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ARTICLE

Palestine Magazines and Co-Created Solidarity in Scandinavia

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Abstract

This article examines the role solidarity magazines played for the first generation of global Palestine activists. Through an analysis of Scandinavian magazines of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and microhistories of the first generation of solidarity activists in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden based on interviews, memoirs, novels, and letters, this article examines how the first Palestine committees and the foundational notions of the Palestinian cause were formed. This article argues that the solidarity magazine became a central forum for the co-creation of Palestine solidarity between Palestinians and their sympathizers. Viewing solidarity as a result of joint political and intellectual labor gives agency to solidarity as a third space between national solidarity movements and Third World liberation movements. By taking this approach, this article reads magazines as an aperture into the first iteration of Palestine as a global cause.

Keywords: microhistories; Palestine; Scandinavia; solidarity; Third World

> Lastly, what we need is definitely a political newspaper. Without a political organ, a political movement deserving that name is inconceivable in the Europe of today.
>
> –Vladimir Lenin.[1]

1. Co-created solidarity

Just as social media are crucial today to the new wave of support for Palestinians since the war on Gaza began in 2023, solidarity has always depended on the existing media ecology. Before the early 2000s, when the Internet became the central forum for advocacy, print media—and particularly the solidarity magazine—facilitated a transnational circulation of solidarity with Palestine.[2] These magazines created counterpublics against the dominant pro-Israeli discourse of mainstream media, but they also gave space to internal debates between competing movements. Hundreds of such movements—from small, local committees to national and transnational organizations—sprang up around the world, and almost

[1] Lenin [1901] 1961, 17.
[2] Aouragh 2011.

all of them had a magazine.[3] For historians today, their pages archive how the question of Palestine became a battleground in politics and theory.[4] We can follow the development of key terms, political debates, and ideological schisms, and the formation of symbols and historical interpretations that still figure today. This article asks what role magazines played for the first generation of global Palestine activists. More than an agitprop in the Leninist tradition—as referred to in the opening quote—my analysis suggests that they served a wider function in solidarity work. Through an analysis of Scandinavian magazines of the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the Palestinian liberation movement announced itself to the world and the first Palestine committees were formed in (almost literally) every corner of the globe, I argue that the solidarity magazine became a central forum for the co-creation of Palestine solidarity between Palestinians and their sympathizers.

Recent studies have shed light on many aspects of Palestine solidarity from the early 1960s to the war on Gaza.[5] They show how the Palestine solidarity movement developed as a "network of networks" consisting of thousands of small groupuscules and hundreds of larger national and transnational organizations.[6] Solidarity can be defined as sentiments such as identification, sympathy, and support, but also as networks and institutions that express and define solidarity.[7] In sociological terms, solidarity encompasses both norms and organization—or, as the sociologist Erving Goffman put it, the co-creation of action and meaning through social interaction.[8] I think that interaction and co-creation have been overlooked both in the historical literature on Palestine and in current debates about the "influence" of Hamas, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), or other groups on the thoughts and actions of activists in the West, who are criminalized as guilty by association with terrorism, but also derided as "useful idiots" (ironically, another term attributed to Lenin!) who merely regurgitate the ostensible Palestinian view.[9] Palestine solidarity did not just result from a one-directional "global offensive" of the Palestinian organizations, which was then received and interpreted by solidarity activists through texts.[10] Rather, the way magazines were founded and edited shows that information was received and interpreted *socially* through friendships and contacts between Palestinians and activists, who began to travel to Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine.[11] As Goffman emphasized, when other human beings act symbolically toward us, we react and adjust accordingly.[12] As we react, others take our role and see themselves from our view, which produces another round of reaction and adjustment. Such rounds of reciprocity played out in and around solidarity magazines that were read, co-edited, translated, and circulated across continents. The work to form solidarity movements connected Scandinavian activists with a global network of Palestinians inside and outside the nascent liberation organizations—primarily the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the PFLP, and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), but also unions of students, workers, women, and other groups. The joint labor of these people to collectively conceptualize Palestine as a global cause made it

[3] Thomson and Olsen 2023.
[4] Collins 2011.
[5] Thomson and Olsen 2023.
[6] Della Porta and Mosca 2005.
[7] Featherstone 2012.
[8] Goffman 1956; 1967.
[9] Haugbolle 2024.
[10] Chamberlin 2015.
[11] Haugbolle and Olsen 2023.
[12] Goffman 1967.

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possible, from the late 1960s onward, to transpose the Palestinian revolution to a world public.[13]

As the most widespread medium of the early period, the solidarity magazine contained a multitude of viewpoints and diverse journalism that made Palestinian society, art, politics, theory, and historical analysis available to a wide audience and communicated the solidarity movement's perspectives. This article analyzes how Palestine solidarity magazines were written, edited, and distributed. It suggests that Palestine became a central node in the imaginary of Third World solidarity and global anti-imperialism as a result of successful co-creation. I approach magazines as sources of information not just about the subject matter they cover, but also equally as archives of the deep social interactions they afforded between members of the transnational Left during the 1960s and 1970s. The analysis shows how Palestinians and Scandinavians became interwoven in entangled relations, which allowed solidarity magazines to become a kind of laboratory for the solidarity project. Through networks of Palestinians across the world, the question of Palestine emerged as a historically constituted discursive arena, informed by, and informing, politics and theory globally.

