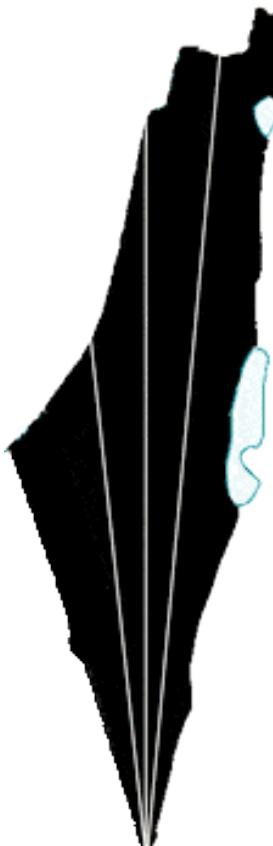


My People Shall Live

The Autobiography of a Revolutionary



Pt. 1

LEILA KHALED



Foreword

by

Lieut.-General Sir John Glubb, KCB, CMG, DSO, OBE, MC

I SHOULD PERHAPS BEGIN THIS FOREWORD BY EXPLAINING that Miss Leila Khaled did not ask me to write it. I do not know her present whereabouts. Perhaps she does not know that I am writing it. Indeed in the book itself she expresses a low opinion of me.

This is a remarkably interesting book for a number of reasons. It is written with extreme simplicity. This is refreshing in a book on Palestine, a subject on which innumerable books have been written. Nearly all of them are prejudiced, if not pure propaganda, and most of them contain half-truths, distortions of the facts and intentional forms of deception. Not that Miss Khaled is impartial, but her position is clear. The Israelis have conquered her country by force and driven out her people. She intends to enable them to return.

Throughout the book, she relates simple facts without comment. Her family home in Haifa was seized, the furniture carted away by Jews, who deported her father to Egypt. In the light of this simple narrative, the propaganda seems absurd which claims that the Palestinians voluntarily abandoned their homes and their possessions to become penniless refugees. The rape of Arab women by Israeli soldiers and the torture of Arab prisoners by the Israeli police are referred to in passing in the same unemotional tone and without comment.

But while her own experiences are narrated factually and simply, her political opinions largely reflect the oversimplified views of the extreme left wing Palestine parties. The Palestinians have been treated with so much cruelty and injustice that it is not surprising that they should develop a persecution complex. Yet this factor makes it difficult for their sympathisers to assist them, for all their attempts to help are denounced as treachery and deception. Like other young revolutionaries, Miss Khaled divides the world into good guys and bad guys. The United States comes in for the most severe denunciation as "a nation of monsters and scoundrels".

But perhaps the most obvious moral of the book is that violence breeds violence. The Nazis subjected the Jews to violence. The Jews treated the Palestinians with violence. The Palestinians see violence as the only means of recovering their country and their freedom. At the age of twenty, Leila Khaled wrote "armed struggle is the way of salvation. As a Palestinian, I had to believe in the gun as an embodiment of my humanity and my determination to liberate myself and my fellow men." Any Palestinians who oppose the use of violence are denounced by her as traitors, fascists or reactionaries. She relies on the workers and the peasants to rise against all such.

This double objective - that of freeing Palestine but at the same time eliminating all Arab "reactionaries"-made united action impossible. Indeed the enemy most bitterly attacked by Leila Khaled and her comrades was Jordan. If the Palestinians had been able to unite to free their country regardless of political ideologies, the result might have been different.

Yet this determined young woman did not call on her comrades to exterminate the Israelis or to drive them into the sea. When victory is won, she says, we will establish a democratic state in Palestine with Jews and native Palestinians on equal terms. We will never agree to a solution in which all power is in the hands of one race and the other is reduced to a subordinate status. Her solution is, however, impossible because the basis of Zionism is the desire to have an all-Jewish state and on no account a binational state.

Our sweeping denunciations of hijackers as savage brutes and criminals are somewhat weakened when we read that this famous female hijacker wept when she heard of the assassination of John Kennedy. She emphasises her determination that her hijackings would not result in loss of human life, especially not in injury to children. And in fact no one was ever hurt on these enterprises, except her own companion. The object, she explains, was to show the world that the Palestinians were still alive and to be reckoned with.

The author's descriptions of her hijacking exploits are vividly written and most exciting. We do not often have the opportunity to hear an account of such incidents written by the hijacker rather than by the victims.

"He jests at scars, that never felt a wound," says William Shakespeare in Romeo and Juliet. It is easy for us, who have never been the victims of foreign conquest and are still living in our homes, to denounce with vehemence the crimes of the evicted Palestinians.

JOHN BAGOT GLUBB

Prefatory Note

ON DECEMBER 16, 1970, I MET LEILA KHALED FOR THE first time. It was a brief encounter; I only had the opportunity to ask what she was doing. "I am a Palestinian Arab soldier," she said proudly. She had read about my radical activities in North America and asked what I was doing. I answered: "I am painting wings of freedom on my shackles !" We met again on January 4, 1971- I asked if she'd consider writing her memoirs with me. "What memoirs?" she replied, laughing. I insisted that many people would be interested in her experiences. "I'll think about it," she promised. I saw Leila again on July 23, 1971, and we talked for more than thirty hours over a five-day period. We collected her notes and looked over the published and unpublished material about her. During the following September and October, I wrote this book as told to me by Leila Khaled.

OCTOBER 30, 1971, GEORGE HAJJAR, DEPT. OF INTEGRATED STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO, WATERLOO, ONTARIO.

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Introduction

The FORCED EXODUS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE FROM their ancestral homeland is one of the most dramatic stories of modern times. Yet after a quarter of a century that story remains for the most part untold. The picture presented to the outside world is that communicated by the hollow political and military pronouncements of the Arab states, or by the Israeli Zionist conquerors and the World Zionist Organisation. Palestinians have not spoken for themselves: their self-appointed trustees and mediators act without authorisation. My generation-the generation of Leila Khaled and the Popular Front-intends to speak for itself with a true Arab revolutionary voice. The echo shall be heard in the coming decades; it is this very voice that the forces of reaction and darkness-Arab, Israeli, and imperialist alike -are hoping to still forever.

The graduates of Auschwitz and the mythical "pioneers" of the third Aliya who founded the Zionist state are responsible for the persecution, dispersion and continuous alienation of the Palestinian people. As European settlers, they imported with them not only European and American technology but the West's contempt for native populations. Those interlopers and their fabled Sabra offsprings dominate the government, the military and labour federation, and every socio-economic institution in Israel.

The sanctimonious attitude of the ruling clique towards their own technological and cultural superiority is further reinforced by a chronic Masada siege mentality which feeds on its own self-induced paranoia. The terror is of an impending holocaust waged by Holy Arab Warriors against poor, besieged Zion, the latter, of course, being a self-helping, self-cultivating, self-determining, peaceful community. This Manachean state of mind has been exploited by the World Zionist Organisation to extort funds from Jews and guilt-ridden liberals the world over. WZO as the loyal servant of imperialism has been able to deceive the public and win over Western governments because it speaks the language of the West.

More than a half century has elapsed since the barbaric and systematic obliteration of the Palestinian people began. Nearly a quarter century has passed since Leila Khaled was evicted from her home in Haifa. Leila was expelled from her homeland in 1948, at the age of four. Her home on Stanton Street in Haifa is now occupied by European Zionists who claimed to have a "higher right" than she did. Leila became a "refugee" child, one of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians forced out of their country to make room for the victims of European inhumanity. Leila was among the more fortunate Palestinians; her family lived in one room rather than in a tent in a refugee camp. Yet she knows by personal experience what it means to be a refugee. She is now a full-time revolutionary. She is discovering the true meaning of being a Palestinian in its original Canaan definition: a heroic fighter, a warlike person, a selfless fellow.

To Leila, history has determined her vocation and destiny has decreed her role. To the Palestinian and Arab people, Leila is the symbol of liberated womanhood, the devoted patriot who with the Popular Front will end tyranny and exploitation in the Arab homeland. To the friends of revolution everywhere, Leila is hope restored, humanity rediscovered, self-respect regained.

This book is not an historic document, nor is it an academic analysis of the highly complicated Arab-Zionist-imperialist civil war of the past quarter century. It is rather the personal portrait of a Palestinian revolutionary who lived through the period as a child of revolution, and as a participant-observer. Revolutionaries and lovers have yet to write of the struggle. Leila Khaled is a revolutionary and a humanist. This is her story and the story of her people and their fight for freedom.

Leila generously gave her time and talent to the task of reconstructing her life as a revolutionary. Thanks also must go to her comrades for their help in creating this book.

G.H.

PART ONE: The Badge of Infamy - Deprivation and Discovery

1 The Staircase

Come forward, poor of the earth, and cover this time with tatters and tears Cover it with the body that seeks its warmth the city: arcs of madness.I thought Revolution should give birth to its children, So I buried millions of songs and came.

Adonis (Quoted in Mona Saudi's In Time of War! Children Testify p. 168)

I COME FROM THE CITY OF HAIFA, BUT I REMEMBER LITTLE of my birthplace. I can see the area where I played as a small child, but of our house, I only remember the staircase. I was taken away when I was four, not to see Haifa again for many years. Finally I saw my city twenty-one years later, on August 29, 1969, when Comrade Salim Issawi and I expropriated an imperialist plane and returned to Palestine to pay homage to our occupied country and to show that we had not abandoned our homeland. Ironically, the Israeli enemy, powerless, escorted us with his French and American planes.

What I knew about Haifa had come from my parents and friends and from books. Now I saw Haifa from the air and formed my own cherished image of my home. Haifa is caressed by the sea, hugged by the mountain, inspired by the open plain. Haifa is a safe anchor for the wayfarer, a beach in the sun. Yet, I, as a citizen of Haifa, am not allowed to bask in its sun, breathe its clear air, live there with my people. European Zionists and their followers are living in Palestine by right of arms and they have expelled us from our homeland. They live where we should be living while we float about, exiled. They live in my city because they are Jews and they have power. My people and I live outside because we are Palestinian Arabs without power. But we, the graduates of the desert inns, we shall have power and we shall recover Palestine and make it a human paradise for Arabs and Jews and lovers of freedom.

I love Haifa, as does my family and all Palestinians. At the outset my love for Haifa was sentimental, a child's love for a dream land. As I grew older and began to read and think for myself, I discovered that I have historic roots, that my people have a history of struggle, that my nation is the equal, if not the superior, of other nations. Above all, I learned that my class, the working people, the unemployed, the refugees, the oppressed everywhere could liberate mankind from the shackles of superstition and backwardness. I had to forget what the colonial school system had endeavoured to instill in me—that I had no history; that there was no Palestinian people, no Arab nation. In my search for freedom, I discovered some of our legendary heroes and the golden age of Arabism and realised how "historians" have skillfully belittled our achievements and consigned us to oblivion.

I knew that I had a role to play: I realised that my historic mission was as a warrior in the inevitable battle between oppressors and oppressed, exploiters and exploited. I decided to become a revolutionary in order to liberate my people and myself.

I was greatly inspired by a Palestinian revolutionary of the 1930s: Izz Edeen Kassam, a man who embodied the spirit of resistance and who organised the first working class and peasant revolution

in the Arab homeland. He had been organising his Underground for several years. In 1935, seeing the continuing betrayal of his people, he launched an armed struggle which he intended to be the beginning of a people's war of liberation against the enemies: British imperialism, Zionism, and Arab backwardness. The revolutionaries were workers, peasants, students and other progressive groups. The revolt was a revolt of the oppressed and it was suppressed by the British with the aid of the Zionists and Arab reactionaries. Palestine was lost to Zionism between 1936 and 1939, not between 1946 and 1948 as historians would have us believe. In 1936, a peasant uprising engulfed the entire country in a general strike that lasted from April to October. Its goal was to insure Palestinian Arab identity by the establishment of a democratic state, the expulsion of the British and the cessation of Zionist immigration to Palestine. The only result was that the British set up one of their time-honoured imperial devices: the Royal Commission, which in 1937 recommended the partition of Palestine. The Defence party of Palestine -a front organisation of King Abdullah and the British-agreed to the proposal. The revolutionary struggle intensified but resistance was finally crushed by a traitorous Palestinian leadership and its "peace regiments"; by Arab government trusteeship and its "mediation", and finally by British-Zionist military collaboration. Kassam was martyred. His martyrdom precipitated a political cataclysm, but his revolution was finally buried by his enemies; his memory was blotted out by his detractors. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine begins where Kassam left off: his generation started the revolution; my generation intends to finish it.

I learned the history of the upheaval of the 1936 revolution largely from books, but I know the history of my people since 1948 from the bitterness of my own experience. I left Haifa four days after my fourth birthday, on April 13, 1948. My birthday was not celebrated because April 9 was a day of national mourning in Palestine. I am now twenty-nine years old and I have not celebrated a single birthday since, and will not do so until I return to Haifa. I did not leave Haifa of my own free wish. The decision was not made by my family but by a people who should have known better -a persecuted and hunted race who in turn became my persecutors and hunters of my brethren.

My family had cordial relations with our Jewish neighbours. We lived on Stanton Street, which wasn't far from the Jewish quarter, Hadar, the fashionable Fifth Avenue of Haifa. I knew Jewish children; Tamara, one of my best friends, was Jewish, but I knew that there was no distinction between us. I was conscious of being neither Arab nor Jew. The turning-point in my relationship with Tamara came on November 29, 1947, when the UN partitioned Palestine between Tamara and me. Tamara was awarded 56 per cent of my land. (Her own people claimed only eight per cent ownership of the whole land of Palestine, according to their own statistics.) I was expected to accede to this demand and congratulate Tamara's people. I was expected to deny my humanity, acknowledge the moral legitimacy of the Zionist claims, and accept the status of being homeless in my own home, a refugee in my own land. World Zionism, American Imperialism and all their allies sentenced me to a life of exile for being an Arab. Then they expected us to honour their "decision" and abide by it. Because, if we bided by that "decision", Zionist claims would be satisfied, their territorial expansion would end and their Aliyahs immigrations would cease.

The UN "decision" to partition Palestine prompted a general strike that lasted for three days. The strike was totally ineffective. The Arab National Movement was exhausted; it was a mere ghost, a disorganised, emotional mob. The traditional institutions disintegrated; the newer confederations of workers and peasants weren't sufficiently developed to take up the cause of national liberation. We were foredoomed. Sporadic violence broke out: Arabs killed Jews, Jews killed Arabs. But Jewish violence was organised and disciplined. They were thoroughly mobilised and they knew what they were fighting for. Arab violence was ill planned, random activity carried on by individuals. The Zionists had camaraderie as well as gunpowder; they had well-organised armed forces and they excelled in psychological warfare. Their leaders were at the head of their columns; ours were securely ensconced in Mount Lebanon or Cairo. The Zionists were thus able to snatch Haifa out

from under us, particularly after Sir John Glubb Pasha, the commander of the Arab Legion of Jordan, ordered his Haifa regiment to withdraw in agreement with British plans to evacuate Haifa and ensure Jewish victory.

