

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261937713>

Brothers in Arms: How Palestinian Maoists Turned Jihadists

Article in *Die Welt des Islams* · February 2011

DOI: 10.2307/41105368

CITATIONS

6

READS

796

1 author:



Manfred Sing

Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz/Germany

37 PUBLICATIONS 57 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



BRILL

Die Welt des Islams 51 (2011) 000-000

DIE
WELT DES
ISLAMIS

Brothers in Arms: How Palestinian Maoists Turned Jihadists

Manfred Sing*

Beirut

Abstract

At the beginning of the 1980s, the idea of armed *jihād* against Israel was not only promoted by renegades from the Muslim Brothers in the Gaza strip, but also by former Maoists of Fatah in Lebanon. After the pull-out of most PLO-fighters from Beirut in 1982, a group around its spokesman Munir Shafiq formed the Brigades of Islamic Jihad which were subsequently responsible for attacks in Israel. In a posthumously published booklet, two activists explained their reasons for their turn from Maoism to Islamism. The following article exposes the activists' trajectory and the stages of their ideological and religious conversion. According to their own narration, the former Maoists at first came to the conviction that Islam was a factor for mass mobilization and then individually adopted Islam to become practising Muslims.

Keywords

Maoism, Islamic Jihad Movement, Islamic Jihad Brigades, Fatah, Marxism-Leninism, Munir Shafiq, Muḥammad al-Baḥayṣ, Bāsim al-Tamīmī, Ṣādiq Jalāl al-ʿAzm, Lebanon, Palestine, Iranian Revolution

On 14 February 1988, three men died in Limassol, Cyprus, as their car exploded. The victims of the attack were Muḥammad al-Baḥayṣ (*nom de guerre*: "Abū Ḥasan") and Bāsim Sulṭān al-Tamīmī ("Ḥamadī"), the leaders of the Islamic Jihad Brigades (*Sarāyā al-Jihād al-Islāmī*), and

* This article is a result of my research project on Communist transformations which is funded by the German Research Foundation (*DFG*) since 2007 and located at the Orient-Institut Beirut. I want to thank Melanie Schulze-Tanielian and my project assistant Miriam Younes for their help in bringing this article in its final form.

their fellow Lebanese combatant Marwān al-Kayyālī.¹ The explosive device had supposedly been planted by Mossad agents,² who considered these three men top-terrorists.

Prior to their leaders' assassination, the Islamic Jihad Brigades had stepped up its operations inside Israel, were responsible for several attacks in 1986 and 1987,³ and considered as "the most significant military movement in the mid-1980s."⁴ The most prominent assault was the 'Gate of Moor Operation' of 15 October 1986, 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.⁵ In the immediate aftermath of the attack, which the assailants named the Burāq-Operation (*'amalīyat al-Burāq*), the Jihadists issued their first public declaration using the name Islamic Jihad Brigades, propelling the movement into the view of the public.⁶ This particular cell also claims to have *attempted* the first suicide attack in Palestine. In August 1987, 'Itāf 'Ulyān ("Umm Ḥamadī")⁷ was discovered and

¹ Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 111. Munīr Shafīq, *Shuhadā' wa-masīra. Abū Ḥasan wa-Ḥamadī wa-ikhwānuhumā* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā', 1994), 32, 124.

² Shafīq, *Shuhadā' wa-masīra*, 32, 124.

³ Jean-Francois Legrain, "HAMAS: Legitimate Heir of Palestinian Nationalism", in: *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism or Reform?*, ed. by John L. Esposito (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 159-178, here: 161.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵ See Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 96, and Shafīq, *Shuhadā' wa-masīra*, 32, 124. Shafīq does not mention that the "successful and great" operation caused the death of a civilian.

⁶ Shafīq, *Shuhadā' 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.

⁷ According to her account, she secretly went to Lebanon in 1980 to join a Fatah training camp at the age of 17. There she obviously met Munīr Shafīq, Abū Ḥasan, and Ḥamadī. Since 1984, she pleaded for suicide attacks in Israel according to the model of attacks in Lebanon. She got the green light from the Islamic Jihad Brigades in 1985 and planned the attack with an abettor for two years. 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-istishhādīya fī Filasṭīn" on the Aqsa-Website <http://www.aqsa.com/vb/showthread.php?t=11344>, retrieved on 17 December 2009. More

imprisoned, shortly before she could head for her last journey to Jerusalem in a car packed with two hundred kilos of explosives.⁸ This unsuccessful attempt became part of the foundation myth of the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (*Ḥarakat al-Jihād al-Islāmī fī Filasṭīn*)⁹ 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.¹⁰

The victims of the Limassol attack—“Abū Ḥasan” al-Baḥayş and “Ḥamadī” al-Tamīmī—were considered the masterminds behind both the Burāq-Operation and Umm Ḥamadī’s failed suicide mission.¹¹ The men’s violent death in Limassol led to the dissolution of the Islamic Jihad Brigades soon after and marked the final chapter of their fifteen years of military action. Baḥayş and Tamīmī had started their career as Maoist activists inside Fatah (Palestinian National Liberation Movement, *Ḥarakat al-Taḥrīr al-Waṭanī al-Filasṭīnī*), the largest faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Like them, a number of Fatah Maoists moved to the “grounds of Islam”¹² in the period between 1979 and 1984, and after ten years of dissent with the political line of Fatah, they finally broke away to form the Islamic Jihad Brigades. Thus, the Brigades were one of the first armed Islamist groups and can be seen as the Lebanese branch of the emerging Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (*Ḥarakat al-Jihād al-Islāmī fī Filasṭīn*).¹³ The

information about her on the Website of the Women’s Organization for Political Prisoners (*Nisā’ li-āğl al-Asīrāt al-Siyāsīyāt*), <http://www.wofpp.org/english/etafi.html>, retrieved on 17 December 2009.

⁸ Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 124.

⁹ Compare the current General Secretary’s, Ramaḍān Shallah, statements in Ghassān Sharbal, *Fī ‘ayn al-‘āşifa. Ḥiwār ma’a l-amīn al-‘āmm li-Ḥarakat al-Jihād al-Islāmī fī Filasṭīn al-duktūr Ramaḍān ‘Abdallāh Shallah, ajrāhu Ghassān Sharbal, al-Ḥayāt* (Beirut: Bīsān, 2003), 65, 67.

¹⁰ 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. The Jihad Movement is said to have carried out thirty suicide attacks with one hundred sixty victims since 1995, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Palestinian_Islamic_Jihad_suicide_attacks, retrieved on 17 October 2009.

¹¹ Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 123ff., 131f.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3, 46, 89, 131-138.

¹³ This meets also the self-conception of the Islamic Jihad Movement. See the interview with Ramaḍān Shallah published in Sharbal, *Fī ‘ayn al-‘āşifa*, 65.

adoption of Jihadism among Palestinian fighters happened simultaneously by the Lebanon-Fatah-line and the Egypt-Gaza-line, represented by its main figures Fathī Shiqāqī and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-‘Awda. In Lebanon, it was mostly Fatah officers, often of Maoist or Marxist background,¹⁴ who reintroduced the idea of *jihād* to the political and military scene.

In a treatise named *As’ila ḥawl al-islām wa-l-mārkiṣīya min warā’ al-quḍbān* (“Questions about Islam and Marxism from behind the prison bars”) Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī explained why they had adopted to Islamic principles.¹⁵ According to the preface, the text was written in 1984, in response to questions sent to them by their comrades in Israeli prisons.¹⁶ This indicates that much of the Jihad movement’s recruiting took place in Israeli prisons¹⁷ and many of the new Jihadists were former nationalists and secularists¹⁸ 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 downfall of the Soviet Union that Marxism had practically and theoretically failed.¹⁹

In 1994, the Islamist intellectual Munīr Shafīq republished the entire treatise as an appendix to his hagiography “Martyrs and Course of Life: Abū Ḥasan, Ḥamadī, and their Brothers.”²⁰ Shafīq was not only a close observer of the Islamic Jihad Brigades, but also the *spiritus rector* of the group, who actively took part in the group’s discussions and decision making.²¹ In addition, Shafīq founded the political wing of the Islamic

¹⁴ Members of other Marxist groups (PFLP and PFLP-GC) also joined or formed *jihād* groups. See Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 93, 129f; Denis Engelleder, *Die islamische Bewegung in Jordanien und Palästina 1945-1989* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 70.

¹⁵ Muḥammad Muḥammad al-Baḥayṣ, Muḥammad Bāsīm Sulṭān al-Tamīmī, *As’ila ḥawl al-islām wa-l-mārkiṣīya min warā’ al-quḍbān* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Islāmī, 1990). I am grateful to Sa’ūd al-Mawlā, Professor for Sociology at the Lebanese University, for drawing my attention to this paper.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁷ Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 95; Engelleder, *Die islamische Bewegung*, 72.

¹⁸ Among them is Ramaḍān Shallaḥ, the current leader of the Islamic Jihad Movement.

¹⁹ See the preface in Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī, *As’ila*, 10.

²⁰ Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra. Abū Ḥasan wa-Ḥamadī wa-ikhwānuhumā*.

