

Musa Alami, "The Lesson of Palestine," *The Middle East Journal*,
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In this 1949 article published in *Middle East Journal*, Musa Alami, a noted and highly respected Palestinian Arab leader during the first half of the 20th century, summarizes from a Palestinian perspective what happened in 1948 that resulted in Palestinian dispersion and Israel's establishment. Unsurprisingly, he lays prime responsibility at Britain's feet, accusing it of opening the door to Jewish immigration, allowing Jews to arm and preventing Arabs from doing the same. The war itself he breaks into two phases: November 1947 through May 15, 1948 and May 15th onward. During the first phase, Palestinians were woefully unprepared and disjointed. During the second, neighboring Arab armies failed to adequately or sincerely take up the Palestinian cause.

Neither Palestinian nor Zionist history began in 1947. Nor did it begin in 1917. It began when the two communities touched each other with zest, zeal and building trepidations from the 1860s forward. This oversight in his rendition is noted in several significant ways.

By beginning with a brief mention of the Balfour Declaration and the British favoring Jewish homeland development, he barely acknowledges how Jewish immigration and land purchase began in serious numbers and amounts in the four decades before 1917. At the same time, Alami places the issue of Jewish immigration as the crux of the reason for Palestinian Arab displacement, but says nothing about Palestinian Arab – not just Arabs not living in Palestine at the time, but resident Palestinians – selling land to Jews so that the Zionists were able to establish a geographic nucleus for a Jewish state. The majority Palestinian Arab population was wracked by poverty and the politics of self-serving elites, who indeed loudly proclaimed Palestinian Arab national identity and their opposition to Zionism – which Alami never speaks of – when it appeared and grew from the 1880s to the 1940s. He avoids any extended description of internal Palestinian Arab bickering that plagued the national movement from the 1920s forward. No wonder then, as a passionate Palestinian advocate, he puts the dates of the first battle for Palestine from November 1947 forwards.

Alami places external responsibility for the loss of Palestine on British shoulders and Jewish preparedness. And, he points to the absence of Arab unity, focus and preparedness.

Alami correctly notes that a Palestinian-wide leadership was absent at the end of the mandate, leaving Arab villagers to fend for themselves. He also indicts surrounding Arab countries for ineptitude and their self-interested desires to control areas of Palestine while caring little for the Palestinians themselves. He omits dozens of [Palestinian Arab political decisions to boycott participation with the British in the Mandate](#). Nor does he evaluate how these decisions enormously debilitated Palestinian Arab opportunities to slow or stop the Jewish national home. In fact, Palestinian Arab leadership rebuked highly sympathetic pro-Palestinian overtures from

many officials, like Ernest Bevin and Lord Passfield, and especially rejected the vocally anti-Zionist policies advocated by Sir John Chancellor, the third Palestine British High Commissioner from 1928-1931. Taking no action to embrace Palestinian Arab advocates during the Mandate's early years was a key mistake for the Palestinian Arab national movement's goal of preventing a Jewish state, or at least limiting its size. What Chancellor proposed was stopping the Mandate altogether. His bold intent was NOT embraced by the Arab leadership for fear that Palestinian leaders would have to share political power with other Arabs outside of their narrow political realm. [Palestinian Arab press of the late 1920s and 1930s](#) is replete with examples authored by Palestinian writers who understood clearly that Jews were headed toward controlling a part of Palestine, and that Palestinian Arabs were in fact assisting the Zionists in their land acquisition. [Arab leaders meeting in Damascus in 1938](#) warned explicitly that if Arab states did not come to the aid of the Palestinians then, a Jewish state was inevitable. While Alami cites a quotation from Menachem Begin about wanting Arabs out of Jewish areas of the proposed state (the accuracy of the quote needs to be checked), small numbers of Arabs had begun moving away from Jewish areas even before WWI. And there is no doubt that segments of the Jewish community sought to have areas of Palestine that were predominantly Jewish.

Militarily, Alami notes, Jews began their own military training and later volunteered with the British Army, giving their youth military experience. They smuggled in arms, created factories, formed military organizations. The Arabs saw the need to do the same, but didn't. While the Jews conscripted everyone, amassed arms and acted with a unified goal and command structure, the Palestinians instead treated what was coming as they had previous revolutions – independently and without adequate preparations. Disunity and the absence of a single military command meant villages were effectively on their own. In both phases, special interests displaced any unifying objective that might have been. Meanwhile, the Jews treated what was happening as a total war.

Alami continues the story with the Palestinians who left lost confidence in their defense. Those remaining were told Arab armies from other countries were on their way. But during the second phase, these armies failed to save them. In addition to disunity and a lack of preparation, an absence of seriousness, a failure to understand implications prevailed. Newspapers reported that in Jewish populated areas, there was rationing and a sense of tension; Palestinians behind the lines carried on with life as usual.

Politically, Alami says the Arabs should not have accepted the June 1948 truce. Each country negotiated separately, each placed its own self-interest above concern for the Palestinians' fate.

Socially, says Alami, the way Arab governments treated Palestinian refugees was shameful. Due to their inaction, incompetence and unawareness, he called Arab states weak. What befell the Palestinians, he warned, won't be the worst if things do not change.

Danger, Alami says, comes from the Jews wanting to take all of Palestine, i.e., Palestine, Transjordan and large parts of Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. Arabs must change their way of life to face this threat. Without a unified plan of action, they will “remain divided and backward” while the Jews grow stronger.

Since members of the Arab League are internally split, Alami believes a smaller group has the solution. If states in the Fertile Crescent, i.e., Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq, were to band together into a single, connected entity, they could have shared defense, economic, financial, cultural, justice and social policies. Members would be equal (with Lebanon having special status).

Arriving at this new entity requires three elements: (1) Unity, despite distance and differences, would be achieved via improved knowledge and education. (2) Governments’ modernization would require each country to have a constitution, a scientifically grounded administration, be progressive and aim to serve all, not just special interests. (3) People’s rights and duties would oblige governments to ensure people’s freedom, equality, work, social security, social service and the rights of women. The people’s first duty is to know they have these rights.

Alami explains why Fertile Crescent states need comprehensive national education as well as better economic systems. People benefit when economic goals are directed by a central, non-partisan and honest administrative body, technical experts coming from educated youth, and funds come from taxes (especially inheritance), government exploitation of resources and to some degree, loans.

He sees only Jews and the British opposing this and exhorts Arabs not to lose sight of their goal. Only through unity can Arabs thrive and can the Palestinians be directed to a better future. The question the reader is left with is why would existing states agree to this kind of drastic change which might take away from their own power?

Alami in the end is a profound Palestinian patriot, providing a ‘road map’ for Palestinians to take destiny in their own hands, to change the realities they confronted internally and externally. He writes, “After the disaster of Palestine the Arabs stand at the crossroads.” And he concludes, “The disaster has shaken us profoundly, and wounded us deeply, and opened the door to a great danger. If the shock wakes us up, brings us together, and impels us to a new life from which we can derive strength, the wound will heal, the danger will be averted, and Palestine will be recovered. And the misfortunes will be a blessing.

But if not, woe to the outcome.”

Wendy Kalman and Ken Stein, January 17, 2022

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Note to the Reader

This article is a translation from the Arabic, with some condensation, of *The Lesson of Palestine* (*'I brat Falastin*) by Musa Alami, published in book form in Beirut I March 1949. *The Lesson of Palestine* is an analysis of what happened in Palestine in 1948 and an answer to the questions which those events post for the future of the Arabs.

