

SURVEY OF ARAB AFFAIRS

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HUSSEIN, THE PALESTINIANS AND THE PLO

When King Hussein of Jordan terminated coordination with the PLO in February of this year, the political community in the territories knew that the quiet antagonism which prevailed between the PLO camp and the pro-Jordanians was likely to take a public and often violent turn. Hussein's speech came only weeks after Zapher al-Masri, the Nablus notable and businessman who was recently installed as mayor of that town was murdered. Despite the fact that Khalil Ashur, head of the al-Najah College Student Council and Shabiba (Fatah student movement) leader, was among

the eulogists, suspicions remain that Ashur's military colleagues perpetrated the murder.

Confrontations were also expected in some of the territories' "national institutions". In July, only weeks after Jordan closed 25 PLO offices in Amman and expelled Yasser Arafat's deputy Khalil al-Wazir, a test of strength took place in the Engineering Union in the Beit Hanina suburb of Jerusalem. A bizarre coalition of communists and pro-Jordanians were successfully challenged by a Shabiba supported list headed by Mahmud al-Qawasmi, president of the Hebron

Technical Engineering College and brother of Fahd al-Qawasmi, the former mayor of Hebron who was elected to the PLO Executive Committee in 1984 and murdered later that year in Amman.

The Hebron Engineering Union is actually a branch of the Jordanian parent; a fact both the communists and the PLO supporters try to hide. The word "Jordan" does not appear on the organization's official letter mast, but nevertheless, the Hashemite kingdom controls the certification process which the engineer requires to legally sign plans or to set up an office. The branch has also received funds from the Joint Jordanian PLO Committee, which were used to support recent unemployed graduates, to subsidize health plans and for various housing schemes.

Contrary to expectations, the PLO supported list won seven of the eleven positions in the local executive committee. But the executive of the branch, veteran communist Ibrahim Deqaq from Jerusalem, refused to concede defeat and give up his office. Instead, the Jordanian parent organization, working in collusion with Deqaq, decided to appoint four additional members to the committee, assuring the communists and the pro-Jordanians a plurality. On July 26, al-Qawasmi and his supporters raided the Professional Union Center where the branch is located and forced Deqaq, formerly one of the leading theoreticians of Palestinian strategies of steadfastness and former member of the PLO National Steering Committee, to leave the premises.

The downfall of Deqaq is one more sign of the waning influence of the Communists in the territories following years of prominence in the local Palestinian movement. The three way split of the Communist dominated labor movement in 1985, between the Popular Front, the Democratic Front and the Palestinian Communist Party was an earlier sign. Even this was actually the

second split. The first occurred in 1981 between the official Communist dominated federation and the Fatah contenders.

But Mahmud al-Qawasmi's takeover of the Engineering Union is by far more significant. It reflects the growing importance of Hebron in Judea and Samaria politics and the PLO's increasing interest in the district.

Mahmud al-Qawasmi carries with him three political assets. The first is his name itself -- he hails from the second largest clan in Hebron after the Ja'baris. In addition, he enjoys considerable authority in Hebron's leading modern organizations. Lastly, he is allied with the upwardly mobile, professionally-oriented al-Natshe family. The alliance between the two families was formed in the early 1970s to oppose the dominance of Shaikh al-Ja'bari, the powerful Hebron mayor who ran city hall for over forty years until his resignation in 1976.

Even Hebron's leaving institutions reflect this rivalry. Mahmud al-Qawasmi is president of the Hebron Technical Engineering College, a junior college which enrolls eight hundred fifty students. The college was founded in 1978 by the League of Hebron Graduates, an umbrella organization which finances and lends professional assistance to many of the city's welfare and educational institutions. Both the al-Qawasmis and the al-Natshes play prominent roles in the League. The al-Natshes also have important positions in some of Hebron's labor unions and in the Friends of the Sick Association. The al-Ja'baris, on the other hand, control the administration of Hebron University, which began as a religious college formed by Shaikh Ali al-Ja'bari in 1971.

The family rivalry first drew the PLO's attention in the mid-1970s. The PLO was interested in cultivating the al-Qawasmi and al-Natshe families in their struggle against Shaikh al-Ja'bari, one of the few local leaders whose

prestige extended throughout Judea and Samaria and who voiced views contrary to the PLO line. Thus, the PLO threw its full weight in support of the nationalist list, which contested the 1976 municipal elections. Heading the list was a prominent member of the al-Qawasmi family, agronomist Fahd al-Qawasmi, followed by Mustafa al-Natshe, who later replaced Fahd as mayor after Fahd was deported in 1982. Shaikh al-Ja'bari, assured of defeat, refused to contest the elections.

PLO interest in Hebron has increased in recent years, despite the removal of both Fahd and Mustafa al-Natshe from office by the Israelis, for a variety of strategic reasons. Hebron, overall, is the fastest growing region in Judea and Samaria. Moreover, the alliance between the PLO and members of the al-Qawasmi and al-Natshe families has become more important in light of PLO setbacks in other areas. In the Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria areas, both the pro-Jordanians and the Communists remain strong. In Nablus, tensions exist between Hikmat al-Masri and other leading families and the PLO. Both of these regions are also much more sensitive to changes in Jordanian economic policy, while Hebron has the luxury of a considerable economic power base independent of Jordan; namely, Israel's building trade, which is dominated by Hebronites.

