groups paid, expanded their training and acquired heavier weapons including tanks and an anti-aircraft defence system. Arafat was in effect creating the structure of a government-in-exile beholden and accountable only to itself.

Organizations and businesses sprang up to meet specific needs. SAMED (originally the Palestinians Martyrs' Works Society) became one of the leading holding companies in Lebanon. Headed by banker Ahmad Krei', years later the chief negotiator of the Oslo Agreement, it ran thirty-six separate companies. Its subsidiaries manufactured shoes, blankets, furniture, baby food and other products, and created the channels to distribute and sell them. On the non-commercial side were the Palestinian Red Crescent aid organization, unions of Palestinian teachers, doctors and workers, and scholarship committees and others entrusted with vocational and agricultural training. Various women's groups complemented this work.

These organizations presided over transactions involving billions of dollars, but there was no official budget and some substantial amounts were never recorded except in a small notebook which Arafat kept in his breast pocket. SAMED's reach extended to Palestinians throughout the Arab world and established business contacts in African and other third world countries. Overall, efforts by SAMED and the PLO to build a Palestinian infrastructure which dealt with the needs of Palestinian everywhere made for a great success story. The various associations and unions operated throughout the Middle East, including, importantly, in the occupied territories. Furthermore, following the political moves of the PNC conference in June 1974 in Cairo, the PLO paid the occupied territories special attention and spent money expanding its following there and promoting an organizations structure.

The dictatorial inclinations that always showed through in Arafat's military and propaganda efforts led him to take personal control of everything done by SAMED and other Palestinian organizations. Even the awarding of a scholarship required his personal approval. Leaders of refugee camps, including many who had no

official function, were bribed by him to support Fatah instead of other Palestinian groups, and to sing his praises. He personally selected cadets who were despatched to the USSR and other countries for military training. The Palestinian news agency Wafa, until then a minor entity, came under his direct control, as did all the publications of the PLO. Old-fashioned cronyism flourished; Arafat favoured those who had the knack of pleasing the chief, in this case a talent for introducing him to things he did not know and could not judge. Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad, his original partners, on occasions protested against his unwillingness to delegate and argued with him heatedly. Neither was up to challenging him, however, and the two of them, by all accounts men of honour and integrity, put the interests of the PLO ahead of other considerations. They accepted his primacy because 'the PLO had become more than a state-within-a-state, it was a state in exile'[5-152] and they did not want to destroy it.

In Beirut, Arafat felt at home and vindicated. Not only was money the decider of all things, but as the centre of Middle East journalism the Lebanese capital afforded him a chance to practise his publicity skills in a more extensive way than Amman, Damascus or Kuwait had ever done. Even his human touches, like being photographed with refugee children, consoling weeping women in bombed refugee camps and inspecting the devastation caused by Israeli air raids, stopped being totally genuine and turned into a media event. More importantly, Beirut provided him with a new pool of talent willing to report directly to him without any consideration of the overall apparatus of the PLO. CIA contact Ali Hassan Salameh, to Arafat 'Ibni', or 'my son', was a leading representative of this breed of Palestinian Beirutis, as was Atallah Atallah, an utterly corrupt former Jordanian army officer who adopted the ways of the city and endeared himself to the 'Old Man', who came to depend on him more than on those with real knowledge of the refugee camps and their problems. Even PLO commanders outside the city behaved in a Beiruti manner: Major Muin, who controlled the Lebanese town of Nabatiya, collected taxes for personal use without being reprimanded.

The Beirutis, demanding chauffeur–driven limousines and bodyguards, fooled the unworldly Arafat with their shallow sophistication. Because he considered them his link with the outside world, the non-drinking, non-smoking Arafat provided them with all the ready cash they needed to maintain a life style which, though alien to him personally, he felt was helpful to the cause. He studiously overlooked their damaging and embarrassing peripheral activities. For example, the trucks used to carry arms and ammunitions to his troops in Lebanon brought back to Damascus contraband cigarettes which, along with other duty-free goods, were sold for considerable profit which the Beirutis pocketed. Within Beirut itself many of them formed partnerships with the city's criminal elements and even sold surplus arms to Arafat's Christian enemies.

Whatever the shortcomings of the old Fatah group, it is unlikely that any of them would have been as accommodating to Arafat as the Beirutis, notorious for their laziness, corruption and lack of commitment. Their lives in the Paris of the East had so removed them from the mainstream of Palestinian thinking that some of them had no appreciation of the conditions in the refugee camps—indeed, most had never even visited one. Theirs was official corruption: the money they pocketed was approved by Arafat as a means of using them, controlling them and

weakening the old guard who still clung to the idea of collective leadership. In comparison, members of the original Fatah group were a bunch of innocents. While the Beirutis responded to outside influences, the old guard represented the native Middle East. They differed even in their manner of dress: unlike the conservative Abu Jihad, Abu Iyad, Qaddoumi and the rest, the Palestinian Beirutis dressed in the smart but casual fashions of French and Italian seaside resorts.

Arafat's adoption of the Beirutis paralleled his new political direction, which called for cooperation with the West. He moved into a world new to him and it affected him personally. He began to wear built-up shoes to give himself added height, had his military uniforms properly tailored and took to carrying his slush money in a briefcase during his now non-stop travels. Naturally he distributed pictures of himself sleeping in planes to show how industrious he was—a totally unnecessary confirmation of his legendary commitment to hard work.

In fact, his constant self-promotion and glibness with journalists became embarrassing. He constantly referred to the number of honours given him by Islamic and third world organizations and prefaced his statements to journalists with 'Because you are a friend' or 'I tell you frankly.' Suddenly, out of nowhere, he developed an interest in women. For the first time he established romantic relationships, beginning with the widow Nada Yashrouti, a wealthy, pretty Palestinian who was to act as a go-between with the Lebanese and who was assassinated by an unknown gunman in 1973. Her death shocked him, but, to his credit, he obeyed the rules of gentlemanly behaviour and never discussed it. Later he had an affair with the Syrian Najla Yassin, and this too ended without publicity. There were more liaisons, too. Though little is known about them, they put an end to rumours of homosexuality which the Israeli Mossad and other intelligence services had foolishly spread and tried to prove though without success. Nor were those services able to prove any misuse of funds for personal reasons; though he believed in using money to corrupt others, his eighteen-hour day and personal inclinations precluded indulgences. In fact, there is no record of him ever buying the smallest present for any of his girlfriends, and he never frequented restaurants.

The adoption of Beirut was one-sided. Arafat and the PLO had remained outsiders in a country whose structure was delicately balanced among its seventeen politically recognized religious sects. Overall, Lebanon was half Christian and half Muslim, and the Muslims were demanding a change in the arrangement known as the National Pact which perpetuated their secondary status. The Christians, who opposed any change in a structure which ensured them the top political and military positions, feared that the Palestinian presence might tilt the balance of power in favour of their Muslim countrymen. In the 1960s the Christians began to expect the worst and started arming and training militias. The leaders of the Christian forces, Beshir Gemayel (the Phalange), Dany Chamoun (the Tigers) and Chebril Kassis (Order of Monks), among others, were determined to eliminate the Palestinian presence. The Phalange controlled more than twenty-five thousand armed men and their military hardware included recoilless guns, some old tanks and 155mm artillery pieces.

The argument for and against the Palestinian presence in Lebanon in the early 1970s found the country fragmenting along religious lines, with the Christian-

dominated government and groups of Christian militias opposing the PLO and most Muslims and leftists providing it with intermittent support. Because the Muslims were clamouring for an end to Christian control of all aspects of political and commercial life, the Muslim–PLO alliance, which naturally supported Muslim demands, amounted to flagrant interference in the country's internal affairs. This support was undisguised. The PLO forces began training the Shias and other groups who might help them fend off the Christians in the future. The failure of the attacks against Israel[5-153] and increased Lebanese demands to curb the Palestinian presence meant that one of two things was required to ease or eliminate the growing tension between the two sides. The PLO had to halt its activities against Israel and curb its followers, or the initiative towards peace had to succeed. Neither happened.

To Arafat, Lebanon was the last refuge. Since the Syrians were controlling Palestinian guerrilla activity in their country and the PLO had been ejected from Jordan, Lebanon was the only country from which he could continue whatever diminished military activity he was conducting against Israel. He refused to consider any changes in the Cairo Agreement and others which allowed him freedom of action within Lebanon, regardless of the heavy toll the Israeli retaliations were exacting and which was turning more and more Lebanese against the PLO.

The behaviour of the Palestinians made matters worse. By 1975 Beshir Gemayel, the leader of the largest Lebanese militia, the Christian Phalange, had established solid contacts with the CIA and Israel and was determined to eradicate the Palestinian presence in his country.[5-154] To counter this, as with Jordan, Arafat accepted interim agreements, failed to implement them and did nothing to contain the situation. In Lebanon, too, there was total lack of appreciation of local conditions and a belief that the Arab countries would not allow the PLO's presence to be endangered. This has always been one of Arafat's blind spots; he feels the need to act independently but believes the rest of the Arabs will protect him from the consequences of independent behaviour.

This complex situation was behind Arafat's disinclination to curb the behaviour of the PLO fighters within Lebanon—a combination of arrogance and thuggery—and explains why it was worse than in Jordan. The instinctive leader had not learned the lesson of the Black September Civil War. Arafat's Lebanese realm was called the Fakhani Republic, after the district of Beirut where he had set up his headquarters. Within that area of Beirut, the refugee camps and long strips of southern Lebanon, his authority was supreme and the Lebanese government exercised little if any control. It was a flagrant violation of Lebanese sovereignty, and the way his followers conducted their daily lives exacerbated the situation. They set up road blocks, took over buildings, operated extortion rackets, protected criminals fleeing from Lebanese justice, requisitioned cars, drove out local residents, opened unlicensed shops, bars and nightclubs, and issued their own passes and permits. In short, they behaved like urban gangsters or armed Mexican *banditos*, but despite repeated pleas by his old guard Arafat did nothing to stop these. It was the consequent loss of control by the Lebanese government which underlined the divisions within the country and impelled anti and pro-PLO groups to create more militias.

There were seventy different armies in Lebanon by 1975, the year the civil war started. The murder in February of the pro-Palestinian politician Ma'arouf Sa'ad by anti-Palestinian followers of the Christian leader and former Lebanese President Camille Chamoun provided the initial spark. A month later, on 13 March, Christian Phalangist gunmen ambushed a bus carrying Palestinian trainees, murdered twenty-six of them and dashed all hopes of containing the situation. Lebanon was aflame.

To his credit, Arafat was reluctant to use force.[5-155] But there was little he could do to appease the Christians beyond sending emissaries and appealing to the Arab countries to intervene to restore calm. Many in Fatah and the PLO were eager for revenge; other Palestinian groups, the DFLP in particular, had already conducted hit-and-run campaigns against the Lebanese army. The Christian forces decided the time had come to finish off the Palestinians. The pro-Palestinian Lebanese militias wanted the Christians reduced to size and President Suleiman Franjieh, a corrupt warlord with a criminal record, was too discredited and too Christian to hold things together. In fact Franjieh, who was openly in favour of ejecting the PLO from Lebanon, provided assistance to Christian groups and had formed his own militia. There were no responses from the rest of the Arabs to Arafat's appeals; most of them had grown tired of the Palestinian game of becoming Arab when it was convenient.

The fighting took the form of senseless individual acts of violence. Christians dragged Palestinians out of cars, determined their identity by their pronunciation of certain words (tomatoes are *bandoura* to Palestinians and *banadoura* to the Lebanese) and murdered them in cold blood. Palestinians and their allies killed people for wearing Maronite Christian crosses. Women on both sides were raped, and mixed neighbourhoods suffered attempts by both sides to cleanse them of their opponents. In the most international part of Beirut, the district which contained some of the most elegant hotels in the world, hand-to-hand fighting took place. Beirut became uninhabitable and foreign residents, many of whom had originally believed that the situation was containable, left en masse.

Despite some efforts to defuse the situation which resulted in a number of truces which neither side observed, the situation soon escalated. On 15 May the Christian Tigers militia attacked one of the largest Palestinian refugee camps in the country, Tel Za'atar. Attacks on other refugee camps followed and resulted in hundreds of casualties. By December, after a joint effort by Christian militias led to the occupation and razing of the Dbaye and Karantina refugee camps, Arafat decided he would have to abandon all restraint. The atrocities continued. On 6 December, which became known as Black Tuesday, the Lebanese Christians went on a killing orgy throughout Beirut which left over three hundred dead, mostly innocent victims who just happened to be there.[5-156] On 4 January 1976, the Christians laid siege to Tel Za'atar with the help of the army and refused several attempts by the International Red Cross and other organizations to evacuate the dead and wounded or move the residents of the camp altogether. This added to Arafat's determination to survive through fighting. His hitherto lukewarm association with the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), headed by the politician Kamal Jumblatt, became a firm military and political alliance. He decided to go for a military victory.

Finally, on 20 January, an opportunity for retaliation presented itself. A combined Palestinian–Lebanese National Movement force attacked the Christian stronghold of Damour south of Beirut and occupied it. The victors looted, raped and murdered hundreds of innocent people and ex-President Camille Chamoun, a staunch opponent of the Palestinian presence in his country and a resident of Damour, had to be rescued by helicopter. Whatever the previous Christian atrocities—of which there were many, mostly against civilians—the behaviour of Palestinian fighters in Damour earned them dishonour. Arafat, forever speaking of 'an hour of destiny', did nothing to control his fighters. In fact he had never tried to control them, even when they looted the Banco di Roma and the British Bank of the Middle East during the fighting for the centre of Beirut. He avoided confrontation for fear of losing their loyalty.

By March the Lebanese army had begun to disintegrate. A splinter group headed by Colonel Ahmad Khatib defected and renamed itself the Lebanese Arab Army. At that point it became impossible for the central government to reimpose its authority. A few weeks later, General Aziz Ahdab called for the resignation of President Suleiman Franjieh and declared himself military governor of the country. Both moves had the backing of Arafat and the LNM. But Ahdab was unsuccessful and, though Franjieh remained as a nominal president, the militias of both sides took over Lebanon. According to Rashedah Mahran, 82 per cent of the country came under PLO and LNM control.[5-157] In purely military terms, victory was within reach.

More was needed to achieve victory in Lebanon than what was happening on the ground. The fate of the country depended as much on what outside powers were doing as on the strength of the dozens of bloodthirsty guerrilla groups. The CIA and Israel were providing the Lebanese Christians with financial support, arms and training.[5-158] King Hussein, still reeling from the decisions of the Rabat Conference and hoping to undo them, was encouraging Christian–Israeli cooperation[5-159] against the Palestinians and helping the Christians directly. Syria, which had provided the PLO with support during the very early period of the civil war, was becoming uneasy about the ramifications of the conflict on its own security. The oil-producing countries were showing concern over links between radical Palestinians with Communist countries and international terror groups. They supported the Christians against the Palestinians and their fellow Muslims. And Sadat, having signed the second stage of his disengagement agreement with Israel, Sinai II, in September 1975, welcomed the pressure on the Palestinians. He hoped it would force them to follow his lead and concede more in order to reinvigorate his efforts towards peace. It is true that the countries which were inclined to help Arafat—Libya, Iraq, Algeria, South Yemen and some socialist states—were in no position to do so, but it was his inability to see beyond his immediate surroundings which mattered most. He never knew what he would do with Lebanon in the event of success, but his tribal feelings still drove him towards seeking a military victory.

Syria was the country most affected by the events in its neighbour. An unopposed PLO–LNM victory would radicalize Lebanon and threaten Syria's ability to act independently. Syrian leaders watched the increasing cooperation between Israel and the Lebanese Christian militias with dismay: they wanted to maintain

the status quo in Lebanon and feared being dragged into a war with Israel.[5-160] They had to act. Time and again the Syrians appealed to Arafat to contain the situation and there were many meetings between him and President Assad. Because he needed the support of the Lebanese National Movement, which guaranteed his continued presence in the country, Arafat ignored Assad and backed the Muslim forces bent on total victory.

In June ten thousand Syrian soldiers entered Lebanon. Arafat cried foul and made another appeal to the Arab states, but they still showed no inclination to be involved. Black June joined Black September; he had miscalculated again. Not only were the Syrians willing to fight him and kill Palestinians to maintain the existing balance of power in Lebanon and beyond, but they would do so with US approval which guaranteed that Israel would not oppose them.[5-161] They also had implicit Arab support. And to Arafat's surprise, the Christian forces greeted the Syrians with open arms.

The survival of Arafat and the PLO in Lebanon became a matter of serious speculation. The besieged Tel Za'atar camp fell to Christian forces in August after several half-hearted or militarily unsound attempts to relieve its defenders and save its inhabitants. The Christians conducted a festival of ceremonial killings which lasted several days, surpassed Damour and produced between two and three thousand victims. Arafat and his military commanders, Abu Jihad in particular, shouldered some of the blame for not succeeding in organizing a rescue effort. A few days later the Syrian army entered Beirut, occupied the district controlled by Arafat and his allies and put an end to their chances of military victory. Meanwhile, and despite some recent PLO–CIA cooperation on the ground (which included protecting American neighbourhoods in Beirut and an unsuccessful attempt by Arafat to prevent the assassination of the US Ambassador to Lebanon, Francis Meloy, who was murdered by Palestinian dissidents in June), all moves towards peace were frozen.

Dismal as this picture was, there was one PLO achievement. Although overshadowed by events in Beirut, it would influence the future of Arafat and the PLO considerably. On 10 April that year the municipal elections held in the West Bank under Israeli supervision produced a stunning victory—PLO supporters got 85 per cent of the seats.[5-162] Arafat's policy of backing willing followers with money and of punishing those who would not toe a PLO line worked. As usual, he capitalized admirably on this success. First, he focused more than ever on the occupied territories, made the able Abu Jihad responsible for activities there and increased the PLO's financial aid and involvement in daily affairs. He also convinced President Sadat that it was his popularity among the Palestinians of the territories that lay behind Syria's attempts to thwart his pursuit of peace. Sadat's acceptance of the idea that the territories rather than all of Palestine had become the issue between the Arabs and Israel led him to oppose both the Syrian moves against Arafat and King Hussein's open and secret deals to reassume responsibility for Palestinian affairs, and to provide the PLO with help.

In October, Sadat joined Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in brokering an agreement in Riyadh to end the fighting in Lebanon and relieve the beleaguered Arafat. By the end of 1976, the Arabs had despatched the Arab Security Force and later the Arab Deterrent Force to control the situation. Though Syria was the primary source of

troops for both, it acted in concert with the rest of the Arab countries and the conditions within Lebanon stabilized.

The election of Jimmy Carter as President of the United States also afforded a way out of the Lebanese conflict and a chance to restart the efforts towards achieving peace. Unlike the policies of Kissinger, who had openly agreed with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin that the PLO was unacceptable, those of Carter and his Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, offered the Palestinians direct if conditional participation in a peace conference. In March 1977, a mere three months after he became President, Carter, in an unprecedented American move, declared his support for 'a homeland for the Palestinians'. Two months later, the State Department confirmed the US position.

Arafat's dream of American even-handedness was coming true. American receptivity to the idea of a Palestinian homeland was conditional, however, on the acceptance of certain UN resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 242 which called for Israeli withdrawal from the territories in return for its right to secure boundaries and a comprehensive peace agreement. Arafat personally had no problem with this;**(5-163)** everything he had done, and the messages delivered by intermediaries, showed him recognizing the right of Israel to exist. He made overtures to Carter through Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and used Palestinian academics Edward Said and Walid Khalidy as well as the ever-willing businessman Hasib Sabbagh. Characteristically unable to organize anything, even a diplomatic response, he deluged the White House with messages full of peaceful intent. At one point his frustration with the lack of response led him to approve contacts with Israeli General Matti Peled aimed at resolving the problem directly. But Peled, though receptive and well-meaning, had retired and had no influence with the Israeli government.

On 1 August, reassured by Arafat's many communications, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance joined the USSR Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, in announcing joint plans to reconvene the Geneva Conference with Palestinian participation, conditional on acceptance of the relevant UN resolutions. Things did not proceed smoothly, however. An astonished Vance was to discover, through a message delivered by Saudi Arabia while he was on a tour of the Middle East a short time later, that Arafat could not deliver on his previous promises. According to the PLO version of events, the pressure of senior figures within Fatah, other guerrilla groups and Arab states opposed to Geneva were behind Arafat's retreat.

While these pressures did exist, this initial failure was also a clear reflection of the conditions within the PLO and the nature of its leadership. Arafat's supreme position did not mean that he acted in a vacuum. Unlike dictators of actual countries, he had no secret police or state structure to impose his will on his people and his actions were always determined by whether or not the Palestinians would follow him. His people would not have followed but for his ability to speak for the whole PLO. In this case, the strong opposition to his plans made it doubtful whether he could 'sell' a deal to the USA. He lacked the necessary support of other major figures such as Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad. More than anything else before it, this retreat explains Arafat's frequent resort to expediency: his leadership was secure because he had no equal, but his ability to act, though he used it frequently, was conditional on Palestinian acceptance of his policies. Realizing that

he had nothing to offer without their approval, he was always in the business of balancing the game of internal power politics and his personal beliefs.

New factors contributed to his change of position, too. In May 1977, Menachem Begin's Likud party won the Israeli elections and this was followed by the announcement of plans to expand settlement activity in the occupied territories. In Lebanon, the PLO and Syrians had achieved a rapprochement and the Syrians were once again turning against the Christians. Having been unable to convince the Carter Administration to expand its offer of a homeland to include 'the right of self-determination', Arafat wanted them to pressure Israel into halting settlement activity and did not want to lose Syria's support. Acceptance of the US offer would have renewed his conflict with Syria, and this he could not afford. A new Syrian stand against the PLO in Lebanon would have weakened him to such an extent that the Carter offer of a Palestinian homeland might have been made exclusively to the people of the occupied territories. He was reacting to the potential challenge from the occupied territories for the first time.

Unable to overcome these obstacles, Arafat haggled. In the process he offended those Arab countries who had advocated contact with the USA–Egypt and Saudi Arabia—as well as his own intermediaries, and the USSR, neglected by his machinations, retreated into a state of inactivity. After the rejection of the Vance initiative the PLO and the USA maintained contact, particularly through American intermediary Landrum Bolling, a Quaker friend of Jimmy Carter, but there was little movement.

Eventually Sadat lost patience with Arafat's vacillation and cut the ground from underneath him. On 8 November 1977, having ensured that Arafat was at the meeting of the Egyptian People's Assembly, for which purpose he had summoned him from Libya especially, Sadat offered to travel 'to the ends of the earth' to pursue peace—then reduced his offer and invited himself to Jerusalem to address the Knesset. It was a declaration which stunned the whole world. The Israelis under Begin hurriedly issued an invitation. The Arabs fumed and began to regroup. But Arafat was the biggest loser; he had been pre-empted.

What everyone had suspected—that Sadat wanted out of the conflict—was formalized in the speech. The October War and the disengagement agreements with the Israelis had strengthened his position within Egypt and he was responding to the dire economic needs of his country. The political climate within Egypt gave him room for manoeuvre that was not available to any other Arab leader.**(5-164)** Unlike the rest of the Arab peoples, the Egyptians were beginning to tire of the conflict and of shouldering most of the responsibility for it. Hussein had wanted a similar deal with Israel, but the presence of a Palestinian majority within his country had not allowed him to carry out his plans openly and he had had to resort to secrecy.

For Arafat Sadat's sudden move changed everything. He had depended on Egypt and had competed with Sadat to maintain the PLO's position as a negotiating partner in any peace agreement; now he was forced to take steps backwards to rejoin the Arabs who had opposed his and Sadat's original plans. For a week, after a hasty departure from Cairo to Beirut, he still hoped that it had been a mere slip of the tongue by the Egyptian leader, who had spoken without a script, and that Sadat would find a way of not pursuing his offer. But it was no use: Sadat

persisted, and before his journey to Jerusalem visited other Arab leaders to try to get them to join him. On 19 November the world held its breath while Sadat addressed the Israeli Parliament.

Sadat spoke well and with deliberation. He championed Palestinian rights and, as part of a comprehensive peace agreement, he wanted the Palestinians to have an entity of their own; but there was no mention of the PLO. Sadat overlooked the various decisions of the Arab League, and Palestinian representation was left wide open. Arafat watched the speech on television in a state of shock. The Egyptian leader was after a settlement with anyone who agreed with him, and pretended to speak for the Palestinians. By placing so much emphasis on Palestinian rights he was excluding King Hussein, and the encouragement to the indigenous leadership of the occupied territories was obvious.

Arafat's inconsistent reading of political situations is a weakness which remains with him to this day. He has superior instincts which allow him to see openings in the bleakest of situations, but, being largely uneducated, he makes grave errors of judgement when confronted with totally new conditions. He totally failed to foresee the effect of his prevarications on Sadat, who had to act because Arafat had left him vulnerable and in danger of losing everything that the 1973 War had achieved. However, his response to Sadat's decision to act alone showed him at his most astute. According to someone who was witness to the debates within the PLO's command, the first thing Arafat did was to order his followers to refrain from any calls to murder Sadat (some still did so without his approval) and to stop referring to him as a traitor. He did not want to push Egypt's president too far. Then, announcing that the focus of attention had completely shifted to within Palestine, he reviewed the situation in the West Bank and Gaza and sent orders to his people there, the mayors in particular, to boycott all peace initiatives led by Egypt. He followed that with instructions to the PLO secret cells in the West Bank and Gaza to threaten anyone who supported Sadat. Finally, in what was becoming an enjoyable habit, he contacted Arab leaders and flew off to meet all of them.

Clever as these moves were, Sadat's journey to Jerusalem still left Arafat exposed. There were many voices within Fatah calling for a radical response, and there was always a danger of individuals or groups acting on their own. The rejectionists, the radical guerrilla groups, gloated and felt vindicated. George Habbash accused Arafat of paving the way for Sadat.**(5-165)** Syria, Libya, Algeria and South Yemen created the so-called Steadfastness Front and called for continued confrontation with Israel and Sadat. Saudi Arabia as usual took time to make up its mind, but eventually threw its weight behind those rejecting Sadat's effort though without actually joining them. The decision was taken by the mild, fatherly King Khalid despite support for Sadat by strongman Crown Prince Fahd, the present King, who had known about the Egyptian move in advance. The solid anti-Sadat stand by the Arab governments provoked the Egyptian leader into severing diplomatic relations with all his opponents. With the issue thus joined, Arafat, no longer independent or above Arab feuds, had to adopt a new posture in line with theirs. The next PLO executive committee meeting produced decisions which rejected all UN resolutions. On the surface, Arafat's peace efforts had come to an end.

With Lebanon still on the boil under a new political configuration which found Syria backing him, Arafat was saved by the response of the people of the occupied territories to his orders. Refusing to contemplate going back to Jordan—not after the Black September Civil War—they followed Arafat's orders and boycotted Sadat. The second National Guidance Committee, which had replaced most local political groups in the West Bank and Gaza and depended on new college graduates and professional associations, gave Arafat and the PLO their undivided support, as did the mayors. Though invitations were issued, only one mayor, Elias Freij of Bethlehem, met Sadat during the latter's visit to Jerusalem and offered him support. Because Freij was also pro-Jordanian he represented all the support Egypt and Jordan had. He received over a hundred death threats, mostly from PLO activists.(5-166) The other mayors stood by the PLO and the rest of the people became more Palestinian than ever before. Sadat was left unable to speak for the Palestinians.

Not for the first time in the history of Arafat's leadership of the Palestinians, it was a violent incident and its consequences which provided him with a way out of his predicament. Among the many steps backwards Arafat had taken was a recommitment to attacking all targets within Israel, and it was Fatah itself which started the ball of violence rolling. On 11 March 1978, an eleven–man Fatah hit squad landed their boats just south of Haifa. They had meant to land much further south and sneak into Tel Aviv, but found themselves somewhere on the main road connecting the two cities. Briefly confused by their surroundings, they later managed to hijack a bus and shoot everything in their way. Before the carnage was over, thirty-four Israelis were dead and more than eighty wounded. The attack inflamed passions on both sides and came very close to forcing a reversion to traditional Arab and Israeli positions and to ending the ongoing negotiations being conducted by the USA, Israel and Sadat.

The Israeli response to the Fatah raid came within seventy-two hours, on 14 March. Operation Stone of Wisdom was overseen by Menachem Begin personally. It involved thirty thousand soldiers and represented the biggest response to Palestinian raids into Israel to date. Within eighteen hours the Israelis had achieved their primary military goal, which was to smash the guerrillas near their border in southern Lebanon and establish a security zone four to eight miles wide along the whole border with Lebanon. Skirmishes continued, and the Israeli success was not achieved without cost. Arafat inspiringly led the Palestinian forces in person, and the Israelis suffered fourteen dead and over two hundred wounded in the first forty-eight hours.

For the Palestinians, the effects of this invasion on the negotiations between Israel and Sadat had both positive and negative results. First, the whole invasion, a mini-war between Israel and the Palestinians, dramatized the absence of the Palestinians from the negotiations and the fact that there could be no peace without them. There was also the further confirmation of Arafat's personal courage. Regionally, it guaranteed them further Arab support from many countries and added to Sadat's isolation. Simultaneously, the Israeli occupation of a security zone in Lebanon added that country to those with land under Israeli control. The Americans, desperately trying to keep alive the stalled negotiations, understood the Palestinians' violent message and counselled restraint on the Israelis. Behind

those positive results, however, lurked another consideration: the increased support for the Palestinians made the overall Arab position more rigid and meant that Sadat had to go it alone.

On 17 September, after lengthy negotiations which hovered on the edge of failure for days, Sadat and Begin reached an agreement in principle to end the state of war between their two countries. The Camp David Accord, so called after the American presidential retreat where the two leaders concluded their negotiations, was reached under the auspices and constant prompting and cajoling of President Jimmy Carter. Even some American insiders admitted that the Palestinians had suffered one of their most significant defeats in a history replete with failure and suffering.

The peace agreement called for the withdrawal in stages of Israeli forces from Egyptian territory and the normalization of relations between the two countries. This was accompanied by a vague and totally illegal agreement regarding the West Bank and Gaza—a face-saving device for the Egyptians which the Israelis had no intention of observing.(5-167) The vagueness lay in the failure to define the final status of the occupied territories after the stipulated transitional period of five years; would they be independent, autonomous or attached to Jordan? The illegality was in-built: Sadat had no authority to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians. And from the very start, Begin made it clear that he had no intention of withdrawing from the territories and planned to annex them to Israel instead.

Despite an open appeal by Arafat not to finalize the agreement, Sadat went ahead and signed it in March 1979. Arafat's appeal came after meeting of Arab heads of state in Baghdad in November 1978, as a result of which Egypt's membership in the Arab League was frozen, its ambassadors to the Arab countries were recalled to Egypt and the League's headquarters was moved to Tunisia. Although Arafat had appealed to Sadat, the PLO was the one entity which did not close the door on contacts with Egypt and Arafat never withdrew his representative from the country. His course of action was perverse; had the Palestinian people known this it would most definitely have cost him his leadership. Moreover, his obvious inclination to stay in contact with Sadat puzzled and offended the Arabs feuding with the Egyptian leader on behalf of the Palestinians.

It was the people of the West Bank more than Arafat and the PLO who passed judgement on the Camp David Accord and cut it down to size. A national congress, convened in the West Bank in October 1978 for the sole purpose of debating the agreement, led 150 West Bank leaders to issue a declaration renouncing it and confirming their support for the PLO—in reality for its declared position. The hard-line message was a sharp contrast to Arafat's machinations, which he noted. Sadat had no intention of allowing Palestinian interests to obstruct an Egyptian–Israeli peace. After all its efforts the Carter Administration considered Camp David a diplomatic triumph, but it had achieved nothing for the Palestinians.(5-168)

Neither the feeling of the people of the occupied territories nor being ignored by the Carter Administration deterred Arafat, and he continued his efforts towards peace.(5-169) In so doing, he was responding to a new element in the process. The Palestinian businessmen, whom Arafat had always cultivated and on whom he depended for financial support, had solid connections with the moderate Arab

camp and encouraged his personal inclinations.[5-170] Instead of heeding the message from the occupied territories, some hard-liners within Fatah, the PFLP, DFLP and Saiqa, and the refugees in camps in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, Arafat followed the money men who made their contributions dependent on deference to their masters in the oil-rich countries.

With the backing of this wealthy clique, the PLO carried out a worldwide diplomatic offensive against the Camp David Accord. It included contacts with a long list of European leaders such as Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, French Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-France, Romanian President Ceaucescu, Greek Premier Andreas Papandreou, UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim and many others. Beyond Europe, Arafat managed to get himself elected and re-elected to offices in the Islamic Conference and the Organization of Non-Aligned Countries. In a curious way, what Arafat was doing resembled what Shukeiri had done; his diplomatic efforts were guided by people who did not take the average Palestinian into consideration.

These contacts sought recognition of the right of the Palestinians, as represented by the PLO, to self-determination and they were relatively successful. The 1980 Venice Declaration of the European Economic Community accepted the Palestinians as a party to the conflict but failed to recognize the subsidiary right of self-determination and the creation of a Palestinian state. It was not enough for Arafat because it contained nothing new; in order to claim victory he needed more. But he had nowhere to turn.

Yet as usual it was within the Middle East itself that the real changes were taking place. On 22 January 1979, an Israeli hit squad slipped into Beirut and assassinated Ali Hassan Salameh, by then Arafat's most trusted lieutenant, an adopted son and the man behind several Black September terror attacks. It was a clear sign that Israel still considered the PLO a threat deserving special attention—that regardless of any potential peace treaty, the two sides were still at war. It was tantamount to stating that Sadat's initiative did not represent a solution to the issue between Israel and the Palestinians and admitting that it was still a source of conflict. Arafat sank into a state of utter gloom. The idea of being a sitting target without either the prospects of diplomatic success or the wherewithal to manage an effective military response frightened him.

The Iranian revolution, which overthrew the Shah on 31 January 1979, was a colossal event which altered the entire political balance in the Middle East. For six months, Ayatollah Khomeini provided Arafat with a new lifeline. The PLO leader was the first foreigner to visit Tehran after the overthrow of the Shah and he was treated as an important ally and head of state. The new Islamic regime had received help from the PFLP in their struggle against the Shah, including a gift of seventy thousand rifles and sub-machine guns. As chairman of the PLO Arafat claimed credit for this, as he had for so many other successes initiated by revolutionary guerrilla groups. Khomeini told Arafat that Iran was committed to his cause, in particular to liberating Jerusalem. Arafat's response was more emotional than realistic: 'Today Iran, tomorrow Palestine.'[5-171]

Arafat's unnatural honeymoon with the Iranian revolution was short-lived. The Iranians began to doubt his motives at the time when they were holding US embassy staff as hostages. Arafat, responding to an American message delivered

through Saudi Arabia, tried to intercede in the crisis on behalf of the US government. Blind to everything except Palestinian considerations, and misjudging the depth of anti-US feeling in Iran, he saw in the crisis an opportunity to improve his standing with Washington. It backfired; though he continued his verbal support for the Palestinian cause, Khomeini distanced himself from Arafat. At the same time the Palestinian money men, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia—the last after determining Arafat was of no use in the hostage crisis—threatened to withdraw their financial support and forced Arafat to backtrack.(5-172) When it finally came, the break with Khomeini was sudden and complete. From then on, the Iranians increased their support for Shia groups in Lebanon and used them to put pressure on Arafat to depart from total pro-West policies.

Once again the contradictions in Arafat's behaviour, playing both the peacemaker and the revolutionary leader at the same time, tripped him. In this instance, he was prevailed upon to sever his relations with Iran despite the pro-Iranian feelings of his people and most of the guerrilla groups. There were other examples of his belief that the support of the oil-rich Arab countries and wealthy Palestinians was indispensable, whatever his desire to continue to follow a two-track approach until Palestinian rights, including that of self-determination, were recognized. For instance, one of Arafat's close associates, Abul Zaim or Atallah Atallah, kidnapped the well-known Saudi writer and dissident Nasser Al Said in Beirut and delivered him to the Saudis in return for $2 million. Some time later, 'unknowns' assassinated Abdel Wahab Kayyali, one-time leader of the militant Arab Liberation Front and an outspoken critic of what he called 'placing personal interests above those of the Palestinian people'. Both Said and Kayyali were anathema to Arab moderates. Pleasing the pro-West Saudis and looking the other way while true revolutionaries were silenced did not stop Arafat from establishing direct links to the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, helping Ugandan leftists and continuing to depend on Communist countries for arms and training.

All this took place while he sent new messages to the Carter Administration hinting, while refusing to do so openly, at accepting UN resolution 242 and Israel's right to live within secure boundaries. Characteristically, he extended whatever authorization he had from the PLO leadership and the PNC to compromise. Even his meeting in November 1979 with the American black leader Jesse Jackson, roundly condemned by Zionist groups and Israel, was only another attempt to keep the channels of communication with the US administration open.

Throughout 1979 and early 1980 Arafat's and the PLO's fortunes were at their nadir. Even though Abu Jihad's efforts to organize cells in the West Bank and Gaza were proving successful, the local leadership of mayors, students and trade unionists was more independent and militant than was convenient for Arafat. He responded by keeping pro-PLO elements in the occupied territories on a short financial leash. Meanwhile, Abu Jihad's success in the occupied territories prompted the Israelis to support a counterweight. They created the Village Leagues, a collection of small-timers who were supposed to help them develop an alternative to the PLO. When the collaborationist nature of the Village Leagues rendered them ineffective, the Israeli civilian governor of the territories, Menahem Milson, dissolved the pro-PLO National Guidance Committee, delayed postponed municipal elections and resorted to supporting Islamic groups. Towards the end of

1980 the Palestinian National Front (PNF), more independent and Communist-leaning than the NGC, was also dissolved.

Late in 1980, to Arabs and outsiders alike seeking a solution, Arafat assumed a position as the only man who could deliver peace.[5-173] Still pretending to agree with the Steadfastness Front, he simultaneously went beyond using Palestinian academics and businessmen as intermediaries and hid behind Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia. In August 1981, the Fahd Plan called for a peace with Israel based on withdrawal from Arab land occupied in 1967 and, without naming Israel, the right of all the parties to the Arab–Israeli conflict to live 'within secure and recognized' boundaries. In fact, Arafat was the proponent of the whole scheme; once again he had used an associate to advance an idea the success of which was doubtful. The plan was the work of Arafat's associate Basil Aql, a Palestinian businessman with solid Saudi connections and a direct line to Fahd. The offer of recognition of Israel that it contained went beyond what was approved by the PLO, whose executive committee had demanded Israeli recognition of the Palestinians as party to the conflict and their rights of self-determination in return for total abandonment of the armed struggle.

In September 1980 Iraq invaded Iran; Arafat tried to mediate between the two sides, but without success. The countries of the Steadfastness Front and leftist guerrilla groups backed Iran and saw in the war a diversion from the Palestinian problem. Arafat followed the Palestinian money men and the oil-producing Arab states and supported Iraq. Whatever divisions existed in the Arab world and among the Palestinians were magnified, and indeed the Iran–Iraq War replaced the Arab–Israeli conflict as the problem of primary concern to the countries of the Middle East.

In November 1981 Fahd presented his plan to another Arab conference in Fez, Morocco, but new considerations in addition to the Iran–Iraq conflict stood in the way of adopting the proposal of the Crown Prince. Signalling that it was determined to have a say in any solution to the Arab–Israeli problem, the USSR had recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people to give itself diplomatic leverage. The Syrians and Israelis refused to accept the plan. A month before, Sadat had been assassinated by Muslim militants opposed to peace with Israel. Arafat was shaken enough by what had happened to the Egyptian leader that he took to mentioning his fate to avoid taking a stand. The Fahd Plan, though resurrected later—also without success—was abandoned. Despite openly supporting the plan when it was first presented,[5-174] after its failure Arafat disavowed any knowledge of it. This taught the Saudis a lesson: they never again trusted him.

As in 1977, Arafat refused to follow his own initiatives openly. His secret contacts with the Americans, since 1981 under Ronald Reagan, were extensive, particularly through the American intermediary John Mroz. Although American intentions were subject to considerable doubts and Reagan, unlike Carter, was openly pro-Israeli, Arafat still could not take a clear enough position for or against peace for fear of the cost. In July 1981, he received a de facto recognition by the US government when American envoy Philip Habib brokered a ceasefire agreement between the PLO forces and Israel, who had been conducting an escalating

artillery war across the Lebanese border. Habib had to negotiate with the PLO and Arafat, mostly indirectly, but it was none the less an open recognition.

The door for another round of contacts with the USA was open. There were many willing intermediaries, but as ever things could not move forward because the USA demanded unconditional recognition of Israel's right to exist and for the PLO to renounce terrorism, and Arafat failed to respond. Although a State Department psychological profile of Arafat described him as 'pragmatist and opportunist',[5-175] an open, clear statement on recognition and terrorism was needed beyond the personal assurances offered through intermediaries. Arafat was caught; he could not accept recognition of Israel because he had told his people that he would never do that. His forces were observing a truce and becoming restless, and he knew the Israelis were planning an attack on Lebanon to destroy the PLO physically. The USA, Israel, Jordan and Egypt were critical of him because he would not make a total commitment towards peace; the rest of the Arab countries and most Palestinians opposed him because he insisted on a dialogue with America and everyone was preoccupied with the Iran–Iraq War. What looked like a stalemate was a prelude to war.

Chapter 6

The End of the Armed Struggle.

Although they were meticulously observing the ceasefire arranged by the United States in June 1981 and doing everything within their power to avoid a resumption of violence, Arafat and the rest of the PLO leadership knew Israel would invade Lebanon the moment Menachem Begin was re-elected, two months after the truce came into effect. However, unlike the rest of the PLO command Arafat believed that the invasion would not be limited in scope. He felt it would be aimed at the total elimination of the Palestinian presence in the country, even if it required the occupation of Beirut.[6-176]

Israel had amply demonstrated a determination to use the divisions among the Arabs resulting from Camp David, the Iran–Iraq War and the solidly pro-Israeli policies of the Reagan Administration to intercept Iraq's armament programme, freeze any moves towards a peace agreement that would include the Palestinians and expand its settlements in Gaza and the West Bank. On 7 June, with Iraq fully engaged in fighting Iran, the Israelis raided the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Ozeirak and destroyed it. Apart from offering Iraq money to rebuild it, the Arab countries did nothing in response. On 13 December that year Israel officially annexed the Golan Heights, and once again there was no concrete Arab response. At the same time, the Reagan Administration turned a blind eye to Israeli plans to expand settlement in the occupied territories and announced that PLO acceptance of United Nations resolutions was not enough to restart a dialogue with the organization—a total, unequivocal renunciation of terrorism was required. Though still without a coherent policy towards the occupied territories, Israel used this

opportunity to increase its support for the collaborationists, the Village Leagues under the leadership of one Mustafa Dudeen, and redoubled its settlement efforts.

The only thing that stood in the way of Israel realizing all its aims was the existence of the PLO—the simple fact that an organization purporting to speak in the name of the Palestinians resided in neighbouring Lebanon. The temptation to eliminate this magnet for Palestinian and Arab hopes, a PLO which was recognized by 107 countries[6-177] and which kept the issue of the Palestinian struggle alive while threatening Israel's long-term supremacy, was too strong to resist. Arafat was right: Menahem Begin and his Defence Minister Ariel Sharon began planning the invasion of Lebanon late in 1981, during a period of unusual quiet along the two countries' mutual frontier.

Realizing that explicit or tacit American approval was needed, in March 1982 the Israelis sounded out Secretary of State Alexander Haig regarding a full-scale invasion of Lebanon to eradicate the PLO presence. Haig gave them a tentative green light; to him, they were free to invade if the Palestinians violated the truce.[6-178] According to former President Jimmy Carter, this response, initially given to Israeli intelligence, was confirmed by the Secretary of State to Ariel Sharon in May.[6-179] In fact, however conditional Haig's original green light had been, it amounted to approval of Israel's plans. Both sides had always experienced difficulty in controlling the behaviour of their soldiers in the field, and the multiplicity of the Palestinian groups involved made some form of violation of the ceasefire likely. Aware of the threat, Arafat tried to obtain US diplomatic assurances against an Israeli attack.[6-180] The double-dealing Haig gave Arafat the assurances he requested, but they proved empty.

On 3 June, gunmen belonging to the Abu Nidal (Sabri Al Banna) terrorist group shot and wounded the Israeli Ambassador to the UK, Shlomo Argov. Although Western intelligence sources absolved the PLO of responsibility (Abu Nidal had been ejected from the organization in the 1970s after trying to assassinate Arafat), this was the pretext Israel needed to put its plans into effect. With the Israeli penchant for misnomers, that unrestrained attack against Lebanon would be called Operation Peace for Galilee.

The following day the Israeli air force attacked Palestinian refugee camps, military positions and PLO offices within Beirut itself. Having tired of waiting for the invasion he had expected, Arafat was in Saudi Arabia to promote another mediation effort to end the Iran–Iraq War and refocus attention on his problems with Israel. On hearing the grim news he flew to Damascus almost immediately and crossed into Lebanon by car, exposing himself to the danger of Israeli air attacks every inch of the way. His chief adversary, Ariel Sharon, away in Romania when Argov was wounded, flew back to Jerusalem to supervise the invasion. By 6 June the two antagonists were in full command of their forces. The biggest Israeli war since October 1973 began at dawn and involved 75,000–80,000 soldiers, 1240 tanks, 1520 armoured personnel carriers, 350 ambulances and 300 buses to carry prisoners.[6-181] Against them stood 15,000 Palestinians under Arafat's direct command and 3000 followers of other guerrilla organizations. The Israeli air force roamed the skies unopposed, and the antiquated SAM missiles of the PLO forces provided no protection. Hundreds of people, mostly civilians, died during the first day of aerial bombardment. Israel lost no aircraft.

Despite repeated Israeli declarations to the contrary, unlike Karameh, the Israeli attack on Lebanon was a full-fledged military invasion from the start. And, also unlike Karameh, this time the Palestinian forces and the whole Palestinian presence in Lebanon were the creation of Yasser Arafat. Furthermore, this time Arafat stood alone, both militarily and diplomatically. The invasion and its results represented the purest test of what Arafat had achieved during fourteen years of setting up a Palestinian armed resistance and staking a Palestinian claim to international recognition. It was an Israeli–Palestinian war.

Arafat's return to Beirut to lead his men enlivened them. He alone among the PLO leadership personalized the image of their Palestinianness. Wasting no time, he ordered the withdrawal of the twenty-four old tanks which constituted a mini-armoured corps and which had been deployed in an exposed and vulnerable way. Then, smiling and raising his fingers in a victory sign, he toured his forces, forward positions. The troops excitedly shouted out his *noms de guerre*, 'Abu Ammar' and 'Brother Abu Ammar', as he clasped his hands together above his head and urged them on. There were several occasions when he was within yards of the enemy, and at other times areas he visited were occupied by the Israelis only minutes after his departure.