With careful co-ordination and brilliant military strategy, the Zionists thought they could attain their goal with a minimum of effort and loss of life. They did. Most of the 80,000 Arab inhabitants of Haifa left without battling to the death for their city. They departed in an atmosphere of terrorism. This exodus started on April 9, my birthday, the day the Zionists massacred in cold blood the people of Deir Yassin-a crime which the Zionists cruelly but cleverly, magnified to frighten the remaining population into submissive departure.

Haifa was electrified by the murder of 254 people and the wounding of hundreds more. The people of Haifa feared that they were on the eve of a much greater massacre. Terror and panic prevailed. Two days later the violence touched me: I saw death for the first time. I do remember being terrified, but I do not remember whether the dead person was Arab or Jew. I only remember hearing bombs exploding and seeing the blood spurting from the dying man's stomach. I hid under the staircase and stared at the corpse in the street outside. I trembled and wondered whether this would be the fate of my father.

The spread of death and terror, and fear for our future impelled my family and most other Arabs to leave. The eight of us and my mother left for Sour on April 13, 1948. My instinctive reaction was that I must remain at home. Nobody explained to me why we were leaving and I didn't understand. Mother packed the children into the little rented car with a few of our personal belongings, and was ready to set off until she counted the children and found that one was missing. All knew instantly that I was the one. Two of my sisters found me hiding behind the date box and hauled me out like a sack of potatoes. Nawal screamed "The Jews will kill you if you don't come!" as she pulled me by the hair. I was infuriated and still couldn't understand why we were going to Sour. My father bade us farewell, gave me a tearful kiss, and remained behind. I remember the figure of despair growing smaller in the distance. I also remember that this was the last time I saw the staircase of our house.

I didn't see my father again for several months. And when he came to Sour he was a broken man. Apparently my father had had no intention of leaving; he intended to remain no matter who controlled Haifa. However, our home and his business were seized on April 22 immediately after the fall of Haifa. He had to watch Zionists moving into our home. He saw our furniture carted off. Then he, himself, was deported to Egypt.

My father managed to reach Sour by the late summer of 1948. He arrived penniless after working hard for three decades as a storekeeper. Never allowed to become a Lebanese citizen, father truly felt the meaning of rejection. He was thrown out of his country and then denied citizenship in a neighbouring Arab country. He remained exiled in Lebanon until his death in 1966. For eighteen long years, he lived in Lebanon dreaming of returning to Haifa. I, as his daughter, am attempting to realise that dream. I shall not fail my father and my nation. If I am unable to return and live in freedom in Palestine, my children will return.

Historians and the pliable Western media try to tell us that the people of Haifa left their city while the Jewish mayor called for co-existence and co-operation. Even if we presume the mayor's call to have been genuine, would that have stopped the bloodshed and the systematic expulsion of my people? Would that have suddenly made the Zionists change their programme of conquest and subjugation of the Arabs? If the mayor had been sincere, why didn't he command his Zionist hordes to cease firing? Why didn't he stop the murder of my brothers and the rape of my sisters? If the Zionists desired co-existence, why did they and the "innocent" British prepare hundreds of little boats to transport the people of Haifa to Sour, Saida and Acre? Zionist deeds were more eloquent than their words. The Zionists wanted us out of Haifa and Palestine, and they succeeded in forcing us to leave, while making the world believe we left voluntarily. We did not leave voluntarily, and if

we did, what law or morality gave the Zionists the right to occupy our homes and take our possessions? That is the question which the realistic historian must answer and the fact that every self-respecting Jew must live with.

It is also reported that the Palestinian Arabs hoped to return to their homes after the "invading" Arab armies had reoccupied Haifa, driven the Jews into the sea, and restored their rights. As to "invading" Arab armies, the so-called seven Arab states dispatched some twenty-thousand odd troops under the most adverse conditions. They were neither well-trained nor equipped with modern weapons. They faced an enemy with over 60,000 committed and trained troops. The Arabs had no central command and no morale to speak of. If any heroic deeds were achieved, they were the deeds of individuals, not armies. The Arab armies were merely the sacrificial lamb of a dying social order which sent a mob of soldiers to face a modern enemy, thinking it could win an easy victory and take a new lease on life. The Arab "invasion" as it turned out, merely gave the Zionists a pretext to add a substantial proportion of the UN-created Arab Palestine to the Jewish share, and enabled King Abdullah and his Palestinian cohorts to obliterate the country of Palestine by annexing the remainder of Palestine to Jordan. Moreover, the Arab "intervention" gave the Israelis a feeling of invincibility.

I vividly remember my mother saying to me, shortly after our arrival in Lebanon, that I must not pick oranges from the grove nearby. I was puzzled and insisted on knowing why. My poor mother, with tears streaming from her eyes, explained: "Darling, the fruit is not ours; you are no longer in Haifa; you are in another country." Before she rushed into the house to wipe her tears and hide her shame, she looked at me with motherly firmness saying: "Henceforth you are forbidden to eat oranges that are not ours." With child-like acceptance I nodded my head, but her words still echo. For the first time I began to question the injustice of our exile.

As a child of four I found myself burdened by the adult problems of life and death, right and wrong. I, as a dreamer, living on the bare subsistence provided by a UN blue ration card, in a crowded room, on a side street in Sour, stand as a witness to Zionist inhumanity. I charge the world for its acquiescence in my destruction.

My family and I sank into a mood of quiet despair and settled into a routine of sordid living

Of the summer of 1948 I recall nothing besides accompanying my older sisters Nawal, Zakiah and Rahaab to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) provision bureau to collect our miserable rations. My sisters were humiliated; my mother was angry. While we lived on international charity, the Zionists enjoyed the fruits of our labour in Palestine. Western friends tell me that the Zionists claim that when they "pioneered" Palestine there were no people there, that there were only malarial swamps and arid deserts which they turned into green plains and rolling valleys. Friends also tell me that the Zionists want peace and that we, the Arab marauders, continuously infiltrate into Palestine to burn, murder and steal.

In the autumn of 1948 I was placed in the Sheikah kindergarten to keep me out of mischief. I enjoyed the company of the other children. I was quite boyish and aggressive; I played and fought with the boys. Our teacher, Zeinah, was an energetic little old lady who loved children and dedicated her life to them. She truly cared for us and taught us to care for our fellow men. She was an upright and strong person, and sought to pass on her values to us, but the children didn't seem to appreciate her sermons.

We had no programme of study at school. It was merely a babysitting affair, but Zeinah was a devoted Moslem matron who thought that teaching us the Holy Koran was a noble mission. Without teaching us the alphabet or giving us any other kind of instruction she asked us, children between the ages of five and six, to commit substantial portions of the Koran to memory and we did. Graduation from Sheikah was no easy task. Each prospective graduate had to recite sections of the

Koran in public -almost like a doctoral defence for children. I delighted in my own word-perfect performance, particularly when I was reciting the story of Joseph and how he fled to Egypt with the child Jesus to escape death at the hands of Herod, but was later banished at the behest of the Pharisees, the higher Jewish clergy, the Zionist prototypes. The teacher and the children were overjoyed. I was ecstatic. As I finished the last verse, a child ran from the school house carrying the news to my mother, and demanding al-Hilweinah, a worthwhile reward. My poor mother could only afford to give her a few sweets. When I arrived home cheerfully announcing my graduation my mother also gave me some sweets and a big kiss. I had expected a gift and a big celebration but nothing happened. I cried my eyes out, not realising that mother was unable to buy me a dress, a doll, or even a pair of socks.

My Uncle Kahlmoud, who did have money, had heard of the news. He asked me whether it was true. I said, "Yes." He gave me a little test and was very impressed. He couldn't believe that a child of six could have memorised whole portions of the Koran. To show his appreciation he gave me one whole Lebanese pound (the equivalent of 25 pence). This was the first pound I had ever earned. I jumped with joy, gave him a great big hug and ran home to announce the big victory to my mother and to emphasise her niggardliness. Mother smiled approvingly as I displayed the pound and boasted about the generosity of my uncle, her brother. But I had no idea of what to do with my prize, so I gave it to my mother. She returned to me twenty-five piastres saying, "This is yours Leila, do as you wish with it." A few days later, I bought a gift for my teacher and sweets for the children with my treasure.

In the autumn of 1950, I was enrolled in grade one at the Union of Evangelical Churches' School for the Palestinians, but only after a struggle. That summer, I had learned to read on my own by attentively listening to my sisters and picturing the passages of the Koran in my mind. Since I was Zakiah's constant companion, I knew what she knew and learned what she learned. She was going into the fourth grade and I decided I wanted to be in the same grade, especially after discovering that the two pre-elementary grades plus the first two grades were going to be housed in a tent on the grounds of the schoolhouse.

But the teacher placed me in the first pre-elementary grade and proceeded as if nothing was wrong. I was shocked and objected strenuously. I shouted out that I ought to be placed in grade four. Everyone laughed. "Examine me and you will see," I demanded. I was able to read fourth grade-level Arabic without making a mistake. Then she examined me in mathematics, and I knew enough to pass. English was my downfall. I knew the alphabet and a few words that my sisters used around the house. I was able to recognise the English alphabet as she wrote it on the blackboard, but I made a disastrous mistake when I read the letter "O" in English as "five" in Arabic, which in fact took the same form. The teacher burst out laughing. "You see, I knew you didn't know enough to be even in grade two, never mind grade four. But since you're such a bright little girl you won't have to spend two years in pre-elementary school. I will place you in grade one." I made my point and achieved a real academic victory, but I also felt a momentary letdown because I still had to remain in the tent outside the schoolhouse. Henceforth, I was no longer a child learning songs and games, but a serious pupil learning Arabic, math, and English. Also, as a student in grade one, I earned the right to my own slate with a sponge and lead chalk. Mother made me a cloth school bag from a piece of one of her old dresses. I was delighted that I had so much!

In grades one and two, I enjoyed school and settled down to a "normal" existence in exile. There was only one significant incident during these years in my life, which had to do with demonstrations commemorating the loss of Palestine. Although I was passionately aware of the Palestinian tragedy, for some reason or other, I thought the demonstration on May 15, 1951, was a mere interference with my school work. The school was closed for the occasion but I did not participate. I asked mother what the demonstrations meant. Realising that I was the only child of walking age who had remained at home, she replied angrily, "As a Palestinian girl you should have

joined your sisters to protest against the Zionist occupation of Palestine." I agreed that the demonstration was desirable, but insisted that school work was more important. Mother was surprised by my treasonous talk, and lectured me on the three historic days of betrayal that every Palestinian should remember: the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917; the partition of Palestine, November 29, 1947; and the proclamation of the state of Israel, May 15, 1948. Ever since, these dates have become a vital and integral part of my life.

1952 was a turning-point in my life. I was only eight years old but the onrush of events and the background of my world of exile forced me to be politically aware. My brother first drew me into politics. I recall the first political debate between brother Mohammad and my father. Mohammad, who was 17, was enthusiastically relating to the family how a group of young Egyptian army officers overthrew the corrupt King Farouk of Egypt. Father was opposed to the revolt and insisted that the officers were a group of military upstarts, who knew nothing about politics and overthrew a king who had fought for the defence of Palestine in 1948. Mohammad was furious. He reminded father that the King was a British political stooge who lost the war in Palestine and did nothing for four years to help recover Palestine. Moreover, Mohammad continued, "The King and his retinue were decadent to the bones and they squandered the wealth of Egypt on themselves rather than on the people." The family was cheering for Mohammad as he proved that he was better informed than father. Mohammad had collected the documentary evidence from Rose EI-Yousef – an Egyptian journal – and pasted it on the wall of the boys' room. He read it all to father, who acquiesced and proudly congratulated his eldest son on being so well informed and committed to the revolution. Mohammad became our political commentator and all of us, especially the girls, learned enormously from him. Furthermore, being at the American University of Beirut on a scholarship added to his prestige and put him in close association with the fledgling Arab Youth Movement, which provided him with a wealth of information and organisational skill.

In the autumn of 1952, I enrolled at the same "exclusive" Palestinian school set up by the churches. This was the year of discovery and commitment. In the next three or four years my political and social ideas were formed, and my political ties were made. A series of unrelated incidents set the stage for my politicisation: a violent storm; a harsh cold; a collection for a refugee girl.

The pleasant summer of 1952 turned into a violent winter in early December. A storm struck and blew over our school tent which held over seventy children. A few were injured; the rest of us had the daylights scared out of us. In the midst of pouring icy rain, tears and mud, I stood silently crying as the children screamed and ran for cover. It was a symbol of our ruined Arab homeland. Local protests and heartrending stories followed, but do no avail. Western Christian charity had its limits. The tent was re-erected; there was no alternative.

At this point, the tent had little or no meaning to me. It was not long after this incident that it began to dawn on me that tens of thousands of people permanently lived in tents, not just for games or schooling. In early 1953, a bitter cold spell set in in Sour; beautiful white snow covered the mountains of Lebanon, and the mountains of Galilee. Slush and ice covered the whole town. I caught a bad cold but we had no medicine and I had to keep on going to school in my worn-out sandals. One windy February day I struggled home through nearly two feet of snow. I was freezing to death. I entered the house crying pitifully.

I shouted: "I can't take any more! I need a pair of socks and a pair of shoes. Sandals without socks are for the summer, not for the winters of Lebanon." Mother looked at me sadly, "Darling, don't you think I know that?" "If you did," I screamed, "you'd buy me a pair of shoes and socks." Angrily she answered: "You should be thankful you have a pair of sandals to wear and a house to come to. Other children have neither sandals nor homes. They don't even have enough to eat. Do you understand Leila? Do you?" "No, I don't," I replied angrily. But I enquired further. "Why don't they have sandals, homes and bread? Why don't they have them?" Mother replied quietly: "They have no

money because their parents are like us, they lost their homes in Palestine and there is no work available in Lebanon. You see, Leila, those Palestinians who had no relatives elsewhere in the Arab world had no place to go but the open desert or the slums of Arab towns and somehow survive until UNRWA was organised. Imagine where we might have landed had we not had relatives in Sour and I had not had a few bracelets from the old days which I could sell to buy you food for the first few months. Where would we have gone, where would we be now? I wonder if you would have survived to this day. What might have happened to you and your sisters and brothers had I been killed or taken away by the Zionists when we were on our way from Haifa to Sour? Don't you know that the Zionists slaughtered our people, and those who escaped them died of thirst or starvation? I could tell you a million tales of woe, but, I want you to know only this: you are an alien here in Lebanon, and your homeland is under foreign occupation. We fought and fought valiantly to save the land; we lost and were driven out. You Leila, and your brothers and sisters, must never forget Palestine and you must do your utmost to recover her."

I imagined I was listening to a sad story that had happened somewhere else to someone else. I was affected deeply but I didn't feel that I was part of the story. The truth finally hit me in the spring of 1953, when I was nine. I was competitive and regarded myself as the brightest child of not only my family but of my class. My self-assurance was undermined by Samirah, a little girl from the camps—the scum of the earth, so I thought. I was terribly upset when I learned that she stood first in the class, way ahead of me. I despised her, my jealousy overwhelmed me. I think I even hit her, and I certainly insulted her. Once we even fought in the classroom. When the teacher discovered us locked in a hair-pulling match she promptly separated us, surprised to see her two smartest pupils fighting. Outside, the fighting resumed, I was the aggressor once again. The teacher took me inside for a little talk; it was a talk I shall never forget. She explained to me that poor peasant children were just as bright as my family and friends. "Besides," she added, "they are the true children of Palestine because they live on the land, and cultivate and harvest it. Virtue is a part of the people of the land, and the simple folk are the backbone of all societies. Those peasants," she continued, "did not leave Palestine willingly like the rich people who now live in villas in Cairo and Beirut. They were forced out to make room for the Zionist intruders. Leila, those are the people of Palestine. You must learn to love them, be part of them, serve them." The lesson taught, she called Samirah back into the room and told her to shake hands with me and to take me to her tent-home to show me how she lived and her parents and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians lived. Samirah did.