²¹ See Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 4, 127. See also “Munīr Shafīq”, in: *al-Khiṭāb al-islāmī al-mu’āṣir: Muḥāwarāt fikriyya*, ed. by Waḥīd Taḡā (Aleppo: Fuṣṣilat li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Tarjama

Jihad Brigades, the Fighting Islamic Tendency (*al-Ittijāh al-Islāmī al-Mujāhid*), which was instrumental in forming the liaison to Faṭḥī Shiqāqī's Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine.²² In his account of the Maoists' transformation, he often neglects to mention names, dates and places; neither does he claim to have written an objective report.²³ Still his book gives some insight into the discussions and decisions making process of the group. Shafiq—an offspring of a Palestinian Christian family—had been a member of the Communist Party in Jordan until 1965, and had spent several 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 Baḥayṣ

wa-l-Nashr, 2000); also compare Bashīr Mūsā Nāfi', "al-Islāmīyūn al-filastīniyūn wa-l-qaḍīya al-filastīniya", on <http://www.samanews.com/index.php?act=%20Show&rid=23063>, retrieved on 10 September 2009.

²² See Legrain, "HAMAS", 162. Shafiq underlines the group's pioneering role for Hamas, but does not mention his or the group's connection to Shiqāqī's group, see Shafiq, *Shuhadā' wa-masīra*, 125. Legrain's assumption (idem., "HAMAS", 162) that Shafiq got associated with Hamas after 1988 may go too far. In the article analysed by Paz, Shafiq does not speak for Hamas, but for Islamists in general. See Reuven Paz, "Is Hamas Reevaluating the Use of Terrorism" (1998), on <http://112.150.54.123/articles/reevaluation.htm>, retrieved on 27 September 2008.

²³ Shafiq, *Shuhadā' wa-masīra*, 4.

²⁴ For biographical details see "al-Kātib fī ṣuṭūr: Munīr Shafiq", on <http://www.islamonline.net/arabic/contemporary/Tech/2001/article9-cv.shtml>, retrieved on 28 February 2008. Compare also the interview on the satellite channel *al-Jazīra* with Munīr Shafiq, "Bidāyāt al-niḍāl al-siyāsī wa-khiyār al-muqāwama" (23 May 2009), on <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/CD89F9DC-E123-4C2C-B154-2160DBBDE42B.htm>, retrieved 15 October 2009. Born in 1936, Shafiq engaged in politics starting in 1951. By joining Fatah, he became responsible for foreign relations (1968-1972) and then 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 the "general coordinator of the Arab Nationalist Club (*al-Muntadā al-Qawmī al-'Arabī*)", an alliance of Islamist and nationalist groups, see Munīr Shafiq, "al-Muqāwama mā ba'd intihā' al-ḥarb al-bārīda", in: *Qiyam al-muqāwama. Khayār al-shahāda wa-l-ḥayāt*, ed. by al-Mu'tamar al-Dā'im li-l-Muqāwama (Beirut: Dār al-Hādī, 2008), 255-263, here: 255.

²⁵ Munīr Shafiq, *al-Islām fī ma'rakat al-ḥadāra* (Beirut: Dār al-Kalima li-l-Nashr, 1981; Dār al-Fikr al-Islāmī, 21990). In this paper, I quote from the second edition.

and Tamīmī referenced it in their treatise several times and one of the chapters even bears the title of Shafīq's book.²⁶

The following paper examines how the activists Shafīq and Baḥayṣ/Tamīmī narrated their ideological trajectory and tries to highlight their political motivations:

Firstly, I argue that the Maoists' shift reflects a reformulation of armed struggle in Islamic terms. The adjectives in the terms "Palestinian revolution" and "Arab masses" were replaced with "Islamic" and "Muslim". The former Maoists vested categories that they had originally taken from the Chinese and Vietnamese example in an 'authentic' Islamic style, especially after the revolution in Iran (1978/79) added momentum to the Palestinian liberation movement.

Secondly, this reframing made the former Maoists appear more radical, in their self-understanding as well as in relation to Fatah. Although they had not substantially altered their insistence on the priority of armed struggle, the bulk of Fatah members was moving towards political "settlement" with Israel. Therefore, the actions of some Fatah members in Lebanon were significant for the emergence of the figure of the guerrilla fighter (*fidā'ī*) and the Muslim fighter (*mujāhid*) as well as for the transformation of the former into the latter. The Maoists' conversion illustrates this shift from the heroic *fidā'ī* narration towards a more desperate and tragic narration that focuses on the double image of fighter and martyr (*mujāhid/shahīd*).²⁷ In spite of criticism that already the Maoists' understanding of armed struggle was a means in itself, not a means to an end, the Jihadist logic turned more exclusively around self-victimization as a source of resistance: Palestinians and Muslims were depicted as the "wretched of the earth" (Frantz Fanon) and thus motivated to sacrifice themselves in a war against the West and Zionism.

Thirdly, this shift can be seen as part of the de-secularization of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.²⁸ Different actors legitimate their rejection

²⁶ Baḥayṣ, Tamīmī, *As'ila*, 23, 46.

²⁷ Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine. The Politics of National Commemoration* (Cambridge: University Press, 2007).

²⁸ For this process in the Israeli, Palestinian, and US context see Hans G. Kippenberg, "Die Entsäkularisierung des Nahostkonflikts. Von einem Konflikt zwischen Staaten zu

of international rulings and their advocacy for political violence by referring to a religious language. In the Maoists' case, this transformation led to instability inside the group. Although the Maoists early on were sympathetic to the revolution in Iran and recognized the benefits of using Islam as a tool for mass mobilization, they disagreed over whether it was necessary that all their followers had to become believing and practising Muslims. In their propaganda material, the converts, however, stress the fact that they had not only to be ideologically convinced, but also to become believers. Indirectly, this point illustrates that their conversion was ideological *and* religious. Furthermore, it addresses the question how the turn to a more radical conviction can go together with a more conservative belief system—a conflict, which the group especially discussed in reference to the role of female fighters.

My argument is that the Jihadist ideology emerged from, but does not represent a mixture of Islam, nationalism, and Marxism. The result was neither an Islamized Maoism nor a Maoist Islam, but a reframing of the Maoist plea of People's war in an intransigent way ~~beyond any critique~~. In a time of crisis and defeat, the actors insisted on the priority of armed struggle and turned it into an article of faith.

The Re-introduction of *jihād* to Palestine and Lebanon

On 1 January 1965, the popular armed struggle by Palestinians began when the heretofore-unknown al-ʿĀṣifa (the Storm) forces, the military wing of Fatah, released a communiqué in Beirut that announced a first successful guerrilla raid into Israel.²⁹ For the fighters, this event marked the beginning of the so-called Palestinian “revolution” (*al-thawra*). Although the Palestinian movement was still weak at that time, various guerrilla groups rapidly sprung up after the Six-Days-War in June 1967. These groups used Lebanon and its Palestinian refugee camps as safe haven, especially after they had been expelled from Jordan during

einem Konflikt zwischen Religionsgemeinschaften”, in: *Säkularisierung und die Weltreligionen*, ed. by Hans Joas, Klaus Wiegandt (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2007), 465-507.

²⁹⁾ 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.

“Black September” in 1970. But soon, the guerrillas found themselves trapped in the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), defeated by the Israeli invasion of Beirut 1982 and caught in internal fighting. Therefore, individuals and groups began to propagate the reinvigoration of popular armed struggle against Israel using the concept of *jihād*.³⁰

The concept of *jihād* understood as armed struggle against Israel was certainly not new in the context of Palestinian resistance. As early as 1929, ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Qassām had propagated *jihād* “until victory or martyrdom”.³¹ In 1978, Yassir Arafat on his *hajj*-pilgrimage to Mecca used the term *jihād* in arguing that the liberation of Palestine through armed struggle was a duty to God.³² However in the 1960s and 1970s, the Islamic movement—the Muslim Brothers and the Islamic Liberation Party (*Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr*)—rejected direct confrontations with Israel as long as the resistance was in the hands of Fatah.

The re-introduction of the *jihād* into the political and military scene was not forced by traditionally religious circles. 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. The Movement of the Arab Nationalists (*Ḥarakat 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, (P)DFLP, PFLP-GC, and OCAL) all of which identified with Marxism-Leninism.³³ Their disillusionment with Arab nationalism reached its peak when Anwar al-Sadat, the heir of Nasserism, started the peace process with Israel in the 1970s while Israel started occupying the so-called security zone in the South of Lebanon (1978-2000). The second shift occurred under the

³⁰ Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 90-95. The first advocates of *jihād* go back to the early 1970s.

³¹ Ibid., 98 ff.; Engelleder, *Die islamische Bewegung*, 70.

³² Engelleder, *Die islamische Bewegung*, 70f.

³³ PFLP: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, founded 1968 by George Habash. PFLP-GC: Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine/General Command, split from the PFLP in 1968 under Aḥmad Jibril. (P)DFLP: Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, split from the PFLP in 1969 under Nāyif Ḥawātima. OCAL: Organization of Communist Action in Lebanon, founded in 1969/70 by Muḥsīn Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad Kishli.

auspices of the Iranian Revolution in 1978. 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 *jihād*.³⁴ While Gaza-born Faṭḥī Shiqāqī'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 Palestine and Lebanon, a number of Arab nationalists of the 1960s became Jihadists by the 1980s, either by way of Islamism or Maoism.

