

Woman Hijacker Feels 'Engaged to the Revolution'

By **BERNARD WEINRAUB**
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LONDON, Sept. 8—She sits in a heavily guarded police station in West London wearing a ring with a bullet on it. "I am engaged to the revolution," she once said.

At first glance Miss Leila Khaled is an unlikely revolutionary in the diplomatic drama being enacted between the British Government and the Palestinian commandos.

Trim and dark-eyed, Miss Khaled, a 24-year-old teacher who speaks English fluently, was seized at Heathrow airport on Sunday after trying to hijack a New York-bound Israeli airliner carrying 145 passengers. Her fellow hijacker was shot dead in the jacker aboard the El Al jet, one of four planes involved in hijackings by Palestinians over Western Europe.

Now in a women's detention room at the Ealing police station, eight miles west of downtown London, Miss Khaled is awaiting the decision of the British Government on her release.

A Scowling Face

Whatever loneliness or private terror Miss Khaled endures is masked by a tough, scowling face, a military strut and a terse, almost angry voice.

"In our revolution the woman has just as big a role to play as her male counterpart," she has said. "I regard the fact that a woman should shoulder the responsibility of the battle against Zionism, like the man does, as important to the success of the revolution."

And yet Miss Khaled's fears about her guerrilla role are just barely submerged. A British businessman who met her recently in the Middle East discussed her role on a previous hijacking of a Trans World Airlines Boeing 707 to Syria last year.

"You really musn't do this sort of thing," the British businessman told Miss Khaled at a party in Qatar, a shiekdom on the Persian Gulf. "You

will give fat old businessmen like me heart failure."

Miss Khaled burst into laughter. "I can tell you nobody was half as scared as I was," she was reported to have said. "I was shaking like a leaf."

Shortly after the hijacking last year—in which Miss Khaled played a decisive role—she told a correspondent of The Times of London:

"A hijacking of this sort is just like any other commando operation. We have succeeded in this mission, but there will be others. I am a fighter, just like any other of the Palestinians who are determined to regain Palestine. If I am called upon to do this again, I will do it gladly. It is my duty."

Exactly what incidents set off Miss Khaled's fury at Israel—and details of her background—remain unclear. She was born in Haifa, which is now in Israel. "I was only 4 years old when we were driven out of Palestine and I fled with my family to Lebanon," Miss Khaled has said.

Went to American School

She was educated at an American girls' school in Tyre, Lebanon, and at the American University in Beirut. She drifted, like many youth, into the Marxist-oriented Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

"Like all Palestinians, education only helped me realize what a loss Palestine was," she once said.

And yet even as Miss Khaled slipped into the vortex of the guerrilla movement, she continued a college routine of dates in Beirut, dancing at parties and studies.

Worked as a Teacher

Shortly after her graduation from the American University in Beirut, Miss Khaled worked as a teacher in Kuwait. The Arab-Israeli war of June, 1967, however, jolted her.



Associated Press

Leila Khaled, 24-year-old revolutionary, in recent photo

When the war broke out, Miss Khaled was reported to have been in Haifa and to have slipped out of Israel and wound up as a refugee in a camp in Tyre, Lebanon. She was then said to have joined the guerrilla group.

She has explained the attacks on Western airliners with the comment that the West is a friend of Israel and "friends of my enemies are my enemies."

However, after the hijacking of the Trans World Airlines jet last year she wrote letters explaining to passengers the reasons behind the attack.

"We were sorry for the inconvenience we caused to them, but that world must know we are a people and we are a people entitled to our rights," she said. "I am only

doing what duty demands."

At the Home Office, officials were studying a series of legal questions involving Miss Khaled.

They noted that if the hijacking attempt began when the plane was in British airspace, she could be tried here instead of being extradited to Israel. If it was over the high seas, British courts would have no jurisdiction; as the flag country of the El Al jet, only Israel would have jurisdiction.

English law has no specific offense of aircraft hijacking, but prosecution is possible under a 1967 agreement, ratified by both Britain and Israel, which said anyone committing an offense aboard an aircraft can be prosecuted by the country responsible for registering the plane.