After a tour of the camp, I realised that I was living in luxury. I knew how fortunate I was and how despicable and arrogant the rich people must be. I suddenly became aware of class differences in that upsetting spring for me. As I grew older, I acquired the necessary intellectual and moral ideology to understand what I had felt in that camp, why class society must be abolished and socialism established in its place. But, Samirah, my classmate and class sister and Amirah, my teacher and working-class advocate, taught me that first lesson of true freedom and true humanity. They taught me more in a few hours than a thousand books could have done in a hundred years. In that camp, I saw misery, hunger, and humiliation. I saw the maimed, the diseased, the broken-hearted. I saw bare-footed children with swollen stomachs, fathers with heads bowed, pale mothers with sickly babies, grandparents in despair. I saw the meaning of poverty and hunger, and felt the despair of deprivation to my bones. I did not shy at the sight of filthy tents and I was not deterred by the sight of death. I toured the whole camp and tried to feel how the people felt. I returned home intoxicated by the wine of reality. I was crucified and redeemed at the same time. Ever since, I have loved the poor and marched with them to overthrow our mutual oppressors. Over 700,000 Palestinians still live in these refugee camps. Some of them do menial work in nearby towns, most of them rot in idleness. They live on meagre UN doles and have no hope of salvation without an Arab-Palestinian revolution.

My faith in myself and my fellow students was greatly strengthened in the spring of 1953. On

Bayram's Eve, the Easter of Islam, most of the children were ready for a week's vacation. Most were talking about dolls, dresses and the other gifts they expected to receive. A sad little girl in ragged clothes was sitting nearby all by herself. I didn't know her well and I didn't ask her why she was so lonely and unhappy. Nabil, our teacher, was aware of her plight. After our break he told us that it would soon be Easter and that all of us, with the exception of one little girl, would be receiving gifts. He said, "It would be unmoslem not to share our riches with the poor, and certainly unArab not to be generous." I was excited-maybe the time had come to storm UNRWA's offices or government house in Sour. But Nabil had no such drastic measures in mind. "One of you will not have a happy Easter unless she has a new dress for the occasion. I cannot afford to buy her a dress alone. Here, I am contributing twenty-five piastres, and if each one of you contributes two to five piastres we could buy Hassnah a dress." The children looked at each other, puzzled by the request. I was not. I knew what it meant to be poor, having just visited the primitive camps. I stood up and announced, "Here is my entire weekly allowance of five piastres." Most of the children followed suit and we bought Hassnah a dress in the midst of joyous tears. I decided not to wear my own new dress that year because thousands of Palestinian children had none.

I loved my teacher Nabil, adored his physical prowess and moral integrity. He in turn coddled me and treated me like a little sister. On the fifth anniversary of the creation of Israel, May 15, 1953, he and I marched at the head of the parade. With clenched fists, we shouted "Long live Arab Palestine, Palestine is ours, we shall return!" Thousands of people, old and young, assembled in the town square to hear Nabil swear allegiance to the flag on behalf of all Palestinians. He spoke persuasively, "Our parents lost Palestine, but our and succeeding generations have an obligation to liberate our homeland." As he concluded his speech, he asked the crowd to look southward and to pledge before themselves and their fellow men to return to fight for Palestine. I had received the sacrament of revolution. I also learned a lesson from my cat, Sarah. She was black like me and we were constant companions. I read my lessons to her; I took her for walks to the sea. I made clothes for her, bathed her and brushed her like an infant. Sarah was my child. When she had her first litter of kittens I acted as midwife. I was devoted to the kittens. When one died I gave him a Moslem burial and visited his grave daily. Then one day I discovered a great big chicken eating the flowers off my kitten's grave. I caught him and in my childish fury wrung his neck. The incident caused an uproar around the house; finally the neighbour was dutifully told that her chicken had violated my rights of property. My mother insisted that I dispose of the kittens. After some searching I found good homes for them. Then nature took its course and my cat became pregnant again. My mother was determined not to turn our home into a maternity hospital again, so she seized the cat, put her in a sack, and told my uncle to take her as far away as possible. I cried and pleaded with her, but she was unyielding. Uncle carried out the mission. I was catless for nearly one year.

In the spring of 1954, I was ten years old. On a bright Sunday morning on my way home from school, I saw my cat, Sarah, striding majestically on the top of the arch of a dilapidated building. I was overcome and rushed towards her, not completely certain that it was Sarah. It was indeed my cat and I welcomed her with open arms. The whole family was overjoyed and regarded her return as miraculous. On Monday morning the teacher asked us to write an essay on something very important that had happened in our own lives. I was pleased to have the chance to write on the return of my "dove to the ark". I wrote about the story of the flood, comparing it to the Zionist flooding of Palestine and portraying my cat as the "dove of peace" that foretold of the ebbing of the tide. I felt that if my cat could find her way back to me after one year, I ought to be able to find my way back to a liberated Palestine. My teacher, also a Palestinian, thought the sentiment was noble and elevating and tried to instill in me a more scientific approach to the homeland. But to a child of ten the homeland was a dream to excite the imagination, not an attainable goal.

To extinguish the flame of revolution, "safeguard" Arab black gold, and maintain United States strategic interests, America-the creator, protector and supplier of weapons to Israel; the father,

godfather and high priest of Zionism-set out in the early 1950s to create an extension to NATO and place our world in its orbit. John Foster Dulles, the US Secretary of State, visited the Middle East in March, 1953. His country was in the grip of virulent McCarthyism and Dulles as an ardent anti-communist came to "save" us from the "Communist menace" and turn us into docile "democratic" citizens of the "free world". He sought to form a regional alliance tied to NATO and at the same time find a final settlement to the so-called Arab-Israeli conflict which would ensure the continued supremacy of Western imperialism and its oil cartels in the area.

The answer of my generation to Dulles's attempts was a loud "No"; all the free groups worked together to frustrate his plans. It was rather fitting that opposition should commence at the American University of Beirut. But neither Dulles nor his local supporters were aware of the depth of nationalist feelings that gripped the country. Nationalist students led the struggle for liberty under the vanguard of the Arab Youth Movement. They weren't frightened of death and were not scared off by the armed soldiers who tried to keep them at bay and protect Dulles. Young nationalist revolutionaries broke through the army ranks and almost managed to slay the dragon of capitalism. Hell broke loose as the resurgent crowds moved towards their target. The army, gendarmerie, and secret police moved in. Dozens of students were seized while hundreds of others were clubbed or crushed by mounted horsemen. My brother Mohammad participated in the demonstration and returned to tell the eager family about it.

Though the country was profoundly shocked by the brutality of its own soldiers, it took another year of nationalist agitation, and finally the murder of Hassan Abu Ismael, the American University of Beirut student leader, for the country to wake up and disentangle itself from the web of the proposed American alliance system-the Baghdad pact. The murder of Hassan was particularly terrible because it took place in front of the AUB, and the AUB administration refused to lodge a formal protest against the assassination of one of its students. Suddenly people began to understand the meaning of Western democratic institutions and their political intentions towards the Middle East.

But the unfolding drama of the fifties did not reach its denouement until the Suez War of 1956, when Britain and France, in concert with Israel, invaded Egypt seeking to overthrow Nasser and impose a Ben Gurion kind of peace on the Arab people. The declaration of May 25, 1950, in which the three great powers, Britain, France and the USA, had guaranteed the territorial integrity and sovereign independence of the Middle Eastern states and pledged to come to the aid of an aggrieved party, was trampled upon by two of its signatories, Britain and France, and allowed to lapse by America when it was no longer of value to Zionism.

The West failed to coerce the entire Arab world into a subservient alliance system under the wing of America. On the contrary, it forced a polarisation in which Nasser's Cairo became the focal-point of nationalist awakening and Nuri's Baghdad the centre of counter-revolution and the capital of the "northern tier" advocates. All in all, Dulles and Ike, Eden and Macmillan, Ben Gurion and Moshe Dayan were not a totally unmitigated evil; they gave us a rude awakening for which we owe them a debt of gratitude. They forced us to re-examine the foundations of our society. No longer did the Arabs have to undergo long periods of self-delusion to distinguish friend from foe and to uncover the enemy within and without.

2 Education and Revolution

Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains.

Rousseau

AS A MEMBER OF THE ARAB NATIONALIST MOVEMENT, I was trained to be conscious of the past, present and future. Under-developed people and societies typically lack an awareness of the present and the future, but such consciousness is imperative if we are to be masters of our own lives and environment. We cannot overcome the past and its crippling ideologies unless we gain a free consciousness. Under-developed people live by fate; they look with nostalgia to a "golden past". My people and I suffer from these debilities, but we are also living in the ongoing process of history and are trying to determine our future rather than bind ourselves to a dead past.

The value of the conquest of Palestine by imperialism and Zionism is that it forced some of us to re-examine the foundation of our society on our own. We discovered that our society was rotten, traditional, unprogressive. Our defeat was indeed our salvation, our means of regeneration and renewal. Now the issue is not restoration, but the construction of a new socialist republic encompassing the entire Arab world.

We must either accept or decline the challenge. If we accept, we must head to the mountains, to the peasants' huts, to the city slums. If we decline, we could lead a life of "happy" servitude under the yoke of Zionism and imperialism and compare our economic well-being today with that of last year or the year before Dayan "liberated" us. Moreover, we could console ourselves by saying "We now have peace and quiet," and we have more "democracy" under Moshe Dayan and his bulldozers than under Hussein and his Bedouin regiments.

By 1955 I was becoming conscious of present problems and future plans. In that spring, I obtained my elementary school certificate and made plans to go on to secondary school. I was eleven years old and Israel was seven. We went through the same perennial ritual of denouncing Zionism, imperialism and Arab reactionaries on the seventh anniversary of our exile and doing nothing about it.

Meanwhile Israel had used those seven years to consolidate her internal front and "integrate" her Afro-Asian population, the Sephardim Jews. "Peace" overtures were made by Moshe Sharrett in 1954, but his government was toppled by the Israeli hawks under the redoubtable leadership of Ben Gurion. However, before Sharrett's overthrow, the Israeli government was implicated in one of the most insidious plots in the history of diplomacy. The scheme known as the Lavon affair entailed the blowing up of the US and British embassies and other Western strategic interests in Egypt to prove the instability of the Egyptian regime, and "persuade" Israel's protectors to remain ensconced at Suez and not to withdraw from the Sudan. The Israelis, of course, had hoped to make the crime appear the work of the Egyptians. Unhappily for them, they were caught red-handed and exposed. The Lavon affair rocked Israeli politics for the next decade.

Israeli expansionism began in earnest with the gradual annexation of demilitarised zones set up under the truce agreements of Rhodes (1949), the continued expulsion of Arabs from Israel, and the suppression of the remaining Arab minority in Israel. More important was the start of the policy of massive reprisals. This was launched on October 15, 1953, with an attack on the village of Kibya and culminated on February 28, 1955, when Israel invaded the Gaza Strip, demolished Egyptian fortifications and killed and wounded over one hundred and fifty people. The attack did not have its intended effect. Nasser did not withdraw; instead, he encompassed the entire Arab world. By the autumn of 1955 he concluded the famous arms deal with Czechoslovakia, thereby breaking the Western monopoly as sole armament supplier to the Mid-east states and began to move towards

pan-Arabism.

Everything crystallised in the early autumn of 1955 because Allen Dulles, the head of the CIA and brother of John Foster Dulles, flew to Cairo in September and tried to persuade President Nasser not to go through with the Czech arms deal. This high-handed gesture, denounced by Arab nationalists, was only the first in a series of attempts on the part of the American imperialists to undermine Nasser.

Hardly any school child that year escaped learning about these events. I anxiously absorbed details and mastered most of the anti-Western arguments. My family's economic condition was improved and the atmosphere around the house relaxed. We now had a three-room apartment and hunger was no longer a threat. Two of my sisters were working and mother had made some wise investments. We all felt that the Arabs were taking some overdue first steps towards recovering Palestine and we were still wholeheartedly behind the nationalist movement.

1956 was the year of years in modern Arab history. The Nasserite regime, aided by external and internal pressures, had managed to extract an evacuation agreement from the British in 1954, and by June, 1956 withdrawal was completed. Dulles and Eden then decided to topple Nasser because he was moving in a neutralist direction instead of toeing the Western line. They exerted economic pressures, but he did not yield. Nasser was beginning to sense his potential power and the desire of the Arab masses for a strong, charismatic leader. Eden and Dulles for their part were unable to grasp the profound changes that were taking place. They thought that if they couldn't overthrow Nasser they could humiliate him and make waves by withdrawing the promised \$70 million loan for the Aswan High Dam project. Nasser responded by nationalising the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956. The Arab giant had suddenly awakened and roared with fury at the West. Mass adulation for Nasser became an Arab phenomenon; Nasserism became a world-wide doctrine. The West was stunned when Arab pilots soon proved that they could operate the Canal just as, if not more, competently than their Western counterparts.

The world stopped and listened. Diplomats from the Third World made pilgrimages to Cairo to declare their solidarity with the Arabs. When Robert Menzies, the Prime Minister of Australia, journeyed to Cairo carrying the ultimatum of the Canal Users' Association, Nasser gave Menzies an emphatic no and sent him packing. The Arab world applauded; the oppressed saw a spark of hope. Europe and America stood in awe while Nasser became the brown giant of the Third World. Then came the infamous tripartite invasion of Egypt on October 29, 1956, but Nasser held on to the Canal and the reins of power. Israel had unabashedly conspired with Britain and France to reverse the tide of Arab history and impose a new imperial regime on our world.

The 1956 invasion of Egypt ceased on November 6. That day a new baby was born in the Khaled family. We called him Nasser in honour of President Nasser, to symbolise our first hour of victory since the defeat of 1948. Nasser was number twelve and the last child of Ali Khaled. Now the family could either form a soccer team or take on the "twelve tribes" of Israel. The decision was already made. That autumn was the most exciting period of my childhood. We were engaged in all sorts of feverish activities. It seemed as if the whole school was one family, the whole of Sour was one tribe, the whole of the Arab world was one nation state. It was a time to remember and enjoy, a time of pride and self-confidence. But the enemy was still at the gates.

