

7. With the PDFLP

North-west of Irbid, in a PDF base set up in a vast cave. Four in the morning, and still dark. The deep blackness of the sky is pierced with myriads of glittering stars – a night almost as beautiful as the magnificent nights of the Sahara. Opposite the camp, on the invisible far bank of the river, the lights of the Israeli kibbutzim. A three-mile run in the night, followed by quarter of an hour's physical training. Breakfast consists of hard biscuits, green olives and scalding tea. Dawn breaks, revealing a narrow bare defile dominated by the camp. In the distance to the north, the Golan Heights are dimly visible. The desiccated hills are sparsely dotted with poplars. The cave shelters about fifteen *fedayeen*, with their equipment and stocks of food. Under a solitary tree squats an anti-aircraft gun – a Dikitiriov. Um Kalçum is singing on the transistor radio, and the camp's dog, called Feyrouz in homage to the vocal art, is howling.

The camp timetable, for those who are not away on commando operations or in working-parties establishing contact with the population, is as follows :

4.00 a.m.	Reveille. A run, physical training.
4.45 a.m.	Breakfast.
5.15 a.m.	Wash; clean up camp, etc.
7.30 a.m.	Assembly for discussion; day's programme; distribution of tasks.
9.30–10 a.m.	Free time.
10–12 noon	Physical exercises; reading.
12–1.30 p.m.	Lunch.
1.30–3 p.m.	Free time. Cleaning military equipment.
3–5 p.m.	Political seminar.
5–6 p.m.	Free time. (The guard-duty roster is drawn up; volunteers leave for the river.)

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6.00 p.m. Supper.
8.00 p.m. First night watch begins.

Every Tuesday military training is given to peasants who ask for it. Every Friday, the camp is given a thorough cleaning and general tidy-up.

This base, the fifth of its type, has been in existence for about three weeks at the time of writing. The base consists of twenty-five *fedayeen*, including those who are away on operations or in village working-parties. The group has carried out forty operations, in ten of which it had no fighting to do. Camp rations consist basically of starch foods (haricot beans, lentils, potatoes, pasta), eggs, tomatoes and tinned foods (sardines, corned beef). Meat is only eaten once a week.

Morning assembly. Twelve *fedayeen* are present, together with the leader of the base. After discussion, a volunteer party is agreed upon for a reconnaissance operation. Then the camp leader raises the question of the difficulties inherent in the situation in South Lebanon, and the group discusses which members should leave for there to form the nucleus of a large base, in collaboration with other PDF groups. Five *fedayeen* agree to form this nucleus.

Three *fedayeen* from a village working-party who returned late the previous night present a brief report:

'We have been in the village of Samaa for almost two months. This village has about 4,000 inhabitants, a school and a post-office. After a fairly long period of work, ten peasants completed military training and became the nucleus of a local militia. But the area representative for the militia, who is supposed to maintain contact with the peasants, has not done so, which is bad.

'On the way back we met up with a Fatah group, who put us up for the night. In the evening we had a discussion with them on the need for political organization. The leaders of their base said that at the present stage military work was the sole overriding consideration – we'll see what happens after the liberation, they said. The striking thing about them is the very

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marked hierarchical relationship: they all address their officers as "saïdi" (sir).

'We also visited the village of Tiba for a couple of days. It has around 5,000 to 6,000 inhabitants. There we have a good nucleus for a popular militia, established for three months. Relations with the population are good, but we need more regular contacts, more continuity.'

In principle, all the villages in the region are the responsibility of a coordinating officer, who is supposed to maintain regular contact with the militia (according to the PDF, the movement had 1,200 peasants organized in its militia in September 1969). Contacts are generally established through working with the peasants, whether Palestinians or Jordanians. Relations with other movements such as El Fatah and Saïka are also close – as they are even with the soldiers of the Jordanian Army, to whom the PDF's land-rovers regularly give lifts. All the village working-parties, usually consisting of half a dozen or so *fedayeen*, have at least one specially trained member, to avoid mistakes due to inexperience in dealing with the peasantry. Written reports are submitted at regular intervals to the regional executive committee.

One of the *fedayeen* recalled a discussion meeting in a village where the peasants proved very reserved.

'To my mind,' said another *fidayi*, 'we have no hope of success in any village if we only stop by, or stay for a short time. We have to stay for a long time, working with them and gaining their confidence, discussing matters to do with their everyday lives in terms that will not shock them, simply and in familiar images. It is no good approaching them with the "we've come to educate you" kind of attitude; if you do that, they close up completely.'

'The older ones are very reticent,' replied the first man. 'They say everything is the Will of Allah; but with the young people things are much easier – they believe that things can be changed, and that it depends on us, if we take the task seriously.'

The base leader concluded the discussion by saying: 'What we need is to have men in the villages whom we have trained

ourselves, and keep in continuous contact with them. We must provide collective services for the whole village: the water problem, for example, is very considerable. We should work fewer villages more thoroughly. The final objective should be to double our power. The villagers should end up asking the party to act as arbitrator for them, and coming to us when they need help. But all this will only be possible if we get precise information, so we can make our contribution in the most appropriate and effective manner. We must work with the people to win their confidence and be able to pick out the more dynamic among them, to train them as the nucleus of the popular militia. They will be able to help us place the reactionary elements and neutralize them. In all this, you must remember that personal contacts with the peasants are vital, especially at the beginning.'

The group then moved on to a session of criticism and self-criticism. A minor dispute between two *fedayeen* was rapidly cleared up. Then a *fidayi* said:

'I didn't join in the training session this morning.'

'I was going to speak to you about that,' said the group leader. 'It is not good enough just to go on indulging in self-criticism. This is not the first time you have missed training; self-criticism is not a convenient means of avoiding doing things you don't like by admitting that you don't do them. You have chosen the revolutionary road, you must buckle down to it.'

He consulted the others, who said this *fidayi* was slow in his work.

'I am slow, I know it; but I can do nothing about it.'

'Tomorrow we want to see you in the training session, and every day after as well. If you don't like it, say so, and we'll see what the other comrades think.'

'No, I agree. I must agree, I have joined the movement.'

