

Note: The following text reflects my vision during 1968-69 in Beirut Lebanon about the necessity to tell the world the truth about Palestine. I had just finished editing *AlQuds* - Arab Jerusalem a 16mm 18 minute B&W film documentary about the loss of the city of my birth following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The letter was addressed to the film committee of the Fifth of June Society, who distributed *AlQuds*. My next project was a film about Palestinian Children's drawings, to be filmed by my friend Hani Jawhariyyeh, who was later to help establish the PLO cinema section, and who was martyred during a battle in Lebanon in 1976. After filming the children in Baq'a refugee camp in Jordan, the Civil War of 1970 erupted and the project was not realized.

Vladimir Tamari, May 25, 2016 Tokyo, Japan.

Palestinian cinema: the beginning

The Palestinians are attempting, against many odds, to forge their new identity: Cinema is one of the most potent ways to express this new identity. The truth has to be told, the present realities have to be explored and the ideas for the future expressed through film. This is my concern, that a small but real beginning is made on the right footing. Many films have been made about Palestine, each expressing the point of view of its maker. The U.A.R. government would express its own party line. UNRWA had to be "objective", and not to mention Israel any derogatory fashion, Granada TV had to "balance" the film by showing Abba Eban at an interview. The time has come to make films from the "inside", telling the story as the Palestinians themselves experience it. The most well-meaning outsider outsider to the problem, however well informed and sympathetic, cannot tell the story "as it is", without without imposing on it - unconsciously -his own background. Films said from different points of view are of course good in themselves, but the time has come to say our point of view as Arabs and Palestinians.

What does this involve ?

1- Realism: the story has to be told without hiding anything behind silly slogans, without flinching from bitter truths, and with a special eye to express the hopes of the people shown, and the individual qualities that

each and every person shown on film might have. We have to be very particular to get personal experiences. and express these experiences visually, on film. people are eager to tell their real story, we have to gain their trust and imaginatively use visual material. My belief is that the truth will speak for itself.

2- Arab Production: If this sort of thing is to grow, we have to depend on ourselves, and set a special Palestinian Cinema Production board to deal with sponsoring and getting finance for films. This is essential because any foreign source of finance will invariably have built-in restrictions as to what our films should say. It is both possible and desirable to get our money from Arabs: it might take a little effort in the beginning, but we will be free to show our point of view. Technical facilities are available locally, and should be used. In the camps it is essential to use Arab cameraman, for a very good reason: the refugees are wary of UNRWA and Western cameraman who, as one refugee told me during a filming at camp "for twenty years you have been taking our pictures and what has come out of it?" Cameraman have been stoned even ! In this atmosphere we have to go to the camps humbly, seeking the simple truth as fellow Palestinians, whenever possible the film crew should live in the camp. We cannot sacrifice the trust of the subject of the film and authenticity of feeling for a Hollywood-type smoothness. It is real creative effort in films that makes people listen, not slick but empty films. Of course quality has to be always sought, at accepted professional levels.

3. Audience Orientation: Although the films we will make are Palestinian films, they should be oriented so that the prospective audience will understand and interact with them. A film aimed at a French audience has to be made in French, with a special stress, perhaps on the 'joi de vivre' of Arab children, in spite of their sufferings. A U.S. audience will be impressed by the 'get-up-and-go' type of self-help demonstrated by the fedayeen. An Arab audience wants to see particular experiences of individuals, not loud slogans. An Arab audience also needs to be given hope: a we know what happened in Palestine, but we want to see what the Palestinians are doing to create the new life, as it were. A Japanese

audience is sure to be repelled by any emotional shouting or by slogans, but individuals relating their story will go a long way to convince an audience. All this of course does not mean that a basic humanistic, humble and imaginative approach is not universally understood, but still we have to be sensitive to the audience.

4- A creative approach to Pproblems: We have a unique problem here, and we need a unique solution. Arab cinema has made people sick with its hypocrisy and "living in the clouds" attitude to life. It has been more entertainment than a moving social weapon. We Palestinians have to join the new creative forces that are making the new cinema in Algeria, in Iraq, and whenever there is courage, talent and enthusiasm. None of the formulas of the past are working: we have to invent the new cinema. And if we succeed, than people will see our films, understand our cause and perhaps, finally, move to solve the problem.

CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS FILM:

Since we already received the money for this film, we should make it before unforeseeable conditions make it impossible to make. I propose to go to Bakaa camp, with a cameraman from Amman (now working with the ministry of information newsreel) and shoot the film in black and white and also color. Once the material is processed we can have a small group of people (too many cooks!..) to discuss the best possible approach, especially towards a commentary. Already a reasonable sequence is formulated and I am ready to discuss it or outline it with the committee. But of course the different responsibilities for filming, communications, accounting, commentary writing etc. have to be discussed with some detail before anyone sets out.

THE PALESTINIANS:

This film has been conceived independently from Walter de La Mare's proposal. The stories of perhaps ten really interesting Palestinians of all kinds of backgrounds can be told .An old refugee woman might speak of how it was in Jaffa in the thirties, a young educated commando can

speaking about and cause, a Beirut businessman can speak about the difficulties involved in being an exile from one's own country. Mahmoud Darwish in Haifa could be interviewed, reciting his poems. Mrs. Khatib in Jerusalem could speak about her community, and so on. This can be very effective.

INDIVIDUAL NEWSREEL [sic] REPORTS: For TV and local distribution. Topical reports of 13 minutes: The experience in an Israeli jail of As'ad Abdul-Rahman, the latest fidai operation (once set up we can convince fidai organizations to release movie material which I know is being shot on many operations). The field is endless.

[signed] Vladimir Tamari 6.I.69

[January 6, 1969]