The years from 1956 to 1959 were my period of political apprenticeship as an activist. Although I had sensed intense political interest and activity in our house since 1954, I somehow did not grasp its full significance and was not really involved in the discussions. Brother Mohammad was a member of the Arab Nationalist Movement and he frequently gave us literature to distribute in Sour or posters to paste up. Sisters Zakiah and Rahaab must have joined the Movement in 1956 or 1957, and they were very active. I began to associate with the Movement people in 1957. I didn't realise, however, how much more there was to the movement than writing, distributing pamphlets,

demonstrating or making speeches. The Movement was active in 1957 when it was widely rumoured that Turkey was planning to invade Syria and overthrow the progressive regime on behalf of the US. We had numerous discussions, but there was no organised youth movement to take action. I was on the periphery and asked my sisters for information which they refused to give because I was not a fully-fledged member of the Movement. But my enthusiasm at associating with liberationists and my emotional commitment to the cause offset any misgivings I might have had about not being a participating member.

In 1958, under artillery fire from the Lebanese army, the distinction between member and non-member ceased. Sour was under siege. The false friends of Palestine and Arabism began to show their teeth immediately after the formation of the United Arab Republic in February of 1958. To protect their own tottering regimes the Hashemites of Iraq and Jordan formed their own counter-federation, probably under Western instigation. The whole Arab world was polarised: pan-Arabism versus provincial sovereignties; revolution versus counter-revolution; Cairo versus Baghdad. In this political context the Lebanese President Chamoun, the darling of Western diplomats, decided to seek a second presidential term. The Arab Nationalist Movement as well as other forces, progressive and reactionary, sought to block the constitutional amendment proposed by his party. Because of the constitutional deadlock, the conflict of antagonistic social forces, and the opportunism of merchants and politicians on both sides, a civil war erupted on May 10, two days after the assassination of Nasib Al-Matni, a renowned Arab political editor.

In Sour local opposition to the Arab Nationalist Movement was feeble. It was easy for us to seize the city and run its government in the interests of the people and the rebellion. The Island of Sour proper was under our absolute control. But the army held the gate at the northern end of town, where the opposition had numerous followers, including the local member of parliament, his tribe and its clients. Tempers in Sour had been running high since April 2, 1958 when the gendarmerie had shot and killed Maan Halawah, a prominent nationalist leader. Most people in Sour considered his murder unwarranted and unprovoked. The Solidarity Club of Sour, however, interpreted Halawah's murder as a declaration of war on the Arab Nationalist Movement as well as an attempt by the Lebanese authorities to intimidate the city and foil the nationalists. Their premonitions proved correct.

A three-day curfew was imposed, followed by a round-up of "political agitators". When the people discovered what was happening, they broke the curfew, stormed the police station, and released the prisoners. This time Mohammad Kassem, another distinguished nationalist, was killed, and I had my first brush with death, escaping by only a few centimetres. Although I had participated in practically every demonstration in Sour for the past six years (1952 until April 1958), it still seemed like just a lot of fun. I had not seen anyone murdered since the man who died in front of our house in Haifa, when I had been safely hidden under the staircase. Maan Halawah, however, was gunned down by the Lebanese gendarmes while shouting nationalist slogans as he was raised shoulder high by comrades. Mohammad Kassem was shot when the gendarmes tried to re-impose their curfew on Sour. I was by his side, handing him stones to hurl at the gendarmes when he was cut down. I ran screaming for help. When help came he was still alive and we rushed him to the hospital in a broken old car. I thought he was going to live. The surgeon came out of the operating room after a few minutes. He walked slowly towards us, then solemnly offered his condolences trying to hide his own tears. For the first time in my life I knew the loss of a comrade in battle. I cried for days. The city mourned the loss of two great comrades and gave them heroes' funerals. But that was only the beginning. The summer of 1958 was a summer of mournings. The para-military forces and the army of Chamoun advanced like a pack of mercenaries to ravage our city and bring us the blessings of American weaponry. That summer, I do not remember sleeping a whole night without interruption, for I was a soldier at thirteen, and I had sentinel duty and other political and military obligations. I was anxious to be a good soldier.

As the Lebanese divided and brother killed brother, it became evident that too many foreign fingers were on the triggers. On July 16, 1958, American Marines landed in Lebanon, two days after the Iraqi people overthrew the Hashamite dynasty there and executed Nuri al-Said and Abdul-Ilah, Britain's most faithful Arab agents. The Lebanese-Arab people witnessed the awesome majesty of the sixth fleet. Unhappily, however, for America, it was too late to restore Nuri and company to power. But they stayed in Lebanon, deadlocked the civil war, and declared it a draw. Arab political commentators wrote books on "Neither Victorious Nor Vanquished".

Fortunately the summer of 1958 in Sour was not as devastating as we had feared. The destruction was mitigated by an uneasy, unwritten local accord with the army: the ANM controlled the town centre, the army held the outskirts of the city. The continuous bombardment of our positions was nerve-racking and frightening. In addition the army frequently cut off food supplies. But we improvised and managed. At one stage, our area was being starved and our men's morale was weakening because of the bombardment of the army and their own hunger. We had about ten kilos of flour at home and I decided that I could bake enough bread for the men. But instead of baking it I kneaded the entire ten kilos and fried the dough in olive oil. Now I could supply a regiment, not only a few dozen fighters. The image of a revolutionary Jesus blessing the fish and feeding the multitudes came to mind, but I performed no miracles.

The crucial part came when I delivered the bread to the lines. I was caught in the crossfire of the two sides; each thought I was the enemy, but apparently neither was prepared to gun me down. I was amazed by the speed of the bullets as they buzzed by, and was somehow surprised to see a real battle scene raging, particularly with me in its midst. Until then I had thought that battles were like demonstrations. I quickly learned about battles and screamed to both sides to stop fighting because I only had bread on my tray which I carried on top of my head as befits a Palestinian maiden. Fortunately, one of the comrades recognised me and signalled to his men to stop firing. I ran in his direction when he called my name and reached the hungry men safely.

Later I learned another lesson of war. I was ready to choke any Lebanese soldier I could lay my hands on when one day a soldier walked into our house asking for a drink of water. I replied that I'd give him a drink of poison before I'd give him a drink of water. He seemed taken aback: "Why would you do such a thing?" he asked. I said, "Because you're murdering our men." He smiled and cautiously replied, "Miss, if we had been aiming our bombardment on your men and city, the whole thing would have gone up in smoke by now. We have orders to fire and we are firing, but we are not aiming. We merely fire to keep your men edgy and in place, hoping that they won't try to attack us or attempt to cross to our side of town. Tell your comrades to stay put, otherwise we will be forced to wipe out the whole area." Mother and I listened carefully. I told him he was a liar and he deserved to die of thirst and starvation as well. Mother relented and told me to give the soldier a drink in return for the good news he brought us. I reluctantly did so insisting that he was an enemy soldier and he should be treated accordingly. "We should take him prisoner," I announced. He gestured at his gun as he stood in the doorway chuckling over my outrageous threats. He suggested that I try to attack his side of town if I were so courageous. Mother pleaded with him to tell his comrades not to fire so mercilessly on the city and men and he in turn assured us that he was a Lebanese who loved his country and did not wish to see it destroyed.

In 1958, having proved my mettle in battle, I had earned the right to candidate membership in the Arab Nationalist Movement. My mother strongly disapproved of the political activities of the girls in the family. She felt that now that the civil war was over the girls should stay at home and leave the politics to men. Mother had no objections to brother Mohammad manning the trenches, staying out late at night or going off on unknown political missions for weeks at a time. To her, Mohammad was a man so he did the work of men. Such was her upbringing. She said she was also afraid of scandalous talk in the neighbourhood about women in politics. Mother knew that social ostracism would result if any one of us stepped out of line. My sisters assured her that they were mature and

capable of looking after themselves. Besides, they said, the men they associated with were respectful, political gentlemen with high principles. None was out to violate any girl, especially girl comrades. Nothing would convince mother. Father was a little reluctant and suspicious, but he favoured our position and it was finally he and Mohammad who came to the rescue. They succeeded in persuading mother not to disrupt the political work of my sisters. When we were kicked out of Palestine, they argued, Zionists did not distinguish between men and women. Women constituted over one half of the Palestinian people and they too were exiled. The Israelis trained their women to fight and granted them civil liberties. If we wished to defeat the Israelis we must outplay them in their own game. Mother was silenced by one final question: "Do you wish to see Palestine liberated?" father asked. "Yes," she said unhesitatingly. Mohammad reasoned: "Mother, you cannot then oppose the participation of your daughters in political life, can you?" Mother smiled. "I do not mind Zakiah and Rahaab joining," she relented, "but this child politician (referring to me) must stay at home." I was the sacrificial lamb of the deal, but the right of women to participate was conceded.

Since my sisters were allowed to participate in politics, it was inevitable that I should be allowed to do so eventually. In the meantime I decided to continue my activities clandestinely. In 1959, however, when mother discovered that I had become a fully-fledged member of the ANM, she tried to forbid me from going to meetings. I couldn't very well offend her by flaunting my membership card. I told her that I was merely doing what I always did as a political supporter of the Movement, but mother remained unconvinced. On the night of a very important meeting which I was determined to attend I resorted to subterfuge. I took a bath and put on my pyjamas to convince mother that I was not going anywhere that night. She must have thought that she had won the battle and that her "child politician" was recovering her senses. As zero hour approached, I made my move and, still in my pyjamas, I went by mother in the kitchen saying casually "I am a little bored, Mother, I am going to visit my girl friend next door." She raised no objections. I headed directly to the meeting hall at the Solidarity Club. My pyjama debut startled the members as I made my way to an empty seat. They were shaken by what they regarded as immoral behaviour. I was blasted for violating Arab decorum and polite womanly behaviour. They were almost ready to pass a motion of censure and perhaps expulsion. Some of the reactionaries thought my appearance in pyjamas was a tradition-trampling, sex-enticing episode. Tradition-trampling it might have been; sex-enticing it was not. I was terribly disturbed by their male chauvinism and self-righteousness. I stayed through the meeting and left still angry, because my commitment to the cause was not appreciated and the personal difficulties I encountered at home were not taken into consideration. How could we liberate Palestine and the Arab homeland, if we ourselves were not liberated? How could we advocate equality and keep over half-the female half-of the human race in bondage? That would be the next battle waged at the Sour Solidarity Club. Mother never found out about this escapade, but she soon reconciled herself to my vocation and acceded to my political demands. It took the ANM nearly a decade to start tapping to the full the human reservoir of women.

The school of the Evangelical Churches was not equipped to provide schooling for the secondary school baccalaureates or beyond. I had to go elsewhere to continue my education. The Saida School for Girls was going to be my first opportunity to act completely on my own. I was excited by my newly-won freedom as a young adult, but a little upset that school rules required that a student have two residential years to qualify for examination to the baccalaureate. That meant I was going to lose one of the two years I had gained when I started school. I thought repeating the fifth secondary grade was no tragedy and rationalised it as a splendid opportunity to do great political work.

But the autumn of 1960 was the year of the international summit at the UN, not the, year of great power rivalry or regional wars. Everything seemed quiet and conducive to reflective prolonged study. President Nasser went to the UN; he looked tame compared to 1956. Diplomacy seemed to have replaced revolution; the Third World was coming of age perhaps a little too soon. The only hot

spot in the Arab homeland was Algeria. I had to adjust to a new social and political environment after the turbulent years of Sour and await the coming of a revolutionary messiah. He never came. Palestine needed one, but the Popular Front was not born until November of 1967.

In Saida there was much time to spare and little action to engage in. Here I was no longer in a completely Palestinian enclave. This school was highly apolitical-a graveyard for a revolutionary. I was placed in a house with twelve other girls. A few were Palestinians with whom I thought I could communicate. But to them Palestine was in the distant and remote past. They wanted to obtain an "education" and find husbands. What a travesty of womanhood. I did not give up hope, however, and tried to accommodate myself to their mode of living. I was convivial by nature and loved to be with people, but I felt somewhat lonely in the midst of these eleven girls. I took heart when I noticed another lonely person. Her name was Miss McNight, an American black who had come all the way from America to teach in a private school in Saida. I was a little startled at first until I learned the reason for her choice. In Lebanon she was treated as a person and given the deference we accord teachers in the Arab world; in America, she was regarded as a coloured woman, an inferior, perhaps even a sex object.

Miss McNight and I quickly became good friends. It was natural for two strange black women in Saida to pool their resources and offer each other aid and comfort. Miss McNight was a darling of a woman-vivacious, always smiling, quick witted -the model of a big sister for me. But our politics differed. She was surprised when I expressed deep hatred of the Jews and taught me not to make sweeping declarations. She pointed out that not all Jews were Zionists; some were, in fact, anti-Zionist. I reflected on her distinctions and tried to adopt them into my thinking.

The anniversaries of the Balfour Declaration (November 2) and the Partition of Palestine (November 29) were approaching. The time came to test who stood where on my campus. I started to agitate for a general strike of schools, Sour style, to commemorate the anniversaries. In Sour, my school was always in the lead. We used to commence the marches and force all the other schools to close down and join in the demonstrations. It was not to be fulfilled in Saida. Miss McNight appreciated the idea but even she didn't like the idea of a general strike, the forced closing down of schools, the holding of massive public rallies or the storming of police stations. She was a graduate of Martin Luther King's school of non-violence. She stood for prayer and the education of the enemy. I was a militant revolutionary who was born in the crucible of revolutionary upheaval.

Despite our differences of opinion, Miss McNight and I remained friends. As a member of an oppressed race she was sympathetic to my cause. She used her influence to persuade the Lebanese Arab principal to let me hold on Arab soil a peaceful student rally in support of the Palestinian cause. The principal only agreed reluctantly, thinking she was doing a favour to her neighbours from Palestine. The rally, however, was postponed from November to May 15, 1961, the thirteenth anniversary of the Zionist state. Then I delivered my first public lecture on Palestine.

I spoke of the history of Palestine and Zionism and my hopes for the future. Zionism as a political concept came to the fore at the turn of the twentieth century. It was at the outset a religious idea-old Jews pilgrimaged to Jerusalem to spend their last days there and die in the holy land. Zionism as a word was coined in 1886 by Ben Acher, a European Jew who had never been to Palestine. It was Herzl who started the political side of Zionism in his pamphlet *The Jewish State*. He was an Austrian, assimilated Jew who cared very little about Jewry prior to the 1880s. As a political correspondent covering the Dreyfus trial in Paris, he was converted to Zionism. He was appalled that France, the most civilised nation in Europe, was blatantly persecuting a fellow Jew and making him a scapegoat for a crime he never committed. Herzl felt that only in a Jewish state could the Jew become a "normal" person and lead a life of inner peace. He used all his energies and capitalist contacts to mobilise European Jewry and convened them at the first Zionist congress in 1897, at Basle. His programme was adopted and the World Zionist Organisation was formed with Herzl as

chairman. Herzl sought aid from the Kaiser to realise his dream. He journeyed to Istanbul and sought the aid of the Sublime Porte. He told his prospective patrons that Jewish capital, knowledge and skill would be placed at the disposal of Berlin and Istanbul if the Porte granted access to the Jews in the southern part of Arabia, Syria, and Palestine. But the Porte, fearing the reaction of his Arab subjects, was unable to confer such a title.

