'Aflaq: His Approach to Arabism

Michel 'Aflaq:
A Biographical Study of his Approach to Arabism

by

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Abstract

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The study attempts to determine the extent to which Arab nationalism, as expressed in the writings of Michel 'Aflaq, may be considered truly secular. The analysis of 'Aflaq's published essays and speeches focuses upon his treatment of religion in general and of Islam in particular. In order to present a valid analysis of his writings, the origins of 'Aflaq's thinking are traced to the experiences and influences he underwent.

It is shown that, although 'Aflaq uses religious terms and concepts, he deprives them of all supra-human implications. Thus, the particularism engendered by different religious modes of worship loses much of its significance. Since Islam is, for 'Aflaq, the greatest expression of Arabism at its particular time, therefore, all Arabs, including Christians, can find themselves only through Islam.

Arab nationalism, as expressed by Michel 'Aflaq, is secular only to the extent of subsuming Islam within Arabism while resurrecting the philosophical and ethical principles of Islam suitable to the present time. For 'Aflaq, the principles suitable to the present lie in freedom, unity, and socialism.

Abstrait

Nom: N. Salem Babikian

Titre: Michel 'Aflaq: une étude de son approche à l'Arabisme

Département: Institut d'Etudes Islamiques, Université McGill

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Cette étude tend à determiner l'étendue du laïcisme dans le nationa-
lisme arabe tel qu'exprimé par Michel 'Aflaq. L'analyse des essais et des
discours publiés par 'Aflaq converge sur son traitement de la religion en
général et de l'Islam en particulier. Afin de présenter une étude valable
de ses écrits, les sources de la pensée de 'Aflaq sont referées aux expé-
riences et aux influences qu'il a subites.

Il est demontré que, bien qu'il utilise des termes et des conceptes
religieux, 'Aflaq les prive de toutes implications supra-humaines. Ainsi,
les particularités engendrées par les différentes modalités d'adoration
perdent de leur sens. Pour 'Aflaq, l'Islam fut l'ultime expression de
l'arabisme et il s'ensuit que tous les arabes, les chrétiens inclus, ne
peuvent retrouver leur identité que par l'Islam.

Le nationalisme arabe, tel que l'exprime 'Aflaq, est laïque autant
qu'il insère l'Islam dans l'Arabisme en ressuscitant les principes philo-
sophiques et morales islamiques en accord avec le présent. Pour 'Aflaq, les
principes qui conviennent au temps présent se trouvent dans l'égalité,
l'unité, et le socialisme.

Table of Contents

Foreword

I undertook this thesis partly for personal reasons, having
been deeply marked by the disastrous Arab-Israeli war of 1967. The work
I put in while researching and writing the thesis has proved to be a
cathartic experience. Studying Michel 'Aflaq's life and writings has
enabled me to better understand and to make peace with myself.

The scholarly purpose of this thesis is much more specific than
most studies on Arab political thought in that it seeks to see how one
man wrestled with a particular problem: how does Islam play a role in the
formulation of Arabism? The question may be viewed as the central focus
of the process of modernization in the Arab world. The study strikes a
balance between a descriptive approach and the use of sociological and
psychological analyses. Apart from a few determinations of historical
dates, this thesis has little that is very original to offer. Nonetheless,
it is hoped that the attempt to systematize 'Aflaq's ideas will be of
some use to further study.

I owe a great debt of thanks to the members of the Institute of
Islamic Studies who have helped clarify my questions about Islam, history
and civilization. Professor Niyazi Berkes has profoundly, and radically,
affected the course of my studies and my way of thinking. Dr. Richard
N. Verdery has been a patient advisor, particularly at those times when I
made him wait. Mr. Muzaffar Ali, head librarian at the Institute was
especially helpful in obtaining some of the material. Needless to say,

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Miss Salwa Ferahian was, as always, ready with first aid whenever I could not find some book or article. I am also grateful to my colleague, Mr. Chris Rogers, who read and commented upon several chapters in draft form. Finally, I add a few words of gratitude to Tenno who, against his grain, encouraged and cheered me on whenever I was down.

A Word on Transliteration and Footnotes

The Institute of Islamic Studies system of transliteration is
followed except for the following cases:

ى not indicated when it is <u>alif maqsura</u>,

ة not transliterated, eg. قصة is rendered <u>qissa</u> and not <u>qissah</u> or
<u>qissat</u>, except in the <u>idāfa</u> construction when it is indicated as a "t".

Certain common names having varying forms in English, French, etc.
are rendered in that form used by the person named; most notably, Michel
and not Mikhā'īl, Michael, or Mīshīl.

Non-Western authors, writing in a Western language are usually
indicated as they themselves write their names in Latin script, except
in the Bibliography when that version is followed by the transliterated
form of the author's name in Arabic.

Only a shortened form of the reference is given in the footnotes:
initials indicate the author's first name; the full title of the book or
article is given fully the first time, thereafter a short form of the
title is given; and the publisher is given only in the Bibliography.

Introduction

The study of Michel 'Aflaq's thought within the context of the problematic relationships between Islam and Arab nationalism, and between Islam and Arab socialism, grew out of my early personal interest in the questions of identity and of its political implications.

The purpose of this study is specific and yet complex. It is complex in that it sets out to explain how a Christian Arab, such as Michel 'Aflaq, could identify himself as an Arab -- without denying the Islamic content of Arabism. It is specific in that it focuses on only one stream of Arab political thought, the Ba'th movement in Syria, and, within that stream, it is concerned mainly with one man's ideas.[1] In other words, the problem is twofold: the relationship of a Christian to Arabism, and consequently to Islam, subsumed within the question of how to relate Islam to Arabism.[2]

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[1] 'Aflaq's importance should not be exaggerated. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the multiple editions and printings of 'Aflaq's essays are concrete proof that he reached, if not influenced, many Arabs. The important role played on the Arab world scene by the Party he helped found is another proof of his influence. According to T. Khalidi, "It is evident ... that no examination of contemporary Arab nationalist thought would be meaningful without a critical examination of the political thought of Aflak"; see his article, "A Critical Study of the Political Ideas of Michel Aflak", Middle East Forum (M.E.F.)XLII/2 (1966), 55.

[2] The nature of Islam itself further complicates the problem. It has been correctly observed that, historically, religious loyalty and political loyalty "... are identical and inseparable in Islamic conception. What the West distinguishes as civic, political, social, religious, and moral obligations are in Islam all moral obligations deriving from a revealed religion"; see M. Berger, The Arab World Today (New York, 1962), 335-336. Thus, any answer to a political or social question is to be framed in ethico-religious terms.

It is impossible to place a study such as the present one within a
continuous flow of ideas in the Arab world since a complete history of Arab
political thought is still to be written.[1] Some authors detect the begin-
nings of Arab nationalism, not simply as the existence of an Arab nation
but as a movement with political aims[2] as early as the 1860s; most writers

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[1] See the bibliography prepared by N. Ziadeh, "Recent Arabic
Literature on Arabism", The Middle East Journal (M.E.J.) VI (1952), 468-
473, which lists 18 items on Arabism, ranging from books to pamphlets and
various conference proceedings. Also see the section on "Political Ideology:
Nationalism, Socialism, Nasserism, The Ba'th, Communism, The Moslem Brother-
hood", in Arab Culture and Society in Change, A Partially Annotated Biblio-
graphy of Books and Articles in English, French, G rman, and Italian com-
piled by the staff of the Center for Study of the Modern Arab World (Beirut,
1973), 113-156; and Inside the Arab Mind, A Bibliographic Survey of
Literature in Arabic on Arab Nationalism and Unity with an annotated list
of English language books and articles compiled by F. I. Qubain (Arlington,
Virginia, 1960) which, although only 100 pages, is quite valuable because
it is fully annotated. For the most comprehensive surveys of the ideas of
Arab nationalism, see A. Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1789-
1939 (London, 1962), especially pp.273-260; G. Antonius, The Arab Awakening
(London, 1938); and H.Z. Nuseibeh, The Ideas of Arab Nationalism (Ithaca,
1956). These three writers place great emphasis on the impact of the West
through Christian missionaries who, inadvertently, taught nationalism to
Christian Arabs. More importance is attributed to the role of Muslims in
the genesis of Arab nationalism in a recent article by F. Steppat, "Eine
Bewegung unter den Notabeln Syriens, 1877-1878: Neues Licht auf die Entste-
hung des arabischen Nationalismus", Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenland-
ischen Gesellschaft, Supplement I, Teil 2 (1969), 631-649. Even greater
emphasis is placed upon the role of Muslims by A.L. Tibawi, A Modern
History of Syria (London, 1969). C.E. Dawn, "From Ottomanism to Arabism:
The Origin of an Ideology", Review of Politics, XXIII (1961), 396, implicitly
views Muslim Arabs as the initiators of Arabism which Christian Arabs later
accepted. On the whole, most of the studies on political thought in the
modern Arab world focus only on those ideas arriving from the West without
paying any attention to the continuity of thought and of socio-political
institutions between the pre-modern and the modern periods in the Arab
world.

[2] For the distinction between nationalism as the existence of a nation,
and nationalism as political ideology, see S. Haim (ed.), "Introduction", Arab
Nationalism, An Anthology (Berkeley, 1962) where she gives an explanation
based upon Sati' al-Husri, Al-'Uruba Awwalan ("Arabism First") (Beirut, 1955).
According to al-Husri, only an awareness of the existence of a nation could=

agree that 1913, when the Arab Congress met in Paris, may be considered as the definite entrance of the Arab nationalist movement upon the world stage.

Between the two world wars, when most of the Arab lands were controlled one way or another by European Powers, the need to develop a viable political community was overshadowed by the need to liberate the land from foreign occupation. In confrontation with Europeans, Arab nationalists had to adopt the political language of Europeans in what proved to be a vain attempt to be understood on European terms.[1] A crisis of identity thereupon overcame Arab intellectuals; they were preoccupied with such questions as - 'Who are we?', 'Are we, as Arabs, one single nation, or several different nations?' These led to more analytical questions - 'What is a nation?', 'What are the necessary and sufficient conditions that must be satisfied for a nation to exist?' All of these questions were prompted by the premise that each nation has the right to its own political structure. Arab nationalism identified the Arabs -- "whoever lives in Arab territory, speaks Arabic, lives according to the

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-be the motive power for political action. The role of education in fostering nationalism is given great importance by al-Ḥuṣrī in most of his works. In English, the role of education in fostering a revival of Arabic and the importance of a literary revival for the development of nationalism is discussed by N.S. Fatemi, "The Roots of Arab Nationalism" in B. Rivlin and J.S. Szliowicz (eds.), The Contemporary Middle East, Tradition and Innovation (London, 1965); by C.D. Cremeans, The Arabs and the World, Nasser's Nationalist Policy (New York, 1963); and by D. Peretz, The Middle East Today (New York, 1963).

[1] The following discussion is based upon A. Daher, Current Trends in Arab Intellectual Thought (Washington, D.C., 1969).

Arab mode, and is proud of being an Arab"[1] -- as the source of legitimate authority over themselves. The idea became a basis for the struggles towards independence waged by nationalists during the period between the two world wars.

With the end of the Second World War, foreign military occupation was gradually removed. Even when this had been generally achieved, however, in the 1950s, the divided and weak Arab states were regarded as part of the Western satellite system and had to fight to pursue an independent policy. Nonetheless, with de jure independence a second stage overtook Arab nationalism: that Arabs largely share in a common language and religion, common historical memories, culture-patterns, institutions, and national aspirations was taken for granted[2] and the search for political structure became the foremost concern. The problem of developing a viable political community became closely linked with Arab socialism (ishtirākiyya).[3] The political

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[1] A.R. Azzam, "The Arab Nation" (14th Annual Conference of the Middle East Institute, 1960), 9. See B. Lewis, The Arabs in History (London, 1950), 9-17, for a discussion of the connotations the term "Arab" held at different times. Also see H.Z. Nuseibeh, Ideas, 65 n.1, where he makes the observation that it was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that the term "Arab" acquired political implications.

[2] N. Rejwan. "Arab Nationalism, in Search of an Ideology", in W.Z. Laqueur (ed.), The Middle East in Transition (London, 1958), 145-146. Also see S. Hamady, Temperament and Character of the Arabs (New York, 1960), 17-22.

[3] According to the analysis made by T. Izutsu, God and Man in the Koran, Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung (Tokyo, 1964), Arabic terms used to translate foreign words may be classified as transparent, semi-transparent, or opaque. Such words as talīfūn (telephone) and dīmuqrātiyya (democracy) are completely transparent; the original Western word is "palpably" there. Terms like qawmiyya and ishtirākiyya are considered semi-transparent since they "mean what they mean only through the intermediacy of genuine Arabic words, each one of which has its own proper meaning and history in the Arabic language". Through middle terms, one is supposed to be led to-

function of Arab socialism is to create a constitutional community such
that its members would participate in the organization of public life and
in the choice of leadership.

To avoid some of the confusion surrounding the term "Arab
nationalism", I distinguish between two meanings: the narrower sense
broadly indicates the struggle of the Arabs for independence, while the
wider sense refers to the attempts at creating a viable political community.
The second meaning, usually labelled "Arabism" (ʿurūba), encompasses both
thought and action aimed at formulating a coherent political community,
willing and able to face the problems posed by the modern situation.
Logically, Arabism would include Arab nationalism, or the struggle for
independence, and Arab socialism, or the re-formulation of political
structure and leadership; but the term "Arab nationalism" has been accepted
by usage to cover the broader concept encompassing both stages. The

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　—the Western concepts of "nationalism" and "socialism" in a flash,
passing over the bridge as "lightly as possible". Nevertheless, the Arabic
connotations cannot but be felt whenever the terms are used. Moreover, if
one is unfamiliar with the Western concepts, the terms then become opaque.
In other words, the Arabic terms are interpreted according to their basic
meanings in Arabic. In this case, qawmiyya connotes qawm (people, origi-
nally a tribal group) and means that which makes a number of individuals
a cohesive group; thus, the link between the people and the territory is
rather vague. Ishtirākiyya refers to sharaka (to share, participate, be
or become partner, participant, or associate). The emphasis is on sharing
and participation in both the economic and the political spheres, without
carrying any connotations of class distinctions or class conflicts. The
difference in emphasis between "socialism" and "ishtirākiyya" did not go
unnoticed. Shiblī Shumayyil, one of the earliest Arab writers who repre-
sented "the starting point of a progressive left in contemporary Arab
thought", attempted to correct the situation. He considered "ishtirākiyya"
as a "misleading Arabic translation" and insisted on "ijtimāʿiyya". His
intention was "to make clear that 'socialism' meant something quite diffe-
rent from the Arabic word ishtirakiyya (association; verb, ishtaraka, to join,
to become associated with), and to relate it to its etymological origin
ijtimāʿ (society, community)"; see H. Sharabi, Arab Intellectuals and the
West; The Formative Years, 1875-1914 (Baltimore, 1970). The fact that
ishtirākiyya rather than ijtimāʿiyya persisted indicates that the connota-
tion of participation was the more important.

problems encountered by Arabs in their attempts to develop a viable
political community, and a theory to support it, have been overshadowed
by the intrusive presence of Israel which threatens any possible unity
among Arabs and ensures that their struggle for an effective and inde-
pendent polity is not resolved, but continues to absorb a large part of
their creative powers.[1]

Syria lies at the cross-currents, and can claim to have been both
the head and the heart, of the Arab nationalist movement since its begin-
ning. It was the Ba'th, a movement born in Damascus, the capital of Syria,
that transformed the ideal of Arab unity into a concrete political force
by bringing about, in alliance with 'Abd al-Nāṣir, the union between
Syria and Egypt; however short-lived that union was, it remains one of the
most important watersheds in modern Arab history. Moreover, only the Ba'th
has attempted to offer a comprehensive theory for Arab life. On the
intellectual level, and as political action, mainly on the negative grounds
that it does not flow within the stream of "Islamic modernism", the Ba'th
has been assumed to be secular -- advocating the removal of religion,
specifically of Islam from all aspects of public life.[2] The study of 'Aflaq's

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[1] For a slightly different interpretation, see H. Djaït, La
Personnalité et le Devenir Arabo-Islamiques (Paris, 1974), who reserves the
term "synthèse nationale" for the several Arab states that have emerged since
the Second World War. Djaït sees two possiblities: either to build political
structures within the present limitations of each Arab state, or to construct
the "Arab nation". He means that the term "Arabism" is relevant only to the
second option. It is to be noted that Djaït's book is itself a testimony of
'Aflaq's influence, since he uses 'Aflaq's terminology.

[2] For example, A. Tibawi, Modern History, 391, opposes the Ba'th,
representing "secular pan-Arab nationalism with a socialist philosophy and
revolutionary undertones", to the Muslim Brotherhood which "stressed Islam
before regional or general Arab nationalism".

views on religion in general and on Islam in particular may clarify
this assumption.

As the "philosopher" of the Ba'th, 'Aflaq proclaimed the motto:
"Umma 'arabiyya wāḥida dhāt risāla khālida" (one Arab nation with an
eternal message)[1] as the principle defining the goal to be achieved by
revolution. 'Aflaq played an instrumental role in the political sociali-
zation of the younger generation rather than in the elaboration of a clear
political doctrine. In effect, 'Aflaq was the "teacher" rather than the
"philosopher". He never achieved the cool systematically analytical
style of such writers as Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī, but maintained the multi-level
style of the creative writer. 'Aflaq's speeches and essays were, there-
fore, not liable to simple analysis but required the elaboration of a
conceptual framework as a means to interpret his ideas. The problem of
understanding 'Aflaq's ideas is compounded by the complexity of his
subject-matter. For 'Aflaq, 'urūba (Arabism) has several facets,
Arab nationalism, Arab socialism, and Arab unity, which are inter-related.

Two of these facets, Arab nationalism and Arab socialism, could be
viewed as two phases of what is essentially one process, namely, political
development.[2] The most important aspect of political development, in terms
of structures, is "differentiation, by which integralist sacral societies
governed by religiopolitical systems are being transformed into pluralist

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[1]The term "risāla" may be understood as both "message" and "mission".
Although the motto has usually been translated as "One Arab nation with an
eternal mission", I felt that "message" was a more suitable translation as
it fits 'Aflaq's theory of knowledge better.

[2]The following discussion is based upon D.E. Smith, Religion and
Political Development (Boston, 1970).

desacralized societies directed by greatly expanded secular polities".[1]
Changes in the derivation of legitimacy are a key element to the ideolo-
gical and institutional changes required for the transformation of a
traditional system.

In the traditional religio-political systems legitimacy is attributed
to the state by religious ideas and ideals; rulers and ruled are not
necessarily connected. The term "state" refers only to the ruling elements,
while "society" refers to the ruled. By contrast, a modern government
acquires its legitimacy from society itself and the term "state" indicates
an organic relationship between governors and governed. The political
content of nationalism is primarily the claim that the political community
is the source of legitimate authority and secondarily that each 'nation'
is a political community.

In other words, the basis of government is changed from a God-given
mandate to government sanctioned by the nation. It is a premise that was
quickly taken for granted and hardly ever questioned. At first sight the
premise might seem to be in direct confrontation with the theory of the
Islamic state. But it is my belief that Arabism, including the Ba'th as

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[1]D. E. Smith, Religion and Development, 1. According to Smith, the
characteristics of a traditional religio-political system are summarized in
five points: "First, the ideological component of the system is provided
entirely by religion... Religious ideas maintain the legitimacy of the sys-
tem and specifically of the ruler... Second, the political community of a
traditional religiopolitical system is identical with the religious community
in theory and substantially so in fact. Third, it is the religiously inte-
grated and legitimated social system, not an efficient governmental apparatus
which enables the ruler to maintain stability in the realm over considerable
periods of time. Fourth, religious specialists perform essential rituals
which legitimize royal power, function as advisers to the king, and inculcate
in the people the virtue of obedience to divinely ordained authority.
Fifth, the ruler's religious functions are extensive... The ruler is in
every sense the defender of the faith"; ibid., 7.

one of its expressions, and Islamic modernism which proposes to establish
a political community based on Islamic injuctions, derive from the same
roots; namely, the Islamic revivalist movements of the eighteenth and
nineteenth centuries, whose impetus towards a return to the "Golden Age"
-- to the earliest periods in Islamic history, heightened the value of
the specifically Arab contribution to Islam.[1] Consequent to the glorifi-
cation of the "Golden Age" of Islam came a literary and historical reva-
luation of Umayyad history by prominent writers, such as Aḥmad Taymūr and
Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī. Their revaluation of the Umayyad period projected
the Arab characteristics of Islam to the forefront; so much so that 'Aflaq
could consider Islam itself as only an expression of the Arab genius, of
Arabism.

It is noteworthy that by the sixteenth century, with the end of the
Abbasid shadow Caliphate in Cairo, the Islamic state ceased, de jure, to
exist.[2] H.A.R. Gibb traces the evolution of the de facto Islamic state
to the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, when the "main socio-political
tension" between the religious community and the centers of political
power was mitigated by religious brotherhoods. Even this balance was

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[1] An example in English is H.Z. Nuseibeh's exposition of "The Genesis
of Arab Nationalism" in Ideas, where he traces the existence of the Arab
nation to the pre-Islamic period. On the importance of historical inter-
pretation in the development of Arab nationalism, see A.G. Chejne, "The
Use of History by Modern Arab Writers", M.E.J. 14/4 (Autumn, 1960), 382-
396. The theories of Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī on education are notable for their
emphasis on the study of history as a means for political socialization.

[2] C.E. Dawn, "From Ottomanism to Arabism", 378-379.

destroyed by the early nineteenth century and Gibb accurately states that, "It was destroyed less by the direct intrusion of the West than by immensely complicated internal developments".[1] The various revivalist movements, beginning with Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb in the eighteeth century may be viewed as active attempts to re-establish the Islamic state. The idea evolved, with 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Kawākibī, into a program to establish an Islamic state in the person of an Arab caliph.[2] Even as the political system was being questioned, the issue was presented as a restructuring of Islam itself.[3] The need to change Islam, embodied in the sharī'a, projected the community, the basis of ijmā' (consensus), one of the traditional sources of law, into prominence as a means to re-form Islam.

Since the community was to be considered as a source of law, it could just as well be considered a source of political legitimacy.[4] Thus, Islamic reformism might be viewed as a step towards the basic premise of nationalism; that the community is the source of legitimate authority. In the case of the Arabs, the distinction between the Muslim community and the Arab community is blurred because of two factors: the historical promi-

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[1] H.A.R. Gibb, "Social Reform: Factor X" in W.Z. Laqueur (ed.), Middle East in Transition, 5.

[2] C.E. Dawn, "From Ottomanism to Arabism", 392.

[3] See D.E. Smith, Religion and Development, 14, Figure I.1.

[4] See L. Binder, "Islam, Arabism, Political Community", The Ideological Revolution in the Middle East (New York, 1964), 116-153, where the author discusses the differences between the concepts of "natural community" and of "rational community" while taking for granted the idea that the community is the source of legitimate authority.

nence of Arabs in Islam and the use of the term umma for both the
religious and the national community.[1]

It is noteworthy that the tension between nationalism and Islam
was superseded in the writings of Arab intellectuals by the apparent
tension between socialism and Islam.[2] As political domination by aliens
was ending in the 1950s, questions about the nature of the emerging political
community and about the relation between government and governed became
paramount. The process of political development in the Arab lands required
the individual's "emotional commitment to the national group and by rational
efforts to see that his behavior conformed with the imperatives of this
commitment."[3] The individual's sense of self-determination had to be enhan-
ced; in other words, a new relationship between the ruled and the rulers
had to be institutionalized. Arab socialism may be thought of as an
attempt to achieve the institutionalization of an integral relationship
between ruled and rulers, playing an important role in that aspect of
political modernization known as "mass politicization" which includes "the
changes in behavior patterns by which the masses are brought into the poli-
tical process as participants on a more or less regular basis".[4] As an

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[1] S. Haim credits 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī with the secular use of
the term umma; see her article, "Islam and the Theory of Arab Nationalism",
Die Welt des Islams, new series 4 (1956), 139.

[2] F. Rahman, "The Sources and Meaning of Islamic Socialism", in D.E.
Smith (ed.), Religion and Political Modernization (New Haven, 1974), 249.

[3] I.F. Harik, "Ethnic Revolution and Political Integration in the Middle
East", International Journal of Middle East Studies 3 (1972), 309. Political
scientists use the term "nation-building" for this phase of political deve-
lopment; see D.E. Ashford, "Contradiction of Nationalism and Nation-Building
in the Muslim World", M.E.J.18/4 (Autumn, 1964), 421-430.

[4] D.E. Smith, Religion and Modernization, 17. Also see E.M. Koury,
The Patterns of Mass Movements in Arab Revolutionary Progressive States (The
Hague, 1970)

integrative factor, Arab socialism may be considered in competition with

Islam which played a crucial role in the integration of Muslim society.[1]

The conflict between socialism and Islam might be more apparent than

actual, since

> ... religion may contribute to the process of mass politicization by
> providing sacred symbols that acquire political significance. The "use"
> of religion for the purpose of political mobilization can be manipulative,
> but it need not be. In many cases the projection of sacred symbols into
> the political arena proceeds from holistic world views which deny the
> sacred-secular distinction. It is clear that in many cases a definite
> sequence is involved: religion helps to produce mass politicization and
> then declines politically as increasing numbers of participants come to
> perceive politics as a relatively autonomous area of human activity.[2]

Moreover, if Islam continues to perform its integrative role within 'society',

socialism might be relegated to functioning as the integrative factor between

'society' and 'state' in order to avoid a lapse into the traditional dicho-

tomy between the rulers and the ruled. Whether these theoretical constructs

are sufficient or whether they are accepted by most Arabs is a question

requiring sociological research which this thesis does not presume.

Only recently have scholars attempted to explain the phenomena of

Arab nationalism and Arab socialism by referring to their sociological

dynamics. According to one opinion, Arab nationalism is identified with

the "salaried middle class" which, in the pursuit of its class interests

tends towards nationalism and a form of socialism. By rapid social change

a restructuring of society which eliminates the vestiges of the old order

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[1] See K.S. Abu Jaber, The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: History, Ideology, and Organization (Syracuse, N.Y., 1966), 8, who points out that Arab socialist ideas place the "emphasis on the political rather than the social".

[2] D.E. Smith, Religion and Modernization, 17-18.

would presumably place the salaried middle class in power.[1]

The crucial problem in the contemporary Arab world is the continued external military threat which prevents political development from taking its course. In effect, the tension between Islam and Arab nationalism and between Islam and Arab socialism has been displaced by the tension between Arab nationalism and Arab socialism. The failure of Arab thinkers to produce a coherent, secular ideology was materialized in defeat during the Arab-Israeli conflict of June 1967, triggering salvos of self-criticism which left nothing sacred in Arab life and thought.

The continued threat of Israel prevents any divisive elements or processes, such as class struggle, from impeding the development of strong Arab military forces. State intervention becomes the only way to achieve the modernization imperative for true independence.[2] In view of the urgent need for security, the process of developing a pluralist society where dissent may be constructively articulated is delayed. Considerations of security and modernization are not unrelated to the third element of Arabism: that of Arab unity. Only unity among the twenty-odd Arab states could present a strong enough front to a hostile world and, more to the point, only in a unity of interests, economic and social as well as political,

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[1]M. Halpern, The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa (Princeton, 1963), 52. Due to the continued threat of Israel, government in many Arab countries has been taken over by the military. Halpern tries to place the military within the salaried middle class, losing sight of the fact that a military education alienates the individual from his class interests, at least to some extent. The problem of the military in a class struggle is much more complicated than Halpern indicates.

[2]B.R. Nayar, "The Political Mainsprings of Economic Planning in the New Nations: the Modernization Imperative versus Social Mobilization", a paper presented at the 9th World Congress of the International Political Science Association (Montreal, 1970).

could a viable political community take its place in the Middle East.

In presenting this case study in intellectual history, I do not presume to be able to know all the aspects of 'Aflaq's life and thought, phenomena governed by psychological laws. My humbler goal is to render an approximate sketch of his approach to Arabism.

The first and second chapters revolve around 'Aflaq's early years of formation, before he took an active political role. The third chapter traces the beginning phases of the political action 'Aflaq participated in. The fourth chapter is an attempt to present a systematic interpretation of 'Aflaq's thought as given in his essays and speeches. The fifth chapter is a review of the later phases of the political action in which 'Aflaq had a share. The roots of his later political attitudes are sought in his family background and in the circumstances he was surrounded by. The tension between his thought and his action, outlined in the conclusion, bears the imprint of the tradition he was born into, of the alien tradition he imbibed, and of the events he lived through, whether he accepted or rebelled against them.

The Sources

The following survey of secondary and primary sources bears directly on the Ba'th movement. More general sources are commented upon as they become relevant in the text of this study. The survey is based on the bibliographic essays by K.S. Abu Jaber in The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party

and by I. Rabinovich in <u>Syria under the Ba'th, 1963-1966</u> (Jerusalem, Israel, 1973).

Secondary Material

Other than the three books described below, many articles have been written about the Ba'th. These have been listed in the general Bibliography.

K.S. Abu Jaber wrote a history of the Ba'th Party in his <u>The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: History, Ideology, and Organization</u> (Syracuse, N.Y., 1966), but his discussion of its intellectual background is cursory and at several points, particularly the early years of formation, rather inadequate. Since the author is concerned with the Ba'th Party as a whole, his account of 'Aflaq is very short. His account of events during and after the dissolution of the union between Syria and Egypt is lacking since new documents have come to light. As for the years after the failure of the union, Abu Jaber attributes too much importance to 'Aflaq's faction within the Party, which, at the time, was fast fading into the background. The book is somewhat outdated in view of the political developments after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the change in the Ba'th Party orientation in Syria after 1970.

A more recent history of the Ba'th is Ibrahīm Salāma's <u>Al-Ba'th min al-madāris ila al-thukanāt</u> ("The Ba'th from the Schools to the Barracks") (Beirut, 1969). The book was unavailable, but it is said to be most informative on some issues and disappointing on others.

The most recent work devoted to the Ba'th is Itamar Rabinovich's

<u>Syria under the Ba'th 1963-1966, The Army-Party Symbiosis</u> (Jerusalem,
Israel, 1973) which, as the title indicates, is focused on the post-
union Ba'th and is quite short on the formative years, although excellent
for the specific period covered. It is quite probable that Rabinovich
used secret Ba'th documents obtained by the Israelis when they captured
Kuneitra.

<u>Primary Material</u>

Two principal categories of primary sources are used: Ba'thī
documents as well as memoirs and books of polemics.
Ba'thī documents:

The two main collections of Michel 'Aflaq's essays and speeches are:
<u>Ma'rakat al-masīr al-wāhid</u> ("The Battle for One Destiny") first published
as a collection in 1958 and <u>Fī Sabīl al-ba'th</u> ("In the Way of Resurrection")
first published as a collection in 1959.[1] <u>Ma'rakat al-masīr al-wāhid</u>
groups those articles dealing with Arab unity in general and with the
union between Syria and Egypt in particular. The second collection, <u>Fī</u>
<u>Sabīl al-ba'th</u>, treats a wider variety of 'Aflaq's themes; such as "Arab
Nationalism", "the Eternal Arab Message", "the Arab Ba'th and Revolution",
"Arab Socialism", "the Unity of the Arab Struggle", and "the Arab Ba'th
Movement". Each of these topics groups the essays in chronological
sequence. The two collections include selections from 'Aflaq's discourses
between the years 1935 and 1960 with the greater number of essays dated

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[1]According to one source, "Aflak has not been a prolific writer and
all his writings are now collected in /these/ two collections"; T. Khalidi,
"Critical Study", 55. It is true that 'Aflaq is not a prolific writer, but
it is not true that all his writings are included in the above-mentioned
two volumes.

between 1940, when the Ba'th took on a vaguely organized form after the loss of the Alexandretta sanjaq, and 1958, when the Ba'th succeeded in leading Syria into union with Egypt. The two books have been printed in different Arab countries several times and in different editions, which fact attests to their widespread circulation. One might then safely assume that 'Aflaq's ideas were widely diffused in the Arab lands, at least among the literate, and that they struck a responsive note.

An earlier collection, called FĪ Sabīl al-ba'th al-'arabī ("In the Way of the Arab Resurrection") was published in Baghdad in 1953, being presented by Al-Shabāb al-'arabī fī al-'irāq (Arab Youth in Iraq).

Some of the essays included in the two principal collections have been translated into French or English. The journal Orient (Paris), published several translations of essays by Michel 'Aflaq and by other Ba'thīs, such as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Bīṭār.[1] S. Haim included in her book, Arab Nationalism, An Anthology, a translation of two of 'Aflaq's essays: "Al-Qawmiyya ḥubb qabl kull shay'" (Nationalism is Love before Everything Else), dated 1940, and "Min Ma'ānī al-inqilāb" (Aspects of Revolution), dated 1950, under the one heading "Nationalism and Revolution".[2] An English translation of the essay "FĪ Dhikra al-rasūl al-'arabī" (In Memory of the Arab Prophet) has been added to this thesis as Appendix.

Other essays written by Michel 'Aflaq are included in various collections grouping several other Ba'thī writers. The earliest collection

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[1] See the general Bibliography for details.

[2] See the general Bibliography for full details.

Al-Qawmiyya al-'arabiyya wa-mawqifuhā min al-shuyū'iyya ("Arab Nationalism
and its Position vis-a-vis Communism") (Damascus, 1944) was co-authored
by 'Aflaq and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Bīṭār. Also to explain the position of the
Ba'th vis-à-vis Communism is a work written by 'Aflaq and Jamāl al-Atāsī,
Mawqifunā al-siyāsī min al-shuyū'iyya ("Our Political Position vis-a-vis
Communism"), published in Cairo, 1957.

Two books, which were unavailable, seem to have been written in
view of the union between Syria and Egypt. The first is practically an
official proclamation of the Ba'th leaders' policies preliminary to union:
Ḥawl al-qawmiyya wa-al-ishtirākiyya ("About Nationalism and Socialism")
written by Michel 'Aflaq, Akram al-Ḥawrānī, Munīf al-Razzāz, and Jamāl
al-Atāsī and published, significantly, in Cairo in 1957. The second is
probably a self-congratulatory gesture, Ittiḥād Miṣr wa-Sūriyya ("The
Union between Egypt and Syria") written by 'Aflaq, Ḥawrānī, and Bīṭār
and published in Cairo in 1958.

As a result of the failure of the union, the following two works
were published in Beirut in 1960. 'Aflaq contributed one article,
"Ma'ālim al-qawmiyya al-taqaddumiyya" (The Characteristics of Progressive
Nationalism) to Dirāsāt fī al-qawmiyya ("Studies in Nationalism"). The
other Ba'thī work, unfortunately unavailable, is Dirāsāt fī al-ishtirākiyya
("Studies in Socialism").

The most recently published book by Michel 'Aflaq, also a collection
of essays, is Nuqṭat al-bidāya, aḥādīth ba'd al-khāmis min ḥazīrān ("The
Beginning Point, Discourses after the 5th of June") published in Beirut

in 1971.

Several essays, not included in any of these collections, are mentioned by A.Y. al-Khalil, The Socialist Parties in Syria and Lebanon (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The American University, 1962). Although al-Khalil does not ascribe these essays to ʿAflaq, other essays he lists anonymously were included in the two principal collections. Moreover, the titles indicate ʿAflaq's rather "metaphysical" bent. These missing essays are listed for future research interest but were not used in this study: Fī al-siyāsa al-ʿarabiyya ("On Arab Politics") (Damascus, 1948); Fikratunā ("Our Idea") (Damascus, 1948); Al-Baʿth al-ʿarabī ḍarūra tārīkhiyya ("The Arab Resurrection is an Historical Necessity") (Beirut, 1955); Mustawa jadīd li-niḍālina ("A New Level for our Struggle") (Cairo, 1957); Al-Qawmiyya fī naẓar al-baʿth ("Nationalism in the View of the Baʿth") (Cairo, 1957); Fī al-ḥiyād al-ijābī ("On Positive Neutralism") (Cairo, 1957); Siyāsat al-taḥarrur wa-al-ḥiyād al-ijābī ("The Politics of Liberation and Positive Neutralism") (Damascus, 1957); Al-Wiḥda thawra tārīkhiyya ("Unity is a Historic Revolution") (Damascus, 1958); Al-Baʿth al-ʿarabī fī ṭarīq al-niḍāl ("The Arab Baʿth on the Road to Struggle") (Beirut, 1960); Naẓarat al-baʿth ila al-insān ("Man in the View of the Baʿth") (Beirut, 1960).

Although Bīṭār is much more systematic in the exposition of his ideas, he did not gain much reputation as a political theorist, and is better known for his activism and political involvement. His main work is Al-Siyāsa al-ʿarabiyya bayn al-mabda' wa-al-taṭbīq ("Arab Politics between Principle and Practice") published in Beirut in 1960.

Of the second-generation Ba'thIs, several are prominent as intellectuals and writers. 'Abd Allāh 'Abd al-Dā'im, concerned primarily with youth and education carries on 'Aflaq's tendency as an educator. His main works are: Al-Qawmiyya wa-al-insāniyya ("Nationalism and Humanism") first published in 1957; Al-Tarbiyya al-qawmiyya ("Nationalist Education") published in 1960; Al-Ishtirākiyya wa-al-dīmuqrāṭiyya ("Socialism and Democracy") (Beirut, 1961); and Al-Waṭan wa-al-thawra ("The Homeland and the Revolution") published in 1963.

By contrast, MunIf al-Razzāz seems to be continuing 'Aflaq's more politically active tendency. His main works are: Ma'ālim al-Ḥaya al-'arabiyya al-jadīda ("The Characteristics of the New Arab Life") first published in Cairo in 1953, and very popular since it went into at least four editions;and Taṭawwur ma'na al-qawmiyya ("The Evolution in the Meaning of Nationalism") published in 1960 and an elaboration of his first book.[1]

Sa'dūn Ḥamādī, at one time Minister of Agrarian Reform in Iraq, has written several works of which two might be mentioned: Naḥnu wa-al-shuyū'iyya ("We and Communism") published in Beirut, and Naḥwa iṣlāḥ zirā'I ishtirākI ("Towards Socialist Agrarian Reform") also published in Beirut in 1964. Two of his articles are considered central to a systematization of Ba'th political thought: "Qaḍiyyat al-qawmiyya al-'arabiyya: mushkila wa-ḥall wa-uslūb" (The Question of Arab Nationalism: Problem, Solution, and Method) in Al-Ādāb (Beirut) III/1 (Novemeber, 1955), 873-878, 949-951; and "Al-Wāqi'iyya wa-al-fikr al-'arabI al-mu'āṣir" (Realism and Contemporary

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[1] M. ṢafadI, Ḥizb al-Ba'th, ma'sāt al-mawlid, ma'sāt al-nihāya ("The Resurrection Party, The Tragedy of Birth and the Tragedy of Death") (Beirut, 1964), criticizes both these authors as superficial and unscientific.