In the Lebanese arena, the Fatah Maoists' adoption of *jihād* occurred against the multi-faceted background of the civil war. Fatah had not only to face the Israeli invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982, but also Syrian containment policy. In 1976, Syria intervened in the Lebanese civil war, sending troops to prevent a victory of the PLO's allies, the Lebanese National Movement, an alliance of Lebanese leftist, nationalist, and Muslim groups, headed by Kamāl Junbulāt (Joumblatt). 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. This forced exile of Palestinian militants provoked a *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere among all pro-Palestinian fighters. Only when in September of 1982 communist and nationalist groups set up the Lebanese National Resistance Front (*Jabhat al-Muqāwama al-Waṭanīya al-Lubnānīya*) to fight the Israeli troops in Lebanon, some Palestinian fighters were able to re-group and participate in various guerrilla attacks. In time, the Resistance Front was

³⁴) Some of Khomeini's bloodthirsty references to the meaning of *jihād* are: "Islam is a religion of blood for the infidels but a religion of guidance for other people. [...] We have sacrificed much blood and many martyrs. [...] 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 Laurent Murawiec, *The Mind of Jihad* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 43f. For the impact of Shiite elements on Sunnī *jihād* fighters like Faṭḥī Shiqāqī see Emmanuel Sivan "Islamic Radicalism: Sunni and Shi'ite", in: *Religious Radicalism and Politics in the Middle East*, ed. by Emmanuel Sivan and Menachem Friedman (Amherst: State University of New York Press, 1990), 39-76. For leftist sympathizers see Emmanuel Sivan, "Assessment by the Left", in: *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, ed. by idem., enlarged edition (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1990), 153-180.

able to affect Israel's gradual withdrawal 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.³⁵

The Palestinian Jihad Movement practically and ideologically aimed at broadening the mass basis for armed struggle in Palestine and Lebanon. 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."³⁶ Jūrj Ḥabash (~~Ḥabash~~, 1925/6-2008, PFLP) endorsed the Islamic Jihad Movement openly,³⁷ but also the prominent Fatah figure Khalīl al-Wazīr ("Abū Jihād")³⁸ was supposedly on good terms with the Jihadists; it is even said that in the aftermath of 1982, he tried to convince disappointed Muslim Brothers and PLO-fighters to form a Jihad organization.³⁹

The Development of Fatah Maoism

The Maoists inside Fatah crystallized into an independent *tayyār* (tendency) between 1972 and 1974 that was made up of "Palestinians,

³⁵ The unknown telephone caller is said to have been a member of one of the groups that separated from the Amal Movement (*Afwāj al-Muqāwama al-Lubnāniya*, Lebanese Resistance Detachments) and later originated Ḥizballāh (the Party of God). The bombing of the US embassy in Beirut on 18 April 1983 and the attacks on the barracks of the US and French peacekeeping troops on 23 October 1983 are attributed to this spectrum of 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).

³⁶ Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 111.

³⁷ Ibid., 114. Also Engelleder, *Die islamische Bewegung*, 71.

³⁸ Abū Jihād, the former second in command in the PLO, was assassinated in Tunis in 1988.

³⁹ Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism*, 111; Engelleder, *Die islamische Bewegung*, 71. Compare Shafiq, *Shubadā' wa-masira*, 59, who downplays Abū Jihād's role.

Lebanese, Arabs, and Non-Arabs”.⁴⁰ According to Munīr Shafīq, Muḥammad al-Baḥayṣ was concerned about organizational questions since 1971, when he started to believe that the Palestinian leaders’ policy in Jordan was too provocative and partly responsible for their expulsion.⁴¹ After two years in Baghdad, Baḥayṣ moved to Beirut where he discussed with different PLO factions the future political line.⁴² Here, Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī met “as soon as Muḥammad Sulṭān al-Tamīmī was released from prison”; this marked the beginning of “a perfect union” and the two men “marched hand in hand for nearly fifteen years”, complementing each other.⁴³ They decided that the structure of Fatah as well as that of Communist Parties was inappropriate for a revolutionary organization.⁴⁴ They preferred to be organized without a central committee or a general secretary, but committed themselves to “the mass line” (*khatt al-jamāhīr*).⁴⁵ The activists borrowed the term from Mao Zedong, whose method was to learn from the masses and to immerse the political leadership in the concerns and conditions of the masses. The Maoists continued to work within the framework of Fatah, because they were against the splitting of the guerrilla movement. Their main goal was to unite the “masses” according to the Chinese and Vietnamese model of a People’s war irrespective of the possible losses of human lives.⁴⁶ The “mass line” had few senior figures, except for Shafīq, Baḥayṣ,

⁴⁰ Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 2. “Non-Arabs” seems to refer to Iranians. For the emergence of the tendency see also Fathī al-Biss, *Inṭhiyāl al-dhākira. Hādihā mā ḥasāla* (Amman: Dār al-Shurūq, 2008), 141-145. For the leftist Fatah wing see Helga Baumgarten, *Palästina: Befreiung in den Staat. Die palästinensische Nationalbewegung seit 1948* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 227-234, and also Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (Oxford: University Press, 1999), 199, 352f.

⁴¹ Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 40.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8, 132.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 36f.

⁴⁶ 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”, in: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 1, nr. 2 (winter 1972), 19-34, here: 25.

and Tamīmī, but strongly attracted students from Lebanese universities and colleges⁴⁷—many of them later became leading intellectuals.

The reference to Maoism was not by accident, since the militants believed that China stood for “unreserved support”.⁴⁸ This judgment was based on the fact that between the mid 1960s and mid 1970s China was “the most consistent big power supporter of the Palestinian guerilla organisations, arming them, criticizing them, seeking to unify them and, despite fluctuations in the relationship, providing moral and material support.”⁴⁹ Since the first trip of a Fatah delegation to China in 1964, Palestinian leaders like Yāsir ‘Arafāt (Arafat, 1929-2004) and Habash regarded China as a close 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.”⁵⁰ China supported the guerrillas not only with arms (guns, mortars, anti-tank rockets), but also provided military training units in China and the Arab states.⁵¹ Chinese leadership initially favoured Fatah over the Marxist organisations PFLP and (P)DFLP and consistently pleaded for the “unification under the most powerful *fedayyen* confederation”.⁵² Chinese

⁴⁷ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, 352. The students were highly politicized since the beginning of the 1970s, and their protests reached a peak in 1974 when they occupied buildings on the campus of the American University of Beirut and were subsequently excluded by the University administration. Former Maoist Biss gives an account of his personal involvement and temporarily exclusion, see Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 148, 206-213. For the background see Makram Rabah, *A Campus at War. Student Politics at the American University of Beirut 1967-1975* (Beirut: Dar Nelson, 2009), and Betty S. Anderson, “Voices of Protest: Arab Nationalism and the Palestinian Revolution at the American University of Beirut”, in: *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 28 (2008), 390-403.

⁴⁸ Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 144f. See also *Munazzamat al-Tahrīr al-Filasṭīniya wa-Jumhūriyat al-Šīn al-Sha‘biya*, ed. by Munazzamat al-Tahrīr al-Filasṭīniya (Cairo, 1966).

⁴⁹ Lillian Craig Harris, “China’s Relations with the PLO”, in: *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 7, nr. 1 (autumn 1977), 123-154, here: 123f. 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 by Cooley, “China and the Palestinians”, 26.

⁵⁰ Harris, “China’s Relations”, 127.

⁵¹ Cooley, “China and the Palestinians”, 26f. He points out that it is impossible to estimate the exact amount of Chinese military and economic support.

⁵² Harris, “China’s Relations”, 124.

politicians told Palestinian visitors more than once that “unity is the key to victory for the Palestinians”.⁵³ China was also the only great power which declared in 1973 that the “Palestinian people’s rights cannot be restored through UN resolutions”⁵⁴ and was sceptical about a political settlement on Palestine. Observers attributed it to Chinese influence that the Palestinian National Charter from 1968 was revised a year later, stating that “the armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine; it is, therefore, a strategy and not a tactic.”⁵⁵ “Third World revolutionaries” like Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Frantz Fanon, and Ernesto Che Guevara became increasingly popular among Palestinian activists and even replaced the experience of the Algerian revolution.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the Sino-Soviet rivalry also affected the Palestinian guerrillas, since Soviet support was regarded “half-hearted”.⁵⁷

Whereas the advocacy of Maoist concepts was originally widespread among the guerrilla groups, the gathering of Maoists inside Fatah can be seen as an indirect result of the expulsion of the PLO fighters from Jordan in 1970, as well as of the Sino-Soviet rivalry. After the guerrillas’ aim to create an Arab Hanoi⁵⁸ had failed in Jordan, the Marxist leaders Ḥabash (PFLP) and Nāyif Ḥawātima (Hawatmeh, (P)DFLP) reconsidered the Maoist concept of a “People’s war of long duration” as well as 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 associate

⁵³ Ibid., 131, 141.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 127.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 129.

⁵⁶ See Baumgarten, *Palästina*, 189, 228; compare Cooley, “China and the Palestinians”, 19-34.

⁵⁷ Harris, “China’s Relations”, 124. 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. 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: Kegan Paul International 1981), 132. Whereas the PLO was represented in Beijing by a permanent office since 1965, it opened a representation in the Soviet Union only in 1974; see Harris, “China’s Relations”, 149, and the Website of Palestinian Embassy in Russia, <http://www.palestine.ru/Arabic/embassy/main.html>, retrieved on 15 May 2010.

⁵⁸ Baumgarten, *Palästina*, 224, 226

to Arafat at the time, propagated the so-called “Transitional National Program” (*al-Barnāmiġ al-Waṭani al-Marḥalī*), which became the basis for the Palestinian National Council’s “Ten-Point-Programme” in 1974.⁵⁹ This clearly indicated the PLO’s contentment with a partial liberation of Palestine, i.e. a step-by-step liberation or a Two-State-Solution.⁶⁰

The Maoists vigorously criticized this policy change, because they thought it to be damaging Palestinian cause.⁶¹ They believed that the Soviets’ imperialistic strategy (“neither peace nor war”)⁶² aimed at reaching a political stalemate in the region and offered no real solution for the Palestinians. They also viewed the new amendments to the PLO Charta as solely serving the interests of the United States, Egypt, and the Arab League, which attempted to rid itself of the responsibility for Palestine.⁶³ 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”.⁶⁴ Because of his outspoken criticism, Munīr Shafīq was ousted as an editor of the PLO newspaper *Filastīn al-Thawra*.⁶⁵ In an article written in 1972, he had already dismissed any proposal for conflict resolution other than armed struggle until total liberation.⁶⁶ In later works, he drew a straight line

⁵⁹ See *ibid.*, 245f. The “Ten-Point-Programme” was decided on at the 12th meeting of the Palestinian National Council, 1-8 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 (28-30 October 1974) and by Arafat’s speech in the General Assembly of the United Nations (13 November 1974).

