

LETTERS

A question of emphasis

FORUM

EDWARD W. SAID

We must address US politically



Sir: The interview with me carried in your April issue (*Forum*, No 54) was based on about 1½ hours of tape-recorded discussion with Mark Bruzonsky; the date of our meeting, I think, was towards the end of February of this year. My reason for writing you this letter, which I trust will be published at the soonest opportunity for your readers' sake, is that a few points – two to be exact – seem to have been given the wrong emphasis in transcription. I say this without in the slightest wishing to fault Mr Bruzonsky, who quite obviously had a difficult task at hand. The problem derives from the spontaneous and spoken character of our meeting, and also from the fact that I did not see the transcription before it was published.

In the first place, I do not mean to suggest that Palestinian "armed struggle" is in my opinion either a mere slogan or an outdated concept. I was speaking about the need for a *political* program adequate to those new political, diplomatic, and cultural circumstances that have developed since 1974. What I mean to say exactly conforms to resolutions taken by the Palestinian National Congress in its 1974, 1977, and

1979 meetings. Insofar as in my opinion any popular struggle depends mainly upon political means supplemented (and no more than supplemented) by military means, *that* is what I was talking about in connection with the Palestinian struggle towards self-determination. It should be clear that I support the struggle itself without reservation.

In the second place, I do not want to be understood as saying that a Palestinian state is *principally* in the interests of the US. I have been for many years a very vocal opponent of the view that the US holds 99% of the cards, and an equally committed opponent to US imperialism. Yet I believe that there is a real distinction to be made between those interests in the US represented by its imperial establishment, and those interests represented by the broad mass of its people. If we make distinctions between Arab regimes and Arab people we must make the same distinction about this country: to say otherwise is to demonstrate the functional illiteracy of which I was also speaking. The main argument for a Palestinian state is a Palestinian one; it also happens to be an international one, and – I wanted to say – it is in the broad interests of the US to understand and recognise this fact. The Camp David agreements as well as the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty of course make no such recognition.

That is all I wished to add to what is otherwise a fair representation of my current views.

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Editor's note: As you noted, we merely transcribed what you said and can therefore in no way be responsible for the uproar that your statements have caused in Arab and Palestinian circles.