Arab Thought) in Al-Ādāb (Beirut) V/3 (March, 1957), 265-271.

Another work that should be mentioned is Fī al-fikr al-siyāsī ("On Political Thought") published in Damascus in 1963. It is a collection of essays written by several young Baʻthī intellectuals, representing the leftist tendencies with the Party. It marks a revision of Baʻthī ideology and was the basis for the "ideological report" of the Sixth National Congress of the Baʻth Party.

One of the most important documents, published under the auspices of the Party itself is the series Niḍāl al-baʻth fī sabīl al-wiḥda, al-ḥurriyya, al-ishtirākiyya ("The Struggle of the Baʻth in the Way of Unity, Freedom, and Socialism"), issued in seven volumes by Dār al-Ṭalīʻa in Beirut between 1963 and 1965. The seven volumes constitute a collection of Baʻth statements, including speeches and essays by Baʻth leaders and Party communications, covering the activities of the Baʻth from 1943, when the Baʻth was just a movement around which nationalist youth gathered, to 1963, the year the Baʻth came to power in Syria. Unfortunately, the statements published are selective and can serve only partially as a historical source. The earlier volumes in the series consist mostly of manifestos, declarations, and newspaper articles while volumes IV to VII, covering the activities of the Baʻth leadership in the years 1955-1963, contain important documents on the union period and on the National Congresses of the Party including several documents which had been previously considered secret.

Dirāsa tārīkhiyya taḥlīliyya mūjaza lī niḍāl al-baʻth al-ʻarabī

al-ishtirākī ("A Short, Analytical, Historical Study of the Struggle of
the Socialist Arab Resurrection Party") is representative of the relatively
more leftist orientations within the Party.

Other works published under the sponsorship of one or the other faction
of the Ba'th may be categorized as political pamphlets, such as Al-Ba'th
al-'arabī al-ishtirākī īmān rāsikh, also in English as The Socialist Arab
Ba'th, a Profound Belief[1] published in 1971; Min Qaḍāyā al-thawra al-
'ālamiyya ("Of the Issues confronting the World Revolution"); and
Al-Marḥala al-ūla fī binā' al-ishtirākiyya ("The First Stage in building
Socialism"). Party leaflets are practically impossible to find on the
North American continent, and supposedly difficult to obtain even in
Syria. The American University of Beirut is supposed to house a
collection of the Ba'th pamphlets.

It has recently come to my attention that the publishing house
Dār al-Ṭalī'a lī-al-ṭibā'a wa-al-nashr (Vanguard House for Printing and
Publishing) of Beirut has published a series called Wiḥda, ḥurriyya,
ishtirākiyya (Unity, Freedom, Socialism) devoted to Ba'thī writings, of
which I obtained: #14 Al-Fallāḥūn wa-al-thawra fī al-rīf ("The Peasants and
the Revolution in the Countryside"); #16 Maqālāt fī al-ishtirākiyya ("Essays
on Socialism") by Jamāl Atāsī; and #20 Ishtirākiyyat al-ba'th wa-minhājih
al-iqtiṣādī ("The Socialism of the Resurrection and its Economic Program")
by Bashīr Dā'ūq.

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[1]Note the translation, in which Socialist qualifies Arab Ba'th and
not the other way around.

Memoirs and Books of Polemics

A rather strongly polemical account, representing the post-union Nasserite faction, of the history of the Ba'th is Hizb al-ba'th, ma'sāt al-bidāya wa-ma'sāt al-nihāya ("The Resurrection Party, The Tragedy of Birth and the Tragedy of Death") (Beirut, 1964) written by Muṭā' Safadī, a Syrian novelist and publicist with many articles published in Al-Ādāb (Beirut). Safadī shared the disillusionment of several other Ba'thīs at the failure of the United Arab Republic. He became an active supporter of Egyptian President Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir and was jailed for his activities in 1963. He has an intimate knowledge of Ba'thī affairs and, despite its obvious bias, his book offers important information.

Another disenchanted Ba'thī group, the Marxist faction which came to the forefront in 1963 and played a decisive role in Syrian politics until its expulsion from the Party, is represented by Yasīn al-Ḥāfiz. His critique of Ba'thī ideology, in his collection of essays, Ḥawl ba'd qaḍāya al-ḥaraka al-qawmiyya al-'arabiyya ("On Some Problems of the Arab Nationalist Movement") (Beirut, 1965) is on the theoretical level and, indirectly, reveals the author's critical attitude towards 'Aflaq.

An apologetic reply by Tawfīq 'Indānī, Al-Ba'th fī durūb al-niḍāl ("The Ba'th in the Paths of Struggle") (Damascus, 1965) was unavailable but is said to be disappointing as a source for the history of the Ba'th movement.

Munīf al-Razzāz, secretary general of the Ba'th Party after Michel 'Aflaq, from April 1965 to February 1966, has many chips on his shoulder. In his book, Al-Tajriba al-murra ("The Bitter Experience") (Beirut, 1967),

al-Razzāz tried to settle accounts with both foes and allies, and to justify his own position. The book was unavailable but is said to offer an important survey of the Party's history up to April 1965. It is supposed to be a candidly detailed and vivid portrait of the Ba'th and of its members.

Sāmī al-Jundī's book Al-Ba'th ("The Resurrection") (Beirut, 1969), is obviously against the extremist regime of Ṣalāḥ Jadīd whom he holds personally responsible for the tragedies of the Jundī family. Al-Jundī is an Ismā'īlī, joining the Ba'th through the influence of Zakī al-Arsūzī, himself an 'Alawī. Jundī served in several Syrian cabinets in 1963 and 1964, but was then shipped off to Paris as ambassador. His description of the early years of the Ba'th, particularly of Arsūzī, is quite detailed but the information he gives of Michel 'Aflaq's role during that period is rather disappointing. Nonetheless, as a historical source, Jundī is still indispensable for the inside view he gives of the Ba'th.

Also in response to the memoirs written by Munīf al-Razzāz, Muḥammad 'Umrān, an officer and Minister of Defense in the Syrian cabinet ousted in February 1966, who was assassinated a few years later, wrote a more general account of Syrian politics. Only one volume of Tajribatī fī al-thawra ("My Experience in the Revolution") (n.p., 1970) was ever published. It was unavailable but is said to be disappointing as most controversial points are glossed over.

Chapter I

Early Days

The present study is not meant to be, in any way, a conclusive biography of Michel 'Aflaq; he is still living and continues to develop his ideas and to write. Incomplete as this study must necessarily be, the landmarks in the early life of Michel 'Aflaq are charted, which should then enable us to retrace some of his thoughts to their experiential sources. 'Aflaq's life is then followed to an important climax in his intellectual development -- the union between Syria and Egypt, in the perspective of its ultimate failure. Relatively greater emphasis is placed upon his early years of formation, which heretofore have been neglected,[1] since it is clear that "Aflaq's nationalist and intellectual ideas were well formed before he became a significant political figure in Syria".[2]

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[1]That a man's intellectual product can hardly be divorced from the events in his life, needs no justification; where the available biographical information is skimpy, it is expanded by reconstructing historical events and then portraying 'Aflaq, the subject of the biography, as a likely actor on the historical stage. Some extrapolation is required and the picture that emerges is necessarily speculative to a certain extent. See Young Man Luther (London, 1958) and Dimensions of a New Identity (New York, 1974) about Thomas Jefferson, by E. Erikson; Thomas Jefferson, an Intimate History (New York, 1974) by F.M. Brodie; and The Masks of Power (New York, 1974) by J. Dornbern about Leonid Brezhnev for full-scale biographies using a similar technique.

[2]S. Lavan, Four Christian Arab Nationalists (Unpublished M.A. Thesis submitted to the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1966), 90. The thesis, although interesting in its attempt to compare and connect Buṭrūs al-Bustānī, Najīb Azzūrī, Edmond Rabbath, and Michel 'Aflaq as proto-types for the development of Arab nationalism among Christian Arabs, neglects the possibility that these Christian Arabs derived at least part of their inspiration from their Islamic milieu. Lavan later condensed his thesis in an article, "Four Christian Arab Nationalists", Muslim World 57 (1967), 114-125.

According to S. Muṣṭafa and M. Khadduri,[1] 'Aflaq was born in
Damascus in 1912. Another source,[2] considered more reliable since its
information seems to have been obtained directly from 'Aflaq himself,
states that he was born in 1910. The date quoted by S. Muṣṭafa might be
an official date as, at that time, it was usual for Christian families
to defer registering a birth until the child was baptized.

Information about 'Aflaq's family and his childhood is meagre. The

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[1] S. Muṣṭafa, Muhādarāt 'an al-qiṣṣa fī Sūriyya hatta al-harb
al-'ālamiyya al-thāniya ("Lectures on the Story in Syria until the Second
World War") (Cairo, 1958), 301 n.2. The book is a historical survey of
the short story and the novel in the present Syria with no apparent poli-
tical implications. M. Khadduri, Political Trends in the Arab World, the
Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics (Baltimore, 1970), 153, presents a
synoptic view of the stages through which political thought has evolved in
the Arab world. The value of the book lies in its broad yet systematized
approach, but it magnifies the influence of ideas upon events.

[2] "Forum interviews Michel Aflaq", M.E.F. (February, 1958), 9. Note
that in his more recent work, Arab Contemporaries, The Role of Personalities
in Politics (Baltimore, 1973), 211, khadduri revises 'Aflaq's birthdate to
1910. Khadduri, in this later book, relies on personal contact with 'Aflaq
but does not refer to interviews or to any other sources for the biographi-
cal information he gives. The book is a continuation of his work, Political
Trends, and follows a similar approach of stage by stage development within
the overall picture of "personalities in politics"; the ability of people
to transcend circumstances is over-estimated, unfortunately. An even more
conclusive piece of evidence for 1910 is the application, presented to the
Syrian government on 10 July 1945, to establish the Ba'th as an official
party, in which 'Aflaq is said to be 35 years old; see Nidāl al-B'ath
(Beirut, 1963), Vol.I, 105. S. Haim, in her article, "The Ba'th in Syria"
published by M. Curtis (ed.) in People and Politics in the Middle East
(New Brunswick, N.J., 1971), 132-143, inexplicably chooses 1911 as 'Aflaq's
birthdate. Aside from other factual errors, such as her statement that
Bīṭār studied Mathematics at the Sorbonne when, according to all other
sources, he studied Physics, the whole article is based on a misreading
of A. al-Jundī's book, Al-Ba'th.

family name, "'Aflaq", is an Arabic word,[1] which fact indicates that the
family was not of foreign origin. From the meaning of the word one might
deduce that, most probably, the family was of the lower social strata. The
very paucity of information about 'Aflaq's family suggests that it was not
of the traditional power groups nor of the learned aristocracy, either on
the national or on the communal levels. With clearer hindsight, 'Aflaq
may be viewed as a member of the newly forming petite bourgeoisie.[2] 'Aflaq's
father, "jailed and tortured by both Turks and French"[3] for reasons not
made explicit, was a grain merchant "whose income was occasionally handsome
but would provide no real security for the family".[4] During an interview
with a close friend of Michel 'Aflaq, Abu Jaber was told that 'Aflaq's
mother was "very much interested in politics and a firm believer in Arab
nationalism".[5] The 'Aflaqs were members of the 'Greek' Orthodox Church,
a circumstance which placed Michel 'Aflaq in a particular psycho-social

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[1]See Tartīb al-qāmūs al-muhīt, edited by T.A. al-Zāwī al-Tarabulsī
(1st edition, Cairo, 1959), Part III, 232-233.

[2]See N. Lewis, "The Frontier of Settlement in Syria, 1800-1950",
International Affairs (January, 1955), 48-60, for a short account of basic
economic and demographic changes in Syria during the late 19th and early
20th centuries. Also see W.R. Polk and R.L. Chambers (eds.), Beginnings
of Modernization in the Middle East, the Nineteenth Century (Chicago, 1968);
C.A. Cooper and S.S. Alexander, Economic Development and Population Growth
in the Middle East (New York, 1972); and M. Halpern, "The New Middle Class
as the Principal Revolutionary and Stabilizing Force" in his Politics of
Social Change , 51-78.

[3]"Forum Interviews", 9. Also see P. Seale, The Struggle for Syria;
a Study of post-war Arab Politics, 1945-1958 (London, 1965), 148, where he
quotes 'Aflaq saying, "I had been greatly influenced by my father who had
taken an active part in the struggle against the French and had been impri-
soned many times".

[4]M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 213.

[5]K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 10-11.

situation.[1]

'Aflaq was a pupil at Al-Thānawiyya al-urthūduksiyya[2] (The Orthodox
Secondary School), but graduated from the Tajhīz Dimashq[3] (The Damascus
Preparatory /to the University_7), a public school. Having won a govern-

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[1] According to one thesis, the religious minorities rose to prominence
in the lands of Islam whenever contact between the Islamic East and the
Christian West necessitated exchange and communication. Thus, Christians
and Jews served as translators of Greek knowledge into Arabic during the
early centuries of Islam; see R.M. Haddad, Syrian Christians in Muslim
Society: an Interpretation (Princeton, 1970). According to Haddad, therefore,
Christians in the Arab world of today are serving a similar purpose. The
present situation is more difficult in that the power relationship between
"East and West" is the reverse of what it was during the period between the
7th and the 10th centuries; the East is the weaker. The thesis explains
certain aspects of Arab Christian behavior such as the preponderance of
Christians (and Jews) in the earlier (18th and 19th centuries) contacts
between East and West. But it does not explain why some, and eventually
most, Christain Arabs ultimately reject the Christian West and identify
with the Islamic East.
    The present writer does not presume to be an authority on Eastern
Christianity; nonetheless, I would like to present a few ideas which might
prove useful. M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 213, simplifies the issue
too much when he states that "The Greek Orthodox Church was regarded by
Arabs as a national, not an ecumenical, Church, and its members tended to
identify themselves with nationalist activities". It is to be noted that the
Orthodox Church 'of Antioch and Jerusalem' had emerged victorious from a
"nationalist" struggle with the Patriarch of Istanbul. It won the right to
use Arabic in all of its functions and to assign Arabic-speaking priests and
bishops. By the early twentieth century the Orthodox Church of 'Antioch
and Jerusalem' was practically autonomous. The situation with respect to
the 'Greek' Catholics, those who had earlier defected from the Orthodox to
the Catholic Church, is more complex. While more "western" vis-à-vis the
Orthodox, the Greek Catholics take a definitely "Eastern" stance vis-à-vis
the Roman Church. The defection from the Orthodox to the Catholic Church
may be viewed as a means to achieve greater "national" autonomy than was
allowed by the Greek-dominated Orthodox Church. Thus, Negib Azoury, an
early Christian Arab nationalist, writing in the early twentieth century,
Le Reveil de la nation arabe (Paris, 1905) called for the establishment of
an Arab Catholic Church to counteract Greek orthodoxy and Turkish political
control.

[2] S. Muṣṭafa, Muhādarāt, 301 n.2.

[3] N.M. Kaylani, "The Rise of the Syrian Ba'th, 1940-1958: Political
Success, Party Failure", I.J.M.E.S. III, 4. The Tajhīz was in preparation
for the university, but it is not clear from the sources whether it was one
school or a system of schools.

ment scholarship,[1] he left directly upon graduation for Paris to study history and law[2] at the Sorbonne. There are no further indications in the sources about the earlier stages in 'Aflaq's education, and nowhere was it clarified when and where he learned enough French to enroll at the Sorbonne, assuming that Al-Thānawiyya al-urthūduksiyya was similar to other Orthodox schools of Syria in which classes were conducted in Arabic.[3] There is a divergence in the sources, as far as the dates of 'Aflaq's departure for and stay in France are concerned.[4] Back in Syria, 'Aflaq was assigned to teach history in the public school system.[5]

Aside from these bare bits of information about 'Aflaq's early life, there is a lack of inquiry into the effects that the momentous events he lived through must have had on him and on a whole generation of "angry young men".

'Aflaq was born two years after the Young Turk revolution in 1908 and four years before the outbreak of the First World War. It was during those crucial years that an Arab national movement began to change into a

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[1] M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 213.

[2] Only S. Muṣṭafa states that 'Aflaq read law; see Muhādarāt, 301 n.2.

[3] It is to be noted, however, that with the Mandate in 1923, French was imposed on the public schools.

[4] Middle East Forum gives 1928-33; see "Forum interviews", 9. K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 11, gives 1928-32; S. Muṣṭafa, Muhādarāt, 301 n.2, gives 1930-33; H. Mahr, Die Baath-Partei, Portrait einer panarabischen Bewegung (Munich, 1971), 18, follows P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 148, giving 1932-36. Khadduri revises his dates in his later work, Arab Contemporaries, 213, where he states that "talent and industry won him /'Aflaq/ a government scholarship in 1928 which enabled him to spend the next four years in Paris". This latest revision indicates 1928-32 as that period during which 'Aflaq studied in France.

[5] More specifically, he taught at the Madrasat al-tajhīz al-awwal (First Preparatory School). See M. Ṣafadī, Ḥizb al-ba'th, 56.

nascent political movement.[1] The 1908 revolution created a short-termed
euphoria in the Ottoman Empire, which was quickly superseded by disillu-
sionment as the 'Young Turks' pursued a policy of centralization, believing
that it would strengthen the Empire. The Arab Congress, meeting in Paris
from 18 to 23 June 1913, denounced the centralizing policies of the new
government, particularly those aspects which tended towards the Turkification
of Arabs. Protest within Syria itself had been vigorously suppressed,
forcing the Syrian Arab opposition to go underground. Several secret
societies were formed; the two most known are Al-Jam'iyya al-'arabiyya
al-fata (The Young Arab Society) and Al-'Ahd (The Covenant).[2] In January

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[1] D.S. Thomas, The Transformation of Syrian Arab Nationalism, 1908-
1920 (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill Univer-
sity, 1968) traces the evolution of nationalism in Syria. The thesis shows
that between 1908 and 1918 only a few Syrian Arabs embraced Arabism as a
political motive force and that in 1918, with the destruction of the Ottoman
Empire, Arab nationalism in Syria was accepted by most Syrian Arabs as the
only ideological alternative then available. The thesis depends heavily
upon C.E. Dawn, "The Rise of Arabism in Syria", M.E.J. XVI (Spring, 1962)
145-168. C.E. Dawn has, since then, published several articles dealing with
the transition to Arabism of which, "Arab Islam in the Modern Age", M.E.J.
XIX (Autumn, 1965), 435-446. He has recently published a book which, in
effect, summarizes the views he expressed in his articles; see C.E. Dawn,
From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism
(Urbana, 1973). Also see W.L. Cleveland, The Making of an Arab Nationalist:
Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati' al-Husri (Princeton,
1971). None of these studies satisfactorily succeeds in explaining why
Syrian Arabs moved to Arab nationalism and not to a more particular ideology,
such as 'Syrian' nationalism.

[2] M.H. Farazāt, Al-Haya al-hizbiyya fī Sūriyya: dirāsa tārīkhiyya
li-al-ahzāb al-siyāsiyya wa-tatawwurina bayn 1908-1955 ("Party Life in Syria:
A Historical Study of the Political Parties and their Evolution between 1908-
1955") (Damascus, 1955), 40-43, classifies these secret societies as a stage
in the development of political parties. G. Antonius, Arab Awakening, 107-
112, gives a background for the intellectual history of these secret societies.
Also see A. Hourani, Arabic Thought, 285; Z.N. Zeine, The Emergence of Arab
Nationalism (Beirut, 1966); and G.M. Haddad, Revolutions and Military Rule
in the Middle East (New York, 1965), Vol.2, 73.

1915, members of these two groups addressed a letter to Ḥusayn, the Sharīf of Makka, asking him to lead an Arab revolt. The letter was soon followed in May 1915, by the Damascus Protocol,[1] setting conditions for "a possible Anglo-Arab agreement to secure the independence of the Arab lands".[2]

The outbreak of the First World War and the alignment of the Ottoman Empire with Germany against France and Britain impelled Jamāl Pasha, military governor of Syria, to tighten his control. In July 1915, 58 of the leading citizens of Syria were sentenced to death for treasonable acts or writings against the state; eleven were publicly executed in Beirut on 21 August. Early in 1916 another series of arrests were followed by the hanging of 22 more of the leading professionals and learned men in the city squares of Damascus and Beirut. By means of such bitter policies Jamāl Pasha "earned the sobriquet of al-Saffah (the blood-shedder)".[3]

The impact of such atrocities upon Michel 'Aflaq is difficult to judge. He would have been too young, about five years old, to grasp what

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[1] The main point of the Protocol was an offer to collaborate with Britain in return for British recognition of an independent Arab Kingdom comprising Arabia (except Aden), Palestine, Syria, and Iraq. See G. Antonius, Arab Awakening, 157-158, for the full text of the Protocol.

[2] S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate (London, 1958), 50. Longrigg's book is the most comprehensive work in English about Syria between the two World Wars; although it is representative of British attitudes, distortions are not too serious. It is interesting to note that another group of Arab nationalists, centered in Baghdad, had sent in 1913 a similar proposal to the Amīr 'Abd al-Azīz Ibn Sa'ūd, who by then controlled Najd. He could offer no help, neutralized as he was strategically by his enemy, the pro-Turkish Amīr of the Jabal Shamār to the North; see G. Kirk, A Short History of the Middle East, from the Rise of Islam to Modern Times (6th edition, New York, 1963), 121.

[3] P.K. Hitti, Syria: A Short History (London, 1959), 238, is in fact a condensation of the author's much longer work History of Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine (London, 1951). The two books are the first comprehensive histories of Syria written by an Arab in English. Hitti, like Antonius, believes that Western missionaries and local Christians were the first agents of modernization in the Arab East.

was really happening. But the filtered image he probably received would have been all the more horrifying for its very incomprehensibility, particularly so if his father "was jailed and tortured by the Turks" around the same time.[1] Of all the Arab areas, Greater Syria suffered the most during the First World War. Jamāl Pasha imposed military conscription; there were grave shortages in the most basic necessities, from grain for bread to wood for warmth; all resources being diverted to the Ottoman army.[2] Most probably it was during this period that 'Aflaq's father found himself under pressure from the Ottoman government. As a grain merchant he must have been strictly supervised by the authorities who relied on Damascus, as the entrepôt of the Homs-Hama area, for grain supplies[3] -- bringing home the mounting Arab resentment against the Turks.

Meanwhile, the Sharīf of Makka and his son, Fayṣal continued the dialogue with the Syrians until the outbreak of the revolt in the Hijaz in June 1916, which was spearheaded by the Arab army consisting of "Arab regiments under Iraqi and Syrian officers, with miscellaneous Hijāzī tribal forces".[4] By early 1917, Fayṣal had obtained an oath of loyalty, or what might have been viwed as a bay'a from the surviving leaders of the Arab oppostion movement in Syria.[5]

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[1] According to S.H. Longrigg, _Syria and Lebanon_, 51, "hundreds were removed from their homes and interned in remote places".

[2] See P.K. Hitti, _Short History_. Also see M. McGilvary, _The Dawn of a New Era in Syria_ (New York, 1920) for a personal impressionistic account of war-torn Syria.

[3] J. Berque, _Les Arabes d'hier a demain_ (Paris, 1960), 16.

[4] S.H. Longrigg, _Syria and Lebanon_, 52 n.2.

[5] _Ibid._, 52.

The contradictory negotiations and alliances undertaken by the
Allies, particularly France and Britain, during the war and until the
peace treaty of 1923 have been dealt with elsewhere in great detail.[1]
Only a few salient features need be drawn here. In 1918, the Ottomans were
in full retreat in Syria; on 15 September the Arab Army seized Dar'a, on
1 October Arab forces entered Damascus, Homs was occupied on 11 October,
Hama on the 17th, while Aleppo was reached on the 25th. While Faysal and
the Arab Army were sweeping the interior, French and British troops were
successfully marching through the coastal towns; British forces occupied
Haifa, Acre, Tyre, and Sidon and French troops joined them in Beirut and
Tripoli.

Let us then imagine what the end of the First World War might have
been like for ten-year old Michel 'Aflaq in Damascus.[2] Surely it must
have been thrilling to watch the entrance of the Arab Army led by the
Amīr Faysal "whom/the population of Damascus now greeted, as he galloped

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[1] In particular, see P.C. Helmreich, From Paris to Sèvres, The Parti-
of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919-1920 (Columbus, 1974).

[2] The charismatic character of Damascus is important in the Arab nationa-
list reading of history. As the capital of the Banu Umayya, it is considered
the center of the Islamic world, retaining its Arab characteristics; see P.K.
Hitti, Capital Cities of Arab Islam (Minneapolis, 1973), 61-83, where the
city is described as "Damascus the fragrant, the oldest continually inhabited
town known to history, beauty queen among Moslem cities and one of three
paradises on earth, capital of the Umayya dynasty, ...for a time mistress
of an empire greater than that of Rome at its height." Also see S. al-Jundī,
Al-Ba'th, 38-40, where Damascus is seen as "the city of Arab history, it does
not yield except to a lover: the city of expectation; ...its refusal means
that an undertaking becomes impossible, its acceptance means that history
becomes actual. Islam did not become a great state until Damascus carried
its flag and the nationalist idea would not have prevailed if Damascus had
not believed in it,. Damascus is the capital of the Middle East, it pulses
with life carrying its secret through history. Damascus is Damascus, the
lighted torch whose light dims at times but does not go out. Often do the
eyes imagine that the light has gone out, only to realize that it was gathering
its power to blaze once more."

in, with an emotion long remembered".[1] The relief of having a World War

end must have been easily associated with the coming of the Amīr Fayṣal.

Fayṣal assumed immediate control of all Syria except the areas

along the Mediterranean coast where British and French troops were garri-

soned. In July 1919 he convened a General Syrian Congress which declared

Syria sovereign and free. In March 1920, the Syrian Congress proclaimed

Fayṣal King of Syria.[2] The following account of Fayṣal's short rule as

King of Syria was deliberately quoted from the source with the least

parti-pris.

> Fayṣal and his Syrian supporters began reconstructing Syria. They
> established Arabic as the official language and proceeded to have
> school texts translated from Turkish. They reopened schools and
> started new ones, including the Faculty of Law at the Syrian University
> and the Arab Academy in Damascus. Well-imbued with ideas of parlia-
> mentary government, Fayṣal appointed a committee to begin drawing up a
> constitution. In the areas still held by the French, Syrians continued
> to revolt. In the Nusayriyah Mountains around Latakia in the northwest,
> Salah al-Ali led an uprising against French troops in May 1919. Along
> the Turkish border the nationalist leader Ibrahim Hananu started another
> rebellion in July 1919. The French defeated the attempts, but not
> before both men had acquired a permanent place in Syrian history as
> heroes... France and Great Britain refused to recognize Syria's inde-
> pendence and the Supreme Allied Council, meeting in San Remo, Italy, in
> April 1920, partitioned the Arab world into Mandates, following the

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[1]S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 64. Also see K. al-'Azm, Mudha-
kkirāt Khalid al-'Azm (2nd edition, Beirut, 1972) for a personal account
of Syrian history from 1903 to his death.

[2]For the text of the proclamation and the Constitution, see J. al-Ayāshī,
Tārīkh Sūriyya al-siyāsī min al-intidāb ila al-inqilāb (1918-1954) ("The
Political History of Syria from the Mandate to the Revolution") (Beirut, 1955),
53-57 and 59-78 respectively. Al-Ayāshī's book betrays the emotions of an
Arab patriot and thus loses some of its interpretive value. Nonetheless,
it is useful as a portrait of the Arab nationalist view of history. Moreover,
it reproduces many documents such as the Fayṣalī Constitution of Syria. See
N. al-Armanāzī, Muhādarāt 'an Suriyya min al-iḥtilāl hatta al-jalā'
("Lectures on Syria from the Occupation to the Liberation") (Cairo, 1954),
for an Arab view of Syria's history less emotional and more scholarly than
al-Ayāshī's work.

earlier Sykes-Picot agreement. Syria became a French Mandate,[1] and
French soldiers began marching from Beirut to Damascus. Arab resistance
was crushed /at the battle of Maysalūn/, and on July 25, 1920, the
French marched into Damascus...[2] Syria had experienced its brief moment
of independence, the loss of which Syrians blamed on France and Great
Britain. The experience left not only a deep bitterness against the
West, but a deep-seated determination to reunite Arabs into one state.[3]

,The first and most devastating effect of the Mandate system was the
partition of Greater Syria into French and British spheres of influence.[4]

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[1]The Mandate was drawn up by France, supported by the United States,
confirmed by the League of Nations Council on 24 July 1922 and came into
force in Syria on 29 September 1923. Turkey had given up all claims to Syria
within the mandate boundaries by the Treaty of 20 October 1921, which was
confirmed by Articles 3 and 16 of the Lausanne Treaty signed on 24 July 1923.
See League of Nations, Official Journal, no.8, Part II, August 1922, 1013-
1031 for the "French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon". It is reproduced
as Appendix by E.P. MacCallum in The Nationalist Crusade in Syria (New York,
1928), 253-261, and in Arabic by J. al-Ayāshī in Tārīkh Sūriyya, 170-176.

[2]See R. Storrs, The Memoirs of Sir Ronald Storrs (New York, 1937);
although the book places greater emphasis on the Palestine problem than on
the Arab nationalists as a whole, a careful reading yields many an insight
into the motives of the various people involved in the movement and the
effects the Mandates partition had on the socio-economic fabric of life in
the eastern lands of the Arab world. The role of Fayṣal during the Palestine
negotiations and the Peace Conference, most of which took place in or around
Paris, inevitably led to his loss of prestige among Arab nationalists.
Fayṣal's willingness to reach an understanding with Dr. Chaim Weizmann,
leader of the Zionist movement might be considered necessary in the light
of Realpolitik, but it compromised Fayṣal's claims to the leadership of the
Arab nationalist movement when he recognized the separation of Palestine
from Syria in January 1920. After the invasion of Syria by French forces,
instead of going home to the Hijaz a defeated man, Fayṣal negotiated with
France and Britain until he emerged as the candidate for the throne of
Iraq; see P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 7

[3]Area Handbook for Syria (Washington, D.C., 1965), 17-18.

[4]G. Kirk, The Middle East in the War (London, 1952), 9; and G. Antonius,
Arab Awakening, 109-110. The inherently self-contradictory policies of
twentieth-century imperialism is exemplified in the partition of Greater
Syria; while France and Britain undermined traditional lines of communication
and of trade, they depended upon the traditional leadership whose economic
bases they had corroded; see J. Baulin, Face au Nationalisme arabe (Paris,
1959), 7-8.

Under the protection of Britain, Zionism was allowed a free hand, supposedly to establish a "Jewish national home", in southern Syria.[1] A similar policy of fragmentation was followed by the French, most clearly in their creation of Greater Lebanon and, less obviously, in splitting the remainder of the mandated area into separate zones; the State of Aleppo, the State of Damascus, the Jabal al-Durūz, the Latakia, and the Sanjak of Alexandretta.

The events and changes on the political scene were accompanied by unhappy developments in the economic arena, most disastrous of which was the monetary policy promulgated by the Mandatory Power. General Gouraud imposed a 200,000 gold liras war reparation on Syria. Syria also had to pay the salaries and expenses of the Mandate's swollen bureaucracy. A paper currency, which was issued by the Bank Sūriyya wa-Lubnān, created by the French, was forced upon the people. The Syrians then had to give up the Ottoman, Egyptian, and British gold coins -- which in effect were the gold reserve of the country -- for a paper currency tied to a franc fast being devalued. It should be noted that during the years after the war, France itself was having problems epitomized by the quick succession of governments formed between September 1920 and November 1925 -- ten cabinets to be exact.

France naturally favored the free entry of French goods into the Syrian market, consequently causing great dislocations in the local economy. The small-time local manufacturers, who had had almost no competition during

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[1] See E. Saab, _La Syrie ou la Revolution dans la rancoeur_ (Paris, 1968) for a modern history of Syria focusing on the dismemberment of Palestine. An interesting view is presented by J. Hajjar, _Destinées du Proche-Orient_, who sees the problem in the following terms: "L'idéal d'un nouveau royaume catholique d'aristocratie chevalresque au Liban se prolongeait dans un plan concret de massive émigration juive en Palestine". The continuing problem of Zionism in Palestine has created a veritable flood of literature. In this study only the effects upon the nationalist movement in Syria will be considered.

the war, were wiped out in a short time and any chance that an industrial
bourgeoisie might have had of eventually developing was eliminated. The
role of the middle classes was effectively limited to bureaucratic and
professional functions,[1] while the upper class remained a landed gentry.[2]

Farmers, merchants, and businessmen who suffered financial losses
naturally blamed the French authorities for it. Resentment against the
French aroused by specific causes eventually carried the individual along
the current of discontent where he joined other dissatisfied fellow country-
men. Syria was far from being without fuel for a conflagration.[3]

Zealously pursuing its mission civilisatrice, secular France exploited
religious symbols to disguise those techniques of control used in the Maghrib.
Where in the Maghrib the French divided the population by distinguishing

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[1] See M. Halpern, Politics of Social Change, 51-78.

[2] Syria was dominated by an oligarchy consisting of about fifty families
in the major towns of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama. The same family
names repeatedly appeared on the political scene: 'Asalī, Atāsī, Azm, Ḥakīm,
Jabrī, Kikhya, Mardam, Quwwatlī, and others. For the most part, these were
land-owning families whose interests were tied to the soil and their attitudes
reflected this fact. See G. Torrey, Syrian Politics and the Military, 1945-
1958 (Columbus, 1964), 22.

[3] Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī, "Sūrīyya min yawm Maysalūn ila yawm al-jalā'" (Syria,
from the day of Maysalun to the day of liberation), Addendum to Yawm Maysalūn
("The Day of Maysalun") (2nd edition, Beirut, n.d.). Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī was a
Minister in the Cabinet formed under King Fayṣal in 1920 and played an impor-
tant role in education and politics during the following years. He was a
strong Arab nationalist, prolific writer and systematic thinker. His Yawm
Maysalūn lies within his theory of history as a means to achieve a national
identity; it is only an initial step in formulationg a valid Arab view of
modern history. For the above account of the early years of the French Mandate
in Syria also see S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, and E. Rabbath, L'Evolu-
tion politique de la Syrie sous Mandat de 1920 à 1925 (Paris, 1928). Rabbath
presented this work to the Ecole des Sciences Politiques as his dissertation
for a Doctorat en Droit; it is therefore oriented towards the legal aspects of
the Mandate.

Berbers from Arabs, in Syria they attempted to fragment the people in terms of religious differences. Their greatest success was the establishment of Lebanon as a Christian enclave with a political system based on the pre-dominance of the Maronites who felt an affinity to France for its Catholicity.[1] Moreover, as they had done in the Maghrib and most notably in Algeria, the French undertook a deliberate policy of imposing their language and culture.[2]

The division of Syria into separate zones exacerbated economic and social problems and brought forth a series of revolts in various parts of the countryside and in the city sūqs.[3]

> Threats were uttered to boycott French goods... Shops were shut...
> Noisy, sometimes violent demonstrations were easily organized from the
> city mob or the students on any pretext. The private visit of Mr. Crane
> to Damascus in April 1922 led to repeated demonstrations not only in
> that city but in Homs, Ba'albek, Dayr al-Zur, Tarablus, and elsewhere,
> violent enough to necessitate intervention, and marked by bloodshed;
> long sentences of imprisonment were passed on the instigators, and these
> in turn led to the shutting of bazaars.[4]

The climax came in 1925. At the outset of the year, the French seemed to have succeeded in establishing a modicum of political order. They had crushed the rebel groups in the north and in the east,[5] and the "Druzes were believed to be passing gratefully through a period of accelerated progress".[6] Under

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[1] See E. Rabbath, "Esquisse sur les populations syriennes", Revue Internationale de Sociologie, vol.19, 443-525, for a clear-headed condemnation of French policies in Syria.

[2] See A.L. Tibawi, Modern History, 344.

[3] S. al-Ḥuṣrī, Yawm Maysalūn, 412.

[4] S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 147.

[5] See G. al-Ayāshī, Tārīkh Sūriyya, for a detailed account of the various violent expressions of dissent in Syria between 1920 and 1925.

[6] S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 148.

duress, the French had been forced into allowing the 'states' of Aleppo and Damascus to unite.

It is ironic that the most violent expression of Arab nationalism was initiated by the Durūz, who were considered by the French as outside the realm of a potential Arab state.[1] News of the Durūz rebellion spread and ignited the spirit of revolt in most of Syria.[2] Nationalist leaders in Damascus pleaded with Sulṭān al-Aṭrash, the Durūz chieftain, to attack the Syrian capital. In October, the Durūz invaded the Ghūṭa, outside Damascus. Soon events crowded in upon the city; nationalist leaders led demonstrations and "under the flag of Fayṣal's Kingdom of Syria, and with al-Aṭrash as President, a programme of all-Syrian unity, independence and democracy, a national army and the withdrawal of the foreigner, was addressed to the Syrian nation".[3] The French, under General Sarrail, reacted with violence. The following account hardly needs any comments to highlight the consternation and traumatic bitterness engendered in Syria, particularly in Damascus.

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[1] The Durūz had a preponderantly pro-Hāshimī leadership (see E.P. MacCallum, Nationalist Crusade, 106-107); some Durūz leaders favored Fayṣal, by then King of Iraq while others favored 'Abd Allāh, his brother, ruler of Transjordan. Also see P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 8, who presents the thesis that as a consequence of the failure of either Fayṣal or 'Abd Allāh to obtain Syria, the axial tension between Iraq, with its Fertile Crescent Plan, and Jordan, with its Greater Syria Paln, became endemic to the Syrian poltical scene.

[2] S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 155.

[3] Idem.; to be compared to the Arabic text in J. al-Ayāshī, Tārīkh Sūrīyya, 269, where the demands listed are: (1) the unity of Syria, coast and hinterland, and the recognition of the Syrian State as one, Arab, and completely independent; (2) the formation of a popular government with a Constituent Assembly to publish a Constitution based upon the principle of absolute sovereignty; (3) the withdrawal of occupying forces from Syria and the formation of a national, or communal, army (jaysh millī); and (4) the affirmation of the principles of the French Revolution -- liberty, equality, and fraternity -- as human rights.

