

and mauve in the cheeks. Were these bruises or the natural result of rotting in the sun?

"Did they strike her with the butt of the rifle?"

"Look, sir, look at her hands."

I hadn't noticed. The fingers of the two hands were spread out and the ten fingers were cut as if with gardening shears. Soldiers, laughing like kids and gaily singing, had probably had fun discovering and using these shears.

«Look, sir.»

laughing or smiling. No one was throwing rice or flowers.

Since the roads had been cut off and the telephone was silent, deprived of contact with the rest of the world, for the first time in my life, I felt myself become Palestinian and hate Israel...

* * *

The statement that there is a beauty peculiar to revolutionaries raises many problems. Everyone knows, everyone suspects, that young children or ad-

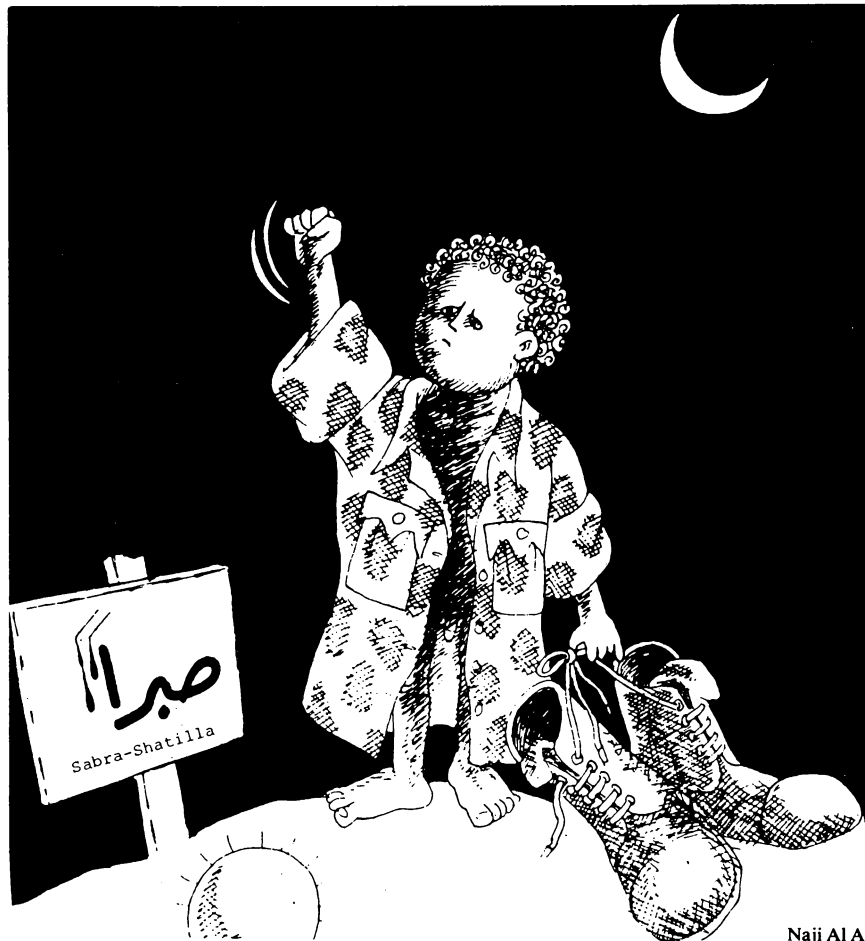
more muted beauty prevailed because of the presence of women and children. The camps received a sort of light from the combat bases, and as for the women, it would take a long and complex discussion to explain their radiance. Even more than the men, more than the fedayeen in combat, the Palestinian women seemed strong enough to sustain the resistance and accept the changes that came along with a revolution. They had already disobeyed the customs: they looked the men straight in the eye, they refused to wear a veil, their hair was visible, sometimes completely uncovered, their voices steady. The briefest and most prosaic of their tasks was but a small step in the self-assured journey towards a new, and therefore unknown, order, but which gave them a hint of a cleansing liberation for themselves, and a glowing pride for the men. They were ready to become both the wives and the mothers of heroes, as they already were for their men...

* * *

... Perhaps we should also recognize that revolutions or liberations aim - obscurely - at discovering or rediscovering beauty, that is the intangible, unnamable except by this word. But no, on the other hand, let us mean by beauty a laughing insolence goaded by past unhappiness, systems and men responsible for unhappiness and shame, above all, a laughing insolence which realizes that, freed of shame, growth is easy...

Many died in Shatila, and my friendship, my affection for their rotting corpses was also immense, because I had known them. Blackened, swollen, decayed by the sun and by death, they were still fedayeen... I had spent four hours in Shatila. About forty bodies remained in my memory. All of them - and I mean all - had been tortured, probably against a backdrop of drunkenness, song, laughter, the smell of gunpowder and already decaying flesh...

At the Damascus airport on my way back from Beirut I met some young fedayeen who had escaped from the Israeli hell. They were sixteen or seventeen. They were laughing; they were like the ones in Ajloun. They will die like them. The struggle for a country can fill a very rich life, but a short one. That was the choice, as we recall, of Achilles in the *Iliad*.



The ends of the fingers, the top joints, with the nail, lay in the dust. The young man, who was simply and naturally showing me how the dead had been tortured, calmly put a cloth back over the face and hands of the Palestinian woman, and a piece of corrugated cardboard over her legs. All I could distinguish now was a heap of pink and gray cloth, hovered over by flies...

The day after the entrance of the Israeli army we were prisoners, but it seemed to me that the invaders were less feared than despised, they caused less fear than disgust. No soldier was

olescents living in old and harsh surroundings have a beauty of face, body, movement and gaze similar to that of the fedayeen. Perhaps this may be explained in the following way: breaking with the ancient ways, a new freedom pushes through the dead skin, and fathers and grandfathers will have a hard time extinguishing the gleam in the eyes, the throbbing in the temples, the joy of blood flowing through the veins.

In the spring of 1971, in the Palestinian bases, that beauty subtly pervaded a forest made alive by the freedom of the fedayeen. In the camps a different,