⁶⁰ 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.”

⁶¹ Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 17.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 18, 28.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 21f.

⁶⁵ See Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, 352

⁶⁶ Munīr Shafīq, “Li-mādhā yarfuḍu l-filastīniyūn mashrū‘ al-dawla al-filastīniya fī l-Ḍiffa al-Gharbiya wa-Qiṭā‘ Ghazza”, *Shu‘un Filastīniya*, 1972, nr. 7 (March), 65-73. More

from the “Ten-Point-Programme” to the Oslo Accords (1993) to illustrate the worsening situation in Palestine.⁶⁷ Despite the growing tensions, the Maoists decided to stay within Fatah, as long as their right to criticism was respected,⁶⁸ and they did not join the Rejectionist Front,⁶⁹ which subsequently emerged under the leadership of the PFLP. It was also in the interest of Fatah to retain the Maoist faction under its umbrella; Fatah leaders wanted to counterbalance the Marxist-Leninists’ in the PLO and might also have thought that this way they could exert better control over the Maoists.⁷⁰

When the Palestinians entered the Lebanese civil war alongside the Lebanese Nationalist Movement, Maoists—estimated to be in the “hundreds”—joined under various Fatah commanders, since they were not united by a formal organization.⁷¹ However, Shafiq disagreed with Arafat’s and Joumblatt’s decision to “isolate” the Maronite Phalange because he regarded this step as a break with the Palestinian policy of non-involvement.⁷² But the Maoists were not unanimous on that point; Nāji ‘Allūsh was at variance with Shafiq’s as well as with Arafat’s position and left Fatah.⁷³

By 1976, Maoists finally formed the so-called Student Squad (*al-Sariya al-Ṭullābiya* or *al-Katība al-Ṭullābiya*) which became the organizational kernel of the fighters who were mainly active in various

verbose: idem., *Bayn istrāṭījiyat al-tahrīr al-kāmil wa-istrāṭījiyat al-ḥall al-siyāsī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘a, 1973).

⁶⁷ Shafiq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 11, and idem., *Min ittifaq Ūslū ilā “al-dawla thunā’iyat al-qawmiya”*. *Rudūd ‘alā Idwārd Sa’id wa-‘Azmi Bishāra wa-ākharīn* (Amman: Dār al-Šurūq, 1999).

⁶⁸ Šafiq *Šuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 51, 58.

⁶⁹ 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 al-Šā‘iqa and the Iraq backed Arab Liberation Front.

⁷⁰ This is Shafiq’s assumption, see idem., *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 69.

⁷¹ Biss speaks of “hundreds, if not thousands”. See Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 230.

⁷² See Shafiq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 76f., and Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 230f. Phalangist militiamen killed twenty-seven Palestinians in a bus (13 April 1975, at Ain El-Rummaneh) in retaliation for an ambush by unidentified gunmen the same day and thus provoked the outbreak of the violence that led to the civil war.

⁷³ See Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 231, and Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, 199. On ‘Allūsh’s dissent with Fatah see ibid., 352f., 355, 431, and Baumgarten, *Palästina*, 227-233 passim. ‘Allūsh joined the Abū Niḍāl group and went to Iraq.

sectors of West-Beirut.⁷⁴ In 1977, the group was renamed Jarmaq Squad (*Katibat al-Jarmaq*)⁷⁵ and moved to southern Lebanon, where it fought as a part of al-‘Āṣifa against the South Lebanon Army (*Jaysh Lubnān al-Janūbi*).⁷⁶ According to Anīs al-Naqqāsh,⁷⁷ 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.”⁷⁸ It fortified the Beaufort Castle (Qal‘at Shaqīf), 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 confessional⁷⁹ and regional backgrounds, but also Iraqi Communists, Maoists, and Islamists⁸⁰ who had found refuge in Lebanon, as well as Iranians who came for military training to the Fatah camps.⁸¹ The Iranian trainees came from the Marxist group Fidā’iyīn-e Khalq (the People’s Fedayeen) as well as from the Islamo-Marxist

⁷⁴ Shafiq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masira*, 83, 114f. Compare Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 277.

⁷⁵ Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 277. Named after Mount Jarmaq (Mt. Meron), the highest mountain in Palestine/Northern Israel.

⁷⁶ 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.

⁷⁷ He was the partner of Venezuelan terrorist Carlos (Ilich Ramírez Sánchez) in the attack on the OPEC conference in Vienna 1975. See the interview Ḡassān Sharbal, “Anīs al-Naqqāsh”, in: *Asrār al-sundūq al-aswad. Wadī’ Ḥaddād – Carlos – Anīs al-Naqqāsh – George Habash*, ed. by Ghassān Sharbal (Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2008), 253-341, and Manhāl al-Amīn, “Anīs al-Naqqāsh: al-Munāḍil al-qawmī ‘alā l-ṭarīq al-islāmī”, in: *al-Akhhbār*, 9 April 2009 (on <http://www.al-akhhbar.com/ar/node/128691>, retrieved on 25 November 2009).

⁷⁸ See Sharbal, “Anīs al-Naqqāsh”, 330.

⁷⁹ Christians, Muslims, and Druzes all joined the Jarmaq Squad.

⁸⁰ Seven-hundred members of the Shiite Da‘wa-Party from Iraq trained in PLO camps. See Waddāḥ Sharāra, *Dawlat Hizballāh. Lubnān mujtama‘an islāmīyan* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār, 2006), 109; compare also Bernard Rougier, *Everyday Jihad. The Rise of Militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon* (Harvard University Press, 2007), 28.

⁸¹ According to Anīs al-Naqqāsh in Sharbal, “Anīs al-Naqqāsh”, 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»”, in: *Cahiers de L’Institut Religioscope*, 2, December 2008 (on <http://www.religioscope.org/cahiers/02.pdf>, retrieved 1 December 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 Sharāra, *Dawlat Hizballāh*, 109.

counterpart Mujāhidīn-e Khalq (the People's Mujāhidūn).⁸² The squad decided to support all of these groups despite their ideological differences.

According to Shafiq, the squad lost forty "martyrs"⁸³ 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 6 June 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" (*Ma'rakat Shaqif*), because its fighters managed to inflict "substantial loss"⁸⁴ 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.⁸⁵

After this, Munir Shafiq's account becomes more than vague, because he does not want to reveal details about the ensuing fighting between Palestinians and between Palestinians and Lebanese Shiites. He mentions that when Syria encouraged a rebellion against Arafat in 1983,⁸⁶ the Jarmaq Squad was forced to take sides, although it rejected the division.⁸⁷ He writes that "the squad was forced to retreat to Tripoli and

⁸² See Sharbal, "Anīs al-Naqqāsh", 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 Jalāl al-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.

⁸³ Shafiq *Shuhadā' 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, *Inthiyāl*, 307.

⁸⁴ Shafiq only mentions two martyrs; see Shafiq, *Shuhadā' 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.

⁸⁵ Shafiq, *Shuhadā' 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.

⁸⁶ Sa'ūd ("Abū Mūsā") al-Murāḡa's group, Fataḥ al-Intifāḡa, called upon all Fatah groups to disobey the leadership's orders, see Brynen, *Sanctuary*, 184-187.

⁸⁷ Shafiq, *Shuhadā' wa-masīra*, 92f.

enter a struggle that it only wanted to leave”, but he does not explain the retreat in detail.⁸⁸ He hints at “the experience of the Lebanese wing”, stating that of the Lebanese only a few remained in the squad after 1982, whereas most of them looked for a “new position”.⁸⁹ 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 Hizballāh.⁹⁰

The first example of a collective shift from Maoism to Islamism occurred in Tripoli, but Munīr Shafīq devotes only a footnote⁹¹ to mention that one of the squad’s leaders, ‘Iṣmat Murād from the Maoist Movement of the Arabic Lebanon (*Ḥarakat Lubnān al-‘Arabī*), joined the Islamic Unification Movement (*Ḥarakat al-Tawḥīd al-Islāmī*).⁹² He neglects to mention that the Maoists were instrumental in forming the Tawḥīd Movement and that with Khalīl ‘Akkāwī, who was of Palestinian descent and a supporter of the Jarmaq Squad,⁹³ a second prominent Maoist leader joined the Tawḥīd Movement together with his Popular Resistance (*al-Muqāwama al-Sha‘biya*). From 1982 to 1985, the Tawḥīd

⁸⁸ Ibid., 93.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 88ff.

⁹⁰ Like ‘Imād al-Mughniya, 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 chiïtes. Ce qui s’est passé en réalité, c’est que les chiïtes qui étaient dans la Brigade l’ont quittée de fait en 1979. Plusieurs ont rejoint les groupes islamistes chiïtes qui ont créé plus tard le Hezbollah.” See Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 35.

⁹¹ Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masira*, 89f.