The French brought in reinforcements, and besides waging active war against the Druses of the Hawran, executed insurgents, whom they designated as brigands, and burned several Arab villages near Damascus accused of harboring them. Early in October the dead bodies of twenty-four such "brigands" were paraded in the streets of Damascus on camels and then exposed in the public square.[1]

Soon after, ..., on October 17 French troops were attacked in the city by mobs assisted by a hundred or more insurgents from outside... Firing began about noon and the French replied by sending tanks which fired at random down several of the main streets. At five p.m. on Sunday the 18th the French began bombardment without warning from the citadel and from the hills north of the city. Blank shells were used at first, but on the 19th all French troops and residents were removed to an entrenched position by the Salahie gate region, and bombardment continued with live shells until noon of the 20th. Fires started, and six or eight square blocks in the center of the city occupied by bazaars and residences of Arab notables between the street called Straight and the Citadel were wholly destroyed, while occasional buildings were damaged in other parts of the city. Neutral residents of Damascus estimate that 500 to 1000 natives, men, women, and children were killed. Property losses are placed at four to nine million dollars.[2]

The Maydān quarter, where the ʻAflaq family lived,[3] was "haunted

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[1] ʻAflaq lived in one of those squares, and such a sight must have strongly affected him.

[2] Q. Wright, "The Bombardment of Damascus", American Journal of International Law 20 (1926), 264. Wright's account is based on a statement by General Sarrail published in Le Soir of Beirut, 20 November 1925; on articles by Henri de Kerillis in the Echo de Paris, 25 September to 6 October 1925; on French official reports to the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, October 1925 (Minutes of the 7th session); on the account of a reporter in the London Times of 30 October 1925; on the account of the Reverend Elias Newman, an eyewitness, published in Current History, 16 January 1926; and on personal inspection and conversations with residents of Damascus in November 1925. The article itself focuses on the legal implications of the Damascus bombardment by the French; the discussion centers on the question whether Syria and other "non-Christian" states were subject to international law, mainly the law of war. The author concedes that "it does seem that the different culture or the fact of tutelage would withdraw Syrians from the protection of the law of war". Nonetheless, he concludes that "French forces in Syria, ..., violated international law in bombarding Damascus."

[3] M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 213.

... by mobile and truculent rebels".[1] No doubt the fact that 'Aflaq lived

and, later, taught in the Maydān quarter must have played an important role

in his political socialization, in the formation of his political ideas.[2]

> In mid-February a series of battles in street and garden, conducted
> with savage indiscipline by the auxiliaries and followed by wholesale
> looting, cleared the quarter of most of its inhabitants. A few weeks
> later, however, it was still used as a rebel rallying area, and early
> in May the French Command decided on its further destruction by shelling,
> air-bombing, renewed ground operations, and the diversion of its water-
> supply. Only in August was comparative quiet restored to the remnants
> of the Maydan area, and its garrison withdrawn.[3]

The immediate effects of the bombardment were demographic and economic

dislocations. Refugees fled to the countryside and the network of economic

transactions centered on Damascus broke down completely. Trade and industry

were paralyzed and, as the revolt spread to other areas of the country,

agriculture also suffered. The primitive measures which the French under-

took, such as cutting down the fruit-trees of the Ghūṭa, did not improve

the disastrous economic consequences. It is no wonder then that 'Aflaq

asserted, "Before going to France I was ... a nationalist".[4]

It took years for the French to re-establish a semblance of order.

General Sarrail was replaced by M. de Jouvenel, and later by M. Henri Ponsot,

as High Commissioners who aimed at a political settlement of Syrian troubles.

The adjustment in French Mandatory policies in Syria gave Syrian leaders

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[1] S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 164. See also al-'Ayāshī, Tārīkh Sūriyya, 286-287. The Maydan quarter is known for its highly political atmosphere.

[2] See M.H. van Dusen, "Political Integration and Regionalism in Syria", M.E.J. 26/2 (1972), 129-135.

[3] S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 164.

[4] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 148. As a 15-year old teenager in trying conditions, 'Aflaq must have been passing through an intellectual and spiritual puberty as tormenting as the physical.

the opportunity to organize themselves.[1] While the People's Party had appeared in 1925, it had become moribund and al-Kutla al-wataniyya (literally "the Patriotic Bloc" but known as the "National Bloc") became prominent in 1929.[2] The National Bloc included many of those who had struggled for autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. Followers of the Istiqlāl (Independence Party) (pre-1919) and of the People's Party joined it. In April 1928 elections were held for a Constituent Assembly which finally succeeded in drafting a Constitution only to have it rejected by M. Ponsot, because of article 2 which upheld the indivisibility of "Syrian territories detached from the Ottoman Empire".[3]

The political modus vivendi worked out in 1928 came just in time for 'Aflaq to accept a scholarship for university studies in France. From 1928 to 1932, he studied at the Sorbonne where he earned his licence.[4] The interlude that 'Aflaq spent in France was an eventful period for Europe as well as for France itself. In 1929, the stock market fell through in New York and a world economic crisis broke out. Mainly because of the dual -- agricultural and industrial -- basis of its economy, France was not seriously affected until 1931; the Gay Twenties had led into the Great Depression of the 1930s. It was a time of acute ministerial instability in France; between the resignation of Poincaré in 1929 and the Popular Front government under Léon Blum in 1936, there were no fewer than 20 ministerial crises. The Great Depression was proof enough that the Western system was not

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[1] N.A. Ziadeh, Syria and Lebanon (new York, 1957).

[2] For a concise history of political parties in Mandate Syria see G.H. Torrey, "Syrian Political Parties up to Independence" in Syrian Politics.

[3] A.L. Tibawi, Modern History, 348.

[4] A.Y. el-Khalil, Socialist Parties, 109.

invincible.

In Syria, the period was overshadowed by a continuous depression as there were no defenses against deteriorating international economic conditions. The political negotiations between the Mandated Syrians and Mandatory France were at a stale-mate, encouraging leaders of the nationalist movement to consolidate their efforts. When the High Commissioner forced a Constitution on Syria in May 1930, it was as a National Bloc that these leaders faced the elections of 1932 although full party organization or single command was not yet perfected.[1] In the two years between the proclamation of the Constitution and the elections, the Nationalists met repeatedly, formulated their position as sole true representatives for Syria and kept in close touch with unionist elements in Lebanon, the 'Alawī areas, and the Jabal al-Durūz.

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[1] S.H. Longrigg, _Syria and Lebanon_, 187.

Chapter II

The Young Man as an Artist

The outburst of 1925 and the bombardment of Damascus could have engendered only a lasting distrust of France in 'Aflaq's heart, which prevented him from ever becoming completely acculturated to France or the French. The events of 1925 were too recent to be easily forgotten; the alienation of a Christian in an Islamic milieu translated into the alienation of an Orthodox, an "Eastern Christian", at sea in "Western Catholicism", metamorphosed into the alienation of an Arab at bay in Europe.

While in France, 'Aflaq met Arab students from countries other than Syria, such as the Moroccan 'Alāl al-Fāsī.[1] According to some sources, 'Aflaq founded an Arab Students' Union which agitated for the independence and unity of Arab lands.[2] According to a different source, an "Arab educational society" was organized, which endeavored to "enlighten Arabs and Europeans alike about the uniqueness of Arab nationalism and its rich heritage".[3] According to yet another source, 'Aflaq "was in close contact with other Arab student unions and Arab societies which aimed at serving

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[1]N.M. Kaylani, "Rise of the Syrian Ba'th", 4.

[2]M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 213. Also see K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 11.

[3]N.M. Kaylani, "Rise of the Syrian Ba'th", 4, referring to I. Salāma, Al-Ba'th min al-madāris ila al-thukanāt (Beirut, 1969), 5-6.

the Arab cause."[1] In other words, 'Aflaq seems to have participated in
the quasi-political activities of Arab students in Paris, in what way and
to what extent are not very clear.

The political domination of France over Syria and Lebanon in the
Mashriq and over Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco in the Maghrib and its
avowed mission civilisatrice gave it a strong position of cultural influence.
The French intellectual heritage was a common source for many Arab intellec-
tuals from various areas, a factor which accelerated their mutual recognition.

'Aflaq is said to have read[2] Anatole France,[3] Romain Rolland,[4]

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[1] A.Y. el-Khalil, Socialist Parties, 109. The activities of Arab
students abroad, particularly during the inter-war period, have not yet been
investigated, although they seem to have played an important role in the
political socialization of future leaders. The first "Conference of the
Arab Students in Europe" supposedly took place in Brussels in December
1938; see S.G. Haim, Arab Nationalism, 100.

[2] See "Forum interviews", 9; K.Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 11; and H. Agwani,
"The Ba'th: A Study in Contemporary Arab Politics", International Studies
III/1 (1961), 10. T. Khalidi, "Critical Study", bases his analysis on the
premise that 'Aflaq derived his inspiration primarily from Hegel; a premise
to which I take exception.   S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 27, makes a passing
reference to 'Aflaq's possession of Alfred Rosenberg's Der Mythus des 20.
Jahrhunderts, eine Wertung des seelischigeistigen Gestaltenkampfe unserer
Zeit ("The Myth of the Twentieth Century, an Evaluation of Conflicting
Mental and Spiritual Types in our Time") published in 1920 in Munich. The
best source about 'Aflaq's inspiration is 'Aflaq himself in an interview
with P. Seale in Beirut on 3 January 1961, in which he refers specifically
to the influence André Gide and Romain Rolland had on him; see Struggle for
Syria, 149.

[3] In the early 1930s, Anatole France was at his peak as a master of
literary style, having been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1921.
His anti-clericism and his sympathy for the socialism of Jean Jaurés are
brought out in the fourth and last volume of his Histoire Contemporaine
(1897-1901) in the account of the Dreyfus affair, when a Jewish captain in
the French army was unjustly condemned for treason, a case which illustrates
the problem of religion versus national identification. The themes of anti-
clericism and socialism as well as the problem of national versus religious
affiliation struck responsive chords in 'Aflaq.

[4] Romain Rolland, who received a Nobel Prize for literature in 1915,—

Bergson,[1] Dostoevski, Tolstoi,[2] Marx, Nietzsche,[3] Gandhi,[4] but "his

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[*]"combined literature and history to produce such plays as Danton (1900) and Le Quatorze Juillet (1902). In these plays he aimed at illustrating the moral truth ratner than at exact historical accuracy. In his plays on the French revolution, the heroes àre meant to embody a religious, national, or rationalist political action, or the need to combine justice to the individual with the preservation of public order. Rolland's passion for the heroic, reflected by 'Aflaq in such essays as the appended "In Memory of the Arab Prophet", found expression in a series of Vies des hommes illustres, such as Vie de Beethoven (1903). His most famous work is Jean-Christophe (1904-12), an epic in conception and style, presenting the crises confronting a creative artist who, even at moments of deep depression, is inspired by love of life, also a central tenet for 'Aflaq. At the end of the First World war, Rolland turned to Asia, especially to India, seeking to understand its mystical philosophy and following sympathetically its struggle for emancipation in Mahatma Gandhi (1924), Vie de Ramakrishna (1929), and Vie de Vivekananda (1930). He participated in left-wing congresses and manifestos and, in 1935, visited the U.S.S.R. but never became a member of the Communist Party. The First World War inspired his second monumental work, L'Ame enchantée (seven volumes, 1922-23; one volume, 1951) which concludes by exposing the cruel effects of sectarianism. See in particular F.J. Harris, André Gide and Romain Rolland: Two Men Divided (New Brunswick, N.J., 1973), for the differences between Rolland and Gide.

[1]While it might be difficult to discern elements of alienation in the lives of Anatole France or of Romain Rolland, the case is different for Bergson, as well as for Gide. Bergson was born in 1959 in Paris of Irish-Jewish parents, but his works do not project his particular difficulties onto a universal level. Bergson was basically interested in the problem of existence itself rather than with modes of existence. His main thesis is that being is itself change and movement (i.e. becoming, not being) an idea that foreshadows the later existentialist position. His infatuation with life is reflected in 'Aflaq's literary attempts, where he rejects suicide.

[2]It is probable that 'Aflaq was introduced to Russian writers through Gide's biography, Dostoievsky, written in imitation of Rolland's book about Beethoven. One can only speculate whether 'Aflaq felt any added empathy, as a fellow Orthodox, to Dostoevski's and Tolstoi's religious problems. The theme of revolt, very central for 'Aflaq, is clear in both writers' works, although Dostoevski reverted to an ultra-conservative stance in his later days when he believed that the Orthodox Church embodied in Russia was alone destined to lead the nations of Europe and, indeed, the world, in the path of righteousness. Tolstoi's search for meaning in life led him, in contrast to Dostoevski, to a form of Christian anarchism, rejecting the authority of the Church and of organized government. His views of history were probably of interest to 'Aflaq who was studying the subject; Tolstoi believed that natural law determines the lives of human beings and that all are ruled by an inexorable historical determinism.

[3]Tolstoi's attack on organized religion was carried further by"

chief admiration was for Gide".[1] The influence of Western writers on

'Aflaq's thought is to be weighed with caution in view of the assertion

'Aflaq is supposed to have made to Rouleau, that he had not been influenced

by any Western philosopher or writer. Rouleau quotes 'Aflaq saying,

> Besides, I have lost contact with the currents of Western thought
> since the beginning of the Second World War, devoting most of my time
> to the practical tasks of my party.[2]

[ ]Nietzsche, who probably came to the attention of 'Aflaq also through
the writings of Andre Gide, who was himself influenced by German schools of
thought. Nietzsche's critique of traditional religion is in terms of his
basic thesis that man's fundamental drive is for the power to perfect himself,
through an ethic of self-assertion, to become a creator rather than a mere
creature. That theme is echoed in the stories written by 'Aflaq which, wnile
illustrating the lesson of independence and assertion, never approach the
irrational extreme of the Nietzschean superman.

[4]'Aflaq probably became interested in Gandhi through the works of
Romain Rolland as well as of André Gide, as both writers experienced a period
of attraction towards the Orient mystique. 'Aflaq's attitude towards violence
is different from Gandhi; he does not condemn violence as a means of ful-
filling the revolution, although at times one feels as if he would have
liked to.

[1]M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 213. Gide had primary influence
over 'Aflaq, both as a creative writer and as a thinker. Other than Gide's
several trips to the Maghrib and to the Mashriq, there is no historical
evidence that he read any Islamic works or had any knowledge of Islamic
philosophy and mysticism. Moreover, other than the fact that such litera-
ture could have been available to Michel 'Aflaq, there is no evidence that
he ever delved into it. Nonetheless, it seems to me that Gide held sway
over 'Aflaq precisely because Gide's ideas echo the philosophy of Islamic
mysticism. Interestingly enough, Gide himself claims that "what we call
influence is only the awakening of dormant preferences"; see his "De
l'influence en littérature", Oeuvres Complètes, III, 251, as cited by
N.J. Nersoyan, André Gide; The Theism of an Atheist (Syracuse, 1969), 18.

[2]In an alleged interview in 1962; see E. Rouleau, "The Syrian Enigma:
What is the Ba'th", written in 1967 and reprinted in I.L. Gendzier, The Middle
East Reader (New York, 1969), 158. It should be pointed out that the article
is itself questionable on several counts; Rouleau relies mainly upon a per-
sonal source who "wishes to remain anonymous" and upon Wahīb al-Ghānim who,
at one time, attempted to take over 'Aflaq's position in the Party.

It is quite probable that 'Aflaq read classical and modern Arabic works, but the sources give only the European writers whose works he is supposed to have studied.[1] On the whole, it seems that André Gide, and perhaps Dostoevki,[2] held sway over 'Aflaq as an artist and as a political thinker while Anatole France, Bergson, and other writers added thematic variations.

By the end of André Gide's long literary career, he was recognized as one of the most important writers of Europe, who mirrored the emotions and thoughts of an era. With Gide, more than with other writers, it is very difficult to separate the works from the man. André Gide[3] was born in the Paris of 1869 into a Protestant family which, through his own diaries, is known to have been the scene of clashes between sharply divergent moral and religious tendencies. Gide lived most of his life during the Third Republic, the instability of which may be gauged from the less than twenty-four-hour duration of Ribot's government in May 1914. He died during the Fourth Republic which was an interlude between de Gaulle's Provisional Government and his Fifth Republic. In effect, the political

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[1] Lacking a study of 'Aflaq's Arabic sources, the present analysis can be considered only as incomplete. It is left for future research to delve into the Arabic sources of 'Aflaq's inspiration.

[2] S. Mustafa, Muhādarāt, 303.

[3] The following compte rendu of those aspects of Gide which are reflected by 'Aflaq is based mainly upon N.J. Nersoyan, Theism of an Atheist. There have been many works written about Gide, of which: E.U. Bertalot, André Gide et l'attente de Dieu (Paris, 1967); P. de Boisdeffre, Vie d'André Gide (Paris, 1970); G.I. Brachfeld, André Gide and the Communist Temptation (Geneve, 1959); J.M. Chadourne, Gide et l'Afrique (Paris, Nizet); M. Mancuer, Gide, l'indecision passionnée (Paris, 1969); J. O'Brien, Portrait of Andre Gide; a Critical Biography (New York, 1953); L. Thomas, André Gide; the Ethic of the Artist (London, 1950).

situation in France was almost continuously chaotic from the day of Gide's birth to the day of his death.[1]

Gide's interaction with those conditions was expressed in his literary creativity. In a world which exhibited no stability and where the accepted standards of conduct had broken down, Gide was practically driven to reappraise his own potentialities and to seek a basis of moral behavior within himself. In contrast to Bergson, Gide did delve into his own nature and posed his personal problems as universal questions. It is only later in his life that Gide was drawn to political concerns, as the natural outcome of his moral search. It is the metaphysics underlying his creative work that led Gide to an appreciation of the socio-political problems of his day. But political action never became a central mode for Gide; he remained the creative artist until his death.[2]

As a creative writer Gide was indifferent to logical consistency. Moreover, contradiction was for Gide an effective means of getting at the truth. The dialogue of which contradiction is but the linguistic manifestation may become fierce discord but the resulting reconciliation would lead to greater harmony,[3] and the highest level of perfection would be attained in truth and perfection. Incapable of an unfettered hedonism or of an unfettered puritanism, Gide oscillates between the realm of established

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[1] This is paralleled by the 'continuously chaotic' conditions in Syria since the First World War to the present times.

[2] The parallel between Gide and 'Aflaq breaks here since 'Aflaq did take political action, at first directly and openly and later, indirectly and from behind the scene.

[3] A position which is definitely non-Marxist. As echoed by 'Aflaq, it is the clue to his ultimately anti-Marxist stance. It is also the reason why we cannot consider 'Aflaq as Hegelian.

order, and that of anarchy. He makes this state of oscillation the basis of a new ethics; cultivating extremes he attempts to hold them in precarious balance.[1]

Gide kept casting the problem of knowledge and reason into a soul-and-body or heart-and-mind contrast.[2] For Gide, knowledge is not acquired but breaks into consciousness when the unknower is properly stimulated. Gide was driven by the idea that the body keeps man from reaching the substance of things, that it keeps him away from the 'Whole', until "he discovered that the body which is an instrument of isolation is also an instrument of communion".[3] This discovery led Gide to his latter-day socio-political concerns; in fact, he himself said that what he sought in communism was communion.[4]

The anxiety which pervades Gide's work is that anxiety of separateness, of alienation. The search for some way to either integrate the individual into the Whole or to render him autonomous was the basic problem for Gide.[5] Self-knowledge becomes salvation; in order to know oneself one must engage in an activity which would cause one to come face to face with that part of

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[1]Gide was quite conscious of this process as in the following passage: "Est-ce ma faute à moi si votre Dieu prit si grand soin de me faire naître entre deux étoiles, fruit de deux sangs, de deux provinces et de deux confessions?" as quoted by K.I. Perry, The Religious Symbolism of André Gide (Paris, 1969) from Andre Gide, Journal, X, 45-46.

[2]'Aflaq also used the same terminology, which, incidentally, is common in Sūfī material; see the appended "In Memory of the Arab Prophet".

[3]N.J. Nersoyan, André Gide, 25.

[4]A. Gide, "Les Cahiers, Oeuvres Complètes, I, 50.

[5]But the two choices may be considered as one and the same since only by knowing himself may the individual truly integrate into the Whole.

the unnamable of which the 'self' is a carrier. Self-knowledge is not simply the recognition of one's limitations but the recognition of the limitless beyond which is yet part of the 'self'; thus, the "best means of learning to know oneself is seeking to understand others".[1]

Something of the theory that a man's salvation lay in the giving of his naked self to a reality that lovingly envelops the 'self', persisted in Gide. It is a dream of the unity of spirits without arbitrary unification; in such unity, as in love, there is self-discovery. The 'self' finds its place in the 'Self' of the whole and is neither lost nor forced into a mold at the cost of losing its own given shape. The process of achieving such an ideal is not determinist in the sense that history is forced to conform to an arbitrary scheme of perfection. Rather, one must have the consciousness of moving toward fulfillment as a concrete possibility even though that fulfillment cannot and ought not be visualized in detail ahead of time.[2]

For Gide, the function of the artist therefore is not to present an unchanging ideal. It is to bear witness to the unfolding of fulfillment while the artist himself experiences in his person the birth pains of the 'ever new'. Art is the bridge between incomplete actuality and the unfolding ideal;[3] that art leads from unrest to serenity was a favourite theme in Gide's works. There is no difference between the pursuit of

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[1] A. Gide, The Journals of André Gide, trans. by J. O'Brien (New York, 1949), II, 355.

[2] Note the similarity of Gide's view and of 'Aflaq's view of history, in that history is seen as the fulfillment of destiny.

[3] Aflaq transposed this idea to the political arena and, for him, the Ba'th Party, as an embodiment of the 'new' is the 'bridge' between the unsatisfactory present and the glorious future.

truth and its attainment.

Beneath the diverse imagery of Gide there is, first, the god that is held in the mind as if a specific, intellectually encompassable object corresponded to it and, secondly, God, the indeterminate Truth that includes, envelops, and transcends one's own being. In the former of these, Gide never quite believed, since he maintained that it is impossible to 'believe' and to 'know' simultaneously inasmuch as these two concepts are mutually exclusive.

Sacredness is then ascribed to a secular condition by giving it a sacred name. That God is not but becomes was a conviction which restored Gide's ethical balance; he found in this formula a ground on which religion and morality could be reconciled or, rather, morality could be given an ultimate, religious support. The point to be retained is that Gide could never quite abandon the notion of the Absolute. Toward the reality which does not admit of finitude, definiteness, contains the world, militates against its absurdity and man's aloneness, saves the course of history from being a purposeless, chaotic adventure - toward this reality Gide had an attitude of worship.[1]

Mysticism, presupposing and demanding the abdication of reason, was a term of opprobium for Gide. He rejects the term mysticism and its synonyms, besides abdication of reason, arbitrary, unwarranted assertions, foggy, unclear, befuddled thinking, the domination of society by a class of people,

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[1]This attitude is quite clear in 'Aflaq's writings, particularly his early essays and speeches, where he holds that al-ḥaqq (Truth) is the highest principle.

self-deception, baseless hope and vacuous promises. And yet, trans-rational union with the Real continued to be his highest aspiration. The answer to human alienation, to the struggle between the actual and the ideal reality, is what the mystics call the unitive way. The influence of North Africa on Gide's idea of the Real is unmistakable in the following passage:

> Each object lost its lustre, its weight, its reality. I was walking but dreamily. It seemed to me that I did not see, but I remembered; or rather, I was advancing, not doubting that those things there were real, but that it was I who was seeing them -- so thorough was my identification with them.[1]

In Les Nourritures Terrestres, Gide achieves a recognition that though the senses might be instruments to overcome isolation, they are insufficient. Noteworthy is the fact that Gide took the epigraph for this work from the Quran. The book is illustrative of the generally religious atmosphere created by Gide in his writings.

Reacting to human anxiety, Gide advocated a search for the meaning of things beyond history.[2] After awakening to his obligations toward society/Gide modified his 'mysticism' by substituting the name "prolix humanity" to the 'Whole'.

> God holds me, I hold him; we are. But in thinking this, I am but one with all of creation, I melt and am absorbed in prolix humanity.[3]

The declaration is ostensibly theistic but fundamentally humanistic, since God is love and salvation or self-discovery is in love, which is a roundabout way of saying that salvation is in God. But God is in humanity.

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[1]A. Gide, "Le Renoncement au Voyage", Oeuvres Complètes, IV, 328.

[2]Again, Gide takes a clear-cut departure from the Hegelian or the Marxist position vis-à-vis history.

[3]Nouvelles Nourritures, 79-80, as quoted by H.J. Nersoyan, André Gide, 141. Translated into 'Aflaq's world, Arab nationalism becomes the first step to achieve union with total humanity.

Gide's most influential works up to 1932, when 'Aflaq left France,
were L'Immoraliste (1902) in which he preaches escape from traditional
conventions, and Corydon (1924) in which he presents his most sustained
theory of morality justifying his homosexuality; namely, that a given
behavior is 'good' when it conforms to nature esthetically and is useful
to society.

Gide was greatly attracted by the Maghrib: Algeria, Tunisia, and
Morocco meant to him what Italy had meant to Goethe, a vital turning point
and a joyful revelation. In 1926, two years before 'Aflaq arrived in Paris,
Gide set off for the French colonies in Africa and, in 1927, he attacked the
French colonial system in his two works: Voyage au Congo and Retour du Tchad.[1]
His consequent enthusiasm for, and later disillusionment from, communism
are documented in his two books Retour de l'U.R.S.S. (1936) and Retouche
à mon Retour de l'U.R.S.S. (1937). 'Aflaq is said to have returned to France
in 1937 during the summer vacation[2] and he probably picked up the two books.
Gide probably continued to influence 'Aflaq even after the latter's return
to Syria since Gide's last work, Ainsi soit-il, les jeux sont faits, was
published posthumously in the 1950s.

Back in Syria, 'Aflaq was assigned to teach history in the secondary
school system of Damscus, along with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Bīṭār, "a member of a
Muslim family reputed for its learning and strong nationalist leanings",[3]

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[1] Gide's clearly anti-colonialist stand must have been an added
attraction to 'Aflaq, who had just arrived from a besieged Syria.

[2] E. Rouleau, "Syrian Enigma", 159.

[3] M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 214. Bīṭār is considered a co-
founder with 'Aflaq of the Ba'th Party.

whom he had known in his school days. Between 1932 and 1936, 'Aflaq spent his free time writing short stories, a novel, and a play[1] which reflected André Gide's impulse away from "orthodox realism, classical psychology and conventional structure" and towards "the somber and the ironic distortions, the psychological explorations, and the dislocations in form".[2] Of 'Aflaq's literary attempts, Muṣṭafa writes that "he is the unfinished symphony of modern Arabic literature".[3] 'Aflaq has not proved to be a prolific writer, but his value lies

> ...in the intellectual revolt he propagated and in the ideal liberation he inspired, and still continues to inspire, the generations he brought up; he is the foremost among those pioneers who built a bridge between Arab thought growing in Syria and universal values.[4]

Even during this early period, 'Aflaq's artistic efforts were not simply literature for its own sake but expressed new moral and social attitudes which had been unknown in Syria. 'Aflaq lacked the discipline necessary to the creative artist and his friends had to force him to write, always at the last moment. As the printing presses waited, 'Aflaq would dash off page after page; for 'Aflaq the story was the child of the moment, spontaneous.[5] Nonetheless, 'Aflaq succeeded in combining universal themes with a knowledge of the Arab intellectual heritage.

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[1]See S. Muṣṭafa, Muḥāḍarāt, 301-327, for excerpts from 'Aflaq's short stories and for an analysis of his literary output, upon which the following account is based.

[2]A.L. Guérard, André Gide (New York, 1963), xv.

[3]S. Muṣṭafa, Muḥāḍarāt, 301.

[4]Ibid., 302.

[5]Ibid., 314-315.

At this stage of 'Aflaq's intellectual development, one could
still distinguish the message from the medium; the message was revolt
against the current socio-economic and political situation while the
medium was the literary form such as the short story, the novel, or the
play. The medium gradually changed to political action while the message
remained the same. And yet, political action did not overwhelm the artist
in 'Aflaq; his later essays and speeches cannot be classified simply as
political propaganda because they did not lose the multi-level implications
of literature.

'Aflaq gave his views about the literary form, specifically the
novel and the short story, in an interview to the journal Al-Ayyām (The Days)
in 1935. The following are excerpts quoted by Muṣṭafa in his study of
'Aflaq's literary work.[1]

> ...Since writers in the Arab world began treating the story, they see
> it as a personal thing and limit it to love episodes or to the descrip-
> tion of particular social conditions (such as the life of villages or
> of gamblers). They are concerned with the narrow topic and do not care
> about truly universal themes. Literators have not yet confessed that
> the story should encompass all the facets of life and penetrate to its
> very depth, like poetry and philosophy. I do not believe that the Arabic
> story is only a special kind of literature. The story has to encompass
> all of man's life; including politics, society, philosophy, so that the
> story is not read for amusement or novelty but to delve into the pro-
> fundities of human life. The art of the story in Syria is still in the
> experimental stage. Writers hesitate between two positions: an imaginary
> position so far removed from reality that it almost becomes a stranger
> to life, and a realistic position limited to rigid photographs of life
> ...without life! The most preferred attitude is that the writer remain
> rooted in reality while safe-guarding the liberty of his imagination
> and the force of his feelings.

The first of 'Aflaq's short stories of which there is a record was
published in the periodical Al-Ayyām on 16 November 1934. Insān Jadīd ("A

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[1] S. Muṣṭafa, Muhāḍarāt, 306.

New Man ") is the story of a professor walking in a garden, deep in thought about his next lecture on the ethics of Schopenhauer.[1] While he is immersed in deep thought, bird droppings fall on his notes; the professor awakens to the beauty of nature and discovers his own life forces. He rebels against, abandons the constraints of his former life, and finds freedom and self-assertion as a ship's cook.[2]

The second story, Ra's Sa'īd Afandī ("The Head of Mister Happy"), reflects another of Gide's themes, escape. At first the crisis which Mister Happy flees from is a mystery. Only indirectly does the reader come to realize that Mister Happy had discovered his wife in the arms of her lover. The resultant anxiety is represented by the unnatural feeling of an enlarged head. There seems to be no cure for the enlarged head of Mister Happy, except suicide. But he passes by the edge of the river and does not jump. Instead he forgets his wife's treachery by betraying her in the arms of a prostitute.

A third story, Al-Ṣafqa ("The Slap"), published on 31 May 1935, treats of man's exploitation by woman. One might see in the second and third stories a love-hate attitude towards women, similar to Gide's tormented relationships with the gentler sex. The Slap is the revolt of a collapsed character whose personality had been destroyed by his job as a government teacher and his lot as a husband. He was reduced to a machine; swallowed his food as a machine swallows its oil, slept as a machine quiets

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[1] According to J. O'Brien, Portrait of Andre Gide, 44, Gide was initiated to philosophy with Schopenhauer's World as Will and Idea, which led him to the Symbolists' disdain of realism. Eventually, Gide had revolted against Symbolism as sterile and his revolt is echoed by 'Aflaq.

[2] The theme of voyaging is characteristic of Gide while the revelling in life might also be traceable to Bergson.

down in the factory, and produced 24 liras at the end of the month. Suddenly, he revolts. But his revolt is passive; he does not divorce his wife, he does not resign his job but allows himself to sicken and die. In her anger, his wife slaps the corpse.

As for Gide, the elements of time and place are unimportant in 'Aflaq's short stories. 'Aflaq might, with a light touch, illuminate the local reality but he seems to have preferred keeping his level of reality free from any roots tying it to a particular place or a particular time. Thus, the professor in A New Man appears to the reader out of nowhere, free of any time/space framework; he is a professor and it is springtime. The story climbs to a climax of alienation and anxiety, transforming the philosophy professor into a cook on a small vessel. The story becomes charged with emotion; anxiety carries the happening to a universal magnitude.

The professor ascends from one level of consciousness to another until he decides to eliminate the past from his very being and to begin life as a new man. The freedom he achieves is essentially a freedom of submission whose appeal is religious in the sense that it provides the individual, dangling free of social conventions and hence anxious, with an external reality to which he can attach himself and with which he can literally identify. The Earth, of which the individual is a part, is that tangible reality, and the means of self-attachment are the senses providing a sensuous alternative to emotional, intellectual, or religious ties.

Through each of 'Aflaq's stories a clear line climbs towards a human crisis, towards a higher level of anxiety. 'Aflaq did not hold his stories to a set chronology, or even to a sharp, clearly-defined movement.

He might take the story step by step or he might dwell on the crisis itself. In any case, the _Angst_ which the event carried holds sway. The glimpses revealed by the written lines do not clarify the crisis but mystify and gather around the situation. The light allowed is not directed towards the crisis but emanates from it. The causes of the crisis might remain a mystery but its shadows reveal the universal human condition which it represents.

Despite his undisciplined writing, 'Aflaq achieved a singular artistic unity in his stories. In _The Slap_, the story begins with two loci: the teacher, who had been transformed into a machine, and the wife, who had beseiged him with her disdain. 'Aflaq connected the two by the slap against which the teacher attempts his revolt.

The characters in 'Aflaq's stories are not delimited by definite features. 'Aflaq builds his individual characters from inside the story, by which means he re-creates a universal human condition. Although his stories are psychological, they are not built on self-descrption by the characters or on analysis by the author. The critical situation a character finds himself in and his actions to resolve the crisis speak for him. 'Aflaq depended upon side images to illuminate the event and its complications. Each image is the door connecting the character and his crisis, on the one hand, and the story and the reader, on the other hand. In effect, the side images bridge the distance between the character and the crisis as they force the reader into living the crisis himself.

Thus, in _A New Man_, the reader learns the facts about the professor -- that he teaches philosophy, that he is 34 years old, that he has a black

beard, a wife and children -- only as they reflect and shed meaning on the story. The garden in which the professor is walking appears only through his actions -- the Spring excites him, the breeze throws off his hat, the frog and the stream recall him to nature, and the heat teases him.

The build-up of Angst occurs without monologue or analysis but by a series of incremental twinges, one after the other, sufficient to allow a logical acceptance of the professor's escape towards another life. What separates the characters created by 'Aflaq from reality is the minute difference between their own reactions and the usual reactions of ordinary people in similar situations. Although many philosophy professors might wish to escape, very few actually do. Although many government employees might wish revenge on the system, very few actually carry it out. Although many desperate people might wish to kill themselves, those who do commit suicide are considered crazy. In each of these situations, the 'strange' reaction is yet reasonable and possible at each moment. 'Aflaq's characters require an intellectual leval unlimited by reality too close.

'Aflaq also wrote a novel in 1935, Shaytān niṣf al-layl ("Midnight Demon") of which only two parts are to be found, published on 19 and 28 January 1935, while the rest seems to have been lost. The novel focuses upon the metaphysical existentialist problem of freedom, through the theme of suicide.

'Aflaq sometimes limited his characters, when he gave in to his pedagogical and moralistic tendencies, to transmitting his own views. The reader would then feel that they were revolting, not by their own spirit, but against the manipulations of the author. This appears most clearly in

<u>Midnight Demon</u>, in which a dialogue about freedom and suicide is marred

by being stuck to the story without flowing smoothly with it.

The only play 'Aflaq wrote, <u>Mawt al-Sindbāb</u> ("The Death of Sindbād"),[1]

was published in the journal <u>Al-Ṭalī'a</u> (The Vanguard). The play again

reflects a basic theme in Gide's <u>Narcisse</u> and <u>Voyage d'Urien</u>; travelling

in search of Truth which ends in the discovery of oneself. Al-Jundī sees

in the play more than a mere copy of André Gide's works;

> I see in it a difference from Gide; the influence of Nietzsche is in
> the ethereal oriental features with the touches of an artist wishing
> to depart the land of art, suffering from a crisis of escape from his
> own genius. His powers were not able to withstand the wonder of an
> artist so he chose politics as a haven for his weakness.[2]

'Aflaq wrote some poetry as well as prose. One of his poems,

I'ṣṣifī yā riyāḥ ("Storm! oh Winds") is mentioned by Jundī as "one of the

wonders of Arabic poetry, pulsing with color and mysticism, prophesying, it

seemed to me, that the poet's ambition was far from meters and rhymes".[3]

As with Gide, 'Aflaq's creative writing had at least two dimensions;

nearly all the objects, whether persons, things, or relations, were them-

selves, and yet were ideas or principles beyond themselves. The themes of

'Aflaq's stories do not deal with immediate social problems or with concrete

personal questions; social, political, or moral issues interested 'Aflaq

only to the extent to which they dealt with the life of man. For 'Aflaq,

man comes first and the story is to express his human condition; for which

reason 'Aflaq treated the themes of revolt, of honor, dignity, freedom, and

truth in human life. He approached these themes, not at an intellectualized

level but at a human level as he himself might have lived them. In a way,

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[1] S. Muṣṭafa gives the title as <u>Mawt al-Sindbād</u> (see his <u>Muḥādarāt</u>, 312)
while S. al-Jundī refers only to <u>Sindbād</u> (see his <u>Al-Ba'th</u>, 33).

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, 33-34.

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>, 34.

'Aflaq was not writing 'stories' but confessions; he wrote about the constraints which he himself had faced, intellectual constraints, social and traditional constraints, political constraints, and even, the constraints of fate.

> Even in their release my arms are tied with the chains of Fate. Do you not hear the clanging of the chains? They fill my ears.[1]

Revolt was the most basic theme in 'Aflaq's fiction; an inexcapable Angst leads to creative revolt releasing the potentialities of human existence.[2] 'Aflaq's stories were a call to revolt, to reach a full life by a painful heroic leap. 'Aflaq's revolt is not against life but against the masks, the molds, the artificiality which dry up its sources, against the ties which bind life and which demean humanity to the level of herds; revolt against traditional morality (in Mister Happy), against the artificial routine of life (in The Slap), against the constraints of academic dryness (in A New Man). 'Aflaq repeatedly asserts that suicide is not the answer (Midnight Demon, Mister Happy), but life itself. What does it matter when, at the end, man achieves but ruin (The Death of Sindbād) if man reaches

> the Truth which was always apparent! He would have partaken of life. Taken and thrown away. Taken and given. Until his hands had touched everything and he had folded to his breast all living things...[3]

According to Mustafa, 'Aflaq is among the first Arab writers to rid themselves of the romantic style.[4] He gave early expression to the transformation from a passive, re-active stance vis-à-vis western civilization

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[1] From the novel Midnight Demon as quoted by S. Mustafa, Muhādarāt, 324.

