Revolutionary Transformation in the Arab World
Habash and his Comrades from Nationalism to Marxism

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# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1  Intellectual and Political Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Building up a Movement</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  The Ideology of the Movement</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Drift to the Left</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Factionalism and the Emergence of the New Left</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected Bibliography</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE RECENT POLITICAL fragmentation of the movement of Arab nationalism has caused a great deal of confusion to foreign as well as Arab students of Middle Eastern politics. It has been common in recent years to hear or read of new dissident groups breaking away from their mother-organizations to form their own separate political parties. Since its establishment in 1967, for example, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), previously known as the Palestine branch of the Arab Nationalists' Movement, has given birth to three independent organizations, the PFLP (General-Command), the Popular Democratic Front, and very recently the Popular Revolutionary Front. Similarly, in Syria since 1963 political power has frequently been transferred from the hands of one group of army officers to another, each claiming to be the legitimate representative of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party.

In these cases and others, the issue is complicated further by the adherence of the new movements and splinter groups to almost identical political principles. They invariably profess their allegiance to the aspiration of the Arab masses to unity, freedom and socialism. An understanding of the nature of their political and ideological differences as well as the problem of assessing their relative strength, thus becomes increasingly difficult.

This study attempts to fill a gap in the available writing on contemporary Arab political parties by seeking to
examine the genesis, development and political role of the Arab Nationalists' Movement, more conveniently known as the ANM. It aims to dispel some of the confusion which has surrounded the activities, methods and ideology of this important section of the movement of Arab nationalism during the last two decades. The study may also serve as a record of the political experience of a group of young Arab men who labored actively to transform the political and social conditions of the Arab world.

The historical development of the ANM is considered in the light of the major events which dominated the Arab political scene from 1948 onwards. In this context, the first chapter describes the political setting from which the Movement emerged, namely the Arab world, following the first Arab defeat in Palestine, in the throes of the reaction which this setback provoked among a number of Arab intellectuals. Chapter 2 surveys the early attempts of the founding members of the ANM to establish underground branches in different Arab countries, and examines the particular political circumstances which accompanied its development on the regional and pan-Arab levels. The third chapter deals with the ideology of the Movement as it evolved throughout the 1950s, echoing the immediate grievances, concerns and hopes of the Arabs. It further describes the various methods which the ANM envisaged as necessary for the achievement of its political objectives of Arab unity, Arab national liberation and victory in Palestine. Chapter 3 is concerned with the early signs of political and intellectual tension within the leadership of the Movement, expressed in two conflicting tendencies, one of which sought the adoption of Marxism-Leninism and advocated closer association with Nasirism even at the risk of the Movement's own ultimate dissolution, while the other adhered to the unity and independence of the ANM and counseled moderation in theoretical and organizational matters alike. The last chapter discusses the final split in the ranks of the Movement, con-
centrating on the evolution of the new “Left” in a number of Arab countries under the impact of the second Arab defeat in June 1967.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea of this research first occurred to me in 1965, when after spending some eight years as an active member in the different ranks of the ANM—four of these in its higher echelons in Lebanon and Iraq—I embarked on an academic career. Not before 1971-73, however, was I able to pursue my research interest in this particular field, thanks to the opportunity provided to me by the Middle East Social Science Research Awards Program sponsored by the Ford Foundation and the Research and Conference Grants of the American University in Cairo.

Initially my intention was to make an analytical study of the ANM in relation to the whole socio-economic and political structure of the contemporary Arab world. But it eventually became obvious that this was too high an ambition to be accomplished by a single researcher with limited facilities. My sincere hope is that this brief survey of the political history of the ANM would provide future studies in the field with a directive and an outline.

I am deeply grateful to a number of friends—both members and ex-members of the ANM—who wish to remain anonymous, but without whose assistance this study would not have been possible. I owe a special debt of gratitude to some of them for providing me with the primary source material relating to the Movement, and for allowing me the benefit of their valuable views and reminiscences. As the author, I hasten to add that I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings of fact and interpretation which may appear in this study.

Cairo, September 1973

W.K.
FOLLOWING THE ARAB disaster in Palestine in 1948, a heavy cloud of disillusionment spread over the Arab world. Observers of the Arab scene were quick to record the prevalent mood of despair. The mass of political literature published shortly after the war harped on the recurring theme of Arab reluctance and lack of initiative in the struggle to save Palestine from the Zionists. Professor Nabih Faris of the American University of Beirut noted that “today the Arabs stand at the threshold of the second half of the century cautious, hesitant and perplexed.” According to him, the Arabs had suffered continuous defeat during the previous decade, and recent events had “torn apart the veil of imaginary strength which had been woven around the legend of the fifty million Arabs.”

A colleague of Faris sounded a similar note of warning. Qustantin Zurayk described the consequences of the failure in Palestine in the following terms: “Over and above the material disaster, there was a moral one reflected in the lack of confidence of the Arabs in their governments and in their leadership.” He added that many of them even “had doubts about their own selves and their capabilities as a nation.”

1  N. A. Faris, Min al-Zawiya al-‘Arabiyya (From the Arab Corner), Beirut, 1953, pp. 5-6.
The state of mind of the Arab youth did not appear to be much better than that of the older generation, for they too suffered from confusion and lack of confidence in themselves and in each other. Their previous efforts during the 1940s to found viable political movements which would lead the struggle for the national cause had not been sufficient to avert the disaster, nor had these efforts fulfilled their ambition to serve and liberate their nation.\(^3\)

However, the mood of despair which engulfed the Arab world was not the only reaction to the 1948 defeat. Questions were soon raised by the Arab layman and intellectual alike as to the causes and impact of the unfortunate escapade. Efforts were made to depict the major illnesses of Arab society, and ways were prescribed to remedy the deteriorating situation. Numerous explanations were suggested and the Arab reader was subjected to a barrage of views and ideas on the situation ranging from conservative sectarian interpretations to the more liberal rationalizations.

The Muslim Brothers viewed Zionism as an extension of the European crusades, whose object had been to humiliate the Arabs and Islam.\(^4\) A return to the rules of Islam was thus envisaged as the only way for the Arab and Muslim community to save itself from a total collapse. Exponents of secular Arab nationalism, on the other hand, considered sectarian politics a threat to the unity of the Arab nation, and a divisive factor which tended to “weaken the position of the Arabs internationally, and paralyze their civil and social activities.”\(^5\)

The views of the latter group gained growing circulation among the rising middle classes, including the military, and an increasing following among the university students and intellectuals of Beirut, Damascus and Baghdad. In later years, this tendency was reinforced by the rise to power of the

\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 17-18.
Ba’th Party in Syria, and the pragmatic conversion of the Egyptian military regime to the ideas of Arab nationalism.\(^6\) Equally relevant to the development of the political situation which emerged after 1948 was the manner in which the new exponents of Arab nationalism interpreted the causes and implications of the defeat. One of them remarked that the “disaster” caused a deep intellectual turmoil and shook the foundations of Arab society, but when “the storm subsided, the minds finally moved in search of the causes of the disaster.”\(^7\) The intellectual activities of Arab nationalists, at this stage, centered on a reconsideration of three interrelated issues: the magnitude of the Zionist threat; the relationship of the Arabs with the West; and the nature of the Arab regimes which evolved after the second World War.

The Zionist question, at one and the same time, aroused their serious concern and determined their attitude toward the West and their own governments. Almost without exception, the new generation of Arab nationalists, better known as the “generation of the disaster,” viewed the establishment of the state of Israel as a major threat to the existence of the Arab nation. The events of 1948 seemed to confirm the worst fears entertained by the Arabs (since the Balfour Declaration in 1917) that the newly-founded Jewish State was bent upon the annihilation of its neighbors. The Zionists had not satisfied themselves with the realization of Jewish sovereignty in Palestine, but had sought successfully to displace the indigenous Arab population. Early in 1947, Zurayk had warned that if a Jewish state was established in Palestine, it would soon become an extremely powerful military force in the Middle East. A flood of Jewish immigrants from Europe, and large sums of American dollars, would enable the new state to extend beyond its borders into the rest of

the region." He asserted that one of the major tasks of the intellectuals, mass media and governments in the Arab world was to draw the attention of the people to the fact that the aim of "Zionist imperialism" was to "annihilate the people [of Palestine] and replace them by another: it is naked imperialism in its most obvious colorings, and most horrifying form." A few years later, Fayiz Sayigh wrote:

"Until recently, the Zionist danger threatened Palestine alone. But today ... International Zionism... is itching for a new invasion. An invasion which would not stop at the borders of Palestine, but would only subside when it reaches the limits [International Zionism] claims its own—'From the Euphrates to the Nile.' "

The establishment of Israel was seen by the Arabs as a phase, an initial step, in the advance of Zionism to its ultimate objective—the subjection of the whole Arab nation to the worst kind of imperialism, territorial imperialism. Whether this belief was legitimate or not is beside the point; the important thing to note is that the creation of Israel turned the Zionist threat into the fundamental preoccupation of the Arabs. They further realized that the success of Zionism in Palestine was closely related to the interests of the West in the Middle East. Little theoretical distinction was, in fact, made between Western imperialism and Zionism, and the two terms were often used interchangeably.

The dominant view among the radical Arab nationalists was that Israel formed the spearhead of Western imperialism in the area. Its function, now that most of the Arab countries had gained their independence, was to enable the West to reimpose its predominant influence over the Middle East.

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through the agency of an aggressive military and political base installed in the midst of the Arab countries. On the other hand, a minority of Arab nationalists who greatly admired the cultural and technological achievements of the West, and who in most cases had spent some years in institutions of higher education in the United States and Europe, attempted to show that the West was as much the victim of Zionist schemes and conspiracies as was the Arab world. They claimed that International Zionism could not only muster the votes of a large section of the electorate in the United States, but also wielded an enormous influence over the economies of the Western nations.\textsuperscript{11} Driven to its ultimate conclusion, this view implied that the West was an instrument of Zionism, and merely a tool in the hands of the financially and politically powerful Jewish communities in the West.

Despite the obvious contradiction between the two arguments, Arab thinkers, at the time, did not appear to be aware of its existence. Often some of them used the two views simultaneously to emphasize the nature of the challenges which Arab society was facing. This confusion could be attributed to the fact that, though the West appealed to the temperament and intellect of the pro-Western group, there was no way to absolve it from the ill-fortune which had befallen the Arabs.

The major change which occurred in the Arabs’ attitude toward the West in 1948 was that their antagonism to the traditional imperialist powers, France and Britain, was extended to include the United States.\textsuperscript{12} Active American support for the Zionists in 1947 and 1948 appeared to have been instrumental in the process of the establishment and consolidation of the position of Israel. Arab moderates were thus left with no substantial grounds to defend the policy of

\textsuperscript{11} I. Jum’a, \textit{Al-Qawmiyya al-Arabiyya} (Arab Nationalism), Cairo, 1958, p. 98. Zurayk and Faris also belonged to this school of thought.

\textsuperscript{12} Faris, op. cit., pp. 48-49.
the US in the region, and their efforts were limited to occasional pleas to American officials to adopt an even-handed approach to the Palestine problem. They pointed out that it was in America's long-term political and economic interest to reach a friendly understanding with the Arabs rather than with Israel. By and large, though, the impact of 1948 tended to intensify and perpetuate Arab feelings of hostility and suspicion toward the Western powers and especially the US.¹³

A more immediate result of the Palestine campaign was the exposure of the military and political vulnerability of the Arab regimes. These became a subject of ridicule to foreigners and Arabs alike. For a number of decades, Arab sentiment had been geared to the idea of national independence. At the end of the second World War, Britain and France conceded political independence to a number of Arab countries in the Fertile Crescent. High hopes were raised in the Arab world by these newly-independent countries. The waning of foreign influence “meant that vital policy decisions, as well as the assumption and relinquishment of power, were now left to the uninhibited choice of the peoples concerned.”¹⁴ Moreover, with the first signs of an impending total confrontation with the Zionists, “the Arabs had anticipated one of the most important victories in their increasingly successful struggle against all foreign rule in the Middle East.”¹⁵ Arabs listening to their radio sets and the speeches of their leaders were assured of victory against the Zionists in 1948. They were led to believe that by virtue of sheer numbers alone, they would inevitably win the war. Thus the Arab masses confidently awaited the favorable outcome of the battle without being called upon to take part in the struggle. It was ironic to realize later that,

despite the official involvement of seven sovereign Arab states in the conflict, "In the final phase of the war, there were 60,000 Jewish soldiers facing 40,000 Arabs."\textsuperscript{16}

No sooner had the war started in mid-May 1948 than the news of the Arab defeat on every front was reported. The Arabs bitterly condemned the governments which had led them to disaster. The accusations which they levelled against their leadership ranged from outright treachery and collaboration with the enemy to neglect of duty and deliberate inaction. According to Sayigh, high-ranking Arab officials and leaders did not deserve the title of "statesmen"; they were merely a bunch of selfish "politicians" bent upon the assumption of power at any cost. They were a group of ' opportunists and compromisers," interested in trivialities rather than in the general good and the national cause.\textsuperscript{17} The bitterness and disappointment of the Arabs was typically expressed in the following words:

"Seven Arab states declared war on Zionism in Palestine, but stood powerless facing it and then turned back. Fiery speeches were made by the Arab representatives in the highest international bodies warning that if such or such a decision were taken, the Arab peoples and states would resort to action. Statements were thrown like bombs by officials during the meetings of the Arab League. Then, when the moment arrived, the fire proved to be low and dull, the steel and iron, rusty, bent and susceptible to quick damage and disintegration, and the bombs, hollow, empty and harmless.

"Seven states attempted to annul the partition of Palestine and sought to repel Zionism, but emerged from the battle with the loss of a sizable portion of the country, including even the area allotted to the Arabs\textsuperscript{16}  M. Rodinson. \textit{Israel and the Arabs}. London, 1968, p. 39.

\textsuperscript{17} Sayigh, \textit{op. cit.}. pp. 93-94.
under the partition scheme, and were forced to accept the terms of an unfavorable truce."\textsuperscript{18}

Even top Arab officials, who shared directly in the responsibility for the defeat, did not refrain from contributing to the exposure of the fatal defects of the existing regimes. The Lebanese Prime Minister, Riadh al-Sulh, sarcastically declared that the Arab armies returned from Palestine intact, without participating in its defense, after the Jews had violated the truce. He added, "I wonder if the reason was lack of arms, absence of Arab solidarity, or exaggerated respect for the truce."\textsuperscript{19} Early in 1949, Nuri al-Sa'id announced in the Iraqi Parliament that the Arab defenses in the Palestine campaign were extremely weak. He strongly criticized the Arab governments for showing fitde interest in the formation of a joint military command or in aiming the Palestinian volunteers.\textsuperscript{20} The Egyptian press condemned the Arab governments for their indifference to Egypt's appeal for military assistance when Israel attacked the Negev.\textsuperscript{21} One Arab commentator could not help remarking:

"We have become so occupied with our internal differences that we have neglected the external danger. Similarly, the disagreements among those who are in charge of our affairs have been transformed from being differences of opinion into antagonisms."\textsuperscript{22}

Resuming their personal and political quarrels, after a short lull necessitated by the war, Arab statesmen now appeared to utilize the Palestine issue in two ways: first, to shift the responsibility from themselves to others; and

\textsuperscript{18} Zuraiq, op. cit., pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{19} As quoted in M. J. Bayinun, \textit{Qwafil al-'Uruba wa Mawakibba khilal al-'Usur} (The Caravans of Arabism and its Processions Throughout the Ages), Beirut, 1950, p. 243.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid}, p. 242.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Al-Nahar}, Beirut, January 2, 1949.
\textsuperscript{22} Bayhum, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 245.
secondly, as an added means of propaganda to discredit each other's position. Far from being deceived by the transparently hypocritical remarks of the ruling classes, certain Arab elite groups, including army officers and intellectuals, were very much aware of the facts of the situation. Each in his own realm or in cooperation with others began to prepare the way for an imminent change in the political status quo. On the intellectual level, as Hourani notes, Zurayk advocated

"a fundamental change in the Arab way of life. This involved the creation of a unified state, and economic and social development; but these in their turn involved an intellectual change: the Arabs must become 'in fact and in spirit... a part of the world in which we live', accepting its material techniques, its secularism, its methods of scientific thought, and its moral values."23

The achievement of such a radical change was to be the task of

"an intellectual elite able to see itself and the Arabs with the clarity and humility that true understanding of history alone could give. A similar lesson was taught by the most intelligent and responsible of the Palestinian leaders, Musa al-'Alami,..."24

Both thinkers "placed their faith where the liberal nationalists had placed it: in the dedicated elite . . ."25 Nabih Faris similarly claimed that "the Arabs would only be able to safeguard their existence through unity and solidarity."26

Fayiz Sayigh called for the founding of an institute, a kind

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23 Hourani, op. cit., p. 354.
24 Ibid., pp. 354-355.
25 Ibid., p. 355.
26 Faris, op. cit., p. 6.
of brains-trust, which would establish branches all over the Arab world for the purpose of finding scientific solutions of the problems of Arab society.27

In the attempt to prescribe remedies for the disastrous defeat, two arguments figure most in the writings of Arab thinkers: a consistent emphasis on the necessity of unifying the Arab countries, and a direct appeal to Arab youth to realize the aspirations of the nation to unity and liberation from Zionism and imperialism.

The loss of Palestine not only unmasked the bankruptcy of the Arab regimes, but also discredited the form of Arab cooperation which the Arab League represented.28 Its failure was attributed to the fact that it favored the perpetuation of regionalism as opposed to pan-Arabsim, and that it was entirely controlled by an old generation of Arab politicians whose scope was limited to the Hamidian era and the first World War.29 Munif al-Razzaz, one of the founders of the Ba‘th Party, claimed that the coming together of corrupt Arab governments only resulted in the accumulation of corruption. A better kind of union among the Arabs, he suggested, would have been one based on a truly popular democratic rule in each Arab country.30 The Arab League thus became the target of a variety of criticisms and attacks, so much so that the need was felt to remind the Arabs of the simple fact that the governments and not the League bore the main responsibility for the failure in Palestine.31

A more practical form of Arab cooperation and a greater measure of political integration were advocated. A number of proposals were made, ranging from a league of Arab peoples to a federation, and finally to an organic union of the Arab

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31 See the editorial in al-Nahar, July 22, 1948.
countries from the Gulf to the Atlantic. Since the beginning of the first World War such schemes had been the subject of controversy throughout the Arab world. The events of 1948 gave more weight to a new political tendency which appeared in the early 1950s. The new drive for unification was now based on the concept of the solidarity of the Arab peoples rather than on the agreement of their governments or ruling dynasties.” The political structure of the suggested unified Arab state was to be democratic, popular and progressive. Its aim was to mobilize Arab political, economic and military capabilities to free Palestine from Zionism and liberate the rest of the Arab world from the yoke of Western imperialism. In this process a “select elite” of Arab youth,

“organized and united through political parties and cohesive organizations, committed to a common and pure doctrine, and bound by a concrete and true loyalty…”

would play the major role.

Zurayk’s appeal fell on the receptive ears of the Arab youth. A group of his students at the American University of Beirut, headed by a medical student, George Habash, responded with great enthusiasm to his call. The ideas he propounded inspired Habash and his comrades to form a political movement dedicated to an unyielding search for ways to combat the three major threats which haunted the Arab world: political fragmentation, imperialism and Israel. But before these plans could mature, the army moved in a number of Arab countries to take over power from the discredited traditional leadership.

The intervention of the army in politics came about as the result of a variety of reasons. Some were social and

32 In this respect, it is worth noting that the old generation of Arab thinkers who advocated Arab unity hinged their hopes on the initiative of the Arab monarchs. See, for example, G. Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, London, 1938.
33 Zurayk, op. cit., p. 55.
pertained to the growing dissatisfaction of the emerging middle classes with the existing political and social order.