The meeting was over. The weather was hot and dry. A few yards away from the base stood the group's land-rover, undisguised and uncamouflaged. Since March 1969 there had only been a very few – twelve to fifteen – Israeli raids on Jordan, and security measures were therefore somewhat slack. The land rover took us to Shouneh-Chemalieh, a village of

broken-down houses and empty streets, only crossed by a few *fedayeen*; shopkeepers still did a little trade. We were about two miles from the River Jordan. We went into a café, in which sat an old man, a fighter for El Fatah since 1966. Greetings on all sides. Tea was served. Then the old man started to talk: 'Yesterday the Israelis pounded a Fatah camp that was firing mortars at them. Under heavy fire, our men were forced to retreat to the village, and this morning the Jordanian Army and Security Service came at dawn and got hold of the mortar before we could recover it; they said we could come to Amman to get it back.' By agreement with the Israelis, all military activity was to cease during the reconstruction of the Ghor Canal.

We got back on the road. On the way, we picked up five *fedayeen* from the base, who had been sent on a reconnaissance mission on the East Bank two days before. We stopped for a few minutes to greet our friends in the Saïka, who shared an office here with the PDF, the two groups being on excellent terms with each other. After this, we travelled on on foot, along a path through wooded hills overlooking a valley with maize and banana plantations. In front of us, the land of Israel was vivid green, while on the East Bank large areas of bare earth showed up in brown patches. Along the floor of the valley ran a stream in which Jordanian soldiers were bathing.

According to the *fedayeen* in the reconnaissance party from the other side of the Jordan, the Israeli fertilizer plant, which they had studied from close range, was very heavily guarded. According to their report, there were a control tower, three tanks and well-armed security guards. They had noted the times at which the guard was changed. One of them told an anecdote:

'We hitch-hiked down to the border in a Jordanian Army jeep. On the way, the Jordanian officer said: "You *fedayeen*" (there were three of us), "you are the best fighters, but you should only fight on the West Bank. And in any case, to cross the river you ought to work in collaboration with us." So we told him we did not like his attitude, and we would do what

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was best for our people. "You're not in Hanoi now," the officer said. So we replied that maybe we would turn Amman into a second Hanoi. Then they tried to prevent us from crossing the frontier. There were three of them to three of us. We turned our Kalachnikovs on them and they beat it, so we crossed all the same.'

I asked one of them why he had joined the PDF. He was seventeen years old, his mother had lived in the El-Hussein camp since 1967, his father was dead. He left school at fourteen, and had been a *fidayi* for four months:

'Well, we are Marxist-Leninists, we are more interested in the happiness of the workers than in the land of Palestine for its own sake. The other movements are helped by the Arab states, who are reactionary. They have a leadership complex, we want no truck with that. We don't get paid, in this outfit. The other organizations are not interested in raising the political level of the poorer classes in order to liberate them. Only the PDF has this aim.'

Down the hill, a Jordanian Army lorry was unloading supplies to a detachment of troops; the soldiers worked very slowly, in a holiday atmosphere. The *fedayeen* were amused.

Just as we were about to leave in our land-rover, we were signalled to stop. Two Jordanian soldiers came up, holding a peasant. They explained that they had found him near the River Jordan, and that he had tried to flee; he must be a spy. They wanted the *fedayeen* to take him with them to the village. The peasant climbed into the back, the two Jordanian soldiers saluted, while the peasant, an old man, protested his innocence. 'Don't worry,' said the leader, 'we'll sort it out.' At the village, they stopped the vehicle in front of a café and asked: 'Who knows this man and will answer for him?' Two elderly men, one of whom knew the *fedayeen* and was on good terms with them, knew the peasant. The incident was closed.

On the road, we picked up a hitch-hiking Jordanian soldier. From time to time the muffled thump of mortar fire could be heard. We stopped at a wooden hut where three guerrillas from the PDF base were waiting for us. In the zone they had been reconnoitring, several miles of the route to the Jordan were

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mined on the Jordanian side. The Jordanian Army refused to tell the *fedayeen* where the mines were situated, or the best way through the mine-field. A *fidayi* of El Fatah's had stepped on a mine and lost both legs.

'On one occasion,' said the group leader, 'while one of our detachments was crossing the Jordan on a night mission, the Jordanians sent up flares to mark our position.'

Two of the *fedayeen* were the sons of refugees from 1948, the father of the third had been a peasant on the West Bank until 1967. As we ate our frugal lunch, an old peasant who had been in contact with the PDF for several months came by to bring us some tea, and told us that agents of the Jordanian security service were trying to buy Kalachnikovs in the area, to arm some of their men who were to pass as *fedayeen*. The guerrillas started chatting to him, and tried to get him to talk about old times. The old peasant just said: 'I was in the 1936 revolt, the chiefs sold out on us, and now, with the king, it's just the same. There are some who eat and others who work.'

THE VILLAGE OF KAFR YOUBA

In the village of Kafr Youba, which has about 6,000 inhabitants, there is a PDF militia. A meeting was due to be held in the village hall.

We were met first by the political head of the militia, Soleiman Mahmoud, a twenty-nine-year-old peasant who had spent six years in the Jordanian Army, then in El Fatah, and had finally been two months with Saika:

'I started off getting together the young men, and the others in the village that I knew, and we worked together, cooperating with a PDF group from Irbid; they instructed me in the PDF line, and I then explained it to the other villagers. Our peasants here would like arms. I explain that it is our duty to participate in the revolution, that we have to protect ourselves not only against the Israelis but also against the monarchy in this country. As it happens, just outside the village there is an encampment of fifty Jordanian soldiers, living

under canvas and in temporary shelters, who behave very badly in the village, so they are not greatly loved by the people here. I also tell them about the June war, why we lost, how the armies did not fight because the régimes were not interested in fighting on behalf of the people, but put their own survival first. I tell them that we can rely on no one except the masses, that is ourselves, we who have to fight to improve our lot. Every week I make a collection. I also work in another village, with a village working-party; at first it was hard going, but now that we have got to know each other and they know what we want I go back there quite a lot. The PDF is the only organization operating in our villages.'

The village hall had a ping-pong table, and the young men were playing or watching, while the older men played backgammon. As we came in, everyone crowded round the *fedayeen*, greeting them as old friends. Tea was served. The *fedayeen* then sat down to answer the hail of questions being fired at them:

'Why was UNO able to force the Arabs earlier, and cannot force Israel now to accept its resolutions?'

'When are we going to get arms?'

'What happened at the PLO Congress?'

'How many missions have you been on since your last visit?'

'Is it true that Nasser is going to make peace?'

There were about fifty men in the hall, mostly young, and none of them old. The village school-teacher was a member of the PDF, and what he said carried a lot of weight in the village; the young people all listened to him. The *fedayeen* answered the questions and gave explanations. Sometimes the school-teacher interjected some comments. A young man doing his national service with the Jordanian Army said: 'I and my comrades who are soldiers in the Jordanian Army are ready to leave the Army to join the Resistance, if you will have us.'