Sadly, this ability to lead and inspire his fighters was not matched by sound military preparations, despite his repeated insistence for almost a year that a major Israeli invasion was on the way. His pre-invasion orders to his Beirut followers to stock ammunition, food, water and other necessities had been obeyed,[6-182] but his field command structure, which he personally had drawn up, collapsed within forty-eight hours of the Israeli onslaught. Though some of his field commanders acquitted themselves admirably, notably Salah Ta'amari in Sidon, most of his senior officers, including his favourites Ghazi Attallah, Haj Ismael and Abu Hajer, fled, alone or with their troops. And there was no plan worth mentioning for where to hold the line or how to effect a retreat. The PLO troops were brave but essentially leaderless, and therefore less effective than they could have been. Arafat's legendary dependence on unfit sycophants and his lack of method were exacting a heavy price.

The military outcome of the fighting was made worse by problems which were not of his making. In April that year, Arafat's total conviction that an Israeli invasion was on the way had led him to swallow his pride and meet President Assad of Syria to develop joint contingency plans. The two men agreed to pool their forces to meet any Israeli attack. However, after the Israeli air force had blasted the Syrian SAM missile systems out of existence and downed over forty of their fighters in one day, on 11 June Assad agreed to a unilateral truce with Israel without even consulting Arafat. Three days later the Lebanese President, Elias Sarkis, formed a Committee of National Salvation, essentially an attempt to save Lebanon through meeting the Israeli request to eject Arafat and the PLO from the country.

The Syrian and Lebanese betrayals came on top of total silence from the rest of the Arab, non-aligned and Muslim worlds. Arafat had broadcast impassioned appeals to leaders of these blocs on 9 June, but there was no tangible response. Even the Arab League did not call for a meeting—it finally met after Beirut was surrounded on 29 July, nearly two months after the start of the invasion. In fact,

the deteriorating military situation was matched by an incredible lack of diplomatic activity. It was as if all parties concerned had accepted the Israeli premise for starting the war and had joined in a conspiracy of silence to see it succeed. Only the American envoy Philip Habib was there, despatched to the area by a cynical Alexander Haig two days after the start of the fighting. But the Israelis knew better than to listen to Habib. By 14 June he had organized several ceasefire agreements, none of which they observed. The Israelis were following a more telling indicator of American intentions: President Reagan, in Paris to attend a NATO conference, seemed to accept the Israeli justifications for the invasion without reservation.

Except for pockets of resistance by some of Arafat's courageous fighting units, the PLO forces were in full retreat. Unable to halt or hinder the Israeli advance, Arafat was preoccupied by the possibility that the anti-PLO Christian forces might break out from north of Beirut and link with the Israelis to encircle the city. This did not happen. Despite Israeli attempts to draw the Christians into the conflict, the latter resisted for fear of alienating the Arab world on whose goodwill Lebanon's economic wellbeing depended. Still, they did conduct a propaganda campaign against Arafat through a radio station they controlled, and on several occasions contributed to the demoralization of his troops by claiming that he had escaped. Arafat responded in character, by making himself visible and through broadcasts, including one which ended with, 'Here I am, and here I stay' and another with, 'Beirut will be the Hanoi and Stalingrad of the Israeli army.' At one point, unable to resist the pull of his Arabness and hoping for Arab help against fading hope, he declared, 'We will fight alone, until the rest of the Arabs follow us.' When nothing happened, the radio station under his control broadcast Koranic verse.

Although Arafat's heroic performance made a psychological difference it had minimal impact on the military situation, and by the end of June the Israelis had Beirut completely surrounded. The barbarous land, air and sea attacks which followed were made worse by the presence of spies who pointed out Arafat's whereabouts.[6-183] On occasions Arafat's hideaways were attacked by Israeli fighter planes, helicopters and artillery several times a day. Sharon wanted the leaders of the PLO killed as a way of eliminating the organization,[6-184] and naturally Arafat was his principal target. Even former Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban admits that buildings were marked on the assumption that Arafat was in them,[6-185] and this made it dangerous for anyone to be near him, including news correspondents. An early attempt to terminate Arafat reduced his original headquarters to rubble.[6-186]

The worse it got, the more remarkable was his ability to rise to the occasion; it was as if he were made for battle. He slept in the backs of cars, operated from positions too near Israeli forward lines to be believed, moved constantly, misled informers by arranging appointments at which he never showed up, and did anything else he could think of to avoid becoming a sitting target. Since he had no fixed headquarters safe from attack, many of his orders were issued while he was standing in the middle of streets or travelling in cars. The preamble to some of his instructions reflected the situation on the ground: 'Deliver this or don't come back.' Amazingly, the man still managed to give interviews and stay in touch with

the outside world, including maintaining contacts with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and Chairman Brezhnev of the USSR.[6-187]

Despite the forced resignation of Alexander Haig on 25 June for reasons of general incompetence, there was no diplomatic activity in the offing. Arafat therefore devoted himself to the internal situation, which was threatening his ability to continue to resist. The PLO leadership was divided between those who wanted to accept the announced Israeli terms and evacuate Beirut, and those who did not. From the start the far-seeing Abu Jihad had been against getting bogged down in a Beirut quagmire. He proposed cooperating with Jordan and working through that country to organize the occupied territories. The Al Hassan brothers, Qaddoumi and others were also for pulling out. But many, including the radical groups and Fatah's Abu Iyad, wanted to stay and resist to the death. Amazingly, Arafat listened to both sides and temporized. The second problem was a more difficult one. Lebanese leaders and even those citizens who sympathized with the PLO were beginning to accept that the PLO's departure was the only way out of the city's predicament. The leaders visited Arafat and began counselling this course of action. The popular demand showed itself in several ways, including appeals to him as he roamed the city from people who had been left homeless or were running short of food and water.

All the elements working against a continued PLO presence in Beirut finally came together and forced a decision on Arafat. Having failed to get the Arab governments to act, he had gone over their heads and on 10 July appealed to the Arab people, but that too did not work. He followed it with a desperate call for UN intervention which claimed, probably rightly, that thirty thousand people had died, ten thousand more were missing and eight hundred thousand had been made homeless. The United States, however, vetoed all UN attempts to order a cessation of hostilities so long as they contained or suggested a condemnation of Israel. Even a mid-battle attempt by Arafat to change the character of the situation—an unpublicized and somewhat vague personal acceptance of all UN resolutions—had no effect. Having exhausted every avenue, he finally bowed to the pressure of the Lebanese politicians, the Palestinian fighters who were despairing because the Arabs had abandoned them,[6-188] and the cries of ordinary Beirutis screaming 'Enough' every time they saw Arafat.

On 12 August, after more than two months of fighting and eight days after the heaviest single bombardment of Beirut, which resulted in more than three hundred dead, President Reagan finally telephoned Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, compared what was happening in Beirut to the Holocaust, and demanded that it be stopped.[6-189] A few hours later, the shooting came to an end. Arafat had already told the Lebanese Prime Minister, Shafiq Wazzan, and the former Prime Minister, Saeb Salam, that he would leave[6-190] and confirmed this to the US envoy. The details were to be worked out with Philip Habbib who was still in Beirut, trying to reconcile Israeli demands to disarm the Palestinians completely and Palestinian insistence on keeping their arms and a measure of honour in the manner of their departure.

All sixteen people interviewed by me, twelve of them journalists, who witnessed the battle of Beirut attest to Arafat's courage and inspiring leadership. ABC correspondent John Cooley, a veteran of the Algerian war of independence and

various Middle East wars, describes Beirut as 'a military and moral battle—despite ending in defeat, his finest hour'.[6-191] My journalist father still wears a look of incredulity when recalling Arafat's behaviour during the battle and offers, 'I don't think he ever slept. He was everywhere—never tired and never showed despair.'[6-192] The Norwegian television journalist Karsten Tveit shakes his head and settles for, 'He was amazing.'[6-193]

Although some PLO insiders thought they could have done better, Arafat's finest hour and the image he projected transcended his failure to organize and focused attention on what was an uneven confrontation from the start. His manner and personal example triumphed and added to his lustre throughout the world. It was more than personal courage; he was a master of those little things which meant a lot to ordinary fighting men struggling against hopeless odds. Even with parts of Beirut burning and much of it reduced to rubble, his *kuffiya* was still arranged to resemble a map of Palestine and his shoes were always polished.[6-194] Head high and eyes sparkling, he looked and acted like a leader of men. And despite his legendary short fuse he never lost his equilibrium, nor even his sense of humour. At one point, when a delegation of Lebanese politicians and religious leaders arrived unexpectedly to ask him to leave, he turned to an aide, before they were ushered in, and asked what they wanted. When his adjutant told him that they had come to say goodbye, Arafat smiled and said, 'Where are they going?' Everyone around him broke into uncontrollable laughter. Later Arafat repeated the story to his visitors and it produced the same effect.[6-195]

Arafat remained steadfast to the end. The French contingent of the international force which was supposed to oversee the PLO's withdrawal from Beirut arrived on 21 August. It was followed by American and Italian units and a small British one. The withdrawal took place in stages, but Arafat was the last to leave, on 30 August.[6-196] He left in style, with all the pomp and circumstance befitting a hero, after saying goodbye to the Lebanese leadership and some wealthy Palestinians who came to Beirut's harbour to honour him. As he sailed away on the ship ATLANTIS he raised his fingers in a victory sign for a long time, then leaned on the deck to watch Beirut fade away. He was on his way to Athens and from there to exile in Tunisia, his new base of operations. In a final gesture of independence and defiance he had refused to go to any Arab country directly involved in the conflict, not even to Syria, where everybody expected him to go. The rest of his ten thousand fighters, whose departure he had personally overseen, were despatched to nine different Arab countries.

What followed the battle of Beirut astonishingly reversed the results of the actual fighting. The day after Arafat's departure President Reagan announced what has been called the Reagan initiative, a detailed peace plan which, though it did not offer the Palestinians self-determination and leaned towards attaching the occupied territories to Jordan (the Jordanian Option), called for a freeze on Israeli settlement activity. Beirut had sent a message that even the pro-Zionist Reagan could not ignore.

The mere fact that the plan was presented—and immediately rejected by Israeli Premier Begin—amounted to an explicit admission that the Palestinians were an unavoidable component in any plans for a comprehensive Middle East settlement. It was Arafat's performance in Beirut that had made the USA decide that there

would be no peace without the PLO. This American recognition, the belated acceptance of a Palestinian existence by Reagan, happened, ironically, at a time when the PLO was weaker than ever. Beyond the obvious humiliation of a military defeat, leaving Beirut destroyed the PLO's elaborate political and administrative apparatus[6-197] that, although put together haphazardly, had become an effective enough voice with which to express Palestinian frustration. In Lebanon Arafat had had a pool of talent of over three hundred thousand Palestinians; now that was beyond reach. Reorganizing to maintain control of the leaders of the occupied territories would become a problem. Tunisia was simply too far from Israel.

The lonely, friendless Arafat who arrived in Athens four days after leaving Beirut believed that the Lebanon debacle was the result of an Arab plot to destroy the PLO.[6-198] He wasted no time in responding to his new universe. He did not accept the Reagan Plan but stopped short of rejecting it completely, leaving the door open for negotiating Palestinian demands regarding the right of self-determination and advocating mutual recognition between the PLO and Israel as a first step. He summoned from Beirut several Palestinian businessmen to whom he gave messages for King Hussein and President Husni Mubarak of Egypt—Sadat's successor, who had himself accepted the Camp David Accord—which confirmed that he had adopted the diplomatic option.

Hussein responded by sending Arafat a delegation made up of his Foreign Minister, Marwan Al Kassem, and the Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament, Ahmad Lousi. They offered him cooperation based on the acceptance of Jordanian leadership of a joint Jordanian–Palestinian delegation to discuss the Reagan Plan. Though personally receptive to the idea, Arafat did not give a final answer and used the need to consult the PNC and PLO's Executive Committee as an excuse. This was a calculated move. He wanted the benefit of working with Jordan without attaching himself irrevocably and giving up on the Steadfastness Front, the group of countries opposed to all UN resolutions and the American peace efforts. Very much like Sadat before him, the PLO leader now accepted that the occupied territories were the exclusive arena for conflict or negotiations.

Arafat knew that the PLO which had survived his withdrawal from Beirut was weak and divided. Throwing in his lot exclusively with Hussein would have been tantamount to admitting defeat, while continuing with the Steadfastness Front and reliance on armed struggle was unrealistic. Survival—playing both camps to avoid being sidelined—became the issue. Everything he did in the international, Arab and Palestinian fields had the sole purpose of keeping the Palestinian flag flying, of giving life to what had prompted Reagan's belated recognition of the Palestinian people. It was a matter of adapting to a new state of exile without accepting defeat.

Yet however admirable Arafat's realization of what was needed and the speed with which he moved to meet these needs, it was the Israelis who gave him victory. Over-reacting and overplaying their hand is a reflection of the arrogance which bedevils Israeli politicians of both Right and Left. Suffering from this inherent attitude more than others, Begin and Sharon contributed to the continued survival of Palestinian identity more than all of Arafat's plans put together. What the two Israelis did, by commission and omission, was to exaggerate Arafat's threat to such an extent that they could not view it sensibly. In the process, they

made the real threat equal to the inflated imagined one. They awarded the Palestinians the sympathy of the world and a considerable measure of understanding of their political point of view.

Among the things Arafat had nobly insisted on in his negotiations with US envoy Habib before leaving Beirut was safeguards for the Palestinians he was leaving behind, the destitute of the refugee camps who had supported him and continued to represent a vulnerable Palestinian presence in Lebanon.[6-199] The guarantees he obtained stipulated that the Israelis were to refrain from entering west Beirut, in effect an acceptance that the inhabitants of this area would be protected by the multinational force despatched to the city to keep peace. In other words, he placed the refugees in Lebanon at the mercy of the USA.[6-200] In a way this resembled US reliance on Arafat for the protection of their citizens during the Lebanese civil war.

On 23 August the Lebanese Parliament had elected the Christian warlord and Israel's ally Beshir Gemayel President of the country. On 14 September, a few days before he was to be inaugurated, Gemayel and forty of his followers were killed by a remote-control bomb which destroyed the headquarters of his Phalange party. Though the Israelis were still in Beirut, confusion reigned. The Palestinians, Syrians, Lebanese Muslims and competing Christian militias all had an interest in eliminating Gemayel. Even Israel was not above suspicion, because of bitterness over Gemayel's refusal to meet them halfway during their advance on Beirut and after the fighting was over because he had proved too independent and difficult to manage. Nor was a joint effort to assassinate Gemayel out of the question. But all this did not matter; the Israelis used the incident as an excuse to occupy west Beirut in obvious violation of the various undertakings they had made to American envoy Habib. Shamelessly, the Israelis claimed they had to enter west Beirut to maintain law and order.

On 16 September, with Gemayel still unburied, his Phalangist followers connived with the Israelis[6-201] and moved into west Beirut. Their aim was to punish the Palestinians in camps on the edge of the city, Arafat's supporters whom, without a shred of proof, they held responsible for Gemayel's death. What followed was the massacre in cold blood of over two thousand Palestinian inhabitants of the refugee camps of Sabra and Chatilla, in orgy of killing which occupies one of the blackest pages of any confessional conflict this century. Little doubt existed as to who the perpetrators were; in the words of veteran correspondent Robert Fisk writing in *The Times*: 'The Christians did it.'

Fisk, the Norwegian journalist Karsten Tveit and Tim Llewellyn of the BBC were among the first foreign correspondents to enter the camps after the massacre, and they established an Israeli share of culpability well before the international outcry which followed. Fisk determined that the camps were unarmed and, with an unerring eye, analysed the positions of the dead and the ways in which they had been killed to prove that there had been no resistance. Tveit and Llewellyn, though they still find it painful to discuss what they saw, confirm Fisk's analysis and the Israeli involvement through providing the Christians with safe passage through their lines.

Ten other journalists who went into the camps soon afterwards added further confirmation of their colleagues' interpretation of the atrocity. What happened

there did not involve any fighting and was simply a slaughter of civilians. Nor was the entry of the Christians into the camps a secret; they were ushered in by Israeli troops. Furthermore, the killing did not follow an incident of any sort, but was premeditated and unjustified. The operation took over thirty-six hours and required hundreds of Christian fighters; many of them were rotated and crossed Israeli lines repeatedly, armed and in trucks. At some points the Israelis were within 600 yards of the camps[6-202] and therefore able to hear gunfire, if not the shrieks of the victims who included babies, pregnant women and old men. In a ritualistic frenzy crosses were drawn on victims' bodies, the bayoneting of pregnant women was commonplace, and the names of Christ and the Virgin were scrawled in blood on walls. The butchering did not stop until some of the Israeli army officers tired of hearing the screams and ordered an end to it all.[6-203]

The Lebanese were unrepentant. The world's attempt to reduce the massacre to another madness in a faraway place did not succeed. Having watched the Israeli invasion and countless acts of savagery committed against innocent civilians in Beirut and throughout Lebanon, the international press corps were finally faced with a horrific incident which could not be overlooked and which they could use to tell the world what was happening in that country. With Sabra and Chatilla as a peg, they aired their frustrations about the countless Israeli atrocities they had witnessed. It was Fisk, Tveit, Llewellyn, Robert Suro of Time, Chris Harper of ABC, Stephen Mallory of NBC, David Hirst of the Guardian and the brave Israelis of the Peace Now movement, who demonstrated in the streets of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in tens of thousands, who finally turned the tables on Israel.

Suddenly, in every corner of the world, it became difficult for anyone to ignore the Palestinian problem and no one could discuss it without accepting, implicitly or explicitly, the existence of a grievance which needed to be addressed. The recognition enveloped every Palestinian like a cloak of sadness and pained honour. Even inside the occupied territories, a remarkable solidarity showed itself in everything from increased attendance at mosques to the wearing of black ties, and people spoke of Sabra and Chatilla as if they were next door. Begin and Sharon were defeated; suddenly the loss of Beirut was a strictly military affair. Judged by the worldwide outcry and his masterful response in appearing to want a peaceful settlement, on the diplomatic front Arafat was considerably ahead.

Nevertheless, the PLO was still divided. Arafat's withdrawal from Beirut, a decision he made himself, split the PLO more seriously than ever before.[6-204] The PFLP, DFLP, Al Saiqa and members of the Fatah command had wanted to fight to the end. Arafat's ambiguous reaction to the Reagan initiative added to the worries of the hard-liners and their opposition to a course of action which had not been approved by the PNC or PLO Executive Council and had not followed the usual consultations. Beyond that, even with an unfriendly Reagan in the White House Arafat put relations with the USA ahead of those with the Palestinians' traditional supporter, the USSR. The most telling sign of Arafat's wish to turn the military disaster of Beirut to diplomatic advantage showed in his abandonment of the Steadfastness Front and his friendly approaches to Egypt and Jordan.

In early 1983, the Executive Committee of the PLO expressed its disquiet over Arafat's unauthorized actions and tried to reimpose its will on him. This followed his tepid acceptance of the already rejected Fahd Plan during an Arab heads of

state conference in Fez, Morocco in November 1982. When he tried to follow this by accepting Hussein's offer of cooperation and the proposed alliance with Jordan (which called for a joint negotiating position, with the PLO participating as junior partner of a Jordanian delegation to the proposed Geneva conference), he was faced with wide opposition from all quarters—even the loyalists Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad joined other members of the PLO Executive Council in opposing him. The only people who supported Arafat were some leaders from the West Bank, and though this was significant, he was still forced to consider what ignoring the dissenters would do to the PLO. The memories of the Black September civil war were too fresh for most Palestinians to accept operating under the aegis of Jordan. Only a non-ideologue practitioner of the art of the possible like Arafat would consider joining forces with King Hussein, who had caused the Palestinians so much misery and constantly presented himself and Jordan as an alternative to their aspirations of nationhood and statehood. Faced with greater resistance than he had anticipated, Arafat relented.

The opposition to Arafat in the PLO's open forums was no more than a taste of worse things to come. The open debate concerned the diplomatic activity to be pursued in the wake of the loss of Beirut, but some within the PLO ranks wanted an investigation of the disastrous plans and command structure during the fighting. They demanded an explanation for the poor leadership of the fighters, the conduct of some of Arafat's pet officers and the corruption of the Beiruti group around him. For months after the evacuation of Beirut this group of critics fumed silently. Then a Syria worried about being sidelined by a potential Jordanian–Arafat alliance provided them with support, at first surreptitiously and later openly. This led to the most serious open rebellion against Arafat's leadership of the PLO since he had become its chairman.

In January 1983, PLO commanders and Fatah members Abu Salih, Salah Abu Kwayk, Musa Al 'Amla, Ahmad Qadi and Said Maragha began bombarding the PLO Executive Committee with demands for reform. They objected to autocracy in political, military and financial decision-making, and the concentration of all power in the hands of Arafat. They rejected the Reagan initiative, the peace plan presented at the Fez conference (the revised Fahd Plan) and any cooperation with Jordan. They also insisted on knowing why officers who had shown cowardice during the fighting in Lebanon were awarded with promotions by Arafat, and pointed out specific incidents of corruption and their consequences on morale. Not only was Arafat under attack by loyal Palestinian elements with excellent reputations, his opponents did not mince their words. They blamed him for everything and asked for his resignation.

Arafat's diplomacy and the corruption surrounding him had been a source of general disaffection, but it was the promotion of Haj Ismael, Ghazi Attallah and Abu Hajer which broke the camel's back.[6-205] The rebellion grew when Arafat characteristically did not respond to the complaints. He merely continued with his extensive travel schedule to meet Arab leaders and resorted to old tricks by trying to silence the rebels through promoting or bribing their leaders. He made promises to deal with the situation—something he always did under pressure—but they were not acceptable because he never delivered. The rebels reacted to his attempts to circumvent them by setting themselves up as an alternative group to Arafat

called the Fatah Revolutionary Council. The PLA commander Tarik Khadra and the Speaker of the PNC Khalid Al Fahoum also objected to Arafat's haughty attitude and added their voices to those of the original rebels. The revolt began to spread. Everybody believed that the commanders being criticized were inept cowards who had fled their posts during the fighting and that protecting them was a flagrant case of Arafat placing loyalty ahead of competence.[6-206] Naturally, old stories about corruption and dictatorial behaviour were resurrected for added value, but they were too well known to merit debate.

In May 1983 Arafat finally accepted the need to confront the rebels, but only after instructing the Palestinian Wafa' news agency to call them renegades whose conduct was harmful to 'the cause'. He travelled to Damascus from Tunisia, summoned them from Lebanon and prepared for a showdown. The Syrians under Assad finally exposed their hand and threw in their lot behind the rebels openly. Angered by Arafat's antics and refusal to take concrete corrective action, they ordered him to leave their country in twenty–four hours. On 23 June there was an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate him on his way out. On the 27th, thinking they had Arafat on the run, the Syrians assassinated Saad Sayel, a trusted friend of the PLO leader who was in command of the pro-Arafat Palestinian forces which remained in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, emboldened by Syria's support, the rebels, now numbering over two thousand, tried to assume command of all the Palestinian forces which remained in Lebanon's Baqa' valley and the city of Tripoli, the remnants of their massive past presence. Bitter fighting broke out between Palestinians loyal to Arafat and those who followed the rebels, particularly around the refugee camps in Tripoli. Arafat, rightly fearing the worst, decided that the situation required his personal presence and sneaked into Tripoli via Cyprus. He did so under the nose of the Syrians, shaving off his beard for the first time in years and disguising himself further with a smart suit and sunglasses.[6-207] After fighting Israel, Jordan, Syria and the Lebanese, in August 1983 Arafat and his loyalists were fighting fellow Palestinians.

Arafat's presence among troops loyal to the PLO made a difference and he engaged the Syrian– reinforced Palestinian forces which attacked his followers with his usual determination and courage. But what saved the day for him was something else. Because of open Syrian support, the rebels wore the emblem of Arab hegemony over the Palestinian identity. Despite considerable sympathy for their demands, many Palestinians saw the leaders of the anti-Arafat uprising as puppets of a government which did not represent them and refused to follow or accept them. This showed in the overall Palestinian attitude and, more dramatically and effectively, when the guerrilla organizations opposed to Arafat's diplomatic manoeuvres, the PFLP and DFLP, refused to join the fight against him for fear of destroying the PLO in the process. Beyond this, all the conservative Arab countries supported Arafat and put pressure on Syria to refrain from changing the structure of the PLO leadership.

On 25 October, in the middle of the Syrian–Arafat confrontation and realignment of Arab positions, three hundred American marines and fifty-eight French paratroops were killed by Shia suicide bombers in Beirut. Though not directly linked to Arafat's situation, this event shook America and froze all efforts

by Secretary of State George Shultz to follow on any American peace plans. The Reagan initiative was now completely dead. In December the various mediation efforts between Arafat and Syria succeeded and there was another exodus of Palestinian fighters from Lebanon. Arafat left Tripoli with four thousand followers, protected by a French fleet after securing US guarantees of Israeli non-interference in his departure.

On 21 December, as the ship carrying him, the ODYSSEUS ELYTIS, navigated the Suez Canal, Arafat disembarked at the Egyptian port of Ismailia and went on to Cairo for a highly publicized meeting with Husni Mubarak. It was the first meeting between an Arab leader and an Egyptian president in six years. Though the PLO leadership, including Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad, had not been informed and fumed audibly, this was a major concession by Arafat which betrayed a belief that the Palestinians could not continue alone—he needed Arab patronage. His move undermined the Arab states which had accommodated the Palestinians and opposed Egypt over Camp David, and placed Arafat where he had always wanted to be—within the Egyptian sphere of influence. Even at the height of the Arab–Egyptian estrangement he had maintained indirect contact with Anwar Sadat. This meeting in late 1983 was the final act which buried the pretence of a unified Arab stand against Egypt's policies. Once again his only Palestinian support came from some leaders in the West Bank and Gaza, the new source of moderation which was growing in importance and to whom Arafat was being drawn closer by the day. To other Palestinians, particularly the poor ones in the refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, the shadow of Sadat and Camp David hung over the future like a bad dream.

The meeting with Mubarak was followed by secret personal initiatives towards keeping alive the option of working with King Hussein. With the US government adamant in its refusal to accept an independent PLO as a negotiating partner, Arafat needed an Arab cover—but it could not be Mubarak. The universal Arab condemnation of Camp David which Arafat had violated still precluded an Egyptian cover; the mere act of meeting the Egyptian leader amounted to an open abandonment by the PLO of the Arab insistence that Camp David be abrogated. So instead of using Mubarak Arafat sought to adhere to the general principles of Camp David through attaching himself to Hussein, the one Arab leader who believed in them but who was not ostracized. Joining forces with Jordan gave Arafat considerable room for manoeuvre: because of the Palestinian element in its population the country was more sensitive to PLO pressure than Egypt was. In opting to follow Hussein, Arafat was for the umpteenth time following his own instincts and disregarding the decisions of the PNC and PLO executive committee, in this case the ones taken in 1983.

The problems created by the widening divisions between Arafat and the rest of the PLO, which were a result of Arafat's dictatorial behaviour, were presented to PNC and PLO executive committee meetings in February 1984. The demands for adherence to the idea of collective leadership were near-unanimous, but in effect it was too late to control Arafat, and as had become his habit the master of drama responded by threatening to resign several times. Everybody knew there would be no PLO without him. The merger between his person and the fate of the Palestinians was so complete that no one would consider accepting his departure.

In the end, he prevailed and secured backing for working with Jordan. The following November, in a challenge to hard-line Palestinians, Syria, Libya and the other countries which remained set against a settlement based on UN resolutions and American initiatives, he convened a PNC meeting in Amman at which he invited King Hussein to be the keynote speaker. Hussein asked for a reasonable approach and diplomatic effort, and was explicit in his request for recognition of Israel based on UN resolutions. When members of the PNC showed their reluctance, Arafat once again offered to resign; he absented himself from debate until the delegates gave their final blessing to his and Hussein's policies.

Arafat was a seasoned performer who knew his role. This was evidenced by his dismissiveness of the various PLO para-parliamentary bodies and command structure, his meeting with Mubarak and negotiations with Hussein. He also forced his opinions on others by threatening to resign and destroy the PLO. Even before the Israelis and Syrians added to his stature by ejecting him from Lebanon, he had used Beirut and the Beirutis to eliminate all alternatives to his personal leadership. And after that he continued to devote as much time to his primacy and to securing his position against internal Palestinian divisions as he did to the overall Palestinian cause.

In February 1983, before the spread of the rebellion against him and his remarkable response to it, Arafat pushed through a measure which merged the guerrilla forces and the hitherto semiautonomous, Arab League-funded Palestine Liberation Army. It looked like an overdue move aimed at a joint command, and Arafat named the combined military force the Palestine National Liberation Army (PNLA). In fact the only real difference it produced was to tie the new organization to the Palestine National Fund. Because he controlled the fund, it put the huge budget of the new military force under his direct personal control.**(6-208)**

The PLO created a Lebanese Committee to oversee the conditions of both civilian Palestinians and fighters in that country. Once again, the financial control of this committee—which hardly ever met—was in Arafat's hands and the funds allocated to it were deposited in the Chairman's Fund for Lebanon. These extensions of Arafat's control of PLO finances were in addition to his direct responsibility for the major contributions from rich Arab states such as Saudi Arabia. As with donations from other oil-rich countries, Arafat exercised full and total control of the Saudi official contribution to the PLO—$30 million annually—and the considerable taxes the Saudis levied from Palestinians working in that country.

The two years following the defeat in Lebanon witnessed the enactment of measures aimed at Arafat's absolute supervision of all activities, even when these measures were inherently unsound and produced inefficiencies. He deliberately appointed several people to perform the same function and had all of them report directly to him. There were countless special advisers and a cabal of spokespersons. The military command structure was fragmented, producing more chiefs than Indians, and he constantly changed the titles and roles of important functionaries. He wrested control of publicity from loyalists and attempted to undermine others by involving them in efforts unacceptable to the leadership as a whole. This was Arafat's way of keeping them weak and unable to oppose him.

A typical example of this deliberate policy was his removal of the control of publicity organs from his long-term friend Abu Jihad. Arafat put the editorship of

Sawt Ali Bilad (*Voice of the Country*) under an outsider, the Iraqi Kurd Khalid Salam, also known as Mohammed Rashid, who did not represent a threat because he was not Palestinian. Arafat resented Abu Jihad's success in building a structure, activist cells and effective charitable organizations in the occupied territories, and he put obstacles in Abu Jihad's way by controlling even the smallest of expenditures and channelling funds to his own supporters.

Nor did Abu Iyad escape Arafat's efforts. In 1984 he was ordered to coordinate certain security matters with the CIA's leading expert in counter–terrorism, Vincent Canistrero, a function which left Abu Iyad unable to oppose Arafat's conciliatory attitude towards the United States. This cooperation lasted long enough and was extensive enough to represent an information exchange agreement. The PLO provided reports on the organization and structure of all groups capable of undertaking acts of terror against US interests in the Middle East, and the secret reports made by the CIA to the State Department absolved the PLO from any accusations of participating in terrorism.

Arafat's determination to turn the PLO into a vehicle for his ideas and personal ambitions did not solve the diplomatic logjam which confronted him. Despite constant travel to secure the support of third world and Muslim countries, America's refusal to accept him and the USSR's peaceful co-existence policies under Gorbachov left him with no effective international support. He desperately needed something to justify the continued existence of the PLO and its role. A feeble offer to start direct negotiations with Israel late in 1984 was completely rejected by the Israeli Prime Minister Itzhaq Shamir. After some of the Israeli doves began holding meetings with PLO officials, early in 1986 Shamir declared all contacts with the organization illegal. The deadlock proved that Arafat had been following the right policies since Beirut: regardless of the level of opposition to an alliance with Jordan within the PLO, it was the only way for him and the Palestinians to move forward.

On 11 February 1985, after agonizingly long negotiations failed to bridge the differences between Arafat's position and that of King Hussein, the two signed the vaguest of agreements of cooperation. However inexact the wording of the accord, both leaders committed themselves to a joint Jordanian–Palestinian delegation to participate in an international peace conference. Beyond that it was unclear, particularly on PLO acceptance of UN resolutions, the future of the West Bank and Gaza, and whether a Jordanian– Palestinian federation was envisaged as part of a final settlement to the conflict. Hussein had no doubt that Arafat had acceded to Jordanian primacy and accepted the UN resolutions, but Arafat was tarrying, foolishly thinking he could use Jordan as a vehicle for international acceptance of the PLO without ceding anything.

The first sign of doubt regarding the new alliance came immediately after the agreement was announced. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, on a state visit to Washington, refused to discuss with President Reagan what looked like a new moderate PLO line. Fahd had been stung by Arafat's less than honest behaviour towards his plan in 1983. He knew that the PLO leader was in the habit of promising more than he could deliver and that the PLO executive committee had to approve major shifts in Palestinian policy. The background to Fahd's reluctance justified it; the PLO leadership had reacted angrily to Arafat's seeming concessions

to Hussein. Characteristically, Arafat responded by telling the agreement's opponents that it was not final, and delegated Abu Iyad and Abu Mazen to go to Amman to negotiate a change. He knew that it was too late and that Hussein would not listen to them. In fact, Hussein treated Abu Iyad and Abu Mazen with disdain because he saw their presence as nothing more than a ploy on Arafat's part to stifle opposition. So, believing that he had a mandate to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians, the King embarked on a heavy schedule of secret and open contacts to promote the deal.

It is impossible to determine whether the 1985 ceding of Palestinian representation in the diplomatic arena to Hussein was real, a reflection of Arafat's deceit or Jordanian wishful thinking, or a combination. That Arafat did not believe in it completely is attested to by his simultaneous efforts to rekindle the armed resistance. In May that year, Syria responded to PLO attempts to smuggle fighters back into the refugee camps in Lebanon by using the pro-Syrian Amal Shia movement to surround and attack these camps. The residents of Bourj Al Barajana and the depopulated Sabra and Chatilla camps were hit mercilessly and suffered heavy casualties in what became known as the War of the Camps. As usual, Arafat cried foul and appealed to the Arabs to intercede, but they had grown accustomed to hearing from him only when in trouble and refused to respond. The War of the Camps, the result of unmitigated foolishness on the part of Arafat, who should have predicted the Syrian response, was to last two years and result in thousands of unnecessary casualties. Syria's determination to block any kind of return to Lebanon by the PLO was accompanied by the more serious step of forming an alternative organization to it, the Palestine National Salvation Front. The popular George Habbash was prevailed on to back these efforts.

Meanwhile Hussein was busy trying to sell his interpretation of his agreement with Arafat. In September 1985 Richard Murphy, the leading Middle East specialist in the State Department, tried to move things forward by paving the way for the formation of a joint Jordanian– Palestinian delegation acceptable to the USA. But the different interpretations of the rules governing the mandate of such a delegation by the Jordanians and Palestinians stood in the way of success. Murphy's attempts to have the Palestinians accept the Jordanian interpretation led the Palestinians to boycott him and, in an attempt to equate his work with the officially rejected Camp David Accord, to label his efforts Camp Murphy. Refusing to accept defeat, Hussein decided to circumvent Palestinian stubbornness by progressing matters through direct negotiations with the Israelis. Late in 1985 he began contacts with the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, in an attempt to obtain Israeli concessions that might induce greater efforts on the part of America.

On the ground, however, developments were forcing things in a different direction. On 25 September a PLO hit squad under the command of Abu Jihad attacked an Israeli yacht moored in the Cypriot port of Larnaca and killed three Israelis. The military justification was simple and correct: Israel was using Cyprus to stop PLO attempts to reinfiltrate Lebanon and to intercept seaborne attacks on facilities in Israel. On 1 October, once again using a plan which had been drawn up well beforehand, the Israelis attacked the PLO headquarters and Arafat's personal residence in Hammam Al Shat in Tunisia. It was a massive raid which resulted in fifty–eight Palestinian and fourteen Tunisian deaths and left Arafat's

personal office in rubble. In a repeat of Beirut Arafat himself was the target, and the rumours spread by his enemies to the effect that Israel never wanted him dead do not merit consideration.

The PLO leader's reaction to the raid sounded like an uncontrolled outburst; in hindsight it was a studied one, aimed at pleasing the home crowd. For though he lashed out at the USA and accused it of collusion,(6-209) he took no steps to indicate that he had given up on working with America. His stance consisted of pleasing the Palestinian rank and file while adhering to a belief that the people who were trying to kill him represented the best hope for solving the Palestinian problem. The accusations of collusion did not please the Reagan Administration, while his failure to follow the accusations with anti-US action went down badly with his colleagues. Whatever the local and international reaction, Arafat the publicist devoted more time to promoting the legend of a sixth sense which saves him from such dangers—he miraculously escaped death, he asserted, because he was jogging at the time of the raid. In fact his so-called jogging took the form of fast walks around the PLO compound, and everybody who was in Tunisia at the time of the occurrence greets questions about his story with smiles, head-shaking and snorts of derision.

Matters escalated: on 7 October gunmen of the Palestine Liberation Front hijacked the cruise ship ACHILLE LAURO as it sailed out of the Egyptian port of Alexandria. The four hijackers were only in their late teens and badly trained. Although they demanded the release of PLO prisoners in Israel, their communications with the outside world suggested they had no plan of action. Their inadequacy and nervousness showed itself in a particularly hideous manner when they murdered Leon Klinghoffer, an invalid elderly American Jewish passenger, and threw him overboard. The murder did not become known about until later, but the fate of the 476 passengers and 80 crew members occupied the world, which looked to Arafat for a solution.

Unaware of Klinghoffer's murder, Arafat rushed to Cairo, assumed responsibility for the hijacking and promised PLO disciplinary action against the perpetrators. The worldwide outcry against the hijacking was loud enough, but Arafat had a problem. The Palestine Liberation Front's leader, one Mohammed Zeidan or Abul Abbas, was a supporter of Arafat's who had stood by the leader during the Syrian invasion of Lebanon and the anti-Arafat rebellion in 1983. The pro-Iraqi, uneducated and unworthy Zeidan had been elevated by Arafat to membership of the PLO's executive committee because of his Iraqi connection and Arafat's own ability to manipulate him. This made him reluctant to condemn Zeidan, and the failure to punish the Palestine Liberation Front or Zeidan personally exposed Arafat's penchant for saying one thing to the outside world and another to the Palestinians. It also highlighted his reliance on men of low calibre. Arafat's inability to place the success of his diplomatic approaches to the USA ahead of loyalty to Zeidan was truly puzzling, and the absence of advisers who should have known better is further confirmation that he surrounded himself with sycophants and incompetents.

On 8 October, Zeidan joined Arafat in trying to end the ACHILLE LAURO affair. On the 9th, the ship docked at Port Said in Egypt and a horrified world learned of Klinghoffer's murder. Late the same day, as part of a deal with Egypt, Zeidan and

the hijackers left Cairo for Tunis aboard an Egyptian Boeing 737. The plane never made it; it was diverted to Sicily by American fighter aircraft, and Zeidan and his fellow conspirators were surrendered to the custody of the Italian authorities. But the Italians, fearing retaliation, allowed Zeidan to slip away to Yugoslavia, and the hijackers were exchanged some time later. However lamentable, these acts of undeserved clemency mattered less than Arafat's performance during the affair.

Even after the damage done by the hijacking became abundantly clear, Arafat never disowned Zeidan and the Palestine Liberation Front. With his divorce from the doctrinaire movements within the PLO—the PFLP, DFLP and the rest—and because he was uncomfortable in the company of thinking people, Arafat had become increasingly more beholden to the lowest common denominator of the Palestinian resistance movement. This prevented him acting with the courage that the ACHILLE LAURO hijacking required. It was Mubarak, rightly angered by the use of Egypt as a springboard for the hijacking and equally upset by the US act of air piracy, who prevailed on an Arafat committed to *laflafa* (a term coined by the Lebanese historian Zein Zein to describe the Arab penchant for wrapping things in so many layers of peripheral considerations that the real issue becomes confused) and forced him to see the error of his ways. Threatening to end all Egyptian–Palestinian political cooperation, in early November Mubarak got Arafat to issue a statement renouncing all acts of terrorism outside the borders of Israel; it became known as the Cairo Declaration. In view of Arafat's open espousal of the diplomatic option, this overdue declaration was to become a term of reference which served Arafat well in the years which followed.

Meanwhile, Hussein's diplomatic efforts were suffering the consequences of his offer of more concessions than the Palestinians were willing to accept and Arafat's usual lack of clarity and inclination towards double dealing. Arafat himself was happy to watch Hussein do the diplomatic running while reserving to himself the right to dissent later. Various PLO leaders, however, took to making statements contradicting Jordanian pronouncements that the PLO had accepted the UN resolutions 242 and 338—which, after Arafat's renunciation of terrorism, was the US precondition for starting a dialogue with any delegation purporting to represent the Palestinians. When a statement contradicting the Jordanian claim was made during Hussein's visit to Reagan late in 1985, and was followed by a successful PLO effort to stop the rest of the Arabs from backing him, the King, like Fahd of Saudi Arabia before him, decided that Arafat was playing it both ways and saw no chance of success. A number of communications between the two men followed, culminating on 19 February 1986, one year after his agreement with Arafat, in an angry and bitter television address by Hussein to his nation in which he declared the PLO rapprochement dead and finished.

Hussein followed this move by a crackdown on the PLO presence in Jordan. Abu Jihad, in Amman to oversee activities in the occupied territories, was sent packing and his offices were closed. Pro-PLO journalists were told to control their rhetoric, and the Jordanian government served notice on politicians and groups friendly to the PLO to refrain from deputizing for it. At the same time, Hussein began to move closer to Syria and Arafat's enemy Hafez Al Assad. The King also increased his contacts with the Israelis, letting them know of his willingness to reach a peace

agreement with the help of Palestinians in the occupied territories—but without Arafat and the PLO.

Suddenly, but unsurprisingly, Arafat was without real Arab allies. The War of the Camps in Lebanon was raging and he was losing it. Hussein was dealing with the USA and Israel without him, supporting a movement aimed at producing an alternative leadership to Arafat headed by a former stooge of Arafat's, the corrupt Attallah Attallah, and trying to buy, with ready cash, the loyalty and support of the people of the occupied territories. Egypt sought to use Arafat to re-enter the Arab arena, but harboured considerable misgivings. The countries of the Steadfastness Front had already suffered so much from Arafat's double dealing that they simply did not want to be involved with him any more. In April 1987, responding to this isolation by convening another PNC conference in Algiers, he managed to get approval for his leadership and policies from most Palestinian groups, including Habbash's PFLP which had more or less given up the Palestine National Salvation Front. But his cavalier style and legendary failure to think before acting showed clearly when he tried to appease hard-line Palestinians by condemning Egypt and Camp David. This distanced him further from Mubarak and added to his isolation.

Arafat, though a highly emotional man given to outbursts of bad temper, foul language, and huge swings in mood and thinking, is at his best under pressure. One could say pressure increases his stature. Serious distress seems to calm him, or perhaps it exposes hidden qualities which are normally concealed by his theatricality. It certainly produces examples of a sense of humour and quick-wittedness which most Arabs associate with Egyptians. In Tunisia in 1987, he both shocked and amused an Iraqi academic who politely suggested that many Arab leaders accused him, Arafat, of lying. The academic, with no axe to grind, was suggesting a change of tactics. Staring at the Iraqi with incredulous, extra-bulging eyes he said, 'Why not? For Palestine, I'd lie all the time.' Momentarily, his guest was at a loss for words. Then he burst out laughing and Arafat joined him with a broad smile which, according to the Iraqi, lightened his face and made him look like a little boy.

In a way he has always been a little boy given to tantrums until stopped. But undoubtedly there is more to his ability to take adversity easily. In Tunisia he found time to improve his English, ride horses, tell jokes and refine his talents for salesmanship. In the occupied territories, the then Israeli Defence Minister Itzhaq Rabin was following exceptionally harsh and inhumane policies in handling all dissidence, even against the most moderate of Palestinian groups. This policy destroyed any chance of the emergence of a local leadership with whom the Israelis and the world could deal. Rabin's pyrrhic success was so total that US Secretary of State Shultz could not find any takers for an offer to arrange a dialogue with local leaders in 1987. At the same time Syrian attacks on Palestinian camps in Lebanon kept the diaspora Palestinians behind Arafat.

In fact, the problem for Arafat was not the Palestinians who by choice or because of outside pressure or lack of alternative were behind him, it was the Arabs and the rest of the world. Arab governments' awareness of Arafat's lack of dependability had eliminated any new Arab initiatives and all he could do was to try to reach the Americans directly, through individual intermediaries beholden to

him personally. The businessman Hasib Sabbagh was still there, his credentials enhanced by the fact that he had worked with George Shultz when the latter headed the Bechtel Corporation. The academic Edward Said, a loyal Palestinian who always placed the cause above personal considerations, was also still there and represented a respected voice of reason within American circles. Another Palestinian academic, Mohammad Rabi', was also a willing middleman, as was Professor Walid Khalidy, though infrequently. Beyond that, Arafat established a vague connection with the public relations firm of Grey & Co, ostensibly to overcome obstacles in the way of dialogue.[6-210] It actually involved many more people, and I know of at least three Americans who carried messages back to their government on Arafat's behest. One of them, a Jewish American with Israeli connections, carried a message from Arafat to Ariel Sharon, the man many hold responsible for the Sabra and Chatilla massacres.

However desperate Arafat was to start a dialogue with the USA, he still refused to adopt an intelligible policy stance which truly reflected the Palestinian position. His was a highly personal, personalized approach which afforded him a chance to interpret the US responses selectively and judge them in accordance with what they provided for the Palestinians and, above all, with how they affected his own leadership position. This is why the special committee created for the sole purpose of overseeing negotiations with the United States never met.[6-211] Despite the fact that his heroic past rendered his position secure, personal aggrandizement came ahead of method: Arafat's primacy took precedence over Palestinian expectations. Many of the intermediaries who worked with him at the time were surprised to find that that their so-called revolutionary leader who complained about lack of Arab financial support was always accompanied by a personal photographer, Murad.[6-212]

With the Americans refusing to budge beyond the incessant resort to intermediaries, Arafat's activity in Tunisia centred around his person and revealed more of the man than ever before. Throughout 1986 and most of 1987 he had little to do, and used his time to meet more rich diaspora Palestinians than had previously been possible. He paid special attention to them, listened attentively and in the process made them feel important. Because most were people who made their money in the oil-rich states and had a vested interest in not alienating the countries which had made them rich, theirs was the point of view of the conservative Arab regimes. Arafat, because of his own inclination and belief in money, found in them kindred spirits. In return they provided him with financial support which went into funds controlled by him personally. For example, the will of the Palestinian construction magnate Kamel Abdel Rahman included a bequest of $70 million to the PLO, but to this day not even the dead man's family knows what happened to this money. Other smaller bequests and donations also went missing.

In meetings with rich Palestinians and others, Arafat's Tunis office was run like the diwan of an Arab king. As in the past, even his most important meetings were interrupted by a flow of people who carried small pieces of paper and whispered in his ear to seek approval for whatever they were requesting. At night, he would gather between ten and twenty people around him—being invited to dinner with him was a more accurate measure of one's importance than title or position.

