

Khaled Mouammar interview

Palestinians fight for a secular democracy

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"While the Palestinian people trusted only the guerillas, the Arab states were imprisoning members of Fatah. But they could not stop the growing Palestinian resistance. In 1967, more guerilla groups were formed.

"Finally, in 1968, the guerillas met with the PLO. They merged, but what actually happened was that the guerillas took over. They got rid of Zuhairy."

NO CONNECTION

Mouammar took pains to emphasize that the group that had threatened to 'drive the Jews into the sea', no longer exists.

"We don't say it has to be 'us or you' — that is what the Zionists say. We want a free country where both the Hebrew and Palestinian cultures can flourish.

"The Palestinians realize that they have to live with the Israelis, and are

not interested in the creation of a uni-racial Arab state. The PLO and the Palestinians want to create a secular democratic state made up of the Palestinians and the present inhabitants.

"In the refugee camps, they are teaching the kids Hebrew, so they can live with the Jews eventually. The children know that they are fighting the racist Israeli government and not the Jewish people. The foreign press has confirmed that they can distinguish between the two."

PARLIAMENT ADRIFT

Mouammar outlined the present make-up of the PLO. "The PLO is the organization designated by the Palestinian people as their representatives. It is a Palestinian parliament in exile. The 180 members of the parliament elect a 42-person council which in turn elects an executive committee of 12 members. There are

five representatives of resistance groups on the executive, but the PLO is made up of more than guerilla groups. It is also made up of representatives of women's groups, labour organizations, students and other sectors of Palestinian society.

The guerilla organizations, whose members are called 'Fedayeen' (men of sacrifice) by the Palestinian people, are grouped in five factions within the PLO.

"But groups like Black September and Arab Youth for the Liberation of Palestine are just adventurists, who have been condemned by the PLO," he stressed. "There are many groups that act in the name of Palestinian liberation that are not supported by the PLO."

He was pessimistic about the possibility of terrorist actions being curbed.

"The terrorists are frustrated individuals, who have been driven to

extremes by the Mid-east situation. But until the situation is remedied, terror will continue."

MAA' LOT

He commented on last year's raid on a Maa'Lot high school by Palestinian guerillas.

"First of all, if the guerillas had known there was anyone in that school at night, their intelligence would have had to have been far better than it is.

"And it was clear from the beginning that they had intended to let the kids go. It is obvious from the statements they made.

"But Dayan, who was personally in charge of the negotiations, planned to trick them. It was an Israeli gamble with the children's lives.

"They (the guerillas) were after the release of 100 political prisoners. How else are you going to free them?"

"There are 19,000 political prisoners in Israeli jails, and they are

being subjected to torture. The Swedish government, Amnesty International and the UN Human Rights Commission have condemned this.

"What can a poor people use? We don't have huge armies and an air force. They call our actions terrorism, but what is a terrorist act? Isn't it terrorist to drop 80,000 pounds of bombs on a refugee camp from an airplane?"

"Since 1967, 30,000 Palestinians have been killed and wounded. The Jordanians have killed 20,000 and the Israelis 10,000.

"The Israelis use the same arguments the Americans used in Viet Nam. When a B-52 annihilated a Vietnamese village, it was a stirring victory, but when a Viet Cong threw a bomb into a restaurant it was referred to as an act of terrorism."

Mouammar continued, "People forget that the creation of Israel was an act of terrorism against the Palestinian nation. The leaders of these same terrorist groups became the leaders of Israel. People like Radin, Dayan and Ben-Gurion.

"Israel is basically a military society; everyone is caught up in the general mobilization. All men in Israel between the ages of 18 and 65 are in the army, so it is hard to establish what is military and what is not.

"The Israelis use this to their advantage; they build settlements in dangerous frontier regions and fortify them. They are willing to sacrifice settlers in order to extend their territory.

"The Zionist mentality is a fascist mentality; they believe that Arabs only understand the language of force. They are always aggressive and must always expand.

"The rulers of Israel can't allow any victory for Fatah, because it would shake the Jewish people's faith in them; it would be too demoralizing."

ANOTHER WAR

Mouammar is convinced of the certainty of another conflict in the Mid-east.

"The October war is the first one the Israelis did not come out of with fruits. It discouraged investment and immigration. If you can believe Time's figures, emigration is now proceeding at the rate of 18,000 people a year.

"There is a serious economic crisis in Israel. In November, the currency was divided by 40 per cent in one day. This and other developments resulted in an immediate 70 per cent increase in the cost of living.

"There is great unrest in the occupied territory which we don't hear about. Recently there were 10 days of continuous demonstrations in Gaza and on the West bank.

Mouammar thinks that the resistance is significantly contributing to Israel's problems.

"They must keep increasing the military budget because of this; they haven't had time to recover from the effort of the last war."

He said the Israelis missed their chance for a final victory after the 1967 war.

"They could have won if they had gone to Egypt, Jordan and Syria and said, we'll give you back the Sinai, the West bank and the Golan Heights if you'll meet our terms.

"But the arrogance of the fascist mentality always comes out; they got over-confident, and now the tide has turned in favour of the Arabs."

Before the PLO goal of a democratic secular state can be realized, Mouammar said, the Israeli people will have to become aware of the aims of the Palestinian revolution.

"I know it will take a long struggle to bring this about," he concluded, "but I hope the Jewish people will realize that the Israeli state is asking them to die for nothing."

THE BIG ONE

Big taste, big satisfaction



Warning: The Department of National Health and Welfare advises that danger to health increases with amount smoked.