Musa Alami is a Palestinian Arab, the son of a former Mayor of Jerusalem and deputy in the Ottoman Parliament. He studied law at Cambridge, England, and entered the Government of Palestine, becoming Arab Secretary to the High Commissioner and later Crown Counsel. In 1937 he resigned from the Government to devote himself to the practice of law and to the national struggle of the Palestinian Arabs. He played an important role in the St. James Conference between Arabs and British I 1939, as he was to do later in the London Conference of 1946-47. In the autumn of 1944 he was chosen by the six Arab parties in Palestine to represent Palestine at the Preparatory Conference for Arab Unity which met at Alexandria and drew up the Protocol of Alexandria. He sat also on the committee of Foreign Ministers which drew up the Constitution of the Arab League, signed on March 22, 1945. He was entrusted by the Alexandria Conference and later by the League with the task of opening Arab Offices for information in London, Washington, and Jerusalem, as well as with the direction of a project elaborated by himself for the social and economic reconstruction of the life of the Palestinian Arab peasants. After 1946 he devoted himself entirely to these projects and ceased to attend meetings of the Arab League or to participate in its political decisions. He is currently directing a large project for the settlement of Arab refugees in what remains of Arab Palestine and in Jordan.

For a number of years Musa Alami has occupied a special place in the Arab national movement. Old enough to have been brought up in Ottoman days and to have inherited the breadth of vision which empire gives, and young enough to feel the despair and aspirations of Arab youth, he constitutes a vital link between generations. The political school in which he was trained was the thirty years of struggle under the Mandate, and the triangular tension among Arabs, Jews, and British. From this hard school he has emerged, not defeated or pessimistic, but conscious of his responsibilities and clear about what must be done. His analysis of why the Arabs lost the battle of Palestine is absolutely frank and critical: the version which he gives, while not at all conforming to the version now current in this country of seven Arab Goliaths and one Jewish David, lays bare the weaknesses in Arab life which led to the disaster. It was not a conflict between seven powerful states and one weak group: it was one between a determined, well-organized group endowed with western techniques and American money on the one hand, and an old-fashioned, slow-moving and disunited society on the other.

“The Lesson of Palestine” contains a program for the future of the Arabs aimed at removing the causes of their weakness and redeeming them. This redemption is through work, through the renovation of all aspects of Arab life, through the reintegration of the Arabs into the community of living creative nations.

THE LESSON OF PALESTINE

Musa Alami

The Arabs were faced with a challenge, the first since their liberation from foreign rule; and they did not meet it. A great national disaster has been inflicted upon them, exposing them in turn to further blows and disasters. The challenge and disaster are those of Palestine.

The disaster was not inevitable. During the course of the struggle we had an opportunity to finish with Zionism and its dangers altogether, but we did not take it.

We were greatly shaken and began to question ourselves, asking, how did the disaster happen? Why did matters take this turn? What were our mistakes? Where were the sources of weakness in us, and the gaps through which the enemy entered? How can we repel the great and imminent danger, and recover the beloved and violated fatherland?

This is what we shall now try to analyze.

The prime causers of the disaster were the British. It was they who gave the Jews the Balfour Declaration in 1917 with its “national home,” and then opened the doors to them. British protection and patronage enabled the Jews to make Palestine their home, and to multiply. Under the protection of British arms Jewish colonies were founded and extended, and Jewish immigration flourished. Under the wings of the British Mandate Jewish terrorism hatched and grew, and was trained by British hands until it became an organized military force. During all this the British prevented us from arming, and shut our eyes to the arming of the Jews, until the time came when they were strong enough to stand on their own feet. Then the British withdrew and announced their neutrality.

Thus the British were the prime causers of the disaster, and on them lies its responsibility. They were assisted by the Americans and the Russians. So much is clear. At all events, we found ourselves face to face with the Jews, and entered into battle with them to decide the future; and in spite of what the British, the Americans, and the Russians had done, it was still within our power to win the fight.

There were two phases to the battle of Palestine. In the first phase the burden of defense was thrown on the shoulders of the Palestinians; in the second, it was taken up by the Arab armies. The Arabs failed to defend Palestine in either phase.

In the first phase the fundamental source of our weakness was that we were unprepared even though not taken by surprise, while the Jews were fully prepared; that we proceeded along the lines of previous revolutions, while the Jews proceeded along the lines of total war; that we worked on the local basis, without unity, without totality, without a general command, our defense disjointed and our affairs disordered, every town fighting on its own and only those in areas adjacent to the Jews entering the battle at all, while the Jews conducted the war with a unified organization, a unified command, and total conscription. Our arms were poor and deficient; the arms of the Jews were excellent and powerful. It was obvious that our aims in the battle were diverse; the aim of the Jews was solely to win it.

These same weaknesses were the source of weakness in our defense in the second phase, that of the Arab armies: disunity, lack of a unified command, improvisation, diversity of plans, and on top of all a slackness and lack of seriousness in winning the war.

Just as we failed in the military sphere, so we failed in the political. Our actions were improvised, our conduct of affairs a chain of enormous mistakes: we had no clear objective and no fixed policy. The natural result of all this was disaster and the loss of Palestine.

These weaknesses were a reflection of the state of the Arab nation and of the existing regimes: a disjointed political order based on dismemberment was reflected in its ranks in battle, as was its slackness. Further, its affairs were in the hands of inefficient governments, and the nation itself was still weak in consciousness and maturity.

The loss of Palestine was a great disaster with far-reaching results for the very existence of the Arab nation. If the Arabs hasten to face the anger before it overwhelms them, there is still time and opportunity. But if they do not, these beginnings will lead to their inevitable conclusions.

The first remedy lies in unity, so that we may become again a strong, cohesive body politic. Fortunately this unity has been the principal aim of our national movement from its inception, just as historically it was the beginning and basis of our existence. Nevertheless, there are obstacles in the way of complete unity at the present time. The field must be narrowed so that it may be nearer actual realization. Here the Fertile Crescent presents great possibilities. Let us then be convinced of regional unity which will bring together the countries of this Crescent, and can be a pattern for general unity, while the door remains open for those other Arab countries which may wish to enter.

But unity is not enough. The inefficiency of the present regimes is also responsible for the disaster. Thus along with unity must go a modernization of government, assuring reforms in organization and progress in aims, and embracing both internal and external policies.

But even all this is not enough without solicitude for the people, for their revival and endowment with the primary elements of power, so that their strength may be transferred to the state. The people must participate in the direction and supervision of their own affairs; they must be given all their rights just as duties are demanded of them. The first and most sacred of their rights is freedom in all its forms. Then come real equality, security of work and social security, and the spread of social services. The people's first duty is to know their rights, to believe in them, and to act by them.

There must be a strong universal system of education with the object of creating a new, powerful, conscious generation capable of defending the Arab homeland and of recovering its self respect. There must also be a complete program for the exploitation of Arab sources of wealth, so that a powerful defensive system may be created to preserve the country, to raise its standard of living, and to revive its people.

These are the matters of the hour in these difficult circumstances. The future history of the Arabs will be determined for a long time by the way we deal with them and the results we achieve.

THE BATTLE FOR PALESTINE: FIRST PHASE

November 1947 – May 15, 1948

In the year 1920 a conversation took place between a Frenchman resident in Palestine and a Jew from one of the colonies. The Jew said, "We have two enemies in Palestine – malaria and the Arabs. The cure for malaria is quinine; as for the Arabs, their cure is this –," and he pointed to the rifle he was carrying. From that time on, the Jews collected arms and prepared for the battle. In 1922 a large shipment of arms sent to the Jews was discovered in Haifa, and in 1933 a larger shipment was found being smuggled to them at the port of Jaffa in a barrel of cement. No doubt the smuggling of arms proceeded continuously between these two dates.

