

Waiting for the Massacre

Lafif Lakhdar, Mustapha Khayati

August 1st, 1970

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Introduction by S. Prasad

“Waiting for the Massacre” is a text that the Tunisian revolutionaries Lafif Lakhdar and Mustapha Khayati distributed in Jordan on the eve of the Black September massacre in 1970. It was published later that year in French in *An-Nidhal*, a small Tunisian Trotskyist journal. Tony Verlaan’s Create Situations group translated the text into English the following year, although it is unclear if this translation was ever published. The revised version of Verlaan’s translation below represents the first publication of the text in any language in over 50 years.

When this text was first published in Arabic on August 1st, 1970 Mustapha Khayati had just resigned from the Situationist International (SI) in order to join the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DPFLP). Khayati is best known as the main author of *On The Poverty of Student Life* and for his central role in the “Strasbourg Scandal,” which anticipated, and in some ways precipitated, the events of May 1968, of which Khayati played an active part.

The situationists thus listened carefully for the early tremors that would herald the coming earthquake: the class struggles in Algeria, the civil war in the Congo, the riots in Watts, the student movements in California and Japan, and the wildcat strikes slowly spreading across Europe. In these struggles the SI saw “a mass of new practices that are seeking their theory.” The role of a revolutionary organization was “to not only justify... the insurgents, but to help elucidate their perspectives, to explain theoretically the truth for which such practical action expresses the search.”

Khayati, who joined the SI in 1965, played a central role in this project. Khayati was the primary author of an “Address to Revolutionaries in Algeria and All Other Countries.” This was clandestinely distributed in Algeria and then published as a pamphlet in five languages. This was followed by a series of balance sheets on important contemporary struggles (Algeria, Vietnam, Palestine, Czechoslovakia), paying careful attention to the concrete situation, with its dynamic and limits.

These studies of particular struggles were accompanied by his more theoretical essays published in the situationist journal, such as *Setting Straight Some Popular Misconceptions About Revolutions in the Underdeveloped Countries*. At the time of his resignation from the SI, Khayati was working on a text that would later be completed by Rene Riesel and published as *Preliminaries on Councils and Councilist Organizations*, the situationists’ most complete statement on the theory of revolutionary organization

“Those who were really opposed to Spanish fascism went to fight it. No one has yet gone off to fight ‘Yankee imperialism.’” This was Khayati’s stinging rebuke in 1967 to the western left’s token opposition, which “remains spectacular for everyone,” to the wars in Vietnam and Palestine. Two years later, he would do just that.

Mustapha Khayati resigned from the Situationist International in the midst of their 1969 Venice conference. This was the first gathering of the SI since May 1968, and it also turned out to be their last before the group’s dissolution in 1972. In his letter of resignation, dated October 1, 1969, he states that:

“I feel a certain obligation to participate alongside the more radical elements of the revolutionary crisis currently taking shape in the Arab nations. Given my opposition — like that of the SI — to all forms of dual membership and infiltration (for the SI as for any revolutionary movement), I hereby tender my resignation.”

Lafif Lakhdar is less well known in the English speaking world than his co-author, where he is primarily remembered for a pioneering study of political Islam published in the wake of the Iranian Revolution. But he was a writer of some stature in the Arab world.

Lakhdar was, like Khayati, a Tunisian revolutionary who found himself among the Palestinian fedayeen in Jordan. He had begun a career as a lawyer in Tunisia representing political dissidents until he himself came under scrutiny from the regime. He fled Tunisia in 1961 with help from the Algerian FLN and “spent nearly 20 years wandering the world using forged passports.” After participating in the Algerian Revolution, he became an advisor to Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella. He helped arrange a meeting in Algeria between Che Guevera and Abu Jihad of Fatah. He would have to flee the country in 1965 after Boumédiène deposed Ben Bella in a military coup. In 1968 he arrived in Amman as a guest of Yasser Arafat. The two shared an apartment so as to protect Lakhdar from Algeria intelligence operatives. But Lakhdar, like Khayati, soon found the revolutionary politics of the DPFLP, founded by Nayef Hawatmeh, more persuasive. “Hawatmeh argued that the only justification for forming a fighting force is to topple the Arab regimes.... He convinced me...” Lakhdar would later translate the Communist Manifesto into Arabic. “The first genuine translation,” as he put it.