In Syria, the young generation of army officers, graduates of Homs Military College, were mainly drawn from among the sons of middle and lower class families:

"A study of the backgrounds of a number of prominent younger officers revealed that most came, not from the two major cities, but from the provinces and smaller towns. Homs and Hama were more often the places of birth than Damascus and Aleppo." 34

The political attitude of the Egyptian officers who assumed power in 1952 was largely governed by their modest class origin.35 The army’s bid for power seemed to be directly related to the process of social transformation in the Arab world. According to Halpern,

“What is novel in the present-day Middle East is not control by army officers. What is new are the groups for which the army speaks and the interests it represents. In this century army coups have ceased to mirror merely the ambitions of individuals. Instead they reflect larger forces and issues than were once involved in the frequent changing of the guard. The army has become the instrument of the new middle class.” 36

There was, however, a political dimension to the intervention of the Arab armies in politics. The parliamentary institutions and systems of government which emerged under the auspices of the foreign powers after the first World War seemed to suffer from a number of fatal discrepancies. The continued interference of the foreign powers

in the internal affairs of the Arab countries often jeopardized the imported democratic process. On many occasions in Egypt, pressure from the British Residency in Cairo, or a show of naval force in Alexandria, led to the dissolution of parliament and the fall of government. Similarly, the French High Commission in Syria and Lebanon frequently obstructed the regular process of democratic rule by imposing its views on the local governments.

Another factor which rendered parliaments and "democratic institutions" in the Arab world unworkable was the fact that they were largely controlled by the privileged and propertied classes of society. It was, therefore, not too surprising that when the new military regimes abolished these liberal constitutions and parliaments, their actions "occasioned remarkably little regret on anyone's part."

The Palestine disaster undoubtedly accelerated the erosion of the political position of the ruling classes in the Arab countries. Occurring at a time when social and political conditions in the Arab world had reached a point of exacerbation, it acted as the midwife of political change. In some Arab countries, Syria and Egypt, the reaction was immediate and final; in Iraq, it was latent; and in others still, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, it was not forthcoming.

Military takeovers depended on a number of factors. In Iraq, the army was not only checked by the British military presence, but had experienced a crippling purge following the collapse of Rashid 'Ali's coup in 1941. It took its officers' corps some time before it could effect a successful coup in 1958. In Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the case was different There, the tribal allegiance of the officers and rank and file, and their absolute loyalty to the throne, proved to be stronger than their devotion to any political doctrine. On the whole, however, the Palestine campaign was a turning point in the development of the political role of the military.

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37 Ibid., p. 229.
38 Kirk, op. cit., p. 9.
in the region. After a short experience at the front, the young officers in Egypt, Syria and Iraq realized that the way to Tel-Aviv lay through the Arab capitals, and could not be completed before the creation of a viable polity and a strong national army. Hence, they turned their guns against the traditional leadership which they held responsible for the defeat in Palestine.

The army posed as the only alternative for political change in the Arab world, by virtue of being the best organized section of the rising middle class and the only one sufficiently armed to hold power. The absence of cohesive political parties dedicated to the relevant demands of the historical epoch made this situation almost inevitable. In 1947, the Ba’th Party in Syria had only a limited number of members, and no branches in any other Arab country.\(^{39}\) It was only after the shocking experience in Palestine that the Party began to attract an increasing number of followers. One of its leading members described the change in the following words:

“For many years it [the Party] had to be content to inspire new currents of thought, until the day when the Arab defeat in Palestine shook confidence in all the traditional leaders. The masses, weary of the methods and the regimes which, in their eyes, had brought about the catastrophe, were ready for new leaders, and all the dynamic movements gained by this.”\(^{40}\)

Traditional political parties, especially in Egypt, which commanded a large following and a reasonably efficient political machine, shared equally with the old regimes in the responsibility for political instability, corruption and defeat. Similarly, the communists were discredited for supporting the Soviet Union in recognizing the state of Israel. Thus the

\(^{39}\)  Nidal Hizb al-Ba’th al-‘Arabi al-Ishtiraki (The Struggle of the ARAB Ba’th Socialist Party), Beirut, 1971, p. 20.

door was wide open for the military to step in and take the reins of power.

The repercussions of such a move on the evolution and development of the nationalist movement in the Arab world were most unfortunate. The army came to pose as a substitute for the movement, and eventually thwarted its attempts to gain a predominant position in the hierarchy of power. Though the Ba’th Party, in cooperation with its military wing, succeeded on different occasions in Syria and Iraq in seizing power, in the Pinal analysis it had to yield its position to its own military men or suffer complete severance from its links with power. The ANM, on the other hand, for the major part of its history, was dominated by its close adherence to Nasirism. Only in regions where the Movement managed, at an early date, to break away from the Nasirite influence, and where the local circumstances favored its growth, did it achieve some measure of political success.

Nevertheless, the seizure of power is not the only standard for judging the impact of a political movement on the course of events. The ideas it disseminates, the methods it employs and the pressures it exercises may have a direct bearing not only on the development of political events, but also on the general situation governing the acquisition, retention and uses of political power by other groups in society.

During the last two decades of Arab history, the Ba’th Party and the Arab Nationalists' Movement have had a profound influence, direct and indirect, on the minds of Arab youth, and on the development of events in the region. A great many similarities existed between the two movements, both being pan-Arab and strongly nationalistic in outlook, but at the same time there were sharp differences between them in terms of political origins, organization and, most important, the way in which they evaluated Arab problems and their solutions. In fact, they represented two distinct shades of the movement of Arab nationalism. While the Ba’th owed its political origins to the 1941 events in
Iraq and the presence of the French in Syria, the ANM was totally the product of the 1948 defeat. And while the ideology of the Ba’th was infused with some vague conception of socialism, the ANM remained purely nationalistic until the early 1960s.

Little, almost negligible attention has been given to the study of the latter brand of Arab nationalism.\(^\text{41}\) Its dose association with Nasir’s policy in the Arab world has aroused some confusion regarding its independent political role. Furthermore, the dominant influence of the Ba’th in the Fertile Crescent has to a large extent undermined its political standing in the region. However, with the emergence of the Marxist wing of the Palestine resistance movement in 1967, and a radical regime in South Yemen, the ANM was brought into the limelight of political prominence. It may be safely said that today the leadership of the new “left” in the Arab world is largely drawn from men who at one time or another in their political career have been members of the ANM. These men have travelled a long way from nationalism to Marxism, and it is to that journey that this study is devoted.

\(^{41}\) Reference here is to a brief chapter on the ANM in M. Suleiman, Political Parties in Lebanon, New York, 1967, pp. 155-172.
CHAPTER TWO

Building up a Movement

SHORTLY AFTER the end of the second World War, a group of Palestinian students joined the American University of Beirut (AUB). Among them were two young men, George Habash from the Lydda-Ramle area and Wadi 'Haddad from the north of Palestine. George was born of a family of well-to-do merchants. His father was a wholesaler who imported food products and sold them to the domestic stores and local shopkeepers in Jerusalem and the nearby towns. Wadi’s family came from a similar social background and had close connections with the class of liberal professions. By the time the two young men graduated from the medical school in 1951 and 1952 respectively, they were unable to return home. Their families had already moved to Amman during the Palestine War. George, an extremely bright and most dynamic student who had all the makings of a successful doctor (he received his medical degree with distinction), was bitterly disappointed. Together with a group of Arab students, he joined the Arab volunteers force and fought on the Syrian and Lebanese front. In a recent interview with Trevor Jones of the United Press, Habash revealed that his first involvement in politics was brought about by the devastating events of the war in 1948:

“I have no personal motive (to participate in the political struggle in the area) except that which every Palestinian citizen has. Before 1948 I was so far from
politics as you are today from the knowledge of the Arabic language. I was a student in Lydda, the town where I was born, and I have seen with my own eyes the Israeli army entering the town and killing its inhabitants. I am not exaggerating ... They have killed our people and expelled us from our homes, towns, and land. On the way from Lydda to Ramalla I have seen children, young men and old people dying. What can you do after you have seen all this? You cannot but become a revolutionary and fight for the cause. Your own cause as well as that of your own people.”

To Habash the loss of Palestine was not only a national disaster, but also a painful personal experience. His feelings were shared equally by his close friend Wadi* and by a number of their colleagues from different parts of the Arab world.

The early activities of the group centred on focusing the attention of their fellow students on the intricacies of the Palestine question. The meetings of Habash and his comrades were held in the office of *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa* (The Firm Tie), supposedly a non-political student society founded in 1918 with the sole purpose of promoting the literary abilities of Arab students. But no sooner had the Palestine issue been raised than the organ of the society, *al-Urwo*, showed a clear indication of the society’s increasing involvement in politics. Early in the academic year 1947-48, the society called for a one-week strike and led the students in Beirut in a large demonstration in protest against the acceptance of the Partition Plan by the UN.¹ A few months later a delegation of students met the Lebanese President and demanded prompt action in defence of Palestine. Some hundred students occupied the university premises, and went on a hunger strike for a number of days until they received

¹ For the full text of the interview see the Lebanese daily *al-Anwar*, August 13, 1973.
² *Al-'Urwa*, December 1947.
word from Amman that the Jordanian army had entered the West Bank. By 1949 Habash and Hani al-Hindi had become members of the editorial board of *al-’Urwa*. The latter was a Syrian student majoring in political science. He was born in 1927. His father, Colonel Mahmoud al-Hindi, had served in the Iraqi army, and played a prominent part in Rashid ’Ali’s movement, but had, however, returned with his family to Damascus after the collapse of the movement in 1941. Hani completed his secondary education in Shuweifat High School in Lebanon and in 1946 joined the AUB. His upbringing was entirely dominated by the political involvement of his father in the struggle for Arab unity and Arab nationalism. In 1948, Hani took part in the Palestine war and witnessed at close range the disastrous defeat of the Arab armies as a result of the military and political fragmentation of the Arab world. A close colleague said that in later years he had admitted that

“the loss of Palestine was a turning point in his life. His main obsession became that of acting swiftly before it was too late. 'Regaining Palestine’ became the sole purpose of his life, even if death was the only mean to achieve that end.”

During the four years that he spent at AUB, he formed a life-long friendship with George and Wadi’.

In 1950 Habash was elected president of *al-’Urwa*. The vice-president was Ahmad al-Khatib, a medical student from Kuwait and a classmate of Wadi’ Haddad. Al-Khatib belonged to a family of no great means or social standing. He managed after completing his secondary school education to obtain a small grant from his Government to pursue his medical studies in Beirut. Shortly after his return home he developed the reputation of being an excellent physician. This, added to his interest in the well-being of his patients

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4 Al-Balagh, Beirut, August 3, 1973, p. 28.
from the lower classes, turned out to be a great asset in his political career as leader of the opposition party in the Kuwaiti parliament.

Habash and al-Khatib won the elections to the top positions in the society with a sweeping majority against a list supported by the communists and the Syrian Social Nationalists, better known as the PPS. In 1951, with the exception of one or two Ba’thists in the Administrative Committee of al-’Urwa, the rest of the members belonged to Habash group. The new Committee included al-Khatib, president; Haddad, member; and Habash, president of the “Action Committee” in charge of the daily activities of the society.

From 1948 until its dissolution in 1955, the society served as the political platform of the group, and al-’Urwa as its mouthpiece. In fact, the modified constitution of the society, published during the academic year 1948-49, clearly stipulated that the purpose of the society was “to develop and educate the national spirit among the Arab students.”

Between 1948 and 1952 Habash and his associates had neither a definite political outlook nor any form of organization. Inevitably, however, they were greatly influenced by the immediate intellectual and political climate generated by Zurayk and his colleagues. They thought of themselves as forming a political current, a kind of widely inclusive national tendency whose purpose was to mobilize the whole Arab nation in its struggle for Palestine. They disapproved of the existing political parties including the Ba’th, because these were considered part of the pre-disaster era. Moreover, the Ba’th seemed to assign little attention to the Palestine issue, while the members of al-’Urwa regarded it as the most crucial and urgent problem facing the Arab world. Munif al-Razzaz once wrote that he did not deem it

5 *Al-’Urwa Papers.* These are a collection of documents and papers related to al-’Urwa activities, which are now in the of Arts and Sciences Society at the AUB.
necessary in his book to spare the Palestine disaster "one letter," for to him it was only one "event" among many others which Arab society had experienced. Al-'Urwa refused to recognize themselves as a political party, and even when circumstances in 1958 necessitated that they should reveal their identity, they preferred to call their organization the Arab Nationalists' Movement (Harakat al-Qawmiyyin al-'Arab). This was a clear indication that they did not view themselves as the representatives of a particular class or section of the population, but as the vanguard of the whole Arab nation.

Until the end of 1951, the group was loosely held together by the participation of its members in the activities of al-'Urwa, which ranged from the distribution of pamphlets to the organization of strikes and demonstrations. But beneath this, there existed a deep feeling of national responsibility, a belief that more should be done and that a permanent basis for their cooperation must be established, especially because by 1952 Habash and most of his associates had already graduated. In 1950 Hard al-Hindi, upon his return to Damascus after completing his course of study, immediately set to work to form a terrorist group known as Kata’ib al-Fida’ al-’Arabi (Legions of Arab Redemption), whose purpose was to assassinate Arab leaders who were thought to have been responsible for the defeat in 1948. An abortive attempt was made on Shishakly’s life in Syria, on October 12 of the same year, and Hani fled to Beirut, where he resumed his former connection with Habash and Haddad.

During the academic year 1951-52, the first formal cells of the Movement were organized, drawn from among the more politically committed students in al-'Urwa. Habash and his comrades formed the leading cell, which directed the others whenever the situation demanded. Their activities

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7 Before 1958 they were known as the Arab Nationalist Youth.  
were geared to the kind of political challenges which prevailed in their immediate surroundings and in the Arab world at large. With the increasing drive of the West to include the region in its defensive military and political schemes throughout the 1950s, the new movement firmly deprecated any Arab involvement in such endeavors. In a lecture on the subject delivered to the members of al-'Urwa, Habash wondered how the Arabs could accept joining forces with the West while the latter was still occupying the Suez Canal and a number of Arab countries, and had caused the Palestine disaster. He added that the Arabs did not want to align themselves with the Soviet Union, and had no wish “to be dragged into a war in which we have no interest” Habash then declared that the position of the Arabs between the two world camps should be one of “absolute neutrality. According to him the struggle of the Arabs against their external enemies should be limited to fighting Western imperialism and Jewish occupation.9

In addition to their hostile attitude toward the West, the Zionists and the Arab governments, members of the group showed a few other political characteristics which the ANM bore at its inception and for a long time to come. There was a strong feeling, almost an obsession with the necessity of formulating an Arab nationalist philosophy which would embody the aspirations, ideals and strategy of the Arab nation. In this context, communism was regarded with great suspicion by the emerging movement, and considered to be a dangerous ideological threat to the concept of Arab nationalism.10 Furthermore, Habash and his comrades often recalled the anti-Arab stand which the communists in the Fertile Crescent had adopted in cooperation with the imperialist powers regarding the Alexandretta issue in 1936,

the Iraqi coup in 1941, and the establishment of Israel in 1948. Basically, however, as the later autocritiques among the ANM members were to observe, their antagonism to Marxism in particular and socialism in general was rooted in the type of Anglo-Saxon education which they received in Palestine and Beirut, and in their middle-class social background.

Members of the Movement also showed signs of adopting terrorist means whenever they were frustrated by the repressive measures of the Arab governments. In times of crisis, they appeared to believe that terrorism as such might incite the masses into violent political action unimpeded by the countermeasures of the authorities.

Throughout the 1950s, the Movement adhered to a personal code of conduct which was strict, rigid and uncompromising. The members were not allowed to buy any kind of foreign product or to show any interest in social activities except those which benefited the national cause. Their organization was highly centralized, and the type of political life which they led was similar to that of a closed community of masons, highly secretive but brotherly and cooperative.

The personality of Habash dominated the rest of the founding members, and left an impact on most of those who came into contact with him. He undoubtedly possessed the gift of evoking loyalty and affection from his comrades. He would come to an enlarged meeting of the movement, sit quietly until every one had spoken his mind, then roll up his sleeves and, while still smoking his locally made cigarette, address each member modestly in his typical Palestinian accent as "akhuya" (my brother). The words would then flow like a stream, emotional but not excessive, most convincing, accurate, and above all sincere. He would talk about the necessity of individual sacrifice in the course of the struggle, and how small it was compared to the suffering of a whole people of refugees, living in tents. More important
to his listener was the fact that no one could be more qualified than George to speak about sacrifice. Since the mid-fifties Habash had put aside his medical degree and with it a most promising career, left his family and lived the life of a permanent political refugee, always on the run, harassed by the security agents of several Arab countries (not to mention Israel\(^1\)), condemned before even reaching the age of 35 to a total of 45 years’ imprisonment in Jordan alone; all this for the sake of his political convictions.

Habash's passionate appeal to the conscience of his colleagues and followers was equally matched by his outstanding ability to understand the most intricate aspects of the organizational and political problems of the Movement. However, he did not show as much interest in theoretical issues of an abstract nature. He left this function to some of his promising junior disciples, notably Muhsin Ibrahim and Al-Hakam Darwaza.

Muhsin was born in 1936, of a poor family in South Lebanon where his father had a minor job in the local *shari’a* court. Unable to provide his son with a private education, he sent him to a government school in Sidon. After attaining his elementary certificate Muhsin joined the teachers' training college, from which he graduated with an adequate knowledge of French. At the same time, encouraged by his father who took great interest in Arabic poetry, he developed a keen taste for the Arabic language. In later years Muhsin’s social and intellectual background had a direct bearing on his Marxist orientation, and on his role in the ANM as its leading theoretician, who articulated its views and elaborated its ideological position.

Al-Hakam Darwaza was of the same age as Muhsin, but

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\(^{11}\) On August 10, 1973, the Israeli authorities took the unusual step of forcing down an Arab airliner in Lebanese air space and searched it for Habash. However, due to a last-minute decision, Habash and some of his close associates in the leadership of the Popular Front for the liberation of Palestine had not boarded the aircraft in Beirut. Israel’s act was strongly condemned by all members of the Security Council and the International Aviation Organization.
of a different social background and of Palestinian origin. His father was a well-known merchant in Palestine who, upon the expansion of his business before 1948, moved to Damascus and finally settled in Beirut. His uncle, ‘Izzat Darqaza, the author of a voluminous work on the development of the Arab political movement, was an historian, and among the first Arab intellectuals to advocate the idea of Pan-Arabism after the First World War. Hakam spent his childhood and early youth in Damascus until the mid-fifties when he entered the American University of Beirut. However, his stay at AUB did not last long, for he was soon expelled following his participation in a student demonstration in protest against the establishment of the Baghdad Pact. Consequently, Darwaza left for Egypt where a few years later he graduated from Cairo University with a BA degree in sociology.

By the end of 1952, Habash and the members of the leading cell had achieved a great measure of success in organizing a large number of students. Subsequently, they handed over the leadership of the Movement in Beirut to the second generation of militant Arab students, and left Lebanon to start branches in other Arab countries.

Habash and Wadi’ Haddad went to Amman, where they jointly opened a medical clinic, better known at the time as die “people's clinic", in which they treated the inhabitants of the refugee camps without receiving any fees. They also founded, under the auspices of al-Muntada al-'Arbi (The Arab Club) in Amman, a school for combating illiteracy. The club and the school soon became centers of party recruitment and places for conducting debates, discussions and lectures on the political situation in Jordan and other Arab countries.

Through their association with the club, Habash and Haddad came into contact with Hamad al-Farhan, a well-known East Jordanian businessman In Amman and a graduate of the AUB. His family owned considerable shares in some
of the major economic enterprises which operated in Jordan, and he was himself on the board of directors of financial and export-import companies. To the amazement of Habash and Haddad, they discovered that al-Farhan, along with a group of well-to-do Palestinians from Nablus and Jerusalem, had already formed a political organization known as Mu’tamar Amman (The Amman Conference) shortly after 1948. Al-Farhan and his colleagues held similar political views to those of Habash, but in terms of organization and membership, the Amman Conference did not observe the same rules and standards which were followed in Beirut. It relied for political support mainly on the high social standing which its leadership enjoyed among the Palestinian bourgeoisie and the business community. This was very different from the cell-based austere movement envisaged earlier by Habash and Haddad as the instrument of revolutionary change in the Arab world.