The first military demonstration made by the Jews was when Colonel Jabotinsky led demobilized Jews in an attack on the Arabs during the uprising in Jerusalem on April 4, 1920. It was Jabotinsky who later founded the Revisionist Zionist Party, which represents fanatical Zionism, or to be more precise, frank and open Zionism, and from which sprang the military organization, Irgun Zvei Leumi. Jabotinsky freely admitted the wide aims of Zionism and the necessity of relying for their realization upon force, and upon the creation of Jewish military unity for that purpose.

From the beginning, the Jews began training and organizing on a military basis under the guise of sporting organizations. At the time of the Arab revolt of 1936-39, the Jews came out into the open, and the British Mandatory Government took charge of training them at the hands of British officers. This was the beginning of a new phase in the existence of Haganah, or Jewish "defense force." When World War II broke out, the Jews volunteered in the British Army, and were encouraged to do so by their organizations for political, military, and economic reasons, but primarily to give their youth military training on a wide scale.

The Jews profited from every occasion in the war to arm extensively. They smuggled in ships loaded with arms from Tobruk. Through devious means they acquired another large quantity of arms from British military camps in Palestine. They bought further arms from traders who used to smuggle them in from the western desert and British military camps in Egypt. All this was disclosed by various incidents brought before military tribunals. They also founded light arms factories. At the beginning of the war the two military organizations, the Stern Gang and Irgun Zvei Leumi, emerged as national military organizations; in 1943 they began to conduct terroristic activities against the Mandatory Government.

The Arabs saw all this, feared its results, and felt the necessity of doing the same. But there arose no genuine movement among them to arm and train. They had recently emerged from the revolt of 1936-39, during which the British had treated them with the greatest severity. Military tribunals had sentenced to death anyone with whom or near whose houses were found arms and ammunition, even if it were only a bullet; and the British had collected whatever arms remained with the Arabs after the revolt. Moreover, emergency laws and military tribunals were still functioning because of the war. As a result of the attitude of the British toward them and because of their own feelings, the Arabs abstained from volunteering in the British Army.

In the light of all this, it was obvious that any movement for training and arming would have had to be conducted outside of Palestine in the neighboring Arab countries; but this also did not come about. There was an attempt, but it did not succeed because of the lack of unity and cohesion.

So the struggle began, and the Arabs were totally unprepared for it, while the Jews had made great progress in their preparations: they had a goal, and were getting ready to reach it. Nevertheless, the initiative was with the Arabs, who thought that victory would come with shouting, and that actual fighting would put an end to hesitation and bring forth help and materials. But in matters on which important results depend, and particularly in those which decide the destinies of peoples and countries, it is impossible to rely on the inspiration of the moment, or on the course of events.

When the struggle began the news agencies reported a statement made by a British soldier friendly to the Arabs, advising them to prepare on a large scale, and quoting an English

proverb which says, “If your enemy be a mouse prepare as though he be a lion.” We ignored the advice, but the Jews took it.

The procedure of the Jews in the struggle was based upon total warfare: universal conscription, and expert military command, a unified military authority, wide-scale military training, complete modern armament, heavy mechanical equipment, expert and strong defenses, and complete integration of the various departments – in general, utilization of all their power and resources for the war effort.

We, on the other hand, proceeded on a narrow limited basis: we had no clear idea of total warfare, but were dominated by the ideas and methods of previous revolts. These had been, in the first instance, popular mass movements of general excitement and enthusiasm. Later there had developed revolutionary groups or bands, but the organization of these groups had been primitive: they had depended for their existence on the personality, strength, and influence of their leaders. For the most part, military elements had had no share in them. Their weapons had been light and old, and every unit had acted independently of the others. When the struggle began, these groups were formed again with the same materials and elements, on the same bases and with the same methods: no general support, no regular soldiers, no unity, not totality, no training, no defense, no good arms.

No doubt our old methods were good in their time, but by now the power of the Jews had increased; their military organization had grown; they had trained forces, effective weapons, a highly technical command. The phase of popular revolts and primitive bands had ended, and only a proper army could be effective.

The first spark of the struggle flew at the end of November 1947, following the recommendation for the United Nations for partition; it was in Jaffa, and the hand behind it was generally thought to have been British. The atmosphere had been prepared by the declaration of a three day’s general strike.

Was it better to accept the struggle than and to go ahead with it, or should we have paused and perfected our preparations? Did the political situation really demand immediate hostilities before we were ready? However that may be, the fact was that the battle went on, and we proceeded to the bitter and painful end.

As the struggle commenced, we began to understand our deficiencies. Little by little our forces began to grow; here and there we got the better of the Jews in preliminary patrols. Some people imagined that victory was within our grasp, and that the Jews had lost the struggle and their cause. But a basic deficiency in our military set-up continued to create a wide breach in our ranks which remained open until the enemy entered through: this was the absence of a commander-in-chief in the field directing affairs through a unified administration. Instead, a very strange way of conducting war prevailed: in spite of the fact that the struggle was one, the

field one, and that we were one small entity in a small country, the theater of operations was split up and the direction of the struggle conducted on a local and disjointed basis.

The Jews were better organized than we. They had a common military command, their forces were coordinated, their fronts connected, and their war one. They took full advantage of our disunity and the anarchy in our military set-up. When the time opportune, they collected all their forces and directed them to one point chosen by them, and dealt us heavy concentrated blows; the victims bore the full brunt of the blow alone, without receiving help or any attempt to lighten it, until he weakened under the impact and fell. Other places watched what was happening next to them and waited their turn, and were unable to do anything because of their preoccupation with themselves, the lack of cooperation, and of a common command.

Thus the country fell, town after town, village after village, position after position, as a result of its fragmentation and lack of unity. How much we lost on every side through this disunity!

This was not all. In addition to its local, disjointed character, the war in Palestine involved only part of the country, not all of it. The brunt was borne by those adjacent to the Jews, while those who were distant remained distant, unless the war approached them; they followed its news and developments with concern, but as though they were not from Palestine, or as though the problem did not concern them, or the result affect them. Thus the war failed to achieve the character of totality.

At the same time the Jews mobilized not only all their young men, but also all their girls in every place and colony, no matter how far from Arab neighborhoods, or secure in the heart of Jewish areas. They conscripted even the newly-arrived immigrants. There was general mobilization and complete military organization.

When the struggle began, the Arab League did attempt to remedy the military deficiencies in Palestine by forming a military committee upon which it threw the brunt of the war. The "Army of Liberation," which it wanted to constitute as a striking unit, while the burden of defense was left to local forces. But because of its smallness, it was neither able to act seriously in attack, nor even to serve usefully in defense.

In every movement, the aims desired and the methods to achieve them must be defined. What were our aims in the struggle, in the face of the great danger? The aim to which all forces should have been employed and all efforts exerted was the defeat of the enemy and the winning of the battle – and nothing else. But this was not the case; eyes were turned from the true aims to others. Every step in planning the war was mixed with the desire to safeguard a special interest. The necessities of war were neglected or delegated to a second place, and special considerations relating to private aims took priority.

Thus we proceeded in the battle of Palestine – the struggle for our existence, the battle for life or death – in the first phase, between November 1947 and the middle of May 1948, which ended with the evacuation and the incredible collapse. We were scattered far and wide, our homes, our land, everything lost.