[2] 'Aflaq's treatment of revolt is surprisingly similar to Camus' in that man's revolt against the meaninglessness of life is considered positive and valuable in itself.

[3] From Sindbād, as quoted by S. Mustafa, Muhādarāt, 325.

[4] This assessment is to be compared to the repeated categorization of 'Aflaq as a "romantic" political thinker; in particular, see L. Binder, Ideological Revolution.

into ideology and revolution, from defensive pacifism to offensive positivism. For 'Aflaq, life is not tragic but heroic.

The story, for 'Aflaq, was a means of expressing, of crystallizing life; it was not simply literary exercise. Through the moral dilemma of each of his characters, 'Aflaq criticized the existing social order with its irrelevant traditions creating tension which had to culminate in revolt against inertia, family oppression, and the barrenness of a bureaucratized way of life. 'Aflaq's own anxiety directed his writing.

At the time he wrote these stories, 'Aflaq was searching for the solution to his own Angst. He wrote, not in the belief that the word was the way but to release the forces inherent in the word to search for the way.[1] It led him to political struggle and he fed it, until his writing became a total ideology for building the Arab nation.[2]

Sometime in 1935, when the leftist periodical Al-Tali'a[3] was founded, 'Aflaq began writing essays as well as fiction, such as Khurafat al-bu's ("The Myth of Despair"),[4] Ara' fi al-shi'r ("Opinions about Poetry"),[5] Al-Shabab al-marid ("Sick Youth"),[6] Sirr Baris ("The Secret of Paris"),[7] Nahw haya mufji'a ("Towards a Painful Life"),[8] Tharwat al-haya ("The Treasure of Life").[9] He also published essays in the Communist-oriented periodical Al-Tariq (The Road) and in Al-Ayyam.[10]

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[1] See the appended translation of his essay, In Memory of the Arab Prophet, for his views of the 'word'.

[2] "Politics", he confided to Patrick Seale, "were a refuge for the unsuccessful writer" (see Struggle for Syria, 149).

[3] S. Mustafa, Muhadarat, 304 n.1.   [4] Al-Tali'a I/1 (August, 1935).

[5] Ibid. I/2 (August, 1935).   [6] Ibid. I/5.

[7] Al-Quds (Jerusalem), 1935.   [8] Al-Tali'a II/2 (March, 1936).

[9] Ibid. II/4 (June, 1936).   [10] S. al-Jundi, Al-Ba'th, 31.

In some of these essays, 'Aflaq called for the adoption of socialism.
The socialism he advocated was a particular kind which derives from those
spiritual values which lead to the fulfillment of the potentialities of
each individual within the community. The goal of 'Aflaq's socialism is

> ...not only to speed production, but to increase the richness of life...
> It has been too long that life is regarded as an oven in which millions
> of men are consumed to produce a grain of gold... I can still remember
> those who perished in their graves while struggling to achieve their
> cherished aspirations; life was deprived of the sterling qualities of
> love and goodness for these men...
> ————I have never regarded socialism as a means to satisfy hunger...
> I am not concerned about hungry men merely because they are hungry...
> but because of the potentialities hidden in them which hunger prevents
> from being actualized... If I were asked to define socialism, I would
> not seek a definition in the writings of Marx and Lenin, but I would
> rather say that it is the religion of life, and of the ability of life
> to overcome death.[1]

The generation gap between traditionalists and modernists, between
evolutionaries and revolutionaries led 'Aflaq to address himself, first and
foremost, to his students who formed the core of his supporters; "in the
last analysis his political strength depended on them as the vehicles of
his political ideas".[2] Although 'Aflaq reflected the image of 'teacher',
he lacked both the will and the charisma necessary for true 'master-disciple'
relationships.

The earliest evidence of 'Aflaq's attempts to establish a rapport with
the new generation was the organization of Nadwat al-Ma'mūn (The Circle of
al-Ma'mūn),[3] probably a literary club with political orientations. The
choice of "al-Ma'mūn" for a name is intriguing, to say the least. It could

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[1]M. 'Aflaq, "Tharwat al-ḥaya" (The Treasure of Life), Al-Ṭalī'a II/4
(June, 1936). Excerpts are as translated by M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries,
217-218. For a summary of the essay, see S. Muṣṭafa, Muḥādarāt, 303.

[2]M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 219.

[3]S. Muṣṭafa, Muḥādarāt, 301 n.2.

be a reference to the Mu'tazila, who are supposed to represent the philo-
sophical and rationalist trends in Islam or it could be an echo to the
translation and absorption of Greek thought which the Khalīfa al-Ma'mūn
encouraged.[1]

'Aflaq was probably in Syria for the elections of 20 December 1932
which were marked by violence in Aleppo and Damscus, where the elections
had to be held again in 1933. The National Bloc, by that stage, had changed
its policy. Hitherto, the Bloc had been opposed, after the debacle of the
1928 constitution, to any kind of cooperation with the French, but in view
of the promised elections in 1932 it decided to meet the French half-way.
In the finally resulting Chamber, 17 out of 71 seats were won by Nationalists
while a large number of representatives held themselves independent. Two
National Bloc members joined the Cabinet which was to negotiate a treaty
with France.

The years between 1933 and 1936 were highlighted by the various
attempts to reach an accord between the French and the Syrians, analogous
to the Treaty between the British and the Iraqis. French policy, as enun-
ciated by the High Commissioner, M. Ponsot, and followed by his successor,
the Comte de Martel, was based upon

> ...the continuing role of his country in the Levant (a role which seemed,
> indeed, to be inconsistent with any real independence in the foreseeable
> future), and confessed to no early expectation of a unitary Syria. There
> would, on the contrary, he indicated, be a Treaty Zone, and a Mandatory
> Zone, of which the latter would include the Druzes, 'Alawis, and Lebanon;
> thus effectively destroying Syrian unity and its access to the sea.[2]

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[1] To be noted is the fourth principle of al-Arsuzī's Ba'th: "The Arab
is the Master of his Fate"; (see S. al-Jundī, Al-ba'th, 22) a reminder of the
basic Mu'tazili controversy about pre-destination and free will. Moreover,
al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 28, states that student groups in secondary schools and
at the university undertook the translation of western philosophers and writers.

[2] S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 193.

The proposed Treaty[1] was rejected by the Syrians in 1934 precisely on the point of the continued division of Syria. The rejection of the Treaty by the Syrian Chamber and the consequent suspension of the Chamber by the High Commissioner were accompanied by strikes and riots in Damascus.[2] The members of the National Bloc had been among the first to resign from both the Cabinet and the Parliament. At this stage, the Bloc became the effective leader of the independence movement in Syria.

The two years following the rejection of the Treaty were a period of some administrative but no political progress; the Nationalists harassed the Administration on every issue.

> The political situation in Syria in the autumn of 1935 was, if outwardly calm by local standards, one of repression and menace; the clash between French policy and national aspiration was unchanged, Syrian demands unsatisfied, their proponents unrepentant and determined.[3]

Events during the first few weeks of the new year, 1936, amid disorder and near-anarchy, ushered in a new phase in the political life of Syria and of Michel 'Aflaq.

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[1] The Treaty was modelled on the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, but with some important differences; see S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 196-197.

[2] In May 1934, a tour by the President of Syria was marred by demonstrations, with bomb throwing, shutting of bazaars, student strikes and riots.

[3] S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 199.

Chapter III

Troubled Times

At the turn of 1935-36 the stage was set for a strong nationalist assertion in Syria.   The National Bloc was consolidating itself and proclaimed the National Pact on the fortieth day after the death of Ḥanānū, a nationalist who had resisted the French in the sanjaq of Alexandretta. The Bloc demanded "complete independence and effective union for Syria, the abrogation of Zionism, wide Arab unity, equality of rights for all communities, a higher standard of living, and, for all time, a ban on all political parties save the Bloc."[1]

Political ferment filtered down to the younger generation and various youth organizations sprang up. Young men in the cities formed new extremist associations which exalted the principles of devotion to the nation.[2] Among the groups which came into prominence between 1935 and 1937 was the Communist Party,[3] characterized by

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[1]S.H. Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon*, 215.

[2]In 1932, Antūn Saʿada founded a secret society which he called al-Ḥizb al-Sūrī al-Qawmī (The Syrian Nationalist Party, better known as the Parti Populaire Syrien or PPS). Saʿada preached a doctrine of Syrian nationalism based upon an 'organic correlation' between the nation, as people, and its geographical homeland. For further details on the PPS, see P. Seale, *Struggle for Syria*, 64ff.; and A.Y. el-Khalil, *Socialist Parties*, in which the PPS and the Baʿth parties are described and compared.

[3]The Communist Party was founded in Beirut in 1930, its early members being nearly all Armenian and had successfully organized a railway strike in 1932, a strike among the Iraq Petroleum Company's workers at Tripoli in the same year, and, in 1934, a printers' strike. Around the same time, the Party was reorganized and its leadership taken over by Arabs who had been trained-

...a fairly definite programme, a business-like and widespread
organization, the genuine enthusiasm of its members, the incorporation
of the young and vigorous as distinct from the 'old gang' of local
politicians, and an eager self-manifestation in the form of uniformed
and disciplined squads or gangs...[1]

'Aflaq's relationship with Communism during this period has been
judged differently by various observers. Some maintain that he became a
Marxist while in Paris,[2] other assert that he remained a full-fledged
Communist until 1943.[3] But during the interviews he had with P. Seale[4]
and with K.S. Abu Jaber,[5] 'Aflaq denied that he had ever been a Communist
although, at one time, he had sympathized with Communism.[6]

Another of the earliest and most prominent of the youth organizations
of the 1930s in Syria was the League of National Action, led by such men as
'Abd al-Razzāq al-Dandāshī, Ṣabrī al-'Asalī, and Zakī al-Arsūzī, who had
become famous in the guerilla resistance against the occupation of Alexan-
dretta, gaining some of the aura of Ḥanānū, and who had played a role during

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=in the Soviet Union. Divided views were held as to collaboration
with the nationalists in Syria until, in 1936, the Party decision was to
support them, at least temporarily, to the extent of cooperating with such
right-wing extremists as the Muslim Brethren. The Party then participated
in the nationalists protest and demonstrations, revealing its excellent
organization, and was particularly prominent in Alexandretta. For further
details, see S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 227ff.

[1]Ibid., 225.

[2]See K.H. Karpat (ed.), Political and Social Thought in the Contem-
porary Middle East (New York, 1968), 185.

[3]See W.Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (New
York, 1956), 330 n.15; and G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 117 n.68.

[4]P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 149-151.

[5]K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 11.

[6]It is my belief that 'Aflaq's early sympathy for and later rejection
of Communism were both influenced by Gide; see Chapter II, 54.

the early establishment of the Ba'th. The League "stood for an uncompro-

mising nationalism and pan-Arabism, for totallaicization of the Adminis-

tration, and for energetic social reform on equalitarian but not Communist

lines".[1] There sre strong indications that Michel 'Aflaq was involved

in the League of National Action.[2]

The National Bloc attempted to control these youth organizations

by founding the Nationalist Youth which was supposed to gather all para-

military bodies under the wing of the National Bloc. The Nationalist Youth

placed great emphasis on discipline, sports, and military training, rally-

ing a great number of young men for annual congresses in Damascus. The

Steel Shirts, the paramilitary branch of the Nationalist Youth were trained

by ex-officers of the defunct Ottoman army.[3]

By the end of February 1936[4] there was no abatement in Syrian opposi-

tion to the Mandate. The French military commander declared that "his

troops would, if forced, not hesitate to use their arms".[5] In fact,

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[1]S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 228. See H. Mahr, Baath-Partei, 16, for a description of the League in which Mahr explains that the main doctrinal difference between the League and the PPS was the League's broader view encompassing the area from the Atlantic to the Gulf as one Arab nation.

[2]S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 31, and N.M. Kaylani, "Rise of the Syrian Ba'th", 3.

[3]S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 229. It is interesting to note that Ba'thī Syria is, at present, experiencing a resurgence of paramilitary youth, training under the aegis of Ba'thī officers. Other than passing references here and there, there has been no study of the role which Arab officers of the Ottoman army played in the development of Arab nationalism.

[4]The year 1936 is considered a turning-point in Arab history since it marks the beginning of the Palestine revolt which lasted until 1939.

[5]S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 217.

M. de Martel had obtained a new latitude from the Quai d'Orsay and, by the

beginning of March, agreement was reached with the nationalist leaders on

the essentials of a future treaty. A Syrian delegation, including several

Bloc members left for Paris to negotiate the final draft.

Despite these measures, it was only when the leftist government of

Léon Blum had been elected that there was a breakthrough in the treaty

negotiations. The rise of Blum's socialists to power raised hopes, in

Syria as in the Maghrib, of self-determination and independence in the near

future. These hopes seemed to be realized by the Treaty,[1] which de jure

if not de facto would have meant an end to the Mandate. Opposition to the

Treaty, moderate as it was, was offered by the League of National Action

and by student demonstrators, who demanded complete and effective independence.

'Aflaq's views on Communism were definitely formed during this period.

During 1936, the Syrian Communist Party became anti-nationalist and seemed

to have become the puppet of the Communist Party in France.

> It dropped its revolutionary demands and lent its weight to the
> the French colonial regime... Indeed, its very existence became depen-
> dent on France's continued hold over Syria... It forgot its real enemies
> and concentrated instead on attacking Franco, Chiang Kai-shek, Mussolini,
> and other enemies of France and Russia, while allying itself to political
> and social reaction at home.[2]

The Bloc's willingness to compromise, even with the anti-Treaty

elements in the French government which took over from Léon Blum in June

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[1] A summary of the Treaty is given in S.H. Longrigg, *Syria and Lebabon*,
222-224. The Treaty was signed but never ratified by France.

[2] M. 'Aflaq and S. Bītār, *Al-qawmiyya al-'arabiyya wa-mawqifuha min
al-shuyū'iyya* ("Arab Nationalism and its Position vis-à-vis Communism")
(Damascus, 1944) as quoted by P. Seale, *Struggle for Syria*, 150. In an
interview with K.S. Abu Jāber, 'Aflaq stated that after 1936, he became
disenchanted with the Communist Party; *Arab Ba'th*, 11. It is to be noted
that by then, Gide had published his book *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.*, criticizing
Communism.

1937, damned it in the eyes of less moderate nationalist groups.[1] The

youth wing of the Bloc, the Nationalist Youth, came into conflict with

the French army at Aleppo in February 1937 and at Latakia a few weeks

later, clamouring to be adopted as the core of the future Syrian army. It

also came into conflict with the other paramilitary factions, such as the

National Guard companies, the Brotherhood of Ḥanānū and the League of

National Action.[2] The Bloc position was further aggravated by the deve-

loping Franco-Turkish negotiations about the sanjaq of Alexandretta, "whose

status (up to 1936) as an integral part of Syria was queried by none".[3]

In the following months and for the next two years the Alexandretta issue

dominated Syrian political thinking and emotion, agitating the Youth move-

ments and the League of National Action.[4]

By the end of 1938, amidst strikes throughout the country, disorders

in the Jazira, the poor showing of the Bloc among the ʿAlawīs and the Durūz,

and endless demonstrations of political and paramilitary youth, the Syrian

Chamber unilaterally ratified the Treaty of 1936, rejecting any amendments.

In February 1939, the Syrian government declared its intentions to take over

the functions of the mandatory authorities. The new High Commissioner,

M. Paux   forced its resignation, suspended the Syrian constitution and

dissolved the Chamber.[5] The cession of the sanjaq of Alexandretta to Turkey

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[1]The split of the Istiqlāl (Independence) Party from the Bloc fore-
shadowed the post-independence period when the Bloc disintegrated into many
factions.

[2]S. al-Jundī, Al-Baʿth, 20; and S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 229.

[3]Ibid., 238.   [4]Ibid., 240.

[5]A.L. Tibawi, Modern History, 360. Also see S.H. Longrigg, Syria
and Lebanon, 293.

in June 1939 caused even greater resentment in Syrian relations with France.

In the meantime the League of National Action had been discredited because its Secretary-General had agreed to serve in Parliament before the termination of the Mandate; an action in clear contradiction to the League's principle of non-cooperation with the mandatory authorities.[1] The League retained some strength while the issue of Alexandretta was undecided but with the loss of the sanjaq,[2] a faction of the League of National Action -- including Zakī al-Arsūzī, himself from Alexandretta, Michel ʿAflaq, and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Bīṭār[3] -- met and decided to form a breakoff organization, but were unsuccessful in establishing a united group. ʿAflaq and Bīṭār founded a secret organization, Shabāb al-iḥyāʾ al-ʿarabī (Youth for Arab Revival)[4] also known as Al-Baʿth al-ʿarabī (The Arab Resurrection).[5] Zakī al-Arsūzī formed Al-Ḥizb al-qawmī al-ʿarabī (The Arab Nationalist Party)[6]

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[1] S. al-Jundī, Al-Baʿth, 20.

[2] S.H. Longrigg cautiously judges the event as "a crude example of 'power politics' by Turkey, a regrettable yielding by France of another's rights in her own interests, and a resented blow to Syria whose claims were overridden and her weakness abused"; see Syria and Lebanon, 237-238. Although it might be considered a digression, the writer of this thesis feels compelled to refer to B.R. Nayar's paper, "Modernization versus Mobilization" where it is argued that as long as such clear international 'crimes' are committed, naked power alone becomes the ruling criterion and armed violence the only means of defense. In terms of priority, it is military security that propels states to industrialize and modernize. Modernization is thus "undertaken despite the prospect of rootlessness" and alienation because of the necessity for armed capability in "an international system, whose chief characteristic is the struggle for power".

[3] S. al-Jundī, Al-Baʿth, 21.

[4] S. Muṣṭafa, Muḥādarāt, 301 n.2. Also see M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 215.

[5] Some authors translate the term "baʿth" as "renaissance", but "resurrection" is a closer translation; see S. Jargy, "Le déclin d'un parti", Orient (Paris) 21/1 (1959), 21. The term "iḥyāʾ" is synonymous to "baʿth".

[6] S. al-Jundī, Al-Baʿth, 21.

which, in 1940, was changed to <u>Al-Ba'th al-'arabī</u>.[1] The importance of

these groups is not to be exaggerated, although they formed the arena in

which 'Aflaq's ideas were beginning to be translated into action.

> He and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, while continuing to teach at the Tajhiz,
> the principal government secondary school in Damascus, started weekly
> meetings for small groups of students in their homes on Friday, the
> Muslim day of prayer. They issued their first tract in January 1941,
> which was followed by six or seven others in February.[2]

According to Sāmī al-Jundī, although the members of the two Ba'ths

had similar ideological attitudes, they were unknown to each other for almost

a year. It should be noted that, between 1941 and 1955, the student popula-

tion of the Tajhīz school and of Damascus University had a majority who

came from outlying districts and who returned to their home-areas after

completing their studies. It is in this way that organizations based upon

recruitment from the student population spread outside Damascus.[3]

The nationalist movement in Syria had achieved no concrete programs

in its struggle for independence when the Second World War broke out a few

months after the loss of Alexandretta. In the Middle East, it was a time

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[1] S. al-Jundī, <u>Al-Ba'th</u>, 26. Also see N.M. Kaylani, "Rise of the
Syrian Ba'th", 3, where he states that the nucleus of both 'Aflaq's and
al-Arsūzī's groups were from the League of National Action.

[2] P. Seale, <u>Struggle for Syria</u>, 151. The first tracts are supposed
to have appeared even before Kaylani's rebellion of May 1941 in Iraq, although
Seale does not indicate the evidence for the existence of these tracts.

[3] S. al-Jundī, <u>Al-Ba'th</u>, 38. According to Jundī, this meant that the
Ba'th, while spreading in rural and small town areas, did not gain sufficient
strength in Damascus itself. The incipient conflict between Damascus and
rural or small-town areas was particularly highlighted during the intra-
Ba'th conflicts of 1963-1970; see I. Rabinovich, <u>Syria under the Ba'th</u>, 109-
209.

of apparent tranquillity and "puzzled anxiety of the general public"[1] until

the Franco-German Armistice on 22 June 1940, when the very concept of a

French Mandate over Syria became rather ridiculous; how was a state,

obviously in such dire difficulties in managing its own affairs, supposed

to help another country achieve maturity?!

> To many or most Syrians, the war was over, France defeated, the Mandate
> effectively extinguished both by this fact and, more specifically, by
> her own withdrawal from the mandate-giving League of Nations in the
> spring of 1941; it remained now to find means of achieving the twenty-
> year old but still withheld aims of Syrian nationalism from an ex-
> Mandatory now clearly weakened, doubtful in status, and profoundly
> mistrusted.[2]

After a short series of military victories over Italy in Libya and

Eritrea, the Allies suffered disasters in 1941. At the outbreak of the War,

the majority of politically-minded Arabs had realized that there was nothing

to choose between oppression by democracy and that exercised in the name of

Fascism and, consequently, the general attitude had been one of apathy and

scepticism towards both sides. By 1941, the course of the War seemed to tip

the balance in favor of the Axis[3] and in Iraq the time seemed ripe for a

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[1] S.H. Longrigg, _Syria and Lebanon_, 294.

[2] Ibid., 300.

[3] Eric Rouleau's passing reference to 'Aflaq's "apparent sympathies for
Nazism in the early years of the Second World War" is probably due to the
support 'Aflaq expressed for Kaylānī's action; his "sympathies" are, there-
fore, at best, third hand. More seriously, Rouleau then continues by accusing
'Aflaq of a racist phrase which just does not exist where Rouleau says it does.
Moreover, he tries to add to the evidence of 'Aflaq's alleged "sympathies for
Nazism" by quoting from a letter he is supposed to have received from one of
'Aflaq's "companions", where the companion tells of 'Aflaq's admiration for
Alfred Rosenberg's _The Myth of the Twentieth Century_. Even if true, as 'Aflaq's
admiration for Marx certainly did not make him a Communist, so his "admiration"
for Rosenberg does not make him a Fascist. See E. Rouleau, "The Syrian
Enigma", 158ff. Rouleau's incorrect observation that there existed in the
Ba'th movement an "emphasis on the notion of the leader", implying again

strike against the British. Rashīd 'Alī al-Kaylānī[1] and three other officers led a rebellion which was ultimately defeated by British-led Indian and Jordanian troops. The restoration by British arms of Hāshimī rule in Iraq spelled the end of the Hāshimīs' charismatic influence on Arab nationalists.

The uprising in Iraq became a decisive issue between the two Ba'ths in Syria. Al-Arsūzī condemned the rebellion as inopportune, while 'Aflaq supported it whole-heartedly. Al-Arsūzī lost most of his followers who enthusiastically joined 'Aflāq and Bīṭār.[2] The two teachers gained public notice when they formed Shabāb nāṣrat al-'irāq (Youth in Support of Iraq), sending volunteers to Baghdad. Despite the defeat of Kaylānī, 'Aflaq and members of the Ba'th continued their political activity, but informally.

The Second World War did not spare Syria from grave shortages in basic necessities. Discontent "took visible form in hunger marches in Damascus and Aleppo, with banner-carrying crowds in ugly moods"[3] in January and again in February 1941. These events, as well as Britain's sensitive

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—that the Ba'th might be compared to the Fascist movements is clearly unfounded and can only be explained by the fact that Rouleau seems to depend exclusively on non-Arabic source material. According to S. al-Jundī, al-Arsūzī's Ba'th did have some "emphasis on the notion of the leader", but he makes it clear that the Ba'th led by 'Aflaq and Bīṭār always favored some form of collective leadership and actually attacked Nāṣir, after the dissolution of the U.A.R., for encouraging a personality cult.

[1] See P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 9, where Seale maintains that Rashīd 'Alī was driven to revolt "by his failure to extract concessions from the British for the Palestinian Arabs" and not because of any "sinister Nazi predilections".

[2] S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 31. Also see S. Muṣṭafa, Muhādarāt, 301 n.2; and P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 151. Seale states that the revolt in Iraq gave 'Aflaq's group the occasion to demonstrate "their devotion to the wider Arab cause", and that "the revolt which was short-lived provided the impetus which set the Ba'th on its militant path".

[3] S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 301. Also see G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 57.

position in Iraq, prompted the British and the Free French, who planned on armed intervention against the Vichy government in Syria, to proclaim a promise of independence. Allied troops moved into Syria on 8 June 1941, and and, on 14 July, Vichy representatives signed an armistice agreement with the British.[1] Under the Lyttleton-de Gaulle Agreement a Free French government was promptly installed in Syria.

Notwithstanding the promise of complete independence, protracted and painful discussions became necessary before the full withdrawal of French troops from Syria. The policy of the French was, in effect, "to offer the very minimum towards honoring their promise of independence, to retain all essential control, to hold, and to secure for the future, all that existed of French rights, institutions, privileges".[2] In short, France wished to retain all her cultural, economic, and strategic interests and remain the dominant Power in the Eastern Mediterranean.

On the eve of the Second World War, the National Bloc had been fatally undermined by its failure to have the French Parliament ratify the Treaty of 1936 and by its failure to prevent the loss of the Alexandretta sanjaq to Turkey in 1939. Mass demonstrations turned into riots led by the impatient paramilitary youth movements. As a result of these troubled years, the Bloc was threatened by fragmentation into several factions.[3]

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[1] See G. Kirk, In the War, 16 and 104-28, for a discussion of French-British relations and the motives for the invasion of Syria.

[2] S.H. Longrigg, Syria and Lebanon, 321. For the petty treatment by the French of nationalist aspirations, see ibid, 340-356; J. al-'Ayasnī, Tārīkh Sūrīya, 486-496; N. al-Armanāzī, Muhādjarāt, 123-188.

[3] The most important of these was a faction centered in Aleppo which came to be called the People's Party (Hizb al-sh'ab); see P. Seale, Struggle

Soon after the entry of the Free French in Syria both 'Aflaq and
Bīṭār resigned, in 1942, from their teaching posts "in protest against
governmental encroachment on academic freedom",[1] never to return to their
teaching careers. From then on, neither had an obvious source of financial
support and it is probable that, over and above any financial resources they
might have saved, they depended upon the Ba'th organization.[2] They proceeded
to build up their organization in the last years of the war. Secondary
school and university students "were mobilized for political agitation; clan-
destine sheets were published; a beginning was made at organizing the 'street'·
and suq for strike action".[3]

In the spring of 1943, the French permitted the holding of elections.
Michel 'Aflaq, alone of the Ba'th, presented himself as Greek Orthodox can-

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**for Syria, 27. The People's Party became official in 1948, a few
years after de facto independence, which pattern seems to confirm Jacques
Berque's observation that the first movements for independence in an Arab
country tended to produce a broad heterogenous grouping such as the Syrian
National Bloc, but with the first successes against the foreign occupying
power, personal and ideological differences would arise. See J. Berque,
"L'Univers politique des Arabes", Encyclopedie française (1957), vol.XI.
Berque's thesis might require some qualifications in view of the fact that
the two factions within the National Bloc, the People's and the Independence
Parties, had had some form of existence as early as 1925 but coalesced soon
after.

[1]M.Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 215. Also see S. Muṣṭafa, Muḥāḍarāt,
301 n.2. K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 121, quotes from a "Statement of the
Students of Michel 'Aflaq", a leaflet distributed in the streets in which
'Aflaq "accused the minister of education of incompetence and of bowing to
the imperialists".

[2]According to Abu Jaber, ibid., 12, they depended "on their families
and private tutoring for their livelihood".

[3]P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 151. Also see K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab
Ba'th, 12. Whatever contact 'Aflaq had had with Communists now served him
well as he set up a party structure along the same lines; see ibid., 139-145.

didate from Damascus,[1] even though the Ba'th organization was not yet officially constituted as a party but "represented the movement of the new generation towards the Arab Resurrection".[2] He failed to be elected, mainly because his student base of support was inadequate in the Syrian electoral system which Seale explains as follows:

> Notions of electioneering were at the time virtually restricted to securing the backing of the "strong men", of abadayat in the various ahya' or quarters of the city, which housed a vast lower middle class of tradesmen, merchants, and craftsmen, divided into various religious, racial, and functional groups. The abadayat were local bosses, defending the weak against the strong, taking bribes from the rich and administering a sort of rough and ready justice in the network of streets over which they ruled. Rival candidates at elections bid for their support...[3]

Notwithstanding the cracks obvious in the Nationalist front, the Bloc constituted the only viable political party between 1941, when Syria was formally recognized as independent, and 1946, when French troops were

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[1] See Nidāl, vol.I, 33-36, for his candidacy speech. The tension between 'Aflaq's thought and action is clearly seen in this speech in which he declares that the Ba'th's role is to prepare and that it "will not enter government hurriedly", but "will remain in the ranks of struggle for a long time". The passage contradicts 'Aflaq's action in presenting himself in the elections, but then another passage in the same speech explains the contradiction, where he states, "Our work is a long struggle aiming at the distant future, for which we tend the present with great care, in preparation for that future".

[2] M. 'Aflaq and S. Bīṭār, "Tafsīran lil-taṣrīḥ al-ladhī nasharatuh ba'ḍ al-ṣuḥuf" (An Explanation for the Proclamation published by some newspapers), Nidāl, vol.I, 29. The date for the establishment of the Ba'th as a Party is a problem as various secondary sources give different dates. It seems that none used the Nidāl as a historical source as has been done in this study.

[3] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 28-29. In view of the later electoral success of the Ba'th in 1954, the position of these abadayat, Seale comments, "was undermined by the exodus from the old quarters to the new residential areas of the city and by the increasing hold which modern ideologically based parties came to have over the young". For the distinction between traditional parties, revolving around personalities, and modern ideological parties, see H. Mahr, Baath-Partei, 14-15, and N.A. Ziadeh, Syria and Lebanon, 191ff. Also see C.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 62-68, where he treats the Syrian electoral system and process.

finally withdrawn,[1] The Ba'th, as yet only an informal group of nationalist
youth, published a proclamation supporting Quwwatlī.[2] There was no alter-
native but to participate in the efforts of the National Bloc. The procla-
mation did include an attempt to clarify the motivations behind and the
implications of the support which the Ba'th was lending Quwwatlī, and to
explain the differences between the Ba'th and the National Bloc. Accordingly,
the essential difference lay in the distinction between the term wataniyya,
approximated by "patriotism", and qawmiyya (nationalism). Wataniyya meant
attachment to the land, la patrie, and implied concern limited to a parti-
cular region rather than to the whole Arab world. Qawmiyya meant self-
identification with a group of people, and implied concern with the qawm,
with all Arabs.[3] The constitutional issue underlying the term qawmiyya, or
nationalism, is hinted at in the following passage from the proclamation:

> We will not accept to deal with the patriotic group except on the bases
> of maintaining the independent character of the nationalist youth which
> we represent and of considering the patriotic demands /presumably the
> the withdrawal of French troops from Syria/ as the minimum of our nationa-
> list demands /presumably independence and unity of all Arabs/.[4]

[1]P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 26. Shukri al-Quwwatlī, who had emerged
as the accepted leader of the nationalist movement, was the spokesman of the
Istiqlāl faction within the Bloc. For details of this period, given from the
French point of view, see M.C. Davet, La Double Affaire de Syrie (Paris, 1967).

[2]Nidāl, vol.I, 28-30.

[3]The blood ties implicit in the term qawm are clearly apparent in the
writings of the earlier nationalists such as Shumayyil and Sa'āda, influenced
by social Darwinism. The racist approach to nationalism did not last long
in the case of Arab nationalist thought. See E. Rabbath, Unité syrienne et
devenir arabe (Paris, 1937), where the "nation" is indicated by the term
"umma", despite its so-called religious connotations. See S.Haim, "Islam and
Arab Nationalism", 139-146, for an interesting discussion of the distinctions
between "wataniyya" and "qawmiyya". Unfortunately, she reduces them to
"mystical" notions.

[4]Nidāl, vol.I, 29. The quotation was translated from Arabic into
English by the present writer. All other translations will also be by the
present writer unless otherwise indicated.

The elections resulted in an overwhelming victory for the National Bloc, with Shukrī al-Quwwatlī elected President of the Republic of Syria. The issue of a national army came immediately to the fore; the French demanded the right to maintain bases and troops in Syria and Lebanon. Moreover, they insisted on keeping control of the troupes spéciales when the Syrian government could not accede to such demands and retain popular support.[1]

On this isssue, the Arab Ba'th Office[2] published several statements in which the National Bloc was strongly criticized, as a group of professional politicians who could do no more than negotiate endlessly. The first of these declarations included in the collection Nidāl al-Ba'th was also the first to be headed with the motto, "One Arab nation, with an eternal message".[3]

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[1]According to S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 43, France would have accepted Syrian conditions if the Syrian government had recognized the "Jewish national home" in Palestine.

[2]The earliest declaration which indicates the establishment of the Arab Ba'th Office is a letter to the American Consul in Syria about the Palestine problem, dated 10 August 1944. It can, therefore, be deduced that sometime between 14 November 1943, the date of the last statement without the phrase "from the Arab Ba'th Office", and 10 August 1944, the date of the letter to the Consul, the Office was established. See S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 41, where Jundī states that it was only in 1945 that the Ba'th acquired an office.

[3]The statement is dated 4 February 1945. Although the Ba'th seems to have published earlier declarations on the same issue (see Nidāl, vol.I, 99) this particular statement was probably the first to be published by the Office as such. The phrase, "One Arab nation, with an eternal message", first appeared in 'Aflaq's candidacy speech for the elections of 1943 (see Nidāl, vol. I, 35). The slogan was used almost like the seal of the Ba'th, appearing before the signature of 'Aflaq or Bītār, in the intervening declarations. The statement of 4 February 1945 is also distinctive in that it introduces a new style in the statements written by Michel 'Aflaq; it is preceded by a quotation from a previous essay, probably to emphasize the continuity between the informal student group that had been the Ba'th and the more organized structure that the establishment of an Office indicated. Also see the statements of 16 May, 24 August, and 26 December 1945 attacking the Syrian government for its conciliatory attitude towards the French. These are to be compared to the statement issued on 20 May 1945 in which the Ba'th reverses its opposition and supports the Quwwatlī government, "as long as it remains in its embattled position and does not accede to any treaty with France"; see Nidāl, vol. I, 96. The difference=

Negotiations having failed, the Nationalists realized that military
pressure was about to be exerted on them but could only reject French propo-
sals for a Treaty. The situation deteriorated rapidly; riots and fighting
took place in various cities, and on 29 May 1945, the French repeated their
exploit of twenty years earlier by bombarding Damascus with aircraft and
field-guns.

> The French used armoured cars, machine guns and aeroplanes to suppress
> the disorders. Aleppo and Hama suffered severe damage and considerable
> civilian casualties. But the worst fate was reserved for Damascus which
> for the third time since 1925 was subjected for three days to prolonged
> shelling by field-guns and bombing from the air... It was virtually a
> war between the armed forces of Free France and the civilian population
> of Syria.[1]

International circumstances made it imperative that Syria be "pacified"
and Britain took it upon itself to force the withdrawal of French troops
from the cities back to the barracks. In December 1945, Britain and France
agreed to consult upon the regrouping and eventual evacuation of their troops
from Syria.

Meanwhile, Michel 'Aflaq, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Bīṭār, and Midḥat al-Bīṭār
had applied on 10 July 1945 for a permit to officially constitute the Ba'th
as a party. The permit was refused,[2] but the Ba'th had been launched and
"no one could doubt its existence".[3] The basis of its membership was still

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-between the French and the Quwwatlī government, was clearly demons-
trated when the French bombarded Syria. The Ba'th statements critical of the
Quwwatlī government were mostly written by Bīṭār, who was soon enough exiled
to Mayādīn, a village in the northern part of Syria. He was released during
the period of truce between the Quwwatlī government and the Ba'th. It should
be noted that, in contrast to the statements written by 'Aflaq which were
rather abstract, Bīṭār addressed himself to the immediate issue.

[1] A.L. Tibawi, _Modern History_, 376-377. Also see Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī,
Yawm Maysalūn, 329-331.

[2] See _Nidāl_, vol. I, 103-105.   [3] _Ibid._, 103.

the student population in Damascus but the events of 1945 -- the trial and
exile of Bīṭār, the consequent student demonstrations, and the bombardment
of Damascus -- made the Ba'th known and popular, particularly for its viru-
lently anti-Communist position.[1] While it was still based in Damascus,
branches of the Ba'th were being established in various centers such as
Homs, Latakia, and Aleppo, by students returning from Damascus to their
home towns. Moreover, a new and separate type of organization, Firaq al-jihād
al-waṭanī (Patriotic Battle Troops) which was in essence an independent
militia, was formed.[2] The new arm of the Ba'th expressed its readiness to
use violence and might be considered the beginning of Ba'th interest in the
military.

The Ba'th National Command was composed of three others besides
Michel 'Aflaq.[3] It seems that the Ba'th had held general meetings, as a
Party, for sometime before the first meeting for which there is evidence
available, held on 1 December 1945 at Ba'th "headquarters".[4] Although 'Aflaq
and Bīṭār had applied, in 1943, on behalf of the Arab Ba'th Office for a
permit to publish a newspaper, it was only in 1946 that the permit was

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[1]See Nidāl, vol.I, 88, for a declaration in which the Ba'th attacks
the Syrian Communist Party for its "servile imitation" of the French Commu-
nist Party. Also indicated is the collection of essays, "Mawqifuna min
al-naẓariyya al-shuyū'iyya" (Our Position vis-à-vis the Communist Theory),
ibid.,193-226; one of these essays was translated and published under the
title, "L'Idéologie du Parti de la Resurrection Arabe" in Orient (Paris) 29
(1964).

[2]S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 41.

[3]See Nidāl, vol.I, 103

[4]Ibid.,118.

granted.[1] The first issue of <u>Al-Ba'th</u>[2] (The Ressurection) appeared on
3 July 1946 with Bītār as Chief Editor and 'Aflaq as Political Editor. It
is probable that a permit to officially constitute the Ba'th as a party was
also granted at the same time.