2. Entangled histories of Palestine

As John-Paul Ghobrial points out in the introduction to a recent special issue about global microhistories, we must go beyond comparison between national histories if we want to understand the dynamics of transnational flows of power, resources, and information that go into the making of a phenomenon such as solidarity.[14] Focusing on overlaps and enmeshment allows the historian to "illuminate the complex, global networks of power-inflected relations that enmesh our world."[15] Solidarity magazines and other revolutionary periodicals are rich sources for this agenda, which historians have only recently begun to explore, especially in the context of the 1950s to 1980s.[16]

This period, sometimes referred to as the highpoint of the "global" or "long" 1960s, saw the making of many new solidarity movements for liberation struggle in the global south, such as Vietnam, Chile, Cuba, South Africa, and Palestine.[17] They were formed in a dynamic process that incorporated liberation movements, revolutionaries, counterculture groups, and most shades of the Left in the West and on the formerly colonized continents of the world. At the international level, solidarity with the Third World involved Socialist-bloc and newly independent governments seeking allies across the Iron Curtain. At the organizational level, solidarity forged partnerships between liberation movements, social movements, political parties, and intellectual currents in different countries. At the inter-personal level—the very glue of solidarity—a wide network of individual friendships tied people together into collective projects, often facilitated by summer camps, solidarity conferences, and individual travels that became more common during this period. I am interested in how microhistories of such encounters allow us to move seamlessly in and out of temporal and geographic scales, between the processes of political alliances and concept formation during the highpoint

[13] Haugbolle and Olsen 2023.
[14] Ghobrial 2020, 7–9.
[15] Seigel 2005, 78.
[16] Ahmad, Benson, and Morgenstern 2024.
[17] Chaplin and Mooney 2018; Christiansen and Scarlett 2015; Renaud 2021.

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of Third Worldism.[18] Where political alliances have often been studied through the archives and methods of conventional diplomatic history, solidarity magazines provide insights into how people developed theories of race and settler colonialism that are still central in today's discussions about the Gaza war.[19] By working together, they came face to face with other ways of experiencing and engaging these questions. Their interaction produced entangled experiences and positions that shaped the thinking of the Left globally.[20]

Recent research has shown how the Palestine solidarity movement developed from mainly Arab support in the 1950s into a global moral community with representatives in most parts of the world.[21] A community based on solidarity makes new moral claims and therefore challenges the way we see the world.[22] Interpreted this way, the ability to forge empathic relations is intrinsically transformative and revolutionary.[23] To be in solidarity with different people necessitates various levels of interaction, including translation, reading, and interpretation. As a practice—a way of being in the world—solidarity can upend existing power dynamics such as the North–South differential and provoke new ideas about imperialism and revolution inside the movements and milieus that participate. My analysis homes in on the way that encounters and joint work between Palestinians and solidarity movements helped forge a global cause. It is based on six years of interviews with, and ethnography among, first-generation Palestine solidarity activists and archival work on their magazines, memoirs, letters, films, flyers, posters, and other written material and cultural production.

Specifically, I focus on the first three Scandinavian solidarity committees and their respective magazines: the Danish Palestine Committee's *Falastin* (meaning Palestine in Arabic), published from 1970 to 1975, Sweden's Palestine Groups in Stockholm and their magazine *Palestinsk Front* (Palestinian Front [PF]) from 1968 to 1974, and The Palestine Committee in Norway (PCN) who have published *Fritt Palestina* (Free Palestine) from 1970 to this day. Beyond these three magazines, I also draw on interviews with former members of the editorial boards and their Palestinian contacts, as well as memoirs, novels, and private papers that further illuminate their lives between Scandinavia and the Middle East. In a time before the Internet, how did slogans, ideas, and images circulate to form shared beliefs about the Palestinian cause? How important was the circulation of activists—to and from Beirut and Amman—for the publication of Palestine periodicals? Answering these questions might help us understand the globalization of the liberation struggle and the challenges solidarity is facing today.

3. The birth of Palestine solidarity in Scandinavia: The early journals and their networks

Interest in Palestine in northern Europe began in small circles of students, artists, and intellectuals on the Left around 1960, when protest movements against the Vietnam War politicized many on the Left. Learning to protest and organize, members of the popular movement against the Vietnam War in each country extended their anti-imperialist analysis to other conflicts, notably Cuba, Algeria, and Palestine. After the 1967 war, they

[18] Elling and Haugbolle 2024; Magnússon 2017.
[19] Rexer 2024.
[20] Collins 2011, 34–42.
[21] Chamberlin 2015; Haugbolle and Olsen 2023; Thomson and Olsen 2023.
[22] Scholz 2008, 113–50.
[23] Featherstone 2012, 120.

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channeled some of that energy into groups and committees devoted to Palestine. This specialization in "causes" in the so-called Third World was a general feature of the New Left, in Scandinavia and elsewhere. It either took the form of small, focused movements, such as the Palestine committees, or umbrella organizations like The Federation against Imperialism (1975–82) in Denmark, which gathered various smaller groups in broad coalitions, or as working groups within leftist political parties such as the Workers' Communist Party in Norway. Their own magazines became the primary venue for expressing and detailing the aim and nature of their support for Palestine on their own terms. The very need for social movements for Palestine emerged in the complete absence before 1967 of pro-Palestinian voices in mainstream media. If national TV, radio, and newspapers did cover the Palestinian liberation movement, they mainly described them negatively, thus reflecting the official government lines.

