



Jihadism and Terrorism

Edited by Rüdiger Lohlker

Volume 1

Rüdiger Lohlker,
Tamara Abu-Hamdeh (eds.)

Jihadi Thought and Ideology

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From Maoism to Jihadism: Some Fatah militants' trajectory from the mid 1970's to the mid 1980's¹

On 14th February 1988, after fifteen years of military action, the Palestinians Muḥammad al-Baḥayṣ (nom de guerre: “Abū Ḥasan”) and Bāsīm Sulṭān at-Tamīmī (“Ḥamadī”) and their fellow Lebanese combatant Marwān al-Kayyālī died as their car exploded in Limassol, Cyprus.² The explosive device had supposedly been planted by Mossad agents,³ who considered the three men top-terrorists and leaders of the Islamic Jihad Brigades (Sarāyā al-Ġihād al-Islāmī). Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī had started their career as Maoist activists inside the Fatah (Palestinian National Liberation Movement, Ḥarakat at-Taḥrīr al-Waṭanī al-Filasṭīnī), the largest faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Like them, some other Fatah Maoists moved to the “grounds of Islam”⁴ in the period between 1979 and 1984. After ten years of dissent with the political line of Fatah, they finally broke away from Fatah to form the Islamic Jihad Brigades. The Brigades were one of the first armed Islamist groups of Palestine and can be seen as the branch of the emerging Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (Ḥarakat al-Ġihād al-Islāmī fī Filasṭīn) on Lebanese soil.⁵ The adoption of Jihadism among Palestinian fighters happened simultaneously by the Lebanon-Fatah-line and the Egypt-Gaza-line, represented by its main figures Faṭḥī Šiqāqī and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-‘Awda. In Lebanon, it was mostly Fatah officers, often of Maoist or Marxist background,⁶ who reintroduced the idea of *ḡihād* to the political and military scene.

The Islamic Jihad Brigades were considered “the most significant military movement in the mid-1980s”⁷, responsible for several attacks inside Israel in 1986 and 1987.⁸ A prominent assault was the ‘Gate of Moor Operation’ of October 15, 1986, which the assailants named the Burāq-Operation

¹ This article is a revised version of “Brothers in Arms: How Palestinian Maoists Turned Jihadists”, *Die Welt des Islams* 51, no. 1 (2011), 1-44.

² Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1994), 111. Munīr Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra. Abū Ḥasan wa-Ḥamadī wa-iḥwānuhumā* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Wafā’ 1994), 32 and 124.

³ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 32 and 124.

⁴ Id., 3, 46, 89, 131-138.

⁵ This meets also the self-conception of the Islamic Jihad Movement. See the current General Secretary’s, Ramaḍān Šallaḥ, statements in Ġassān Šarbal, *Fi ‘ayn al-‘ašifa. Ḥiwār ma’a l-amīn al-‘amm li-Ḥarakat al-Ġihād al-Islāmī fī Filasṭīn ad-duktūr Ramaḍān ‘Abdallāh Šallaḥ, aḡrāhu Ġassān Šarbal, al-Ḥayāt* (Beirut: Bīsān 2003), 65.

⁶ Members of other Marxist groups (PFLP and PFLP-GC) also joined or formed *ḡihād* groups. See Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 93 and 129 f.; Denis Engelleder, *Die islamische Bewegung in Jordanien und Palästina 1945-1989* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2002), 70.

⁷ Jean-Francois Legrain, “HAMAS: Legitimate Heir of Palestinian Nationalism”, in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism or Reform?* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers 1997), 159-178, here: 162.

⁸ Id., 161.

(*‘amalīyat al-Burāq*),⁹ when Jihadists threw three hand grenades at Israeli troops during a graduation ceremony near the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. The attack resulted in the wounding of seventy soldiers and the death of one of the conscript’s fathers.¹⁰ In the immediate aftermath of the attack the Jihadists issued their first public declaration using the name Islamic Jihad Brigades, propelling the movement into the view of the public.¹¹ This particular cell also claims to have attempted the first suicide attack in Palestine. In August 1987, ‘Itāf ‘Ulyān (nom de guerre: “Umm Ḥamadī”)¹² was discovered and imprisoned before she could head for her last journey to Jerusalem in a car packed with two hundred kilos of explosives. This unsuccessful attempt became also part of the foundation myth of the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine and was of great significance because it not only took place nearly eight years before the first successful suicide attack in Palestine, but also because the potential perpetrator was a woman.¹³

In a treatise named *As’ila ḥawla l-islām wa-l-mārkisiya min warā’ al-quḍbān* (“Questions about Islam and Marxism from behind the bars”) Muḥammad al-Baḥayṣ and Bāsim Sultān at-Tamīmī explained why they had moved from Marxism to “the grounds of Islam”.¹⁴ According to the preface, the text was written in 1984 in response to questions sent to them by their comrades in Israeli prisons.¹⁵ This frame points at the fact that much of the Jihad movement’s recruiting took place in Israeli prisons¹⁶ and many of the new Jihadists were former nationalists and secularists¹⁷ who shared a common experience of military and prison life. The treatise was posthumously published as a booklet in Beirut in 1990, two years after the two authors were killed in Cyprus. The two martyr-converts are presented as men of praxis, not of theory who knew long before the

⁹ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 31, 124. The operation is named after the heavenly creature that, according to Islamic tradition, carried Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem on his Night Journey.

¹⁰ See Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 96 and Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 32 and 124. Šafīq does not mention that the “successful and great” operation caused the death of a civilian.

¹¹ Id., 124.

¹² According to her account, she secretly went to Lebanon in 1980 to join a Fatah training camp at the age of 17 where she obviously met Munīr Šafīq, Abū Ḥasan and Ḥamadī. Since 1984, she pleaded for suicide attacks in Israel according to the model of attacks in Lebanon. She was convicted to fifteen years in prison, released after ten years, but again imprisoned and released for several times. See her account under the title “‘Itāf ‘Ulyān: Rā’idat al-‘amalīyāt al-istiḥādīya fī Filasṭīn”, (on the Aqsa-Website, <http://www.aqsa.com/vb/showthread.php?t=11344>) (accessed December 17, 2009), and more information about her on the Website of the Women’s Organization for Political Prisoners (Nisā’ li-aḡl al-Asīrāt as-Siyāsīyāt, <http://www.wofpp.org/english/etafi.html>) (accessed December 17, 2009).

¹³ Many websites hail her as a brave fighter and female role model and include her in the ranks of prominent female suicide bombers like Wafā’ Idrīs, the first female ‘martyr’ in Palestine in 2002. See Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 123-125, 131f. and also Ramaḍān Šallah’s statements in Šarbal, *Fi ‘ayn al-‘āšifa*, 65, 67. Since the mid 1980s, the Jihadist movement has claimed responsibility for many militant attacks in Israel. It is said to have carried out thirty suicide attacks with one hundred sixty victims since 1995. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Palestinian_Islamic_Jihad_suicide_attacks) (accessed December 17, 2009).

¹⁴ Muḥammad Muḥammad al-Baḥayṣ, Muḥammad Bāsim Sultān at-Tamīmī, *Ḥawla l-islām wa-l-mārkisiya min warā’ al-quḍbān* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Islāmī 1990).

¹⁵ Id., 7.

¹⁶ Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 95; Engelleder, *Die islamische Bewegung*, 72.

¹⁷ Among them is Ramaḍān Šallah, the current leader of the Islamic Jihad Movement.

downfall of the Soviet Union that Marxism had practically and theoretically failed.¹⁸ In 1994, the Islamist intellectual Munīr Šafīq republished the entire treatise as an appendix to his hagiography “Martyrs and March: Abū Ḥasan, Ḥamadī, and their Brothers”.¹⁹

Šafīq was not only a close observer of the Islamic Jihad Brigades, but also the *spiritus rector* of the group²⁰ who actively took part in the group’s discussions and decision making.²¹ In addition, Šafīq founded the political wing of the Islamic Jihad Brigades—the Fighting Islamic Tendency (al-Ittiḡāh al-Islāmī al-Mujāhid)—which was instrumental in forming the liaison to Fathī Šiqāqī’s Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine.²² In his account of the Maoists’ transformation, he often does not mention names, dates and places; neither does he claim to have written an objective report,²³ but his book gives some insight into the discussions and decision-making process of the group. Šafīq—an offspring of a Palestinian Christian family—had been a member of the Communist Party in Jordan until 1965 and had spent two years in prison due to his political convictions. In 1968, he joined Fatah and became a high-ranking member of the PLO.²⁴ He turned to Islam at about 1979, and the publication of *al-Islām fī ma’rakat al-ḥadāra* (Islam in the Battle of Civilization) in 1981 can be considered his Islamic coming-out.²⁵ The importance of this book in the context of the Jihadist movement is obvious, as Baḥayş and Tamīmī referenced it in their treatise several times and one of the chapters even bears the title of Šafīq’s book.²⁶

The re-introduction of ḡihād to Palestine and Lebanon

The re-introduction of the term *ḡihād* into the political and military scene during the 1970s was

¹⁸ See the preface in Baḥayş and Tamīmī, *Hawla l-islām*, 10.

¹⁹ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra. Abū Ḥasan wa-Ḥamadī wa-iḥwānuhumā*.

²⁰ See his statement in the interview with Waḥīd Taḡā, “Munīr Šafīq”, in Waḥīd Taḡā (ed.), *al-Ḥitāb al-islāmī al-mu’āşir: Muḥāwarāt fikrīya*, (Aleppo: Fuşşilat li-l-Dirāsāt wa-t-Tarḡama wa-n-Naşr 2000); also compare Başīr Mūsā Nāfi’, “Al-Islāmīyūn al-filastīniyūn wa-l-qaḍiya al-filastīniya” (<http://www.samanews.com/index.php?act=%20Show&id=23063>) (accessed September 10, 2009).

²¹ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 4 and 127.

²² Šafīq himself does not mention his or the group’s connection to Šiqāqī’s group, but underlines the group’s pioneering role for Hamas, see Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 125. Legrain’s assumption that Šafīq got associated with Hamas after 1988 may go too far, see Legrain, “HAMAS”, 162.

²³ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 4.

²⁴ For biographical details see Islamonline 2001, “al-Kātib fī şuţūr: Munīr Šafīq” (<http://www.islamonline.net/arabic/contemporary/Tech/2001/article9-cv.shtml>) (accessed February 28, 2008). Born in 1936, Šafīq engaged in politics starting in 1951. By joining Fatah, he became responsible for foreign relations (1968-1972) and was a member (1972-1978) and the director (1978-1992) of the PLO Planning Centre. After that, he is said to have withdrawn from official duties to devote his energy to studies and writing. He is now active as “general coordinator of the Arab Nationalist Club (al-Muntadā al-Qawmī al-‘Arabī)”, an alliance of Islamist and nationalist groups, see Munīr Šafīq, “al-Muqāwama mā ba’d intihā’ al-ḥarb al-bārīda”, in Mu’tamar al-Dā’im li-l-Muqāwama, *Qiyam al-muqāwama. Ḥayār aš-şahāda wa-l-ḥayāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Hādī 2008), 255-263, here: 255.

²⁵ Munīr Šafīq, *al-Islām fī ma’rakat al-ḥadāra* (Beirut: Dār al-Kalima li-n-naşr 1981; Dār al-Fikr al-Islāmī 1990²).