Out of justice to the efforts of the Arabs of Palestine, mention must be made of their noteworthy qualities. In spite of everything, the Arabs made exemplary stands: what happened at Selma, Abu Kebir, Jerusalem, Qastel, Beit Safafa, Kafr Saba, Bab al-Wad, Ramleh, Tantoura, Ajzem, Jeba, Tireh, and other places was worthy of the Arabs' character and proof of their essential quality. If ultimately the Palestinians evacuated their country, it was not out of cowardice, but because they had lost all confidence in the existing system of defense. They had perceived its weakness, and realized the disequilibrium between their resources and organization, and those of the Jews. They were told that the Arab armies were coming, that the matter would be settled and everything return to normal, and they placed their confidence and hopes in that. Moreover, they had before them the specter of Deir Yassin, with all its brutality.

The evacuation and homelessness of the Arabs was planned and intended by the Jews. When Menachem Begin, the leader of the Irgun Zvi Leumi, was visiting New York following the assassination of Count Bernadotte, he made the following statement: "In the month preceding the end of the Mandate, the Jewish Agency decided to undertake a difficult mission as a prelude to taking over the Arab cities before the evacuation of British forces and the dispersal of their Arab population. The Jewish agency came to an agreement with us that we should execute these arrangements, while they would repudiate everything we did and pretend that we were dissident elements, as they used to do when we fought the British. So we struck hard and put terror into the hearts of the Arabs. Thus we accomplished the expulsion of the Arab population from the areas assigned to the Jewish state."¹

THE BATTLE OF PALESTINE: SECOND PHASE

(From May 18, 1948)

The Arabs of Palestine left their homes, were scattered, and lost everything. But there remained one solid hope: the Arab armies were on the eve of their entry into Palestine to save the country and return things to their normal course, punish the aggressor, and throw oppressive Zionism with its dreams and its dangers into the sea. On May 14, 1948, crowds of Arabs stood by the roads leading to the frontiers of Palestine, enthusiastically welcoming the advancing armies. Days and weeks passed, sufficient to accomplish the sacred mission, but the Arab armies did not save the country. They did nothing but let slip from their hands Acre, Sarafand, Lydda, Ramleh, Nazareth, most of the south and the rest of the north. Then hope fled.

¹ *Al-Hayat* (Beirut), Dec. 20, 1948.

The loopholes through which the enemy entered in the first phase, while we were fighting as a people, were the same as those weakening our ranks and forces in the second phase, while we were fighting as states and regular armies. Disunity in our aims, improvisation, lack of preparation – in short, military deficiency – were the same. On top of all this was added lethargy, absence of plan, neglect of local strength, and lack of seriousness.

In this phase also, our forces were disunited in the face of the enemy, our fronts independent of each other, and our war local. Our armies had no unified command. It is true that they agreed upon a high command, but it remained nominal.

As a result, the Arab armies were unable to collect their forces and aim them at the heart of the enemy in a powerful, decisive blow. On the contrary, the enemy again exploited the disunity and lethargy in our ranks, gathered all its forces, aimed and struck at our fronts and at our armies, one after the other, with concentrated blows. We received them individually; no one moved when the other was being attacked, nor returned the blows. This happened again and again. The Arab governments had committed themselves to war beforehand, but when it came they found themselves unprepared. We do not know whether this was because they did not take the enemy, or their task, or both, seriously, each one relying on the other without assuming responsibility themselves, or whether it was born only of carelessness and their habit of improvising.

In general, lack of seriousness in the war, failure to understand its far-reaching results, and absence of appreciation for the great responsibility which was on them were obvious during the battle, whether it was at the front, or behind the lines. At the front, this was clear from what has preceded – in the failure of the armies to conduct any of the serious military operations for which they had come, and in the extent of their losses. Behind the lines, the waging of war demanded that preparations should be carried on with great energy, and that all the power of the nation and its resources be directed to the war. But nothing of this happened, and ordinary life went on as it always had in a natural, unperturbed way.

This biting comment we take from the newspapers, quoting the UN observers and the Red Cross officials, who said that when they were in Tel Aviv or Haifa they felt a tension which they did not feel when they were in the Arab capitals. In the former, there was an atmosphere of war everywhere – rationing, abstention from comfort and amusement, and the direction of everything to war; in the latter, an atmosphere of pleasure and indulgence in all the ways of comfort and plenty and blissful calm.

We entered the war and slept; but the enemy did not taste of sleep.

THE POLITICAL SPHERE

All this happened in the military sphere of the battle of Palestine. In the political sphere, our proceedings were one chain of great mistakes. Improvisation and a failure to specify our aims were characteristic of all our political actions. We entered the struggle with no clear purpose, with no specific plan, and we excelled at nothing except our negative stand. We had powerful winning cards in our hands, but we did not know how to play them to advantage. In international politics there were two big opposing camps, disagreeing more and more in both small and major matters. This situation provided us with a means to be effective and victorious, but we did not succeed in exploiting it or in gaining either side. On the contrary, both sides agreed at our expense – the one matter on which they were able to agree – and the miracle was complete.

But no doubt the biggest political failure we recorded was our inability to create some kind of real unity among ourselves in the face of a united enemy, at a most critical moment, in an historical and decisive struggle, with disaster facing us.

A tremendous mistake was to accept the truce on June 10, 1948, after twenty-five days of the struggle had passed and before the Arab armies had arrived at a decisive result. It is true that the Security Council, and the British and Americans in particular, interfered and put pressure on the Arab states to stop fighting; and that the British cut off the supply of arms, contrary to treaties between them and the Arab states, and then came forward with the suggestion of the appointment of an “International Mediator” as an apostle of peace, and proposed the four-week truce to save the weak position of the Jews. But all this does not excuse the mistakes which led to failure and disaster. This pressure had been gauged and expected beforehand. Everyone saw the necessity of finishing operations as quickly as possible, before other states intervened, and we were given the opportunity. But lethargy and lack of effort in striking the quick, decisive blow set in. The Arab states could have done one of two things: either collect themselves and continue the war without listening to the UN and the Security Council, as the Jews did later on, until Palestine was saved; or end the war on conditions clearly settling the issue over which they were fighting. But the matter ended with individual negotiations made by the Arab governments separately, one after the other with the Jews, to decide on a lasting truce. These governments did not know either how to enter the battle or how to get out of it.

Thus we lost the battle and we lost Palestine, and with it we lost the self-respect of the Arab nation; until the European press referred to the Arab states as “the seven zeros.”

MAIN CAUSES

How did matters take this turn? There are three aspects to the answer: lack of unity and dissension among the Arabs; the existing regimes in the Arab countries; and the state of the Arab peoples. The disunity at the front was a reflection of the disunity within; the weakness of the military and political preparations was the result of a general governmental weakness of preparation; the shortcomings and lethargy of the governments was the result of the weakness of

popular control over them; and the weakness of this popular control was the result of a general weakness in the Arab peoples.

In the face of the enemy the Arabs were not a state, but petty states; groups, not a nation; each fearing and anxiously watching the other and intriguing against it. What concerned them most and guided their policy was not to win the war and save Palestine from the enemy, but what would happen after the struggle, who would be predominant in Palestine, or annex it to themselves, and how they could achieve their own ambitions. Their announced aim was the salvation of Palestine, and they said that afterward its destiny should be left to its people. This was said with the tongue only. In their hearts all wished it for themselves; and most of them were hurrying to prevent their neighbors from being predominant, even though nothing remained except the offal and bones.