The first magazines to "discover" Palestine still had few direct links with Palestinians. *Politisk Revy* (Political Review), founded in 1963 as an intellectual home for the Danish New Left, began writing about Palestine as part of a general Arab struggle, which it tended to view skeptically due to the threat to Israel. After 1967, they changed their line in accordance with a general shift on the European New Left to view Palestine more favorably. *Politisk Revy* took what they called an "antipartitionist" approach to radical journalism, in the sense that they refused to segregate politics and economics from culture and the arts.[24] Instead, they viewed art, literature, education, protest, critical economic analysis, satire, and political organizing as interconnected and mutually reinforcing elements necessary for the attainment of consciousness and liberation.[25] The first Danish publications to systematically express solidarity with the Palestinian struggle were situated further to the left than *Politisk Revy* in Communist circles and with a more classic agitprop approach to the political magazine as a publication that should convince the audience of the party line. *Kommunistisk Orientering* (Communist Orientation) and *Ungkommunisten* (The Communist Youth) were thus small leaflet magazines associated with the Maoist group Communist Working Circle. *Ungkommunisten*, edited by a notable Maoist called Gottfred Appel, became the first outlet for Marxist–Leninist interpretations of Palestine in Denmark.

Appel had developed his own version of Marx's notion of false consciousness. He described the Western state as parasitical in the way that it extracted wealth from this duped working class while implicating them in continued imperialistic and neocolonial exploitation. The real revolution could only take place in the exploited part of the world, from where it would spread to the West.[26] When he turned his attention to Palestine, he therefore offered a radical and militant support for the newly formed PFLP, which converged with the anti-imperialist elements of his thinking. The PF for the Liberation of Palestine had emerged from splits in the Arab Nationalist Movement, which had existed since the 1940s as a small, transnational militant current led by Palestinian intellectuals who, since the early 1960s, had become increasingly inspired by the global New Left and anti-imperialist liberation movements in other parts of the world.[27] The September 1969 issue of *Ungkommunisten* told its readers that "it is necessary that we arm ourselves with a scientific and revolutionary ideology that belongs to the proletariat and finds support among the classes with nothing to lose and everything to win." At this stage, Appel formed a full partnership with the PFLP and

[24] Bjerregaard 2010, 45.
[25] Ahmad, Benson, and Morgenstern 2024, 5.
[26] Kuhn 2014.
[27] Haugbolle 2017.

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began reading *al-Hadaf* (the Target), the organization's weekly magazine, parts of which he received in translation through PFLP contacts (p. 5).[28]

Across Scandinavia, Palestinian militants influenced the organizational structure and ideological direction of the early committees by facilitating connections to the PLO, Fatah, the Palestinian Workers' Union, the PFLP, and the DFLP (founded in 1969). In Sweden, the first Palestine Committees in Stockholm, Uppsala, and Gothenburg included several Palestinians.[29] In Norway, a young Palestinian named Elias Chammas—who had moved from Lebanon in the mid-1960s—befriended a group of student activists in the Socialist Youth Union (Socialistisk Ungdomsforbund, founded in 1963). Together with a handful of others, they formed a preparatory committee for the Palestine Committee in 1969. In the coming years, Chammas connected his Norwegian peers with Fatah in Amman and later Beirut and provided a stream of written material from the PLO. In Denmark, Nabil Kanafani—a cousin of the revolutionary writer and PFLP leader Ghassan Kanafani—had arrived from Kuwait via Sweden in 1966. At the School of Architecture in Copenhagen, he encountered a circle of friends who had become interested in Palestine and who would, a few years later, found the Danish Palestine Committee, including Gunvor Hansen and Malene Ravn. Nabil Kanafani met the brothers of Ghassan's Danish wife, Anni, who were both communists and interested in Palestine. This meeting in Denmark rekindled his contact to Ghassan and the PFLP, and Nabil Kanafani from then onward became the PFLP's principal contact in Denmark.[30] Nabil Kanafani was active in a cultural association called the Arab Club, a social venue for the then relatively small group of Arab immigrants in Copenhagen. He invited Ghassan Kanafani to speak at the Club in October 1970 and later several other PFLP leaders. Nabil Kanafani generally helped the Arabic-speaking community develop links to the PFLP. At the same time, he co-edited *Falastin* and assisted journalists and artists who needed written material about Palestine or translations of writers like the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish into Danish.

4. Entangled in Beirut

Through the Kanafani family's special connection to Denmark, the ideas of the PFLP and the work of Ghassan Kanafani made a great impact on the solidarity movement. Kanafani (1936–72) was not only a well-known writer but also a member of the PFLP's leadership who oversaw most of the group's international connections.[31] At his office in Beirut, he would receive journalists and solidarity activists and explain the Palestinian cause, sometimes taking them to task for their ingrained pro-Israeli views.[32] Some of the Westerners who visited Beirut to connect with the Palestinian revolution became his personal friends. One of them was Birgitte Rahbek, a member of the Palestine Committee and co-editor of *Falastin* until 1972. She entered Palestinian circles as a student at the American University in Beirut in 1970–71, where she attended lectures with the famous Palestinian professors Walid Khalidi and Hisham Sharabi. Her studies and encounters with Palestinian refugees and intellectuals at the American University of Beirut opened her eyes to rich intellectual and political discussions in Palestinian and pro-Palestinian circles and paved the way to a life-long engagement in the Palestinian cause as a radio journalist, writer, and translator in Denmark.[33]

[28] Kuhn 2014, 34–54.
[29] Interview with Mikael Wiren, Stockholm, May 22, 2022.
[30] Interview with Nabil Kanafani, Copenhagen, January 20, 2021.
[31] Wild 1975, 14–21.
[32] A famous example is an interview by Australian journalist Richard Carleton in 1970: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHgZdCJOUAk.
[33] Interview with Birgitte Rahbek, Copenhagen, August 10, 2017.