The 1967 Six-Day war was a disaster for the states of Jordan, Syria, and Egypt and for the project of Arab Nationalism. The war led to the occupation of the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza, as well as the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. Millions of Palestinians flooded to refugee camps, particularly in Jordan, where Palestinians now made up a majority of the population.

But this defeat marked a turning point. It made clear that the emancipation of Palestine must be conquered by the Palestinians themselves. Palestinian exiles would no longer wait for the armies of Arab states to liberate Jerusalem; *they would have to launch their own war.*

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was now for the first time led by fedayeen, particularly from Yasser Arafat’s Fatah. As one of the first armed resistance groups, formed nearly a decade earlier, Fatah now had an immense amount of prestige. The charter of the PLO was rewritten at this time to embrace a strategy of armed struggle.

Armed resistance groups began to proliferate among Palestinians in exile. Out of the Arab Nationalist Movement emerged the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which would soon become famous for a series of spectacular airplane hijackings. The PFLP itself soon split, with the DPFLP branding itself as an even more extremist organization.

With an influx of Palestinian refugees and armed revolutionary organizations, large sections of Jordan became ungovernable. Fedayeen used Jordan as a base to launch guerrilla attacks into Israel, with the inevitable reprisals improving the resistance’s moral and political authority. As a journalist put it, “[p]ower began to slip from the monarch into the hands of the myriad of Palestinian fighters who swaggered with their weapons through the streets of Amman, hung Marxist banners on mosques and began a campaign of hijackings and kidnappings. Palestinians spoke openly of taking over [Jordan] as part of Palestine.”

Debord sums up the situation succinctly:

All the Palestinian organizations were armed and enjoyed in Jordan a situation of dual power, but the latter occurred exactly at the level of local conditions. All the ridiculousness of the impotent Arab states, divided, and accumulating bombast on their unity, found itself concentrated in the embryonic statist pseudo-apparatus which shared that part of the Jordanian territory which little by little had escaped the State of Hussein. A dual power can never last, however not one of the Palestinian organizations wanted to overthrow Hussein, and thus all of them renounced their sole slim change of winning, not even wishing to see that it was the last hour to risk everything: for each of them feared that the operation would only profit some rival organization and its Arab protector State. It was thus perfectly evident that Hussein would destroy the Palestinian organizations.... However the boukha was drawn, it had to be drunk.

By the summer of 1970, tensions were at a boiling point. Violent clashes broke out periodically. But both sides hesitated. On September 6, the PFLP simultaneously hijacked four international flights, landing three of them at an abandoned airfield in Jordan, where they were blown up in front of the world's media. This pushed the situation past the point of no return. The Kingdom of Jordan was soon engulfed in a civil war between its armed forces and Palestinian fedayeen. Thousands of Palestinians were killed or expelled in the massacre, and the PLO was driven out of Jordan. These events are often remembered as Black September.

It was into this furnace, a kingdom in the midst of a creeping civil war, that Khayati ventured. "At the heart of [the DPFLP]," Khayati had, according to Debord, "thought he could discern a revolutionary proletarian fraction.... [But t]he proletarian fraction of the DPFLP, and even the least expression of its autonomous perspectives, had only existed in the well intentioned imagination of Khayati during his tenure on the management committee of this under-developed leftist misery." Khayati thus found himself in "a nearly desperate position but one into which he had put himself."

Debord remarks somewhere that of the "clandestinity of private life" we "possess nothing but pitiful documents." There is little available documentation of the texture of Khayati's time among the Palestinian fedayeen. As is often the case with the adventures of former situationists, we are left to rely largely on Debord's account.

Debord's judgment of this adventure and the writing that resulted from it was harsh. This is first attested to in "Remarks on the SI Today," a document circulated within the SI at the time:

At Venice, so as to make known the haughty reasons he had for making this choice, and for making it thus, Mustapha expounded an analysis of the possible revolutionary developments in Jordan and described the subjective necessity he felt to participate in this struggle. Immediately upon his arrival in Jordan (from which he had returned precisely at the moment of his declarations in Venice), he discovered — according to his own recent account — that there wasn't any such perspective! In an organization (the DPFLP) of which he is a formal member and of which he disapproves on at least several points, he didn't lead any political struggles....