⁹² In the summer of 1982, thousands had gathered in the mainly Sunnī town to take an oath on Sheikh Sa‘īd Sha‘bān as the new Grand Emir of Tripoli; Sha‘bān was a charismatic Sunnī figure with a strong pro-Iranian tendency and good relations to Lebanese Shiite clerics. Four months later, the Maoists joined Sha‘bān to form the Tawḥīd Movement. See Saab, Ranstorp, *Securing Lebanon*, 830f; Muḥammad Abī Samrā, “Min ‘Munazzamat al-Ghaḍab’ wa-‘Dawlat al-Maḥlūbīn’ ilā ‘al-Muqāwama al-Sha‘biya’ wa-‘Lijān al-Masājīd’”, in: *Al-Nabar*, 2 March 2008 (on <http://www.beirutletter.com/editorial/e520.html>, retrieved on 1 November 2009).

⁹³ On him see Michel Seurat, “Le quartier de Bāb Tebbān à Tripoli (Liban). Étude d’une ‘asabiyya urbaine’”, in: idem, *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 Sharbal, “Anīs al-Naqqāsh”, 330.

Movement reigned over the greater part of ‘liberated’ Tripoli and established—except for the ‘Alawī quarter Jabal Mohsen—a mixed Sunnī-Shī‘ī Islamic social system, wherein seven emirs exercised control in the town quarters.⁹⁴ In this context and with 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 city⁹⁵ against the resistance of pro-Syrian leftist groups.

The Tawḥīd Movement rejected political parties and pluralism 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”.⁹⁶ In mid-October 1983, the movement executed twenty-eight communists in their homes, with the justification that spilling the unbelievers’ blood was “licit” (*ḥalāl*) according to the *sharī‘a*.⁹⁷ 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 1983.⁹⁸

This episode illustrates that the ~~former~~ Maoists in Tripoli not only sided with a pro-Iranian Sunnī Islamist movement, but also remained loyal to Arafat’s Fatah, while some of their Marxist-Leninist counterparts cooperated with Syria to eliminate Fatah. The Maoists’ loyalty to Arafat⁹⁹ can be explained by the Syrian containment policy against the Fatah. Soon after, the Syrian strategy resulted in “the war of camps”, during which the Shiite Amal militia, backed by Syria, tried to gain

⁹⁴ ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf Sinnū, *Ḥarb Lubnān 1975-1990. Tafakkuk al-dawla wa-taṣaddu‘ al-mujtama‘* (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2008), vol. I, 418.

⁹⁵ See Sinnū, *Ḥarb Lubnān*, vol. I, 418; Rougier, *Everyday Jihad*, 9.

⁹⁶ Seurat, “Le quartier de Bāb Tebbānē”, 160f. Sheikh Sha‘bān 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-Ghaḍab”.

⁹⁷ Seurat, “Le quartier de Bāb Tebbānē”, 159.

⁹⁸ Arafat’s opponents were Fataḥ al-Intifāḍa, PFLP, DFLP, and PFLP-GC. 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.

⁹⁹ See Shafiq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 88f., 93.

control over the Palestinian camps in Beirut and in Southern Lebanon.¹⁰⁰ Shafiq does not dwell on this point, but mentions that one of the squad's founders and leaders, 'Alī Abū Ṭawq, was killed at the hands "of those whom he did not consider his enemies",¹⁰¹ i.e. the Amal militia. Shafiq asserts that Abū Ṭawq "was forced" into the wrong war, because he wanted to fight the "Zionist enemy" in Lebanon and found himself trapped in "unbelief" (*shirk*), when he tried to defend the people in the Shatila camp in 1986.¹⁰²

The Discourse of Conversion

The Maoists' ideological crisis of orientation lasted from 1976 to 1982. The beginning of their increasing detachment from Maoism was not only marked by Mao Zedong's death in 1976 and the downfall of the "Gang of Four",¹⁰³ but also by China's new foreign policy 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.¹⁰⁴ In the foreword to *al-Islām fī ma'rakat al-ḥadāra* (1981), Munīr Shafiq mentions that his book was the fruit of two years of discussions with friends and foes, which had helped to clarify his ideas.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ For the background see Sinnū, *Ḥarb Lubnān*, vol. I, 408-412.

¹⁰¹ Shafiq, *Shuhadā' wa-masīra*, 94f.

¹⁰² Ibid. See also Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 319. Abū Ṭawq's martyrdom is still commemorated by Fatah, see "Mukhayyam Shātīlā yukarrimu dhikrā l-shahīd Abū Ṭawq", in: *al-Mustaqbal*, 19 August 2009 (on <http://www.almustaqbal.com/stories.aspx?StoryID=363521>, retrieved on 15 May 2010), and "al-Qā'id al-baṭal al-shahīd al-muqaddam 'Alī Sa'id Abū Ṭawq" on the website *Fatehforum* <http://fatehforums.com/showthread.php?t=3376>, retrieved on 15 May 2010.

¹⁰³ Shafiq, *Shuhadā' wa-masīra*, 34. This disappointment was a global phenomenon and caused most Maoists in Europe 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.

¹⁰⁴ See Behbehani, *China's Foreign Policy*, 102-133 (chapter "Turning point in Sino-Palestinian relations"); Harris, "China's Relations", 123-154; and Sāmī Musallam, *al-Ṣin wa-l-qadīya al-filasṭīniya 1976-1981* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Filasṭīniya, 1982), 8-15.

¹⁰⁵ Shafiq, *al-Islām*, 10.

After nearly a decade of disputes with the main Fatah line, Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī turned to the “grounds of Islam” at about the same time.¹⁰⁶ It took another two or three years for the *jihād* group to form. Shafiq mentions that at the end of 1984, Fatah leadership in the West Bank decided to no longer support Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī. However, this decision did not affect Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī’s activities, as they continued to cooperate with their former comrades.¹⁰⁷

However, 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 and films, such as the playwright Roger ‘Assāf,¹⁰⁸ the novelist Ilyās Khūrī,¹⁰⁹ the philosopher Ṭarād Ḥamāda,¹¹⁰ the sociologist Sa‘ūd al-Mawlā,¹¹¹ and the filmmaker Muḥammad Suwayd.¹¹²

Faṭḥī al-Biss, a Palestinian refugee from Jordan and one of the early members of the Student Squad, even recounts a dispute with Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī about their conversion to Islam. In his recently published and controversial memoirs,¹¹³ Biss describes his return to Jordan in 1977

¹⁰⁶ Shafiq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 3, 46, 89, 131-138. Also compare Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, 630.

¹⁰⁷ Shafiq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 59.

¹⁰⁸ ‘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 avions déjà vu. Je leur ait dit, aux amis iraniens, ils ont été choqués.” See Dot-Pouillard: “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 16.

¹⁰⁹ Ilyās Khūrī wrote ‘the’ Lebanese-Palestinian novel *Bāb al-Shams* (Beirut: Dār al-Ādāb, 1998).

¹¹⁰ He represented Ḥizballāh as labour minister in the Lebanese cabinet of 2006/07.

¹¹¹ 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.

¹¹² 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”, on <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/lauraMarks/index.html>, retrieved on 20 November 2009.

¹¹³ *Inṭhiyāl al-dhākira* 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

after ten years of political and military engagement in Lebanon, and his personal struggle, 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.¹¹⁴ In his discussions with his comrades, they assured him that “the revolution has enough fighters.”¹¹⁵ Yet in about 1982, Baḥayṣ 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.”¹¹⁶ Biss replied that an Islamization was not necessary because the squad never opposed Islam and the restriction to “a pretentious ideology” (*aydiyūlūjī fadfād*)¹¹⁷ was contrary to the squad’s former aim of “broadening the front of friends and diminishing the front of foes.”¹¹⁸

Neither Shafīq nor Baḥayṣ/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 al-Naqqāsh—coming from a Lebanese Sunnī 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.¹¹⁹ Since he tried to assassinate the Shah’s last Prime Minister Shāpūr Bakhtiyār (Shapour Bakhtiyar) in Paris in 1980, the political impact of

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 (*al-na’arāt al-tā’ifiya*) 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 May 2009. See Dār al-Shurūq, “Maḥkamat al-isti’nāf tunhī qaḍiyat *Inthiyāl al-dhākira*”, on http://www.shorok.com/activities_details.php?event_id=107, retrieved on 11 November 2009.

¹¹⁴ Biss, *Inthiyāl*. 285. He also opened a publishing house (*Dār al-Shurūq*).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 286.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 310.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* Biss does not convey their response.

¹¹⁹ In an interview, he described how his friend Jalāl al-Fārisī cited a Koranic verse on patience and endurance during a prayer in Tehran: “Ça été une véritable révélation, un moment fort dans ma vie. Depuis, je suis devenu un fidèle pratiquant.” See Charara, Domont, *Le Hezbollah*, 93.

the Iranian Revolution on him seems ~~more~~ obvious. The same can be said about his Lebanese-Shiite friend ‘Imād Mughniya who became the military mastermind of Hizballāh.¹²⁰

Munīr Shafiq 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.¹²¹ He asserts that his “conversion was no individualistic process”, and that he “did not turn to Islam because of special circumstances or personal convictions”, but because he “was part of a wider tendency.”¹²² 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.”¹²³ Some of them embraced Islam wholeheartedly and more quickly than others, who still wanted to discuss it. After Mao Zedong’s death, the Arab Maoists grasped that the Cultural Revolution had failed.¹²⁴ They had their day of reckoning with Marxism-Leninism debunking the myth that it owned supreme social, historical, ideological, and methodological knowledge.¹²⁵ 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.”¹²⁶ 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”.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ On him see Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 5, and Naqqāsh’s remarks in “Ṣadiq li-‘Imād Mughniya yakshifu tafāṣil ḥayātihi l-yawmiya”, in: *Dunyā al-Waṭan*, 21 February 2008 (on <http://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/content-123683.html>, retrieved 14 May 2010). Mughniya 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 12 February 2008. See *Newsweek*, “The Fox is Hunted Down”, 25 February 2008 (on <http://www.newsweek.com/id/112771>, retrieved 1 November 2009).

