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## ~~TILL VICTORY~~ *Here and Elsewhere*

The most recent film from the Dziga Vertov Group--it was reported complete as of January 31, 1971--, ~~TILL VICTORY~~ took much longer to make than any of the others. The first contacts with groups engaged in the struggle to liberate the Palestinian people and land from Zionist oppression took place in November 1969. From these meetings there emerged the resolve to focus the film on the work of the Fatah. (This resolve--again-- reflects a very particular and very conscious political bias. The Palestinian situation, as J.-L. G. himself remarks, is rife with "contradictions--and at least theoretically the situation is less obvious than it is in Southeast Asia".) Much of the footage was shot on location. The rapidly changing situation in the Middle East slowed the shooting. The work was further complicated by material and ideological difficulties--like the Chinese J.-L. G. calls these "contradictions", too--within the Dziga Vertov Group itself. There is reason, however, to believe that the main difficulty lay for J.-L. G. in the methods of thinking and methods of work that underlie its elaboration: more ambitious than ~~EAST WIND~~, the Dziga Vertov Group attempts in ~~TILL VICTORY~~ to extend the principle of "collective creation" to a mass basis. The time it is taking to make the film, J.-L. G. explained to ~~L'EXPRESSION~~ last July, is "the result of political discussion. The members of the Palestinian resistance are participating in its making. This is one of the aspects of their work. The film is discussed on a regular basis." These ambitions expose their owners to risk: as J.-L. G. explains in a text translated in the January 1971 issue of ~~FREE PALESTINE~~, "it is very difficult talking to a leader about the image that should be formed on the Palestinian Revolution and about the sound that should accompany this image or contradict it." These risks are not without their rewards, though: "What is positive is this very difficulty, which in fact highlights, in concrete form, the contradictions between theory and practice."

~~TILL VICTORY~~ (two-thirds of the Fatah slogan ~~REVOLUTION TILL VICTORY--~~ "we decided to leave the word ~~REVOLUTION~~ for the Palestinians to say in the movie"; elsewhere, though, J.-L. G. says that its "actual title really is ~~METHODS OF THINKING AND METHODS OF WORK IN THE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT~~") is the first Dziga Vertov Group film to deal in an on-going



armed fight for liberation. Its subject has thus the kind of raw, carnal reality that newspaper headlines record. In this alone it differs radically from the preceding films. Intending as they do "to work for publicity of the Palestinian struggle", its makers mean it "(1) to help people who are fighting imperialism in one or another way in their own country; (2) to present a new kind of film, a kind of political tract." This first intention renders the film "a political act: demonstrating the struggle of the fedayhin to other Arabs; showing Fatah women fighters to their sisters in the Black Panthers who are being chased by the FBI". This intention requires that the film be shown and distributed "politically": "Where can it be shown? This depends upon the situation of the present struggle. It could be shown in a village square in southern Lebanon; we will hang a sheet between two windows and show the movie. It will be shown to the students in Berkeley, to workers on strike in Cordova or Lyons. It means it will generally be shown to aware elements among audiences. Why? Because it is a movie that represents the experience of the struggle." In regard to the second intention, the line its realisation takes is indicated in a remark by the guerilla leader Khal Hassan which seems to have impressed J.-L. G. very strongly: "we ought to shoot Assifa's first shell close to the ears of the peasants, that they might hear the sound of the liberation of the land." This, J.-L. G. declares, "is a revolutionary sound". In making "a new kind of film" the aim is to make a film in which "political ties between the image and the sound" are clearly and sensibly established. "This is a way to solve, day by day, a concrete problem. To find a fidai or cadre or woman fighter, to search together for the way to transform their struggle into images and sounds, to say to them, 'I want to shoot your picture while you shoot your first bullet in the name of Assifa', to know which picture should come first and which should follow so that the whole may gain a meaning of political and revolutionary significance--that is one way to serve the Palestinian Revolution which in turn is furthering the revolution in the world."

One afternoon in April 1970 J.-L. G. and J.-P. G. talked about the film they were working on for a crew from KQED-TV (San Francisco). In describing their work they made much use of a notebook (in J.-L. G.'s hand) plotting its structure and detailing much of its image and sound. As they were describing it then, the film would consist in four parts.