Debord picks up this thread in “Notes toward a history of the SI, 1969–1971,” part of a “public circular” on the dissolution of the SI:

Since the revolutionary Palestinian elements had merited Khayati’s adhesion, they merited also that he support before them a minimum perspective, and that he put them on their guard. He contented himself with returning to Europe gravely deceived, before the inevitable repression. Undoubtedly he has brought out since, on the 1st of August 1970, in company with Lafif Lakhdar, twenty-four theses, moreover very insufficient, entitled “Waiting for the Massacre.” But these theses, published in the trotskyst journal *An-Nidhal*, were in fact written after the massacre, which had begun before the summer and had only to be completed by the autumn.

What concerns Debord is how Khayati conducted himself as a revolutionary during his excursion. He found himself unsure of his footing, unable to intervene in the “desperate situation,” even as he began to see it clearly. Khayati resembled Saint-Just at the start of Thermidor, stunned into silence by the rush of events.

To make matters worse, in Debord’s estimation, Khayati’s activity within the DPFLP was inconsistent with the theory of revolutionary organization that Khayati himself had contributed significantly to developing. It is this gap between ideas and activity, between what one thinks and how one lives, that Debord found unacceptable.

All of this is to say that Debord’s criticism seems aimed more at Khayati’s activity than his analysis. If Khayati had initially misread the moment, he was nonetheless compelled to face with sober senses the actual conditions he encountered upon his arrival. Debord confirms in private correspondence that when Khayati returned to Europe, the theoretical disagreements between them about the situation had become negligible.

If the text appeared “insufficient” to Debord it would appear to be because it did not succeed as an intervention. The only specific criticism he makes is about *timing*. The theses simply appear too late to have an impact on the unfolding of events.

If this text has not vanished into total obscurity, abandoned only to the criticism of mice, it is because Debord’s criticism has, in a sense, preserved it for posterity. This is what makes encountering the text today, in a new situation and with new tasks, possible. We are thus able to read it with fresh eyes unburdened by the particular concerns of its contemporary critics.

Despite its faults, Khayati and Lakhdar’s theses are an attempt to grapple with the dynamic and limits of an actual struggle. In this sense, they resemble many of the texts Khayati wrote as a situationist. Moreover, it is the only text, at least that we are aware of, written on the Palestinian movement from an ultra-left perspective by people who actually participated in the resistance.

If Khayati had set out to discover a deep well of proletarian self-activity and self-organization within the armed resistance, then this clearly did not pan out. But with hindsight it is harder to fault him on this. A similar attitude of wishful-thinking often reappears within the ultra-left’s writing on the matter. *Aufheben*’s otherwise remarkable essay on the intifada seems to suggest that every apparent historic blunder on the part of the PLO was actually driven by an excess of proletarian self-activity.[28] Consider also the immense emphasis on proletarian self-activity and initiative that characterizes *Midnight Notes*’ writing on Palestine and the Middle East. “Waiting for the Massacre” does not have the abstract distance of these groups and Khayati can at least be credited with having the courage of his convictions and putting his hypothesis to the test.

Moreover, the text turned out to be fairly prescient. Khayati and Lakhdar were able to see clearly the traps awaiting the Palestinian resistance on the other side of the “real defeat” of 1970: on the one hand, the temptations of spectacular terrorism and, on the other, the bloody labyrinth of geopolitical conflicts the PLO would soon be engulfed in. The former is exemplified by the Black September organization and the latter by the long civil war in Lebanon.

But what is more remarkable is the text’s anticipation of both the intifada and the Oslo Accords. In that sense it has aged well. Khayati and Lakhdar seem to suggest an historic crossroads. One possible route follows the line of a peace process that leads to a hollowed-out Palestinian state on the West Bank administered by Fatah. The other route would be the storming onto the stage of history of the Palestinian proletariat in the form of a mass self-organized uprising of everyday Palestinians assisted by the rank and file of the existing armed resistance organizations. What the authors did not anticipate was that both routes would cross each other. Both of the events they predicted would happen, although much later and not quite how they expected. As it would turn out, a mass uprising, an intifada, was a necessary prerequisite for a doomed peace process. But none of this would come to pass until nearly two decades later. It is worth remarking that if Khayati and Lakhdar thought that a Fatah-led Palestinian state “worthy of its name” would be a disaster, the actual Palestinian Authority, administered by a senile Fatah and torn apart by settlements, is a much more immense disaster than they could have anticipated at the time.

