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THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN SYRIA

- 1918 - 1939 -

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by

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TO MY FATHER.

## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

This treatise is an attempt to clarify and record an aspect of the political life in Syria during a critical period of its modern history. It is not only the result of research into what has already been written on the subject, but also that of consultations and personal interviews and correspondence with a number of persons who have played leading roles in the events of the period involved. To these persons, and in particular, to their excellencies Nabih al-Azma, the late Adil al-Azma, Zaki al-Khatib, Said Haidar and Sheikh Kamil al-Kassab, I am deeply grateful.

I am also indebted to my professors for valuable suggestions and precious advice, and without whose help this treatise would have never been accomplished.

E. A. N.

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## INTRODUCTION

When I first started on this work I was not aware of the difficulties that would confront the researcher in the political movements. The history of the Middle and Near East, has always been carefully recorded, yet no thorough analysis had yet been made of the political parties in Syria between the two world wars. Although Arab nationalism might be as old as Ibrahim's conquest of Syria (1831), it did not manifest itself as a modern movement until late in the 19th century. Even then it did not have a particular stamp to differentiate it from a reform movement within the Ottoman Empire. As such, the early history of Arab nationalism forms part of the history of the Ottoman Empire, and not a distinct and independent movement aiming at the creation, or re-creation, of an Arab State with a separate personality and a separate existence.

As an illustration, the Arab political parties which grew under the Hamidian regime, may be mentioned : they proclaimed their allegiance to the Sultan-Caliph, and aspired, in most cases, for nothing more than decentralization. They were convinced that the people who inhabited what was later to be known as " occupied enemy territory " were Ottoman Arabs, however contradictory this may sound, and that Islam was a link that no geographic, linguistic, or ethnic boundary could break. In other words, the bond of religion was much stronger than that of secular nationalism.

The few radical parties which grew during the early days of Arab nationalism and which aimed at a complete separation from the Ottoman Empire had little support, and although in most cases,

secret, vigorous and enthusiastic, had little hope of success under the despotic system of Abdul-Hamid II. The success of the Turkish Revolution of 1908-1909 strengthened the hopes of the Arabs in achieving some kind of autonomy. Arab leaders, consequently supported the Committee of Union and Progress and contributed thereby to its success.

It took the Arabs little time to realize that the Young Turks' regime was in many ways much more despotic than that of Abdul-Hamid ; and that the racist conception on which the new state was built (Pan-Turanianism), which implied the " turkification " of non-Turks within the Empire, was detrimental not only to the hopes and aspirations of the Arabs but also to the most elementary rules of Islam and of modern democratic thinking. Thus the Turkish coup of 1908-1909 had two repercussions in the Arab world. It gave new vigour to the movement for autonomy and progress, and, at the same time, attempted to deprive the Arabs of whatever special character they possessed.

The outcome of these two clashing forces was the further strengthening of the radical nationalist movement. This explains the position the Arabs took during the First World War, when Hussein ibn 'Ali, Sherif of Mecca, after winning the support of the Allies, raised the banner of revolt, proclaimed himself King of the Arabs, and called for a Jihad.

Thus we find, during and after, the First World War, that nationalism had become a potent and significant force in Arab politics. Arabism was substituted for Osmanism, and the parties which continued their activity after the War adopted a distinct Arab

policy instead of the mild policy of cooperation with the Ottomans.

On the other hand, the promises of the Allies, offered through Sir Henry McMahon, and the proclamations of Hussein gave new vigour to the Arab movement for independence. Here again, the Allies committed the same mistake already committed by the Young Turks : they supported the demand for Arab unity and independence while, at the same time, drew plans for the division of the Arab world into spheres of influence that were, later on, labelled "mandated territories". It is not our purposes to condemn or to defend the Allies for what they did. It should, however, be stated with fairness that the promises the Allies offered were given in war-time when the only consideration was victory at any cost and by any means.

By the division of the Arab world into fragments, the Allies temporarily substituted a number of local nationalisms, each working independently against western interference, in place of an all-inclusive Arab nationalism. In this way the Syrian, the Iraqi, and the Lebanese nationalisms were created.

The purpose of this thesis is to discuss the political organizations that secured the active continuation and development of one of these movements - Syrian nationalism - in the period between the two world wars. The attention of the reader should be drawn to the fact, that larger Arab nationalism, although weakened was never extinguished, and that Syrian, Iraqi, and Lebanese nationalisms as off-shoots of a wider and more comprehensive pattern continued to be the focal point of resistance to western interference in their affairs. As soon as such interference disappeared

their raison d'être disappeared as well.

It is not our purpose to speculate on the future of the Syrian, Lebanese, and Iraqi nationalisms, for our treatise shall limit itself to the political organizations arising in Syria. It is necessary at the outset, to define what a political party is.

No generally accepted definition has yet been found. Burke's definition which is the most universally quoted, states that a party is "a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest upon some particular principle in which they all agree." Unfortunately this definition is unacceptable when applied to the parties discussed in this treatise. The differences of parties were not solely, or chiefly, on questions of "principle" rather personal motives played a major role in the formation of parties. Many parties also agreed on principles but they differed in stressing some points more than others, as shall be seen later.

MacIver, defines a political party as "an association organized in support of some principle or policy which by constitutional means it endeavours to make the determinant of government."<sup>1</sup> This was not, however, the aim of the Syrian political parties which appeared between the years 1930 and 1927. During this period the political organizations and parties had the sole purpose of making it difficult for the mandatory power to govern the country, by abstaining from cooperation with it. On the other hand, the Syrian political parties which appeared outside Syria, mainly in

1. MacIver, R.M.

The Modern State. (London, 1938), p. 396.



Egypt, did not aspire to reach power. Therefore, Maciver's definition is inadequate when it is applied to the Syrian political parties.

In the American practice, a legal definition has been devised for political parties, according to which no political organization acquires the name of party unless it has scored a minimum number of votes at the previous elections. " The New York definition of a party is a political organization which polled at least 10,000 votes (at one time 35,000) for governor at the last preceding election ; in Texas it is 100 000."<sup>1</sup>

If this definition were to be applied to the Syrian parties, the above-mentioned figures should be applied to the general elections. On the other hand, this definition would not give an accurate estimate of the party's support in the Syrian case ; because the candidates won their votes due to their personal popularity and attributes, not due to their loyalty to a particular party.

Several other definitions may be found, and although different in their wording, there is no inherent contradiction in what they consider the nature of a political party. In the Western practice the political parties aim at achieving the general good of the State through the existing form of government. It is an established fact that all the parties in Syria proclaimed that they were working for the general good of the State. It is undoubtedly true that they all wanted to achieve independence, and that their

*Irony!*

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1. Finer, H., Theory and Practice of Modern Government, revised edition, (New York, 1949), p. 219.

should extend so widely that it would become impossible to control it effectively. Thus in all large parties there arises a general tendency toward oligarchy and centralization. The main Syrian parties were highly centralized, but centralization would not guarantee their efficiency, for the parties lacked the integrating force which binds the members of every party in a cohesive whole, namely, an ideology.

3- There is a general tendency among men to stay away from politics and keep, as much as possible, out of the political arena. Indeed this is the chief problem with which every political party struggles to overcome. For the prime purpose of every political party is to achieve victory. "The first commandment of a political party is victory. Victory is found also written even into the ninth of its commandments... By choice, the party would be victorious ; virtuous it is only by compulsion. 'Buncombe' is the homage which electoral virtue so often pays to electoral victory"<sup>1</sup>. To achieve victory the duty of every political party becomes to mitigate the apathy of the average voter. This is usually done by simplifying, as much as possible, the task of the electorate<sup>2</sup>, by offering to it all the facilities available, and making it exert the least mental or physical effort necessary to state its choice.

As far as the Syrian political parties are concerned ; it seems that they were very successful in arousing the interest

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1. Finer, op. cit., p. 376.

2. Wilson, G.W. The Elements of Modern Politics, (London & New York, 1936), p. 368.

disagreement was on the rapidity and method with which they wanted to terminate the mandate. But did all these parties agree that their aims should be achieved through the existing form of government? The answer is negative. For, during the period between the two world wars, the better organized political parties - the nationalist parties - were sanguine that their salvation lay in the overthrow of the existing form of government. From this angle the Syrian parties could be looked at from a legal point of view, in the same light as the Communist party in a parliamentary democracy - the Communists want to join parliament to help its overthrow, or, at least, to hinder its smooth working.

All definitions of a political party also agree that a political party is an organization with a definite membership. This however does not mean that the party depends for its support only on its members. Indeed the support that the party gets from its members is very small compared to that which it receives from its supporters. This was very true of the Syrian parties except for the fact that the organization of the parties was often so loose that a clear distinction between a member and a supporter was hardly noticeable. The distinction between a member and a supporter is, however, most significant; for a person may vote all his life for a particular party and still not be a member of that party.

The fact that there are usually more supporters than there are members in most parties, is due to two main reasons :

- 1- There is a fear among party organizers lest membership

of the masses in politics despite the inadequacy of the means at their disposal. For Syria did not suffer from the apathy of voters. The people were deeply concerned. What the Syrian electorate suffered from was the fear of stating freely its choice. Election campaigns were accompanied with violent riots and bloody encounters that made a very great number of the electors, mainly from the intelligentsia, abstain from voting. The pressure that the different competing groups exerted was often physical rather than intellectual.

This leads us to the problem of legal limitations imposed on the activities of political parties. These limitations, if rigidly applied, can completely hinder the freedom of political parties. The purpose of legislation concerning parties is not, however, to limit the freedom of parties, but primarily to assure responsibility of the party and thereby prevent it from abusing its power. Despite the resentment with which party-leaders often meet government interference in party affairs, there seems to be general acquiescence to it. The necessity of legal limitations on parties is immanent. In their eagerness to achieve victory, political parties are likely to sway public opinion by illegal methods. Consequently the law has to step in " to purify the electoral process."<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note that these limitations were hardly used during Feisal's regime in Syria, but were abused during the period of the Mandate. In the latter instance they were so severe that they often jeopardized the very existence.

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1. Finer, op. cit., p. 394.

of political parties. Thus no legally recognized political party appeared in Syria until 1936. After that period the activities of the nationalist parties were often suspended due to their resistance to the measures that the mandatory power tried to impose on Syria. This is not to deny, however, the necessity of legal limitations on the parties in Syria. Indeed the Syrian party-system suffered from very serious defects.

The history of Syrian Political Parties which is the subject of this paper will be divided in three chapters :

For the first chapter, the organization and aims of the political parties in Feisal's days (1918-1930) are discussed. This is a period in which Syria enjoyed comparative independence and in which, therefore, the personality of the Syrian people manifested itself in its true light. In this chapter, the role Feisal played in the formation of political parties, is discussed, as well as the opposition to the throne and the activities of the different parties within and outside the Syrian Congress.

Very little material is available concerning this era, the printed documents have been either lost, or forgotten in the dark corners of private libraries. I have had therefore to rely primarily on the information I gathered from the survivors of that period among whom are Nabih al-Azma, the late Adel Al-Azma, and Said Haidar to whom I owe the greatest part of the information in the first chapter.

From Maysaloun until the outbreak of the Second World War(1930 - 1939) is a new period in the history of the Syrian

political parties. It is the period of violence, sometimes overt, sometimes hidden, for the ultimate overthrow of the mandatory power. The men of the period are still almost the same men of Feisal's days, the main political parties under Feisal continued under the Mandate regime, assuming different names. The people are still the same with all their aspirations and hopes. Only the governing authorities have changed and mainly towards these did the national parties change their policy of support to one of struggle and disobedience with occasional attempts to cooperate.

Of the parties that grew during this period I have chosen three model organizations which give a representative idea of the organization of political parties in general. During the research on this period, I discovered interesting information concerning certain minor political groups, but I did not mention them assuming that their discussion falls beyond the scope of a treatise dealing exclusively with political parties.

The concluding chapter, will point out the main defects from which this Syrian party-system suffered during the period under consideration. Suggestions have also been proposed which, without claiming to be final, may help the establishment of a party-system which will conform more closely to the principles upon which political parties are built in western democracies.

H.A.H.

CHAPTER I.

The Political Parties under Feisal's  
Regime in Syria.

Oct. 1918 - July 1930.

No political movement starts all of a sudden or ends all of a sudden; every movement has its beginnings long before it actually takes place, and its effects are reflected in the coming generations.

To understand the political organizations under Feisal's regime in Syria, we have to go back a short period toward the first decade of the twentieth century - to the Turkish coup d'état of 1908 - 1909.

Political organizations passed through two main stages before 1918, the study of which is essential for the understanding of the genesis of the party-system in Syria. The first stage extends roughly from 1908 to 1911 and marks the era of cooperation and good-will, at least on one side, between the Arabs and the Young Turks.

Between 1908 and 1911 the Turco-Arab relations reached a high degree of friendship; The Arabs saw in the Young Turks' movement a sign of progress, the overthrow of absolutism and the establishment of constitutionalism - a regime under which they hoped to see realized their political aspirations for decentralization and internal autonomy.

Few Arab political organizations were then forward; chief among which were al-Ikha al-'Arabi al-'Uthmani, and al-Muntada al-Adabi.

Al-Ikha al-Arabi al-Uthmani aimed at cooperation with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), in the hope of helping the Arabs, thereby, to occupy a position of equality with the other peoples of the Empire. The Arabs would, on their side, do their best to help in the promotion of the Empire's interest, they would "protect the Constitution, unite all races in loyalty to the Sultan,"<sup>1</sup> while, at the same time, promote "the welfare of Arab provinces on a footing of real equality with the other peoples of the Empire, spread education in the Arabic tongue and foster the observance of Arab customs."<sup>2</sup> As can be seen, the al-Ikha' had a very moderate programme, yet the Young Turks, opposed to any organized non-Turkish effort, even if it aimed at the good of the Empire, forcibly dissolved it in less than a year after its formation. But although the Al-Ikha' party was never allowed to mature, and although, during its short life, its activities did not go beyond reception parties for Arab deputies in Istanbul; yet, this party marks the start of an Arab nationalist, separatist, movement.

Al-Muntada al-Adabi was more of a literary than a political club. It included the Arabs resident in Constantinople with the purpose of developing among them a feeling of being a group through the discussion of those issues that mainly concerned the

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1. Antonius, G., The Arab Awakening, (London, 1938), p. 103.

2. ibid, p. 103.



the Arab world. However, in 1915, doubtful of all non-Turkish elements within the Empire, and in conformity with the dictates of the pan-touranian/<sup>policy</sup> which acquired additional vigour during the war the OUP-men suspended the activities of the club.

A further element that contributed to the Arab national movement in the twentieth century, was a parliamentary group made up of the Arab representatives in the Ottoman parliament<sup>1</sup>. This group appeared in 1911 and worked for the safeguard of Arab rights throughout the Empire. Even this group did not escape the wrath of the Young Turks.

The tyranny of the OUP ; and its suppression of all Arab nationalist organizations, opened a new phase in the history of the Arab national movement. As a result of persecution, Arab activities went underground. This period extends roughly from 1912 to 1915.

The formation of secret Arab organizations was a proof of the strength and seriousness of the Arab national movement. It showed the determination of the Arabs to achieve freedom from foreign control, and unity under an Arab government. The secret organizations working for that purpose were many ; chief among which may be mentioned, the Kah'taniyya, al-'Alam al-Akhdar, al-Ah'd, and, al-'Arabiyya al-Fatat. The last two were the most active and the ones destined to a longer life than the others. They shall be studied in detail when the political parties during Feisal's regime in Syria (1918-1930) are discussed.

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1. Majlis al-Mab'outhan

The purpose of these organizations was the welfare of all the Arab world without any special provision for any of its parts; in other words, the spirit of provincialism which was to appear to some extent after the first world war, was completely absent.

Membership in all these secret organizations, was limited to Arabs, chosen after very careful examination. On the whole, they were made up of the young intelligentsia, imbued with a very strong nationalist feeling.

Contemporary with these secret organizations were few others working in the open and had moderate programmes. Chief among these organizations may be mentioned Hisp Al-Lamarkaziyyah and Jami'yah al-Islahyah. While in Paris was formed the Arab Congress that gave strong support to these movements in the home country.

The Lamarkaziyyah party was formed in 1913, its most important members were "Arabs from Syria". Its central headquarters was in Cairo and allowed the formation of branches all over the Ottoman Empire, in every city or center where at least ten of the party-members resided.

Although the party was made up exclusively of Arabs and although its leading members were from Syria<sup>1</sup>, yet its programme included all the Empire. Its aim was to show the advantages of decentralization in the Ottoman Empire due to the numerous races, languages, and religions which it embraces; and try to make, by all legal methods, decentralization prevail in the Ottoman system of government.

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1. Among the leading members were: Rafik al-Azm, Rashid Rida, Dr. Shmayil, Iskandar Announ, Sami Jraidini, Bakki al-Azm, Muhib ed-Dine al-Khatib.

Despite its insistence on the fulfilment of these aims only by legal means, Hisb al-Lamarkaziyyah did not escape the wrath of the Young Turks, and was abolished by the authorities around the 1915, when the GUP started to enforce, more severely than any time before, its Turkification policy.

The second important Arab movement appeared in Beirut around 1913, when the Moslem and Christian notables of Beirut,<sup>1</sup> decided to work for the amelioration of the administrative system in the Ottoman Empire. The programme they drew up was nearer to an organic law than to a party programme ? It provided for administrative autonomy for the Arab wilayets ; while foreign, military, legislative and economic, affairs remained in the hands of the central government, whereas education, agriculture, commerce, and municipal works (roads, buildings etc...) were to be in the hands of the administrative body of the wilayet. The programme also emphasized that heads of government offices in the Arab Wilayets, should know the Arabic language, and that all officials in Arab-speaking wilayets should be Arabs<sup>2</sup>. This programme received wide support specially in Syria and Iraq.

Meanwhile in 1913, the Arab youth, because of their contact with the West and of the stifling of liberty within the Ottoman Empire after the accession of the Young Turks to power, decided to call for a general Arab congress in Paris to which all Arabs in the world would send representatives and at which a decision should be

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1. Darwazah, M.I. Hawl al-Harakah al-Arabiyyah, (Saida, 1950), Vol. I, p.36.

2. *ibid.* p. 36.

taken as to the future of the Arab world. In this way, the Arab national movement transcended the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire to include all Arabs wherever they were.

Judging from its leading members the Paris Congress was chiefly made up of men from the secret al-Fatat party<sup>1</sup>. The programme it wanted to achieve, however, was chiefly taken from that of the Law which was mentioned above.

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The important point about all these movements centers around the fact that the political organizations which were later to appear after the First World War in Syria, were not the outcome of the circumstances of the war - settlement, but that they had behind them a history, and, therefore, an experience which makes Syrian party-life, in the post-war - period the continuation rather than the start of party organization. And that the Arabs in Syria played the leading role in most of these organizations and that they were adequately equipped to lead the Arab world in the post-war period.

With this brief historical sketch of the political organizations in the decade that preceded the First World War, it is now time to consider the political parties during Feisal's regime in Syria (1918-1920).

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Political activity increased tremendously during Feisal's regime in Syria. As a primary consequence many parties were formed

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1. Darwazah, M.I., Op.cit., Vol. I, p. 37.

besides those which continued to exist in the post-war period. The historical background, programmes, and internal organization of these parties shall now be discussed.

HISE AL-FATAT AL-ARABI<sup>1</sup> - The history of Al-Fatat goes as far back as 1911 when the Arab national movement went partly underground due to the persecution of the new Turkish Government which set itself " to stamp out all non-Turkish currents in the State specially Arab and Armenian nationalism "<sup>2</sup>. Students from Syria & Iraq who were studying in Paris at that time (1911), realizing the impossibility of achieving Arab aspirations for some sort of independence, with the help of the men of the new Turkish regime, decided to form a secret organization similar in many respects to the OUP. They decided that the central committee of the party be in Paris while branches of it will be established all over the world specially in Syria and Iraq ; later and during the war, the party moved its central administrative body to Damascus. Due to the great secrecy with which the party's activities were carried out, it was able to outlive the war although many of its members fell victims to Jamal pasha's executioners.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Fatat, was " the society of freedom in Syria. The landowners, the writers, the doctors, the great public servants linked themselves in this society with a common oath, passwords, signs, a press and a central treasury, to ruin the Turkish Empire."<sup>4</sup>

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1. The Young Arab Party:

2. Lawrence, A.W., Seven Pillars of Wisdom, (London, 1936), p. 47.

3. Among its members who were imprisoned was Shukri Al-Kumratly, later President of the Republic of Syria (1943-1948) who attempted suicide in prison.

4. Lawrence, op. cit. , p. 47.

It was also " deadly secret ; and the Government, though it suspected (its) existence, could find no credible evidence of(its) leaders or membership."<sup>1</sup>

It was during the early years of the war that the Amir Feisal came to know of the existence of al-Fatat party and instantly joined it.<sup>3</sup> When the banner of the Arab Revolt was raised in 1916 the party of al-Fatat was able to mobilize a good many of its men, to join the Hejazian army which Feisal lead.

After the war al-Fatat, confined its activities mainly to Syria, and was the most active and influential organization in the state. No governmental measure, under Feisal's regime in Syria, could be carried out without the party's consent, be it tacit or explicit. It was as important to the new state of Syria as the CUP was to the Turkey of 1908-1909. Consequently the role it played during that period (1918-1930) had a far-reaching influence on the internal and external policy that Feisal followed. It was powerful among the masses of the interior and could very easily mobilize them.

During Feisal's regime, it founded new branches all over the interior, got in touch with its prominent members in the other

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1. Ibid, p. 47.