²⁶ Baḥayş, Tamīmī, *Hawla l-islām*, 23, 46.

not forced by traditionally religious circles. Individuals and groups began to propagate the reinvigoration of popular armed struggle against Israel using the concept of *ġihād*.²⁷ The concept of *ġihād* was certainly not new in the context of Palestinian resistance.²⁸ It was accompanied by two major ideological shifts that affected the Middle East as a whole and especially Palestine between 1967 and 1979. After the Arab defeat of 1967, many Arab nationalists embraced Marxism.²⁹ Their disillusionment about Arab nationalism reached its peak when Anwar al-Sadat, the heir of Nasserism, started the peace process with Israel whereas Israel occupied the so-called security zone in South Lebanon (1978-2000). The second shift occurred under the auspices of the Iranian Revolution in 1978/79. The revolution inspired many Arab activists to embrace political Islam, among them leftist and Christian intellectuals, who started to sympathize with Islamism as a mass movement for revolution and *ġihād*.³⁰ While Gaza born Faṭḥī Šiqāqī's ideological trajectory led from Arab nationalism to Islamism and then to Jihadism, most Arab nationalists of the Lebanon-Fatah-line came to Jihadism by way of Maoism. In both the Palestinian and the Lebanese context, a number of Arab nationalists of the 1960s became Jihadists by the 1980s, either by way of "moderate" Islamism or Maoism. The Palestinian Jihad movement practically and ideologically aimed at broadening the mass basis for armed struggle. It seems to have been supported logistically and financially by PLO factions and might even have entirely relied on PLO support, "before it diversified its sources of support to include Iran and Islamic groups in some Arab countries."³¹

In the Lebanese arena, the Fatah Maoists' adoption of *ġihād* occurred against a multi-faceted background. In Lebanon, the popular armed struggle by Palestinians had started on 1 January 1965 when the heretofore unknown al-‘Āšifa (the Storm) forces, the military wing of Fatah, released a

²⁷ Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 90-95. The first advocates of *ġihād* go back to the early 1970s.

²⁸ As early as 1929, ‘Izz ad-Dīn al-Qassām had propagated *ġihād* "until victory or martyrdom." Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 98ff.; Engelleder, *Die islamische Bewegung*, 70. In 1978, Yassir Arafat on his *ḥaġġ*-pilgrimage to Mecca also used the term *ġihād* in arguing that the liberation of Palestine through armed struggle was a duty to God; Engelleder, *Die islamische Bewegung*, 70f.

²⁹ The Movement of the Arab Nationalists (Harakat al-Qawmīyīn al-‘Arab), centred in Beirut, crumbled in the aftermath of the Six Day War and gave birth to Palestinian and Lebanese groups (PFLP, DFLP, PFLP-GC, and OCAL) all of which identified with Marxism-Leninism.

³⁰ Some of Khomeini's bloodthirsty references to the meaning of *ġihād* are: "Islam is a religion of blood for the infidels but a religion of guidance for other people. [...] We do not fear giving martyrs. Whatever we give for Islam is not enough and is too little. [...] [To kill the infidels] is a surgical operation commanded by Allah. [...] War is a blessing for the world and for every nation." See Murawiec, *The Mind of Jihad*, 43f. For the impact of Shiite elements on Sunni *ġihād* fighters like Faṭḥī Šiqāqī see Emmanuel Sivan "Islamic Radicalism: Sunni and Shi'ite", in Emmanuel Sivan and Menachem Friedman (eds.), *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East* (Amherst: State University of New York Press 1990), 39-76. For leftist sympathizers see Emmanuel Sivan, "Assessment by the Left", in id. (ed.), *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, enlarged Edition (New Haven/London: Yale University Press 1990), 153-180.

³¹ Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 111. Ġūrġ Ḥabaš (PFLP) endorsed the Islamic Jihad Movement openly, but also a prominent Fatah figure like Ḥalīl al-Wazīr ("Abū Ġihād") is supposed to have been on good terms with Jihadists, see id., 114, and Engelleder, *Die islamische Bewegung*, 71. Šafīq, *Šuhadā' wa-masīra*, 59, downplays Abū Ġihād's role.

communiqué in Beirut that announced a first successful guerrilla raid into Israel.³² For the fighters, this event marked the beginning of the Palestinian “revolution” (*al-thawra*); more guerrilla groups sprung up after the Six-Days-War in June 1967, using Lebanon and its refugee camps as their safe haven, especially after the guerrillas were driven from Jordan in “Black September” 1970. But soon, the guerrillas found themselves trapped in the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990). Fatah had not only to face the Israeli invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982, but also Syrian containment policy and internal fighting. In 1976, Syria intervened in the Lebanese civil war, sending troops to prevent a victory of the PLO’s allies, the Lebanese National Movement.³³ The end of the Israeli siege of West-Beirut in August 1982 mandated the evacuation of approximately ten thousand PLO guerrilla fighters under the eyes of multinational forces. Only when in September of 1982, communist and nationalist groups set up the Lebanese National Resistance Front (*Ġabhat al-Muqāwama al-Waṭanīya al-Lubnānīya*) to fight the Israeli troops in Lebanon, some Palestinian fighters were able to re-group, participate in various guerrilla attacks and affect Israel’s gradual retreat from Lebanon, except for the southern security zone. During these events, an anonymous telephone caller used, for the first time in Lebanon, the name of ‘Islamic Jihad,’ taking responsibility for a series of suicide bombings aimed at Western targets, as well as kidnappings of Western diplomats and journalists.³⁴

The Development of Fatah Maoism

Between 1972 and 1974, the Maoists succeeded to build up a *tayyār* (tendency) inside Fatah, made up of “Palestinians, Lebanese, Arabs and Non-Arabs.”³⁵ This *tayyār* had no central committee and general secretary because the Maoists were against the “splitting” of the resistance movement, which after all would weaken the Fatah. In this sense, they were also committed to “the mass line” (*ḥaṭṭ al-ġamāhīr*).³⁶ This term was borrowed from Mao Zedong’s method to learn from the masses and to immerse the political leadership in the concerns and conditions of the masses. Thus, the

³² Rex Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival. The PLO in Lebanon* (London: Westview Press 1990), 1. According to Brynen, the group never reached the frontier, let alone their intended target, an Israeli water-pumping station.

³³ An alliance of Lebanese leftist, nationalist and Muslim groups, headed by Kamāl Junblāt (Joumblatt).

³⁴ The unknown telephone caller is said to have been a member of one of the groups that separated from the Shiite Amal movement and later originated Ḥizballāh (the Party of God). The bombing of the US embassy in Beirut on April 18, 1983 and the attacks on the barracks of the US and French peacekeeping troops on October 23, 1983 are attributed to these groups. Ḥizballāh emerged between 1984 and 1985. See August Richard Norton, *Hizballah of Lebanon: Extremist Ideals vs. Mundane Politics* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations 1999); Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah. Born with a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press 1997); Walid Charara, Frédéric Domont, *Le Hezbollah. Un mouvement islamo-nationaliste* (Paris: Fayard 2004).

³⁵ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 2. “Non-Arabs” seems to refer to Iranians. For the emergence of the tendency see also Faṭḥī al-Biss, *Inṭiyāl aḍ-ḍākira. Hādā mā ḥašala* (Amman: Dār aš-Šurūq 2008), 141-145. For the leftist Fatah wing see Helga Baumgarten, *Palästina: Befreiung in den Staat. Die palästinensische Nationalbewegung seit 1948* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1991), 227-234.

³⁶ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 36f.

Maoists' main goal was to unite the "masses" according to the Chinese and Vietnamese model of a people's liberation war irrespective of the possible losses of human lives.³⁷

The reference to Maoism was not by accident, since China stood for „unreserved support“³⁸ in the eyes of the Maoist militants whereas Soviet support was regarded “half-hearted”³⁹. This judgment goes back to the fact that between the mid 1960s and mid 1970s China was “the most consistent big power supporter of the Palestinian guerrilla organisations, arming them, criticizing them, seeking to unify them and, despite fluctuations in the relationship, providing moral and material support.”⁴⁰ Since the first trip of a Fatah delegation to China in 1964, Palestinian leaders like Yāsir ‘Arafāt (Yasser ‘Arafat) and Ğūrġ Ḥabaš (George Habash) regarded China as a close friend and ally. In 1965, Mao Zedong explained the common interest with the words: “Imperialism is afraid of China and of the Arabs. Israel and Formosa are bases of imperialism in Asia. You are the gate of the great continent and we are the rear. They created Israel for you, and Formosa for us. Their goal is the same.”⁴¹ China supported the guerrillas not only with arms (guns, mortars, anti-tank rockets), but provided also military training units in China and the Arab states.⁴² China initially favoured Fatah over the Marxist organisations PFLP and (P)DFLP and consistently pleaded for the “unification under the most powerful fedayyen confederation”.⁴³ Chinese politicians told Palestinians visitors more than once that “unity is the key to victory for the Palestinians.”⁴⁴ China was also the only great power which declared in 1973 that the “Palestinian people's rights cannot be restored through UN resolutions”⁴⁵ and expressed scepticism about a political settlement on Palestine. It was therefore seen as a Maoist influence when the Palestinian National Charter was revised in 1969 stating that “the armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine; it is, therefore, a strategy and not a tactic”.⁴⁶

³⁷ In a mass public rally on the Palestine Solidarity Day in 1965, Mao told the PLO delegates “that peoples must not be afraid if their numbers are reduced in liberation wars, for they shall have peaceful times during which they may multiply. China lost twenty million people in the struggle for liberation.” Cited by John K. Cooley, “China and the Palestinians”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 1, no. 2 (1972), 19-34, here: 25.

³⁸ See Biss, *Intiyāl ad-dākira*, 144f.

³⁹ Lillian Craig Harris, “China's Relations with the PLO”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7, no. 1 (1977), 123-154, here: 124. An account of 25 PLO delegations to China versus nine to the USSR between 1964 and 1975 is given by Hashim S.H. Behbehani, *China's Foreign Policy in the Arab World 1955-1975. Three Case Studies* (London/Boston 1981), 132. It was not until 1970 that the Soviet Union gave any recognition to the validity of Palestinian guerrilla movement action, see Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation. People, Power and Politics* (Cambridge: University Press 1984), 155.

⁴⁰ Harris, “China's Relations”, 123f.

⁴¹ Id., 127.

⁴² Cooley, “China and the Palestinians”, 26f. He nevertheless points out that it is impossible to estimate the exact amount of Chinese military and economic support. ‘Arafat said in 1970: “I would be revealing no secrets, if I tell you that China was the first outside power to give real help to Fateh.” As cited *ibid.*, 26.

⁴³ Harris, “China's Relations”, 124.

⁴⁴ Id., 131 and 141.

⁴⁵ Id., 127.

⁴⁶ Id., 129.