Herzl was forced to look elsewhere for allies. He found one in Britain, the colonial power that occupied Egypt, the Sudan and Arab Gulf. He repeated his offer to the British and argued that a Jewish state would be a great bulwark against Arab revolution and a local sentinel to guard Britain's vital interests in the area which included the Suez Canal and the trading routes to the Far East. From the very beginning the idea of an Israeli state was sold to the Western powers as a wedge to keep the Arabs divided. The British appreciated the proffered co-operation of the international Jewish bourgeoisie and offered such land areas as the Argentine and Uganda where the Jews could settle. Although Herzl preferred a Jewish state in Palestine, he accepted the Uganda offer and sold it to his compatriots at the World Zionist Organisation congress of 1903. Shortly afterwards, Herzl died and the Uganda project was buried. Britain also offered Al-Arish in Egypt on the Mediterranean Coast, the area nearest to Palestine, and that proposal was turned down by the Zionist diehards. (In the autumn of 1971, Israel controlled not only the whole of Palestine, but also Al-Arish, Sinai and the Golan Heights of Syria.)

Zionist colonies were set up in Palestine and thousands of Jews were filtered in because of the incompetence and corruption of the Ottoman administration. By 1917, when the Zionists extracted the Balfour Declaration from the British, the Jews constituted less than ten per cent of the population of the area, but the draftees of the Declaration had the temerity to refer to our people as the "non-Jewish population" rather than referring to the Jews as a minority which could have religious rights in Palestine. The British were powerful and liked to have powerful friends with capital. The Zionists were prepared to pay any price, make any deal, offer every conceivable sacrifice, commit any crime to reach their goal. They did and in 1948 Israel was established over the corpse of the Palestinian people. With the diplomatic support of the great powers, they were able to attain their objective quickly because Britain and France divided the Arab East among themselves into seven states and imposed on the Arabs a so-called "sacred trust" of civilisation under Western tutelage. Then the allies suppressed the Arab National Movement and crushed the revolutionary elements that launched the Great Arab Revolution of 1916.

Much more significantly, Britain allowed the Zionists to establish dual power in Palestine and denied the same privilege to the Arabs. The cards were stacked in favour of Zionism. To undo this conspiracy we revolted on a number of occasions against the mandate and Zionist colonisation and fought for our national independence. But the enemy was in our ranks and our own ruling class was finally responsible for our betrayal. The 1936 General Strike was a classic example in which the peasants and workers led the revolution and forced the upper class to join forces with them. They did, but only to abort and sacrifice the revolution on the altar of personal advantage. When the war of 1948 came, our ruling class had abandoned us to the wind. We were leaderless, dispersed and on our own. The Zionist plucked the land from our hearts with little cost and less effort.

The bankruptcy of our feudal leaders and the collapse of our social structure ushered in the age of the colonels' regimes – regimes that were progressive, reformist, Arabist. Meanwhile, the Zionists proceeded to establish a racist, exclusive society where East European Zionists, Polish and Russian, dominated the government, political parties, trade unions, bureaucracy, and business. Afro-Asian Jews were the target of discrimination, class exploitation and European contempt. The Arab inhabitants, the rightful owners of Palestine, were placed under military administration and used along with the Arab Jews as a cheap labour supply.

I concluded with a plea to free Palestine. Such a state of affairs cannot continue and we must not

allow it to continue. We can end it through Arab unity and the liberation of Palestine. Our goal can be reached if the UAR was expanded and all the Arab states become one nation-state. We must fight for one Arab nation, for unity, for freedom, for socialism. We must defeat enemy number one, America, the supplier of Hawk missiles to Israel, and we must seize our own oil resources. We must learn to emulate our Algerian brethren in order to liberate Palestine. Long live Palestine, Arab and revolutionary!

The students applauded heartily; they seemed to have been favourably impressed by my knowledge of Palestinian history and my commitment to unity. At that moment neither I nor they foresaw the breakup of the UAR on September 28, 1961 when Syria withdrew, thereby dashing the Arab hope for unity and forcing the Palestinian people to re-examine their whole strategy of liberation. The breakup of the UAR was the temporary collapse of hope, and yet it also brought about the rise of a Palestinian revolutionism. Palestinian organisations of all sorts suddenly sprang up everywhere and mushroomed in the next three or four years. A new age dawned in the Arab East while the Arab West inched its way to independence in Algeria through armed struggle.

That spring, I obtained my secondary school baccalaureate and went back to Sour for the summer, hoping to go to AUB in the autumn if I passed the entrance examinations. Sour was the vortex of nationalism that summer and every conceivable question regarding the future of Arabism was raised and debated. The Movement was in disarray, but we took heart, because Nasser was building rockets and fleets. On July 23, 1962, Nasser celebrated the first decade of the Egyptian revolution by displaying "Egyptian" made rockets, ships, tanks and planes. He announced to the world that Egyptian rockets would reach just to the south of Beirut. He and Amer saluted the parade and acted as if they were Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt combined. We were elated; last all of Israel was within the firing range of Arab rocketry. Nasser also declared that Egypt's fleet was the greatest in the Eastern Mediterranean and we felt the time may have come to take revenge even on Turkey for her butcheries of the First World War.

In the summer of 1962, I once again had to face the problem of being a Palestinian Arab woman. My sisters in the West speak of two kinds of oppression: class and sexual. I had to face four kinds of oppression: national, social (the weight of traditions and habits), class and sexual. At this point I was particularly prone to oppression because I was a woman. My family professed equality like most modern families, but didn't practise it. Although I passed the baccalaureate examination with flying colours and my brother Khaled failed, my family insisted on sending him to university instead. I was a very low priority item compared to my brothers. I was finally able to attend the American University of Beirut in 1962-63 due to the generosity of brother Mohammad, who was working as an engineer in Kuwait. I scored the second highest average at the AUB entrance exam: eighty-seven per cent, which should have entitled me to a scholarship, but for some reason or other, I was not given one. But I was delighted to have passed and wanted to enroll as quickly as possible before I got railroaded into some uncreative role like office work or marriage and baby-production.

When I arrived in Beirut in late August of 1962, my earthly possessions consisted of fifty Lebanese pounds. I thought I could register on the installment plan. The AUB registrar, however, didn't believe in that basic American principle. I did all I could to persuade him to let me register before my place was taken by someone else; I promised to pay the balance before the beginning of the academic year. He wouldn't budge. But a girl in the office sympathised with me. "How will you raise the balance for your fees Miss?" she asked. "I have a brother in Kuwait who promised to send me to university if I passed the examination, and I did," I was quick to explain. "Go and telegraph your brother," she instructed. I ran to downtown Beirut and telegraphed Mohammad. The cost was twelve pounds. I now had only thirty-eight Lebanese pounds. I realised how quickly I could blow the money and end up penniless and unregistered.

I waited and waited and a whole day elapsed before word came that the money was coming. I

smiled to myself with satisfaction. My brother, like all good Arab men, honoured his promises. I flew back to AUB and proudly presented the registrar with my fees. He uttered a few bureaucratic words and I was registered.

At AUB I enrolled in the four required freshman courses chemistry, Arabic literature, English, and math. Only one of my four professors was of Arabic origin, and I couldn't tell the difference between him and his three other fellow professors. They were all American in outlook, behaviour, and manners. They were pseudo-ivy leaguers in a provincial school that only excelled in producing CIA spies and ministers. I don't know which was the lesser evil of the two.

My nominal education was taking place at AUB; my real education was in the lecture hall of the Arab Cultural Club of Beirut and in the ranks of the ANM. At the ACC I became acquainted with distinguished Arab intellectuals such as Joseph Mogheizel, the club's president, and Mohsen Ibrahim, the editor of Al-Hurriyah, then official voice of the Arab Nationalist Movement. I also met Teysier Koubaa, the president of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS). The group of students and intellectuals I met in that academic year now occupy leadership roles in the Popular Front and the Arab left.

AUB was an intellectual graveyard for me. It was a "finishing" school for the rich children of the Middle East and a social club for the colonial elite of the Arab world. Student government was banned and the university was run like an American corporation. Students whose fees were not paid in full were often forbidden to attend classes. The only permissible activities on campus were dances, parties and plays. No open political clubs were allowed. There were no demonstrations, no political rallies, no guest speakers.

I lived at Jewett Hall, the women's residence, where I had an American room-mate named Judy Sinniger. Her social life never ceased to amaze me. One week she had three different dates, with three different men and she kissed each one of them with the same passion in the grand room at Jewett in front of a lot of other girls. I asked Judy how she could do it. She passed it off, "It was all nice, clean American fun with no strings attached." I laughed and admired her for her amorality.

But Judy and I were more than room-mates. We were intellectual companions. She lectured me on American government, values and social order, and I lectured her on the Arabs. She was a liberal Kennedy fan; I was a Nasser admirer. The test of our friendship came in October, 1962, a decisive month in America and the Arab world. On October 22, 1962, Kennedy threatened to invade Cuba unless the Soviet missiles were dismantled and removed from Cuba. On October 2, the UAR had officially sent its troops to the Yemen, to bolster the republican regime which had overthrown the medieval regime. Judy and I had long and heated dialogues concerning these events. The dialogues were mutually instructive, but neither of us convinced the other.

Judy held that it was right for America to demand the removal of missiles from Cuba. The missiles, she claimed, constituted a strategic threat to her country's national security. I considered it criminal and barbarous on the part of the United States to threaten atomic holocaust unless it got its own way.

Judy regarded the dispatching of UAR troops to Yemen as an invasion. I saw it as a moral obligation on the part of President Nasser, a noble gesture which he undertook to save the revolution from its corrupt enemies. She asserted that Nasser was an ambitious politician who sought to seize the Gulf's oil and use it for his personal aggrandisement, and I countered that we had a right to that oil and it should be used for the benefit of the Arab people. She saw Nasser's activities as part of a Soviet plot to occupy the Arab world. I explained to Judy that we were not fighting just to expel the colonial and neo-colonial powers from our region only to offer our homeland on a silver platter to a new superpower. Judy was an imperial citizen, however liberal and idealistic she may have been. I was a Palestinian Arab woman without a homeland, living in exile in an American

colony in Ras Beirut. She had everything to lose, I had everything to gain. One's social consciousness is indeed determined by one's social conditions.

Although politics were banned on campus and GUPS' (General Union of Palestinian Students) political activities were low-keyed, we engaged in confrontation politics in the spring of 1963. The proclamation of the republic of Palestine based in the city of Nablus provided us with the occasion. Needless to say, Nablus, before and after the proclamation, remained under the firm control of King Hussein and his tribal soldiery. But there was a fair amount of agitation that reflected Palestinian dissatisfaction with Hussein, the Arab states, and the general social condition. Moreover, new Palestinian organisations appeared on the scene, and by the autumn the Arab states were forced to take notice and start talking about Palestinian unity. At AUB we held demonstrations in support of Palestinian demands for a place under the sun. The administration initially turned a deaf ear to our activities, hoping that the spring offensive was a passing phenomenon.

We were prompted to move quickly by the widespread accurate rumours that the Jordanian embassy had called in Palestinian students and threatened to cancel their Jordanian passports if they didn't cease their political agitation. We responded with more demonstrations, an action that gathered momentum rapidly, involving practically all the old politicos of Beirut and a significant proportion of foreign students. (This was the first time that foreign students at AUB had rallied to the cause of the Palestinians since 1948, when President Dodge had protested at the establishment of the state of Israel to President Harry Truman of the United States and had been axed from his post for it.)

The university administration braced itself for counteraction. Amidst an atmosphere of high tension, GUPS proposed that a student committee be formed to represent Palestinian students before the Jordanian embassy. The committee was formed and a number of prominent foreign students were elected to the committee. I was included in the group. The same day, we descended in full force on the Jordanian embassy and told the ambassador in no uncertain terms that we would slash his throat if he withdrew the passports. I did most of the talking and my fellow students backed me to the hilt. Moments after our arrival, the embassy was surrounded by the Lebanese gendarmes, and a whole contingent, of what appeared to be armed intelligence service officers, stormed into our meeting office. The ambassador seemed to know exactly what was happening although he claimed not to have called in the police. In the presence of the whole committee, he had to eat his words and advise the police that we were not a gang of criminals, merely a committee of AUB students visiting his excellency. The guards surveyed each one of us and left the room.

I resumed the violent threats and insisted that we be given written assurances that passports wouldn't be cancelled. The ambassador said that he was not instructed to give such assurances, but he was authorised to deny the report and give us his word of honour that such action was not contemplated. I sensed a feeling of victory and drank Arab coffee with the ambassador and assured him that we would be back if any action were taken against Palestinian students. Since we were talking in English and I was being so forceful, he presumed that I was not an Arab. Before we left I spoke to him in Arabic and assured him that I was an Arab, a Palestinian and that every Arab woman was going to be my kind of woman in the near future. He smiled paternally and bid us farewell.

That same spring, I once again had to face the problem of being a woman. The ANM decided to train the first paramilitary contingent of university students. I was among the first to apply and I couldn't be turned down on some flimsy excuse because of my revolutionary credentials and my long experience as an activist. Moreover, since I was on the executive committee of GUPS and a militant from AUB, they were afraid to turn me down. Instead they tried to persuade me not to go because of the harshness of the weather, the physical fatigue and the embarrassment my presence would cause. I assured them I was prepared to face and overcome all these difficulties. They finally agreed to let me go and I underwent the necessary training.

Politics were banned on campus, but the ANM was organised as a secret organisation on a cell basis. I had the responsibility of distributing literature at Jewett Hall and pasting posters on trees in the area. I did it secretly, towards five o'clock in the morning or about one a.m. before I went to bed. One night I was caught by a watchman who at first appeared severe and threatening, but who turned out to be a member of our underground. It was quite a rewarding experience to find a comrade in the middle of the night. From then on he provided me with information regarding security and advised me when it was safe to work. Being caught meant expulsion without trial. Inside Jewett Hall I was on my own. I placed bundles of literature in the women's mail boxes and simultaneously periodically denounced those who imposed on us that useless literature. Occasionally a student or two would come to the defence of the distributor, arguing that it was essential for us to know what was happening and to hear all points of view. This tactic helped me in organising, and also to know which students were politically inclined.

I was never revealed as a nationalist and a member of the underground to the students as a whole, but the administration was clever and they suspected that I was the torch bearer of nationalism at Jewett. I was called to the dean's office when I was seen publicly distributing literature relating to the fifteenth anniversary of Israel. The dean spoke to me in quick, angry, Americanised English which I pretended not to understand. She was outraged that an AUB student couldn't speak English. She called in a secretary and asked her to act as an interpreter. The dean demanded, "Did you read the student handbook?" "Yes, I did," I replied through the interpreter. "Did you know that according to article six you could be expelled for distributing political literature without permission?" "Yes." I said. "Why did you do it then?" I innocently replied that what I was distributing was not political literature at all. She took the pamphlet from the secretary's hand and read a few passages out loud. "Isn't this a political pamphlet that comes under rule six?" I said I didn't know what a pamphlet was, and that I didn't know what she was talking about anyway. The poor liberal dean started explaining to me that a political pamphlet was a statement that explained, defended and advocated a political position. I agreed that her definition was excellent but contended that it didn't apply in this case because Palestine and her defence were natural and essential to me. "Palestine is not politics to me," I declared. "It is a question of life and death, and no one, certainly no Yankee who can't even speak Arabic, can tell me how to act on the issue and how to fight for my country." The dean considered me a recalcitrant student who needed discipline and she threatened to expel me. "I dare you to do so!" I screamed in English and declared war on her as a CIA agent and on AUB as the servant of the Pentagon and the oil cartels. "Yankee dean, there will come a time when I will be sitting in your chair and I will expel all of your kind." I stormed out of her office shouting "Long live Palestine, long live the ANM, long live the revolution 1" The dean was shocked, and probably had to take a few tranquilisers before settling down to a day of bureaucratic business.