Guests at these occasions, which often lasted until the early hours, were often despatched on 'special missions'. Some of these were to countries where the PLO had permanent representatives, and the arrival of Arafat's emissaries to meet local politicians or international organizations undermined the official diplomatic presence.

In London, special adviser Bassam Abu Sharif took over the function of liaising with the British government without deferring to or contacting the PLO legate to the UK, the competent Faisal Awaidah. Naturally, this produced altercations which Arafat the supreme decision-maker resolved. Even more interesting than his divide-and-conquer dealings was his simple manner of handling these situations. In his memoirs, Abu Sharif recalls how, on the telephone, whenever his leader spoke to him Arafat used to repeat his commitment to peace in the hope that the telephone was tapped and his intentions would reach the ears of Western governments.**(6-213)** His determination to transmit his point of view to the outside world took another form when he sponsored the publication in London of the Arabic-language daily *Al Quds Al Arabi*. The paper represented the PLO's point of view and was followed closely by interested parties. But although it met with overall success, it still did not succeed in its task of promoting Arafat's point of view.

Arafat deliberately sent the peace messages in English. After taking lessons in Tunisia, he was determined to use the language. A major reason for his wish to master English was a desire to speak for himself without translators, but he was also jealous of those who had a good command of the language. His English never progressed beyond an elementary level, but his insistence on using it revealed how the members of his were too afraid to correct him or to advise him against banal phrases and old-fashioned clichés. To this day he is given to using, 'I will tell you really frankly', 'Where there's a will there's a way' and 'It is a case of to be or not to be.' None of his aides dares tell him how silly it all sounds.

Because Tunisia did not border Israel, and because the lessons of Beirut and Amman had finally been learnt, the personal behaviour of Arafat's followers was now considerably better. But corruption and inefficiency were still rife. Most of the people close to Arafat insisted on first-class air travel and when visiting foreign countries stayed at expensive hotels, including the Savoy in London and the George V in Paris. At a time when the PLO was announcing reductions in the salaries of its rank-and-file members one adviser, delegated to attend a relatively unimportant meeting, chartered a plane from Brussels to Paris which cost $15,000. Many of them used their outside contacts to work with SAMED for personal gain. After Lebanon SAMED, now with three thousand employees, concentrated its efforts on Africa. The management of African companies were put in touch with major businessmen in Europe; SAMED charged a fee for the introduction or a commission on the business which followed.

By 1987 Arafat and the PLO were sinking, with little relief in sight. Arafat devoted much of his time to secondary activity, most of which was aimed at protecting his position as leader of the Palestinians. His entourage thrashed away aimlessly, desperate to maintain their leader's international acceptance or to find a way to move forward. Despite Israel's strictures, an attempt was made to deal directly with Israel through contacts with moderate politicians there, including a

Meretz party member of the Knesset named Dodi Tsoeker. But these efforts never had a chance, and foundered when the two sides could not even agree on holding a conference to announce their joint intentions.[6-214] Seeing that contacts with the USA could not be resurrected on PLO terms, an insider—with Arafat's personal approval and under his supervision—created a disinformation unit to disseminate news of fictitious PLO successes and build up the image of the leader with foreign journalists. The same adviser developed an idea for a television programme in the USA to advance the PLO viewpoint, but which would avoid the strictures surrounding advocacy programming—programmes aimed at promoting a particular political cause—by having an Arab corporation, a bank or an airline, sponsor it.

Lack of adequate planning, funds and follow-up meant that nothing came of these efforts. His waning fortunes made Arafat more insistent on being the sole voice of the Palestinians, and he began reacting to criticism more intolerantly. In a singularly criminal reaction to dissent, the PLO assassinated the Palestinian cartoonist Naji Al Ali in London in July 1987 because he had dared depict the corruption of the organization. By all accounts it was a case of lunatic followers trying to please the leader without his knowledge, but they were not punished. In November, during an Arab summit conference in Amman, he verbally abused PLO leader Yasser Abed Rabbo for speaking to a correspondent of Agence France Press on his own; Arafat wanted to do all the talking.[6-215] His frustrations and jealousies were exaggerated by Arab leaders' demoting of the Palestinian issue to a minor position and concentration on the Iran-Iraq War. And while Arafat's own simple efforts with the Israelis bore no fruit, a secret agreement had been made earlier in the year between King Hussein and the Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. It had been reached without the knowledge and participation of the PLO and was called *the London document* after the venue of the unpublicized meetings. But relief from an unexpected source was on the way. A month later the intifada began.

Chapter 7

Arafat and the Intifada.

Officially, the uprising known as the intifada began on 9 December 1987 when Hatem Sissi, a resident of the Jabaliya refugee camp, was killed by Israeli troops chasing Palestinian children who were pelting them with stones. This happened a day after an Israeli truck had run into a group of Palestinian labourers and killed four of them at the Erez checkpoint separating Gaza from pre-1967 Israel, an entry spot for Palestinians working in Israel. To the Israelis it was a traffic accident, but the Palestinians believed that it was a deliberate act of revenge for the stabbing to death of an Israeli merchant, Shlomo Sakal, in Gaza on 6 December.

In hindsight, the incidents themselves were not significant; it could have been another collection of events. The sequential acts of violence, particularly what

happened to the Palestinian workmen waiting to be searched and have their permits examined, were the final explosive expression of an atmosphere already seething with revolutionary ferment. Little was needed to ignite the dormant passions of the Palestinian population of the occupied territories.

The unnatural and unhealthy conditions in the territories had pointed towards an impending uprising for some time. Since 1967, the Israelis had insensitively carried out countless measures of suppression and land confiscation which were in clear violation of the Geneva and Hague Conventions governing the behaviour of conquerors in occupied territories. All United Nations attempts to pass resolutions condemning Israeli violations of international law and human rights had been vetoed by the United States, which insisted that they be equated with the activities of the PLO and balanced by UN calls for the suspension of all Palestinian resistance activity. Meanwhile, the helplessness of the Arab governments had been made official when the November 1987 Arab summit in Amman devoted itself almost exclusively to the Iran–Iraq War and offered little to the PLO and the people of the occupied territories; Arafat was treated like an uninvited guest. Thirdly, the PLO in Tunisia was far away and ineffective. Its guerrilla efforts, real or exaggerated, fell short of providing a relief valve for the frustrations of the people of the West Bank and Gaza. Lastly, all moves on the diplomatic front had been frozen since 1982; the USA had rejected the PLO as a negotiating partner, and the Jordanian and Egyptian efforts had faltered.

Israel was thus able to continue its unchecked policies of oppression. The government used vague laws concerning the ownership of public land to confiscate much of the territory of the West Bank and Gaza (while the exact figures are disputed, human rights and other impartial groups state that this covered more than 80 per cent of the West Bank and over 40 per cent of Gaza) and to build 'strategic settlements'. The Israelis allocated themselves a huge share of the spring water of the West Bank and channelled it to pre–1967 Israel (again, the conflicting figures suggest somewhere between 60 and 75 per cent of all spring water). Even had they been residents in the West Bank, on a per capita basis the Israelis gave themselves twelve times what they allocated to the Palestinians. Punitive taxes were imposed, which the Israelis used to pay for their military presence. The people could not afford them, and those who failed to pay were imprisoned. Israel capped all this by adopting an iron fist policy under Minister of Defence Itzhaq Rabin. By 1985 existing laws which had led to the imprisonment of twenty-five thousand people were proving unequal to the task of controlling the Palestinians.[7-216] The following year Rabin resurrected the emergency decrees of administrative detention which had originally been enacted under the British mandate of Palestine in the 1930s. These laws allowed Israel to imprison people without charge and with no right of appeal, and they were used to justify the detention of thousands.

All these repressive measures followed the banning of indigenous political organizations such as the National Guidance Committee in 1982 and 1983 under the Likud government of Menachem Begin. While no Israeli government since the 1967 War had had any long-term policy for the occupied territories—they simply did not know what to do with them—Begin's considered the land as part of the concept of Eretz Israel, greater Israel, and did not want the Arab population. His

government hoped these harsh measures would make the Palestinians leave; to have made this its official policy would have alienated the international community. In fact, an unknown number of people did leave and the educated Christians led the way; their numbers declined from 11 per cent of the Arab population in 1967 to 3 per cent in 1986.

In 1987 things considerably worsened on all fronts. Early in the year 17 Palestinians were killed, 129 wounded and hundreds imprisoned without trial.[7-217] By the end of the year there were daily individual acts of violence, beatings, stabbing and occasional shootings, mostly by armed settlers, which the Israeli law courts always found a way of justifying. During October, the Israeli security forces killed four members or a new local organization in an ambush. Unlike the banned groups beholden to the PLO and advocating an Israeli–Palestinian dialogue to achieve peace, the fundamentalist Islamic Jihad to which the four Palestinian victims belonged was a secret group committed to violence. On 25 November, a member of the Syrian-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command landed by hang-glider in northern Israel where he killed six Israelis and wounded seven more.

Hundreds of Palestinians were detained and many more were beaten and tortured during interrogations. Tourism, one of the main sources of income, declined and the overall standard of living, already well below what the Israelis enjoyed, sank further. Everything suggested that the atmosphere of despair in the occupied territories was on the verge of erupting, through either an increase in the level and nature of acts of violence or a mass protest movement. Some writers and journalists—Dany Rubenstein, Yehuda Litani and notably the Israeli author of *The Yellow Wind*, the admirable David Grossman—had gone on record with predictions of an impending disaster, but nobody listened to them. In the end it was the nature of the eruption, to be followed later by its amazing power to sustain itself, which exposed the conditions which had created it. What led to the intifada became part of its story.

The killing of Hatem Sissi in Gaza at the end of 1987 was followed by a rebellion of staggering proportions. The children of the Gaza refugee camps, including the most densely populated spot on earth, the camp of Jabaliya, rose as one. Using chequered *kuffiyas* as masks, they formed small mobile groups which had the advantage of knowing their terrain and attacked Israeli patrols and soldiers with the only weapon available to them, stones. Within a week the rebellion had spread to the West Bank and an army of children joined the original Gaza stone throwers. Schools were shut down, barricades were built, curfews were imposed, hundreds of children were arrested and countless others beaten with sticks and rifle butts. When that did not work, the Israelis had to augment their heavy military presence by calling up thousands of army reserves and declaring a state of emergency.

The international press corps became witness to one of the most startling journalistic events of the century. Thousands of young children and teenagers—what the locals and later the international press called the *shabab* (young men)—donned the *kuffiya* emblem of Palestine and, raising their fingers in a V for victory sign, engaged the most successful army in the Middle East in an unequal confrontation which dazzled the world. The children were angry, determined and

fearless. The Israeli soldiers lacked the proper training to put down the intifada and over-reacted. The story perpetuated itself dramatically.

It was impossible for outsiders, even the US government, to condemn the children of the intifada or to equate what they were doing with anything but a call for freedom. They were not raiders or hijackers but innocents fighting a colonial occupier, and they were being beaten, imprisoned and shot at random. These events were recorded in despatches and still pictures and on television, and their message was rendered more appealing because the children used slogans such as 'We want a country of our own', and 'We are fighting for our freedom.' In a short time the base of the rebellion expanded: even five-year-olds and illiterate women threw stones, scuffled with Israeli soldiers and adopted the V for victory gesture to represent their defiance.

The PLO was stunned by what was happening but remained afraid to commit itself. It did not want to attach itself to what might turn out to be only a flash-in-the-pan affair and end up looking foolish. This is why it took the leadership a month to adopt the intifada.[7-218] Although he instructed the PLO radios in Baghdad and other places to exhort the local people to greater effort and personally recorded some appeals to that effect, it was Arafat who during the early days of the intifada manifested the most reluctance to provide the rebellion with support because he feared the effects of another failure on his already reduced position. Abu Jihad, the man responsible for the occupied territories within the PLO command, had an impressive knowledge of local conditions and pleaded for an immediate PLO response. When the intifada would not die and Arafat finally bowed to the inevitable, Abu Jihad ran after it with remarkable speed. Because he knew every village, school and large family in Gaza and the West Bank, he 'adopted' the intifada and provided it with the necessary financial backing and logistical support to keep it alive. Abu Jihad became the manager, the brain in exile, of the spontaneous movement. Hard-working, methodical and selfless, he was the right choice.

The initial Israeli response was even more confused than that of the PLO, and in view of the Israeli presence on the ground less excusable. Defence Minister Itzhaq Rabin had a history of advocating violent responses to Palestinian protests (although after the Oslo Agreement and his assassination he was praised for his peaceful intentions) and favoured tough measures to end the uprising.[7-219] In fact, he believed his call for 'breaking their bones'[7-220] would be so successful that he saw fit to leave on an official trip to the United States; however, the deteriorating conditions caught up with him in Washington and forced him to return home. The rest of the Israeli government, including the Prime Minister, Itzhaq Shamir, were in agreement with Rabin, and the records of their statements and reactions show a government trying to nip in the bud what it considered a passing phenomenon. They did not understand the nature of what was happening. Only the veteran politicians Shimon Peres and Abba Eban saw things for what they were and wanted all measures aimed at restoring order accompanied by steps to alleviate the conditions which had led to the intifada. Ironically, for about two weeks the thinking of the PLO and Israel was quite similar.

The rest of the world also misjudged the nature and significance of the intifada during its initial stages, but soon got the message. The newspaper, magazine,

radio and television reports, together with dozens of detailed studies by human rights organizations including the Israeli B'Tselem group, made it impossible for any leader, however friendly to Israel, to deny the 'children of the intifada' sympathy. This sympathy, a rare outpouring of individual feeling which eventually gathered world opinion behind it, led to profound changes in the official attitude of many governments, particularly that of the United States. Arafat's quest for Palestinian identity could be dismissed or accommodated as the work of a politician whose very existence depended on continuing this quest, but the children were that very identity, its living picture. They sought recognition of their inalienable human rights; they were the undeniably attractive face of Palestine.

To the USA the Jordanian Option, the wish to have Jordan deputize for the Palestinians and eventually to incorporate the occupied territories into Jordan, was dead. King Hussein had no appreciation of the animosity with which the Palestinians viewed him, and this foolish dream of his was among the rebellion's first casualties. When Muslim and Christian holy places in Jerusalem became centres of resistance, another casualty was the Israeli pretence of a united Jerusalem in which Israelis and Arabs lived happily together.

These developments led to soul searching and a new perception of Palestine by Western governments. They concluded that Israel's policies of oppression had failed. Instead of focusing on the hijacker, they now had to cope with the picture of a crying child being beaten by an Israeli soldier for raising the Palestinian flag. The armed raider became a thing of the past, his image replaced by that of women in traditional dress shielding their children from violence. Everybody agreed that a solution had to be found for the plight of the Palestinians. In the words of the Palestinian historian Yezid Sayigh, 'The intifada achieved in weeks more than the armed struggle achieved in years.'**(7-221)**

Like the PLO, the Arab governments were caught unprepared, but the Arab reaction was the opposite of Arafat's. The initial reaction on official level was one of wholehearted support, but it eventually became more cautious. During the intifada's early phase, Arab media celebrated the Palestinian children and women and what they were doing more than any other event in the century, including the October 1973 War. What surfaced was a genuine feeling of Arab unity, which often surprises outsiders at times of severe Arab adversity. But, echoing what happened during and after the 1973 War, it did not last long.

King Hussein knew that his claim to leadership of the Palestinians had been dealt a fatal blow. The initial street-level euphoria in Jordan to which the government responded gave way to a more careful official attitude in handling the news of the intifada. The last thing Hussein wanted was for this populist movement to spread to his own country. Syria was the one Arab state which stood solidly behind the movement, and occasionally radio stations run by anti-Arafat guerrilla groups in that country provided greater guidance to the people of the West Bank and Gaza than Arafat's own news outlets. The rest of the Arab governments also abandoned their unqualified support and resorted to playing down the nature of the rebellion, particularly after pro-intifada demonstrations in some Arab countries aroused official concern. Overall, the Arab governments had no interest in a new populist movement succeeding and infecting their people, and this translated into an Arab summit decision in Tunisia in January 1988 to

support Arafat as the intifada's creator or leader. They provided him with more money to finance and control the movement. Arafat did not threaten them, but a genuine rebellion did. The official Arab perception of the intifada was exactly what Arafat wanted.

However, the intifada was much more deep-rooted, stronger and more revolutionary in nature than either of the parties directly concerned, Arafat and Israel, had thought. Literally translated, *intifada* means 'tremor', but one specifically aimed against the forces which caused it and therefore a reaction to these forces. There is a precedent within the Arab Middle East for using the word: it is what the popular uprising against the Iraqi monarchy in 1952 and some uprisings in Egypt had been called.

What distinguished the Palestinian intifada from others was its dependence on children to lead it. The emergence of children reflected a generation gap which demonstrated how far the Palestinians had progressed since their rebellions in the 1930s and the 1948 War. The non-acceptance of the older generation and their ways by the better educated young was universal, and the difference in their thinking represented a healthy multiple of the normal generation gap—perhaps a difference of a hundred years. I remember being taken aback during an interview of eight intifada children by their insistence on attributing their organizational skills to having watched the Israelis at work and hearing them call their fathers 'a generation of treason'. There was more to the stones which they used to attack the Israeli army and security forces than a simple resort to what was available. Using stones was a reversion to an Islamic stance: *rajm* or throwing stones against evil spirits is what pilgrims to Mecca do from the top of a mountain. And then there were the women supporting the activities of their children—in their case it was a rebellion against the minor role hitherto allocated to them in the Palestinian conflict.

In fact the intifada was an open-ended rebellion, an attempt by children to destroy everything which had surrounded them and left them without hope, the PLO included. To attain that, they were ready to sacrifice everything they had. It was a revolt against local conditions by children who claimed greater knowledge than their elders and who viewed their fathers with derision while hating the Israeli occupier. There was anger against a leadership-in-exile which had grown comfortable and corrupt.**(7-222)** It was a movement anchored in Islamic and Arab traditions of resistance. It also had the added support of a formerly disenfranchised group, the women, who adhered to the rebellion to express their social frustration and who felt closer to and protective of their children. They wanted freedom from oppression but had no ideology.

Within Palestinian ranks, even groups against which the intifada children directed their anger—for example, the traditional elite—could not but support them, and as such the movement was a unifier of the Palestinians. On street level, it was also a unifier of the Arabs. The Syrian poet Nizar Kabbani, perhaps the leading Arab poet of the times, joined the Palestinian Mahmoud Darwish in celebrating the event in emotional verse which was recited throughout the Arab countries.

None of this escaped Arafat. His initial reluctance or misjudgement produced countless accusations against him, but the rumours that he was against the

movement per se are too thin and ridiculous to be considered. During this period he managed to dispel the image of a late-comer by his usual exaggeration and because the PLO were cast in the role of intifada organizers, something which he gave up after determining that it generated a negative reaction among the rank and file of Palestinian children.[7-223] The continuation of the uprising, the breadth of its appeal and its eventual ability to force all strata of society to join it, along with Arafat's isolation and the absence of an alternative, meant that he had little choice but to go along with it and try to incorporate it under the aegis of the PLO.

Yet the movement did contain dangers to his position which were very much on his mind. Firstly, its populist nature ran counter to his neglect of social issues and attachment to wealthy Palestinians. In particular, it was not led exclusively by what he considered a dependable elite, the guardians of the social status quo with whom he felt comfortable. And within the PLO, to support the stone throwers the remarkable Abu Jihad activated every cell he had created since the early 1970s. He was rightly identified with the PLO's efforts to support the intifada and, through his ingenious use of private voluntary organizations (trade associations, student groups, medical relief agencies and charities), became the guiding light to people of the occupied territories. Having suffered diminution and humiliation at the hands of Arafat over the years, Abu Jihad was using this new opportunity as a springboard for reforming the PLO. He made it clear that the intifada should not be sacrificed to Arafat's diplomatic initiatives and that it had to be followed by greater control on his dictatorial ways and management of the PLO's finances.[7-224]

Not bullets, arrests, beatings, house demolitions, the use of tear gas, the closure of schools, economic pressures including the closure of Israel to 125,000 Palestinian labourers, or even the burying alive of four men while CBS news recorded the event could stop 'one of the great anti-colonial uprisings of our time'.[7-225] But in order to continue, the intifada had to produce an indigenous leadership. The acceptance of the PLO's primacy, despite widespread misgivings about its leadership, was a foregone conclusion. It was tantamount to accepting an overall Palestinianness through association with the one organization which had kept the dream of that identity alive. To organize and sustain day-to-day events, however, needed direct local guidance. Equally, the nature of Israeli thinking meant that a more serious and dramatic attempt to cripple the uprising was bound to be made. This was particularly true because of the rebellion's success in establishing a Palestinian identity. That was unacceptable to the Israelis, but became acceptable to the rest of the world and ended Hussein's role, which the Israelis reverted to in times of trouble. And last the USA had to resurrect its efforts towards peace and thaw what it had frozen in 1982.

The United National Leadership (UNL) came into being one month after the start of the intifada, and it was Arafat himself who announced its existence. But there was a built-in contradiction in the act of its creation; Arafat insisted on making the announcement personally to pre-empt an inevitable event, and he secured the agreement of the local leaders that their names and the organizational structure should remain secret. The actual proposal to create a local leadership had come from the DFLP. By not revealing their names and accepting the need to operate secretly, the leaders of the UNL served notice that they would not supplant Arafat.

They were a mixed bag of people who included Faisal Husseini and Sari Nusseibeh as representatives of the Palestinian elite, and Hanan Ashrawi, Radwan Abu Ayyash, Ziyyad Abu Zayyad, Hanna Seniora, Sam'an Khoury and others who represented a new local breed of leaders who did not fit the traditional mould. The activists of the UNL came from all factions comprising the PLO; the intifada forced them to cooperate and they did so while praising the PLO and Arafat.

One of the first things the UNL did was issue a fourteen– point programme which accepted the overall leadership of the PLO and asked for adherence to United Nations resolutions and the right of self-determination. In addition, the leadership asked local people holding jobs in the Israeli occupation apparatus to resign, called for strikes and for businesses to close, and issued specific instruction to the children ranging from how to throw stones to what to say under interrogation. But even with their acceptance of the PLO umbrella, the UNL still represented a threat to the PLO leadership.[7-226] The reasons for that were simple: unlike the PLO, which had fallen under Arafat's control and deferred to traditional regimes and wealthy Palestinians, the UNL responded to local conditions and the voice of the average Palestinian. The UNL had established popular committees in every village, town and neighbourhood. Its leadership was more methodical, responsive and effective, and less corrupt, than the Palestinian exiles in Tunisia. But a measure of independent action was inevitable; even Faisal Husseini, who until the intifada was accepted as Arafat's personal representative in the occupied territories, initially directed the various departments of his Centre of Arab Studies to address immediate issues without deferring to Tunisia. Later, Arafat did not give them room to operate independently and even the most unimportant of handbills bore the PLO signature.

Meanwhile two independent Islamic groups, Islamic Jihad and Hamas, came into the open. Unlike the UNL, they had no direct connection with the PLO but had grown as the beneficiaries of the usual reversion to religion in times of stress. Their fortunes improved after the intifada turned mosques into virtual centres of resistance. The Islamic movements acted in a similar fashion to the UNL while avoiding competition with it. They had their own special areas, neighbourhoods and camps, trained children in methods of resistance, supported needy families and called their own strikes. They represented another challenge to the PLO, in this case an open one which tolerated no moderation in facing the Israelis. Even opponents to Islamic fundamentalism found it difficult to criticize its organized, clean ways. The qualities of the leaders of the UNL and of Hamas and Islamic Jihad made them, intentionally or not, competitors to Arafat.

Israel's dramatic move came in April 1988, six months after the start of the intifada, by which time the Israelis had finally accepted that it would not disappear. On 9 April 1988 the Israeli cabinet, led by Premier Itzhaq Shamir and Defence Minister Rabin, decided to assassinate Abu Jihad.[7-227] Led by pathfinders who had entered Tunisia under false passports weeks before and managed to obtain considerable intelligence, on 16 April an Israeli hit squad guided by aircraft landed from small boats on the Tunisian coast and shot the intifada leader. It was a gruesome murder carried out in the presence of his wife and young child, and he was hit with more than 150 bullets while vainly trying to resist with a small handgun.

Publicly, Arafat mourned Abu Jihad, made the usual accusations of US collusion in organizing his assassination, and arranged a funeral for his lifelong comrade in Damascus in which hundreds of thousands walked. There was no doubt, however, that one of the two men with the ability and stature to stand up to Arafat had been eliminated. Because of his successful leadership of the intifada, Abu Jihad was the PLO's counterweight to the growing importance of the local leadership. For Israel, the assassination was a failure; instead of subduing the intifada, Abu Jihad the martyr became one of its more inspiring symbols, perhaps more effective dead than alive.

One immediate result was Arafat's assumption of his murdered colleague's duties. Except for Abu Iyad he was, as Edward Said described him on BBC radio, surrounded by 'sycophants, yes-men and mediocrities', and he personally took charge of all activity in the occupied territories. This coincided with Israeli activities which accidentally helped Arafat—again, rumours to the contrary are totally unfounded. The Israeli attempts to destroy the intifada led to the detention of forty thousand people and the deportation of sixty-nine others.[7-228] This weakened the local leadership and strengthened Arafat. In fact, the combination of PLO control of finances and direction and Israeli pressure destroyed any chances of the UNL turning itself into a national command for the Palestinians. Suddenly, the door was open for the PLO leader to begin acting against the challenge facing him.

In responding to the challenges from the occupied territories and the opportunities created by Israeli short-sightedness, Arafat behaved in character. He had no clear plan for realizing the potential of the uprising and limited himself to following his instincts and protecting his position. Lacking the means to influence or control Islamic groups on the ground, he settled for making appeals to Arab governments to stop providing them with direct financial help and to outlaw such help from independent groups in their countries. Towards the UNL he adopted proven methods. He used money to support individual leaders and withheld it to weaken others. Husseini's Centre for Arab Studies, concerned with the vital issues of land confiscation, water allocation and human rights violations, was denied funds, which went instead to less effective groups dealing with the same issues. Husseini, Hebrew– speaking, moderate, honourable and with open lines to Israeli kindred spirits seeking a just solution to the Arab–Israeli problem, had grown too popular for comfort. I myself traced a PLO payment of $500,000 to an Arafat lackey in Ramla and discovered that the man used most of the money to line his own pockets. In addition to exerting influence through control of money, Arafat moved to claim responsibility for one of his traditional redoubts. He decreed that no major statement regarding the aims of the intifada could be made without his personal approval. Then, capitalizing on the fears of the traditional establishment which had been overtaken by the populist rebellion, he opened channels of communication with some of them. Arafat even sent friendly messages and provided support to the one Palestinian mayor who had backed the Sadat peace effort, Elias Freij of Bethlehem. Arafat's moves worked: he took control of the intifada.

On 31 July 1988, nearly three months after Abu Jihad's death, King Hussein, also unwittingly, gave Arafat another victory. The monarch finally gave up his

claim to the West Bank and to representing the Palestinians. Although he had ostensibly accepted the 1974 decision of the Rabat Arab summit meeting which appointed the PLO the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, everything Hussein had done until this final renunciation of his claim was aimed at preventing the implementation of this decision. The 1988 announcement helped Arafat by ending Hussein's pretension to Palestinian leadership in negotiations with Israel and the USA. It was readily accepted by the rest of the Arabs and, more significantly, by the people of the occupied territories. This time Hussein stopped paying the salaries of people who had been part of the Jordanian administration before 1967 and the Israeli occupation.

With Arafat in total command of the situation, the United States felt the need for a new peace initiative to such an extent that the Secretary of State, George Shultz, visited the Middle East four times in little over a year. Unfortunately he had nothing new to offer, and beyond the historical demands for the PLO to accept UN resolutions he called for cessation of the intifada in return for a freeze in Israeli settlement activity. Except for a single meeting with local leaders Hanna Seniora and Fayiz Abu Rahma, which earned them a strong rebuke from Arafat, Shultz's offer led the local leadership of the occupied territories to boycott the American. Beyond the emptiness of the US offer, they were obeying the PLO. Arafat did not want any negotiations to be started unless they were with himself. In fact, Arafat and the PLO had suspended contacts with the USA[7-229] because he did not want to appear as arrogating this right to himself—something which could have offended the local leadership—and because he could not judge the final outcome of the uprising. Although having the UNL obey this strategic order was another victory for Arafat, the intifada was determining his behaviour and that of the rest of the Palestinians.

Arafat's attitude towards the intifada has been subjected to rigorous examination by journalists and biographers for over a decade. Most of them analyse it through the single prism of his attitude to the UNL and some of its individual leaders and the natural challenge to his leadership that they represented. Although undoubtedly a valid approach towards exposing Arafat's tactics and the jealousy with which he protected his own leadership, it still ignores the bigger strategic considerations which dictated his tactics and explained Arafat's jealousy and fear. In judging the intifada, its achievements and its relationship with the PLO, it was Arafat's attitude towards a populist movement, with or without individuals who might have replaced him, which tells us more about him. It was, as Abu Jihad had suspected, his determination to turn the gains of the intifada into diplomatic successes for himself and for the PLO which mattered. Whatever conclusions examining these strategic considerations yields, whether replacing or weakening Arafat and dividing the Palestinians at that critical stage would have produced more for them, occupies the last pages of this book. What is of immediate concern is Arafat's use of the rebellion and response to it.

In July 1987, four months before the intifada started, Arafat's adviser Bassam Abu Sharif, a Palestinian Beiruti transplanted to Tunisia and, like all the Beirutis, never one to question his master's word or instructions, declared that he was willing to meet the Israelis to start negotiations towards a political settlement.[7-230]

No one bothered to respond to his offer. Later, during the early stages of the intifada, Israeli leader Shimon Peres revealed that the PLO had sought direct dialogue with Israel.[7-231] Whether Peres was alluding to the Abu Sharif offer is unknown, but, as shown before, Arafat never tired of sending peace messages to both the United States and Israel which both sides ignored. The intifada changed all that. Arafat's ability to assume leadership of it reinstated him as a potential negotiating partner.

In June 1988, during an emergency Arab summit conference to discuss the intifada, Abu Sharif released a paper in which he offered to accept UN resolutions 242 and 338 and to accept Israel's right to live within secure boundaries in return for the acceptance of the idea of a Palestinian state—in other words, mutual recognition. Although ostensibly his work, the new proposal had Arafat's fingerprints all over it. The 'unofficial' nature of the proposal, however, spared the Arab delegates at the conference the need to discuss it and take an official stand for or against it, but it was noted by them and received worldwide publicity. Secretary of State George Shultz declared that the suggestion contained in the paper fell short of what was required and asked for any Palestinian proposals to be made official—to bear the signature of Arafat himself.

The absence of Arab and strong Palestinian opposition to the contents of the Abu Sharif proposal opened the door for Arafat to espouse openly what he had been promoting through his aide. First, he sent Shultz repeated messages through the Swedish Foreign Minister, Sten Andersson, and Palestinian academic Mohammed Rabi', declaring his acceptance of the proposal. When that failed he prevailed on the pro-West Arab leaders, Fahd of Saudi Arabia, Mubarak of Egypt and Hussein of Jordan, to intercede with the Reagan Administration and recommend resumption of direct contacts with the PLO. When that too failed, in November that year he convened the Palestine National Council in Algeria. At that point his identification with the intifada was so total that he managed to outmanoeuvre the opponents of his pursuit of peace, including the PFLP and DFLP which had reconciled with him in April to render the intifada more effective.

With George Habbash of the PFLP watching in utter disbelief, during the first few days Arafat left it to the loyal Abu Iyad to lobby delegates and inform them of the aims of the conference. His popularity ensured success, and on 15 November Arafat marched to the podium in military style to receive a standing ovation. Looking every inch a victorious general, he declared the creation of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and himself as its president, spoke of a two-state solution, accepted all UN resolutions and asked for the holding of 'an effective international conference concerning the Middle East issue'. In what was to become one of his favourite slogans, he adopted words originally used by the former French President Charles de Gaulle and called for 'a peace of the brave'. Then, announcing the death of 'prevarication and negation' and the dawn of a new epoch, he concluded his speech with an appeal to President-elect George Bush to respond positively to his gesture of peace.

Although the White House, including both President Ronald Reagan and President-elect George Bush, would not go further in their reaction than admitting that the Algiers declaration contained some 'positive aspects', they saw it as being too vague to merit a change in US policy towards opening negotiations with the

PLO and were adamant in their refusal to consider recognizing a Palestinian government. Soon afterwards, on 4 December, the United States and Israel were the only two countries to vote against a UN General Assembly invitation for Arafat to address the international body; 154 countries voted for the resolution. Shultz, the leading American advocate of a hard line against Arafat, accused him of being an *accessory to terrorism*[7-232] and announced that the USA would not grant him a visa.

Arafat refused to be discouraged. On 6 December, he arrived in Stockholm to participate in a meeting with American Jewish leaders arranged by Sten Andersson. Rita Hauser, Stanley Scheinbaum, Menachem Rosensaft and two other Jewish activists had met with the PLO's leading dove, Khalid Al Hassan, two weeks before. On 7 December, sitting next to the diminutive Hauser, a lawyer and the moving spirit behind the Jewish group, Arafat amplified his previous positions and accorded Israel unequivocal recognition. Hauser, an articulate, tireless worker for peace, was delighted. But the United States needed more and conveyed their demand to Arafat through Andersson.

On 13 December Arafat addressed the UN General Assembly, which had protested against Shultz's visa ban and moved itself to Geneva for the purpose of listening to Arafat. To the Americans, this was the occasion for Arafat to satisfy their need for clarity. Arafat tried:

The PLO will work to reach a comprehensive peaceful settlement between the sides involved in the Arab–Israeli struggle, including the State of Palestine and Israel, as well as the other neighbouring states, within the framework of an international conference for peace in the Middle East to realize equality and a balance of interests, particularly the right of our people to freedom and national independence, and the respect of the right to live, and the right of peace and security to everyone; namely, all the sides involved in the struggle in the area in accordance with resolutions 242 and 338.

He coupled that with a total renunciation of terrorism. But the USA still would not accept Arafat's wording and turned him down.

Finally, in a frantically organized press conference on the 14th, Arafat gave the US government what it needed. Shifting words, he declared, 'In my speech yesterday, it was clear that we mean … the rights of all parties concerned in the Middle East conflict to exist in peace and security, and, as I have mentioned, including the state of Palestine, Israel and other neighbours.' Arafat uttered these words in the presence of eight hundred news correspondents but refused to answer any additional questions, concluding his press conference with the now famous 'Enough, do you want me to striptease?'[7-233] The initial American response came from ambassador-at-large Vernon Walters who was in Geneva for that purpose. A mere four hours later Shultz announced that the United States 'is prepared for substantive dialogue with PLO representatives'. With that, the Reagan Administration opened a door which had been closed except for receiving messages since Henry Kissinger's 1975 promise to Israel that the USA would not deal directly with the PLO. On 15 December the US Ambassador to Tunisia, Robert Pelletreau, held a meeting with PLO representatives there.

Throughout the world Palestinians celebrated what they saw as a substantial victory. Even within the occupied territories, Palestinians held demonstrations of

joy and the word everyone repeated was *Mabrouk* or 'Congratulations'. The Israeli reaction was the opposite. Prime Minister Itzhaq Shamir condemned the US decision, and he was joined by Israelis of all political persuasions including the dovish Shimon Peres. Israeli children burned an effigy of Arafat in downtown Jerusalem and spoke bitterly of a US betrayal. In reality, what appeared like an unqualified victory for the PLO was a mixed bag.

Starting a dialogue with the Americans was a victory in one sense. It stripped Israel of the excuses it had always hidden behind not to deal directly with the Palestinians and face the realities created by the intifada. But judged by the USA's stubborn and consistent refusal to accept the idea of a Palestinian state, or to pressure Israel into changing its policies in the occupied territories during the negotiations which led to the final acceptable statement, Arafat's achievement was considerably less than it appeared. Nevertheless, his total control of the propaganda apparatus of the PLO allowed him to tell only one side of the story. To the Americans he was willing to offer total cooperation. The terrorist bombing of the Pan American flight over Lockerbie in Scotland on 23 December 1988 found him rushing to offer the USA help against the perpetrators; he even accused fellow Palestinians opposed to his policies.**(7-234)** Disgustingly, at the same time some of his aides attempted to make money by selling information about the bombing to the media.

What followed the Arafat concessions and the start of the US–PLO dialogue amounted to a kind of post-natal depression that neither side would admit to. The Israelis persisted in their refusal to respond to the PLO's new position, and the departure of Ronald Reagan and George Shultz and their replacement by George Bush and James Baker produced natural delays. Even after that, there was the problem of the different interpretations of what had been agreed on and what should follow. The American perception of what a dialogue with the PLO involved fell short of accepting the principle of self-determination and the idea of a Palestinian state and, to America, progress depended on what Israel would accept. However, unlike Shultz, Baker worked against Israeli immobility and tried to pressure the Israelis into revealing their position.

For the first time since the beginning of the intifada, Baker's efforts exposed differences within the Israeli coalition government. In early 1989, the Labour Defence Minister Itzhaq Rabin came out in favour of a dialogue with the Palestinians. It was aimed at encouraging the local leadership, particularly the moderate Faisal Husseini, in an attempt to circumvent and isolate Arafat and the PLO in Tunisia. Dead set against the idea of a Palestinian state and still committed to an iron-fist policy, he automatically made it impossible for Husseini to contemplate accepting the implicit Israeli invitation to assume Palestinian leadership.

In April 1989, bowing to the need for an official Israeli response, the Likud party finally offered what came to be known as the Shamir Plan. This stipulated the exclusion of an internal (Husseini) or external (Arafat) PLO in deciding the fate of the occupied territories. It envisaged the holding of local elections, with Israel maintaining the right to disqualify candidates on the basis of political affiliation, as a first step towards autonomy. The so-called autonomy for the Palestinians would come after an interim period of three to five years, but it would leave Israel

in charge of land, water and security. The Plan made clear that settlement activity would continue. Carrying out even this programme would depend on cessation of all terrorist activity—to the Israelis, that meant the intifada. The Israeli press took to describing the Plan as a piece of *constructive ambiguity*. As everyone including the Israelis expected, the PLO rejected it.

The Shamir Plan left Baker little room for manoeuvre. But again unlike Shultz, he was determined to expose the Israeli position and undermine it. Working closely with the Egyptian President Husni Mubarak, he adopted the Shamir Plan in terms of Israeli willingness to cede some territory and tried to get the PLO to stop all acts which the Israelis would label as terrorist activities. Deferring to the Israeli refusal to deal with the PLO, he tried to explore these possibilities with the local leadership of the occupied territories. Following Arafat's instructions, the local Palestinian leadership had nothing to offer him.

To Arafat, Baker's plan amounted to a call to end the intifada and a retreat from the commitment to UN resolutions. The ensuing deadlock reduced the whole US–PLO dialogue to nothing more than a tactical and publicity victory for Arafat. As on other occasions when the Americans failed to provide him with a way out of a logjam, Arafat turned to Europe as a theatre for airing his efforts towards achieving peace. On 1 May 1989, after a meeting with the French President François Mitterrand, for the first time he announced that the articles in the Palestine National Covenant calling for Israel's dismantlement were *caduc*, a French word meaning *obsolete*. The statement, well received in Europe, was dismissed by the Israelis and elicited no official response in the USA. Meanwhile the intifada would not stop. The local Islamic groups, Hamas in particular, expanded their activities and carried it forward. This led to an Israeli crackdown and the arrest of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and over two hundred followers. The need by non-Islamic groups to maintain momentum found them inventing new ways to challenge Israeli rule. Without intending it, the methods they adopted became a source of danger to Arafat's leadership.

The most serious intifada challenge to Israel and the PLO came from Beit Sahur, a small town two miles south of Bethlehem. Its twelve thousand relatively prosperous and highly educated inhabitants, 75 per cent of whom were Christians mostly of the Greek Orthodox persuasion, represented the more advanced segment of the population of the occupied territories. The townspeople had fully participated in the intifada and suffered for it, but in April and May 1989 they started to turn themselves into a model and became its leading innovators. The Beit Sahuris began a highly organized campaign of civil disobedience.

Like most educated Palestinians, the majority of these people were followers of PFLP, DFLP and the local Communist party. During the early stages of the intifada, they had created a number of committees to help them cope with the brutal methods of the Israeli occupiers. There was a committee to organize young resisters, another to encourage the planting of fruit and vegetables to attain self-sufficiency, a third to coordinate the activities of the various political groups, and others to oversee the provision of medical care and to organize contacts between the different religious leaders. With this solid organizational structure behind them and a leadership made up of impressive young men (the economist Jad Itzhaq, Professor Ghassan Andoni and the pharmacist Makram Sa'ad among

others), the Beit Sahuris decided to stop paying any taxes to the Israeli government.

The Israelis accorded this new challenge the importance it deserved and reacted accordingly. Defence Minister Itzhaq Rabin vowed to 'teach them a lesson'.[7-235] A wave of arrests followed and ninety-five people were placed in detention; however, this would not stop the Beit Sahuris, who not only refused to pay taxes but began making appeals to other towns to follow suit. For three months the Israelis stepped up their counter-measures, including the uprooting of hundreds of olive trees which until then had been a major source of food to the Beit Sahuris—to no avail. Late in August the town was surrounded by Israeli troops, a curfew was imposed and, acting on lists drawn up by the various taxation departments and personally approved by Rabin, dozens of houses were ransacked and their contents confiscated. Even a YMCA rehabilitation centre set up to treat children traumatized by the intifada was raided several times and the children kicked and beaten by Israeli soldiers.[7-236] More than $1.5 million worth of household goods were taken, from wicker chairs to refrigerators and television sets. Pharmacies and grocery stores suffered the same fate, and the inhabitants of Beit Sahur were left without food and medicine. The curfew lasted forty-four days and was supervised by Rabin personally.

Three weeks after the start of the siege, the world began to wake up to the heroic struggle of Beit Sahur. Once the press had printed dramatic pictures of the Christian and Muslim leaders of the town marching together with their bibles, crosses, Korans and crescents raised high, and holding joint prayers to protest against the siege, the story could not be ignored. The Arab states tabled a UN resolution calling for the condemnation of Israeli measures and the lifting of the siege, but it was vetoed by the United States. Inhumane as it was, the American veto did not compare with the betrayal of Beit Sahur by the Tunis PLO.

To Arafat, the campaign of the Beit Sahuris was the last thing he needed. Their civil disobedience movement was autonomous, the product of a local leadership which he did not control, and he never supported any moves by the local population unless they had his personal sanction and approval. Furthermore, the campaign threatened to expose the emptiness of his acceptance by the Americans and to undermine his dialogue further. He still believed the USA held the key to an overall resolution of the conflict. Arafat's initial response to the unexpected problem which faced him was to deny the Beit Sahuris publicity, to ignore or play down what they were doing in the official PLO bulletins. When the townspeople persisted, the PLO advised the leaders of the UNL and others to work to stop other towns from following Beit Sahur's example. Meanwhile, the Beit Sahuris were denied financial help and support.[7-237] Arafat went further and deliberately courted some traditional leaders who feared the spread of the civil disobedience movement, including the Bethlehem mayor, Elias Freij—the man he had threatened with death when the latter met Sadat during the Egyptian leader's historic visit to Jerusalem.[7-238]

Because of PLO opposition and the absence of an organized and determined leadership in other towns, the Beit Sahur campaign failed to spread. Eventually, bereft of support and help, the Beit Sahuris gave up. Soon afterwards the local PLO, acting on the personal instructions of Arafat, moved in to assert its control of

the town through leaders more to its liking.[7-239] On Christmas Eve 1989 the South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a man of peace with considerable experience in the effectiveness of civil disobedience campaigns, visited Beit Sahur and conducted prayers of support for its people. The local people, desperate for recognition, were elated by his presence and message. The world's press gave this event considerable coverage. The PLO's propaganda machine, however, was less enthusiastic.

The lack of progress in the US-PLO dialogue and the challenge of Beit Sahur took place amidst developments which were to change the fortunes of every single country and political entity in the Arab Middle East. Gorbachov's USSR had opened the doors for Jewish emigration to Israel. The consequent arrival of tens of thousands of immigrants augured poorly for any attempt to stop the government of Israel from building new settlements and confiscating more Arab land. This and the lack of progress in the dialogue with America eroded Arafat's position and increased support for his opponents, mainly the Islamic fundamentalist movement Hamas. Moreover, the intifada, though alive through the infrastructure which maintained it, was showing signs of spinning out of control. In late 1989 and early 1990 Arab had turned against Arab and small organizations, the Black Panthers and Red Eagles among them, were killing Arab collaborators in their dozens. Activities against Israel became only occasional events.

Regionally, the Iran–Iraq War had ended in August 1988 and, although Iraq was left carrying a huge debt of over $60 billion, nominally Saddam Hussein came out of it victorious. To Arafat, this was an opportunity to move the Palestinian problem back to centre stage, but Saddam and the nature of Middle East politics were to intercept his efforts and usher in a new disaster.

Relations between the PLO and Iraq, often expressed violently because of Iraqi rejection of peace efforts and support for anti-Arafat Palestinian elements, had improved considerably after the start of the intifada. Even in the middle of its war with Iran, Iraq had provided the PLO with $40 million in emergency aid to keep the uprising going. Immediately following the assassination of Abu Jihad, Arafat had moved several PLO offices to Baghdad for fear of more Israeli raids on Tunisia, and there was talk of moving all of the PLO there. Some Palestinian volunteers fought with the Iraqis against Iran. More importantly, the end of the conflict found Saddam refusing to demobilize and commanding a million-man battle-tested army. The PLO leader began to see Saddam as a military counterweight to Israel.

In February 1990 Saddam joined Egypt, Jordan and North Yemen in forming the Arab Cooperation Council, an economic alliance intended to compete with the Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council. However, simultaneously with the reintegration of Iraq into a regional bloc and Saddam's emergence as a regional leader, relations between Iraq and the United States worsened. Ostensibly America had supported Saddam during his war with Iran in order to stem the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, but the Irangate affair and the secret delivery of US arms to Iran convinced Saddam that America had backed him as a matter of convenience and would eventually turn against him. After the war with Iran ended the Americans began trying to contain him through withholding economic aid and exposing the brutality of his regime, and Saddam decided that they were out to overthrow him. Saddam responded by attacking American hegemony in the Middle

East and asking for the withdrawal of the US fleet from the Gulf. He coupled that with threats to 'burn half of Israel' if it resorted to military action against any Arab country. This was a clear reference to the potential use of non-conventional weapons. Along with assurances to Arafat that he had fifty-four army divisions to use in any confrontation with Israel[7-240] and the fact that he was acting against Arafat's enemy, Assad, in Lebanon, this drew the Palestinian leader into the Iraqi orbit. With hundreds of thousands of Russian immigrants now flooding into Israel and America unable to stop the government's settlement programme, Arafat was beginning to despair of the success of the dialogue with the USA and desperately wanted to re-establish a foothold in Lebanon. Above all, he believed in Saddam's military capabilities.