After the guerrillas' aim to create an Arab Hanoi⁴⁷ had failed in Jordan in 1970, one of the Marxist leaders, Nāyif Ḥawātima (Hawatmeh, (P)DFLP), reconsidered the concept of a "People's war of long duration" and moved towards the Soviet stance that advocated the Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories (UN resolution 242), the foundation of a Palestinian state, and mutual recognition. Hawatmeh, a close to 'Arafat at that time, started propagating the so-called "programme of stages" of liberation (*barnāmiğ al-marāḥil*) which became the basis for the Palestinian National Council's "Ten-Point-Programme" in 1974.⁴⁸ It indicated the PLO's contentment with a partial liberation of Palestine, i.e. either a Two-State-Solution or a step-by-step liberation.⁴⁹

The Maoists vigorously criticized this policy change.⁵⁰ They believed that the Soviets' imperialistic strategy ("neither peace nor war")⁵¹ aimed at reaching a political stalemate in the region and offered no real solution for the Palestinians. They also viewed the new amendments of the PLO Charta as solely serving the interests of the United States, Egypt and the Arab League that attempted to rid itself of the responsibility for Palestine.⁵² Therefore, the Maoists questioned whether Fatah wanted to maintain as its goal the liberation of Palestine as a whole or give up the "revolutionary struggle" and "fundamental rights."⁵³ However, the Maoists did not join the Rejectionist Front⁵⁴ which emerged under the leadership of the prominent Marxist, George Habash (PFLP). Despite their conflict with Fatah leaders, they decided to stay within the organization, as long as their independence and criticism were respected.⁵⁵

When the Palestinians entered the Lebanese civil war alongside the Lebanese Nationalist Movement in 1975, Maoists—estimated to be in the "hundreds"—joined under various Fatah commanders, since they were not united by a formal organization.⁵⁶ They formed the so-called Student Squad (as-Sarīya aṭ-Ṭullābīya or al-Katība aṭ-Ṭullābīya) which became the organizational

⁴⁷ Baumgarten, *Palästina*, 224, 226

⁴⁸ See id., 245f. The "Ten-Point-Programme" was decided on at the 12th meeting of the Palestinian National Council, 1st-8th July 1974, Cairo. It was followed by the decision of the Arab League that the PLO was the only and legitimate representation of the Palestinian nation (28th-30th October 1974) and by Arafat's speech in the General Assembly of the United Nations (13th of November 1974).

⁴⁹ The 2nd Point reads: "The Liberation Organization will employ all means, and first and foremost armed struggle, to liberate Palestinian territory and to establish the independent combatant national authority for the people over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated." The 8th Point reads: "Once it is established, the Palestinian national authority will strive to achieve a union of the confrontation countries, with the aim of completing the liberation of all Palestinian territory, and as a step along the road to comprehensive Arab unity."

⁵⁰ Šafīq, *Šuhadā' wa-masīra*, 17.

⁵¹ Id., 20.

⁵² Id., 18, 28.

⁵³ Id., 21f.

⁵⁴ Several militant groups left the PLO or left their membership pending because of the Ten-Point-Programme, like PFLP, PFLP-GC, the Abū-Niḍāl-Group, Syrian backed as-Sā'iq and the Iraq backed Arab Liberation Front.

⁵⁵ Šafīq *Šuhadā' wa-masīra*, 51, 58 and 69.

⁵⁶ Biss speaks of "hundreds, if not thousands". See Biss, *Intiyāl*, 230.

kernel of the fighters who were mainly active in various sectors of West-Beirut.⁵⁷ Since 1977, Maoists were also known as the Jarmaq Squad (Katībat al-Ġarmaq)⁵⁸ in southern Lebanon, which fought as a part of al-‘Aṣifa against the South Lebanon Army (Ġayš Lubnān al-Ġanūbī).⁵⁹ According to Anīs an-Naqqāš,⁶⁰ one of the squad’s co-founders, the squad counted “more than a hundred and twenty fighters in the South while the [Lebanese] National Movement only had some dozens.”⁶¹ It fortified the Beaufort Castle (Qal‘at Šaqīf), a crusader fortress situated on a hill near Nabatiye and the Litani river, from where the fighters fired rockets against the Israeli forces which retaliated with permanent shellfire. The squad attracted not only Palestinians and Lebanese from different confessional⁶² backgrounds, but also Iraqi Communists, Maoists, and Islamists⁶³ who had found refuge in Lebanon, as well as Iranians who came for military training to the Fatah camps.⁶⁴ The Iranian trainees came from the Marxist group Fidā’iyīn-e Ḥalq (the People’s Fedayeen) as well as from the Islamo-Marxist counterpart Muġāhidīn-e Ḥalq (the People’s Muġāhidūn).⁶⁵ The squad decided to support all of these groups despite their ideological differences.

According to Šafīq, the squad lost forty “martyrs”⁶⁶ during the various campaigns from 1976 to 1978. Its final chapter began with the Israeli invasion of Beirut (Operation “Peace for Galilee”). On the night of June 6, 1982, Israeli forces took the Beaufort Castle in one of the first clashes of the invasion. Nonetheless, the Jarmaq Squad reaped fame from the “Battle of the Beaufort Castle”

⁵⁷ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 83, 114f. Compare Biss, *Intiyāl*, 277.

⁵⁸ Biss, *Intiyāl*, 277. Named after Mount Jarmaq (Mt. Meron), the highest mountain in Palestine/Northern Israel.

⁵⁹ It was set up by Sa‘d Ḥaddād in 1976 and allied with Israel, especially when Israeli troops invaded Southern Lebanon (Litani Operation) in 1978 to set up the security zone.

⁶⁰ He was the partner of Venezuelan terrorist Carlos (Ilich Ramírez Sánchez) in the attack on the OPEC conference in Vienna 1975. See the interview Ġassān Šarbal, “Anīs an-Naqqāš” in Ġassān Šarbal (ed.), *Asrār aṣ-ṣundūq al-aswad. Wadī’ Ḥaddād – Carlos – Anīs an-Naqqāš – Ġūrġ Ḥabaš*, (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books 2008), 253-341, and Manhāl al-Amīn, “Anīs an-Naqqāš: al-Munāḍil al-qawmī ‘alā ṭ-ṭarīq al-islāmī”, *al-Aḥbār*, April 9, 2009, <http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/128691> (accessed November 25 2009)

⁶¹ See Šarbal, “Anīs an-Naqqāš”, 330.

⁶² Christians, Muslims, and Druzes all joined the Jarmaq Squad.

⁶³ Seven-hundred members of the Shiite Da‘wa-Party from Iraq trained in PLO camps. See Waddāḥ Šarāra, *Dawlat Hizballāh. Lubnān muġtama‘an islāmīyan* (Beirut: Dār an-Nahār 2006), 109; compare also Bernard Rougier, *Everyday Jihad. The Rise of Militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon* (Harvard University Press 2007), 28.

⁶⁴ According to Anīs an-Naqqāš in Šarbal, “Anīs an-Naqqāš”, 326, and Sa‘ūd al-Mawlā in Nicolas Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran, en regardant vers Jérusalem: la singulière conversion à l’islamisme des «Maos du Fatah»”, *Cahiers de L’Institut Religioscope*, Numéro 2 (2008), <http://www.religioscope.org/cahiers/02.pdf> (accessed December 01, 2009), 1-39, here: 33. The relations between Fatah and Iran were good, Arafat himself visited Khomeini twice in the latter’s exile in Najaf. It is also known that two of Khomeini’s sons participated in the Fatah military training. See Šarāra, *Dawlat Hizballāh*, 109.

⁶⁵ See Šarbal, “Anīs an-Naqqāš”, 326; Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 33. Among the prominent trainees were supporters of Khomeini like Muḥammad Muntazarī, the son of the Āyatullāh Muntazarī (d. 2009), and Ġalāl ad-Dīn al-Fārisī who could not run for the Iranian presidency in 1986 on the grounds that his father was born an Afghan; on Fārisī see Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press 1994), 176.

⁶⁶ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 119. According to Sa‘ūd al-Mawlā, fourteen or fifteen died trying to prevent the Israeli intrusion 1978, see his statement in Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 33. Biss mentions a memorial place erected in Bint Jbayl for twenty-eight squad members, see Biss, *Intiyāl*, 307.

(Ma‘rakat Šaḳīf), because its fighters managed to inflict “substantial loss”⁶⁷ onto the Israeli army. Yet as the invasion advanced and many fighters were killed, the squad’s members were scattered, retreating either to Beirut or to the Beqaa-Valley.⁶⁸ In this context, Šafīq states that “the experience of the Lebanese wing” inside the squad came to end, because only a few Lebanese remained in the squad after 1982, whereas most of them looked for a “new position.”⁶⁹ These remarks suggest that either many Lebanese abandoned the group because they were unwilling to accept the turn to Islam or they were of Shiite background and most probably turned to groups that later formed Ḥizballāh.⁷⁰ Šafīq further indicates that “the squad was forced to retreat to Tripoli and enter a struggle that it only wanted to leave.”⁷¹

The squad’s engagement in Tripoli is remarkable because the first example of a collective shift from Maoism to Islamism occurred in Tripoli prior to the Israeli invasion to Lebanon; Maoists were instrumental in forming the Sunni Islamic Unification Movement (Ḥarakat at-Tawḥīd al-Islāmī) which was ideologically influenced and directly supported by Iran.⁷² One of the squad’s leaders, ‘Išmat Murād, and one of its supporters, Ḥalīl ‘Akkāwī, who was of Palestinian descent,⁷³ joined the Tawḥīd Movement and brought with them their organizations, Murād’s Movement of the Arabic Lebanon (Ḥarakat Lubnān al-‘Arabī) and ‘Akkāwī’s Popular Resistance (al-Muqāwama aš-Ša‘bīya). From 1982 to 1985, the Tawḥīd Movement reigned over the greater part of ‘liberated’ Tripoli and established—except for the ‘Alawī quarter Jabal Mohsen—a mixed Sunnī-Šī‘ī Islamic social system, wherein seven emirs exercised control in the town quarters.⁷⁴ In this context and with

⁶⁷ Šafīq only mentions two martyrs; see Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 120. According to Israeli sources, six Israelis, among them the commander of the unit, and at least three Palestinians were killed; see Zeev Schiff, Ehud Yaari, *Israel’s Lebanon War* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1984), 124-131.

⁶⁸ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 122f. Sa‘ūd al-Mawlā said in an interview: “Avec l’invasion israélienne et l’occupation, la Brigade n’existe plus, elle est détruite militairement et politiquement. Donc tout ce monde s’est dispersé.” See Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 35.

⁶⁹ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 88-90.

⁷⁰ Like ‘Imād al-Muḡniya, Ṭarād Ḥamāda and temporarily Sa‘ūd al-Mawlā (until 1988). The latter even maintains that the squad was split along confessional lines after 1979: “A partir de 1979, nous avons fait face à cette division sunnite chiites. Ce qui s’est passé en réalité, c’est que les chiites qui étaient dans la Brigade l’ont quittée de fait en 1979. Plusieurs ont rejoint les groupes islamistes chiites qui ont créé plus tard le Hezbollah.” See Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 35.

⁷¹ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 93.

⁷² The activists just returned from a visit to Teheran when they heard about the Israeli invasion. In the summer of 1982, thousands gathered in the mainly Sunnī town to take an oath on Sheikh Sa‘īd Ša‘bān as the new Grand Emir of Tripoli; Ša‘bān was a charismatic Sunnī figure with a strong pro-Iranian tendency and good relations to Lebanese Shiite clerics. See Saab, Ranstorp, *Securing Lebanon*, 830f; Muḥammad Abī Samrā, “Min ‘Munazzamat al-Ġaḍab’ wa-‘Dawlat al-Maṭlūbīn’ ilā ‘al-Muqāwama aš-Ša‘bīya’ wa-‘Liḡān al-Masāḡid’”, *An-Nahar*, March 2, 2008, <http://www.beirutletter.com/editorial/e520.html> (accessed November 01, 2009); id., *Ṭarābulus: Sāḡat allāh wa-mīnā’ al-ḡadā’ia* (Beirut: Dār as-Sāqī 2011). Munīr Šafīq only briefly mentions the Maoist involvement, see his *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 89f.

⁷³ On him see Michel Seurat, “Le quartier de Bāb Tebbāné à Tripoli (Liban). Étude d’une ‘asabiyya urbaine’”, in id., *L’État de barbarie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1989), 110-170. ‘Akkāwī is said to have taken part in battles in southern Lebanon for some time, see Šarbal, “Anīs an-Naqqāš”, 330.