However, the two young doctors decided to join the leadership of the Amman Conference in the hope that they would later on effect a change in its structural organization and set up more disciplined cadres, and at the same time benefit politically from the entrenched social position and political prestige of their new associates.

Among the first new recruits to the Movement after Habash’s arrival in Amman was a young East Jordanian, Nayif Hawatima from Es-Salt district. The Hawatimas were a small settled Christian tribe in East Jordan of no particular political significance or influence. Nayif’s family belonged to the poorer section of the tribe and lived a life of subsistence. His uncle owned a small chicken farm, and so he could afford to send Nayif and his younger brother to acquire their elementary and secondary education in Amman. It was only in 1966 that Nayif, subsidized by the Movement, managed to join the Beirut Arab University and major in philosophy. While still in Amman, however. Hawatima, together with a few Palestinians of a similarly
modest social background (some of whom were locally recruited while others arrived in Jordan in the middle and late 1950s after completing their studies in Beirut and Cairo), formed the leading group of organized and disciplined members upon whom Habash could depend.

On January 1, 1954, Habash started the weekly *al-Ra’i* (The Opinion), which was described as "The Voice of Arab Nationalist Youth." It strongly deprecated the involvement of any Arab country in the Western plans for the establishment of military pacts in the Middle East, and vigorously attacked Jordan's political ties with Britain. It described the attempts which were being made at the time to include Iraq in a defensive alliance as nothing but a new form of imperialism. Locally, *al-Ra’i* called for the removal of Glubb Pasha, and claimed that, despite Jordan's nominal independence, Britain continued to exert a direct influence on the government of the country.”

The Jordanian Government did not take kindly to the accusations of *al-Ra’i*, and before the end of the year its offices were closed and Habash went underground. In no time, however, on January 3, 1955, *al-Ra’i* reappeared in Damascus under the direction of Hani al-Hindi, who had returned to Syria immediately after Shishakly's overthrow.

Habash was not discouraged by the suppression of the Movement’s organ, nor by the constant attempts of the authorities to arrest him. Throughout 1955 he continued to conduct his political activities from his hiding place, issuing pamphlets concerning the burning issue of the day, the Baghdad Pact, organizing demonstrations, clashing with the army and police, and at the same time attending to the urgent task of building an underground movement.

Toward the end of 1955, the nationalist resistance in Jordan to the proposed Pact reached a high pitch, and King

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12 *Al-Ra’i*, Amman, August 2, 1954.
Hussein thought it wiser, for the time being, to back down. In 1956 he took steps to effect the dismissal of Glubb, formed a national front government under Suleiman al-Nabulsi, held elections for a new parliament, and signed a military agreement with Egypt and Syria. The new Prime Minister announced that he intended to cancel the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty and pledged Jordan's full military support for Egypt during the Suez crisis. Early in 1957 *al-Ra'i* praised the Jordanian Government for signing a treaty of mutual aid and cooperation with Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia.\(^{14}\)

The temporary change in King Hussein's policy seemed to favor the political fortunes of the Arab Nationalist Youth. Habash, after spending a short interval in prison in 1956\(^ {15}\) was released to run with a few of his comrades for parliamentary elections on behalf of the Arab Nationalists in Jordan. Their electoral campaign focused on the necessity of achieving Arab unity, the expulsion of the Jews from Palestine and the liberation of the Arabs from any form of Western influence. They advocated an Arab policy of absolute neutrality, and emphasized the need for social and economic reforms in Jordan.\(^ {16}\) Neither Habash nor any of his colleagues were elected; with the exception of a few Ba’thists, communists and Muslim Brothers, the majority in the new parliament was drawn from among the Palestinian dignitaries of the traditional families of the West Bank, and the tribal leadership of East Jordan. The Arab Nationalist Youth were not disheartened by the results of the campaign; in fact, they often took pride in this first attempt which they made to establish some form of contact with the masses. The campaign not only introduced the Movement and its aims to a larger audience, but also enabled Habash and his comrades to widen their field of political activities to include

\(^{14}\) *Al-Ra'i*, Damascus, January 21, 1957.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., May 7, 1956.

\(^{16}\) *Manshur Intikhabi Raqam (6)—Barnamij al-Qawmiyyin al-‘Arab al-Intikhabi* (Electoral Pamphlet No. 6—The Electoral Pamphlet of the Arab Nationalists), Amman, 1956.
the poorer classes instead of limiting themselves to small circles of students and intellectuals.\textsuperscript{17}

However, the new experience was short lived, as the Jordanian monarch soon realized that the growing influence of the radical movements and the Cairo-oriented politicians in his kingdom undermined his own position, and threatened to sever all the relationships with the West which he held dear. On April 25, 1957, a new Government was formed, and the country was placed under martial law. Leading Ba’thists and communists (led the country, and a number of army officers sought political asylum in Cairo and Damascus. Habash and Haddad again went into hiding. At first they attempted to undermine the stability of the new regime by means of demonstrations and strikes, but as these tactics proved futile and led to the arrest of an increasing number of their followers, they resorted to a more violent but less costly method.

In 1957-58 a number of bomb explosions, which caused some damage to government buildings, and shook the private houses of a number of prominent ministers, occurred in Amman. Within a few months, however, the authorities managed to arrest some of the active members of the Movement who were directly involved in the incidents. Apart from Haddad, two of the suspects were Palestinian students at the AUB. One of them was caught with his fiancée shortly after placing a bomb in a government building. A third was a pharmacy student who had been expelled from AUB in 1955 for taking part in a demonstration on campus.

Thus, Habash’s efforts and hopes to build a leading cadre for the Movement in Jordan were crushed. Many of the accused were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and were not released until 1962, when only a few of them returned to the ranks of the Movement. Haddad, whose con-

\textsuperscript{17} Internal Circular for the confidential use of the members of the Movement (henceforth IQ, \textit{A\'Immal al-Sha’bi} (Work Among the People), 1959, pp. 5-6.
nection with the incidents was not directly established, received a relatively short sentence. After his release in 1960, he joined Habash in Damascus. In the meantime, Habash and Hawatima managed to avoid arrest, but as the situation became increasingly intolerable, they slipped out of the country and appeared in Damascus in February 1958 to celebrate with their comrades the first step towards the realization of their long-awaited dream: the unity of Syria and Egypt.

In the absence of Habash, and with the disintegration of the leading cell which he had founded a few years previously, the ANM in Jordan not only suffered a serious setback but its leadership reverted to those of the passive elements of the Amman Conference. During the next five years Habash remained in Syria, closely supervising the activities of the expanding branches of the Movement, and drawing closer to the policies and views of President Nasir.

In Lebanon the efforts of the ANM were more rewarding. The second line of leadership which took over the activities of al-'Urwa from Habash operated under relatively more favorable political conditions than those which prevailed in Jordan. Their first initiative centered on the publication of an underground weekly, al-Tha'r (The Vengeance), which appeared on November 20, 1952. Its aim, as its title suggested, was to prepare the Arab nation for the day when it would avenge its injured pride in Palestine. During the next six years, al-Tha'r incessantly pursued its objective by keeping the Palestine question alive in the mind of the younger generation of Arabs.

The second objective of the ANM was to expand its organization beyond the limits of the AUB. Early in 1953 new cells were established in a number of secondary schools in Beirut, Tripoli and Tyre; and at least one cell was formed in the University of St. Joseph in Beirut. In the meantime contact was established with the Palestine refugees in the coastal towns, and students were regularly sent to the camps.
to recruit new members into the ranks of the Movement. Within a few years, the distribution of *al-Tha’r* had increased from some 5,000 to 15,000 copies, and the Movement had succeeded in the formation of a sizeable organization. From 1952 to 1954, the leading caucus was drawn from among the students of the AUB and was predominantly Palestinian. But early in 1955, following the participation of the students in violent demonstrations against the Baghdad Pact, the University expelled some seventeen student leaders and dissolved *al-’Urwa* society.\(^{18}\)

With the exception of one Lebanese student who received a disciplinary probation, the members of the leading cell at the AUB left for Cairo to resume their academic studies. By then, however, the efforts of previous years had begun to yield some promising results. A new leadership for the Movement in Lebanon emerged to take the place of the old one. The majority of its members were drawn from the Muslim community in Lebanon and from outside the AUB. Among them were Muhsin Ibrahim from Sidon and Muhammad al-Zayyat from Tyre.

Despite the increasing number of Lebanese elements in the higher echelons of the ANM in Lebanon, its political and ideological concerns remained pan-Arab and closely tied to the Palestinian question.\(^{19}\) In this context, Lebanon was viewed as a marginal and exceptional part of the Arab world, where political change in the direction of closer organic association with other Arab countries depended on the achievement of a certain measure of political unity among these countries first, and then its inclusion of Lebanon. In the meantime, the role of the Movement was to prepare the ground in Lebanon for a closer cooperation between the Muslims and Christians by converting a growing number of the latter to the ideas of Arab nationalism.

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\(^{18}\) *Al-Ra’i*, January 24, 1955.

The views of the Arab Nationalists proved to be impracticable and too idealistic for the confessional realities of the Lebanese situation. It was not until 1958, when civil war broke out in Lebanon, that the ANM began to show some interest in local political issues. The Movement actively participated in the campaign against Sham’un and received military aid from Syria in the form of arms and ammunition. Nayif Hawatima hurriedly left Damascus to head the Movement’s committee in al-Mina, a district of Tripoli, for the purpose of defending it against the government forces. In Tyre, under the leadership of Muhammad al-Zayyat, the ANM checked the influence of Sham’un’s supporters and controlled a large section of the town. In Damascus, Muhsin Ibrahim was busily arranging with Habash and the Syrian branch of the Movement the transportation of arms across the borders.

In 1958 events enabled the ANM to widen its circle of friends and supporters, and consequently encouraged its occasional involvement in the Lebanese situation. In 1960, after some hesitation, it gave al-Zayyat permission to run as an independent candidate for parliamentary elections. Al-Zayyat was of a family of small farmers who for decades had suffered under the predominant political and social influence of the large landowning families in south Lebanon. His formal education was limited to a secondary school certificate which he obtained from the local government school, but his sincere interest in the well-being and daily concerns of the small peasants won him their support during the election campaign. Although he failed ultimately to secure enough votes to earn him a seat in parliament, yet his popularity seemed at one time to threaten the political monopoly exercised by the leading Shi’i families of al-Khalil and al-As’ad in the South. On the whole, however, the activities of the Movement in Lebanon remained a function of its pan-Arab strategy, largely dominated by events and
policies which lay beyond the Lebanese borders.\textsuperscript{20} Even as late as 1965, one would still hear leading members of the Movement complaining, "Our position in Lebanon is that of an alien Arab community living in complete estrangement from the immediate environment surrounding us."

In Kuwait, the position or the Movement was different. There, al-Khatib and his comrades showed greater concern for purely Kuwaiti issues and embraced a locally-oriented strategy.

Upon his return home, Ahmad al-Khatib proceeded to establish a new branch for the Movement. Early in 1953 he published the weekly \textit{Sada al-Iman} (The Echo of Faith) and founded the National Cultural Club. At first he relied heavily on the support of the Palestinian community in Kuwait, but eventually, as the Movement became more involved in the local political situation, an increasing number of Kuwaitis joined its ranks. This tendency gained considerable impetus by the association of the Movement with the Kuwaiti merchant class in its opposition to the autocratic, political practices of the traditional ruling family and the British.

Al-Khatib and his colleagues strongly believed that Kuwait's future lay in its union with an independent and free Iraq. But until such time as Iraq achieved its real independence, the Movement in Kuwait was to make every effort to limit the influence of the local rulers, resist the wider ambitions of the Shah of Iran, and emphasize the Arab character of Kuwait and the Gulf.\textsuperscript{21} In pursuing its objectives the ANM participated successfully in the elections for the local councils of education, health and the Waqfs. At the same time, \textit{Sada al-Iman} and the Cultural Club led the campaign for the formation of a legislative council elected by the people to assist the ruler of Kuwait in running

\textsuperscript{20} IC, \textit{Al-Taqrir al-Siyasi, Lebanon} (The Political Report, Lebanon), 1963.

\textsuperscript{21} IC \textit{Al-Istratijyya al-Iqlimiyya lil-Kuwait \textasciitilde ala Daw} \textit{Istratijyyat al-Haraka} (The Regional Strategy of Kuwait in the Light of the Movement's Strategy), 1967.
the affairs of the country. In May 1955 al-Khatib, at the head of a delegation, met the Amir and submitted to him a large number of petitions advocating the promulgation of a democratic constitution and the institution of a representative assembly. During the Suez Crisis, the ANM managed for the first time since 1938 to arouse the sentiment of the masses to participate in a large demonstration in opposition to the tripartite aggression against Egypt. By that time, the Movement had become a recognized political force in the country. The government now intervened less often to suppress the nationalist press; and following Qasim's claim to Kuwait, the Amir, in the hope of preserving national unity, agreed to grant the nation a constitution and a national assembly. As a result, the Movement decided to take part in the democratic process. Its aim was to establish new channels of communication with the masses, and to consolidate the autonomous status of the trade unions, the press and political parties. In 1963, the Movement claimed that it had been satisfied with its performance in the Legislative Council. However, it drew the attention of its members to the following drawbacks:

1. The revolutionary image of the ANM appeared to suffer as a result of its compromising attitude toward the privileges enjoyed by the ruling family.
2. The Movement tended to rely more on its role inside the Council than on the activities of its members among the masses.
3. The Movement failed to exercise enough pressure on the Council to recognize the revolutionary regime in the Yemen.

However, despite these shortcomings, the Movement did

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25 IC, Ta’nim Khas ‘an Iqlim al-Kuwait (Special Circular on Kuwait), 1963.
not deem it necessary to withdraw from the newly-formed parliament, in which four of its members, supported by eight fellow-travellers, formed the nucleus of political opposition to the Amir's government. In the meantime, the political outlook of the ANM in Kuwait underwent a change. Its growing support for Nasir, and the deterioration of relations between the UAR and Iraq combined to render the Movement's earlier enthusiasm for an Iraqi-Kuwaiti union less desirable. Instead it recognized the fact that Kuwait

"had become a member-state of the U.N. and the Arab League by virtue of its financial resources. . . . We should view it on that basis as a full state despite its small size and population, and regardless of its having been until very recently historically part of Iraq."

Consequently, although the Movement in Kuwait continued to pay some lip service to the necessity of uniting Kuwait with Iraq, in practice it showed greater concern for the internal problems of the country. In particular it aspired to find practical remedies for the immediate grievances of the lower social classes.

The organizational responsibility of the Movement's branch in Kuwait extended to other parts of the Arab Peninsula. Before leaving Beirut toward the end of 1952, al-Khatib was made to understand that one of his tasks was to found new organizations for the Movement in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf area. In this respect his efforts proved to be less successful.

In Bahrain the three consecutive attempts which were made in 1959, 1963 and 1965 to form an underground organization were severely suppressed by the authorities. In Saudi Arabia, the first initiative made in 1962, by an AUB graduate, soon petered out as a result of the lack of aid and support from the Movement centrally. In 1964, a conference

26 Ibid.
27 IC, Al-Istratijiyya al-Iqlimiyya lil-Kuwait ‘ala Daw’ Istratijiyyat al-Haraka.
attended by leading members of the ANM in the Gulf region was held in Kuwait, at which it was considered that the potential future position of Saudi Arabia in relation to revolution in the Peninsula was similar to that of Maoist China in South East Asia. Accordingly a decision was taken to give Saudi Arabia top priority by dispatching to it as soon as possible leading elements from Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar to establish a new branch.

Following the decision of the Conference, a prominent member of the Movement from Bahrain moved to Dhahran, where he founded a small organization. But as no further support was forthcoming, the new group began to suffer from the same difficulties which faced the previous efforts. At this point, a group of Saudi students who had been recruited into the ranks of the ANM in Beirut arrived in ar-Riadh to spend their summer holidays. There they established a new organization, and when they returned to Lebanon to pursue their studies, they maintained close links with ar-Riadh branch. Contact was then established between this latter group and the Dhahran organization, and a joint meeting was held on January 21-22, 1966, in Beirut at which the following decisions were adopted:

1. To prepare a number of studies regarding the social, economic and political situation in Saudi Arabia.
2. To combine the two groups in Saudi Arabia under a joint leadership.
3. To secure permanent contact with the center of the Movement through Kuwait.
4. To hold an annual conference for the region.
5. To recruit Saudi students in Cairo, Beirut, Damascus and Baghdad.29

Before 1958 the efforts of the ANM in Iraq did not make much progress. Among those who accompanied Habash to Amman at the end of 1952 was Hamid aJ-Juburi,29 a member

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28 IC, Dirasa Hawl al-Sau'dia (A Study on Saudi Arabia), 1967.
29 At present a member of the Iraqi Cabinet.
of the founding cell at AUB. After spending some time in Amman, he left for Baghdad to set up a new branch of the Movement. However, al-Juburi appeared to lack the sense of initiative which Habash and al-Khatib showed throughout their political life. He was accused of being more inclined toward political exhibitionism than the tedious task of creating a political movement. His activities appeared to be limited to occasional discussions with his immediate circle of personal acquaintances, whom he usually met in some of the cafés of Baghdad. The arrival in Baghdad in 1957 of another founding member of the ANM to assist al-Juburi in his task did not produce any tangible results, and the former soon returned to Beirut.

In 1958, following the collapse of the Hashimite monarchy in Iraq and the advent of Qasim and the communists to power, the Movement decided to subordinate all other considerations to the requirements of the struggle in Iraq. Subsequently, leading elements were withdrawn from a number of regions and were dispatched to Baghdad. First among those who arrived was Salam Ahmad, an Iraqi from Basra who graduated from AUB in 1957 and worked for almost a year on the editorial board of the weekly atâha'b in Kuwait. Salam came from an extremely poor background, as his father had no fixed job or any constant source of income. The fact that he had been able to pursue his higher education in Beirut was only made possible by a scholarship which he received from his government. In Iraq, Salam was joined by Nayif Hawatima, two leading members of the Movement in Lebanon and a Palestinian. To them was added al-Juburi and another Iraqi, Basil Qubaysi (who had been

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31 Basil was born in 1935, of a family of large land-owners. His father was a high-ranking official in the Iraqi Government and acted on several occasions as governor in the provinces. After leaving Beirut in 1955, Basil continued his higher education at Baghdad University. In 1963, under pressure from the Ba'th regime, he left the country for the US, where he earned his doctorate in political science. Upon his return to Beirut in 1971, he resumed his political activities in the ranks of the
expelled in 1955 from AUB), to form the Regional Command of the ANM in Iraq under the leadership of Hawatima.

Toward the end of 1959, Qasim indicated a change of heart towards his former allies, the communists. As a result, the nationalist forces in Iraq gained some breathing space. The newly-formed leadership of the Movement managed to establish a few cells in the Karkh district in Baghdad and the northern provinces. At the same time the Movement introduced itself to the Arab nationalists in Iraq by reprinting *With Arab Nationalism* (Ma’ al-Qawmiyya al-’Arabiyya), a book first published in Cairo in 1957, embodying the basic political views of the ANM. This was followed by the regular publication of the underground paper *al-Wihda* (Unity), which strongly attacked Qasim’s divisive Arab policy, and called for the unification of Iraq with the UAR. *Al-Wihda* also advocated the formation of a nationalist front in Iraq to combat the danger of communism.

In 1961 the Movement in Iraq, following the same pattern which was adopted by its sister-organizations in other Arab countries, opened the Arab Cultural Club in al-A’dhamia district in Baghdad. The Club became a center for recruiting university and secondary school students, and a place where an increasing number of prominent Arab nationalists in Iraq were invited to deliver lectures which were often highly provocative.