A *fidayi* well-known in the village rose to speak: 'You ask for arms; but we cannot give you any, because we get no money from any state. We will not lie to you and pretend that we will soon have arms for you. But you must not forget that political work is extremely important, and that we must get

more and more people on our side. The political work has to be done first; then with time and a little money we shall grow stronger and we shall also be able to give you arms. Someone mentioned the PLO a minute ago. The PLO gives us the minimum of unity that we need, but it is also composed of middle-class people and millionaires. We, for our part, we are with you, the workers, for there is no real community of interest between the rich and the poor; just as the big land-owner and the poor peasant are not the same, and the man who lends money does not have the same aims as the man who needs to borrow money. All these millionaires are working against your interests, while we, what we want to do is to unite the poor, the peasants, the workers, everybody who has to work for a living.'

THE SAKEB BASE

The Sakeb base, near Ajloun, was well secluded among wooded hills. The camp is practically surrounded by a hedge of poplar trees and an almost dry wadi, with just a thin, bright trickle from a hidden spring. Plantations of olive trees, hazel bushes and fig trees heavy with fruit stretched away into the distance.

In the village near the base a peasant had been killed in a brawl by a member of Saika a few months previously, so relations between the villagers and the PDF *fedayeen* had been marked by suspicion at first. The *fedayeen* avoided going to the well where the village women went to get water; they also helped the peasants thrash the nut-trees. Village working-parties had also established contacts in the camp at Souf.

It was evening, we were having a desultory conversation on political strategy and guerrilla warfare. Several of the *fedayeen* were interested in the differences between Vietnamese experience and Guevara's theories. The leader of the base was a bachelor who had been in the Resistance for two years. In the tent where we were sitting there were four sons of refugees, three from the West Bank (having fled from the 1967 war); they

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had all completed their primary education, and had been members of the PDF for an average of four months. There were two sons of peasants (one of whom was illiterate; both had been with the PDF for three months); one worker who had his school certificate and had been with the PDF for three months; and an Iraqi, son of a prosperous peasant, who had completed his secondary education and came from the Iraqi Communist Party (General Line).

'What difficulties do you have with the peasants?' I asked.

Everybody gave his own reply, except the twenty-one-year-old illiterate peasant, who listened and nodded his head from time to time. Later the camp leader told him not to feel shy about joining in.

'We have difficulties in communication; we have to find simple examples to show them what is meant by exploitation.'

'It is difficult to talk politics with them at first. So we invite them to come along for weapons-training sessions; they are interested and come, and it gives us a chance to explain things to them.'

One of the *fedayeen* spoke about conditions in the village:

'There are about 5,000 to 6,000 inhabitants in this village. There is a school, but no dispensary and no sterilized water. The staple crops, in order of importance, are figs, olives, nuts, tomatoes and wheat. Everybody in the village owns some land, but hardly any own enough to live on. Tenant-farming is very widespread here; the land is rented out, and the landlord is paid in advance. The poorest peasants here own 5 *dunam* (0.5 hectares) and the richest 100 *dunam* (10 hectares, or about 25 acres). The soil is poor because of erosion, and no farmer is considered well off unless he has more than 50 *dunam*. There are also a few big absentee landlords. The peasants want more land, they hunger and thirst for it. A fair number of the young people are in the army. Family ties are strong, and in this village there are four big families who exercise authority. Religion is still a powerful force.

'Spiritual authority here is exercised by the *imam* and his deputy, and the prosperous village elders. The administrative authorities are the mayor, a member of the strongest of the

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four ruling families, various other members of that family and the village council.

'Before June 1967, whenever the Jordanian authorities visited the village, in the shape of the mounted police, they would be received with a special banquet in their honour, chickens would be killed, and so on. Since 1967 this has stopped, and the police pass discreetly by.

'We choose this place to work because it is wooded and hilly, and it has water; road communications are good, and above all it is thickly populated. There are three villages close by, with about 15,000 inhabitants in all.'

ORGANIZATION OF A BASE

In some bases the atmosphere is not very good, because the officers appointed by the central leadership of the party sometimes tend to abuse their power. In Sakeb, the camp leadership is elected. There is a management committee of five members responsible for the whole base.

The general assembly on the base has twenty-four members. Division of duties is as follows:

- one overall camp leader, responsible for political, military and organizational work;
- one political head responsible for commando detachments away from base and village working-parties doing propaganda work;
- one military instructor responsible for logistics and training the peasantry;
- one administrative head responsible for health, detailing fatigues, etc.;
- one supplies officer who has to make sure that the camp always has two weeks' reserve rations and sufficient medical supplies, and who also looks after the cooking arrangements.

The camp is well kept, but has no air-raid shelters.

The next day, a peasant from the village came around to invite us to lunch. While we were on our way there, he said: 'The PDF has a very good reputation here.'

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We passed a village working-party which had just come back from a short trip of a few days. That morning, a Friday, they had been to the mosque, and after the service they discussed land questions with the peasants. The village consisted of small detached houses spaced several yards apart, and uneven alleyways wound up the hill. As we passed his shop, a grocer stopped us and offered us tea.

'Will the army liberate Palestine?' the camp leader asked him.

'Yes, if Allah wills it.'

'Allah is good, but it is up to us to help ourselves. So far as the armies are concerned, we are exactly where we were in June 1967; the changes are minimal.'

'If we are defeated a second time, the Arab nation will perish once and for all.'

'I do not agree. But tell me: who is it who is doing the fighting at the moment, the army or the *fedayeen*? Who are we talking about? (He got up and walked over to the scales.) 'Here, in the scale, this is Israel.' (He placed a heavy weight in the scale.) 'This is Israel with her conventional army, and here on the other side of the scale are the Arab armies' (he placed a light weight on the scale). 'But if we arm everybody, if we fight on our own ground, if everybody is organized, educated, trained, then look what happens' (reversing the position of the weights). 'The Jordanian Army consists of men who are paid large salaries, why should such an army fight for the poor?'

A PDF TRAINING CAMP

The camp was near Jarash, in hilly country covered with umbrella pines, the tents well hidden under the trees. This was the PDF's main training camp, containing sixty young people on a two-months' training course. The current group was the sixth to be trained by the PDF. Their average age was twenty; recruits came from refugee camps, some from the towns, village communities and other Arab countries. Some had attended a week's course in politics in a preparatory camp.