⁷⁴ ‘Abd ar-Ra‘ūf Sinnū, *Ḥarb Lubnān 1975-1990. Tafakkuk ad-dawla wa-tašaddu’ al-muḡtama’* (Beirut: Arab

the partial retreat of Syrian troops, ‘Arafat staged his Lebanese comeback in September 1983. His fighters took position in the Badawi refugee camp near Tripoli and later also in Nahr al-Bared. ‘Arafat supported the Tawḥīd Movement financially and militarily to consolidate its power in the city⁷⁵ against the resistance of pro-Syrian leftist groups. The Tawḥīd Movement rejected political parties as a heritage of colonialism and wanted to “purify” the city in order to re-establish “the honour of Tripoli” (*karāmat Ṭarābulus*) and “the honour of man.”⁷⁶ In mid-October 1983, the movement executed twenty-eight communists, with the justification that spilling the unbelievers’ blood was “licit” (*ḥalāl*) according to the Šarī‘a.⁷⁷ At about the same time an intense Palestinian-Palestinian conflict erupted, when the Syrian-backed Fatah dissidents attacked ‘Arafat’s five thousand fighters, forcing them to once again leave Lebanon in December 1983.⁷⁸

The Tripoli episode illustrates that the Maoists not only sided with a pro-Iranian Islamist movement, but also remained loyal to ‘Arafat’s Fatah, while their Marxist-Leninist counterparts cooperated with Syria. The Maoists’ loyalty to ‘Arafat⁷⁹ was opposed to the Syrian containment policy against the Fatah not only in Tripoli but also in “the war of camps” during which the Shiite Amal militia, backed by Syria, tried to gain control over the Palestinian camps in Beirut and in Southern Lebanon.⁸⁰

The Discourse of Conversion

There was no clear-cut way from Maoism to Jihadism and not all Maoists subscribed to Islam or militant Jihadism. There is an illustrious club of today’s intellectuals who fought in the Student Squad, but withdrew from the battlefields to spread their pro-Palestinian message through books

Scientific Publishers 2008), Vol. I, 418.

⁷⁵ See Sinnū, *Ḥarb Lubnān*, Vol. I, 418; Rougier, *Everyday Jihad*, 9.

⁷⁶ Seurat, “Le quartier de Bâb Tebbâné”, 160f. Sheikh Ša‘bân stated: “Nous ne sommes ni un parti ni une religion nouvelle. Nous sommes musulman, notre religion est l’islam, notre partie les musulmans.” Also compare Abī Samrā, “Min ‘Munazzamat al-Ġaḍab”.

⁷⁷ Seurat, “Le quartier de Bâb Tebbâné”, 159. In an open letter, the Lebanese Communists (LCP) accused their war-ally, the PLO, of not having prevented the massacre, see the section “Waḡā’iq” in the party journal *aṭ-Ṭarīq* 4 (1983), 215-229, under the title “Ḥaul al-azma fī Munazzamat at-Taḥrīr al-Filasṭīnī wa-aḥdāṭ Ṭarābulus wa-š-šamāl, wa-l-‘alāqa bayn qiyādat ‘Fataḥ’ fī š-šamāl wa-l-Ḥizb aš-Šuyū‘ī al-Lubnānī”, including the official PLO statement answering the allegation and a riposte by the Polit Bureau of the LCP.

⁷⁸ ‘Arafat’s opponents were Fataḥ al-Intifāda, PFLP, DFLP, and PFLP-GC. Sa‘īd (“Abū Mūsā”) al-Murāġa’s group, Fataḥ al-Intifāda, called upon all Fatah groups to disobey the leadership’s orders, see Brynen, *Sanctuary*, 184-187. For the background see Sinnū, *Ḥarb Lubnān*, Vol. I, 417-421. Arafat’s presence in Tripoli was not acceptable for Syria, since ‘Arafat and Syrian president Ḥāfiẓ al-Asad had failed to agree upon a common political strategy in spring. ‘Arafat’s fighters managed to escape with French help on Greek ships, in spite of resistance from Syria and Israel.

⁷⁹ See Šafiḡ, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 88f. and 93.

⁸⁰ For the background see Sinnū, *Ḥarb Lubnān*, Vol. I, 408-412.

and films, such as the playwright Roger ‘Assāf,⁸¹ the novelist Ilyās Ḥūrī,⁸² the philosopher Ṭarād Ḥamāda,⁸³ the sociologist Sa‘ūd al-Mawlā,⁸⁴ and the filmmaker Muḥammad Suwayd.⁸⁵

Fathī al-Biss, a Palestinian refugee from Jordan and one of the early members of the Student Squad, recounts a dispute with Baḥayş and Tamīmī about their conversion to Islam. In his controversial memoirs,⁸⁶ Biss describes how he returned to Jordan in 1977 after ten years of political and military engagement in Lebanon, being torn between his conviction to armed struggle and his wish to return to his family to help as a pharmacist in the refugee camp.⁸⁷ Some of his comrades assured him that “the revolution has enough fighters.”⁸⁸ Yet in about 1982, Baḥayş and Tamīmī suddenly showed up in his office to discuss their newly acquired Islamic convictions. The two argued that Maoism did not lend itself to the continuation of their struggle and “that Maoists [like Biss] who opposed the transformation have left the [mass] line and the squad whereas the vast majority has adopted the new position.”⁸⁹ Biss replied that an Islamization was not necessary because the squad never opposed Islam and the restriction to “a pretentious ideology” (*aydiyūlūḡī faḍfāḍ*)⁹⁰ was contrary to the squad’s former aim of “broadening the front of friends and diminishing the front of foes.”⁹¹

In general, the Maoists’ ideological crisis of orientation seems to have lasted from 1976 to 1982. The beginning of an increasing detachment from Maoism was not only marked by Mao Zedong’s death in 1976 and the downfall of the “Gang of Four,”⁹² but also by China’s new foreign policy

⁸¹ ‘Assāf, who converted to Islam after the Iranian Revolution, visited the Islamic Republic in 1985 and returned disenchanted. After observing the Iranian regime firsthand, he found it too Marxist: “Et curieusement, pas seulement par la pratique politique, mais en art, l’art, la forme artistique, sont décalqués en Iran presque sur ces régimes marxistes, les mêmes images, le sang, la violence, le nationalisme, la gloire des leaders, c’était la répétition de ce que nous avons déjà vu. Je leur ait dit, aux amis iraniens, ils ont été choqués.” See Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 16.

⁸² Ilyās Ḥūrī wrote ‘the’ Lebanese-Palestinian novel *Bāb aš-Şams* (Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb 1998).

⁸³ He represented Ḥizballāh as labour minister in the Lebanese cabinet of 2006/07.

⁸⁴ He is professor at the Lebanese University, was member of Ḥizballāh from the early 1980s to 1988, and is well-known for his engagement in the Christian-Muslim dialogue after the civil war.

⁸⁵ In his film *‘Inda-mā ya’tī l-masā’* (Nightfall) Suwayd recorded the stories of his surviving former comrades in “documentary fiction”. See Laura U. Marks, “Mohamed Soueid’s Cinema of Immanence” (<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/lauraMarks/index.html>) (accessed November 20, 2009).

⁸⁶ *Intiyāl aḍ-ḍākira* was published in Beirut and Amman in 2008. The Jordanian authorities, at first, prohibited the distribution of the book. According to the bill, no less than twenty passages were classified as defamatory because the author blamed the Jordanian army for having maltreated Palestinians and bombed refugee camps and held that the security services tortured prisoners. The authorities accused the author of inspiring “confessional chauvinism (*an-na‘arāt aṭ-tā’iftiya*) and discord (*fitna*) between individuals of the Jordanian people”. After a public outrage, particularly on behalf of the Jordanian Writers’ Union, the court dropped the charges against the author in Mai 2009. See Dār aš-Şurūq, “Maḥkamat al-isti’nāf tunhī qaḍīyat Intiyāl aḍ-ḍākira”

(http://www.shorok.com/activities_details.php?event_id=107) (accessed November 11, 2009).

⁸⁷ Biss, *Intiyāl*, 285. He also opened a publishing house (Dār aš-Şurūq).

⁸⁸ Id., 286.

⁸⁹ Id., 309.

⁹⁰ Id., 310.

⁹¹ Id., Biss does not convey their response.

⁹² Şafīq, *Şuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 34. This disappointment was a global phenomenon and caused most Maoists in Europe

after its admission to the United Nations (1971) and the Soviets' expulsion from Egypt (1973). China gradually improved its relations to the Arab states, especially to Egypt, and did not openly condemn the Camp David negotiations (1977/78). In turn, its relations to Fatah cooled down.⁹³ In the foreword to *al-Islām fī ma'rakat al-ḥadāra* (1981), Munīr Šafīq mentions that his book was the fruit of two years of discussions with friends and foes.⁹⁴ After nearly a decade of disputes with the main Fatah line, Baḥayš and Tamīmī also turned to the “grounds of Islam” at about the same time.⁹⁵ It took another two or three years for the *ḡihād* group to form. Šafīq mentions that at the end of 1984, Fatah leadership in the West Bank decided to no longer support Baḥayš and Tamīmī. However, this decision did not affect Baḥayš and Tamīmī's activities, as they continued to cooperate with former comrades.⁹⁶

Neither Šafīq nor Baḥayš/Tamīmī mention an overwhelming ‘Damascus incident’ preceding their turn to Islamism and Jihadism. This lacuna hints at the fact that they took this step after due deliberation. Only Anīs an-Naqqāš—coming from a Lebanese Sunnite family—once singled out a religious motive for his conversion when he referred to a Friday prayer in Tehran as being decisive for his move to Islamism.⁹⁷ Since he tried to assassinate the Shah's last Prime Minister (Shapour Bakhtiyar) in Paris in 1980, the political impact of the Iranian Revolution on him seems more obvious. The same can be said about his Lebanese-Shiite friend ‘Imād Muḡnīya who became the military mastermind of Ḥizballāh.⁹⁸

Munīr Šafīq describes his own conversion as a long “historical process” arising from a long standing “critical attitude towards the ideas of Marx” when he was still a member of the Communist Party.⁹⁹ He asserts that his “conversion was no individualistic process,” and that he “did not turn to

to abjure their convictions, since the Gang of Four was not only blamed for excesses during the Cultural Revolution, but was also declared guilty for anti-party activities in a show trial in 1981.

⁹³ See Behbehani, *China's Foreign Policy*, 102-133 (chapter “Turning point in Sino-Palestinian relations”); Harris, “China's Relations”, 123-154; and Sāmī Musallam, *aṣ-Šīn wa-l-qaḍīya al-filasṭīniya 1976-1981* (Beirut: Mu'assasat ad-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniya 1982), 8-15.

⁹⁴ Šafīq, *al-Islām*, 10.

⁹⁵ Šafīq, *Šuhadā' wa-masīra*, 3, 46, 89, 131-138. Also compare Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, 630.

⁹⁶ Šafīq, *Šuhadā' wa-masīra*, 59.

⁹⁷ In an interview, he described how his friend Ġalāl al-Fārisī cited a Koranic verse on patience and endurance during a prayer in Tehran: “Ça été une véritable revelation, un moment fort dans ma vie. Depuis, je suis devenu un fidèle pratiquant.” See Charara, Domont, *Le Hezbollah*, 93.

⁹⁸ On him see Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 5, and Naqqāš's remarks in “Šadīq li-‘Imād Muḡnīya yakšifu tafāṣīl ḥayātihi l-yawmīya”, *Dunyā al-Waṭan*, February 21, 2008, <http://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/content-123683.html> (accessed May 14, 2010). Muḡnīya is believed to be responsible for the 1983 bombing of the US Marines barracks in Beirut, the kidnapping and killing of CIA's Beirut station chief, William Buckley, and the 1992 attack on the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires. He was killed by a car bomb in Damascus on February 12, 2008. See “The Fox is Hunted Down”, *Newsweek*, February 25, 2008, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/112771> (accessed November 01, 2009).

