Apart from these official policies, there was a concurrent covert one. The KGB mounted its biggest subversive operation up to that time, endeavouring to lay the foundations for a long-lasting Soviet influence, if not dominance, in the area.[33] This subversive operation entailed several kinds of activity, of which penetration into various governments was one. For example, Sami Sharaf, the intelligence adviser to President Nasser, was a controlled KGB agent, feeding information to Nasser which was intended to erode the links he had with the West. Sharaf, for instance, planned the November 1964 mob demonstration which resulted in the burning of the USIS Library in Cairo.[34] On 22 May 1971 Anwar Sadat was to arrest Sami Sharaf, along with Aly Sabry and ninety others, for planning an imminent coup.

A part of the covert strategy was to organize various terrorist groups. The oilfields of Saudi Arabia were the targets of the Front of Liberation of Saudi Arabia, for example, and smaller sheikdoms south of Kuwait were 'targeted'. Also, urban terrorism, including kidnappings and assassinations directed against Turkey, was to be organized. The Turkish operation was apparently set up early in the 1960s with a few agents recruited in Ankara by the KGB and sent for training in the Soviet Union and later in Syria, where training camps were set up and supervised by Soviet personnel.[35]

In the Kremlin's attempts to penetrate the Middle East, the PLO was to form the fulcrum of the Soviet Union's strategic approach. That group, for various reasons, was to emerge as a terrorist organization above all others, the initiator of the terrorist recrudescence which was to plague Western democratic societies from the late 1960s on, and the central co-ordinator of logistical and material support to a vast network of terrorist groups worldwide.

The Soviet Official Position on the PLO

The PLO was officially founded at the Arab Summit Conference of January 1964. Up until the 1967 Six-Day War and the massive defeat of the Arab armies by Israel, there were few direct contacts between the Soviet Union and the PLO, although at least one high-level meeting is known to have occurred. In May 1966 there was a meeting between Ahmad Shuquairy, the leader of the PLO at the time, and Kosygin.[36] The content of the meeting can only be guessed at but the meeting itself would indicate an interest in the group which predates the official shift of interest, generally seen as occurring after the Six-Day War.

At the time of the first terrorist act carried out on Israeli territory by al-Fatah, in January 1965, the Soviet media made no mention

whatsoever of its occurrence. This position, or rather avoidance of a public position, was then gradually replaced by comments which alleged the non-existence of the *fedayeen* groups - what *Izvesitya* called 'the activity of mythical diversionary groups'.[37] There were, however, a number of scholarships granted by Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and East Germany to the General Union of Palestinian Students - a PLO affiliate.[38]

During those years the main thrust of Soviet policy in the Middle East stressed state-to-state normalization which resulted successfully in closer ties with Syria, Iraq, Yemen and the Sudan, and in a growing Soviet military presence in that whole area. Coincidentally, between 1964 and 1967 the PLO opened branch offices in many of the same states: the UAR, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan and Aden.[39]

Immediately after the Six-Day War, the USSR, attempting to consolidate an international front of Soviet bloc states with Arab and 'non-aligned' countries at the United Nations, shifted the emphasis of its policy from the strengthening of Arab 'progressive' forces to one stressing all-Arab unity. 'The war showed . . . Imperialism [to be] the enemy of all Arab countries . . . not merely of the progressive republics.'[40] To justify this new approach, the Marxist-Leninist doctrine was to be interpreted with great flexibility so that military dictatorships might become acceptable allies.[41] Since states such as Egypt, Syria and Algeria did not have a dictatorship of the proletariat and had no national bourgeoisie, these lacunae were explained as being specific problems of that area and the path to be followed in order to transform these societies had to be a flexible application of Marxist-Leninist doctrine.[42]

In the immediate aftermath of the war, some Soviet statements advocated an 'Algerian' strategy to be adopted against Israel. It was said that there was a need to prepare the Arabs for protracted guerrilla warfare and a 'real people's war'.[43] However, on the whole, the call for the liquidation of Israel was sharply criticized and the PLO's use of that 'absurd slogan' was called 'hysterical'.[44]

With the overthrow of the first chairman of the PLO, Ahmad Shuqairy, at the end of 1967, the Soviet Union used the opportunity to criticize, not the organization itself, but the man, and this mainly because of his past reliance on Chinese assistance.[45]

In 1968 the USSR initiated a campaign of approval and justification, in the media and at the United Nations, for the 'partisans' struggle against the 'occupier'. The immediate aim of Soviet policy in the Middle East was to isolate Israel and the United States by establishing Soviet influence and exploiting the on-going conflict to gather and unite the Arab world as much as possible.

The strategic choice to achieve this end was, however, uncertain, especially after the humiliating defeat of the USSR's clients during the Six-Day War, with its own loss both of prestige and of expensive weaponry.

After the severing of relations with Israel in 1967 a tentative shift away from military confrontations, at least in the immediate future, was initiated. This shift was in fact reflected in official pronouncements which were at first vague, but which gradually, in the second part of the year, indicated growing approval of unconventional methods of warfare. The Soviet media began the publication of detailed descriptions of terrorist activities. The image these publications were creating was that there was a growing struggle by 'partisans' from within which was gaining support among the local population in Israel.[46]

The growing approval manifested itself in other ways as well. The first conclusive evidence of some Eastern bloc support for the terrorist organizations was reported by Muhammad Jabih, president of the Palestinian Students' Association of which Arafat had been the first president. In April 1968, upon his return to Cairo from a trip to Eastern Europe, he reported the promise made by the USSR, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia, to supply 'light equipment and medicaments' to the terrorist groups and to offer study grants as well.[47] Radio Cairo had reported a year earlier that East Germany had offered to supply arms to the PLO.[48]

In July 1968 Yassir Arafat secretly visited Moscow as part of the UAR delegation. The purpose of the visit was to establish contact with the Soviet leadership and arrange for the supply of arms.[49] Subsequently, Soviet embassies in the Middle East made several approaches to the *fedayeen* groups with the view to establishing some co-operation,[50] and the Jordanian Communist Party was regularly employed as a go-between to maintain contacts between the Soviet Union and the PLO. There was approval and even praise of the Arab terrorists in an article by Georgii Mirskii in *New Times*[51] in which he called al-Fatah the 'dominant force' in the resistance movement, having both moral and political influence, and declared that the 'very existence of this patriotic organization waging a dedicated struggle against the invaders is a source of inspiration for the Arabs'.