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On regular journeys back and forth between Beirut and Copenhagen, Rahbek and a handful of other activists developed a new form of practicing solidarity that enriched the understanding of Palestine in Denmark. For the first few years, the Scandinavian Palestine committees focused mainly on studying history and using this factual knowledge to counter Zionist positions in their own national publics. As their acquaintance with Palestinians grew more intimate and they began traveling regularly, their purview changed to include the topics and perspectives they learned from their contacts and from their experience in the Middle East. They would take weeks and sometimes months out of their schedule to travel to Amman and Beirut. This change in practice transformed solidarity from a moral occupation with a political question to an entangled practice where being in solidarity also meant getting as close to the Palestinian experience of subjugation and colonial expulsion as possible, to be able to communicate their wishes and hopes. The transition from "solidarity at a distance" to "solidarity as entanglement" happened gradually and was more the product of close connections than the result of a particular idea or plan of how to be a solidarity activist. After the month of "Black September" 1970, when the Palestinian groups were defeated militarily by the Jordanian government and forced to move their headquarters to Lebanon, Beirut became the place to come face to face with the resistance and meet solidarity activists from all around the world. Journeys to Beirut became *de rigeur* and a visit to the Palestinian camps in Lebanon something of a rite of passage.[34]

4.1. *Falastin: Historical materialism and anti-Zionism*

Falastin was a small-print magazine published by the Danish Palestine Committee between 1970 and 1975 along with an occasional *Falastin Bulletin* devoted to topics like Zionism in Danish Schoolbooks.[35] The decision to use the Arabic "Falastin" rather than the Danish "Palæstina" signaled closeness to the struggle and a belief in the vernacular political framework that Palestinian organizations represented. The Danish Palestine Committee never counted many more than a few hundred members, but it was active and visible in the Danish public through the organization of demonstrations, photo exhibitions, and campaigns. The Committee was founded in September 1970 by a nucleus of friends, including Nabil Kanafani, at the School of Architecture in Copenhagen and was, as mentioned, heavily influenced by the PFLP. The magazine primarily aimed at informing the Danish public about the situation in Israel and among the Palestinian groups and communicating the position of the Committee. *Falastin* was published two to four times a year, with a ceding publication rate in 1973 and 1974. Issues would be 20–30 pages, with unsigned articles signaling that the content reflected the collective output of a committee rather than individual opinions. The covers were mainly black and red with stark images of demonstrations, Arabic writing, and some of the already by the early 1970s recognizable symbols of the struggle: the Kalashnikov, the *fadayeen* (Palestinian fighters), and the *kuffiya* (headscarf). Repeating these images in the magazine helped elevate them into easily recognizable symbols of the struggle in Denmark. The articles of *Falastin* provided a narrative and ideological frame for the new iconography. In the first issue, the magazine's editors made their political aim clear:

> The Palestine Committee is set up with the aim of spreading solidarity with and knowledge about the Palestinian people's revolutionary liberation struggle. We hope to be able to contribute to spreading this knowledge, since we find that the way Danish

[34] Interview with Peder Martin Lysestøl, Trondheim, March 7, 2020.
[35] Bjerregaard 2010.

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> press, radio and TV has hitherto treated the Palestine question has been unreasonable and very emotional.[36]

The counterpoint to "unreasonable and emotional" discourse is an analysis based on historical materialism, the editors state. They are generally in solidarity with the Palestinian people but find that the PFLP is the only liberation organization that represents a "revolutionary" position. Through the Committee's discussions from 1967 to 1970, among themselves and with Nabil Kanafani, they had become convinced that scientific socialism as represented by the PFLP offered the most convincing explanation and the most realistic solution, namely, popular struggle to create a socialist, non-sectarian state of Palestine for Jews and Arabs.[37] They therefore devoted several pages of the first issue to reprinting PFLP's political manifesto in English. The text, which was translated into several languages and circulated internationally through the PFLP's network, presented the conflict as a revolutionary class struggle inside Palestinian and Arab as well as Israeli society.[38] This interpretation went against the conventional media framing of a national struggle between two peoples or two religions, in which the Committee felt that the Danish and Western media remained stuck. Being "emotional" about Palestine thus referred to the way mainstream media would connote the Middle East conflict with the Holocaust and the existential threat to Jews. "The correct historical framework," in the Committee's words, would subject the situation in the Middle East to a Marxist analysis that showed how the bourgeoisie globally was conducive to Western imperialism.[39] In this way, their analysis was meant to be an act of solidarity that would make revolutionary practice possible. Ideology would guide joint revolutionary action. This worldview was neatly summarized by graffiti from a Beirut wall, which was reprinted in the sixth issue of the magazine, first in Arabic and then in Danish translation. The writing on the wall states: "Our weapon: the scientific socialist ideology + the gun."[40]

The gun recured in *Falastin* as a fully endorsed, central symbol for the revolutionary struggle. But unlike Appel's group, who at this point had—secretly—received military instruction from the PFLP in Beirut, none of the Committee's members took up arms. Following the PFLP's analysis, they believed that it was necessary to embrace violent media spectacles grounded in a historical materialist analysis of global resistance. Revolution required militancy, but in Denmark, it would suffice to provide non-violent support, for example, by organizing a collection of funds, called the "Machineguns for Palestine" campaign, in 1971. In the global solidarity milieu, the question of violence would become very divisive during the 1970s. None of the Danish Palestine solidarity activists were pacifists, but the Munich Olympics in 1972, where the Fatah-affiliated group Black September killed several Israeli athletes, made some of them reconsider their position.