¹²¹ See the interview with Munīr Shafiq, “Bidāyat al-niḍāl al-siyāsī”.

¹²² Shafiq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 107.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹²⁷ See for example Murawiec, *The Mind of Jihad*, 289f.

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 *akh* (brother) and *ukht* (sister) instead of *rafīq/rafīqa* (comrade).¹²⁸ And already in 1976, Shafīq invoked “the spirit of *jihād*” in a poem mourning his brother’s, “Abū Khālid” Jūrj Shafīq ‘Asl, death on the battlefields.¹²⁹ But now, the Maoists started a long-term discussion on the “particularity” (*khuṣūṣiyya*) of every revolution and on the question of how to win over the masses.¹³⁰ They were struck by the masses streaming into the streets of Tehran in 1978/79 shouting “God is great” and “There is no God but God”.¹³¹ At this point, most Maoists came to the conclusion that while Marxism could not be put into practice,¹³² 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.¹³³ The reasons for this resistance, according to Munīr Shafīq, 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 “intellectual and psychological barriers” to embrace Islam.¹³⁴ After intense studies and 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.¹³⁵ The idea that there was no revolution without belief definitely forced them to reverse and abjure their former materialistic convictions.

¹²⁸) Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 35.

¹²⁹) See Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 274. Compare also Shafīq’s remark in the 2009 interview that “Marxists don’t have a language to deal with death”; see Shafīq, “Bidāyat al-niḍāl al-siyāsī”.

¹³⁰) Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 34.

¹³¹) *Ibid.*, 35.

¹³²) *Ibid.*, 98.

¹³³) *Ibid.*

¹³⁴) *Ibid.*, 138.

¹³⁵) *Ibid.*

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.¹³⁶

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.¹³⁷ 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.¹³⁸ 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.”¹³⁹

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 Shafīq contributed a controversial paper named *Mawḍū‘āt ḥawl al-mar’a* (Topics on Women).¹⁴⁰ Shafīq 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-Islamic tradition, but was the result of the decline of the Arab world

¹³⁶ Ibid., 136; compare also Rūjīh (Roger) Nab’a, “Wa... li-mādhā al-rumūz fī zaman al-miḥan,” in: *al-Akhhbār*, 6 September 2006 (on <http://www.al-akhhbar.com/ar/node/3715>, retrieved on 11 November 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 al-sha’biya*) is the most important factor that determined whether Arab nationalism, Palestinian liberation, and Islamic revolution failed or succeeded.

¹³⁷ Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 136.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 135.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 137.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 126-129, and also Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 284.

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. Shafiq 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. Shafiq 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 thirty¹⁴¹ and retreated to Beirut during the war. According to Fathī al-Biss, Shafiq’s paper displayed “a stronger Islamic portion than usual” and let “some of us ask the question: are we really Marxists?”¹⁴²

An aspect that figures prominently in Shafiq’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, Shafiq only blames Arafat and the PLO for contributing to battles among Arabs, instead of “pointing with every gun at the Zionist enemy”¹⁴³ and seeking support from all sides, regardless of political or confessional affiliations.¹⁴⁴ This error brought the Palestinians into opposition to the Maronite forces and to Syria, which “was not the enemy.”¹⁴⁵ Shafiq also blames the PLO for its deteriorating relations to the Amal militia and the Shiite population in the South of Lebanon.¹⁴⁶ He holds that the Jarmaq Squad was on

¹⁴¹) 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.

¹⁴²) Biss, *Inṭhiyāl*, 284.

¹⁴³) Shafiq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 23, 81.

¹⁴⁴) *Ibid.*, 84f.

¹⁴⁵) *Ibid.*, 73-77.

¹⁴⁶) *Ibid.*, 83. This remark may refer to the critical position of Amal leader Mūsā al-Ṣadr 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

good terms with Amal members¹⁴⁷ and played an important mediating role, preventing Amal and PLO (until the mid 1980s) from fighting each other and thereby protecting the population.¹⁴⁸ The members of the Jarmaq Squad were respectful of religious traditions and fasted during the month of Ramadan.¹⁴⁹ The Shiite population in turn called them *Ḥusaynīyūn*¹⁵⁰ already prior to their conversion to Islam because of their braveness and their will to self-sacrifice.¹⁵¹ Another nickname the Maoists were proud of was *Jamāʿat al-Taḍāmun al-ʿArabī* (Society of Arab Solidarity), because of their repudiation of fights among Arabs.¹⁵² According to Shafīq, the Maoists also protested—as the “conscience of Fatah”—against the harsh treatment, torture or killing of prisoners and civilians by Palestinian forces.¹⁵³ This is exemplified by their withdrawal from the fighting during the massacres against Christian civilians in Damour in January 1976.¹⁵⁴ The violent massacres during the first two years of the civil war caused Syria and the PLO to sign an agreement to temporarily stop the fighting at the summit of the Arab League in 1978. The Maoists welcomed this agreement and used the truce to fight Israel and the Southern Lebanese Army.¹⁵⁵ In 1978 and 1979, some of their troops even managed to infiltrate Israel and launch two attacks in Hebron and Nablus.¹⁵⁶ Shafīq concludes that the Maoists’ will to wage

Israeli troops. When the Israeli army invaded Lebanon in 1982, they were at first welcomed by the population.

¹⁴⁷ Compare also Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 240f., who maintains that the Student Squad provided weapons and a military training when Amal started to form its own militia in 1974.

¹⁴⁸ Shafīq, *Shuhadāʾ wa-masīra*, 84; also Biss, *Inthiyāl*, 278.

¹⁴⁹ Shafīq, *Shuhadāʾ wa-masīra*, 116.

¹⁵⁰ After Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, Muhammad’s grandson, who was killed and beheaded at the battle of Karbala (680 AD).

¹⁵¹ Shafīq, *Shuhadāʾ wa-masīra*, 94. He does not mention whether he converted to Sunnī or Shiite Islam. The context makes a conversion to the Sunnī Islam more likely. Some authors even hold him to be a Hamas spokesman, see Legrain, “HAMAS”, 162, and Paz, “Is Hamas Reevaluating”.

¹⁵² Shafīq, *Shuhadāʾ wa-masīra*, 74.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 113f.

¹⁵⁴ The death toll is unclear and ranges from three to six hundred. In revenge, Christian militias killed three thousand residents of the Palestinian refugee camp Tell al-Zaater in August 1976.

¹⁵⁵ Shafīq, *Shuhadāʾ wa-masīra*, 114.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

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.¹⁵⁷

In reference to the intra-Palestinian and intra-Arab battles, Munīr Shafīq quotes in length from a book published in 1978 and co-authored by two Squad members, one of them his brother killed in 1976.¹⁵⁸ The authors mainly deal with the moral principles required of the revolutionary, such as selflessness and brotherliness.¹⁵⁹ Although from a Marxist background, they define ethical and moral principles as concurring “with what Islam says”,¹⁶⁰ according to Shafīq. 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.¹⁶¹ 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.¹⁶²

Şādiq al-‘Azm’s Critique of “the Maoism of Fatah” and Shafīq’s Replies

In 1973, Marxist philosopher Şādiq Jalāl al-‘Azm criticized the Palestinian Maoists’ warfare as 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 that it comes closer to achieve its liberating aims.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Sa’d Jarādāt, Jūrj Shafīq ‘Asl, *Afkār thawriyya fī mumārasat al-qitāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘a, 1978).

¹⁵⁹ Shafīq, *Shuhadā’ wa-masīra*, 103-110.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 110.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., 132.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 232.

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. After his turn to Islam, Shafiq depicted the *mujāhid*—the one who fights the *jihād*—as even more resolute than the *fidā'i*—the one who sacrifices himself—which was the term used by the PLO guerrillas.

To better understand this development, it is necessary to turn back to the 1973 debate, when Šādiq al-‘Azm attacked Munīr Shafiq, Nājī ‘Allūsh, and other Fatah Maoists because he held their extremism responsible for the expulsion of the PLO guerrillas from Jordan in “Black September” 1970.¹⁶⁴ Šādiq al-‘Azm’s book was meant to be a critical inquiry into the Palestinian military struggle. Although al-‘Azm supported it in general, he believed that there was room for improvement on all levels.¹⁶⁵ He argued that “Black September” was a continuation of the defeat of the Arab armies in 1967.¹⁶⁶ 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.¹⁶⁷ Although it was quite common to refer to the guerrilla attacks as the “Palestinian revolution”,¹⁶⁸ Šādiq al-‘Azm questioned this term. He considered military struggle only as “resistance” (*muqāwama*) and not as a full-fledged “revolution”¹⁶⁹ and wrote that according to Mao Zedong “armed struggle is neither the only, nor the sufficient precondition to achieve a revolution.”¹⁷⁰ He

¹⁶⁴ An equally critical work about the Palestinian guerrillas was written by the Syrian Marxist thinker Ilyās Murquṣ, *‘Afwīyat al-naḡariya fi l-‘amal al-fidā’i. Naqd al-fikr al-muqāwim* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥaḡiqa, 1970).

¹⁶⁵ Šādiq Jalāl al-‘Azm, *Dirāsa naqdiya li-fikr al-muqāwama al-filastīniya* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Awda, 1973), 8.