2. Feisal used to live at the Bakris, when he came to Damascus. Through Fawzi and Nassib al-Bakri, the party contacted Feisal, and made him a member of it; it was also able through him to inform the Sherif of Mecca of the demands of the national movement, the influence of which we remark in the declaration of the revolt that Sherif Hussein announced, and in the Hussein-MacMahon correspondence. See, Darwazah, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 33.

Arab states, to strengthen the movement for unity and independence of all the Arabs. It established a central body for propaganda and information in Damascus, and branches of it in the different parts of the world and could thereby get reports on all that was taking place in the internal and external fields. It helped financially many political parties and clubs working for aims similar to its own. In a word, its position could be contested by no other party; after all, Feisal himself was one of its members ; Rida' al-Rikabi, the Military Governor General of Syria, and Yasin al-Hashimi, Councillor of War, were both from the party too. (It shall be seen later how very important was the role personalities played in the Syrian party-system.) Its central organization used to send in proposals to the Amir, and announce his decisions in all the different fields of policy, whether internal, administrative or foreign.<sup>1</sup>

The history of al-Fatat during Feisal's regime in Syria could be divided into two main divisions.

The first period extends roughly from October 1918 until the end of 1919, during which the members of al-Fatat gave full support to Feisal's policy with the Allies - a policy which aimed at securing full independence for Syria and the Arab world.

The change in Feisal's policy which took place after his second visit to Europe in September 1919 marks the second landmark in the history of Syria in general, and of al-Fatat in particular.

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1. Darwazah, op. cit. , Vol. I, pp. 74-76.

After September 1919 al-Fatat withheld the support it had already given Feisal, finding it unexpedient to follow a policy of appeasement and acceptance to the dictates of Paris and London. The party thought, contrary to Feisal's opinion, that a further occupation of the French to any part of Syrian soil should be resisted by force of arms, if necessary.

The disagreement between Feisal and al-Fatat was the main cause for the growth of many opposition parties during and after 1919. This disagreement lasted until July 1930 when all political groups felt the absolute necessity of unifying their ranks to meet the threats of occupation with which General Gouraud served the Government of Damascus.

With the defeat of the Syrian Armies at Maysaloun<sup>1</sup> (July 24, 1930) the party of al-Fatat was disbanded and its leading men fled chiefly to Egypt and Transjordan. Those who went to Egypt joined mostly Hishb -al-Ittihad as-Suri<sup>2</sup> and remained there as exiles until little by little they were allowed to return, individually to Syria.

The more active group, however, went to Transjordan where they were hospitably received by Amir Abdullah who allowed them to continue their activities for the liberation of Syria from French rule. This sojourn in Transjordan was not for very long. By 1934, the Amir found it detrimental to his policy with

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1. Al-Husari, S. Yawn Maysaloun, 2nd. ed., (Beirut, 1948), pp. 145-157.

2. The Syrian Unity Party.



the Allies to allow such activities to take place within the boundaries of his new state. Consequently, he informed the Syrian political refugees of the necessity to leave the country. Thus the residue of the Syrian nationalist elements either went to join their friends in Egypt, or pushed on into Mejaz where King Abdul-Aziz, badly in need of enlightened men to lead him across the twisted channels of European diplomacy, received them with great hospitality.<sup>1</sup>

It should be born in mind, that although al-Fatat, as well as the other political organizations that had been formed in Syria under Feisal's regime, no longer existed after 1920, as political parties, yet the men of al-Fatat and al-Istiklal, in particular, and of the other political organizations in general, remained the most active nationalist leaders of Syria, even under the Mandate. Although their activities under the Mandate were curtailed, to a very great extent, yet, they still played the most important role in Syrian politics.

The political programme of al-Fatat was very vague ; it is even probable that it did not have a detailed programme which was a usual thing in secret organizations. As specified in its oath, the aim of al-Fatat was " to exert every effort to bring the Arab nation abreast with other advanced, free and great independent nations."<sup>3</sup>

Some Aspects of The Internal Organization of Al-Fatat :- Like all secret organizations, al-Fatat had a very limited membership, chosen

1. Many of the leading men of al-Istiklal party, shared with the members of al-Fatat, their fate.
2. Darwazah, op. cit., Vol. I; p.

after very careful examination. Special attention was given to the fact that no man would be eligible for membership unless he was well-known for his moral integrity, secrecy, courage, and above all, intense Arab nationalism. Once these qualities existed in a man, he was contacted by a member of the organization who knew him well. If the man accepted to join the organization, his name was sent to the Central Committee which studied carefully every aspect of his life, personal as well as public. Then other members of the organization tried to contact him, his friends were asked to give their opinion about him. If after the careful study of his character, the committee in charge, was convinced of his fitness, he was then, officially approached but in such a way that no secrets were given to him as to the membership or even the existence of the organization. If this last step was safely passed, the new member was asked to take an oath before the one or two members of the organization who contacted him. In taking that oath he promised to sacrifice all his possessions including his very life for the achievement of the aims of the organization; that he would keep any information or instruction, about or from, the organization, in deepest secrecy, and that he would obey whatever orders he might receive from the organization.

By this very careful method the new member would have known only one or two of the members of the organization - those who got in touch with him, and in front of whom he took his oath.<sup>1</sup>

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1. For a list of some of the members of the Organization of Al-Fatat see, Darwazah, Wak op.cit., Vol. 1, pp. 30-31 and 77-78.

Consequently, al-Fatat was one of the very few secret organizations which remained as such; although some of its members were arrested by the Military Court that Jamal Pasha set up in Aley (Lebanon) between the years 1915 - 1916.

Al-Fatat was able to continue its secret existence until 1918 when under Feisal's regime its membership increased tremendously due to the new policy it followed, which aimed at the inclusion within its ranks of all high government officials. As a result of this policy al-Fatat did not remain secret except in name. This greatly weakened the party and made it a loose organization made up of a heterogeneous mass.

The Central Committee of al-Fatat was not an elected body, it was made up of the founders of the organization. From this body emanated all the orders to the members of the organization. During the war, the party found great difficulty to contact all of its members since many of them had been recruited into the Turkish Army and were constantly on the move.

The members of al-Fatat were, on the whole, men of means and consequently the party's finances were, comparatively, good. The main source of income took the form of grants and donations, and although dues had to be paid, rarely did any member pay them regularly<sup>1</sup>. When, during the war, Amir Feisal joined the organization he thenceforward supported the finances of the party. This increase in the resources of al-Fatat resulted in a wide extension of the party's activities - new branches were established in the Arab world and a propaganda office for the party was created.<sup>3</sup> It can therefore be

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1. Al-Azma, N. Personal interview, 24/1/53 (Beirut) .

3. As a matter of fact, Feisal's contributions were not limited only to al-Fatat, he supported almost every nationalist party that grew during his regime in Syria.

safely asserted that the Arab nationalist movement owed its greatest debt to al-Fatat, for it championed the movement during the most critical years of its existence. During Feisal's period in Syria, al-Fatat was strongly seconded by al-Istiklal party; Towards the study of this last attention shall now be turned.

AL-ISTIKLAL PARTY<sup>1</sup> : - The study of al-Istiklal forms part of the study of al-Fatat, for it was its off-shoot and worked in completely harmony with it. It was the branch of al-Fatat operating in public and acting as a screen to keep al-Fatat, as much as that was possible, a secret organization. The founders of al-Fatat, realizing the willingness of a very great number of people to join the party after 1918, decided to establish the party of al-Istiklal which would admit all Arab applicants without making them pass under the rigid and vigorous examination through which a person had to pass before becoming a member in al-Fatat.

The two organizations shared many of their leading members ; and, consequently we cannot say that al-Istiklal had a programme distinct from that of al-Fatat. They both aimed at the " independence of the Arab world and its liberation from foreign control "². Financially al-Istiklal was supported by almost the same men who supported al-Fatat although membership in al-Istiklal was very much wider than that in Al-Fatat.

The Istiklal party appeared in 1919, its membership increased tremendously in the first months of its existence. Although no accurate figures are available, it is estimated that membership in al-Istiklal reached 360,000 men. These were classified into registered supporters and active members. The number of the

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1. The Independence Party.

2. Neouli, A., 'Ushtu wa Shahadt, (Beirut 1951), p. 24.

latter did not exceed 2500 men.<sup>1</sup> The registered supporters were recruited by a most inaccurate method. Three or four of the major lines of policy of the party would be put down at the head of a long sheet of paper. These sheets would be circulated around the country gathering the signatures of those who approved of them. The major lines, however, were statements around which no controversy could arise. As a matter of fact, this method was not used to gather support for the party (many of those who signed did not know which was the party sponsoring the campaign-) but to arouse among the people a feeling of patriotism that the party might have to call upon in the future. Thus the Istiklal party was able to keep the nationalist spirit, at least in Syria, awake and vigorous.

The Istiklal party was also the backbone of Syrian party-life, all other parties drew from it, its strongest elements not only during Feisal's regime but also under the Mandate. Although al-Istiklal was disbanded after the French occupation, however, the men of al-Istiklal who had remained in Syria continued their activities either as individuals or tried to form new parties as shall be seen in the next chapter. The main elements of the Katlah Party, for example, were from the Istiklal party.

Those of its members who fled the country after the French occupation, had the same fate as the members of al-Fatat. After being ousted from Transjordan they went to Egypt or to Hejaz where they helped to develop the feeling of Arab nationalism. It has been said that the spirit of Arab nationalism would not have been aroused in Egypt were it not for the elements that emigrated from Syria.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Al-Azma, N., Interview on Jan. 24, 1952, Nabih al-Azma was then in charge of registering the names of the members and his information on the subject is therefore reliable.

2. Al-Azma, N. Interview on Dec./13/1951.

THE 'ABD PARTY :- The date of the formation of the 'Abd party coincides roughly with that of al-Fatat<sup>1</sup> when the Arabs felt the necessity of acting in secret if they were to act at all. Because the new Turkish regime was too strict to allow a non-Turkish organization to act freely. Like al-Fatat, the 'Abd, therefore, was a secret organization; but unlike it, it was made up almost exclusively of Arab military men, in the Turkish Army.<sup>3</sup> In this respect it was similar to the GUP whose core was mainly military.

The 'Abd party continued until the end of Feisal's regime in Syria, and during the war its leading members joined Feisal's army after the declaration of the Arab Revolt in 1916.

The appearance of a military organization standing for Arab nationalism indicated the obstinate opposition to any further foreign interference in Arab affairs, and the conviction of an Arab nationalism lying at the base of an Arab state, had become an undeniable fact.

The founder of the 'Abd party was Aziz Ali al-Masri, an Arab officer in the Turkish Army, who felt that the relations between the Arab world and Turkey should be regulated on the basis of some sort of a personal union. This would mean, that the Arab world should be declared autonomous paying nominal allegiance to the Sultan in Istanbul. Such a programme would satisfy the Arab aspirations for wide decentralization, and, at the same time, would not break the ties between the Arabs and their Ottoman co-religionists.

1. Darwazah says that the 'Abd Party appeared around 1913, op. cit. p. 33.
2. " Nearly one third of the original Turkish Army was Arabic speaking ". Lawrence, op. cit., p. 48.

For the achievement of its programme the party set up branches in the main cities of the Arab world - Beirut, Damascus, Mosul and Basra. These branches started to contact the Arab members of the Turkish army and was able by 1914 to include within its ranks a considerable number of them.<sup>1</sup>

When the GUP - men knew of the existence of the 'Abd party, they immediately felt its danger and at once started on a persecution campaign. They arrested Aziz Ali al-Misri and condemned him to death ; later, they released him provided he kept out of the Ottoman Empire. Provisions were then taken to disperse Arab soldiers in different parts of the empire, in such a way that their coming together became almost impossible. A further measure was then taken by which no Arab in the Turkish Army could take a commanding post, specially in the Arab lands.

These severe measures paralyzed the activities of the organization during the war, and led to its complete disorganization.

No sooner was the war over than the party resumed its activities. It included within its ranks, besides its old members, many of those Arabs who were in the Hejazian army and a few civilians.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Quoting Said Amin, Darwazah says that membership in the party reached 315 members by 1914 ; this, Darwazah thinks is an exaggerated number. However, this is a considerable number for a secret organization.
  2. Among the civilians who joined al-'Abd after 1918 were : Amir Fuad ash-Shihabi, Hassan al-Hakim and Husni al-Barazi.

But the 'Ahd party of 1913 was widely different from that of 1918. For the sake of convenience the changes in the 'Ahd party shall be discussed under two headings : 1- The change in its sphere of action :- While in 1913 the party was open to all Arabs without any distinction as to which part of the Arab world they came from, the 'Ahd party after 1918, accepted the fait accompli in the Arab world and decided to split into two independent branches : one made up of the Iraqi members - the Iraqi ' Ahd Party ; and the second made up mainly of the Syrian members - the Syrian ' Ahd Party.<sup>1</sup> Such a division, the leading men of the ' Ahd party thought, would render the party more efficient in counteracting foreign interference; besides, Syria had to fight the French while Iraq the British<sup>2</sup>. However, a clear-out separation was never effected, all that happened was, that the leaders of the party decided to have two main branches of the party, one in Iraq and the other in Syria. And that there was no misunderstanding among the leaders of the party is proved by the fact that the Syrian 'Ahd Party had constant relations with its Iraqi counterpart and demanded the independence of Iraq under the throne of Amir Abdullah ibn el-Husseini.<sup>3</sup>

The split in the 'Ahd party, whatever its reasons may have been is most significant. This split shows that the spirit of an all-embracing Arab nationalism had not yet become fully mature and that in its stead a Syrian and an Iraqi nationalism had started to appear. The split, in other words, shows, that the Arabs then

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1. Said, A., Athawrah al-'Arabiyya al-Zubra, (Egypt, 1933), Vol. II, p.37

2. It has also been said that the cause of the split in the 'Ahd' party was due to personal misunderstanding among the Syrian & Iraqi members during the Arab Revolt. See, Darwazah, Vol. I, p. 88.

3. Al-Azma, N., Interview on Jan. 24, 1953.



could not transcend the boundaries set among the Arab states, however fictitious these boundaries might have been.

3- As a result of this first change, the 'Ahd party after the First World War, found it necessary to draw up a new programme to suit the new developments. While it asked for nothing more than wide decentralization during the first years of its existence, the 'Ahd started to demand full independence for Syria under the monarchy of Amir Feisal ibn el-Hussein, because it realized the impracticality and inadequacy of decentralization.

The activities of the party under Feisal's regime in Syria, were not very important because the membership of the party was limited and the party insisted to remain mainly a party for the army ; as such it included a number of officers.

On the other hand, some of the members of al-'Ahd were also members of al-Fatat, and after 1918 many more members joined al-Fatat and took part in its activities. Sometimes, however, the 'Ahd party played the role of opposition to al-Fatat & al-Istiklal parties, but generally speaking, al-'Ahd was always ready to cooperate with the above-mentioned parties. The inclusion of civilians in the party greatly facilitated the cooperation between the two parties.

Like all the other political parties that appeared under Feisal's regime in Syria, the 'Ahd party disappeared after the defeat of Maysaloun (July 1920).

-(AL-HISB AL-WATANI)<sup>1</sup>

As shall be seen later in this chapter, Syria did not enjoy the semblance of parliamentary life until 1920 and only for a period of five months. Thus political activity reached its apex during that period, for the parties that were formed realized the necessity of more or less, elaborate programmes.

Among the parties which were founded in 1920 was Al-Hisb al-Watani. The immediate cause for the appearance of this party was the disagreement between Amir Feisal and al-Fatat - which will be discussed later. Badly in need of an organized support from home to back him in his foreign policy, the Amir got in touch with some important members of the 'Ahd Party<sup>2</sup> and asked them to draw up a programme and form a party. Thus on Jan. 25, 1920, al-Hisb al-Watani came into existence. Its programme provided for a constitutional monarchy with Feisal at its head. Article two of its programme set the purpose of the party as follows : - 1- To work for, and demand, the full political independence of Syria within its natural boundaries, and to defend that independence by all efficient means.

2- Strengthening the national, intellectual and economic ties among the Arab peoples as a whole and among the Syrian peoples in particular. And to encourage scientific reasoning in the Arab

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1. PATRIOTIC OR THE SYRIAN NATIONALIST PARTY.

2. Among the persons he contacted were Aref al-Tawam and Hassan al-Hakim.

nation so that it may rise to the level of modern nations.

3- Equality in civil and political rights among all the citizens of the Syrian state, with complete disregard of racial or religious affiliation.

4- The support of the democratic monarchical principle by the formation of a parliamentary government emanating from the people and responsible to them. At the head of this government would be Amir Feisal as King of Syria. He would represent the country politically as is the case in all constitutional monarchies (sic).

5- The safeguard to all citizens of the rights conferred upon them by law, and the work towards the amelioration of the social order by the raising of cooperative funds for economic help and charity, and encouraging commercial and agricultural and labour unions.

6- The support of the Amir's policies and plans for securing the country's developing its army, and establishing order.

The rules of internal organization of the party provided for the formation of two administrative councils made up of 16 members ; and an advisory council made up of 35 members most of whom were from the notables of Damascus and Hejaz.

Few conclusions can be drawn from this part of the party's programme :-

1- That al-Hisb al-Watani was the first political party to limit its sphere of activity, in theory as well as in practice, to the boundaries of Natural Syria<sup>1</sup>. The party also insisted on the independence of Syria and made few provisions for nothing more than strengthening the political, intellectual and economic ties with the other Arab states.

2- The party specified in its constitution that all Syrians were equal in their civil and political rights ; however, in the explanation of this article it said that only racial and religious distinctions should not be made. No mention is made of sex distinctions. This may be due to the fact that the formulators of the party's constitution did not favour the participation of women in politics. An issue which, as we shall see later, caused a great stir in the Syrian Congress, in 1920.

3- The party had an economic and social policy beside the political, which, though inadequate, showed that the party might have elaborated its social and economic policy had it had a longer span of life.

4- The party was strongly in favour of a monarchy with Feisal as its candidate. It seemed that this was its most essential aim and that the support of Feisal was its main purpose. Not that Feisal had competitors in Syria for the throne, but that many of the the leading parties of Syria in 1920, disagreed with Feisal in his foreign policy specially after his second voyage to Europe and

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1. The party did not define what it meant by " Natural Syria ", however we can, generally speaking, say that it included Syria, Palestine and Lebanon.

the signing of an agreement with Clemenceau.<sup>1</sup>

5- In its internal organization, Hisb al-Watani differed slightly from its contemporaries. It had one advisory and two administrative councils. The reason for having more than one administrative council and an advisory council, may be due to the fact that the formulators of the party's policy seeing the cleavage between the younger and elder elements in both al-Fatat and al-Itikial parties, wanted to avoid such a clash by making one council representative of the youthful elements in the party while another would be made up mainly of elderly men.<sup>2</sup>

It would therefore seem that the Hisb al-Watani was the nearest, in its programme and organization, to a modern political party. For as it is generally known a " party " is not only a political organization standing for one issue, but also one that has formulated an opinion on almost every issue, whether political, economic or social in nature. In this respect the Hisb al-Watani fulfilled most of the requirements of a modern political party.

Al-Lajnah al-Wataniyyah al-'Ulia and Al-Hisb al-Dimucrati<sup>3</sup>

The evacuation of the British army from Syrian soil was terminated by the end of 1919. On November 22, however, one incident happened that had a direct effect on the political activities in Syria. Yasin al-Hashimi, an active member in the party of al-Fatat.

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1. Said, A., op. cit. Vol. II, pp. 85 - 100.

2. Al-Azma, N. , Interview 24/1/53.

3. The Higher National Committees and the Democratic Party.

and then Minister of the Defence Council, was captured or "kidnapped" by the British.<sup>1</sup> The reason for this action it was said, was that Yasin al-Hashimi was an extremist who, the British knew, would rather go to war rather than accept the dictates of the Lloyd-George-Clemenceau Agreement which was then being negotiated.

This incident reminded the Syrians of the dangers that lay ahead of them, and it was the immediate cause for the passing of a law providing for compulsory military service. The Al-Lajnah al-Wataniyyah al-'Ulia was then formed to help in the recruitment of men, and to encourage the people to join the army.<sup>2</sup>

The programme for compulsory military service failed because the plan lacked three things : leadership, necessary funds, and technical skill. The British were not ready to help in any of these fields for they knew that any such action on their part would alienate France.

Consequently, the notables of Damascus met at the initiative of the leading men of al-'Ahd party. A committee was formed including representatives from the different Damascene quarters and from the political organizations then found in Syria. All these constituted the Al-Lajnah al-Wataniyyah al-'Ulia. As head, was chosen Sheikh Kamil al-Kassab who made Damascus his headquarters.

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1. Darwazah, M.I., op.cit. Vol. I, pp. 106 - 108. see also Said, A., op.cit. Vol. II pp. 103-104.
  2. History books referring to that period call the committee, the National Committee, the founder of the Committee says that the official name of the organization was the High National Committee. From a personal correspondence with Sheikh Kamil el-Kassab, Dec.11, 1951.

When Feisal came back from his second voyage to Europe and the terms he got from Clemenceau, and to which he was willing to agree, became known to the public ; Sheikh Kamil al-Kassab decided to form a political party which would assist the High National Committee, and called it the Democratic Party.

\* According to Sheikh Kamil al-Kassab, the purpose of the party was " to oppose Feisal who has made an agreement with Clemenceau Prime Minister of France, after Britain had betrayed the Arabs going back on their word and reaching an agreement with the French that the latter abandon their claims to Mosul and Palestine as a first step towards the carrying out of the terms of the ill-omened Balfour Declaration . . . When we knew (Sheikh Kamil al-Kassab is speaking) about the agreement that Feisal concluded with Clemenceau in Paris, the High National Committee was formed... and later, I founded the Democratic Party which followed the same policy as the High National Committee."