On 20 May 1990, a young Israeli shot and killed seven Palestinians in the occupied territories. Six days later the United States vetoed a UN resolution, backed by fourteen of the fifteen members, calling for an investigation of the conditions in the occupied territories. On 30 May, with the atmosphere which surrounded the start of the dialogue all but destroyed, a hit squad belonging to the Abul Abbas Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), the group responsible for the 1985 ACHILLO LAURO hijacking, landed on a beach near Tel Aviv with instructions to kill everything in their way. The landing took place at a time when the plight of the people in the occupied territories was the focus of international attention and during a joint hunger strike by Israeli–Palestinian peace activists including Hannan Ashrawi. To Ashrawi, it was a stab in the back.[7-241] For though the attackers failed and all four of them were killed by Israeli security forces, the issue of terrorism and PLO responsibility for it was resurrected and the moral position of the territories' leadership was eroded.

US Secretary of State Baker gave Arafat a chance to act against the PLF and continue the dialogue. He kept up his pressure on Israel to stop expanding and building settlements and reacted angrily to Shamir's attempts to improvise obstacles to delay the start of negotiations. On 13 June, Baker reacted to a new set of Israeli pre-conditions by announcing, 'Our telephone number is 202–456–1414. When you're serious about peace call us.' This dramatic gesture failed to move Arafat, who convened the Palestine National Council in Baghdad and set up a committee to investigate the Tel Aviv incident, but failed to act decisively. The PLF had Iraqi backing and Arafat needed Saddam's support. When over forty members of the US Senate demanded the ending of the dialogue with the PLO, James Baker had no choice but to accede to their demand. After eighteen months of unsuccessful efforts, on 20 June 1990 Baker announced the suspension of US–PLO contacts. Justified or not, the move forced Arafat into the arms of Saddam irrevocably; he had nowhere else to turn.

Despite appearing to have beaten a larger country, and despite the verbal threats against America and Israel which made the Arab masses regard him as a hero, the end of the Iran–Iraq War left Saddam with fundamental problems which he could not solve. Iraq was carrying a huge debt, the people were demanding the fruits of victory, and the oil-rich Arab countries were no longer willing to provide Saddam with financial assistance to protect them from Iran. He had enjoyed US support against Khomeini; now the Americans were seeking to reduce him to size, and publicizing his atrocities against the Kurds and the dangers of his non-

conventional weapons programme. Saddam was in deep trouble, but Arafat did not seem to appreciate this; with Abu Jihad gone and Abu Iyad receiving less and less of his attention, Arafat accepted the analyses of his Beiruti cabal, the uneducated lot who could never oppose their leader's instincts regardless of the importance of any issue.

To Saddam Kuwait, the historical object of Iraqi hate and long claimed by its larger neighbour, represented a possible way out of his predicament. Because he needed Kuwaiti money, either by blackmailing the small country as Iraq had done in the past or by occupying it, he resurrected the historical claim. Foolishly, the Kuwaitis played into his hands by behaving in a manner which turned them into an enemy of Iraq. On their own, or in cooperation with Western powers determined to undermine Saddam's rising fortunes, Kuwait pumped more oil than it needed,[7-242] which caused the price to collapse, and demanded immediate payment of an $8 billion Iraqi debt. During an Arab summit conference held in Baghdad in May 1990 to address the problem of Russian emigration to Israel, Saddam registered a strong complaint against Kuwait for pumping the surplus oil, stealing oil from the Rumeilah oilfield which ran across both countries, and causing Iraq serious economic problems which left it unable to borrow money on the international market. The accusations were true. On 15 July 1990 the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tarik Aziz, repeated Saddam's accusations and added that the Kuwaiti oil policy was costing Iraq billions of dollars that the country could not afford; he stated that a $1 per barrel reduction in the price of oil cost Iraq a billion dollars a year. This was followed two days later by a personal warning from Saddam to Arab countries not to harm Iraq. In response several US warships were despatched to the Gulf; then there were more Iraqi threats against Kuwait and a meeting on 25 July between Saddam and the US Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, in which the latter appeared to give Saddam a green light to continue hounding Kuwait. On 1 August a last-ditch attempt by the Saudis to defuse the crisis failed. Saddam moved forward whatever plans he had and the following day invaded Kuwait.

During the early part of the crisis Arafat assumed the role of mediator, something he always loved but at which he was never successful. The small gathering of Saddam, the Emir of Kuwait, King Hussein of Jordan and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia during the May 1990 Arab summit in Baghdad, which produced the first Iraqi threat to Kuwait, found him appealing to the Kuwaitis to change their policies and accommodate Iraq. When the Kuwaiti Emir gave an ambiguous answer regarding the pumping of oil and insisted that the $8 billion debt be paid immediately, Arafat exploded. Trembling and pointing at the Emir, he screamed, 'The consequences of this will come to haunt all of us. Won't you just understand and relent!'[7-243] When the Kuwaitis would not be moved he made trips to Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other countries in an attempt to marshal support for a way out of the crisis. He failed.

Arafat's pro-Iraqi inclinations became official after the invasion and after Saddam, on 8 August, linked any withdrawal of his forces from Kuwait with an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. Despite the West's refusal to discuss this linkage, Arafat continued to misjudge the extent of Western determination to eject Iraq from Kuwait unconditionally. The appeal of linkage was too strong; some have claimed that he and King Hussein were behind Saddam's

move.[7-244] Though this is unproven, Arafat nevertheless threw in his lot with Saddam wholeheartedly. On 10 August, after Arafat had tried to form an Arab Good Offices Committee to mediate, but failed, an emergency Arab summit meeting was convened in Cairo. The PLO was one of three entities (twelve Arab countries opposed, and Tunisia boycotted the proceedings) to vote against the use of force on Iraq. With that move, Arafat practically severed relations with the oil-producing countries and Egypt.

Those decisions were Arafat's alone, taken without convening any of the PLO quasi-parliamentary bodies to which such decisions were usually referred. The chairman of the Palestinian National Fund, Jaweed Al Ghossein, Khalid Al Hassan, Hani Al Hassan and, perhaps more importantly, Abu Iyad, were among those who opposed an open invasion of Kuwait.[7-245] Within the occupied territories there was unanimous condemnation of the invasion by the local leadership, who rightly saw their position of opposing the idea of occupation weakened by Saddam's military adventure and informed Arafat of their view.[7-246] However, he would not listen to them.

Nor was there any shortage of signs suggesting that a more cautious stance was needed because the Iraqi leader's decision to invade had been based largely on lack of understanding of the Western position. During a trip by Arafat to Baghdad, Saddam asked the PLO leader whether he believed the Western threats to attack him. When Arafat refused to give a clear answer and referred Saddam to his special adviser, Bassam Abu Sharif, the latter said that they would indeed attack and cited cover stories in *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines as evidence that there was nothing to stop them from carrying out their threats. At this point Saddam asked his own advisers why no one had told him that he had been on the covers of America's leading news weeklies.[7-247] That absolute power had corrupted Saddam absolutely, isolated him and blinded him to facts easily available in high-circulation magazines should have been enough to show Arafat the unsoundness of his thinking, but the PLO leader still refused to act on what was becoming clear to everyone else.

Some time later, on 28 August, Arafat joined King Hussein in proposing an Arab solution to the conflict, which became known as the Hussein Plan. It was stillborn; the USA was leading the UN to adopt more and more resolutions approving the resort to arms, and nobody was interested in personal initiatives. Because Arafat's assessment of the importance of his own initiatives had always been an inflated one, he failed to see the bigger picture. In that he stood alone, with only Jordan and Yemen following similar policies. He embarked on a breakneck schedule of visits to all Arab and Muslim countries that would receive him—King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, among others, would not grant him an audience. Meanwhile, new UN resolutions were making ever louder calls for an unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, and an avalanche of countries, including Arab ones such as Syria and Egypt, were joining the armies gathering in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries to attack Saddam.

The ramifications of the Arab–Israeli conflict went beyond the idea of linking an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait with an Israeli pull-out from the occupied territories. With Iraq displaying clear signs that it would respond to any attack on its forces by using missiles against Israel, keeping Israel out of the conflict became a

problem. An Israeli response to an Iraqi missile attack would upset the international nature of the opposition to Saddam and embarrass the Arab countries which had joined the anti-Saddam coalition, or force them into supporting Saddam against Israel.

In addition, the conflict had a direct effect on the youth of the intifada and the rest of the population of the occupied territories. With the atmosphere there growing tenser by the day and Saddam's picture and songs in his praise everywhere, there was fear of Palestinian mass protests in the territories spiralling out of control. That did not happen; instead it was an Israeli over-reaction to an everyday stone-throwing incident which came close to scuttling the whole alliance against Saddam and forcing the call for linkage he had made on the international community.[7-248] The Temple Mount (Harram Al Sharif) is a hotly disputed area of Jerusalem which houses Islam's third holiest shrine, the Mosque of Omar. The mosque backs on to the Wailing Wall, and the Israelis would like to demolish the mosque and erect in its place a new Temple. Because of the closeness of these two holy places there are frequent clashes between Muslim and Israeli youths, and on 8 October 1990 this was probably the catalyst for an Israeli massacre of twenty Palestinians. The following day large-scale rioting broke out and more Palestinians were killed.

The local leadership of the occupied territories, notably Faisal Husseini, tried their utmost to contain the situation. Israel's willingness to use its armed forces to quell the spread of disturbances worried them, and the spectre of a huge massacre loomed. Arafat reacted differently. The inflamed atmosphere in the territories was matched by bouts of uncontrolled Arafat rhetoric. Throwing all caution to the wind, he sounded more and more like an expression of Saddamism. To him the Gulf Crisis exposed a US–Zionist plan to destroy Iraq and deny the Arabs a military counterweight to Israel. With the clock ticking and hundreds of thousands of troops from the Coalition led by the USA, the UK and Saudi Arabia gathering for the start of a military campaign against Iraq, on 6 January 1991 Arafat made a famous speech and addressed America with the words, 'Welcome to war.'[7-249] A day later, he declared that the Palestinians would fight 'side by side with their Iraqi brothers'.

On 16 January 1991, the Coalition partners attacked Iraq with an air offensive of unprecedented ferocity. A day later Abu Iyad, an opponent of the invasion of Kuwait, was assassinated by a gunman from the pro-Iraqi Abu Nidal terrorist group; two Arafat aides who happened to be with him died too. Sadly, the departure of this major Palestinian leader was overshadowed by the atmosphere of war. Arafat appointed the ineffectual Hakkam Balwai to replace Abu Iyad. Coupled with taking over responsibility for Abu Jihad's functions after his assassination three years earlier, this appointment expanded Arafat's personal control of the PLO.

The Iraqi aerial defence system proved ineffective. Hundreds of Coalition aircraft roamed the skies unopposed, and inflicted untold damage on the Iraqi forces in Kuwait and within Iraq itself. They unjustifiably bombed power stations, bridges, sewage plants, baby food factories and other civilian and non-strategic targets. On 22 February, after the cream of the Iraqi air force had escaped to Iran, the land offensive began. Three days later, the Iraqis managed to hit Israel with

conventional missiles and continued to do so for four days. On 28 February, a ceasefire came into being. The Iraqi army was defeated and Arafat along with it.

Arafat's behaviour during the Gulf War deserves closer scrutiny. There was considerably more to it than his belief that Saddam's call for linkage might work and the inflated picture of the capabilities of the Iraqi army promoted by Saddam. At the crux of it was his inability to analyse the international situation and the absence of able advisers who understood the world. He had already distanced himself from knowledgeable academics such as Edward Said, Ibrahim Abu Loghoud and Walid Khalidy, stopped listening to the voices of the PLO old guard (Ghossein, the Al Hassan brothers and Abu Iyad) and become more dependent on the Beirutis. He now relied on Bassam Abu Sharif, who lacked the intellectual competence of Said, Abu Loghoud and Khalidy without possessing the wisdom of the tried original Fatah members. Beyond that, he responded to immediate considerations without thought for the long-term effects of the conflict.

Maintaining his position with the people of the occupied territories was Arafat's greatest concern during this period. He had already decided in favour of negotiating a peaceful settlement to the Arab–Israeli conflict. That automatically meant that his important constituency was the people of the occupied territories and not the diaspora Palestinians in the refugee camps of the Arab world or, more importantly, those in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. In contrast with most PLO leaders, the simple people of the occupied territories were solidly behind Saddam because Iraqi intransigence and lobbing rockets against Israel provided them with emotional satisfaction. Arafat felt that he had to go along with them or lose them.

This was indeed short-sighted. The leadership of the occupied territories, which represented a threat to his primacy with the people of the West Bank and Gaza, was made up of pro-PLO moderates who were unlikely to forsake their position of moderation and assume the role of extremists in the conflict. Faisal Husseini, Hanan Ashrawi, Sari Nusseibeh[7-250] and Heidar Abdel Shafi understood what was happening and showed no signs of changing their positions. Moreover, the so-called extremists, led by the Islamic movement Hamas, did not provide Iraq with support and openly called for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, albeit conditional.[7-251] His only competitors in his backing for Iraq were the PFLP and DFLP, and he knew better than anyone else that they were weak, riven by divisions and in no position to mount a challenge to his leadership. He ignored all these facts because of an inherent insecurity and consequent wish to undermine others.

To the combination of a frozen peace initiative which was exposing his position, lack of understanding of the international picture (including the results of the faltering USSR's wish to accommodate America), the hope that the idea of linkage might prevail, and unjustified fears of challenges to his leadership in the occupied territories, Arafat added a small, insignificant element which his mental workings had inflated beyond its natural importance. For some time his relations with the Gulf states, Kuwait in particular, had been deteriorating because they had begun to circumvent the Palestine National Fund and Arafat's personal control and to offer direct aid to health, education and other institutions in the occupied territories.[7-252] With these same countries providing Islamic groups with financial help, Arafat saw a risk to his continued ability to control the purse strings as a

way of protecting his leadership. Iraq was different. Iraq had given up on supporting other groups and forged an alliance with him.

Immediately after the cessation of hostilities, on 6 March, President George Bush's message to Congress addressed the Arab–Israeli problem in unusually clear terms. 'The time has come to put an end to the conflict … A comprehensive peace must be grounded in UN resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of territory for peace,' the President announced. Though he had opposed linking the forcing of Iraq out of Kuwait to any plans to settle the Arab–Israeli conflict, in a United Nations address in October 1990 Bush had made a promise to turn his attention to it.

Bush's speech to Congress was followed on 12 March by a trip to the Middle East by Secretary of State James Baker. On 8 April, after another Baker trip, a nine-point peace plan was announced by the USA and Israel. Because it called for a regional peace conference and contained a number of preconditions, Arafat rejected it while reaffirming the PLO's acceptance of an international conference to implement UN resolutions in accordance with the decisions of the November 1988 PNC conference. Other efforts to break the deadlock, including more visits by Baker, followed. On 31 July, at the end of the US–Soviet Summit Conference in Moscow, President Bush and Chairman Gorbachov announced the convening of an international peace conference in October to settle the Middle East conflict. Arafat was left with no option but to join the conference on their terms or be marginalized. The Palestinians were to be represented by leaders from the occupied territories with no ostensible PLO connection, and they were to be part of a Jordanian delegation. Arafat instructed Faisal Husseini and Hannan Ashrawi to start a dialogue with Baker. He accepted the invitation. Oslo beckoned.

Chapter 8

The Right Thing for the Wrong Reasons.

Arafat had no choice but to accept the invitation to an international peace conference issued by President Bush and Chairman Gorbachov on terms the PLO had rejected in the past. On 18 October 1991 James Baker and Boris Pankin, his Soviet counterpart, finalized the work of their leaders and announced that the conference would take place on the 30th of that month in Madrid. The four months since the Bush and Gorbachov summit had produced nothing new, however, in the international situation which had prompted the initiative. For an ostracized and relatively powerless Arafat, things had worsened by the day.

Within the PLO, the conclusion of the Gulf War was followed by new calls for better management of finances and an end to dictatorial behaviour by those individuals and groups which had demanded the same in the past. But they were hollow calls which pointed out an inherent dissatisfaction with Arafat's ways at a time when there was little money to manage and circumstances were compelling him into accepting compromises which even his detractors knew were inevitable. The PFLP and DFLP knew that divisive pressure for reform might lead to the

disappearance of the Palestinian presence as represented by the PLO on the international stage, or at the least would weaken the organization further. Khalid Al Hassan and other advocates of reform felt the same. The problems of survival facing the Palestinians were too pressing and came ahead of tackling corruption and Arafat's style of individual leadership.

The unavailability of money rather than its mismanagement became an immediate issue. The redirection of Gulf oil money from the PLO to Iraq during the nine-year-long Iran–Iraq War had produced a deficit in the PLO budget which from 1985 affected its operations. Continued mismanagement of finances made the problem worse. By the end of the Gulf War Arafat had all but depleted the PLO's reserves, which, though unknown, were certainly less than the $10 billion alluded to by some writers.

The consequences of Arafat's policies during the Gulf War turned a financial problem into a crisis. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates ordered a total stoppage of their already reduced subsidies to the PLO. Libya, though it never joined the coalition against Saddam, did the same because Qaddafi disapproved of Arafat's position. Iraq, broke even before the war, was not exporting oil and had no money to give. Syria was sponsoring Palestinians opposed to Arafat and was determined to replace or weaken him. The money the PLO received from Palestinians in the oil-producing countries, mostly the taxes levied on them by the host countries and remitted to Arafat, also stopped. Even contributions from rich Palestinians slowed to a trickle because most of them were dependent on the oil-producing countries to make money, feared alienating them and had opposed the Arafat–Saddam alliance. (Jaweed Al Ghossein's opposition towards the war typified the thinking of this group.)

Arafat compared the shortage of money to carrying an unloaded gun. The PLO was there, but was rendered ineffective. Acting completely out of character, Arafat took steps to control the expenditures of the various departments and unwieldy structure he had created. The PLO budget was halved,[8-253] and he stopped dispensing money to please visitors whose loyalty he wanted to buy and titleless favourites in his entourage. The huge financial reallocation programme produced bottlenecks, and employees in the PLO's offices throughout the world now had to go three months at a time without being paid.[8-254] Some PLO professionals in Tunis started looking for jobs outside the organization. Perhaps more importantly, there was not enough money to support the structure created to maintain the intifada. Families of children imprisoned by the Israelis could no longer depend on receiving the financial support the PLO had provided in the past. Press offices which specialized in gathering information to feed to the foreign press closed down. Some leaders who had attached themselves to the PLO because they received hefty subsidies from Arafat started putting out feelers to Jordan.

Within the occupied territories, the money problem added to the already confused situation created by the threatening political marginalization of Arafat and the PLO. The local leadership was adrift, suffering the consequences of a PLO position which it had opposed without being able to dissociate itself from it. The crypto-PLO UNL—Husseini, Ashrawi, Nusseibeh and others—felt the diminution of their position, but still refused to contemplate the creation of an alternative leadership. As with those who wanted to control Arafat's wasteful and dictatorial

ways, they considered such a move counter-productive. The deteriorating economic situation, a stagnant Israeli economy and the use of fewer Palestinian workers, the absence of PLO money and remittances, and the arrival of tens of thousands of Palestinians who had been ejected from Kuwait and others who had their jobs in Iraq, all made for a dismal picture. To the local leaders, the declining standard of living threatened to produce greater support for the financially sound and better organized Islamic movements. They were right; the Islamists were gaining on the PLO.[8-255] The Islamists were the beneficiaries of Arafat's political failure and the largesse of the Arab countries which wanted to weaken him, Kuwait in particular.

Withholding financial support from the PLO and providing it to its enemies was just one aspect of Arafat's isolation within the Arab world. The oil-producing countries boycotted him, and his attempts to organize visits to Saudi Arabia were turned down. Having read the international situation correctly and joined the pro-West coalition against Iraq, the leaders of Syria tried to befriend Jordan and add to his isolation. The support of ostracized Iraq amounted to nothing. Egypt, antagonized by Arafat's Gulf War policies which included disapproval of Mubarak's position, viewed him with a measure of malevolence. Jordan, Arafat's erstwhile partner and supporter of Saddam during the Gulf crisis, saw fit to change direction and King Hussein, forever anxious to make himself available as a replacement for Arafat, did everything to draw closer to Syria and resume his position as the West's favourite Arab leader. Hussein's gestures of repentance towards the West were accepted and he was rehabilitated. Even Tunisia was having second thoughts about the presence of the PLO on its soil. Unable to travel and devote himself to using Arab divisions to Palestinian advantage, Arafat settled into a state of deep depression.

Arafat's Palestinian and Arab problems were in addition to the fatal blow his Gulf War friendship with Saddam had dealt to the chances of resurrecting the suspended dialogue with the United States. He kept trying, but all former intermediaries turned down his entreaties to carry messages to America because the prospects of success were non-existent. (Although without important connections in America, I was one of the people approached by an Arafat adviser to assess the chances of restarting the dialogue.) The new USSR under Gorbachov was confirming its commitment to glasnost and perestroika and showing little interest in promoting the Palestinian cause, and Europe was powerless. Direct negotiations with Israel represented a way out of his predicament. But the pre-Gulf War attempts to open back channels to the Israelis,[8-256] both Labour and Likud, had failed because Israel had seen little reason to accede to the PLO's requirements, and there was even less reason for the Israelis to accept them at this juncture.

In the late 1980s there had been the Amirov–Nusseibeh, Sharon and Kimche openings with Likud and the Darawsha and Tibi efforts with Labour.[8-257] The two sides' different perceptions of what needed to be done to achieve peace produced insurmountable difficulties, and these activities were abandoned without leaving a term of reference. Even after the Gulf War's effects and, according to Edward Said, a PLO anxiousness to meet US–Likud terms for negotiations,[8-258] the Israelis would not accept the PLO as a negotiating partner.

It was, therefore, the closure of all avenues except that of participating in an international peace conference which compelled Arafat to accept the terms he had rejected in the past. To him, the problem became one of reconciling the rules and regulations governing the proposed conference and the American attitude behind it with his wish to manipulate it to guarantee his personal survival and that of the PLO. Whatever policies or positions the PLO had espoused in the past were subordinated to the issue of survival.

The job of getting the Palestinians and Israelis to accept the rules governing their participation in the Madrid Conference fell to US Secretary of State James Baker, the man who had already initiated contacts aimed at assessing the negotiating positions of both sides immediately after the Gulf War. Baker had made five trips to the Middle East before the Bush–Gorbachov Moscow summit. A stubborn, sharp-tongued and highly educated Texan with an iron will and a determination to succeed, he sought to overcome all obstacles to the start of a peace conference by browbeating both sides. The Bush–Gorbachov invitation was based on Baker's positive assessment of the chances of a conference succeeding; he came to that conclusion well before the Palestinians and Israelis accepted either it or the invitation.

The problem Baker faced with the Palestinians was how to entice them into joining the negotiations as part of a Jordanian delegation—the most the Israelis would accept—without damaging their credibility with their people and the PLO. The original Jerusalem meetings between Baker and Hanan Ashrawi, Faisal Husseini and others (jokingly called Textine for Texas–Palestine) had Arafat's personal approval. There were many occasions when meetings had to be delayed or interrupted because the Palestinians needed new or clearer instructions from Tunis. Baker knew this, but it did not throw him. He also knew that an independent Palestinian delegation or one separate from the PLO was not possible. Baker thus circumvented the Israelis' non-acceptance of the PLO by negotiating with Arafat through intermediaries. Arafat reciprocated by bowing to the inevitable; he accepted Baker's demand for the official PLO to be kept out of the talks.

This strange situation—Ashrawi and Husseini assuming the role of a front for Arafat and the Americans finally abandoning the idea of creating an alternative leadership—deserves examination. Being a woman and a Christian stood in the way of Ashrawi as an alternative to Arafat, but her eloquence, energy and selfless participation in the intifada and international forums had elevated her to the status of a Palestinian heroine. She was a star on the international stage, yet she had never shown any desire for primacy. To her credit, she turned down all offers to replace the PLO and Arafat.**(8-259)**

Husseini, decent, honourable, popular and the bearer of a proud Palestinian name, was a firm believer in peace. His father, a larger-than-life hero whom all Palestinians revered and to whose friendship Arafat had laid claim, had died fighting for Jerusalem in 1948. Faisal himself had received military training with the PLO in Damascus and had organized some of its original cells in the occupied territories, but had turned into a firm believer in peace as the only way out of the conflict. His frequent arrests by the Israelis had enabled him to master Hebrew, and he openly cooperated with peace movements within Israel. Husseini, then and

now, was a real alternative to Arafat, but he was too much of a gentleman to do anything which might compromise the overall Palestinian position, and to this must be added his greater attachment to the honour of serving his people than to personal glory. Baker knew that Faisal, like Ashrawi, would not go along with any plans to supplant their leader.

Another potential leader among the Palestinian negotiators in Jerusalem was Sari Nusseibeh, a professor of philosophy at Beir Zeit University and also a descendant of an old Jerusalem family. Nusseibeh never showed any stomach for political combat and was much more at home with books than in public gatherings. His involvement in the negotiations was an act of public service and he did not want to go any further. With Ashrawi, Husseini and Nusseibeh unwilling to entertain a challenge to Arafat and paying him homage, the rest of the leaders of the occupied territories had to follow suit. Whatever thoughts Baker had about what this group should do were subordinated to getting the peace process on track. The Secretary of State directed his energies to affording the Palestinian leadership of the occupied territories the necessary disguise for acceptability to Israel and to pro-Israeli members of Congress.

The commendable attitude of Ashrawi, Husseini, Nusseibeh and the rest of the UNL did not stop Arafat from agitating. The signs of strain were everywhere, but there were no Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad to calm him down. In Tunis, his language became worse and he took to haranguing the closest of aides over the smallest mistake. On one occasion he not only railed against one of his senior advisers but slapped his face, knocked him down and kicked him repeatedly in the presence of visitors.[8-260] His dependence on pills[8-261] increased; he took uppers and downers and his sleeping and working hours became even more erratic. He raged like an animal behind bars, but one with a sharp tongue who never stopped denigrating other Arab leaders.

Because direct telephone links between Jerusalem and Tunis did not exist, he kept in constant touch with the Palestinian negotiating team through reconnections via the United States and Cyprus. The cumbersome nature of the exercise and the hours he kept meant that he often woke them in the early hours to ask them to do things that were not urgent. Undoubtedly he resented their direct contact with Baker[8-262] and reacted to it jealously. He demanded and received the right to approve everything, which included a verbatim record of all discussions with the Secretary of State. On some occasions he fretted over minor differences in their recollections, and on others his instructions to individual delegates bore little resemblance to what he told others. Arafat had previously attempted to separate Husseini and Nusseibeh through getting the latter to head political committees which competed with those of Husseini, so they interpreted these latest moves as an attempt to drive a wedge between them, to weaken them and keep them loyal. There were times when discussions with Baker had to be stopped or delayed because Arafat was not available to give his personal consent to a specific point. Everything he did was tantamount to a declaration, unnecessary in the circumstances, that he was the boss.

But Arafat's unhelpful attitude did not deter the patient negotiators. Their demands to Baker were a clear articulation of the PLO's declared policy. They wanted the participants in the negotiations to be identified as Palestinians and

accepted as a team who spoke for their people. The issue of Israeli settlements had to be addressed immediately, and new building had to be stopped as a precondition to attending the conference. They insisted that the right of Palestinian self-determination and the issues of a Palestinian government and Jerusalem be included in the agenda of the peace conference. Their refusal to assume any roles without accepting the PLO label showed in the scant attention they paid to concealing or encrypting their communications with Arafat. (Later, after they were made to accept Baker's terms in September 1991, Ashrawi taxed the Secretary of State's patience and announced to the world that she had given him a message from Chairman Arafat.)

The Israeli position was simpler. Because the Likud-led Israeli government did not want to attend a peace conference, they created obstacles. Instead of presenting Baker with Israel's long-term requirements, Shamir and his government concentrated on the technicalities of convening the conference in the hope that they might force the Palestinians to withdraw. The Israelis objected to a separate Palestinian delegation, to any member of the PLO being included in a Palestinian–Jordanian delegation, to the presence in the Palestinian team of anyone from Jerusalem, and to the inclusion in the conference agenda of any reference to self-determination and an independent Palestinian state. Meanwhile their settlement expansion programme was accelerated.

In July 1991, after President Assad of Syria declared his willingness to attend the proposed conference, Shamir announced that Israel would do the same. But this acceptance was too tentative to be other than an empty gesture. Shamir still made no concession on his prohibitive preconditions and the settlement building programme. But unlike former Secretaries of State whose efforts had foundered on the rock of Israeli intransigence, Baker refused to be discouraged. He responded by assuming the role of 'honest broker' in terms of satisfying both sides without informing either what he was offering the other. He presented the Palestinians and the Israelis with conflicting letters of assurance which were aimed at satisfying their misgivings.

It was Arafat who saved the day for Baker by accepting the terms of the Secretary of State's letter of assurance to the Palestinians. It contained promises that the settlement programme would be frozen, that Israel would recognize Palestinian sovereignty over some territory and that Jerusalem was subject to negotiations. When Baker presented his letter to the Palestinian negotiators during his seventh tour of the area in mid-September 1991 the occupied territories team turned it down as unsatisfactory, above all because Baker's promises were not binding on Israel. But to their amazement, Arafat's instructions from Tunis contradicted their stance. He told them, albeit with some ambivalence, to concede the points regarding self-determination, the idea of a Palestinian government and a delay in implementing any agreement.**(8-263)** Two days later, after summoning Ashrawi to Amman to meet Baker, Arafat arrived in the Jordanian capital in person. Without hesitation he ordered the Palestinian delegates to accept the principle of a joint Jordanian–Palestinian delegation and confirmed his concession regarding self– determination.**(8-264)**

Not a single member of the original negotiating team from the occupied territories agreed with Arafat's concessions. They felt betrayed and told him so. In

a throwback to his old ways in Kuwait, Beirut and elsewhere, he tried to reason with them and to deflect their threats of resignation. Less than honest about his reasons for acceptance, he talked about the overall international situation but said nothing about the threat of PLO bankruptcy. They counter-attacked with solid reasons for refusal—mostly that Israel had not accepted the American promises, the implications for the Palestinians of being part of a Jordanian delegation, Israel's track record of attaching its own interpretation to every international agreement and its ability to veto any negotiator with PLO connections. At this point Arafat got angry, ranted about them wanting to go their own way and threatened to torpedo the whole negotiations by resigning. The negotiators had no choice but to relent. As usual, by resorting to his Samson-complex threat to bring the whole house down Arafat had got what he wanted.

The terms he accepted precluded the participation of Ashrawi, Husseini and Nusseibeh, considered Jerusalemites by the Israelis, as full delegates to the conference. Because of their rising prominence, their demotion suited him. They were to become members of a Guidance Committee, an advisory group to the actual negotiators. With that behind him, Arafat immediately turned his attention to making a list of delegates without deferring to them, and in the process came close to forcing the resignations of Husseini and Nusseibeh.**(8-265)** Not only had he promised hundreds of people that he would make them delegates,**(8-266)** his list included incompetent, uneducated loyalists with no diplomatic experience or knowledge of conditions in the occupied territories. It was only through the stubbornness of Husseini and Nusseibeh that he finally agreed to amend his list, though there were still too many delegates. (It was the fear of resignations and defections which later forced him into appointing Heidar Abdel Shafi, a Gaza doctor and political activist of impeccable credentials and considerable courage, to head the Palestinian negotiating team to Madrid.)

Arafat the compulsive manipulator still needed greater confirmation of his pre-eminence over the original negotiators. In Amman he used the weakest member of the original negotiating team, Saeb Irekat, to propose the signing of a petition of loyalty to the PLO and himself. Irekat, a professor of politics at Al Najjah University in Nablus and an editor of *Al Quds* newspaper, had been no more than an adjunct to the original negotiating team and had no following on the ground. His suggestion, made to please Arafat, revealed him as the Achilles heel of the negotiating team. The others thought that signing a loyalty decree was like the swearing of an oath by someone who had been telling the truth all along, and turned down the gratuitous gesture without discussion.

After Arafat's propaganda machine had trumpeted the substantial concessions he had made in Amman as a singular triumph, he turned his attention to convening the Palestine National Council to seek approval for his new policies. The decision of the PNC, which met in Algiers on 27 September, was a foregone conclusion. Mostly Arafat loyalists, the members knew that they could not go back on what he had conceded without damaging the Palestinian cause, and there were many absentees. Furthermore, the people who could have briefed the meeting on the background to the Amman concessions, Ashrawi and Husseini, could not do so openly because of Israeli laws forbidding 'inside Palestinians' to belong to the

PNC and participate in its debates. Ashrawi and Husseini ended up attending the meeting silently and risking arrest on their return home.

On the surface the final PNC vote was 256 for and 86 against accepting UN resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis for attending the conference, which the PLO had already accepted in 1989. In reality it was a vote for cancelling these resolutions, which should have been implemented by the UN without the need for a conference. Though the PNC delegates attached conditions regarding east Jerusalem, settlements, freedom in selecting delegates and the stipulation that autonomy was only a first step towards independence, Arafat accepted the vote of approval without deferring to these conditions. He acted as if he had an open-ended mandate; all the Palestinian objections to attending the conference were ignored.

The only positive outcome of Arafat's concessions and the way he used the conditional acceptance of the PNC was that it exposed the Israeli position. The Israelis got everything they wanted, particularly the denial of an independent Palestinian presence which was behind Arafat's 1989 UN address and related moves. They still refused to give a binding answer regarding going to Madrid, and continued to try to stall the convening of the conference. Among other things, they tried to inflate the importance of Ashrawi's and Husseini's so-called 'illegal' attendance at the PNC conference and considered arresting them upon their return to the occupied territories and utilizing the consequences of such a move. Though he lambasted Ashrawi and Husseini for providing the Israelis with an excuse, Baker refused to accept Shamir's objections. Finally despairing of Israeli tactics, he prevailed upon President Bush to resort to financial pressure to force Shamir's hand.

In a series of moves in late September 1991 the Bush Administration, in a rare display of public anger against Israel, announced the withholding of of $10 billion in loan guarantees, most of which the Israelis intended to use to expand settlements. The Americans, aiming to neutralize the issue of settlements and to force Israel to the negotiating table, asked for a 120-day delay to consider the Israeli request for guarantees. It was an unprecedented and courageous step, taken in the full knowledge that the pro-Israeli lobby could not muster the two-thirds Congressional vote needed to over-ride the President's decision. Shamir was caught in a financial bind. After unsuccessfully lobbying Congress, a mere ten days before the start of the Madrid Conference he agreed to attend on the basis of what Baker had achieved. A few days later the co-sponsor of the conference, the USSR, re-established diplomatic relations with Israel, which had been severed after the 1967 War. The Israelis had run out of excuses.

The start of the Madrid Peace Conference on 30 October was a colossal media event. President Bush, Chairman Gorbachov, Secretary of State Baker, Foreign Minister Pankin, observers from the United Nations, the Arab League, Egypt and the European Union, and 4665 accredited journalists were in attendance. In a move which captured the hearts of hundreds of millions of television viewers throughout the world, the Palestinians arrived impeccably dressed, jubilant and carrying olive branches. Back in the occupied territories people were so hopeful that violence all but died down. The Israelis looked as if they were attending a funeral.

The opening speech at the Royal Palace was delivered by the host, the Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez. He was followed by Bush and Gorbachov, whose words were full of hope. The inaugural Palestinian speech, written by Ashrawi and delivered by Dr Heidar Abdel Shafi, was elegant, balanced and contained no provocation: 'We wish to directly address the Israeli people, with whom we have had a long history of pain. Let us share hope instead.' By contrast, Shamir's speech concentrated on the past to justify Israel's existence and an unwillingness to compromise, and he totally overlooked Arafat's concessions. What followed amounted to an undignified spat between Shamir and the Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Shra'a, in which each accused the other of terrorism. Shamir, determined to treat the proceedings as a matter of minor import only, returned home after twenty-four hours. The Israeli delegation he left behind was still determined to use anything and everything to prevent things moving forward. Instead of negotiating, they tried to make an issue of Saeb Irekat's decision to wear the *kuffiya* emblem of the PLO. The two days in Madrid exposed a Palestinian desire for peace which the Israelis did not share.

When the negotiations were recessed, Baker, in a surprise move, announced that Washington would become the venue for the next stage of the bilateral meetings, scheduled for 4 December. The bilaterals were the one-on-one meetings dealing with issues between Israel and each individual delegation. The regional issues, the multilaterals, mattered less because they depended on the success of the bilaterals. The multilaterals were to be held in capitals all over the world to show the universality of the problem (in fact, over two years they were held in thirty separate cities). The Palestinian delegates viewed the move to Washington with misgivings, but, operating as part of a Jordanian delegation, they were bound by the Jordanian decision to attend. Furthermore, Arafat, forever a believer that America held the key to a settlement, accepted the move and endeared himself to Washington.

For months, meeting followed meeting without producing results. The Palestinian delegates, led by the respectable, well-mannered Abdel Shafi with Husseini acting as back-up, and speaking to the world through the reasoned, cultured voice of Ashrawi, made a good impression by addressing the substantive issues. Still determined to use delaying tactics, the Israelis refused to meet with the Palestinians separately—to them a move tantamount to recognition. They insisted on having the Jordanians in attendance—and intended to speak to them. The two sides would not enter the same room to begin talking, which produced a show which delighted the international press. Journalists called it 'corridor diplomacy' and press photographers took pictures of each side standing idly in corridors waiting for the other side to change its mind.

The bilateral peace talks in Washington were deadlocked. With the Americans determined to stay aloof from the day-to-day contacts in order to force both sides to compromise, the Israelis did everything to engineer a Palestinian walk-out. On 2 January 1992, they deported twelve Palestinian activists from the occupied territories and later defied a UN resolution to repatriate them. The Israeli budget for 1992 contained allocations for building settlements. Week-long demonstrations protesting the deportation order led to violence and the death and injury of many Palestinians. The period to March 1992 saw an increase in intifada violence, and

things looked so bleak that 117 members of the PNC asked for the negotiations to be suspended. By April and the fifth round of non-meetings in Washington the Palestinian negotiators too were in favour of suspending the talks. Unsurprisingly, this was not the position of Arafat, who repeatedly ordered them back after they threatened to walk out.[8-267]

Arafat was in the unenviable position of not wanting the negotiations to fail or succeed. His commitment to a peaceful solution to the conflict was strengthened rather than weakened by the opposition he encountered in making the concessions to Baker. He knew that failure in Washington would be a personal failure which would probably end his leadership. Simultaneously, he was determined to be the architect of any peace accord and, despite all evidence to the contrary, still believed that an agreement achieved through the delegation in Washington would allow Husseini, Ashrawi and the others to wrest the leadership from him and the Tunis PLO.

Shortly before the start of the Madrid Conference, one of Arafat's advisers arrived in London and succeeded in recruiting Arab journalists to spy on members of the Palestinian delegation on behalf of the Tunis PLO.[8-268] (In May 1997, Ashrawi reacted nonchalantly when I confronted her with this and responded with: 'There were many spying on us, but we had nothing to hide.')[8-269] During the talks of January 1992, acting on Arafat's personal orders the PLO office in Washington delivered $20,000 to a senior delegate whose loyalty to the organization was suspect. He was bribed to act as a counterweight to Abdel Shafi, Husseini and Ashrawi.[8-270] Furthermore, the same adviser who bribed journalists to spy on Husseini and Ashrawi told me that Arafat was expecting Ashrawi to 'burn out from over-exposure' and that Tunis was hoping to promote Saeb Irekat as her replacement.

In addition to the crass attempts to weaken the delegates' position, Tunis undertook more deliberate action in the occupied territories. Special committees were created to support the peace process; they were supposed to take their orders from Tunis instead of from local leaders.[8-271] Arafat spent money on these measures in the middle of the financial squeeze and while keeping Ashrawi and Husseini on a tight leash. Of course, there were dozens of Arafat-appointed advisers to the delegation who, in the words of Ashrawi, 'had no function but to make long-distance telephone calls and drink coffee'.[8-272] Maintaining them cost a great deal of money.

Meanwhile, Arafat instructed the delegates to hold a firm line. Without a strategy for the negotiations, he could not order them to make concessions he was obviously ready to make himself for fear that they might either resign or accept them and get the credit for reaching an agreement. The issue was not what the Palestinians were ready to offer, but who was going to make the offer and to whom. The resignation of the Shamir government in early February as a result of the defection of two extremist parties which had formerly supported him meant a moderate Labour government might come to power. Rabin had won the leadership of the Labour party and, though he had implemented harsh measures against the intifada, he ran on a platform promising peace. Unlike the knowledgeable people operating in the open in Washington, some of Arafat's advisers in Tunis saw salvation in contacts with a Labour government.

As if decreed by fate, an accident dramatically exposed the various attitudes towards him of all the parties to the negotiations. On 29 April 1992 Arafat was flying to Tunisia in a small plane. Over the Libyan desert the plane crashed, killing the pilot and two others and injuring Arafat. Unusually, no accusations of conspiracy were forthcoming from the PLO because the plane had been delayed by headwinds and had run out of fuel. For thirteen long hours, no one knew whether Arafat was dead or alive and individuals, groups and governments had a chance to express their views of the man.

It was Arafat's aide Bassam Abu Sharif who rose to the occasion in Tunis. Though neither an accomplished diplomat nor an educated adviser, Abu Sharif was capable of daring improvisations and anxious to assume responsibility during his boss's absence. On receiving the news he put through a telephone call for help to former President Jimmy Carter, someone with whom the PLO had established a relationship after he lost his bid for a second term. Carter wasted no time in contacting the White House and the appeal eventually reached the President. The Bush Administration behaved as if Arafat was an irreplaceable asset and acted quickly. It was an American satellite which eventually located the wreckage of the plane and provided information for the successful rescue operation.**(8-273)**

In Sweden for a conference, the distraught Ashrawi was overwhelmed by the number of news organizations asking for a statement. When she finally held a press conference and expressed hope for Arafat's safety while insisting that the Palestinian cause would survive whatever the outcome, the Arafat loyalists in Tunis accused her of treason and demanded a retraction. There was nothing to retract—she had behaved honourably.**(8-274)** The reaction of Tunis was a measure of the fear the PLO-in-exile entertained regarding the loyalty of Ashrawi and her fellow delegates to the peace conference. Like Arafat, they thought she was paving the way for a takeover by the indigenous leadership.

In the occupied territories, for thirteen hours life came to a standstill. People did nothing else except talk about the the loss of their leader, the symbol of Palestinian nationhood. They analysed the plane crash in terms of the deadlocked talks in Washington; they thought Arafat was behind the firm stand of the Palestinian delegates. To them, the lack of a successor underscored the void created by the deaths of Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad and the unfitness of the second-tier characters who surrounded Arafat. Most people had a difficult time remembering who made up the new group. Because of the total commitment of Ashrawi, Husseini and the rest of the local leadership to the primacy of Arafat, no one in the territories thought any of these figures could assume his role. The news that he had escaped death was greeted by demonstrations of utter joy.

In the Arab world, most countries were still feuding with Arafat over his stance in the Gulf War. But this did not stop them from viewing the prospect of his disappearance with genuine unease. Whatever Arafat's faults, Egypt and the moderates saw him as irreplaceable. They feared the end of the negotiations and the emergence of Islamic groups (which they were supporting nevertheless to keep him weak) as a replacement for the PLO. A more immediate prospect—violence and massacres in the occupied territories, and ensuing chaos—also haunted them. They were better off with Arafat than without him. Only Syria viewed

Arafat's possible demise, and the prospect of groups beholden to Syria attaining greater influence on Palestinian affairs, with a measure of equanimity.

The reaction from all corners of the world contained nothing surprising. To most governments and people, Arafat was Mr Palestine; overall, someone guilty of bad behaviour but a known quantity who could be relied on to pursue peace. All news editorials and analysis accepted him indirectly, through pointing out the danger of the growing power of the Islamists, the possibility that the intifada might reignite and turn more violent, and the absence of an heir apparent. In essence, the assessment of European and other countries resembled that of the USA, the delegates to the conference, Palestinians in the occupied territories and outside, and the Arab countries. Only the Israelis had nothing to say. The incident was reported without comment; Arafat was rescued before they had to address themselves to the implications of his absence.

The injured leader who emerged from the crash and was taken to Amman for medical treatment enjoyed hearing recitations of the premature obituaries. Though ordered to rest and await surgery to remove a blood clot on the brain, Arafat did not obey his doctors. Not one to accept even the most justified constraints on his activities, he received hundreds of people who paid him homage and told him of their distress when he was feared lost, and he read *suras* from the Koran. His hospital suite became a focus for re-confirming the fealty the Palestinians had accorded him over the years, and he loved every minute of it. Later he underwent a successful operation to remove the blood clot.

The crash was the most serious of dozens of close brushes with death. Outside reaction notwithstanding, its most important result was the effect on Arafat's thinking. His mortality now preoccupied him and he became a man in a hurry. He knew his instructions to the delegates in Washington to insist on a multi-step peace that would guarantee an independent Palestine were not attainable, and was more ready than ever to settle for something less. Not only did the prospect of dying without a tangible achievement haunt him, his post-Gulf War isolation remained. The euphoria generated by the start of the negotiations among the Palestinians had all but vanished and money was running out. The reaffirmation of his primacy which followed the crash gave him a psychological lift but did not solve any of his problems. Finding a way out of his predicament became more pressing than ever before.

Amusingly, on the popular level, the stories told after his rescue differed substantially in feeling from the initial response to the plane crash. Because of lack of movement in the negotiations and increasing signs that he had no intention of abandoning the peace process, rumours of a new Arafat began to proliferate. According to the original story, this new Arafat was a Mossad agent replacing the real one who had died in the crash. An embellishment of this story claimed that the real Arafat was replaced during the surgery in Amman which removed the blood clot on his brain—again with a Mossad agent, who was planted as part of conspiracy between King Hussein and the Israelis. The third variation merely sought to explain Arafat's later unpopular behaviour by claiming that he had been mentally incapacitated by the crash. It went on to attribute his refusal to take a firm stand against the Israelis to members of his entourage—aides who made decisions in his name in return for cash payments from the Israelis.

There was another unexpected revelation during the period which followed the crash, and it was confirmed a year later. News began filtering out that Arafat had a wife and that she had been involved in efforts to enlist the Americans' help in finding him. A year later, in Paris, Raymonda Tawil, a Palestinian activist who had suffered Israeli detention in the occupied territories on several occasions, confirmed that Arafat had married her daughter Suha. Thirty years Arafat's junior and a Christian, Suha was a tall blonde with green eyes who spoke several languages and had acted as Arafat's assistant. The worldly daughter of a banker, she was fond of telling stories about Arafat's hot temper, but played no public role until Arafat's later return to the occupied territories.