In the spring of 1963, I passed my freshman year, although not with distinction. I had hoped to return to university and continue my education but money was not available, and I had to look for work. The temporary ending of my schooling made me look back on the value of my education in general. My academic education was on the whole meaningless. It taught me nothing of lasting value. The few sparks of life in these years were all related to the politics of revolution and were outside the curriculum. In the first three or four years of my education, I enjoyed reading history and literature. Towards the end of my student career my interests shifted to mathematics and chemistry and I began planning to specialise either in pharmacology or agriculture. Agriculture was vital because when we returned to Palestine we would need to cultivate the land on a scientific basis and prove to the world that we could make better use of it than the Zionists.

In the first three years of secondary school I read about important figures: Lincoln, Napoleon, Hitler, Lenin. I admired them all in the beginning. At the moment I admire Lincoln as a liberal in his time, Lenin as the greatest "historic world individual", to be followed only by Mao, Ho, and Guevara. At first, I admired Hitler because I thought he was the enemy of the Jews. Later I found

out he classified Arabs as sub-humans, only slightly above the gypsies and the Jews. I admired Napoleon's military conquests and his ability to overcome all obstacles, until I discovered that he did it all for personal glory.

In literature, I read excerpts from Dickens and Shaw. I loved their work and once tried to imitate Shaw in an essay. The teacher didn't appreciate the effort and the C plus was a powerful deterrent to further imitation. I dismissed Shakespeare as a pompous circumlocutionist. In Arabic literature, I liked the poets of the Ommayad and Abbasid periods. That's all the "education" I remember. Since I had plenty of time to spare in 1960-61, I read Gandhi on my own. I liked his moral integrity, but I felt that he was born a slave and never transcended his slavery.

As to personal and social relations, I led a "normal" life for an Arab girl. For six years, I liked a fellow Palestinian student of peasant background. At first his careful avoidance of girls provoked my curiosity. Later I discovered his dislike of women stemmed from watching his mother being raped by Israeli soldiers as they were fleeing from the Safad area in 1948. He abandoned his mother the moment he was able to subsist on his own. I haven't seen Adel since I went to AUB and I wonder whether he is among our fighters or whether he is one of our martyrs. Perhaps he has abandoned hope altogether and is living in the slums of some Arab town. I've had casual boyfriends but never became really attached to any man. The older I grew the more attached I became to the revolution.

3 Exile in Kuwait

In Kuwait and the Arab Gulf every non-Kuwaiti is an alien, except the British, the Americans and their appendages.

Katib Karouni

ARAB NATIONALISM WAS A NINETEENTH-CENTURY IDEA. It was first propounded by literary elements and liberal writers who came in close contact with European thought and writers at British and French universities. Students and reformers were the first to espouse the nationalist ideas and organise Arab clubs. From the outset, Arab intellectuals were in the forefront. Arab soldiers and officers in the Ottoman armies joined the intellectuals at the turn of the century, particularly after the Ottomans launched their Turkification policy in the first decade of this century. In those days nationalists did not have a clear conception of nationalism, nor did they have a defined framework encompassing all the Arabic speaking people. Nationalism was "Eastern", not Western. That is, it included the fertile crescent states of West Asia, not North Africa. Indeed, some important figures such as Al-Afghani, who advocated the "Islamic Baath", failed to distinguish between Arabism and Islam. His concept was strengthened by Western encroachments on the region, and complicated by his advocacy of liberal democratic ideas within the Moslem world.

Al Afghani and his followers regarded the problems facing Islam as ones of civilisation and community. They thought that the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt (1798) and the subsequent takeovers of the Arab West by France and the occupation of Egypt by Britain were a repeat of the medieval wars of Islam and Christendom. To them, the answer was therefore clear: the Moslem world had to react as a community to withstand that onslaught and to defeat the West. Arab and Moslem were one; all Moslems had to act collectively. It took nearly three decades to jettison that

mental albatross: Islam and Arabism were divorced and distinguished as two different concepts, rather than remaining as one and indivisible. The occasion for the separation was revealing. It left the Arabs breathless, defensive, bared. They knew how to react to the "Christian" West and how to face the latter's challenge-by holy war. Now their co-religionists, the Turks, tried to Turkify the Arab East, which they had dominated from the sixteenth century until World War I.

The Arab response was anguished shock. They had to learn quickly that Moslems were not all brothers and that Turks were not Arabs; that the world was no longer run by religious bigots but by capitalists; that states and parties seek alliances on the basis of mutual interests, not religious affiliations; that Arabs must alter their view of the world or remain subjugated. There was no specific party to cope with these issues. But there were individuals and groups based in Beirut, Cairo, and Damascus. There were also the nationalist officers in the Ottoman army who formed a part of the "young Turks". These officers were treated contemptuously by the rest of the "young Turks" after the latter disclosed their intentions in 1908 and repudiated the idea of a decentralised empire based on national autonomy. Those officers, the intellectuals, and students constituted the cadres of the Great Arab Revolution in 1916. The net result of that revolution was the proclamation of a Damascus-based Arab state in 1920. The revolution and its leaders were rapidly suppressed and dispersed. The "Eastern" part of the Arab world was dismembered and occupied by the British and French, who divided it among themselves in accordance with the Sykes-Picot treaty which allocated Lebanon and Syria to France, and Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan to Britain. The secular Arab nationalists were eliminated; the regionalists were bribed by state principalities and given kingly titles; the Hashemites and their hangers-on carried the day by becoming pliable British tools, using religion and tribalism to perpetuate their power. The idea of nationalism alone survived as the Arab East was divided into spheres of influence between Britain and France. Palestine was conferred on the Zionists in the Balfour Declaration and the mandate's regime did its utmost to realise the Zionist ideal.

To infuse the idea of nationalism with socialist content required approximately half a century of turmoil and at least three major defeats for the prevailing feudal and petit bourgeois regimes. In each case the Zionists triumphed while digging their own graves deeper. From 1920 to 1948, nationalists attempted to advance a secular liberal idea of nationalism. They failed dismally because both they and the feudal commercial ruling classes thought in terms of the Western capitalist analysis and tried to compete for Western favours; both were imposed practically from above and they were never able to incorporate the masses into their system. The secular nationalists with their liberal beliefs had the historic value of discrediting themselves and (the Wafd party of Egypt) unwittingly convincing the Arab people that the West was their intractable enemy. In other words, the Arabs remained weak and divided and the West was held responsible for their division and penury. It seemed, moreover, that the West never gave its clients an opportunity to develop a capitalist society in the Arab world and the Arab rulers remained as remote from the people as their Ottoman predecessors. In this environment of weakness, Zionism was able to implant itself and deliver the coup de grace to Arab feudal mercantilism in 1948. As a result, a petit bourgeois nationalism arose and reflected itself in the first pan-Arab nationalist party-the Baath, a social democratic movement. The Arab Baath (formed between 1943 and 1947) as opposed to the Islamic Baath of yesteryear, was a significant development. It revitalised the idea of Arab nationalism and gave it a secular frame of reference. More importantly, however, the Baath tied the idea of Arab unity with the concept of socialist humanism and placed socialism anew on the agenda of the Arab nation. The slogans of Baath were liberty, unity, socialism. Unfortunately for Baath, it did not inherit the mantle of the Arab revolution because its ideologies did not take into account the contradiction between liberal democracy and socialism, because they glossed over the relationship between socialism and mass mobilisation and organisation, and because the leadership preferred individualist theorising and rulers to relevant social theory and mass work. Since Baath was born an

adolescent intellectual, it was unable to surmount that condition and integrate itself in the society it purported to represent. In the sixties, its military leaders became putschists and incapable of relying on the masses; the colonels depended on their fellow colonels and the civilians on their tribal associations, the intellectuals on their salon audiences. Baath became only a party in name in the 1970s, not a revolutionary instrument for the transformation of Arab society.

To a number of nationalists, Baath lost its historic relevance in the late 1940s, because Palestine was not its first priority and because it lacked understanding of revolutionary struggle and iron Organisation. Those nationalists attempted to replace Baath as the historic agent of Arab social change and in 1948, they formed the Corps of Arab Martyrdom (Kataib El-Fidaa El-Arabi). Between 1952 and 1957 they were known as Arab youths (El-Shabab El-Arabi). In 1952 they called themselves the Arab Nationalist Movement (Haraket El-Komeen El-Arab). In 1967, they effectively ceased to exist. In 1970, the Arab Work Socialist Party (Hozib El-Amal El-Ishtiraki El-Arabi) succeeded the ANM as the Pan-Arab party. The Popular Front For the Liberation of Palestine (El-Jabhan El-Shaebah Litahrir Filistine) which was formed in November 1967, replaced the Palestinian branch of the ANM, which had been set up in 1962. At the outset, the Movement was a collection of sentimental rationalists, nourished by the ideas of Satish Al-Hussari, a writer who stressed the idea of nationality and based it on language and history only. In 1963, the Movement was in a state of flux; revolutionary radical nationalism was posed as the new alternative. The social question was becoming the focal point. It was this prospect and the intellectual and moral challenges it entailed that I pondered then as a member. The nuclei for the ANM were organised by a group of students and graduates from the American University of Beirut in the 1940s. The most important figures were Dr. George Habash, Dr. Wadih Haddad, Hani El-Hindi and Ahmad El-Khatib. The initial cadres were mostly Palestinians who were appalled by the Arab disaster of 1948.

The creation of the Zionist state gave the Movement the necessary impetus for growth. The leaders were populists, anti-imperialists, ultra-nationalists. To them, nationalism and anti-imperialism were the principal preoccupation; Israel was the principal enemy; the Arab masses were the principal friend. Because of these political propositions, the young nationalists fought in the 1950s against entangling Western alliances, against the Hashemites in Jordan and Iraq, against Arab advocates of Western capitalist ideas. As the Movement evolved, Nasser attained stardom in the firmament of the Third World, by concluding the famous Czech arms deal with the Soviet bloc and nationalising Suez. In recognition of these achievements, the nationalists identified themselves with Nasserism and applauded its deeds for the next decade. At the time it was patently clear that both Nasser and the ANM were natural allies; both believed in class collaboration and national unity; both held ambiguous ideas regarding co-operative socialism; both were elitists and statist in their conception of leadership and the role of the state in the economy. The only difference was that Nasser was in power and was unable to transcend his environment. The ANM was not in power and, in due course, it turned against those very oligarchic ideas. Nasser was proud to react and manipulate pressures from East and West and boasted about being a pragmatist power-wielder. The ANM leaders, on the other hand, were Movement people. As such, they were more attuned than Nasser to the currents of modern thought and more capable of grasping and adapting to reality. In the mid 1960s, they became advocates and practitioners of armed struggle and scientific socialism. Nasser died in 1970, a soldier-diplomat, not an advocate of people's wars.

Meanwhile, during the period of close collaboration, contact between Nasser and the Movement was maintained via such nationalist Syrian officers as Saraj and the Egyptian political ideologue, Abu-Alnour. The relationship was cordial but paternalistic. Direct contact was made for the first time on November 21, 1961, when Hani El-Hindi, a Syrian radical member of the ANM visited Nasser at the latter's request. El-hindi raised some fundamental issues with Nasser regarding the Syrian secession and the future prospects of Arab revolution, but by that time Nasser's interests had shifted to "Egyptian socialism". Dr. Habash, the Secretary General of the ANM, met Nasser on

April 11, 1964, and was favourably impressed by Nasser's formidable personality and his ability to master issues and people. The exchange was in a period of expansive dimensions for Arab nationalism and Nasser seemed to have recovered from the agony of the Syrian divorce. However, the meeting took place at a point when the roads to Jerusalem began to diverge radically and openly. Therefore, it may be important to underscore the fact that the ANM not only preceded Nasser and Nasserism in terms of time, but also it never became his permanent and supple tool, nor did it stop at Nasserism. We admit that the ANM was a staunch defender and ally of Nasserism in the stage of the national revolution-and we offer no apology for it. Moreover, the parting of ways, not the break with Nasser, came over the South Yemen question in the mid sixties. Here was a situation that Nasser tried to contain and keep under his grip. He helped organise and promote the Front For the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (Flossy), a group of British-oriented unionists and nationalists headed by Sanjaq. The ANM, on the other hand, recognised its own South Yemen Wing (the FLN) as the legitimate representative of the South Yemenese. Armed struggle commenced in the countryside and the peasants were converted to the revolution while Flossy was enjoying the limelight and the glare of Cairo and negotiating compromises with the British. Finally, the British were forced out and the People's Republic of South Yemen was proclaimed in November of 1967. Within a few days, the bubble of Flossy was punctured and it passed from the scene. Nasserism was contracting and narrowing its horizons. The ANM revolutionism was replacing it by expanding its base and broadening its social views. In the post-June-War period, ANM revolutionism became the magnet of the Arab masses-the galvanising force of the poor, the weak, and the wretched of the Arab world. In a nutshell, the question that posed itself was: who shall govern, the colonels or the people? We in the Arab Work Socialist Party say the people. That's why we contend that the revolution is coming; that's why I became a full-time revolutionary.

In the spring of 1963 Israel was fifteen years old. Instead of rekindling the Arab spirit and resuming its historic mission after the breakup of the UAR, Nasserism was becoming inward looking, repressive, managerial. Economically bourgeoisie, it became a spent force in historical terms, the Yemen "intervention" (October 1962) and the National Charter of May 1962, notwithstanding. Statesmanship, economic progress, political stability were touted as the hallmarks of the Egyptian regime. The UAR placed advertisements in the New York Times inviting monopolistic investors to share in its profitable state enterprises. Gone were the days when Nasser spoke and Western industries came to a halt for lack of oil; gone were the days when Nasser spinned revolutionary slogans and the Arab masses seized and burned embassies; gone were the days when Western prime ministers were treated like messenger boys and scoffed at in public. Yet in spite of this turnaround, we in the ANM remained Nasser supporters until 1967.

The Nasserite social order consisted of a Charter that promised a new UAR based on Islam, democracy and co-operation; recognised the dominant role of the state in the economy; acknowledged the role of the "national bourgeoisie"; conferred on workers and peasants half of the parliamentary seats; granted employees an advisory role in the management of their fields, factories, offices, and pledged to give them financial rewards based on profits made. Nasserism was turning Egypt into a "paradise" of colonels, managers, clerks. By 1965 he, with Heikalian frankness, told the second Palestinian National Congress that he had "no plan for the liberation of Palestine". Furthermore, Arab unity was revived in the spring of 1963 for about three months when Iraq, Egypt, and Syria agreed (April 17) to form a new and revitalised United Arab Republic. The unity talks were held in Cairo after the Baathists, the junior partners of Nasser of the 1958 United Arab Republic period, seized power in Iraq (February 8), and Syria (March 8). To bolster their regimes, the Baathists called for Arab unity and for cooperation among "the progressive forces". Nasser could not ignore or oppose their call lest he be considered an anti-unity man. After the proclamation of the New UAR however, the Baathists returned to their capitals and began to purge the Nasserites and finally removed them from power completely. In early July Nasser showed his

displeasure by releasing the recorded tapes of the talks to Al-Ahram, the mouthpiece of the middle class Egyptians. Heikal, the editor, serialised censored verbatim accounts and commented scathingly on the Baath, thereby signalling to the world that Nasser had no intention of proceeding with the autumn merger as scheduled. The disclosures demonstrated two facts: first, that Nasser was unwilling to regard anyone as his equal, or subordinate Egyptian "national interests" to the common Arab good, and secondly, that the Baathists were insincere, mistrusted Nasser, and viewed themselves as the successors to a dying Nasserism. In the ensuing years, Baathism too became a regime of colonels. This and other semi-fictional incidents puzzled, bewildered and confused the ANM.