The singling out of al-Fatah for specific approval - a practice which was to be frequently adopted by the Soviet Union - and the visit by Arafat to Moscow might even suggest a concerted attempt at organizing the centralized type of group preferred by the USSR, which would greatly simplify the application of Soviet influence on its activities and would be a mirror image of Lenin's concept of the 'professional' terrorist group. Yassir Arafat appears to have been

singled out as a focal point to effect that centralization.

However, the intrinsic lack of cohesiveness of the various groups was repeatedly criticized by the Kremlin, and a call was made for a unification of 'all national Palestinian forces'.[52] The adoption of a programme for the liberation of Palestine was praised.[53] The official Soviet position was indicated at the United Nations, by the Soviet Union's asking for a political solution to the problem.

During the same year of official Soviet hesitation and gradual shift towards the Palestinian terrorists, the various *fedayeen* groups were themselves undergoing a reorganization, in terms of both structure and ideological adherences. The PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) came into existence in late 1967 and was made up of three principal groups: one set up by George Habash in the aftermath of the Six-Day War (The Vengeance Youth), one made up of PLO anti-Shuqairy members (The Heroes of the Return) and one formed in the early 1960s by Ahmad Jibril and Ali Bushnaq, Palestinian ex-officers of the Syrian army. Raids into Israel by this last group began in 1965. The need for the adoption of a strict Marxist-Leninist revolutionary ideology was emphasized in their own publication.[54] PFLP publications included the same terminology which was used by the Soviet Union, which called Israel a 'bridgehead for old and new Imperialism'[55] led by the United States, and linked Zionism, racism and world imperialism into one expression. 'The war for the liberation of Palestine', the PFLP said, 'is a war against Israel and all those who stand behind Israel, particularly American Imperialism.'[56] It also identified itself with the 'world liberation movement'. Although the PFLP declared that it would only direct its strikes against military and strategic targets, this was qualified by one of its commanders who stated that they might attack civilian targets in reaction to 'Israeli terror'. He explained his position in cost-effectiveness terms thus: 'Attacks on Israeli military targets cost us effort, weapons and people - while attacks on civil targets and concentrations are not so costly.'[57]

The PLO equally directed most of its activities in 1968 to reorganization and unification of the various *fedayeen* groups. Although amalgamation and control by the PLO over all the other groups was not achieved in that year, the slogan for unity was heavily emphasized by the PLO leadership. 'To unify the Palestinian *fedayeen* forces, the PLO has called for co-operation, co-ordination, and unification . . . The achievement of this aim is essential for the escalation of the armed struggle.'[58]

The major effort made by the PLO to secure its position as the controlling umbrella body was to reconvene the Palestinian National Council (PNC). At the Cairo meeting held between 6 and

15 January 1968, the PLO publicly called for 'every Palestinian organization that takes part in the armed resistance to co-operate with the PLO in order to unite this struggle and escalate it'. A subcommittee was formed for that purpose composed of members of the Executive Committee 'which will have direct revolutionary contacts with all the Palestinian organizations'.[59]

Yassir Arafat,[60] who had been one of the founders of al-Fatah in 1958, explained that unity would be achieved 'on the battlefield forged by guns and sealed with the blood of martyrs'.[61] This extremist terrorist position was the rallying cry of the PNC which adopted an amended National Covenant reflecting the new outlook which had developed as a consequence of the Six-Day War. The terrorist groups were seen to be gaining in influence within the PNC, as exemplified by the term 'Palestinian revolution' and the definition of the 'armed struggle' as the 'only way to liberate Palestine' which were incorporated in the new Covenant but were absent from the 1964 Covenant.[62] Moreover, the new Covenant also specifically and totally rejected a political solution. To unite all the various groups and help them to ignore the differences which divided them, 'armed action' was made the rallying cry - the essential requirement for co-operation.

The Soviet Union, in 1969, continued to demonstrate an increased, albeit still cautious, official approval of *fedayeen* activities. The main thrust of its foreign policy in the Middle East was still directed towards state-to-state relations and an attempt at establishing its influence through those recognized channels. Concurrently, however, the terrorist groups were praised more strongly and more often by the Soviet press and officials of the government. This shift of emphasis became more apparent as the possibility of a four-power settlement receded. Alexandr Shelepin, a member of the Politburo, speaking in Budapest, compared the activities of the *fedayeen* to the partisan resistance against the Nazis, and identified the 'Palestinian patriots' struggle for the liquidation of the consequences of Israeli aggression' as a 'just anti-imperialist struggle and we support it'.[63]

The Kremlin encouraged the use of violence by these groups hoping perhaps that a quicker withdrawal by Israel from the territories occupied in the Six-Day War would ensue. In a broadcast in Arabic, for example, Radio Moscow stated that the 'resistance movement had become a part of the general struggle of the Arab people against the Israeli aggression' and that it was therefore 'natural' that the Palestinian refugees should carry arms to defend their rights usurped by the aggressors.[64]

This position was reiterated by F. A. Tabeev, leader of the Soviet delegation to the Second International Conference in Support of

the Arab Peoples in Cairo, and a member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. He stressed the Arab peoples' 'right to resist' and that the USSR 'has provided and will continue to provide active support'.[65]