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In the main camp, trainees were given military and political training, and drilled to act as a disciplined and cohesive group. The best students were to become party officers on completion of their training. Nearly all the recruits were from poor backgrounds, the sons of refugees or peasants; they had attended school on the average up to the age of twelve to fourteen years. About 10 per cent were illiterate; two had final school-leaving certificates.

The military training course was led by a Palestinian who had belonged to a commando unit in the Iraqi Army before becoming an instructor in that Army. The political courses were given by a Palestinian engineer, Abdallah, a member of the Arab Nationalist Movement for seven years and one of the founder-members of the PDF who organized the split from the PFLP.

I took a look at the recruitment register, which contained information about recruits on this and previous courses:

- A from a refugee family of 10 persons.
20 years old. Five years' primary school.
Has worked as fitter's mate.
No membership of any other parties.
Joined PDF 'because it is a proletarian organization'.
- B From a family of 9 'Displaced Persons'.
19 years old. Illiterate.
Has been a waiter in a restaurant.
No previous membership of any other party.
Joined PDF 'because he had had enough of living in poverty, and the party was for the poor'.
- C Syrian, from an artisan family of 10 persons domiciled in Lebanon.
18 years old. Six years' primary schooling.
Has worked in a bakery.
Ex-Member of the Arab Nationalist Movement.
Joined the PDF 'because it is a proletarian organization'.
- D From a refugee family of 10.
17 years old. Primary education completed.
No previous employment.

Was a member of El Fatah for six weeks in 1968. Left the movement 'because life was too easy on the base and there was not enough action'.

Joined the PDF 'because he thinks it is a truly revolutionary organization'.

E Iraqi, from a poor peasant family of 7 persons.

25 years old. Primary education completed.

Has been a driver.

Has never belonged to any political party.

Joined the PDF 'because it is a party that is for the poor'.

F From a refugee family of 9 persons.

20 years old. Seven years' schooling.

Has worked as a casual labourer on public works projects.

Ex-member of El Fatah. Left El Fatah with a group of his fellows, most of whom joined Saïka. Considers Fatah 'bourgeois and right-wing'.

Joined the PDF because he 'hoped it would be different'.

The recruits generally arrived in poor physical shape, and left in average condition. Besides the strictly military training, they were taught the principles of hygiene. Discipline was not easy to maintain, as the trainees did not always appreciate the need for it. According to Abdallah, the trainees had difficulty in taking in the political courses. On leaving the camp, they had a better sense of community, were better able to accept criticism and had a more democratic outlook, less hierarchy-oriented. Every trainee was encouraged to read on his own during his free time at the end of the day, and to develop a taste for study. The camp's daily timetable was as follows:

5.00 a.m.	Reveille. Half an hour's run. Half an hour's gymnastics.
6-8 a.m.	Breakfast. Wash. Tidy up the camp.
8-12 noon	Commando training. Close-combat training.
12-2 p.m.	Lunch. Free time.
2-5 p.m.	Weapons training. Target practice.
5-8 p.m.	Political course. Discussions.
8 p.m.	Supper.
9 p.m.	Lights out, or, sometimes, night expeditions.

At political meetings, the recruits sat in a large semi-circle. The political instructor, Abdallah, would ask questions. On the occasion in question it was the second day of the course, and he was establishing contact with his new pupils. He asked: 'Why are you here?' About forty trainees failed to raise their hands to answer. The others, asked in turn, replied:

'We are here as part of the world revolution.'

'We are Arabs.'

'We are here to liberate the workers.'

'There are two classes, the bourgeoisie and the workers; we want to change that.'

'Because the Arab world needs a real revolution and the Palestinians are at the centre of the problem.'

'To change the Arab world.'

'To liberate the workers and peasants.'

'Because the Palestinian problem and the Arab problem are one and the same' (this from an Iraqi).

'Because the injustice of Palestine is one that the poor have felt.'

'Because the PDF is the first revolutionary Palestinian organization.'

'Because the PDF is founded on the people, and the rest are bourgeois.'

'I am against imperialism and Zionism.'

'We need a real revolution, not like Nasser's. I am a Palestinian and I have lived in South Yemen. The Egyptians are not revolutionaries - they supported Flosy, not the NLF.'¹

'I came because this is the only egalitarian organization, and the PDF does not only want to liberate Palestine but all the Arab countries from exploitation; I am an agricultural labourer; the rich say they will pay, but it is the poor who fight.'

'El Fatah is a nationalist organization; but the PDF will fight to the end for a new society.'

Then Abdallah, the political-science instructor, spoke:

'Each of you has said that the PDF is for the poor. For the rich do not want to fight on your behalf: they only want to

1. Rival liberation organizations in South Yemen. The first is regarded primarily as nationalist, the second as more revolutionary.

exploit you. Their only concern is to get more money. The PDF is an organization for the workers and peasants because the Arab states, all the Arab states, have been unable to find a solution to the political problems that directly concern you. These régimes have served their own interests only.

'You were all for Nasser before 1967, and before then how was it possible to criticize him? Despite all his promises, he was only able to hold out for six days. You saw that there was no army of liberation, for were you armed? No, because they do not want to arm the people. Why? Because the Egyptian officers are a wealthy ruling caste with no desire to lose their privileges – which is what would happen if there were a people's army. But you, you want to continue the fight in spite of everything. Just to liberate Palestine? I do not think so, for you are poor. You instinctively want to fight – not only because it is good to have the land back, but also to liberate yourselves from the class that has betrayed you ever since 1948, that speaks to you of freedom but continues to betray you, that talks today of the Resistance, but would destroy it if it could. We have learned that the liberation of Palestine is the Palestinians' own business. And the poor are the ones most able to fight for their own interests. The problem is to understand why we want to use arms: not to kill the Jews, but to liberate ourselves from all the foreign and national classes who are the cause of our poverty. Our struggle is both a national and a social struggle. You have been stripped of everything. Why? Not by the will of God, but because of exploitation by the rich and by the Arab governments who represent them. Your fathers always lived in poverty, but the rich do as they like, they have the money and also the power. The government protects the wealthy classes, and is always ready to knock you on the head if you protest. You know all this. It has been happening since 1948, and it happened before that. So when you fight, you are not only fighting Zionism but also to liberate yourselves.

'China, for example, was occupied by various bourgeois European states. They took the raw materials, and gave nothing in return. At the same time there were, in China, rich merchants who lived by trade with the Europeans, and who were bound

to them by a tie of common interest. And now you have heard of the Chinese revolution, and you have heard it said that they are free of all foreign domination.