Finally, local PLO strategists place great hopes in Hebron's Technical Engineering College as a model institution, which educates students who can find jobs in the local marketplace after graduation. This PLO-oriented institution has also succeeded in attracting United States assistance. Finding an "enemy" source to fund nationalist goals is a great boon to the PLO in a period of considerable strained political and economic fortunes.

The only flaw in the PLO's strategy is failure to measure al-Qawasmi's sincerity as a nationalist. In an analysis of the 1976 municipal elections, which were regarded as radical by most observers, political scientists Avraham Diskin and Shaul Mishal claim that the traditional families mediate between their interests and the external forces interested in influencing them. Thus, if the stature of the PLO rises, the family allots more members or allies itself entirely with this organization. This support will be withdrawn and/or possibly transferred if a change in the balance of forces occurs. Mahmud al-Qawasmi may choose this same option if the Jordanians begin pouring substantial sums into the territories part of their five year plan. In other words, is the PLO using Mahmud al-Qawasmi or is al-Qawasmi using the PLO?

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THE POLITICAL COSTS OF EGYPTIAN STATE INTERVENTION IN RELIGIOUS MODERNIZATION

The world-wide trend toward religious fundamentalism, illustrated most dramatically by the successful religious revolution waged in Iran, has made overt religious belief into an anti-nationalist, destabilizing force in many eyes. No one can dispute that the movements engendered by strong religious

convictions have promoted revolutions, but religion and religious movements have also been used throughout time to maintain regimes - including corrupt and despotic ones. In fact history demonstrates that religion has served the state as least as much as it has threatened it. The current Egyptian

government is suffering from its predecessors' failure to take this lesson to heart.

Arab regimes, like many of their Third World counterparts and European forebears, have attempted to co-opt the religious establishment into their service. Often these official pronouncements have been little more than lip-service -- declaring Islam the state religion and then announcing their intention of instituting legislation and law in its spirit, for example. Most states have maintained the practice of acceding personal affairs to religious courts. Such states are devoted nonetheless to making the religious bureaucracy indebted to the state by paying the salaries of teachers and clerics and creating public state controlled institutions which offer religious training, allocate jobs and look after their professional interests.

The fact that most Arab states are comprised mainly of Sunni Muslims has facilitated this process of co-optation. Sunni Islam, like the Protestant denominations in the United States, is usually organizationally diffuse, small scale and highly localized. Thus Sunni Islam is easily dominated by a strong, state-run bureaucracy. On the other hand, Shiite dominated states like Iran have always boasted a powerful, traditional and independent clergy. Thus, while most Arab countries had a secular government creating a national bureaucracy to control the religious modernization process, in Iran the powerful Shiite clergy revolted against the secular state and usurped the government to gain political control. The unusual strength of the Shiite clergy offers one explanation of why the revolution which broke out in Iran has failed to unsettle other Arab regimes.

But the state can still lose control when it goes about religious modernization the wrong way, even among the more quiescent Sunnis. The Egyptian government under Husni Mubarak is concerned that the religious needs of the

population are not being met because of inadequacies in the state's religious apparatus. The lack of qualified teachers in Egyptian mosques, for instance, is a major problem. This void is being filled more and more by Islamic fundamentalists who substitute evocative emotional extremism for the exposition of Islamic law. There are 40,000 mosques in Egypt, but only 5,747 qualified, state-supported religious teachers.

Mubarak's government can clearly place the blame for this state of affairs on his predecessors and their meddling in the affairs of al-Azhar University, Cairo's 1,000 year old teaching institute. Through modernization at the hands of Egyptian religious reformists, al-Azhar lost touch with the masses. Until the 1930s, a special department graduated highly trained preachers and teachers. Then, the department was divided three ways to accommodate the reformist quest for theological studies, taught in the abstract, comparative style used in western institutions, and the study of Arabic grammar. Homiletics and teaching was reduced by a year to a two-year course. In the 1960s al-Azhar established colleges of science, medicine, and engineering, thereby becoming a religious and science university and handing the traditional subjects yet another blow. Finally, as part of President Nasser's commitment to assure employment to all university graduates irrespective of their training, many non-theological graduates were sent to fill vacant positions in the mosques. Thus, the prestige of the preacher and teacher (the imam), was further lowered, and the average mosque-goer was angered. Then, in the 1950s and 1960s the Muslim Brotherhood, began to "infiltrate" the mosques with their own preachers. A counter religious bureaucracy was beginning to materialize.

In 1979, al-Azhar, with the encouragement of a worried government, attempted to salvage the situation; it reopened the traditional college after 50 years of reform and modernization.

WHAT THE PALESTINIANS IN THE TERRITORIES ARE READING

Strategies, - No date. No publisher. Distributed in the territories in Spring 1986. 78 p.