Munich took place just weeks after another attack against civilians in Lod (today Ben Gurion) airport, where members of the Japanese Red Brigades who had been recruited by the PFLP killed 26 people, including 17 pilgrims from Peru. Perhaps it was neither strategically nor morally right to attack civilians, some of the Danish activists began to wonder. While they—and their more liberal peers in *Politisk Revy*—had supported the plane-jackings of Leila

[36] Falastin, issue 1, 1970, p. 3.
[37] Interview with Birgitte Rahbek, Copenhagen, November 18, 2022.
[38] Peddycoart 2022, 133–37.
[39] Falastin, issue 1, 1970, p. 3.
[40] Falastin, issue 6, 1972.

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Khaled in 1969 and 1970 as "political, not moral acts" designed to propel a political process, the operations of 1972 made *Politisk Revy* come out clearly against a form of spectacular violence that did not serve the overall purpose of "liberating Palestine from Zionism."[41] Rather, the *Politisk Revy* columnist Jacques Hersh wrote, "one risks strengthening the Zionist enemy by viewing all Jews in Israel, or even tourists who come there [in reference to the tourists who were killed in the Lydda massacre] as enemies."[42] In contrast, *Falastin* maintained a hard line, even as they pointed out that the PFLP had not been behind "the Munich massacre." In issue 3, 1972, shortly after Munich, they wrote:

> Every blow against imperialism is a victory for the Palestinians, and if they are not trying to maintain sympathy and support from "progressives" in Western Europe, it is because they have never really been able to count on it and have never really received objective support based on Western opinion, and because the few powers [such as the Committee] who support the Palestinians and will continue to do so have a scientific, not a moral, point of departure.[43]

The events of summer 1972 became a turning point because they provoked a confrontation with the question of violence in the liberation struggle, in a way that bears resemblance with debates about Hamas after October 7, 2023. For some, an "oppressed people is always right," as the title of the first Danish Palestine solidarity film from 1975 has it.[44] Furthermore, they would point to the fact that Palestinians are legally protected by the 1970 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2625 that explicitly endorsed a right to resist "subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation." For others, resisting oppression was morally right but did not justify violence against civilians or other forms of injustice in the struggle.

As can be seen from the quotes, Munich sharpened the lines between solidarity as "moral" (liberal) and "scientific" (Marxist–Leninist) ideology. Moral solidarity, defined as commitment to universal values of liberation, was thus tested by different political practices of solidarity. In fact, several members of the Committee recall serious internal debate and tension over the official line that was expressed in *Falastin*.[45] While they were fully committed to the PFLP and to the principle that only Palestinians have the right to define their own struggle, some members did lean toward the skepticism expressed by Hersh. They were also aware that sensitivities surrounding the Jewish question could be considered "bourgeois" and "moral" at the ideological level. However, in the pursuit of a broader base for Palestinian support than the few thousand people they could muster at demonstrations in Copenhagen (dwarfed by the tens of thousands demonstrating on a weekly basis after October 2023), perceived insensitivity could be a crucial stumbling block. That very critique would often be leveled at the PFLP in the years to come as the main explanation why they failed to transform from a vanguardist into a mass popular party.[46]

The ideological solution to this problem, as devised by Ghassan Kanafani and the political leader of the PFLP, George Habash, was to disconnect Zionism from Judaism. This crucial

[41] Bjerregaard 2010, 416.
[42] Jacques Hersh, "Geværet og det politiske sigte" (The gun and the political aim), *Politisk Revy*, issue 200, June 1972, p. 3.
[43] Falastin Bulletin, issue 3, 1972, p. 8.
[44] Haugbolle and Olsen 2023, 135.
[45] Interview with Nabil Kanafani, Copenhagen, January 20, 2021.
[46] Peddycoart 2022, 144–56.

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distinction was made clear in the first issue of *Falastin* that defined Judaism as "a religion of significant importance but not … a national or ethnic union between members in other countries … Zionism, on the other hand, is an international political movement which because of the ethnic and national bond that it insists on wants to join all Jews in a worldwide movement."[47] Later issues of *Falastin* (4, 1971 and 6, 1972) returned to this theme by giving readers a detailed overview and analysis of Zionist thinkers, and by naming and shaming those in Denmark who—according to *Falastin*—represented Zionism, including big newspapers and named editors. In this and other ways, the magazine aligned itself very closely with the PFLP's ideological framework and applied it to the Danish context.

4.2. Fritt Palestina: Roving revolutionaries

As we have seen, a handful of Palestinians participated in the early Palestine committees across Scandinavia. Another common feature was the mobility of the founders and editors of these magazines and their direct exposure to the Palestinian liberation movements. Some, like the editors of Norway's *Fritt Palestina*, Finn Sjue and Peder Martin Lysestøl, began with interest in Israel. An early member of the Norwegian Socialist People's Party formed in 1963, Lysestøl went to Israel in 1964 to study kibbutz socialism but ended up befriending Palestinian peasants near the kibbutz where he was staying.[48] This triggered curiosity about Arab politics, which he later pursued in Belgrade and Cairo, where he was sent as a representative of the Socialist Youth Union. During his time in Cairo, Lysestøl also visited Gaza—which at this point was under Egyptian control—and befriended a group of Fatah members. On return to Oslo in 1969, he, Sjue, and a handful of like-minded friends prepared for the launch of a PCN. Chammas provided them with contacts in Beirut and brought home books and pamphlets in English. During the preparatory stage, which lasted a full year, the group read all the books on Palestine that they could get their hands on and studied the history of the region. With no Internet and no specialization in the contemporary Middle East at Norwegian universities, they had to acquire information from alternative sources, such as Chammas, who acted as a "courier" of material that was otherwise hard to find in Scandinavia. On several study trips to Cairo, Gaza, Amman, and Beirut between 1968 and 1971, the Norwegians bought books and met with more Palestinians. As their network expanded among Palestinian revolutionaries, they began to methodically interview members of different Palestinian groups to assess which of them matched their own (largely Maoist) beliefs. A notebook from these trips reveals their detailed understanding of the factions and Palestinian politics, and their ability to navigate subtle political and ideological debates at the time. Sjue would transcribe the interviews and send them back to the other Committee members in Norway. In this way, ideological and strategic ideas were transferred from the Palestinian milieu but also filtered through the Norwegians' own interpretation. This also shows how the Committee, despite its small size, worked in an organized manner where members on "field mission" in Beirut would report back to the group with letters and detailed accounts.[49]