⁹⁹ See the interview on al-Jazeera with Munīr Šafīq, “Bidāyāt an-niḍāl as-siyāsī wa-ḥiyār al-muqāwama” (23.5.2009), <http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/pages/63f0f92c-21df-4541-a4a4-13e4762a1731>, (accessed September 9, 2012).

Islam because of special circumstances or personal convictions,” but because he “was part of a wider tendency.”¹⁰⁰ However, he admits that the last step of the collective conversion was an individual one, since the group members had to fight “a new battle within themselves.”¹⁰¹ Some of them embraced Islam wholeheartedly and more quickly than others. After Mao Zedong’s death, the Arab Maoists grasped that the Cultural Revolution had failed.¹⁰² They had their day of reckoning with Marxism-Leninism debunking the myth that it owned supreme social, historical, ideological, and methodological knowledge.¹⁰³ Instead, they came to attribute the failure of the Cultural Revolution in China to the “European (sic!) mentality,” namely the “European idea” of a “total break with the past.”¹⁰⁴ This is certainly a critique by hindsight, but it illustrates how the Maoists perceived the Chinese failure, when in 1980 Khomeini reclaimed the very idea of a total break with the (Westernized) past in revolutionary Iran and postulated an “Islamic Cultural Revolution.”¹⁰⁵

The group from very early on had been critical of “Western” Marxism because of cultural differences. For example, it was part of their independent (“Arab”) interpretation of Marxism that they used the salutations *aḥ* (brother) and *uḥt* (sister) instead of *rafiq/rafiqa* (comrade).¹⁰⁶ Already in 1976, Šafīq invoked “the spirit of *ḡihād*” in a poem mourning his brother’s, “Abū Ḥālid” Ğūrġ Šafīq ‘Asl, death on the battlefields.¹⁰⁷ However, the Maoists were heavily struck by the masses streaming into the streets of Tehran in 1978 shouting “God is great” and “There is no God but God.”¹⁰⁸ From then on, they started a discussion on the “particularity” (*ḥuṣūṣiyya*) of every revolution and on the question of how to win over the masses.¹⁰⁹ At this point, most Maoists had already drawn the conclusion that while Marxism could not be put into practice,¹¹⁰ Islam could be the instrument for a revolution of the Palestinian and Arab masses. Yet, they doubted whether a deeper understanding of Islam was necessary to mobilize the Muslim masses for revolution, since even in their own rows resistance against a turn to Islam prevailed.¹¹¹ The reasons for this resistance, according to Munīr Šafīq, was that many group members had studied Marxism at Western universities and some were non-Muslims or even atheists, so that they had to overcome

¹⁰⁰ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 107.

¹⁰¹ Id., 111.

¹⁰² Id., 34.

¹⁰³ Id., 32.

¹⁰⁴ Id., 34.

¹⁰⁵ See for example Murawiec, *The Mind of Jihad*, 289f.

¹⁰⁶ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 35.

¹⁰⁷ See Biss, *Inṭiyāl*, 274. Compare also Šafīq’s remark in the 2009 interview that “Marxists don’t have a language to deal with death”; see Šafīq, “Bidāyāt an-niḍāl as-siyāsī.”

¹⁰⁸ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ Id., 34.

¹¹⁰ Id., 98.

¹¹¹ Id.

“intellectual and psychological barriers” to embrace Islam.¹¹² After intense discussions, the group members concluded that its “pivotal axis”—mass mobilisation through Islam—was without any value or even unreliable, if they had no deeper understanding of “the tenet” of Islam (*al-‘aqīda*)—belief in God, the creation, the Prophet Muhammad and the Koran.¹¹³ The idea that there was no revolution without belief definitely forced them to reverse and abjure their former materialistic convictions.

For years we have searched for the mass line, while it directly lay before our eyes, but we did not see it. Do you not see that Islam is the line of the masses in our countries? So, by which logic do we look for characteristics of the revolution by saying that they are national democratic [...] or socialist while they are Islamic here, if we like it or not? From here, the revolution will be born in our countries.¹¹⁴

The group came to realize that it had been the prisoner of a foreign and wrong “theory of the revolution,” but with their incremental rejection of Marxist theory, they had approached the masses’ pulse more and more.¹¹⁵ After all Mao had been right to demand that an effective theory of the revolution has to be discovered in the practice of the masses, because only such a theory could in return inspire the masses, since revolutions could not be made by ready-made prescriptions from Moscow or Beijing.¹¹⁶ If one were to apply Marx’s saying, that the avant-garde has to be the midwife of the revolution, to the Arab conditions then the revolution must be a Muslim child, “because in the Arab countries the revolution will not be born with blonde hair and blue eyes or with a yellow face and slitted eyes, and whoever bears in his mind the Marxist option, has to go to Sweden, China or Vietnam.”¹¹⁷

A harbinger of the group’s final turn to Islam was a heated discussion on “the woman’s question” which kept the group busy from 1975 to 1977 and to which Munīr Šafīq contributed a controversial paper named *Mawḍū‘āt ḥawl al-mar’a* (“Topics on Women”).¹¹⁸ Šafīq argued that historically women had participated in all the nation’s and *umma*’s struggles and therefore should also be involved in the current battles. He asserted that the disregard for women had no basis in the Arab-

¹¹² Id., 138.

¹¹³ Id.

¹¹⁴ Id., 136; compare also Rūḡīh (Roger) Nab’a, “Wa... li-māḍā ar-rumūz fī zaman al-miḥan”, *al-Aḥbār*, September 6, 2006, <http://www.al-akhbar.com/ar/node/3715> (accessed November 11, 2009). Nab’a, a co-founder of the Student Squad and now a teacher at the International College at the American University in Beirut, holds that “the mass basis” (*al-qā‘ida aš-ša‘biya*) is the most important factor that determined whether Arab nationalism, Palestinian liberation, and Islamic revolution failed or succeeded.

¹¹⁵ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 136.

¹¹⁶ Id., 135.

¹¹⁷ Id., 137.

¹¹⁸ Id., 126-129, and also Biss, *Intiyāl*, 284

Islamic tradition, but was the result of the decline of the Arab world and of colonial exploitation. However, he further argued that women should only dedicate their efforts to the liberation of the nation, and not pursue a separate cause such as “absolute equality with men” or “women’s liberation.” Such demands were inappropriate to Arab history, “against the majority of the people”, and represented a bourgeois or individualistic attitude. Šafīq alerted that to reach the masses, the revolutionaries had to understand that the people cannot be forced into a direction they would not accept: “Women’s liberation” was off the agenda. Šafīq admits that some members could not accept these arguments due to their social background (class, religion, university study). He even concedes that after the group’s turn to Islam fewer women participated, although they had played a prominent role earlier. However, he reduces this development to the fact that many female fighters had reached the age of thirty¹¹⁹ and retreated to Beirut during the war. According to Fathī al-Biss, Šafīq’s paper already displayed “a stronger Islamic portion than usual” and let “some of us ask the question: are we really Marxists?”¹²⁰

An aspect that figures prominently in Šafīq’s narrative about the Maoists’ conversion is the image of the morally upright, unshakable fighter who differs from self-interested tacticians. In spite of the active participation of the Maoists in the civil war, Šafīq only blames Arafat and the PLO for contributing to battles among Arabs, instead of “pointing with every gun at the Zionist enemy”¹²¹ and seeking support from all sides, regardless of political or confessional affiliations.¹²² This error brought the Palestinians into opposition to the Maronite forces and to Syria, which “was not the enemy.”¹²³ Šafīq also blames the PLO for its deteriorating relations to the Amal militia and the Shiite population in the South of Lebanon.¹²⁴ He holds that the Jarmaq Squad was on good terms with Amal members¹²⁵ and played an important mediating role, preventing Amal and PLO (until the mid 1980s) from fighting each other and thereby protecting the population.¹²⁶ The members of the

¹¹⁹ Maybe this argument means that it should be considered natural for women to marry and have children by that age and retreat from political work.

¹²⁰ Biss, *Inṭiyāl*, 284.

¹²¹ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 23 and 81.

¹²² Id., 84f.

¹²³ Id., 73-77.

¹²⁴ Id., 83. This remark may refer to the critical position of Amal leader Mūsā aš-Šadr who proclaimed as early as 1973 that he did not consider launching rockets and grenades as “revolutionary”. Amal also tried to prevent guerrilla actions in the South between 1980 and 1982 because the people were tired of the permanent skirmish between the PLO and Israeli troops. When the Israeli army invaded Lebanon in 1982, they were at first welcomed by the population. For the deterioration of PLO-Amal relations after 1979 see Rami Siklawi, “The Dynamics of the Amal Movement in Lebanon 1975-90”, *Arab Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2012), 4-26, here: 12f. and 16-20.

¹²⁵ Compare also Biss, *Inṭiyāl*, 240f., who maintains that the Student Squad provided weapons and a military training when Amal started to form its own militia in 1974.

¹²⁶ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 84; also Biss, *Inṭiyāl*, 278.

Jarmaq Squad were respectful of religious traditions and fasted during the month of Ramadan.¹²⁷ The Shiite population in turn called them *Ḥusaynīyūn*¹²⁸ already prior to their conversion to Islam because of their braveness and their will to self-sacrifice.¹²⁹ Another nickname the Maoists were proud of was *Ġamā‘at at-Taḍāmun al-‘Arabī* (Society of Arab Solidarity), because of their repudiation of fights among Arabs.¹³⁰ According to Šafīq, the Maoists also protested—as the “conscience of Fatah”—against the harsh treatment, torture or killing of prisoners and civilians by Palestinian forces.¹³¹ In 1978 and 1979, some of their troops even managed to infiltrate Israel and launch two attacks in Hebron and Nablus.¹³² Šafīq concludes that the Maoists’ will to wage the war against “the Zionist enemy” was in line with the Fatah principles, whereas the inner-Arab fighting—the PLO was involved in—was not.¹³³

In reference to the intra-Palestinian and intra-Arab battles, Munīr Šafīq quotes in length from a book published in 1978 and co-authored by two Squad members, one of them his brother killed in 1976.¹³⁴ The authors mainly deal with the moral principles required of the revolutionary, such as selflessness and brotherliness.¹³⁵ Although from a Marxist background, they define ethical and moral principles as concurring “with what Islam says,”¹³⁶ according to Šafīq. He concludes that “religious ethics” and “strong moral values” were among the main reasons that caused the group to renounce Marxism and “opportunism” and turn to Islam.¹³⁷ Revolutionaries should not aspire fame, wealth, or influence, but only have to be the “unknown soldiers” on God’s way and play the role of the “catalyst” (*‘āmil musā‘id*) for mass revolution.¹³⁸

Šādiq al-‘Azm’s Critique of “the Maoism of Fatah” and Šafīq’s replies

After his turn to Islam, Munīr Šafīq was convinced that the *muġāhid*—the one who fights the *ġihād*—should be even more resolute than the *fidā‘ī*—the one who sacrifices himself—which was the term used by the PLO guerrillas. Because of his uncompromising view, Šafīq had been ousted as an editor of the PLO newspaper *Filasṭīn at-Ṭawra* after he had criticized the PLO “Ten-Point-

¹²⁷ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 116.

¹²⁸ After Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī, Muhammad’s grandson, who was killed and beheaded at the battle of Karbala (680 AD).

¹²⁹ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 94.