" The Democratic Party included within its ranks many Arab leaders from the different parts of Syria ... they came in hundreds of delegations to join the party ... and it is also noteworthy that Hauran and Djebel Druze completely adhered to the party. This explains their stand in the face of the treacherous foreigner<sup>1</sup>" This passage, quoted verbatim from a personal letter addressed to the writer by Sheikh Kamil himself, shows that the Democratic Party had one single purpose to work for, namely, to safeguard the independence of Syria from outside aggression - French in this instance.

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1. Personal letter from Sheikh Kamil al-Kassab, dated, Dec. 11, 1951.

Although all the parties that were formed under Feisal, had more or less the same aim, yet, the Democratic Party was the most extremist group in Syria, and was not ready to grant any concession to any foreign power. It was ready to oppose French entry into Syria at any cost not excluding actual war.

The party was violently opposed to Feisal's seemingly mild policy towards the Allies. Its leader went so far as to call Feisal a traitor to Syria " who preferred the interest of foreigners to that of his country. "<sup>1</sup>

In this respect, therefore, al-Hisb-al-Dimucrati (The Democratic Party) supported al-Fatat in its opposition to Feisal but went much further, calling Feisal's policy treasonable.

The indignation of the members of the Hisb-al-Dimucrati and of the High National Committee, reached its boiling point when Feisal decided in July 1930 to accept General Gouraud's ultimatum<sup>2</sup> and ordered the disbandment of the army and the dissolution of the Syrian Congress. Al-Hisb-Al-Dimucrati organized huge demonstrations against the decision of the Crown. Although a few were killed and many wounded in these demonstrations, yet the King did not change his decision.

The activities of the High National Committee and of Al-Hisb-al-Dimucrati were, on the eve of the Battle of Maysaloun, a

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(1) Ibid. / Personal letter

2- Al-Ayyam, Al-Wathaik-wal-Moua'hadat, (Damascus 1937), p. 145.



few days later, much more fruitful. The Syrian Government had to recruit an army to face the invading French troops. It was only then that Sheikh Kamil al-Kassab with the other members of his party and the Committee, joined Feisal and called upon the people to join the army. By July 24th a considerable number had been mobilized and dispatched to the frontiers. But although the people readily answered the fervent call of al-Kassab, the efforts of the untrained Syrian army to forestall the attack of the well-organized French forces, were in vain.

Maysaloun was a death-blow to any defence project of Syria, and, consequently, the Democratic Party which had been created for the purpose of defence, lost its raison d'être.

The Democratic Party had no internal organization beyond a few self-appointed men who called themselves leaders of the party. At their head was Sheikh Kamil al-Kassab who, as his title shows, was a religious leader. This explains, partly, the support that Sheikh Kamil received from the masses.

The party's central organization was in Damascus because most of its leaders were from Damascus. No official branches of the party were formed in any other city of Syria although the party had supporters all over the country. The High National Committee, had, however, branches in almost every big city in the interior of Syria, ~~although the party~~ and as Sheikh Kamil was also the founder of the Committee he thought that the branches of the Committee would act, though unofficially, as branches of the Democratic Party as well.

The main source of income of the Democratic Party was from the irregular contributions of its rich members. Like any other newly formed party, the Democratic Party needed as many adherents as possible, and, consequently, it placed no monetary obstacles in the way of membership. On the other hand, due to its limited scope of activity, the Democratic Party did not need much in way of funds.

AL-HISB AL-HADIDI : This is one of the minor political parties that were formed during Feisal's regime. It appeared around 1930. It was made up chiefly of emotional youth elements many of whom were highly educated. Its main purpose was to enlighten the people as to the consequences of French interference in the affairs of Syria, and to convince them of the necessity of opposing French intervention by force if necessary.

This party was not created to support or oppose any special political group in the country, it aimed simply to develop among the people a political consciousness that would enable them to view with clarity the main political issues of the day. Generally, however, it supported al-Fatat and worked in agreement with it.

The activities of the party were limited to holding general meetings at which one of the members of the party would deliver a speech expressing an unbiased opinion, as much as that was possible, on current issues.

Al-Hisb al-Hadidi was one of the few parties that survived after Maysaloun, but not for very long. The party was dissolved by

the French authorities in April 1922 and many of its members put in jail, immediately after the disturbances that followed the visit of Mr. Charles R. Crane to Damascus.<sup>1</sup>

The Arab Club : As soon as hostilities ceased, the Arab Club was founded, among its founders was Ali Rida al-Rikabi, the General Military Governor of the Eastern Zone, who acted as president of the club until June 1919 when he was replaced by Fawzi el-Azm.<sup>2</sup>

Although the club was founded with the expectation that it would have branches all over the Arab world, yet, its activities were limited to Syria; its central headquarters was established in Damascus. Branches of the club were also formed in Homs and Aleppo, the branch in Aleppo being more active than that of Homs.(3).

The general tendency of the club was violently anti-French, its theoretical goal was the formation of a " Great Arabia " stretching from the Hejaz to the Persian Gulf, including Syria and Mesopotamia.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the Arab Club insisted on the "independence of all lands inhabited by Arabs."<sup>5</sup>

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(1) Al-Azma, Adib, from a personal interview Dec. 8/1951.

(2) Darwazah, M.I., op. cit., Vol. I, p. 98.

(3) de Gontaut-Biron, Comte R., Comment la France s'est installée en Syrie. (Paris 1932), p. 195.

(4) Ibid. p. 195.  
(5) Kohn, H., History of Nationalism in the East. ( London, 1929), p. 286.

Like all political clubs, it proclaimed its political impartiality, in the sense that it was free from any party affiliation, and stood above the petty quarrels that often arose among the different Syrian parties. Thereby, the Arab Club was able to win the confidence of all parties and of the government as well. Thus the Syrian Congress held its first meetings in the halls of the club.<sup>1</sup>

Due to its superior organization the Arab Club played the leading role among all the other clubs that were formed in Syria during that period, and its activities received wide response in popular circles.<sup>3</sup> These activities consisted mainly of holding public meetings, addressing the people in mosques, distributing pamphlets and newspapers, all of which aimed at stirring a nationalist spirit among the populace hostile to any foreign interference in Syrian affairs.

The membership of the Arab Club was strictly limited to the higher intellegentsia of the country. Most of the members belonged to some political party, with the greatest number belonging to al-Fatat and al-Istiklal. Thus, although the Arab Club proclaimed itself to be politically impartial, yet it often found itself cooperating with these parties. So much so that some foreign observers confused the organization of the club with that of al-Fatat and al-Istiklal parties.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Darwazah, M.I., op. cit. (~~Saida, 1950~~), p. 98

2. Said, A., op. cit., Vol. II, p. 44.

3. De Gontaut-Biron, Comte R., op. cit., passim. In this book the author gives many characteristics that really belong to the al-Fatat and al-Istiklal parties. <sup>the Club</sup>

In this sense, therefore, the Arab Club was only an affiliated organization to the above-mentioned parties. If, however, some authors insist on its separate existence and relative political impartiality then it did not differ from the other political parties of the day except in name.

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From this survey of the political parties it is possible to reach the following generalizations :-

The programmes of the political parties that were formed during Feisal's regime were by no means adequate; in most cases they provided for solutions only to those issues that caused the greatest stir. These were mainly events that happened on the foreign field. None of these parties had clear programmes to remedy the social and economic problems of Syria. In fact even the political programmes that the parties had were inadequate - some of the main political issues that needed a pressing remedy were completely disregarded ; some of these issues were, the Electoral Law, the religion of the State, women suffrage, to mention a few. Not that these issues were not thought of, but that such issues would divide the ranks. Thus essentially the programmes of political parties included only those articles that would win almost universal support such as independence, unity and opposition to the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the political leaders thought that once full independence is achieved and stability established, fuller

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1. Said, A. op. cit., Vol. II, p. 54.

programmes would be drawn up.<sup>1</sup>

A more accurate explanation is perhaps the fact that these political parties had no fuller programmes because they were still new and never had any experience in working in an independent Arab state.<sup>2</sup>

It can therefore be safely asserted that the political parties until 1930 and even later, as shall be seen in the next chapter, did not have programmes but "slogans". In other words, it was enough to have a slogan to form a party, and these slogans were essentially similar, their differences lay in the emphasis that they placed on some issues rather than on others. For example, Hisb-al-Watani layed more emphasis on monarchy than the Hisb-al-Dimuorati whose emphasis was more on defence.

A further reason for not having full programmes was that parties did not feel the necessity of such programmes, but cared more to have important, well-known personalities join the party in the hope of making it more popular. This leads to the second general

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1. Although this seems logical, it is doubtful that the effect of full programmes upon the ranks should of necessity be divisive. In times of crisis the most opposing parties often forget their differences. Nor does it seem completely justifiable to postpone the drawing up of full programmes until independence is fully achieved, when those programmes might prove helpful in the achievement of independence.

2. Darwazah, M.I., Personal letter, dated, 24/13/51.

observation about the Syrian parties during that period, namely, Leadership.

In every kind of organization, leadership is essential. The masses who organize themselves into political parties, need organization to achieve the purposes for which they strive. "Organization implies the tendency to oligarchy."<sup>1</sup> In every organization a "directing" and a "directed" body, immediately, develops. Leadership becomes specially important in a politically immature country; in such a country efficiency depends almost solely on the wisdom and sincerity of leaders.

The qualities of a good leader are many and various. For the purposes of new parties, such as those which appeared in Syria, the leader had to be a good propagandist, an efficient organizer an effective orator, and above all, a man sure of himself, conscious of his mission, devoted to his career.

The Syria which came out of the First World War was a new country passing through a crisis which jeopardized its very existence as an independent sovereign state. What it needed therefore was a inspiring ruler, conforming with the above-mentioned characteristics, to keep it one cohesive whole. The country looked to Feisal to occupy that position and hoped to see all its hopes realized through his help

Despite his oratorical abilities and eloquences, Feisal did not possess an imposing personality; one, that would make dissention almost impossible<sup>2</sup>. He was not sure of himself, he doubted the belief

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1. Michel, R., Political Parties. (London, 1915), pp. 50-55.

2. Darwazah, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 137-138.

of the Syrian populace in him, and, consequently, took different attitudes toward certain issues in a very short period. We find him, for example, on the one hand promising the people that he will not allow any foreign power to take any concessions on Syrian soil, and at the same time making negotiations with Clemenceau to allow the French certain concessions rather than cause bloody encounters. Not that he was not sincere when he made his first promises, but simply that he was driven by emotions to make such promises that he did not realize as impractical until after he had made them.

It is undeniable that Feisal was a great success in his foreign policy and that the concessions he got from Lloyd George, Clemenceau and the League of Nations were primarily due to his personal versatility and tact, but to say that he was as great a success in his internal policy would be a clear deviation from the truth - a good diplomat is not necessarily a good leader. As we shall see later the country was not united behind Feisal, not even Syria proper. The party on which he counted most and in which he was a member, namely al-Fatat, slipped out of his control for some time. Nor were the masses on his side by the end of 1919; their violent riots stand as clear evidence for their dissatisfaction. The masses were then, for some time, more ready to follow Sheikh Kamil al-Kassab, leader of the Hieb-al-Dimucrati, than to follow Feisal.

But Sheikh Kamil did not possess all the requirements for leadership either; he too was a good orator but he lacked an intellectual superiority and an expert knowledge " on matters inaccessible, or almost inaccessible to the mass " <sup>1</sup>. The factors which

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1. Michel, op. cit., pp. 90 - 91.



contributed to Sheikh Kamil's popularity were primarily, his past record<sup>1</sup> which made his name familiar to the people ; for " in the popular view, to bear a name which is already familiar in certain respects constitutes the best title to leadership ".<sup>2</sup> Besides, Sheikh Kamil was a religious leader, a good propagandist and a able agitator - qualities that are by no means sufficient to make out of him a " national " leader.

Indeed there were too many leaders in Syria during the period ; but none of them could win all the country's support. As might already have been remarked, the parties that were formed during that period were numerous too. Each one of these parties, with one exception<sup>3</sup>, had more than one leader, each one of whom identified himself with the party to which he belonged. The leaders of the party felt that the political party which they helped to create, was their personal property, that the interest of the party was their interest as well, and vice versa. All criticism of the party was taken as a criticism against a particular person in the party. Consequently, there was a great devotion to the leaders to the party, but, at the same time, there was great abuse of its power.

Criticism among the parties was in most cases, directed against persons, for, as far as policies were concerned the political

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1. Sheikh Kamil had been to Hejaz during the First World War and was working with King Hussein for the liberation of the Arab World from Turkish rule.
  2. Michel, op. cit., pp. 79 - 81.
  3. The exception was the Hisb-al-Dimucrati whose only leader was Sheikh Kamil al-Kassab.

parties of that day were very similar. Had the parties been divided along lines of policy Syria would have had one major party and a number of affiliated organizations. But the love for power resulted in the formation of a great number of parties, thereby increasing the number of leaders.

All this leads up to say that personalities were much more important than policies in the formation of the early Syrian political parties.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of this tendency many of the leading men in Syria belonged to more than one party. Because of this anomalous situation no party had the exclusive loyalty of its members, likewise no party could exactly determine its membership.

The third major observation about Syrian political parties between 1918 and 1930 was that none had any clear political ideology. No political party had a philosophy into the framework of which all issues would fall and would be solved. This explains why there were no clear-cut demarkations among the parties.

The causes underlying this situation were chiefly :

The lack of clarity and precision in the political aims that the leaders hoped to achieve. The political leaders themselves did not know what policy they would support should the threat of foreign interference disappear. The events of the day, had monopolised their attention while plans for the future were shrouded in vagueness.

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1. Royal Institute of International Affairs, The Middle East, (London and New-York, 1950), pp. 391-393.

There was however one general tendency which revealed a significant aspect of party-life, namely, that there was a widespread conviction that the mass of people was ignorant and should be lead, and driven if necessary.<sup>1</sup> This explains the tendency towards narrow centralization among the Syrian political groups and parties.

Industrialism had not yet entered Syria. The state of development in the economic and social fields was still, up to a point primitive. Class-consciousness had not yet penetrated Syrian society, and industrialism had made very little headway.

The lack of a clear ideological distinction among the parties had its advantages and disadvantages. One advantage was the absence of sharp hostilities among the parties. All felt some kind of friendliness and had many points in common. This proved useful during the critical period through which Syria was passing.

Among the disadvantages was the impossibility of the development of any strong opposition because of the absence of a clear-cut ideological belief.

There was, however, one distinction among the Syrian political parties along which their classification was possible. The political parties could be classified into two main categories according to the age of their members. While some parties were made up mainly of the elder class of politicians, others comprised mainly

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1. Adil al-Azma, 8/12/51.

the younger intellegentsia. The main elements in the secret societies were young people, while public organizations were made up of comparatively old men. The reason for such a division is obvious : It was dangerous to enter a secret organization, and young men were more likely to court these dangers.

Despite this distinction, both kinds of parties worked in perfect harmony, proving their sincerity and readiness to disregard personal interest.

Those parties that were established by the younger intellegentsia, had, at least on paper, " fuller programmes and more elaborate organisations, and (were) interested in questions of social and economic organization as well as in purely political problems."<sup>1</sup>

According to this classification, the al-Fatat and al-'Ahd parties would belong to the younger generation of politicians ; while Hieb-al-Istiklal, al-Hisb al-Watani and al-Hisb-al-Dimucrati would belong to the older generation of politicians.

This latter group of parties apparently dominated the political field, but it fell under the influence of the other group of parties, specially al-Fatat. The older of men who held office could not temper the extremist policy that al-Fatat wanted them to follow - a policy that finally led up to Maysaloun.

Before ending this section two generalizations remain to be mentioned : In their internal organizations the political parties of Syria between 1918 and 1930 did not feel the necessity

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1. Royal Institute, op. cit., pp. 393 - 393.

of greater organization than what they had already. Because, as it has been said earlier, there was no strong opposition that would necessitate a centralized organization. They also felt that despite the weakness of their organization they enjoyed a wide national support.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Syria was still a new state and the tradition of a complex party-system had not yet evolved.

Finance regulations which each party set for itself on paper were rarely carried out. This made the French think that the Syrian nationalist parties were financed by the British, while the British thought that the French were supporting the opposers of British rule in the British mandated areas. Both the British and the French were wrong, for it should be stated very clearly that the finance of the Syrian national movement until 1935 was exclusively from Arab sources i.e. from the other Arab states or from the emigrants abroad.<sup>2</sup>

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From this general survey of the political parties that grew during Feisal's regime in Syria, the following verdict could be given. From a purely theoretical point of view, it can be asserted with precision that none of the political parties which appeared during that period satisfied the conditions of a modern political party. For to form a political party three requirements are essential :

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1. The reason why they enjoyed national support without being organized is due to the fact that the people payed allegiance to the persons rather than to the party.
  2. Al-Azma, N., Personal interview Beirut, Dec., 34, 1952. Nabih al-Azma refused to say wherefrom the Syrian national movement got help after 1935 and for what purpose that help was given.

1- Personnel : This denotes a number of persons owing final loyalty and allegiance to the party.<sup>1</sup> Such a personnel did not exist in any of the political parties that were formed during Feisal's regime in Syria. Their membership, as it has been mentioned earlier, was continuously shifting due to the similarities in their programmes and to the stress on personalities rather than policies.<sup>2</sup>

2- A programme : Every modern party has a set programme - at least on paper - that considers social, political and economic issues. The parties of Syria between 1918 and 1930 had, in most cases, programmes which dealt primarily, not to say exclusively, with the political issues; even these were inadequately analysed. On economic and social issues they had very vague policies if they had any at all.

3- Organization : Modern political parties have a complex hierarchical organization which provides for a number of specialized committees and affiliated groups, as well as for officials who are sometimes paid, to conduct the administration of the party.

None of the political parties in Syria had such a complex organization. It was consequently very difficult for a party to get in touch with every one of its members, and to expect them to answer the calls it makes on them<sup>3</sup>. Although membership reached

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1. The question of loyalty, whether it should be to the party or to the state is a controversial issue. Some say that if too much loyalty is given to the party, then this may interfere with the loyalty to the state. Other political thinkers believe that the party and the state are one - thus the two loyalties are really one. See Macy, J., Organization and Machinery of Modern Parties, (New-York, 1918), pp. 283-286.

2. See above p. 48 - 11.

3. This generalization does not apply to the secret organizations which were more organized.

a sizable number in some parties, the members that they got in touch with did not exceed three hundred on the average.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, despite the absence of the characteristics of modern parties, the political organizations which appeared in Syria between 1918 and 1920 cannot be said to have been political factions or interest groups. For by definition a political faction is " a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community."<sup>2</sup> Despite their bad organization, limited programmes, and shifting membership, these organizations worked for the national interest and disregarded, as much as that was possible, the special interest of individuals, or groups of individuals, unless that special interest coincided with the national one.

The political organizations during that period, were not clubs either. Because the purpose of political clubs, is to educate, impartially, the people on the current political issues, giving in every instance the pros and the cons of every problem. While the political parties that were discussed thus far, stood by a definite programme however limited that might have been.

Although to call the political organizations already discussed, political parties would in the modern sense of the term, be a mistake, to call them otherwise would constitute a

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1. Al-Azma, N., Interview Beirut, Dec. 8, 1953.

2. Hamilton, A., Jay, J., Madison, J., The Federalist, (Washington, D.C., 1837), p. 54.

greater error. Besides, these political organizations had the potentialities to become modern parties had they been given the time to develop under a smoothly working parliamentary regime.

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Thus far the theoretical side of the party-system in Syria between 1918 and 1920 has been considered. Their actual workings, their attitudes towards the political events that happened during the period under consideration, would now be treated.

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A survey of the main events that happened between October 1918 and July 1920 is necessary for understanding the actual workings of the political parties which were formed in that period, as many of the parties came into being as a reaction to internal or external developments. Therefore to a brief study of the history of Syria between 1918 and 1920, the first part of this section shall be devoted.

On September 30, the last Turkish official left Damascus, and immediately a provisional government was formed with Said al-Jazairi at its head. This government represented, in the eyes of the people, the resistance to the pan-tourianian movement that Jamal pasha tried to enforce on Syria. It proclaimed the independence of Syria and started an effective Hashimite propaganda. This government, however, did not last for more than a few days. No sooner Feisal had made his triumphant entry into Damascus on October 3, than he started to take the necessary steps towards the formation of a new government. The government that Said al-Jazairi had set up, was looked at with suspicion by the Anglo-



Arab General Headquarters due to the alledged pro-French leanings of al-Jazairi.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, on October 5th, an official proclamation announced the formation in Syria of " a constitutional, Arab, fully-independent government ", acting in the name of His Majesty Sultan Huseein ibn'Ali.<sup>2</sup> The administration of the country was placed in the hands of a General Military Governor who acted under the supervision of the Amir.

This regime continued in Syria until August 4, 1919 when a Council of Directors was created. Under this purely military Government whose only activity, as far as the internal field was concerned, was to establish law and order, political organizations were not expected to be active. This, however, was not the case, as shall be seen later.

The rule of the Council of Directors continued from August 4, 1919 until March 8, 1920 when the military administration was finally abolished and Syria proclaimed an independent constitutional monarchy with Amir Feisal assuming the title of King Feisal I of Syria, and with the Syrian Congress acting as the official representative body of the Syrian people. The Congress immediately started to draw up a constitution which was finally promulgated on July 3, 1920.<sup>3</sup> This constitution was based on the most democratic principles. It provided for two Chambers, the lower stronger than either the Upper Chamber or the King. The Lower Chamber was to be elected for

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1. David, Ph., Un Gouvernement Arabe à Damas, (Paris, 1923), p.10.