'How have they been able to accomplish this? By organizing themselves under a leadership with a clear ideology, a leadership that was at the same time bound to the people; by this means they were able to undertake the Long March that led them to power. They found out who their friends were, and who were their enemies. Did the wealthy Chinese want to liberate China? No, for their strongest ties lay abroad. It was therefore necessary to fight them too.

'And what happened in Vietnam? Ho fought for forty years. Just to liberate his country? No, to liberate the people from its slavery and squalor. And what do the Vietnamese people in the South want? To get rid of the foreign invaders and the Vietnamese who fight with the foreigners.

'And what was our position before 1967? We had no land, no work, no future. What were the Palestinian people's relations with the Jordanian government and with the other Arab governments – any of them? We were not able to organize. We could not even move about freely. Your fathers, when they were able to get work, always got lower wages than the others because they were refugees. More often than not they only got half pay, for which they had to thank their masters humbly, since they had to work so that we should be a little less underfed. All this happened in countries with Arab governments, and they profited, they and the rich men they represented, from your situation as refugees. They were not trying to pull you up, but to drag you down.

'Well, now what are we going to do about it? We have lost the whole of Palestine, and all our people are either living under a foreign occupation or are refugees. Who has acted to alter this state of affairs? Only the guerrilla organizations, but they claim only to be acting against Zionism. But we know that it is not only Zionism but all the reactionary governments and the rich Arabs who have oppressed and exploited us. Therefore if we are to liberate the country ourselves, those who have suffered up to now must have arms in their hands to protect their

own interests. We cannot, however, achieve our aims in a short space of time. We will need a great deal of time to increase our military and our political strength. The PDF is you; you are bound up with it in one organization, and individual heroism is not what counts. In this way we shall be able to show the way to our people, so that it can fight for itself. The PDF is the revolutionary party which will become the party of the poorer classes: the party of the workers, the peasants, the dispossessed and the revolutionaries. There is a long road in front of us, and a long war. We will need to maintain our revolutionary attitude, subject our ideas and our behaviour to continual scrutiny, criticize and analyse ourselves, and ask ourselves: are my relations with my comrades revolutionary? Are my relations with the people revolutionary? We must continually increase our efforts, and then we will be able to become a revolutionary organization despite our lack of arms.

'Nasser and the other heads of governments have failed to find a solution, because they do not have a revolutionary outlook or form of organization. The difficult road towards raising our political and cultural level is also a long road. But the number of miles we have to travel is unimportant; what is important is to raise by our efforts the revolutionary potential of our people. You must recognize that there are many difficulties in the way of creating a revolutionary organization, and that you cannot solve them all at once. But by leading the revolutionary life, by giving everything to the struggle, by keeping our minds active at all times, we may be able to overcome these difficulties bit by bit, and for that reason we have to say to ourselves: I shall be killed by the Israelis, or by the Jordanians, or maybe even by others, but it does not matter because I am one, and for each one that falls a thousand will be ready to step into his place. Many thousands of us will perish, and it is possible that our generation will not see victory, but it is certain that if we follow our chosen path with determination our children's generation will see it.

'To be a revolutionary it is no good just being a dreamer; we must be convinced that we can succeed if we think straight, and if we attack seriously all the problems that face us; we will then

have the same success as Lenin, Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Mao and all the rest of the world's revolutionaries. Talking and understanding are not enough – we must put our ideas into practice, we must act. I am not saying that we want you all to die like heroes, what we are after, our final objective, is to change the living conditions of our people. We shall also have to prepare ourselves for the worst; it is possible that things may go very badly tomorrow, that we will have to march without food and live in great hardship, for we know that sooner or later the Arab régimes will try to destroy us. So we will have to strengthen ourselves, we will have to work. We cannot jump into the tree with one bound, we shall have to climb it bit by bit. To do this, we shall need political discipline and we shall have to exert ourselves daily if we want to achieve our aims.'

ACCOUNTS GIVEN BY PDF FEDAYEEN

Nabil, aged 26

'I was born on the West Bank, near Qualquilya. My parents were peasants, they owned no land themselves but worked for others. They still live on the West Bank of the Jordan. In 1948 I was five years old, and I remember nothing of that time. I went to school, which was free, for twelve years in all. I worked with my father and continued my studies at the same time, and I passed my schools certificate.

'On leaving school, I went to Damascus and studied history from 1963 to 1967, and got my degree. My brother was earning money in Kuwait, and he paid for everything.

'In 1967 I went back to Qualquilya; there was no work. Meanwhile, in Damascus, I had joined the Arab Nationalist Movement, but I was disillusioned by its confusion, and its undemocratic procedure. In June 1967 we were bombarded, and having no arms we took refuge in the mountains. The next day we tried to return to our homes, but we were bombarded once more, and together with several thousand other inhabitants we

set off on a two days' journey to Dirista, on the West Bank, and were housed in government schools. It was very hard for the women and children.

'After a week I left the village without telling my parents and went to Amman; I looked for work and found a job as a teacher in a grammar school called the "Palestine School". In July 1968 my brother came to see us in Amman (my parents had joined me), and said that he agreed with my plan of joining the *fedayeen* and that he would subsidize them and look after their needs by sending money from Kuwait.

'In August the PFLP held their Congress, and it became apparent that a crisis was imminent. At the time I wanted to leave for Saudi Arabia. I no longer supported the PFLP; the right refused to implement the resolutions of the August Congress, and the left-wing group was still very small (and it did not look like getting any bigger). I went to Dahrán, but soon realized that it was extremely difficult to carry out any political work there at all. Meanwhile my family had returned to Qualqilya. When the PDFLP came into being I was sent a copy of its manifesto, setting out its basic line, and I immediately supported it. I got together with some other young Palestinians, and we saved up to send contributions to the PDF; we managed to save 100 dinars in three months. In the meantime I read a number of Marxist books – which were very difficult to obtain, as they are banned in Saudi Arabia. In June I made up my mind to come back. I asked if I could join the organization; three days after my arrival I joined a military training camp. The PDF's position with regard to the Arab states seems the right one to me; they are right to link the Palestinian revolution to the Arab revolution. We need a radical change here in the East if we are going to escape from our spiritual and material poverty. By contrast, El Fatah boasts of having no ideology; what that means in effect is that they adopt the more or less conservative attitudes of our régimes. Their militants are untrained and the movement's rigidly nationalistic outlook is extremely limited. El Fatah is always talking about liberating the country, but what about the people? What will they get out of it? Are we going to start all over again like the Algerians?

The mass of the poor, who have had to give up everything, will be the ones to pay.'