¹³⁰ Id., 74.

¹³¹ Id., 113f.

¹³² Id., 122.

¹³³ Id.

¹³⁴ Sa‘d Ġarādāt, Ġūrġ Šafīq ‘Asl, *Afkār ṭawriya fī mumārasat al-qitāl* (Beirut: Dār at-Ṭalī‘a 1978).

¹³⁵ Šafīq, *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 103-110.

¹³⁶ Id., 110.

¹³⁷ Id.

¹³⁸ Id., 132.

Programme” of 1974.¹³⁹ In an article written in 1972, he had already dismissed any proposal for conflict resolution other than armed struggle until total liberation.¹⁴⁰ In later works, he drew a straight line from the “Ten-Point-Programme” to the Oslo Accords (1993) to illustrate the worsening situation in Palestine.¹⁴¹

In contrast to the Maoists, Arab Marxist and Communist intellectuals were highly critical of the Palestinian guerrillas’ ideas and behaviour.¹⁴² In 1973, Marxist philosopher Šādiq Ġalāl al-‘Azm attacked Munīr Šafīq and other Fatah Maoists because he held their military strategy not only for one-sided and unrealistic but also for responsible for the expulsion of the PLO guerrillas from Jordan in “Black September” 1970. Although ‘Azm supported the guerrillas in general, his book was meant to be a critical inquiry into the Palestinian military struggle which he believed had to be improved on all levels.¹⁴³ Because of this critique, ‘Azm lost his “job with the PLO’s Research Center on direct orders from Arafat himself”¹⁴⁴ and had to go underground for a while because of personal threats. Ironically, he shared the fate of being ousted with Šafīq whom he had mainly criticized.

‘Azm argued that “Black September” was a continuation of the defeat of the Arab armies in 1967.¹⁴⁵ He admitted that the Palestinian leaders had correctly criticized the Arab states’ inability to face Israel, but had nonetheless inherited the social, political, and military problems from the Arab regimes.¹⁴⁶ Although it was quite common to refer to the guerrilla attacks as the “Palestinian revolution,”¹⁴⁷ ‘Azm questioned this term. He considered military struggle only as “resistance” (*muqāwama*) and not as a full-fledged “revolution”¹⁴⁸ and wrote that according to Mao Zedong “armed struggle is neither the only, nor the sufficient precondition to achieve a revolution.”¹⁴⁹ ‘Azm

¹³⁹ See Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, 352.

¹⁴⁰ Munīr Šafīq, “Li-māḍā yarfuḍu l-filasṭīniyūn mašrū’ ad-dawla al-filasṭīniya fī d-Ḍiffa al-Ġarbīya wa- Qiṭā’ Ġazza”, *Šu’ūn Filasṭīniya* 1972, no. 7, 65-73. More verbose: Šafīq, *Bayn istrāṭīġiyat at-tahrīr al-kāmil wa-istrāṭīġiyat al-ḥall as-siyāsī* (Beirut: Dār aṭ-Ṭalī’a 1973).

¹⁴¹ Šafīq *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 11 and also Šafīq, *Min ittifāq Ūslū ilā “ad-dawla ṭunā’iyat al-qawmiya”*. *Rudūd ‘alā Idwārd Sa’īd wa-‘Azmī Bišāra wa-āḥarīn* (Amman: Dār aš-Šurūq 1999).

¹⁴² For critical works about the Palestinian guerrillas see the Syrian Marxists Ilyās Murquš, *Afwīyat an-naẓariya fī l-‘amal al-fidā’ī. Naqd al-fikr al-muqāwim* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥaqīqa 1970) and Yāsīn al-Ḥāfiz, *at-Taġriba at-tārīḥīya al-vietnamīya. Taqyīm naqdī muqāran ma’a t-taġriba at-tārīḥīya al-‘arabīya* (Beirut: Dār aṭ-Ṭalī’a 1976). For a critical view on the Arab new left by a communist see Karīm Muruwwa, *al-Yasār al-ḥaqīqī wa-l-yasār al-muġāmir. I’ādat al-i’tibār ilā l-ḥaqīqīya fī l-ḥilāf ma’a ġamā’at “al-Ḥurrīya”* (Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī 1970).

¹⁴³ Šādiq Ġalāl al-‘Azm, *Dirāsa naqdīya li-fikr al-muqāwama al-filasṭīniya* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Awda 1973), 8.

¹⁴⁴ Ghada Talhami, “An Interview with Sadik al-Azm”, *Arab Studies Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (1997), 113-126, here: 122.

¹⁴⁵ *Dirāsa naqdīya li-fikr al-muqāwama al-filasṭīniya* published in 1972 was a kind of supplement to his other critical works after 1967, *an-Naqd aḍ-ḍātī ba’d al-hazīma* (Beirut: Dār aṭ-Ṭalī’a 1968) and *Naqd al-fikr ad-dīnī* (Beirut: Dār aṭ-Ṭalī’a 1969).

¹⁴⁶ ‘Azm, *Dirāsa naqdīya*, 17-21.

¹⁴⁷ See for example Munīr Šafīq, *Ḥawl at-tanāquḍ wa-l-mumārāsa fī t-tawra al-filasṭīniya* (Beirut: Dār aṭ-Ṭalī’a 1971), idem., *aṭ-Ṭawra al-filasṭīniya bayn al-naqd wa-t-taḥṭīm* (Beirut: Dār aṭ-Ṭalī’a 1973).

¹⁴⁸ ‘Azm, *Dirāsa naqdīya*, 11, 18, 25 passim.

¹⁴⁹ Id., 214.

deplored that Fatah did not even want to become a social movement¹⁵⁰ and added:

The simple thing that Munīr Šafīq ignores—whereby he reflects the general Fatah direction—can be reduced to the point that the emotional attachment of the masses to armed struggle as well as the spontaneous and natural support for the revolution does not necessarily form a significant and important political change in the consciousness of the masses.¹⁵¹

Moreover, ‘Azm criticized the concept of a people’s war¹⁵² and accused Munīr Šafīq among others to apply it in an arbitrary manner:

From here arises a very contrived phenomenon one can call ‘the Maoism of Fatah’ (*māwīyat al-Fatah*), which is a Maoism void of any serious content and of all the foundational pillars on which authentic Maoism is build; its only aim is to justify the political line of Fatah and its decisions and tactics which do not originally come from sources that have any connection with Maoism or any revolutionary experience that bears any resemblance with the Chinese experience.¹⁵³

‘Azm did not only disapprove of the PLO habit to describe Israeli soldiers as mere cowards relying on their weaponry, but also deplored Šafīq’s simple belief that “he who really believes in the masses and their ability will always win because the masses make history and they will make it also in our countries in the presence, not in the future [...]”¹⁵⁴ ‘Azm admitted that the masses make history, “but there are many conditions that have to be fulfilled and achieved, something which Fatah does not acknowledge and Munīr Šafīq put aside.”¹⁵⁵ Finally, he criticized that the Maoists’ warfare was suffering from a surplus of bravery and a lack of political consciousness:

It is no wonder that the *fedayeen* are more often driven by their wish to die for their cause instead of fighting well and live—if possible—to see their cause win. The resistance movement does not differentiate clearly (in the consciousness and behaviour of the *fedayeen*) between human sacrifice, that is useless or a sacrifice for itself or not more than just martyrdom, and the price that the movement has to pay in order to realize progress so

¹⁵⁰ Id., 221.

¹⁵¹ Id., 42.

¹⁵² Id., 78-206.

¹⁵³ Id., 119.

¹⁵⁴ Id., 206. Compare a similar quote id., 42.

¹⁵⁵ Id., 43.

that it comes closer to achieve its liberating aims.¹⁵⁶

This criticism was farsighted insofar as the useless suicidal behaviour it condemned was replaced only ten years later by a logic that regarded martyrdom as the kernel of the matter.

In his immediate response, Šafīq cited different examples and definitions to justify calling the Palestinian struggle a revolution.¹⁵⁷ He wrote that the participation of “tens of thousands of the revolutionary masses” and the loss of “tens of thousands of martyrs, wounded, and political prisoners” made the guerrilla movement a revolution.¹⁵⁸ Defending the concept of “a People’s war of long duration”¹⁵⁹ and his belief in the masses,¹⁶⁰ he stated that no Marxist-Leninist had the right to criticize the thousands of martyrs and wounded in the “holy war” (*ḥarb muqaddasa*) against Zionism, Imperialism, and the anti-revolutionary forces.¹⁶¹ He put the doubting “intellectual” (*muṭaqqaf*) in quotation marks and compared ‘Aẓm to the imprisoned Fāṭima al-Barnāwī,¹⁶² concluding that the latter had to be preferred to the first, whose attitude leads to nothing but “surrender.”¹⁶³

In *al-Islām fī ma‘rakat al-ḥaḍāra*, Šafīq indirectly took up the debate once again by re-defining mass mobilisation and the People’s war in Islamic terms. The entire text is an attack on Western cultural imperialism and it praises PLO representative Edward Said for his book *Orientalism*.¹⁶⁴ Šafīq was convinced “that imperialistic exploitation knew consciously or unconsciously” that military, economical and political power was not enough and therefore “strove to make the dependency comprehensive (*šāmil*); especially in the countries of the Arabs and Muslims it concentrated on the cultural-civilizational attack.”¹⁶⁵ For this purpose, the West invented the standards of rationality and irrationality, progress and backwardness, morality and immorality just to impose its lifestyle, materialistic belief, and consumer mentality on other peoples.¹⁶⁶ Šafīq’s critique of the capitalist “global greed” included Marxist thought and socialist countries, because their power as well was based on the exploitation of other peoples. To illustrate this point, Šafīq created a fictional discussion between an Arab and a French Marxist after the assumed victory of

¹⁵⁶ Id., 234.

¹⁵⁷ Šafīq, *at-Tawra al-filasṭīnīya*, 13-16, 65-67.

¹⁵⁸ Id., 12. Compare also Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, 199.

¹⁵⁹ Šafīq, *at-Tawra al-filasṭīnīya*, 44-49.

¹⁶⁰ Id., 98-107.

¹⁶¹ Id., 20.

¹⁶² The PLO fighter who tried to install a bomb in an Israeli cinema in 1967 was imprisoned for ten years.

¹⁶³ Šafīq, *at-Tawra al-filasṭīnīya*, 28.

¹⁶⁴ Šafīq, *al-Islām*, 8, writes on the second page of the book in the first footnote: “In this context, Edward Said’s book ‘Orientalism’ constitutes a very important work, because he proves this truth with hundreds of evidences and testimonies.”

¹⁶⁵ Id., 196.

¹⁶⁶ Id., 19-27, 84-92, 109-114, 176-206.

socialist revolutions in both their countries.¹⁶⁷ The Arab Marxist asks his French comrade whether they would sell a Peugeot now for half the price or buy Arab oil for double the price. The answer is that this sort of global justice can only be put in practice after world revolution, and that after all the French proletariat has the right to an appropriate standard of living. Šafīq concluded that capitalist and socialist economies share the same greed and the same mode of exploitation of non-Western countries.¹⁶⁸

After these observations, Šafīq argues that Muslims are morally and spiritually different and should base their lifestyle on “the revolution of Islam” and on “the totality of Islam.”¹⁶⁹ Necessary would be a total renunciation of the West, “because the total war (*al-ḥarb aš-šāmila*) that was waged against us can only be answered with total war.”¹⁷⁰ This war requires “unity” (*tawḥīd*)—a pivotal term in this Islamist discourse¹⁷¹—and aims at the liberation of Palestine, which forms the focal point for the mobilisation against imperialism.¹⁷² The *ḡihād* against imperialistic powers will further strengthen “the process of unification” (*‘amalīyat at-tawḥīd*) among Muslims,¹⁷³ “because Palestine has become the title of unity (*tawḥīd*).”¹⁷⁴ Šafīq urged that:

We have to stand on the ground on which the masses stand—without ambiguity, unshakeably and without hesitation. [...] There is no development without the people. [...] We are no contemporaries as long as we are alien to the spirit and the pulse of the *umma* and do not stand on the fundament of heritage on which the masses stand.¹⁷⁵

As the “mass line” can only be with Islam, secular Marxists contradict themselves when they plead for the emancipation of the masses.¹⁷⁶ Theoretical reasoning—because of the problems, sacrifices, and obstacles of military struggle—has not led to any alternative to the “*ḡihād* for the liberation of

¹⁶⁷ Id., 84-87.