Although Suha herself remained silent, the reaction to the marriage was widespread. The Palestinians liked the idea of a first lady and Suha's Christianity was not an issue, not even with the Islamists. In fact, her refusal to charge into the limelight endowed her with the aura of a traditional Arab wife. Simultaneously this brought an end to the Israelis' foolish pursuit of rumours regarding Arafat's homosexuality. Arafat never said a word on the subject of his marriage, and this too endeared him to his countrymen and other Arabs and Muslims who believe 'the household' is not a subject for public discussion. He continued as if nothing had happened.

In May 1992, while Arafat was still convalescing in Amman, a meeting took place over lunch in Tel Aviv which was to change the future of the Middle East. The venue was a small Indian restaurant, the protagonists were Terje Rod Larsen of the Norwegian Institute for Applied Social Research (FAFO in its Norwegian acronym) and Yossi Beilin of Israel's Economic Cooperation Foundation. The Norwegian, involved through FAFO with humanitarian studies in the Middle East, especially conditions in the Gaza Strip, was concerned with improving conditions within the occupied territories. The Israeli was a academic who believed that direct negotiations were the only way out of the state of war between the Arabs and Israelis. In addition, Beilin was one of the rising stars of the Israeli Labour party and was close to Shimon Peres.

Almost in passing, but with the stalemated negotiations in Washington as background, the Norwegian suggested the use of his country as a conduit for direct Palestinian-Israeli contacts. The suggestion fell on receptive ears. Beilin was not only a promoter of direct negotiations but had been involved in several such attempts in the past, including unfruitful ones with the pro-PLO West Bank leader Sari Nusseibeh. He promised to pursue the idea if Labour won the imminent elections. Three days later they did and Rabin was named Prime Minister. Shimon Peres became Foreign Minister, with Beilin as his deputy.

Among the first acts of the new Israeli government was an announcement by Rabin that he would achieve peace with the Palestinians within a year. This was followed by the lifting of the ban on crypto-PLO individuals, in particular Faisal Husseini, as fully fledged delegates in the Washington negotiations. Whether this was aimed at helping the Washington negotiations or promoting Husseini as an alternative leader to Arafat is unknown, but it still represented a change in Israeli policy. Almost simultaneously, Rabin declared that there would no more political settlements aimed at populating the occupied territories with Israelis rather than affording Israel security. America started the process of lifting the freeze on loans

to Israel. The two moves increased the atmosphere of apprehension in Tunis. Arafat believed that the lifting of the ban was calculated to promote Husseini as a rival, and that the qualified end to settlement building and freeing of loans meant other settlement activity would continue and thwart all open or covert attempts by him to reach a peaceful solution.

Meanwhile Yossi Beilin was now in a position to act. Though many contacts had been made in the past, the Norwegian offer was attractive because Larsen was highly thought of by all sides, the Palestinians included, and because his wife, Mona Juul, was an assistant to the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Thorvald Stoltenberg. Three months after their initial meeting, in September 1992, Beilin used the presence in Jerusalem of Larsen, his wife and the Norwegian deputy Foreign Minister Jan Egeland to confirm the availability of an official Norwegian 'channel' that would supersede the sterility of the Washington negotiations. Egeland was enthusiastic about Norway playing a role in efforts to overcome the Washington impasse. Without Norway in mind, the PLO in Tunis was thinking along similar lines and was using Egypt and the Palestinian Ahmad Tibi to transmit messages to Israel reflecting considerable moderation regarding the thorny issue of Jerusalem.**(8-275)**

The unstructured exchanges between the Norwegians and the Israelis and the secret PLO position came together in early December 1992. The multilateral negotiations making the rounds of the globe were taking place in London. Yossi Beilin was a participant, along with Yair Hirschfeld, an academic junior colleague in his research institute. Hanan Ashrawi was doubling as a delegate to the multilaterals, and Larsen was there as an observer. Ashrawi, aware of Beilin's negotiations with Nusseibeh, was determined to set up a meeting between him and Ahmad Krei' (Abu 'Ala), the head of the economic department of the PLO and the director-general of SAMED, the PLO's commercial arm. Though direct contact with the PLO by Israelis had just been made legal, Beilin was reluctant to take up Ashrawi's offer. Finally a meeting between Abu 'Ala and Yair Hirschfeld was substituted by Beilin, who used the good offices of Larsen for the purpose.

Like Abu Mazen, the money man from the early days in Qatar, Abu 'Ala had grown close to Arafat after the deaths of Abu Jihad and Abu Iyad, and the one-time mathematics teacher in Kuwait represented a new and different breed of Palestinian leadership. He hailed from the village of Abu Dis (the butt of Palestinian jokes, like the Irish in the UK and the Poles in America) east of Jerusalem, and Arafat trusted him because of his financial manipulation of SAMED and subsequent control of money. The elevation of Abu Mazen and Abu 'Ala signalled the transfer to money men of duties which had formerly belonged to Fatah's original revolutionary group.

The London meeting found the representatives of two sides, Hirschfeld and Abu 'Ala, impressed by each other, lamenting the lack of progress in Washington and agreeing to meet again for general discussions. Hirschfeld, with Beilin and Larsen in the background, suggested Oslo as a venue. The surprised Palestinian accepted. But despite the good beginning, Larsen's experience in the Middle East had made him weary of attaching too much importance to the behaviour of individuals, regardless of their status. Because Abu 'Ala was an unknown quantity, Larsen visited Tunis to assess Arafat's attitude first-hand. Discursive and evasive, the

PLO chairman finally told the Norwegian what he wanted to hear: he had a role to play similar to the one played by Sweden's Sten Andersson, who had arranged Arafat's meeting with Rita Hauser and the American Jewish group.[8-276] Larsen was elated.

On 18 December, while Larsen was busy arranging a follow-up to London, the Rabin government came close to scuttling the Oslo channel and the negotiations in Washington. Over-reacting to the kidnap and murder of an Israeli border guard, Nassim Toledano, by Islamic militants, it deported 413 members of the Islamic movement Hamas to Lebanon. The international outcry which followed Rabin's iron-fist measure gained momentum when Lebanon refused to accept the deportees. The Hamas members, tired and without proper winter clothes at the onset of an exceptionally cold winter, settled for establishing a camp in no man's land between Israel and Lebanon, called Marj Al Zuhour, meaning 'field of roses'. Their plight became the leading international news story of the time.

Arafat wanted to use the deportation to improve the Palestinian diplomatic position, but the delegates in Washington wanted to suspend all negotiations, declared this without deferring to Tunis and confronted Arafat with open rebellion.[8-277] The confrontation had a familiar outcome: after failing to appease them, Arafat stormed out of the meeting and threatened to resign. He did not, but Heidar Abdel Shafi, though he continued as a member of the official delegation, gave up his leadership of the Washington group and took a back seat. In a rare act of defiance the PNC voted for a suspension, and in effect the negotiations were frozen for four months.

While they were in limbo, Arafat followed his own designs without much attention to the fate of the deportees. Abu 'Ala, aware that Arafat was committed to opening direct communications with the new Israeli government, had transmitted the results of his London meeting with Hirschfeld to Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), who had become Arafat's closest adviser. Later Abu Mazen and Abu 'Ala relayed the news to Arafat.[8-278] The PLO chairman welcomed the Norwegian channel, and asked Abu Mazen to oversee it and to keep him informed. To Abu Mazen, a man who had written a thesis on Zionist politics at Moscow University, this opportunity differed from others the PLO had pursued in the past; he suspected that Hirschfeld and Beilin had the backing of Peres.

On 20 January 1993, when the plight of the deportees was the focus of world attention, Palestinian and Israeli delegations arrived in Oslo on their way to the small town of Sarpsborg, a two-hour drive from the Norwegian capital. Yair Hirschfeld was accompanied by a fellow academic, Ron Pundak; Abu 'Ala's companions were Maher Al Kurd and Hassan Asfour. Because of Abu 'Ala's poor English, Al Kurd was to act as a translator while Asfour, a member of the Palestine Communist party, had encyclopedic knowledge of the history of the Arab–Israeli conflict, in particular the history of indirect negotiations and secret contacts.

Larsen, his wife Mona Juul and Egeland were there to greet them at Borregaard Manor, but the latter two withdrew and left Larsen with his five wards. There was no agenda and no attempt by Larsen to improvise one. Wisely, and noting that the Israelis looked like dishevelled men of letters while the Palestinians wore suits and silk ties, Larsen simply arranged for them to meet in the reception room of the old house. Both sides wanted to find out whether this was just another futile exercise

or the start of a real alternative to Washington. That the Norwegians viewed the affair with seriousness was made clear by the initial presence of Egeland and the manner in which both sides had been met in Oslo and transported to Sarpsborg.

The Palestinian team's official status was easier to determine than that of the Israelis. The PLO's finances no longer allowed for unauthorized forays, so if the Abu 'Ala group had come into this category it would have been remarkable. The credentials of the Israelis, however, were unclear; there was no way to judge whether they had official sanction or represented anybody in the Labour party. Still, the Palestinians could not afford to delay and they proceeded without clarifying this critical point. The Tunis PLO was almost bankrupt[8-279] and desperate to pursue any avenue of direct negotiations. There had been demonstrations in refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria because payments to relatives of martyrs had not been made and hospital and social services offices were closing down.

When the two sides faced each other Abu 'Ala launched into a long speech in Arabic, focusing on the need to supersede what was happening, or not happening, in Washington. The speech was significant both for what it said and for what it omitted. The most important concession amounted to a Palestinian acceptance of a phased Israeli withdrawal beginning with the Gaza Strip—something the Israelis had desired for a long time. Peres had suggested it in 1980 and Rabin had expressed it through a wish that Gaza 'would sink into the sea'.[8-280] Not only was this contrary to the position held by the delegation in Washington on Arafat's orders, but Abu 'Ala said nothing about the deportees whose fate was occupying Ashrawi, Husseini and Abdel Shafi. Emphasizing that he was in Norway 'to find solutions',[8-281] and that his purpose was to arrive at a declaration of principles based on the hitherto rejected Gaza-first option, he came close to leaving the Israelis at a loss for words. Hirschfeld responded politely, then for two days asked for reiterations and clarifications and got them.

To Abu 'Ala, Abu Mazen and Arafat, the question raised by the Sarpsborg meeting was the same as the one which had preceded it: did the Israeli intellectuals represent anybody? Arafat instructed them to clarify this point with Larsen, but the latter, despite the solid contact with Beilin, would not commit himself because he simply did not know. On the Israeli side, the enthusiastic report by Hirschfeld to Beilin produced a different result. Beilin decided that the time had come to brief Shimon Peres on what was happening. After considering the information for two weeks, Peres, emphasizing the Gaza–first option, finally told Prime Minister Itzhaq Rabin of the Oslo channel.

The two Israeli leaders had fought an acrimonious battle for the leadership of the Labour party, and the Foreign Minister had been Israel's leading dove while the Prime Minister was the hard-line architect of the iron fist policy. The enormity of the Gaza-first offer united them, but there was more to the sceptical Rabin's decision to accept the Oslo channel. Israeli intelligence reports had informed him that Arafat was running out of money,[8-282] Egypt had told him that the PLO was desperate to negotiate, and he had detected signs that the PLO was softening position through other contacts, in particular intermittent talks between the PLO's Nabil Sha'ath and Yossi Sarid, his Minister for the Environment.[8-283] Rabin decided the PLO approaches were serious; Oslo became an official function.

Meanwhile, Arafat was issuing warnings to the Palestinian delegates in Washington to toe the PLO line or face the consequences.[8-284]

By the time the negotiations in Washington resumed in May 1993, after the repatriation of some of the deportees and a conciliatory statement by Rabin that the deportation did not represent a precedent, the Oslo channel had achieved considerable progress. In Washington, Ashrawi, Husseini and Abdel Shafi were determined not to leave anything to chance. They presented a detailed proposal which covered the issues of a timetable for an Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories in accordance with UN resolutions, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, the spring water that Israel illegally pumped from the West Bank, Palestinian prisoners, and the vital questions of self-determination and Palestinian government. In the United States the Clinton Administration, unlike that of his predecessor George Bush, was unswervingly pro-Israeli. It had decided to take a direct role in the official negotiations and presented its own plan to overcome the impasse—a bridging proposal which reflected the opinions of Israel. Though informed by the Norwegians of the existence of the Oslo channel as early as April, the Clinton Administration viewed it with scepticism because they it had not been told of the changes in the Palestinian position. Secretary of State Warren Christopher decided in favour of shuttle diplomacy.

In February that year, following Stoltenberg's appointment as UN representative to Bosnia, Johan Jorgen Holst had become Norwegian Foreign Minister. Under his enthusiastic direction the Oslo negotiations had continued and there was initial agreement between the Palestinians and Israelis on a declaration of principles; this was known as the Sarpsborg Document. Early in April, an enthusiastic Arafat had told Egyptian President Husni Mubarak of the existence of the channel and his hopes for its success. When Itzhaq Rabin visited Egypt the same month, Mubarak told him of Arafat's report. Though apparently so unmoved that he was dismissive, on his return home Rabin approved the inclusion of official government representatives in the Israeli delegation to Oslo. He made this decision against a background of increasing violence in the occupied territories: March and April witnessed a reversion to the early days of intifada.

Uri Savir, the director-general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, and Joel Singer, an international lawyer who had participated in the Camp David negotiations, joined the negotiators in late May. Except for the replacement of Al Kurd, probably as a result of Israeli objections,[8-285] the Palestinian team remained the same. According to Abu Mazen, the Palestinians had decided against the presence of a legal consultant for fear of leaks.[8-286] In reality, Arafat had committed himself to reaching agreement in Oslo at any price; the PLO's financial problems were affecting his bureaucracy in Tunis and resulting in complaints, defections, paralysis and disintegration. To Arafat, lack of money and Arab support meant that the alternative to reaching an agreement via Oslo was the collapse of the PLO.

From May onwards, the meetings in Norway produced the clearest evidence of how disadvantaged the Palestinians were. The tough and abrasive Singer and Savir subjected Abu 'Ala to something akin to a courtroom interrogation, during which they attacked the Palestinian negotiators in Washington.[8-287] Amazingly, the Palestinian kept his cool and did not defend them. However, having made concessions regarding the major issues of Jerusalem, the refugees and a

Palestinian administration, Arafat needed a cosmetic Israeli concession over and above the ceding of Gaza. He instructed Abu 'Ala to ask for the addition of Jericho in any withdrawal agreement. Presented as an Arafat invention when final agreement was reached, this combination had been offered to (and rejected by) the Palestinians by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in 1977 as part of a multi-step settlement.[8-288] The Israelis accepted the inclusion of Jericho without defining what it meant. The only remaining points of contention between the two sides were subsidiary ones: official confirmation that the delegation represented the PLO, the manning of crossing points between Israel and its neighbours, and the Israeli insistence that the Palestinian National Covenant be amended to eliminate all references which questioned Israel's right to exist within safe and secure boundaries.

There were hitches and threats of walk-outs by the Palestinians, but they were no more than negotiating ploys. At one point Arafat backtracked and tried to reintroduce Jerusalem into the negotiations, but the Israelis refused to compromise and forced him to confirm his relegation of this issue to final status negotiations. Even Abu 'Ala was surprised. On 10 July, Abu 'Ala returned to another round of negotiations with a letter from Arafat confirming his position as PLO representative.[8-289] Later in July, an Israeli army attack on Lebanon by planes, helicopters and tanks was totally ignored by the PLO negotiators. Nothing beyond what was happening around the Oslo negotiating table seemed to concern them.

Realizing that the PLO was hooked, the Israelis decided to expedite the proceedings and overcome all the remaining obstacles, technicalities and problems of definition. They offered Arafat something he desperately wanted, perhaps the only thing he wanted—the recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. The Israelis suggested that an exchange of letters of mutual recognition should accompany the declaration of principles; the Israeli letter would accept the PLO as representing the Palestinians. Arafat agreed to the offer; it was the survival of the PLO that had been his principal concern. Holst was so astounded by the modest PLO demands that he travelled to Tunis in the company of Larsen to verify their acceptability by Arafat and to overcome the obstacles which remained.

The Oslo Agreement was finalized in Sweden in the early hours of 19 August 1993, nine months after the first meeting in London. Peres, anxious to intercept any possibility of Arafat changing his mind or introducing new elements, had arrived in Stockholm the previous day determined to settle the remaining minor points separating the two sides. He had invited Larsen and the ever-willing Holst to Stockholm and spoke to Arafat on the telephone through the Foreign Minister. The telephone calls lasted well into the morning, but Arafat agreed to everything. This meant mutual recognition by the two parties, limited autonomy for the Palestinians in Gaza and Jericho and the PLO's early empowerment there, the democratic election of a Council (Palestinian Parliament), and Palestinian control over the non-strategic areas of health, sanitation, education and postal services. All else was to be settled in future negotiations. The Israelis and Norwegians were ecstatic. In Tunis, without giving much thought to the negotiators in Washington, Arafat too celebrated. With him were Abu Mazen, Hassan Asfour, Yasser Abed

Rabbo, a defector from the PFLP who had become his spokesman, and a Lebanese friend. After kissing each other on the cheeks three times in the traditional Arab style, all of them started crying.

Summoned to read the agreement in Oslo on 19 August, the Egyptian lawyer Taher Shash, another participant in the Camp David negotiations, found the legal language acceptable, but telephoned the immovable Arafat and told him that it was worse than Camp David.[8-290] The agreement was initialled at the Plaza Hotel in Oslo. Though it still needed approval by the Knesset and the executive committee of the PLO, its acceptance was a foregone conclusion. The Palestinians were to inform the by then inward-looking Russians, and the Israelis would advise the United States. In the case of the Israelis, Peres and the whole Norwegian team flew to Santa Barbara, California, where Secretary of State Christopher was on vacation. Christopher welcomed the agreement, but not without expressing surprise.

A day later, Arafat set up a meeting of the PLO Executive Committee for 3 September. News of the agreement began leaking in many corners of the world. In a final act of humiliation, it was Israeli journalists in Washington who, on 27 August, told Ashrawi, Husseini and Abdel Shafi of what had happened. The Palestinians were preparing themselves for the eleventh round of negotiations. Two months earlier, they had asked Arafat about the existence of a secret channel of negotiations and he had denied it. Bitter and disillusioned, the official Palestinian delegates tendered their resignations.

Although Likud voted against the agreement, the Knesset accepted it by a relatively wide margin: the final vote was 61 in favour and 50 against. Only 13 out of the 18 members of the PLO's executive committee attended the 3 September meeting. Several members abstained, and the final vote, carried by a majority of one, was questionable. The Palestinian poet laureate Mahmoud Darwish resigned from the executive committee and accused Arafat of embarking on an adventure. The combative PLO leader replied, 'All my life has been a historical adventure.'[8-291] Darwish was joined by Shafiq Al Hout, the leader of a group totally ignored by the agreement: the four hundred thousand Palestinians in Lebanon. Farouk Qaddoumi, the man in charge of the PLO's foreign affairs, also announced his opposition and objected that he had been kept in the dark. Much more surprising was Abu Mazen's reluctance to vote for the agreement—he had viewed Arafat's latest telephone concessions to Peres with misgivings.[8-292] Despite such antipathy, the margin of one vote was all Arafat needed.

Arafat subsequently had a stormy meeting with Ashrawi, Husseini, Abdel Shafi and Irekat, who were subjected to their leader's screams of 'We're broke, we couldn't continue!' The revered Abdel Shafi would not rescind his resignation and returned to Gaza to continue his humanitarian work. Husseini and Ashrawi did relent, but only because of their belief in the need for a united Palestinian front. Ashrawi in particular offered her services to help the PLO in any way she could. Irekat withdrew his resignation and drew closer to Arafat, to be used as a token representative of the Washington delegation to endow the agreement with legitimacy.

To Faisal Husseini, what was achieved in Oslo 'was not peace, just a declaration aimed at achieving peace'.[8-293] This very important distinction, flagrantly ignored

by Arafat, determined the outlook of the whole world towards the Oslo Agreement. Everyone agreed it should be signed in Washington to guarantee it American support, but, because it was not a final peace agreement, the arrangements called for just Peres and Abu Mazen to do the signing on the White House lawn. Arafat the master of drama would not have that: it was his hour and he insisted on being invited.**(8-294)**

To Rabin, Arafat's exaggeration of the importance of the agreement was an unexpected gift and he too accepted an American invitation to go to Washington. The presence of the two leaders thus elevated an interim accord to a peace agreement. For Israel, this meant they did not have to concede more to achieve real peace. Meanwhile, Arafat was occupied with other things. Hours before the ceremony was due to start another problem emerged similar to the one which had occurred at the UN in 1974. Arafat wanted to appear carrying his gun. When the Americans would not allow it, he disingenuously suggested that he should drop it in view of everyone as a sign of the abandonment of violence. After his offer to give a performance was turned down, he finally agreed to part with it. Later, he held up the proceedings because the Israelis had failed to mention the PLO by name as the representative of the Palestinian people. The Israelis agreed to amend the text and the ceremony followed soon afterwards.

Noting that Arafat was determined to play the occasion for maximum effect, the Americans decided to go along with this. On 13 September 1993, the world held its breath. Thousands of people were in attendance and 400 million others were glued to their television sets to watch the signing of the Declaration of Principles of Interim Self-Government Arrangements. Three former American presidents and several one-time secretaries of state were there, along with dignitaries representing dozens of international organizations. So were numbers of Palestinian and Israeli children, wearing T-shirts extolling peace which had been specially made for the occasion. President Clinton occupied centre stage, flanked by Rabin, Peres, Abu Mazen and Arafat. The documents were signed by Abu Mazen and Peres after Clinton, Rabin and Arafat had made their speeches. Then, as if a reminder were needed, the first sign of what it all really meant jarred the proceedings. With Clinton's arms spread wide to nudge Arafat and Rabin closer to shake hands, a beaming Arafat extended his hand across Clinton while Rabin hesitated. The brief hesitation of the Israeli leader eventually gave way to a half-hearted handshake, but Arafat pumped his erstwhile enemy's hand repeatedly while savouring the applause which the event generated.

Except for Middle East specialists, nobody paid much attention to the title of the basic document, which betrayed its limitations, or to the contents of the mutual letters of recognition. Even the word 'autonomy', used to describe what would follow the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and an undefined Jericho, escaped analysis. It was a Menachem Begin invention, coined by him during the Camp David negotiations to express his refusal to accept Palestinian independence or a Palestinian state. Everybody was enamoured with the idea of a comprehensive Middle East peace, but to the knowledgeable, and to Palestinians belonging to PFLP, DFLP, Hamas and more than twenty other political groups, the agreement, the speeches accompanying the ceremony and the behaviour of the protagonists revealed a great deal.

Even the memoirs of the moderate Hanan Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, condemned the Arafat speech. Above all, having suffered from American one-sidedness, she found his statement to Clinton, 'We're relying on your role, Mr President,' unpalatable. Her bitter reaction to Arafat's speech was summed up by 'We wouldn't have recognized ourselves in it.'[8-295] To the celebrated Egyptian writer Mohammed Heikal, Arafat looked like a Hollywood actor 'collecting an Oscar'.[8-296] To Glenn Frankel of the *Washington Post*, 'The declaration of principles was defective.' In a lengthy interview with the author in May 1997, Ashrawi elaborated on her original objections by stating, 'Peres made fools of them, smiled and got everything. I believe firmly that we could have got more [in Washington].' Husseini refrained from using the first sentence, but used the very same words about getting more in Washington.

The objections to the agreement within Palestinian ranks were matched by misgivings among the Arabs. King Hussein saw the agreement as something less than he had achieved with Peres in London in 1987 but he still chose to back it. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia too compared it to his 1982 plan, the one Arafat backed and then abandoned, and refused to provide open support. The Egyptians, though they supported the agreement, could not help but compare it to what the Camp David Accord gave the Palestinians. They came to the conclusion that the agreements were the same and that the only difference was the presence of more Jewish settlers in the occupied territories. (By then their numbers had reached over 200,000 in the West Bank and 3500 in Gaza.) Algeria and Iraq were preoccupied with internal problems. As usual, Syria lamented the divisions in Arab ranks, gave the agreement ephemeral support and hoped that it might weaken Arafat.

In terms of how the agreement was reached and the brutal treatment of the official delegation to Washington, there is no better summation than the words of Faisal Husseini. Because of Arafat's repeated statements describing the Washington delegates as 'my sons and daughter, my team', Husseini states, 'Everybody thought we were PLO except the PLO.'[8-297] While the injury to their psyches and positions mattered, it was the contents of the agreement which most embittered the Palestinian delegates to Washington. To Ashrawi, 'Whoever initialled the agreement never lived under the occupation [of the occupied territories].'[8-298] Even Abu Mazen's memoirs, *Through Secret Channels*, despite deliberately overlooking the efforts of the Washington delegates and the way they were compromised, admit that 'The Israelis refused any reference to Palestinian national rights.'[8-299]

What was celebrated in Washington was a nine-page document with seventeen articles, plus another fourteen pages of annexes and minutes. The letters of recognition had been signed on 10 September, but they too were exchanged in Washington. Arafat's letter to Rabin was detailed, in most texts more than one page, but Rabin's to Arafat was a terse four-line paragraph. In his speech, Arafat was explicit and determined to give his own gloss on what was happening: 'My people are hoping that this agreement which we are signing today marks the beginning of the end…' Rabin, dealing with the knottiest problem dividing the two sides, stuck to a rigid Israeli line: 'We have come from Jerusalem, the ancient capital of the Jewish people.' Although the declaration reflected Israeli demands,

the general terms used meant that any final judgement of it depended on how it was interpreted and implemented. Nevertheless, the contents of the letters of recognition were irreversible. In other words, while Israel and the PLO recognized each other, there was nothing in the declaration for the Palestinian people.

The interim agreement contained no solutions or guarantees regarding the size of territory to be ceded the Palestinians, a Palestinian state, the future of the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, water, the Palestinian refugees and Jerusalem. These issues were relegated to the permanent status negotiations, which were to begin after three years of the interim agreement and to be finalized before five years had passed. Even the functions of the interim authority were couched in vague language. To the Palestinian lawyer Burhan Dajani, the basic document and letters of recognition amounted to 'a complete presentation of Israeli requirements and utter neglect of the rights of the Palestinian people'.(8-300) The Palestinian writer Edward Said assessed that 'Israel got its tactical and strategic objectives.'(8-301) The objections from Dajani, Said, the important members of the Washington team and other Palestinian moderates made for a long list:

1. There was no coordination and consultation with the Arab governments regarding Oslo. This meant that there would be no Arab support in interpreting and implementing it. Honourably, Husseini had kept the Arab governments informed of developments in Washington.
2. The PLO/Arafat letter of recognition offered the Israelis total cooperation and implied that the intifada would be ended. This too eased the pressure on Israel and left it in a position to attach its own interpretation of the terms of the agreement.
3. Rabin's letter did not mention the UN resolutions which were supposed to provide an overall framework for the agreement. This deliberate omission provided Israel with the ability to interpret the agreement selectively.
4. The provisions for the election of a Palestine Self-Government (subsequently referred to as Council) reduced Palestinian demands for a state to an assembly representing small towns. The Council was to represent the Palestinian people living in the occupied territories, but there was no mention of the land over which it exercised its jurisdiction.
5. The mention of resolutions 242 and 338 in the basic declaration, weakened by Rabin's failure to refer to them in his letter of recognition, failed to state what the resolutions meant. Because the resolutions had been subject to different interpretations since 1967, it amounted to nothing.
6. Even issues which did not merit being deferred to a later date, such as the fate of over ten thousand Palestinian prisoners held by the Israelis, were not resolved and there was no timetable for releasing them.
7. The central issue of Jerusalem was deferred to final negotiations.
8. The whole agreement was tantamount to nothing more than recognition of the PLO as a representative of the Palestinian people in future negotiations.

To Shimon Peres, the agreement saved Jerusalem for Israel—Arafat had conceded Jerusalem to get Gaza.(8-302) Moreover, the Israelis had no intention of

accepting the principle of free elections as called for by the agreement. On 5 May 1994, former deputy chief of Mossad and political adviser to Prime Ministers Rabin and Golda Meir, Shmueil Toledano, told me, 'If Hamas wins the Council elections, then we will cancel them.'[8-303] This was an admission that the Israelis would not accept any results except ones which guaranteed the primacy of the PLO and Arafat. Perhaps it was the inclusive statement of the Israeli writer Amos Oz which went to the heart of the matter. He hailed the agreement as 'The second biggest victory [after the creation of the state of Israel] in the history of Zionism.'[8-304]

The world's media continued to ignore the substance of the agreement and the recognition letters, and concentrated on rehabilitating Arafat the former terrorist. In a short time he became a statesman. Arafat cherished his new international image, while telling the Palestinian people that what he had done was a victory for them. To the annoyance of the Israelis, he declared, 'Soon Palestinian flags will fly on top of every minaret and church.' Enemies of the agreement, to Arafat 'enemies of peace', were lumped together under the labels of extremists (fundamentalists) and terrorists, even the Christians among them.

On 2 November, less than two months after the signing of the agreement on the White House lawn, the Tunisian authorities traced an unauthorized radio transmission. They arrested a Palestinian, Adnan Yasin, and handed him over to the PLO for interrogation.[8-305] Yasin was an assistant to Hakam Balawi, the man who had succeeded Abu Iyad as PLO security chief. A Mossad agent, Yasin had succeeded in planting bugging devices in the offices of several PLO leaders, including that of the negotiator Abu 'Ala. Though he was the only PLO official to be charged with spying, and the whole affair became the subject of a huge cover-up, little doubt exists that Israel knew all about the conditions under which the PLO was negotiating. The Israelis had negotiated an agreement with an organization which had suffered from lack of Arab support and internal divisions and was threatened by bankruptcy. According to Itzhaq Rabin, the PLO which negotiated Oslo was no more than a shadow of its former self.[8-306]

Chapter 9

Ten Thousand Goons and a Goalie.

The Oslo Agreement changed the nature of the Arab–Israeli conflict in a fundamental way, but it did not and could not end it. It enhanced the positions of Israel and Arafat and the PLO, mostly in the eyes of the outside world and in terms of their ability to deal with each other, but the euphoria which accompanied the signing was short-lived. Arafat's concessions cast doubt on whether he would be able to carry his people with him; the most important issues had been relegated to the final status negotiations; and considerable ambiguity surrounded the articles of the Declaration of Principles. What had been achieved was mutual recognition and a commitment to end the conflict through diplomatic means. Everything else depended on Israeli and PLO goodwill.

In personal terms, the recognition of the PLO and of his individual leadership by the world community was a singular political triumph for Arafat. He loved his new status, and it showed in the way he walked and talked—the firm step, the broad smile, and the statesmanlike references to the 'peace of the brave' and 'an end to war and conflict'. He took to speaking slowly and more deliberately, even making frequent references to his poor English. The participants in Oslo became 'my friends'. He exhibited a sense of confidence, secure in the knowledge that the recognition put an end to the possibility that the PLO as it existed in Tunis might be marginalized and replaced by local leadership.

In Oslo and later, however, Arafat insisted that considerable financial support was required to underwrite the primacy of the PLO and make the agreement work in the face of Palestinian and Arab opposition. Abu 'Ala and Abu Mazen, both businessmen, became more important to his plans: he needed financial advisers more than political ones. He commissioned a number of studies to determine what it would take to enliven the economies of Gaza and the West Bank. Politically, he followed his own counsel; he equated the welfare of the PLO with that of the Palestinian people. Once again, the PLO's financial situation became a major factor in determining the outcome of negotiations with Israel.

The recognition of the Tunis PLO by the United States and other major powers added to the problems of radical guerrilla groups and the local leaders Ashrawi, Husseini, Nusseibeh and Abdel Shafi. The latter group was against undermining the PLO, and opposing its policies was now a greater impediment to Palestinian ambitions than ever before. Questioning the unpopular terms of the agreement required the creation of a coherent alternative to Arafat, beyond the scope of the 'too intimidated, divided and suppressed' moderates.[9-307] Meanwhile, the PFLP, DFLP and smaller groups were divided and bereft of meaningful political and financial support. Only the religious movements Hamas and Islamic Jihad were unaffected by the post-Gulf War political atmosphere which given rise to Oslo. Their position resembled Arafat's and Fatah's after the Arab defeat of 1967: by remaining on the sidelines they survived in good enough shape to benefit from a disaster.

The rising fortunes of the Islamists led the PFLP, DFLP and the rest of the rejectionist camp to negotiate with them to form a common front, an effort which eventually culminated in the creation of the Palestinian Forces Alliance. However, this proved to be just another grouping which failed to act as a cohesive unit. Arafat successfully neutralized the moderates at a time when the hard-liners were in no position to mount an effective challenge to his leadership.

Still, Arafat was astute enough to recognize that time was against him. He needed to turn his diplomatic victory on the world stage into something tangible for his people. Promises of financial help had been made, but it would take time for them to materialize and substantial progress in the negotiations was doubtful. This is when the master propagandist concentrated on broadening the base of support for the Oslo Agreement. His efforts to promote it with his people and the rest of the Arabs resulted in a reversal of his traditional role.

Before Oslo it was moderate Palestinians and pro-West Arab governments who had tried to 'sell' peace plans to Arafat. After Oslo, he was doing the selling. In the 1980s he had turned down King Hussein's plan for a joint Jordanian–Palestinian

position, acceptance of UN resolutions and direct overtures to Israel. He had rejected the Fahd Plan (even though he had initiated it) and vetoed the participation in negotiations with the United States by the leadership of the occupied territories. Oslo left him with less than what these efforts had promised, but Oslo was his alone and it cast him in the role of peacemaker.

Arafat's first concern was to gain greater Palestinian support for Oslo. Although the agreement had originally been rejected by guerrilla groups, Hamas, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, most of the leadership of the occupied territories and Palestinian intellectuals, this did not affect the reception it received from the exhausted, impoverished people of the occupied territories. Initially, they accepted Arafat's word that peace and economic wellbeing were on the way. They looked forward to freedom and the emergence of a Palestinian state. But this enthusiasm was short-lived and their joy soon gave way to doubt.

The Israelis continued to follow an iron fist policy, and the number of Palestinians killed and wounded after the agreement did not decrease. Arafat was unable to respond without endangering the accord, even when the Israelis killed the popular Fatah leader Ahmad Abu Rish (no relation to the author) on 28 November 1993. Of course, the rejectionists used this inauspicious start to effect. Coupled with the absence of tangible benefits from the agreement, the Israelis' behaviour altered the perception of Oslo on street level. The sudden change in the situation increased support for the Islamists and they won the elections to the student council of Bir Zeit University, the largest Palestinian institution of higher education, in December 1993.

Because of the diminishing support for the agreement, Arafat steadfastly refused to convene the Palestine National Council to legitimize what he had done. Debating Oslo and what followed it was the last thing he wanted. Instead he invited dozens of Palestinian businessmen, landowners, journalists and 'loyal' leaders from the occupied territories to visit him in Tunis to 'discuss' the agreement. He was more comfortable relying on his personal ability to convert individuals than depending on the support of groups, organizations or anything which represented a structure. Even dealing with non-governmental charity organizations made him uneasy and he ignored them.

Arafat offered his visitors variations on the same refrain: 'For every 100 reasons against the Declaration of Principles, I can give you 300 in support.'[9-308] Then he would launch into a discourse about the PLO's financial problems, 'the perfidy of our Arab brothers' and how fighting Israel was tantamount to fighting its ally, the United States, and hence unrealistic. He always concluded his discourse by making personal appeals to the listeners which recalled elements peculiar to them and their families; he made them feel as if everything depended on them. Some accepted his reasons, out of belief or because they saw no alternative to his leadership. But it was the well-known lawyer Mousa Mazzawi, a representative of educated Palestinians, who dealt a damaging blow to Arafat's salesmanship efforts. When summoned to Tunis to endorse the agreement and accord it a measure of legal acceptance, 'Brother Mazzawi' steadfastly refused to accommodate him.[9-309] Arafat's efforts were inconclusive.

The second problem facing him was the position of King Hussein of Jordan. Arafat's acceptance of less than what Hussein had secured in his 1987 London

Accord with Shimon Peres threatened to cancel the reasons for Hussein's rejection by the Palestinians and as a replacement for Arafat. Arafat went to Jordan several times to explain the agreement to 'my brother King Hussein', and embraced the King more warmly than usual. He made several references to an eventual confederation between Jordan and the Palestinian entity after Oslo had been implemented, saying that 'the fate of Palestine and Jordan is one and the same'. Familiar with Arafat's promises of convenience, Hussein listened without committing himself. The King remained a potential competitor.

Only Egypt saw in the agreement a fulfilment of Camp David and a vindication of Sadat's policies which had been adopted by Mubarak. After rebuffing the initial US efforts to get them to back the agreement, the rest of the Arabs felt no pressure to adopt a clear position and took shelter in inactivity. Arafat was less concerned with their political support than with a resumption of their financial backing—at least in getting them to release tax money collected from Palestinians working in their countries. Some of them received Abu Mazen but refused to help, and all the oil-producing countries rejected Arafat's attempts to visit them. In January 1994 he finally managed to visit King Fahd, only to hear the latter condemn PLO corruption and insist that Saudi aid, a mere $30 million, be channelled through the World Bank. Because the promised financial help from the rest of the world was dependent on progress in implementing the Oslo Agreement and this was taking longer than expected, the refusal of the Arab countries to rescue Arafat was particularly devastating.

The dwindling prospects of securing broad support from the Palestinians, forging an alliance with King Hussein and receiving financial help from the rest of the Arabs forced Arafat into greater reliance on the agreement itself and the political and financial support that the West, the United States in particular, was willing to put behind it. Because Western support was conditional on Israeli acceptance of the follow-up agreements to clarify Oslo and turn it into an actual plan, Arafat became dependent on his partnership with Israel to overcome the results of Palestinian and Arab opposition. An economic conference convened on 1 October 1993 to assess the needs of the occupied territories resulted in promises of $2 billion by twenty-eight donor countries, considerably less than the $8 billion Arafat had requested. Furthermore, this money was earmarked for specific projects with the donors supervising its use. These restrictions placed the promised aid money beyond Arafat's reach and limited his ability to use it to promote himself and the PLO. On 17 November that year, Abu 'Ala openly admitted that the PLO was bankrupt.**(9-310)**

The financial crisis became a vicious cycle: the worse it got, the greater was Arafat's need to make Oslo work. Making it work meant enticing the Israelis to move faster, and enticing the Israelis to move faster depended on making more concessions. Arafat had no time to haggle, bargain or conduct lengthy negotiations. Implementing Oslo in accordance with an Israeli interpretation of its vague terms became his only lifeline. To Rabin, the reluctant participant in the peace negotiations, Arafat's problems represented an opportunity to give the agreement the harshest interpretation possible. The absence of Israeli goodwill was total, and very short-sighted.

The first point for negotiations between the two sides was the withdrawal by Israeli forces from Gaza and Jericho, scheduled to begin on 13 December 1993, exactly three months after the signing of the agreement. This would have allowed direct and controlled international financial aid to start filtering through to the new Palestinian Authority. Knowing this, Rabin decided to play for time. He repeatedly told the press that there was nothing sacrosanct about the 13 December date. Though not given to outbursts, he never hid his dislike of Arafat and eventually explained the reason for the delay in negative terms: 'If Arafat is sweating, let him sweat.'[9-311]

Rabin was determined to undermine Arafat and his promises of a 'Palestinian state, praying in Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem and creating a democracy'. The Israeli leader's early rejection of a Palestinian state was followed by his government's aim to reduce the Palestinian presence in the occupied territories.[9-312] The verbal blows to Arafat's hopes were accompanied by uncompromising Israeli activities on the ground. Less than two weeks after the Washington ceremony, on 26 September, the Israelis responded to small disturbances in the Gaza Strip by demolishing seventeen houses, making sixteen arrests and carrying out two summary executions.[9-313] Nothing had changed.

Meanwhile, Rabin's adherence to the ban on the building of 'political settlements' did not stop him from approving the 'thickening' of existing ones—increasing their population by sponsoring more settlers. Rabin's actions amounted to a rejection of Arafat's attempt to form a common front with Israel and thwarted all steps to make Oslo a first step in a process which would culminate in Palestinian statehood, Arafat's declared goal. The difference between Arafat's and Rabin's interpretations of Oslo was starkly revealed during their October 1993 meeting in Cairo.

The 'summit meeting' to overcome the deadlock between the negotiation teams resolved none of the outstanding issues. The negotiators were instructed to redouble their efforts. Arafat had already appointed Tunis loyalist Nabil Sha'ath, a money man and unqualified diplomat who had acted as his personal overseer at the Washington negotiations, to head the Palestinian team. His Israeli counterpart was General Amnon Shahak, the deputy chief of staff of the Israeli Defence Forces and a man with considerable knowledge of the territory under discussion. The elevation of Sha'ath amounted to a demotion for the representatives of the intifada and their replacement by 'outsiders', the Beirutis who had run the Tunis PLO.

Ashrawi, Husseini, Shafi and others within the occupied territories continued to plead for PLO reform, for an end to Arafat's inefficient personal style of management and for greater participation in the negotiations by people who knew Gaza and the West Bank, but it was to no avail. Arafat would not listen to them, resented their criticism and depended more and more on Sha'ath, Abu Mazen, Abu 'Ala and the old Tunis bureaucracy, most of whose members had little idea of conditions within the West Bank and Gaza. Even members of the technical committees who were negotiating the various aspects of Oslo came from Tunis. The only requirement for being appointed to a technical committee was closeness to Arafat.[9-314] The Beiruti outsiders had an advantage.

At that point, Rabin's idea of making Arafat sweat took the form of a deliberate attempt to humiliate him. The Israelis refused to accept the term 'President' to

describe Arafat's position.[9-315] This was followed by a refusal to allow the putative Palestinian Authority to issue passports and stamps (some were supposed to carry Arafat's likeness on them). Soon afterwards, during November and December 1993, the Israeli negotiators insisted on retaining control of the entry points to Gaza and Jericho.[9-316] On this Rabin was his usual uncompromising, brusque self: 'We will not give you control of our borders.'[9-317] Later Rabin insisted on using the word 'deployment' instead of 'withdrawal' to describe the planned Israeli pull-out from Jericho and Gaza. 'Deployment' signalled Israel's determination to retain the right to remilitarize these areas in the future. Meanwhile, the Israelis released a small number of Palestinian prisoners and showed little inclination to do anything about the rest. The Palestinian negotiators were offered nothing.

In February 1994, Peres and Arafat signed the first Cairo Agreement which incorporated Israel's security demands, Israel's right to veto Palestinian returnees to Gaza and Jericho, and a new stricture: Arafat accepted Israel's decision to rename settlements and call them blocs.[9-318] It was a new concession which ran counter to Arafat's promises to his people that the settlements would eventually be dismantled. Taking into account also Israel's control of water sources, Rabin's uncompromising position on Jerusalem, the delays in the release of Palestinian prisoners, a new decision to build $600 million worth of roads to integrate the settlements into pre–1967 Israel and a determination to speak of the Palestinians as aggressors, the Israelis were succeeding beyond their most optimistic expectations. Arafat's concessions during the period September 1993 to February 1994 confirmed the worst fears of those who considered Oslo an instrument of total surrender, described by Edward Said as a Palestinian Versailles.[9-319] It certainly made credible the claim that Oslo and what followed it 'exposed Israeli strengths and Palestinian weaknesses'.[9-320] Yet, by approving these concessions, Arafat and the Tunis PLO were confirmed as the protectors of the agreement.

The small, isolated acts of violence during the negotations in Taba and Cairo (the venue changed back and forth) were ignored, but the Hebron massacre of 25 February 1994 came close to ending the whole peace effort. Wearing an Israeli army uniform an Israeli settler, Baruch Goldstein, sneaked into Hebron's Ibrahimi Mosque in the early hours for the sole purpose of killing Arabs performing the dawn (*fajr*) prayer during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Using an Ml6 automatic rifle and taking advantage of the deliberate or accidental inattention of Israeli guards, he kept reloading and firing his weapon until twenty-nine worshippers were dead and over three hundred lay wounded. It was a supreme act of religious pornography—a religious fanatic murdering others in the midst of their religious observances.

Goldstein was a thirty-five-year-old transplanted New Yorker, a medical doctor, the type of Jew who moved to Israel for religious reasons rather than through homelessness or economic need. He was a resident of Kiryat Arba, a small settlement outside Hebron which had been set up immediately after the 1967 War. A member of the Kahane Chai (Kahane Lives) movement (followers of a certain Rabbi Kahane, who had advocated cleansing the land of greater Israel of all Arabs), Goldstein objected to the use of the mosque by Muslims. It contains the Tomb of the Patriarchs, as well as the tombs of Abraham, Jacob and Rebecca, and

had been shared as a place of worship between Palestinians and Israelis on an unfair basis: there were 120,000 Muslims and fewer than 3000 Jews, yet they got equal time and space (in fact, time and again the space allocated to Muslims was reduced). Goldstein was a suicide assassin who was killed by enraged Muslim worshippers, but his act of lunacy contained an unmistakable message. In addition to denying Palestinians protection against the actions of the Israeli army, the Oslo agreement had overlooked the danger of extremist settlers. The settlers, armed by the Israeli government as they were and still are, became a real source of physical danger to the Palestinians.

The Israeli government reacted to the carnage in Hebron by placing the 120,000 Arabs of the town under curfew, and Israeli patrols operated under shoot-to-kill orders to contain the riots which broke out everywhere. But amazingly Kiryat Arba, the home of the fanatical followers of Kahane and the unrepentant friends of the assassin, was not placed under curfew.**(9-321)** Member after member of Kahane Chai told television reporters of their approval of Goldstein's action and their desire to eliminate the Arabs of Hebron—or at least to evict them. Though Kahane Chai had been banned because it advocated violence, the many incitements to murder Arabs went unpunished. One thousand people walked in Goldstein's funeral procession and his tomb soon became a place of pilgrimage.**(9-322)** The Israeli government expressed its regrets.

In fact, the Rabin government did not consent to the creation of a special commission to investigate the incident until international pressure forced it to do so.**(9-323)** The Shamgar Commission, named after the judge who presided over it, was empowered to investigate collusion by other Kiryat Arba residents, the alleged involvement of soldiers in the incident and the methods of Kahane Chai. This perfunctory move aside, Rabin saw Arafat as the one person capable of defusing the situation. He tried to reach Arafat by phone 'to discuss the problem'. But with Palestinian demonstrators throughout the occupied territories burning Arafat's effigy in protest for the first time in history, the PLO leader responded with a dramatic, 'I will not speak to him, not while my people are being massacred.'

This time the usual Arafat dramatics in front of the television cameras did not solve his problem. Shaking with anger and tearful over 'the genocide being committed against the Palestinian people', he asked for United Nations protection for the Palestinians of the occupied territories. But he would not suspend the negotiations, cast doubt on their future or condemn the Rabin government. Jordan, Lebanon and Syria suspended their negotiations with Israel immediately after the Hebron massacre, but Arafat would not act. On 1 March the PLO's executive committee over-rode Arafat's objections and voted to suspend the negotiations.**(9-324)** Even Abu Mazen voted for suspension. It was a major defeat for Arafat which was accompanied by an improvement in the fortunes of his opponents, above all the Islamists. Arafat repeated his belief in 'the true implementation of the peace process' as if it were a *sura* from the Koran.