2. For a full text of the proclamation see Said, op. cit. Vol. II, pp. 3-5.

3. For the full text of the Constitution see : David, op. cit., pp.135-153.

four years by indirect suffrage and every male citizen above 21 enjoyed active suffrage in the first ballot. In the second ballot, electors must be at least 25, and able to read and write. The ministry was responsible to the Lower Chamber.

This constitution however was never applied. Three weeks after its promulgation the occupying French forces entered Damascus after the defeat of the Syrian Forces at Khan Maysaloun (July 24, 1930).

Thus throughout the period under consideration (Oct. 1918-July 1930) Syria did not know a smoothly running parliamentary life. One provisional government gave way to another, until, finally, when the semblance of an organized life was established, (March 1930) the very existence of Syria as an independent sovereign state was in the balance.

In the meantime the Syrian political parties were very active but only in so far as preserving the unity in the ranks of the Syrian people could we say that they achieved anything.

As soon as the Syrian Congress met in June 1919, two groups appeared inside it. The one called itself Hisb-al-Takaddum<sup>1</sup> and the other al-Hisb al-Dimucrati<sup>2</sup>. These two groups were purely parliamentary and included only the members of the Syrian Congress.

In Hisb al-Takaddum were included the members of al-Istiklal

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1. The Party of Progress.

2. The Democratic Party.

and al-Fatat parties. This group was the better organized and the one enjoying a majority within the Congress.

Al-Hisb al-Dimucrati was the opposition group which represented the dissatisfied with Feisal's regime and those who opposed the measures that Al-Fatat favoured concerning the recruitment of an army and the defence of Syria's independence by force of arms, if necessary.<sup>1</sup> This group included some of the notables of Damascus and the representatives of several Syrian districts.

When parliament met in the Abd Building in Damascus, these two groups did not sit together. To each was assigned a wing of the Building where problems were discussed separately before presenting the final decisions.

The activities of both groups had a marked effect on the constitution which the Syrian Congress drew up. During the debates concerning the constitution the Takaddum group showed a marked tendency towards modernization. Thus when the question of the political and civil rights of women was brought up Sheikh Said Mourad al-Ghazzi, an enlightened religious leader, supported the women's cause. Through his help the Takaddum group found no difficulty in winning a majority in favour of this question. The measure however, was not carried out, on the grounds that it might cause a great deal of disturbance in the reactionary and dissatisfied circles. Were it not for this reason Syria would have been the first Oriental and Islamic country to have

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1. It is interesting to note that Ryad al-Solh was a member of al-Hisb al-Dimucrati and one of its most active members, yet he was on such good terms with the Takaddum party that it was thought to be part of al-Fatat's policy to include elements from the Takaddum group in Al-Hisb-al-Dimucrati to weaken it. See Darwazah, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 115-116.

granted women suffrage.

When finally the constitution was drawn up, it reflected the wishes of the Takaddum group despite the opposition of al-Hisb-al-Dimucrati.

Once through with the draft of the constitution the Takaddum group embarked on a criticism campaign against Ali-Rida al-Rikabi's cabinet. It claimed that al-Rikabi was unable to support the strain of the political condition and found itself forced to withhold its confidence in his cabinet. Consequently, the leaders of the Takaddum group assembled in the house of al-Rikabi and criticized al-Rikabi so vehemently that he was forced to tender his resignation on March 3, 1930. On March 6 Hashim al-Atassi a man famous for his loyalty to the nationalist cause was asked to take over the charge of al-Rikabi. The cabinet of al-Atassi received its support from the Takaddum group. As soon as it was in office it took a series of steps which considerably raised its popular support--it proclaimed the independence of Syria (March 8, 1930), started an internal loan, and enforced compulsory military service.<sup>1</sup> Such were the relations and activities of al-Fatat and al-Istiklal parties inside and outside the Syrian Congress. Their relations with Feisal were also significant.

It has been mentioned earlier that Feisal was a member of al-Fatat and as such his support came mainly from this party. In two main instances Feisal and al-Fatat fell in direct opposition.

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1. Darwazah, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 122-123.

The first instance was when the King-Crane Commission passed in Syria. During its visit, the British tried to win over Arab public opinion to choose Great-Britain for assisting Syria. Due to this attempt there arose a disagreement between Feisal and al-Fatat. Feisal thought that it would be in the benefit of the nation to accept Great-Britain's offer and choose it rather than France. Al-Fatat however insisted on refusing such half-measures and demanded full independence.<sup>1</sup> To reconcile these two tendencies it was finally decided that the U.S.A. ~~might~~ be chosen. Actually the U.S.A. received the greatest number of votes.<sup>3</sup>

The second instance in which al-Fatat disagreed with Feisal was after the conclusion of the Feisal-Clemenceau agreement.<sup>2</sup> Al-Fatat and its affiliated organizations saw in this agreement the defeat of national hopes and aspirations. Faced with this opposition Feisal asked al-Fatat to present its opposition in writing. This was done. Feisal then called up each member of the central committee of Al-Fatat to give a written testimony on this issue. This too the members of the central committee did without hesitation. Feisal then called the central committee of al-Fatat to a meeting. At this meeting he and a few of the members of al-Fatat directed such criticism on the central committee that it was forced to resign. The new Committee which was more ready to cooperate with Feisal, rejected the agreement as well. In this way Feisal's manoeuvre to replace the central committee of al-Fatat by another with the hope of finding friendly understanding in a new one, failed.

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1. Darwazah, op.cit. vol. I pp. 100-101.

2. "King-Crane Report", Editor and Publisher, Vol. 55, N°27, New York, Dec. 2, 1932

3. For full Arabic text of this agreement see al-Ayyam op.cit. pp. 137-139.

The Influence of Religious Men : No study of the political parties in Syria would be satisfactory unless due credit is given to the significant role that religious men played in the manipulation of public opinion. It should be stated with clearness that many of the violent political outbursts that took place in Syria during Feisal's regime, and throughout the period of the mandate, would have not taken place, had they not received the tacit or explicit support of those men. Had the mandatory power taken greater care, and had it attached due significance to religious influence over the people, many of the bloody insurrections would have been averted. For the ulema of Syria had an almost decisive influence over the masses of the population.

Generally speaking, the political views of these religious leaders consisted in a demand for the independence of an integral Syria, Palestine included, under a decentralized, democratic government with Feisal at its head, as king. If the help of a foreign power should be imposed on Syria, this power should be rich, not bound by any treaty concerning Syria, and unsuspected of any colonizing ambitions.<sup>1</sup>

The mosque throughout the history of Islam served a political, as well as, a religious purpose. The congregational Mosque in every city provided a meeting place, and for many Moslems, a place that should be visited at least once a week. The solemn Friday prayer followed by the Friday sermon, which usually dealt with current issues, had a far-reaching effect on the pious Moslems who were readily influenced by the words of the eloquent Friday

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1. Gontaut-Biron, op. cit., p. 374.

speaker. This community feeling which the Friday prayer stimulated among Moslems, the feeling of being a homogeneous whole, cohesively united in a common cause, enjoying a common belief, made the population feel in itself a dynamism animated by a religious devotion and a national spirit that could override all obstacles.

On the other hand, no violence could be used to bar the people from going to the mosque, or to use violence within the walls of the mosque - such action would cause so immense an indignation in Moslem circles that no one has ever dared yet to try. All these factors gave the weekly Friday meetings not only a religious but also a political significance.

The nationalist political leaders found in these Friday public meetings, during the regime of Feisal and during that of the mandate, an ideal ground for infusing their ideas of liberation. Consequently, most of the violent manifestations took place on Fridays ; and it was indeed very difficult to subdue a people animated jointly by religion and nationalism.

The mandatory power, however, voluntarily disregarded the influence of religious leaders as well as that of nationalist. This explains the difficulties France had to confront in applying the mandate over Syria.

THE SYRIAN POLITICAL PARTIES IN EGYPT.

The problem which Syria was struggling with after the war did not engage only those who inhabited the country, but also involved the Syrians all over the world. The question of the independence and unity of Syria meant to all Syrians a great deal. The future of Syria involved national pride, as well as a home of which they could boast and in which they could live unmolested. Consequently, the question of Syrian independence found a number of powerful partisans among the emigrants who helped the movement within Syria to achieve whatever success it did achieve, not only during Feisal's regime, but also and specially, during the period of the mandate. Indeed no discussion of the political parties in Syria would be complete unless it mentions, however briefly, the political organizations that were formed outside Syria, and specially those in Egypt. From America too the Arab nationalist movement found sympathetic encouragement. The Syrian emigrants who numbered hundreds of thousands followed with great interest in their clubs, weeklies and newspapers, the events of the Orient after the victory of the Allies, in which they saw the dawn of their independence. (1)

As the cradle of Arab renaissance, Egypt became, in the post-war period, a stronghold of the Syrian national movement. The Syrian nationalists found themselves, in Egypt, unrestricted in their political activities, provided, of course, that they would not disturb the public order. Consequently, they formed two main organizations which included a large number of the enlightened

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1. Gontaut-Biron, op. cit., p. 188.



Syrians who lived in Egypt in the service of the government. These two organizations were Hisb-al-Ittihad as-Souri<sup>2</sup> and Hisb al-Mo'tadel as-Souri.<sup>3</sup>

Hisb al-Ittihad as-Souri : This party was founded by a few Syrians around the year 1917 after the new Russian authorities made public the Sykes-Picot Agreement.<sup>3</sup> This agreement showed that the Allies were decided to separate Syria and Iraq from the rest of the Arab world and to proclaim in them some kind of government which would make them spheres of influence to France and to Great Britain.

Shocked with the terms of this agreement and dissatisfied with King Hussein's methods in handling Arab affairs, those few Syrians decided to play the game their way. They elected, around the beginning of 1918, a committee of seven members to negotiate with the British. This committee was made up of the following members : [Rafic al-Azm, Abdul-Rahman Shabbandar, Fawzi al-Bakri, Sheikh Kamel al-Kassab, Khaled al-Hakim, Mukhtar el-Solh, Hassan Hmadeh.]

*Request* { The first thing the committee did was to send a letter to Lord Milner, British minister of war, asking him to clarify certain lines in the policy his Britannic Majesty's government hopes to follow in the Arab world after the war is over.

The questions that were include in this letter reveal the tendency of the committee-men who were later to become the leading

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1. The Syrian Unity Party.
  2. The Moderate Syrian Party.
  3. Nsouli, A., op. cit., p. 35.

members of Hisb-al-Ittihad-As-Souri. The letter showed that the committee which claimed to represent the Arab aspirations, was ready to cooperate with the Allies, provided the independence of Syria was guaranteed. Contrary to what might have been thought, the party wanted Syria to become part of an Arab Kingdom which would include the Arab Peninsula, Iraq, Syria, and a part of the Wilayet of Mosul. The party, however, insisted on a system of wide decentralization in the would-be Kingdom. The committee, in its letter to Lord Milner, also pointed out that the Syrians were the moving power of the Arab Revolt although it was proclaimed in Hedjaz.

In the official answer that the committee received on June 22, 1918, the British government guaranteed to help the Arabs to overcome the obstacles that might stand in the way of their independence.<sup>1</sup>

After exacting from the British Minister of War such a promise a large number of the Syrians found in Egypt, gathered to discuss the political problems that were facing the Arabs, and ended their meeting by proclaiming the formation of Hisb-al-Ittihad As-Souri. They drew up for the party the following programme:<sup>3</sup>

1. The boundaries of Syria stretch from the Taurus Mountains in the north : to the Arabian Desert and Madain in the south : and from the east the Khabur and the Euphrates rivers : and from the west the Red Sea, the Hafah-Akaba line, and the Mediterranean.

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1. For the text of the letter that the committee received from Lord Milner see : al-Ayyam, op. cit., p. 91.

2. Said, op.cit., pp. 38-41.

2. Syria shall be fully independent; the League of Nations shall guarantee its organic law, in such a way, that may not be detrimental to its independence.

3. Syria shall have, as a form of government, a decentralized democracy. " The government of the country, shall have recourse to the League of Nations for the choice of specialists who would occupy the posts of high-councillors, in case necessity for such help be felt.<sup>1</sup>

4. The essence of its laws shall be purely civil, except in questions of personal status, which shall continue to be regulated by the religious law.

5. Syria's organic law shall guarantee minority rights.

At the same meeting when the programme of the party was drawn up, Amir Michel Lutfallah was chosen president of the party with Sheikh Rashid Rida as its vice-president, Abdul-Rahman Shahbandar and Salim Sarkis as secretaries. Soon, however, Shahbandar was sent to Damascus to establish a branch of the party there.

The finances of the party came mainly from its rich members and supporters; among these last the most generous was Doctor George Lutfallah, president of the New Syria National League<sup>2</sup> who sent the party 2000 guineas with a letter of encouragement soon after the official formation of the party - Dec. 19, 1918.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Gontaut-Biron, op. cit., p. 184.

2. Gautent-Biron, op. cit., p. 188.

3. Said, op. cit., Vol. II, p.41.

The activities of the party between 1918 and 1920 were limited to sending petitions to the League of Nations protesting against foreign interference in Syria's sovereign existence. The party objected to the declaration of General Bolls in 1918 which divided Syria into a southern, eastern, and western regions ; and it proclaimed that this was an overt application of the secret treaty of Sykes-Picot.<sup>1</sup> The party also objected to the League for the French occupation of the coastal parts of the Syrian territory.

Hibb-al-Ittihad As-Souri was also the first party to demand from the League of Nations to send an inquiry commission to investigate the wishes of the Syrians before finally deciding their fate. And when the King-Crane Commission came to Syria for that purpose, the leader of the party, Michel Lutfallah went over to Syria and added his efforts to those of the other party-leaders in Syria trying to help the people make the right choice.<sup>3</sup>

The activity of the party increased after the defeat of Maysaloun (July, 1920) when all the political parties that had been formed in Syria disintegrated. Many of the leading party-men of Syria took refuge in Egypt specially after feeling unwanted even in Transjordan after 1924.

When the news of political intolerance that the French exercised over the Syrian nationalists, reached Egypt, and directly after the visit of Mr. Crane to Damascus in April, 1923, a Syrio-Palestinian

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(1) Ibid, p. 13.

(3) Ibid, p. 41.

Congress representing " all parties working for the independence of Syria ", was called to meet in Egypt. The Congress sent a letter of protest to the League of Nations against the violation of the French of the people's rights; and reaffirmed Syria's refusal of the mandatory regime. This meeting took place under the auspices of Hisb-al-Ittihad As-Souri.

On the 27th of Dec. 1930, four days after the conclusion of the Anglo-French Agreement which delimited the frontiers between Syria and Palestine, Hisb-al-Ittihad As-Souri joined in a special session and decided to send a telegram to all newspapers, protesting against the partition of Palestine and Syria.<sup>1</sup>

On Sept. 1, 1921, Hisb-al-Ittihad As-Souri carried out the plan it had been preparing since February of that year, namely the calling up of a congress at Geneva for the purpose of unifying all Arab efforts to regain Syria's independence.<sup>2</sup> The Congress included representatives from all the Syrio-Palestinian organisations most of which had already been dissolved. Rachid Rida, vice-president of Hisb-al-Ittihad As-Souri, presided over the meeting of the Congress.<sup>3</sup>

Hisb-al-Ittihad As-Souri acting on behalf of all Syrian parties sent a letter to the London Congress, called up to reconsider the treaty of Sevres (March-February, 1921), asking the Congress to allow an Arab to present the Arab point of view.

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1. For the text of the telegram see Said, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 263.

2. Darwazah, M.I., op. cit., Vol. 1, pp. 30-31.

3. For the report of the decisions of the Geneva Congress, and the committee that sprang from it see Said, A., Vol. III, pp. 263-272.

Hisb-al-Ittihad As-Souri became very active, but whether its activity was fruitful is a completely different issue. None of the meetings or protests had any real influence since the party, despite its claim of representing all Syrian political organizations, officially represented the opinions of a few and self-appointed leading men.

After realizing the uselessness of their endeavours, the leaders of Hisb-al-Ittihad As-Souri and the other Syrian political refugees in Egypt, cut down their activities to a minimum. Their activity was revived in half-conscious stirrings during the Druze Revolt of 1925-1926. During the Druze Revolt, Hisb-al-Ittihad As-Souri, as well as the other Syrian parties outside Syria, sent many of its top men to help in the organization of the revolt, while the rank and file of the party provided the front with arms, ammunition and clothes. At the same time a propaganda campaign was carried on in European and American circles for the support of Syria's struggle against French colonial policy.<sup>1</sup>

On the 30th of November 1936 M. de Jouvenelle reached Cairo and in the evening Michel Lutfallah leader of Hisb-al-Ittihad As-Souri held a tea-party in his honour. M. de Jouvenelle agreed with M. Lutfallah that the relations between Syria and France should be regulated by a treaty providing for independence and the creation of a national constitutional government and the proclamation of a general amnesty. On the following day he was handed the formal demands of the Executive Committee of the Syrio-Palestinian Congress,

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1. Darwazah, op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 34-35.

on the basis of which negotiations between Syria and France could be carried.<sup>1</sup> But de Jouvenelle never thought it worth his while to negotiate with an unrepresentative group, he, therefore, declared that the petition was harshly phrased and took this as a pretext to stop negotiations.<sup>3</sup>

By the beginning of the 30's the Syrian political movement in Egypt came to an end and political activity concentrated itself in Syria.

Al-Hisb as-Soury al-Mo'tadel : This was another party that was started in Egypt around the year 1919. It differed but slightly in its aims from the Hisb-Al-Ittihad As-Souri. The purpose for which the party was established is closely related to the coming of the King-Grane Commission to Syria. The party, as a matter of fact had no programme beyond the demands that it put forward to Mr. Grane, through four of its leading men, in July 1919.<sup>3</sup> These demands were the following :<sup>4</sup>

1. That Syria should remain an indivisible country, extending from the Taurus Mountains to the Sinai Desert and from the Mediterranean sea to the Arabian Desert.

2. That the Allied Congress will proclaim the complete

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1. Said, op.cit., Vol. III, pp. 371-393.

2. Darwazah, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 34-35.

3. These leading men were : Faris Nimr, Khalil Khayat, Antoun Mashshaka, and Nasim Saibi'a.

4. Said, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 44.

independence of Syria, and will choose a Power charged with the duty of helping Syria until the time when it becomes able to defend its independence and enjoy it fully. This Power shall be the United States of America, because this country is the strongest and richest country in the world, and also because it is not a colonial Power.<sup>1</sup>

3. That Syria be divided into states each of which enjoying local autonomy, but all of which responsible to one central government.

4. The form of government shall be a parliamentary democracy.

5. That Arabic shall be the only official language in the country.

6. That State and Religion be completely separated, except in those questions concerning personal status.

The party stressed the necessity of keeping Syria a unity; division had to be resisted by all means. On the other hand, the party proclaimed that American custody over Syria shall best guarantee the fulfilment of the aspirations of the Syrian people. This latter attitude made some writers consider the party an instrument of American propaganda in the Arab world. They even went so far as to say that the views of the party were spread in Damascus and Syria, through the help of the American Red-Cross.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Gontaut-Biron, op. cit., p. 353.

2. Gontaut-Biron, Comte de, Comment la France s'est installée en Syrie, (Paris, 1922), passim. chapt, XII.



Al-Hisb al-Motadel included within its ranks a select group of Syrians living in Egypt. Among its leading members were : Faris Nimr, Ya'coub Sarrouf, Michel Ayyoub, Sai'd Shkair, Antoun Mashhaka, Khalil Khayyat, Suleiman Nassif, Nasib Saibi'ah, Amin Murshak, Nicola Diab, Salim Haddad, Ilias Issawi and others.<sup>1</sup> The political organ of the party was al-Mokattam review which mirrored the aims and defended the view of the party.

The party had a peculiar internal organization ; it set up two branches in Egypt, one in Cairo and the other in Alexandria. Each one of these branches had a permanent head, but for each session the members would choose a president to preside over the meeting. Faris Nimr was the permanent head of the Cairo branch, and Khalil Khayyat of the Alexandria branch.

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The Syrian parties that were formed in Egypt did not differ from those that were formed within Syria except in two major respects : in the first place the political parties within Syria were more directly concerned with what was taking place around them, thus their efforts were divided among innumerable events including the significant as well the insignificant. These insignificant issues were often mixed up with the more significant ones in Syria and were even stressed unduly ; for the political parties in Syria had a public opinion to satisfy. This public that the Syrian parties had to deal with was more likely to react to minor issues than to serious factual analysis.

The Syrian parties in Egypt, free from the pressure of an

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1. Said, A., Athawrah al-Arabiyyah ... (Egypt, 1933), Vol. II, p.43.

emotional mass opinion were, consequently, more likely to give a sound judgement based on careful study. These parties also formed a cohesive body due to their select membership and their limited number. The political parties within Syria had a shifting membership since many belonged to more than one party at the same time.

This does not mean, however that the parties in Egypt were more effective than those of Syria - due to their limited membership and small support the Syrian parties in Egypt had little effect on the decisions concerning policy.

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The nationalist movement during Feisal's period continued through the help of several political organizations. These organizations spread not only in Syria but in the other Arab states as well. They proclaimed basically similar programmes which aimed chiefly at the preservation of unity among the Arab states and demanded their complete independence.

All these parties were, however, suffered equally from weak internal organization, and the whole future of the country was left to the discretion of a handful of personalities. These personalities acted more in their private capacity than in their capacity of party-representatives. Consequently, all conflicts took a personal character and, suspicious of each other, the leaders would disagree on the most frivolous and insignificant of issues. The efficiency of political organization was, thereby, seriously diminished.