In an interview published in <u>Al-Nidāl</u> (The Struggle)on 16 September
1945; 'Aflaq explained the reasons for establishing the Arab Resurrection
Party and the main principles in the Ba'th program.[3] A new leadership had
to emerge as a historical necessity for the incipient constitutional struggle,
and the Ba'th, representing "the essence, not the appearance, of the people
and its future, not its present",[4] was that new leadership. The main prin-
ciple of the Ba'th was "Faith in the eternal message of the Arabs, as the
profound incentive for any resurrection".[5] The sociological expression of
the Resurrection would be the elimination of artificial progress as well as
of dead traditionalism; in other words, organic progress derived out of the
experience of the people. Economically, the Resurrection would be embodied
in the principles of Arab socialism which "derives from the soul of the Arab
nation, from its great needs and its noble ethics".[6] The goal of the Ba'th
would be to provide each individual Arab with all the opportunities and the
means necessary "to fulfill his Arabism".[7] Politically, the Resurrection

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[1]<u>Nidāl</u>, vol.I, 138. The casualness indicated by N.M. Kaylani, "Rise
of the Syrian Ba'th", 5, in establishing the Ba'th Party as the result of an
informal meeting at the Luna Park Cafe is belied by the red-tape the Ba'th
leaders had to go through to obtain a permit.

[2]The government refused to allow the newspaper to be named the <u>Arab
Ba'th</u>.

[3]See <u>Nidāl</u>, vol.I, 113-116.   [4]<u>Ibid</u>., 113.
[5]<u>Ibid</u>., 114.   [6]<u>Ibid</u>.
[7]<u>Ibid</u>., 115.

would be realized in a leadershiprepresenting the qualities and the genius

of the Arab people, and not "that exploiting class contaminated by aliens".

Practically, the Resurrection necessitated the formation of a vanguard

which would undertake to oppose corrupt reality so as to realize a compre-

hensive revolution in modern Arab life, spiritually, intellectually, morally,

and socially.

Clarifying the idea of Arabism and educating the people to it was the

immediate goal of the Ba'th. At this stage, and with respect to Michel 'Aflaq

for a long time afterwards, the Ba'th organization was conceived of as an

educational movement for the regeneration of the Arab nation rather than a

simple political party.[1] The context for the Resurrection was understood

to be what is now known as the Arab world, that area "from the Ocean to the

Gulf".[2]

The nationalist governments in Syria and Lebanon had not been idle,

and in February 1946, they had appealed to the Security Council of the

United Nations for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from both

countries. Surprisingly, the petition was promptly granted and Syria was

completely evacuated by April (Lebanon in December) 1946; "France's 'civi-

lizing mission' and the League's 'sacred trust of civilization' both passed

into history".[3] A few months after the liberation of Syria and Lebanon, the

Cold War between the emergent superpowers, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., began

in earnest with the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine, announcing the demise

of Pax Britannica and the birth of Pax Americana.

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[1] T. Abou-Rejeily, "La pédagogie du Ba'th selon Michel Aflaq", Travaux
et Jours 51 (Avril-Juin, 1974), 43-68.

[2] Nidāl, vol.I, 117.

[3] A.L. Tibawi, Modern History, 378.

Chapter IV

Between Thought ...

Theories of state structure are as vague in the writings of modern-day Arab nationalists as they were in the writings of Muslim political philosophers of medieval times. The problem of deriving a viable constitutional theory is, even at present, reduced to the problem of formulating it in terms familiar within an Arabo-Muslim frame of ethics. H.A.R. Gibb observed that

> Just as European romanticism gave colour and emotional appeal to a new nationalism founded on language, racial theory, and a historic past, so, too, the modernist... reform movement in Islam is combined with a nationalist interpretation of Islam.[1]

W.C. Smith, by contrast, suggests that "the driving force of nationalism has become more and more religious".[2] Whether Islam has been nationalized or whether Arab nationalism has become "more religious" does not really answer the question of how Arab political thinkers, specifically Michel 'Aflaq,[3] view the role of Islam in the formulation of Arabism in the twentieth century.

The writings of Michel 'Aflaq are difficult to comprehend because his views are scattered throughout numerous literary and political essays. 'Aflaq has not produced a systematic, logically consistent work presenting the fundamental elements of his thought. The most important of 'Aflaq's political

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[1] H.A.R. Gibb, Modern Trends in Islam (Chicago, 1950), 111.

[2] W.C. Smith, Islam in Modern History (Princeton, 1957), 82-83.

[3] To interpret what another man believes, what his faith is, and what his intimate relationship with God, if any, is a difficult and indiscreet task, and yet it is basic to any understanding of a man who undoubtedly, if at times indirectly, influenced events in the Middle East.

essays and speeches are collected in two anthologies,[1] arranged thematically and, within each theme, chronologically. It is thus difficult to focus on the relationship between specific events in his life and developments of his thought. It has been correctly observed that most of 'Aflaq's political essays and published speeches, like his earlier literary works, are the product of the moment, governed by the chance occasion.[2] Because his essays and speeches lack that element of disciplined contemplation which would have systematically clarified his ideas,[3] 'Aflaq leaves himself open to the criticism that he neglected "serious" (jaddī), "scientific" or "analytical" ('ilmī) thought.[4] Nonetheless, he is admired for expressing himself in "terse and synoptic sentences which carry conviction".[5]

The ideas of Michel 'Aflaq were formed before he became an important political figure in the Syria of the 1950s. His activities in the Syrian political arena, particularly between 1954 and 1958, did play a role in his later essays and speeches which were largely geared to specific events. It is nevertheless true that the main lines of his thought remained basically unchanged.[6] In the present chapter, the study of 'Aflaq's ideas will be

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[1]These are: FĪ Sabīl al-Ba'th ("In the Way of Resurrection"), edited by Sa'dūn Ḥamādī, and Ma'rakat al-masīr al-wāḥid ("The Battle for One Destiny"). Both collections were printed several times in various Arab countries. All references will be to the second Beirut edition of 1963, unless otherwise indicated.

[2]M.Ṣafadī, Ḥizb al-Ba'th, 80.

[3]Ibid., 80-81.   [4]Ibid., 82.

[5]M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 219.

[6]See his latest book, the title of which, Nuqṭat al-bidāya ("The Beginning Point") (Beirut, 1971), reflects his resistance to ideological compromise. The essays and speeches echo his earlier themes and do not lack the critical consciousness necessary for his self-image as a revolutionary.

based mainly on the earlier essays which were written in more general
terms.

The choice and use of words 'Aflaq made in his essays and speeches
are clues in the investigation of that basic problem: the role of Islam in
the formulation of Arabism in the twentieth century. Many of the terms
'Aflaq used are either directly derived from Islam or have broadly religious
connotations. Such is the term "ba'th" (resurrection) cited at least three
times in this form in the Quran and numerous other times in different forms.[1]
Another example is "sabīl" (way) referred to in the Quran many times.[2] But
one does not find the two terms, "sabīl" and "ba'th", juxtaposed in the
Quran. Each of the terms has its own separate "semantic field"[3] and both are
separately governed by the concept of Allah; Man is to strive in the Way of
God; the Day of Resurrection is dominated by the figure of God sitting in
judgement. By juxtaposing "sabīl" and "ba'th" in the expression "fī sabīl
al-ba'th" (in the way of resurrection), 'Aflaq places the two terms within
the same semantic field such that the Resurrection governs the Way, in the
absence of God.

One of the earliest essays 'Aflaq wrote was on "imān" (belief or faith)[4]

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[1] The most representative verse is 30:56, "But those to whom knowledge
and faith are given will say: the truth is ye have tarried, by Allah's decree,
until the Day of Resurrection (yawm al-ba'th). This the Day of Resurrection,
but ye used not to know". Translation according to M.M. Pickthall, The Mean-
ing of the Glorious Koran.

[2] An example is 2:261, "The likeness of those who spend their wealth in
Allah's Way (sabīl Allah) is as the likeness of a grain which groweth seven
ears, in every ear a hundred grains. Allah giveth increase to whom He will.
Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing". Also see T. Izutsu, God and Man, 143-
144, where the author places the concept of Way as a key principle in Islam.

[3] Ibid., 27.

[4] M. 'Aflaq, "Imān" (Belief or Faith), Sabīl, 29-30; the term occurs in
many of his essays. Also see M. Khadduri, "Critical Study", 57, for a dis-
cussion of 'Aflaq's concept of belief..

a fundamental concept in both Islam and Christianity.[1] The question whether
Īmān is created or eternal was a controversial point in Islamic theology
but, in either case, it was clear that Īmān occurs in man at the initiative
of God. In the usage of 'Aflaq, the term "Īmān" is devoid of God as is
clear from the following passage:

> There is no one who can boast that he created (khalaqa) or actualized
> in time (awjada) this belief. It is within each man, and within each
> Arab.[2]

'Aflaq distinguishes two stages in the articulation of belief, as
spiritual principle (mabda' ka-rūh) and as intellectual principle (mabda'
ka-dhihn).[3] As spiritual or intuitive principle, faith is that human quality
which enables man to distinguish between the true and the false. Faith is
not to be discovered by experiments or by reason, but when reinforced by
experience and refined by reason it becomes an intellectual principle. At
both stages, faith is a function of man; it is man who determines whether
faith remains a spiritual principle or is refined, by man, into an intellectual
principle. These are only a few examples to illustrate the use 'Aflaq makes
of religious terms, giving them a secular context such that Arabism is lifted
to the level of the sacred in the absence of the supernatural.

Although 'Aflaq is known to have read and studied several European
thinkers during and after his student days in France, this fact does not rule
out the possibility that he derived his essential frame of reference from

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[1]See T. Izutsu, The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology (Tokyo,
1965), for an interesting study based on semantic analysis.

[2]M. 'Aflaq, "Īmān", 29. 'Aflaq's position reflects the contention of
Gide that knowledge is not external to man but is an uncovering of what is
already there.

[3]Ibid., 30.

Arab and/or Muslim thinkers he might have studied. It is impossible at this

stage of our study to attempt tracing either the style or the content of

'Aflaq's writings to other Arab or Muslim thinkers,[1] except in a general

manner. It seems to have been taken for granted that, since 'Aflaq spent

four years studying in France, he must have been influenced exclusively by

Western thinkers.

> To the Western critic, Aflaq's exposition of Arab nationalism
> presents a hodge-podge of vulgarized European philosophies...
> But to criticize Aflaq in this manner is meaningless. The main
> point is that his expression of Arab nationalism is unique among Arabs.
> If European ideas have influenced his thought, the cause is not to be
> sought in his European education, but in the relevance of these notions
> to the problems Aflaq sought to solve.[2]

In the analysis of the early literary output by 'Aflaq, it was shown

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[1] There can be no question, to me at least, that 'Aflaq somehow ulti-
mately derives his basic intellectual framework from Arabo-Muslim sources
simply because he was able to strike a reverberating chord among Arabs, the
majority of whom are Muslim.

[2] L. Binder, Ideological Revolution, 159-160. As an example of 'Aflaq's
"hodge-podge" borrowings, Binder, by translating risāla as "mission" rather
than "message", believes 'Aflaq reflects Herder in the view that every nation
has a peculiar mission. Binder loses sight of the connotations inherent in
the term risāla as "message", referring to rasūl (the one who is sent with
a message, the Prophet Muḥammad) and the rich Islamic literature dealing with
Prophecy and Knowledge. Strangely, Binder sees Hegel's influence in 'Aflaq's
insistence on the importance of history, losing sight of the importance Ibn
Khaldūn was assuming. Such oversight is unfortunate, particularly in view
of 'Aflaq's rejection of Hegel's dialectic and his different "cyclical con-
cept of alternate glory and decline". If one must see a foreign influence
in such a view, I would refer to the influence of Tolstoi or Dostoevski
rather than Hegel. The "will" 'Aflaq talks about might be Rousseau's General
Will or Schopenhauer's concept of will, implicitly attacked by 'Aflaq in one
of his short stories;but it is also reminiscent of the Mu'tazila insistence on
man's free-will as concommitent to his responsibility for his actions. It
is not true that 'Aflaq accepts the Marxist theory of class struggle; how
could he while rejecting Hegel's dialectical determinism and Marx' materialism!
The dialectic 'Aflaq uses is derived from Gide's concept of the dialectic
as a means to achieve balance, which idea itself may be considered quite
Islamic in view of the verse 2:143, "wa-kadhālika ja'alnākum ummatun waṣatun
li-takūnū shuhādā'a 'ala al-nāsi" (Thus have We made of you a nation justly
balanced so that you be witnesses to the people). I am not turning 'Aflaq into

that the most important European mentor for 'Aflaq was André Gide.[1] Other
than the obviously sympathetic elements of religious alienation in Gide's
and 'Aflaq's lives, the views Gide held about art and, later, about socio-
political issues were closely paralleled by 'Aflaq. It is my contention
that 'Aflaq chose to be influenced by Gide precisely because Gide seemed to
echo ideas very close to the Arabo-Islamic ethos.[2]

Before presenting the views of 'Aflaq, it would be of interest to
see how a disciple understood and systematized his ideas. A preliminary
elaboration of a "total view of Arab life"[3] was presented by Sa'dūn Hamādī,
who by the way edited the first collection of 'Aflaq's essays and speeches
FI Sabīl al-ba'th, in two lengthy articles, the first of which was entitled,
"The Question of Arab Nationalism".[4] Hamādī presents a systematic theory,
following the lines of Michel 'Aflaq's basic themes, without acknowledging

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=a traditional Muslim, just pointing out that he just may have been
influenced by the Arabo-Islamic intellectual heritage. Also see J. Viennot,
"Le Role du Ba'th dans la genèse du nationalism arabe: quelques remarques
sur sa position vis-à-vis de l'Islam", Orient (Paris) 35 (1965), 65, who
observes that 'Aflaq, like Descartes, "remet tout en question, rejette tous
les systèmes politiques"; rejects all Western modes in order to restructure
Arab thought in all its profundity, its intimacy and its density.

[1]See Chapter II of this study.

[2]Surprisingly, Seale chooses to avoid 'Aflaq's repeated references to
the influence of Gide (Struggle for Syria, 149-150)to highlight "German
theories of a romantic and idealistic nationalism" (ibid., 153).

[3]The importance of a total view of Arab life was underlined by 'Aflaq
several times, of which his idea that "merely placing the case of Arab nationa-
lism in the framework of a total idea could be the first contribution in placing
the Arabrevolutionary movement upon firm bases"; see his essay, "Ma'ālim al-
qawmiyya al-taqāddumiyya" (Characteristics of Progressive Nationalism), FI
Sabīl, 116. Also see his essays, "Al-Haraka al-fikriyya al-shāmila" (The
Total Intellectual Movement) and "Al-Tafkīr al-mujarrad" (Abstract Thought) in
FI Sabīl, 288-293 and 62-69 respectively.

[4]S. Hamādī, "Qadiyyat al-qawmiyya al-'arabiyya", Al-Ādāb (November,
1955), 873-878, 949-951.

his source.[1] The seond essay, "Realism and Contemporary Arab Thought",[2] is
a reaction to the "idealist" label impugned against certain Arab thinkers,
most notably against Michel 'Aflaq.[3]

According to Ḥamādī, while the term "realism", as it is generally
used in politics, means working within the possibilities and limitations of
a situation existing in the present, such a conception of "realism", however,
is inadequate to comprehend the Arab revolution. In itself the present is
too poor to serve as a framework for the revolution. The concept itself of
realism needs to be enlarged in order to accomodate the higher concept of
Truth (al-ḥaqq). The realism of Arab nationalism lies in the striving for
Truth. As such, Arab nationalism is humanist in that it is a manifestation
of abstract Truth in one of its forms.[4] For Ḥamādī, it is the conscious
mind that determines the intruments, such as unity, liberty, and equality,
by which Truth is transmuted into social realities.[5] Ḥamādī's primary concern
is the individual Arab, who has still to rediscover and reformulate his own

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[1] See L. Binder, Ideological Revolution, 194 n.5C, who comments that
Ḥamādī's views are so close to 'Aflaq's as to be almost identical. It is
to be noted that Ḥamādī refuses to view the Arab situation in perspectives
borrowed from Western democracy, or from German and Italian totalitarianism,
or from Marxism and insists upon a specifically Arab system of thought to
fit the distinctive Arab condition.

[2] S. Ḥamādī, "Al-Wāqi'iyya wa-al-fikr al-'arabī al-mu'āṣir", Al-Ādāb
(Beirut) V/3 (March, 1957), 265-271.

[3] See later in this chapter for a discussion of 'Aflaq's views on the
issue of idealism versus realism.

[4] Here Ḥamādī seems to be implying that Truth is wholly contained in
humanity, with no ties to an extraterrestrial, supernatural world. Compare
with Gide's idea of the Absolute, Chapter II, p.52.

[5] Ḥamādī is emphasizing the power within a human being to tranform his
own condition. Note the change of terms from socialism (ishtirākiyya) to
equality (musāwā).

moral being. Each Arab soul must achieve a spiritual transformation that
will awaken the mind, inspire it with the strength of will and the virtue
of the whole nation so that the mind could revolt against its present and
create a new future. The revolution must pervade each Arab soul until the
fear which imprisons it in the existing order of things is dispelled by
courage and love of adventure. What each Arab needs today is the assertion
of his own free will in the exercise of his strength and virtue, through the
sense of belonging to a nation with a message, which is no longer leading
a merely marginal existence in the world. A leadership core is needed to
sow skepticism of time-worn traditions, to teach defiance, and to help each
individual achieve his full potential.[1]

The revolution can be accomplished only through the individual's
commitment, through his conflict and pain. The fundamental characteristic
of the struggle is the free-will exercised. Whereas Marxism explains the
historical process by material dialectics, and Capitalism explains it by the
laws of human nature, the Arab holds that man's free will is the central
force in society. The second characteristic of the struggle is its comprehen-
siveness; it involves every aspect of man's life. In other words, the moral
revolution underlies the social, political, and economic transformations.
Thirdly, the struggle is not only voluntary and comprehensive, but practical.
Steps must be taken to fulfill man's direct, material needs in order to
embody the spirit and purpose of the revolution. Arab society, in which
ignorance, poverty, and disease prevent the individual from achieving his

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[1] The implication is that the Ba'th Party is that leadership core
which is to lead the nation to a new life.

full potentialities, cannot be transformed simply by theorizing. Action, forceful action, needs to be taken.

But, Ḥamādī asks, what is the final aim of Arabism? Is it the liberation of the Arab lands from foreign occupation? Or is it the raising of the living standards of Arabs?

Neither by itself, nor even both together, constitute the complete objective of Arabism, although both must be attained; they are incidental goals imposed by transient conditions. The final aim of Arabism is Truth (al-ḥaqq).[1] The originality of Arabism is that it places Truth within man himself, as an inborn attribute. This tendency towards Truth has been clearly manifest in the civilizations that the Arab nation has given the world, most eminently in Islam. The message[2] of the Arabs today is to rediscover their original principle in order to create a new civilization where this principle is practiced as respect for man.

The organization of society upon this ethical basis would have three features: first, the people would constitute the source of all power. Second, in order to maintain the dignity of the individual and to realize all his potentialities, the economic system must be such as to prevent the exploitation of man and to free him from want. The third feature would be

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[1]Embodied in this term is the implication that Truth is justice. Moreover, as one of the names of God, the term has multi-fold religious connotations. 'Aflaq's recurrent use of this term in his essays and speeches is a clear instance of the religious fount from which he drew.

[2]A note needs to be added here to clarify the double function of the term "risāla" (message). It is analogous to the term "waḥy" (revelation) analyzed by T. Izutsu in the chapter "Communicative Relation between God and Man", God and Man, 165-184. As for the term "waḥy", the term "risāla" involves at least three persons: the one who sends the message, the messenger, and the one to whom the message is sent; the connotation of "mission" may then be understood as the duty of the messenger to deliver the message.

tolerance. Tolerance would be deeply imbedded in the Arab tradition under Islam and Arabism, inheriting that principle of tolerance, would be capable of rising to a humanism unknown to the intolerant nationalisms of the West.[1]

In the only study in English devoted to the analysis of the political ideas of Michel 'Aflaq,[2] T. Khalidi relies exclusively on internal evidence in order to show that 'Aflaq's metaphysics were largely influenced by Hegel, in that 'Aflaq postulates a dualism between Spirit and Matter with Spirit controlling Matter.[3] According to Khalidi, 'Aflaq's "spirit of Arab life or nation is a synonym for /Hegel's/ spirit".[4] Khalidi continues his analysis by attempting to trace 'Aflaq's dialectic to Hegel's influence.[5] It is true that 'Aflaq poses a dualism between Earth and Heaven[6] and between the old

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[1] It is Ḥamādī, and not 'Aflaq, who insists on tolerance as the third feature of the new order in society. Having reduced "socialism" to the blander "equality", Ḥamādī reduces "equality" to "tolerance"; thus diluting 'Aflaq's much stronger assertions about economic measures to be undertaken.

[2] T. Khalidi, "Critical Study", M.E.F. (1966), 55-67. A major drawback of this article is that the author does not give any specific references to 'Aflaq's writings, even though he relied almost exclusively on internal evidence. L. Binder, Ideological Revolution, has a chapter on what he calls "Radical-Reform Nationalism", a condensed revision of his article, "Radical-Reform Nationalism in Syria and Egypt", Muslim World, 49 (1959) 96-107, 213-231, is a comparison between 'Aflaq and the Ba'th, on the one hand, and Nasser and the Free Officers, on the other. K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th; M. Khadduri, Political Trends; and P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, each has a section on the ideas of Michel 'Aflaq. An indication of the widespread influence 'Aflaq has had is a recent book, in French, by a Tunisian author who reflects 'Aflaq's terminology and ideas in almost every chapter; H. Djaït, La Personnalité et le devenir Arabo-Islamique (Paris, 1974). It is noteworthy that Djaït joins between 'Aflaq and Edmond Rabbath, another Christian Arab nationalist, who wrote a book called Unité Syrienne et devenir arabe (Paris, 1937).

[3] In his rejection of Marxist materialism, 'Aflaq does tend to emphasize the spiritual and the mystical, but to go from there to tracing the influence of Hegel upon him is rather far-fetched. It should also be pointed out that 'Aflaq, as an Arab, was heir to a rich tradition of Islamic philosophy, the later phases of which had several points of similarity to Hegel such as the dualism of spirit (rūh) and matter (mādda) and the dominance of spirit over matter.

[4] T. Khalidi, "Critical Study", 56.

[5] Ibid. L. Binder, Ideological Revolution, 159, correctly notes that 'Aflaq rejected the egelian dialectic.

[6] M. flaq, "Al-Arḍ wa-al-sama " (arth and eaven), Maṣīr, 34.

and the young,[1] but the dynamics of these pairs of opposites is not as simple as Khalidi seems to suggest.

I believe that there is a fundamental difference between the Hegelian dialectic, which is the basis of Marxist theory, and the dialectic underlying 'Aflaq's thought, which is quite similar to the dialectic Gide presented. The key terms in the Hegelian dialectic are thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. By contrast, the key terms in Gide's dialectic are contradiction or, in other words "living tension",[2] as the source of creativity. 'Aflaq never attempts to resolve the ambivalences and contradictions in his essays. The dialectic proper to 'Aflaq progresses from affirmation to contrasting affirmation, which mutually deny and mutually recall each other. Negation becomes an affirmation of the opposing 'thesis' and not a negative mediation. The Hegelian deterministic progress, from thesis and antithesis to synthesis which in turn creates its own antithesis in view of a higher level of synthesis, is fundamentally different from 'Aflaq's discontinuous dialectic.

Arising out of the Arabic language,[3] 'Aflaq's dialectic, in its alternating movement, tends to diversify into opposites such that these opposites do not produce one another but bear witness to each other. The polarity of opposites does not then lead to a synthesis where the two terms would cease their opposition; but thought grasps the opposites in conjunction.

The non-Hegelian dialectic 'Aflaq propounds underlies his view of history which is thus neither Hegelian nor Marxist. 'Aflaq's philosophy of

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[1] M. 'Aflaq, "Khibrat al-shuyūkh wa-indifā'āt al-shabāb" (The Experience of the Old and the Rashness of the Young), Sabīl, 36.

[2] H. Djaīt, Personnalité, 13.

[3] L. Gardet, "Les différents types de dialectique", in J.P. Charnay (ed.), L'Ambivalence dans la culture arabe (Paris, 1967), 359-365.

history, like his views upon most topics, is not presented in a coherent

system but needs to be reconstructed from several essays. Basing his argu-

ments upon the contention that 'Aflaq accepts the Hegelian dialectic, Khalidi

suggests that 'Aflaq's view of history is "strictly deterministic".[1] The

term 'Aflaq uses is "qadar" which, as so many of the terms he uses, is

rather ambiguous because it is loaded with a chequered history of meanings.

Probably the best translation would be "fate",[2] in order to avoid the mecha-

nistic connotations of Marxist determinism.

'Aflaq sees history as being composed of alternating phases of decline

and glory;[3] clearly recalling Ibn Khaldūn's conception of history. The cycli-

cal emphasis appears when 'Aflaq stresses the past glory of the Arabs and

the almost fateful need to rediscover it.[4]   The same view is reflected

in the Ba'th constitution which notes that the Arabs have experienced many

historical reverses but have always risen to high points of glory.[5] The

return to past glories is not in the spirit of imitation but to benefit the

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[1]T. Khalidi, "Critical Study", 57.

[2]The term "qadar" and the concept it calls forth are reminiscent of
the early Muslim controversy about free-will and man's responsibility for
his actions. 'Aflaq seems to approach the position that although man cannot
question his fate, only by accepting his fate would man fulfill his poten-
tialities.

[3]In his discussion of 'Aflaq's view of history, Binder places 'Aflaq
in the category of "romantic nationalists"; see his Ideological Revolution,
154. 'Aflaq does display many of the characteristics of the romantic but
he goes beyond it in that he does not reject reason but views it as the
highest principle (see p.88) in man's quest for knowledge. Personally, I
place 'Aflaq, along with Gide, in the category of early existentialists in
the 'tradition' of Sartre and Camus.

[4]M. 'Aflaq, Fī Sabīl al-ba'th al-'arabī ("In the Way of the Arab
Resurrection") (1953), 29, as referred to by L. Binder, Ideological Revolu-
tion, 173 n.68.

[5]"Constitution of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party" as translated by
S. Haim, Arab Nationalism, 233.

present from the lessons of the past in order to build a better future.[1]
It becomes clear that in 'Aflaq's view, each stage of decline has within
it the seeds necessary to produce the following stage of glory (khulūd);
each stage is itself an "être" and a "vouloir être".[2] The inexorable pull
towards the future rests upon a realistic, yet optimistic, view of the present.
'Aflaq defines his own position as realist and idealist simultaneously.[3]
He distinguishes two types of idealism: "illusory idealism" and "realistic
idealism",asserting that the idealism of the Ba'th is of the second type. It
is almost synonymous with faith (Imān) since he defines "realistic idealism"
as that "believing spirit" which is "optimistic, confident in itself, in the
nation, and in the future."[4] 'Aflaq explains that his idealism is realistic
in that the real is to be studied and known so as to be changed and overcome.[5]
The dialectical tension between the two terms in the compound expression
"al-mithāliyya al-wāqi'iyya" (realistic idealism) becomes a force propelling
the Arab nation towards its glorious future.

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[1]M. 'Aflaq, "Ḥawl al-risāla al-'arabiyya" (About the Arab Message),
Sabīl, 144-145.

[2]H. Djaīt, Personnalité, 70.

[3]M. 'Aflaq, "Al-Mithāliyya al-mawhūma" (Illusory Idealism) and "Al-
Mithāliyya al-wāqi'iyya" (Realistic Idealism) in Sabīl, 31 and 32 respectively.
The issue of idealism versus realism is considered important by Ba'thīs; even
Mutā' Ṣafadī, an ex-Ba'thī who turned against 'Aflaq, also treated of the
subject. Ṣafadī, malgré lui, accepts 'Aflaq's contention that idealism is
the driving force behind revolution but differs from 'Aflaq in keeping the
two concepts, idealism and realism, separate (see Ḥizb al-ba'th, 23-24).
For both 'Aflaq and Ṣafadī, the optimistic attitude towards the future creates
the revolution against the present.

[4] M. 'Aflaq, "Mawhūma", Sabīl, 31.

[5]Also see his essay, "Al-Ma'raka bayn al-maṣīr al-saṭhī wa-al-wujūd
al-aṣīl" (The Battle between Superficial Destiny and True Existence), Ma'rakat
al-maṣīr al-wāhid (Beirut, 1963), 25-32. All references to Ma'raka will be
for this edition.

'Aflaq starts with the existence of the Arab nation as an axiom, requiring neither rational justification nor analysis of any kind. He writes,

> We did not have to think for long about investigating the foundations of the Arab nation, and whether... it has the ties common to all its regions and people that justify its unity... This is an obvious thing that imposes itself.[1]

Arabism, for 'Aflaq, is not a concept that can be expressed in precise terms; it is an emotionally-charged idea with Arab unity as its fundamental tenet. 'Aflaq asserts that Arabism is not theoretical, but gives rise to theories; that it has not been contrived by art, but is the source and inspiration of art.[2] He continues by elaborating what Arab nationalism should not be. It should not be racist, since racism implies injustice (ẓulm). It should not be religious, since religion does not bind the nation but, on the contrary, may divide one people.[3]

According to 'Aflaq, nationalism is neither theory, nor love, nor faith, nor will, although these are some of its necessary ingredients;[4] like love of family[5] or like one's face,[6] nationalism is a beloved fate.[7] And

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[1] M. 'Aflaq, "Al-Ba'th huwa al-inbi'āth min al-dākhil" (The Resurrection is Inspiration from the Inside), Ma'raka, 58.

[2] M. 'Aflaq, "Fī al-Qawmiyya al-'arabiyya" (About Arab Nationalism), written in 1940, Sabīl, 43.

[3] M. 'Aflaq, "Al-Qawmiyya al-'arabiyya wa-al-naẓariyya al-qawmiyya" (Arab Nationalism and Nationalist Theory), written in 1957, ibid., 102-106.

[4] M. 'Aflaq, "Al-Qawmiyya", ibid., 44.

[5] M. 'Aflaq, "Al-Qawmiyya Ḥubb" (Nationalism is Love), ibid., 45.

[6] M. 'Aflaq, "Al-Qawmiyya qadar muḥabbab" (Nationalism is a Beloved Fate), ibid., 47.

[7] Ibid. In another passage 'Aflaq equates the "spasm of love" with the "revulsion of hate", exemplifying the power of contradiction in his expression, the tension of opposites which creates a transformation of consciousness.

one's fate must be accepted as one must accept oneself in order to fulfill one's potentialities to the greatest extent possible. 'Aflaq's refusal to define Arabism is consistent with his early attack on abstract thinking and theoretical definitions.[1] Interestingly enough, 'Aflaq draws an analogy between those who attempt to treat nationalism as theory and those who attempted to rationalize Islam, the dialecticians (_'ulamā' al-kalām_).[2]

At first sight, these arguments seem to indicate that 'Aflaq is striving to reject the rational approach to nationalism, but he is not simply insisting on subjective nationalism. He only rejects rationalizing in general terms and insists on talking of specifics; "_'urūba_" (Arabism) instead of "qawmiyya" (nationalism), and "Islam" instead of "dīn" (religion).[3] Since Arabism is a premise, or axiom, which may not be questioned nor be subject to rational analysis, these are logical consequences to the fact of Arabism.[4]

'Aflaq clarifies his ideas further by distinguishing between "the Arab idea" and "the nationalist theory".

> It is the Arab idea which is axiomatic and eternal; it is a beloved fate since it is love before anything else. By contrast, nationalist theory is a progressive expression of this eternal idea, dependent on time and circumstances. The theory is represented today -- according to our belief -- in freedom, socialism, unity.[5]

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[1] M. 'Aflaq, "Fī al-Qawmiyya", 42.

[2] Ibid., 41.

[3] M. 'Aflaq, "Al-Qawmiyya wa-al-nazariyya", 102.

[4] One of these consequences is made explicit in the Ba'th Constitution, Article 10, which declares, "An Arab is he whose language is Arabic, who has lived on Arab soil, or who, after having been assimilated to Arab life, has faith in his belonging to the Arab nation"; see S. Haim, Arab Nationalism, 236.

[5] M. 'Aflaq, "Al-Qawmiyya wa-al-nazariyya", 102-103. This later clarification, bridging a gap of 17 years, illustrates how 'Aflaq's basic ideas remained unchanged. 'Aflaq's three pillars of the Arabism specific to the contemporary period: freedom, socialism, unity are analogous to the three principles of the French Revoltuion of 1789: liberté, égalité, fraternité. How far one may push this analogy is an open question; at this stage of our *

'Aflaq avoids a chauvinistic position by positing a principle higher than
Arabism. He refers to this higher principle in several essays of which the
following passage is only one example.

> We believe that Arabism is above everything, in the sense that it is
> above well-being and selfishness... but we believe that one thing is
> above Arabism, and that is Truth /al-haqq/. Arabism must be bound to
> an eternal principle... Our slogan ought to be Truth above Arabism so
> that the union of Arabism with Truth may become a reality.[1]

From the context and by obvious omission, 'Aflaq is not equating Truth
(al-haqq) with God.[2] As eternal principle, Truth does take on some of the
attributes of God but is in no way identified with the overpowering, over-
whelming God of the Islamic Middle Ages. I think that 'Aflaq is really
talking about that "divine spark" which, according to his frame of reference,
lies dormant in each human being, waiting to be fanned into flames. But it
is only in the bosom of the nation that each individual would be capable of
fulfilling his full potentialities.[3]

The first element of the eternal Arab idea specific to this, the
present time, is freedom. 'Aflaq insisted on this point quite strongly
while rejecting the idea that only in democracy can freedom be safe-guarded,

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=study, it is sufficient to note that, for 'Aflaq, unity/fraternité
is central in his conception of the interrelationship of the three.

[1] M. 'Aflaq, FI Sabil al-ba'th al-'arabi, 50, as quoted by L. Binder,
Ideological Revolution, 175 n.63. Also see Appendix, "In Memory of the Arab
Prophet".

[2] Even in the essay, "In Memory of the Arab Prophet", 'Aflaq mentions
God only at the end, almost as an afterthought, and only as another term for
Truth. See the suggestive article by C. Malik, "The Near East: The Search
for Truth", in S. Haim, Arab Nationalism, 189-224.

[3] On this point, 'Aflaq seems to be in agreement with Jamal al-Din
al-Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh, and Sati' al-Husri; see S. Haim, "Islam and
Arab Nationalism", 127.

individual and communal. And when the unity of the nation is reconstituted,

there will be no conflict between serving the nation and benefitting from it;

rather, both individual and national interests will be harmonized. In an

essay written in 1946, 'Aflaq explains that "the fight for freedom is a life

and death battle".[1]

> Our belief has always been that freedom is not a complementary thing
> which might be dispensed with in the life of the nation. Freedom is
> the foundation of this life, its essence and its meaning. Freedom is
> indivisible; we cannot revolt against foreign imperialism and then
> remain silent about injustice within the nation since the motive pushing
> us to resist imperialism is the same which prevents us from countenan-
> cing injustice.[2]

According to 'Aflaq, freedom is not to be found in more articles in the

constitution or in more laws, but in action.

> We would not impose upon the rulers respect /of freedom/ and we would
> not reveal to the people its value and its sacredness, if we did not

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[1]M. 'Aflaq, "Limādha nahrus 'ala al-hurriyya" (Why we Guard Freedom),
Sabīl, 319-321. Although the order in which the three elements are mentioned
varies, during the early stages it reflected the history of the Ba'th move-
ment. The Ba'th appeared when the Arab homeland was under the rule of foreign
powers; thus, the first phase in its ideological development was an emphasis
on freedom from foreign control. The failure of the Arab armies to prevent
the partition of Palestine and the alarming atmosphere of insecurity created
by the presence of Israel impressed upon politically conscious Arabs the need
for unity. The Algerian revolution of 1954 and the Egyptian revolution of
1952 signaled the beginning of the final phase in the political liberation
of the Arabs; with that also began the need for socialism, as the socio-
economic content of the Arab nationalist ideology. See M.S. Agwani, "Ba'th",
8-9.

[2]M. 'Aflaq, "Limādha", 319. 'Aflaq conceives of freedom both as
personal freedom -- "freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of belief
as well as artistic freedom" (see "Bath Constitution", Second Fundamental
Principle in S. Haim, Arab Nationalism, 233-234) -- and as national liberation.
See M. Kerr, "Arab adical actions of emocracy", t. nthony's apers 15,
edited by A. Hourani, y-40, for an interesting discussion of the problem.
Since 'Aflaq does not explicitly treat of the problematic choice between
individualism and pluralism, on the one hand, and unity, on the other hand
Kerr refers to A. 'Abd al-Dā'im, Al-Jīl al-'arabī al-jadīd ("The New Arab
Generation") (Beirut, 1961), 167, who states, "The liberty of the individual...
ends where the liberty of the group begins."

believe in it actively (jihādan) and protected it at great sacrifice (istishhādan).[1]

The need for freedom was the main issue which 'Aflaq and the Ba'th placed against joining any alliances with non-Arab states and which led them to the position known as "positive neutralism".[2]

Michel 'Aflaq is primarily a nationalist, both in the sense of an anti-imperialist and in the sense of a builder of a political community. But, as he himself insists, socialism is indispensable for the realization of the goals of nationalism.

> In 1928 (before we went to Europe) we saw nationalism simply as a struggle between the nation and the colonizer... Then we went to France... we read the great liberal thinkers of the West and acquired a picture of an enlightened society, free from misery and corruption. We discovered that we were suffering not only from national wounds inflicted by the foreigner but also from social wounds because our society was sunk in ignorance and falsehood. We then understood that the struggle against the colonizer had to be waged by the people as a whole... To be effective, the struggle against the colonizer had to involve a change of mind and of thought, a deepening of national consciousness and of moral standards...3

Since 'Aflaq rejects Marxism, his combination of nationalism and socialism in one system of political thought is not necessarily a contradiction in terms. The following exposition of Ba'thī socialism is based on three of 'Aflaq's essays, written at different times. 'Aflaq explained his rejection of Marxism in an essay published in 1944 and followed it with another essay, written in

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[1]M. 'Aflaq, "Limādha", 321. Note the use of religious terms such as "sacredness" and the specifically Islamic terms of "jihād" and "istishhād".

[2]According to K.S. Abu Jaber, the fact that Nāṣir denied "certain political liberties was a point of contention with the Ba'th "at least in theory"; see his Arab Ba'th, 8.

[3]M. 'Aflaq and S. Bītār, Al-Qawmiyya al-'arabiyya wa-mawqifuha min al-shuyū'iyya (Damascus, 1944), as quoted by P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 149. 'Aflaq's progress from simple nationalism to nationalism coupled with socialism is the inverse of Salama Mūsa's movement from simple socialism to socialism coupled with nationalism; see K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 3.