That month the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 904, which condemned the incident and called for the stationing of 160 unarmed UN observers in Hebron. Though the United States abstained and exposed Arafat's untenable position further, his belief in Washington's importance stopped him from criticizing the Clinton Administration. He was still determined to resume the

negotiations and used the UN vote to do so on 18 March, without reconvening the PLO's executive council. Soon afterwards he had a telephone conversation with the Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, in which he accepted Israel's condolences. Even the Shamgar Commission's suspect report—one with which the PLO officially disagreed, which claimed that Goldstein had acted alone, and which absolved members of the Israeli army who had failed to stop him before and during the shooting—elicited no response from Arafat. Members of Kahane Chai celebrated Shamgar's findings.

Ironically, it was the hard-liner Rabin who underscored the unsound nature of the Israeli presence in Hebron and the rest of the occupied territories. In March 1994, following the killing of five more Palestinians during riots, he spoke at a Labour party conference and openly admitted that 120,000 Arabs were being 'held hostage by 400 Jews'. In a later speech to the Knesset, the Israeli leader released his country's official statistics relating to the intifada. According to these, 2156 Palestinians had died, 25,000 had been wounded and a staggering 120,000–140,000 (nearly 8 per cent of the population) had been detained or arrested. But Rabin used the figures to make a statement to defend his policies and not to help Arafat. He was demonstrating the unfeasibility of keeping a whole people enslaved, to justify his ratification of the peace agreement and to gain approval for the use of Arafat to solve the problem.

This coincided with Palestinian and Arab statements expressing disgust with Arafat's subservient ways. The rejectionists, Islamists and Syria issued denunciations, but this time they were joined by Arab moderates. On 28 March the Egyptian magazine *Rose Al Yussuf* carried a cartoon depicting the boots of an Israeli soldier covered with Palestinian kisses. Arab anger was so intense that the Egyptian government allowed students at Cairo University to demonstrate against Israel, Oslo and Arafat. Inside the occupied territories, the old story of a post-crash Arafat lookalike working for Mossad gained renewed currency.

The emergence of an Israeli lunatic fringe determined to stop its country's government from meeting Arafat's ever-diminishing demands was followed by confirmation of Palestinian anger. On 6 April an Islamic bomber blew up an Israeli bus near the town of Afula. Eight people were killed and fifty-two wounded. A week later, on the 13th, the Islamists struck in Tel Aviv and this time there were six killed and thirty wounded. As a measure of Palestinian frustration, the people who had carried out the suicide bombings were spoken of as heroes. But Arafat condemned them outright. As he inched towards signing the second Cairo Agreement, the one which gave Oslo the worst possible interpretation, he was already isolated from mainstream Palestinian thinking. Even the young militant members of Fatah, the Fatah Hawks, were reaching out to Islamic Hamas to form a united front. Arafat's only attempt to remedy the situation consisted of building bridges with the old elite of the territories, along with other hated groups including collaborationists. The people behind the intifada, the people who made world recognition of the PLO possible, were totally ignored by him.

On 29 April Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in Paris signed the Protocol on Economic Cooperation, an agreement governing the economic relations between the two sides during the interim period. An extension of the Declaration of Principles, it linked the economy of any future Palestinian entity to Israel and

made it dependent on and subservient to Israeli economic policy. The Palestinian Interim Authority was to follow Israeli rules and regulations governing imports and import duties. The Authority was to impose a value added tax similar to the one in Israel (this made products from the West Bank and Gaza uncompetitive in other Arab countries which had no such tax). The Authority was denied the right to reduce the price of fuel and other commodities and had to impose obligatory car insurance similar to that in Israel. The two sides were to cooperate in the fields of general economic issues, technology, the sciences and business relations between different elements of their communities. Furthermore, the protocol allowed Israel to suspend at will the use of Palestinian labour, the source of 25 per cent of the gross national product of the occupied territories.

All other issues, including consumption, production, investment and external trade, were left to the decisions of the Joint Economic Committee. Because Israel had a veto on the decisions of this committee and because the PNA was more dependent on a strong Israel than vice versa, the whole protocol amounted to an attempt to integrate the economy of the territories into that of Israel. Palestinian economists from the territories, Professor Jad Itzhaq in particular,[9-325] objected to the agreement, but their opinions were ignored. Having conceded so much on the political front, Arafat was not about to make Israeli economic hegemony an issue.

Five months behind schedule and seven months after the start of the negotiations to detail Oslo, the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators finalized the Cairo Agreement on 4 May 1994. It covered the assumption by the Palestinian Authority of 'responsibility' for Jericho and Gaza and paved the way for further withdrawal or deployment agreements. But, typically, Arafat used the public ceremonies to endow what was happening with drama, and used this drama for personal gain.

The major point of contention between the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators had been the size of Jericho—whether it was a town, district or region. Under Jordan, Jericho had been a major district encompassing 360 square kilometres. But the Israelis would not accept this and used a stricter definition which limited it to 54 square kilometres. Bereft of bargaining power, the Palestinian team under Nabil Sha'ath, unlike other Palestinian negotiators an unqualified group who never questioned their masters' instructions, finally accepted the Israeli definition.

Arafat appeared at the signing ceremony in Cairo worried about a Palestinian backlash. Although the 2500 guests included the US Secretary of State Warren Christopher and the Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozeyrev, and the occasion was held under the auspices of President Mubarak, most of the Palestinians and other Arabs who had been invited refused to attend. Faisal Husseini stayed in Jerusalem and wired Arafat with a pointed public plea, 'Mr Chairman, please do not sign this agreement.'[9-326] The Arab reaction to the agreement was similar: the Secretary General of the Arab League, Ismat Abdel Maguid, and various Arab ambassadors boycotted the ceremonies. Unable to respond to Husseini, the Arab boycott, or to twenty-five notables from the occupied territories who had also petitioned him not to sign, Arafat resorted to the theatrical. It was his way of assuming the mantle of a tough negotiator.

When the time came, Arafat signed the lengthy document and attachments and handed back copies to the Israeli side. But to everyone's amazement he had not signed the map showing the size of Jericho. After determining that the omission was deliberate, Mubarak, the host, became livid. His and Egypt's dignity at stake, he railed at Arafat in front of dozens of television cameras. When Arafat pretended to stomp out, Mubarak followed him to a corner and, wagging an angry index finger, ordered him back. Arafat signed the map while protesting its dissimilarity to the one he had been shown before—though without producing a copy of the one he liked—and made remarks about not trusting the Israelis. The only result of his last-minute histrionics was the embarrassment they caused. What often worked with local people failed in front of an international audience.

I was visiting the West Bank and Gaza at the time, and I can testify that not a single Palestinian, be they politicians, academics or ordinary citizens, mistook his performance for toughness or saw anything in it beyond a piece of play-acting. They knew that he had already accepted whatever fiefdom the Israelis had ceded to him and that the all-important issue of sovereignty had been progressively eroded. On a visit to South Africa a week after the signing, Arafat called for a jihad—a holy war—to liberate Jerusalem. The call fell on deaf Palestinian, Arab and Muslim ears. Nobody was listening to him any more. The Israelis sent him a message asking for clarification. No answer came back.

In addition to defining Gaza and Jericho, the agreement contained twelve further articles. These covered a schedule of redeployment of Israeli forces; transfer of authority; structure, jurisdiction, responsibility and legislative powers of the Palestinian Authority; arrangements for security and economic relations between Israel and the Authority; and the creation of a liaison committee to oversee the implementation of the terms of the agreement. The articles regarding security and the function of the Palestinian police occupied a whole page, while the one about human rights was a three-line exercise in vagueness. In essence, the articles dealt with how the Authority was to function and not with what it was. What it was had been determined by Arafat's concessions, which left Israel in charge of water, entry points, settlements and Jerusalem and gave it the right to veto every single function of the new Authority.

The Palestinians were aghast, most of them angry to the point of being unintelligible. But it was Holocaust survivor and human rights activist Dr Israel Shahak who delivered one of the final judgements: 'The agreement means that Arafat is now annexed by the American–Israeli security system. In return he will get nothing except permission to be a local dictator.'[9-327] Meron Benvenisiti of the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem said, 'It was an Israeli victory and an abject Palestinian defeat.'[9-328] The Israeli writer Amos Oz, as determined as ever to sugarcoat Palestinian losses by according the people behind them statesmanship, spoke of the PLO signatories being 'the most moderate likely [Palestinian] leadership'.[9-329]

The gradual handover of Gaza and Jericho began on 13 May. Shahak was right—the retreating Israelis were replaced by elements of Arafat's three sources of power: nine thousand security men who had been living in Arab countries since the debacle of Lebanon, the Tunis bureaucracy, and a small group of money men and notables who owed their loyalty to the chief and not to the Palestinian cause.

To the people of the occupied territories the newcomers were an alien governing group, many of whom spoke with Lebanese, Syrian or other accents. Historically they resembled the Mamluks who ruled Egypt between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries—a privileged caste of mercenaries.

On 1 July 1994, Yasser Arafat returned to the occupied territories for the first time in twenty-seven years. Hundreds of thousands turned out to greet him, and there were unmistakable scenes of jubilation. But it was not for love of the agreements he had signed—it was a celebration of the only semblance of a Palestinian government in modern times. Hope was in short supply, and anything that contained the smallest grain of it would have been welcomed. After kissing Palestinian soil, Arafat played on the theme of hope while, unexpectedly, sounding a note of reality.

To Arafat what was happening was 'a first step', and he pleased the Gaza crowd out to greet him by promising to secure the release of Sheik Yassin, the Hamas leader who had been detained by the Israelis along with three hundred followers since 1989. But he admitted: 'There will be hardship, there will be hunger and, as always, Palestinians must rely on no one but themselves.' This time his call for Palestinian self-reliance had a hollow ring to it. The agreement which brought him back to Gaza showed that his policies of Palestinian self-reliance had failed to deliver what the Palestinian people wanted.

Arafat occupied the former British governor's house in the town of Gaza, Mansion House, turned one floor into modest living quarters for himself and his wife, who arrived later, and proceeded to function as the president of the council of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The council had not been elected, so this amounted to a granting of absolute power to the PLO pending the holding of elections. Not only did the chairman of the PLO become the president of the PNA, he was also its prime minister, the commander of the armed forces and president of the legislative council, and had the power to appoint, promote and fire members of the judiciary. The executive, legislative and judicial powers of the PNA were thus vested in the person of Yasser Arafat or subordinated to PLO bodies over which he presided. It amounted to installing a one-man, one-party system.

Yet even with such a system of government, Arafat was supposed to exercise the powers vested in the party through adhering to the articles of the basic law, something akin to a provisional constitution, a framework for self-government. Published by the PLO in three different versions late in July 1994, the articles of the law were to guide the PLO and Arafat during the transitional period. (Whether transitional referred to the period before the emergence of a state or pending elections was not totally clarified.) In fact, the whole exercise of publishing the basic law was just another attempt to placate the people. Though it promised adherence to democracy and United Nations human rights articles, the law was flawed in two major areas. It addressed itself to people and not territory—not a word about the areas covered by it—and the Israelis extended their control over the PNA by allocating themselves the right of veto over its articles.

Settlements within the areas evacuated by the Israelis were not covered by the law, nor were the roads leading to them and whatever occurred in them. The Israeli–Palestinian Legislative Sub-Committee was the interpreter of the articles of the basic law, and this automatically gave Israel the right to approve or disapprove

the ways in which it was applied. The only functions over which the PNA exercised authority without having to defer to Israel were those of education, tourism, social welfare, health and direct taxation. In the case of taxation, some of the money was to be remitted to Israel to defray occupation costs. Israel was to retain control over thirty-three services until after PNA elections or final status negotiations. What was being transferred was, in effect, what a state delegates to a municipality and not what one state might cede to another. This is when the accusation that Arafat was creating nothing more than a small town government became popular. The words of the human rights activist Hussein Daif Allah summed up what was happening: 'Even registration of cars remained in Israeli hands.'[9-330]

Arafat proceeded to create a structure for the PNA in line with his traditional thinking. The three areas of greatest concern to him were to form a PNA executive (essentially a cabinet), to establish a security apparatus and to control all aspects of propaganda. This was an opportunity for Arafat to depart from the unwieldy structure of the Tunis PLO and to build bridges with the people of the occupied territories, but he ignored it. Even loyalists from the PLO-in-exile warned against superimposing the inefficiencies and ways of Tunis and recommended a new approach. Bassam Abu Sharif, for instance, bluntly stated that the PLO must 'adopt new ways or perish'.[9-331] Arafat refused to listen. He paid little attention to the emerging chasm between the corrupt outsiders from Tunis and the educated, democracy-loving local people of 'the inside'.

Angry over the terms of the agreement and their subordination to minor status, most local leaders refused to join the PNA Executive. Concerned, Hanan Ashrawi announced the formation of the Independent Palestinian Commission for Citizens' Rights. Despite repeated offers, Heidar Abdel Shafi steadfastly refused to have anything to do with 'Arafat's government'. Faisal Husseini, a true Jerusalemite with endearing affection for his place of birth, accepted a position which gave him responsibility for the city. Jerusalem's fate was in the hands of ignorant negotiators who reported directly to Arafat, and Husseini hoped to use his expertise to stop them making concessions.

The appointments to the twenty-person executive revealed a great deal about Arafat's intentions. Nabil Sha'ath, Initissar Wazir (the widow of Abu Jihad), Yasser Abed Rabbo and Munib Masri were outsiders. The appointment of Masri in particular rankled; he was the man who had saved Arafat in Jordan in 1970, but also a Hussein loyalist who had been a member of the Jordanian cabinet after Black September. From the inside came Elias Freij, once accused of treason by Arafat himself and hardly an accepted local leader. There was also Mohammed Zuhdi Nashashibi, a member of an old family of landowners with no following. Of course, Saeb Irekat took whatever post was offered him. According to the head of the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre, Ghassan Khatib, Arafat was using 'individuals and families and not classes or representatives of classes or groups'.[9-332] The refusal to rely on anyone who represented a point of view or had a popular base behind them was something Arafat had done since the days of Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunis. As it was, Arafat had little regard for his appointees and seldom told members of his executive what he was doing, even when dealing with what nominally fell under the control of their ministries.

Arafat followed the appointments to the executive by dealing with city councils. He replaced the elected or independent traditional leadership of the towns with an old guard of incompetent loyalists; in the case of the city of Nablus he replaced the whole council. In Gaza, he replaced the competent and popular mayor Mansur Shawa because the man questioned his orders.[9-333] To make things worse, Arafat appointed Zakkaria Agha to the vague position of PLO representative in Gaza, to use against organized entities when necessary. Agha, though an insider, had not participated in the intifada and was resented by the people who had.

After the city councils had been neutralized Arafat turned his attention to the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), mostly humanitarian establishments with connections to the outside world. The NGOs had successfully contributed to the maintenance of services in education, health and social affairs—understandably, the ones Israel ignored and ceded to the PNA. Arafat placed all contacts with the outside world under the PNA and subordinated them to his government apparatus. Most members of the board of trustees of Al Makassed Hospital, the largest in the West Bank, were replaced by Arafat loyalists. The PNA claimed that the board was a political organization. This created an unnecessary bureaucratic layer made up of loyalists who judged everything by how it might affect Arafat's political standing. Arafat's bureaucrats allocated non-government aid money to groups which supported their boss.

The trades unions, with over 250,000 members, were already emasculated by the agreement with Israel which stipulated that all the taxes levied on their members working in Israel would be disbursed to the PNA. Weakening the unions was in line with generally eroding all organizations and structures. Even women's organizations did not escape Arafat's attention, and he replaced the leadership of those which had opposed the Declaration of Principles. Associations of doctors, engineers and lawyers suffered the same fate; individuals with a direct line to Arafat often replaced elected popular leaders.

Perhaps it was what Arafat did to the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PEDCAR) which told most about the direction of the Palestinian National Authority. PEDCAR was created by the World Bank immediately after Oslo for the purpose of controlling much of the aid money donated to help the new Palestinian entity. It was meant to subscribe to rigid financial controls and to follow recognized accounting procedures, the opposite of Arafat's 'flexible' ways. Upon returning to Gaza, Arafat appointed himself chairman of PEDCAR and gave himself the right to approve everything it did. The organization's director, Yusuf Sayigh, resigned in protest.[9-334] Arafat used his departure to disempower the remaining members of the PEDCAR board. Financial control was back in his hands, but PEDCAR lost its credibility and there were many harmful delays in receiving aid because the donors' wish to control the use of money conflicted with Arafat's methods.[9-335]

After establishing an ineffective executive, destroying local organizations and seizing control of the finances, Arafat reverted to his old habit of utilizing an entourage of yes-men and sycophants, acolytes without official titles or job descriptions. Abu 'Ala, Abu Mazen and Nabil Sha'ath were reconfirmed as his closest advisers. Sha'ath doubled as a member of the cabinet. The Subservient Saeb Irekat, another cabinet member—the one person from the original

negotiating team with no local following or stature—was added to this group. He became Arafat's punchbag, the figure Arafat berated publicly whenever things went wrong. (The PLO leader is still in the habit of calling him 'Gahel', meaning 'ignorant', whenever Irekat dares question him.)[9-336] Hakam Balawi, the man in charge of security in Tunis and boss of Mossad agent Adnan Yassin, became Arafat's adviser on security. The results of the investigation into the Yassin case have never been published.

The personal style of leadership rejected the concept of organizations and ignored anyone with administrative experience. According to Arafat's biographer Dany Rubenstein things were so bad that there were three drivers for every official car.[9-337] Everything from distributing aid money to who got a telephone line was decided by the chief. The measure of anyone's importance was their ability to meet him and to have their picture taken with him. Arafat reverted to his favourite role of tribal sheikh. The diwan which he had created in Tunis was expanded: instead of Palestinian businessmen trekking to see him, it was ordinary people who felt a direct link to him raised their status. Petitioners for jobs for their sons and relatives beat a path to his door, as did shopkeepers wanting a signed picture to show to customers and people engaged in land disputes and tribal feuds. Everybody was welcome—everybody, that is, except people who represented ideas, organizations or structures.

The other areas of concern to Arafat, security and propaganda, also had an inauspicious start. Article 9 of the Cairo Agreement stipulated the presence of 'a strong police force'. While both sides needed it to protect themselves against opponents of the Oslo Accord, their conceptions of the function of this force were different from the start. The Israelis, still in overall charge of military affairs, were more concerned with their own security. Their vision of a strong police force was a narrow one: they wanted it as protection against militant Islamic groups and others inclined to resort to terrorism to undo the agreement.[9-338] Arafat, though realizing the need to stop acts of terror, was implicitly opposed to reducing his police force to an extension of the Israeli security apparatus. He liked the idea of a PLO military force: he saw it as his private army, an expression of Palestinian separateness—perhaps its essence. In the past, reviewing troops and being with them had given him a psychological lift; now it became a substitute for having an independent entity, its only living symbol.

The disagreement regarding the function of this force has haunted both sides to this day. Seven thousand of the initial nine thousand force which began arriving in Jericho and Gaza on 13 May belonged to the Palestine Liberation Army which had been scattered in Arab countries throughout the Middle East. Fearing the development of empathy between the local population and the agreed 'police force', the Israelis had insisted that it should be made up of outsiders. The outsiders who arrived were trained as soldiers and not as policemen. Their lack of preparedness was underscored by the fact that they were the first department of the PNA to receive outside financial help: the USA, Britain and France made contributions to their maintenance.[9-339] Incredibly, in another show of insensitivity towards the Palestinian people Arafat appointed Haj Ismael to command the first contingent to enter Jericho. During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Haj Ismael had been accused by other Palestinians of cowardice and fleeing his post.

Other things followed which diminished the stature of this force in Palestinian eyes. Forbidden by the agreements from calling his troops an army, Arafat discarded the Palestinian Liberation Army title and renamed them in a way which defined their function. Though other formations were created later, the first arrivals were called the Preventive Security Service (PSS). They were empowered to arrest or imprison people because they belonged to particular political groups, opposed PNA policies or spoke against the terms of the Oslo and Cairo agreements. Events were to confirm this.

Two things added to Palestinian disquiet over the real function of the PSS. Among the first acts of Colonels Jibreen Rajoub and Mohammad Dahlan, respectively in charge of Jericho and Gaza and directly responsible to President Arafat, was the holding of security coordination meetings with Yacov Perry, head of the hated Shin Bet Israeli internal security police, and with General Amnon Shihak, the Israeli deputy chief of staff, who had been appointed chief Israeli negotiator. The latter meeting implied that Israel considered the question of security vital to the progress of negotiations. As a result of these meetings and other contacts, and in breach of the articles of the Cairo Agreement, the Israelis allowed members of Jibreen's force to roam the West Bank freely in pursuit of suspects and opponents.**(9-340)** Soon Rajoub's men were conducting what amounted to a cleansing operation of dissident Fatah elements and others in Nablus, Qalqilya and Tulkarem. In the process one person died and fifty were wounded. A short time later the first reports of Palestinians dying under torture began surfacing.

The Arafat propaganda apparatus was similarly beholden to the Israelis, but in this case the different Palestinian and Israeli interpretations of its duties were more pronounced. The Declaration of Principles stipulated the creation of a radio and television network to promote the peace process; this later became known as the Palestine Broadcasting Corporation (PBC). To Arafat, this meant promoting the eventual emergence of a Palestinian state. The Israelis saw in it a way of confirming the concessions to the contrary which they had obtained from Arafat. Because Arafat could not afford a public display of disagreement and because the Israelis believed they could control the PBC, the two sides once again went ahead without resolving this very important problem.

Palestinian radio came into being on 1 July 1994, the day Arafat arrived in Gaza. Its director was Radwan Abu Ayyash, an Arafat loyalist from the occupied territories. He became director of PBC six months later, after television started. Radio Al Quds (Jerusalem), as it was called, carried Arafat's speech and hailed the beginning of 'a free Palestine'. Astonishingly, in a taste of things to come, it used the same frequency as the one used by Palestinian dissidents in Damascus.**(9-341)** Arafat was determined to deny his people the benefit of the opinions of others.

The Israelis helped start Radio Al Quds, which was located in Ramla, by providing it with facilities which had belonged to a radio station run by Jordan before 1967. As in the case of the security apparatus, outside financial help was more readily available for disseminating propaganda than for alleviating poverty. The Germans provided the broadcasting authority with aid money to buy radio and television transmission equipment. The Israelis provided PBC with programmes and offered technical help. Subsidizing Arafat's propaganda machine

became a symbol of outside governments' interest in helping the peace process move forward.

The start of radio broadcasting was followed by meetings with all local newspaper editors in which Arafat told them that it was their duty to promote the Authority and overlook its mistakes. In justifying his order, Arafat responded to their misgivings by repeating, *Mish wa'atu*—'It is not the time for it.' He meant it was not the time for self-criticism—without saying anything about when it might become appropriate. He advised the editors to rely on Wafa, the PLO news agency which had moved to Gaza with him and whose director reported straight to him. He ended his meeting by inviting the editors to deal directly with him on all issues of substance and gave them his private telephone number. After that he posed for pictures with each of them. Afraid, all of them saw fit to hang the signed pictures in their offices.**(9-342)**

Two groups became alienated from what was happening. In addition to Husseini, Ashrawi and Abdel Shafi, Sari Nusseibeh sought to distance himself and took a year's sabbatical with a think-tank in Washington. The people behind the Beit Sahur civil disobedience campaign were given the cold shoulder. Ziad Abu Zayyad, an intifada leader and a participant in some secret talks with the Israelis, froze his activities. In addition to politicians, the PNA had very little contact with human rights organizations: even Ashrawi's Centre for Citizens' Rights received little cooperation. Think-tanks such as the Centre for Research and Studies, the Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre and the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) were viewed with suspicion. The politicians and intellectuals of the intifada were marginalized.

Israel's intransigence in the negotiations left Arafat with nothing to offer his people and added to his desire for greater personal control of everything. Even though he was in his mid-sixties, much to the chagrin of his complaining young wife he worked an eighteen-hour day and devoted most of it to inter-Palestinian affairs. Nabil Sha'ath and Saeb Irekat shuttled between the venues of Cairo, Sharm Al Sheikh and Taba, held meetings with Israeli negotiators and came back empty-handed. The negotiations centred on phase two of the Israeli redeployment, a withdrawal from more Palestinian towns and villages. But as in the period before the Cairo Agreement, the Israelis persisted in their efforts to impose their own interpretations and to undermine Arafat. Because their behaviour helped his enemies who threatened his position, he was forced into ever more dictatorial behaviour.

The first problem facing the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators was the expansion of settlements. Because the Oslo and Cairo agreements did not contain any challenge to the Israeli occupation law during the interim period, the Israelis continued their expansion activities under the guise of 'thickening, creating nature reserves and starting stone quarries'. According to Dilip Hiro, the magazine *Jerusalem Report* of February 1995 'revealed that ongoing Jewish settlement activity was in progress almost everywhere in the West Bank'.**(9-343)** The Israelis introduced another invention of which I, as owner of land near a settlement, have direct experience. Arab landowners were denied the right to sell their land or build on it if it was 'within strategic distance from a settlement'. The definition of

'strategic distance' was never articulated, and this regulation was definitely in violation of the spirit of the agreements.

Arafat and his negotiators argued and protested, and he himself could not understand why 'they are out to undo the agreement', but the Israelis were immovable. While the area of land confiscated during this period is disputed, there is little doubt that the Rabin government approved some measures and allowed Israeli municipalities and private groups to carry out others unimpeded. Rabin's decision to stop the establishment of 'political settlements' still left the Israeli government free to confiscate land for roads, allowed it to look the other way while individual acquisition of municipal land and property took place (around 60 properties in the old city of Jerusalem)[9-344] and provided it with an excuse not to interfere in land sales by poor Arabs.

The second problem between the negotiators centred on the repatriation of Palestinian refugees and the release of prisoners. Time and again Arafat had told his people—promised them, in fact—that four hundred thousand Palestinians would be repatriated. His belief was genuine and he actually counted on it to happen. The Israelis, however, spoke of a mere thirty thousand, a token effort to reunite families separated by wars, particularly that of 1967. Once again, Rabin showed no interest in anything except extracting the most out of the weak Palestinians and humiliating Arafat. This was followed by an Israeli refusal to release most of the Palestinian prisoners. Token releases took place, including five hundred after the Cairo Accord and a number of women prisoners who, illegally, were asked to sign promises of good behaviour as a precondition. But the Israelis held on to most of the prisoners, despite knowing that it would affect Arafat's popularity.

The policies within the territories were followed by measures which proved that there was Israeli opposition to Palestinian self-determination and an independent Palestinian government. In June 1994 Israel and Jordan signed a preliminary agreement ending the state of war between them, and there was a final agreement the following October. In contrast to his attitude to Arafat during the signing ceremonies in Washington, Rabin was openly friendly with King Hussein and he and Foreign Minister Peres invited the King to pray in Jerusalem, something they had always denied Arafat. That invitation was a signal that the Israelis still preferred Hussein. In November that year the Israelis used their control of the entry points to Gaza to stop the Pakistani Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, from visiting Arafat. In between, the Israelis told several governments that they could not open embassies, legations or other forms of diplomatic representation in Gaza.

Arafat's position was deteriorating on all fronts. The only consolation came in October when he heard that along with Peres and Rabin, he had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He used the occasion to make a new declaration regarding his commitment to peace and to praise his 'friend in the White House'. Although this final act of rehabilitation meant a great deal internationally, the people of the occupied territories and Palestinians everywhere saw nothing in it except another confirmation that Arafat's actions were pleasing to outsiders but producing nothing for them. With unemployment in Gaza and the West Bank hovering around 50 per cent, the disenchantment with the results of the agreements began to express itself violently.

On 9 October, unknown Palestinians kidnapped an Israeli soldier, Nachsohn Waxman. The Israelis blamed Arafat and held him responsible for the hostage's safe return. The Palestinian security forces, acting on Arafat's personal orders, began a methodical and extensive search and arrested and interrogated dozens of people. Arafat made his position abundantly clear: 'I condemn this act and the people responsible for it and they will be punished.' His gesture went unappreciated. The Israelis held him personally responsible for Waxman's safety, insisted that the soldier was being held in areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority and equated the failure to find him with violating the agreements. Ten days later, Israeli forces stormed a house in the village of Beit Naballah, still under Israeli control, and found Waxman dead. Conveniently forgetting their previous accusations regarding the kidnapped soldier's whereabouts, the Israelis nevertheless continued to blame Arafat and to demand a better performance from the Palestinian security forces. Rabin was out to destroy him.

Foolishly thinking they could handle the situation better, the Israeli security forces were ordered by Rabin to target 'Palestinian terrorist forces wherever they are'.**(9-345)** A number of Islamists were targeted and assassinated, mostly in areas ostensibly under the control of the PNA. Alluding to the agreements and the efforts of the Palestinian security forces, Arafat made a personal appeal to Rabin to desist. Rabin added insult to injury and refused to respond. Despite Arafat's persistent efforts Rabin never overcame a psychological barrier which made him treat the Palestinians' leader as nothing more than a necessary evil, and he never did anything to ease his plight.

On 19 October a Hamas suicide bomber blew himself up in a bus in the middle of Tel Aviv. Twenty-two people were killed and fifty others were injured. Caught between Islamic militancy and Israeli insensitivity, Arafat lashed out without restraint. He angrily attacked 'the conspirators receiving orders from outside to destroy our dream of a homeland'. With his security forces facing problems controlling the Islamists he reinvigorated the Fatah Hawks, the militant wing of his political movement who had proved unruly and willing to cooperate with Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and entrusted them with 'dealing with the terrorists'. It was probably Arafat's first use of a word which had been used to describe him for most of his life. A Palestinian civil war looked imminent.

On 3 November, still trying his utmost to balance his desire to maintain a Palestinian position while responding to Israel's increasing security demands, Arafat attended a service in honour of Hani Abed, an Islamic activist who had been assassinated by the Israelis the day before. The reaction to his presence was the opposite of what he had expected—shouts of 'Collaborator!' echoed throughout the mosque. Another man would have left immediately, but Arafat stayed on—only to suffer physical humiliation. Angry young men snatched his *kuffiya* and made threatening gestures, and he was whisked away by his entourage in a state of shock and utter disbelief.

Nothing demonstrated Arafat's predicament more than what happened during an emergency meeting between him and Rabin in Madrid to discuss the Tel Aviv bombing and a smaller one which killed three Israeli soldiers on 11 November. According to an aide who was present, Arafat spoke of a total commitment to the peace process, pleaded for understanding of 'the critical situation facing all of us'

and cited facts and figures about his efforts against the bombers. He said, 'I cannot do more without imprisoning all my people.' Rabin could not wait for him to finish and hurriedly presented him with a threat that 'Israeli forces would fire indiscriminately at Palestinians should these incidents continue'. When the meeting ended, both men found it difficult to shake hands.

On the 18th, something akin to a Palestinian civil war broke out. When over two thousand worshippers at the Great Mosque in Gaza demonstrated and shouted abusive slogans at Arafat, his security police responded by opening fire. Before calm had been restored, fourteen Palestinians were dead and three hundred injured.(9-346) The casualty list was longer than on any day of the intifada, and many Palestinian began referring to him as 'the military governor of Gaza' or 'Israel's local chief of police'. A few days later militants assassinated Sheikh Assad Saftawi, a Muslim cleric whom Arafat had befriended and tried to use to enhance the PNA's Islamic credentials and appease the Islamic movements. The Israelis viewed these developments with malevolent detachment.

The Israeli thinking during this period bordered on the perverse. That Rabin was under internal pressure to protect Israeli citizens against acts of terror is undoubtedly true—Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu never tired of accusing him of allowing terrorists 'within a striking distance of Tel Aviv'. But Rabin showed no inclination to cooperate with Arafat on this subject and instead limited the Palestinian leader's options. His behaviour regarding other issues was less than constructive, in particular his unwillingness to stop the expansion of settlements. And he did nothing to expedite the ceding of more territory or to make the Israeli army act in a less aggressive way. All things considered, he gave Arafat little reason to help him.

Rabin's reaction to the bombing of a bus in Jerusalem on 25 November, for example, was to close the occupied territories to Palestinian workers for two weeks. This tactic had been tried in the past without any results, and in this instance all it did was increase the financial problems of the Palestinians—eighty thousand of them were stopped from entering Israel. In fact, the repeated closures towards the end of 1994 increased unemployment to the staggering level of 58 per cent.(9-347) Instead of crippling the bombers, it helped them and allowed them to point out the economic failure of the agreement.

As it was, only $140 million of the $700 million allocated to the PNA for its 1994 budget was received. Arafat's conflict with international donors regarding control of the money contributed to the delay, but lack of progress in the negotiations to increase the size of the territory controlled by the PNA was another factor, and the Israelis were behind this. In November 1994, with the PNA unable to pay salaries and threatened with collapse, Terje Larsen of Oslo Agreement fame declared that the international aid programme had been a failure. Delegated by the UN to remedy the situation, Larsen forestalled the PNA's bankruptcy by arranging a $150 million package of emergency aid without any strings attached. By overplaying their hand, the Israelis had allowed Arafat to gain control of the aid money.

On 27 December 1994, Jewish zealots began to build a settlement south of Bethlehem. Efrat was a major new project rather than a thickening or expansion effort. At first Rabin claimed that it was a private enterprise in which the

government could not interfere. Later he referred the whole thing to the Israeli Attorney General for consideration, but did nothing to stop the construction pending a final decision. Arafat's statements that this was 'a clear violation of the agreements with Israel' went unheeded. The Attorney General decided in favour of the settlers. The mayor of Jerusalem, Ehud Olmert, announced that the municipality would build more houses in the old city. Again, Rabin refused to act.

With a Palestinian civil war looming, Israel's actions lowered Arafat's standing with his people while helping him become the sole arbiter of their fate. His diminishing popularity with the people of the occupied territories was forcing him into greater dependence on his Tunis PLO, the corrupt and unpopular outsiders. Meanwhile, Israel approved Arafat's plans to expand his security forces and by the end of 1994 their numbers had risen to thirty thousand, more than the number of teachers. Much of the new UN aid money was used to pay their salaries and those of thirty to forty thousand bureaucrats. The Wafa news agency, the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation and Arafat's press spokesmen received a disproportionate amount of the emergency funds. The PNA established military courts and empowered them to administer justice in a highly questionable fashion: among other things, people were tried and convicted so speedily that they were often denied the right of defence.[9-348] In October, PSS served notice that its powers extended to press censorship and it blocked the distribution of the pro-Jordanian *Nahar* newspaper. This was followed by the detention for sixteen hours of a Palestinian human rights activist, Dr Raja Sourani. The less popular Arafat became, the more he resorted to arbitrary dictatorial measures which were enforced by the Tunis PLO.

In early 1995 the Israeli position was exposed, leading to more violence. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres no longer saw any need to deny what his government was doing: 'We will build with or without declaring it.'[9-349] Islamic fundamentalists responded by exploding two bombs in the Israeli town of Natanya, killing twenty-one and wounding many more. Arafat's security forces rounded up hundreds of Islamists whom they imprisoned and tortured, but without finding the perpetrators. Israel ordered another punitive border closure against Palestinian labourers.

Arafat continued to follow policies which contributed to the developing problem between insiders and outsiders. He cancelled the results of a poll in which the local PLO nominated known insiders to run for the council elections[9-350] and followed what he called 'child's play' by creating his own list of candidates made up of outsiders unknown to most of the local people. The Arafat loyalists, including members of his close entourage, took commissions on business deals with the outside world,[9-351] most of which involved the use of aid money to buy basic commodities and food.

Early in the year it was announced that Suha Arafat was pregnant. Although she had been denied any role, even the right to decorate her living quarters, she began to complain about her husband not having a home life and not devoting enough time to her. The Sorbonne-educated Suha was eventually allowed to participate in meetings of charity organizations and to speak to the press. Her simple, straightforward manner held considerable appeal and she was totally supportive of her husband's 'preoccupation with the cause'. Despite many reports

to the contrary and claims that she was involved in business deals, I was not able to uncover any. There were two occasions when she helped foreign correspondents arrange exclusive interviews with her husband, but apart from that her activities remained peripheral and essentially decorative. In June 1995 she gave birth to a daughter whom the parents named Zahwa, after Arafat's mother. Sensibly, the birth in a Paris hospital—remarked upon because Suha would not use the local health services—was not followed by any special celebrations.

Arafat was unable to develop permanent policies to deal with any of the problems facing him. Protesting that the Israeli settlement policy was in violation of 'the agreements we reached in Oslo and Cairo' and threatening the peace process, he did nothing beyond appealing to the United States and Egypt for help. Neither was in a position to do more than express disapproval of Israeli policy. Arafat followed this with several overtures to Islamic groups and tried to get them to join the PNA, but the basic differences between them outlasted temporary truces and announcements regarding a united front against 'the common enemy'. Running his security forces took more and more of his time. He promoted Colonel Jibreen Rajoub, in charge of security in Jericho, to membership of his negotiating team and in so doing added to Palestinian non-acceptance of its membership. In addition to being involved in corruption in handling the aid money, the Beiruti outsiders within his entourage became sub-agents for Israeli companies which in the past had distributed imported goods to Palestinian areas.**(9-352)**

Still working a sixteen-hour day, Arafat had very little personal life and literally lived above the office. Constantly on the move, he solicited the support of governments in Europe and throughout the world, but no one could help. He was consuming more uppers and downers than ever before. His hands began to tremble and there was a glassy look in his eyes. Nothing of substance changed.

The Israeli shoot-to-kill policy was made official in mid-February 1995. In April there was another dual bombing, followed by yet another in August. Border closures between Israel and the occupied territories were becoming longer and more punishing. The Israelis heaped accusations of non-cooperation against the PNA and demanded stronger security measures. Because of the dramatic nature of the bombings, the Israeli demands for greater security overshadowed all the important issues being negotiated by the two sides. The USA ignored Israeli policy on settlements and closures and supported Israel's 'legitimate security needs'. In March 1995, both Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Vice President Al Gore pressed Arafat to take stronger measures to meet the Israeli demands.

On 24 September 1995, Arafat and Shimon Peres signed the Taba Agreement. Four days later, in an attempt to publicize progress in the peace process, it was countersigned in Washington. This time there was no enthusiasm among the Palestinians or worldwide—just ordinary press coverage. Taba, or Oslo II as it was later called, represented the conclusion of the first phase of the negotiations with the Israeli government. It was to be followed by more deployment, then the final status negotiations.

The agreement, consisting of 31 articles, 314 pages and 9 maps, divided the West Bank into three zones. The Palestinian National Authority was to have control of all civil affairs in Zone A, comprising the towns of Nablus, Ramla, Bethlehem, Tulkarem and Qalqilaya and accounting for 6.6 per cent of the West

Bank's land mass. (Because of the difficulty in reconciling the interests of 120,000 Arabs and 400 Israelis, there was no agreement on Hebron and this matter was left to a later date.) Twenty-four per cent of the area of the West Bank was designated Zone B and was placed under joint Israeli-Palestinian control, with Israel having the final say in what happened there. The remaining 69 per cent of the West Bank remained under direct Israeli control. Among the articles of the agreement was one which called for the strengthening of the Palestine security forces. The only positive aspect of the agreement was the release of more Palestinian prisoners, but this fell short of expectations and the Israelis continued to detain most of them. The actual number of Palestinians in Israeli prisons is unknown.

To assess what Arafat had achieved and how the context had an overwhelming influence, it is necessary to examine the background to the Oslo I, Cairo and Oslo II agreements. First, the negotiations for all three took place under unhelpful conditions: the poor state of the PLO finances and lack of political support following the Gulf War weakened the Palestinian bargaining position. Secondly, the Palestinian position was made worse by Arafat's politicking, his fear of being replaced by the leadership of the occupied territories and his dependence on incompetents. Thirdly, the end of the Cold War found the United States in a position of undisputed leadership of the world, and Arafat's dependence on an unswervingly pro-Israeli American president did not help the Palestinian cause.

The convergence of so many adverse factors meant that only Israeli goodwill could save Arafat, but there was none of it. In all three agreements, Israel refused to define its borders. Arafat found himself recognizing a state which reserved the right to define itself by actions such as the control of border entry points. Furthermore, there was no change in the rigid Israeli stance on the questions of Palestinian self-determination, Jerusalem, continued use of 80 per cent of the water of the territories, the building of settlements, the holding of prisoners and the subordination of the economic structure of the PNA to their own.

During a visit to the occupied territories immediately after Oslo II, I asked a well-known foreign correspondent what the agreement had achieved for the Palestinians. He thought for a minute, then, using the number of the original security forces, said, 'You now have ten thousand goons in charge of your destiny.' When I reminded him that the Arafat propaganda machine represented another important area and that it was busy promoting the agreements Arafat had signed, he answered, 'In that case, it's ten thousand goons and a goalie.' The goalie is Marwan Kanafani, Arafat's press secretary and a former footballer with a professional team in Cairo.

Chapter 10

L'Etat Arafat.

On 4 November 1995, an Israeli religious fanatic by the name of Yigal Amir assassinated Itzhaq Rabin as the Prime Minister was leaving a pro-peace rally in

Tel Aviv. This criminal act underscored the divisions in Israeli society and sent a shudder throughout the world. Elections for the Knesset and the premiership were six months away and the political debate within the country had become bitter. Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu had called for the abrogation of Oslo and equated its acceptance with treason. Rabin had responded by pointing out the benefits to Israel of what he had signed.

In reality the differences between the Rabin and Netanyahu positions were purely tactical. Rabin accepted the Oslo Agreement and what followed it without making substantial concessions to Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. His disdain for Arafat was obvious and he had openly rejected the idea of a Palestinian state. Netanyahu advocated annulling the Oslo Agreement because it accepted the PLO as representative of the Palestinian people and implied a vague promise of Palestinian statehood. Although it escaped the morbid minds of the Amirs of this world, the way the agreements were being implemented reconciled the two positions. Hanan Ashrawi and Faisal Husseini, among others, believe that the Palestinians are better off negotiating with Likud and Netanyahu—that it is easier to argue against their open belligerent policies than against Labour's subtle equivalent.**(10-353)**

Unedifying as it is to criticize an assassinated leader, what followed Rabin's death demonstrated a universal lack of understanding of how he had used Oslo. President Clinton, King Hussein, President Mubarak and other world leaders attended his funeral and made solemn speeches decrying the death of 'a peacemaker'. Even Oman and Qatar were represented by official delegations. Arafat did not attend, mostly for security reasons, but the PLO sent a six-man delegation. Four days after the funeral Arafat paid a secret visit to Mrs Rabin in Tel Aviv and, in accordance with Arab tradition, respectfully took off his headdress. Speaking to the press afterwards, he lamented the death of 'my partner in the peace process'. The negotiations were still stalled.

Rabin was succeeded by his Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, the man whom Ashrawi had accused of smiling and making fools out of the Palestinians. With Israel traumatized by the assassination and an election approaching, Peres saw no benefit in moving things forward. During a meeting in December he played to Arafat's vanity and addressed him as '*rayyes*' or 'president'. The television pictures of this event showed Peres using the word and turning to Arafat for a reaction, and the latter beaming like a happy child. The only thing on which both men agreed was that the time to hold the long-delayed elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council and president had come.

Although international observers, including former President Jimmy Carter, monitored the elections on 20 January 1996 and reported that they were fair, the scope of their observation covered the possibility of coercion and ballot rigging and nothing else. In December 1995, a month before the actual voting, Arafat had delayed the registration of voters in the cities of Jerusalem, Gaza, Hebron and Khan Yunis.**(10-354)** This illegal move was followed by massive registration of loyalists to guard against an anti-PLO outcome in these cities. During the campaign, airtime on Palestinian radio and television was denied to candidates opposed to Oslo.**(10-355)** Both actions gave the PNA candidates a substantial advantage.

The results of the elections came as no surprise. Samiha Khalil, a brave member of the Palestinian Women's Movement, ran against Arafat and got 12 per cent of the vote of slightly over one million. Since there were no existing electoral district boundaries they had to be created for these elections, which allowed for an element of creativity. Then, by conceding those constituencies where they were most likely to lose, Fatah ensured it was not wasting votes which could be put to good use elsewhere. Reflecting this built-in bias, Fatah received 30 per cent of the vote which somehow guaranteed it 51 seats in the 88-seat legislative council, 58 per cent of the total.[10-356] Members of the Tunis PLO received more votes than local people in thirteen of the fifteen polling districts. Among the outsiders who won seats were Nabil Sha'ath, Intissar Wazir, Abu 'Ala, Hakam Balawi, Hassan Asfour and Marwan Kanafani.

Perhaps it was the behaviour of Kanafani which told more about the elections than anything else. Israeli television filmed him kissing Arafat's hand to thank him for his victory. To Edward Said, the elections sanctified the division between the insiders and the outsiders;[10-357] people like Balawi and Kanafani were not known to their constituents. And Arafat capped it all by appointing the unpopular Abu 'Ala Speaker of the legislative council and thus his legal successor.

The atmosphere surrounding the elections and the actual voting was inconsistent with what Arafat called 'a totally free, democratic process'. The opposition parties, including the Islamists, did not participate in the elections, though a few of their members did on an individual basis. The terms of Oslo allowed Israel to guarantee a PLO success and they saw no point in participating. (Article 3 of the basic law, which covers the elections, states: 'This does not affect the authority of the PLO and its organizations, including representing the Palestinian people.') The Palestinian National Authority bought family, regional and religious allegiances to try to endow the elections with legitimacy. The mushrooming PNA bureaucracy, including the security forces, numbered over eighty thousand with an average of five dependants each and was also used effectively. Many of the outsiders in the security services were registered in districts where the independent opponents of the PLO were strong.

Other events before and after the elections cast doubt on whether their results represented Palestinian feeling. Among them was the funeral of an engineer, Yahya Ayyash, who had allegedly masterminded several suicide bombings. Ayyash was killed by a mobile telephone explosion on 5 January 1996, sixteen days before the balloting. His funeral attracted three hundred thousand Gazans. However, when it came to voting the overall turn-out fell short of what the first election in Palestinian history had been expected to produce. In Jerusalem something akin to an election boycott took place—only 40 per cent of the electorate voted. The turn-out in Hebron was still low, at 66 per cent. Gaza, however, reflected its special status as the home of Arafat's bureaucracy; the turn-out was 87 per cent there compared to the West Bank's 74.

The elections, slated to be held 'in keeping with democratic principles… no later than nine months after the DoP [Declaration of Principles]', were a failure. Arafat took the oath of office on 12 February 1996. This stipulated that the Palestinian National Charter be amended to accept the right of Israel within secure boundaries, and confirmed him as Prime Minister and commander in chief. But

his dictatorial inclinations showed very early when the Legislative Council held a meeting in Bethlehem in March 1996. When some members questioned the powers vested in the office of the president, he stomped out shouting, 'Dogs and sons of bitches!' and threatening to 'get rid of the whole lot of them'. Although the Council's powers do not allow it to act on its findings, Arafat still resented it because its mere existence signalled potential trouble—a source of control on his behaviour.