¹⁶⁸ This argumentation was not new but already used by Mirza Sultan-Galiev, a Tartar Bolshevik and representative of a ‘Muslim Communism’ in the USSR. He wrote in 1923: “If a revolution succeeds in England, the proletariat will continue oppressing the colonies and pursuing the policy of existing bourgeois governments. [...] In order to prevent the oppression of the toiler of the East, we must unite the Muslim masses in a communist movement that will be our own and autonomous.” Cited by Murawiec, *The Mind of Jihad*, 230.

¹⁶⁹ Šafīq, *al-Islām*, 97. He bemoaned that Muslims faced with Westernization mainly followed two unsuccessful routes: the call for Modernization or the call for harmonization between modernity and heritage, see id., 121-129.

¹⁷⁰ Id., 200. The whole chapter (id., 195-200) that ends with the sentence quoted above bears the title: “About the necessity to wage total war against total war.”

¹⁷¹ Former Maoist Roger Nab‘a lately explained the whole history of the Middle East since the abolishment of the Ottoman Sultanate in 1923 as a search for “unity“ (*tawḥīd*) and “opposition” (*mumāna‘a*) to its loss, see Nab‘a, “Wa... li-mādā.”

¹⁷² Šafīq, *al-Islām*, 44, 150-155.

¹⁷³ Id., 44.

¹⁷⁴ Id., 150.

¹⁷⁵ Id.

¹⁷⁶ See his interview with Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 30.

Palestine.”¹⁷⁷ Although a critic could hold that the revolution “has not yet resulted in the annihilation of the Zionist entity and the liberation of Palestine,”¹⁷⁸ it would be wrong to pose the question whether armed struggle as such has failed. Instead, any “questioner should go to the battlefields so that the Palestinian revolution could account for a huge amount of fighting masses (*ḡahāfil muḡāhida*) who wage the venture of war until victory.”¹⁷⁹

Selective and Accumulative Conversion

Bahāyṣ’s and Tamīmī’s treatise *As’ila ḥawla l-islām wa-l-mārkisīya min warā’ al-quḍbān* can be understood as a popularized version of Šafīq’s *al-Islām fī ma’rakat al-ḥaḍāra*. In question-and-answer-form, the authors explain their reasons for abandoning Marxism. As their adoption of Islam was not only a religious conversion, but also an ideological reorientation, it was selective and bore heretical features and can be categorized as “accumulative conversion,” according to a typology developed in the research project of the Enquete Commission of the German Parliament on so called sects and psychosocial groups.¹⁸⁰ An accumulative and selective conversion can be set apart from two other forms of conversion: from the convert who chooses a mono-cultural, singular, closed religious system (mono-conversion) as well as from the convert who intensifies the religious orientation that is predominant in his family or social milieu (intensification). For the accumulative heretic, the family or original social milieu does not influence his choice, and he is aware of other possibilities. The actor does not look for a closed system of religious belief, but instead *selects* particular elements from an assortment of principles. He prefers religiously open milieus and upholds a great deal of flexibility for his ideas and behaviour. He combines a sort of *open-mindedness* and *creeds from different backgrounds* with the fundamentalist core of his new belief system. He does not pay much attention to cognitive, theological or dogmatic *contradictions*, but constructs an *ontological frame* that can tie together contradictory elements.

(1) Selectivity

Right from the beginning, Bahāyṣ and Tamīmī underline the selectivity of their Islamic belief

¹⁷⁷ Šafīq, *al-Islām*, 150f.

¹⁷⁸ Id., 154

¹⁷⁹ Id.

¹⁸⁰ See German Report on Cults (Enquete-Kommission des Deutschen Bundestags „Sogenannte Sekten und Psychogruppen“): “Anhang zum Forschungsprojekt ‘Aussteiger, Konvertierte und Überzeugte – kontrastive biographische Analysen zu Einmündung, Karriere, Verbleib und Ausstieg in bzw. aus religiös-weltanschaulichen Milieus oder Gruppen’”, 1998 (<http://www.cesnur.org/testi/endber/ANHANG.HTM>) (accessed September 27, 2008). The typology can be applied as a heuristic model indicating that conversion processes produce different versions of a multi-layered habitus and discourse that cannot be solely explained by religious motives or motivations.

when answering their co-fighters' question from where a political theory derives its legitimacy: from its consonance with the contemporary stage and the needs of reality (as would be the case with Marxism) or from its historical birth certificate (i.e. Islam)?¹⁸¹ In their response, they reject the assumption that they converted to Islam only because the religion is part of the Arab legacy. Instead, they agree, that the whole legacy is not automatically correct and appropriate:

Not everything that is part of the legacy is scientific and correct so that we have to follow it. Not everything that is part of the legacy can be rejected because it is gone by. There is always something that is dogmatically, methodically and theoretically correct while it is at the same time a legacy that the ancestors and the descendants bear.¹⁸²

They also reject their brothers' assumption that they converted to Islam to win the Muslim masses over more easily.¹⁸³ Instead they state that mass mobilization under the umbrella of Islam is difficult or even unpopular because it resembles "swimming against the current"¹⁸⁴ since *ġihād* demands more sacrifices.¹⁸⁵ The move towards the "grounds of Islam" is to be only the first, correct and necessary step into the right direction.¹⁸⁶ This is because first and foremost, Baḥayş and Tamīmī believe in Islam and in God, and second, that Islam helps to discover the right "theory of revolution."¹⁸⁷ Finally, the authors are convinced that if there will be a revolution, it can only be an Islamic one: *Lā tawra fī bilādinā illā tawra islāmīya*.¹⁸⁸

(2) Open-mindedness

The Palestinian converts combine open-mindedness with regard to their understanding of Islam with an uncompromising understanding of *ġihād*. The two authors implicitly contradict the Muslim Brotherhood's slogan "Islam is the solution" (for every time and place) when they write: "Islam has no preconceived answers to contemporary challenges," because "the understanding of contemporary people for Islam and the problems of their time" is decisive.¹⁸⁹ Islam presents "general principles," but it "does not interfere in the details" which are left open for *iġtihād* (independent interpretation of the legal sources) in line with transformations and material progress;

¹⁸¹ Baḥayş, Tamīmī, *As'ila*, 12.

¹⁸² Id., 13f.

¹⁸³ Id., 15-16.

¹⁸⁴ Id., 16; Şafīq, *Şuhadā' wa-masīra*, 131.

¹⁸⁵ Baḥayş, Tamīmī, *As'ila*, 16.

¹⁸⁶ Id., 16, 38.

¹⁸⁷ Id., 16.

¹⁸⁸ Id., 27.

¹⁸⁹ Id., 16.

this also refers to concepts like *šūrā* (consultation), *milkīya* (possession), and *takāful* (solidarity).¹⁹⁰ Although Islam has the answers to contemporary challenges, this does not mean that “those, who are entitled to issue juridical opinion and independent interpretation (*man fī yadīhim amr al-fatwā wa-l-iğtihād*),” possess “a magic key” when they turn to Islam to find solutions.¹⁹¹ Resolving contemporary challenges is intricate: “Do not forget,” the authors urge their brothers, “that what can be suggested is only an attempt to apply the method of Islam by human beings, and they are erroneous. [...] There is no infallibility for leaders and *muğtahidūn*.”¹⁹² Therefore, after embracing Islam as a revolutionary idea “further research, work, study and attempts are necessary—but in any case the probability of success through Islam is certain in the end, while other ways are doomed to failure from the beginning to the end.”¹⁹³

As the Islamic Jihad groups were well-known for the tendency to work together with different PLO factions in spite of ideological differences, the two authors write that the struggle against Israel has to be continued “in the spirit of brotherhood, unity, cooperation and trust” and continue:

We should not be afraid of differences, but of stagnation [...], we should not fear the pluralism of opinions but the censorship of opinions. [...] We have to build unity within pluralism, difference, and struggle. [...] It cannot be tolerated that unity curbs thought or that freedom of thought curbs unity.¹⁹⁴

(3) Debunking Marxism

Baḥayş’s and Tamīmī’s booklet is an attempt to defeat Marxism with the weapons of historical criticism. The authors present Marxism as theory culturally grounded in Europe that is not apt for the Third World and has failed: “Instead of mass support in the battle for freedom and independence it has turned into a tyrannical, bureaucratic state, isolated—together with the avant-garde party—from the people” and curbs all freedoms whenever policy and secret services want to.¹⁹⁵ Marxists are convinced that they possess the “magic wand,” but no Marxist book has ever been valid for more than five years.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, it is time to end “the intellectual terror” (*al-irhāb al-fikrī*), that Marxism is “objective and scientific and knows the secrets of truth.”¹⁹⁷

The crucial argument of the authors lies in their reference to Marx’s well-known description of

¹⁹⁰ Id., 37.

¹⁹¹ Id., 38.

¹⁹² Id.

¹⁹³ Id., 39.

¹⁹⁴ Id.

¹⁹⁵ Id., 19f.

¹⁹⁶ Id., 21.

¹⁹⁷ Id., 21f.

the “devastating effects” of British colonialism on the traditional society in India.¹⁹⁸ Marx’s view was that British “capital” or “industry” would fundamentally transform European as well as non-European societies; accordingly, it was a trick of history that the force of capitalism and the “stupid” British rule, which mercilessly destroyed the social web of the repressive “village culture” in India, would cause a revolution in Asia.¹⁹⁹ Twice Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī quote Marx’s statement that the “dual historical mission” of the British was to destroy the old Asiatic order by “sowing the seeds of European civilization.”²⁰⁰ Certainly, the authors knew the critique of this Marxian passage by Munīr Šafīq and Edward Said.²⁰¹ The authors understood Marx’s analysis as a justification of European colonialism and underlined their argument that contemporary “civilization” was a “destructive one.” Capitalist as well as communist states had created dependent Westernised societies in the Third World that would never be able to acquire “real independence.”²⁰² A remedy could only be found in the Islamic civilization (*ḥaḍāra*), which had liberated the peoples from corruption and destruction—beginning with the Islamic *futūḥāt* (conquests) which differed fundamentally from any imperialist aggression.²⁰³ As soon as the Islamic model of justice and solidarity would be revived, the “real struggle” for independence against Imperialism and Zionism could begin.²⁰⁴

The authors argue that communism failed due to a disparity between its promises and the situation of the masses. “The avant-garde elite” (*an-nuḥba aṭ-ṭalī‘īya*) in communism finds itself in isolation and in opposition to “traditional” society.²⁰⁵ Governing communists were unable to harmonize their views with their society’s traditions.²⁰⁶ Yet, true development and independence can only be accomplished by the masses and not by “secular, Westernized programs,” which stand in contrast to what the masses believe. Because of the central position of Islam in “our civilization”

¹⁹⁸ The sources are not mentioned in the treatise, but the authors certainly refer to: Karl Marx, “British Rule in India“, *New-York Daily Tribune*, no. 3804, June 25, 1853 (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/25.htm>) (accessed October 27, 2009), and id., “The Future Results of British Rule in India”, *New-York Daily Tribune*, August 8, 1853 (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/07/22.html>) (accessed October 27, 2009).