¹⁶⁶ *Dirāsa naqdiya li-fikr al-muqāwama al-filastīniya* published in 1972 was a kind of supplement to his other critical works after 1967, *al-Naqd al-dhātī ba’d al-bazīma* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī’a, 1968) and *Naqd al-fikr al-dīnī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī’a, 1969).

¹⁶⁷ ‘Azm, *Dirāsa naqdiya*, 17–21.

¹⁶⁸ See for example Munīr Shafiq, *Ḥawl al-tanāquḡ wa-l-mumārasa fi l-thawra al-filastīniya* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī’a, 1971), idem., *al-Thawra al-filastīniya bayn al-naqd wa-l-taḡtīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī’a, 1973).

¹⁶⁹ ‘Azm, *Dirāsa naqdiya*, 11, 18, 25 passim.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 214.

deplored that Fatah did not even want to become a social movement¹⁷¹ and added:

The simple thing that Munir Shafiq 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.¹⁷²

Moreover, ‘Azam criticized the concept of a People’s war¹⁷³ and accused Munir Shafiq among others to apply it in an arbitrary manner:

From here arises a very contrived phenomenon one can call ‘the Maoism of Fatah’ (*mawiyat al-Fatah*), which is a Maoism void of any serious content and of all the foundational pillars on which authentic Maoism is built; 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.¹⁷⁴

He deplored Shafiq’s 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 [...]”¹⁷⁵ ‘Azam 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 Munir Shafiq put aside.”¹⁷⁶

In his immediate response, Shafiq cited different examples and definitions to justify calling the Palestinian struggle a revolution.¹⁷⁷ 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.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 221.

¹⁷² Ibid., 42.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 78-206.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 119.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 206. Compare a similar quote *ibid.*, 42.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 43.

¹⁷⁷ Shafiq, *al-Thawra al-filasṭīniya*, 13-16, 65-67.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 12. Compare also Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, 199.

Defending the concept of “a People’s war of long duration”¹⁷⁹ and his belief in the masses,¹⁸⁰ 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.¹⁸¹ He put the doubting “intellectual” (*muthaqqaf*) in quotation marks and compared ‘Azm to the imprisoned Fāṭima al-Barnāwī,¹⁸² concluding that the latter had to be preferred to the first, whose attitude leads to nothing but “surrender”.¹⁸³ In *al-Islām fī ma‘rakat al-ḥadāra*, Shafiq indirectly took up the debate once again by outlining three related concerns: he rejected the West as a whole, dismissed Marxism and re-defined 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*.¹⁸⁴ Shafiq 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 (*shāmil*); especially in the countries of the Arabs and Muslims it concentrated on the cultural-civilizational attack.”¹⁸⁵ 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.¹⁸⁶ In reality, the West, he argued, has morally gone downhill in every respect, because of the “global greed” of capitalism.¹⁸⁷ His critique of “global greed” included Marxist thought and the practical politics of socialist countries, because their power as well was based on the exploitation of other peoples. To illustrate this point, Shafiq created

¹⁷⁹⁾ Shafiq, *al-Thawra al-filastīniya*, 44-49.

¹⁸⁰⁾ Ibid., 98-107.

¹⁸¹⁾ Ibid., 20.

¹⁸²⁾ The PLO fighter who tried to install a bomb in an Israeli cinema in 1967 was imprisoned for ten years.

¹⁸³⁾ Šafiq, *al-Thawra al-filastīniya*, 28.

¹⁸⁴⁾ Shafiq, *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.”

¹⁸⁵⁾ Ibid. 196.

¹⁸⁶⁾ Ibid., 19-27, 84-92, 109-114, 176-206.

¹⁸⁷⁾ Ibid., 84-92.

a fictional discussion between an Arab and a French Marxist after the assumed victory of socialist revolutions in both their countries.¹⁸⁸ 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. Shafiq concluded that capitalist and socialist economies share the same greed and the same mode of exploitation of non-Western countries. This well-known argumentation¹⁸⁹ served to justify the mobilisation of the exploited Muslim masses.

Shafiq bemoaned that Muslims faced with Westernization have mainly followed two unsuccessful routes: the call for modernization or the call for harmonization between modernity and heritage.¹⁹⁰ He argued that Muslims, who are morally and spiritually different, should base their lifestyle on “the revolution of Islam” and on “the totality of Islam.”¹⁹¹ Necessary would be a total renunciation of the West, “because the total war (*al-ḥarb al-shāmīla*) that was waged against us can only be answered with total war.”¹⁹² This war requires “unity” (*tawḥīd*)—a pivotal term in this Islamist discourse¹⁹³—and aims at the liberation of Palestine, which forms the focal point for the mobilisation against imperialism.¹⁹⁴ The *jihād* against imperialistic powers will also strengthen “the process of unification” (*‘amalīyat al-tawḥīd*) among Muslims,¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 84-87.

¹⁸⁹ Compare Mirza Sultan-Galiev, a Tartar Bolshevik and representative of a ‘Muslim Communism’ in the USSR, 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.

¹⁹⁰ Shafiq, *al-Islām*, 121-129.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 97.

¹⁹² Ibid., 200. The whole chapter (ibid., 195-200) that ends with the sentence quoted above bears the title: “About the necessity to wage total war against total war.”

¹⁹³ 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-mādhā.”

¹⁹⁴ Shafiq, *al-Islām*, 44, 150-155.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 44.

“because Palestine has become the title of unity (*tawḥīd*).”¹⁹⁶ The cultural resources for this struggle are present in the masses and do not have to be imported. Shafiq 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.¹⁹⁷

As the “mass line” can only be with Islam, secular Marxists contradict themselves when they plead for the emancipation of the masses.¹⁹⁸ Theoretical reasoning—because of the problems, sacrifices, and obstacles of military struggle—has not led to any alternative to the “*jihād* for the liberation of Palestine”.¹⁹⁹ A critic could hold that the revolution, although it had stopped “elimination and genocide [in Palestine] has not yet resulted in the annihilation of the Zionist entity and the liberation of Palestine.”²⁰⁰ This objection is right, Shafiq argued, but it would be wrong to pose the question whether armed struggle as such has failed. Instead one should realize that victory would require that “vast popular Arab and Islamic forces” engaged in the war just as they did during the liberation of Palestine from the Crusaders. Therefore, any “questioner should go to the battlefields so that the Palestinian revolution could account for a huge amount of fighting masses (*jaḥāfil mujāhida*) who wage the venture of war until victory.”²⁰¹

Shafiq indirectly opposed ‘Azḡm’s earlier critique of the mass line and went on to argue that mass mobilisation for Palestine alone was not enough. He reframed his “trust in the masses”, but imagined the greatest possible fighting unit against the greatest possible enemy, i.e. the liberation of Palestine had to go hand in hand with the Muslims’ total war against the West. Apart from this, he followed the same rhetorical

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 150.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ See his interview with Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 30.

¹⁹⁹ Shafiq, *al-Islām*, 150f.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 154.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

strategy that already the Soviet communists had used in their attempt to gather ‘the exploited masses of the East’ for *jihād* under the red banner,²⁰² when he re-claimed “real” *jihād* under the green banner of Islam.

Selective and Accumulative Conversion

Baḥayṣ’s and Tamīmī’s treatise *As’ila ḥawla l-islām wa-l-mārkiṣiyya min warā’ al-quḍbān* can be understood as a popularized version of Shafīq’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.²⁰³ Although the original research question—why people turn to fundamentalism—may be one-directional, 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. 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

²⁰²⁾ See for example the “Manifesto of the Congress of the Peoples of the East”, issued 1923 in Baku: “Peoples of the East! You have often heard the call to holy war from your governments, you have marched under the green banner of the Prophet, but all these holy wars were fraudulent, serving only the interests of your self-serving rulers, and you, the peasants and workers, remained in slavery and want after these wars. [...] Now we summon you to the first real holy war under the red banner of the Communist International. We summon you to a holy war for your own wellbeing, for your own freedom, for your own life!” Cited in Murawiec, *The Mind of Jihad*, 214f.

²⁰³⁾ 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, on <http://www.cesnur.org/testi/endber/ANHANG.HTM>, retrieved on 27 September 2008.

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. In this respect, the former Maoists spoke about the duties of a Muslim (fighter) in the face of existential challenges.

(1) Selectivity

Right from the beginning, Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī underline the selectivity of their Islamic belief 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)?²⁰⁴ 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.²⁰⁵

They also reject their brothers' assumption that they converted to Islam to win the Muslim masses over more easily.²⁰⁶ Instead Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī state that mass mobilization under the umbrella of Islam is difficult and resembles "swimming against the current".²⁰⁷ The authors

²⁰⁴ Baḥayṣ, Tamīmī, *As'ila*, 12.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 13f.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 15f.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 16; Shafiq, *Shuhadā' wa-masīra*, 131.

argue that using Islam as an instrument for mass mobilization is quite unpopular, since *jihād* demands more sacrifices.²⁰⁸ But the move towards the “grounds of Islam” is to be only the first, correct and necessary step into the right direction.²⁰⁹ This is because first and foremost, Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī believe in Islam and in God, and second, that Islam helps to discover the right “theory of revolution”.²¹⁰ Finally, the authors are convinced that if there will be a revolution, it can only be an Islamic one: *Lā thawra fī bilādinā illā thawra islāmīya*.²¹¹

(2) Open-Mindedness

The Palestinian converts combine open-mindedness with regard to their understanding of Islam with an uncompromising understanding of *jihād*. The 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.²¹² Islam presents “general principles”, but it “does not interfere in the details” which are left open for *ijtihād* (independent interpretation of the legal sources) in line with transformations and material progress; this also refers to concepts like *shūrā* (consultation), *milkiya* (possession), and *takāful* (solidarity).²¹³ Baḥayṣ and Tamīmī argue that 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-ijtihād*),” possess “a magic key” when they turn to Islam to find solutions.²¹⁴ 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

²⁰⁸) Baḥayṣ, Tamīmī, *As’ila*, 16.