However, despite this marked progress in the activities of the Movement, there were some major obstacles to its becoming the main nationalist force. The Ba'ath Party had...
already by 1959 won the sympathy and allegiance of the Arab nationalist masses in Iraq. Although the abortive attempt to assassinate Qasim resulted in the severe repression of the Party's cadres, the incident was hailed by the ordinary Arab nationalist as an act of heroism. And as soon as Qasim loosened his grip on the Ba'th, the Party recovered speedily, and it eventually emerged stronger than ever to bring about Qasim's tragic end in February 1963, when it assumed power.

The ANM also suffered from recurring personal and political disagreements among its leaders. Al-Juburi resented Hawatima's leadership and did not accept the criticisms of his comrades regarding his somewhat undisciplined attitude. In one of the formal and often heated meetings of the Regional Command in 1960, he took a shot with his gun at Hawatima, but missed him by a small distance and was immediately expelled from the Movement.

However, the ANM in Iraq continued to make substantial headway both politically and in terms of its expanding membership. The Ba'ath's explicit condonation of Syria's secession in September 1961 left the Movement as the major nationalist force in Iraq which continued to stand for union with Nasir. In the meantime, the composition of the Regional Command underwent a change. In 1961-62, two of its members returned to Lebanon, and were replaced by a promising young Iraqi from al-Najaf. At the end of 1961 Hawatima was arrested, and was not released until February 1963, when the Ba'ath took over power. His ensuing stay in Baghdad did not last long, as he was again arrested by the Ba'athists in April and within a few days was deported to Beirut. Subsequently Salam Ahmad replaced him as the general secretary of the Movement, and three new elements were elevated to the Regional Command: one of them was a Lebanese student in the Engineering College, while the other two were Iraqis, a student in the School of Commerce and a worker in the IPC.

The first reaction of the ANM to the Ba'ath coup was to
raise the slogan of Iraq's union with the UAR, and the necessity of forming a National Front with complete free, dom for Arab nationalists. In time, however, the Movement realized that the new Ba'thist regime in Iraq, as well as that in Syria, was not prepared to take any substantial step toward unity with Egypt, and therefore had no intention of honoring the Tripartite Unity Agreement signed in Cairo on April 17, 1963. Furthermore, there were definite indications that the Ba'th in Iraq was bent upon the political liquidation of the Movement.

On March 17, the ANM submitted to the Revolutionary Council in Iraq and to President Abdul Salam 'Arif a memorandum calling upon them to put an end to the inhuman treatment which some members of the Movement were receiving at the hands of the paramilitary organization of the Ba'th Party, known as the National Guards. Scores of the Movement's members were imprisoned for days without questioning, and were tortured for no obvious reason. Al-Wihda newspaper, the mouthpiece of the Movement in Iraq which appeared publicly, immediately after the coup, was soon banned.

The new Regional Command formed after Hawatima's departure met toward the end of April, and decided to take decisive action against the Ba'th in self-defense, and for the cause of unity with Nasir. Consequently a number of senior army officers were contacted with a view to a coup; but before any concrete plan was to materialize; the Ba'thists uncovered the plot on May 23 and a full-scale campaign was launched against the Movement. Within a few days Salam Ahmad and another of his comrades in the Command were arrested, a third fled to Beirut and the remaining two went into hiding, while leading elements in the intermediary and lower ranks were rounded up and thrown in prison, thus causing the total paralysis of the Movement.

Early in July of the same year, four new members, a Palestinian, an Iraqi and two Kuwaitis, were sent to Iraq to try and reorganize the Movement with the assistance of the two remaining members of the previous Regional Command. But no sooner had the new leadership published its first issue of the underground *al-Wihda* in October than it received a crippling blow. Two of its Iraqi leaders managed to reach Kuwait, but the rest—four in number—were arrested. As a result, the Movement was unable to resume its activities except after 'Arif’s coup on November 18, 1963.

In Syria, the ANM, after al-Hindi’s short and unfortunate experience of 1950, made a fresh attempt to organize a branch in Damascus early in 1954. But by then the Ba’th, reinforced by its merger with Akram al-Hourani’s Arab Socialist Party, had become not only a major political force in the power structure in Syria, but had also absorbed within its ranks the overwhelming majority of young Arab nationalists. Against such an obstacle, the Movement had little chance of making any substantial progress. Its efforts, therefore, remained feeble and unrewarding. In the mid-fifties, its activities were confined to the publication of the weekly *al-Ra’i*, which on various occasions advocated Syria’s union with other Arab countries including Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan.\(^{36}\) Few Syrians joined its ranks, it was estimated that until 1960 there were not more than 15 Syrian members in the Movement, while the majority of its recruits were Palestinian students.\(^{37}\)

The formation of the UAR in February 1958 appeared to relieve the Movement of the task of establishing a branch in Syria. It was then felt that by safely placing the country in Nasir’s hands, the efforts of the Movement could be directed toward other Arab countries, where the situation was more urgent. However, the secession of Syria in 1961 prompted the Movement to act speedily to mobilize the Nasirite forces.


in the country. Though almost half its founding Syrian members left its ranks and some of them even supported the new regime, the rest loyally adhered to their belief in unity with Nasir.

With Habash guiding the steps of the Movement from his hiding place in Damascus, it soon acquired the reputation of being a very sincere and devoted Nasirite force. Its activities after 1961 extended to the University of Damascus and the secondary schools, and to some sections of the labor movement in Aleppo and Damascus. Eventually, when the Ba'th assumed power in March 1963, the Movement had acquired a relatively strong position which qualified it for two Cabinet seats. However, its cooperation with the Ba'th was short lived. Its two ministers, together with their Nasirite colleagues, soon resigned their posts in the Cabinet and accused the Ba'th of betraying the terms of the Tripartite Unity Agreement. The Ba'th retaliated by banning the publication of its organ, Sawt al-Jamahir (The Voice of the Masses) and arresting some of its leaders. Despite the setback, the ANM continued to exert its influence through its organization and the friendly relationships which it had established with a group of army officers, in the hope of effecting a change in the political situation which would favor the restoration of the union between Syria and Egypt.

In Egypt, the ANM had little political incentive to institute a purely Egyptian branch. But the presence of a large number of Arab students in Cairo and Alexandria encouraged the formation of a student organization which played an important role in the political training and education of new cadres which were later dispatched to other Arab countries.

The arrival in Cairo in 1955 and 1956 of some 15 student leaders who had been expelled from AUB provided the Movement in Egypt with an already trained political cadre. In less than a year, it achieved a great measure of control over a number of Arab student societies. The Federation of Kuwaiti (student) Missions was most active among them: it published the weekly *al-Ittihad* (The Federation), which soon became the voice of the Movement in Egypt. In the long run, the efforts of the ANM in Egypt were most rewarding among the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip and students from the Yemen and Saudi Arabia. By the end of the 1950s, a sizeable political organization was established in Gaza. At the same time a group of students from South Arabia were recruited into the ranks of the Movement, prominent among whom were Qahtan al-Sha’bi and his cousin Faysal, who in 1963 successfully launched an armed rebellion against the British in Aden and South Yemen. A less rewarding effort was made in Libya, where the Movement could not make any substantial progress due to its periodical suppression by the authorities.

The growth of the ANM in different Arab countries during the first decade of its existence followed one of two principal patterns. In some countries, such as Kuwait, Lebanon and Egypt, it evolved accidentally as a result of the initiative of Arab students who happened to be nationals of those countries, or who were recruited in Beirut and Cairo, and upon their return to their countries maintained their political links with the Movement. In other places, notably Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, the founding of branches was more deliberate. It followed the specific decisions of the Movement centrally or regionally to send leading members to establish an organization or to assist in its development. These decisions were usually taken in accordance with the

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41 This may partly account for the significant popular support and military strength which the PFLP has enjoyed in the Gaza Strip during the Israeli occupation.
Movement's assessment of the political situation in a certain region and its relevance to its overall strategy.

The circumstances which accompanied the evolution of the Movement varied from one Arab country to another, but this should not be confused with the fact that the Movement was highly centralized. From its inception it emphasized the necessity of uniting the Arab world, and warmly preached that the first step in this direction was to embody this principle in the newly-founded movement. Accordingly, when Habash and his comrades left Beirut, they maintained close contact with each other. Many of them continuously moved from one Arab country to another, thus tightening the relationship between the branches. It was not until 1957, however, that the central structure of the Movement began to take shape, following its first pan-Arab Conference held in Amman the year before.

Toward the end of 1955, the founding leaders of the ANM felt that it was high time to assess the results of the efforts which they had made during the last three years. Consequently, a conference was arranged for leading members of the Movement, and the delegates arrived in Amman early in 1956. It was attended by eight delegates: three representing Lebanon and including Muhsin Ibrahim and Muhammad al-Zayyat; Hani al-Hindi from Syria; Habash and Haddad from Jordan; al-Khatib from Kuwait; and a Palestinian residing in Beirut. The third Lebanese delegate was still a student at AUB, while the rest of the delegates had graduated from AUB between 1950 and 1952.

During the early sessions of the Conference, the delegates surveyed the achievements and activities of the branches in different Arab countries. Clearly in Lebanon the Movement appeared to have made substantial strides among the students and the Palestinian refugees. In Jordan, it had undoubtedly managed to gain an appreciable political standing; as regards
Building up a Movement

its organization. Habash disclosed the particular relationship which existed between the Movement and the Amman Conference. At the recommendation of the Conference it was decided that the latter group should eventually be absorbed into the disciplined ranks of the Movement.

More important, however, were the deliberations regarding the type of organization which the Movement should adopt. Until the time of the Conference, membership in the Movement was based on the cell-system. A prospective candidate was usually contacted by one of the members, who would then invite him to attend the regular weekly meetings of the cell. The leader of the cell would explain that in view of the desire expressed by each member to devote his efforts to the national cause, it was their duty to work secretly as an independent unit without reliance on others. Upon their recruitment, members of the cell were not informed of the existence of other cells, and were made to understand that their function was to institute a new movement in the Arab world. The leader of a cell usually posed as an ordinary member and thus did not arouse the suspicions of his colleagues. In fact, however, a form of hierarchy costed whereby leaders of cells were themselves also grouped into separate cells led by more efficient and trained cell leaders until a level was reached where only a few individuals were in charge of the whole hierarchy. This type of arrangement continued to function until 1956. when the first National Conference of the Movement defined the relationship between the different levels, specified the term by which each level would be designated, and. most important, founded a central hierarchy which effectively controlled and coordinated the workings of every branch of the Movement.

The National Conference represented the highest legislative authority in the Movement. Its membership was confined to a limited number of individuals, and the addition of new members was a prerogative of the Conference itself.
An Executive Committee was nominated from among the members of the Conference. Its function was to run the daily affairs of the Movement throughout the Arab world.

It was divided into two sections, the Administrative Committee and a Committee of Thought; the first took charge of organizational and financial matters, while the latter was entrusted with developing the ideology of the Movement. Until 1962, the Administrative Committee formed the actual ruling body of the Movement. The hard core of its membership was composed of Habash, Haddad, al-Hindi, Ibrahim and Baydoun. The Committee of Thought was dominated by two figures, namely Ibrahim and al-Hakam Darwaza.

On the level of individual Arab countries, known as the regional level (al-Mustawa al-Iqlimi), the hierarchy consisted of four grades. The highest executive authority in any region was the Regional Command nominated by the Administrative Committee. Though a regional conference was held annually, it did not have the power to elect the Regional Command, and its decisions were subject to the approval of the Administrative Committee. Second in the hierarchy was the Shu'ba, in charge of the organization and activities of the Movement in a province or a town. Depending on the size of the organization, one town might have two Shu'bas or more as was the case in Beirut during the late 1950s. Next was the Rabita (League), directly responsible for the basic party-unit of the Movement, namely the cell (Khaliyya). The typical cell would be entrusted with the task of recruiting new members, distributing pamphlets and leaflets, and conducting the meetings of the Halaqat. The latter were not viewed as being part of the Movement proper, but as a training stage through which every member of the Movement was to pass before becoming a full member in a cell. In the early days, this preliminary phase could extend to two years or more, but as the Movement grew in size, conditions for joining a cell were gradually relaxed.
CHAPTER THREE

The Ideology of the Movement

THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE, the conditions of membership and the relationships within the Movement were a product of a specific phase in Arab history, which extended from the Palestine disaster to the break-up of the UAR in 1961. The political events in the area during that period emphasized in the Arab mind the necessity for national unity, discipline and, most of all, strength. The organizational principles of the ANM which were preached to the members largely reflected this tendency. These principles revealed the strong aversion of the Movement to the existence of any ideological dispute within its ranks. At the same time it adhered to the principle of nomination rather than election in choosing its leaders on all levels. It required from its members absolute obedience to the orders of their superiors. It claimed “flexible centralism” as the guiding relationship among its different echelons; but in practice, the Movement tended to concentrate enormous power in the hands of a few individuals who were at the top of the hierarchy.

The political events of that period equally inspired the political outlook of the Movement and determined its political behavior. As far as its secular notion of Arab nationalism was concerned, the Movement borrowed heavily

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from Sati’ al-Husri; but as regards the views and slogans which it expressed, its approach was unique, Arab nationalism was defined as the

“distinct and collective personality of a group of people called the Arabs or the Arab nation. It is an overall historical, linguistic, cultural and social fact of life which makes the Arab nation a distinct social and historical unit based on the interaction of a number of specific mutual ties.”

These ties comprised a common language, history, traditions and habits, culture, geographical unit, mutual interests and a collective will. According to Darwaza, Arab nationalism evolved in two stages: a formative stage which “resides deep in history” and the stage of development and crystallization extending from the pre-Islamic era to the present.

Three years after the publication of *With Arab Nationalism*, Darwaza published a handbook *On Nationalist Education* (Fi al-Tathqif al-Qawmi) strictly for the use of the members of the Movement. It introduced a more dynamic concept of nationalism. The previous definition of Arab nationalism was now applied to the Arab nation instead. Nationalism itself became

"a movement conscious of the distinct and independent existence of the nation. It seeks to materialize this existence in independent political, economic and social national institutions. In other words nationalism is the mental and emotional condition through which the nation realizes its collective unitary existence. From

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4 Ibid., p. 69.
this evolves the collective will of the people to live together independent from other nations, and to organize their own affairs in accordance with the demands of their own situation.\(^6\)

Darwaza added:

"It is clear that this definition distinguishes . . . between the nation and nationalism. A nation is a group of people which enjoys the elements of unity, harmony and interaction, it is the objective moral and material existing reality. On the other hand, nationalism is the awareness of this objective reality and its expression in different forms and in a number of fields."\(^7\)

The change in definition signified the Movement's growing awareness of the importance of the involvement of a greater number of Arabs in the struggle for unity. Following the marked stagnation of the drive for Arab union after its initial success in 1958, the Movement began to emphasize the role of the Arab masses. It called upon its members to recruit an increasing number of workers, peasants, junior government officials and craftsmen into its ranks. It claimed that it had now built sufficient cadres to be able to transform the Movement into a popular political party. More important, it asserted that the failure of the Arab nationalists to seize power in Iraq had definitely demonstrated that the struggle against the communists would not be won except by gaining the organized support of the masses.\(^8\) Arab nationalism in its static form was capable of attracting the sympathies of the Arabs, but it had to be transformed into a dynamic movement before it could enlist their active participation.

\(^6\) Ibid, pp. 11-12.
\(^7\) Ibid, p. 12.
\(^8\) IC, Al-'Amal al-Sha'bi, pp. 10-11.
The most striking aspect of the Movement’s outlook, however, pertained to the three objectives it aspired to achieve: "Unity, Liberation, and Vengeance." The views expressed by Arab thinkers after 1948 shaped the content of the Movement's aims to a great extent.

The ANM understood the Zionist danger to be one of total subjugation, which did not differentiate between one Arab country and another, but sought to establish a Jewish state "from the Euphrates to the Nile." It declared that its opinion regarding the Arab-Zionist conflict differed from that held by the majority of Arab politicians and political parties:

"We view the enmity between us and the Jews as a historical one which started hundreds of years ago. Its cause is the constant aspiration of the Jews to conquer Palestine and establish their own government.

"To us this is a danger equivalent to absolute extermination, a danger of an aggressive and expansionist nature. It will not stop within its present borders but will fight a fierce battle against our people ...

"We do not understand the source of the danger to be confined to Israel. It is also represented by International Judaism, including its millions of people, its enormous material wealth, and its influence in international politics."9

According to Habash and his colleagues, Jewish colonialism was not an integral part of Western imperialism, but had an independent existence:

"We cannot possibly accept the dominant belief among our people that the Jewish danger is an imperialist project... which would disappear with the disappearance of imperialism. It is however possible that this false understanding stems from the fact that

9 IC. Al-Marhala al-'Arabiyya al-Hadira wa Ahdatuha {The Present Arab Stage and Its Objectives}, 1957.
until today imperialism and Judaism have been bound together by common interests...
"The Jewish danger has its own independent roots... its own philosophy, and its own aims. The fact that it has been able to win the support of the imperialist powers does not mean that it is permanently attached to them.
"Our problem with the Jews is not a problem with Western imperialism. It is a problem with an independent Jewish movement employing its own resources to win the largest number of states to its side."10

Furthermore, the Movement asserted that, unlike imperialism, the Jewish conquest of Palestine did not seek to acquire a privileged position for the Jews in the region, but "aimed at the usurpation of the Arab land, and the expulsion of the Arab people..."11 Habash and his comrades claimed that the Arab defeat in 1948 was not accidental. The responsibility for the disaster was primarily attributed to

"the deterioration and corruption of our national conditions, represented in the fragmentation of the homeland, the dominance of imperialism and its allies, the weakness and disintegration of our social existence, and the predominance of the reactionary conceptions among Arab individuals."12

But even that could not account for the Arab military failure:

"Responsible Arabs had seriously contributed, consciously or unconsciously to the occurrence of the disaster. Their responsibility manifested itself in the treachery of some of them, the negligence of others,

10  Ibid.
11  Darwaza, Ma' al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya, p. 102.
and their shortsightedness when they imagined that the battle with the Jews was a mere picnic."\textsuperscript{13}

There were in addition some external influences which played an important role in bringing about the success of Zionism in Palestine. The traditional alliance between Zionism and imperialism inevitably strengthened the position of the Jews throughout the world, and enabled them to realize their aspirations. The irresistible political influence of the Jewish community, first in the Ottoman Empire and later in Britain and the United States, constantly coincided with the greedy policies of these powers.\textsuperscript{14} Last but not least, the Jewish effort in its own right succeeded in mobilizing the vast resources of the Jews all over the world.\textsuperscript{15} In this respect, the Movement preached that it was a matter of utmost importance not to distinguish between Zionism and Judaism:

"It is not important to indulge in a discussion concerning the reality of Judaism, as to whether it is a religion or a nationalism. What is important for us to realize is that this group in reality stands before the world as one group having a tight organization and a studied plan. It fights us today with increasing violence and brutality.

"In this war are combined the efforts of all Jews from the far left to the extreme right..."\textsuperscript{16}

After depicting the reasons for the defeat, and the nature of the enemy, the Arab Nationalists moved to discuss ways of countering the Jewish danger. They rejected the notion that the internal contradictions of Israeli society would weaken its structure and eventually lead to its collapse. Neither the social tension arising from large scale immigra-

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., pp. 94-11).
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 64.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 26.
tion, nor the economic and political conflict, were thought to be sufficient to threaten Israel's existence: "It is quite obvious that the elements of cooperation and cohesion ... in addition to scientific planning are far stronger than the factors of disintegration and conflict..." Thus the Arabs' only hope resided in their dependence on themselves, and in mobilizing their own resources.18

The organic integration of the Arab countries was seen as the most efficient way to accomplish such an objective. The struggle for Palestine was not an isolated and regional struggle, but one which concerned the whole Arab nation. as this was equally threatened by the Jewish danger.19 It was, therefore, the duty of every Arab to prepare for "the battle of Vengeance."