The post-election divisions among the Palestinians were the worst in the PLO's history. The opposition from leftist guerrilla groups and the Islamists was strengthened by that of the people of the West Bank and Gaza, the areas covered by the various agreements. The Tunis outsiders, traditional leaders and many followers of Fatah were behind Arafat, but most of the ordinary people were turning against an unproductive Oslo. However, Arafat succeeded in blaming what was happening exclusively on the Israelis. This helped his personal approval rating, which was considerably higher than the approval for Oslo—41 as against 20 per cent. The leftists and Islamists thought otherwise, and the latter responded violently.

On 25 February two explosions, one in Jerusalem and another in Ashkalon, occurred within hours of each other, killing twenty-four people and injuring ninety others. Leaflets claimed they were in revenge for the death of Ayyash. Another closure of the West Bank and Gaza was ordered; the Israeli government also suspended contacts with the Palestinians and again called on Arafat to act against the perpetrators. A day later when a Palestinian-American drove his car into a crowd in Jerusalem he killed one person and injured twenty more. On 4 March another bomb in Jerusalem killed nineteen and injured ten, and an explosion in Tel Aviv left fourteen dead and a hundred injured. Arafat responded by imprisoning hundreds of people and by outlawing several Islamic groups and closing some of their schools, orphanages and charity organizations. But this was not enough for Peres who, using the articles of Oslo and Oslo II, ordered the Israeli army into the autonomous areas and took direct action against the organizations behind the bombings. Most Palestinians felt that the two security services were in alliance against them.

The detention of hundreds of suspects by both sides did nothing to halt the decline in Peres's popularity, and the opinion polls showed a shift towards Likud and Netanyahu. Though there were constant meetings between the Palestinian and Israeli security people, they were unproductive. Arafat genuinely had nothing to offer the Israeli government and settled for stopping donations to all Islamic groups. The frustration of the Israeli government culminated in an over-reaction to incidents along the country's border with Lebanon. Skirmishes along this border were an everyday occurrence, but Peres's determination to appear tough led him to invade Lebanon on 11 April in what the Israelis called Operation Grapes of Wrath. Hundreds of people died or were wounded (the Kana village massacre alone left over a hundred dead) and three hundred thousand people fled southern Lebanon.

Arafat's desperation drove him into adopting another unpopular position. He referred to the Hizbollah fighters who had justified the Israeli invasion as 'terrorists'. This diminished support for the Palestinian Authority within the Arab

world, Lebanon in particular. Soon afterwards, he and Peres agreed to delay implementing the agreement on an Israeli withdrawal from Hebron to avoid inflaming those segments of the Israeli public which were against it. Arafat followed this by convening the PNC on 24 April and, citing the distress the continued closure was causing, he received approval to amend the Palestinian National Charter in accordance with Oslo, Oslo II and the United Nations resolutions. He promised to publish an amendment to the original articles calling for the dismantling of Israel and announced, 'I am very happy to have kept my commitment [to Israel].' Everything Arafat did during this period was aimed at helping Peres win the Israeli elections. But his efforts backfired.

On 31 May 1996, the Israeli voters elected Benjamin Netanyahu Prime Minister of Israel and gave the Likud coalition a 62 to 52 Knesset majority. Although Arafat resorted to declaring, 'We do not interfere in Israeli affairs. The Israeli election is a matter for the Israeli people', in reality he was devastated. The devious methods of the Labour party had suited him. They did not expose his position and allowed him to inflate the small gains his PNA had achieved and to exaggerate their importance. Netanyahu followed the same policies openly and this made the Palestinians see the agreements in a totally negative way. Netanyahu was against withdrawal from the Syrian Golan Heights, a Palestinian state, the strictures on building settlements, any negotiations on the future of Jerusalem and the return of any Palestinian refugees. Labour had used suspect definitions to achieve the same ends; Netanyahu, out to humiliate Arafat, refused to accept any restrictions, even decorative ones.

The election signalled a low point in Arafat's career. Netanyahu's distrust of Oslo, dislike of Arafat and the PLO, and determination to follow policies which ignored both became clear very early in his premiership, when he reiterated that he was elected to undo the inequities of Oslo. A mere four days after his election, on 4 June, settlers in Hebron and Nablus announced their intention to enlarge their presence. Netanyahu accused the PLO of being behind terrorism, saddled Arafat with personal responsibility and declared that the PNA was violating the agreements. According to Netanyahu, Israel would not follow up on the agreements until all acts of terror ceased. The Israeli newspaper *Ma'arev* said that Netanyahu 'aims to violate the agreement'.

He did, flagrantly. Moreover, his open espousal of hard-line policies and his abrasive manner were in sharp contrast to Arafat's reliance on the atmosphere of an event to determine its worth, which allowed him to make it palatable to his people. Netanyahu, an MIT graduate, had little time for Arafat's quintessentially Arab ways. The differences in style added to the problems of implementing agreements which were unsound and which Netanyahu had redefined. The two men personalized the problem between their peoples and moved in opposite directions. The view of Palestinian intellectuals was shared by Arafat's Israeli biographer, Dany Rubenstein: 'The main problem for the Palestinian Authority stemmed from the character of the agreements.'**(10-358)** Netanyahu exposed that character.

The Arab countries responded to Netanyahu's election by holding an Arab League meeting on 23 June. They reaffirmed their commitment to the various agreements on the basis of UN resolutions stipulating the exchange of land for

peace. Netanyahu called the universally accepted principle of exchanging land for peace a precondition and rejected it. Though he stopped short of openly abrogating the agreements, his rejection amounted to cancelling them and restarting negotiations on a different basis. To him, everything—even the agreement on withdrawal from Hebron reached between Arafat and Peres—had to be renegotiated. Arafat responded by describing the agreements as 'internationally guaranteed ones which cannot be cancelled by one side'. He followed this with praise for 'My partner in the peace process, Mr Rabin'. Arafat was beginning to blame Rabin's death for his problems.

On 2 August, Netanyahu officially eased the restrictions on settlement building. The American election campaign was in progress and both presidential candidates trumpeted 'the legitimate problems of Israeli security' and sought to gain favour with Israel and Jewish voters. The negotiations between the two sides centred on Hebron, and Netanyahu's rejection of the previous agreement between Arafat and Peres produced new Israeli demands. The United Nations and the United States called for the two concerned parties 'to settle the outstanding problems between them' through direct negotiations. It was another unequal contest.

Netanyahu's intransigence finally produced an explosion. On 31 September he ordered the opening of a tunnel in Jerusalem which bordered the Muslim Mosque of Omar and the Dome of the Rock. Although it had been built years before, the Labour government had refrained from opening it to avoid inflaming Muslim sensibilities. Though forewarned of possible trouble, Netanyahu went ahead. Jerusalem erupted in violence which soon spread to the rest of the West Bank and Gaza. It took four days to restore order. The number of casualties was high—fifty-seven Arab and eighteen Israeli dead, and several hundred wounded.

This was the first major confrontation between the Palestinians and the Israeli government since Oslo, and it produced an eruption of intifada proportions. In several towns the Palestinian security forces responded to Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians by helping their compatriots; there were several shoot-outs with the Israelis. And another of Arafat's sources of power, the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation, exhorted the Palestinians to greater effort. Netanyahu accused him of complicity in both. Arafat followed the signals from his security people and broadcasting authority; he knew he could not sit out the confrontation and survive. Relations between the two men got worse. The tunnel remained open, the negotiations continued at a slower pace, the date for the start of the final status phase came and went without being noticed.

An agreement on Hebron was finally signed on 15 January 1997, but only after a last-minute intercession by King Hussein, who, fearing the collapse of the whole peace process, acted as an intermediary. Once again, Hussein's role betrayed the Israelis' preference for him; Netanyahu had refused to meet Arafat. The new Hebron agreement secured less for the Palestinians than the original one with Peres which had given them seven-eighths of the city. It amounted to a dictat by Netanyahu, the result of a new peace process.

The agreement afforded the 400 Israelis residing within the town of 120,000 Arabs a direct road link with Kiryat Arba, the home of Baruch Goldstein. To the British journalist Tim Llewellyn this road link 'destroyed the continuity of the town'.**(10-359)** Joint Israeli–Palestinian patrols were entrusted with keeping the

peace, with 120 UN personnel acting as observers. Ten thousand Palestinian residents of downtown Hebron, its commercial and market heartland, effectively remained under Israeli rule. Israeli patrols protected the Jewish settlers and paid little attention to protecting the Arabs.

Nowadays the Arabs of Hebron are constantly pestered and hassled by the aggressive settlers in their midst. According to Llewellyn, 'The Ibrahimi Mosque situation is a disgrace. Muslims have been restricted to their areas of the site, but Jews can go anywhere.' The settlers are armed and do not shy from using their weapons or dumping refuse on Arab pedestrians. And the relationship of the Hebronites to the outside is not much better. They are cut off from the hinterland and no one can easily get to other parts of the West Bank, even if they use 'Arab' roads. The Israelis stop them anywhere and any time they like. A day after the signing of this lopsided agreement, Arafat gleefully declared: 'Hebron is a liberated city.' Faisal Husseini described it differently: 'Hebron was a negative agreement.' To academic Ghassan Khatib, this was another confirmation that 'the interests of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people are different; they are in conflict'.(10-360)

As with the PLO two decades before, the interests of the Palestinian Authority and the personal interests of Yasser Arafat became one and the same. His dependence on the United States to achieve a lasting solution to the Arab–Israeli problem turned into a dependence on Israel—even under Netanyahu—and what it was willing to offer to achieve the same end. Almost everyone in the occupied territories agrees with Khatib's statement. Dr Khalil Shikaki, head of the Centre for Palestine Research and Studies, states: 'All decisions are in Arafat's hands. He thinks he is a father deciding for his children. He has set his mind on creating a state, regardless of its shape.'(10-361) Bassim Eid of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group is vehement that Arafat 'decides every little thing'.(10-362) Dr Mahdi Abdel Hadi of PASSIA, the Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, speaks of the disappearance of hope which held the Palestinians together in the past, laments the absence of a structure to replace hope, then delivers his stunning condemnation: 'The Palestinian Authority is a mafia which does not define the Palestinian problem.'(10-363)

The Oslo Agreement is now five years old. Judged by any yardstick it has been a failure, even when one follows Arafat and assigns to it the prime Palestinian aim of establishing a state. Although the judgement rendered by academics and human rights activists reflects the attitude of the Palestinian people, Arafat's attitude and what he has created can only be assessed through understanding conditions on the ground. Hanan Ashrawi and Khalil Shikaki insist that the internal situation must come first. To them, the nature of the Palestinian entity determines its ability to negotiate with Israel to realize the goal of a Palestinian state. To Arafat the entity, regardless of its form, must be protected to produce a state.

The argument between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, though it has gone through many ripples, excitements, changes of venue, suspensions and direct and indirect intervention by outside powers, remains the same as it was after the Hebron agreement. Even Israeli plans to ring Jerusalem with settlements; the building of the huge one called Jabal Abu Ghneim (known to Israelis as Har Homa), and the massive suicide bombings of August 1997, which left 12 dead and

157 wounded, are footnotes to the larger picture which repeats itself disturbingly. Israel refuses to follow the spirit and letter of Oslo, and uses the issue of security to justify its position. Unable to abrogate Oslo, Netanyahu has rendered it null and void. The only real change has involved the evolution of the status and workings of the Palestinian Authority, and that is Arafat's creation.

There is a massive contradiction in the articles of the various agreements which led to the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority as the governing body of Gaza and parts of the West Bank. The agreements called for the replacement of the Israeli occupation authority by a PNA designed by the PLO and Yasser Arafat. It also called for power to be vested in a democratically elected Legislative Council, but made clear that Israel would not tolerate the election of groups opposed to the agreements. In other words, whatever democratic process was embodied in the agreement was aimed at perpetuating the rule of Arafat and the PLO under Israeli supervision.

After an election carried out in highly questionable circumstances, the boycott of the opposition parties, Israeli strictures (the Israelis have the right to veto any enactment by the Council within a thirty-day period) and the PLO's use of money to guarantee a favourable outcome, Abu Mazen's appointment to head the electoral committee and Abu 'Ala's elevation to Speaker represented the administration of a *coup de grâce*. To Khalil Shikaki, 'Abu 'Ala is not democratic; this ended the council before it began [functioning].' A cursory examination of the workings of the Legislative Council based on my attendance of its meetings in Ramla on 23 and 24 April 1997 proves Shikaki's point. The eighty-eight members of the Council behave as if they belong to a club. They address each other as 'Brother' and 'Sister', smoke during the official sessions, hold private meetings within the larger meeting, and use 'Okay' and other English colloquialisms. There are no opposition blocs—each member acts on his or her own initiative—and the importance of any question relates to the status of who asked it rather than to its inherent value.

The Council operates within the traditional confines of the Muslim concept of Walayi Al Amr, the decider of all things. During the two sessions I attended there were several important questions about the release of Palestinian prisoners languishing in Israeli detention centres, the need of money to support martyrs' families and a motion of no confidence against the Minister of Education. Every time the questions became hard and Abu 'Ala had no answers for them, he closed the debate by stating that the matter was in 'the hands of Brother Abu Ammar [Arafat]'. This ended the debate; no one dared persist. So Arafat's decisionmaking powers are debated without any effort to control them.

During my two days in attendance there were demonstrations in front of the Council building in support of striking teachers, who were demanding an increase in their monthly US $300 salaries. The strike had started a month before and the demonstrators were students from the nearby Beir Zeit University. Some of the placards they carried called for the release of thirty teachers who had been arrested for striking by the PNA's Preventive Security Service. Not a single member of the Council addressed himself to the matter of illegal arrests in a meaningful way. The four members interviewed by me spoke of the strike undermining the

authority and majesty of 'the state', implying that they were members of that state and therefore threatened by the strike.

When I questioned a young, well-spoken member of the Council, Hussam Khader, about why all questions ceased after Abu 'Ala spoke of the issues being referred to Arafat, he answered that Arafat was 'the symbol of the Palestinian state and without him there would be nothing'. In other words, Arafat should not be questioned or undermined because there is no individual or system to replace him. Other members of the Council agreed with Khader. One shook her head in dismay. In weakening Arafat, the Israelis too are aware that there is nothing to replace him.

Later I asked Hussam Khader about an issue which he himself had raised in the Council weeks before. Someone, unknown to this day, had imported US $70 million worth of Romanian flour which turned out to be old and mouldy and caused a lot of illness in a population for whom bread is a staple part of their diet. Khader confirmed that the Authority, that is, Arafat, had refused to release the name of the importer. When Khader persisted Arafat invited himself to dinner at his house in Nablus and made a personal appeal to him to desist from pursuing the matter. Khader was intimidated by the visit of 'the head of the Palestinian state to my humble abode'. Instead of representing a parliament, Khader, understandably, became a member of a tribe. The matter is still pending.

The one member of the Legislative Council who would not accept the concept of Walayi Al Amr and was beyond intimidation was Heidar Abdel Shafi, the old Washington negotiator who, having received the highest number of votes in Gaza, consistently advocated a democratic system through reform of the PNA and limiting Arafat's powers. In August 1997 Shafi resigned his seat in the Council, declaring that it had ceded its power to the executive branch—Arafat. Since then, the Council has made accusations of corruption against four members of the Arafat cabinet and demanded their resignation. This drew promises from Arafat to appoint a new cabinet and to address the issue of corruption. Later, he used the stalled negotiations with Israel as an excuse not to do anything.

In the absence of an effective legislature, the judiciary was supposed to act as a brake on Arafat's power. However, though an independent judiciary was stipulated in the agreements, this did not happen and subduing it proved easy. Arafat used his usual methods to gain the loyalty of its members. When this failed, he simply dismissed them. On 3 September 1996 he summarily fired the chief justice of the West Bank, Amin Abdel Salam, because Salam demanded that the PNA justify the arrest of over twenty students from Bir Zeit University and ordered their release.[10-364] This arbitrary act was overshadowed by the riots which followed the opening of the tunnel in Jerusalem, and Arafat once again used his problems with Israel to cover an illegal act. The rest of the judiciary took fright. Corruption, denial of human rights and freedom of speech went unchecked and became the order of the day.

The institutionalization of corruption which accompanied Arafat's rise to power and was an integral part of his Tunis organization followed him to Gaza. However, the potential for corruption in the PNA was greater, because its authority was greater and it had more money. After overcoming the constraints on the use of aid money by appointing himself chairman of PEDCAR, Arafat personally continued to

use large sums of it to buy the loyalty of people, either directly or through hiring their relatives and adding to the problems of an inefficient bureaucracy. Of course, the money earmarked for special projects was under the control of loyalists who found several ways of creaming off commissions from suppliers and contractors. Becoming an import agent was another way of making money, and the Tunis cabal allocated themselves import agencies in accordance with an honour-among-thieves system. The newest way of making money was through the use of official offices, mostly those of the district governors, to settle land and ownership disputes. With the judiciary in limbo, Arafat's officials arrogated to themselves the right to act as judges and arbitrators and decided in favour of those who offered them the largest bribe.

The first examples of corruption in Gaza involved attempts to solve the PLO's financial problems through manipulating donations and contracts. The Wall Street Journal of 3 February 1995 reported that the telephone contract for the territories under Arafat was manipulated by Gabriel Banar, a Moroccan Jew, Pierre Rizk, a Lebanese intermediary, and the man known as both Khalid Salam and Mohammed Rashid, who was Arafat's Kurdish adviser on financial affairs. The money realized was deposited in a Cayman Islands bank account and Salam controlled it as Arafat's deputy. Soon afterwards, at a donors' meeting in Paris on 25–26 April 1995, the International Monetary Fund gave the PNA US$18.5 million. According to Edward Said, US$18 million of this money was deposited in Arafat's name and only half a million was paid into the account of the PNA.[10-365] This was the period which witnessed several reports that the notorious arms dealer Adnan Khashoggi was interested in investing in PNA-controlled areas. For the first time ever, there were suggestions that the Arafat household was involved: his wife Suha was seen shopping in Paris's Faubourg St Honoré with Khashoggi's wife.

During the initial period the PNA functioned through corruption; there was no other source of income. And while there is no evidence whatsoever that Arafat used money for his personal ends, he still overlooked the underhand dealings of his Tunis entourage. Arafat's commitment to reward loyalty instead of talent encouraged moral and financial corruption which alienated the local people. This meant that Arafat needed more money to appease the locals, and the ugly cycle perpetuated itself.

There are enough stories of PNA corruption for a whole book. Here there is only space to mention some representative major instances which reflect on the PNA's workings, on how corruption weakened it and made it unable to deal with the Israelis, and on how this is leading to disaster. For example, according to the *Sunday Times* of 4 January 1998, several members of Arafat's entourage imported Mercedes cars without paying taxes on them and then sold them on the open market for profit. There were several instances of high PNA officials forcing landowners to sell them land at a low price. A man called Zaki Nahas, a resident of Nablus, was arbitrarily imprisoned by the local police when he refused to sell a piece of land coveted by an Arafat official. When my own family tried to divide a piece of land among my grandfather's heirs, Arafat's local district governor said he would not approve the proposed division unless he was paid the equivalent of 15 per cent of the land's value.

Many of the newcomers who accompanied Arafat from Tunis used commission money to build luxurious villas, a double blow to the sensibilities of the poor local people. No less damaging was the behaviour of Arafat's senior adviser, chief negotiator and Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Nabil Sha'ath. A widower, Sha'ath remarried in 1996. In an extraordinary show of vulgarity he held four lavish wedding receptions, two in Jerusalem, one in Nablus and one in Gaza.[10-366] Among Sha'ath's official pronouncements were ones calling for increased aid to the Palestinian Authority. How would-be donors reacted to the news of his stream of party-giving is not known, but they could not have been impressed. The local people were infuriated.

Titled 'Shameless in Gaza', the *Guardian* newspaper report of Sha'ath's wedding receptions also revealed the existence of a construction company called the Al Bahar Co. 'Al Bahar' means 'the sea', but the activities of this company were so extensive that the local people referred to it as 'Al Muheet', or 'the ocean'. One of the major shareholders in this business is Suha Arafat. There is no evidence that her involvement in the company's affairs went beyond shareholding or that she actively promoted its business, but there is little doubt that a company partly owned by the President's wife has an advantage over others. As with other situations, Arafat pretended that nothing of importance was happening.

There were other cases which confirmed the prevalence of corruption. A Palestinian businessman who spoke off the record told me how a contract to build a cement factory was manipulated. In 1996 a friend of his presented the PNA with a scheme to build such a factory and lessen the dependence of the Palestinians on Israeli products. He had gone into partnership with a French company and drawn up detailed plans for a US$50 million plant. He asked those responsible in the PNA to grant him a licence, explaining that this would produce considerable savings and lower the price of cement from US$70 to US$50 per ton. The PNA people to whom he made his presentation referred him to Arafat's adviser Khalid Salam, the man entrusted with decisions on big projects. Salam listened to the licence-seeker, requested a copy of the blueprint, then asked a Tunis loyalist to approach the French company and undertake the project with them. The local businessman lost the deal.

The Romanian flour deal to which Hussam Khader had objected represents an example of the secrecy and dishonesty which are typical of the PNA. In fact, there are many dual agencies with Israeli businesses and most of them are registered in the names of mysterious companies. The Tunis crowd owns most of them. Why the PNA uses Israeli agents to import office furniture from Italy when local factories are capable of supplying it and are in desperate need of the business is also unknown. Why Suha Arafat's uncle, George Hawa, was briefly imprisoned by Arafat[10-367] for corruption and then released is another unknown.

The hundreds of incidents of known and suspected corruption pale in comparison with the devastating revelations made by the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* on 4 April 1997. After listing projects belonging to the Al Bahar Co., Sha'ath-owned Team Corporation and agencies represented by one of the sons of Abu Mazen, the paper made a direct accusation against Yasser Arafat and Khalid Salam. It claimed that US$170 million collected by the Israelis as value added taxes and refunded to the PNA had been deposited in a Tel Aviv bank, the

Hasmonaim branch of Bank Leumi, and that Arafat and Salam were the designated co-signatories of the account. For weeks, the story of the secret account in an Israeli bank and questions regarding the depositors' ability to face the Israelis in negotiations were the number one topic of conversation among Palestinians worldwide.

The Legislative Council, afraid of the consequences to its credibility, summoned Salam and questioned him. It was a strange occasion—after all, the man had no official title. He responded to all the questions from Council members in an arrogant manner and gave away nothing. According to Salam, the money went into a special presidential fund. He claimed that he was nothing more than a controller. To whom the money went, and why, were for the President to know. Unable to stick anything on Salam, the Council gave up. The VAT money was the equivalent of the Chairman's Fund for Lebanon and others which Arafat had controlled over the years. One might call the VAT money Walayi Al Amr's Fund.

On 17 July 1997 the *Wall Street Journal* ran an editorial decrying the corruption of the PNA and calling for an end to Arafat's war chest. This is a misnomer. There is no war in the offing, and Arafat personally still has no use for money. Most of the corruption money has gone into creating an overblown bureaucratic system which the PNA cannot afford. This system is under the direction of a man who does not understand economics and who adheres to a tribal system of giving and receiving. His use of these antiquated methods encourages others to follow suit. On 26 May that year the *Independent* of London reported that US$323 million had been lost to corruption the year before—half of the money spent by the PNA. In August, at a presentation at the International Institute for International Affairs in London, Arafat responded to a question about corruption in his administration by stating, 'Corruption? What corruption? How can you have corruption when you have no money?' It was a stupid answer.

Criminal as the level of corruption in the PNA undoubtedly is, it does not compare with human rights and freedom of speech violations by Arafat's security apparatus. Human rights activist Bassim Eid insists that nobody knows exactly how many people there are in 'the various branches of Arafat's security apparatus. But it is probably the highest police to population ratio in the whole world.' Academic Ghassan Khatib cites Amnesty International and believes that they number about forty thousand; 'At one point he halved their salaries and doubled their number and, of course, this was done with the Israelis' approval.' Khalil Shikaki states, 'Cooperation between Palestinian security and the Israelis is excellent.'

Altogether there are nine police/security organizations. Some of them, like Force 18, are small and relatively inactive; but others, such as the Preventive Security Service, have thousands of members and are involved in all aspects of everyday life. A third group, Force 17, is a presidential guard, but its members also carry out special security assignments on Arafat's personal orders. Of course, there are the pretenders to military status: the Palestinian navy, which is headquartered in Gaza, and the Marines, amusingly located in landlocked Nablus. Whatever their names and numbers, the heads of these various services report directly to Arafat. As chief of the chiefs of police, he is ultimately responsible for everything they do and for the cooperation with Israel.

The various security departments responsible to Arafat are behind the deaths of sixteen Palestinian citizens in custody.[10-368] There are forty people who have been detained for over two years without being charged, and 117 who have suffered the same fate for over one year. Yuval Ginbar of the B'Tselem Israeli human rights centre states: 'The number of people under detention by the PNA and Israel at this time [April 1997] exceeds the numbers under Israel detention in the past.'[10-369] In March 1996 the PNA arrested over 1200 people in one sweep, and some of them are still in prison. An Amnesty International report quotes police general Yaser Yususf response to a prisoner's complaint that the law should be applied: 'We are the law.'[10-370]

According to Amnesty International, prisoners are tortured on a regular basis; the methods used are among the cruellest in the world. Prisoners are suspended from ceilings, whipped, burned with cigarettes, dowsed with icy water, kept in solitary detention and denied food and sleep. They are subjected to gross indignities. Islamists are made to shave their beards, or occasionally half their beard, which destroys their honour, and some have been left without clothes for days at a time. Interrogators heap abuse on them and call their sisters and mothers whores. Not only is there no judicial recourse, but their families have been threatened when they protested loudly.[10-371]

Hanan Ashrawi, determined to do something constructive, and now a member of Arafat's cabinet in charge of higher education ('Someone has to protect our achievements in the education field'), says, 'Enough is enough. Arbitrary imprisonment and torture has to stop.' Bassim Eid points an accusing finger: 'He [Arafat] is behind every single act of his security services. No one [member of the security services] has been arrested for human rights abuses for more than a week or so, the murderers are free. He sets them free after a phoney investigation.' Whenever confronted with questions on this subject, Arafat speaks of 'unfortunate mistakes'. During a presentation to the London-based International Committee to Save Jerusalem, Abu 'Ala too spoke of 'unfortunate mistakes'.

Arafat cannot be absolved, but reasons beyond his control are partially responsible for making the situation as bad as it is. The lack of training and attitude of the security services are major contributors. Though some of them are undergoing training now, members of the security services assumed their responsibilities without adequate preparation. Moreover, according to Faisal Husseini, 'They brought the bad habits of the countries where they were stationed [other Arab dictatorships].' Of course, Israeli pressure on Arafat adds to the problem in a major way. Israel has made the eradication of terrorism a requirement for moving the negotiations forward, and in the process has forced Arafat to resort to police methods, particularly against the Islamists. Israel approved the expansion of his security services and their use in ways which contradicted the commitments to democracy contained in the various agreements. In this Israel has the support of the United States, which calls on Arafat to 'address himself to the issue of terrorism' without exercising any restraint. Even the death under torture of a US citizen, Azzam Muslih, did not provoke an American response against the PNA. Violations of the human rights guarantees contained in Oslo appear to be acceptable to both the Israeli and US governments.

The combination of an emasculated Legislative Council and judiciary, lack of training and appropriate attitude by members of the security services, Israeli pressure and American explicit connivance (the CIA has a representative office which works with the security apparatus of the PNA) would not amount to much without Arafat's personal approval. He handles the human rights situation the way he behaved towards the ACHILLE LAURO hijacker Abul Abbas; he responds to what affects his position and standing with outsiders. Even when demonstrators called for Arafat 'to take his dogs and leave',[10-372] and thirty thousand of them ran through the streets of Tulkarem in protest against the actions of the security service, Arafat still thought his goal of a Palestinian state justified his behaviour.

The last hurdle of opposition to Arafat's singular purpose was the press. He moved to control it. The first closure of a newspaper by Arafat and the PNA took place in March 1966, less than a year after Arafat's arrival in Gaza. *Al Istiklal*, a publication of the Islamic Jihad, was shut down by a presidential order which offered no justification for the action. The following September the newspaper *Jenin*, named after the city where it was published, suffered the same fate on the orders of the local security service. It was an independent organ and its only crime consisted of criticism of the municipality and the local trade union organization, both beholden to Arafat. Several times during 1996 the distribution of *An Nahar*, a widely read daily with Jordanian connections, was stopped by members of the Preventive Security Service. The editor, Othman Halaq, was ordered to run an editorial declaring his allegiance to Arafat. He did, but it was not enough; his association with Jordan was unacceptable, and after repeated interference in its distribution the paper ceased to publish in January 1997.

The closure of newspapers was accompanied by the arrest of several journalists and the intimidation of others. Samir Hamato of *An Nahar* was arrested in March 1996 and kept in detention for seven months. Imad Abu Zahra, the owner-editor of *Jenin*, was detained on several occasions. In May 1996 Maher Al Alami, an editor of *Al Quds*, the highest-circulation daily, was detained for five days. He had put a story favourable to Arafat on page eight instead of on the front page, where the President thought it should be. Khalid Ammayrah of the satellite television channel of the United Arab Emirates was harassed, stopped, interrogated and detained for brief periods throughout 1996. In April 1997, what the foreign press dubbed 'the thought police' arrested lawyer Jameel Salameh after hearing of an article he was writing and before anything appeared in print. The following May, Daoud Kuttab, a Palestinian–American freelance journalist, was detained for a week for filming sessions of the Legislative Council during which members made statements about corruption. Kuttab wanted to air the proceedings on the Al Quds educational channel. After his arrest, the channel was shut down.

The state of fear generated by these arrests was so great that the local press failed to report them, even when the arrested journalist worked for them. When a number of academics approached *Al Quds* newspaper to publish an appeal to Arafat against the detention of journalists, owner Mahmoud Abu Zuluf refused to publish it. Meanwhile PNA orders instructing newspapers how to handle certain stories, including the space which should be allocated to them, increased. President Arafat's press spokesman, the same Marwan Kanafani of hand-kissing fame, became the moderator of a weekly one-hour news programme on Palestinian

television. The programme devotes most of its time to promoting Arafat and his deeds. Meanwhile, according to Sama'an Khoury of PBC, 'cooperation with Israeli media [radio and television], though not admitted, is total'.

The assault on the press was followed by others on human rights activists and academics. Dr Raja Sourani, director of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, was arrested several times on the personal orders of President Arafat. Bassim Eid of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitor was arrested twice by the Preventive Security Service for criticizing the PNA's failure to provide opposition candidates with equal radio time. Eid was abused and tortured. Cooperation with international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International is not allowed, and people belonging to any organization involved in human rights work are harassed.

Undermining academics and centres of education followed the enactment of illegal measures to control the interpretation of these laws by the local chiefs of police. According to the human rights organization Al Haq,[10-373] 'sports, cultural and social events' need a police permit. There is no legal basis for this. It amounts to an attempt to control everything that happens in the nine universities and the schools of the West Bank and Gaza. On occasions these events were stopped by the local police even after permission was secured. What happens in classrooms and lecture halls is also controlled. In November 1997 Dr Fathi Subuh of Al Azhar University in Gaza was arrested for discussing corruption during one of his lectures. Everything a teacher or lecturer does is reported to the police by paid informers.

According to people in the Legislative Council, academics and several PNA officials, Arafat has gone from just ignoring advice to refusing to listen to anyone. Until recently Abu Mazen was an exception, because he went back to the more democratic days of Fatah in Kuwait. The two men used to have disagreements and shouting matches, but Abu Mazen eventually relented. Nowadays Arafat's control of the PNA is greater than the one he exercised on the PLO, because the latter's various committees and councils occasionally resisted Arafat and forced him into using circuitous methods. Except for feeble and unproductive attempts by the Legislative Council, his control of the PNA is absolute.

In exercising this control Arafat relies on a large collection of yes-men with suspect talents. The exact number of people who report to Arafat directly is unknown, but it runs into the hundreds. All twenty-four members of the cabinet report to him. Heads of the security apparatus come next. District governors, in reality military governors of areas each made up of several small towns, follow suit. There are no fewer than fifteen advisers, over eighty legates to foreign countries, forty-eight mayors, the head of the Wafa news agency, the director of the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation, the Speaker of the Legislative Council, the head of the Negotiations Affairs Department, members of the PLO's executive committee, the head of the Palestine National Council and ten people without portfolio who often carry more clout than titled functionaries. Even important merchants report to him.

It would be impossible to detail the relationship which binds all these people to Arafat. However, the major ones fall into three distinct categories. Financial people come first, and there is no exaggerating the importance of Khalid Salam, the

untitled co-signatory on the Tel Aviv bank account. A quiet, behind-the-scenes man, Salam has greater influence on the running of the various departments of the PNA than any other person besides Arafat. According to Hussam Khader of the Legislative Council, the Ministry of Finance does not know what is happening: ministers, directors and advisers defer to Salam and solicit his help in obtaining money for their departments. Salam's position of power is totally dependent on the person of Arafat; otherwise there would be no place for an Iraqi Kurd in a Palestinian administration.

Next in importance are Arafat's image-creators, most of whom double as internal propagandists and spokesmen on the peace process. Arafat's chief press officer Marwan Kanafani, the ex-footballer on the Legislative Council, owes his very existence to Arafat. Antipathetic and unpopular, Kanafani is a Beiruti outsider who wears white suits and sports a cigarette holder; he looks and feels uncomfortable in Gaza. Special adviser Nabil Aburdeneh is another outsider, from Jaffa, who is totally beholden to Arafat. Kanafani, Aburdeneh and Bassam Abu Sharif form a triangle of propagandists who defer to Arafat and never question his word.

The official spokesmen are augmented by negotiators and others in high positions whom Arafat uses selectively. Speaker of the Legislative Council Abu 'Ala is one. His inability to perform this function is best demonstrated by his statement in London in August 1997 when he announced that he was not 'the architecture [Sic] of the agreement [Oslo]'. Abu 'Ala follows Arafat obediently, and this is why Arafat trusts him. Watching him make a presentation in London, I came to the conclusion that he has adopted Arafat's manner of speech and his gestures. Nabil Sha'ath, chief negotiator and Minister of Planning and International Relations, is a spokesman whom the Legislative Council has accused of corruption and whose dismissal it has demanded. He is unlikely to oppose or advise Arafat on anything. Saeb Irekat, Minister of Local Government, has never addressed himself to local problems, and derives particular pleasure from being a negotiator because he is a US citizen who likes dealing with Americans in high positions. He is a leftover from the original negotiating team who was elevated to prominence by Arafat to provide the PNA with acceptability. Another spokesman is Minister of Information Yasser Abed Rabbou. But he too is an outsider who acted on Arafat's orders to ban the books of Palestinian writer Edward Said. There is no evidence that any of the people mentioned has ever shown any independence or an ability to provide constructive advice.

Hanan Ashrawi speaks either when the press go to her directly or when Arafat's favourites are not up to the task. She is no longer a member of the inner circle; in particular her criticism of the PNA's human rights record has not endeared her to Arafat. Moreover, in a show of petty hastiness if not lack of character, Arafat has on several occasions referred to her as the '*sharmotah*', 'whore'.**(10-374)** The reasons behind Arafat's use of this objectionable description also govern his attitude towards Faisal Husseini. Ashrawi and Husseini are popular, knowledgeable and independent, and none of these qualities appeals to Arafat. He has taken to keeping Husseini waiting hours at a time to see him, and in December 1996 in Bethlehem he berated this quiet, gentlemanly figure in the presence of foreign visitors who were there for the Christmas celebrations. During the March-April

1997 confrontation over Israeli plans to build a new settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim (to the Israelis, Har Homa), Arafat ordered Husseini to stop acting as a spokesman against the project even though the contested area fell within Husseini's responsibilities as Minister for Jerusalem. Arafat thought Husseini was grabbing too much of the limelight.

The third important group are the security chiefs. They are all outsiders, or people who spent enough time with the Tunis PLO to absorb their ways. As mentioned earlier, Hakam Balawai of the Mossad scandal is in charge of national security. But the most important among the others, the one closest to Arafat, is Colonel Jibreen Rajoub of the hated Preventive Security Service. Colonel Rajoub has arrested and tortured more people than the rest of the chiefs; he has detained journalists and human rights activists and has been involved in selecting lists of candidates for the Legislative Council. Rajoub is in charge of coordinating security with Israel and has been invited to Washington for consultation. Many think of him as a replacement for Arafat. True or not, this says a great deal about Arafat's rule. In a dictatorship the chief of police is always close to the source of power and is in a position to exercise it.

The rejection of Hanan Ashrawi and Faisal Husseini is symptomatic. The resignation of Heidar Abdel Shafi from the Legislative Council and his strained relationship with Arafat is another sign of alienation by local politicians. But Arafat's attitude includes whole groups, and, according to Ghassan Khatib, there is a divide between the PNA and the intellectuals in the territories. There is not a single intellectual or thinker among Arafat's close circle of spokesmen/advisers. There are many Palestinian think-tanks which produce studies that could be helpful to the PNA, but they are shunned and kept under close watch.

The divorce between the PNA and local intellectuals extends to its relations with Palestinian thinkers in the diaspora. Mahmoud Darwish and Shafiq Hout were the two intellectual members of the PLO Executive Committee and they both resigned after Oslo. Edward Said has been the most vocal critic of the agreements and of what Arafat has created; his books are banned. Ibrahim Abu Loughud, a former professor at Northwestern University in Chicago and one-time adviser to Arafat, is another alienated intellectual. The Centre for Palestine Studies, once a source of support for Arafat and which has produced more books about the Palestinian problem than any other organization in the world, has published several books critical of Arafat and the agreements.

The massive changes in Arafat's political fortunes have affected his personal behaviour. Although he was never careful about what he said, his penchant for speaking before thinking has become considerably worse and often comical or embarrassing. His myth-making is back to where it was in his early days, before exposure to Beirut's foreign press made him more cautious. Also worse are his inclination to place loyalty ahead of competence and his intolerance of criticism. According to Dilip Hiro, he suffers from paranoia, love of power and egotism.**(10-375)**

Arafat's references to Saeb Irekat as 'ignorant', his accusations that members of the Legislative Council are dogs and sons of bitches and, most disgustingly, his use of the epithet 'whore' to describe Hanan Ashrawi are enough to establish his credentials as a master of foul and derogatory language. Nowadays, he dispenses such words and phrases ever more freely. According to a PLO Legate to a central

European country, '*Alsanu ziphir*'—he has a dirty tongue. He certainly has a vivid imagination. According to biographer Dany Rubenstein, Arafat told a visitor that Spartacus was Palestinian.[10-376] He has also gone back to exaggerating his early days, even when what he says is offensive. In June 1997 he told CNN interviewer Larry King, 'I don't take a salary, I live off the money I made in Kuwait.' On a number of occasions he spoke of 'when I ran Lebanon', without much thought to how objectionable the statement is to the Lebanese and how it endangers the Palestinian refugees in that country.[10-377]

But there are other signs which merge pure story-telling with dictatorial complexes. When an aide introduced a Palestinian–American visitor as leader of the Palestinian Greek Orthodox community in the USA, Arafat retorted, 'I am more Greek Orthodox than he is. I truly am.' The visitor could not tell whether Arafat was joking or not, but nodded polite agreement. When *Al Quds* editor Maher Al Alami was imprisoned, Arafat summoned him from his cell for a late-night conversation. He wanted to make sure Alami understood the reasons behind his incarceration. Alami too did not know what to make of Arafat's behaviour.

In one case what Arafat did reflected the atmosphere of fear which envelops the Palestinians. Late in 1996, four members of the Preventive Security Service who were in Washington for training visited the CIA offices accompanied by a member of the PLO's mission in America (because America does not recognize the PNA as deserving representation, it still operates as a PLO office). During one meeting a CIA officer asked them to advise Arafat to cancel a request to visit Washington. The family of Leon Klinghoffer, the man killed during the ACHILLE LAURO debacle, were suing Arafat, accusing him of complicity in the murder. According to the CIA man, the Clinton Administration wanted Arafat to wait until the issue was settled without publicity.

The security men and the member of mission were simply too afraid to relay such a request to Arafat. A month later, when it was transmitted to Arafat directly and he was told of the original message, he had all four security officers imprisoned. He followed that by recalling the member of mission in Washington, and placing him under house arrest for four months. He ranted and raved about 'the idiots who would not tell me that my life was in danger'. None of the people near him dared speak of the fear behind the behaviour of the five men.

Strangely, nothing represents Arafat's personal faults more than the manner in which he walks from his office to his car, an event which is frequently filmed for television. He has never managed to cover the 50 or so feet in an organized way. Invariably his guards are there, with rifles at the ready, pushing and shoving people, There are always a lot of guards; the people being pushed about are petitioners who have been told they can wait for him. In fact the whole stage-managed exercise is very much to his liking—it demonstrates that people still need him and that he has troops to protect him. Bassim Eid of Human Rights Monitor tells of how he once drove from Gaza to Rafah and found the 30-kilometre highway connecting the two cities lined with troops. When he asked what justified the military display, he received an answer which amazed him: 'The President is flying to Cairo from Rafah and the security people are there to salute him.' In the same manner the President arranges for throngs of people to greet him whenever he returns from his frequent trips, and his pictures are on the walls of all the towns

and villages of the West Bank and Gaza. It costs a great deal of money to pay for his greeters and pictures. Of course, this atmosphere is so contagious that people contribute to it by running dozens of ads in each newspaper issue congratulating the President on the smallest thing and thanking him for his deeds.

The economic structure of the PNA as it exists today is also undermining the prospects for the emergence of a Palestinian state. To survive, it relies on outside aid and the income of Palestinian workers in Israel. The misuse of aid money has limited its effectiveness and Israeli border closures, cruel and deliberate, have reduced the income of workers. Although this income accounts for more than 18 per cent of gross domestic product, it has become too erratic to be included in any long-term planning.

According to Dr Fuad Bseisu, a PNA minister without portfolio in charge of the newly established Central Bank, the GDP of the territories under PNA control declined 25 per cent between 1995 and 1996.[10-378] The per capita GDP has declined to US$2596 a year.[10-379] The prospects are for more of the same. The population density is high—370 people per square kilometre. Seventy-five per cent of the water of the River Jordan, the only surface water source, and 81 per cent of spring water is diverted to Israel before it reaches the West Bank.[10-380]

Israel's punitive policy on workers, mismanagement of aid money and delay in receiving it, a limited agro-industrial potential (also hampered by Israeli policy), the absence of an industrial base, the failure to attract substantial investment from outside and the concentration of economic power in the hands of the few are leading to disaster. Whether the PNA should continue its reliance on Israel, or change direction and attach itself to the economies of neighbouring Arab countries, is a decision which needs to be made immediately and followed by long-term plans to forestall an economic disaster. Dr Jad Itzhaq of the Applied Research Centre sees no hope in continuing the dependence on Israel, argues that the territories are rich in human resources (82 per cent of the population are literate and there are nine universities) and advocates cooperation with the Arab countries. Others describe Itzhaq's recommendations as unrealistic.

Characteristically, Arafat subordinates his economic policies to political considerations. Politics stands in the way of everything from joint ventures to sound planning, and the political process is frozen. That the failure to answer strategic questions could lead to the collapse of the PNA escapes Arafat. He dismisses studies which show that under present conditions the PNA is unlikely to enjoy economic growth more than its rate of population increase of 3.7 per cent annually.[10-381] In addition to a failure to plan, he rejects calls for economic integration with Jordan, and perhaps Syria, for fear that it might hamper his political independence. Meanwhile, Israel is using his economic dependence on it to weaken him, extract more concessions and destroy the peace process.

Israel is wholly responsible for the stalemate in the peace process, and partly responsible for Arafat's behaviour. Netanyahu claims that Arafat is not living up to the articles of the agreement which call for the PNA to use its security forces to guarantee Israeli security, but there is not much more that Arafat can do in this regard. Even imprisoning thousands more would not stop every suicide bomber, a fact accepted by security and intelligence experts throughout the world. Shmueil Toledano, a former Mossad deputy chief and adviser to Premiers Meir and Rabin,

puts it succinctly: 'Arafat can't help against Hamas.'[10-382] Moreover, Netanyahu is guilty of violating the agreements regarding the building of new settlements, changing the demographic composition of Jerusalem, continuing to hold Palestinian prisoners and refusing to redeploy and cede more territory. These violations of the letter of the agreements are accompanied by violations of its spirit—closing the borders and encouraging settlers to resort to arms if necessary. Netanyahu has refused to allow the opening of a Gaza airport and harbour. The only things he tolerates are actions against the adoption of a democratic system—and of those he advocates more.

Arafat has lived up to the agreements, has accepted punitive Israeli interpretations of some of the terms and has never wavered in his commitment to the peace process. His failures have been in the areas of sound economic planning and the creation of a democracy, but neither is an issue with the Israelis or with the American sponsors of the peace process. Meanwhile, Arafat has never deviated from his goal of establishing a Palestinian state, though he is still without sensible plans to attain this end. Netanyahu's policies preclude the creation of this state or anything resembling it, and the prospects of resurrecting the peace process—even an amended form of it—look more remote than ever.

There are two questions to be asked at this juncture: is a Palestinian state attainable, and would it be worthwhile? Arafat has proved capable of securing international recognition for such an entity. In addition, the Palestinian people want a state of their own. The combination of an internationally recognized state which also represents a distinct group of people would endow it with legitimacy. This, however, does not answer the questions of the state's viability and regional acceptability.

A Palestinian state would not survive on its own; it would become either a shackled state dependent on Israel or a semi-independent entity within a larger Arab context. The dictatorial nature of the existing proto-state has been detailed and is obvious to the whole world. These two elements are connected—the inability to attain an economically independent Palestine means that democracy cannot flourish. Even if a Palestinian state does emerge, the choices will be between greater coercion and a more oppressive regime, and the radicalization of the territories because people's expectations have not been met. In the latter case, the new radical entity might claim Jordan and become a political threat to the rest of the countries surrounding it, including Israel. With no progress in the peace negotiations likely, the Palestinian leadership is not capable of producing positive political or economic results for its people. To Mahdi Abdel Hadi of PASSIA, 'If the present situation continues, then Gaza will sink into the sea and there will be civil war in the West Bank.'

From Defender to Dictator

How will history weigh and judge Yasser Arafat's leadership of the Palestinian people? The end game is not yet played out, but there is much to draw from. His life divides into three distinct and equally important parts. The first part concerns

his strategic decisions towards attaining the Palestinian ideal of nationhood. The second consists of how he pursued this ideal. Thirdly, there is what he has achieved, the Palestinian National Authority, and his performance as its indisputable leader.

Arafat's life has been an extension of the strategic decisions he made on behalf of his people and the messianic zeal with which he pursued them and tried to realize them. His personal life, even after marriage, has always been subordinated to his political persona. He has never been a leader whose behaviour was moulded or determined by a desire to amass wealth, establish a dynasty or satisfy hedonistic inclinations. Furthermore, Arafat is at his best as a military commander in the field, a courageous leader of men and sympathetic story-teller.