Like *Falastin* in Denmark, *Fritt Palestina* became a placeholder for much of this newly acquired information, images, and insights. Once they had established their links to Fatah in 1969, material circulated between Beirut and Oslo. Members of the Committee used everything from statistics, slogans, maps, cartoons, and even songs—which they translated into Norwegian—for the pages of *Fritt Palestina* and for special educational material. New

[47] Falastin, issue 1, 1970, p. 20.
[48] Interview with Peder Martin Lysestøl, Trondheim, March 11, 2011.
[49] Notebook from Amman and Beirut 1969–71, private papers of Finn Sjue.

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members would be taken through a somewhat dogmatic Marxist teaching of the region's history and the background for the conflict. Similar study circles existed in Denmark and Sweden, where activists also produced occasional publications, so-called "study letters," for this purpose. In *Fritt Palestina*, readers could thus follow the work of the Committee, read interviews with Palestinian leaders, reports from field visits to Palestinian refugee camps, and political analysis. There would also be slogans, cartoons, and portraits of Palestinian leaders and artists. Most coverage, however, was devoted to politics. Up-to-date analysis was required in every issue, given the fast pace of diplomatic developments during these years. The political line largely followed that of Fatah as a corrective to the (in their opinion) misguided foreign policy of the Norwegian government. The editors lambasted official visits of Israeli leaders and called for a boycott of Israeli goods and cultural production. The Norwegian Committee acquired more members than their Danish peers through by recruiting nationally, which is reflected in the longer format and more carefully edited content of their magazine. Both the Committee and *Fritt Palestina* still exist today.

An oral history of *Fritt Palestina*'s first years based on interviews with founding members reveals the importance of circulation and contacts with Palestinians, none of which would have been possible without the total commitment of its editors. Lysestøl and Sjue's travel itinerary between 1968 and 1971 is quite impressive, given the cost of air travel at the time and the fact that both were university students. After their first visits to Cairo and the Gaza Strip, they were embedded with Fatah militants in Jordan in the summer of 1970, during which they went on missions with Fatah fighters to the West Bank. They describe these trips in vivid detail in Lysestøl's book *Palestinerne* (The Palestinians), the first detailed account of the Palestinian organizations in Norway that remained a standard reference about the conflict for years in Norway.[50] After their visit to Jordan, on a quick trip back to Scandinavia, they held meetings in Gothenburg with PLO officials about setting up Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish Palestine committees. Soon, they were back in Jordan, where they participated in the Second World Conference for Palestine in Amman in September 1970, in a joint Scandinavian delegation that leaned heavily toward a Maoist approach to the Palestinian question.[51] Sjue and Lysestøl had made friends with a small group of Maoist militants in Fatah, mainly facilitated through Lysestøl's initial Palestinian contacts in Cairo and his friendship with the writer Mounir Shafiq, who, in the early 1970s, became a close aide of Yassir Arafat (and is still an active political writer today). When the Committee invited Shafiq to speak in Oslo in May 1971, he became one of the first Fatah representatives to deliver a public lecture in a Western country.[52]

The first issue of *Fritt Palestina*, published in October 1970, sums up this co-created philosophy in four points. First, Palestine is of global importance because

> 60% of all oil is produced here [in the Middle East] and about 20% of U.S. foreign profit comes from the Middle East. The day the people take over here, the profit ends. That victory will be a decisive blow to the global exploitative system of U.S. imperialism. And the [Palestinian] victory will give power and strength to the struggle of other Arab peoples."[53]

[50] Lysestøl 1970.
[51] Thomson, Olsen, and Haugbolle 2022.
[52] Interview with Lysestøl, Trondheim, March 11, 2021.
[53] Fritt Palestina, issue 1, 1970, p. 2.

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Second, the Palestinian struggle must be supported because it "has reached a higher level than any other place outside of South-East Asia." The comparison with Vietnam is clearly meant to mobilize Norwegians already attuned to anti-imperialist analysis, just like the recurrent slogan of "Palestine, Vietnam, One Struggle," which would be used in demonstrations in all three Scandinavian countries. Making Beirut "a new Hanoi" could be done not just by "spreading guerrilla attacks against Israel, but also through people's political work and the people's militia." The PCN did not put itself forward as potential foot soldiers but rather as loyal supporters who could assist in "political" (i.e., solidarity) work. Third, the PCN stated that "as Christians the Norwegian people has a historical relation with Palestine, through schooling and socialization." They therefore pay attention and can be mobilized to correct the false interpretive frameworks inculcated by misinforming mass media. According to this article, "bourgeois propaganda" has used the alleged Christian solidarity and affinity with Israel to its advantage, but PCN has now pledged to work toward turning the tide. Flanked by a Fatah logo, this article ends by asserting that PCN will strive to forge solidarity in the Norwegian people with the Palestinian people's liberation struggle, fight the "false myths," and show that "the powers that they [the Palestinians] are fighting against" are the same powers that exploit the Norwegian people.[54]