In 1969-70 the USSR tried with difficulty to establish some influence over the *fedayeen* groups, enough at least to prevent any interference by them with the Kremlin's official manoeuvrings. In fact, the Soviet Union timed a renewal of diplomatic initiative in the Middle East with the inauguration of the Nixon administration. The Kremlin presented a peace proposal which would permit a return to a four-power participation based on UN Resolution 242. No doubt the Soviet Union at the time saw this type of initiative as the best vehicle for the re-injection of its influence into the area. However, the representatives of al-Fatah rejected this step in no uncertain terms, calling the Soviet Union 'the slave of the Israeli *fait accompli*. - It supported the 1947 Partition Plan: it now supports the 1967 Partition Plan'.[66] Stung by this public criticism, the USSR in turn responded with a strongly critical article in *Sovetskaya rossiya*. The criticism, however, mainly attempted to bring al-Fatah to a more acceptable position on the issue of the existence of the State of Israel, and was not directed at any *fedayeen* activities. 'It is clear that the aims which al-Fatah and some other organizations have set for themselves, which amount to the liquidation of the State of Israel and the creation of a "Palestinian democratic State", are not realistic . . .'[67]

As the likelihood of a political solution receded, the USSR increased its official expressions of support for the PLO - al-Fatah and other groups, but still showed its unhappiness with the fragmentary and non-cohesive character of the Organization. *New Times* published for the first time photographs of *fedayeen* in training in August 1969 (the site of the training camp is not identified), and in September it described al-Fatah as the leader of the groups, and the PLO as a 'growing political and military force'. The article went on to say that in spite of the 'highly favourable' conditions for guerrilla warfare, the PLO was 'badly hindered in its activities by the lack of co-ordination among the guerrillas'.[68] In short, the Soviet position encouraged violent action but wanted this action to take place under a unified command.

Plans for a second visit to Moscow by Arafat - this one more nearly official than the first, but not quite - were revealed in November 1969. The shift of the Soviet Union's official policy towards the PLO, it was said, was to provide it with 'active aid'. It would permit 'popular organizations' to provide aid to the *fedayeen* in the same way as they supplied 'aid to Vietnam', and other East European countries would also supply aid.[69]

Still exhibiting official caution in its overt approaches to the PLO (which now included al-Fatah), the USSR arranged for Arafat and his delegation to be hosted by the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee.[70] The arrival of the delegation in Moscow coincided with the presence there of a PFLP representative. The visit was given minute attention in the Soviet press, but nevertheless the coverage indicated a more amenable official attitude by the Soviet Union towards supporting and recognizing the PLO as a potential positive force.

Although there was yet no official indication of a promise of arms as an overt policy at the time, the report of the Executive Committee of the PLO which Arafat submitted to the Seventh Palestine National Council in Cairo in May 1970 did mention that the USSR had promised 'certain military support to the PLO'. *Pravda's* Cairo correspondent, Evgenii Primakov, referred to the PLO in a radio interview as a 'now important military factor'.[71]

During the same interview, which Primakov gave on Radio Moscow, he broached the subject of terrorism and presented a position which the Soviet Union has consistently maintained on the issue. He stated that after three years of Palestinian struggle, two approaches to the problem had emerged. First differentiating between 'individual terrorism' and the terrorism connected to 'the general popular struggle, the struggle of the whole people', he said that the Palestinian groups had on the whole adopted an 'organized popular struggle for the liberation of occupied territory' as opposed to choosing 'individual terror'. Second, and at the same time, he hinted at a possible shift in the PLO position which would abandon the extremist demand for the destruction of the State of Israel, which would bring it more in line with the Soviet position.

Neither of these points represents any departure from former official postures or unofficial behaviour on the part of the USSR in regard to the use of terrorism as a strategic weapon when deemed expedient. They seem to indicate more Soviet anxiety to achieve the same sort of centralized infrastructure necessary to support terrorist activity; in essence, the same concept of organization which Lenin had expounded, as was discussed earlier - the 'professional revolutionary' as opposed to the 'amateur' or 'individual' terrorist. The Primakov interview, in particular, seems to hint at a greater degree of acceptability for the PLO by the Kremlin, based on this point about organization. Also, the Soviet attempt to legitimize their own position in relation to the PLO and its activities, and to exploit the groups through greater control, is seen in their efforts at harnessing the Palestinians into the Soviet Union's 'world liberation movement'.

The Soviet reaction in 1969-70 to terrorist incidents which were

perpetrated by the PLO unequivocally endorses these points. Following the terrorist attack on the El Al airliner in Zurich in February 1969, for example, the blame for the 'bloodshed' was placed on 'the adventurous policies of the rulers of Israel'.[72] Further sympathetic approval was published in *Pravda* on 28 February 1969, in an article which again blamed Israel's 'abominable provocations' as being the cause, and exonerated the terrorists because they were 'patriots defending their legal right to return to their homeland'.

In February 1970, following the mid-air explosion of a Swiss airliner over Switzerland in flight from Zurich to Tel Aviv, the Soviet media absolved the *fedayeen* of the crime completely. TASS claimed that the Americans and the Israelis had used slanderous propaganda by accusing 'Arab guerrillas' as a 'diversion' to detract attention from 'the atrocities of the Israeli military',[73] and that there was a 'false communiqué involved at any event'.