Amdjeb, aged 25, ex-El Fatah militant

'I am the son of a peasant and I have never been to school. Until 1967 I lived on the West Bank. I was an agricultural labourer and earned between 15 and 30 dinars a month, depending. I am unmarried.

'Ten days after the defeat of June 1967 I joined El Fatah, because my homeland had been occupied. After Karamah, El Fatah sent me to Syria, near Latakia, for special commando training, and then I returned to Jordan to join in the fighting.

'I earned 10 dinars a month. I went eight or nine months without being sent on a single operation, although I wanted to go, and I was not happy about it. On top of that the organization is repressive: if you make a fuss, they threaten you; the hierarchy is very rigid. Out of seven of us, not one stayed with El Fatah.

'After all the operations I was in – after the first eight or nine months of waiting – El Fatah told the truth about the number of casualties.² But if we were attacked from the air, and any of our men were killed, Fatah never published the true figures.

'I was demoralized when I left El Fatah, and for two months I stayed out of everything. Then I heard mention of the PDF: no officers, no chiefs, no "Sir" (Saïdi), no money – a *fidayi* is not a mercenary. I wanted to find out what it was all about, so I came along and liked what I found. Now I should like to learn to read and write, so that I can improve my knowledge.'

Nabil Abder-Rahim, aged 17

'My mother is dead, and my father unemployed and sick. My brother, who is a mechanic, supports the family. We are refugees from 1948. At first we lived in the Lebanon, in the

2. 700 *chouhadas* (martyrs) in four years six months.

Nabatiya camp, my father had once been a prosperous peasant. After his expulsion, he had nothing.

'My childhood was not unhappy; I always had clothes, although no shoes. We had enough to eat and I went to primary school. In 1965 I started work as an apprentice compositor, and earned 12 Lebanese pounds a week (about £1.50). Then the war broke out.

'I was recruited as a militant in the political organization; at first I worked in the camp and in the printing works; I recruited five members for the political organization of the Front before coming here. Now I am a *fidayi*. I know that other organizations pay their fighters, but I am not a mercenary. I prefer the PDF because it is an organization of the people against the rich; the other movements are simply nationalist. In this outfit we get two or three days' leave every three months, and if you are from Lebanon or Iraq you get up to ten days.

'What I would like to see is: the liberation of the Arab peoples from their reactionary régimes; the recovery of our usurped land; and socialism, but not the socialism of the Arab countries, rather that of Vietnam or Cuba.'

Joul, aged 17½

'My parents were from Beersheba; my father only owned two or three *dunam*, he was poor. In 1948 my family fled to Hebron, where I was born and where I went to school till I was fifteen. My parents worked at UNRWA, in the refugees' grocery shop. In 1967 we came to Amman and my family lives in a camp.

'I was in the PFLP people's militia before the split. I joined them even though I was very young; it is our duty to learn how to fight; I joined the PFLP because it had an office in a part of Amman I often went to. At that time I was working as a factory-hand in a textile mill. Then came the split. I had no special reason for joining one party or the other, but I had heard that this was a serious movement and that it was fighting not only for the land but also for human ends.

'I attended the military and political courses and under-

stood the PDF's general line. I understood the critical analysis of the Arab régimes and the reasons for our defeat in 1967, and I understood that our aims could never be achieved except by the overthrow of the present system, in which the workers would play a decisive role.

'You ask what is the use of criticism and self-criticism. It helps us to analyse and avoid errors, to improve our work and ourselves. What I have learned from all our discussions is that we must reject all pacific resolutions, that revolutionary violence is our only available weapon, and that we must forge a firm bond with the masses. That is why we work with the refugees and the peasants, and why we are always saying: *this* is the revolution, *this* is Marxism-Leninism, and so we learn.'

ACCOUNTS GIVEN BY TWO FEDAYEEN ON VILLAGE WORKING-PARTIES

Farez, aged 24

'Mohamed and I have volunteered to work with the local population from this base. We are keen on the idea of mobilizing the masses. And you learn a lot from this kind of work.

'We make contact with the village, talk to anyone; it is easy to strike up a conversation, because people give us a favourable reception, since we are *fedayeen*. We try to obtain precise information on conditions in the village: the number of peasants, the number of landowners, large and small, whether it has a school, or a dispensary. We take good care not to give the impression that we have come to the village to take anything or to demand anything of them – for we are armed and they are not.

'When we come back, we draft an initial report on the village – the atmosphere, the kind of reception we got. Around here, apart from two refugee camps, there are many Jordanian villages, some of which have quite a few Palestinians living in them. We, the PDF, work with all of them. Even with Jordanian or Iraqi soldiers. The important thing is to get people to

talk to you, to find out what the situation is without arousing suspicion. We are fairly direct about it; we play football with them, in fact we join in all collective games to improve our relations.

'The second contact will depend to a large extent on the first, on how warm it was. On this second occasion, we start to discuss the social problems of the village, with those who are interested. We try to find out how we could work together with them in helping them to meet the social needs of their village. Sometimes before we can reach that stage we need three or even four preliminary contacts – we have discussion meetings with groups of villagers, and explain our political line, relating it to the specific problems of the village. If the peasants are suffering hardship, we ask them if they get no government aid, and then (since they do not, of course) we begin to explain why, and how corrupt the state institutions are. To do this effectively you have to know the local gossip and the local councillors.

'Subsequently we establish personal contacts, especially after a period of joint work, like after the harvest. They trust us, they can see that we have not come to rob them nor to coerce them. We talk over the latest news together, relating it to their own actual situation; we tell them what the PDF's position is on such and such a problem, and inform them about our general line. Then we ask if we may go and visit so-and-so, or we ask someone who seems interested in what we say if we can meet his friends.

'This is the way we begin to build up the first slender links that may become the future nucleus of the local militia we are trying to set up. But we have to set about it patiently, taking weeks and maybe months, because they do not always understand at once, far from it.'

Mohamed, aged 23

'At first I was afraid that we would not be able to explain. But I realized that it is not fair to suppose that the masses, dominated by religious attitudes, reactionary institutions and under-

development, are unable to appreciate a Marxist-Leninist organization. In fact the people are not at all hostile, they understand instinctively where their interests lie. There is no need to bridle at the vocabulary they use – it often clothes thoughts of great truth and perspicacity; they are aware of much more than one might think.

'We, too, have learned much. At the beginning, we tended rather clumsily to use complicated words that do not mean anything to them, and the old peasants would say "yes, yes", nodding sagely, and we would find out afterwards that they had not understood a word but did not want to get on the wrong side of us because we were *fedayeen*.