These points neatly summarize the moral, political, and theoretical dimensions of solidarity as it developed in the formative phase. Politically, PCN aligns with Fatah's strategic vision. Morally, they articulate the violation of Palestinian rights as a shared, universal challenge, which can be understood theoretically through Marxist dependency theory, where global imperialism serves to maintain former colonies in a peripheral position. Moreover, they center Zionism and imperialism as key obstacles both in Palestine and in Norway. The imperative to inspire Norwegians to support and fight for Palestine summarizes the aim of their new magazine. We see here the result of the entangled relation between Maoist student activists and Fatah in condensed programmatic form: Palestine is part of a global anti-imperialist struggle; it is a people's war, and supporting it does not signify anti-Semitism but rather anti-Zionism; whatever the Palestinian people (read: their legitimate representatives in Fatah) decide is the correct interpretive frame; and the United States, European states, and the Soviet Union are all part of a scheme to break their struggle. Palestinians are heroic role models who deserve help and protection. This help will assist Norwegians too as they are subject to the same global (capitalist–imperialist) exploitation. Most importantly, the Committee, which has understood the true nature of the conflict, now see it as its mission to relate this truth to the public.

4.3. Palestinsk Front: Face to face with the revolution

The third Scandinavian case confirms many of the conclusions from Norway and Denmark but also differs in important ways. Palestine solidarity in Sweden emerged simultaneously and partly through contacts between the three countries' groups, as we have seen in the case of the joint delegation to Jordan in September 1970 and the preceding meetings with the PLO in Gothenburg. Rather than one national committee, however, Sweden had various local "Palestine groups" as early as 1968. They were not united in a national umbrella before 1976, when the Palestine Groups in Sweden—which remains the primary network for solidarity work today—were founded. Some of these groupuscules were truly tiny, and I will limit the analysis here to the Palestine Group in Stockholm, who were the main driving force of the journal *Palestinsk Front* (PF). The first issue was published in 1969 by "the Action Group

[54] Ibid.

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Palestinian Front" whose named contacts were three Palestinians living in Sweden, including Daoud Kaloti, the latter PLO representative in Scandinavia. The content was written by Swedish activists Tora Palm, Göran Palm, Staffan Beckman, Marina Stagh, and Jan Gillou. The driving force and initiator, Beckman, had a journalistic background just like Gillou. His wife had been posted to Beirut, where he learned about the Palestinian liberation movement, and where he was also strongly influenced by Maoism. Through Marxist–Leninism, he established contact with Appel in Copenhagen and, already in 1968, regarded him as an important theorist of the revolutionary class struggle.[55]

Kaloti had arrived in Sweden as a student from Jerusalem in 1963. He made the acquittance of Beckman at a demonstration in Stockholm in June 1967, which, according to Kaloti's account in his autobiography, started as a pro-Israel demonstration against "The Arab Hitler" Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt's president. As he recalls it, simply by talking to the (presumably small) crowd of Swedish leftists, including Beckman, Kaloti was able to convince them that Israel was the real culprit in the war, and they eventually changed their slogans to support for Palestine. Kaloti, who lived nearby at the time, was in touch with what he calls "political groups in Palestine" and therefore had a box with flags and posters in his apartment, which he fetched. And so, on that day in June 1967, they started the first pro-Palestine demonstration in Sweden.[56]

Irrespective of whether this colorful story is completely true, Kaloti did, in fact, become part of a group of six people who wrote and distributed the first issues of *Palestinsk Front.* The others were Swedish left-wing youth, who were frustrated with the coverage of Palestine in Swedish media. One of them, Mikael Wiren, remembers his early motivation for joining as part of a wider "anti-fascist struggle." At Stockholm University in 1968, he had joined a Maoist inspired group that later founded the small party Forbundet Kommunister (Communist Federation), which, similarly to other New Left parties, contained an ideological ferment for Palestine solidarity. Soon, Wiren and his peers decided to publish a journal, strongly inspired by the PFLP's weekly *al-Hadaf*, which had begun to circulate among politically active Arabs in Sweden. Like *Falastin* and *Fritt Palestina* a few years later, *Palestinsk Front* resembled *al-Hadaf* in its graphic design with stark colors and monumental photos. Each issue showed the same front of marching fadayeen with a majestic map of Palestine in the background. This image strongly associated Vietnamese FLN soldiers and their popular struggle. The back cover of issue 2, 1969, carried a greeting in Swedish and Arabic from Nguyen Thi Binh, Minister of Foreign Affairs in South Vietnam's revolutionary government to the "Palestinian Brothers in Arms." Content-wise, *Palestinsk Front* like *Falastin* translated parts of the PFLP's political program. There would be articles about diplomatic developments related to the Middle East conflict; interviews with Palestinian militants; detailed coverage of Israeli society and politics; and lists of academic and popular literature for those interested in studying the Palestinian question. A comparison between these reading lists in the three journals shows that they read each other's work—Lysestøl featured in the Danish and Swedish lists, Danish authors like the journalist Jens Nauntofte feature in Sweden and Norway, and Pär Gahrton and Beckman from Sweden were avidly read in Copenhagen and Oslo.[57] The entanglement was cross-Scandinavian just as much as it was north–south.