The structure of the Arab governments was old-fashioned and sterile. The regimes did not even understand the situation, or the importance and danger of the hour, or the course of events. They did nothing positive in accordance with the exigencies of the situation, neither politically, legally, administratively, nor socially. Their political and military inefficiency has already been noted. As for their administrative inefficiency, the Arab states occupied part of Palestine where there was an administrative vacuum after the evacuation of the British. However, the elements of administration were still there: officials, offices, and records. It was the first duty of the Arab governments to continue to administer and not to hold up common interests. All this was quite easy, and of great value for the course of the war. Nevertheless, offices and services were suspended, an indication of incompetence and lack of understanding of the value of local administration.

In the social sphere, the incompetence of the Arab governments has revealed itself in the matter of the refugees. The matter is most urgent. In the eyes of the outside world it is a test of the value and the preparedness of the Arabs. The essence of the matter is not charity, but organization and assistance and the opening up of new opportunities. It is shameful that the Arab governments should prevent the Arab refugees from working in their countries and shut the doors in their faces and imprison them in camps. The matter needs adequate effort a will to work, sincerity, and good organization.

So the blow came through the lethargy and rivalry of the Arab states, the incompetence of their governments, and the unawareness of their peoples. These are our faults, the weaknesses in our ranks, the loophole through which the enemy entered and brought on us shame and loss. So long as these weaknesses remain, the Arabs will remain groups and states ruled by inefficient governments through antiquated regimes; the people will remain feeble, careless, and far from attaining control over their own affairs; and Palestine will not be the last or the most serious disaster to afflict them.

Nevertheless, Palestine and the self-respect of the Arabs must be recovered. Without Palestine there is no life for them. This our ancestors understood truly as of old. Their understanding was better than ours, when Europe attacked and took Palestine from them. They were willing to die for it and continued to struggle until they recovered it. Thus it is today. This is the first phase of a long war. But so long as the conditions of weakness persist, the recovery of Palestine will be a futile hope.

THE JEWISH DANGER

(Summary)

With the establishment of a Jewish foothold and base, the Arabs are faced with a new danger. The ambitions of the Jews are not limited to Palestine alone, but embrace other parts of the Arab world. In a message to his people last year, Mr. Ben-Gurion said: "Prepare to achieve our final goal in the construction of the Jewish state, the gathering-in of the Jews of the world, and the fulfillment of scriptural promises." The Zionist program dates back to the days of Herzl, and it is based on the colonization of Palestine and the revival of the Jewish kingdom as it was in its golden age. Palestine will then become the base for exploiting all the East and for extending the economic interests of the Jews. In their definition, Palestine includes present-day Palestine, Transjordan, and large portions of Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. They dream of "a greater Jewish state between the Nile and the Euphrates."

This program they are implementing step by step. The next step will be an attempt to take all of Palestine, and then they will proceed according to circumstances – circumstances which they themselves will attempt to create. To this they will bring all their power, influence, wealth, and abilities.

This is the danger which faces the Arabs, and which obliges them to change their way of life in order to be able to meet the new situation.

THE LESSON

(Summary)

Although the Arabs have seen and heard something of the disaster which has befallen their brothers in Palestine, its full extent goes far beyond anything they have seen or heard or imagined.

Hundreds of thousands of the Arabs of Palestine have left their houses and homes, suffered the trials and terrors of flight, died by the wayside, lived in misery and destitution, naked, unprotected, children separated from their parents, robbed, raped, and reduced to the most miserable straits.

Had the Palestinians been able to foresee their fate, they would have willingly given up all they possessed in order to preserve their country and to avoid their exodus and dispersal.

Today, Arabs as a whole have been given the opportunity to look into the future, and to profit from this lesson. If they learn this lesson, they must from now organize themselves and prepare to defend their homes and their country. Force can only be repelled by force. But the Arabs will not be strong until they are united, and take the road by which nations become powerful. Time does not wait for us; we must hurry.

The Arabs are still stronger than the Jews if they unite and cooperate. Palestine slipped from their hands very cheaply: it was not defended as one should defend one's home. The Arabs need cohesion, organization, training, so that their potential strength may become real.

The first essential is to end our quarrels about Palestine, and to recover our unity of plan and action. The greatest danger is that we should remain divided and backward, while the enemy grows stronger.

ARAB UNITY

The Arab nation has a deep desire to revive, to lift itself up, to recover its place in history, to be counted as a great nation with a glorious past. But it is dismembered, as the disaster in Palestine revealed in particular. This dismemberment constitutes the principal obstacle in the way of our national resurgence. Unless we realize unity, and do away with fragmentation and all its accompanying features of backwardness and disruption, we cannot take the road to revival.

From its beginning the Arab national movement has had two principal aims: the freedom of the Arab countries from foreign domination, and their unification in one great state. The motto of the movement consisted of two words: "Independence and Unity." These two aims have remained basic throughout the period of the struggle for independence, until they have become complementary to each other – freedom means unity, and unity means freedom and independence.

Thus "Arab unity" has been in the forefront of our national aims ever since we were dismembered. Imperialism came between us and it; we resisted both imperialism and partition and considered them complementary to each other. We used to say that partition was the work of the imperialist, a method of weakening us and dividing our country, and of securing their own position in it.

Now that the imperialists have gone and we have realized one of our major goals, shall we abandon the other and preserve the fragmentation they left behind? Surely not. No Arab country has any special interest in fragmentation. The interest of all lies in unity; only the enemy and the foreigner benefit from it. No one can dispute this, although in every country there are individuals who cling to dismemberment and derive private benefit from it.

Even these regional governments which are based on partition talk of unity. As a matter of fact their chief figures were, for the most part, those of the national movement for independence, and unity was one of their first principles. But each government now seeks from

unity its own predominance and sovereignty, power for its own personalities, and influence for its own sphere.

What of the League of Arab States? It is true that we attempted to achieve a kind of cooperation and grouping together by forming this League as a step toward Arab unity. But the attempt failed; the evils of partition remained, and the Arabs continued to meet and to disagree. More than that, they split into two rival camps, and the League was unable to remove the causes of rivalry – it was, indeed, itself one of the causes. This was because its charter was based on the preservation of the status quo, which is based on partition and on the strengthening of the little states. The League itself has no kind of sovereignty and no operative executive power.

So we must return to unity. What is this unity, and how can we achieve it? Can it be by the development and evolution of the League of Arab States? If that is possible to achieve, that is what we want. But unity necessitates that each state of the League give up some or even all of its independence and sovereignty, in order to form out of the total a joint, unified state endowed with sovereignty. And we have seen that the states of the League, or some of them at least, are watchful to preserve all of their independence and sovereignty, and to surrender nothing for the sake of unity. Thus it is impossible to reach real unity along the path of evolution in this League, and so it is with every similar plan which aims at the unity of all the Arab countries.

The achievement of unity in a partitioned father land can come in two ways: through consent and agreement, each state conceding some of its independence and joining together voluntarily to form one independent state from the sum; or through compulsion – by one of the parts dominating the others and joining them to it willy-nilly, playing the role of Prussia in the unification of Germany. For a long while Arab thinkers have been hoping that an Arab Prussian would arise and unify us, but so far it has not come about. The force necessary to impose and establish unity, and compel all to accept it, does not now exist. Thus only the way of persuasion and agreement is open to us.

Some of the Arab states are jealous of their independence and little, if all, really anxious for true unity. If we look at the Arab peoples we find that some are not enthusiastic about unity, or are unable to direct their governments toward it; others are more enthusiastic and anxious to realize it, and are at the same time more conscious of the Jewish danger, because of its proximity. These latter peoples find themselves faced with a choice: either to remain inactive in face of the danger until it overwhelms them one by one, and to suffer the fate of Palestine, or to wake up and unite so that they may ward it off. The instinct of self-preservation impels these peoples powerfully toward unity.