This is why the flaws in his personality derive from his political behaviour. Even his use of bad language is restricted to frustrations with politics, and personally he is hospitable, generous and very polite. Ironically, his major shortcoming has also been his strength—the belief that he alone is capable of realizing Palestinian ambitions. Because he towered above his contemporaries even during the days of Fatah's collective leadership, this belief in his invincibility saddles him with responsibility for Fatah's and the PLO's strategic decisions and their results.

Arafat's first strategic decision called for the creation and use of a Palestinian identity to face Israel. This meant replacing the Arab governments as the guardians of the Palestinian people and assuming the responsibility of battling Israel. Impossible as it is to determine what would have happened had the Palestinian problem remained in Arab hands after 1967, all the available evidence supports Arafat's decision. Among other things, the behaviour of King Hussein of Jordan and President Sadat of Egypt revealed an Arab willingness to subordinate the interests of the Palestinian people to larger Arab interests or to personal aggrandizement. Nor were other Arab leaders, Nasser included, far behind Hussein and Sadat. Arab divisions always threatened to reduce the Palestinian problem to a point of contention between the various Arab leaders.

Arafat's second strategic decision was the resort to the armed struggle. Here too the evidence is solidly in his favour. The Palestinians were an unknown entity until they expressed themselves through the barrel of a gun. Decades of pleading their cause in international formums had produced less for them than the willingness of their young people to fight and die for it against staggering odds. It was the Palestinian fighter and his kin, the intifada child, who captured the imagination of the world. Their recognition by the world confirmed the existence of a Palestinian people with rights and aspirations. Arafat created the first and guaranteed the survival of the second.

The third strategic decision for which Arafat deserves credit was the pursuit of a peaceful settlement to the Arab–Israeli conflict. He recognized the hopelessness of a total Arab victory earlier than other Palestinian and Arab leaders. From the early 1970s, he stubbornly pursued a peaceful settlement even when this represented a danger to his leadership. The methods he used to obtain his people's backing for the pursuit of peace were not those of a statesman, but the aim was noble and he was successful. Arafat was the only Palestinian leader capable of this achievement. The Israeli decision to accept the Palestinians and Arafat was the

result of his commitment to the armed struggle and his pursuit of peace, the two policies which he brilliantly merged to force the Palestinians on the world.

But the soundness of Arafat's strategic decisions has always suffered from the methods he used to realize them. To Arafat, the end always justifies the means. This is what lies behind his relationships with rich Palestinians of questionable character and his lack of ideology. It also explains his balancing act in dealing with the various Arab governments. It was this commitment to a goal which produced his courageous stand at Karameh against great odds; he placed the need to create the image of the Palestinian fighter above more immediate military considerations. It guaranteed him the Arab financial support which he desperately needed to keep the flame of Palestinian resistance burning. And it lay behind his remarkable performance in Beirut, his willingness to sacrifice thousands of people so that he might leave the city with honour and not as a flash-in-the-pan guerrilla leader.

Arafat's unwavering belief in a Palestinian destiny, though it explains much of his behaviour, falls short of justifying other aspects of it. His failure to organize the PLO was total, costly and unjustifiable. He could have done something about this in Tunis, instead of devoting himself to insignificant issues. His institutionalization of corruption is another mistake which cannot be excused. And so is his dependence on cronies and incompetents and his inability to countenance the advice of able men. These three failings contributed to his adoption of dictatorial ways. Those ways led to the elimination of opponents, and soon what prevailed was the maxim of absolute power corrupting absolutely.

Arafat is a throwback to another age—the age of a brave, uneducated, wily Arab chief. He is not a modern leader. It was Arafat the Arab sheikh who viewed the civil disobedience campaign of Beit Sahur as a modern threat to his primacy. The same attitude impelled him to see the Muslim deportees to Lebanon as dispensable. Later his treatment of the Washington negotiators was nothing short of callous, and he could not understand the need to inform them of what his emissaries were doing in Oslo. To Arafat, the complaints of Husseini, Ashrawi and Abdel Shafi were immaterial. Even his acceptance of such an imprecise document as the Oslo Agreement was the work of an Arab chief who believes in the concept that tomorrow will produce something better.

Arafat the strategist who created a Palestinian identity and gained it worldwide recognition, and who doggedly pursued peace against great odds, was a success. But the weaknesses of the corrupt, inefficient PLO he created to achieve his aims, and his merger of Palestinian interests with an outdated personal attitude, eventually determined the kind of peace he concluded. Above all, it was Arafat's near-exclusive reliance on money as the backbone of the PLO which forced him to settle for Oslo, vagueness and reliance on the goodwill of two countries who have never shown much interest in the welfare of the Palestinians—the USA and Israel. The Palestinian state he so fervently sought to create is not within sight, and his vision of it has been so reduced that it may not be worth having. From the late 1970s and his reliance on the Beiruti cabal the balance tipped in favour of the means determining the end, and what exists today is the result.

Israel is not willing to cede land or control of water, and it is opposed to any compromise over Jerusalem, partial return of refugees or anything which might

contribute to the assumption by the Palestinian Authority of the functions of a real government—in other words, what would create a state. Faisal Husseini says, 'There can be no Palestinian state without Jerusalem.' Others make similar statements citing the shortage of land and the lack of water, and point out Israel's settlement policy. Meanwhile, the fate of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and other Arab countries is not even discussed. The neglect of the refugees in Lebanon in particular is shameless; it was their belief in Arafat's leadership which lay behind their wars with the Lebanese Christians, Syrians, Israelis and fellow Palestinians.

For Arafat to attribute to the death of Rabin his difficulties in negotiating solutions to these problems is nonsensical. He did not get much from Rabin on any of these issues. The agreements he signed are with the state of Israel, and he knowingly left their interpretation to the Israelis as much as to himself. The history of the state of Israel is utterly bereft of examples of generosity towards the Palestinians and an attachment to peace. The Israelis always wanted more than they had, and got it. The Oslo and Oslo II agreements were vehicles for Israel to further its expansionist policies and hegemony through peaceful means.

Meanwhile, Arafat's belief in the end justifying the means and his descent into dictatorial ways have created a Palestinian Authority which suppresses the Palestinian people and does not represent their aspirations. Surrounded by feckless, corrupt and out-of-touch men, Arafat has reached the end of his rope. His dependence on the United States is as unrealistic as his reliance on Israeli goodwill. All that this dependence can guarantee him is American recognition and some help to stay in power against the wishes of his people. In that he is like the rest of the Arab leaders.

On 18 August 1996, the *Observer* newspaper reported the imprisonment of several members of the Palestinian security forces who had been involved in an attempted coup against Arafat. Israeli troops were placed on alert to help Arafat quell this attempt. Since then there have been several similar attempts, reflecting the general state of discontent with Arafat and his administration. Jerusalem's Anglican bishop, Samir Kafity, speaks of 'a dangerous helplessness' enveloping the Palestinians. Although he does not mean it, an Arafat loyalist and member of the Consultative Council, Hussam Khader, condemns Arafat by calling 'for planning for what comes after him'. The Palestinian people are a highly educated lot whose sacrifices made Arafat's achievements possible. They want a national home and they love freedom. Arafat cannot deliver either. More attempts to overthrow, assassinate or replace him must be on the way.

Western people tend to respond to complaints against friendly dictators by asking who is available to take their place. This is not a good question; dictators do not cultivate successors. Arafat's occasional reference to Abu Mazen or Abu 'Ala as a successor is no more than an attempt to keep them apart, weak and unable to challenge him.

In the case of the Palestinians, however, the question of succession is an easy one to answer. They are a people rich with talent. My solution for a replacement to Arafat is a simple one: a triumvirate of Heidar Abdel Shafi, Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi, the old Washington negotiators, as an interim administration. This group would address itself to negotiating a better deal with Israel, while

technocrats would replace Arafat's entourage of corrupt men to run the internal affairs of the territory under Palestinian control.

Epilogue

Few contemporary political figures have aroused as much controversy as Yasser Arafat. For almost a month before his death, the world witnessed an agonizing re-examination of his life without being able to agree on his place in history.

In personal terms he had manifested signs of incoherence for more than two years. There were suggestions that his mind was vacant and, politically, his leadership of the Palestinians had been in doubt since the failure of the Camp David negotiations between him and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak during the last two months of the Clinton administration. After that he was no longer acceptable in international forums. As a result many Palestinians felt disenchanted with his leadership.

In four decades Arafat went from being a nationalist revolutionary to freedom fighter, to statesman, to Nobel Peace Prize winner, to president of the Palestinian Authority and eventually to being a discredited political leader committed to antiquated methods who was no more than a caricature of his old self. Towards the very end he was reduced to nothing more than an incapacitated petty dictator living on past achievements.

Arafat's decline began with the Oslo agreement of 1993. Accepting the terms of the vague agreement produced a disaster. According to Palestinian lawyers who were invited to proffer an opinion on Oslo before the final draft was signed, Arafat rejected their opinion that agreements between strong and weak parties favour the strong. To the lawyers, Oslo was the equivalent of a Palestinian surrender.

The perception of this was made worse by the fact that Arafat negotiated Oslo secretly and accepted it to safeguard his leadership position. The official Palestinian delegation negotiating openly in Washington had turned down better Israeli offers. But he feared that allowing the delegation to sign a peace agreement would marginalize him and produce a transfer of power from the PLO, then in exile in Tunisia, to the indigenous population of the West Bank and Gaza, from where all the official delegates came.

Oslo was a trap and Arafat walked into it willingly. No other Palestinian would have signed an agreement which left the problems of the boundaries, water, refugees and Jerusalem to later except the man everybody called Mr Palestine. Arafat thought that he could turn the agreement into something acceptable to his people. He misjudged the accusative nature of the Israeli state and the attitude of Israeli politicians towards the Palestinians.

The subsidiary agreements which followed Oslo, the Taba and Cairo agreements in 1994, exposed the weakness in the Palestinian position and the determination of the Israelis to follow their onesided interpretation. Under Yitzhak Rabin, until he was assassinated in November 1995, the Israelis refused to budge on anything worthwhile. At this point an Arafat attempt to secure the backing of the Arab

league for abrogating Oslo was turned down. Not having been consulted on the agreement itself, the Arab governments refused to be involved.

The election which followed Rabin's death produced a victory for militant Likud and aggressive and uncompromising Benjamin Netanyahu. This sealed the fate of Oslo. Netanyahu was totally distrustful of Arafat and scoffed at his interpretations of the agreement. He made no secret of his non-acceptance of many of its articles and determination to undermine its application, especially the parts concerning the expansion of the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories.

It wasn't only that, contrary to Arafat's many statements lamenting the death of Rabin and blaming the deadlock in implementing Oslo on the right-wing elements in Israel, neither Labour nor Likud was willing to grant Arafat what he had promised the Palestinian people. In addition to expanding the settlements, the issue of Jerusalem and a Palestinian presence in it was not part of Israeli thinking. The Israelis insisted that Jerusalem was exclusively theirs, 'the eternal capital of Israel', and not a subject for negotiation. Refusing to be honest with his people, Arafat continued to perpetuate the illusion of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

In fact the smallest issue between the two sides took a long time to overcome. Delay after delay eroded whatever faith either side had in the peace process. Meanwhile, ignoring both the spirit and letter of Oslo, the United Nations and appeals by Washington, the Israelis continued to expand settlements, indulged in what they called a 'thickening' process and eventually, blatantly created new ones from scratch. The deadline for concluding Oslo, May 1999, became a mirage. None of the basic issues separating the two sides were being addressed.

Arafat had returned to Gaza in August 1994, kissed Palestinian soil and raised his fingers in a victory sign. By 1999 the victory sign had produced nothing for his people except a 50 per cent decline in their per capita income. Counting on his lack of interest in anything but the confrontation with Israel, Arafat's immediate entourage, a collection of feckless PLO loyalists who had lost the confidence of many Palestinians, continued to pursue their personal interests. Arafat's mismanagement and total neglect of internal issues which mattered to his people went further. He paid little attention to the elected Legislation Counsel, dismissed members of the judiciary who disobeyed him, rid his administration of talented people who thought for themselves and moved forward unabashed. His performance in two areas—what he got from Israel in return for accepting Oslo and the nature of his governance—were total failures.

When his persistent attribution of the failure to implement Oslo to Rabin's death became stale, he resorted to drama and committed himself to accepting the United States as the sole arbiter of the impasse. It was another strategic mistake which would cost him dearly. Not only is the United States an ally of Israel but the Palestinian people knew that, resented Arafat's move and rejected America's role as a fair arbiter. What he did was considered a second act of 'surrender'. When Arafat would not relent, the Palestinians turned to the radical Islamic movements Hamas and Islamic Jihad for solace. The level of violence against Israeli targets, including civilian ones, increased.

The only real opportunity for a way out of the deadlock came in May 1999, when, miraculously, former Israeli chief of staff Ehud Barak led the Labour party

to victory. Barak's election to prime minister reflected an Israeli disenchantment with the stalemate. During the election campaign, Barak committed himself to expediting the peace process and reaching 'a full and final agreement' to end the Arab–Israeli conflict. The pressure on Arafat made him accept the concept of full and final settlement readily. Promising as it sounded, this was a recipe for disaster for both men. There were too many issues to overcome.

Packaging all the outstanding issues in one bundle was akin to wanting to climb the highest mountain in a single leap. Why Barak and Arafat didn't opt for a step-by-step approach cannot be explained except in terms of cynical politics, an attempt to please the home crowd. Nor did Clinton advise them otherwise for he too was after a full and final settlement in the last months of his presidency.

Despite a news blackout, optimism filled the air. News leaks spoke of an agreement being reached for the Israelis to return 95 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza land seized in 1967 to the Palestinian Authority. More dramatic was the news of an Israeli concession on Jerusalem, of Barak's acceptance of a Palestinian presence in the city. Meeting followed meeting, all at Camp David in the United States, and all the news filtering out told of a personal amity between Arafat and Barak, an atmosphere full of promise and hope.

But whatever it was the two sides agreed on failed to materialize. There was nothing to give the talk enough momentum to solve the other issue. After months of pretence, in September 1999 both sides shocked the world and announced their failure to reach agreement on land and Jerusalem. They decided to suspend the talks on these vital elements and address the refugee problem. It was a foolish move. The refugee problem was and remains the hardest to resolve.

The negotiations were conducted against a background of deterioration in the human rights situation in the areas under the Palestinian Authority. Combined with unchecked corruption in the ranks of Arafat's loyalists it diminished his standing among his people at a critical time. Lack of progress in the talks completed the picture; Arafat had nothing to offer the Palestinians. Late in 2000, Arafat issued a familiar call to arms. He asked his people to rise against the Israeli usurper. That the Palestinian had reason to rise and start a second intifada was undoubtedly true. But Arafat's timing and appreciation of the strength of his position were totally wrong. The second, or Al Aqsa, intifada, was to become the fourth strategic mistake of Arafat's leadership.

In 1968, the Arab countries relinquished much of their responsibility towards the Palestinians by ceding leadership of the confrontation with Israel to Arafat and the PLO. It was a criminal conspiracy of silence based on the unsound premise that the Palestinians were capable of defeating Israel on the battlefield. Arafat hid behind his dark glasses, made threatening speeches but had no military plan.

Oslo was the consequence of the failure to defeat or dislocate Israel. Initially greeted with enthusiasm, the agreement eventually lived up to the lawyers' predictions and became a case of total surrender. The Israelis realized that Arafat's position was weak and expanded their claims on Palestinian land and integrity. In response, Arafat tried to saddle Israel's principle backer with the results of his own failure. He declared that America was behind Israel's intransigence and expected the Palestinian people to sympathize with his inability to stand up to the only super power in the world.

By mid-2000, elections in Israel and the United States produced Ariel Sharon and George W. Bush. Neither was likely to bow to Arafat's improvised intifada. But his belated realisation of this and attempt to reverse direction to stop the uprising was a failure. Palestinian frustration with his lack of success, constant change in direction and the stubborn positions of Israel and the United States had already become impossible to contain. For the first time ever, Arafat's primacy started being challenged and there were young firebrands, such as Marwan Barghouti, who were willing replace 'the old man'. Suddenly the once undisputed leader was neither here nor there.

With both Bush and Sharon refusing to deal with him, he tried to placate them through a typical Arafat one-step-forward-two-steps-backward routine. He ordered his security apparatus to undertake a crack-down on the Islamic movements Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The Palestinian Authority was transformed into a police state; thousands of people were imprisoned, dozens tortured and no less than twenty-four died while in police custody. Even human rights activists were attacked in broad daylight. The local Arabic press was muffled.

But these moves were considered as half-hearted by Bush and Sharon who demanded a crack-down by Arafat on his own more militant followers, the popular Barghouti included. Arafat, unable to accommodate them, responded by freeing the Islamists. He played right into the hands of Bush and Sharon. At the end of 2000, catching him while on a trip to the West Bank away from Gaza headquarters, the Israelis ordered their forces to surround him in Ramallah and confined him and a small number of assistants to a compound of five buildings.

With the Bush administration totally committed to inaction, the Sharon government followed Arafat's confinement with a policy of massive retaliation. Town after Palestinian town came under unrestrained Israeli attack the moment a single townsman was suspected of a single act of resistance against the Israeli occupation. And most towns suffered curfews that lasted days at a time. In the city of Jenin, there were more than three hundred casualties in one week. With the Arabs preoccupied with America's invasion of Afghanistan and impending attack on Iraq, and with the Bush administration determined to ignore Arafat and label Israeli prime minister Sharon 'a man of peace', it became apparent that only the removal of the Palestinian leader would alter the fortunes of his people.

Amazingly and despite defection from the ranks of the Palestinian leadership from some of his closest friends, Arafat refused to bow to outside demands. Even many of the Palestinian leaders who helped elevate him to his leadership position, Abu Mazen and Abu 'Ala began thinking that his removal would serve Palestinian interest. Still, with Arafat largely popular with the rank and file of the Palestinian people, he prevailed over his old comrades and maintained his position.

However, the Palestinian problem stopped being a conflict with Israel and became an internal struggle for the leadership of the Palestinians. Obeying their own ambitions, other Palestinians joined Abu Mazen and Abu 'Ala and openly advocated the removal of Arafat. This incredible situation was to last for nearly three years. There were no efforts by outside powers or the Arab countries to restore him to his rightful position or restart negotiations. But then in October 2004, visibly unwell and looking like a shadow of his former self but still unabashedly raising his fingers in the V for victory sign, Arafat emerged from the

cramped, unhygienic compound as a man clearly in need of medical attention. He was frail and unable to walk without assistance. At the end of October, he was moved from Ramallah to a military hospital in Paris as a guest of the French government. All quarrels with his old comrades came to an end and his estranged wife re-emerged to be at his side for the first time in four years.

There was much speculation and confusion and to date the world has not been told the nature of the disease which finally brought Yasser Arafat's life to an end in the early hours of 11 November 2004. But even his most steadfast enemies found it difficult to criticize a man who in failure was referred to as Mr Palestine or Our Father.

Palestinians throughout the world became one in their grief. The Israelis refused to grant him his only recorded wish to be buried in Jerusalem. The press began speculating about what would happen to his real or imaginary fortune. President Bush callously declared that Arafat's departure represented a new opportunity for peace.

Only time will determine Arafat's place in history. His failures as a warrior, peacemaker, and head of the Palestinian state, which are there for all to see, reduced his stature. But his symbolic importance to most of the eight million people who call themselves Palestinians remains a source of wonder to his critics, this writer included. Now, as for the past forty years, he was the finest expression of what Palestine meant to them. When hundreds of thousands of them hailed his coffin when it arrived in Ramallah earlier today, many of them weeping openly, the well-known Palestinian spokesperson Hanan Ashrawi described the scene as 'vintage Arafat; he would have liked it'.

Said K. Aburish,
Nice, 12 November 2004

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Six members of the Palestinian Legislative Council
Three members of the Palestinian Authority cabinet
Twelve members of Fatah and the PFLP
Two former members of the Jordanian government
Two former advisers to Yasser Arafat
One former member of the Iraqi government
Two former CIA agents
Eight journalists

[**SPECIAL NOTE:** This book is very one-sided, pro-Aafat, and pro islamic terror.]

(A-1) Andrew Gowers and Tony Walker, *Behind the Myth, Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Revolution;* Thomas Kiernan, *Yasser Arafat, the Man and the Myth;* Rasheda Mahran, *Arafat, the Difficult Number* (Arabic); Dany Rubenstein, *The Mystery of Arafat;* Janet and John Wallach, *Arafat in the Eyes of the Beholder*.

(A-2) Andrew Gowers and Tony Walker, and Alan Hart in *Arafat*, state he was born in Cairo; Elizabeth Ferber *(Yasir Arafat, a Life of War and Peace*) and Milton Viorst *(Sandcastles*) suggest Jerusalem or Gaza. Biographers disagree on his mother's family name; some state that she was an Abu Saoud while others believe she was a Husseini. And most writers insist his father's family are a branch of the prominent Husseini family while a few hint at an Egyptian connection, mostly without explaining it.

(1-3) Janet and John Wallach, *Arafat in the Eyes of the Beholder*, 11. The Wallachs dug deeper and discovered the truth.

(1-4) Wallach, x.

(1-5) Andrew Gowers and Tony Walker, *Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Revolution*, 13.

(1-6) Wallach, 63; *Time* magazine, 13 December 1968.

(1-7) Elizabeth Ferber, *Yasir Arafat, a Life of War and Peace,* 25.

(1-8) Ferber, 42.

(1-9) Wallach, 84.

(1-10) The Mufti's other close aide was Sheikh Mousa Shahine, the author's maternal grandfather whose recollections are incorporated in this book.

(1-11) Dany Rubenstein, *The Mystery of Arafat*, 38.

(1-12) David Halevy and Neil C. Livingstone, *Inside the PLO*, 63.

(1-13) Hart, *Arafat*, 53.

(1-14) Conversation with Larry Collins, author of *O Jerusalem;* interview in Seattle in 1996 with Abu Said Abu Rish, the author's father and in 1948 a close associate of Abdel Kader.

(1-15) Rubenstein, 36.

(1-16) Hart, 68.

(1-17) Gowers and Walker, 18.

(1-18) Ferber, 42.

(1-19) Hassan Khalil Hussein, *Abu Iyad, Unknown Pages from His Life*, 13.

(1-20) Jean Lacouture, *Nasser*, 59.

(1-21) Gowers and Walker, 28. The authors claim that Arafat attributes his release to the intercession of Egyptian Kamal Eddine Hussein, but the latter could not remember.

(1-22) Harold M. Cubert, *The PFLP's Changing Role in the Middle East*, 44.

(1-23) Gowers and Walker, 29.

(1-24) Hussein, 5.

(1-25) Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State, the Palestinian National Movement*, 1949–1993, 66.

(1-26) Hart, 99.

(2-27) Interview with Dr Tayseer Kamleh, a Palestinian activist in the 1950s and 1960s who later joined Arafat, in London in July 1997; Audeh Butrus Audeh, *Surrender in the Arab Condition*, 89.

(2-28) Audeh, 85, 88.

(2-29) Jochen Hippler and Andrea Lueg, *The Next Threat*, 106–7; Said K. Aburish, *A Brutal Friendship, the West and the Arab Elite* 288.

(2-30) Interview with the Mufti in Beirut in 1960. The Mufti admitted that the Arab Higher Committee supported the Kassem regime and received financial help from it.

(2-31) Hassan Khalil Hussein, *Abu Iyad, Unknown Pages from His Life*, 64.

(2-32) Bassam Abu Sharif and Uzi Mahmaini, *Tried by Fire*, cites George Habbash on Yasser Arafat, 33.

(2-33) Abu Iyad, *My Home, My Land*, 12.

(2-34) Moshe Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity*, 1959–1974, *Arab Politics and the PLO*, 3.

(2-35) David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, 273.

(2-36) Barry Rubin, *The Arab States and the Palestinian Conflict*, 20; Shemesh, 8.

(2-37) Laura A. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, 122.

(2-38) Andrew Gowers and Tony Walker, *Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Revolution*, 65.

(2-39) Janet and John Wallach, *Arafat in the Eyes of the Beholder*, 103.

(2-40) Gowers and Walker, 40–1.
(2-41) Bassam Abu Sharif and Uzi Mahmaini, 57.
(2-42) Walid Khalidy, *Palestine Reborn*, 9.
(2-43) Audeh, 89–90.
(2-44) Kamleh interview.
(2-45) Ibid. Dr Kamleh was privy to a meeting between Arafat and Syrian Colonel Fuad Munther at the town of Dar'a on the Syrian-Jordanian border when the latter offered his help in smuggling people into Jordan and the West Bank, something which must have had official sanction.
(2-46) Brand, 56; Deborah J. Gerner, *One Land, Two Peoples, The Conflict over Palestine*, 84.
(2-47) William B. Quandt, *Palestinian Nationalism, its Political and Military Dimension*, 6.
(2-48) Gowers and Walker, 65–6.
(2-49) Gowers and Walker, 58; Shemesh, 59.
(2-50) *Time* magazine interview with Abu Said Abu Rish, the author's father, in 1965.
(2-51) Based on the recollection of a former Arafat aide who spoke on a non–attribution basis.
(2-52) Gerard Chaliand, *The Palestinian Resistance*, 16, 57.
(2-53) Alan Hart, *Arafat*, 155–9; Gowers and Walker, 54–5.
(2-54) Aburish, 201–3.
(2-55) Gowers and Walker, 60.
(2-56) W. Khalidy, 9.
(2-57) Rubin, 2, states Fatah was never capable of fighting Israel. Dr Kamleh and others involved in Fatah's affairs at the time testify that the Fatah leadership knew this.
(2-58) Hussein, 73.
(2-59) W. Khalidy, 9.
(2-60) Charles D. Smith (ed.), Palestine and the Arab–Israeli Conflict, 196; Rashid Khalidy, *Palestinian Identity, the Construction of a Modern National Consciousness*, 192.
(2-61) Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars, a History of Israel's Intelligence Service*, 212–13.
(3-62) Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman, *Every Spy a Prince*, 161.
(3-63) Don Neff, *Fallen Pillars, US Policy towards Palestine and Israel since 1945*, 153.
(3-64) Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State, the Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 156.
(3-65) Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars*, 242; Samuel M. Katz, *Soldier Spies, Israeli Military Intelligence*, 206.
(3-66) Interview with an old Arafat associate who spoke on a non-attribution basis to conceal other revelations which are not complimentary.
(3-67) Ibid.
(3-68) Sayigh, 164.
(3-69) Ibid, 156.
(3-70) Charles D. Smith (ed.), *Palestine and the Arab–Israeli Conflict*, 241.
(3-71) Barry Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory*?, 16.
(3-72) James Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, 171.
(3-73) Sayigh, 178.
(3-74) Lunt, 172.
(3-75) Interview with Colonel Mohammed Radi Abdallah, ret., Jordan's most decorated soldier, in London in March 1996.
(3-76) John Bulloch, *Final Conflict*, 165.
(3-77) Janet and John Wallach, *Arafat in the Eyes of the Beholder*, 279.
(3-78) David Halevy and Neil C. Livingstone, *Inside the PLO*, 80. Journalist Halevy based the book on Israeli intelligence information and states that Arafat and Abu Iyad fought at Karameh.
(3-79) John K. Cooley, *Green March, Black September*, 100.
(3-80) Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization, People, Power and Politics*, p.39.
(3-81) S.A. El– Edroos, *The Hashemite Arab Army*, 442.
(3-82) Jean Lacouture, *Nasser*, 328.
(3-83) Hassan Khalid Hussein, *Abu Iyad, Unknown Pages from His Life*, 154.
(3-84) Lacouture, 332.
(3-85) Interview with Dr Abdel Majid Farid, former aide to Nasser, in London in September 1997.

(3-86) Cooley, 109, states that between 1967 and 1970, the Palestinian guerrillas inflicted 543 dead and 1763 wounded.
(3-87) Audeh Butrus Audeh, *Surrender in the Arab Condition*, 158.
(3-88) Sayigh, 234.
(3-89) *The Times* (London), 15 June 1969.
(3-90) David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, 294.
(3-91) Andrew Gowers and Tony Walker, *Behind the Myth Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Revolution,* 86–7.
(3-92) Bassam Abu Sharif and Uzi Mahmaini, *Tried by Fire*, 39.
(4-93) Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State, the Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 284.
(4-94) Sayigh, 55; Rasheda Mahran, *Arafat, the Difficult Number* (Arabic), 161, tells of the kidnapping of some Jordanian army officers.
(4-95) Janet and John Wallach, *Arafat in the Eyes of the Beholder*, 285.
(4-96) James Lunt, *Hussein of Jordan*, 180.
(4-97) Charles D. Smith (ed.), *Palestine and the Arab–Israeli Conflict*, 223.
(4-98) Sayigh, 244.
(4-99) Moshe Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity, 1959–1974, the PLO and Arab Politics*, 141.
(4-100) Ibid, 143.
(4-101) John K. Cooley, *Green March, Black September*, 5.
(4-102) Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power, Kissinger and the Nixon White House*, 241. Hersh states that the Jordanian move against the PLO was planned in advance with US connivance.
(4-103) Andrew Gowers and Tony Walker, *Behind the Myth, Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Revolution*, 106.
(4-104) Bassam Abu Sharif and Uzi Mahmaini, *Tried by Fire*, 81–6.
(4-105) Abu Sharif and Mahmaini, 81–6.
(4-106) Ghanem Habbib Allah, *PLO Relations with the Jordanian Regime* (Arabic), 58.
(4-107) Interview with Colonel Mohammed Radi Abdallah, ret., then a commander of a Jordanian armoured unit, in London in March 1996.
(4-108) Hersh, 241, states that Kissinger and Nixon considered dropping American paratroops in Jordan.
(4-109) Gowers and Walker, 111–14.
(4-110) Abdallah interview.
(4-111) Interview with Dr Abdel Majid Farid, former aide to Nasser, in London in September 1997.
(4-112) Wallach, 182. At one point King Faisal of Saudi Arabia airlifted ammunition to help the Jordanians.
(4-113) Mohammed Heikal, *Secret Channels*, 309.
(4-114) Mahran, 179.
(4-115) Ibid, 175.
(4-116) Gowers and Walker, 105. Others in the Arafat camp, including Abu Iyad and Abu Jihad, disagreed, but it was Arafat's word that mattered.
(4-117) Mohammed Heikal, *Al Ahram, 26* July 1971; Shemesh, 173.
(4-118) Moshe Moaz, *Palestinian Leadership in the West Bank*, 70–1.
(4-119) Ibid, 54.
(4-120) Alain Gresh, *The PLO, the Struggle within: towards a Palestinian State*, 79.
(4-121) Shemesh, 177.
(4-122) Fuad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament, Arab Thought and Practice since 1967*, 41.
(4-123) Gowers and Walker, 119.
(4-124) Sayigh, 307.
(4-125) Gowers and Walker, 135.
(4-126) Ibid, 137, suggest Arafat began to oppose terror.
(4-127) Cooley, 106.
(4-128) Sayigh, 311, states that this was the end of Fatah's involvement in terrorism.
(4-129) Cooley, 5.
(4-130) Hersh, 407.
(4-131) Moshe Moaz, *Asad, Sphinx of Syria*, 85.

(4-132) Gresh, 126.
(4-133) Interview with Elias Freij in Bethlehem in May 1997.
(4-134) Sayigh, 351.
(4-135) Ibid, 296–8.
(4-136) Quandt, Jabber and Lesch, 132.
(4-137) Paul C. Findley, *They Dare to Speak, People and Institutions Confront the Israeli Lobby*, 15.
(4-138) Gowers and Walker, 295.
(4-139) Abu Rish interview.
(4-140) Barry Rubin (ed.), *Revolution Until Victory?*, 83.
(5-141) Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power, Kissinger and the Nixon White House*, 402–6, documents how Kissinger frustrated the peace efforts of Secretary of State William Rogers in order to replace him.
(5-142) Avi Shlaim, *War and Peace in the Middle East*, 47, records how Israeli lack of responsiveness to Sadat's peace overtures made war inevitable.
(5-143) Patrick Seale, *Abu Nidal, the World's Most Notorious Terrorist*, 50.
(5-144) Andrew Gowers and Tony Walker, *Behind the Myth, Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Revolution*, 152–3.
(5-145) Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State, the Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 319.
(5-146) Alain Gresh, *The PLO, the Struggle within: towards a Palestinian State*, 126.
(5-147) Sayigh, 320.
(5-148) Seale, 94.
(5-149) Moshe Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity, 1959–1974, Arab Politics and the PLO*, 305.
(5-150) Gowers and Walker, 105–6.
(5-151) Marie Colvin interview with Walid Khalidy, BBC documentary aired on 5 June 1990.
(5-152) Sayigh, 448.
(5-153) David McDowall, *The Palestinians, the Road to Nationhood*, 75.
(5-154) Thomas Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 164; Shlaim, 58.
(5-155) Sayigh, 373.
(5-156) Jonathan Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon*, 84–5.
(5-157) Rasheda Mahran, *Arafat, the Difficult Number* (Arabic), 208.
(5-158) Barbara Newman, *The Covenant*, 5; David Gilmour, *Lebanon, the Fractured Country*, 146, states Israeli financial help to the Christians reached the level of $100 million in 1976.
(5-159) Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars, A History of Israel's Intelligence Service*, 265.
(5-160) Aaron David Miller, *The Arab States and the Palestinian Question*, 84.
(5-161) Wade Goria, *Sovereignty and Leadership in Lebanon*, 230; Moshe Moaz, *Asad, Sphinx of Syria*, 137; and others.
(5-162) Sayigh, 388.
(5-163) Charles D. Smith (ed.), *Palestine and the Arab–Israeli Conflict*, 242.
(5-164) Walid Khalidy, *Palestine Reborn*, 117.
(5-165) Gresh, 214.
(5-166) Interview with Elias Freij in Bethlehem in May 1997.
(5-167) Gresh, 217–18.
(5-168) Donald Neff, *Fallen Pillars, US Policy towards Palestine and Israel since 1945*, 117.
(5-169) Alan Hart, *Arafat*, 401.
(5-170) Mohammed Heikal, *Secret Channels*, 390.
(5-171) Barry Rubin (ed.), *Revolution Until Victory?*, 58.
(5-172) Interviews with former member of PFLP command Munif Abu Rish and other PLO figures.
(5-173) Hart, 405.
(5-174) *International Herald Tribune* interview, 14 December 1981.
(5-175) Heikal, 318.
(6-176) Arafat interview with Abu Said Abu Rish in Beirut in January 1982; Jonathan Randal, *The Tragedy of Lebanon*, 245; Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State, the Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 515.
(6-177) Abul Tayyeb (Mahmoud Al Nattar), *Earthquake in Beirut* (Arabic), 76.

(6-178) Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars, a History of Israel's Intelligence Service*, 373.
(6-179) Randall, 247.
(6-180) Ibid, 250.
(6-181) Sayigh, 524.
(6-182) Tayyeb, 39.
(6-183) Alan Hart, *Arafat*, 415.
(6-184) Charles D. Smith (ed.), *Palestine and the Arab–Israeli Conflict*, 267.
(6-185) Abba Eban, *Personal Witness, Israel Through My Eyes*, 616.
(6-186) Rashid Khalidy, *Under Siege, PLO Decision–making during the 1982 War*, 64.
(6-187) Rasheda Mahran, *Arafat, the Difficult Number* (Arabic), 217.
(6-188) Dina Abdel Hamid, *Duet for Freedom*, 28.
(6-189) Andrew Gowers and Tony Walker, *Behind the Myth, Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Revolution*, 283.
(6-190) Khalidy, 127.
(6-191) Interview with John K. Cooley in London in April 1997.
(6-192) Interview with Abu Said Abu Rish in Seattle in May 1996.
(6-193) Interview with Karsten Tveit in Jerusalem in April 1995.
(6-194) Tayyeb, 48.
(6-195) Interview with Lebanese journalist Suleiman Firzli in London in July 1997.
(6-196) John Bulloch, *Final Conflict*, 214.
(6-197) Alain Gresh, *The PLO, the Struggle within: towards a Palestinian State*, 227.
(6-198) David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, 416.
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(6-203) Said K. Aburish, *A Brutal Friendship, the West and the Arab Elite*, 212.
(6-204) Bassam Abu Sharif and Uzi Mahmaini, *Tried by Fire*, 201.
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(6-211) Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession, the Struggle for Palestinian Self-determination, 1969–1994*, xxix.
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(6-213) Abu Sharif and Mahmaini, 207.
(6-214) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), *Through Secret Channels*, 58.
(6-215) Friedman, 367.
(7-216) Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State, the Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 608.
(7-217) Mohammed Heikal, *Secret Channels*, 382.
(7-218) Charles D. Smith (ed.), *Palestine and the Arab–Israeli Conflict*, 297.
(7-219) David McDowall, *Palestine and Israel, the Uprising and Beyond*, 9.
(7-220) Abba Eban, *Personal Witness, Israel Through My Eyes*, 624.
(7-221) Sayigh, 614.
(7-222) Glen Frankel, *Beyond the Promised Land, Jews and Arabs on the Hard Road to a New Israel*, 57.
(7-223) Heikal, 386.
(7-224) Sayigh, 618.
(7-225) Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 311.
(7-226) McDowall, 11.
(7-227) Andrew Gowers and Tony Walker, *Behind the Myth, Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian*

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(7-228) Bernard Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinians, the Making of a People*, 265.
(7-229) Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession, the Struggle for Palestinian Self–determination, 1969–1994*, xxix.
(7-230) McDowall, 209.
(7-231) Ibid, 8.
(7-232) Gowers and Walker, 392.
(7-233) *Time* magazine, 26 December 1988.
(7-234) The author was among many people contacted by Arafat's assistants who wanted to plant stories to this effect.
(7-235) Glenn E. Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State, the Incomplete Revolution*, 86.
(7-236) Interview with Rifa'at Audeh in Beit Sahur in 1990.
(7-237) Robinson, 88; Frankel, 65.
(7-238) Robinson, 89.
(7-239) Interview with Beit Sahur local leader Makram Sa'ad in Bethlehem in 1990.
(7-240) Sayigh, 640.
(7-241) Hanan Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, 67.
(7-242) Milton Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 251; Saïd K. Aburish, *A Brutal Friendship, the West and the Arab Elite*, 102.
(7-243) Interview with Pierre Salinger, author of *The Gulf War, the Secret File*, in London in 1992.
(7-244) Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein, a Political Biography*, 212, 216.
(7-245) Sayigh, 642.
(7-246) Ashrawi, 70.
(7-247) Conversation with Bassam Abu Sharif in London in 1992.
(7-248) Interview in Jerusalem in April 1995 with Norwegian journalist Karsten Tveit, who investigated the whole incident for an hour–long documentary.
(7-249) Dilip Hiro, *From Desert Shield to Desert Storm*, 382.
(7-250) Conversation with Sari Nusseibeh in November 1990.
(7-251) Hiro, 297.
(7-252) Sayigh, 641.
(8-253) Glenn Frankel, *Beyond the Promised Land, Jews and Arabs on the Hard Road to a New Israel*, 249.
(8-254) The source is a member of the PLO office in London who spoke on a non-attribution basis.
(8-255) Charles D. Smith (ed.), *Palestine and the Arab–Israeli Conflict*, 313.
(8-256) Hanan Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*, 199.
(8-257) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), *Through Secret Channels*, 38–75.
(8-258) Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession, the Struggle for Palestinian Self–determination 1969–1994*, xxxi.
(8-259) Ashrawi, 116.
(8-260) The source is an eyewitness to the incident who was interviewed on a non–attribution basis.
(8-261) Janet and John Wallach, *Arafat in the Eye of the Beholder*, 8.
(8-262) Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State, the Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993,* 655.
(8-263) Omar Massalha, *Towards the Long-promised Peace*, 51.
(8-264) Ashrawi, 96.
(8-265) Ibid, 126.
(8-266) Ibid, 130.
(8-267) Frankel, 350.
(8-268) The author was by chance in attendance when this man had a meeting with a Lebanese journalist and succeeded in recruiting him for a substantial sum of money.
(8-269) Interview with Hanan Ashrawi in Ramla in May 1997.
(8-270) The busy PLO office used an outside messenger, a resident Arab, who was interviewed by the author.
(8-271) Massalha, 60.
(8-272) Ashrawi, 144.
(8-273) Conversation with the man who provided Abu Sharif with Carter's telephone number and

made himself available to help throughout the ordeal.
(8-274) Ashrawi, 204.
(8-275) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), 78.
(8-276) Jane Corbin, *The Norway Channel*, 34.
(8-277) Ashrawi, 240.
(8-278) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), 113.
(8-279) Smith (ed.), 317.
(8-280) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), 200.
(8-281) Corbin, 46.
(8-282) Frankel, 352.
(8-283) John King, *Handshake in Washington*, 111. According to King, Abu Mazen asked for Egyptian help to start direct negotiations.
(8-284) Mohammed Heikal, *Secret Channels*, 431.
(8-285) Shimon Peres, *Battling for Peace*, 384. Peres writes of Abu 'Ala removing members of his team who were opposed to the direction of the negotiations. Kurd was the only person who was replaced.
(8-286) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), 162.
(8-287) Corbin, 83–102.
(8-288) Heikal, 438.
(8-289) Corbin, 118.
(8-290) Heikal, 463.
(8-291) Ibid, 463.
(8-292) Ibid, 462.
(8-293) Interview with Faisal Husseini in Jericho in May 1997.
(8-294) Frankel, 357.
(8-295) Ashrawi, 273.
(8-296) Heikal, 468.
(8-297) Faisal Husseini interview.
(8-298) Ashrawi, 260.
(8-299) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), 163.
(8-300) Burhan Dajani, *Peace Negotiations, the Way, Choices and Prospects* (Arabic), 89.
(8-301) Edward W. Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, viii.
(8-302) Interview with Peres, 412–3.
(8-303) Shmueil Toledano in May 1994.
(8-304) Said cited a BBC interview in *The Politics of Dispossession*, 6.
(8-305) Dilip Hiro, *Sharing the Promised Land, an Interwoven Tale of Israelis and Palestinians*, 426–7.
(8-306) Cited in Noam Chomsky, *World Orders, New and Old*, 257.
(9-307) Barry Rubin (ed.), *Revolution Until Victory?*, 162. Rubin cites *New York Times* correspondent Thomas Friedman.
(9-308) Graham Usher, *Palestine in Crisis, the Struggle for Peace and Political Independence after Oslo*, 15.
(9-309) Rubin (ed.), 197.
(9-310) Mohammed Heikal, *Secret Channels*, 479.
(9-311) Edgar O'Ballance, *The Palestinian Intifada*, 163.
(9-312) Burhan Dajani cites interview with *Der Spiegel* in *Peace Negotiations, the Way, Choices and Prospects*, 163.
(9-313) Usher, 15.
(9-314) Heikal, 473.
(9-315) Noam Chomsky, *World Orders, New and Old*, 395.
(9-316) Edward W. Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, 7.
(9-317) Heikal, 472.
(9-318) Usher, 19.
(9-319) Said, 5.
(9-320) Interview with Dr Khalil Shkaki in Nablus in April 1996.
(9-321) Amos Oz, *Israel, Palestine and Peace*, 121.
(9-322) Heikal, 503.
(9-323) Glenn Frankel, *Beyond the Promised Land, Jews and Arabs on the Hard Road to a New Israel*,

377.
(9-324) Heikal, 495.
(9-325) Interview with Jad Itzhaq, chairman of the Institute of Applied Research, in Bethlehem in April 1997.
(9-326) Heikal, 517.
(9-327) Dan O'Neill and Don Wagner, *Peace or Armageddon? The Unfolding Drama of the Middle East Peace Accord*, 56.
(9-328) Meron Benvenisti, *Ha'aretz*, 12 May 1994.
(9-329) Oz, 113.
(9-330) Interview with Hussein Daif Allah of the Al Haq Human Rights Organization in Ramla in April 1997.
(9-331) Bassam Abu Sharif and Uzi Mahmaini, *Tried by Fire*, 288.
(9-332) Interview with Ghassan Khatib in Jerusalem in April 1997.
(9-333) Ibid.
(9-334) Usher, 74.
(9-335) Ibid, 63.
(9-336) Interview with a member of the Palestine National Council who spoke on a non–attribution basis.
(9-337) Dany Rubenstein, *The Mystery of Arafat*, 124.
(9-338) Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), *Through Secret Channels*, 172.
(9-339) Heikal, 512.
(9-340) Frankel, 380.
(9-341) Interview with Sam'an Khoury, Deputy Director of the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation, in Ramla in April 1997.
(9-342) Interview with an editor who attended the meeting.
(9-343) Dilip Hiro, *Sharing the Promised Land, an Interwoven Tale of Israelis and Palestinians*, 287.
(9-344) Interview with Daniel Siedman, an Israeli lawyer specializing in land affairs, in April 1997.
(9-345) O'Ballance, 160.
(9-346) Heikal, 536.
(9-347) Ibid, 538.
(9-348) Interview with Basim Eid, Director of the Palestinian Human Rights Monitor, in Jerusalem in May 1997.
(9-349) *Ha'aretz*, 21 January 1995.
(9-350) Usher, 75.
(9-351) Rubenstein, 125.
(9-352) Interview with a Bethlehem businessman with close connections to the PNA.
(10-353) Interviews in Ramla and Jericho in April 1997.
(10-354) *Middle East Journal*, Autumn 1996.
(10-355) Interview with Ghassan Khatib in Jerusalem in April 1997.
(10-356) Khatib interview.
(10-357) Edward W. Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, xxv.
(10-358) Dany Rubenstein, *The Mystery of Arafat*, 123.
(10-359) Interview with Tim Llewellyn in London, 14 January 1998. Llewellyn was one of the few Western journalists to spend two weeks in Hebron studying the results of the agreement.
(10-360) Khatib interview.
(10-361) Interview in Nablus in April 1997.
(10-362) Interview in Jerusalem in April 1997.
(10-363) Ibid.
(10-364) *Al Quds Al Arabi*, 4 September 1996.
(10-365) Said, 169.
(10-366) David Hirst, *Guardian*, 21 April 1997.
(10-367) Mohammed Heikal, *Secret Channels*, 532.
(10-368) *Human Rights Monitor* magazine, Issue 5, Autumn 1997.
(10-369) Interview in Jerusalem in May 1997.
(10-370) Amnesty International report of 2 December 1996, 8.
(10-371) Off-the-record interviews with the families of two of them in Jericho and Nablus.

(10-372) *International Herald Tribune, 2* July 1997.
(10-373) Occasional Paper No.12, 1996.
(10-374) This was confirmed by several foreign correspondents and the PNA's Legate to a leading European country.
(10-375) Dilip Hiro, *Sharing the Promised Land, an Interwoven Tale of Israelis and Palestinians*, 424.
(10-376) Rubenstein, 115.
(10-377) Said, 9; Rubenstein, 34.
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(10-379) PASSIA Diary, 1997.
(10-380) Ibid.
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