The term "vengeance" provoked a number of criticisms from other nationalist groups especially the Ba’th. The editors of al-Tha’r took great pains to defend the position of the Movement on this issue. They explained that there was no other choice for the Arabs except to meet the Zionist challenge on the same terms laid down by the Jews: expulsion or extermination.20 In a series of articles, they explained that al-Tha'r (vengeance) meant

"To have absolute faith in strength as the way to build the Arab entity and to protect it from dangers which threaten it. It is a faith deriving from the essence of the Arab experience with imperialism and Zionism.

Al-Tha'r also meant the total commitment of Arab youth to fundamental and decisive solutions to Arab problems, and the rejection of any compromise. It was a constant reminder to the Arab nation to be fully aware of the attempts of imperialism to transform the Palestine question into a
refugee problem or a mere quarrel over the distribution of the waters of the Jordan River. Finally, *al-Tha‘r* indicated to the Arabs the path to regaining their dignity and pride, which they had lost in 1948. Other nations had witnessed wars and defeats, but none of them had been humiliated to the extent of being deprived of an essential part of its homeland and having its people evicted.

During the early years of its existence, the ANM was closely associated with the concept of “Vengeance” and its connotations of tribal revenge. Reference was often made to the Arab Nationalists as *al-Tha‘r* group (*Jama‘t al-Tha‘r*), or "the fire and iron group", implying the Movement’s glorification of might and strength. However, under the pressure of the accusations of fanaticism and fascism which were levelled against it on account of raising such romantic slogans, the ANM gradually reduced its use of the term and eventually adopted the slogan "regaining Palestine".

In the course of the Movement’s second National Conference in 1957, Muhsin Ibrahim suggested that the term ought to be dropped. One of the founding members of the Movement heatedly retorted, "Is this a Conference of Jews or Arab Nationalists?" The sharp reaction which Ibrahim’s suggestion provoked ended in the formal retention of the slogan. However, the subsequent literature of the Movement showed an increasing tendency to ignore it. While *al-Tha‘r* was freely used in *With Arab Nationalism*, its use was greatly restrained a year later in *Israel: Idea, Movement, State*. And finally in *On Nationalist Education* it was completely dropped and the term "regaining Palestine" was used instead.

Despite the change in terminology, there was no substantial modification in the content of the slogan. In fact, the pressure of political events during the late 1950s appeared to reduce the urgency of the Palestine question.

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23 *Al-Tha‘r*, June 14, 1956.
The Movement seemed to give more attention to inter-Arab conflicts and to the concept of Arab unity than to the relatively dormant issue of Palestine. In 1963 interest in Palestine was again revived as a result of the completion of the Jordan project by Israel, and the Movement’s views regarding Zionism and the way to its defeat subsequently underwent a drastic change.

In the meantime the slogan of Arab unity occupied a central position in the Movement’s political outlook. It derived from two important factors. One was political and pertained to the Movement’s conviction that Arab unity, once attained, would inevitably lead to the liberation of Palestine. The other was theoretical and directly related to the concept of Arab nationalism. The unification of the Arab countries was viewed as the necessary outcome of the existence of one Arab nation:

“We often hear or read of the demand for the unification of the Arab nation or the Arab people. This demand rests on a false premise, because the Arab people are an undivided whole. What has been divided is the Arab fatherland. “When we advocate union, we mean a total integration of all parts of the Arab fatherland, and not simply the unity of two or three Arab countries ... Of course we do not oppose such a union; on the contrary, we welcome it and consider it an inevitable step toward total integration. What we mean is that our struggle at this stage should go on to achieve that integration ...”

According to the Movement, the core of the idea of Arab unity

“is the unification of all the scattered parts of the Arab fatherland under the shadow of one national state.

“As to the question why we raise the slogan of unity above all other slogans of Arab struggle at this stage;

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26 IC. Al-Ahdaf al-‘Arabiyya al-Ra’isiyya (The Major Arab Aims), 1957.
it is because unity is a natural condition, while any other situation is an abnormal one and ought not to continue. The existence of one Arab people living in a divided fatherland is an abnormal condition . . .”

Throughout the 1950s the ANM had strongly supported any attempt to achieve a measure of political unity among the Arab states, without regard to the differences in the political or social structure which different Arab countries exhibited. Often the Movement advocated the unity of Syria, Jordan and Iraq, and utilized a wide range of arguments to support such a proposal. According to *Al-Tha'ir*, Jordan lacked the political and economic foundations of an independent state and was, therefore, totally dependent on British financial and military aid. Its only hope for a better future lay in its union with Iraq:

“Although we welcome any step which aims at uniting Jordan with any adjacent part of the fatherland, we prefer that it unites with Iraq as a first step. Iraq's material resources would enable the new state to become an actual power which would frighten the Jewish colonialists.”

With the growing prospect of a union between Syria and Iraq, following Shishakly's overthrow in 1954, the Movement, unlike the Ba'th, rejected the view that in case of its union with Iraq, Syria would be similarly dragged into submitting to Britain's political control:

"Union does not undermine Syria's independence. Union does not drag Syria into Britain's lap. Union is not a 'British Conspiracy' as some people may think. "No, union is not all this. It mobilizes the liberating forces of this fatherland. It gives Iraq a chance to cancel

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26 *Ibid,*
27 *Al-Tha'ir*; June 4, 1953.
the treaty. It creates the Arab power which would restrain the Jews and stand firm against their expansion.”

*Al-Ra‘i* in Amman attacked the growing antagonism of Egypt and Saudi Arabia to the proposed union of Syria, Iraq and Jordan, which it described as being “more violent than the antagonism shown by Israel.”

The Movement equally expressed its unqualified support for the impending prospect of union between Syria and Egypt, and when practical steps to that end were eventually taken in February 1958, it hailed the event as a turning point in Arab history.

Similarly, the Movement did not hesitate to express its support for the formation of the Hashemite Federation, a move precipitated by the emergence of the UAR. After its assessment of the positive and negative aspects of the new union, the Movement decided to endorse the step. However, it revealed that

“The fundamental and most important thing for us is to work inside and outside the UAR to attach to it the Arab Federation and other Arab countries . . .

“The rulers of Jordan and Iraq sought this step to serve their own interests and guarantee their own existence, but we are capable of rendering it a service to the interest of our people and a fulfilment of their aims, provided that we organize our forces accordingly . . .”

On the whole, the Movement’s indiscriminate enthusiasm for any kind of union among the Arab states stemmed from its rather idealistic conception of Arab unity. Union was seen as the magic cure for Arab maladies. It would not only

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pave the way for the Arab nation to recover its pride and crush its foes, but would also enable it to achieve political and economic harmony in the region.\textsuperscript{32}

Towards the end of 1958 the Movement appeared to pin its hopes on the UAR as the vanguard for future Arab unity. The new state under the leadership of Nasir became the magnet which the ANM hoped would draw to itself an increasing number of Arab countries. By 1958 the Movement had made a complete volte-face regarding its political attitude toward Egypt. (In 1953 al-Juburi recognized the “partial benefits” accruing from the “coup in Egypt”, in that it clarified to the Arab ruling classes that their position was by no means eternal. He felt, however, that “recent coups and military events have vague motives and mysterious aims . . .” and were in no way a substitute for a popular revolution in the Arab world.\textsuperscript{33}) Nasir’s negotiations with Britain for the evacuation of the Canal Zone were regarded with great suspicion by the ANM, and when an agreement was eventually signed, \textit{al-Ra’i} sarcastically wrote:

“So the men of revolution have agreed to side with the West by allowing it to reoccupy the Canal and facilitating its use of Egyptian ports and airfields in the event of an attack against Turkey or any Arab state.”\textsuperscript{34}

On another occasion, when Nasir declared that Egypt would be returning to parliamentary rule at the end of 1955, \textit{al-Ra’i} remarked that similar promises were often made by Shishakly in Syria, but never materialized; and there was no reason to believe that the military regime in Egypt consisting of “twelve officers in number” would be any different.\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Sada al-Iman}, while commending the step, expressed its

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Al-Tha’r}, February 2,1956.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Al-’Urwa}, March 1953.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Al-Ra’i}, Amman, August 2,1954; and \textit{al-Tha’r}, August 12,1954.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Al-Ra’i}, Damascus, May 22,1955.
misgivings at the banning of political parties in Egypt, and warned that a one-party system would render the political situation similar to that of "Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany."  

However, once Nasir's dynamic policies appeared to move in the direction of closer association with the aspiration of the Arabs to unity, strength and anti-imperialism, the ANM at first showed some guarded signs of sympathy, and then rallied to his support without hesitation. The first instance of a change in mood occurred in the autumn of 1955, when Nasir made an agreement to receive Soviet arms deliveries from Czechoslovakia. The editorial of *al-Ra'i* declared that the Czech arms deal was a turning-point in Arab history. It destroyed the long-held view that the Arab world was an inseparable part of the Western sphere of influence. *Al-Ra'i* added that it was now the duty of Egypt to continue in its new path, but at the same time to make serious efforts to build its own independent military strength.  

The evacuation of the Canal Zone in June 1956 was another occasion on which the ANM expressed its full support for Egypt. The event was celebrated as a great victory for the Arabs, because it terminated Egypt's long isolation from the rest of the Arab countries, and paved the way for its increasing participation in the Arab struggle for "Unity, Liberation and Vengeance." The nationalization of the Canal and its consequences confirmed the Movement's confidence in the positive role which Egypt appeared to play against Zionism and imperialism. And finally, the formation of the UAR in 1958 under Nasir's leadership dispelled any of the remaining doubts which the Movement had earlier entertained regarding the sincerity of Nasir's regime. The ANM viewed the newly-formed state as "the formal leadership of the struggle for Arab unity and liberation." It claimed

37 *Al-Ra'i*, Damascus, October 3, 1955.
38 *Al-Tha'r*, June 21, 1956.
that the UAR qualified for such a role because it enjoyed an absolute control over its own political and economic resources, and was also endowed with an exceptional leadership which was “sincere, determined and courageous.”

From 1958 onward, the Movement willingly associated itself with the policies of the UAR, and paid absolute allegiance to Nasir's leadership. Consequently its notion of Arab unity gained a practical dimension. It implied that the credibility of any process of political unification in the Arab world depended on Nasir's approval and his participation in its realization.

The third objective of the Movement was that of Arab liberation, which aimed at the elimination of Western influence from the Arab world. It derived from the unfortunate relationship of the Arab countries with the West since the first World War and the role played by the Western powers in the creation of Israel. France and Britain were held responsible for the establishment and consolidation of divisive regional, religious and political factors in the Arab countries. Furthermore, the Western powers and notably the US. were accused of being instrumental in the founding of Israel. The events of the 1950s did not help much to mitigate such growing suspicion against the West. The Tripartite Declaration of 1950 pledging Western commitment to the preservation of the status quo in the Middle East was legitimately interpreted in the Arab world as an understanding among the three Western powers to safeguard Israel's position in the area. The Four Power Proposals for a Middle East Command in 1951 and the establishment of the Baghdad Pact a few years later, were viewed as part of a Western plan to bring the Arabs under the direct military and political control of the West. The worst suspicions of the Arabs were confirmed when France and England in alliance with Israel launched their attack against Egypt in 1956. At that time, from an Arab point of view.

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39 Darwaza, Fi al-Tathqif al-Qawmi, pp. 74-75.
the US seemed to show up in a better light than its European allies, but no sooner had the invading armies withdrawn than the Eisenhower Doctrine was introduced, and a year later US Marines landed in Beirut. Once again the US policy in the Middle East came under the irreconcilable attacks of the UAR and the Arab nationalists throughout the region.

Freedom from Western imperialism was not conceived simply as the elimination of political and military foreign dominance, but also as the rejection of any kind of foreign exploitation:

“When we say imperialism ... we mean direct imperialism such as the one imposed on South Arabia. We mean by it imperialism hiding behind treaties as in the case of Libya and some other Arab countries in the Maghreb. We mean by it masked imperialism embodied in alliances such as the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower project. And last but not least, we mean economic imperialism obviously represented in the monopoly exercised by the oil companies over our natural resources. Liberation means to be free from die shackles of foreign exploitation no matter what shape or form it takes.”

As for imperialism as a world-wide phenomenon, the ANM borrowed its definition from the Marxist-Leninist view:

“Imperialism is a natural reflection of the economic systems dominant in societies which base their economies on the principle of individual economic freedom, and refuse to limit the ownership of private property, or allow the state to take possession of the means of production and exercise an overall control over the distribution of the national wealth...

"[Imperialism], therefore, is a logical conclusion of the expansion of capitalism as a result of the accumulat-
tion of capital due to the increasing returns from continuous profits, and the economic monopoly arising from the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few...

"It is natural that this system of monopoly capitalism should lead to imperialism; first to secure the raw material on which its industries depend, and secondly to ensure for itself enough outlets for the marketing and consumption of its industrial products."

The Movement claimed that its three objectives belonged to a stage in Arab history in which the struggle was mainly political. The Arab nation had first to achieve a certain measure of political integration and freedom from Zionism and imperialism before it could turn its full attention to the process of building a democratic and socialist Arab society. Though recognizing the inevitable interaction among the social, economic and political factors in Arab society, the ANM maintained, however, that the political problem

"lies at the root of the malady. The economic and social difficulties are nothing but an inevitable and natural result of the political problem. And any remedy to the illness of the Arab nation will certainly fail, unless it takes into consideration this particular reality."

As a result, the Movement emphasized the need to mobilize the resources of the nation in the political struggle. It also warned against the transformation of the political struggle into an internal economic conflict, which it claimed would impose upon the Arab nation the burden of fighting on both the internal and the external fronts.

The idea of separating the stages of Arab struggle into

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41 Darwaza, Maʿ al-Qawmiyya al-ʿArabiyya, p. 100.
42 Ibid., pp. 165-166.
44 Darwaza, Maʿ al-Qawmiyya al-ʿArabiyya, p. 167.
first the political and then the social and economic provoked sharp reactions from the Ba'athists. Naji 'Allush accused the ANM of abandoning the cause of the Arab masses in socialism, and acting solely in the interest of the Arab bourgeoisie. Farid Abu Atiyya of Kuwait, on the other hand, asserted that the Arab could not defeat his enemies "until he is provided with the essentials of economic and social existence".

A few years later, the Movement made some slight modification in its "theory of stages" to please its critics. It maintained that there was some fusion in the stages as was the case in the UAR, where the struggle for economic development had begun at a time when the political struggle was still dominant. Consequently, it concluded that despite the difficulty of drawing a clear-cut line between one stage and the other, the basic feature of the present phase of Arab struggle remained clearly political.

To realize its aims, the Movement advocated a radical change in the political position of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. It recognized that its first task was to wrest power from the discredited ruling classes, and unite the three countries under its own leadership. The second step would then be either to invade the rest of the Arab countries one by one and unite them by force; or, depending on the political circumstances prevailing in these countries, the branches of the Movement would follow the same procedure adopted previously in Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. Simultaneously, the new Arab state should mobilize its military, political and economic resources to defeat the Zionists.

However, the Movement’s conception of its own rule appeared to change with the development of events in the area. The emergence of the UAR in 1958 seemed to lighten
the initial burden which it had earlier intended to carry. And a few years later the Movement's leadership, in response to Nasir's call for the founding of a united Arab movement, declared that its organization formed only one section of the proposed movement.
CHAPTER FOUR

Drift to the Left

The ANM continued to adhere to the “theory of separation of stages” until May 1960, when Muhsin Ibrahim, without previous warning, published a long article in the Movement’s organ al-Hurriyya on the occasion of Labor Day in which he wrote:

“The age in which the movement of Arab nationalism was separated from the progressive social revolution has ended. And with it has been turned the page belonging to the traditional nationalist movements which existed in the Arab fatherland between the two world wars, and which advocated independence and 'unity' without placing these demands in an appropriate progressive framework.

“As for the modern movement of Arab nationalism, it includes all the areas of progressive Arab struggle; and its revolutionary implications extend to all aspects of Arab life...

“There is no longer a political national question standing separately and posing against a specific social question called 'the workers question' or 'the peasants question' or 'the question of social progress.' The Arab question has come to mean an overall revolutionary concept which is the melting-pot of the national, political, economic and social ambitions of the progressive Arab masses.”

1 Al-Hurriyya, May 2, 1960.
Ibrahim’s article marked the end of the purely political and nationalistic phase of the life of the ANM, and the beginning of a new era in its political and ideological development. Stirrings of such a change had been apparent since the late fifties, but efforts were made to confine it to the higher echelons of the Movement, literally evidence of the existence of two competing political tendencies within the leadership was revealed in the National Conference held in 1957. The majority of the Movement’s founding members appeared to favor the retention of both the ideological position (as expressed in the idea of separation of stages and the three political objectives), and the organizational principles which were highly autocratic and centralized. On the other hand, a minority of leading members was more inclined towards the idea of the fusion of stages and the adoption of a less rigid relationship between the different levels of the Movement.

At that time, though the issues raised in the Conference were resolved in favor of the former tendency, the occasion enabled the latter group to air its views concerning the future of the Movement. These views gained an increasing weight with the development of the political situation in the area. The failure of the nationalist forces to unite Iraq with the UAR after Qasim’s coup prompted the Movement to re-examine some of its basic political tenets. It recognized that its inability to become a popular movement with a large mass following was due to the fact that it had not acquired a flexible structure capable of performing such a task. Moreover, the ANM claimed that

“Until now the Movement has not confronted the social aspects and the daily problems from which the citizen suffered. We have not impressed the ordinary man as being the movement of workers, peasants and all the masses. In these matters the initiative has been
left to the Communist parties throughout the regions of the fatherland.”

The internal social and economic development in the UAR impressed the Movement further with the importance of adopting a definite stand regarding the social and economic issues. In 1959 Muhsin Ibrahim and Nayif Hawatima went so far as to assert that the socio-economic structure was the determining factor in the progress of all other aspects of Arab society. Their proposals were strongly rejected by the veterans in the Movement, who refused to admit that Arab socialism meant anything more than “an economic system" aimed at achieving justice and equality among the Arabs. This, however, did not discourage Ibrahim and his comrades from airing their provocative views whenever an opportunity presented itself.

In 1960, the weekly *al-Hurriyya* was published in Beirut as the central mouthpiece of the Movement, and Muhsin Ibrahim became its managing editor. With the center of the Movement in Damascus, the exponents of the new radical trend were able to express their unorthodox views in Beirut with minimum control from their traditional comrades. The first signs emerged, as was already mentioned, a few months after the publication of *al-Hurriyya*, when Ibrahim abandoned the theory of stages. This was followed by a growing tendency to adopt a vague notion of Arab socialism to interpret the social as well as the political transformation of the Arab world. The new pattern of thought in the Movement was reinforced by the break-up of the UAR in September 1961.

The Movement, in search of an explanation which would absolve the leadership of the UAR from the chief responsibility for Syria’s secession, condemned the Damascene

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bourgeoisie and its Western allies for the event. It described the Syrian coup as

"the counteraction of a reactionary class against the concept principle and system of socialism and socialist measures in the northern region of the UAR.

"It is a separatist reactionary movement around which the forces of feudalism, capitalism and the owners of big interests have rallied and contributed to its success.

"It is, in fact the feudalist, capitalist, and bourgeois reaction to the idea, system and application of socialism."4

The Movement urged that it was time to realize that the success of socialism depended on the permanent isolation of its enemies, who

"are not only those who stand at the top of the class society and exercise an absolute monopoly over the ownership of the means of production, nor only the feudalists and capitalists who possess the land, industry and money; but also the wider circle of ‘allies’ who in terms of ownership are neither feudalists nor capitalists but look upward to the propertied classes dreaming of climbing the ladder . . . and for this reason they place themselves in their service."5

The introduction of the concept of class struggle to analyze the causes of Syria's secession ushered in a new era in the political and ideological development of the Movement. And as this analytical approach was utilized to inquire into the causes of the failure of the modern nationalist movements in the Arab Orient, it triggered off a series of sharp conflicts which by mid-1964 threatened to transform

4 Al-Hurriyya, October 6, 1961.
the two competing tendencies within the ranks of the ANM into two separate structures.

Habash and his colleagues, who remained in Damascus after the secession, did not take kindly to the daring interpretations of their comrades in Beirut. They rightly suspected that the latter were drifting into more or less a Marxist position which clearly clashed with the initial nationalist outlook of the Movement. Muhsin Ibrahim, who had his own doubts regarding the adoption of an overt Marxist stand, attempted to allay the fears of his colleagues:

“Classical Marxism was derived from part of the circumstances in time and place of 19th century Europe. It drew a specific analytical picture of the social forces, and then predicted that a socialist revolution was not feasible except under industrially developed conditions. It regarded the labor class as the one and only revolutionary force, assigned to the rest of the social forces specific 'secondary' roles, and then defined for the socialist revolution an inevitable road which it had to pass, namely the dictatorship of the proletariat in alliance with some other social forces . . . These fines which are expressed in the Marxist picture do not represent the social reality of humanity in today’s world, and they are far from being able to accommodate the facts of the social Arab situation.”