It would open with the colors of the Palestinian flag--green, white, black, red--as these colors occur in natural objects (like grass and blood); these colors and their "meanings"--"the green means the earth; the white means peace; the black means death of the enemy; and the red means the blood given in the struggle"--have at this point only a lyrical, affective import, as their origin moreover suggests: they come, as J.-L. G. puts it in his provocative English, "from a Middle Age 'd poet".

The first part (then called PALESTINE ZERO) is historical: "Because of the Zionist propaganda almost nobody knows what has really happened in the Middle East since the beginning of the century." This historical profile of the land and its people would involve actors: "Two Palestinian fighters, a girl and a boy, will tell the story of the Palestinian fight from the beginning till now. But not just historical dates, saying 'at that date it was that' and so on . . . For example: 1956, which was the taking of the Suez Canal by Nasser--a very complex situation, because for the West it was a victory over the West. For the Palestinians it was the first time the advance elements of the Palestinian struggle began to realise in their own consciousness that they shouldn't believe any more in the so-called progressive Arab governments. So this is the way the boy and the girl can talk here: the boy can say to the girl, 'You are the Palestinian people, I am Nasser, and I am going to speak for you'--and then he does just that: 'I am going to speak for you.' You see? This is acting. This is fiction. But this is the way you can make people understand that Nasser is not really speaking for the Palestinians."

The second part (then titled PALESTINE ONE) "presents the struggle of the Palestinian people as a new political and revolutionary fact in the Middle East. This new political revolutionary fact is related to all the anti-imperialist struggles all over the world: the Palestinians are fighting Zionism and Zionism is just an agent of imperialism. It's related to Vietnam, it's related to Laos, to Cuba, to South America--everywhere--, and we have to present it that way." Thus it is not enough simply to say "There is Vietnam, there is Laos, there is Cuba": the intention to make "a new kind of film", one in which "the political issue lies in the relationship between images and pictures, the relationships between sound effects", necessitates an attempt to show this relation: "We prefer--since



we are making movies—to try to show it." To show that the struggle in Palestine is related to struggles all over the world they were going to film "just a Palestinian fighter, looking at a video-tape on a TV screen, at some images of Laos, for example—just look at it. Because when the image will be shown in Laos, it will be the contrary: to look at a fedayeen on the screen." This is how to "tell" people that "these two peoples, the Palestinian people and the Laotian people, in very different situations have chosen the same way to go on with their struggle—armed struggle—without telling them anything."

The third part turns from the world scene to detail "the real Palestinian situation and the originality of the Palestinian situation. PALESTINE TWO is how by thinking their own situation in a new way the Palestinians act to transform themselves so as to carry on with the struggle. It's how the Palestinian revolution is thinking and acting in a new way." In a very literal sense this third part is informed by the political fact (stated in the form of an equation) that "armed struggle plus political work equals a long popular war". The logic of the thinking informing this film is so radically innovative in view of the habits of our experience of "cinema" is likely to give us that this writer prefers here to yield the floor to the Dziga Vertov Group itself: "The people's army is the first spontaneous expression of the revolutionary will of the people. This revolutionary will leads to armed struggle. So we speak of armed struggle and after armed struggle we speak of the political work, because the armed struggle involves only a few of the people, not the whole people; but if it only involves a few people, it has to spread as political work for the whole people: the people's army can only live and continue to go on if there is an effort to develop the revolutionary capacity of the people; that means political work. And after this, there is a conclusion: with the two preceding sequences we have shown that if there is no political work the armed struggle is just the usual military activity, not really a people's war. If it's a people's war, it means: armed struggle plus political work equals a long popular war."

"So, after that there is the fourth part: this long popular war will lead to victory. Here we go back again to a meeting. We began with a meeting. But at the beginning the meeting can only mean the revolutionary will of the people—just a will, a feeling, a revolutionary feeling—but

at the end, after having analysed the armed struggle, after having analysed the political work, when we see a meeting again we can call this meeting "revolution till victory", because there is much more in it. Then we can cut into the shot of the meeting the colors we have seen at the very beginning: at the very beginning the color is just a romantic, poetic expression; here at the end the same color has a political context, because of what we have seen in the previous sequences, and in this color we are expressing the political program of Al Fatah--the Seven Points of Al Fatah--which have come out of the real meetings."

D. C. D.

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