Following the shipwreck in Amman, Lakhdar and Khayati returned to Paris. There they collaborated on *Critique et Autocritique de la Résistance Palestinienne*, a book-length reflection on Black September which was rejected by their publisher Editions de Minuit for being “too extreme.” The two regrouped in Beirut where they would publish one issue of *Soulta-al-Majaliss*, a situationist-influenced council communist magazine, before the outbreak of civil war there again sent them into exile. Back in Paris, they would co-author the manifesto *Adresse aux prolétaires et aux jeunes révolutionnaires arabes et israéliens contre la guerre et pour la révolution prolétarienne*. The manifesto, developed by a gathering of Arab and Israeli revolutionaries on May 1st, 1976 in Paris, is thought to be the first revolutionary address published jointly by Arabs and Israelis. The address ends with a call for proletarian revolution throughout the Middle East: “the only program worthy of the Arab and Israeli proletariat and their allies is that of the destruction of the capitalist order and the construction, on its ruins, of a revolutionary society where the total liberation of each individual is the condition for the total liberation of all.”

Waiting for the Massacre

1.

From now on, words must have the same function as bullets. We must switch from delicate allusions to open accusations. The masses must know the whole truth and the entire reality, whatever their bitterness may be.

2.

Through the application of the compromise at hand, the real defeat will take place in 1970, for it implies the liquidation of the Palestinian resistance which is potentially the departure point for the Arab masses of all their future real struggles. The defeat of 1967 is exclusively the defeat of the Arab military-bureaucratic classes, even if the movement of the masses has not yet come to the point of presenting them the bill. The defeat of 1970 will be our own.

3.

Why are all sides of the Arab and world counter-revolution so diligently pushing for a rapid settlement of the conflict which ostensibly opposes the Israeli and Arab States? The reasons that impel the Arabs, Russians, Americans and Israelis to reach an agreement that can safeguard the essential of their mutual interests are many. But the decisive factor, the common denominator which unifies the protagonists, remains the “fear that the masses become radicalized.” The document concerning the Goldman-Hassan II encounter¹ demonstrates this, as do the confidential expressions of Soviet diplomats. A mere reading of the important world press confirms the analysis of Nahum Goldman, as it appeared in “Le Monde” of May 30th 1970. As far as Washington is concerned, since Nixon’s inauguration its banner has been “Avoid a new Vietnam,” as it is militarily and economically unable to face more than one Vietnam.

4.

The leaders of the resistance have constantly deluded themselves that “the Kremlin in the last analysis is on the side of the revolution.” The facts—and we need only quote the most recent—by themselves deny such illusions, which are only the expression of a Stalinism with critical pretense: the bureaucratic class that rules over the USSR has as its strategy the continuation of the status-quo and peaceful—not to say very friendly—coexistence with imperialist counter-

¹ A meeting between Nahum Goldman, president of the World Jewish Congress, and King Hassan II of Morocco to discuss the Middle East crisis.

revolution. Under Stalin, the politics of the Kremlin were not any different, but they were covered with more phraseological firmness. Today, the bureaucratic class which succeeded in harmonizing its ideology with its practice no longer needs such a cover-up of lies. That does not at all mean that there are no contradictions—for there are, at times, very sharp ones—between the Kremlin and the White House. What we now have are the contradictions of competition concerning the division of markets and spheres of influence throughout the world. These contradictions have so far been resolved on the negotiating table and not on the battlefield, always and basically at the expense of the international revolution and of oppressed peoples. The most recent proof of the counter-revolutionary nature of bureaucratic state-capitalism, inside and outside of Russia, is the Soviet-American bargain struck in view of a double liquidation. This deal aims both at the physical liquidation of the resistance and at the political liquidation of the Palestinians' national rights and of the aspirations of the Arab masses toward their liberation from imperialist interests and all the classes that oppress them.

5.