²⁰⁹) *Ibid.*, 16, 38.

²¹⁰) *Ibid.*, 16.

²¹¹) *Ibid.*, 27.

²¹²) *Ibid.*, 16.

²¹³) *Ibid.*, 37.

²¹⁴) *Ibid.*, 38.

mujtahidūn.²¹⁵ 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.”²¹⁶

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.²¹⁷

(3) *Debunking Marxism*

Baḥayṣ’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.²¹⁸ Marxists are convinced that they possess the “magic wand”, but no Marxist book has ever been valid for more than five years.²¹⁹ 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.”²²⁰

The crucial argument of the authors lies in their reference to Marx’s well-known description of the “devastating effects” of British colonial-

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 39.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 19f.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 21.

²²⁰ Ibid., 21f.

ism on the traditional society in India.²²¹ 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.²²² 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".²²³ Certainly, the authors knew the critique of this Marxian passage by Munīr Shafīq and Edward Said.²²⁴ 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".²²⁵ A remedy could only be found in the Islamic civilization (*ḥadāra*), which had liberated the peoples from corruption and destruction—beginning with the Islamic *futūḥāt* (conquests) which differed fundamentally from any imperialist aggression.²²⁶ As soon as the Islamic model of justice and solidarity would be revived,

²²¹ The sources are not mentioned in the treatise, but the authors certainly refer to: Karl Marx, "British Rule in India", in: *New-York Daily Tribune*, 3804, 25 June 1853 (on <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/06/25.htm>, retrieved on 27 October 2009), and idem., "The Future Results of British Rule in India", in: *New-York Daily Tribune*, 8 August 1853 (on <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/07/22.html>, retrieved on 27 October 2009).

²²² 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."

²²³ Baḥayṣ, Tamīmī, *As'ila*, 25, 43; compare the excerpt translated into French in Charara, Domont, *Le Hezbollah*, 91ff.

²²⁴ See Shafīq, *al-Islām*, 180 and Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 153.

²²⁵ Baḥayṣ, Tamīmī, *As'ila*, 25.

²²⁶ Ibid., 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-ghazawāt al-isti'māriya*), in: Shafīq, *al-Islām*, 129-132.

the “real struggle” for independence against Imperialism and Zionism could begin.²²⁷

The authors argue that communism failed due to a disparity between its promises and the situation of the masses. “The avant-garde elite” (*al-nukhba al-ṭalī‘īya*) in communism finds itself in isolation and in opposition to “traditional” society.²²⁸ Governing communists were unable to harmonize their views with their society’s traditions.²²⁹ But according to Baḥayş and Tamīmī, 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” freedom and development can only be achieved with the help of Islam.²³⁰ The intention is to implement a successful development for the *umma* in all spheres, including inflicting “a lasting defeat on the Zionist enemy.”²³¹ Just like Catholicism—as liberation theology—plays a major part in the revolutions of Latin America,²³² 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 crunched by Western civilization and has to reject Westernization in order to achieve independence, freedom and development.²³³

(4) *Ontological Re-framing*

Baḥayş’s and Tamīmī’s ontological starting point is the term *fiṭra*, “the human nature” that God created and humans can not change.²³⁴ *Fiṭra* means a “never ending struggle” between “the contradictory constants”

²²⁷ Baḥayş, Tamīmī, *As’ila*, 46.

²²⁸ Ibid., 49.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid. 49f.

²³¹ Ibid., 50f.

²³² The Latin American Episcopal Conference in Medellin 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.

²³³ Baḥayş, Tamīmī, *As’ila*, 52.

²³⁴ The discussion of the term *fiṭra* takes up about ten pages. Ibid., 31-41.

of human nature, such as between personal whims and higher moral values.²³⁵ 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.”²³⁶ They argue that Islam is a “comprehensive method” for all aspects of human life, whereas Marxist materialistic understanding of human nature is one-sided.²³⁷ 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.²³⁸ 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.²³⁹ Islam does not accept any form of oppression and injustice, and therefore fighting the oppressor is integral to the belief in God.²⁴⁰ 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.²⁴¹ 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 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.²⁴²

(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

²³⁵ Ibid., 36.

²³⁶ Ibid., 33.

²³⁷ Ibid., 39.

²³⁸ Ibid., 32. Compare Shafīq, *al-Islām*, 48, 97, 105, 110, 113.

²³⁹ Baḥayṣ, Tamīmī, *As’īla*, 33f.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 40.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid., 40f.

Islamic alternative put forward by the former Maoists overtly or tacitly reflects this paradox.

First, Shafiq 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 Shafiq, 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.”²⁴³ 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 Shafiq’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.”²⁴⁴ 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. Shafiq’s plea for a “total war against total war” shows that there is no consensus among Islamists concerning this point.²⁴⁵

Fourthly, the former Maoists identify with a non-Western “traditional world” exploited and threatened by “Western modernity” and want to surpass modernity with what they see as ‘real’ development. They refute

²⁴³ See his interview with Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 30.

²⁴⁴ Baḥayṣ, Tamīmī, *As’ila*, 32; they falsely attribute Lenin’s sentence to Engels.

²⁴⁵ ‘Abbās Mūsawī, founder of Islamic Amal and later a leading figure in Ḥizballāh, 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.

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 history²⁴⁶ 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 guerrillas in Jordan (1970) and Lebanon (1978/1982) caused the Fatah movement to split into two opposing camps: one inclined towards a "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 *jihād* as opposed to guerrilla tactics happened in response to the PLO strategy that—beginning in 1974—showed some inclination to accept a two-state-solution. This inclination as well as the disastrous entanglement of the PLO guerrillas into the Lebanese civil war and their factual defeat by the Israeli army caused disenchantment about the tactics, force, and aims of the Palestinian guerrillas. The reaction of the Palestinian and Lebanese Maoists was that they separated—in spite of their permanent call for unification—from Fatah after ten years of dissent or withdrew from the battlefields.

The faction whose individual and collective voyage led to militant Islamism was convinced that it surpassed Marxism. Its 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

²⁴⁶ See Shafiq, *al-Islām*, 41, where he refutes the Marxian notion of "the trick of history".

sublation—of anti-imperialism, liberation struggle, and Arab-Islamic identity.²⁴⁷ These intersections were appealing to different sympathizers. The Jihadists advocated an Iran-like revolution that would supersede the Russian and Chinese models and implicitly revived idea of progress, namely, the idea that Islam summed up and surpassed the previous experiences. They marketed martyrdom and their conviction, that the liberation of Palestine could only be accomplished through armed struggle, as new Islamic ideals.

As Bahāyṣ and Tamīmī turned their backs on Marxist internationalism, their positive reference to the Catholic theology of liberation is surprising, taken that they wanted to be authentically Islamic. However, the understanding of religion as an anti-imperialist force may not be too far away from some Latin American examples. Yet, it is doubtful whether Munīr Shafīq—defining liberation and revolution as total war against the West—deserves the title of a ‘liberation theologian’.²⁴⁸ Neither can the Maoists’ experience be seen as “too early Islamized”, as if a *real* marriage of Marxism and Islamism would have resulted in the desirable realization of Ernst Bloch’s “concrete utopia”.²⁴⁹ Both as Maoists and Jihadists, the actors 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 seems neither particularly liberating nor religious; it virtually remained untouched by their shift, but turned into intransigence couched in Islamic terms.

²⁴⁷ 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-mādhā”.

²⁴⁸ See the comment on Shafīq’s *al-Islām fi ma’rakat al-ḥadāra* by Mohamed Tahar Benssada, “Les théologies islamiques de la libération (9)” (24 April 2007) on <http://www.oumma.com/La-theologie-de-la-liberation-de,2401>, retrieved 1 November 2009. Benssada concedes that “l’œuvre de M. Chafiq n’est pas théologique au sens usuel du terme.” The website’s series on Islamic “liberation theology” also comprises ‘Alī Sharī’atī and Abū l-‘Alā’ al-Mawdūdī.

²⁴⁹ See Dot-Pouillard, “De Pékin à Téhéran”, 17, 21 ; he writes, *ibid.*, 23: “L’expérience «maos» à Tripoli et au Sud-Liban fait office, peut-être, d’utopie concrète non réalisée théoriquement, et trop tôt islamisée pour faire office de véritable synthèse entre marxisme tiers-mondiste et islam révolutionnaire.”

What changed is that the militants opened the Maoist frame for the legitimization of political violence step by step to also include cultural and 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 *mujāhidūn* will succeed in the end, due to their invincible belief and unity. 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, and the 'adequate' means for revolutionary acts as well as about their 'immediate result'—by which Marxists were theoretically agonized and practically threatened with failure. The Jihadists' acts are immune to critique or failure insofar as they argue inside a different time frame and their individual experience is connected to, but also detached from collective providence. They have fulfilled their personal destination as soon as they have become a tool, a "catalyst" for victory; they do not have to "live to see their cause win" (al-'Azm). Although the Islamic Jihad Brigades attracted no mass following, their accumulation of anti-imperialism with Arab-Islamic identity policy and of popular armed struggle with the promise of certain, but delayed victory proves to be exemplary for the formation of intransigence in militant Islamist discourses.