The arrival of Hawatima in Beirut after his deportation from Iraq in April 1963 strengthened the influence of the Hurriyya group in the higher echelons of the Movement. Unlike Ibrahim, he was less in favour of compromise or moderation, and before long he managed to sway the majority of his colleagues in the Administrative Committee into taking a more radical position. At the same time, steps were taken to modify the structure of decision-making in the direction of providing the Regional Commands with a

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6 Ibid., April 30, 1962.
greater measure of autonomy, and increasing the membership of the central committee of the Movement.

Following the dissolution of the UAR, the headquarters of the ANM were transferred to Beirut. Dr. Wadi’ Haddad arrived two days after the secession to join the members of the Administrative Committee who, with the exception of Habash and al-Hindi, resided in Beirut. By 1963, another four leading members joined the Committee; apart from Hawatima, these were Lebanese, two of whom had served on the Regional Command of Iraq. The third, Muhammad Kishli, was a graduate of the Faculty of Economics at Cairo University, and he joined the editorial board of *al-Hurriyya* and strongly supported the political line advocated by Ibrahim. He belonged to a middle-class family of some political standing in the Muslim quarter in Beirut. He received his early education in a French school, and when he moved to Cairo to pursue his higher studies he was recruited to the ranks of the Movement. The Lebanese, five in number, formed the majority of the Administrative Committee. Together with Hawatima they now spoke freely of the necessity to adopt Marxism-Leninism as the guiding theoretical and practical doctrine for Arab revolutionaries. On an organizational level, they preached the Leninist maxim of democratic centralism, and accordingly advised the branches of the Movement to devise their own strategies in accordance with the requirements of the local situation.

Consequently, the Movement in Syria raised the slogans of unity with Egypt, democracy and socialism to meet the specific requirements of the Syrian situation after the failure of the Ba'th to abide by the Tripartite Unity Agreement. In Lebanon more attention was devoted to an analysis of the local political and social situation in an effort to find ways to transform the basis of conflict in the country from sectarianism to class struggle. At the same time, the Executive Committee was enlarged to include two delegates from

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each Regional Command in addition to the permanent members of the newly-formed Political Bureau which replaced both the Administrative Committee and the Committee of Thought. The purpose of the latter reform was to encourage the promising junior members of the Movement to participate in the decision-making process, and establish a dialogue between the center of the Movement and its branches.

The new measures were taken in the absence of Habash, who was imprisoned in Syria in July 1962 and was not released until March 1963, when the Ba'th Party in alliance with a group of Nasirite officers seized power from the secessionist regime. By mid-1963, however, the relationship between the Ba'th and the Nasirites, including the Movement, had reached its lowest ebb, and Habash left for Beirut to find that his comrades had introduced radical changes of a kind which, a couple of years earlier, it would have been considered heretical even to discuss.

On his arrival he expressed his deep concern at the turn of events, but did not refrain from endorsing the new changes. He sounded a note of warning, however, and advised his radical associates to be more patient with those of their colleagues who did not show an identical enthusiasm and aptitude for the understanding of Marxist thought. Similarly, the Hurriyya group was equally concerned about the necessity of preserving the Movement's unity, and expressed full confidence in its ability to be transformed as a whole into a Marxist political party.

The existing political tension within the ranks of the Movement did not appear, at this juncture, to be working itself up into an irreparable political crisis. Although the development of events in the next few months did not lead to an immediate break, it undoubtedly provided the basis for future splits in the Movement.

In June 1963 the Movement held an extraordinary National Conference in Beirut to discuss the political conse-
quences of the final rupture between Nasir and the Ba’th in Syria and Iraq. Realizing the Movement’s inability to effect independently a change in the political status of the two countries in favor of the UAR, the Conference decided to adopt the call for the unification of all Arab organizations and political parties which advocated unity and socialism on lines similar to those propagated by Nasir.\(^8\)

The Movement’s decision was reinforced by Nasir who, in an effort to find a substitute for the Ba’th in the Arab Orient, appealed on July 23 to all Arab revolutionaries to unite under the banner of a Unified Arab Movement.\(^8\) The first practical step was taken in Iraq early in 1964, when Abdul Salam ’Arif responded to Nasir’s call and instituted a committee to prepare for the unification of all Arab nationalist groups excluding the Ba’th Party. At the same time, pending the outcome of the committee’s efforts, the Movement took the initiative by forming a National Front with the Istiqlal Party, the Arab Socialist Party and the Nationalist League.

The Movement was unaware of the full implications of its new policy. Its readiness to accept in principle a political merger with other Arab nationalist groups indicated a decisive change in its view of its own role in the process of national regeneration. While in previous years it had aspired to play a "unique role" in leading the Arab nation to the fulfilment of its objectives, it now realized that the performance of such a task depended on the emergence of a wider movement inspired by Nasir’s radical leadership. The

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\(^9\) Nasir showed a growing interest in the ANM immediately after Syria’s secession in 1961, when for the first time he met three of its leading members and exchanged with them views of mutual political interest. He later held, on different occasions, a number of interviews with some of the Movement’s prominent leaders, the last of which took place following the June 1967 war. However, shortly afterwards, the relationship between the ANM and the UAR rapidly deteriorated as *al-Hurriyya* increasingly criticized the Egyptian leadership for the June defeat.
Marxist group inside the Movement went further, and asserted that the movement of Arab nationalism in the Arab Orient lagged behind Nasir’s socialist revolution. In a lecture delivered at the Arab Cultural Club in Beirut, Muhsin Ibrahim analyzed the recent history of the Movement. He claimed that at the end of the second World War, the Arab bourgeoisie failed to accomplish the major tasks of the national democratic revolution of unity, and liberation from Zionism and imperialism. Hence, the leadership of the movement passed into the hands of the Arab middle classes which included the students and intellectuals, members of the liberal professions, employees in private and public institutions, military officers, craftsmen and the petty bourgeoisie of the countryside. However, the new leadership failed by virtue of its idealistic methods of thinking and class background to appreciate the importance of the social and economic factors. It suffered from a psychological “complex” against "classical Marxism and socialist thinking." Thus between 1945 and 1958 it was unable to surpass the performance of the bourgeois leadership except in condemning the compromising attitude of the Arab governments toward imperialism and the perpetuation of disunity among the Arab countries. But since 1958, according to Ibrahim, the Egyptian revolution had entered a new phase of development. Nasir's revolution, which started off as a mere military coup in 1952, was soon transformed under the influence of its "exceptional leadership" into a socialist revolution which championed the cause of the masses. On the other hand, the nationalist movement in the Arab Orient, despite its close alliance with Nasirism and its verbal commitment to socialism, remained in practice extremely hesitant and undetermined.

Had Muhsin Ibrahim and his comrades been satisfied with these generalizations, the Movement would perhaps have

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10 For text of Ibrahim's lecture, see al-Hurriyya, January 6, 13 and 20, 1964.
avoided the forthcoming crisis. Instead events took a different course. Early in 1964 an enlarged meeting of the Executive Committee was held in Beirut. In the course of the discussions, Ibrahim extended his analysis to include the Movement itself. He asserted that the Movement was part and parcel of the general movement of Arab nationalism which emerged after the second World War. He added, however, that while the Ba’th Party represented the major trend of the nationalist movement, the ANM played a marginal role, and expressed the political and social interests of the upper sections of the Arab middle classes.

Ibrahim’s views aroused the strong resentment of the founding members and some of their supporters, who took a great personal pride in the achievements of the Movement. One of them angrily inquired: “Do you mean to say that for over a decade we have been in the service of the Arab bourgeoisie and imperialism?”

The heated discussion which ensued did not permit the Committee to continue its meetings; it was then decided to refer the whole matter to the National Conference. In view of the gravity of the issue, it was agreed that the membership of the Conference should include all the members of the Regional Commands, in addition to the Movement’s student representatives in Europe.

Toward the end of April 1964, delegates began to arrive in the Lebanese capital. They were met by members of the two factions in the Political Bureau, who sought to rally them in their support. By then the controversy had gained more impetus. Personal accusations were exchanged and previous personal experiences were recalled to substantiate conflicting claims. Hahash and his associates accused the Hurriyya group of “infantile leftism” and described them as the “theorizers” who could not bear the strain of political struggle. The latter retorted by claiming that the founding members not only restrained the revolutionary elements from expressing their progressive views, but also encouraged
the dogmatic and “ideologically retarded” elements to maintain a tight hold on the branches of the Movement.

The Conference held its meetings early in May against a background of mutual suspicions and vicious accusations.\textsuperscript{11} It was attended by some 37 to 40 delegates from a number of Arab countries. They included the ten permanent members of the Political Bureau in addition to five representatives from the newly-founded Palestinian Regional Command, six from Lebanon, four from South Yemen, three from Iraq, three student representatives, and one or two delegates from Kuwait, Libya, Jordan and Syria.

The opening sessions of the Conference dealt with a number of procedural matters, and then moved to discuss what the Conference termed as the “Ideological Crisis” of the Movement. Habash was the first to take the floor in order to explain how he viewed the aforementioned crisis. He stated that, traditionally, the Committee of Thought had been in charge of developing the ideology of the Movement. In time, however, a growing theoretical gap, which was the basis of the present crisis, had emerged between the members of the Committee and the rest of the Movement. He said that in 1963 the Committee had confronted this particular issue and reached the following conclusions:

1. The process of ideological interaction had no advantages whatsoever as long as it was confined to a small number of members.
2. The Committee of Thought had acted on many occasions in violation of the existing organizational principles.
3. While admitting that Marxism was one of the major sources enriching the Movement's thought, the Committee recognized that it was held in great suspicion by the Arab

\textsuperscript{11} Most of the information regarding the deliberations of the Conference is drawn from the author's private notes taken during the sessions of the Conference. The author attended these meetings in his capacity as a member of the Lebanese Regional Command in charge of the Movement's organization in Beirut.
masses, and remained incomprehensible to the majority of the members, who were busily engaged in the daily political struggle. Habash then suggested that, before embarking on any new ideological venture, the Movement should consult all its members, even those at the level of the Halaqa. In his opinion, the Movement should encourage the ideologically promising elements within its ranks; but more important; it should subject the process of the development of thought to specific "organizational restraints" (*Dhawabit Tandhimiyya*).

Habash's analysis of the crisis only confirmed in the minds of the majority of his comrades in the Political Bureau the charges they had levelled against him. He did not only ignore the class analysis which they had earlier put forward, but attempted to interpret the whole question in terms of organizational violations and subjective individual acts. Their suspicions were further aroused when he recommended the imposition of "organizational restraints" to avoid the recurrence of a similar crisis in the future. This was seen as part of an attempt to tie the hands of the Hurriyya group from expressing their advanced views, and to check the process of ideological development which they had set in motion. Even al-Hakam Darwaza, who steered a relatively moderate course throughout the Conference, seemed a bit irritated with Habash’s views. He explained that the solution to the crisis did not lie in the suppression of the new trend of thought, but in establishing it on firmer basis.

A more elaborate reply to Habash’s analysis was left to Muhsin Ibrahim. The latter reiterated in detail his provocative assessment of the development of the modern nationalist movement in general, and the role of the ANM in particular, which he had previously made at the Arab Cultural Club and during the meetings of the Executive Committee. Ibrahim concluded his speech by urging the Movement to take part in founding a Unified Arab Socialist
Party which would overcome the crisis facing the Movement itself as well as the "Arab revolution" as a whole. He warned, however, that the Movement should not entertain any ambition of forming the "revolutionary axis" around which the new party would emerge. He stressed that the ANM formed only one of the tributaries which flowed into the Nasirite current, and to insist on the preservation of the Movement's independence as an organization would lead to a repetition of the Ba'th's unfortunate experience and to a total confrontation with Nasirism. As for the future of the Movement, Ibrahim said that the first task was to subject the ANM to an objective analysis, and then define its role in the process of building a new Arab socialist party. Finally, he pointed out that he was confident that the Movement's conversion as a whole to socialism was possible, provided that it took steps to cooperate with the Left in the Arab world, and showed an increasing willingness to abandon its organizational independence.

Ibrahim’s attempt to minimize the role of the Movement, and his apparent lack of concern for its independence, exasperated the patience of Habash and his supporters. One of the delegates wondered whether Ibrahim’s intention was "to kill the watchman or eat the grapes; to create a new party or simply get rid of the Movement." At one point Habash left the meeting and decided to boycott the Conference, but returned, at the insistence of his comrades, to lead his faction in the debate.

Habash rejected Ibrahim’s attempt to discount the role of the Movement, and recalled that in the early 1950s, when the Movement was first established, its founding members were fully aware of the Ba’th crisis and aspired to form a better substitute for it. In this respect, the Movement had achieved a great measure of success. It had managed to avoid the phenomenon of factionalism which ruined the Ba’th, and it had held fast to its ideals of Arab unity and national liberation. Furthermore, Habash claimed that the
ANM provided the Arab world with an exemplary experience in intra-party relationship, and produced a party-member with a high sense of political and moral duty.

Habash then repeated his call for exercising "organizational restraints" to bridge the existing ideological gap among the members, and suggested that a National Conference be held in the near future to resolve the ideological question and determine the fate of the Movement.

Ibrahim took the floor for the second time, partly to elaborate on some of the views which he had already expressed, and partly to counter Habash's assertions. He explained that basically the ANM suffered from the confusion and vagueness which enveloped its political outlook, and not from the presence of a left or right within its ranks. At this point, Habash snapped at Ibrahim and asked why the latter had before and during the Conference spread such unfounded rumours. Despite the sudden interruption, Ibrahim went on to say that, while the peaceful transformation of the Movement into a socialist organization was possible, this did not apply to the wider Nasirite movement. Accordingly, he urged that, as far as the ANM was concerned, full intellectual freedom should be guaranteed without "any restraints." He further advocated that in the meantime closer links should be established with Nasir personally, and with the left wing of the Nasirite movement to prepare the ground, through a struggle within that movement, for the evolution of a unified revolutionary party. Ibrahim concluded his words by saying that he did not have much confidence in the existing leadership of the Movement to carry out such functions. He proposed, therefore, that a more qualified leadership should be chosen to carry the burden of the new responsibilities.

Undoubtedly the sharp divergence of opinion revealed in the Conference left a deep scar which never healed on the relationship between the two factions. It was only a matter of time before an actual split took place. Inside the Con-
ference, the majority of the Palestinian delegates and the Movement’s founding members, including Haddad, al-Hindi and al-Khatib, rallied to Habash’s support. On the other hand, the Lebanese and Iraqi delegates stood firmly behind Ibrahim and Hawatima. Only a minority of representatives did not take an active part in the controversy. Qahtan al-Sha’bi and his colleagues from South Yemen showed more concern for what the Movement could offer them, in terms of financial and military aid to escalate the rebellion they had launched seven months ago in Radfan. And a few delegates remained uncommitted.

On the whole, however, no opportunity was missed by either side in the Conference to discredit the other. Even when the Conference turned to discuss the financial situation of the Movement, the delegates were sharply divided. On the one hand, the “left” pressed for accepting financial aid from the UAR, while Habash and his colleagues resisted the attempt. Since 1959 the latter, in an effort to preserve the absolute independence of the Movement, had rejected such proposals. The issue was finally resolved in favor of the “left,” when the delegates realized that the resources of the Movement were not sufficient to cover the modest expenses of the members of the Political Bureau. In 1967, however, the UAR discontinued its financial support for the Movement.

The Conference concluded its sessions with the understanding that a new Conference would be held in the near future. In the meantime, the central functions of the Movement were entrusted as a kind of compromise to an interim Political Bureau nominated from among the junior members of the Conference, which had the right to draw on the assistance and advice of the former leadership. More important, the delegates left Beirut with the strong impression that in the coming few years the Movement would witness a decisive change in the direction of consolidating the
autonomy of the Regional Commands and the merger of some of its branches with the Nasirite movement.

Basically the crisis in the Movement was the product of a difference in political experience and temperament» which found expression in opposing ideological contentions. Habash and his colleagues matured politically under circumstances which required closer national cohesion among the Arabs. The creation of Israel and the attempts of the Western powers to include the Arab Middle East in their military pacts posed the two major threats which undermined the independence and aspirations of the Arab nation. The reaction of Arab nationalists to these threats was to reassert their attachment to the idea of Arab unity as the only means by which they would preserve their strength and national identity. Habash's position was largely derived from his belief in the ability of the “Arab vanguard" represented by the Movement to achieve the aims of the Arab people. As the founder of the ANM he took a protective attitude towards it and, for some time, managed to maintain its unity by controlling it from the center. His experience in Jordan, where the central issue of political conflict was one between the nationalist forces and a pro-Western regime, strengthened his commitment to the national cause, but at the same time overshadowed his awareness of the social and economic problems.

On the other hand, Hawatima and his Iraqi comrades were greatly influenced by the trend of political events in Iraq. Following Qasim’s military takeover in 1958, the Communists dominated the whole political and intellectual climate of Iraq. The literature they disseminated and the slogans they raised among the lower social classes in the towns and the countryside had a direct impact on the political outlook of the nationalist parties. Hawatima was quick to realize the relevance of the doctrine of class struggle to Iraqi society and moved to incorporate it in his nationalist system of ideas. The secession of Syria in 1961 confirmed
the significance of the socio-economic conditions in the development of the political situation in the Arab world. Consequently Hawatima and Muhsin Ibrahim, together with their Lebanese comrades, who had come to similar theoretical conclusions on a purely intellectual level, increasingly pushed the Movement to take a more radical stand. The inevitable result was an ideological clash between the old guard and the new generation, the militants—those who sought to preserve the unity of the Movement as a “unique experience” in modern Arab history and those who were more inclined to merge with other Nasirite groups. In short it was the crisis of a nationalist movement tormented by its inability to be transformed en bloc into a Marxist-Leninist party.
CHAPTER FIVE

Factionalism and the Emergence of the New Left

IT IS FAIR to say that the history of the ANM since 1964 has not been that of a centralized pan-Arab organization, but the record of the political activities of its branches in different Arab countries. Though these branches continued for a long time to operate under the same name, and remained held together by a coordinating central body, in practice each branch enjoyed a great measure of political independence.

This new tendency was formalized when the National Conference in 1965 adopted the principle of free elections in the formation of the Movement's hierarchy on the regional as well as the pan-Arab level. An elected General Secretariat replaced the nominated Political Bureau, and the position of any leading unit became subject to a frequent vote of confidence by the units immediately below it in the hierarchy.¹

From that time on, the future of the Movement in any Arab country was largely determined by the independent policy which it chose to adopt. In places where the ANM maintained its political independence, or formed the major trend of the national movement, it survived its internal contradictions and continued to play a significant political role. Under this category, the Palestine branch as well as

¹ IC, Al-La‘iha al-Dakhiliyya, 1965 (The Internal Rules, 1965).
that of Kuwait, South Arabia and Dhofar could be subsumed. In countries where the Movement merged with the Nasirites, or formed the weaker partner in a political coalition such as was the case in Iraq. Syria, Egypt, and to a lesser extent Lebanon, the results were not so encouraging. Ultimately, it would seem, the Movement suffered more from its readiness in some cases to abandon its organizational independence than from too much decentralization on the national and local levels.