Certain organizations, notably Al Fatah, rose to utter ridicule when they counted upon the refusal of the peaceful solution by obstinate Israeli leaders, hoping that this would allow a revolutionary crisis to erupt. The day after Nassar accepted the Rogers Plan,² Al Fatah found no more to say than “the Israeli refusal will take care of sinking the Rogers Plan,” instead of calling upon the masses—left without arms—to actually wreck it. Such “calculation” unveils, once more, the depth of the political stupidity of the Palestinian leadership. Contrary to the prevailing opinion among the resistance, and kept alive by the Arab press, the territorial conquests that were the objectives of the Zionist Movement, which saw its followers as “a people without land,” have lost their importance now that Israel has become a “land without enough people” and a developed economy cut off from a vast consumer market. What matters now for Israeli capitalism is “peace” and secure borders which would be closed to the Palestinians, recognized by the Arab States and “open to the free circulation of people and commodities.” (A. Eban, “Le Monde”, 25-7-70)³

6.

The lucid elements amongst the Israeli officials have found the “final solution” of the Palestinian problem in the creation, on both banks of the Jordan, of an Arab-Palestinian State, worthy of its name. (See also the intimations of Dayan⁴ as revealed by J. Lacouture in “The Nouvel Observateur” of July 19th, 1970, and his declaration in which he accepts the Rogers Plan, “I consider it very important to behave in a manner whereby we don't lose the possibility for dialogue with the Palestinians of the West Bank, for it is with them that we will have to live, for better or for worse, and we had better acknowledge this fact.”)

² The Rogers Plan was a framework proposed by United States Secretary of State William P. Rogers for ending the belligerence between Israel and the surrounding Arab States following the 1967 Six Day War and in the midst of an ongoing war of attrition.

³ Abba Eban, Israeli Foreign Minister.

⁴ Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan.

7.

This Palestinian State, as formulated by Dayan, will not be short of leadership candidates from among the different managers of the Palestinian resistance, notably that of Al Fatah. The bases of the resistance must know, from now on, that the most perilous enemy is now within our borders and in the very midst of our ranks. It is significant to bring up here the testimony given by Hassan II (“Nouvel Observateur” 7/6/70) in which he is more convinced than ever of the urgency and importance of the efforts to pick up again the Judeo-Arab dialogue within Palestine. “I have talked with the Al Fatah leadership and I believe they are lucid.” The “moderation” of Al Fatah—whose most serious expression of objection seems to consist in walking away from the negotiating table—no longer spells any mystery, not even to the most retarded of journalists.

8.

Due to their class nature and their chronic economic and technological backwardness, all Arab regimes are incapable of victoriously confronting the IDF in a classic war. This type of war, fought between a developed and an underdeveloped country, has become an anachronism. It is not by chance that Bureaucratic China is prepared to again take up its strategy of the Long Peoples’ War, in case the Russians or Americans invade. The only means for the masses of underdeveloped countries to rid themselves of national and foreign oppressors remains armed revolutionary struggle. The Arab regimes, which have absolutely nothing to do with such struggles, thus consider to the contrary, that the arming and the self-organization of the masses is the rope with which they will be hung. That is why they do not hesitate to plot with the pseudo-enemy in order to smother their real enemy: the revolutionary masses of peasants and workers.

9.

It is only by arming the masses and organizing within democratically elected Workers’, Peasants’ and People’s Councils (in the refugee camps and in the cities) that the resistance can rise to the level of its historical tasks. Then, the means will correspond with the end we are after: not “the liquidation of the traces of aggression,” but the liquidation of its main causes—the established Arab regimes, the imperialist interests and the State of Israel. The last decisive battle of the Arab Revolution will be against the State of Israel, and this after having brought together the essential instruments for victory: an Arab revolutionary army, a qualitatively and quantitatively developed guerilla force and a popular militia; in a word, the people in arms. To get so far, it is necessary to tear down the Chinese wall made up of the established Arab regimes, and to immediately nationalize Arab oil.

10.

Let’s be thankful to Nasser for having taken it upon himself to deny the thesis of the theoreticians of the eleventh hour, who divide the Arab regimes into two camps—that of the “anti-imperialist patriots and friends of the resistance” and that of “reactionaries who, conniving with the counter-revolution, prepare the liquidation of the resistance.” Now, everything is clear, except

for those with jaundiced eyes. All the Arab regimes, at different levels, are counter-revolutionary. Through the traditional regimes, imperialism directly pushes through its plans, and through the “patriotic” military regimes, the two imperialisms (Russian and American) are able to advance the compromise they have reached (the Rogers Plan among others) in order to slow down the revolutionary movement and to subsequently destroy it.