As representative of public opinion, these parties would

have had larger significance had they been united into one big bloc with a common higher body to represent them on all matters of national importance, and on which, incidentally, they all agreed. The country was passing through a crisis and the necessity for coalition was only natural. Their insistence to remain distinct organizations, and to play the game, each in its own way, diminished from their influence particularly in foreign circles. The western Powers knew of these personal rivalries and agreements, and thus possessed an efficient tool which they did not refrain from using to their great advantage.

The allegiance of the average Syrian was, on the other hand, more to persons than to party. The period which the people had spent under the Turkish rule, made the development of a nationalist spirit a difficult and a time-absorbing task. "The Turks taught the Arabs that the interests of a sect were higher than those of patriotism; that the petty concerns of the province were more than nationality. They led them by subtle dissensions to distrust one another<sup>1</sup>." This heritage was, however, in the post-war period, greatly weakened. The era of Arab nationalism had dawned; enthusiasm reached its peak and seemed to triumph, for a time, over sectional differences. The criteria for dissension were rapidly losing their relevance to the actual situation. All groups came to realize that their differences were significant only in the age when government was merely a system of taxation imposed by force, and not in the heyday of nationalism. Thus we do not find in Syria a single political organization that was based on religious affiliation not a single party asserted that

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1. Lawrence, op. cit., (~~London, 1938~~), p. 44.

the members of a certain community or denomination were unwanted. Every hand was necessary to build the national edifice. The political leaders of the country had realized that religious dissensions had to be eliminated before any step toward the unity and independence be taken. Faisal profited from every occasion to assert the equality of all Syrians in rights and obligations. However, we should not go so far as to say that the minorities were completely integrated. One or two generations might have been needed before such a complete revolution of ideas could have been effected. But we can say with certainty that had the situation in Syria been left to develop naturally, religious and geographical particularism would have been completely eradicated from the scene of Syrian politics.

What the Syrian nationalists were in the process of achieving with a fair measure of success was dealt a deadly blow by the mandatory power. During the inter-war period the French revived all hatreds, encouraged religious fanaticism, and invigorated every relic of antagonism among the different religious and racial groups.

This leads to the discussion of the Mandate; and to this the next chapter shall be devoted.

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CHAPTER II.

THE POLITICAL PARTIES  
during the  
MANDATE.

" Je tiens à vous déclarer... que les Syriens  
" et les Libanais sont nettement mécontents.  
" Vous leur aviez promis l'indépendance, vous  
" leur avez apporté la servitude."

Raymond Poincaré<sup>1</sup>

Syria never wanted the mandate; it took every occasion to express its aversion to it ; it resisted its methods from the day it was established to the day it came to an end.<sup>2</sup> Every political group put it in unmistakable terms that Syria wanted, at most, the honour of assistance and not the curse of subjugation. The Arabs had already realized the duplicity of the Allies and their unwillingness to carry out those promises that they had very generously granted during the war. The Arabs, in the post-war period were not ready to go through the same experience another time. They knew that the Mandate system was nothing but a new device to deprive them of their independence and to satisfy " empire builders " .

The Syrian's hate for the mandatory regime was made more acute because of their hate for France - the country to which Syria

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1. Rabbath, E., Unité Syrienne et Devenir Arabe, (Paris, 1937), p.1

2. " King-Crane Report on the Near East ", Editor & Publisher, Vol. 55, N° 31, (New York, Dec. 3, 1933), passim.

was allocated according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement. France's actions in North Africa, its actions during the war, and after the war, had stamped vivid but poignant memories in the minds of the Syrians that they could not readily overlook. The Syrians knew that the French meant exploitation, subjugation and even annexation when they spoke of their "mission civilisatrice."

The mandate was, consequently, imposed on Syria<sup>1</sup>. The nationalists refused to recognize its necessity and they specially resented the way it was carried out.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Mandate over Syria started in violence, lived through violence, and ended in violence. Even in Greater Lebanon which the mandatory helped to create, there was wide discontent from the method of application of the mandate; specially, when Mr. Robert de Caix proclaimed a constitution which centralized all powers in the hands of the High Commissioner<sup>3</sup>

When the French entered Syria against the will of its people, they strengthened the wave of hate already rising from the days of Feisal's regime. The French, on the other hand, did not bother to try to mitigate that hate by following a benevolent and progressive policy towards the Syrians; rather, the little good they were able to achieve was done at the expense of so much evil that the people

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1. Khabbaz, H., FRança fi Souriya, (Egypt, 1938), pp. 23-36.

2. Kayali, A., Rad al-Kutla al-Wataniya, (Aleppo, 1933), p. 73.

3. "The Conseil Administratif of Lebanon, which had twice asked for a French mandate, passed a resolution in November, 1919, after General Gouraud's arrival, vigourously demanding redress from the arbitrary French military administration and pointing out that Lebanon had enjoyed more freedom under the Turks." Kohn, op.cit. p.293.

started to see evil in all change. A spirit of reaction spread among the people, a spirit of longing to the good old days of Ottoman administration<sup>1</sup>.

From this source of discontent the national movements in the new era drew their vigour. This general discontent grew in magnitude, year after year, until it finally reached the degree of the intolerable. It was then (1935) that a nation-wide revolt broke out. The causes ~~which~~ lead to this outburst will be discussed now.

Syria after the First World War needed complete reconstruction in all fields. What did France contribute to the satisfaction of these needs? Politically Syria needed a consolidation of its unity, an implementation of the mandate by a bilateral treaty, similar to that concluded between Iraq and Great-Britain, and admission to the League of Nations.<sup>3</sup> Syria also needed a smoothly running parliamentary life based on a healthy party-system.

Instead of winning the support of the people by trying to help them reach their political aims, the mandatory authorities took a series of steps diametrically opposed to the national aspirations. By following the old imperialistic maxim of "divide and rule", France provoked "the extreme dissatisfaction of the muslim majority."<sup>3</sup> The idea of a bilateral treaty was not even considered until 1936, and by the end of the thirties the impossibility of an understanding became obvious due <sup>to</sup> some reactionary elements in the French senate.

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1. Masa'd, B., Souriya wa Lubnan Kabla-al-Istiklal wa Badahu, (Egypt, 1929), Vol. I, pp. 66 - 69.

2. Rabbath, op.cit., preface by Amir Shekib Arslan, passim.

3. Fedden, Syria, (London, 1946), p. 367.

With the failure of the nationalist efforts to negotiate a treaty Syria's hope of joining the League faded.

On the purely internal field vigorous measures have been taken to hamper a national revival.

Freedom of meeting and of association were limited very sharply. These freedoms had been proclaimed by the Turkish constitution of 1876 and 1908, and have been applied uninterruptedly throughout the Ottoman Empire until they were suspended during the war. When the High Commissioner took over the administration in Syria he replaced them with new regulations inspired by the circumstances. By Ottoman law, meetings had to win the approval of the administrative officer of the district, while meetings in the streets had to be forbidden when armed or disturbing public order. These regulations remained for some time under the mandate, but most meetings were labelled "undesirable" and had to be stamped out by armed force.<sup>1</sup>

Freedom of association had also been recognized by Ottoman law under the only restriction that notification of the government should precede the formation of any association, and that associations should not be against the law or violate public order and public decorum. Under the mandate, moreover, no political party was permitted to function if it aimed at changing the existing form of Government (both the overthrow of government and changing its form) i.e. the mandate; and that its political programme should be strictly local i.e. their sphere of action should not transcend the boundaries

1. Rabbath, E. L'Evolution politique de la Syrie Sous Mandat, (Paris, 1938), pp. 310-313.



of its immediate community. This last measure was taken to forbid the growth of such parties that would promote the feeling of unity in the different parts of Syria. Limits were set to the immovable property an association could own. On the other hand, dissolution of an association was not by judicial decision, but by administrative order issued by the district officer. Apart from these reservations the freedom of association was secured.<sup>1</sup>

Another of the sacred liberties was seriously limited, namely, the freedom of the press, which is essential for the development of national consciousness, and specially essential for the political development of Syria. Under the Ottoman regime Syria enjoyed a wide free press. But contrary to what might be expected, the rules for the press under the Mandate differed in a remarkable way from the liberal spirit of the old law, though Ottoman. And while the laws regulating freedom of assembly were only suspended, those regulating the freedom of the press were completely changed. The new laws of the High Commissioner consisted a negation pure and simple of the liberty of the press ; measures were even taken that limited the freedom of private correspondence<sup>2</sup>. Such were the restrictions placed on the Syrian press that it lost its raison d'être. This situation, obviously detrimental to the Syrian people, was as detrimental to French public opinion which remain wrongly and inadequately informed about what was actually taking place in Syria<sup>3</sup>.

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1. Ibid. pp. 223 - 234.

2. Rabbath. E. L'Evolution Politique ...pp. 213-231. See also, de Saint Point, V. La vérité sur la Syrie (Paris, 1929), pp. 77-80.

3. De Saint Point, op. cit., p. 80

Briefly, the elementary rights of individuals and groups were denied - no freedom of speech, of assembly, of publication were granted, and imprisonment without trial was frequent.<sup>1</sup>

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Under these conditions Syria could not enjoy a smooth parliamentary system, and therefore it was not helped to acquire the experience necessary to meet " the strenuous conditions of the modern world."<sup>2</sup> Rather, on entering Syria, General Gouraud dissolved the Syrian Congress, the only representative body in the country. A constitution was not proclaimed until 1930 and even then it did not receive the acceptance of nationalist circles, because it placed the residue of power in the hands of the French-appointed High Commissioner. Speaking of these powers, a Frenchman and a witness says,

" Le Haut-Commissaire a donc un pouvoir illimité dans tous les Etats de Syrie : pouvoir de direction, de décision, de surveillance; autorité absolue sur tous les services publics : civile et militaires. Mais il relève du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères qui établit la liaison entre lui et tous les départements des ministères français avec lesquels il a à faire."<sup>3</sup>

Yet, despite this rigid centralization the French administration in Syria was slow and incompetent<sup>4</sup>.

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1. Hourani, A., Syria and Lebanon, (London, 1946), pp. 176-178.
  2. Charter of the League of Nations, Art. 22, paragraph 1.
  3. De Saint-Point, op. cit., p. 69.
  4. Rabbath, E., L'Evolution Politique ... , pp. 110-111.

Through the division of Syria into several independent and semi-independent districts, the French were capable to develop a provincial spirit in some areas and a separatist spirit in others. These were fanned by the religious dissensions that the French stirred up<sup>1</sup>. Although the diffusion of this spirit made the admiration more amenable to the French, it also increased the economic and administrative dislocation, and created further political unrest in the country.

In the economic field " the mandatory government did nothing to increase the prosperity of the country but rather showed bias in promoting French trade interests, and capturing its trade<sup>2</sup>." They circulated in Syria a fluctuating and depreciated paper money and created the unfavourable situation of a franc bloc surrounded by a sterling bloc. They imposed boundaries and custom duties, made transit through Syria to the other neighbouring states almost impossible<sup>3</sup>, and several other similar greivances<sup>4</sup>. " The French made no serious effort to promote native trade and manufactures ; on the

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1. In Jebel Druze and the State of the Alawites there grew a provincial spirit that differed in magnitude at different periods during the mandate, while in Lebanon there grew a separatist spirit which was destined to continue even after the mandate.

2. Kohn, H. op. cit., p. 294.

3. Fedden, op. cit., p. 263.

4. Hourani, op. cit., pp. 176 - 178.

contrary, the tendencies which dominate all French colonial policy became more and more marked : to assimilate the native peoples to French civilization and to make French the sole official language<sup>1.</sup>"

The French did not consider the interest of the indigenous population. France's interest was always the primary consideration in the economic policy which it tried to apply in Syria.<sup>2</sup>

In the administrative field a growing country like Syria needed primarily efficient administrators. The French, however, filled government offices with Frenchmen few of whom were reputed for moral integrity and administrative competence. French officials directed all the leading governmental posts in the country ; and the octopus of corruption reached every branch of the country's administration<sup>3</sup>. Most of the French officials were, furthermore, army-men who knew very little about civil administration. Thus a military state with an effective secret police, the Secretariat, was set up in Syria throughout the period of the Mandate. Due to all these factors the administration of the French in Syria was " corrupt, avaricious and arbitrary."<sup>4</sup>

" One of the differences between French and British methods of colonization is that, whilst Great Britain as a rule sends her

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1. Kohn, op. cit., p. 294.

2. Facing the Chamber of Commerce in Nov. 9, 1930, General Gouraud speaking of the Mandate over Syria said " L'affaire payera ". See Doriot, La Syrie aux Syriens, (Paris 1936), p. 9.

3. Masad, op. cit., pp. 113 - 114.

4. Hourani, op. cit., p. 176.

ablest and most competent men to the colonies, gifted Frenchmen prefer to stay at home."<sup>1</sup> This explains the poor quality of French colonial officers.

This is a brief account of the situation in Syria during the mandate period. Although the picture might not have been equally gloomy all through that period, yet, one could safely assert that it was never good enough to help the people rapidly progress.

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Syrian political parties received their impetus and moving force from this general discontent. It enabled the leadership to bind the Syrians together into political organizations, which played an important role in the country's national revival<sup>2</sup>. The people were ready to support any political party which aimed at changing the situation created by the mandatory power. Their only difference was on how radically this change should be. Consequently all the political parties that grew under the mandate became fighting squadrons against French rule.

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To speak of an organized party - system in Syria during the mandate would be giving the term a much wider connotation than it really means. Throughout this period, there existed political " groups ", sometimes organized well enough to deserve the name " political party ", and sometimes so loose that they were almost

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1. Kohn, op. cit., p. 394.

2. Shahbandar, A., Al-Thawrah al-Souriyah, (Damascus, 1933) p.13.

unnoticeable. Due to their vague programmes and loose membership, it became very difficult to classify them into definite categories. This should not mean that there was no political activity throughout the period under consideration ; political meetings were held regularly and at very short intervals throughout the country.

" C'est à l'ombre des mosquées, dans les universités, dans les cafés et les caravanse-rails, que complotent les musulmans xénophobes, hostiles au mandat français ".<sup>1</sup>

These meetings aimed chiefly at creating a situation of unrest that would force the French to modify their policy towards the indigenous population<sup>2</sup>.

For the purposes of this chapter, the political parties which grew during the period of the Mandate shall be divided into two main divisions : The negativists and the positivists<sup>3</sup>. The classical classification has been to divide the political tendencies into Extremist and Moderate. This classification is, however, biased, for it conveys the idea that the moderates were the seekers of moderation. The truth of the matter, however, is that those whom we shall call positivists, ~~it~~ were ready to accept the mandate as a fait accompli and try to work out a policy of cooperation<sup>4</sup> with the mandatory power. They included those who thought that Syria's interest could not be secured except after the consent of France

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1. Gen. Andrea, La Révolte Druze. (Paris, 1937), p. 77.

2. In 1933, General Sarrail reports, 35 revolts broke out in Syria, the subjugation of which cost France 5000 soldiers. In 1934 Weygand standing before the memorial monument for the French Army of the Levant, said that France cost in Syria 9000 soldiers and 250 officers. Said, op.cit. vol. III, p. 260.
3. A possible way to classify these groups is to divide them into collaborators and non-collaborators.
4. This cooperation often degenerated into servile acquiescence to all French demands.

and through its help. They also believed that French interests in Syria should be safeguarded and that French assistance was necessary for Syria's evolution and progress<sup>1</sup>

\* The extremists, whom we shall call the negativists, saw in the mandate an evil to be resisted at all cost.

The positivists, however, did not have a well organized political party to defend their point of view. Indeed it was a grave mistake that the French committed when they did not help them to form political parties. But it seems that the French authorities were suspicious even of those who were ready to cooperate with them, and consequently, they preferred to keep them a loose aggregate of individuals rather than a compact group with a definite programme and a strict organization. They thought that it was easier to influence individuals than to influence a party. All they did consisted of helping these individuals to gather a following. Thus grew, for the first time, during the elections of 1931 - 1932, several political organizations which went by the names of Mo'tadelin, Islahiyyin, Mithakiyyin & Ahrar.<sup>2</sup>

\* The activities of the negativists were also thoroughly curtailed but these were, however, able to form political groups and parties that rendered them more effective because they were able to win wide popular support.

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1. Mas'ad, op. cit., pp. 66 - 69.

2. Kayali, op. cit., p. 121.

Generally speaking, the support the positivists received, was from the common people of/countryside, while the support of the negativists came mainly from the towns and included the intellegentsia of the population.<sup>1</sup> It might even have been possible to win over the countryside to the nationalist cause, were it not for the obstacles that the mandatory put in the way of development and diffusion of nationalist ideas that aimed at non-cooperation. On the other hand, the organisations of the negativists was not healthy enough<sup>to</sup>/make their voices heard and their influence felt in the distant communities of the countryside.

The impression might be gained that the negativists and positivists were sharply divided ; this, however, was not the case. Although they were sometimes violently opposed and easily distinguishable, the line of distinction was, at other times, almost inexistent. To illustrate, none of the negativists was ready to take up a public office without the consent of his associates, while the positivists were ready to take up such offices, considering it essential to the welfare of the country. On the other hand, the negativists received support from all sections of the population in demanding a treaty with France. A clear-cut opposition was not present because the positivists, more than the negativists, were not organized, they had no definit programmes and were therefore ready to cooperate with the negativists within certain limits.

" They differed not on fundamental questions but on questions of means ; they were akin to one another in sympathies, and individuals from the two (groups) often worked together."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Hourani, op. cit., p. 179.



Besides, the positivists could not declare their opposition to the negativists lest they should be labelled as unpatriotic. Thus during the Druze revolt the positivists took a passive attitude.<sup>1</sup>

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Until 1925 the negativists did not possess a single organization with<sup>in</sup> Syria. Beside the obstacles that the High Commissioner placed in the way of the formation of political parties, the Syrian nationalists within Syria waited for the nationalist leaders who had fled after Maysaloun to Egypt and Transjordan to return to Syria and re-establish the parties which existed during Feisal's regime.<sup>2</sup> Consequently the nationalists who remained in Syria, were continuously in contact with the leaders of the al-Istiklal and al-Fatat parties, the only two parties that survived Maysaloun, both of which had moved to Transjordan.<sup>3</sup>

It was not until five years after Maysaloun that the nationalist movement in Syria started to take definit form and by the 30's the party-system in Syria started to show signs of maturity.

According to the better opinion, no political party appeared in Syria between the years 1930 and 1935.<sup>4</sup> Political

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1. General Andrea, op. cit., pp. 77-78

2. Darwazah, op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 39-31 & 39

3. The revolutionary movements which appeared during the first years of the Mandate, specially in the North of Syria, guided by Sheikh Saleh al-Ali, Ibrahim Hananu & Subhi Barakat, were organized in cooperation with the central committee of Al-Fatat in Transjordan See Darwazah, op. cit., Vol. II p. 38.

4. Al-Beshir, Beyrouth, March 10, 1931, N° 2689.

meetings used to take place secretly in the houses of eminent political leaders in Damascus.<sup>1</sup> Thus Damascus became the center of nationalist political activities within Syria, for Damascus was more politically conscious than any other city in Syria, first, because it was the capital of the realm; second because of its geographic, situation bring nearer to Hejaz ; and finally because its population was predominantly Arab, unlike Aleppo, for example, which is mixed with others of non-Arab stock.

The secret meetings used to include people often representing very divergent views, the majority however, were from the negativist group who did not want to cooperate with the French authorities.<sup>23</sup>

By 1925 the Syrian negativists felt that the time had come for the formation of a political party officially regognized by the mandatory power. In one of his speeches General Sarrail announced his desire to see in the country parties representing public opinion. This point shall be discussed later. To the nationalists the formation of an officially recognized party would satisfy the following necessities :-

First, all the Syrians felt that the situation in Syria was moving

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1. The people who were later to make up the Sha'ab Party used to meet at the house of Said Haidar who was later to become one of the leading men of the party. From an interview with Said Haydar on April 22, 1953 Beirut.
2. " Among the people who often attended these meetings was Sheikh Tajeddine al-Husseini who claimed to be a negativist but who later turned out to be among the first men ready to cooperate with the French. " Interveiw with al-Azma, A., Beirut 24/1/51.

from bad to worse, and that the formation of an organized popular body would press for reform. " We often hear " said a leading nationalist, " of the government taking measures on its own, without asking the opinion of those concerned, under the pretext that there are no organized political parties in the country. This pretext is often heard in parliamentary and press circles."<sup>1</sup>

Second, the moderate negativists felt the necessity of establishing such a party which would help the country achieve its aims through legal means which the party would promise to observe.<sup>2</sup>

Third, the extreme negativists supported the formation of the party because it would divert the attention of the French authorities from the activities of the nationalists who were preparing an armed uprising. By means of party pressure also, some of the more corrupt elements in the administration might be eliminated.<sup>3</sup> In order that the party might be able to win the confidence of the mandatory power, a number of the suspected nationalists were kept out. This attitude which some political leaders adopted, created a big stir in popular circles ; the people started to question why a particular leader joined the party while another did not, consequently a number of people suspected the party of being a French creation.<sup>4</sup>

These factors, among others, resulted in the formation of the ( People's Party ) Hisp-al-Sha'b in 1925.

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1. From a speech by Dr. Ihsan al-Sharif on the opening session of the people's Party. June 5, 1925.
  2. Art. 3 of the party's constitution.
  3. Interview with al-Azma, N., Beirut, 34/1/53.
  4. Ibid.

Why & how the party was formed

On entering Syria (Jan. 1935) General Sarrail promised the people to follow a liberal policy and when the Syrian delegations went to present to the new High Commissioner the wishes of the people, he urged the members of the delegations to unify their ranks and organize their action, and he promised them to grant the liberties of association and of the press saying, ' Organize your ranks as we the French Radicals organized ours, for when we organized our ranks, we were able to beat our opponents ; and you can do likewise in your country and form a cartel'<sup>1</sup>.