In 1984, Sabri Jiryis, the first Arab graduate of Hebrew University Law School and the present director of the PLO research institute, wrote that armed struggle was all but wiped out in the territories. "If only," he exclaimed in a local Palestinian journal, "we could muster and organize two hundred fifty armed fighters, it would be a tremendous achievement." He went on to suggest organized kidnapping of Israeli soldiers in preference to indiscriminate terrorist acts.

By contrast, "Strategies," a pamphlet written by Fatah and distributed by its political arm in the territories, the Shabiba youth and student organization, gives the impression that the territories are already burning.

Much of the pamphlet contains revolutionary hyperbole borrowed completely from similar works drafted by Fatah in the early 1970s. Analytic distinctions between strategy and tactics are made; there is a section discussing the Algerian, Chinese and Vietnamese experiences in waging popular struggle. The usual trite pronouncements on the necessary cooperation between fighters and civilians in the occupied territories are trotted out. The only interesting point is that these ideas remain sufficiently popular to justify their recirculation at this late date.

The polemics with the other Palestinian factions makes for better reading. Even in the 1980s, Fatah has to battle pan-Arabism. The question remains: does unity of the Arab world lead to Palestinian return to Palestine or does the struggle for Palestine lead to Arab unity? Fatah favors the primacy of the struggle over Palestine. In their version, once victory in Palestine is assured, the downfall of reactionary

regimes, such as the Jordanian Hashemites, will soon follow. The other factions, primarily the Popular Front, put their strength behind the popular struggle for Arab unity. Each side has coined its own slogan. For Fatah, the road to Amman, and thus the downfall of King Hussein, lies through Tel Aviv. For the Democratic and Popular Fronts, the road to Tel Aviv lies through Amman. The latter factions advocate simultaneous struggles against the Zionists and the Arab reactionary regimes, while Fatah insists on focusing all their efforts against Israel and championing the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of Arab states.

The concluding section of the treatise discusses what to do with the Jews. There is virtually no connection between its contents and the stated positions of Yasser Arafat or his Palestinian representative in the territories, al-Fajr newspaper editor Hanna Siniora. This group and Arafat's other minions have a public stance which calls for a Palestinian state in the territories. "Strategies," written for the "insiders," bluntly describes an independent, secular Palestinian state, which concedes the rights of Jews who resided in Palestine before 1918 to remain. What will the remaining 95 percent of the Jews now in Israel do? If there was a desire to allay the fears of the Jewish world, other suggestions could be aired; Fatah, however, rejects such suggestions.

In all fairness, the pamphlet may be an old reprint, and Fatah ideas may have changed. Passages alluding to Udi Adiv, the Jewish kibbutznik turned terrorist suggests that much of the pamphlet dates back to the early 1970s. If so, why reprint and distribute it in the territories? The nagging question makes for nagging and bitter feelings - both in Tel Aviv and Amman.

Data-Base:

SYRIA: AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED
EUROPEAN ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

The United Kingdom is attempting to persuade the European Economic Council to impose trade sanctions against Syria in the wake of the Hindawi affair. The Syrian economy has stalled in recent years. Its per capita GNP dropped by nearly 3 percent in the years 1983-84 and, according to one estimate, by another 2.5 percent in 1985.

Clearly, sanctions by the United Kingdom alone will not be effective. The following table, based on the official Syrian Statistical Yearbook, details the make-up of Syria's foreign trade in 1984. As a review of the statistics shows, England must gain Italian, French and German cooperation to achieve any serious impact on Syrian exports and imports.

SYRIAN FOREIGN TRADE BY COUNTRY AND REGION IN 1984
(in thousands of Syrian Pounds)

<u>Country</u>	<u>Exports</u>	<u>Imports</u>
<u>Arab Countries:</u>		
Algeria	164,213	78,807
Jordan	77,959	100,016
Lebanon	49,454	106,413
Libya	12,983	1,241,851
Saudi Arabia	138,746	34,498
Others	302,252	111,964
TOTAL	745,607	1,673,549

<u>European Common Market Countries:</u>		
Belgium	24,774	326,073
France	876,832	824,173
German Fed. Rep.	145,959	947,682
Greece	89,891	223,561
Italy	1,438,182	773,054
Netherlands	4,100	455,459
U. K.	13,426	478,723
Other	1,062	70,730
TOTAL	2,594,226	4,099,455

<u>Other Western European Countries:</u>		
Austria	685	249,607
Spain	240,234	431,303
Sweden	7,781	116,468
Switzerland	76,945	156,011
Others	61,659	64,267
TOTAL	387,304	1,017,656

<u>Socialist Countries:</u>		
German Dem. Rep.	83,330	685,049
Rumania	2,053,388	408,989
U.S.S.R.	837,552	558,250
Others	209,788	842,402
TOTAL	3,184,058	2,494,690

<u>American Countries:</u>		
Argentina	-	75,053
Brazil	46	249,157
Canada	203	537,487
U.S.A.	7,857	556,653
TOTAL	8,106	1,418,350

<u>Other Countries:</u>		
Iran	163,684	3,664,805
Japan	9,755	749,442
Turkey	28,998	267,842
Others	153,055	768,729
TOTAL	355,492	5,450,818

GRAND TOTAL: 7,274,793 16,154,518