Soviet reactions to the spread of hijackings by the PFLP in September 1970 present their position on the question of terrorism quite clearly, if the reactions expressed are placed in the proper chronological perspective. On 6 September 1970 three civilian airliners were hijacked: a Pan-American Boeing 747 on a flight between Amsterdam and New York was hijacked to Beirut and then to Cairo; a TWA Boeing 707 on a flight from Tel Aviv to New York was hijacked after a stop-over in Frankfurt; a Swissair DC8, flying from Zurich to New York, was hijacked and forced to fly to a desert airfield near Zarqa', outside Amman in Jordan.[74] Two days later a BOAC VC-10 flying from Bombay to London, was also forced to land near Amman, as was the TWA flight.[75] The PLO, having congratulated the PFLP on their success once all planes were in Jordan, ordered the PFLP to transfer the passengers and crew to Amman on 10 September 1970. This fact alone is of interest, establishing as it does the organizational and hierarchical supremacy of the PLO over other so-called 'splinter' groups. In fact, that order was at first acquiesced to by the PFLP hijackers, but was subsequently defied.[76] It is not until several days *after* the defied order that the USSR called the hijackings 'regrettable'[77] and criticized 'the Palestinian guerrillas' for their use of 'hijacking of civilian aircraft as a method of struggle'. The lapse of time might indicate a criticism of the lack of control and discipline revealed after the multiple hijackings rather than criticism of the terrorist acts themselves. Moreover, *New Times*, reporting the events late in the month of September, commented more on the destruction of the airplanes (they were blown up on the airfield) than on the actual terrorist act of hijacking and, at any event, it blamed that on 'extremist elements'.[78]

These hijackings came in the aftermath of a cease-fire agreement which was initiated by the United States and agreed to by Egypt and Israel. The disruption caused by the hijackings, it could be argued, might well have been welcomed by the Kremlin as an attempt at keeping its influence in the area alive. Moreover, there was evidence of Soviet involvement in Egyptian cease-fire violations, indicating a reluctance by the Soviet Union to accept the Rogers initiative as a peaceful solution.[79]

The immediate aftermath of those hijackings was the Jordanian-PLO confrontation and war which ended with the massive defeat of the *fedayeen*. The Soviet Union's conspicuous lack of activity during this conflict tends to reinforce the notion that the Kremlin hoped to curb or do away with insubordination in the ranks of the PLO which might result from the fighting, and that the defeated group would thus emerge as a more cohesive unit, albeit weakened. The massive defeat of the *fedayeen* in 1970 no doubt provided an immediate opportunity for the Kremlin to exert greater influence on the organizational structure and leadership of the PLO.

As a result of the defeat, minor organizations were in fact liquidated. Moreover, Yassir Arafat's leadership was accepted by the various remaining groups and resulted in a greater unification of *fedayeen* activities. The consolidation of the Organization contributed to the transformation of the Palestinian problem from one of refugees to a national one. This enabled the Kremlin gradually to shift towards greater public endorsement of the PLO.

This official transition reflected the changed conditions which developed for the Soviet Union in the Middle East, particularly in the aftermath of Nasser's death on 28 September 1970. Egypt, which up until then had formed the cornerstone of Soviet policy in the region, now presented the Kremlin with uncertain prospects. The choice of state-to-state relations on the official level was an obvious one for the Kremlin until the death of Nasser, given the unprecedented growth of military and naval presence in Egypt and the Mediterranean. Because of this inordinate success for Soviet state-to state relations in the Middle East, contacts with the PLO continued to be channelled through the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, which is controlled by the International Department. By December 1970 Boris Ponomarev, Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, was supporting the 'Palestinian liberation movement' and stating that the USSR 'will support it in the future', adding that 'every assistance' was rendered to it by the Soviet Union.[80]

In direct contrast to the official sympathetic response to the PLO hijackings, the Soviet Union was quick to call the Lithuanian

hijackers of a Soviet AN-24 airliner on a domestic flight from Batum on 15 October 1970 'criminal murderers'[81] and to demand that the Turkish authorities extradite them for trial in the USSR.[82] In fact, Ambassador Grubiakov submitted the official request for extradition to the Turkish Foreign Ministry on 24 October.[83] Three days later, on 27 October 1970, a second hijacking occurred, much to the embarrassment of the Kremlin. A twin-engine Aeroflot on a domestic flight from Kerch in the Crimea to Krasnodar was hijacked by two students who asked for political asylum in Turkey. On this occasion, the Soviet government chose to ignore the event. A Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman stated he 'knew nothing' about that hijacking.[84] The Soviet media in general were silent on this second hijacking. The sudden flurry of interest which the USSR exhibited at the United Nations in an anti-hijacking convention was, as we saw earlier, an immediate response to these two events. In neither hijacking was there any political demand made on the Soviet Union by the hijackers, nor was there the organizational infrastructure of the classic terrorist groups which have plagued the Western liberal democracies.

The following year, 1971, saw the Soviet Union gradually losing ground in its state-to-state relations in the Middle East.[85] A renewed interest in the local communist parties of the area was initiated as one of the possible means to help to arrest the anti-Sovietism which was building up. The Communist Parties of Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, which had established their own terrorist group, Al-Ansar, in November of 1969,[86] were encouraged into greater activity. Al-Ansar was supported by the PFLP, the Marxist-Leninist faction of the PLO. Possibly to stop the pro-Chinese trend in the PLO or to attempt greater control over the organization, it would appear that at the time of Arafat's visit to Moscow in February 1970 Moscow made its assistance to the *fedayeen* organizations conditional upon their acceptance of Al-Ansar to their ranks.[87]

With the expulsion of the Soviet Union in 1972 by Egypt's Anwar Sadat, which marked the lowest ebb of Soviet influence in the Middle East, there was a proportionate increase in the official acceptance of the PLO as a political factor by the Kremlin. In retrospect, one can see where the Soviet Union's position in the Middle East was markedly improved after the Munich massacre of Israeli athletes. The increase in Israeli-Arab fighting which immediately followed that tragic incident renewed Arab reliance on Soviet weapons supplies, thus helping to re-establish Soviet influence in the region. The deterioration of United States and West German relations with the Arab States was an unexpected bonus. Moreover, the stated elements of Soviet policy towards the

West and Israel were very similar indeed to those enunciated by the 'Black September' sub-group of the PLO* which killed the Israeli athletes.[88] After the deed, a spokesman for the group said: 'The operation was aimed at exposing the close relations between the treacherous German authorities and United States imperialism on the one hand and the Zionist enemy's authorities on the other.'