Hearing this the negativists immediately sent a note to the authorities concerned asking for a permission to set up a party. This note was sent in the names of the moderate negativists, but the French refused to comply with the wishes of the negativists saying that among the men in whose name the note was sent, were some ex-convicts. In answer to this the negativists brought to the attention of the authorities that the general amnesty, proclaimed by the international treaty of Lausanne, would erase any previous crime. It was then that the authorities gave its permission to set up the party that came to be known later as Hishb-al-Sha'b.<sup>2</sup>

The date of the formation of the Shahb party is not agreed upon by the historians who wrote on this period. Some assert that the party was formed in 1933 after the release of Dr. Abdul-Rahman Shahbandar from prison.<sup>3</sup> Others say that the party did not appear until February 9, 1935<sup>4</sup>. Dr. Shahbandar

1. From a speech by Ihsan Sharif on the opening session of the People's Party, June 5, 1935.
2. Interview with Said' Haidar, Beirut, 22/3/53 .
3. Neouli, A., op. cit., p. 60 .
4. Haddad, G., Fifty years of Modern Syria & Lebanon, (Beirut, 1950), p.74.

who became the leader of the party, said that the party did not come officially into existence except in May 1935.<sup>1</sup> The party's first general meeting, did not take place, however, until June 5, 1935 in Damascus<sup>2</sup>. Although the party might have existed as a secret organization long before 1935, it did not become an official political party until February 1935<sup>3</sup>, and it did not start to function until June, 1935 - the date of its opening session.

Leadership in the party was placed in the hands of Dr. Abdul-Rahman Shahbandar, a man who had made himself prominent as an outspoken opponent of the Mandate. The central committee of the party was made of such negativists as Hassan al-Hakim, Lutfi Al-Haffar, Fauzi al-Ghazzi, Said Haidar, Ihsan al-Sharif, Tawfik Shamiah, Faris al-Khoury, Abdul-Majid Al-Tabbakh, Abou-al-Khair Mouwakki<sup>4</sup>. These leading men were chosen in such a way that every one of them represented a particular group in the country. Individually these men enjoyed popular support, by joining the party they put all the support they enjoyed in the service of the party. The support of the party was therefore very wide. However, many supporters did not want their names to appear, for they preferred to stay out of the limelight. It is estimated that the Sha'b party was supported by at least 5000 men of whom 1000 men only had their names registered

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1. Shahbandar, op. cit., p. 136.

2. From a publication by the Sha'b Party on the opening session of the People's Party. June, 1935.

3. The Constitution of the Party, Art. 4, paragraph 1.

4. Said, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 292.

in the party's books.<sup>1</sup> Many of the government officials joined the party as well, particularly to the officials of the municipality of Damascus.<sup>2</sup>

The official aims of the party and the means the party would follow to achieve them were put down in articles one and two of its constitution.

Article one stated : " The People's Party which has been founded in Damascus shall work for the achievement of the following principles:-

- (a) The achievement of national sovereignty.
- (b) The unity of Syria in its natural boundaries.
- (c) The guarantee of personal freedom in all its forms.
- (d) Training the country for a social, democratic and civil policy.
- (e) The protection of national industries and the fuller exploitation of the nation's economic resources.
- (f) The unification of the educational system and making elementary education obligatory and universal.

Article two of the constitution stated that the party shall carry out those principles through legal channels.

In explanation of the party's aims Faris al-Khoury gave a speech, on the opening session of the party one June 5th, 1935, which is essential for a clear understanding of the party.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Interview with Said Haidar in Beirut, 22/3/52.
  2. General Andrea, op. cit., p. 78.
  3. The speech of Faris al-Koury appeared in a party publication immediately after the opening session of the party, in June 1935.

Faris al-Khoury pointed out that the general line of policy that the party will follow would be to create a non-existing situation. In other words, the party wanted to replace the existing situation by a new one which would assure more fully the national welfare.

He then insisted on the party's determination to support popular government on the most democratic basis and to oppose any tendency towards dictatorship or the rule of the few. Because national sovereignty is best assured when it is supported by a constitutional government. As a matter of fact Faris al-Khoury ascribed the absence of national sovereignty in Syria, during that period, to the dictatorial tendency in its administration; and went on to say that Syria's independence and right to national sovereignty were indisputable. The Syrians, he added, will achieve these aims in the shortest possible time and by legal means.

Coming to the second main purpose of the Shaab Party, he pointed out that natural Syria was inhabited by one people having the same race, language and traditions. The unity of Syria was therefore essential for its continuation.

Then Faris al-Khoury came to the question of personal rights and insisted that without them no democratic government could function properly, he also alluded to the fact that these rights had been the product of the French Revolution and should therefore be precious-ly preserved by the mandatory power.

In trying to explain the fourth paragraph of Art. 3 of the party's constitution, Faris al-Khoury tried to show that the party was for all classes and all religions and that it would oppose any attempt to create such distinctions.

The economic policy of the party, Faris al-Khoury said, aimed at fuller exploitation of Syria's resources and the development of new industries. He pointed out the necessity to protect growing industries through imposing high tariff barriers on imported goods; he then demanded that the national government be given full power in the regulation of custom duties.

Faris al-Khoury drew the attention of the audience to the absolute necessity of unifying the educational system in Syria, and ascribed the situation then present in Syria due to the lack of a unified system of education and the inadequacy of schools, saying that illiteracy in Syria reached a figure very near to 90 %. He then urged the government to make primary education compulsory and free.

Faris al-Khoury then went on to say that the party would not be driven by emotions and that it would try to solve the problems with clear reasoning and scientific study, that the party's only weapon was the law as long as it continued to respect personal freedom. He also made it clear that the People's Party was not built on the " persons " who joined it, but on the " principles " that it aimed to achieve. Then he said that the party was ready to cooperate with anybody who promised to help the party achieve its aims. For the party hoped to achieve those aims in the shortest possible time and would oppose any attempt to hinder or prolong the time for their achievement of these aims.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ibid.



Finally, Faris al-Khoury said that the party wanted to prove, to the civilized world, the ability of the Syrians to govern themselves.<sup>1</sup>

In a speech by Abdul-Rahman Shahbandar, the leader of the party, two more aims were added to those mentioned in the constitution of the party and which received such a wide support that they might rightly be considered as essential as those included in the constitution.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Shahbandar said that the People's Party was to Syria what the GUP had been to modern Turkey and just as this party was able shatter the despotic rule of Abdul-Hamid and establish liberty, so would the People's Party try to be an instrument of liberation.

Dr. Shahbandar also pointed out that the Arab lands, not only natural Syria, form one country and should remain as such due to geographic, social and ethnic factors.

Coming to economics Dr. Shahbandar said, " ... and if I believe that Communism does not suit the Eastern instinct, I do believe, however, that a reasonable degree of socialism is not incompatible with eastern ideals ", and that the countries now cowering under imperialist rule will rise up against the tyranny of gold.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Ibid.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

As to the aims set down in article one of the party's constitution, one could easily judge that they were indispensable to every modern nation, and the very fact that a party should include them in its programme is a proof of the oppressive atmosphere that reigned in Syria during the Mandate period. These aims, the party promised to achieve by legal means. However, in actual practice, the party was determined to use force, if necessary. While the party was proclaiming its peaceful policy on its opening session, Said Haidar, one of its leading men, was conferring with the Druze leaders and assuring them of the party's support in case of an uprising<sup>1</sup>; The great role the party played in the organization of the Druze Revolt will be seen in a moment.

The internal organization of the party is regulated by article four of the constitution. The article is divided into twenty-six paragraphs dealing with the duties of the central administration committee, the duty of the members, the duties of the branches and the methods of their formation, the finance of the party, the duties of the treasurer, the duties of the general secretary, and finally, the general congress. For the sake of clarity, a translation of the party's by-laws will follow :-

Art. IV - The by-laws of the People's Party.

1- The People's Party was founded in Damascus on Monday, February 9, 1935.

2- The People's Party is made up of an active body, an administrative committee and honorary members.

3- The active body is made up of all active members.

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1. Interview with Said Haidar in Beirut, on March 23rd, 1952.

4- The administrative committee is chosen from the active body by secret ballot, and will be made up of a secretary, a treasurer and five active members.

5- The administrative committee accepts the members into the party after looking into their written application which should include the acceptance by the applicant of the party's basic principles. It is up to the administrative committee alone to decide whether the applicant should be considered an active member or an honorary member.

6- Is considered an honorary member every person who contributes to the party morally or materially.

7- The duties of the administrative committee :

(a) To carry out the decisions it takes, necessary for the achievement of the party's aims.

(b) To carry out the decisions taken by the " active body " in its general meeting.

(c) To correspond with all the branches of the party within the Syrian lands.

(d) To invite the " active body " to hold a meeting every six months ; or more often if necessity demands.

8- The duties of the " active body ".

(a) To meet every six months by invitation of the administrative committee, or oftener if the necessity arises, to discuss the deeds of the administrative committee and check on its accounts.

The formation of branches and their duties :

9- The committees of the branches are made up of a secretary,

a treasurer and a number of members varying in accordance with the importance of the branch.

10- The duty of the branch is to carry out the general decisions, taken by the central administrative committee of the party, aiming at the achievement of the party's essential aims.

11- The regulation of correspondence with the center through the general secretary.

Finance of the party :

12- The sources of income of the party are : the entrance dues, the monthly dues, the contributions, the revenue of the social gatherings which the party holds.

13- When a member is accepted to join the party, he pays half a gold pound or its equivalent in paper-money.

14- Every member of the party pays a monthly due of one majidi or its equivalent in Syrian paper-money.

15- The party accepts the contributions offered to it.

16- All dues and contributions gathered by a special officer of the party appointed by the treasurer and answerable to the administrative committee.

17- Receipts, signed by the treasurer, the secretary and a member of the administrative committee chosen by the committee itself, are given for all contributions or dues.

18- No amount of money is to be spent except by decision of

the administrative committee.

The duties of the treasurer :

19- To organize the books on the principles of book-keeping.

20- To keep the money of the party and suggest ways for their use.

The duties of the Secretary :

21- To register the decisions of the administrative committee.

22- To call the administrative committee to meet whenever the necessity for a meeting arises.

23- To correspond with the branches of the party and keep records of each.

24- To register the names of the active and honorary members.

25- To keep the seal of the party.

The general congress :-

26- The party holds, whenever it sees necessary, a general congress which includes the members chosen by the administrative committees of the branches, to discuss matters pertaining to the whole party.

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The by-laws ~~of the party~~ were observed with salutary strictness - all dues were paid on time and to the full<sup>1</sup>; and each party-official tried to keep up to his duties as best he could. For the members of the People's Party were very zealous workers and sincere in their

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Interview with Said Haidar, Beirut, April, 20, 1952.

nationalist spirit. For the short time that the party was destined to live, the zeal and sincerity of the party leaders and members showed itself in their adherence to every law of the party's constitution. It would be interesting to speculate on whether the party would have kept up this reputation of good organization had it been allowed a longer span of life.

All party officials were unpaid volunteers. It could even be said that had the party offered its officials wages, they would have refused to take them. During the circumstances, the nationalist spirit was so high that an individual might have been accused of treason to the nationalist cause had he taken any of the party's funds as a wage. On the other hand, the party-officials provided for in the constitution were all rich-enough not to need the money of the party; on the contrary, they often contributed to the party's funds.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the party's treasury was not rich enough to afford paying its officials.

It has been mentioned that while the party was still a secret organization financial support came to it from American sources. This, however, is denied by all the party-members whom the author, has had the opportunity to meet.<sup>2</sup>

The significance of the People's Party is intimately related to the Druze Revolt of August 24, 1935 ; in this respect, the activity of the People's Party, despite its short life, had a significant

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1. Ibid.

2. Soulof Mas'ad says that when Mr. Crane reached Syria in April 1932, his arrival resulted in a violent show of discontent from French rule. As a result Mr. Crane was forced to leave Syria and the leaders of the nationalist movement were arrested. With Dr. Shahbandar cheques bearing the signature of Mr. Crane were found. Dr. Shahbandar claimed that they were given to him by Mr. Crane as a contribution for the foundation of a national school. See Mas'ad, op. cit., p. 108.

effect on the history of Syria under the Mandate. For, in fact, the immediate purpose for which the People's Party was set up was, contrary to what it proclaimed in its constitution, to draw up a plan for a nation-wide insurrection and establish an independent Syrian State by violence.<sup>1</sup> Thus when the Druze Revolt broke out many of the leading men of the party actually participated in the fighting ; among these may be mentioned Said Haidar and Hassan al-Hakim.<sup>2</sup>

On the eve of the revolt Dr. Shahbandar got in touch with the architects of the Druze Revolt, and, realizing the benefit the party would reap should the revolt succeed, concluded an alliance with Sultan pasha al-Atrash.<sup>3</sup>

When the revolt broke out the party did not take an active part in it, rather it waited to see its repercussion in French circles. In the meantime, however, the party tried to get in touch with the emigrant Syrians asking them to help the revolt financially.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Shahbandar, op. cit., p. 33.

2. Ibid, p. 33.

3. Gen. Andrea, op. cit., p. 78.

4. The first sum of money that came as a help for the revolt was from Amin Arslan from Argentina ; the sum he sent was 12 guineas four of which were sent to Rashid Tali' in Amman to buy cartridges. Later during the revolt 2000 guineas were gathered yearly from different sources.

The arms used during the revolt were mostly Turkish that had been left in the country after the withdrawal of the Turkish Army. These arms were smuggled to the insurgents chiefly from Ma'an, Gaza and Aleppo. Interview with Nabih al-Azma in Beirut, December 8, 1951.

The People's Party did not feel the necessity to intervene until August 1925, after the defeat of Michan's campaign by the Druze. The French then sued for an understanding with the Druze. The intervention of the leaders of the People's Party convinced the Druze Sheikhs that they should not accept the peace that the French proposed. No sooner had the party leaders heard of the arrival of Captain Renau, as representative of General Sarrail, the High Commissioner, than they chose three of the party's leading men, Asa'd al-Bakri, Tawfik al-Halabi, and Zaki al-Drubi, to contact the Druze leaders in the Jebel (August 17) and inform them that Damascus would participate in the revolt should the Druze refuse the peace-settlement. At this same meeting a plan was drawn up for the resumption of action on the 24th of August.

Informed of the steps taken by the People's Party, the French High Commissioner, General Sarrail, issued an order dissolving all political associations in Syria, restricting the liberty of the press, and demanding the arrest of the People's Party's administrative committee<sup>1</sup>. The order of the High Commissioner was immediately carried out. Many of the leading members of the People's Party were arrested and exiled either to the small island of Arwad off the Syrian coast, or to the Hsetche<sup>3</sup>. The leaders of the party were, however, were able to escape French persecution and to help in the organization of the revolt.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Kayali, op. cit., p. 61.

2. Said, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 308-310.

3. The leaders who were able to escape were : Abdul-Rahman Shahbandar, Hassan al-Bakir, Saïd Raïdar, Jamil Mardam, Fauzi Nassib and Asa'd al-Bakri.



From the date of dissolution of the People's Party and of all other political organizations the Druze Revolt took a national character. A Revolutionary Syrian Government was proclaimed. Sultan al-Atrash was proclaimed head of the revolutionary government and General Commander of the Syrian Nationalist Forces.<sup>1</sup>

What would have happened to the People's Party had the Druze Revolt succeeded to place limitations on France's authority in some parts of Syria, is an interesting subject for historical speculation. With the way the revolt ended up, the discussion of the People's Party has to be cut down to a few concluding remarks.

With the failure of the Druze Revolt, the People's Party fell back into its previous status of illegality. Its authority remained in Jebel Druze until 1931 when the Atrash family was able to take over the responsibility of government in the Jebel, and bring under its sway all the other minor families that once supported the party.<sup>2</sup>

With the disappearance of the People's Party in 1935-36, Syrian party-life became similar to that which followed the Battle of Maysaloun (1920). A situation in which the zealous nationalists

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1. All proclamations calling the people to arms and showing the aims of the revolt were signed by Sultan al-Atrash as General Commander of the Syrian Nationalist Forces. See Said, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 311-320.

2. Kayali, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

felt at a loss as to how reform should be carried out, and where it should begin. Fortunately, the situation did not endure for very long. The people of Syria now realized that France was determined to carry out its obligations in Syria, and was ready to sacrifice a great deal rather than leave Syria to the Syrians.<sup>2</sup>

Violence, the people came to know, could not bear the fruits of salvation, but that it would ultimately result in great material losses and in the exile and prosecution of the leaders of the nationalist movement. Meanwhile the policy of cooperation which had been decried, ever since 1918, as a futile instrument of policy, was gaining its proper place. The nationalist leaders, seeing the result of armed resistance to the wished of a powerful European country, in 1930 and in 1936, decided to give peaceful negotiations and diplomatic bargaining a try. This was one achievement of the Druze Revolt.

Another achievement was that the Druze Revolt was able to create in Syria a public opinion aware of the evils of French rule. For the Druze revolt had a national character as opposed to the religious and provincial character which resistance movements had until then had. The revolt proved that differences among the people which the Mandatory tried to create were artificial and that good organization was sufficient to make the Syrian people a cohesive whole.

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2. The losses of France in Syria between 1930-1935 amounted to 2,644 million francs (official figure) and 8,960 men. See Doriot, op. cit., p. 19.

In this way, the revolt created a nation-wide, deep-rooted antagonism to the French.<sup>1</sup>

The leaders of the Druze Revolt did not hope to defeat France which was then known to be the strongest land-power in the world ; they wanted " to prove to the world, by blood and fire, the only language which the West understands, the wishes and demands of the Syrians, and to show the spirit of discontent that existed between the oppressing and the oppressed nation".<sup>2</sup>

The Druze Revolt also helped " to convince the French Government of the need for a less negative attitude towards the nationalists".<sup>3</sup> France, after 1936, was better disposed to negotiate on reasonable grounds with the Syrian nationalists; it implicitly recognized the right of the Syrians to share in the government of their country.

On the other hand, the hitherto platonic manifestations of pan-Arab nationalism; the sentimentalism that accompanied political idealism; were now tempered by a spirit of realism in politics. The nationalist negativists were now asking for a bilateral treaty that would secure France's interests as well as Syria's, an organic law, and admission to the League of Nations.

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1. Interview with Said Haidar, Beirut 22/3/52.

2. Al-Kabas, N° 515, Dec. 7, 1930.

3. Royal Institute of International Affairs, The Middle East, (London & New-York, 1950) p. 388.

Both parties felt that the experiment of the mandate was a failure. A substitute had to be found. That substitute was a treaty.

For the achievement of those demands a new organization was necessary, one which would look at the situation in Syria with a less passionate eye and seek an outlet from it not through over violence but through diplomatic action. The People's Party could not do this job, for it was a party of combat, one for drawing plots and carrying them out by force of arms. Besides the leaders of the People's Party were out of favour with the mandatory and had fled the country, some to Istanbul and some to Egypt. A new party had to take over the pursuit. This marks the advent of the Kutlah Party to defend the nationalist cause.

Hishb Al-Kutlah Al-Wataniyyah<sup>1</sup>

Although the Kutlah Party did not appear until 1938, yet, judging from its membership it can be clearly seen, that its men were those of the al-Fatat and al-Istiklal parties which appeared during Feisal's regime in Syria. It has been seen, in the previous chapter, that the parties of al-Fatat and al-Istiklal completely desintegrated after 1920, and that most of their political leaders fled Syria to the neighbouring states. Little by little, some of these men were able to regain acceptance in Syria and to resume their efforts in the political field. They were not ready to cooperate with the members of the People's Party because they belonged to different organizations under Feisal's regime.<sup>2</sup> Thus when the People's Party desintegrated in 1936, the leading men of al-Fatat and al-Istiklal formed the Kutlah party<sup>3</sup>, while the remaining members of the People's Party refused to join the party and acted as an opposing group. Their difference was by no means on principles for

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1. The National Bloc Party.

2. It has been mentioned in Chapt. I that al-Fatat and al-Istiklal disagreed with Feisal sometimes and that Feisal created the Hishb al-Watani to support him in case al-Fatat and al-Istiklal fail to do so. Some of the leading men of the People's Party had belonged during Feisal's regime to the Hishb al-Watani, while some of the leading men of the Kutlah belonged to the al-Fatat and al-Istiklal parties. As these two groups of men used to consider themselves opposed during Feisal's regime they still felt the same way under the mandate.

3. Kurd-Ali, M., Al-Muzakkarat, (Damascus, 1948), Vol. II, p.577.

for they all wanted to get rid of France, and were equally negative in their general policy. Their difference was built on the fact that they belonged to different organizations during Feisal's regime and they were not ready to forget the old days. This attitude on the part of the negativists was to be of the greatest detriment to the unity and effectiveness of the national movement. It also presented a powerful weapon in the hands of the French that they did not refrain from using whenever it was necessary or possible.

The opposition of those who were once the members of the People's Party, to the Kutlah was not, however, very effective. This was mainly due to the fact that the members of the People's Party were first of all outside Syria, either in Egypt or in Istanbul (Turkey); their criticism therefore of the Kutlah's actions was mainly on the general lines of the Kutlah's policy, while they were kept almost completely uninformed about the strictly internal policy of the Kutlah or about the details of its foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the attack on the Kutlah by the members of the People's Party was not effective because it was not organized, but was conducted by individuals who never came together to decide on the method they would follow in their opposition. Their unfamiliarity with the internal conditions of Syria, and inadequate organization, made their opposition ineffective.