1946, defining Arab socialism. Finally, and probably in reaction to various accusations,[1] 'Aflaq published an essay outlining the differences between Arab socialism and national socialism.[2]

In the first essay, 'Aflaq attacks Communism (shuyū'iyya) on four points. He considers Communism to be a Western philosophy and, thus, a stranger to the Arab ethos.[3] According to 'Aflaq, Communism has absolutely no positive link with Arab history, or thought, or life. Communism developed in the industrialized part of Europe, which had already passed through a nationalist phase and was entering upon an expansionist phase.[4] The Arab nation realizes that it has to reject its actual present in order to enter upon a phase of renewal, contrary to the Western countries whose history has seen continuous progress.

The Arab nation is not imperialist and does not lust for expansion. Moreover, the Arab nation does not need to espouse a materialist philosophy since the spirit is the great hope and mover of revival.[5] For 'Aflaq, Communism is not simply an economic system but a message, a materialistic, artificial message denying the truth of nationalism and the spiritual historical basis upon which the nations rests. It is a total philosophy which imposes a specific foreign policy, a specific governmental system, a specific social system, and a specific, intellectual, moral life. Either the Arabs

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[1] L. Binder, Ideological Revolution, 182-183, places the Ba'th in the same category as the German National-Socialist Party.

[2] M. 'Aflaq, "Mawqifuna min al-naẓariyya al-shuyū'iyya" (Our Position about Communist Theory", Sabīl, 193-212.

[3] Ibid., 193.

[4] Ibid., 197.

[5] M. 'Aflaq, "Ma'ālim al-ishtirākiyya al-'arabiyya" (The Characteristics of Arab Socialsim), Sabīl, 201.

have to accept it as a whole or they have to reject it in order to carry
their own message, embodied in a living humanism strengthened by a mature
nationalism.[1] Even as early as 1944, 'Aflaq saw Marxism as an adjunct of a
foreign power such that its espousal by the Arabs would mean the espousal
of Soviet policies; "strangling the freedom of Arab thought and pushing it
along the path of fanaticism and error".[2] Finally, Marxism contradicts
the modern Arab awakening. Since Marxism developed in an environment foreign
to Arab conditions, it combats problems which the Arabs have not developed,
distracting them from their real problems.[3]

Despite his criticisms, 'Aflaq, as an Arab nationalist, realizes that
socialism is necessary to resurrect his nation.[4] But the economic aspects
of Arab socialism are not important in themselves;

> The nationalist struggle requires the socialist view; in other words,
> /it requires/ the belief that the Arabs cannot rise unless they felt
> that their nationalism includes justice ('adāla), equality (musāwā),
> a life of dignity ('aysh karīm) for all.[5]

'Aflaq ends his essay be re-asserting the spiritual values underlying Arab
socialism. Only by retrieving the original and genuine meaning of spiritual
concepts will the Arabs save their nation from the dangers of materialist
thought.[6]

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[1] M. 'Aflaq, "Mawqifuna", 195-196.

[2] Ibid., 196. Also note that 'Aflaq began to write against Marxism and
Communism after Gide had published his two books criticizing the Soviet ver-
sion of socialism.

[3] Ibid.

[4] D.M. Reid, "The Syrian Christians and early Socialism in the Arab
World", I.J.M.E.S. 5/2 (1974), 177-193, interprets the development of a
socialist ideology in terms of the communal interests of Christian Arabs.

[5] M. 'Aflaq, "Ma'ālim", 202.

[6] Ibid., 206. For a very unsympathetic and incoherent view of Ba'thī
socialism, see J. Rastier, "A la Recherche du socialisme syrien", Orient
(Paris) 4 (1957), 169-179.

'Aflaq added two more "practical" points to his criticism, that Communism denies the right to private property and the right of inheritance.[1] 'Aflaq seems to be upholding these rights so as to distinguish Arab socialism from Communism and to eliminate any possible contradiction between Arab socialism and Islam. The right of inheritance and, by inference, the right to private property is enshrined in Islamic law and practice.[2] Moreover, 'Aflaq considers Communism a real danger to Arabism since it threatens to tie the destiny of the Arabs to the policies of the Soviet Union and to eliminate all nationalisms, despite their positive value.[3]

'Aflaq distinguished between Arab socialism and "national socialism" in two points: that "national socialism" is based on the principle of inequality (1) within each nation and (2) between nations, while the Ba'th upholds the principle of equality.

> Socialism... is considered the handmaid of nationalism; it is a 'necessity which emanates from the depth of Arab nationalism itself. Socialism constitutes, infact, the ideal social order which will allow the Arab people to realize its possiblities and to enable its genius to flourish...' In 'Aflaq's view, socialism is less a set of recipes for solving specific social and economic problems than an instrument for the moral improvement of the people at large... it is both spiritual and identified with nationalism, because it involves the genius of the entire people. 'Socialism is the body, national unity is the spirit'. Political unity is hailed as a creative force which will, of itself, inspire a socialist society. Unity is, infact, not conceivable without a 'progressive' content. This mystical marriage of nationalism and socialism is 'Aflaq's peculiar message.[4]

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[1]M. 'Aflaq, "Bayn ishtirākiyyatina wa-al-shuyū'iyya wa-al-ishtirākiyya al-waṭaniyya" (/The Differences/ between our Socialism, Communism, and National Socialism), Sabīl, 208-209.

[2]As far as the specific policies to be realized, see articles 26-43, of the Ba'th Constitution in S. Haim, Arab Nationalism, 238-241. These measures come very close to the measures called for by what has come to be known as "Islamic Socialism"; see S.A. Hanna and G.H. Gardner (eds.), Arab Socialism: a Documentary Survey (Leiden, 1967).

[3]M. 'Aflaq, "Bayn", 210.

[4]P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 154. Also see M. 'Aflaq, "Al-Wihda al-'arabiyya wa-al-ishtirākiyya" (Arab Unity and Socialism), Ma'raka, 38.

The last and most important element of present Arabism, national unity, is the fundamental and constructive principle of society, of its history, and of humanity as a whole. National unity falls within the category of concepts which are "axiomatic, requiring no analysis or proof; /its comprehension/ enters the heart and possesses the mind at once".[1] Only through pain and struggle may Arab unity be achieved. The struggle for unity is not conceived of simply in terms of the elimination of political boundaries; it is seen as a regenerative process leading to the reform of Arab character and society. 'Aflaq presents the relationship between Arab unity and struggle in dialectical terms; "The Arabs will not realize the unity of their struggle until they struggle for unity".[2]

The Arab message, embodied in the unity and resurrection of the Arab nation, is the best the Arabs can offer to man, since humanitarian principles cannot grow and fructify except within a healthy nation. The eternal Arab message lies in understanding the present, in the light of the past, and responding to its requirements. Eternity (khulūd)· is not something far off in the horizon or outside the framework of time; it is recreated (yanba'itha) from the depths of the present.

The Arab Resurrection is to be achieved through Revolution.[3] And, for 'Aflaq, Revolution is both the means and the end of the Arab Resurrection.

> ...The new Revolution is the sharply conscious, believing progress towards
> that level where contradiction is resolved and opposites are united;
> where the past meets the future, and the nation is reconciled with itself

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[1] M. 'Aflaq, "Ḥawl al-risāla al-'arabiyya" (About the Arab Message), Sabīl, 139.

[2] M. 'Aflaq, "Wiḥdat al-nidāl wa-wiḥdat al-masīr" (The Unity of Struggle and the Unity of Destiny), Sabīl, 242. Note that 'Aflaq consistently used the term "nidāl" which avoids the fanatic connotations of "jihād".

[3] M. 'Aflaq, "Min Ma'ānī al-inqilāb" (Cf the Meanings of Revolution), Sabīl, 175.

in creativity...[1]

Revolution, the rediscovery of the Truth within the nation is to be realized
by the Ba'th. The Ba'th Party is to fashion a core in the image of its ob-
jectives, free of traces of the unhealthy present. In turn, the core is to
spread itself within the nation as a diminutive image of the future of the
Arab nation.[2] 'Aflaq was proposing a vast project of education at the
individual level, such that the Revolution becomes the transformation of the
Arab man in continuous struggle.

> The corrupt present is not only something concrete in the political and
> social conditions, but is something immaterial (ma'nawī) in which society
> shares in different proportions. It may be said that each individual
> bears some of the effects of this present. The revolutionary individual
> is he who combats this reality in himself before fighting it in society
> and in concrete situations.[3]

In a speech he delivered to the Ba'th cadres of Homs in 1950, 'Aflaq
defined Revolution as "that true awakening which may not be denied or doubted
any longer; ...the awakening of the soul which had been buried under the
weight of corrupt and rigid circumstances".[4] The Revolution is imperative
not only to eliminate false social and political conditions but in order to

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[1] M. 'Aflaq, "Ma'ānī", 179. The term 'Aflaq used, "inqilāb", has come
to mean a military coup, while the term "thawra" is accepted as a more corret
rendering of revolution.

[2] M. 'Aflaq, "Al-Ṣila bayn al-'urūba wa-al-fikra al-inqilābiyya" (The
Link between Arabism and the Revolutionary Idea), Sabīl, 171. Also see the
essay "Al-Mustaqbal" (The Future), ibid., 35; and the articles in ibid.,
153-170.

[3] M. 'Aflaq, "Al-Ṣila", 174. 'Aflaq's insistence on the moral trans-
-formation of each individual may be compared to the position of an early Arab
socialist, Shibli Shumayyil, who defined socialism as "the reform of society
through the reform of each individual within it"; see K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab
Ba'th, 2.

[4] T. Khalidi, "Critical Study", 56-57, believes that 'Aflaq's view of
revolution as an absolute antithesis to the corrupt present is a reflection
of his c-el'an basis. hile ' flaq contrasts the dismal present of the
Arab nation with their glo-ious present and future, his position is not
Hegelian but reflects his cyclical scheme of history.

achieve the unity of the nation.[1] 'Aflaq lays down three essential conditions for the Revolution: (1) awareness of the historical and contemporary realities which call for drastic transformation; (2) a feeling of responsibility rooted in a strong moral base; and (3) a genuine belief in the feasibility, at the present stage of Arab history, of the Revolution. These conditions are to be fulfilled by each individual since awareness and belief are characteristics of the individual, not of the group.[2] On the individual level, revolution is imperative in order to "reconstruct the true Arab personality, to free thought, to establish a serious, responsible, ethical system to burst open the sources of faith."[3]

Obviously, 'Aflaq's is an ethical, non-legalistic conception of the revolution, and is closely tied to his ideas about sacrifice and pain. Only by passing through the crucible of sacrifice and pain, will each individual be transformed and thus change the Arab nation into a healthy society.[4]
'Aflaq's concept of the revolution is non-materialist, as may be seen from the following passage:

> Revolution is the victory of Truth over reality, because the /existence of the/ nation, despite its retardation and its disfigurement, is a truth. This Truth declares itself whatever might be the domination of reality. Revolution is this declaration, this reinforcement of the existence of Truth... Revolution is thus the victory of the future /over the present/, which is our truth.[5]

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[1] M. 'Aflaq, "Ma'ānī", 176.

[2] M. 'Aflaq, "Ḥawl al-inqilāb wa-al-qadar wa-al-ḥurriyya" (About Revolution, Fate, and Freedom), Sabīl, 181.

[3] M. 'Aflaq, "Ma'ānī", 177.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

And again,

> Revolution... before being a political and social program is that
> primeval propelling power, that strong psychic current, that manda-
> tory struggle, without which the reawakening of the nation is not
> to be understood.[1]

'Aflaq's three objectives -- freedom, socialism, and unity -- are
indissolubly fused; none can be achieved without the others but all are
only means to the ultimate message of the Arab nation. All depend on the
people and on faith in their eternal regenerative powers. The immediate
cause of the Revolution is the pain of the masses. 'Aflaq sees the Arabs
as suffering masses who, with the Ba'th movement to lead them, must shake
off their marginal status and rejoin the stream of history. His insistence
on pain and suffering as prerequisites of the Arab resurrection is reminis-
cent of Christian thought about the suffering and resurrection of Christ,[2]
although he himself never makes any references that might substantiate the
possibility.

'Aflaq's ideas about religion in general and about Islam in particular
cannot be understood without first understanding his view of history[3] and
what he means by the expression "risāla khālída" (eternal message). As

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[1] M. 'Aflaq, "Ma'ānī", 178.

[2] The themes of sacrifice and pain are also integral aspects of certain
Ṣūfī tendencies.

[3] 'Aflaq's view of Islam is not original, it is similar to the view
expressed by Edmond Rabbath, Unité syrienne et devenir arabe (Paris, 1937)
in many ways. Rabbath sees Islam as an Arab religion -- the Quran was re-
vealed in Arabic, the caliphate, according to the Sunna and Ḥadīth, should
fall to a descendant of Quraysh, and the pilgrimage is to Makka. For Rabbath,
Islam is clearly part of the Arab past but he does not see it as part of the
Arab present or future. 'Aflaq goes beyond Rabbath in identifying the coming
of Islam with the Arab national awakening (see appended "In Memory of the
Arab Prophet"), thus giving Arab nationalism an ethical and even a religious
dimension lacking in the analytically intellectual approach of Rabbath.

mentioned previously, history, for 'Aflaq, consists of alternating periods
of decline and glory. The first of the historical periods discussed at
some length is the Jahiliyya, the period of ignorance before Islam. Socially,
the group dominated the individual; ethical principles were derived from
the group and the individual was imprisoned in a rigid code of conduct.[1]
Ideologically, the Arabs of that period had no conception of an organic link
between past, present, and future; they lived in the isolation of time and
place. They had no idea of destiny or understanding of the meaning of
existence.

The coming of Islam radically changed the social and intellectual
life of the Arabs.[2] Their values were defined by a power above group and
individual, such that the freedom of the individual was guaranteed while
the interests of individual and collectivity were harmonized. The Muslim
Arab acquired a conception of an ultimate goal (khulūd) and of the meaning
of existence. During this period, the Arab moved from Jahiliyya to Islam,
from a life imprisoned by the collectivity to a life in which liberty and
equality were fulfilled for all. As Islam spread among non-Arabs, the Arabs
gradually lost their national unity, and returned to the narrow loyalties
of the Jahiliyya period.[3] The Jahiliyya thus represented a pure Arab milieu
but narrow and limited. The short period following the rise of Islam saw
the fulfillment of the Arab spirit in freedom and equality, and in the
intellectual rush towards wider and more permanent principles. But when

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[1] M. 'Aflaq, "Al-risāla", 142. See the more general study by A.G. Chejne,
"The Use of History by Modern Arab Writers", M.E.J. 14 (Autumn, 1960), 382-
396.

[2] M. 'Aflaq, "Al-risāla", 142.

[3] Ibid., 143.

the national framework was dissolved, the individual returned to loneliness and despair.[1] In effect, 'Aflaq identifies the coming of Islam with the Arab "national awakening".[2] In early Islam, the true "eternal message" came forth for a short time, then came the decline. According to Binder, the risāla,[3] which he translates as "mission", is of "universal validity"; it is also "a claim upon all other peoples to recognize Arab nationalism", and "the basis of nationalist activism",[4] but 'Aflaq's conception of the eternal message is to be understood as "a tendency and a readiness rather than specific limited goals".[5]

It is in Islam and through Islam that the Arabs maintained their national unity. Since the feeling of alienation, of "otherness" was a powerful incentive in 'Aflaq's psyche, the unity he proclaims is, first and foremost, spiritual unity, closer to Gide's concept of balance and harmony than to Hegel's triumphant spirit. Unity, therefore, is not, for 'Aflaq, merely a clear-cut political objective; it is a search for the "treasure of hidden vitality", the moral and spiritual source of nationalism. Arab unity assumes the proportions of an apocalyptic vision; it holds first place in the present definition of Arabism since socialism and freedom cannot be achieved except on the basis of unity. The Ba'th version of unity is "fundamental, living,

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[1] M.'Aflaq, "Al-Risāla", 144.   [2] See Appendix.

[3] See the essays, "Ḥawl al-risāla al-'arabiyya" (About the Arab Message); "Ma'na al-risāla al-khālida" (The Meaning of the Eternal Message); "Al-Risāla al-khālida" (The Eternal Message) in Sabīl, 139-145, 146-147, 148-149 respectively. The first essays was written in 1946 and the other two in 1950. The expression, "risāla khālida", first occurred in 'Aflaq's election speech of 1943.

[4] L. Binder, Ideological Revolution, 177.

[5] M.'Aflaq, Al-Risāla", 142.

having its own theory as freedom and socialism have theirs, and, like them,

having its own daily organized and continuous struggle of principle".[1]

> ...social differences, provincial partitions, confessional conflicts,
> every trace of slavery, particular interests, ignorance, and imitation
> disappear. At that time will the future come to us, to progress in us,
> and nothing will return to reign separate from and external to us.[2]

Spiritual unity becomes the prerequisites for political unity; in fact,

national unity is itself a type of spiritual unity.[3]

Islam, in 'Aflaq's view, represents that period in history when the

Arabs did fulfill their eternal mission in a form that was best suited to

the historical circumstances. As the ideal manifestation of the Arab genius,

early Islam represents one of, if not the most, glorious period in Arab

history. Because of this, the Arab, even the Christian Arab, has to seek

himself in Islam.[4] Arabs, particularly Christian Arabs, are to find in

Islam "their national culture in which they must become absorbed".[5] Thus,

Islam, as a system of thought and of action, provides the ethical dimension

of Arab nationalism.

> As long as the communion between the Arab nation and Islam remains strong
> and as long as we see in the Arab nation a body whose soul is Islam,
> there is no fear that the Arabs will deviate in their nationalism.[6]

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[1]M.'Aflaq, "Thawriyyat al-wiḥda al-'arabiyya" (The Revolutionary
[Aspect] of Arab Unity), Ma'raka, 21.

[2]M.'Aflaq, "Al-Mustaqbal", 35.

[3]See P. Rondot, "Islam, Nationalisme, état moderne en Orient", Orient
(Paris) I (1957), 9, for a perspective which places Islam as a concept of
unity; "unité divine avant tout, mais aussi unité de la communaute des
Croyants, unité enfin d'un monde".

[4]See Appendix.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

The Arab existential revolt is then to be guided by the precepts and ideals of Islam, never straying from within the boundaries of the Muslim ethos. For 'Aflaq, Islam, in its essence, is a revolutionary movement, nourished by struggle and pain, which transformed men and institutions. But, from 'Aflaq's perspective, one needs to differentiate between true Islam and its present disintegrated form. Thus, 'Aflaq sees the official representatives of the present living-dead Islam as the defenders of "inertia and of social exploitation".[1] The new generation, rejecting Islam in its totality, needs to be reminded that the ossified Islam of today is not the true Islam,[2] and that the Ba'th must struggle to bring religion back to its true inspiration.[3] The constraint of the true Islamic values is, in the final analysis, the "eternal message" of the Ba'th.

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[1] M. 'Aflaq, "Naẓaratuna lī-al-dīn" (Our View of Religion), Sabīl, 124.

[2] Ibid., 125.

[3] Ibid., 127.

Chapter V

... And Action

Upon achieving independence in 1946, Syria had yet to determine the nature of its political community in a situation of economic and social flux. The first period saw the continuing gradual weakening of the political and, to a lesser degree, socio-economic power of the old ruling class challenged by the younger 'generation' representing, to some extent, social strata that until then had had little political power. The years between independence and the Ba'th rise to power in 1963 were marked by instability; military coups followed one another, interrupted by a few years of union with Egypt.[1] The disintegration of the traditional elite proceeded rapidly with their glaring failure to meet the tasks and solve the problems posed by independence.[2] During this period, 'Aflaq played an active, if at times behind the scenes, role in the politics of the day so much so that, until the union, the Ba'th Party may be considered synonymous with 'Aflaq.

When French occupation came to an end, the contradictions within Syrian society began to crystallize. The state for which nationalists had fought the French was not the Syria which they had gained.

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[1] For the changes which occurred after the Second World War, see H. Sharabi, "The Transformation of Ideology in the Arab World", M.E.J. 19/4 (1965), 478-485, noting that his prototypes are the PPS and the Muslim Brotherhood rather than the Ba'th.

[2] I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 4-5.

The dismemberment of Syria after World War I had not been repaired by
the mere withdrawal of foreign control,... /raising/ the complex problem
of adjusting the internal differences and vested interests which had
been partially submerged in the struggle against foreign control.[1]

The policy of the National Bloc had been "independence...first";[2] when the

French were evacuated, the Front began to disintegrate. In the political

arena, the conflict took the form of differences over the Constitution.

The collaboration of the Ba'th, during the final phases of the French

occupation, with the National Bloc led by Quwwatlī was short-lived. Soon

enough, Al-Ba'th was attacking Quwwatlī for his "dictatorial" policies,[3]

and more specifically, for his reluctance to set up constitutional rule by

holding elections.[4] Consequently, the Ba'th newspaper was suspended on 18

December 1946 but, in view of the decision to hold elections in 1947,

publication of Al-Ba'th was again allowed on 22 January 1947.[5]

In the meanwhile, the ba'th obtained an official permit to constitute

itself a party, and on 5 April 1947 the First Congress of the Arab Resurrec-

tion Party (Ḥizb al-Ba'th al-'Arabī) was held with the attendance of about

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[1] M. Khadduri, "Constitutional Development in Syria, with Emphasis on
the Constitution of 1950", M.E.J. 5/2 (Spring, 1951), 148.' Also see M. Ma'oz,
"Attempts at Creating a Political Community in Modern Syria", M.E.J. 26/4
(Winter, 1972), 389-404; P. Rondot, "Tendances particularistes et tendances
unitaires en Syrie", Orient (Paris) 5 (1958), 135-148; and M.H. van Dusen,
"Political Integration and Regionalism in Syria", M.E.J. 26/2 (1972), 123-136.

[2] G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 58.

[3] There is justification for the Ba'th change of heart since, once the
Quwwatlī faction was in power, it used its control for personal interests,
nepotism, and corruption on a large scale. Moreover, the government under-
took a campaign to eliminate its critics by a policy of arrests and the sus-
pension of newspapers voicing opposition; see ibid., 77-82.

[4] See the two articles included in Niḍāl, vol.I, 149-154. All the
articles dealt with the specific issue of elections and all of them were
written by Bīṭār except for one in which 'Aflaq protested police brutality
against student demonstrators.

[5] See Niḍāl, vol.I, 171.

two hundred members.[1] The differing tendencies within the Ba'th were
already apparent but, at the time, not to the extent of forming separate
wings,[2] so that 'Aflaq was elected the Dean ('amīd) by general acclaim.[3]

In June 1947, 'Aflaq again presented himself as a candidate with
Bīṭār, but both failed to be elected.[4] Believing that the National Party
success was sufficient, Quwwatlī proposed to amend the Constitution so as
to allow himself to stand for re-election as President, creating a crisis
on the Syrian political scene.[5]

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[1] Wahīb al-Ghānim mentions 247 participants in the Congress; see E.
Rouleau, "Syrian Enigma", 165. According to Nidāl, vol.I, 164, Michel 'Aflaq
gave the opening speech. He also gave a lecture in which he dealt with the
stages through which the formulation of the Ba'th Constitution had passed as
well as the philosophical bases of the Ba'th ideology by explaining the
fundamental and the general principles of the Ba'th in conjuction with its
external and internal policies. Unfortunately, neither the opening speech
nor the lecture were included in the collection Nidāl, and were unavailable.
The Congress signaled a change from the "intimate, even close" relationship
between 'Aflaq and Bīṭār and their followers, which is likened to the rela-
tionship between a Sufi master and his disciples by Ba'th critics; see M.
Ṣafadī, Ḥizb al-Ba'th. The First National Congress produced the Party Cons-
titution and the Party Internal Rules. The statement issued at the end of
the Congress showed that the Party saw itself as representing all Arabs,
not just Syrians. For the Party structure, see Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 139-147.

[2] See Nidāl, vol.I, 168-171. Also see E. Rouleau, "Syrian Enigma",
165, where he quotes Wahīb al-Ghānim, "There were rightists and leftists,
conservatives and socialists, monarchists and republicans... This was the
origin of the incoherence, the internal struggles and the weaknesses of
the Ba'th".

[3] Nidāl, vol.I, 167.

[4] Ibid., 193-195. They had attempted to form a coalition list against
the government slate but had failed; see ibid., 203. Also see G.H. Torrey,
Syrian Politics, 94-96; and P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 31. According to
Seale, the Damascus elections were tampered with. Also see Nidāl, vol.I,
206-207.

[5] See M. Khadduri, "Constitutional Development", 148ff. for details.
Also see S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 46, where he views Quwwatlī's action as a
turning-point for constitutional life in Syria since the Constitution became
like "an essay published in a second rate daily paper".

But by then the Palestine problem overshadowed all other considerations. Zionist terrorist activities multiplied throughout 1947 when, in February, Britain announced that it would submit the question to the United Nations which approved a partition plan in November 1947.[1] Guerilla warfare broke out in Palestine and, as British troops withdrew, the Zionists achieved military superiority over the Palestinian Arabs in the plains. On 14 May 1948 the Zionist State of Israel was proclaimed and immediately recognized by the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. The armies of the neighboring Arab states crossed the frontiers of Palestine only to meet with humiliating defeat. The outcome of the war with Israel was disastrous for the Arabs who lost even more territory than Israel had been allotted in the U.N. Partition Plan.

The colossal failure had a profound effect in all Arab areas but the reaction first appeared in Syria.

> For the young Syrian officers the experience was a turning-point. They came to believe, with some justice, that their political leaders had been critically negligent: greater inter-Arab solidarity could have been achieved; more arms could have been bought abroad or secured from the French before their departure in 1946.[2]

Violent political strikes and demonstrations, in which students took part, resulted in clashes with the police and in loss of life.

> To mark the first anniversary of the 1947 United Nations vote on the partition of Palestine, the Ba'th brought the students out on strike. The suks were closed; demonstrators petitioned the Government demanding an immediate resumption of hostilities in Palestine, the rejection of all alliances with foreign Powers,...[3]

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[1] A short listing of the problems inherent in the Partition Plan is to be found in G.E. Kirk, Short History, 220.

[2] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 33. Also see G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 103-108; and G.E. Kirk, Contemporary Arab Politics, 23-24.

[3] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 34. See Nidāl, vol.I, 224-244, for a series of declarations against the partition of Palestine. The Communists, by contrast, had supported the partition, following the example of the socialist camp.

Martial law had to be declared, and the chief of staff, Colonel Ḥusnī

al-Za'īm, was invited to restore order. Michel 'Aflaq was arrested in

September 1948 for circulating tracts denouncing the government and asking

for the dissolution of Parliament.[1] Both the arrest of 'Aflaq and the

cloture of Parliament aroused violent opposition, even within the cabinet.[2]

A proposal to begin demobilization and to postpone new conscription was

viewed as an attempt by the politicians to shift the blame for the Palestine

debacle and the economic slump to the army.[3] It was clear by the spring of

1949 that parliamentary government in Syria was in serious trouble and on

30 March 1949, Za'Im staged a smooth and bloodless coup d'état.[4]

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[1] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 33; G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 108; and K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 13. Also see Nidāl, vol.I, 257-258. For the complete text of 'Aflaq's defence at his trial, see ibid., 259-265. 'Aflaq was imprisoned several times: in 1939 by the French, in 1948 by the National government of Quwwatlī, in 1949 by Za'Im, in 1952 and in 1954 by Shishaklī.

[2] G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 109-115.

[3] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 58. In effect, governments and regimes were crumbling in all the Arab world; King 'Abd Allāh of Jordan and the Lebanese Prime Minister Riyāḍ al-Ṣulḥ were assassinated and soon enough the monarchies in Egypt and Iraq were to fall.

[4] The role of the military in Syrian politics has been the topic of many studies, some of which are hereby listed: M. Halpern, "Middle Eastern Armies and the New Middle Class" in J. Johnson (ed.), The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries (Princeton, 1962); G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics and the Military, 1945-1958 (Columbus, 1964); A. Perlmutter, "The Arab Military Elite", World Politics 22 (1969-70); S.N. Fisher (ed.) The Military in Middle Eastern Society and Politics (Ohio, 1963); J.C. Hurewitz, Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension (New York, 1970); G.M. Haddad, Revolution and Military Rule in the Middle East (New York, 1973); E. Be'eri, Army Officers in Arab Politics and Society (New York, 1970); and, most notably, I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 1963-1966: The Army-Party Symbiosis (Jerusalem, Israel, 1972). Also see M. Khadduri, "The Role of the Military in Middle East Politics", American Political Science Review, XLVII/2 (June 1953), 511-524, for an early and more general assessment.

The initial reaction of the Arab Ba'th Party to the coup was to support Za'Im, conditional upon several demands: to form a provisional government; to guarantee "public freedoms", such as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly; and to hold free elections within the period of time stipulated by the Constitution.[1] Twice the Ba'th was invited to participate in the Cabinet, but refused as long as its demand for constitutional government was not guaranteed.[2] Finally, the Ba'th came out in open opposition to Za'Im, whereupon the Party newspaper was suspended and Michel 'Aflaq as well as several other Party members were arrested.[3]

'Aflaq had been imprisoned twice before, in 1939 in connection with the guerilla groups he had helped send into Iraq and in 1948, but on this occasion he was either threatened with or actually exposed to torture.[4] 'Aflaq himself never made any statements to explain the letter he is supposed to have written to Husnī al-Za'Im, in which he asked for pardon and promised to withdraw from politics.[5] The incident had its repercussions, for 'Aflaq was never to succeed as an effective political leader.

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[1] Nidāl, vol.I, 287. Although S. Al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 51, asserts that the Ba'th Party collaborated in the preparation of the coup.

[2] Ibid., 285, and, more specifically, 292-297.

[3] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 59.

[4] M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 216. 'Aflaq was again imprisoned in 1952 and in 1954 under the dictatorial regime of Adīb al-Shishaklī. When he was released after Shishaklī's demise, 'Aflaq emerged from prison a hero.

[5] For the text of the letter see M. 'Abd al-Rahīm, Qiyādat Hizb al-Ba'th al-Murtadda ("The Turncoat Leadership of the Ba'th Party") (Cairo, n.d.), 6-7, as referred to by M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 216 n.2. Khadduri considers the possibility that the letter was forged, but dismisses it. Also see S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 54-55, who concludes that forgery is improbable since 'Aflaq never repudiated the letter.

The beginnings were dangerous; it /the incident of the letter/
signified that the leader Michel 'Aflaq was finished. Michel 'Aflaq
the 'teacher' took his place. The Party continued to be loyal to him
and to respect his thought without having faith in his ability to
lead.[1]

Supposedly to rectify Za'Im's errors, Colonel Sāmī Ḥinnāwī staged
another coup d'état on 14 August 1949.[2] There is some indication that the
Ba'th, as well as the Arab Socialist Party led by Akram al-Ḥawrānī and the
Syrian National Party (PPS) of Antūn Sa'āda, had been involved in the secret
manoeuvres to overthrow Za'Im.[3]

The former President, Hāshim al-Atāsī, was asked to head a provisional
government, including Michel 'Aflaq as Minister of Education "in recognition
of his increasing hold over the student body"[4] and Akram al-Ḥawrānī[5] as
Minister of Agriculture. Their camaraderie in the provisional government
probably allowed 'Aflaq and Ḥawrānī to exchange ideas and to achieve some
understanding of each other's perspective. It is at this time that the
socialist elements of the Ba'th, which had been included in the Party Cons-
titution of 1947, were emphasized more and more.[6] In a speech given to

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[1] S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 56.

[2] For an exposé of the coups d'etat in 1949, see A. Carleton, "The
Syrian coups d'état of 1949", M.E.J. IV/1 (January, 1950), 1-11.

[3] Nidāl, vol.I, 285.

[4] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 77. It is to be noted that the new
Cabinet included only one Nationalist member; see G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics,
145. 'Aflaq found himself in the position of being surrounded by young Party
members impatient to "wield power" and had to issue an order forbidding them
from coming to the Ministry; see S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 58.

[5] See P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 62-65, for a short biographical
account of Ḥawrānī.

[6] Nidāl, vol.II, 17 and 21-24, ...etc. Whether the new emphasis was
motivated by opportunism or by sincere ideological reorientation is difficult
to judge. The new emphasis did not contradict an existing doctrine but
reinforced an essential tendency within the Ba'th. Moreover, it is probable
that socialist elements became more prominent when the Ba'th spread in the
villages; see S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 164.

university students on 29 December 1949, 'Aflaq re-iterates the aims of the
Ba'th: "Unity, Freedom, and Socialism". He stresses the importance of all
three equally and points out that they are complementary and inseparable
one from the other.[1]

To consolidate the newly-won calm, the inherent drive within Syria
towards some form of union with another Arab state[2] was fast being trans-
lated into an agreement with Baghdad. Aside from Syrian preference for a
Republican form of government rather than a monarchy, the British presence
in Iraq was viewed as the greatest objection to union between the two coun-
tries.[3] A tripartite declaration by Britain, France, and the United States
to maintain the armistice lines and a balance of arms between Israel and its
Arab neighbors antagonized the Arab world almost as much as had the partition
of Palestine. In reaction against the drive towards union with Iraq, Colonel
Adīb al-Shishaklī seized power in Damascus on 19 December 1949, carrying out
the third _coup d'état_ in Syria within nine months.[4] The political upheavals
of 1949 were followed by two years of confusion, during which the politicians
"continued to play their disorderly parliamentary game, drafting constitu-
tions, issuing manifestos"[5] and generally accomplishing nothing.

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[1] _Nidāl_, vol.II, 28-29.

[2] The fact that Syria has several competively strong centers (see M.H.
van Dusen, "Integration and Regionalism"), and the absence of vested interests
in the Syria as it emerged created push and pull forces from within Syria
towards union. P.Seale, _Struggle for Syria_, inverses the situation, believing
that the push and pull forces were initiated only from the exterior.

[3] The Ba'th position was that a monarchical form of government under the
control of a colonial power was contradictory to the essential goal of freedom;
see _Nidāl_, vol.II, 33-38.

[4] The three _coups d'état_ signaled the beginning of the end for the
traditional ruling class and initiated the gradual transfer of power to new
groups; see I. Rabinovich, _Syria under the Ba'th_, 5.

[5] P. Seale, _Struggle for Syria_, 88.

A Constitution was produced which emphasized social justice without forgetting Arab unity. The innovations of the new Constitution are to be found in the general articles, expressing the hopes and aspirations of the Syrians and bearing the imprint of 'Aflaq and Ḥawrānī.[1] While the Bill of Rights emphasized the principles of freedom and the social and economic rights of the individual, private ownership was limited so that no individual was to be allowed to "utilize his private ownership in a manner inconsistent with public welfare".[2] The article arousing the greatest controversy was the stipulation that Islam was the state religion, against which 'Aflaq and Ḥawrānī aligned themselves.[3] In the end, a compromise formula was agreed upon; the religion of the President of the Republic was Islam, Islamic law was declared the main source of legislation, and the rights of all religious communities were reaffirmed. On 5 September 1950 the new Constitution was adopted and to all appearances constitutional civil government was restored.[4]

The decline of the traditional parties[5] was hastened by renewed external

[1] 'Aflaq's influence is particularly clear in the articles about education, whose aim is defined as the "creation of a generation strong in body and mind, full of faith in God, endowed with moral virtues, proud of the Arab heritage, equipped with knowledge, aware of the its duties and obligations, working for the general welfare..."; see M. Khadduri, "Constitutional Development", 156-157. According to G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 167, there were negotiations aimed at providing the framework for cooperation between Ḥawrānī's Arab Socialist Party and 'Aflaq's Ba'th.

[2] M. Khadduri, "Constitutional Development", 156. On the 1950 Constitution also see G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 170-182.

[3] Ibid., 152-156. Also see A.L. Tibawi, Modern History, 386.

[4] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 91-115.

[5] These, of course, were not political parties in the strict sense; they lacked organization, programs, and ideologies. They centered around persons, and disappeared with them; see N.A. Ziadeh, Syria and Lebanon, 196. Under the conditions of incipient economic modernization, the traditional centers of support were dislocated.

pressure under the conditions of an emerging philosophy of the Cold War.
It seemed that, according to Mr. Dulles, there could be no neutrality between
"aggressors and defenders of freedom". The recent French military occupation
of Syria belied the American logic. Moreover, actual British military pre-
sence in Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt was as, if not more, distasteful to the
Arabs than potential Communist take-overs.[1] The Arab Ba'th Party, consistent
with its earlier demands for effective freedom, insisted upon neutrality
between the Eastern and the Western Blocs.[2]

In the midst of yet another ministerial crisis, on 29 November 1951,
Shishaklī carried out his second coup, dissolving the Chamber and assuming
executive powers. Although the Ba'th, through its connection with Ḥawrānī,
seemed to be in the good graces of Shishaklī, it published a declaration on
8 December 1951 demanding a return to constitutional government.[3] Shishaklī's
answer was to increase repression; in December 1952, a number of officers
were arrested and a few weeks later Ḥawrānī, 'Aflaq, and Bīṭār fled to
Lebanon.[4]

> Shishkakli's break with Hawrani, 'Aflaq and Bitar was a turning-point
> in his and their careers. He lost the support of what were, in different
> measures, perhaps the most astute and the most principled men in Syrian
> public life, while they, united in opposition to his autocracy, entered
> into a partnership which was to change the future of the country.[5]

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[1] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 111-113.

[2] See Niḍāl, vol.II, 88-94 and 153-156. During this period the Ba'th
began to woo the lower classes. The Second Congress of the Ba'th Party in
February 1951 emphasized the problems of the working classes, urban and
rural; see ibid., 98-112 and 115-140.

[3] See Niḍāl, vol.II, 162-166. Partly as a reflection of his own
interests and partly out of conviction, Shishkli initiated a series of social
and economic reforms, further weakening the traditional elite.

[4] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 127-128.

[5] The three had already been arrested and somehow escaped from prison;
see G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 217-218.

In the vortex of events, the Ba'th radicalized. The conception of
Arab unity evolved; from then on, the Ba'th sought union only with progressive
forces, while waiting to overthrow the traditional regimes. It had initially
denounced the "Fertile Crescent" and the "Greater Syria" plans because either
would have meant a return to some form of colonial relationship with Britain.
By the early 1950s, the Ba'th was denouncing the two plans because either
would have involved union with a traditional regime.