'Of course there are difficulties. The peasants' fear of the state, for instance, or rather of the police system. Sherif Nasser, King Hussein's uncle, has created two Resistance organizations packed with police, in order to find out what is going on in the country – this on top of the usual police patrols – and the peasants are afraid to talk. The most important thing is to win their confidence. Then the religious influence can be seen in their passivity, their blind obedience. It is not easy to stir them up. In the course of our latest tour, which lasted two months, we made contact with eleven villages; we helped with the harvest, fruit-picking, bricklaying, building air-raid shelters, repairing water mains. All in all, it was very fruitful. Of course we have only really scratched the surface up to now, but the area is ready to be worked in depth. We need more officers able to take on this work on a permanent basis, who would remain with the villagers working as one of them, instead of just passing through occasionally.'

ACCOUNT GIVEN BY AN OFFICER ORGANIZING
VILLAGE WORKING-PARTIES

Abu Khader, aged 27

'My work consists in building up groups in each village that will eventually form PDF cells. It does not matter that they

are few; what matters is that the nucleus should be firm. The villages in the north of Jordan have 2,000 inhabitants on average, and most of them are peasant smallholders.

'Yesterday I met all the officers working in the north of the country on the same work as me. We have drawn up a balance sheet, comparing methods and results.

'In most of the villages there is a shortage of water and the villagers live in penury. Water is bought, supplied from the canals, like the canal at Ghor, and the state is hand-in-glove with the big landowners, who impose conditions on the smallholders. We are thus able to explain a good deal by relating it to practical experience. Our greatest difficulties stem from the power of tradition, especially among the older people. Of course there are differences between the peasants, not only individually but collectively, depending on social and material status, what village they are from, etc. The old peasants often have younger ones in their employ, paying them very low wages, and there are also family ties which pose a serious problem. It is a difficult and lengthy business to eradicate old ingrained attitudes and create a new spirit. What we are trying to do at the moment is to channel as closely as possible the shades of difference, the attitudes and aspirations of different sections of the peasantry. We have not so far had any concrete results; but our aim is to win over the poor peasantry.

'In the thirteen villages for which I am responsible, cells have been set up. These cells have three functions to fulfil:

1. to spread the ideas of the PDF, i.e. to popularize Marxism-Leninism within the framework of the actual problems of the area;
2. to win new members by setting an example in every respect;
3. to set up militias on a military basis, even if these formations are very primitive at the moment, so that the village has a politico-military nucleus which will subsequently be able to grow and develop as need.

'We distribute a few books: pamphlets by Lenin, Marx, Engels, Giap, Mao Tse-tung; pamphlets on Palestine, the PDF line, etc. But we must not exaggerate the value of books. The

important thing is to talk to people and work with them. Every week there is a meeting of the village cell, when we discuss the work done in the previous weeks, and politics in general. The primary function of the cell is to build itself up on a firm and unequivocal political basis, and then to grasp the class-structure of the village and of the country.

'Our first task is to understand, then after that to do our work. In a few villages, we have begun to persuade the smallholders to cooperate with one another on their lands, and distribute their produce equally under the party's direction. For those with scattered plots of land this system is profitable and has improved their output. But the whole thing is still in a very early stage, we shall see what happens after the 1970 harvest.

'Our aim is obviously to get ourselves established in the 120 or so villages in the north of the country, round Irbid. This will take time, contrary to what many of us thought at first. There are some villages where we have partly failed through inexperience, through impatience. We have to take time to explain. Some cells are functioning very well even without having any party members, others still need help. Most of the villages where we have gained a foothold are Palestino-Jordanian, but the proportion of Palestinians does not exceed 10 per cent, and in the cells the Jordanians are far and away in the majority. Although the work is easier with the Palestinians, with regard to class aims and their own problems, the Jordanian peasants know very well where their interests lie. The problem is to get them to understand the situation clearly and to show them that it is possible to change it.

'Other officers are working on establishing the party in the refugee camps in the area: El Hosson, Souf, Khiyem-Irbid. In the villages the Jordanian authorities make trouble for us indirectly - in principle the status quo is still being upheld in Jordan. They say that the *fedayeen* are savages and beasts, murderers who threaten the lives of the peasants, thieves who do not want to work. Against the PDF they also say that we are against nationalism, against religion and against Allah, and that we are out to corrupt their women-folk. In response,

we work with the peasants and respect their property, their wives and their daughters. We send a doctor into the villages, who provides medical care free of charge. We would like to extend this service, but lack the means, and we would also like to have more sewing classes organized by our women members, and set up schools in places where there are none.'

ACCOUNTS GIVEN BY WOMEN PDF WORKERS

Nadana Ramdane, aged 22

'I was born in Amman, and studied here. My parents are lower-middle class; they own a boarding-house. My family originated from Tulkarem, on the West Bank, which they left in 1948. There are seven children. I have been active in politics since I was fifteen. I used to belong to the Arab Nationalist movement. Before the war we just used to hold meetings. After 1967 we began to approach the refugees. Very soon our people began to get arrested – many of our militants had already been arrested by the Jordanian police in 1966 – and our activities had to be curtailed for a few months. Straight away after the defeat I volunteered to help the new refugees. I became an active party member of the PFLP when it was created at the end of 1967.

'Initially, my work was confined to collecting money. Then it became more varied. After the August 1968 Congress I read the Report of Proceedings, and did not understand what had happened, like most of the activists. After August, we began to talk to other activists, and also to the masses, in an attempt to counterbalance the prestige of El Fatah.

'After February 1969 we completely changed our approach. We stopped reading nationalist thinkers like Sata el Hossari (something like Michel Aflaq, only more right-wing), and began to read Lenin, Marx, Mao. Before, we only had meetings concerned with our own internal organization; afterwards, we held lectures in political education. This was for girls only, because it was at the El-Husseini camp where they did not

permit any mixing of the sexes, so we were obliged to hold separate courses.

'The lectures were interesting: theoretical problems, organizational questions, social analyses and a popularization of the August 1968 programme. We held weekly cell meetings where we would hold readings, discussions, question-and-answer sessions, etc. We would read aloud from Marxist-Leninist works, and PDF pamphlets on the origins of the Arab Communist parties. We gave political and military instruction to girls who then returned to the occupied territories.

