

al-Azzah, Mus'ab. Interviewed 2012. Translated by *The Palestinian Revolution*, 2016.

Western Sector Work in Eastern Europe in the 1970s

My name is Major-General Mus'ab al-Azzah. I joined Fateh in 1966, when I was a secondary school student. As it happened, my uncle-in-law Jamil Jibreel Abu Abdullah recruited me to the movement. After the 1967 Naksa, I left school and joined Fateh in Jordan. I almost met with death in the Jordan Valley and witnessed the Battle of Karameh. Immediately after the battle, I was selected to join the Naval Academy in Rashid, near Alexandria. I worked as a military naval captain, then went to Syria and worked in the navy in Latakia under Ali Hajjaj. I kept moving between positions until 1975, when I was selected to join an official delegation led by brother Abu al-Hol to Romania, along with Tareq Abu Rajab and Riyad al-Hantouli (Abu Thaer). We met with Minister of Interior Manescu and a group accompanying him. The Romanian brothers asked Abu al-Hol to appoint me head of the organisation in Romania. When we returned to Lebanon, I was appointed head of security in Europe, according to an official protocol with Romania, which was in place from 1975 through 1980. This was a huge leap in Fateh's history, especially for the organisation in the occupied territories. We had an agreement with the Romanian brothers, and my liaison officer was General Georgescu, who was the head of the anti-terrorism unit, and the head of palace and aviation security for president Ceauşescu. We used to fly Fateh members from Romania to Lebanon or Damascus for weapons and explosives training. This continued in absolute secrecy for five years.

During that period, Israel didn't manage to expose any of our cells in Eastern Europe. The Western Sector benefitted from our work in various areas of the struggle, inside and outside the occupied territories. People might think it's very easy to fly someone with an Arab passport or the Israeli laissez-passer, who lives in the West Bank or in 1948 Palestine, from Romania or any other Eastern European country to Lebanon or Syria and back without getting a stamp in their passport. We had many means of prevent the Israelis from discovering Fateh members' identities. After one year of studying, when our members returned to Israel, the Israelis would check their passports. If they found a Syrian or a Lebanese stamp, they would integrate the member, who might expose many others. We managed to avoid this through the agreement with our Romanian brothers. This was a Romanian-Palestinian agreement. I'm not exaggerating when I say there were 5000 Palestinian students in

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Romania. More than half of them were on PLO scholarships. The PLO used to receive a quota of scholarships, I think around 500 a year, so there were 500 students every year for five years. If we trained around two per cent of these students, can you imagine the number of students that were organised, trained and prepared before we send them instructions using our own methods? This was an important period for Fateh and the PLO. We also helped other Palestinian factions such as the PFLP and the DFLP. We facilitated many things for them through our relations with many countries, especially Romania. We benefitted from this in terms of organisation and security. We had an agreement with the Romanian state to exchange information. They supplied us with information, and we supplied them with information they needed. This experience was never repeated in Fateh or the Palestinian revolution. This experience started with me and ended when I left Romania in 1980.