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1. In an article signed "S", which stands for Saïd Haïdar, who was in Istanbul, published in al-Kabas N° 515, Dec. 7, 1930, the author attacks the Kutlah for its "moderation" and leniency, but he mentions no instance to show when and how the Kutlah was lenient. The attack was therefore vague.

Thus, in the first few years of its existence the Kutlah had almost not organized opposition from any part of the negativist circles. The opposition that it received from the positivist circles was as ineffective. The positivists, as it was mentioned earlier, were by no means organized and could hardly make their voices heard in popular circles.

No effective opposition appeared until 1933 and later in 1936 when the Isbat al-A'mal al-Kawmi<sup>1</sup> and Al-Jabhab al-Wataniyyah al-Muttahidah<sup>2</sup>, were organized. Despite this opposition, the Kutlah was able to remain the most active political organization, from 1928 until 1938. The next few pages shall be devoted to the study of the history of the Kutlah during this period.

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The policy of the first three High Commissioners who had governed Syria since 1920- Gouraud, Weygand and Sarrail - proved to be unsuccessful. Military generals as these High Commissioners were, they followed in Syria a colonial policy that could not but end up in what it did - a nation-wide revolt. The French government realized the consequences in which the continuation of such a policy would result. The material losses that had befallen the French treasury due to this policy, were too great to be overlooked, and already the communist left of the French Chamber was making an issue of these expences.<sup>3</sup> Thus on December 3, 1936, De Jouvenelle, the first civilian High Commissioner arrived to Syria, to replace General Sarrail.

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1. The league of National Action.

2. The United National Front.

3. Doriot, op. cit., passim.

The policy that de Jouvenelle followed was, in many ways, similar to that of his predecessors. In one respect, however, it seemed different and more constructive. De Jouvenelle was charged with the duty of concluding a treaty with the Syrians<sup>1</sup>, he therefore felt the necessity of asking the people to elect a Constituent Assembly as a first step towards the creation of a smoothly running parliamentary life in Syria. Thus in 1938, and for the first time since 1920, the negativists decided to carry out a nation-wide election campaign.<sup>2</sup> It was during these elections, that took place on the 24th of April 1938, that Hisb al-Kutlah al-Wataniyyah appeared. The elections of 1938 sent in a majority of nationalists. From that day on, the history of Syria under the mandate became deeply related to, if not identical with, the activities of the Kutlah Party. No event of importance, during that period, took place, without the Kutlah playing some leading part in it.

↳ Ibrahim Hananu, leader of the Kutlah party, and he who contributed most to its foundation, became president of the Commission set up for drafting the constitution. Ibrahim Hananu was an Aleppeer who had taken an active part in the revolts that took place in northern Syria during the first years of the mandate. His influence over the men around him was profound and he was "respected even by his opponents."<sup>3</sup> Hashim al-Atassi another ardent negativist and already a veteran politician of Feisal's regime became President of

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1. For the text of the proposed treaty see Al-Ayyam, op.cit., p.168.

2. In the elections of 1938 the negativists boycotted the elections in Aleppo, Homs, and Hama, yet in the ministry of Ahmad Damad there were three nationalists: Faris al-Khoury, Lutfi al-Raffar, and Hakki al-Barazi. See Spid, op.cit. pp. 403 - 407.

3. Doriot, op. cit., passim.



the Assembly. It was only natural, therefore, that the constitution emanating from such an Assembly should be strongly effected by the negativist tendencies of the majority of its members. This was exactly what happened. The Constituent Assembly drew up a constitution that reflected the wishes of the people concerning unity and independence. Such a constitution obviously failed to win the approval of the High Commissioner who issued an order to suspend the activities of the Assembly for three months, and on February 7, 1929, he issued another order adjourning it sine die.

It was not until March 20, 1930 that High Commissioner Fonsot forced a constitution on the country which was a drastic amendment of the 1928 constitution. In 1933 new elections were held, marking the end of the first phase in the history of the Kutlah. During this period the efforts of the Kutlah were directed to the establishment of stable political life in Syria on some basis that would satisfy national aspirations. The Kutlah made a earnest effort to harmonize the interests of France with those of Syria and to diffuse a spirit of calm and cooperation among the population. The Kutlah was never able to escape the consequences of its failure to achieve anything constructive.

When the second phase in the history of the Kutlah opened in 1933 by the parliamentary elections, the Kutlah decided to go a step further in the way of cooperation, and participate in the elections on the basis of the constitution that the High Commissioner promulgated in 1930. The Kutlah did not even demand from the High Commissioner,

garantees concerning the non-interference of the French authorities so as to sway the elections in favour of some candidates.

The French, however, instead of supervising over the elections as a neutral party, appointed a Frenchman, Mr. Saloniac, to act as head of a provisional government. Legally, the French authorities had no right to supervise over the elections, for they were not a neutral party; rather they had vital interests the fate of which had to be decided in those elections. They wanted to negotiate ~~the~~ a treaty with the elected members, and thus they cared very much to see win only those candidates who would be ready to comply with their wishes.

Consequently, when the elections started, riots broke out in the country, and great disturbances took place at the polling stations in Damascus, Hama and Aleppo.<sup>1</sup> The activities of the Kutlah men were strictly limited and some of the Kutlah candidates were actually arrested on the charge of disturbing public order and security.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile the mandatory was exerting a very strong pressure on the Kutlah press, in particular, and on all nationalist press, in general. Such were the restrictions on the press that during the period of the elections, there was only one paper (al-Ittihad) in all Syria prepared to defend the case of the nationalists. The editor of this paper was even arrested, for three days, during the elections, and when he was released, the French threatened to exile him should he make any further propaganda on behalf of the nationalists.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Said, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 565-568.

2. Among the Kutlah candidates who were arrested in Aleppo were : Saadallah al-Jabiri, Jamil Ibrahim Pasha and Edmond Homsî. See Kayali, op cit., p. 141.

3. Kayali, op. cit., p. 124.

The results of the elections, due to the overt pressure that the French exercised over the voters resulted in that, out of the 69 seats of which parliament was made up, 51 were occupied by the candidates that the mandatory Power supported. Only in Homs, did the Kutlah candidates win, and in Nabik, the Kutlah candidate was able to win by a very small margin, over the " moderate " candidate. In all other regions those who called themselves " moderates " were able to succeed.<sup>1</sup> These were the final results of the elections, although they were repeated in Hama and Damascus, under the pressure of the Kutlah.

When the Kutlah members knew the results of the elections, they hesitated to join parliament. But here again the Kutlah party took a decision which showed clearly its willingness to cooperate with the French. Despite its being greatly outnumbered by the French-made deputies, the Kutlah decided to join parliament with the hope of thereby mitigating the evil that might ensue from such a representative body.

The elected candidates were not, however, summoned immediately after their election. The period between January 1933, when the elections came to an end, and June of the same year, when the House was called up to its first meeting, was spent in trying to win over and organize the ranks of those members that supported French policy. The French councillor in Aleppo was able to organize 28 candidates in the form of a parliamentary group that called

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1. For the objections to the illegality of the elections of 1931-33 see Ibid, pp. 121-131.

itself Al-Hisb al-Hurr al-Dustouri<sup>1</sup> with Subhi Barakat, once head of the Syrian Federation until 1935. While the French councillor in Damascus was able to organize some of the deputies of southern Syria into, what came to be known, as Kutlat al-Janoub<sup>3</sup> with Hakki al-Azm, once governor of Damascus and a man known for French sympathies as its leader<sup>3</sup>. These groups had no definite programme to carry out, and no organization to bind them together. They came together for the sole purpose of opposing the actions that the Kutlah men may initiate in parliament, and to support those measures initiated by one of them at the instigation of the High Commissioner. Furthermore these parliamentary groups could be worked against each other whenever the mandatory saw such a necessity as in the case when the issue of the Presidency was brought up.

The candidates for the Presidency were originally three, each of whom was supported by a section of the House. Hashim al-Atassi stood for the Kutlah Party<sup>4</sup>; while Subhi Barakat stood for the Dustouri Party; and Hakki al-Azm for the Kutlat al-Janoub. The French authorities thought that should either Subhi Barakat or Hakki al-Azm be chosen for the Presidency, the Kutlah members of the House would withdraw from parliament and the country would

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1. The Free Constitutional Party.

2. The Block of the South.

3. Said, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 572 - 574.

4. After the death of Hananu, Hashim al-Atassi became the leader of the Kutlah.

immediately fall back into chaos. On the other hand, should Hashim al-Atassi occupy the seat of President of the Republic, the French interests would be directly jeopardized.

Hashim al-Atassi was, however, the weakest candidate for the Presidency. He was able to muster 17 votes only while Subhi Barakat controlled around 38 and Hakki al-Azm around 34. None of these persons could fully guarantee tranquility, consequently, the French named Muhammed al-Abedd who was persona grata for both the negativist nationalists represented by the Kutlah, and the positivists represented by Kutlat-al-Janoub and al-Dstouri party.<sup>1</sup> The positivist group, however, did not agree to this choice except after making an understanding with the mandatory that Hakki al-Azm would be chosen Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup> To calm the negativists Hakki al-Azm accepted to include in his ministry two Kutlah members to each of whom he assigned two ministries, and there were only six ministries in the Syria of that time. The portfolios were therefore evenly divided among the negativists and positivists.<sup>3</sup>

Thus was formed in Syria the First Syrian Republic with the negativists sincerely cooperating with the authorities ; and for a short time peace reigned over the country.

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1. Middle East Journal, " Constitutional Devpt.of Syria " by Khadduri, M , pp. 144-45.
  2. Ibid. p. 145.
  3. The two nationalists who joined the cabinet of Hakki al-Azm, were Jamil Mardam and Mazhar Raslan. See, Said, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 573 - 574.

This situation was not to last for very long. The Kutlah concented to join parliament for the purpose of negotiating a treaty with France which would satisfy the national demands. But when the treaty was proposed to parliament by Mr. de Martel, the High Commissioner, the Kutlah, realizing that the treaty did not satisfy any of the national demands, drew up a petition that was read in the House on April 18, 1933, by Jamil Mardam<sup>1</sup>, whereby the Kutla members proclaimed their withdrawal from parliament in protest against the proposed treaty to which the Prime Ministry had affixed his signature.<sup>2</sup>

The treaty which the French proposed and insisted that Lebanon be excluded from any future Syrian State, ~~and~~ proclaimed that even Jebel Druze and Latakia were to remain semi-independent. This was diametrically opposed to the programme of the Kutlah which insisted on the unity of natural Syria, as shall be seen later.<sup>3</sup>

The Kutlah also objected to the uncertainty with which the treaty dealt with the abolition of the capitulatory regime ; it showed its indignation to the maintenance of forces on Syrian territory, and to the creation of a department of the economic resources ~~and~~ in which France was to occupy a position of prédominance.<sup>4</sup>

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1. Darwazah, op. cit., Vol. II pp. 47-49.
  2. For the manifesto proclaimed by the Kutlah announcing the reasons why they withdrew. See Said, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 575 - 576.
  3. For the text of the treaty of 1933. See Al-Ayyam, op. cit., pp. 173 - 177.
  4. Middle East Journal, op. cit., p. 145.

After the withdrawal of the Kutlah nationalists from Parliament, parliamentary life in Syria was so completely disrupted that the High Commissioner had to issue an order suspending parliament sine die. The reins of government were placed in the hands of Sheikh Tajeddine al-Hasani who governed, without the cooperation of the Kutlah, from 1933 until 1935. Thus ended the first Syrian Republic. The withdrawal of the Kutlah members, and the subsequent suspension of parliamentary life in Syria, proved that, despite the small number of deputies it might be able to send to the House, the Kutlah was really the moving force in the nation, and the sole organization that could make its influence felt under all circumstances. It also proved that the Kutlah had a national support that outweighed any other organization in Syria.

The period between 1933 and 1935, when the Kutlah was not in power, is a most significant phase in the history of the Kutlah and in the party-politics of Syria in general. The party had, during that period, to carry out its activities outside parliament. These activities consisted mainly of consolidating the organization of the Kutlah through its affiliated organizations. The activities of the Kutlah<sup>h</sup> men also included the organization of strikes to show popular discontent and to widen its popular support. One of the strikes, the Kutlah organized, in 1935, lasted for two months and led to the resignation of Sheikh Taj's cabinet. Strikes, in fact, were the only means whereby the population could show its discontent. Not that petitions were not used, but that they were not given the proper attention they deserved, by the authorities. Furthermore, the unorganized press, the inefficient propaganda agencies of the Kutlah

Party, and the limitations imposed on the freedom of both by law, made strikes the most effective method of showing popular resentment. The Kutlah' therefore, seized every occasion to stage a strike. In 1934 a great strike took place in all Syria but specially in Aleppo, in commemoration of Hananu's death; and in 1934 Damascus went on strike for two months in protest against the exile of some Kutlah leaders. It would take Syria a very long time to rid itself from this method of expressing popular sentiments.

The affiliated organizations of the Kutlah were numerous, chief among which were that of Al-Shabab al-Watani<sup>1</sup>, and the group organized by Fakhri Al-Baroudi.

The Shabab al-Watani, was a "para-military organization"<sup>2</sup>, it included all young men under the age of 21 and above the age of 16. These young men were trained in hardy sports and equipped with adequate preparation to join the national army. Branches of the al-Shabab were established in every big city in Syria and included a very great number of the Syrian youth. They had regular parades which were normally received by the populace with great enthusiasm.

Politically, the Al-Shabab organization was an auxiliary of the Kutlah with whose help it was able to rise into prominence in the year 1935 and 1936<sup>3</sup>. The organization would have been much stronger were it not for the constant opposition it received from the 'Isbat al-Amal al-Kawmi. The differences between the two organizations were the result of personal disagreements as the doctrines of the two organizations were almost identical<sup>4</sup>.

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1. The National Youth.

2. Hourani, op. cit., p. 198

3. Ibid, p. 198, op. cit.,

4. Ibid, p. 198



Although the Shabab organization was officially non-political and although its activities did not go beyond public parades, its political influence should not be underestimated.

The Shabab organization was able to keep the national spirit alive among the youth. It was also able to revive the hopes of independence in the hearts of all the people, by giving them the illusion that the youth of the country was strong, nationalistic and trained. These factors had a great effect on the psychology of the people, which made them look forward to the day of liberation.

The other affiliated organization of the Kutlah Party was the group headed by Fakhri al-Baroudi a member of the Kutlah. This organization started as a pressure group<sup>1</sup>, with a single professed aim; to save the country from the tyranny of foreign investment. The campaign was chiefly directed against the Electricity Company of Damascus. This organization was not, however, destined to a long life. Very soon after its formation the French authorities arrested Fakhri al-Baroudi and exiled him, with a few other Kutlah men.

When Fakhri al-Baroudi came back from his exile he resumed his activities, inside and outside the Kutlah and formed in 1936 a propaganda office for which he drew up a definite programme and by - laws. But although the propaganda office of al-Baroudi, proclaimed its political impartiality<sup>2</sup>, it can safely be asserted

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1. For the definition of " pressure group " see Hamilton, Jay, Madison, The Federalist. (Washington, D.C., 1937), p. 54.

2. Maktab Fakhri al-Baroudi Liddia'yah wa-Nashr, " Nizam al-'Amal", p. 18 (Damascus, 1936),

that the office acted as a propaganda bureau for the Kutlah party.

The propaganda office proclaimed the following as its aims :<sup>1</sup>

1- The propaganda that the office will make would include the internal as well as the external fields.

2- The office shall try to unite all groups in Syria.

3- The office will help all parties to get precise statistics gathered from reliable sources.

4- The office will try to spread learning through establishing schools.

5- The office aims at the settlement of the bedouins.

6- The office was established to oppose foreign propaganda.

7- The office is politically impartial.

But while the propaganda office of Fakhri al-Baroudi proclaimed all these to be its aims, in actual fact, it was not able to achieve fully any of them and this is due to two main reasons : First, some of the aims that the office set itself to achieve were too high for even a political party. Second, because the office did not live long enough to be able to grow and expand.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Ibid. pp. 11-13 .

2. We do not know exactly when the office stopped to function, but it is sure that it did not continue after 1938 when the Kutlah proclaimed the Nidal.

Between the years 1933 and 1935 the Kutlah Party was able to win tremendous popular support. It championed the nationalist cause, and showed the people, by resigning from office in 1933, that it placed the national good above all other. It also put all the other political groups or parties of the country in an embarrassing position, demonstrating that they were pliant tools in the hands of the mandatory power.

In the midst of this popular support the French High Commissioner called for general elections in November 1935. It was, thus, natural that these elections should sweep into the Majlis a majority of Kutlah candidates.

On December 31 parliament met, and elected Hashim al-Atassi, leader of the Kutlah, President of the Republic, in the place of Muhammed al-Abed. Jamil Mardam, another eminent Kutlah leader, formed the new cabinet which was made up exclusively of Kutlahmen, like Saadallah al-Jabiri, Shukri al-Kuwatly and Abdul-Rahman al-Kayali ; while Faris al-Khoury, a neutral but an ardent supporter of the nationalist cause, became President of the Majlis.

On December 33<sup>1</sup>, the draft treaty with France was approved and a delegation was immediately chosen to negotiate with the French foreign office<sup>2</sup>. The delegation was made up exclusively of Kutlah members.<sup>3</sup>

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1. On the same day Soltan al-Atrash leader of the Druze Revolt who was banned from Syria entered Damascus.
  2. For the text of the treaty of 1936, see, Al-Ayyam, op. cit., pp. 181-190.
  3. The members of the delegation were : Hashim al-Atassi, Faris al-Khoury, Saadallah al-Jabiri, Edmond Homsy, Mustapha al-Shihabi and Naim Ansk i.

The draft treaty of 1936 recognized the independence and unity of Syria. It also granted some concessions to France, the most important among which were : that France would have two airbases in Syria and all facilities would be assured to French forces in case of war ; and that French officers would train the Syrian army. The treaty was to continue for 25 years.

This treaty was considered by the Kutlah as a personal victory, for it defined the powers of the Syrian Government and those of the French Government in Syria ; in this way it put an end to chaos in Syrian political life<sup>1</sup>. The Kutlah proclaimed, however, that the treaty was only a first step.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, the project of the 1936 treaty was the result of a deep study that had ripened through 16 years of experience. Experts in all fields - army, finance, justice, administration - have all shared in its drawing up, taking into consideration the satisfaction of both contracting parties. " The Franco-Syrian Treaty is a document that brings honour to its negotiators, French as well as Syrians."<sup>3</sup>

It is clear, from the text of the draft treaty, that the Kutlah was not an " extremist " party, as some historians have chosen to call it, rather, it was realistic in its attitude toward the relations of France and Syria. The Kutlah knew that to demand full independence in all fields and to give France no concessions, was a

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1. Maktab Fakhri al-Baroudi Lidia'yah wal-Nashr " The Speech of Fakhri al-Baroudi ", (Damascus, 1936) p. 6

2. Ibid, p. 6.

3. Office National Arabe, Syrie, 1938, passim.

fruitless policy that could lead only to further misunderstanding with the French authorities, and may be, to further riots and bloodshed. The Kutlah also realized, that to propose terms that would guarantee French interests in Syria, would be detrimental to the popular support/<sup>it</sup>enjoyed. Yet, it did not hesitate to propose such terms, for they were the sole method to reach an understanding.

This attitude shows that the Kutlah, despite the criticisms that were often levelled against it, followed a wise policy based on a very realistic study.

Yet, the efforts of the Kutlah were in vain. Despite the measures in the treaty that secured the interests of both parties, France could not ratify the treaty owing to the opposition of the military and reactionary elements in the French Senate.

On February, 8, 1939 when all efforts to reach an understanding failed, and when the French authorities in Syria continued to exercise a marked influence on legislation, and the appointment of officials, the Prime Minister of Syria, tendered his resignation which was directly followed by that of Hashim al-Atassi, the President of the Republic. The French High Commissioner, then, suspended parliament, and the life of the Second Republic came to an end.

The Kutlah declared its opposition to French rule, and announced ' Abd al-Nidal ' <sup>1</sup>, the era of resistance and struggle.

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From this historial survey of the Kutlah, it can be concluded

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1. Interview with al-Azma, Nabih, Beirut, November 13, 1951.

that throughout the period of the mandate, the Kutlah Party was the most active political organization in all Syria. Although the practical achievements of the Kutlah were limited, it would, however be interesting to study what was the theoretical basis that lay at its foundations. In other words, what was the Kutlah aiming at.

The Kutlah did not follow a clear programme. Its growth did not take the natural course that political parties usually follow. Its original members, Ibrahim Hananu, Hashim al-Atassi, Saadallah al-Jabiri, Jamil Mardam, did not come together and decided to draw up a constitution for a political party. Rather they found themselves bound together by belonging to the same organization during Faisal's regime, and decided to run in the election for the Constitution Assembly of 1928. Being akin in hopes and aspirations they became known to the people as al-Kutlah al-Wataniyyah. This name was to stick to those people all through the period of the mandate.

Thus the Kutlah did not have a set social, political or economic policy, beyond one single objective on which all the members agreed namely, to achieve unity and independence. They differed widely on other issues of major importance. In the economic field some of the Kutlah leaders betrayed some socialistic tendencies<sup>1</sup> while a great number of them were opposed to socialism. In it they saw the loss of their extensive property.

This problem was, however, denied serious consideration, for indeed it was a minor problem compared to the major problem of foreign

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1. The writings of Ihsan Baha' Eddine al-Jabiri show an obvious socialistic tendency and a support of the labour cause.

rule.

The Kutlah, therefore, could hardly be considered a party with an ideology. It was a party of "negativism" and opposition. It was bound together by three main factors which were closely related :-

- 1- Hate for French rule.
- 2- Achievement of unity and independence.
- 3- Shaving in the government of the country, to keep away from office all those who were ready to cooperate submissively with the French authorities.