The Munich massacre appears to be the starting point of an official Soviet policy attempting to create a public image for the PLO which would eventually endow it with political acceptability in a broad sphere. Repeatedly over the years, the Soviet Union, through its press, radio and representative officials, has attempted to dissociate the PLO from its terrorist activities, particularly those taking place outside the Middle East area. Thus, the Munich murders were credited to the 'extremist terrorist group "Black September" '.[89]

At the United Nations Soviet representative Y. Malik, reacting to the Israeli raids into Lebanon and Syria which immediately followed the massacre, expressed sympathetic understanding for what he called 'Palestinian rebels who became themselves victims of non-stop Israeli aggression in the Middle East'.[90] A few days later, an announcement by the PLO Executive Committee disclaiming any connection with 'Black September' was given very wide coverage by several Soviet publications.[91]

This policy of legitimization of the PLO was further endorsed and emphasized with direct Soviet arms supplies in 1972.[92] It is noteworthy that this date coincides with the shift of emphasis towards civilian conflict which has already been discussed, and is not in contradiction with this military doctrine.

Following the Khartoum invasion of the Saudi Arabian embassy by the PLO's 'Black September' which resulted in the murder of the American Ambassador, his deputy and the Belgian Chargé d'Affaires, Radio Moscow quoted: 'Yassir Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, in a cable to President Numeiri, said that his organisation has nothing to do with the Khartoum incident.'[93] On the same day, in its English broadcasts, Radio Moscow described 'Black September' as uniting a few extreme groupings of Palestinians, suggesting links with non-Palestinian extremist interests. A few days later, however, *Pravda* quoted a telegram from Arafat to Sadat in which he attacked the United States for its campaign against the Palestinians and their *armed insurrection*[94] (emphasis added).

*Black September was a sub-group of al-Fatah, created after, and named for, the month when King Hussein's loyal forces fell upon the fedayeen, killed thousands of them, and drove them from his kingdom. It was formed to revenge the fedayeen. It's first act was to murder Wasfi al-Tal, sometime Prime Minister of Jordan.

The growing official reliance on the PLO by the USSR and the latter's image-creating efforts can also be seen in the technique often used by the Soviet media of quoting the PLO as the authority rather than the officials of a given country where a terrorist incident occurs. Thus, after the destruction of the oil refineries in Lebanon, Radio Moscow, in its Arabic broadcast, quoted the PLO as accusing Israel of the deed which took place on Lebanese soil. Presumably the oil refineries belonged to Lebanon, but no comment by the Lebanese government was given.[95] And, moreover, *Pravda* called the Israelis 'terrorists' . . . 'raising violence to the status of state policy'.[96]

In August 1973 *Radio Moscow*[97] quoted the weekly *Falastin Ath-Thawrah* of the PLO as sharply denouncing 'the act of terrorism staged by two unidentified persons at Athens airport on 5 August'. It went on to stress that the 'Palestine resistance movement is against all forms of terror'.

This systematic and uniform denial of involvement by the PLO after every incident was consistently published and quoted by the Soviet media. The size of the articles, the extent of coverage of any particular terrorist incident and the languages in which Radio Moscow was beamed all helped this process of 'politicization'. Often particularly brutal terrorist acts (although it is difficult to define what would make one act of terrorism more brutal than another) are either ignored by the Soviet media or given very small attention. For example, the attack by the PLO (Jibril's group) on the Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona in April 1974 in which eighteen Israelis died was reported by TASS in four sentences.[98] Those four sentences blamed the attack on 'Israeli Arabs', thus giving a brand of approval and a legitimation of the act by attributing it to 'local partisan resistance' - which in itself attributes to the 'resistance' a political label that endows it with a 'justifiable' cause. In other cases an attempt was made to place the blame on 'unknowns', as mentioned above, or on Israel itself, as the Soviet response to the Rome and Athens terrorist attacks at the end of 1973 indicated.[99] These attacks, coming as they did just before the reconvening of the Geneva Conference and after the Yom Kippur War which the USSR had tacitly and materially supported,[100] must be viewed in that context. Moreover, a few months earlier the official relationship between Arafat and the USSR was upgraded with Arafat's invitation in August 1973 as an honoured guest to the World University Games in Moscow and with the PLO being allowed to open an office in East Berlin in the same month.[101] *Pravda*, in fact, trying to place the blame elsewhere, stated that in view of the forthcoming Geneva Conference it was unlikely 'that the criminals were Palestinians'.[102] Radio Moscow in Arabic

broadcasts to the Arab world stated that the terrorists had to be non-Palestinian as 'such deeds arouse anti-Arab feelings'. Given the negative position of influence the USSR had at the time of the reconvening of the Geneva Conference, it could be argued that the anti-Arab feelings which were, in fact, aroused by such deeds, would prove to be beneficial to the overall Soviet position. By presenting itself as the only friend of the Arab states in general and the PLO in particular, the Kremlin probably hoped that these anti-Arab feelings would push these parties to place greater reliance on the USSR for material and moral support, and lead to greater cohesion on the 'anti-imperialism' posture pursued by Moscow.