Early in 1964 the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed under the leadership of Ahmad al-Shuqayri, as an outcome of the First Arab Summit Conference. Al-Hurriyya critically remarked that the new initiative was far from being the revolutionary alternative which the Palestine people had long awaited. At the same time, the Movement began to appreciate the growing challenge which some eight Palestinian organizations, including Fateh, posed to its long established political position among the inhabitants of the refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. Consequently, Habash and Haddad formed a separate Regional Command for Palestine which was drawn from among the majority of the Palestinian members of the Movement, who had previously been attached to the Regional Commands of their countries of residence. In May 1964 the new move was endorsed by the Movement’s National Conference. The new branch increasingly became a kind of refuge for Habash’s supporters, who were not too pleased with the left’s drive toward a union with Nasirism. On the other hand, Ibrahim and his comrades, who were more concerned with theoretical questions, were relieved to see Habash concentrating his efforts on the new branch, while leaving them a free hand in other matters.

The strategy of the Movement’s new branch, better known at the time as the National Front for the Liberation of

\[\text{2 Al-Hurriyya, January 27, 1964.}\]
Palestine, unlike that of Fateh, was not based on the idea of mobilizing the Palestinians to wage independently a “war of liberation” but rather on the principle of “official Arab involvement.” The major political and military objective of the NFLP was to act merely as a catalyst which would detonate a conventional war between the Arab states, led by the UAR and Israel. The first military activity was carried out on November 2, 1964, when a reconnaissance party crossed the Lebanese borders into Israel. One of the men was killed, while another was captured following a clash with an Israeli army patrol. Thus the “first martyr” of the “Youth of Vengeance” the military arm of the NFLP, fell in battle.

The shocking defeat of the Arab armies in June 1967 terminated the Movement’s vigorous attempts since 1964 to unite with Nasirism. The Movement made the sudden discovery that the political and social regimes in the UAR and other progressive Arab countries were not socialist, but served the interests of the "petty bourgeoisie." By its nature this class was hesitant in its political and social behaviour; it failed to confront imperialism head-on, and refrained from introducing a socialist revolution. But it was also felt that the class structure and political attitudes of the Arab national movement did not differ much from that of the so-called progressive Arab regimes. Accordingly the Movement urged that the leadership of the "Arab revolution" should be transferred to the hands of the "toiling social classes and groups, who by virtue of their interests and the nature of their ideology were more decisive in their resistance to imperialism and its local allies." Furthermore, the ANM advocated a strategy based on the principle of

The Emergence of the New Left

popular armed straggle throughout the Arab world to defeat imperialism, Zionism and the Arab reactionary classes.5

As a result, the Palestine Regional Conference was held early in September 1967. at which Habash and his comrades condemned their previous strategy and decided to adopt a similar line to that of Fateh- However, they emphasized the Arab character of the Palestinian revolution, and endorsed without hesitation the idea of armed struggle on the pan-Arab level. The Conference indicated that it was a matter of utmost importance to the Palestine cause that the Arab revolution,

"in its effort to rise to the level of the challenge posed against it by the ruthless imperialist, Zionist and reactionary offensive should devise a strategy of armed struggle and apply it in every Arab country."6

The Conference then concluded that the recent events impressed upon the Palestine Regional Command more ever before “the urgent need for the continued independent existence of a Palestinian branch enjoying the highest degree of cohesion, clarity and solidarity.”7

The Arab defeat in 1967 seemed to reduce the ideological tension between the two factions of the Movement. On the one hand, the left increasingly realized that, after all, Nasirism did not form the magical solution for the crisis of the national movement in the Arab world, while Habash and his colleagues had experienced a significant shift toward Marxist thought since 1964.

But the growing involvement of the Regional Commands

7 Ibid.
with the local political situation tended to consolidate the independence of the branches from each other and from the central bodies of the Movement. In December 1967, Habash and his comrades announced the formation of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). In its first communique, the new Front declared that it was founded as a result of the merger of three Palestinian organizations, the Heroes of Return,8 the Palestine Liberation Front headed by Ahmad Jibril,9 and the NFLP. Less than a year later, however, Jibril withdrew from the Front in protest against the dominance of Habash and his group, and formed the PFLP (General-Command).10

Early in 1968, Nayif Hawatima, who had kept aloof from the Palestine branch since 1964, and remained a member of the General Secretariat of the Movement without committing himself to any particular Regional Command, joined the leadership of the PFLP. This marked the beginning of political discord within the ranks of the Front, which reached a threatening magnitude with regard to its internal unity during the sessions of the 1968 Conference. *Al-Hurriyya* claimed that while the “right” pledged its verbal commitment to the political program submitted by the “left” in the Conference, Habash and his followers did not have the least intention of abiding by it.11 Disagreement between the two groups soon began to acquire a violent nature and *al-Hurriyya* condemned the campaign of terror which it alleged had been launched against the progressive elements

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8 The Organization of the Heroes of Return consisted of a small group of Palestinian militants who saw guerilla warfare as the only way to liberate Palestine. It was formed early in 1966 and carried out its first military operation in October of the same year.

9 Ahmad Jibril was a Palestinian officer who served in the Syrian army. In 1959, he formed the Palestine Liberation Front whose strategy was based on purely military lines without much concern for political or ideological issues. In 1965, an attempt was made to coordinate the activities of the Front with that of Fateh, but the initiative did not materialize and the two organizations maintained their independence.

10 For an account of the split, see *al-Nahar*, June 29, 1972.

within the Front. Ultimately, as the position of Hawatima and his comrades became less tenable, they broke away from Habash and formed the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DPFLP). Both parties, however, continued to claim the credit for, and pay their allegiance to, the political program embodied in the Report of the 1968 Conference.

The political platform defined in the Report bore the distinct touch of Hawatima and his associates. It extended the political analysis which the Movement's Executive Committee had elaborated in July 1967 to include the modern history of the Palestinian national movement. It claimed that the Palestinian feudal and bourgeois classes were as responsible for the Arab disaster in 1948 as were their counterparts in other Arab countries. Similarly, the shocking defeat in June 1967 was the outcome of the reluctant and undetermined approach of the Arab petty bourgeoisie in confronting imperialism and Zionism, and of its half-hearted attempts to mobilize the Arab masses. The Report finally concluded that the “Road to National Salvation” lay in the adoption of the ideology of the proletariat, the enhancement of the political consciousness of the masses, the rejection of Security Council resolution 242, and the establishment of closer relations with the Arab Revolutionary movement.

In Kuwait, the Movement continued to enjoy an independent political position with minimum interference from the center. Apart from playing an effective role as an opposition party inside and outside the Parliament, it formed the bulk of the Nasirite movement in Kuwait. Thus the prospect of its merger with any other political organization in accordance with the decisions of the National Conference in 1965 did not arise.

Similarly, the Movement in Kuwait experienced little change in its ideological orientation. From the outset, al-Khatib and his colleagues were ill-disposed toward the radical views introduced by Ibrahim and Hawatima. In 1963 the Regional Command, irritated by the early evidence of the Movement’s turn to the left, refused to hand down the Annual Political Report to its members. A similar incident took place in Jordan, but the Political Bureau immediately dispatched one of its members to Amman with clear instructions to replace the bourgeois leadership of Hamad al-Farhan by a new Regional Command.

Until the end of 1967, the Regional Command of Kuwait remained in charge of the Movement’s branches in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia, but a new situation arose following the Movement’s adoption of the strategy of armed struggle shortly after the June War. Subsequently, a Regional Conference was held in Beirut at the end of the year to define the future role of the Movement in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia in the light of the new strategy. The Conference was attended by delegates from Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman-Dhofar, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, in addition to representatives of the General Secretariat (Hawatima), the National Liberation Front of Occupied South Yemen (more conveniently known as the NLF), and the students.

The first session opened with a general survey of the political and social situation in the whole area and the Movement’s position in each region. In the course of the discussions, the delegates revealed their increasing dissatisfaction with the autocratic manner in which Kuwait had been conducting the affairs of the Movement. One of the delegates accused the Kuwaiti Regional Command of imposing its nominees for the leadership upon some regions without the consent of the members concerned. The Omani delegate complained that, “the Command in Kuwait, with

its bourgeois social background was in charge of a potentially revolutionary region. . .”16

Again a divergence of opinion emerged between the Kuwaiti representative in the Conference and the rest of his comrades, when the discussions turned to define the strategy of the Movement in the Gulf area. While the former shed some doubt on the feasibility of the proposed strategy of armed struggle, the others insisted that,

“Our strategy should derive from the consideration that the fight in the Gulf is one fight; that, basically, it is a struggle for national liberation against the military and political presence of British imperialism in alliance with, and hiding behind, the paper regimes of the sheikhs and all the forces of class exploitation and counter-revolution.

“A revolutionary armed confrontation to defeat imperialism and its local forces is thus inevitable.”17

The majority of the delegates took the view that, while the Movement in the Gulf region should take steps to apply the strategy, the political circumstances in Oman were most favorable for its immediate implementation, especially because in the adjacent territory of Dhofar the revolution had already started.18

The resolutions of the Conference on most issues were largely determined by the views of the radical elements, in spite of the reservations of the representative from Kuwait. Apart from adopting the strategy recommended by the majority, the Conference formally denounced the “patronizing” attitude of Kuwait during the previous two years, and condemned the suggestions made for its exemption from the new strategy.19 To guard against the dominant

16 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
influence of Kuwait in the future, the Conference decided to entrust the leadership of the Gulf region to an elected Political Bureau consisting of one representative each from Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, and three representatives from Oman-Dhofar. Similarly, it was decided that a separate Political Bureau should be established in Saudi Arabia, which would periodically meet with that of the Gulf and together with it form the Central Committee for the two regions.²⁰

The new arrangement, while preserving the organizational unity of the Movement in the Gulf area, undermined the position of the Kuwaiti Regional Command. Secondly, it reflected the strategic importance of Oman; and finally it recognized that the new strategy did not apply at that stage to the Saudi situation.

A second Regional Conference for the Gulf area was held between July 19 and 21, 1968, at which the delegate from Kuwait reiterated in the strongest terms his opposition to the decisions taken by the previous Conference. He advised his comrades not to resolve the ideological issue by accepting Marxism before studying it carefully. “The Movement,” he said, "has adopted scientific socialism, but we do not yet know exactly what it means . . .” He added that, as far as Kuwait was concerned, no man in his right mind “would think of altering the existing regime. There are no toiling groups in the country except the bedouins and the Arab workers. Thus the subject of revolutionary violence in Kuwait does not arise, and we do not entertain such thoughts.”²¹

The objections of the Kuwaiti delegate confirmed the doubts of his colleagues regarding the “bourgeois” nature of the Regional Command in Kuwait, and its unwillingness to go along with the post-June-War strategy of the Movement

²⁰ Ibid.
Accordingly, the Conference decided to suspend the membership of Kuwait in the Movement, and asked its delegate to withdraw from the meetings of the Conference. At the instigation of the Political Bureau for the Gulf, a new Regional Command was formed at the end of July. However, al-Khatib and his associates, who continued to enjoy the support of the bulk of the Movement in Kuwait, did not recognize the new measures. Thus an open split between the Political Bureau and the newly-formed Command on one side, and the leadership of the majority on the other, became inevitable. On October 13, 1968, the minority held its first Conference, in which a resolution was taken to expel the former leadership.

The adoption of the strategy of revolutionary violence did not have any impact on the political situation in the Gulf except in Dhofar, where the Movement-sponsored National Liberation Front of Dhofar (NLFD) had already made some progress. Early attempts to launch an armed rebellion in the mountainous area did not materialize until June 1965. During the late 1950s, Dhofari immigrants in the Gulf region formed a number of small underground societies with the intention of overthrowing the regime of Sa'id Ibn Taymur at home. Some of these organizations joined forces in 1959, and dispatched a group of militant young men to Syria, where they received an intensive course in military training in small arms and explosives. In Damascus, they came under the influence of Habash and his comrades; and upon their return to Oman in 1960, the Dhofari recruits established a new branch for the Movement and patiently awaited the arrival of military and financial aid to start their rebellion.

It became increasingly clear, however, that no substantial assistance was forthcoming, and a sizeable section of the Movement broke away and formed al-Jam‘iyya al-Khayriyya

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22 Ibid., p. 4.
al-Dhofaria (the Dhofarian Benevolent Society) in 1961. The new organization raised the slogan of armed struggle, and within a year it managed to exercise enough pressure on the Movement in Dhofar to make it follow suit. In 1963, the Regional Command or Kuwait approved the decision of the Dhofar leadership, and recommended closer cooperation with the Society. At the same time a representative of the Movement was sent to Cairo where, at the suggestion of the Egyptian authorities, he reached an agreement with the representative of the Society. Then they both returned to Kuwait, where it was decided that cooperation between the two organizations should take the form of a military and political front, which would include other militant groups in Dhofar.

Consequently, the NFLD was formed in 1964, comprising three organizations: the local branch of the ANM, the Society, and a small tribal group known as the Dhofarian Soldiers. A deadline for launching the rebellion was set for July 1965. In the meantime, preparations were made to ensure its success. Unfortunately, the leadership of the Front and the first arrivals from the Gulf to take part in the struggle were arrested following a tip-off from the Iraqi Intelligence to the British and local authorities in Oman. The second line of leadership, which at the time was still in Kuwait, gathered the remaining fighting force and swiftly moved to the mountains of Dhofar, where it declared the rebellion on June 9, 1965.

In the next two years, the Movement suffered from a lack of arms and money, and the scarcity of medical supplies. The meager amount of aid which was sent from Kuwait and Cairo barely sufficed to feed its ill-equipped and isolated small army. The situation was further worsened when the old rivalry between the members of the ANM and the

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24 It is worth noting that by mid-1965, the Nasirite movement in Iraq, including the ANM, had broken off its relations with 'Arif. Consequently, in opposition to the Movement-sponsored Front in Dhofar, Iraq supported a group of Dhofaris under the leadership of al-Qasimi.
Society again erupted. This resulted in the disintegration of the leadership of the Front and the withdrawal of some members of the Movement to reorganize their forces.

By the end of 1967, the tide of political events in the region had begun to take a more favorable turn. The seizure of power by the Movement’s branch in South Arabia under the leadership of the NLF strengthened the hands of their comrades in Dhofar, and revived the activities of the Front. Subsequently, the new leadership of the NFLD held its second conference since 1964, known as the Himrin Conference, between September 1 and 25, 1968. Its purpose was to lay down the principles of political and military struggle in accordance with the decisions of the two previously held Conferences of the Gulf. At the Himrin Conference, a Marxist faction emerged and the following platform was adopted.

1 To change the Front’s name into the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf (PFLOAG), with the intention of extending the fight against British imperialism to other parts of the Gulf.
2 To adopt Marxism-Leninism in theory and practice.
3 To support the struggle of the Palestinians and the peoples of the third world.

However, before concluding the deliberations of the Conference, an additional resolution was taken to expel a minority of the leading members, who were charged with petty bourgeois inclinations, and were later accused of acting as the agents of the reactionary regime in Saudi Arabia.

Since then, with the influx of military and financial aid from South Yemen, the PFLOAG has shown a greater measure of internal cohesion and a growing degree of effectiveness. Early in 1970, despite the official silence maintained by the British authorities on news from the area, it was revealed

26 Ibid., August 3, 1970.
that a rocket attack on the RAF base at Salala, the capital of Dhofar and the seat of the Sultan, caused considerable damage.\textsuperscript{27} In another incident, the rebels injured three British officers and nine soldiers.\textsuperscript{28} However, the attempts of the Front to extend its military activities to other parts of the Gulf, as planned by the Himrin Conference, were less successful owing to the weakness of the revolutionary impulse outside Dhofar and the counter-measures taken by the local rulers in cooperation with Britain.

In South Yemen, the military and political activities of the NLF were more rewarding. There, the armed conflict which erupted late in 1963 culminated in the triumph of Qahtan al-Sha’bi and his comrades when Britain's withdrawal on November 30, 1967 resulted in the immediate collapse of the archaic regimes of the local sultans.

The revolution in South Yemen was not purely a local affair. The wider clash between Saudi and British interests on the one hand, and the new regime of North Yemen supported by the UAR on the other, was perhaps the one important factor which in the early stages guaranteed the movement's success. In an effort to embarrass Britain's position in Aden and South Arabia, the UAR pledged its full support for the NLF. In July 1965, the delegate of the Front, Faysal al-Sha’bi, declared to a meeting of the ANM’s Executive Committee that "Until now the Front has been totally dependent on the financial support which is offered by the UAR."\textsuperscript{29}

Early in May 1963, at the initiative of the Movement's branch in South Yemen, eight secret societies joined forces to form the NLF. During the next five months exhaustive discussions were conducted with al-Asnaj's People's Socialist Party, but failed to result in an agreement. The latter insisted

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Sunday Times}, February 15, 1970.

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Daily Express}, June 16, 1972.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{IC, Hawl Ijtima’ al-Lajna al-Tanfidhiyya} (On the Meeting of the Executive Committee), July 1965, p. 11.
that it was still possible to achieve independence without resorting to violent means. Consequently the Front took the initiative and proclaimed the revolution in Radfan on October 14.

In time, however, the NLF felt the urgent need to define its political objectives and ideological position. It thus held its first Conference in Ta’iz toward the end of June 1965, in which it adopted a National Charter. Like other branches of the Movement the NLF displayed its pro-Nasirite sentiment, and expressed its determination to lead the fight for independence and eventual union with North Yemen under a socialist regime.

However, toward the end of 1965, the UAR, in the hope of paving the way for the withdrawal of its troops from North Yemen, sought to normalize its relations with Saudi Arabia at the Jeddah Conference. Though the attempt failed to bear any fruit, it precipitated a political crisis between the Front and the Egyptian authorities in the north. The first signs of disagreement appeared when a few leading members of the Front, under pressure from the UAR and the Movement’s General Secretariat, signed on January 13, 1966 an agreement with al-Asnaj’s moderate party to form the Front for the Liberation of the Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY).

The new move was strongly rejected by the official leadership of the Front and its Secretary General, Qahtan al-Sha’bi, who at the time was in Cairo. But before the latter could take any measures to annul the agreement, the authorities in Egypt detained him with some of his colleagues until August 1967. In the meantime, the new Front survived for

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30 Al-Hurriyya, September 6, 1965.
31 For text of Charter, see Kayl Nafham Tajribat al-Yaman al-Jumubiyya al-Sha’biyya (How to Understand the Experience of the People’s Republic of South Yemen), prepared by the Organizational Committee of the NLF, Beirut, 1969, pp. 147-233.
33 Al-Tali’a, Kuwait, February 19, 1966.
a few months before the local leadership of the NLF, and especially its military wing in Aden, reorganized its forces and held a Conference on October 14, 1966, in which it formally resumed its independence and elected a new leadership.

As a result, the ANM suspended its relations with the Front and refused to recognize the new leadership. In a letter addressed to the Front’s Conference, the Movement’s Secretariat advised the NLF to waive its secondary difference with al-Asnaj and concentrate its efforts on the major contradiction between the national movement as a whole in South Arabia and imperialism. Muhsin Ibrahim repeatedly appealed to the NLF to preserve the unity of the national movement even at the risk of sacrificing its own interest. However, despite its strained relations with the Movement and the hostility of the UAR, the NLF continued to lead the struggle for power in 1967, not only against the British but also against its local adversaries. Eventually it proved to be

”... a sophisticated and well-organized force, with excellent security, based on the traditional insurgent system of ’cells,’ each of which is isolated from the others, except for trusted 'link men'.

“The NLF managed to infiltrate most Government bodies, such as the Police, the Civil Service and the schools; and after a struggle ... it established an ascendancy in the trade unions too.”

Ultimately when the moment approached for Britain to leave the country, the NLF was the obvious alternative to fill the political and military vacuum created.