11.

Only a few elements among the leaders of the resistance were actually conscious of, and therefore effectively preparing for, the inevitable bloody confrontation with the “patriotic” regimes. To this day, no Palestinian organization had dared to point the finger at Nasser. The most audacious amongst them are satisfied with hardly critical, delicate illusions. George Habash refused in his press conference to consider Nasser as an enemy of the resistance, because the latter, according to him, has only one enemy: imperialism. As though it were imperialism which had announced from Cairo its acceptance of the Rogers Plan and had suppressed the Palestinian broadcasts, and not the “Rais of the Arab Nation”—this frost that smothers the spring of the Arab peoples. In the same way, the “left” and the right of the resistance have communion in silence about the abject role of the tsars of the Moscovit bureaucracy in preparing the murder of the resistance and of the Arab Revolution. It is certainly in this murder that we can find the famous “Soviet support” of the Arab peoples with which the Arab Stalinist parties gorge themselves and, with them, certain organizations of the resistance. Few men succeed in ridding themselves of the illusion of their epoch. And it’s not the first time that the resistance has fallen victim to its own illusions, and those of others.

12.

Up until now, the majority of the Palestinian leaderships have subordinated (if they are not dead against) the study of revolutionary thought and history to the fetishism of purely military activity, in the form of suicide operations without any strategic perspective. These operations have become one of the essential elements in the pressure that has accelerated the process toward a peaceful settlement. Worse yet, in the south of Lebanon, these operations have led to a catastrophe for the resistance, now caught in the trap of a politically deadly confrontation with the Israeli Army. While the real task of the resistance—as we have written several times—was first of all, to find its roots among the masses and to gain their sympathy and organized support with the aim of turning the tables on the adversary at the right moment, reversing the balance of military power. But, the resistance has not found anything better to do than to fight for the sake of fighting. The leaders of the resistance, who never stop preaching “the creation of an Arab Vietnam,” seem to ignore everything, down to the elementary principles of the Vietnamese experience. Before resuming the armed struggle in earnest and creating the FLN, the Vietnamese took no less than six years of political preparation. As for the multiple “fronts” of the resistance that shoot up like mushrooms, they advertise their birth certificates with gunshots, mostly of a terrorist character (Rome, Zurich, Athens, Munich and so on).

13.

The disarray that grips the resistance's leaders during each crisis clearly reveals their real chances of managing the final crisis.

14.

On the eve of the alternative that awaits the resistance – to disappear or to become the opposite of what it is – it is important that the rank and file pose the real problems in order to see the real solutions.

1. Through its multifaceted relations with Arab regimes and their political extensions, on the one hand, and with the Palestinian and Arab masses on the other, the resistance movement has proved totally incapable of becoming conscious of its own tasks. It has failed to distinguish the support of those whose class interest drove them naturally toward it from the support of those who embrace it only to smother it more effectively. The program and the practice of the resistance do not in any way differ essentially from the programs of the Arab regimes. It has never bothered to lift the Arab masses to the consciousness of their historical interests, nor to defend their daily interests against the exploiting classes and the police regimes. Quite the contrary! We have seen Al Fatah, as a genuine strike breaker, sending its troops to menace and commandeer the construction and tobacco workers of Amman. As for the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DPFLP), it has not even had the guts to publicly defend its own militants against the police of Cairo and Baghdad. Worse yet, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) of George Habash, which this shitheap of well-advised newspapers, on the left or on the right, presents as “diehard extremists” has revealed itself to be systematically complicit with all the crimes of its financiers against both the workers murdered in the streets of Baghdad and against the Kurds.
2. No serious effort toward the elaboration of a coherent revolutionary program and theory has been made by any of the factions of the resistance. They have remained, as always, prosaically empiricist.

15.