The opening statement by Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko at the Geneva Conference on 21 December 1973 called for the 'participation of representatives of the Arab people of Palestine', but did not specifically mention the PLO as such a representative. Thus the official Soviet policy in the Middle East appeared to be hesitant at this juncture, or at the very least displayed the habitual multiple-level considerations of a pragmatic attitude adopted by the USSR while attempting to rally the Arab states around it and against the United States. To achieve its ultimate objective of re-establishing its influence in the area, the Kremlin would allow the Geneva Conference to open without the PLO if necessary.[103]

When Naif Hawatmeh, leader of the PDFLP (Marxist Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine) wing of the PLO attacked an Israeli school at Ma'alot which resulted in the death of many children, there was no condemnation of the act in the Soviet official media, although *New Times* reported 'international condemnation'.[104] The article, however, placed the blame for the murders on Israel and in particular on Moshe Dayan, whom it called a 'Palestinian Eichmann'. This label appears to be a part of the general polarizing attempt by the Soviet Union of the 'left' (pro-Soviet) and 'right' (pro-USA) positions which could be exploited within Israel as well as outside it. And the 'international condemnation' referred, therefore, to the Israeli actions rather than the terrorists. The Soviet press once again dissociated the PLO from the deed, and the Soviet Union could now broadcast a general condemnation of terrorism in a radio communication to Western audiences.[105] In fact, in Russian language publications and Arabic language broadcasts, Hawatmeh was repeatedly referred to as a moderate only a couple of months after Ma'alot, which in itself was an encouragement for future similar terrorist action. Hawatmeh was on friendly relations with the USSR* on his own merit and was possibly being groomed as an alternative leader to Arafat or as a leverage against him to ensure that there would be no change in the serving of Soviet interests.[106]

The cultivation of the PLO as a 'political' alternative continued. And it could be argued that the increased official recognition of the PLO by the Kremlin at that time indicated an exploitative use of that group as a vehicle for imposing itself in the Middle East and elsewhere, rather than reflecting any real interest in its 'cause'. It must be recalled that until 1961, the date of the Khrushchev doctrine, there was in fact no interest in the 'Palestine liberation' issue expressed on an official level by the USSR or any other country. At the United Nations only the Palestine refugee problem was discussed.[107] Arafat created al-Fatah in 1958 and it is unlikely that he would have escaped the attention of the Kremlin until 1966. One of the primary factors leading to the Sinai campaign of 1956 had been daily terrorist attacks in Israel.[108] So it is safe to state that it was not the 'cause' which grasped the imagination of the Politburo in the case of the PLO.

The very strong objections to PLO participation in the Middle East peace process and the Soviet Union's insistence on its inclusion in that process would, at any event, guarantee, at least for the near future, a continuing exacerbation of the local conflict and the increased probability of Soviet success in gaining influence in the area.

In the Kremlin's general attempt to harness the Palestinians and the Arab states in a globalized 'anti-imperialist drive' it applied the same distinctions to terrorist actions as it had consistently applied previously in other contexts in its efforts to consolidate a 'national front' position which could use terror when deemed expedient. The distinction was made between the use of terrorism and the use of violence to further the struggle of national liberation movements. As an example, in July 1974 a 'political observer' for *Izvestiya* wrote an article which condemned terrorism but approved the intensification of 'Palestinian partisans' action against the aggressor'.[109] A month later, Alexandr Ignatov presented a sympathetic picture of the use of terror by the Habash and Jibril groups of the PLO.[110] Quoting the *Novosti* news agency,

*Hawatmeh's PDFLP had the longest and closest ties with the USSR of all the PLO factions. It was Hawatmeh who introduced the idea of a 'stages' policy - that the PLO would accept a part only of the claimed Palestinian territory, as a first step towards 'recovering' it all. Al-Fatah and al-Saiqa, the Syrian-controlled group also accepted the idea, which was against the principle of the Covenant to accept nothing less, ever, than the whole of the former mandated territory of Palestine. This slight concession was accepted by the 12th PNC, in June 1974, when the Soviet Union was eager for peace talks at Geneva in which it would participate. It is likely that Hawatmeh proposed the concession at the behest of the USSR, and it might be seen as a compromise between the PLO's position of holding out for the total destruction of Israel, and the Soviet Union's of accepting Israel's existence.

the Voice of Palestine (Clandestine) in Arabic to the Arab world explicitly described how the USSR viewed the Palestinian issue: 'The Soviet Union and the socialist countries . . . consider this movement a *combat* unit of the *world movement* for national liberation, as well as a unit of the Arab and world democratic forces' (emphasis added).[111]

Radio Moscow in Arabic usually carried a more aggressive and encouraging line than, for example, Radio Moscow in English. Furthermore, in a very interesting article on 'international terrorism and the struggle against it',[112] the USSR described terrorism as being 'most frequently . . . the actions of individuals not of groups', once again paraphrasing Lenin's rejection of *individual terrorism*. This was another attempt to dissociate the PLO from any terrorist incidents by attributing the acts to 'splinter groups', and also as a condemnation of the apparent lack of cohesion among the groups - a fact which continued to trouble the Kremlin. The article went on to define what it called the 'theory of so-called state terrorism' as 'Israel's policy toward the Arab population . . . and the barbaric methods of the Portuguese colonialists in Africa . . . the bloody outrages of the fascist junta in Chile'. It then made the following statement:

> The Soviet Union, proceeding from a position of principle, opposes any attempts to use the question of international terrorism perpetrated by *individual elements* in order to harm this [Palestinian] patriots' struggle . . . whose justness and legitimacy has been recognized, in particular by the United Nations . . . (Emphasis added)

In addition, the incorporation of the Palestinian National Front into the PLO* drew warm praise from the *New Times* correspondent, Victor Bukharov. This group, mainly made up of West Bank Arab Communists, gave the USSR added influence on the PLO. It was very active in terrorism.[113]

With the appearance of Yassir Arafat, gun-holster on hip, before the Twenty-Ninth General Assembly of the United Nations in the autumn of 1974, the Soviet propaganda campaign of legitimation and politicization of the PLO saw its first major success. Arafat, addressing the Assembly, spoke once again of the PLO's wish to destroy Israel and warned that it would continue its terrorist attacks if it could not achieve this. Five days later the PDFLP killed four Israeli civilians and wounded nineteen in a terrorist raid on the town of Bet Shan.[114]

*The PNF was founded in 1973, by the Jordanian CP. Some of its leaders, when exiled by Israel, were appointed to high positions in the PLO.