Once in power, the future of the NLF depended largely on how it viewed its role in running the affairs of the country. This in turn was greatly influenced by the

34 IC, Hawl al-'Ilaqa Bayn al-Haroka al-Wataniyya fi al-Jumub.
The resumption of its relationship with the Movement shortly after the June War.37

Early in 1968, Nayif Hawatima arrived in Aden to attend the meeting of the Front held in preparation for its first conference after victory. In his talks with some of the leaders of the Front, he urged them to adopt a radical program of political and social change largely derived from the experiences of such socialist countries as China and Cuba. Hawatima’s suggestions were favorably received by a number of leaders, but others rejected them; and before long, the leadership of the Front was heading toward an irreconcilable split between the radicals and the moderates, similar to that which prevailed over almost all branches of the Movement throughout 1968.

Inspired by Hawatima’s views, the Marxist group submitted to the Conference (held between March 2 and 8) a revolutionary program, which, in the absence of an equally comprehensive program from the right, won the majority’s approval.38 However, despite the acquiescence of the right, under the leadership of al-Sha’bi, in the decisions of the Conference, and the election of a compromise leadership, it soon became apparent that coexistence between the two parties was most unlikely.

On March 20, a group of high ranking army officers in complete agreement with al-Sha’bi’s faction staged a coup against the left, and arrested its prominent leaders.39 But less than a month later, their supporters in the army and the Front arranged their escape from prison to lead a rebellion against al-Sha’bi’s regime.40 Although their efforts to instigate

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37 "The chief cause of tension between the NLF and the ANM was removed soon after the June War, when the Movement’s Executive Committee condemned the UAR and other Arab “petty bourgeois” regimes for the defeat.

38 "For text of the Program submitted by the left, see N. Hawatima, Azmat al-Thawra fi al-Junub al-Yamani (The Grids of the Revolution in South Yemen), Beirut, 1968, pp. 133-227.


40 "Hawatima, op. cit., p. 129.
a popular revolt did not gather much momentum, they returned to power on June 22, 1969, following a split in the ranks of al-Sha’bi’s faction which culminated in his deposition and the reinstatement of his former comrades in positions of political authority.41

The fate of the ANM in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt was less spectacular. There, the attempt to forge a radical political line within the Nasirite trend not only failed, but led to the gradual disintegration of the Movement.

Shortly after the stormy National Conference of 1964, the Movement in Iraq joined the government-sponsored Arab Socialist Union (ASU). A year later, the experiment proved to be most disappointing. The interference of government officials in the workings of the Union, and 'Arif’s reluctance to take substantial steps to join the UAR, led to the resignation of a group of Nasirite ministers from the Government and caused dissension within the ranks of the Union.42 Subsequently, Salam Ahmad and some prominent members of the ASU broke away and formed the Arab Socialist Movement (ASM). The chief aims of the new movement were to transform Iraq into a socialist country and pave the way for its eventual union with the UAR.43 But, following its implication in an abortive coup against 'Arif in September 1965, Salam Ahmad and most of his comrades were arrested. Afterward, the ASM played a negligible role in Iraqi politics until its final disintegration toward the end of 1968, when the impending split between Habash and Hawatima polarized opinion within its leadership and terminated its practical existence.

A similar fate befell the Movement in Syria. After a two-year experience in the ranks of the ASU, the ANM accused its partners of obstructing the left’s attempt to forge a

41 Al-Huniyya, July 14, 1969.
socialist line, and claimed that the leadership of the Union represented the notables of the Syrian bourgeoisie. The Movement then advocated the formation of a "national progressive front," but again its new attempt failed; and by the end of 1968, some of its leaders joined Habash's Popular Front while others rallied to Hawatima's support.

In the UAR the small group of Egyptians who were members of the Movement joined the vanguard organization of the ASU in 1966, after personal consultations with Nasir. In no time, however, they were involved in the internal struggle for power among the various factions within the organization. As a result, they were arrested for a few months, and when released they did not resume their political activities.

In Lebanon, the ANM faced a slightly different situation, where the position of the Nasirite movement depended on the traditional Muslim leadership in the towns and the countryside. Hence, in the absence of political organizations exclusively committed to Nasirism, as was the case in Syria and Iraq, the Movement aligned itself with the communists and Junblat’s Progressive Socialist Party. However, once it discovered the "reformist" nature of its allies, the Movement called for the rejuvenation of the Lebanese Left as a preliminary step toward the formation of a socialist party. Consequently, in 1968 the Movement in Lebanon severed all its links with the mother-organization, and assumed the name of the Organization of the Lebanese Socialists. A year later, it merged with a small group of Marxist intellectuals known as Socialist Lebanon to form the Communist Labor Organization in Lebanon.

If an approximate date has to be chosen for the final

44 Al-Hurriyya, August 29, 1966.
47 Ibid., October 20, 1969.
cessation of the Movement's existence as a decentralized pan-Arab movement, then January 1969 would be most appropriate. It marked the formal withdrawal of the left from the Movement and the severance of all its connections with it. In fact, the new move was the natural outcome of the process of ideological conflict which had prevailed since 1964, and culminated in 1968 in the emergence of competing organizations within the branches of the Movement.

Undoubtedly 1968 was the year of schisms. As we have seen, in most regions the Movement broke up into two factions. The new situation in the regions inevitably reflected itself in the central structure of the Movement. In January 1969 the left arranged for a meeting of the Executive Committee in which it claimed that, in practice, Habash and his colleagues had shown an increasing tendency since July 1967 to ignore the ideological analysis and political decisions of the Movement. A communique issued after the meeting on February 10 accused the “traditional founding elements of the Movement” of reverting to their old "Fascist methods" and early "rightist bourgeois" ideology of the 1950s. The left then declared its intention to withdraw from the Movement, leaving for the branches the freedom to operate under a name of their own choice without being bound by any obligation to a central pan-Arab body.48

The division between the two factions was finally confirmed in March 1969, when Habash in a meeting of the Executive Committee exclusively attended by his followers condemned the Hurriyya group for their divisive activities and accused them of "infantile leftism." He declared that the dissolution of the Movement was not subject to the whimsical attitude of Ibrahim and his group, but to a responsible decision by the National Conference. Finally, the Committee announced that the branches of the Movement would continue to perform their tasks as part of a

48 For the text of the Communique, see Ibrahim, Limadha Munazzamat al-Ishtirakiyyin al-Lubnaniyyin, pp. 156-192.
The split in the ranks of the Movement had its roots in the ideological conflict which first became apparent in the 1964 National Conference. The same old issues and controversies were again invoked to substantiate the conflicting allegations of the contending parties. The recurring theme of the autocratic attitude of the founding members, and their traditional role in checking the Movement’s progress toward socialism, was repeatedly emphasized. On the other hand, Habash and his comrades once more counseled moderation in ideological matters, and appealed to legitimacy to strengthen their position against that of the dissident left.

A further indication that the final split in the Movement owed its origins to the deep-rooted dispute of the early 1960s was evident in the new arrangement of forces. While the veterans in the Movement, including its founding members, rallied once more to Habash’s side, Hawatima and Ibrahim secured the allegiance of the majority of their Lebanese, Syrian and Iraqi comrades.

49 Al-Bayan al-Sadir ‘An al-Lajna al-Tanfidhiyya Li-Harakat al-Qawmiyyin al-Arab (The Political Communique Issued by the Executive Committee of the ANM) (pamphlet), March 1969. Habash’s followers did not strictly adhere to the latter decision of the Executive Committee. We have already seen how as early as 1967, the PFLP was formed. In later years the Movement in Kuwait adopted the name of the Progressive Democrats and in Lebanon Habash’s supporters worked under the name of the Socialist Labor Party.
Conclusion

THE POLITICAL HISTORY of the ANM may be divided into three interrelated but distinct phases. The first extended from the Palestine War in 1948 to the early days of the establishment of the UAR. During that period the political outlook of the Movement was largely governed by its intense and determined concern for Palestine. Its efforts on both the regional and pan-Arab levels were dominated by its unshakeable belief in Arab unity as the inevitable path to the liberation of the Arab world from Zionism and Western imperialism. The majority of its members and followers at this stage were drawn from among the students and intellectuals in a number of Arab countries. They thought of themselves as the vanguard of a national movement, whose task was to mobilize the whole Arab nation in its struggle for national unity and freedom from all forms of foreign dominance, without regard to political boundaries, religious differences, or social conflicts.

The second phase, 1958-67, may rightly be called “the Nasirite phase” during which the Movement pinned its hopes on the UAR and Nasir's leadership for the realization of Arab national aims, and constantly attempted to merge with other Nasirite groups at the expense of its own ideological and organizational independence. However, parallel to this was the Movement's growing awareness of the importance of the socio-economic factor in determining the conditions of political transformation. This tendency
Conclusion

was reinforced by Syria’s secession from the UAR in 1961. The Movement recognized that to speak of the Arab nation as a unified whole was a kind of idealism which did not correspond to the realities of the existing political and social situation in the Arab world. Thus the ANM gradually moved to adopt Marxism as the guiding political doctrine for its ideas and actions. This, however, generated a process of ideological tension within the ranks of the Movement which ultimately resulted in its disintegration into decentralized regional groups and factions.

Throughout the second phase there appeared to be no apparent contradiction between the Movement’s drift toward Marxism and its close association with Nasirism. However, the devastating defeat of the UAR and the “progressive Arab regimes” in June 1967 resulted in the Movement’s alienation from Nasirism, and ushered in the third phase in its development.

The new phase witnessed the intensification of the ideological conflict within the Movement and the eventual consolidation of the organizational, political and ideological independence of its branches, thus ending for all practical intents and purposes its existence as a pan-Arab organization.

The ANM shared with the modern movement of Arab nationalism in the Arab East two distinct characteristics: an increasing tendency to become more exclusive and radical, and a growing inclination to abandon its pan-Arabism in favor of a regionally-oriented strategy.

Throughout the 1950s, the Movement conceived of the Arab nation as an organic whole entrusted with the task of national regeneration. However, with the failure of the Arabs’ first experiment in unity in 1961, and their second defeat at the hands of the same enemy in 1967, the ANM’s conception of the role and nature of the Arab nation suffered a great deal. In the first instance, the Movement accused the “Arab bourgeoisie” of conspiring against any form of union among the Arab countries, while on the second
occasion it blamed the “petty bourgeois” leadership of the Arabs headed by the UAR for the disastrous defeat.

The adoption of such a line of thinking inevitably led to the loss of a sizeable portion of the Movement’s adherents who belonged to the well-to-do classes and elites of Arab society. Furthermore it contributed to its alienation from Arab regimes which had previously afforded the Movement moral, political and financial support. On the other hand, had the Movement been able to win to its cause the active involvement of the masses of Arab workers and peasants, it would have not only compensated for its losses but also forged a new path toward the mobilization of the Arab masses and perhaps resolved the problem of popular leadership in the Arab world. Unfortunately, however, the left-wing branches of the Movement which emerged after 1968 did not seem to make much progress in this direction, and consequently their appeal has been confined to a limited number of Marxist intellectuals who labor today under strenuous conditions.

It would appear that the final conversion of the ANM to Marxism and the "ideology of the proletariat" was not so much the product of a process of pure thought as the outcome of its pragmatic understanding of the underlying cause for major political developments in the region.

This understanding to a large extent may have been accurate, but the main dilemma of Arab revolutionaries is to devise the ways by which they can bridge the wide gap that separates them from their audience. The role of leadership in the Arab world to which Nasir referred in The Philosophy of Revolution seems to be still wandering, moving aimlessly in a vacuum without finding a place to rest.

In a similar pragmatic fashion, the Movement gradually realized that a decisive change in the status quo of the Arab countries was not likely to occur in the foreseeable future unless it was accompanied by a process of regional transformation. The key to Arab regeneration in the form of a
unified socialist state was not to be found in an idealistic attempt to harmonize the efforts of conflicting political systems and social interests, but lay in first preparing the social and political conditions in each Arab country for such an eventuality.

This conclusion was forced upon the ANM by the facts of the Arab situation. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire after the first World War left the reins of government in the Arab provinces in the hands of the victorious Western powers Britain and France, aided by a coalition of traditional local notables and tribal sheikhs. The new state structures which emerged in the early twenties had to cope with a new set of problems, which the Ottomans had earlier gone a long way in pacifying. A number of interest and minority groups of a variety of social, ethnic and religious backgrounds reappeared on the political scene to demand a share in power and influence. This trend was encouraged by the colonial powers in order to safeguard their newly acquired position from the predominantly Muslim drive for Arab unity, and to satisfy the aspirations of a wide range of political groups and parties.

In time the new political entities which evolved in the Arab Middle East proved to be workable. While unable to achieve an absolute measure of political stability, they managed, nevertheless, to generate sufficient support internally to maintain their own separate existence. The new Governments were successful in accommodating by compromise and more often by coercion the political ambitions and economic interests of the more influential segments of society, such as the landed gentry, royal families and more recently army officers and bureaucrats. Consequently the call to abolish boundaries between Arab states, and the demand to eradicate social and economic differences were fiercely countered by the adamant resistance of those who had a vested interest in preserving the state of political fragmentation in the Arab world.
An additional factor which militated against any effective form of Arab integration during the last half century or more was the economic and political disparity between the Arab countries. According to Professor Vatikiotis:

"Because of economic differences political conflict in the Arab Middle East so far has been between states. This is largely due to the fact that some of them are immensely rich oil-producing countries, others are not; some endowed with adequate resources in proportion to their populations, others are hopelessly over-populated."\(^1\)

The cause of Arab unity was further hampered by the reliance of the Arab states on the Great Powers for military and political support. The growing involvement of the superpowers in the area since the mid-fifties heightened the state of political tension between the Arab regimes. Under these conditions, the ANM eventually recognized the impracticability of a comprehensive Arab movement. And consequently its pan-Arab character gave way to an increasing tendency to participate in regional politics. In the final analysis regionalism in the Arab world proved to be more viable than had been expected by generations of Arab nationalists from the beginning of the century onward.

In this connection the experience of the ANM was not unique. Since the early sixties the branches of the Arab Ba’th Socialist Party showed similar signs of concern for the regional political and economic circumstances in which they operated. Despite the fact that the Syrian Ba’thists were the major advocates of union with Egypt in 1958, due to the clash of interests between the two regions of the UAR, they gradually withdrew their support and accused the Egyptian leadership of exploiting the union to its own advantage. Today, the conflict between the Ba’th Government in Syria and Iraq cannot be entirely attributed to ideological dif-

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\(^1\) P. J. Vatikiotis, *Conflict in the Middle East*. London. 1971, p. 27.
ferences. Underlying this conflict are the concrete state interests of the two countries, which no amount of rhetoric on Arab unity and brotherhood can dispel. Ultimately the nationalist movement in the Arab Middle East faced the realities of the situation and chose to function under more conducive conditions.

The gradual shift in the political outlook of Arab revolutionaries terminated an epoch in the development of the idea of Arab nationalism. It has been recently claimed that the doctrine of nationalism in Asia and Africa was a purely European invention:

“It has been conceived and wholly elaborated in Europe, it knew during the nineteenth century a prodigious popularity in Europe itself and was transmitted and spread to Asia and Africa, where its popularity became as great as in Europe.”

This may be perfectly true, but the interesting thing about political ideas is that they are neither borrowed nor imported for their own sake. Generally speaking, a political doctrine takes root and gains great popularity when it fulfils an urgent political need or when it seems to provide an explanation or even a solution, at least in theory, to concrete problems facing a society.

Toward the end of the first World War the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire were confronted with two major problems which formed the real political basis for the evolution of Arab nationalism. On the one hand, the collapse of Ottoman hegemony under the cultural and ultimately the military impact of the West left the Arab world without a definite sense of commitment. On the other hand, the imposition of foreign rule and the artificial division of the Arab Orient into separate spheres of influence provoked a tremendous feeling of resentment and impatience against the colonial powers. At this juncture, to the majority

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of the Muslim Arabs, the idea of the national-state appeared to be a workable suggestion. It provided them with a new sense of solidarity which replaced Islam and promised to enhance the political and social status of the Arab leadership which emerged during and after the War.

After some hesitation, the ruling classes in the Arab world consisting of the Hashimites of Hejaz and the semi-feudal and town notables of the north adopted the doctrine of pan-Arabism. But as the new leadership compromised with the colonial powers and turned a deaf ear to the pressing social and economic needs of the lower classes, new political and social forces emerged to challenge its authority.

The evolution of the modern movement of Arab nationalism from the mid-thirties onward was the outcome of the growing frustrations of the middle classes, including the officers’ class, with the political incompetence of their traditional rulers.

The Ba’th Party, Nasir’s regime in Egypt and the Arab Nationalists Movement were the chief components of radical Arab nationalism, with its popular appeal and anti-imperialist drive. They were able during the last quarter of a century to transform the political and social fabric of a number of Arab countries, by taking over political power as was the case in Iraq, Syria, Egypt and South Yemen, or by inspiring others to follow suit as is the case in Libya. More important, however, and unlike their traditional predecessors, they often managed to bring the Arab masses

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3 A survey of the daily *Al-Qibla* published in Mecca soon after Sharif Hussein had declared his rebellion against the Turks in 1916 shows a gradual change in the attitude of the First Arab Movement. In the early days of the rebellion, Hussein claimed that his intention was to reform the Ottoman Empire, and save it from the hands of the pan-Turks or pan-Turanians who had distorted the principles of Islam under the influence of the German infidels (see *al-Qibla* 15 Shawwal 1334, 14 Dhi al-Qi’dah 1334 and 11 Jamad al-Awwal 1335). Ironically enough, however, as Hussein’s movement gathered momentum, thanks to the financial and military support of Britain, *al-Qibla* advocated the idea of pan-Arabism and the establishment of a unified state in the Arab East (see *al-Qibla* xo Jamad al-Awwal 1336 and 17 Sha’ban 1336).
temporarily into the arena of political struggle but unfortunately without sustaining this involvement in an organized and structured form. After all, middle class political movements and regimes in most underdeveloped countries are highly sensitive to the notion of sharing power with the masses.

Within this context, the role played by the ANM in the process of political and social change was less spectacular than the one performed by Nasir and the Ba’th. With the exception of South Yemen, the ANM failed to capture political power in any other Arab country. Thus the branches of the Movement, unrestrained by state responsibilities or international complications, tended to become increasingly more radical. In this lies the relevance of the Movement to the recent emergence of revolutionary forces in the area. Whether these are the rebels of Dhofar and the Gulf, the Marxist wing of the Palestine Resistance Movement, the new left in the Arab Orient or the parliamentary opposition in Kuwait, they all have one thing in common, a previous organizational association with the ANM and a dose link with its radical tradition.

Before 1967, and especially when the Ba’th parted company with the Egyptian leadership, the ANM became the major organized force which upheld the cause of Nasirism in the Arab East. It made several attempts in Syria in cooperation with Nasirite officers to regain Egypt’s control over the region. As a result of its implication in an abortive coup to overthrow the Ba’th regime in Iraq, it suffered severely to the point of physical liquidation at the hands of the Ba’th in 1963. Despite its failure to effect a change in the political situation in favor of the UAR, the Movement, as the main apologist for Nasir’s internal and foreign polides, managed to provide Nasirism with its ideological and political basis in the Arab East. To a large extent the remnants of the attachment to Nasir’s memory and to Egypt which one witnesses among the Arabs in the Fertile Crescent
are due to the unreserved and faithful commitment of the Movement to Nasir from 1956 to 1967.

Moreover, the ANM, more than any other political organization in the Arab world, consistently devoted its full energies and employed all its resources and efforts to keeping the Palestine Question alive in the mind of the Palestinian refugees and the post-1948 generation of Arab youth. While the Ba'th Party was more concerned with the struggle for power in the area, and the Arab Governments more involved in inter-Arab conflict than with devising a coordinated and active policy toward the whole problem, the ANM continued to take an uncompromising and militant stand on the issue. On this level, its most important achievement was to preserve an organizational tradition among a nation of refugees on which most of the Palestinian organizations draw today.

The movement as a centrally organized political party ceased to exist after 1968. But its radical heritage and militancy, its irreconcilable anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist bent, and its recent disappointment with “progressive Arab regimes” remain important factors in the evolution of revolutionary regional movements seeking to alter the social and political structure of the contemporary Arab Middle East.
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