It is now of the utmost importance that the rank and file of the resistance, liberating themselves from their leaders who are now more than ever holding the movement back, judge the Arab regimes not any more from what they say, but from what they do, not as they present themselves but as they really are. We cannot believe that the hangmen of the masses and of the revolutionary elements in their own countries can be sincere allies of the resistance.

16.

Among the main characteristics of the Arab military-bureaucracy one finds hype and bluster. On their lips, words have lost all meaning; revolution has been translated as coup d'état, scien-

tific socialism with police socialism, the struggle against American imperialism with acceptance “without conditions or reservation” (Nasser) of its plans. The weak refusal by the Syrian Ba’ath of the Rogers Plan is only a cover for its actual acceptance, which nobody doubts any longer. The comical refusal of Boumedienne is comprehensible through these fantastic acrobatics that succeed in reconciling “the right of each Arab State to decide over its fate in all independence” and “the Algerian support to the resistance.” How can Jordan, for example, decide “in all independence” its fate, without at the same time deciding the fate of the resistance and the Palestinian people? How is the Algerian government going to translate this support?⁽¹⁾ Boumedienne has already sent his rivals to the Suez front in order to enforce the resolution of November 22, 1967.⁵ He has sent to the resistance the sad Kaid Ahmed, heading the Commission of Four, in order to convince them to accept the demands of Hussein. The idea of sending even a few hundred volunteers to “support” the threatened resistance is completely foreign to him.

17.

The hype that surrounded the Iraqi military class’s verbal and self-serving refusal of Ba’athist asylum should fool no one. This must be the last occasion to unmask the actors of the Palestinian tragedy. The whole scope of the Iraqi position is revealed when one recalls even only the most recent past of its architects:

1. The Iraqi regime publicly supported the Lebanese government against the Fedayeen during the crisis of November 1969.
2. At the time of the February and June crises of 1970 in Amman, the Iraqi Ba’ath remained faithful to its anti-Palestinian position. It was George Habash himself, considered by Baghdad the number one man of the resistance and consequently an unassailable witness for the prosecution, who confirmed this to the press. (See “Le Nouvel Observateur” of July 26th 1970.)
3. Only people with a very short memory have forgotten that the counter-revolutionary Ba’ath was the first to sense the risks that the Iraqi masses—who have at all times lived in the shadow of the gallows—might be contaminated by the resistance, and that this party pronounced its famous 14 Points that forbid practically all Palestinian activity in Iraq.
4. Unless one is a Gilbert Mury,⁶ how can one take seriously the pretensions of Baghdad to support till the end the Palestinian resistance? Baghdad has diligently supported the manufacture (Made in England) of the United Arab Emirates against the rising revolutionary movement in that region. Both the National Democratic Front for the Liberation of Oman

⁵ United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, passed on November 22, 1967, called on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories in exchange for the Arab states recognizing Israel’s right to exist.

⁶ Gilbert Mury, a French philosopher and politician associated with the Communist Party of France and later with the Maoist movement, wrote a book on Black September.

⁽¹⁾ We actually know since August 9th 1970 the kind of practical support the military of Algiers intend to give to the resistance, since they called upon the Algerian people to pray for the resistance in all the Mosques on Friday August 14th. (footnote added August 9th 1970).

(NDFLO) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG) have already denounced the “counter-revolutionary meddlings” of the masters of Iraq.⁽²⁾

18.

None of the Arab armies, by virtue of this class nature⁽³⁾ and their unfathomable privilege, could ever be the ally of the resistance. If Western bourgeoisies invest their capital and develop the economy, Arab officers invest the stripes they have granted themselves in order to assure themselves the lion’s share of the social surplus value. Wherever they rule, they behave as in a conquered country left to pillage.

19.

The Arab military-bureaucratic class is subdivided into several fractions, but their common denominator remains, before and after all, the safeguarding of their privileges, the survival of their armies—their only real guarantee of maintaining themselves in their positions; their real program is to endure and not to fight. That is why the last word on their relationship with the resistance can only be, as the latter rises to the level of its tasks, a struggle to the death. For all its faults, the resistance remains a threat to all Arab regimes, because of its latent possibilities, real or imagined, to provoke a surge of the shackled Arab masses onto the stage of history. Certainly the bluff of Boumedienne or of the followers of Aflaq will be short lived, but is incumbent upon the rank and file of the resistance to put an end, once and for all, to false oppositions. The divorce of the Arab masses from their husband-leader (Nasser) must be the last one.