Having been driven underground in Syria by Shishakli's policies, the
Ba'th branches outside Syria gained importance while the National Command
was relatively weakened.[1] Nonetheless, the clamp-down did not deter the
Arab Ba'th Party and the Arab Socialist Party leaders from meeting together.
Within a year of Shishkli's second coup, the two parties merged to form
Ḥizb al-ba'th al-'arabī al-ishtirākī (The Socialist Arab Resurrection Party).[2]
The new Party entered the political arena in full force.

Ḥawrānī, who came to dominate the Party, wanted immediate action.
Unlike 'Aflaq, Ḥawrānī was ready to ally himself with any individual or
party to achieve power, rather than follow a consistent principle. Thus, he
had agreed to collaborate with Shishakli and, later, he turned to the Commu-
nist Party while 'Aflaq dissented.[3] According to Bīṭār, "The fusion
of the two parties was only on the surface and rendered the movement bi-
cephalous, and there were deficiencies in the formation of its membership

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[1] See Niḍāl, vol.II, 207; S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 66; and W.H. Torrey,
Syrian Politics, 310-311.

[2] The first declaration of the new Party to be included in Niḍāl is
dated February 1953 and headed with the slogan "One Arab Nation with an
eternal message"; see Niḍāl, vol.II, 193. See p.22 n.1 of this study for
the justification of this translation rather than "The Arab Ba'th Socialist
Party" as rendered by K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th.

[3] W. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism, 327.

and in the elaboration of doctrine, deficiencies which were certainly the origin of future distortions".[1] By early 1954, signs of political unrest had begun to reappear in Syria.[2] There were prolonged and violent student strikes in the cities[3] and serious incidents in the Jabal al-Durūz region. On 25 February 1954 the commanders of army units in the north and in the east marched into Damascus and overturned Shishakli.

The 1954 coup was different from Syria's previous coups, which were carried out in Damascus, in that it was initiated in the provinces and not in the capital. Moreover, the leaders of the coup did not attempt to create a new political order but restored the pre-Shishaklī civilian government, in which the Ba'th refused to participate mainly because the 'old guard' seemed to be back in power.[4]

> /Shishaklī's/ political legacy only gradually became clear. The army, fully roused to political ambition, was never again properly to return to its barracks... The army, in fact, became inextricably wedded to politics and came to reflect civilian factionalism in its own structures.[5]

From 1954 to 1958, comments Abu Jaber, there was a "slide to the left", not only in Syria but in all of the Arab world.[6] The period was characterized

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[1] S. Bitar, "The Rise and Decline of the Baath", Middle East International (June, 1951), 15. S. al-Jundī's comment on the newly constituted Party is indicative of the difficulties inherent in the merger and also reflects his own preferences; see Al-Ba'th, 65.

[2] N.M. Kaylani, "Rise of the Syrian Ba'th", 15-16 tells of a significant shift in Party tactics vis-à-vis the army. Hawrānī insisted on keeping tight control of Ba'thī members in the armed forces.

[3] Whether these disturbances were incited by the Ba'th is an open question.

[4] This was a short-lived revival of traditional power.

[5] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 146-149.

[6] K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 29. By 1955, Abu Jaber notes, there had been several coups d'état in Syria, a change of regime in Lebanon, revolutions in Egypt and in Algeria, the assassination of the King in Jordan and of lesser political figures in the rest of the Arab world.

by four historic events which completely changed the existing pattern of
political relations in the Arab world. The first episode was the Baghdad
Pact,[1] the second was the arms deal between Czechoslovakia and Egypt and
Syria, the third was the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, and the
fourth was the union between Syria and Egypt.[2]

With Shishakli gone and after a short period of confusion, it was
decided to hold elections according to the Constitution of 1950. In prepa-
ration for the coming elections, the Socialist Arab Resurrection Party held
a public meeting at its headquarters in Damascus.[3] The meeting included
varying groups of intellectuals and professionals.[4] The absence of Ḥawrānī's
supporters, of army officers, and of lower class members indicates the
beginning of a rift between 'Aflaq and Ḥawrānī. They worked out their
differences sufficiently to publish many articles in favor of the working
classes, workers and peasants.[5] It was clear that the two sections stood
a much better chance at the polls together than alone. The consolidated
party is said to have had a core of 6,000 registered members; a tremendous
increase from the 200 some original members.[6]

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[1] The various projects for "common defence" which the British and
Americans tried to impose on the Arab countries, such as the Baghdad Pact,
contributed to the greater intensity of anti-West feelings.

[2] The complications arising from and leading to the above events as
well as the interplay of Big Power interests and inter-Arab rivalries form
the greater part of P. Seale's Struggle for Syria.

[3] S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th, 68, claims that there was an earlier meeting
held in Homs at which the Ba'th candidates to the election were chosen.

[4] Nidāl, vol.II, 224.

[5] Ibid., 228-234.

[6] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 176.

According to one opinion, the Ba'th success at the polls was based

upon Hawrānī's hold over the Homs-Hama rural area.[1] Hawrānī is credited

with initiating contacts between the Ba'th and the army, which favored the

Party during the elections,[2] through his contacts in the Homs-Hama area,

where the military academy was located. It should be noted, however, that

the students at the military academy usually passed through the secondary

school system which had already been infiltrated by the Ba'th. Moreover,

Hawrānī's contacts with the cadets at Homs was through their teachers, some

of whom would presumably have had some relations with the Ba'th.[3]

Although Michel 'Aflaq did not run for the elections, he continued

to be an important figure within the Party.

> No other Syrian could rival his influence with the generation which
> grew to manhood in the late 1940s and early 1950s. But he had no taste
> for the more direct forms of political action. His chosen forum was a
> circle of disciples or a classroom. He could not inflame crowds and,
> at moments of stress, preferred solitude in the Lebanese mountains to
> the political passions of Damascus. With the Ba'th electoral success
> 'Aflaq had, in a sense, completed one stage of his work. He was a
> thinker rather than a political figure and it was now up to others to
> give practical expression to his ideas. Increasingly after 1954,
> Hawrānī the tactician took over the day-to-day direction of the party.[4]

Hawrānī and Bītār were successful at the polls and joined the government.

It was indicative of future trends that the Ba'th candidate won the election

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[1] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 183. Also see M.S. Agwani, "Ba'th",11.

[2] S. al-Jundi, Al-Ba'th, 68. Also see M.H. van Dusen, "Integration and Regionalism", 131.

[3] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 39, where the author states that Hawrānī contacted the cadets through a history instructor, Nakhle Kallas, one of whose brothers, Khalil Kallas, was to become the first Ba'th Minister of Economics in 1955, while another, Bahīj Kallas was an officer in close alliance with Hawrānī. Cf. M.H. van Dusen, "Integration and Regionalism", 132, who states that it was through his brother 'Uthmān, that Akram Hawrānī was able to reach the cadets.

[4] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 184.

in Latakia, a predominantly 'Alawī area; by the late 1960s the Ba'th was
being accused of being the party of minorities, particularly of the 'Alawīs.

The election results reflected a significant shift away from the
'old guard' to new, radical groups.[1] The Ba'th increased its strength from
3 seats in the pre-Shishaklī Chamber to more than 20 seats.[2] Governments,
even coalitions were difficult to form because of the large number of in-
dependents and, consequently, proved to be unstable. The fragmentation in
the Parliament and the relatively solid cohesion of the Ba'th meant that the
Party possessed much greater effective power than its share of seats might
have indicated.[3] Thus, the program presented by the new government reflected
Ba'thī doctrine, laying emphasis on social and welfare measures: revision
of the labor code, distribution of land to the bedouin, creation of a
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, and the enactment of laws to protect
peasants and workers.

On the external scene, the see-saw attraction of Syria to Iraq and
to Egypt was tipped in favor of the latter with the radicalization of Egypt

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[1] G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 263. Also see F. Chevalier, "Forces
en presence dans la Syrie d'aujourd'hui", Orient (Paris) 4 (1957), 179-185,
whosees the elections of 1954 as symptomatic of the disintegration of the
traditional power elite. One may also see in the 1954 elections the emer-
gence of a new political community in Syria; see M. Ma'oz, "Political
Community", 400.

[2] P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 182. There are varying reports of
the number of seats won by the Ba'th; S. al-Jundī, Al-Ba'th gives 17; and
E. Ben-Moshe, "The Test of the Ba'th", New Outlook, III/8 (1960), gives 18.

[3] With the right-wing in disarray, the Ba'th was faced with opposition
from the left. See W.Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism, 344; G.H. Torrey,
Syrian Politics, 282-289; P. Seale, Struggle for Syria, 238-246; and S. Jargy,
"Le Déclin d'un parti", Orient (Paris) 11 (1959), 23-28. The assassination
of the Ba'thī Adnān al-Malkī by a member of the PPS provided the occasion
for the Ba'th to liquidate many of its opponents within the army.

after the Nāṣir take-over in 1954, by Iraq's adherence to the Baghdad Pact, and by the accession of the Baʿth to government in Syria.[1] Once the Baʿth was included in government, it moved to promote union with Egypt, despite the earlier Baʿth distrust of Nāṣir's military background[2] and despite the initial hesitation of Egyptian president Nāṣir.[3]

> So much has been said about the Baʿth tactical aims of out-manoeuvering other rival Syrian parties, and even more about an exaggerated Communist danger, that the fundamentally idealistic character of the move has been blurred.[4]

Arab unity was the aim of the Baʿth movement since its inception and, in the late 1950s, there seemed to be an essential affinity between the philosophy of the Baʿth and the policy of Nāṣir. What ideology Nāṣir had evolved seemed to be identical to the ideas propounded by the Socialist Arab Resurrection Party;

> both believed in the imperative need for the removal of all vestiges of foreign control in the Arab world and in an Arab foreign policy of non-alignment between the Great Powers, in comprehensive Arab unity, and in social, political, and economic reconstruction under the stimulus of state action. Both believed that these objectives were closely related to each other, and could only be achieved by revolutionary means. In these respects a marriage between ʿAbd al-Nāṣri and the Baʿth seemed eminently suitable.[5]

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[1] As early as March 1955, Syrian leaders, with Baʿth encouragement, signed an agreement with Egypt to form a new Arab collective security pact; see G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 279-280.

[2] S. al-Jundī, Al-Baʿth, 73; M. Palmer, "The United Arab Republic: An Assessment of its Failure", M.E.J. 20/1, 50-51; and Nidāl, vol.III, 84ff.

[3] See G.H. Torrey, Syrian Politics, 378; M. Kerr, The Arab Cold War, Gamal ʿAbd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958-1970 (3rd edition, London, 1971), 14; and Arab Political Documents (Beirut, 1963).

[4] A.L. Tibawi, Modern History, 401. It is to be noted that the Baʿth Party had widespread support with 30,000 core members and many ansār (associate members); see E. Ben-Moshe,"Test", 30. Ben-Moshe also states that, by 1958, in addition to teachers, students, and professionals, the Baʿth also enjoyed the support of workers, controlled most of the unions and was popular among peasants.

[5] M. Kerr, Arab Cold War, 7-8. M.S. Agwani, "Baʿth", 14, points out=

The Ba'th, confident in its doctrine, but searching for the man who might be able to realize its ideals, saw in Nāṣir the hero capable of transforming principles into action; Nāṣir was to be the "force matérielle".[1] The first step towards union with Egypt was the announcement on 9 December 1957 that the Ba'th was drafting a bill for federal union with Egypt to be submitted to the government. Nāṣir, however, insisted that there be complete union, not a federation as envisaged by the Ba'th.[2]

'Aflaq was strongly in favor of union with Egypt but, as he so often was, abstract and general in his thinking. He wrote several essays in view of the union; a summary of a typical example hereby follows.[3] This Arab union is only one step in the real search for unity, he begins. The struggle for unity is to transpose the future into the present, witnessing the fulfillment of the Arab nation. We have never doubted that the Arab nation is one in spirit from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arab Gulf. The struggle for Arab unity, he continues, will transform the concept of unity from potentiality (imkān) to actuality (fi'l). As an illustration of struggle for Arab unity, 'Aflaq cites the Algerian revolution. For him, the Ba'th, the Egyptian and the Algerian revolutions are all working for the same goal. In conclusion, he says, let us hope that this small union (i.e. the Syrian-Egyptian) will be the seed of total unity. Separation is a great danger, he

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that a heightened sense of insecurity was created in Syria by the Turkish mobilization in the north and Nurī al-Sa'īd's alleged intrigues to march into Syria from Iraq. M. Palmer, "Assessment", 51-52; and I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 15, think that internal differences within the army led to virtual paralysis of Syria as a political community.

[1] S. Jargy, "Déclin", 28. The search for a charismatic leader, though against the collective leadership principle of the Ba'th, seems to have been a result of 'Aflaq's non-inflammatory leadership; see E. Ben-Moshe, "Test", 33.

[2] K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 42.

[3] See M. 'Aflaq, "Wiḥdat Miṣr wa-Sūriyya" (The Union of Egypt and Syria);

comments, "and if the efforts of the Republic were limited to itself, and
do not fulfill its duties towards its /Arab/ sister regions, such limi-
tation will threaten the existence itself of the Republic".[1]

The union under Nāṣir's presidency was approved by an overwhelming
majority of the electorate, and was formally proclaimed on 22 February
1958. The basic problem with the union was that each of the proponents, the
Socialist Arab Resurrection Party and Nāṣir, had come into the union with
different political experiences and different expectations. Two aspects
distinguished the political background of Egypt and Syria: the leaders in
Egypt were only beginning to experiment with constitutional life while the
practical experience of the Baʻth had been in a constitutional political
structure. Secondly, at the time the union was formed, explicitly socialist
ideas and programs were only starting to be vaguely shaped in Egypt while
the Baʻth was avowedly socialist as early as its charter of 1947 and strongly
so after the amalgamation with Ḥawrānī's Arab Socialist Party in 1953. More-
over, the Baʻth had readily assented to Nāṣir's request to dissolve all poli-
tical parties[2] believing that the Baʻth would be placed in charge of organi-
zing a new joint party[3] while Nāṣir would not "countenance" any sharing of
power.[4] ʻAflaq is supposed to have stated,

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"Al-Wiḥda thawra tārīkhiyya" (Unity is a historic Revolution), Sabīl,
262-265 and 266-273 respectively; and many articles in ʻa aka, 33-182.

[1]M. ʻAflaq, "Wiḥdat", 265.

[2]I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Baʻth, 15. Nāṣir also demanded that
the recruitment of party members from the army be stopped.

[3]M. Kerr, Arab Cold War, 17.

[4]Further, the economic difficulties Syria experienced during the union
led Nāṣir to using the Baʻth leaders as scapegoats and to feeling the need to
win over the rightist circles in Syria.

We hoped that the party would have a basic and responsible share in the governing of the new nation which we helped to create. We hoped our role would be both practical and theoretical since it was we who began preaching socialist ideas at least fifteen years before Nasser assumed power.[1]

Even though all parties in Syria were dissolved after the union, the Ba'th continued to operate in the two regions, not as a tightly-knit organization but as individuals who kept in touch. Again, as during the Shishaklī period, the links between the National (qawmī) organization and the Provincial (qutrī) branch in Syria were weakened.[2]

In the Arab world, reactions to the union varied. The Hāshimī kingdoms of Iraq and Jordan formed a confederation which, however, failed to arouse much interest. Lebanon became the scene of insurrections lobbying for union with the United Arab Republic.[3] American intervention in Lebanon and British action in Jordan were deemed imperative following a revolution in Iraq which overthrew the monarchy and seemed ready to join the union.[4] The hopes for greater Arab unity were dashed, however, when 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim proved to be a separatist with Communist leanings.[5] Nonetheless, the union between Egypt and Syria survived these external upheavals.

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[1] K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 48.

[2] A secret party convention met in Lebanon in September 1959, at which a new constitution and a new leadership, with 'Aflaq at its head, were announced. See E. Ben-Moshe, "Test", 32.

[3] See G.E. Kirk, "The Lebanese Civil War", in his Contemporary Arab Politics, 113-135.

[4] Ibid., 137-147.

[5] Although other factors operated, the inability of the Syrian-Egyptian union to attract other Arab countries, particularly Iraq after its revolution, ultimately added to the disintegration of the union; see M. Kerr, Arab Cold War, 18, on this point.

Meanwhile, the experience of the Ba'th with the union government
was disillusioning, to say the least.[1] The elections to the single party,
the National Union, brought decisive defeat to the Ba'th; of the nearly
ten thousand Syrians elected to the local committees of the "National
Union", only 245 were members of the Ba'th Party.[2] The defeat was a heavy
blow, since it was clear that Cairo was involved. After the elections, a
systematic purge of the Ba'thīs was undertaken and Ba'th members were removed
from key positions which were filled with rightists. The anti-Ba'th trend
was particularly galling since the Ba'thīs considered themselves as having
special privileges because they had been instrumental in the creation of
the union. The more moderate realignment of the union's foreign relations
exacerbated the underlying friction between Nāṣir and the Ba'th.

Whether the dissatisfaction of the Ba'th was rooted in ideological
differences with Nāṣir or in the failure to exert the influence and power
which Ba'th members aspired to is a controversial issue.[3] In any case,
Nāṣir's moves to weaken the Ba'th succeeded.in splitting the Party. In
August 1959, there was a split in the Ba'th when the two leading Jordanian
members, 'Abd Allāh al-Rimāwī and Bahjat Abu Ghurayiba were expelled from
the Party only to organize a splinter Ba'th with the blessings of Nāṣir.

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[1]S. Jargy, "Déclin", 29-39, presents an early prognosis of the ills
of the union, highlighting the structural differences between the Egyptian
system of government, "une dictature militaire absolue", and the principles
of the Ba'th, "régime parlementaire, pouvoir exécutif responsable devant
le pouvoir legislatif, systéme administratif décentralise, garanties de
toutes les libertes idéologiques et politiques". Also see E. Ben-Moshe,
"Test", 32-33.

[2]According to M.A. Agwani, "Ba'th", 17, this number represents 90%
of the Ba'thī candidates not withdrawn from the elections.

[3]See M. Kerr, Arab Cold War, 18, who sees the failure of the Ba'th
to control the creation of the National Union organization as the main reason

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Aflaq, who had retreated to Beirut where he led the National organization

of the Ba'th, condemned the two for "deviating" from Ba'th principles.[1]

Finally, the Ba'tht members of the union government resigned.[2] And hence-

forth, Nāṣir depended upon Colonel 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Sarrāj, Minister of the

Interior in Damascus and in charge of military intelligence, and upon the

older elements of Syrian politics.[3]

The political differences with Nāṣir might have been overcome if they

had not been compounded by a drought which hurt agriculture, the most impor-

tant sector of the Syrian economy. Moreover, Nāṣir's brand of state capi-

talism irked the Syrian bourgeois. Finally, a wing of the army in alliance

with the more traditional elements staged the familiar coup d'état on 8

September 1961.[4] Nāṣir decided not to oppose the coup by force in order

"to avoid shedding Arab blood".[5] The new regime was greatly strengthened

when the secession was publicly supported by Bīṭār and Ḥawrānī.[6]

=for Ba'th discontent. Also see G.E. Kirk, Contemporary Arab Politics, 101-105, who views Ba'th dissatisfaction crystallized in the unease of Syrian officers under Egyptian command. See H. Palmer, "Assessment", 54-56, tracing the dissolution of the union mainly to the discontent of the Ba'th, the mili- tary, and the urban masses. Finally, see M. Colombe, "Particularismes et nationalisme arabes à la lumiere du coup d'état syrien", Orient (Paris) 19 (1961), 16, for a listing of other reasons.

[1] E. Ben-Moshe, "Test", 33.

[2] Nāṣir's most drastic mistake was his attempt to implement centrali- zation in Syria; see K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 57-58.

[3] M. Kerr, Arab Cold War, 21.

[4] The coup was similar to the Ḥinnāwī coup of 1949 in that the mili- tary retreated to the barracks and left politics to the politicians, who then attempted to turn the clock back to the days before union. With the revival of the traditional leadership, Syria was hard-put to claim its progressiveness; see S. Jargy, "La Syrie d'hier à demain", Orient (Paris) 20 (1961), 67-76.

[5] M. Kerr, Arab Cold War, 27.

[6] They signed the "declaration of separation" (see K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 63), an action which Bīṭār later regretted (see S. Bīṭār, "The Baath Party", Middle East International, 4 (July, 1971), 14). At the time of the coup, 'Aflaq was in Europe and escaped the onus of responsibility for the break-up of the union.

Without Nāṣir's recognition, the new Syrian government was as isolated
and as paralyzed as it had been four years earlier.[1] Perhaps the most pro-
found and certainly the most immediate effect the Union and its failure had
on Syrian politics was to reopen the issue of Syria's national identity as
a cardinal political question.[2]

The effects of the union and the secession on the Ba'th Party were
multiple. The dissolution of the Party in Syria during the union had served
to erode the hold of 'Aflaq on the Ba'th, even though he retained some measure
of power as Secretary General of the National organization. During the union,
'Aflaq drifted towards a conditional opposition of Nāṣir's policies. This
middle-of-the-road position widened the rift between Ḥawrānī's group, advo-
cating a more resolute opposition to Nāṣir, and the party members who had
identified themselves with Nāṣir's regime and had been expelled from the
Ba'th following the Third National Congress held in Lebanon in 1959.

Less clear but no less important was the impact of the Union and its
failure on the second-generation Ba'th members (al-ṣaff al-thānī).[3] The
failure of the union crystallized their dissatisfaction with the Party's

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[1]According to one view,"the failure of the union illustrates how
inconsequential ideological ties can be in Arab politics in the face of the
will to power of rival individuals and factions, and the shifts and diver-
gences of their tactical requirements"; see M. Kerr, Arab Cold War, 21.
Such a view is not completely valid since the two contending groups had a
fundamentally opposite view of the relationship between ideology and action;
while the Ba'th held, correctly or not, that ideology rules action, Nāṣir
acted out the opposite -- his pragmatic sense preceding and governing his
ideology. Thus, if ideology proved insufficient as a basis for effective
union, building union on Nāṣir's personality also proved ephemeral.

[2]I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 20.

[3]These had not been fully integrated into the Ba'th due to the policy
of increasing membership very fast during the period 1954-1958; see al-Jundī,
Al-Ba'th, 71.

unionist ideology. Their discontent surfaced at the Fourth National Congress
of the Ba'th held in August 1960. The resolutions passed had an anti-Nāṣir
tinge, denouncing the leaders ('Aflaq, Bīṭār, and Ḥawrānī) for having
hastily entered the union and for having dissolved the Party in Syria. The
resolutions deplored the emphasis placed on Arab unity over and above
socialism and freedom.

It was during the union period that a secret "Military Committee"
(al-lajna al-'askariyya) was formed amongst the Syrian officers stationed
in Egypt, in an attempt to revive the Ba'th structure within the military
which had existed before the union but "under a new guise and according to
a new concept".[1] The Military Committee was led by three 'Alawī officers:
Muḥammad 'Umrān, Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, and Ḥāfiz al-Asad.

The problem of union or not-union with Nāṣir provoked three more
coups d'état.[2] The first, on 28 March 1962, threw out the traditional
elements in an attempt at a qualified rapprochement with Egypt.[3] The second,
on 31 March 1962, called for re-union with Egypt on any terms but failed to
establish itself. The third coup, on 8 March 1963, brought the Ba'th, in
alliance with the army, to power.[4]

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[1] I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 24.

[2] For the contradictory and confusing positions taken by the secessionist
government, see M. Colombe, "La République arabe syrienne à la lumière du
coup d'état du 28 Mars", Orient (Paris) 21 (1962), 11-17.

[3] Not much is known about the behind-the-scenes aims and activities
of the Ba'thī, Nāṣirī, and other factions in the army or about their rela-
tionship with each other and with the civilian factions. During this period
the Ba'thī officers seem to have begun establishing an organization within
the army but separate from the original ba'th structure.

[4] For a detailed description of the coups d'état and of the later nego-
tiations within Syria and between Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, see M. Kerr, Arab
Cold War, 44-76; and I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 26-48. Also see

During the 18 months known as the Separatist (or Secessionist) Period, the Ba'th changed so drastically as to invite the question: "What Ba'th was it that came to power in Syria in 1963"?[1] Until the Fifth National Congress, convened in May 1962 in Homs, 'Aflaq was busy trying to establish the original Ba'th in Syria. His support had been so eroded during the union period that he had to use his Iraqi support to win endorsement for his middle position, rejecting both secessionism and unconditional union with Egypt. The opposition itself was divided into several groups.[2]

The military group that carried out the overthorw of the Separatist regime was also composed of diverse elements, independents, Nāṣirīs, unionist as well as Ba'thīs. Although the Ba'thī officers were few in number, they had the advantage of being coordinated by the close-knit Military Committee. 'Aflaq seems to have been aware of the dangers inherent in an alliance with an autonomous military clique, particularly since his own Party had not yet been well reorganized but fearing that some other political force would forestall his Ba'th, 'Aflaq decided to take a calculated risk.

M. Colombe, "Révolutions, socialisme, et unité", Orient (Paris) 25 (1963), 7-15, who correctly ties the Syrian coup to the Ba'th coup in Iraq on 8 February 1963. According to Rabinovich, the Iraqi coup sympathetic to 'Aflaq's faction of the Ba'th, led the Military Committee to favor 'Aflaq over the more-radical Ba'th faction.

1. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 26.

[2] Thus, in the summer of 1962, the Ba'th Party in Syria was divided into 4 distinct organized groups -- Hawrānī's faction and the Quṭriyyūn (Regionalists) supporting the separatist situation, while 'Aflaq's faction and the 'Socialist Unionists' were considered conditionally unionist -- and an unorganized circle composed of more leftist elements, ex-Ba'thīs and ex-Communists. The importance of this group lies in the introduction of Marxist doctrine into Ba'th thought.

Conclusion

The dozen or so years since the Ba'th take-over of power in Syria[1] may be divided into three phases. The trait common to these three phases is the continued elimination of the traditional elite from the political scene and, to a lesser extent, from the economic and social fields as well. The major result of these years is the establishment of a relatively stable political structure reflecting interests vested in Lesser Syria itself.

The first phase, between 1963 and 1966,[2] was characterized by nationalization measures which made the government the dominant factor in the economy. Politically, all groups other than the Ba'th were eliminated and the Ba'th itself was marked by transformation from a political party which happened to include army members in the same organization into an alliance between a civilian wing and a military wing.

In early 1963, the new Ba'th regime was faced by three main problems; the tenuous position of the Ba'th in the army, the weakness of popular support, and the dilemma of formulating a policy towards Egypt. President Nāṣir seemed to hold the key to the Ba'th relationship with its potential

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[1] The Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights and of Kuneitra in particular allowed Israeli scholars access to much Ba'thī literature which had been held secret. Of the studies based on this material see A. Ben-Tzur, "The Neo-Ba'th Party of Syria", New Outlook 12/1 (1969), 21-37; and I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th. The crucial success of the coup is attributed more to the weakness of the Separatist Regime than to the strength of the coup organizers; see ibid., 49.

[2] I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, focuses on this first period.

supporters in both Syria and Iraq. One of the first actions of the new
government was to issue a statement in which they declared that their aim
was to lead Syria back to union with Egypt, in company with Iraq. In
March-April 1963, a Syrian-Iraqi delegation joined in talks with Nāṣir, who
was disinclined to venture into a union with two partners dominated by the
Ba'th.[1]

Nāṣir demanded that, before substantive negotiations begin, they
"clear the air". 'Aflaq and Bīṭār were sent for, to participate in the
process. Both of them came off very badly, which was rather surprising
since they were known as cultivated and articulate persons. The talks were
an example of the difference between Nāṣir's and 'Aflaq's images as leaders.

> Nasser always supremely confident, always steering the discussion in
> the direction of his choice, always conscious of the substantive or
> psychological point at issue, blunt, forceful, clear, and often witty
> in his expression, alternatively charming or bullying according to his
> purpose, not hesitating at times to harass, interrupt, or embarass his
> visitors and decisively rejecting opposing claims or criticisms when-
> ever he did not fancy their implications. By contrast, Bīṭār and 'Aflaq
> emerge from the record of the discussion as embarassed, confused,
> tongue-tied, and generally ineffectual characters.[2]

Whereas Nāṣir was tall and handsome, 'Aflaq is frail and ugly. Whereas
Nāṣir presented a dominant, confident aura, 'Aflaq is said to be unassuming
and sometimes stutters in public.[3] Where Nāṣir speaks to the people in

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[1] M. Kerr, Arab Cold War, 57. The Egyptian transcript of the talks
was printed in instalments in Al-Ahrām and broadcast over Cairo Radio from
21 June to 22 July 1963, and later published in book form under the title
Mahādir jalsat mubāhathāt al-wihda ("Minutes of the Union Discussion
Meetings"). A translation of the Cairo broadcast is available in the
British Broadcasting Corporation Summary of World Broadcasts, Part IV. A
considerably abridged translation is the American University of Beirut Arab
Political Documents (Beirut, 1963).

[2] M. Kerr, Arab Cold War, 58. According to Kerr, 'Aflaq left in the
middle of the talks in protest; see ibid., 64.

[3] M.S. Agwani, "Ba'th, 10.

their own language, often lapsing into Egyptian colloquial Arabic, 'Aflaq
uses a highly polished Arabic. In effect, Nāṣir seemed to fulfil all the
requirements for the charsimatic leader while 'Aflaq falls far short of
being considered a hero. Although he lacks charisma, 'Aflaq was held in
high estemm, at one time.

> Even his enemies speak of 'Aflaq with deference. Followers hail him
> as a "new" man in the Arab world -- a man who shuns political office,
> prestige, and wealth... His popular image as a "clean" politician has
> helped bolster the image of the ba'th as an ideological -- as opposed
> to an opportunistic, office-seeking -- movement. 'Aflaq's refusal to
> assume public office has helped him maintain his grip on the party and
> has enhanced his reputation. Further, not being in office has insulated
> him from criticism for any public action on the part of the ba'th. His
> middle-of-th-road position also gives him flexibility in dealing with
> party crises.[1]

n fact, the difference between the two personalities may be con-
sidered as the basis for the difference between Nāṣirism and ba'thism.
Nāṣirism, as its name implies, was largely dependent on a single individual,
symbolizing most of the aspirations of the Arab people. The strength of
the Ba'th, by constrast, was based on its ideology and organization. In
fact, it is rather difficult to imagine 'Aflaq's personality as the charis-
matic element which galvanized so many students and other young people,
not only in Syria, but all over the Arab world.[2] My guess is that the
attraction of the Ba'th during the 1950s lay precisely in the unclarity
of 'Aflaq's ideas,[3] which, aside from a set of key terms, allowed each
reader to find his own path. The decline of 'Aflaq's influence since the

[1] K.S. Abu Jaber, Arab Ba'th, 10.

[2] See M.H. van Dusen, "Integration and Regionalism", 136; for a tenta-
tive explanation of why charisma was not really necessary for 'Aflaq.

[3] By 1974, the collection of his essays, FI Sabil al-ba'th, had been
published 11 times, a record by any standards.

1966 coup emphasizes the point that the Party was not based on his personality but on his ideological premises.

Supporting the ideological basis of the Ba'th was its Party organization. Although the Ba'th is organized along generally Communist Party lines, with cells, a central command, local committees, and secret members, there is a difference; policies are worked out in a democratic manner on a local level with considerable autonomy so long as there is adherence to the principles of the Party Constitution. The dangers of such autonomy were to become apparent during this period, when a separate Party organization was gradually developed in the Syrian army, after the dissolution of the Party during the union period. 'Aflaq's efforts to reconstitute the Ba'th Party after the secession of Syria were to stumble on this obstacle.

In the event, an agreement was reached between Egypt, Syria, and Iraq in April 1963, virtually on Nāṣir's terms, which did not succeed in solving the power struggle between the Ba'th and Nāṣir for the leadership of the progressive Arab nationalist movement. While the Ba'th glorified Nāṣir, they were at loggerheads with his supporters in Syria. On 18 July, planes, tanks, and artillery were used to suppress an uprising in Damascus, staged by pro-Nāṣir army officers. The rift between Nāṣir and the Ba'th was again made public.[1]

To strengthen the position of the Military Committee, it was decided to indoctrinate the officer corps by enlarging the separate Ba'th organization within the army. Party institutions, both quṭrī and qawmī were forbidden to form contacts with the Ba'th organization in the armed forces;

and any Party contact between military and civilian wings was prohibited except at the highest level.[1] In short, the Military Committee became the sole representative of the military Ba'th organization, although its identity remained obscure for two years after the coup.

The alliance between the Military Committee and the qawmī leadership under Michel 'Aflaq, which had granted de facto recognition of the special status of the Military Committee as the Ba'th military organization and as the excutor of the coup which ousted the separatist regime, was shaken by 'Aflaq's failure with Nāṣir.

The failure of 'Aflaq and Bīṭār to reach some sort of mutual understanding with Nāṣir affected the civilian wing of the Ba'th in Syria which 'Aflaq was in the process of reconstituting. The majority of the cadres from the two founding branches, Damascus and Hama, were lost to the Nāṣirī or the separatist camp. Thus, the new "regional leadership for Syria", set up in March 1963 was mainly represented by former Ba'th members from the provincial towns with a marked communal character who resented the dissolution of the Ba'th during the union period.[2]

The new leadership had to rely on the "second-generation" members (al-ṣaff al-thānī) who criticized the qawmī leadership for the emphasis placed on Arab unity over and above socialism and freedom. They argued that the Party had to establish socialism in a more independent and strictly Syrian framework. The extremists among them went to the length of establishing an independent regional organization (al-ba'th al-quṭrī) covering

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[1] A. Ben-Tzur, "Neo-Ba'th", 24, quoting a circular of al-Aṭrāf branch of the Ba'th (16 August 1963).

[2] Ibid., 25.

party branches in northern Syria and in the 'Alawī and Isma'īlī zones of the Latakia district.[1] This separate civilian organization did not last long although the tension between the qawmiyyūn, who pushed for Arab union, and the quṭriyyūn, who subordinated Arab union to socialism and to freedom, remained.

Surprisingly enough, this was a period of unimpeded economic and social development in Syria. As an example, for the first time in Syria's history places for all children were provided in schools at the primary level. Along with economic developments there was a "silent social revolution"[2] which hastened the processes of change and inexorably affected the ideological bases of society.

When the Military Committee seemed to be well on its way to being entrenched in the army, it was decided to amalgamate all civilian Ba'th cadres into one organization by bringing into its ranks all shades of Party opinion, including the regionalists (quṭriyyūn) and the Marxist-oriented group. The result was an even more radical shift in the balance of power within the Party; the center of gravity moved to the north from which also came the leaders of the Military Committee so that the Party in Syria seemed to be consolidating on strongly communalist and regionalist lines.

In their rejection of the 'old' Ba'th leadership, represented by Michel 'Aflaq, the regionalists found common cause with the small Marxist faction who provided them with the theoretical critique of the original Ba'th

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[1] A. Ben-Tzur, "Neo-Ba'th", 26.

[2] A.L. Tibawi, Modern History, 413.

doctrine.[1] A month before the 1963 coup, Yasīn al-Ḥāfiz, Jamāl al-Atāsī, Eliyās Murqus and others, who are all said to have had some connection with Soviet activities in Syria,[2] published a collection of articles called FĪ al-Fikr al-siyāsī ("On Political Thought"). The contribution of al-Ḥāfiz was an article "Tajribat al-Ba'th" (The Ba'th Experiment) in which he traced the theoretical roots of the spiritual and political collapse of the "old Ba'th" to the "romantic-metaphysical-idealistic" character of 'Aflaq's view of socialism as it related to Arab nationalism and to the narrow "petit bourgeois" character of the Party's social program. He also criticized the lack of clarity in the second element of the "Holy Trinity"[3] of Ba'th doctrine -- unity, freedom, socialism. This lack of clarity meant that the "old Ba'th" oscillated between supporting a parliamentary system and supporting military coups and dictatorships. According to Ḥāfiz, it was necessary to secure a system of "popular democracy" which would ensure full freedom for the working class by restricting the freedom of the "feudal-bourgeois reactionary circles" and by keeping the army out of politics.

Although the regionalists were not markedly different in social composition from the 'old' Ba'th,[4] they welcomed those sections of the leftist doctrine which undermined the position of the original party

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[1] See A. Levy, "The Syrian Communists and the Ba'th Power Struggle, 1966-1970" in M. Confino and S. Shamir (eds.), The U.S.S.R. and the Middle East (Jerusalem, Israel, 1973), 395-417, for an account of relations between Communists, "right-wing" and "left-wing" Ba'thīs.

[2] A. Ben-Tzur, "Neo-Ba'th", 29.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 27.

leadership, endorsing a more radical attack on private property and a more
extensive program of nationalization.

Although the military group of the Ba'th welcomed the rejection of
parliamentary democracy, while objecting vehemently to Ḥāfiz' views on
the removal of the army from politics, it needed 'Aflaq's group as partner
of the coup alliance in order to acquire the sheen of legitimacy. By
September 1963, the alliance between the regionalists and the leftists
dominated the regional conference, held in anticipation of the Sixth
National Congress, at which doctrinal and political resolutions reflecting
the radical approach of 'Aflaq's rivals were adopted.[1]

These developments in Syria as well as the split of the Iraqi Ba'th
into leftist and rightist wings forced 'Aflaq to endorse a revision of Ba'th
ideology which was published in the wake of the Sixth National Congress
under the title Baʿḍ al-munṭalaqāt al-naẓariyya ("Some Points of Departure").[2]
Since 'Aflaq was still able to retain a hold on the new National Command
whose secretary-general he remained, the Points of Departure reflect a
double view of the Ba'th. The main point of departure from the original
Ba'th position was in the formulation of socialism, which in the text takes
precedence over Arab unity and freedom. 'Aflaq's acknowledgement of private
ownership was attacked as reformist (iṣlāḥī); the new formulation accepted
the concept of class struggle whereas, previously, 'Aflaq had rejected it.

The 1963 Regional and National Congresses of the Ba'th underlined
the ideological division of the party and heightened the struggle between
the rival factions both in Syria and in Iraq. While in Syria, the Military

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[1] I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 180.

[2] Nidāl, vol.VI, 232-291. Also note "Muqarrarāt al-mu'tamar al-qawmī
al-sādis" (Resolutions of the Sixth National Congress), ibid. 292-346.