By the spring of 1963 I realised I would not be able to return to AUB in the autumn. I had to make a decision. There were few work prospects to explore. There were none in Lebanon. I was nineteen years old, and I was not looking for a husband to serve; I couldn't stay at home and vegetate. In that confusing spring, a family incident led me to seek refuge outside of Lebanon.

For fifteen years my family had been exiled from our beloved homeland. Since a state of war existed between the Arab states and Israel, we had not seen a single relative from Haifa or Majdel El Karoum. Travel restrictions were too severe; bureaucratic red-tape was overwhelming, and financial considerations were difficult to overcome. However, after prolonged and careful preparations, my father went to see his family in Jerusalem at the Mendelbaum gate. He waited for three days but no one showed up. A few weeks later, a meeting was again arranged, but this time my father was paralysed and not able to go.

Mother went without him. The meeting was a nightmare of barbed-wire. When grandmother saw mother, she presumed her son must have died and she collapsed. My aunts, my cousins, and mother carried on a teary dialogue for about an hour. Little or nothing was said beyond conveying greetings and fleeting reminiscences. We were all drenched with tears. We looked at each other wondering whether reunion would ever be possible; no one could utter a coherent sentence; we parted infuriated at the Zionist overlord.

As mother said adieu to grandmother, granny placed her necklace around mother's neck and kissed her. An Israeli guard looked on and instantly pounced on mother and snatched the necklace from her chest. Mother fought back but the man with the gun prevailed. She returned home upset by Arab inability to protect her and shocked by Zionist brutality. Such events kept my family and most Palestinians away from the Zionists. Since then, we have not seen our relatives, and father died without having seen his mother and sisters for eighteen years.

What was I to do in the midst of this situation? Where was I to go? If I couldn't bend heaven I would scratch hell Kuwait was the only outlet. There was no other possibility.

In the summer of 1963 the Voice of the Arabs beamed broadcasts from Cairo to the four corners of the globe, and the press of the Arab world was filled with the idea of the Palestine entity. Innumerable Palestinians, including myself, were attracted to the idea, if not to the organisation that was intended as its embodiment: The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). PLO was set up by the Arab League States in January 1964. The PLO was launched by the Arab league to contain the Palestinians while supposedly giving them an instrument of liberation. At the time only a few perceptive people saw Arab summity for what it was. Those who foresaw had no power.

Arab presidents and kings met in the splendour of Cairo and although they decided not to confront Israel, they led their people into believing that they were preparing for the eventuality of war. They issued joint military commands that had no power. Weeks later, they blamed their failure on Lebanon for allegedly not allowing Arab troops to occupy strategic positions on its soil, as if Syria and Jordan had agreed to the proposal and implemented it, and as if Lebanon had remained the only obstacle. They had allocated the astronomical sum of \$13 million to divert the waters of the Jordan

yet such a sum wouldn't be enough to dig a ditch; they created the PLO as a crumb to the Palestinians and the faithful believed in the good faith of the leadership.

All was a sham as the disasters in the June were unmistakably to show. The PLO was born crippled, if not dead, and the Arab states neither allowed the Palestinians to act independently nor did they themselves act with sufficient vigour to safeguard Palestinian interests. The PLO consisted of the remnants of a dead social class, and its leaders were given their positions in recognition of their loyalties to the various summit conferences. The PLO was a skeleton put on display at the Arab League headquarters; it was neither a revolutionary spearhead to lead the struggle for the liberation of Palestine, nor a rallying-point for the dispersed masses of "refugees".

In late September, 1963, I departed for Kuwait with mixed feelings and without prospect of employment. For three months I was without work, waiting for a reply to my application from the Kuwait ministry of education. At last I received word in mid-December that a position was available in Al Jahrah, some fifty kilometres from Kuwait city, the capital of Kuwaiti state, where my brother Mohammad lived.

During the intervening three months I thought about the world situation and pondered the meaning of life, especially after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on November 22. I do not know why the Kennedy assassination affected me emotionally. Kennedy was the president of a state that helped perpetuate my exile, a state that maintained and advanced the Zionist cause I hated. Kennedy was a sophisticated patrician, a class enemy, and he had given key posts in his regime to at least three dedicated Zionist Jews. He also approved the invasion of Cuba in April, 1961 by a pack of America-supported mercenaries. Yet I, the hardened Palestinian revolutionary, for some inexplicable reason, cried when I heard the news.

I watched the funeral on TV and saw Americans weep. Until then I had thought of the United States as a nation of monsters and scoundrels capable of perpetrating every conceivable crime. I revised my view slightly, but Lyndon Johnson's rapacity and Nixon's hypocrisy have reinforced the original image. I wept for Kennedy perhaps because I somehow identified with the youth of America that loved and admired him dearly. Perhaps I may have believed, as some Arabs did, that Kennedy was indeed going to work for the restoration of Palestinian rights, as the Kennedy Nasser correspondence later illustrated. I suspect that my tears were a natural human reaction, my prejudices couldn't stop them until it was too late. I am not sorry I cried.

Al Jahrah for a girl from AUB and the political mill of Beirut was the city of eternal boredom. We were all "foreigners" in the eyes of the Kuwaiti Arab government though every one of us came from the Arab world. The only colourful aspect of the school was the multitude of "foreign" dialects spoken. The Egyptians, Palestinians and Syrians were the largest group. This was the first time I had come into close contact with Egyptians. The Syrians were the same as the Palestinians with the exception of the lady principal, Souad, who excelled as an obsessive bureaucrat and an arbitrary woman. She was, to put it mildly, an administrator who prostrated herself before the ministry of education and set out to discipline her fellow teachers by a network of informers. Matters were complicated for me because I had no conception of roles or rules. I knew of no distinctions between governors and governed; I had no idea of bureaucratic memos and no notion of external authority. The only authority I had ever recognised since I left home in 1960 was that of the comrade regional commander. My world was turned upside down. My colleagues either delighted in my agony, resented me as a proof of their cowardice, or secretly admired my rebellion. They were serfs who trembled before the knight and paid him homage.

At Al Jahraa, we could not leave campus without special permission during the week. On Thursday evenings we could visit relatives or immediate family members and stay overnight. There were no cinemas to visit, no boy friends to pass the time with, no British Museum to study in. Overt political activity was forbidden. We were truly family eunuchs in an oriental despotic order.

I recall distinctly the famous short sleeves episode when I opposed the authorities. The principal had threatened to expel me for appearing in short sleeves which were banned in Kuwait despite the sweltering heat. I challenged her and threatened to expose my body further. She was infuriated but was unable to carry out her threat. I informed her that I would help her write a memo on my "scandalous" behaviour to the ministry of education if she persisted in observing that ridiculous rule. She had to swallow her pride and wrote a memo recommending my transfer elsewhere at the end of the academic year. I exulted at the prospect, though I would regret the loss of the few friends I had made at Al-Jahrah.

The children at Al Jahrah manifested the cultural deprivation of a rural and remote Bedouin people, but they were intelligent and quickly absorbed information. Our school was the only window they had to the outside world. They needed to be taught the rudiments of living in their rapidly developing community and warned about urban slavery. Instead, I was teaching them English and science. But I used every possible opportunity to propagate my political cause. The pupils were susceptible and responded positively.

I did not reveal my association with the ANM: it would have been political suicide. The lady principal would have been delighted to invoke her powers. Instead I injected my political virus in small doses. I related every issue to the world around us and whenever possible to the Palestinian question. Some pupils listened attentively, others patted their goats, sheep, or cows, or fed their chickens through the school windows. Their parents were not keenly aware of what was going on. They thought the teacher knew best and they in no way interfered with my work. The world of Al Jahrah had its good points; it was not all unpleasantness, particularly for those not politically inclined.

Spring came and found the Arab governments making noises about Israel "stealing" Arab waters from the Jordan river. They ostensibly made their own preparations to divert the river-ten years too late. No military attempt to stop the Israelis was made. A few minor border incidents occurred and the Arabs thundered revenge. The farce went on for a year or so. Israel freely carried out her diversion project and expropriated almost all the waters of the Jordan river.

Meanwhile the honourable presidents and noble kings, without consulting the Palestinian people or considering other candidates, appointed Ahmed Shukairy chairman of the PLO.

Shukairy was their man. He could be relied upon to make the necessary flamboyant pronouncements to appease the Palestinian masses, without precipitating a crisis or organising the Palestinians into a fighting force. The PLO leadership was imposed from above and was accountable to the powers above, not to the Palestinian people whom it sought to represent. Shukairy was touring in the Arab world and he came to Kuwait to mobilise the Palestinians and get them to participate in a constituent assembly to elect a Palestinian parliament. In Kuwait, Shukairy contacted the people he knew-the former upper class of Palestine-who now held lower echelon positions in Kuwait as engineers, or managers of small business enterprises. The children of the "refugees"-the school teachers, the skilled, semi-skilled, and manual workers-were not contacted; they were merely expected to applaud the "wise" decisions of the Arab leaders and rubber stamp the election of "their" representative, chosen from the "better" people. Moreover, since the Palestinians in Kuwait and throughout the Arab Gulf were permitted no organic community or viable organisations it was very difficult accurately to determine communal feelings. This situation enabled certain self-seeking, self-appointed individuals to "represent" the Palestinians.

In spite of all these difficulties and my own misgivings, I agitated on our campus urging Palestinians to take an active part in forming branches for the PLO. But no branches were formed at Al Jahrah because too many people were sceptical. I shared the scepticism, but I thought the PLO was better than nothing at all since the Kuwait government recognised it as the official representative of the Palestinians and agreed to let Palestinians join it as long as they remained

outside the Kuwaiti political arena. My principal had received no directive to encourage such a club and she decided the rule banning politics still applied and called me to her office to ask me to cease my activities. She argued that I was a Lebanese, I held a Lebanese passport, and had nothing to do with Palestine. I listened to her monologue without interrupting. When she finished, I stood up, "Woman principal, your kind of obedient, amoral, apolitical people were responsible for the loss of Palestine; your kind of careerists have oppressed the Palestinians more effectively than the Zionists have; your graveyard-like school has stunted the growth of intelligence; you are a part of the enemy camp. I believe if we don't overthrow your masters and your servile type, more tragedy and destruction will plague the Arab homeland. I believe you're more dangerous than the acknowledged foe. Let us suppose that I am only a Lebanese citizen. Does that "nationality" absolve me of my Arab obligations? Does it erase my Arab identity? Does it mean that I am not an Arab woman? Principal, I am an Arab, I am a Palestinian, I am a Lebanese Arab who is going to proselytise the Arab cause here on your campus and everywhere. No force other than death can stop me. Act as you see fit. I shall not relent. I shall not be cowed. I shall not retreat. Good day." I walked out and slammed the door. I had made my last appearance in her office.

On May 28, 1964, the Palestine National Congress was opened in Jerusalem by King Hussein. Its three hundred and fifty delegates represented a cross-section of the Palestinian people, with traditionalists in the majority. A number of prominent "radicals" were barred from the Congress by the Jordanian authorities. The Congress elected an executive committee of seven; reconfirmed Ahmad Shukairy as chairman; issued a manifesto, the National Charter, which embodied the ideology of our bankrupt ruling class, and elected all sorts of high-sounding state committees to man the apparatus of the forthcoming "revolution". The PLO occupied the Palestinian seat at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo. Arab summity continued in the autumn of 1964. Within a year, the leaders themselves had stopped believing their own lies, though their media agents continued to expound the plans in purple prose and poetic visions.

In late June of 1964 I returned to Lebanon for what during the next six years became an annual furlough. In Lebanon I rethreaded my way back to the underground and felt a sense of relief after the isolation of Al-Jahrah and the enervating heat of Kuwait. I observed that cracks were opening up within the citadel of the Arab Nationalist Movement in Beirut. However, these profound differences within the movement were frozen in the name of unity, good statesmanship, and personal relations. Serious differences regarding ideology, strategy, organization and personalities erupted again and again until a formal split was finally to take place in five years' time.

As autumn approached I made plans to return to Kuwait. Once again, I had to live in the barracks, rather than with my brother. For a woman, living alone in Kuwait was simply unthinkable. At the Shaab's school I discovered that I had been demoted from the intermediate to the elementary level of teaching. I was confined to teaching grade two for the next five years and was thus deprived of my adolescent audience and the possibility of using my classroom as a political platform. Dismayed and annoyed at first, I reconciled myself quickly. There was nothing I could do to alter my teaching status. Resignation was a worse alternative since it meant being on the unemployment heap with a substantial number of other Arab workers.

My pupils were an enjoyable lot. Many of them were of Iranian origin; their parents had emigrated to Kuwait in pursuit of work. The Shaab's school was populated with working class children who were anxious to learn and willing to do their homework. They were tireless children who could have outraced baby camels given the opportunity. They were a delight to be with, but they were not important as political converts. Here I had the opportunity to say anything in the classroom without feeling Big Brother was watching; the problem was to learn how to communicate with seven- and eight-year-olds and know what to expect from them. I decided it would be best not to expect anything more than the mastery of a few central Palestinian issues such as the Balfour Declaration, the Partition of Palestine, the creation of Zionist Israel. At the faculty level, there was little tension

and no clashes with the principal or any other colleagues. From 1968 on, the principal and a large number of teachers supported the Fateh. Those of us who supported the Popular Front had no difficulty co-existing with them. But though the atmosphere was conducive to dialogue and hospitable to liberal democratic ideas I never publicly revealed my true political affiliations. I was also helped because I had learnt the rudiments of being a teacher and thus staved off confrontations with bossy administrators.

Kuwait city was a cosmopolitan centre compared with AlJahrah. We were not village bound. I visited my brother and his wife and children at weekends. At Mohammad's, I kept in tenuous contact with the ANM, though the Movement was proscribed and highly disorganised. We were closer to civilisation here, yet worlds apart from the hustle and bustle of Beirut and its intellectual salons and fashionable streets. The people here seemed more mellow and there was no political life even of the right-wing variety. For me it was a period of intellectual incubation and reflection, but not stagnation. There was ample time to study, think, contemplate, plan. Most of my colleagues had a hedonistic life-style, trying to boost their morale by conspicuously acquiring and consuming more goods. Some sent their parents a fair proportion of their salaries and led an abstemious kind of life. I was politically conscious and a chain smoker -I needed no other diversions.