¹⁹⁹ In “British Rule”, Marx writes: “England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution.”

²⁰⁰ Baḥayṣ, Tamīmī, *As’ila*, 25, 43; compare the excerpt translated into French in Charara, Domont, *Le Hezbollah*, 91-93.

²⁰¹ See Šafīq, *al-Islām*, 180 and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books 1978), 153. For the broader context see Manfred Sing, Miriam Younes, “The Specters of Marx in Edward Said’s *Orientalism*,” in: *Die Welt des Islams* 53, no. 2 (2013), 149-191.

²⁰² Baḥayṣ, Tamīmī, *As’ila*, 25.

²⁰³ Id., 44. Compare the chapter about “Violence and the difference between the Islamic *futūḥāt* and the colonial assaults” (*al-‘Unf wa-l-farq bayn al-futūḥāt al-islāmīya wa-l-ġazawāt al-isti‘mārīya*), in Šafīq, *al-Islām*, 129-132.

²⁰⁴ Baḥayṣ, Tamīmī, *As’ila*, 46.

²⁰⁵ Id., 49.

²⁰⁶ Id.

freedom and development can only be achieved with the help of Islam.²⁰⁷ The intention is to implement a successful development for the *umma* in all spheres, including inflicting “a lasting defeat on the Zionist enemy.”²⁰⁸ Just like Catholicism—as liberation theology—plays a major part in the revolutions of Latin America,²⁰⁹ Islam has to take over the same role in Africa and Asia. Like other peoples, the Islamic *umma* possesses the right to protect its identity from being crushed by Western civilization and has to reject Westernization in order to achieve independence, freedom and development.²¹⁰

(4) Ontological re-framing

Bahāy’s and Tamīmī’s ontological starting point is the term *fiṭra*, “the human nature” that God created and humans can not change.²¹¹ *Fiṭra* means a “never ending struggle” between “the contradictory constants” of human nature, such as between personal whims and higher moral values.²¹² Thus, the authors shift the ‘main contradiction’ from social relations to human nature: “Islam is interested in the human being and makes him the yardstick to measure progress or delay.”²¹³ They argue that Islam is a “comprehensive method” for all aspects of human life, whereas Marxist materialistic understanding of human nature is one-sided.²¹⁴ Islam erects equilibrium between the spiritual, material, and natural needs, while Marxism focuses on material needs, justifies mass slaughter as progress, and considers man a servant to production forces and to greed.²¹⁵ Marxism describes history as an egoistic competition for dominance, and fails to fulfil its promise of equality between men, due to its belief that equality can be achieved by nationalization.²¹⁶ Islam does not accept any form of oppression and injustice, and therefore fighting the oppressor is integral to the belief in God.²¹⁷ The masters in feudalist, capitalist, and socialist countries legitimize their power through the creation of laws that stipulate that every attack on them becomes an illegal act.²¹⁸ Laws are created to accommodate the various needs of those in power; in addition, people in the West justify every need (such as homosexuality or norms in

²⁰⁷ Id., 49f.

²⁰⁸ Id., 50f.

²⁰⁹ The Latin American Episcopal Conference in Medellín 1968 officially supported the Neo-Marxist influenced liberation theology. Liberation theologians also supported the Nicaraguan revolution 1979. The same year, the Latin American Episcopal Conference pledged itself to the “preferential option for the poor” in spite of opposition from conservative bishops.

²¹⁰ Bahāy, Tamīmī, *As’ila*, 52.

²¹¹ The discussion of the term *fiṭra* takes up about ten pages. Id., 31-41.

²¹² Id., 36.

²¹³ Id., 33.

²¹⁴ Id., 39.

²¹⁵ Id., 32. Compare Šafīq, *al-Islām*, 48, 97, 105, 110, 113.

²¹⁶ Bahāy, Tamīmī, *As’ila*, 33f.

²¹⁷ Id., 40.

²¹⁸ Id.

regards to heterosexual relations) by relying on public interest and humanity. Socialists, communists, and secularists start fighting for their convictions, but their values soon evaporate, because they neither struggle with their personal aspirations and whims nor question their own self-serving behaviour.²¹⁹

(5) Contradictions: Indirect Confirmation of Marxism and Modernity

The idea to find a way out of modernity and its contradictions is itself a typical modern idea, in particular when this idea is connected with the view that one can surpass modernity by a better alternative. The Islamic alternative put forward by the former Maoists overtly or tacitly reflects this paradox.

First, Šafīq and Baḥayṣ/Tamīmī argue for the comprehensiveness of Islam opposed to the limitations of Western thought as well as for the moral nature of Islam compared to Western immorality and consumerism. However, Baḥayṣ/Tamīmī maintain that Muslims desire and deserve more material progress, justice, and political power. This corresponds to Šafīq, who said: “Pour moi, il y a aujourd’hui des islamistes qui sont bien plus politiques et matérialistes, en un sens, que nombre de marxistes.”²²⁰ The converts propagate not only Islam, but they also behave like better Marxists—in line with the masses and with its materialistic needs.

Secondly, Baḥayṣ/Tamīmī try to defuse the notion that their move to “the grounds of Islam” was motivated by personal interest or political pragmatism, since such self-serving motivations would contradict their critique of opportunism and their self-image of being selflessly committed to higher aims. Yet, one can deduce from Šafīq’s writings that the Maoists hoped that by adopting Islam they would gain more power, support, and legitimacy.

Thirdly, Baḥayṣ/Tamīmī claim that their Islamic ideals differentiate their political struggle from other political projects. They reject the communist logic that “barbarism has to be eliminated by barbaric means.”²²¹ But they neither provide any definition that distinguishes non-barbaric from barbaric forms of violence, nor a proof that their delineation conforms to Islamic ideals. In the opposite, Šafīq’s plea for a “total war against total war” matches the idea to pay evil back in its own coin.²²²

Fourthly, the former Maoists identify with a non-Western “traditional world” exploited and

²¹⁹ Id., 40f.

²²⁰ See his interview with Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 30.

²²¹ Baḥayṣ, Tamīmī, *As’ila*, 32; they falsely attribute Lenin’s sentence to Engels.

²²² For another example compare ‘Abbās Mūsawī, founder of Islamic Amal and later a leading figure in Hizballāh, who said in October 1983: “It is the duty of each Muslim whom Israel, America, France and all those other evil forces have oppressed or killed or helped to kill, or destroyed his home or occupied his land—it is the duty of every Muslim to counter evil with evil.” See Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation. Lebanon at War* (Oxford: University Press 2001), 521.

threatened by “Western modernity” and want to surpass modernity with what they see as ‘real’ development. They refute Marx’s analysis that the modernizing-devastating effect of global capitalism sweeps away all traditions; instead they want it to sweep away only obsolete traditions, in addition to Zionists and Imperialists. They also oppose the idea that the trick of history²²³ causes social revolutions; instead they plead for armed struggle to preserve tradition and identity. Thus, they aspire progress without any of its destructive effects, as well as development and justice without obstacles and compromise. They look for an exit strategy from the devastating side of modernization, but through their plea for permanent military action they embody the destructive force of modernity to which they feel unjustly subjugated.

Conclusion

The ideological transformation from Maoism to Jihadism happened simultaneously to a series of political events. The set-backs for the Palestinian guerrillas in Jordan (1970) and Lebanon (1978/1982) as well as the disastrous entanglement of the PLO into the Lebanese civil war caused disenchantment about the tactics, force, and aims of the PLO. It also caused the PLO to split into two opposing camps: one inclined towards a political “settlement” of the conflict with Israel according to international law and the second one eager to continue the armed struggle until the “liberation” of Palestine. The re-introduction of the concept of *ḡihād* happened in response to the PLO strategy that—beginning in 1974—showed some inclination to accept a two-state-solution. The Maoists’ conversion to Islam made them appear more radical, in their self-understanding as well as in relation to Fatah, although they did not substantially alter their insistence on the priority of armed struggle, whereas the bulk of Fatah members moved towards political “settlement” with Israel.

The Maoists’ shift resulted in a selective, accumulative, and contradictory belief system that marked a triple distinction from the Arab Left, Fatah, and the Muslim Brotherhood, while at the same time representing a triple blending—or sublation—of anti-imperialism, liberation struggle, and Arab-Islamic identity.²²⁴ The Jihadists advocated an Iran-like revolution that would supersede the Russian and Chinese models and implicitly revived the idea of progress, namely, the idea that Islam summed up and surpassed the previous experiences. They vested their ideas in an ‘authentic’ Islamic style and marketed martyrdom and military struggle for the liberation of Palestine as new

²²³ See Šafīq, *al-Islām*, 41, where he refutes the Marxian notion of “the trick of history”.

²²⁴ Former Maoist Roger Nab’a explained that the Middle East knew only four charismatic figures in the 20th century. After Nasser, Arafat and Khomeini, Ḥizballāh’s General Secretary Sayyid Ḥasan Naṣrallāh is a symbol that unites the previous three experiences, see Nab’a, “Wa... li-mādā”.

Islamic ideals. Both as Maoists and Jihadists, they allied with the most committed pro-Palestinian power and its ideology, first with Maoist China, then with Islamic Iran. Their fondness of mass mobilisation, unanimity, armed struggle, and martyrdom does not seem particularly religious; it virtually remained untouched by their shift, but turned into intransigence couched in Islamic terms.

The conversion to Islam and Jihadism caused troubles inside the Maoist group which underwent a state of instability and finally broke up. Baḥayṣ's and Tamīmī's attempt to explain their shift was convincing for some "brothers", but "pretentious" for others. Although for some it formed a new beginning, for others it marked the end of their militant phase. The group members were divided over the question whether every single activist had to become a practising Muslim and what the appropriate role for female fighters was. This point illustrates that the conversion was ideological *and* religious and produced the difficulty to harmonize a radical political conviction with a conservative belief system.

The Maoists' shift can be seen as part of the de-secularization of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in which different actors legitimate their rejection of international rulings and their advocacy for political violence by referring to a religious language.²²⁵ The Maoist militants opened the "immanent frame" (Charles Taylor) for the legitimatization of political violence step by step to also include religious arguments. Hence, internationalism was accompanied by particularity, criticism by belief, and historical necessity by God's will. With their Islamized "theory of the revolution", they believed in the masses' capacity to make history regardless of the circumstances, as long as they stand united. Even if the enemy seems to have the upper hand, history will prove that the *muğāhidūn* will succeed in the end. This prophesy of final victory, which may be delayed until the distant future, leaves behind all concrete questions—about the 'right' moment, the 'ripe' circumstances, the 'adequate' means and the 'immediate result' of actions—by which Marxists were theoretically agonized and practically threatened with failure. Thus, the Jihadists' violent acts become immune to critique or failure insofar as they are situated inside a different frame. The actors have turned into tools of providence, but their personal destination is only to be a "catalyst" for victory; they do not have to "live to see their cause win" (al-'Aẓm).

²²⁵ For this process in the Israeli, Palestinian, and US context see Hans G. Kippenberg, "Die Entsäkularisierung des Nahostkonflikts. Von einem Konflikt zwischen Staaten zu einem Konflikt zwischen Religionsgemeinschaften", in Hans Joas, Klaus Wiegandt (eds.), *Säkularisierung und die Weltreligionen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 2007), 465-507.