20.

Without any devout revolutionary optimism, the resistance’s leadership—which, we hope, is the last rendering of a militarily backward and ideologically defeated form of organization—is in no position to transform the massacre that awaits it into a general and victorious Arab insurrection. It would be a Santo Domingo and not a Vietnam. But the people, that eternal Thalassa, is always full of historical surprises, as Bakunin and even Lenin have observed: “There is more common sense and intelligence in the instinctive aspirations and the real needs of the masses than there is in the profound minds of those who have appointed themselves as their educators and counsel” (Bakunin). “In revolutionary situations the masses very often go beyond their leaders and take their place” (Lenin).

1. Can the most lucid elements of the resistance assume this historical role in the ordeals that the masses must pass before their hangmen-teachers in Amman, Lebanon and elsewhere?

⁽²⁾ The counter-revolution of the Imamship of Oman recruits Omani and Dhofarian mercenaries in Kuwait and sends them for training in Iraq. (document of the PFLOAG, published by Al Hurriya of July 20th 1970.)

⁽³⁾ E.g. an Iraqi officer receives upon his graduation from the military academy a credit of 3,000 pounds (\$10,000); when he marries he receives a gift from the State of 1,000 pounds; every time he goes “in the field” (that is to burn the

2. Can the few elements that have a clear and precise consciousness of the role and the historical future of the resistance as possible vanguard of the Arab revolution... can they on D-Day be the gravediggers of the Arab palaces and barracks and in this way take the place of their leaderships, which are defeatist, theoretically illiterate, politically confusionist and militarily impotent?
3. Can they draw the practical conclusions from the crisis of the resistance, wiping out forever the poisonous flattery of the spectacular press and thereby radically supersede the partial and often merely verbal critique of the only organization on the left: the DPFLP?
4. Finally, can they transform the feeling of disappointment of the masses when they suddenly discover Nasser at the head of the counter-revolution, into a rediscovery of their own strength in order to engage in the real struggles of present and future? This essentially presupposes the ability of these revolutionary elements to counter the rape of the masses by official propaganda-ideological repression that is in no way outdone by police repression-with the most extensive broadcasting of truths and facts. And that they call the Arab soldiers to disobedience and insurrection.

21.

Otherwise, the resistance movement will finish in a bloodbath; the remnants will transform themselves into terrorist gangs having as their only program the assassination of “presidents and traitor-kings.” The Arab States, already police-states, will defend themselves by installing a murderous fascism and each country will have its Franco and Mussolini.

22.

Given that the Hashemite tribe⁷ is incapable all by itself of putting an end to the resistance, or rather of enduring the consequences of a slaughter, it would require participation in the crime, even if symbolic, from the states that accept-publicly or tacitly-the Rogers Plan. The only response to the unity of the Arab States in the counter-revolution is the unity of the Arab masses in the revolution. It is up to the Arab revolutionaries to seize this historic occasion in order to denounce the holy alliance of Arab and world counter-revolution, and to call for its destruction.

23.

At this crucial moment when the Arab leaders are getting ready to recognize the State of Meir-Dayan and to sign the peace of slaves, a truly internationalist voice must rise from the ranks of the resistance in order to say a resolute **NO** to the Israeli state and a sincere **YES** to freely consented coexistence with the Israeli masses. The latter will determine themselves either within the framework of the power of the generalized Workers’ Councils in the unified Arab world,

⁷ The House of Hashim is the royal family of Jordan.

villages of the Kurds or to bury alive the Iraqi communists) his pay increases by 25%; etc.

which would follow the arc of history, or in separation. Let the testament of the resistance, in the case of defeat, and its watchword, in the event of victory, be revolutionary and internationalist.

24.

With the end of the military revolutions which, as thieves in the night, have seized the state, the first phase of the Arab Revolution, petty bourgeois and blanquist, is closed. A new epoch heralds itself where there will be no “miracle” and where no decisive victory will be easily realized. The era of long struggles, of genuine revolution, is about to begin.

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Lafif Lakhdar, Mustapha Khayati
Waiting for the Massacre
August 1st, 1970

Endnotes Dossier: Waiting for the Barbarians

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