The striking similarities between the three Scandinavian movements and their journals can be explained by close contacts between some of their members. Gillou has described his own

[55] Interview with Lars Gösta Hellström, Marina Stagh, and Mikael Wiren, Stockholm, May 23, 2022.
[56] Kaloti 2018, 74–84.
[57] Interview with Niels Stockmarr, Copenhagen, October 22, 2019.

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experiences in these years in fictional form in two recent novels.[58] In the books, which form part of a series of 10 novels about the twentieth century, the protagonist Eric Letang is a young man of Gillou's own age during the 1960s and 1970s. A law student from an upper-middle-class background in Stockholm, he becomes involved with pro-Palestinian youth activists and travels to Copenhagen, where comrades link him to German groups—roughly based on the Baader Meinhof group around Rote Armee Fraktion in West Germany—and he ends up on a mission to meet Ghassan Kanafani and Habash in Beirut. In real life, Gillou did indeed work with Danish leftists and participated in a reportage journey to the Palestinian camps in Jordan as a photographer for Politisk Revy in 1969. The fictional Gillou, Eric, arrives in Beirut to discuss the position of the Palestine Groups with Kanafani.[59] The novel's portrayal of contacts is slightly dramatized compared with accounts of similar visits from my interviews. However, it gives a sense of interaction and political stakes between Palestinian leaders and the early solidarity activists. Having introduced himself with a letter from his Palestinian friend in Sweden (possibly the real-life Kaloti), Eric is instructed to wait at his Beirut hotel until further notice. While he waits, he thinks back to his time as an exchange student in Montpellier, when he was much less political and more carefree. "What happened between Montpellier and Beirut was the Vietnam war, quite simply," Gillou writes. "It presented him [Eric] with a number of clear moral choices that made a chain of logical events until the present moment."[60] In other words, a moralist character had to react to imperialism and therefore *had* to end up with the commitment to the Palestinian cause, which had now landed him in a hotel room, feeling queasy. Eric is shaken from his thoughts by the arrival of Kanafani, who takes him to a seaside restaurant where they discuss the solidarity scene in Scandinavia.

Kanafani asks about the Danish and the Swedish groups. In Denmark, Eric replies, there is a more secretive Marxist–Leninist cell (i.e., the Appel group). Having told the Palestinian leader this, he wonders to himself if he has just implicitly encouraged the PFLP to enlist the Danes for military training. After they sit down to eat, four armed men suddenly arrive at their table, followed by a man in a kaki suit and sunglasses. This is PFLP's founder and political leader, Habash, whom Eric already met in Amman two years earlier. Habash wants to know to what extent the Swedish Palestine Groups are under surveillance by the Swedish security services. Eric replies that they attempted to infiltrate his group by planting a "mole" in their circles, who, after a while, urged them to attack the synagogue in Stockholm. Eric briefly refers "to the experience from Western Germany, where the security service used similar methods, only in a larger measure."[61] These experiences have made the Swedish activists convinced that Western European security services want to provoke an armed movement, which they can then criminalize and brand as terrorist and antisemitic. "As long as we can keep weapons away from our work in Sweden," Eric explains to Habash and Kanafani, "we will be able to continue the solidarity work."[62] He tries to convince the two leaders that Swedish Palestine solidarity needs to be kept clear of the militant path, lest they end up in prison and ostracized by society. In the end, Habash accepts and promises Eric that the PFLP will not recruit any fadayeen from Sweden in the future.

These exact meetings did almost certainly not take place. But the archives of the three movements and their members—in addition to fictional renditions of history such as

[58] Gillou 2017; 2018.
[59] Gillou 2018, 143–47.
[60] Gillou 2018, 146.
[61] Gillou 2018, 148.
[62] Gillou 2018, 148.

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Gillou's—together show that there were extensive contacts between solidarity activists and the PFLP and Fatah leadership. The three journals analyzed here show the results of their entangled relations. They created a corpus of texts and images that established a template for Scandinavian Palestine solidarity. Later solidarity activists and their magazines, demonstrations, petitions, and campaigns built on this early work. They also eventually departed from some of the interpretative framework, not least the Maoist dogmatism, which, after the events in Munich in 1972—followed shortly afterward by the assassination of Ghassan Kanafani in Beirut—began to go out of fashion.

5. Conclusion

Solidarity magazines provide apertures to the complex relations between liberation movements and solidarity movements and the ideological contestation over the global meaning of the Palestinian struggle. By reading into the social life and travels of the editors and their Palestinian contacts, I have shown how Palestine solidarity magazines became placeholders for a wealth of information, insights, images, and analysis developed through transnational networks and friendships. I have found that the circulation of activists, particularly between Beirut and Scandinavia, was crucial for building an understanding of struggle, without which this body of knowledge and practice could not have emerged. Through their entangled relations, Nordic activists curated print material that provided Palestinian answers to fundamental theoretical-political questions about the international division of labor, world revolution and global anti-imperialist struggle, revolutionary subjects, and the place of violence in political struggle. My analysis also highlighted how the Palestinian diaspora facilitated the circulation that made solidarity movements possible. Contestation over interpretive frameworks sometimes played out as a conflict over which Palestinian groups to support and why. Crucial decisions about content and political line were made by early solidarity activists and editors of the magazines as a direct result of discussions—and later, regular, organized meetings—with Palestinian spokesmen. The early magazines presented the finished result of this process of deliberation. By translating key texts and interpreting the Palestinian cause based on broad readings of academic and activist literature, the magazines created a template for how to articulate support for Palestinian liberation. And while the magazines did not manage (or indeed intend) to reach a broader audience, their main message did: that the Palestinian people have a right to self-determination, and that this right can only be achieved through collective struggle.

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