THE FERTILE CRESCENT²

² The term “Fertile Crescent” applies to the crescent-shaped fertile section of the Arab peninsula on its eastern, northern, and western edges, and includes Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq.

So we must narrow the field. Here the Fertile Crescent suggests itself. It was in Syria and Iraq that the idea of Arab nationalism and Arab independence developed in the time of the Turks; it was on the banks of the Barada and the Tigris that the idea of Arab unity was born and flourished in the period of European imperialism. The people of these two countries had most understanding of Arab nationalism and Arab unity, and most enthusiasm for and belief in them. And the countries of this Fertile Crescent are faced most directly by the Jewish danger and exposed to Zionist ambitions. Thus they are the most ready for unity.

Within this Fertile Crescent are wide fields for work, and great possibilities for evolution and progress and construction. It is rich in the basic sources of power, both material and moral. If the countries of the Fertile Crescent were unified, and endowed with good government and proper direction, they would be strong enough to meet and repel the enemy, and save Palestine and the Arabs.

We find also that the history of the Fertile Crescent from the first Islamic period was based on unity and the cohesion of its parts, and that unity is the basis of its continued existence. Partition is imposed on it externally.

We find, finally, that it was the Fertile Crescent which formerly bore the message of the Arabs and played the principal role in spreading their civilization, when it was organized in one state with its capital in Damascus or Baghdad. Let history repeat itself and let us be persuaded to a unity embracing all the parts of the Fertile Crescent, and constituting the model for a more general and complete unity.

Our ultimate objective is complete Arab unity embracing all the Arab countries, and it is only out of sheer necessity, in view of the weak will to unity that we feel in the other Arab countries, that we are now narrowing the field. The smaller unity must be the pattern of a larger unity, and the door must be left open to the remaining countries to enter when they wish.

We consider Egypt's positioning a special light. The role which it played in the past in saving Palestine still awaits it. If the unity of the Fertile Crescent is achieved, it must be based on close cooperation with the other Arab countries, and especially with Egypt – a cooperation closer and firmer than now exists in the Arab League.

What will this unity be, and what is the road to it? The emerging together of the countries of the Fertile Crescent in one state is our ideal. In circumstances like ours, before a danger such as threatens us, we ought to accept this complete unity wholeheartedly; and if it cannot be through the decision of the states, let it be through the decision of the peoples, and by their pushing the governments into it. If full unity is not yet possible, major national interests should at least be brought together in one administration and organization.

I emphasize that this unity for which I am asking is not an alliance or confederation based on agreements and treaties; it resembles the Swiss Federation and the United States of America;

each state independent in its internal affairs, but all united in matters of common interest, through a central unified government.

The major common national interests which ought to be unified are foreign policy, defense, economics, culture, justice and social affairs. We should have one foreign policy expressed through single representation and a single channel of communication with the external world. We should have one defense policy, and one defense force. We should have one economic and financial policy, with one currency and common tariffs and taxes, and one policy for production, exports, and imports. We should have one cultural policy based on unified instruction in administration, schools, books, organization, syllabi, and objectives. We should have one system of justice based on courts with a unified administration, laws, organization, and tribunals. We should have one social policy based on unity of organization and social aims. All these affairs should be unified in one central government representing the entire Fertile Crescent and wielding authority and sovereignty with executive power, responsible to an elected assembly representing the entire country: that is a unified or federal government.

I repeat that this unity must be based on a complete equality among the countries entering into it, and that no one specific regime or special kind of rule should be imposed beforehand. The choice should be left to the people after unity has been decided upon. This, in my opinion, is the nearest we can get to a unity from which power and effectiveness may flow.

As for the way to the realization of this unity, it must be constitutional. In the countries of the Fertile Crescent, groups must grow up believing in unity, in contact with each other, working together to spread the idea, forming a powerful public opinion in each country insisting on its realization, and making it a condition for the support of every deputy and every ministry in order that the representative assemblies may vote it, and the governments accomplish it. Or else there must arise an apostle of unity who will work for it and remove all obstacles in its way.

Lebanon is a part of the Fertile Crescent. If a unity of the Fertile Crescent is formed, Lebanon cannot stand apart from it, for this would not be in its interest. The unity of the Fertile Crescent must be complete. However, there are special circumstances in Lebanon which make it necessary for it to have a special position. Let us admit this. In exchange, Lebanon should agree willingly that the extent of its cooperation within the Fertile Crescent should be wider, and the ties stronger, than they are within the Arab League.

It may be asked: What of the great distances which separate the countries of the Fertile Crescent, the desert between them, the differences in the level of civilization between its regions, and the multiplicity of religions and sects among its inhabitants. Can these distances and divergences be overcome?

As for the distance, they are not so important today, for modern methods of communication have shortened them greatly. Baghdad is nearer to Damascus than Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Beirut were in the past. If these distances did not prevent unity in the age of

the camel, they will not do so in the age of the train, the automobile, and plane. The distances between our countries are small when compared to those in the United States.

The desert is not a barrier. Science will no doubt eventually overcome it: even now the conquest of its distances and spaces has been achieved, and building has begun. Let us remember that the world stands today on the threshold of the atomic age, with all its expected wonders. It is not improbable that the day will come when the heart of the desert will be transformed into a "paradise," a vast inexhaustible storehouse. The desert will be not an element of weakness and division, but a source of materials and power for us as it was, in different ways, a source of strength to our ancestors.

As for differences in the level of civilization, they do not separate brothers; the more advanced must take the more backward in hand. The differences are not great; not so great as that which separates some of the states in the United States. So it is with the multiplicity of religions and sects. Most of these sects have their origin in one religion, the religion of the great majority in the whole Crescent. In any case, the spread of knowledge and national education are two guarantees that all these differences will be narrowed down and removed.

MODERNIZATION

Unity alone is not enough. There must also be complete modernization in every aspect of Arab life and thought, including its external and domestic policies. The realization of unity is one aspect of this modernization which we are demanding. But even if we achieved unity, and the governmental set-up remained the same, matters would be no different, and the same mistakes would be repeated. Now especially, when the Jews have obtained a foothold in the heart of our country and their danger has become concrete, the present level of government cannot remain as it is, for it cannot endow us with the power which we need: what lacks power cannot give it.

We do not mean by modernization of government a change in form, but one in its very essence and ends. Should the government be republican or monarchical? This is not important. There are in the world some republics and monarchies which are successful, some which are backward. What is important is the foundation: its effectiveness and the excellence of its ends.

The basic elements which must be present in a sound regime are a) that it should be constitutional, not merely in name and form, but truly so; b) that its organization and administration should be based on really scientific foundations; c) that it should recruit its best resources; d) that it should be progressive in its spirit and aims, living in its own age and marching in the caravan of progress; and e) that it should be for the benefit of the whole people, not of a special class or specific element.

In the sphere of Arab foreign policy, the principal determining elements are usually three: firstly, the stupidity about "the traditional friendship" between the Arabs and the British. This is

in reality a continuation of the effects of foreign rule, and the lack of self-respect which it produced. Great Britain does not base its relations with us on something called “traditional friendship,” but exclusively on its interests, as every great nation does. Secondly, emotion. A specific policy may be adopted merely out of opposition to the British, or a line of action rejected simply because people are carried away by emotion. This also is a bitter and painful legacy of foreign rule. Thirdly, the influence and attraction of great world movements. The time has come to place our foreign policy on a basis of national interest alone.