On January 1, 1965, Fateh opened a new era in modern Palestinian history. This is generally recognised as the date of the modern Palestinian revolution. Armed struggle, long the talk of the salons and work of individuals and small groups, was now translated into action in daily forays into the homeland. The ANM, of course, had been doing reconnaissance work since 1953 and infiltrating its fedayeen or commandos into occupied Palestine since 1955. The "golden" era of fedayeen activities was in the mid 1950s when the fedayeen used to roam the occupied territories at will. Although the Egyptian government had a role in financing and training the commandos, all missions were conducted by Palestinians who knew the cities and countryside well. Their incursions proved so formidable that Israel used them in 1956 as a pretext to ally with the British and French in the tripartite invasion of Suez. After the "settlement" of 1957 and withdrawal of foreign troops from Egypt, Nasser banned guerrilla activities and for eleven years not a single shot was exchanged across the borders with Israel. Egypt "administered" Gaza behind the UN shield and the Arab states seemed to act as Israel's sentinels for the next decade, and they too discouraged guerrilla operations.

In the autumn of 1964 activities were revived. The PLO proved to be no panacea; the Arab leaders gradually went back on their liberation pledges; the UAR-US relations were deteriorating and President Johnson was threatening to cut the sales of wheat to Egypt; the Syrian Baathists felt under siege from the UAR and Iraq and encouraged activities that embarrassed Nasser; the Palestinian people were disillusioned with their Arab brethren. All these factors led to a new vitality that surfaced in Palestinian ranks. The climate of opinion favoured "doing something". The key Arab leader, Nasser, was running into difficulties with the United States which meant he would support the Resistance to bring pressure on Israel and thus improve his bargaining position with America. Nasser usually knew how to manipulate power to his advantage. Interestingly enough, Nasser did not anticipate the impending appearance of Fateh. He must have thought the PLO would be a replica of the fedayeen movement of the mid-fifties. The new groups that were emerging and eclipsing the PLO were not under Arab League control. The heroes of Return, Avenging Youth and Fateh were a different generation of revolutionaries; autonomous groups, not the hirelings of Arab regimes. They expressed the rise of an independent Palestine and asserted the right of Palestinians to self-determination. At first, Fateh was ignored; later it was accused of being a Cento agent and even labelled as a right-wing Moslem Brotherhood underground. The more that crimes were attributed to Fateh, the more the Palestinians rallied behind it; the more Fatehites Hussein killed, the more Palestinians joined Fateh; the more bureaucratic and upper class the PLO became, the more appealing armed struggle became. The new movement provided a spark of hope: armed struggle was the way to salvation. As a Palestinian, I had to believe in the gun as an embodiment of my

humanity and my determination to liberate myself and my fellow men. Every self-respecting Palestinian had to become a revolutionary.

The news of revolutionary activity filtered slowly into Kuwait either by word of mouth, still the most effective means of communication in the Arab world, or by friendly Beirut or Syrian papers. The Iraqi, Egyptian and Jordanian papers reserved their spaces for contemptuous remarks and accusations against "right-wing radicals" who did not see it the Aref-Heikal-Hussein way. With the cessation of American wheat sales to the UAR in 1966, President Nasser started to look upon Fateh more favourably, particularly after Hussein blocked all PLO attempts to organise and station Palestine Liberation Army troops on Jordanian territory. As Arab leaders repudiated their summit pledges, they began to fall out among themselves, each blaming the other for not carrying out the "resolutions". Nasser supported Fateh because he shared its objectives, not because he was suddenly converted to the cause of people's wars and armed struggle. In this context Nasser divided the Arab world into progressives and reactionaries, proclaiming himself leader of the progressives. The Saudis, at the instigation of Washington, decided to propagate the cause of Islam against the "menace of communism" and King Feisal became the leading proponent of the "Islamic pact" designed to include all Islamic states and tie them to Washington. The Yemeni civil war was concluded in the autumn of 1967 after five years of "revolution". The Yemeni radicals were sacrificed at Khartoum (August 29-September 1), in the name of Arab solidarity and in honour of financial subsidies to Nasser and Hussein from the oil kings. Egypt's fifty thousand troops were withdrawn and the Yemen was abandoned to the winds of conservatism and counter-revolution.

The Palestinian people had spent seventeen years in exile living on hopes fostered by the Arab leadership. In 1965 they decided they must liberate themselves rather than wait for God's help. Fateh began to occupy a central role in our lives despite its many defects and problems. Its supreme virtue, however, was incontestable: it was a fighting organisation in a time when others only talked about the theories of war; it was created by Palestinians to take up armed struggle. Some did. I was not yet ready.

In 1965 my political interests broadened considerably, and thanks to a cowboy from Texas, Lyndon Johnson, I was forced to learn a good deal about Vietnam and Latin America. Next to the Algerians, the Vietnamese were a great source of inspiration to me. Here was a small nation in black pyjamas fighting the mightiest empire in world history and defeating it. As Johnson intensified his bombing attacks, and as his generals promised him victory if only more tons of bombs were dropped on Vietnam, I became angrier and angrier with myself for not being able to do anything to protest or undermine American savagery. The people of Vietnam stood up to the B52 bombers though their land was pulverised and practically every square foot of it became a part of an American-made crater. Here was a people with an indomitable spirit, a people whose heroic deeds placed them among the gods; here was a people whose unbound humanity was a blessing to mankind. The Palestinians must learn the secrets of the Vietnamese: devotion to the cause, sacrifice to the fatherland, absolute commitment to the community; a revolutionary party with a clear conception of ideology, strategy, organisation. We could do it. We had to do it, unless we wished to remain contemptible "refugees".

I hated the American government. And I hated it more when I saw Adlai Stevenson in April of 1965, defending the invasion of the Dominican Republic. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw the "liberal" hero of the Eisenhower era brandishing the names of "fifty-seven communists" who were members of Colonel Francisco Caamafo's insurgent army. Twenty thousand US troops were dispatched to Santo Domingo to "safeguard American life and property" – a euphemism which provided a pretext to overthrow the revolutionary government. I almost died laughing when I heard on a BBC broadcast that the Christian Science Monitor checked on the "fifty-seven communists" and found out that most were either dead, in prison, or in exile. The American troops "liberated" the island, a "free" election was held and the good people "elected" a landed-aristocratic government

led by Mr. Balaguer. All this was done, of course, in loyal homage to liberalism, to the new frontiers, to the good society and to the American dream.

I understood the direct invasion of Vietnam and the Dominican Republic to be a prelude to the return of the age of gunboat diplomacy, which would soon stretch to the Middle East. I could not predict when the United States or its local power would make a move in our area. It seemed the USA was everywhere on the offensive as the Soviet leadership preached co-existence and tried to practise detente. From Brazil to Vietnam, from the Dominican Republic to Algeria, from Mali to Indonesia, from Bolivia to Greece, US fleets, air force, and intelligence networks were undermining the achievements of the post-war period and arresting the tide of history. The 1960s was indeed America's decade. The 1970s shall be the decade of its dismantlement and complete undoing.

The year 1966 was the year of personal mourning for me. Father died after a four-year illness and I deeply felt the loss of his gentle presence. That autumn almost every teacher on that staff was wearing black for family losses. All of us were unhappy and to add to my personal unhappiness the Kuwaiti government expelled my brother Mohammad for political activities and Israel started anew its provocative policy of "massive retaliation".

The Zionists were aware of Nasser's weakness and decided to test Arab will by using Fateh's raids on the occupied territory as a pretext to attack Jordan. In November the Israelis launched a murderous and punishing assault on Es-Samu. The whole town was demolished, and dozens of its inhabitants were killed or injured. Arab military response was zero. The Arab joint command was a dead letter. The Arabs merely went to the UN and obtained another censure of Israel with America's approval. A few months later, in April 1967, Syria's "alliance" with Nasser was also tested. On April 7, the Israelis downed Syrian jet fighters while Egyptian Migs looked on, wings folded. The audacious Israelis did not stop there. They knew more than we did. They challenged Nasser in May and he fell for their trap. In one week in June, the Egyptian army was slaughtered, its armour converted into scrap metal, its "supremacy" in the East was shattered. All the illusions of the Arab nationalists were exploded in two hours and fifty minutes, the time it took the Israeli air force to pulverise the Egyptian air force on the ground on June 5, 1967. A whole era ended; a social class had failed to safeguard Arab interests through stupidity; Arab soldiery lost its moral credibility. Nasserism, if not Nasser, was dead.

Expecting Arab victory I refused to believe the outcome. I did believe it when Nasser offered his resignation on June 9, 1967. I awoke from my dream. I smashed my radio and went into a prolonged period of silence. My whole world collapsed. It seemed every Arab had become a slave. The travel reservations that I had made to return to Palestine to celebrate the recovery of the homeland were cancelled. I had no desire to go to Beirut. I felt catatonic for a month, then I decided to go to Lebanon to find out what was happening. My brother Walid brought me up to date on recent developments within the ANM. In the autumn the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was born.

Here is a summary of the events that occurred in the spring of 1967:

On May 12, 1967, premier Eshkol and his generals threatened to march to Damascus to topple the Baathist (ruling Social Democratic party of Syria) "hotheads". On May 14, Soviet and Egyptian intelligence reported a massing of Israeli troops on the Syrian borders. General Amer proposed a pre-emptive attack on the nineteenth anniversary of Israel. Nasser vetoed him. On May 17, Nasser ordered the UN emergency forces to withdraw. They did within two days. On May 18-19, Nasser paraded his battle-dressed troops in front of the Western embassies in Cairo on their way to Sinai. On May 22, eleven years after the Suez War, Nasser reoccupied Sharm El-Sheik and declared a blockade of Israeli shipping. Nasser was calling all the shots. He dared all enemies. I was elated as the Israelis fumbled, apparently in a state of confusion and irresolution. On May 26, the ambassadors of the two superpowers, the Soviet and the American, visited Nasser assuring him that

if he did not start the shooting the Israelis wouldn't. The maritime nations were making noises and plans under United States auspices. They didn't move. Nasser seemed to be firmly in the saddle. Hussein rushed to Cairo to pay homage and sign an alliance with Nasser hoping to cash in on the spoils of war. Nasser called the press of the world and in one of his last speeches, declared to Israel "Ahlann Wasahlan, Welcome, we are ready, come and fight!" On June 2, 1967, three days before the Israelis attacked, Nasser was informed by "friends" that the Israelis were going to attack on the morning of June 5. All of us thought that the march to Haifa and Tel Aviv was at most a few weeks' affair. As it turned out, the march to Suez was a six-day endeavour. Meanwhile, the Israelis struck first and the UAR eagles never took off the ground; the air force was turned into rubble as the pilots celebrated the birthday of the admiral's daughter, although an alert had been on for three days. On June 5, 6, and 7, radio Cairo and the press announced the shooting down of hundreds of Israeli planes, the capture of cities and Arab victory! We hailed Arab victory! On the eighth of June, silence prevailed. We knew instantly that something was wrong. At the UN, the UAR accepted a "cease-fire order" and on the ninth Nasser resigned. The UAR had capitulated, the tide was turned in favour of Israel. The dream ended.

As the protagonists broadcast their war signals from Cairo, Tel Aviv, and other capitals, in Kuwait we demonstrated in favour of Arab unity and one unified command. I along with others who had some nursing training offered to go to the front. We were turned down. Those of us who smoked Western cigarettes suddenly threw them away. In May, the city of Kuwait truly felt the short spring of the Arab nation. We were overwhelmed by our own illusions when we learned that even little Kuwait was dispatching forces to guard the Arab ramparts and participate in the battle of destiny. On June 5, the day of reckoning, all teachers went to hospitals to donate blood. For a whole month I'd been listening to the news on the hour, now was the final hour: was it to be victory or defeat? It was defeat, on a scale much more catastrophic than the Israelis ever dared imagine. Nasser resigned: the masses restored him to power; he lived for three more years.

The summer of 1967 was uneventful. All hope was gone. Little or nothing occurred to rebuild my confidence. I returned to Kuwait with my colleagues. Those whose families were in the West Bank came back with horrifying stories. The stories had a great impact on each one of us. Details about Zionist atrocities abounded. There were the usual stories of rape, arson, theft. There were the heart-rending accounts of people napalmed from the air, burned to death or surviving with their whole body scarred. There was a story of a mother who cried to wet the tongue of her dying infant. The more tales I heard, the more my hatred crystallised. I met a lady from Kalkalia who described to me how that border town was levelled and how other Arab towns were demolished. I listened intently to all stories. The experience shattered me. Nothing now could avenge Arab honour or liberate the occupied territories; all the diplomatic moves and manoeuvres and the summits and the counter-summits and the eloquent speeches did not make one iota of difference. All the work I did for the Red Crescent and the funds I contributed and collected seemed minuscule. On November 22, the UN Security Council, with Arab approval, sanctified Israel's permanent conquest of my home in Palestine. The UN conferred on Israel the right to use international waterways and the right to recognition with "secure and recognised borders", in return for the settlement of the "refugee problem" and withdrawal to June 4 borders. Israel insisted on total Arab capitulation.

To add to my despair, on October 9 Che Guevara, my hero, was assassinated by CIA-trained Bolivian rangers. The June War shattered my existence, bared my essence. The assassination of Guevara pricked my conscience. Here was an Argentinian radical who had fought beside Fidel Castro in Cuba and helped the revolution attain power on January 1, 1959. His stature in the next eight years assumed international proportions. His personality almost rivalled that of Fidel's. Che sacrificed his personal career as minister of industry when his views and those of Fidel clashed. Instead of making his differences with Fidel a public issue and undermining the revolution in Cuba, he decided to look for a new homeland for revolutionary action. He toured the African continent

and befriended Ben Bella of Algeria and worked in the Congo against the Tshombe secessionist gang and its European mercenaries. Soviet influence eased him out of the Congo. Finally, he went to Bolivia with a core of sixteen guerrillas and for eleven months they struggled to establish a revolutionary base and topple the Barrientos dictatorship. The inhospitality of the terrain, the lack of peasant response, the opposition of American-trained rangers foredoomed the undertaking. Che nevertheless dared stand up to America. His reward was murder on October 9, not by Captain Prado and Colonel Selnich, as the world was led to believe, but by Lyndon Baines Johnson and Hubert Horatio Humphrey. To me, Che's martyrdom can be justified because of its value to world revolution: his life was a form of perpetual renewal; his behaviour was exemplary; his commitment was total-qualities the revolutionary movement needed to absorb. His "adventurism and romanticism" are necessary reminders of the unconquerable power of the human spirit in a world where the fear of America cripples millions, deactivates superpowers, and paralyses professed revolutionaries. Che lived heroically and died heroically. Yet I, a "revolutionary" woman, was living in tranquillity in far away Kuwait when my people needed revolutionaries and heroes of Che's calibre. I decided I must join the revolution.



Leilia Khaled, 2002

Since this book was completed Leila Khaled has been doing "mass political work", organising the guerrilla camps and contriving to recruit supporters. She and I work closely together in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Now that Leila is known throughout the world, her picture having appeared in every western newspaper, we are not likely to permit her in the foreseeable future to participate in foreign, political or military missions. Her role is now to work inside the Arab world for the day when our people can once again return to their homeland.

George Hajjar
February 1973