It was at this time that the Soviet Union shifted its official position even more strongly towards the PLO, and in particular, towards the idea of a Palestinian state to exist alongside the State of Israel.*[115] One day before the United Nations General Assembly debate on the Palestinian issue, Vladimir Volgin, in a radio commentary to North America, called the PLO 'the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people' and 'the sole representative'.[116] This was, however, not an abrupt decision taken by the Soviet Union but part of a gradual process. A few months earlier the Soviet Union had already begun to use a new terminology when referring to the PLO: 'legitimate national rights', an expression which carries within it the idea of statehood.[117] Although there was reticence on the part of the PLO to declare for a state, eventually a year later it fell in line with the Soviet position. Moscow Radio made the announcement on 28 November 1975 in its broadcast in Arabic. By that time the civil war in Lebanon was raging and although Moscow tried to explain the PLO's acceptance of the Soviet position as a sign of maturity and realism,[118] it probably more accurately reflected the growing dependence the PLO had developed in that civil war.

The advocacy of the destruction of the State of Israel, which the PLO still maintains as its foremost goal, was never seriously considered as a possibility by the USSR. To endorse that extreme position must have been seen as too strong a confrontational issue with the United States. However, it can also be argued that the continued existence of Israel would provide the necessary and possibly only catalyst for a certain amount of cohesiveness among the Arab states in general, and within the PLO in particular, and could thus facilitate the extension of Soviet influence in the Middle East area through either, or both.

Whatever the reasons - and the deteriorating relationship with Egypt, together with the concomitant growth of United States influence in the post-October War period (in spite of massive Soviet help in that area), must not be ignored as major influencing factors - the official relationship between the USSR and the PLO was strengthened and could now be used more aggressively and openly by the Kremlin.

From 1974 onwards official meetings between Arafat and Soviet leaders became more frequent and the continued practice of exonerating the PLO from any terrorist involvements featured widely in the propaganda efforts. A series of articles in *Izvestiya* in April 1975 by Victor Kudryavtsev categorically denied PLO involvement in any terror whatsoever, thus passing no comment

*For further details see ed. note p. 119.

on the Fatah attack on the Savoy Hotel in Tel Aviv on 6 March 1975. That attack was ignored by the Soviet media in general, which in itself can be interpreted as a sign of acceptance, if not of outright approval. A few months later, when al-Fatah took credit for the terrorist attack in Nahariya, the Soviet Union passed over the incident once again. This time the PLO behaviour departed from its habitual mimicking of the Kremlin's myth-creating insistence that all attacks on Israeli territory emanated from the local resistance movement and not from outside. Fatah claimed to have perpetrated the act.[119] The silence of the USSR on the event could indicate embarrassment - rather than any disapproval of the death of civilians. In August 1975 Radio Moscow in Arabic went so far as to quote 'PLO spokesman Shafiq Hut' who said that the 'PLO is prepared to sign an international agreement to combat terrorism'.[120] The statement in fact juxtaposed the PLO with Japan which had submitted an anti-terrorist treaty proposal, thus endowing the PLO with a sovereignty of equal standing to Japan, and here one can clearly find the growing emphasis on legitimizing the PLO as if it were a government-in-exile rather than treating it strictly as a national liberation movement.

The successes which resulted from the USSR's efforts in the Far East during this same period, with Vietnam and Cambodia falling to the communists, together with the stronger alliances enjoyed with Libya and Syria, must have been contributory factors to the Kremlin's ever-increasing reliance on a 'political' PLO for its official manoeuvres. When, in that year Kissinger's peripatetic step-by-step diplomacy failed, the USSR stepped up its diplomatic gestures to reconvene the Geneva Conference in a further attempt to extend its influence.

The importance which the Kremlin attributed to the PLO as an alternative 'political' instrument was particularly evident during the Lebanese civil war. Although the 1975-6 crisis presented the Soviet Union with difficult dilemmas of policy decision-making, its general position was one of offical support of the PLO-Lebanese leftist front against Syria.*

Syria, which had drawn closer to the USSR as a result of the Egypt-Israel disengagement agreement in Sinai, had assumed a leadership role of the 'anti-imperialist' bloc of Arab states. However, Libya and Iraq - both allies of the USSR - were financially

*Syria and the PLO were both allies of the USSR; and when Syria, which had armed, supported and sponsored the PLO in order to use it as a surrogate to overthrow the Lebanese government, turned against its own proxy in 1976, it was not with the approval of the USSR. Syria's own faction in the PLO, al-Saiqa, fought for its masters against its fellows.

supporting the leftist Muslim groups aligned with the PLO. And there were indications that the USSR made it known that it would look favourably on the overturn of the Lebanese Christian government which would have as an immediate result a considerable loss of influence for the West.[121] The pragmatic choice of supporting the PLO even at the expense of the favourable state-to-state relations the USSR enjoyed with Syria can only be viewed as a strategic long-term option choice, having direct bearing not only on the Middle East, but on the larger world policy goals of the USSR.[122]

It was in fact at the height of the Lebanese civil war that the Kremlin stepped up its official support for the PLO, again insisting on statehood and Geneva participation. In June 1976 the PLO opened its office in Moscow. That same month, on 27 June 1976, an Air France airliner was hijacked to Entebbe in Uganda by a mixed group of terrorists made up of PLO and Baader-Meinhof (RAF) members. There was no Soviet statement on the hijacking until several days later. Radio Moscow in English condemned the hijacking by quoting the Arab League and referred to 'the international convention on the prevention of illegal seizure of aircraft and hijacking of airliners' which regards such a seizure as 'a criminal act of air piracy'.[123] The articles covering the hijacking did not identify which terrorist group perpetrated the hijacking, preferring to call them 'a group of armed persons'[124] and, predictably and consistently with previous reactions, exonerated the PLO of any terrorist connection.