Among the topics of the hour regarding our foreign policy is that of alliances. Some people believe that we should avert the Jewish danger by means of an alliance with a strong foreign power; but the lesson of Palestine can teach us something in this regard. Who was it who created the Jewish danger, brought it up in its lap, lent it wings, nourished and protected it until it grew strong? Who opened the doors of Palestine to the Jews? He who did all this may repeat it tomorrow and conspire against another part of our fatherland. Nor are the Americans and the Russians preferable in this respect to the British; we have seen the influence of the Jews with the former, and the support they have received from the latter. We cannot rely for protection on the foreigner, for the foreigner demands a prey. We must rely primarily on ourselves for the repulsion of the danger.

I do not mean a reliance on isolation, however. We live in an interconnected world of give-and-take, where we occupy a central position from which we cannot abdicate. We need a friend on whom we can count, and we must arrange to gain one through give-and-take. This does not mean that circumstances are favorable for an alliance. There was a time, before the disaster, when they were, but we lost the opportunity and must now wait. Our prestige has fallen since the fiasco in Palestine, and an alliance between the strong and the weak would be exploited by one side. It is unity today which is the need of the hour and the basis of success.

THE PEOPLE: THEIR RIGHTS AND DUTIES

This Arab people of good stock is the source of the strength we need. Unity and modernization of government are not enough unless they are based on care for the people, and their endowment with the main elements of power, so that their power will be reflected in the state.

To determine the rights of the people is a vital matter for any nation, because this knowledge determines the kind of political and social regime which the nation wishes to realize. The political and social regime is nothing but the organization which enables the people to exercise its rights; and every political and social regime bears within it at least an implicit understanding of these rights.

Just as the political and social regime is based on a specific understanding of rights of the people, so the rights of the people are based on a specific understanding of the nature of man and his end in life, and the nature of society and its relation to the individual. Is man free? Are men

equal? Do material needs affect human dignity and prevent the exercise of freedom? Does the moral principal which applies to the individual also apply to society? Is it the duty of the individual to merge himself in the group, and to sacrifice his personality and opinions in its interest? Or is it the duty of society to preserve the individual's freedom of opinion and to strengthen his independence? These are some of the questions on the answers to which depends our determination of the rights of the people.

The rights of the people are also related to the existence and survival of the nation. The connection becomes clear in times of crisis and danger. A people that does not know its own rights is a people incompetent to struggle for its existence. For example, the right of the people to care for its health and the health of its stock has a direct material bearing on its ability to make war. There is also the right of the people to education: how can people struggle for their nation, when most of them do not know the meaning of the word? Are not the stories of heroes and martyrs among the strongest incentives to their zeal? The virtues on which the urge to struggle depends, such as duty, freedom, and sacrifice, are all taken in through education and instruction. How can he who has not learned them in school or seen them exemplified in living people believe in them truly and deeply? The people are in great need of a "myth" to fill their consciousness and imagination: a myth of which they dream in times of peace and in times of trouble, because it gives their life meaning and gives them self-respect and freedom. If Arab nationalism has failed until now to spread to all classes of the Arab people, and has remained a belief of only the educated class, it is because in its present state it is hard to understand except through advanced education: it is still formal.

This is a critical moment for us. There are before us today three logical possibilities. First, To be stricken with the disaster and to lose a part of our fatherland until we finally become homeless and our existence as a nation comes to an end – if we continue to exist at all – and we become backward human creatures, without honor or right, treated like the negroes of South Africa or America. Second, to abandon our Arab nationalism and our political freedom, to mingle our existence and personality in a wider and more general one, and to become a ghost without real existence; a republic or republics in a large communist state. Or third, to wake ourselves up and be ready to die for our freedom and independence; in other words to be ready to die for the sake of building our own world based on our ideas and dreams, on our history and sufferings. Every step we take bears within it our choice between these three possibilities. As Arab nationalists, we do not want our people to dissolve, to become a specter without real existence. We believe in the people and that they should live their own life, not that of others, and build their own world. It is therefore essential that we know this world and work for its realization.

What are the rights of the people?

Freedom. The first and most sacred right is freedom in its widest sense: freedom from outside and internal oppression; freedom in its simple forms, such as freedom of belief, of

speech, and writing; in its political forms, such as the freedom to form political groups and to hold elections; in its material forms, such as freedom from poverty and want. Every situation and regime which conflicts with any of these freedoms must be removed.

To secure freedom from external imperialism, empty bluff and violent words are not enough. First of all, the cooperation of all classes of the nation must be secured – a cooperation unto death. Second, the utilization of all material and moral force, and the creation of an efficient working organization to accomplish this. To encourage the people to sacrifice and battle without providing a real organization or the necessary material means for battle creates bitterness, and undermines popular morale.

As for the internal field, the freedoms of the people are necessary to preserve their morale and self-respect. No one must be imprisoned without cause, or other than legally. Censorship of the press must be abolished, and a stop put to the persecution of those holding free opinions and working for the truth. There must also end the era of government intervention in political freedom. It must not be that the survival of political parties is dependent upon the desires and whims of the governors. The government must not prevent a group from forming the political organization it wants, nor persecute a group for its political opinions, so long as it abides by the constitution of the country and does not harm public security.

Equality. Equality, like freedom, has the most intimate connection with the people's dignity. Whoever does not feel freedom or equality between himself and others, loses dignity. A people the greater part of whom have lost the deep feeling of dignity and the confidence which extends from it are a weak and in-cohesive people. Thus it is necessary to change formal equality before the law into real equality, not before law only, but in every aspect of life. People must feel social equality, equality in respect and treatment, and equality in opportunity for work and learning.

Work. It is the right of every individual in society to work; and it is one of the duties of the Government to find him suitable work. If he be a peasant, the government must provide a piece of land sufficient for him and his family, and help him exploit it; and if he be an industrial worker, the government must find him suitable industrial employment.

Social Security. If the government cannot find work for an individual, it must guarantee him an income sufficient for him and his family until he finds employment. As for the circumstances which prevent a person from working, either illness or disability or old age, the government must organize a fund to which shall be responsible for securing the life of such persons and their dependents.

Social Service. The first and most important of the services which the government should provide is education, because of its bearing on every aspect, material and moral, of human life. It is up to the government to guarantee education to every member of the people, men and woman, and to make it compulsory. As for secondary, vocational, and university

education, they should be free and open to all children equally. It is the right of the people also to have adequate health care and to have access to all means of medical prevention and cure from birth to death.

Rights of Women. In all these rights and duties, the woman must be equal to the man, so that she may share in the formation of this new Arab society.

Is it possible to postpone the demand for these rights? Perhaps someone may say that talk of the rights of the people at this moment is unrealistic; the crisis demands a strong government, and strong government is inconsistent with the wide freedoms which we are demanding. Social services require heavy expenditures which a government, weak and loaded with duties of national defense, cannot secure. In this there is some truth but it conceals one big danger. If the people give up something of this freedom for the sake of a greater freedom, or some of their rights for the sake of a higher right, or some of their material needs for the sake of larger aims, and accept hardships today for the sake of security in the future – this is one thing. But the denial of their rights by force, or the failure to acknowledge those rights, is something else.

It is true that we need a strong government. Our situation is that of every nation that passes through a great crisis, no matter what stage of development or progress it has reached, and no matter how great its democratic heritage. But the government which can be really strong is the government which is deeply rooted in the people, which recognizes their dignity and works for their security, believes in all their rights, and works with sincerity to achieve them in their full. To such a government the people give their confidence.

It is true that social services require much expenditure and that they are second in order of importance to the duty of national defense, but the people want a guarantee that these rights will be secured and respected. When they are satisfied of that, they will agree to their realization by stages, according to the country's circumstances and the needs of defense.