'I was at the same time a member of the Students' Combat Front, set up in 1968, the whole of which went over to the PDF. In the summer of 1968 we organized a students' summer school, which lasted three weeks, to improve our level of political consciousness. There were militants from almost all the Arab countries, together with Turks, Cypriots and Scandinavians. We exchanged views and talked about our different experiences in political work; we also dug some trenches for the camp of El Baqaa. Now we have set up a centre there, run by women party activists, who teach sewing, reading and writing, elementary hygiene;³ the centre has a permanent staff of four, out of a rota of twenty-five volunteers. We have two doctors, who train medical orderlies, and we hope to get some student-doctors. We also give military training. Our women's organizations are still in the embryonic stage and the work is very hard, for there is powerful resistance to change on the part of the masses; our own militants are not even entirely modern in this respect. But the PDF has the advantage that it is trying to change things.'

3. While we were visiting this camp a woman came up to us; she was no longer young, and her son had been killed fighting with the PDF. She said: 'In all the Palestinian movements the fighters are the same, but the Arab governments draw distinctions, for the PDF tries to base itself on the people and the governments do not like that, for they are rich and the people are poor. But you don't see any sons of rich men dying for Palestine. The sons of the camps are the ones to take up arms and fight. Now, though my son is dead, I fear nothing – not the police, not Hussein, nor anyone.'

Leyla, Jordanian school-teacher, aged 24

'I disseminate the party's ideas in class, and I organize some villages, and I also work in the refugee camp at Souf. The work is difficult for a woman, and it is even more difficult to persuade other women to come and work with us; it is not easy for unattached girls, either: their parents reproach them, they want to preserve their "honour". But we are patient, we explain why we are here to talk to them, because of the war. And we explain why we lost in 1948, in 1956 and again in 1967; in what respects our own governments were responsible, and how if we want to solve the problem confronting us we will have to do it ourselves. These things they understand, but they say: what can we women do about it? So we tell them that in other countries, in Vietnam, for instance, the women have done a lot. Meanwhile, we teach them to sew dresses, and to read and write. In the Souf camp, for example, we have about thirty girls, and besides educating them politically we teach them how to handle a Kalachnikov. What we want is to train young girls to become aware of the problems and to fight, get them to understand the problems of our society and our own special problems as women within that society. Their fathers let us in and listen to us, but are reluctant to let us near their daughters – some spread rumours that the PDF wants to install the girls in their military bases. But we still get recruits, in dribs and drabs. We send out militants into the villages to sound out the population – and the Jordanian villages are much more awake to what goes on than they were before 1967. We explain to them that the government is cutting down trees, which is very bad for the soil, and the reason why they do it is to harm the *fedayeen*, so that they will not have any hiding places. We tell them the land and the water belong to them, then we talk about the special problems of the women in the villages.'

While we were at the school-teacher's house, two young girls from a refugee camp, Samira, aged seventeen, and Salimeh,

eighteen, who are cousins, turned up to visit her. Salimeh spoke to me:

'Up to now we have been learning to read and write, to knit and sew. We make clothes for the *fedayeen*, for our family, and we also sell some. We have also been on a military training course and learned how to work a Kalachnikov.

'We are from the camp at Irbid, we have been refugees since 1948. Before the PDF we stayed at home and did the cooking. In Samira's stone-built hut there are two rooms for eighteen people, and in mine there are two rooms for fifteen. We both first heard of the existence of the *fedayeen* through the radio, then our parents, my father and brothers, started to talk about them, then later we saw *fedayeen* in the camp, on their way through. We used to be peasants before, and our fathers tell us that we owned a little land and that they worked for themselves.

'There is a school-room in the Irbid camp where the PDF gives lessons, and we heard about it and went along of our own accord to see it, we wanted to learn and we did. What we want to do now is carry on with our studies and help the *fedayeen*. In my family, my brother has been a soldier in Hussein's army for four months; he is doing his military service. But I have eight uncles who are *fedayeen*, four in Jordan and four in Syria. Before 1967 Hussein had one of them imprisoned because he was a *fidayi*. I also have two cousins who belong to the commandos of the PLA (Palestinian Liberation Army). Why do I work with the PDF? Because the PDF built the school and teaches us.'

M.A., a Syrian graduate in political economy, has joined the PDF, for which she has been an active militant for six months

'Nothing is simple for us, we have to overcome every kind of difficulty at once. We are trying to do this, in the camps, step by step. Women in this part of the world have a long history of subservience. A woman's economic and social status is such that she is entirely dependent on her husband. As a result, it is generally true that if a female militant marries, for example,

she will stop being a militant, unless her husband is one as well. Women here are dependants, clothed and fed by their husbands, and find it almost impossible to assert themselves outside the circle of home and children.

'We do of course have female militants, especially among the students because they are the most politically aware. There are some teachers, too, but few; they are afraid of losing their jobs. The PDF places special emphasis on political work among women. We are just at the beginning. We have militant women workers in two refugee camps and in one village, in the north of the country, at the moment. As a general rule we make contact with women aged fifteen to thirty-five, and we offer to teach them to sew, to read, or we suggest that they attend one of our courses in child care. Out of 300 women we approach, about 30 will be interested, and 10 will actually take the plunge. Then we try to set up a women's committee, and keep an eye open for those who might join the party. We give clear and simple political education courses, centred on two or three fundamental points, and then we move on to practical work: mobilization of other women, demonstrations, etc.

'In the camps, and among the dispossessed classes generally, it is very difficult. The women are tied by the social attitudes of under-development; they belong to the family, that is their universe, and their freedom to move out of it is conditioned by powerful social pressures, which disapprove strongly of any signs of emancipation. Parents act as social watchdogs, to preserve appearances; and religion, in its most retrogressive aspects, bolsters conservatism. Women's social contacts are limited, their cultural level is very low: they stick to the old drummed-in and assimilated attitudes.

'For the richer women things are a bit different because they have some education and a minimum cultural level. But they are still marked by the taboos of a backward society which holds them in bondage; although they could be economically independent, they are tied socially to the family, and especially to their husbands and fathers. The few attempts at liberation made by our middle-class women are very superficial on the whole, a poor imitation of the West. They are not intellectually

independent, they do not practise liberty; the only thing that counts in the end is to make a "good" marriage. Of course they do have a say in the choice of husband, but he remains the lord and master, and the women will generally attempt to keep him in the home, the centre of her universe. She wants to tie him to home and family, afraid of losing him, and her behaviour remains alienated. That is the horizon of her whole life. Most women here are obsessed with the desire to get married by the age of twenty-five, at the very latest, and most of them actually marry much earlier. A very small minority is fighting for a new role in a new kind of society, but they meet resistance from other women, and even find lack of comprehension and obstruction from revolutionary, politically militant women. Even our Marxists are backward in this respect, with a very few exceptions.'