The condemnation of the act of hijacking must, however, be interpreted in the light of another hijacking which returned to the news a few days before Entebbe and was one on which the USSR had taken a strong legal condemnatory position: the escape from Turkish jails of the father and son Soviet hijackers (the Brazinskas) of the AN-24 Soviet airliner on 15 October 1970. It triggered an angry and vituperative response from the Soviet authorities who had renewed their request for the extradition of the pair of 'murderers for trial in the Soviet Union'.[125] In view of the proximity of the two events, the Soviet condemnation of the hijacking act was understandable and necessary if that legal position was to be maintained. The Entebbe raid by Israel which resulted in the release of the hostages, on the other hand, was given far more extensive coverage in the Soviet media and, while the terrorist act was indirectly condemned by quoting a foreign source, the raid by Israel was directly condemned by the Soviet Union which characterized it as 'a vivid example of terrorism . . . elevated to government policy' which should be condemned more than the act of air piracy.[126] On the same day, on Radio Moscow in English to

Africa, citing the OAU (Organization of African Unity), Kurt Waldheim and Idi Amin as all condemning the raid, the Soviet Union made propaganda value out of it, attempting to inflame the Arabs with anti-American and anti-Western emotion. Israel was identified as the aggressor and the Palestinians as victims of aggression: 'It is Zionist brigandage and terror brought to the level of state policy by Israel that reaffirms the justice of the stand taken by those who consider Zionism a form of racism.'[127] That comment in itself was an indirect admission that the PLO had been involved in the hijacking. A few days later TASS political news analyst Vladimir Goncharov was quoted on Radio Moscow explaining that any 'similar terrorist actions [such as the hijacking] are a direct result of Israel's refusal to reach an agreement that would respect the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian Arab people, the rights which are provided for by UN resolutions'. And the argumentation continued thus: 'Who then has created and continues to create this terror? Is it the Palestinian people or the aggressive usurping Israel?'[128]

This is, of course, consistent with the doctrinal position which the USSR has adopted on the concept of 'aggression'. As was seen earlier,[129] the Soviet position on defining aggression follows the dicta of Marx and Lenin which declared that 'aggression' is peculiar to 'class' societies only and therefore that only those societies are capable of aggressive behaviour. The removal of blame for any aggressive act, including a terrorist one, from the 'Palestinian people', is therefore consistent with that position which maintains that every form of struggle is permissible against the 'aggressor'. It also indicates an automatic approval of the act. Confirming this consistent position, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Kuznetsov, speaking at the General Assembly's 145-nation Main Political Committee, argued for a special treaty making the renunciation of the use of any kind of force 'an iron law in international life'. He qualified that request, however, by adding that the treaty 'should accept force in defence against aggression or its use by national liberation movements'.[130]

The years 1977-8 were to see the Soviet Union coming ever closer to a formal recognition of the PLO. Within the context of global foreign policy objectives and events, the Soviet position on the PLO, at least in the first half of 1977, indicated apparent official inconsistency in Soviet enthusiasm towards the PLO. This was governed by fluctuating international relations having a direct bearing on Soviet national interest, and formed a part of the multiple-options programme which was and has been characteristic of Soviet foreign policy decision-making.

The goal of Soviet policy in the Middle East, as elsewhere,

remained first and foremost one of opposition to United States policies and initiatives. However, several pragmatic considerations were to influence these fluctuations of emphasis in what concerned the PLO connection. For example, the SALT 1 agreements were due to expire in October of 1977. In retrospect, the renewal of Soviet diplomatic peace initiatives in the Middle East which culminated with the 1 October joint United States-Soviet declaration appear to have been, at least in part, a tactic of accommodation with the United States which would facilitate the resumption of the strategic arms limitation talks that Moscow viewed as a focal point in its foreign policy objectives. In addition, a lifting of the trade restrictions imposed by the United States in the aftermath of Soviet involvement in Africa was an immediate short-term goal which the Kremlin must have hoped to achieve. Brezhnev's repeated calls for an amelioration of United States-Soviet relations were accompanied by an apparent Soviet official shift away from the PLO's radical position, with suggestions of several points for a Middle East settlement which did not include the PLO at all and were aimed specifically at pleasing the United States and Israel. These points (secure borders for Israel based on the pre-1967 boundaries; timed withdrawal by Israel; a United Nations presence in a demilitarized zone) were presented along with renewed demands for the reconvening of the Geneva Conference, which would have ensured Soviet participation in any Middle East peace settlement.[131]

On the other hand, calls to reconvene the Geneva Conference with PLO participation were made several times throughout the year. Arafat paid several high-level visits to Moscow during 1977, even meeting Brezhnev himself during his April visit - a first meeting for the two, which in itself was one more step in the creation of a political image for the PLO. Soviet concern over an Egyptian-Syrian *rapprochement* might have been the immediate cause of Arafat's further promotion, but it was not inconsistent with the Kremlin's previous endorsements of the PLO. In a *Pravda* article of 4 May the Kremlin quoted Farouq Qaddoumi, head of the PLO's political section, as saying in an Arab magazine interview that the USSR regarded the Palestinian delegation which had recently visited Moscow as representing a sovereign state.

The meeting between Brezhnev and Arafat was splashed on the front page of *Pravda* in a report which included a photograph of the two men.[132] The importance of creating an independent state was once again emphasized by Brezhnev and made an inseparable part of any peace settlement, and Arafat reconfirmed his position and the position of the PLO as the leaders in the fight against 'intrigues of imperialism and reaction'.