Therefore it is necessary that it be clearly stated in the constitution that the guarantee of these rights is one of the primary duties – and the most sacred – of the state. If popular rights are recognized in the constitution in this way, and there is mutual confidence between the government and the people, then the first step toward achieving these rights will have been realized.

Duties of the People. By placing the discussion of the duties of the people after the discussion of their rights, it is not meant that the latter are the more important. Both right and duty impose themselves on everyone without distinction: he who has rights, has duty, and he upon whom there is no duty has not rights. The first duty of the people is to know that they have rights, to believe in them, and to act with determination to realize them. Then it is the duty of the people to love their fatherland with a real love, and to be ready to exert every effort for it.

NATIONAL EDUCATION

Experiments performed by a number of modern states have shown that any political regime which aims at the realization of speedy and total reforms and the creation of a new life, demands an educational system to spread its principles and beliefs among the people. Such an educational system cannot be realized in one institution such as the school, but must be implemented through the various institutions of the state. More than that, it must employ all the apparatus of the state. The army, youth organizations, parties, societies, clubs, unions; the family, the press, broadcasting are all means for the spread of the principles it proclaims.

Each one of the educational systems adopted by such modern states has been derived from a complete political and social philosophy. It is up to our thinkers at this moment to propound such a national philosophy on which an educational program may be built.

THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM

It is generally agreed that the Fertile Crescent is a country rich in natural resources; but in spite of this wealth, its production is small and the standard of living of its inhabitants, who are few in number in proportion to its wealth, is extremely low. A complete program must be developed for the exploitation of its wealth, for otherwise the Arab people will be unable to establish a strong defense system, raise their standard of living, and perform the social services necessary to the uplifting of people.

To execute this program, the following must be provided: (a) a well-established administrative body; (b) technical experts; and (c) sufficient funds.

Administrative Body. Large-scale construction projects must have one central, stable administrative body which does not change with the government and whose members are known for their ability and honesty and their remoteness from party and political matters. This body, or council, must derive its authority from special legislation passed for that purpose. It will be up to it to propound constructive plans, to organize them according to importance, and to implement them. The special advantage of this set-up is that it can supervise operations over a long period of time, and implement a coordinated line of action, whereas if the matter were left to governments which are liable to change, each would make a new plan, or the government would be changed before anything constructive could be realized.

Technical Experts. We do not yet have in our country the class of technical experts needed to exploit its sources of wealth and raise its economic standards. Yet we cannot implement any constructive scheme without such experts. So we must act to create this class from among our youth. Until this is done, we shall have to appoint technical experts from abroad and use their services in implementing our projects. But to be sure that these experts are not

instruments of any political aim, we must choose them from several nations, not from one nation, and preferably from non-imperialistic nations.

Funds. There is no doubt that constructive schemes need much money. This we can raise from (a) an increase in taxes; (b) internal loans; (c) increased governmental participation in the exploitation of resources; and (d) foreign loans.

(a) An increase in taxes will not be worthwhile unless a modern financial system is created, with graduated taxation. There are in particular two taxes that can increase the state's income without affecting its economy or standard of living: these are the income tax and the inheritance tax. As for the first, it exists in most of the Arab countries, but produces far less than it could. The taxes demanded are small in comparison to the incomes from which they are deducted. By improving the system of collection and increasing the rate, it would be possible to increase the state's income significantly. As for the inheritance tax, it is nonexistent as yet, although it is applied in all advanced countries. There is no doubt that the introduction of an effective inheritance tax would increase the income of the state and help to create social stability.

(b) The government should encourage saving in all kinds of ways, and should find the means of directing these savings into constructive projects. The best method is through internal loans. To encourage internal saving, imports must be severely limited, and the import of luxuries prohibited for a long time. A central government bank, a national currency, and the putting of the whole monetary system under the auspices of the government would simplify the process of national savings and internal loans considerably.

(c) An increase of the government's share in the resources exploited by foreigners, the most important of which is oil, and the allocation of this increase for constructive projects, is another means of acquiring funds and directing them to the proper ends.

(d) Foreign loans are a refuge which should be sought only with extreme caution. They should not be assumed except for productive schemes, so that they can be repaid in the future; and the absence of any political interests behind them should be assured. If these two conditions are not fulfilled, foreign loans will be a great danger to the country's existence.

In addition to constructive projects, the state, if it wishes to realize all its social aims, needs to direct its economy toward the following matters:

(a) Small farms should be created and their independence secured.

(b) As many industries as possible should be introduced into the country.

(c) The wealth of the country must be placed in the hands of the people as far as possible.

(d) In the event of the participation of foreign capital in the exploitation of the country's resources, attention must be paid to two basic conditions: that the proportion of national capital in any scheme be not less than 51 percent of the total capital; and that the introduction of foreign capital not be permitted except after ascertaining the absence of political motives behind it. In cases where foreign concessions have been previously granted, the old agreements should be altered to conform to these two conditions.

The above principles in the spheres of defense, economy, education, instruction, health, and social security, and all that they involve, must not remain mere theoretical principles, but work must immediately be begun to implement them. This implementation will no doubt proceed by stages, and the matters to be implemented in each stage must be determined precisely and in detail, the period necessary for their accomplishment must be estimated, and all this announced to the people as a constructive program to be carried out in that fixed time. And then all the physical and moral strength of the people must be brought to bear for the success of the program.

OPPOSITION

The call to Arab unity and modernization will meet opposition, open or hidden, from two sides: from the Jews and from the British.

As for the Jews, they have ambitions at our expense. They fear us, and they want to preserve the opportunity to implement the remaining parts of their program. It is important to them that no Arab force capable of recovering Palestine or of constituting a danger to their state be created in neighboring territories. They are afraid that this force will be created through unity and modernization. So we should pay attention to their intrigues, and to their fifth column among us.

As for the British, it was they who partitioned us. They are satisfied with this and with the fact that we should be distracted from true unity by the weak and ineffective Arab "League." Partition and backwardness and rivalry further their interests and aims. But they are a practical people, and mature in their politics. Their method is to accept the *fait accompli*. If we achieve unity, they will recognize it and cooperate with it.

Those who plunged us into the disaster will try to delay our progress toward unity and modernization, to strengthen the existing regimes, with their regionalism and partition and bad government, and to distract us from thinking about their crimes against us by waving in front of us loans and welfare projects. It is up to us to keep our eyes on the goal and our feet in its direction allowing nothing to prevent us from reaching it.

CONCLUSION

In every great endeavor, and at every development in its course, there are three stages: the stage of faith, when the goal is believed in and dreamt of; the stage of thought, when the belief becomes an idea and a creed, and the idea becomes operative and demands realization; and the stage of work, when the idea emerges to the level of action. The major objectives of unity and modernization which we have been discussing have passed the first stage. This message is part of the second stage of thought. We are now at the threshold of the third stage, that of work and implementation.

After the disaster of Palestine the Arabs stand at the crossroads. Change and development are inevitable. It is the duty of every thinker and worker to strive to prevent this development from taking the wrong direction, and to guide it to the right one. If the Arabs have vitality and will, and men of maturity and wisdom and drive, they must act swiftly, without hesitation, before time runs out. If they do nothing and remain dreaming, it will be a sign of the fact that they have reached a stage of stagnation and disintegration which will not enable them to march with the times. This I do not believe is the case: I have a deep-rooted belief in the Arab nation and its great capacities.

The disaster has shaken us profoundly, and wounded us deeply, and opened the door to a great danger. If the shock wakes us up, brings us together, and impels us to a new life from which we can derive strength, the wound will heal, the danger will be averted, and Palestine will be recovered. And the misfortunes will be a blessing.

But if not, woe to the outcome.