Committee continued the process of getting rid of its non-Ba'thī allies and seizing the majority of top positions within the army,[1] in Iraq the Ba'th succumbed to a counter-coup staged by the pro-Nāṣir 'Abd al-Salām 'Ārif in November 1963. In its isolation, the Ba'th regime in Syria became even more radical, initiating a bidding contest with Nāṣir for the most radical position in the Arab world.

Economic and social developments in Syria had broken the socio-economic basis of the landed upper class, the main support of the traditional power groups, but the urban middle classes -- traders and owners of small shops -- still retained control in the cities and towns. These elements expressed their dislike of the radical Ba'th in terms of conservative Islamic opinion which was already disturbed by creeping secularism. Vigorous protest began in 1964 in Hama when the muezzins proclaimed "God is great! Either Islam or the Ba'th!"[2] Protest spread to Damascus accompanied by demands for a return to parliamentary government.

The concessions made by the Ba'th regime, embodied in the interim constitution of 24 April 1964, did not go far enough to dampen the crisis and in January 1965 another flare-up occurred in Damascus, only to be met by stern measures of repression. The opposition encountered a Ba'th leadership that was "more resolute, better established"[3] and ruthless.

The break between the Regionalists and 'Aflaq had reached a climax when Bīṭār was expelled from the Syrian Regional Command on 24 January 1964. This event led 'Aflaq, against his better judgement, to initiate greater rapprochement with the Military Committee. He succeeded in summoning an

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[1] A. Ben-Tzur, "Neo-Ba'th", 24. For greater details of the manoeuvres that led to Ba'th dominance in the army, see I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 50-74.

[2] A.L. Tibawi, Modern History, 415.

[3] I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 143.

extraordinary Regional Congress at which he manoeuvered a new Regional
Command made up of a minority of his personal supporters and a majority
of supporters of the Military Committee.[1] Thus were events overtaking
'Aflaq and reducing him to political action based on personal relations
rather than on ideological grounds. As soon as the Syrian Regional Congress
was over, 'Aflaq convened the Seventh National Congress on 12 February 1964
so as to complete the purge of radical-leftists from the Party.

With the elimination of the radical leftists, the Military Committee
was left to choose between 'Aflaq and the qutriyyūn. When it finally
became clear that the Ba'th had lost out in Iraq, the weakness of the 'Aflaq
wing and its inability to control Ba'th party branches became apparent, thus
when the Eighth National Congress of the Ba'th was held in April 1965, the
underlying issue was the attempt to resolve the conflict between the 'Aflaq
wing and the Military Committee, led by Ṣalāḥ Jadīd in the forefront and
Ḥāfiz al-Asad in the background. A compromise was reached with 'Aflaq's
resignation, allowing the election of Munīf al-Razzāz as his heir to the
position of secretary-general of the National Command.

Between April and December 1965, disagreement within the military
organization threatened the position of the Military Committee within the
army.[2] 'Aflaq, who had left Syria to visit a brother in Germany,[3] returned
to Syria in anticipation of a civilian victory over the military. On 19

[1] I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 105.

[2] Ibid., 157-171.

[3] M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 225.

December 1965, 'Aflaq gave a speech at the National Leadership meeting
in which he strongly criticized the developing tendency of the Military
Committee to assume greater power. He attempted to re-assert the original
theoretical assumptions of the Ba'th in the face of the ideological deve-
lopments that had by-passed him in order to emphasize the social content
of nationalist revolution.[1] Moreover, the National Command dissolved the
pro-Jadīd Syrian Regional Command and assumed power in Syria.

Again on 18 February 1966, 'Aflaq gave a speech in which he denounced
the growing power of the separate military organization of the Ba'th.[2]

> When we speak of removing the military from politics there is no question
> of establishing a barrier between the army on the one hand and the Party
> and political action on the other hand. On the contrary, we wish to
> reinforce the links between them, to reaffirm their doctrinal convic-
> tions and to conserve those who have confidence in the Party. We seek
> to re-establish the functions of the army in the revolutionary commu-
> nity. The army is a popular army, it includes individuals who struggle
> for the cause of the people, who are members of the party as are their
> comrades, workers, peasants, and intellectuals, and who therefore have
> the right to live the Party life in its fullness. What we want is to
> avoid the mixture of military activity with the direction of the Party
> or of the government; when the Party appoints a member of the armed
> forces to the direction of the Party, that comrade should not conserve
> his military status. He must devote himself to the activities of the
> Party and to the direction of the people.

But 'Aflaq's anticipation had been too optimistic. The rivalry and diffusion
of power within the Ba'th regime finally erupted in yet another coup
on 23 February 1966.[3] It was different from other coups in that it was

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[1] A. Ben-Tzur, "Neo-Ba'th", 27.

[2] Translated from the French excerpts given by J. Jabale, "La Crise
du Ba'th", Cahiers de l'Orient Contemporain LX (Avril, 1966), 8.

[3] For further details of the complicated events of this period, see
A. Ben-Tzur, "Neo-Ba'th", 34-37; I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 195-
204; M. Colombe, "Remarques sur le Ba'th et les institutions politiques de
la Syrie d'aujourd'hui", Orient (Paris) 37 (1966), 57-67; and M. Kerr, Arab
Cold War, 103-105.

engineered by one wing of the ruling Party against another. The February coup not only drove 'Aflaq and Bītār from power in Syria but also shook the Party in other Arab states, since it represented the revolt of a Party branch against the National Command.[1]

The second phase, the Jadīd years between 1966-1970, saw the military wing oust the civilians, represented by 'Aflaq.[2] The regime at that stage was dominated by Ṣalāḥ Jadīd, one of three founding members of the Military Committee, who chose to exercise his power by serving as the assistant secretary of the Regional Command of the Syrian Ba'th, described at this stage as "a bureaucratic apparatus head by the military, whose daily life and routine are shaped by rigid military oppression".[3] Besides Jadīd's preference for discreet use of power, this arrangement rendered the 'Alawī elements in the regime somewhat less conspicuous.

During this phase of Ba'th rule in Syria, a more radical interpretation of Ba'th doctrine was implemented. All banks and large industries, nationalized during the union and denationalized during the secession, were again nationalized. Foreign trade was put under government control. Worker participation in management and profits was extended. Land reform was expanded.[4] But those articles of the Ba'th Constitution dealing with freedom -- freedom of expression, freedom of assembly,...etc. -- were not permitted. Further, no move was made to institute a constitutional system.

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[1] M. Kerr, _Arab Cold War_, 120.

[2] A. Levy, "Syrian Communists", 395-417, links the monopoly of power by the military organization to the rise of the radical left in Syria and among the Palestinians, complicated by the presence of Israel and the interest of the Soviet Union.

[3] A. Ben-Tzur, "Neo-Ba'th", 37.

[4] G.H. Torrey, "The Ba'th - Ideology and Practice", _M.E.J._ 23/4 (1969), 461.

Diffuse opposition[1] arose, expressed in religious demonstrations
in May 1967 against an atheistic article published in a weekly journal
under the auspices of the Syrian army. That the incident assumed such
proportions was a testimony to the discontent the Ba'th aroused mainly
because of the large number of minoritarian and lower class members in the
ruling faction and their failure to win support for their socialist
measures.

> ...the fact that a military-sectarian faction was ruling Syria and
> carrying out a secular policy had certainly served to undermine its
> legitimacy in the eyes of many Syrians and had contributed to weaken
> the loyalty of the population to Jadīd's regime. The regime's notions
> of Arab-Syrian nationalism and of Marxist socialism were not yet suffi-
> cient to form a solid basis for a new political community in Syria,
> because they were divorced from the essential element of Islam.[2]

By a series of decrees the regime took over legal authority of the
religious establishment, in order to muffle the ability of the 'ulamā'
to agitate against the regime.

Despite the seeming instability on the political front, socialist
measures embodied in a second five-year development plan, began to have
their effects in further weakening the economic and social bases of the
traditional political structure.

When the military wing of the Ba'th gained a victory over the civi-
lian wing, it constituted an organization parallel to the army itself and
a rival to the normal military chain of command. The dangers of such a

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[1]An abortive coup was staged in September 1966 which was linked to
the ousted National Command; see I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 215.

[2]M. Ma'oz, "Political Community", 402.

development became obvious in the disaster of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war
and even more so in the failure of the Syrian army to stop the massacre
of Palestinians in Jordan during September 1970.

'Aflaq showed his displeasure with the radical army take-over by
leaving Syria for Brazil to live with relatives for some two years. It is
reported that 'Aflaq married at this time, almost sixty years old.[1] He was
still in Brazil when the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967 broke out.

In Syria, the defeat suffered during the Six-day War was attributed
to the failure of the ruling Ba'thī faction to stand up to the challenge.
Although Ṣalāḥ Jadīd and his associates were discredited and confused, no
real contender for power appeared on the scene, illustrating the absence
of any serious rivals to the Ba'th in Syria.[2] The discomfiture of the
'leftist' Ba'th in Syria reinforced the 'rightist' Ba'th in Iraq which came
to power in the wake of a coup in July 1968.

Arab defeat in the war of 1967, for which Ba'thist leaders were
partly responsible, shocked 'Aflaq but he made no move to return from Brazil
until after the Iraqi Ba'th seized power in 1968 and showed a willingness
to acknowledge the authority of the National Command.[3] Developments on the
inter-Arab scene continued to affect internal developments in Syria. In
November 1970, at the Syrian Party Congress, Jadīd assailed Ḥāfiz al-Asad who
held sway in the Syrian army, charging him with responsibility for the failure
of the Syrian intervention in the war between the Palestinian commandos and

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[1] M. Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 225.

[2] I. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, 216.

[3] His latest book, Nuqṭat al-bidāya, consists of the collection of
addresses he delivered and of essays he wrote on his way back to the home-
land.

King Ḥusayn in Jordan. In his frustration, Asad decided to take over from Jadīd, ushering in the third phase of the Baʻth in Syria.

The third phase, from 1970 to the present, saw the dismantling of the separate party organization within the army. This reversal did not mean the rise to power of the civilian wing but the integration of military Baʻthīs within the civilian wing may. be considered a step in this direction.

In order to consolidate his new position as leader of both the civilian and military Baʻth, Asad retracted from the extreme leftist posi- tion of Jadīd. He attempted to bridge the gap between the ruling group, and, at least, the urban population by conciliatory moves towards the middle classes (i.e. by softening the socialist measures undertaken by Jadīd) and towards the more Orthodox religious elements by, for example, praying at the mosque publicly.

As one of the measures to base the regime on firmer foundations, a "progressive front" was formed in Syria in which the Baʻth cooperates with other parties in an effort to make the regime more acceptable. A new constitution was promulgated calling for the election of the President by universal suffrage as well as of a parliament in which not all members are Baʻthīs. A greater measure of freedom in the 1972 provincial elections was allowed but the Baʻthī authorities had to intervene when it was felt that the Baʻth candidates were not winning. The incident demonstrates that the political structure was stable enough to allow experimentation but it also demonstrates that the Baʻth was not yet fully accepted.

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[1]The death of Nāṣir in 1970 may also have reduced internal tension in Syria, since the locus of the centrifugal force was removed.

The relations between the National Command, with headquarters in
Beirut, and the Syrian Ba'th are not very clear. Since his return, 'Aflaq
has again become active and has tried to rally popular forces behind the
Iraqi leaders, gaining the disfavor of the Syrian Ba'th who condemned him
to death in absentia in 1971.[1]

In view of the complicated events 'Aflaq livedthrough and had to
adjust to, it is rather difficult to make a judgement of the man. Critics
object that 'Aflaq never moved beyond inspired rhetoric to produce detailed
social and economic programs. To be fair to him one should remember that
he played a most important role in the immediate post-World War II genera-
tion. 'Aflaq's generation is described as "breaking away from the world
of the older generation partly by conscious will, but also partly as a
result of the final disintegration of the traditional framework".[2] The
major problem then facing the Arabs was how to free themselves from foreign
influence which the Cold War threatened them with. A decade before Nāṣir,
the Ba'th had become the most consistent and inflexible anti-imperialists
and neutralists of the Arab world.

The slogan devised by 'Aflaq -- One Arab nation with an eternal
message striving for unity, freedom, and socialism -- meant, in effect,
a simultaneous internal assault on 'reactionary forces' on the local level
and external attack on imperialism abroad. The Ba'th was among the pioneers
of the idea that freedom from foreign control, if it is to last effectively
must be accompanied by a complete transformation of traditional attitudes
and social organization, by a national resurrection (ba'th)[3]   Based on

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1... Khadduri, Arab Contemporaries, 224.
2 H. Sharabi, "Transformation", 479.
3M.'Aflaq, "Bayn Ishtirākiyyatina", Sabīl, 207.

Syria, the 'great railway junction',[1] the Ba'th provided the Arabs every-
where with a dynamic, home-grown ideology when they needed it.

Personally, I see 'Aflaq's contribution to Arab nationalism in his
resolution of the problematic relationship between Arabism and Islam.
'Aflaq's interpretation of Islam betrays a relative departure from Islamic
'orthodoxy', going far beyond Muslim reformists or Muslim "secularists"[2]
Notwithstanding, Islam is viewed as the true basis for Arabism whether
for Muslims or Christians. For 'Aflaq, Islam is not a divine revelation
but a response of the Arab people to their time. Islam as reflected in
the life of the Prophet,

> is a faithful picture, a perfect and eternal symbol of Arab nature,
> its rich possibilities and its original course. It is right, there-
> fore, to consider Islam apt to a perpetual renewal, not only of its form
> or letter but of its spirit.[3]

'Aflaq presents a metaphysical argument, not quite clear from a
logical perspective, but indicative of his belief in a cyclical theory of
history. He views Islam, in its essence, as an important factor in deve-
loping a forceful Arab nationalism, yet in forms and expressions thing of
the past. 'Aflaq seems to be saying that Arab nationalism is to the present
what Islam was in the context of the times of Muhammad. Thus, for 'Aflaq,
Islam, as the objective characteristic of the Arab nation,[4] is not merely
an historical event but

> a perpetual readiness in the Arab nation -- if Islam is to be correctly
> understood -- to rise whenever the material dominates the spiritual,
> and the form the essence. The Arab nation then confronts itself to
> reach a higher unity and a healthy harmony.[5]

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[1] H. Lammens, _La Syrie et sa mission historique_ (Paris, 1915), 15.

[2] M. 'Aflaq, "Dhikra al-rasūl al-'arabī" (In Memory of the Arab Prophet)
Sabīl, 50-61; Appendix, 157-172.

[3] Ibid.; Appendix, 160.   [4] Ibid.; Appendix, 160-161.

[5] Ibid.; Appendix, 159.

Therefore, the feature that distinguishes the Arabs as a people is the fact their national awakening coincided with a religious message; in other words, their national awakening was twinned with the ethical message to bring truth, guidance, mercy, and justice.[1]

'Aflaq, accepting Islam as universal, seems to contradict his own view of Islam as part of a national experience. 'Aflaq himself asks the question, "Does this mean that Islam was created only for Arabs?" In his terms, Islam represents the "profound communion" of the Arab nation with the "eternal concepts of the universe", its aspiration "to comprehensive everlasting values as bases for its existence", "to eternity and comprehension".[2] Islam, for 'Aflaq is the "strongest expression" of the "wholeness" of the Arab nation as part of humanity.[3] As such, it reflects the essence of Arabs, including Christian Arabs who

> ...will realize, when their nationalism is fully awakened and when they rediscover their true nature, that Islam is, for them, a national culture by which they must be saturated until they understand and love it to the point of guarding Islam as the most precious element of their Arabism.[4]

'Aflaq did succeed in rousing the Arabs by formulating a viable link between the Islamic past and the Arab future, but he was unable to cope with the present. The tragedy of 'Aflaq is that he could not remain a Christian nor could he become a Muslim (thus erasing the image of the Ba'th as the Party of minorities) without denying the essence of his thought which transcends such petty distinctions to reach out for a human system of ethics.

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[1] M. 'Aflaq, "Dhikra", 55; Appendix, 165.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 58; Appendix, 168.

[4] Ibid.; Appendix, 169.

In 1973 the Ba'th was able to win approval for a draft constitution but only by reinstating the compromise articles of the 1950 constitution which required that the President of the Arab Republic of Syria be a Muslim and that the Sharī'a be the main source for legislation. On the international level, Asad followed a moderate path, emphasizing the need for internal Syrian national (waṭanī) unity as a means to build a progressive society and as a vital precondition for all-Arab unity.[1] An early prediction seems to be in the process of being actualized; writing in 1959, Jargy noted,

> Le Ba'th, dont le sort paraissait jusqu'ici indissolublement lié à
> celui du mouvement nationaliste arabe au point de se confondre avec
> lui, est en passe de devenir un parti dont l'action se limitera tôt
> ou tard à un cadre restreint et à une clientèle bien determinée.[2]

The fourth Arab-Israeli war of October 1973 has not healed the rifts between the Iraqi and the Syrian wings of the Ba'th. While Syria is taking a more moderate line, following the example of Sadat, Iraq is holding out for an extreme solution to the Israeli problem. Moreover, the war seems to demonstrate the success of alliance between the 'progressive' and the 'reactionary' governments in the Arab world. As long as this alliance is successful against external pressure, more radical forces will remain in abeyance.

The third phase has thus been characterized by the stabilization of the ruling structure, but the gap between rulers and ruled has yet to be bridged. Syria, the birth-place of the Arab Ba'th movement whose raison d'être was Arab unity, has become a state in its own right.

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[1] From a different perspective, H. Djait, Personalité, 77-79, reaches the same conclusion.

[2] S. Jargy, "Déclin", 21.

Appendix

In Memory of the Arab Prophet[*]

The Arab Personality between Past and Present

On an occasion such as this, there always comes to my mind a question: What is the use of talking? At no time in our history has talk so proliferated and so overwhelmed everything else as the period in which we live, and ours is the least vital and productive of eras. Is talking then an adjutant to paralysis and sterility instead of an incentive to work and to a spirit of production? There is an essential difference between speech related to its pronouncer, who expresses the sum of a living personality and his total attitude towards life, and speech disconnected from personality, which indicates nothing but a frivolous mind and a babbling tongue. The Arabs were very sensitive to the word (lafz) since words were pulsating

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*An address delivered by Michel 'Aflaq at the Syrian University (Damascus) in 1943, and published in M. 'Aflaq, Fī Sabīl al-ba'th (Beirut, 1963), 50-61. The address was delivered in 1943, on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the "nobel Arab Prophet". According to E. Rouleau, "Syrian Enigma", 160, this address marks 'Aflaq's debut on the political scene, winning him a "certain notoriety". The above address might be usefully compared with Qusṭantīn Zurayq's essay, "Arab Nationalism and Religion", written on the same occasion in 1948 or 1949 and translated by S. Haim in her anthology, Arab Nationalism, 167-171; in which Qusṭantīn echoes 'Aflaq's sentiments: "True nationalism cannot in any way contradict true religion, for it is nothing in its essence but a spiritual movement which aims at resurrecting the inner forces of the nation and at realizing its intellectual and spiritual potentialities in order that the nation shall contribute its share to the culture and civilization of the world"; (ibid., 168).

realities full of life. The heart listened, not the ear; and the total
personality responded, not the tongue alone. The word was sacred and
tantamount to a pledge which bound and controlled individual and communal
life. Words, which once were like monetary currency worth a particular
value in gold, have become, today, as pieces of paper with nothing to
guarantee them. We see the spirit poor to the point of non-existence,
capable only of drowning all in a sea of words. And yet, no one demands
that words be reinforced by action. It is then no surprise that trust is
lost, that matters are obscured, that cheating and capriciousness increase
and result in bankruptcy and scandal.

We are confronted by the reality of a disconnection, or rather a
contradiction, between our glorious past and our shameful present. In the
past, the Arab personality was whole, with no difference between its spirit
and its mind, between its action and its word, between its private morals
and its public ethics (akhlāq). Arab life was complete, full, overflowing;
thought, spirit, action, and the powerful instincts were intermeshed. As
for us, we only know a split, divided personality, and a poor, partial life;
if mind inhabits it then the spirit shuns it, and if the emotions enter it
then thought withdraws. It is then either arid thought or rash action,
since the present Arab personality is ever deprived of some essential force.
Now is the time for us to resolve the contradiction, to return to the Arab
personality its wholeness and to Arab life its completeness. The ties
between mind and brawn must be knotted once again in order that, as one, they
take action which is at once spontaneous, free, rich, strong, correct,
masterful.

Our affiliation to our·heroic ancestors was only a formal affilia-
tion, nothing more; the link between our contemporary history and our
glorious past parasitic and not organic. Today we must resurrect those
traits and undertake those actions which justify our formal lineage and
which would render it lawful, real. We must remove the obstacles of petri-
fication and of decay so that our noble and glorious blood would re-filter
to us. We must purify our lands and our skies to accomodate the souls of
our heroic ancestors; they would then descend amongst us and would deem
our respect agreeable.

We have remained a long time living in a dense, suffocating atmos-
phere, because our life was a lie; in a state of divorce between thought
and action, between tongue and heart. Each word we say causes the clamor
of empty barrels, and a hollowness in the ear and in the soul, because it
is emptied of its meaning. Each word we read causes trembling and pain in
our eyes, appearing to us as a ghost or a shadow, reminding us of something
from which we have been torn away. It saddens us like the apparition of
ruins deserted of inhabitants. We must return to words their meaning and
their strength, their dignity and their sanctity so that each word might
embody a real entity. We must make each word a report about an action we
undertook, after it had been only a memorandum about an action we failed
to accomplish. We must speak only what we can realize until the day when
we can realize all that we say.

Islam: a Perpetual Experience and Readiness

Gentlemen:

The movement of Islam, represented in the life of the noble Prophet,

is not, for Arabs, simply a historical event to be defined in time and space and by causes and consequences; by its depth, its intensity, and its scope, this movement is in direct relationship with the absolute life of Arabs. It is a faithful picture, a perfect and eternal symbol of Arab nature, its rich possibilities, and its organic course. It is right, therefore, to consider Islam apt to a perpetual renewal, not only of its form or letter but of its spirit. Islam is that vital pulse which sets in motion the latent forces in the Arab nation; which would then rage with passionate life, sweeping away the dams of traditions and the chains of conventions, restoring the bond between the Arab nation and the profound essence of the universe. It is overcome by wonder and fervor, and expresses its admiration and enthusiasm in new words and glorious actions. Its frenzy could not be limited by its essential (dhātiyya) frontiers; it overflows upon other nations by thought and by action and thus achieves comprehension. By means of this difficult ethical experience, Arabs knew how to revolt against their reality and to confront themselves, so as to overcome their limitations and to reach a stage of higher unity. They experimented with themselves in order to discover their possiblities and to exalt their qualities. All the conquests and civilizations brought forth by Islam were but in the seedling stage during the first twenty years after the birth of Islam (ba'atha). Before conquering the world, the Arabs conquered themselves, sounded their own depths, tried their innermost beings; and before governing other nations, they governed themselves, controlled their own passion, and mastered their own will. The sciences they instituted, the arts they originated, the cities they built, were concrete but partial and limited realizations of the grand-

lose total dream they lived during those years with each fiber of their souls. Yet they had achieved but a pale reflection of the echo of that heavenly voice which they had heard, a pale shadow of that enchanting vision they had glimpsed the day the angels fought in their ranks and the heavens shone on their swords.

Their experience is not simply a historical event to be mentioned as a lesson or for glory. It is a perpetual readiness in the Arab nation -- if Islam is correctly understood -- to rise whenever the material dominates the spiritual, and the form the essence. The Arab nation then confronts itself to reach a higher unity and a healthy harmony. It is a trial to strengthen the morals of the Arab nations whenever it yields, to stimulate its spirit whenever it drifts on the superficial; an experience in which is repeated the heroic battle of Islam, with all its chapters of missionary activity, of persecution, emigration, war, victory, defeat -- to end in a definitive triumph for faith and Truth (al-haqq).

The Prophet's Life, Quintessence (khulāṣa) of Arab life

The Prophet's life, representing the Arab soul in its absolute reality, cannot be known through reason (dhihn) but only through living experience. This knowledge, therefore, is not a premise but a conclusion. Present-day Arabs, since the atrophy of their vivacity hundreds of years ago, read the Traditions and intone them without understanding; since understanding would require a high degree of effervescence in the self, a level of deep and true feeling they have not yet attained, and an existential situation placing man fact to face with his destiny. The Arabs are as far as they could be from these requirements.

The souls of our heroes have shunned and abandoned us a long time ago, because heroism is no more a recognized characteristic of Arabs. It is to be feared that the general glorification of the Prophet is but an expression of limitation and impotence rather than an esteem for sublimity. Our era has separated from heroism, we look upon heroism with dread and wonder as if it were from a different world. True exaltation of heroism originates from participation in its experience and in suffering. A hero esteems only him who realizes even a minute share of heroism in his life.

Until our present time, the life of the Prophet was viewed from the outside, as a wonderful image created to be admired and venerated. We must now begin to see it from the inside, so as to live it. Every Arab is at present capable of living the life of the Arab Prophet, even if only in the ratio of a pebble to a mountain or a drop to a sea. Naturally, no one, whatever might be his stature, would be capable of achieving what Muhammad achieved. But it is also natural that any man, however narrow his capacities, is capable of re-enacting, on a much lesser scale, the role of Muhammad, as long as he is affiliated to that nation which assembled all its forces to produce Muhammad or, in other words, as long as that man is a member of that nation which Muhammad produced by mobilizing all his forces. In the past, the whole life of the nation was summarized in one man and, today, the whole life of this nation in its rebirth must become an explanation of its great man. Muhammad was the incarnation of all the Arabs; today every Arab must become Muhammad.

Islam, Renewal and Perfection of Arabism ('urūba)

A man from amongst the Arab heard a divine message, and preached it

to humanity. The men around him were but Arabs and only a few responded to the call while most resisted it. The Prophet emigrated with the believers when the polytheists (mushrikūn) fought him. But Truth (al-ḥaqq) triumphed and won the adherence of all. The struggle of Islam cannot be alienated from its natural stage, the Arab land, nor from its heroes who were all the Arabs. The Qurayshī polytheists were as necessary, for the realization of Islam, as the believers. Those who fought the Prophet participated in the victory of Islam just as much as those who aided and supported it. God could have revealed the Quran to His Prophet in one day but it took more than twenty years. God could have given victory to His religion and led all the people to it in one day, but this was not accomplished even in twenty years. God could have revealed Islam before its appearance by tens of centuries in any nation from amongst His creatures, but He revealed it at a certain time, at its own moment, and chose the Arab nation and its hero the Arab Prophet. In all this was wisdom, for the clear truth, denied only by the proud, is the following:

- the choice of the Arabs to transmit the message (risāla) of Islam was due to their basic characteristics and qualities;

- the choice of that era in which Islam appeared was due to the fact that the Arabs had matured and perfected themselves sufficiently to receive such a message and to transmit it to humanity;

- the delay in the triumph of Islam for many years was to allow the Arabs to reach the Truth through their own efforts and, as a result of their testing themselves and the world, after difficulties and pain, despair and hope, failure and triumph; so that faith surged and was reborn from the

depths of their souls as true belief infused with experience, bonded to the very essence of life. Islam, therefore, was an Arab movement whose significance was the renewal and perfection of Arabism. Arabic is the language in which Islam was revealed; the Arab mentality is the lens through which Islam directed its view of things; the virtues Islam exalted were Arab virtues, latent or apparent; the faults it fought were Arab faults in the course of disappearing. At that time, a Muslim was not just an Arab but the new, evolved, and complete Arab. As we qualify certain individuals of a nation by the term "patriot" or "nationalist" -- (although the whole nation is supposed to be nationalist, we specify by the term that group of people having faith in the cause of their country because they assembled the conditions and qualities necessary to realize their intimate relationship to the nation, and to assume the consequent responsibilities -- so in the past, the Muslim was that Arab who had faith in the new religion because, having assembled the conditions and qualities necessary to understand that religion, he represented the leap of the Arab nation towards unity, strength, and progress.

Humanism (insāniyya) of Islam

Does this mean that Islam was created only for Arabs? If we assert such a belief we err from the truth and contradict reality. Every great nation, in profound communion with the eternal concepts of the universe, aspires to comprehensive, everlasting values as bases for its existence. Islam is the best expression of the aspirations of the Arab nation to eternity and comprehension. Thus, Islam, in its reality, is Arab and, in its ideals, humanist. The message of Islam is the creation of Arab humanism.

Among nations, the Arabs are distinguished by this characteristic:
their national awakening was coupled with a religious message. In other
words, this message expressed a national awakening. The Arabs did not
expand for the sake of expansion, and did not conquer and govern other
lands because of economic needs, or because of some racial pretext, or
because of a craving for domination and hegemony, but to accomplish a reli-
gious duty in truth (ḥaqq), guidance (hidāya), mercy (raḥma), justice (ʿadl),
and sacrifice (badhl). They shed their blood for it and, to face God, they
were enthusiastic, joyous. As long as the communion between the Arab nation
(ʿurūba) and Islam remains strong and as long as we see in the Arab nation
a body whose soul is Islam, there is no fear that the Arabs will deviate
in their nationalism. Arab nationalism will not be directed towards the
fanaticism of oppression or imperialism.

The Arabs, naturally, will not be able to accomplish this duty unless
they are a strong, creative nation since Islam can be incarnated only in
the Arab nation, in its qualities, morals, and, talents. The first duty
imposed by the humanism of Islam is that the Arabs become strong, masters
in their lands.

Islam is a living entity characterized by clearly apparent features
and frontiers. A living entity, with its particular characteristics, highly
evolved in the stages of life, possesses a definite identity and cannot be
something else. It signifies a certain meaning and contradicts, opposes any
other meaning. Islam is universal and eternal but its universalism does
not mean that Islam can be enlarged, at any one time, to encompass all
concepts and all directions. At each critical age in history and at each

decisive stage of development, Islam expresses one of the innumerable
concepts latent within it since the very beginning. The eternity of Islam
does not mean that it is rigid and that no change or permutation occurs,
that life passes over it without touching it. Rather, Islam, despite its
continuous change, the many robes it wore, the many skins and cores it
destroyed, retains its original roots. The capacity of these roots to grow,
to reproduce, and to originate remains the same, does not diminish or die.
Islam is relative, with respect to a particular time and space, yet absolute
within the limits of each time and space.

The jealous, who want to transform Islam into a container for every-
thing and a laboratory producing all sorts of compounds and medicines,
instead of proving the strength of Islam and protecting its idea from hap-
hazard change, are, in fact, destroying its soul, its personality, and are
aborting its living characteristics, its freedom and its essence. From
another point of view, they are opening the door to the prophets of darkness
and to the masters of iniquity to draw from Islam the weapons with which
to destroy the substance itself of Islam, the Arab nation.

The concept expressed by Islam in this dangerous era of history, in
this decisive stage of development, is that all efforts be directed towards
strengthening and awakening the Arabs and that these efforts be encompassed
by the frame of Arab nationalism.

The Arabs and the West

A century and a half ago, the West once more came into contact with
the Arabs through Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. This catastrophe was
symbolized by tablets upon which Quranic verses were written next to the

Rights of Man. From that time the Arabs (or more exactly the leaders intruding upon the Arab nation) have not ceased to drive their modern renaissance in this distorted direction. They spend great efforts deforming their history and their Quran to demonstrate that the principles of their civilization and of their belief do not differ from the principles of Western civilization, and that they preceded the West in the proclamation and application of those principles. This can only mean one thing: that the Arabs face the West as if they were accused and that they recognize the validity and primacy of Western values. The incontestable fact is that the invasion by Western civilization of the Arab mind, at a time when that mind had dried to the point of becoming an empty mold, was able to fill the emptiness with Western concepts and meanings. A short time later the Arabs realized that their enmity with Europeans was exactly on the terms of the latter and that they differed from Europeans only in degree; as a little from much, and retarded from advanced. The time will soon come when the Arabs finally confess to the logical conclusion of this direction, which is to adopt European civilization. In other words, there is in European life that which precludes their own life. The snare of European imperialism did not lead the Arab mentality to a confession of eternal principles and concepts, since the Arab mentality had been formed by these principles and concepts since its birth. The snare was to exploit the opportune inertia of the Arab mind and its impotent creativity so as to force it into adopting the specifically European content of these concepts. We do not disagree with the Europeans upon the principle of freedom, but upon the special meaning they understand by it.

Europe today, as in the past, is afraid for itself before Islam. It now knows that the strength of Islam (which in the past expressed the strength of the Arabs) is resurrected to appear in a new form, as Arab nationalism. This is why Europe directs against this new force all of its weapons; while we see it befriending the archaic form of Islam and even supporting it. International Islam, which is limited to empirical practice and to generalized, faded principles is being Westernized; today in thought, tomorrow in thought and actuality. The day will come when the nationalists find themselves the only defenders of Islam and are forced to recreate a new significance for it; if they wish to assure a valid raison d'être for the Arab nation.

The Honor of Arabism

Of the European concepts invading the modern Arab mind, there are two ideas about nationalism and humanism which are wrong and extremely dangerous. The abstract nationalist idea in the West is logical in establishing a separation between nationalism and religion, since religion penetrated Europe from the outside and is foreign to European nature and history. In Europe, religion is a summary of concepts about the hereafter and about morality. Religion was not revealed in a national language of Europe, did not express the needs of the environment, and was not incorporated into the history of Europe. By contrast, Islam, for the Arabs, is not simply a concept of the hereafter or a mere system of morality, but it is the most exalted expression of their existential being and of their view of life. Islam is the strongest expression of the wholeness of their personality, in which are fused the verbs of feeling and of thinking, hope

with action, the self with its fate. Above all else, Islam is the most
extraordinary image of the Arabic language and its literature, and the
greatest part of Arab national history. It is, therefore, impossible to
exalt any one of our eternal heroes only as an Arab neglecting or shunning
him as a Muslim. Our nationalism is a living, organic entity and any
dissection or amputation of its limbs might be fatal. The relationship
between Islam and Arabism, therefore, is not of the same nature as the
relationship between any other religion and any other nationalism. The
Christian Arabs will realize, when their nationalism is fully awakened and
when they rediscover their true nature, that Islam is, for them, a national
culture by which they must be saturated until they understand and love it
to the point of guarding Islam as the most precious element of their Arabism.
Reality is still far from this hope and the new generation of Christian
Arabs must undertake the task of realizing that hope with courage and
asceticism, sacrificing their pride and interests, since nothing equals
Arabism and the honor of belonging to the Arab nation.

Abstract Humanism

The other peril, which is the dangerous concept of abstract humanism
on the European style, leads, in the final analysis, to considering nations
as inorganic blocks of the same material, without roots in the earth, and
upon which time had no effects. Thus, the reforms and revolutions arising
out of the needs and capacities of one people may be applied to another
people.

Do the revolutionary theorists of economics and of society really
believe that by sticking some fruits of wax upon a dried branch they would

revive the branch, and turn it into a living tree? It is not enough that theories and reforms be rational in themselves, they must branch out of a pervading spirit which is their source and origin. Some of these thinkers believe that the introduction of various reforms in the Arab situation is sufficient to resuscitate the nation. We see, in that, an aspect of decadence; it is an inversion to put the branch in place of the trunk, and the consequence in place of the cause. In reality, these reforms are branches which require, before anything else, spiritual origins, as flowers upon a branch: the faith of the nation in its message and the faith of its sons in the nation. In Islam, faith in the one God was the origin, and from it branched all the reforms which were incurred by and transformed Arab society. The first Muslims in Makka were not aware that their consent to profess the unity of God and the Judgment Day would lead them to consent to all the legislation later fashioned by Islam. We therefore see them applying this legislation spontaneously, voluntarily, logically because their second consent was the core of the first consent to the profession of the unity of God. Thus, whatever God might command would be Truth (ḥaqq) and Justice (ʿadl).

Whatever might be said about the significance of politics and economics as factors in the resistance of Quraysh to Islam, the primary factor remains a religious, that is an intellectual, factor. Those who follow the distorting materialist explanation of religion contradict historical reality and the spirit of humanity, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, attack the Arabs' most precious characteristic: their idealism. When their material interests forced Quraysh to conclude the treaty of Ḥudaybiyya with the Prophet, they persisted in denying his prophetic inspiration and his new

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religion.

From the above, the reason for our attaching every importance to the deeply conscious national sentiment, considered as an origin, becomes clear; it alone is the guarantee that social reforms will be living, active, bold, and in harmony with the spirit of the people and their needs, fulfilling them because it wants to.

The New Arab Generation

Gentlemen:

We are celebrating the memory of the hero of Arabism and of Islam. Islam is but the child of pain; the pain of the Arab nation. The pain has returned to the land of the Arabs, strong and deep, such as the Arabs of the Jāhiliyya (pre-Islamic period) never knew. It is most appropriate that it inspires us today with a purifying, strengthening revolution such as that whose flag Islam carried. None but the Arab of the new generation is capable of deriving strength from our pain and of realizing its necessity, because the pain of the present had prepared this generation to carry the flag of revolution. The love of this generation for its land and for its history led it to a knowledge of its spirit and its source.

We, the new Arab generation, carry a message, not a policy; a faith and a belief, not theories or speeches. We do not fear the particularistic elements strengthened by the weapons of foreigners and driven by racial hatred of the Arab nation, since God, nature, and history are with us. These elements do not understand us since they are strangers to us, strangers to sincerity, to profundity, and to heroism. They are artificial, fabri-

cated, contemptible. None understand us except the experienced and those who understand the life of Muhammad from within, as moral experience and historic destiny. None understand us but the sincere who clash, at every step, with lies and hypocrisy, with venality and calumny. Nonetheless, the strangers persist and multiply their efforts. None understand us but those in pain, who drew out of the bitterness of their exhaustion and out of the blood of their wounds, the image of the future Arab life; happy, content, strong, rising, shining, created in harmony. None understand us but the Believers, the believers in God. We might not pray with the praying, nor fast with the fasting, but we believe in God because we are in dire need of Him. Our burden is heavy, our way is rugged, and our goal is distant. We acquired this faith, we did not inherit it; we won it in travail and pain, we did not receive it as a tradition. Thus, it is precious to us; it is our property and the fruit of our toil. I do not believe that an Arab youth who realizes the corruption ensconced in the heart of his nation, and the dangers surrounding the future of the Arab nation, threatening it from the outside and, particularly, form the inside, and who believes, at the same time, that the Arab nation must live, that it had a message as yet undelivered, that it has possiblities as yet unattained, that the Arabs have not yet said all they have to say and have not yet done all they can do; I do not believe that such a youth could dispense with faith in God, which is faith in Truth, in the necessity for the victory of Truth, and in the necessity of seeking to win victory for Truth.

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