Faced with this situation, the only reliable source, for determining the aims of the Kutlah were :

- 1- The Constitution of 1928.<sup>1</sup>
- 2- The draft treaty of 1936.<sup>2</sup>

These two documents depict the political thinking of the Kutlah. A third available source, is to be found in the speeches delivered by, and the writings of, the leading Kutlah men, at different occasions. But these speeches and writings have, in the greatest part, been left in the private possession of some of Syria's leading men.

These sources show the following general lines of policy :

- 1- That Syria should be an independent, sovereign state, forming a separate entity.<sup>3</sup>

*Lines of  
Policy of Kutlah*

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1. De Saint-Point, op. cit., pp. 193-205.
  2. Al-Ayyam, op. cit., pp. 181-200.
  3. Const. of 1928, art. 1 and 2

2- That the form of Syria's government should be a parliamentary republic with Islam the religion of its President.<sup>1</sup>

3- That the liberties of conscience, of the press, of association should all be fully safeguarded.<sup>2</sup>

4- That all Syrians should be equal before the law with complete disregard of, religious confession, race or language.<sup>3</sup>

5- That education should be open and obligatory to all members of the population. That the educational system should be the same all over the country, and should aim at strengthening the ties of fraternity among the people, and developing a national spirit.<sup>4</sup>

6- Legislation should aim at the development of national industries, and the period for foreign concessions should be strictly limited.

7- Laws should guarantee economic and social equality.<sup>5</sup>

8- A strong national army should be developed.

9- All favourable conditions should be created to encourage the return of the Syrian emigrants.

10- The independence of every Arab state shall remain incomplete until all these states are organized into one unified state.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Const. of 1928 art. 3. The idea of a monarchy did not find headway in Syria after 1920. See Saint-Point, op. cit., p. 169.

2. Const. of 1928 art. 7 to 18.

3. Const. of 1928 art. 6.

4. Const. of 1928. Articles 19 to 23.

5. Maktab Fakhri al-Barwadi, "Nizam al-'Amal", passim.

6. Ibid, pp. 11-12.



These are some of the major aspects in the programme of the Kutlah. The most important among them concern the unity and independence of Syria, before the achievement of which, no other step could be taken.

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The following conclusions can be drawn.

That the Kutlah Party, as its name connotes, was never a party in the strict sense of the term, but an association of individuals holding similar views on a few major issues. These issues included, as already mentioned above, the demand for unity and independence, their hate for the mandatory power and their opposition to any attempt at prolonging the period of the mandate. They did not discuss and agree on the other important issues that were bound to arise as soon as independence is achieved. The cooperation among the Kutlah members was, therefore, temporary. Had the major objectives of the Kutlah been achieved the whole organization would have fallen to pieces, because it would have lost its raison d'etre. It would have been much wiser, had the Kutlah drawn up a definite and detailed programme that would insure its continuation under all circumstances.

In the second place, it was most unfortunate, that throughout its history the Kutlah did/<sup>not</sup> enjoy a strong leadership, despite the wide national support that it received. None of the numerous leading men of the Kutlah was strong enough to win an unflinching support from a cheering mass. None of them was strong enough to array the nation behind him and proclaim it a war against the forces

of reaction and submissiveness<sup>1</sup>. This lack of a strong leadership, accounts for many of the failure of the Kutlah. Indeed leadership plays the most important role in the life of modern political parties.<sup>2</sup>

How, then was the Kutlah able to remain a strong organization throughout the period of the mandate, inspitea of its weak internal organization, lack of ideological background, and absence of strong leadership ?

There is only one answer to this question. That the hate for French interference in Syria, the rancourous hostility toward the mandate, the eagerness to attain, unity and independence were great unifying factors. The leaders of the Kutlah were ready to forget, at least temporarily some of their personal fends, to engage in a common struggle against a common enemy. This attitude shows a certain degree of political maturity worthy of admiration.

But hate cannot constitute a solid foundation for a political party, unless it be supported by organization and discipline. The lack of these last in the Kutlah Party provided another reason for its failure.

If this sounds like discrediting the Kutlah completely, the preceeding paragraphs would not have served their purpose. for, despite all these weaknesses, the contribution of thde Kutlah to the Syrian national movement as /whole, was more than that of any other political organization. Thd/rough the activities of its

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1. Hashim al-Atassi who was the leader of the Kutlah was revered because of his age and not because he had the qualifications of a strong leader.

2. See Michel, op. cit. , passim.

members, the nationalist spirit was able to survive, and was even strengthened, throughout the period of the mandate, in the face of France's colonial policy. Not for a single moment, throughout the period of the mandate, did the Syrians stop their activity for the propagation of the Arab cause, and for keeping up the nationalist spirit which had developed, during, and after, the First World War. For this achievement, the Arab World, in general, and Syria in particular, would remain grateful, primarily, to the Kutlah Party.

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Al-Jabhab al-Wataniyyah al-Muttahidah.<sup>1</sup>

With the disintegration of the People's Party, the Kutlah took over the task of representing the nationalist aspirations. The Kutlah remained, roughly speaking the only organization that stood for these demands until 1935, when the most important step in the history of the mandate had to be taken, namely, the drafting of a treaty regulating the relations between Syria and France. This momentous event resulted in the creation, in 1935, of a political " front " which went by the name of the United National Front.

This party included within its ranks all the discontented individuals with the Kutlah's mild policy and those suspicious of its good intentions. They accused the Kutlah of following a policy of collaboration with the mandatory power disregarding the national good, weakening the spirit of resistance and thereby lengthening the stay of the French in Syria.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the party was to modify the policy of the Kutlah, in such a way as to assure the national good. In the first article of its constitution it proclaimed that the party was formed to " face the present situation " in which Syria had to conclude a treaty with France. The front did not want to allow the Kutlah a free hand in shaping the country's future. Viewed from the Front's angle, the Kutlah's policy was too mild. The front advocated drastic action and despised half-solutions to the nationalist problems. It was not ready to bargain on the

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1. The United National Front.

2. Writing in 1930 Said Haider said, "... If this is what resulted from the Revolt of 1925 (meaning, this policy of cooperation that the Kutlah followed with the mandatory power), then the revolt has been a drastic failure ". Al-Kabas, N° 515, Dec. 7, 1930.

national demands and refused to give concessions to the mandatory power, for it considered what the Syrians demanded a right to be granted in full.

The programme of the Front, however, as set in its constitution mirrored the generally accepted goals of all the Syrian nationalists with emphasis on some points more than others, as shall be seen.

In the preamble of the Front's constitution are enumerated the reasons for the formation of the Front, and its general aims. It says, " The world events that occurred in the year 1935, had a remarkable effect on the Arab cause in general, and on Syria in particular. These events were the factors that went into the formation of a United National Front supported by a unity of ideas and aims on whose basis this programme has been put ".

" It is understood that the aim of every sincere person is that the Arabs should form one independent nation with one flag. This is the ultimate purpose of this front and of every one who belongs to it. As far as, the part of the Arab World occupied by France, the front decided to follow a definite plan aiming at the liberation of this area and the unification of all its parts, as a first step towards the achievement of its ultimate purpose..."

" The Front realized that to follow the policy of steps in Syria, is detrimental to its cause and to that of the Arab World. This policy will cause irreparable damage in both cases. The work for liberation is, however, the first step toward a free, sovereign and independent life."

" ... These were the reasons for the formation of this Front which promised to fulfil all its programme."

" The Front does not pretend to be infallible, and therefore respects the opinions of those who do not share with it its interpretations, and finds it to be part of its duty to promote fraternity and understanding among all groups of sincere nationalities, and to preserve the freedom of expression and belief, specially at this time when the nation needs to discover the truth and dispel all doubts to come to the best results. The Front does not recognize that difference of interpretation, among groups or individuals, is incompatible with unified action and the reigning of calm, provided good intentions prevail...."<sup>1</sup>

The party's constitution provides the only official document showing the general aims of the party, while its attitude to specific situations is described in the occasional pamphlets that it circulated.

To the constitution of the party attention shall now be turned. It includes the following articles :-

Art. I- There was formed in Syria on the 25th of Rajab, 1354 of the Hijra, and the 23rd of November, 1935, a united front of nationalist individuals and groups to face the present situation in world and local affairs ; and for the purpose of stimulating national activity.

The Front is open to all nationalist individuals and groups,

1. Minhaj al-Jabha al-Wataniyyah al-Muttahidah (Damascus, 1935), p.3

provided that they believe in the nationalist ideology, and aim at the liberation of the country from all foreign influence.

The members of the party are either active members or supporters. The active members are the participants in money and deed. The supporters are those who share with the Front its beliefs, and who support it financially and morally<sup>1</sup>.

Art. 2 - The Front proclaims the following to be its aims : - Syria, in its natural boundaries, forms an indivisible part of the whole Arab Nation. The primary aim of this Front, is to liberate Syria, as defined above, and to abrogate all bonds imposed by the mandate, or any foreign influence, and to assert for Syria an actual and real, independence that would guarantee its sovereignty and all of its political and constitutional rights and freedoms, as a step toward the achievement of the ultimate purpose which is, to form a part of an Arab union.

Art. 3 - There shall be no distinction, religious or otherwise, among the citizens of the State; all shall enjoy equal rights and duties...

The Front then turns to the situation in Syria in 1935<sup>4</sup> and puts down the following articles to show its policy.

Art. 4 - As far as the French occupied portion of Syria is concerned, and as<sup>a</sup> step towards the achievement of the Front's aims as defined in article two, the Front will work for the unification of Syria, its

1. This provision for " supporting " members is found in almost every constitution of parties, because there was a great number of people in Syria who did not want to be in the limelight of politics.

coast and interior, while avoiding the decentralized system of government. The people of Lebanon, in the 1914 boundaries, shall be given the right to decide when they would wish to join Syrian unity. This time will come whenever the circumstances become favourable and when the idea for union with Syria ripens.

The Front accepts to conclude a treaty of friendship with the French Army, which would guarantee the abolition of the mandatory regime and recognize Syria's independence, sovereignty and unity, as described above, provided also that the treaty will guarantee, at least, the same rights that the latest Anglo-Iraqian Treaty guarantees to Iraq. Due attention should, however, be given to the distinctions that exist between Iraq and Syria, which entitle Syria to more favourable terms. The treaty shall limit the time of its duration, and shall guarantee the restoration of all rights and freedoms suspended due to the present situation. These rights and freedoms include, the economic, constitutional and political rights, parliamentary life, and freedom of action in the wakf, be it an islamic or a non-islamic wakf, the Customs and everything that has been put under the administration of the Common Interests, the army, the General Security Office etc... The policy of stages shall not be followed as far as the unity and sovereignty of Syria, are concerned.

Art. 5 - It is not permissible to carry out any action of a local character if it is incompatible with the general interest of the Arab cause which forms the foremost national purpose for all the active individuals in this Front.

Art. 6 - No one participating in the activities of this national



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organization, is allowed to join any government which does not believe in the above-mentioned principles. Even if such a government is formed, no member of the party shall be allowed to partake in it, except after getting the approval of the Central Committee of the party. No member of the Front shall negotiate with any foreign authority on whatever relates to the French occupied territory of Syria, unless he makes sure that sovereignty and unity, as mentioned in article four of this constitution, are guaranteed.

Art. 7 - Participation of the Front in parliamentary elections and any other public affair is decided in the method explained in the previous article.

Art. 8 - It is not permitted for any active member of the Front to accept any political or administrative office, except after getting the approval of the Central Committee of the Front. \*

From this part of the Front's constitution which shows its general line of policy, the following general remarks can be drawn :

First, the programme of action of the party is too general and vague for an organized, modern, political party. The reason for this inadequacy is, obviously, to make the programme a flexible one and in this way avoid numerable criticisms. Thus the programme provides on the one hand for extreme negativism and non-cooperation and, on the other hand, envisages the possibility of concluding a treaty based on the Anglo-Iraqi pattern.

Second, the most outstanding feature of the whole programme is the demand for Arab Unity. This point is so much stressed in the programme,

that any other demand seems to be important only in so far as it would lead to that unity or paves the way for it. Yet the party seems to regard Arab Unity such a remote hope that it does not bother to describe the form this unity should take or the lands it would include. The main reason for this lack of clarity on this point may be due to the fact that defining Arab Unity in detail might have caused a division in the ranks of the party, a thing that the Front wanted to evade at any cost. As such the Front used the demand for Arab Unity as a slogan and an ideal. Like all ideals it was shrouded in vagueness and uncertainty.

Third, as far as the immediate policy of the Front, it seemed to stress the necessity of a treaty that would end the mandate and grant Syria a position not only similar but even superior to that of Iraq. Implicitly, the Front claimed that Syria was more advanced than Iraq, on the other hand the treaty between Iraq and Great Britain had been concluded in 1930 while that between Syria and France would be concluded in 1936 or later. During this period considerable advance has been made in Syria. The insistence of the Front on the nature of the future Franco-Syrian Treaty is very significant, as shall be seen later ; it was indeed the main factor that made the Front stand in direct opposition to the Kutlah Party which was negotiating the treaty with France.

When the draft treaty was approved by the Syrian parliament, the United National Front stood in violent opposition and levelled severe criticisms to it. These criticisms were published in the form of pamphlets and leaflets between the years 1936 and 1938. It would be necessary to point out some of these criticisms, for they showed

the general tendency of the Party and clarified its position in relation to a number of issues.

The Question of Unity :- One of the main issues in the treaty was that of unity. As far as this problem was concerned, the Front pointed out that in the draft treaty unity was not secured. The treaty, the Front said, did not guarantee the return to Syria of the four cazas (Hasbayia, Rashayia, the Beka'a and Marjeioun) and of the coastal strip, that forms an indivisible part of Syria. On the other hand, the Front remarked, no true unity has been established among the districts of Lataquieh, Jabal ed-Druze, and Alexandretta, all of which would continue to enjoy administrative and fiscal independence<sup>1</sup>. The Front goes on to say, that such measures were not representative of the people's wishes and that they were taken on the Kutlah's own initiative with complete disregard of the decisions of the national congresses that emphasized the impossibility of negotiations until the French guaranteed the complete unity of Syria.<sup>2</sup>

The Recognition of Independence :- Great Britain promised, by the terms of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, to help Iraq enter the League of Nations on a particular date. Whereas the Franco-Syrian Treaty said that France shall prepare Syria to enter the League within a

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1. See sixth correspondence attached to the treaty of 1936, Al-Ayyam, op. cit., pp. 193 - 195.
2. Bayan al-Jabbah al-Wataniyyah al-Muttahidah' An Mashri al - Mu'ahadah al-Suriyah al-Faranciyyah. (Damascus, 1936), pp. 2 - 3. See also, letter from Zaki al-Khatib to the High Commissioner, Damascus, 18 - 11 - 1936.

period of three years from the date of ratification of the treaty. The Front, objected, that the period mentioned is indefinit and that it may take too long, while it should not, for Iraq had been a member of the League since 1933 and there is no reason to make Syria wait any further before joining it.<sup>1</sup>

The International Agreements that France has or that it may conclude:

By article three of the new treaty, Syria is bound by the obligations, agreements and contracts that the French Government has bound itself with, concerning Syria, or which were concluded on behalf of Syria. This, of course, includes the Treaty of Ankara which places Alexandretta and Antioch in constant danger<sup>2</sup>. The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty does not include such provisions, and it was not concluded until Iraqi unity, with Mosul as an indivisible part, was firmly established, although the minority problem is much more acute in Iraq than it is in Syria.

The treaty also does not mention the other international agreements implied by the article, and these ought to be mentioned so that the significance of this article may be made clear.

This article also mentions, contrary to the Iraq treaty, that ~~xxx~~ Syria shall respect every agreement that has been made, or that will be made, by the French Government, in the name of Syria, until the termination of the mandate, that is until Syria joins the League of Nations.

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1. Ibid. pp. 3-4.

2. See, letter sent from Zaki al-Khatib, General secretary of the Front to the High Commissioner, Damascus, 16/11/1936.

According to this provision, the Front says, the treaty between Lebanon and France shall bind Syria, and as such Syria would lose the right to demand the restoration of the Syrian territories that have been ceded to Lebanon<sup>1</sup>. Just as these parts may be lost by Syria to Lebanon, the Front thought, so would Alexandretta be lost to Turkey. The Front also wondered why France should include such a provision in the treaty of 1936 when the treaty it proposed in 1933 and which was refused by the Syrians said that the French Government would amend all the international agreements that may be unsuitable to the new condition in Syria after the conclusion of the treaty.<sup>3</sup>

The Right of Defence :- Article 5 of the treaty plus the military annex, impose greater bonds on Syrian sovereignty than those imposed on Iraq by the treaty of 1930 despite the difference between the dates of both treaties. Also, in the case of Iraq there are some reasons which warrant the existence of these bonds; for Iraq is on the road to India which is of vital concern to Great Britain, while Syria does not enjoy the special position, as far as France is concerned, that Iraq enjoys vis-à-vis Great Britain. The situation in Egypt is similar to that of Iraq in this respect, but there is no reason for all the military and air bases that France insists on having in Syria.<sup>3</sup>

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1. For the text of the 1936 treaty between Lebanon and Syria, see Al-Ayyam, op. cit., pp. 303 - 317.

2. Art. 3 of the refused treaty of 1933 between France & Syria. See Al-Ayyam, op. cit., pp. 173 - 180.

3. Bayan al-Jabhah al-Wataniyah ' an Mashru'al-Mu'ahadah, p. 5.

Turning to the military annex of the treaty the United National Front observes a number of weak points and tries to draw the attention of the people as well as that of the Government, to the necessity of reconsidering the treaty. It is interesting to review briefly the criticisms of the Front to the military annex for this shows the logic that the Front followed in considering national problems.

The Front points out that article 1 of the military annex and correspondence number one which is attached to the treaty, bind Syria to take over the army present in Syria at that time and undertake alone the responsibilities which may result from this charge. Correspondence number one guarantees the acquired rights of the officers of this army as part of the expenses and obligations mentioned in article one of the military annex.

Now, the Front asks, are the resources of the country adequate to meet the expenses and obligations of this army when it includes volunteers with very high salaries? The Front says no, and points out that there was no such condition in the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty.

Furthermore, the British Military Mission in Iraq, is a purely consultative body, whereas no mention is made to the nature of the French Military Mission provided for in the Franco-Syrian Treaty. Article seven of the military annex also, binds Syria with the responsibility of guaranteeing for the French forces such immunities that are obviously harmful to the sovereignty of the State.

Article 5 of the military annex gives France the right to construct two air bases, just as Britain has been given in Iraq. But the difference between the two treaties is that while Iraq is indispensable for the communications among the different parts of the British Empire, Syria is not that essential for the communications of France with the exterior. And whereas the Iraq Treaty charges Iraq with only one third of the expenses of building and equipping these air bases, Syria is charged with all the expenses of construction and equipment.

The French Government did not consult the Syrians on the number of troupes they would keep on Syrian territory, whereas the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty provides for such consultation between the British Government and the King of Iraq.<sup>1</sup>

The French Government demands from Syria the price of the military establishments that have been built during the period of the mandate. These expenses, the Front says, must be considered like any other expense ~~through~~ which the mandatory had to incur during the application of the mandate.

Syria shall pay, by the terms of the military annex, all the expenses of the French aerial navigation destined to Syria. While the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty imposes on Iraq only one third of the expenses for that same purpose.

The Front also wonders why some important judicial, fiscal, military and educational problems have been postponed until the conclusion of the treaty.

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1. Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930- Annex N°1. See al-Ayyam, op. cit., p. 348.

From the text of the second correspondence attached to the treaty, Syria is not given the freedom to choose its technical advisors except from France. While the Iraqi treaty with Great Britain, grants Iraq, at least theoretically, the right to choose advisors from countries other than Great Britain, in case fit persons are not available in Great Britain itself.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the whole problem of foreign technical advisors, judges, and government officials has not been solved by the treaty in a way that would decrease the expenses on these fields.

In the third correspondence, the Syrian Government demands from the French Government to represent it, according to international practice, in those countries where Syria is not directly represented. While it should have been made clear that Syria shall have the right to choose freely, any country to preserve its interests abroad, as is the case in the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty where this right has not been restricted.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of minorities, the Front objected, has been included in the treaty when it should not; for this problem is purely internal and should be subject to no discussion in the drafting of an international contract. On the other hand, no provisions concerning this problem are present in the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty.

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1. Bayan al-Jabha 'an Mashru' al-Mu'ahadah ... p.8.

2. The Front objected to this part of the treaty because it wanted Syria to be given the right to ask an Arab State to represent it wherever this was possible.



In the protocols 3 and 5 the contracting parties tried to put the basis for the negotiations between Syria and Lebanon concerning the formation of a common body to regulate their common interests. The Front points out, that all these measures, hinder trade and paralyse economic activity, and involve fabulous expenses that would ruin the economy of Lebanon, of the Syrian territories included in Lebanon and of the Syrian interior. The only solution, the Front proposes, is complete and all-embracing unity.

The seventh correspondence, imposes on the Syrian Government the maintenance of foreign educational, health and charity, institutions, and of archeological missions according to the system set down by the French in the text of the mandate. We do not find, the Front says, any provision for the limitation of the activities of these institutions or any guarantee to secure the freedom of national education from these bad influences. The text of the correspondence makes it even impossible to unify the educational system. The Front goes on to say, that one of the main reasons for the refusal of the 1933 treaty was the attempt to limit the internal sovereignty of Syria.<sup>1</sup> Besides, such measures are not imposed on Iraq by its treaty with Great Britain.<sup>2</sup>

The eighth correspondence, attached to the treaty, gives the French residents in Syria, acquired rights. This concession would entail immense expenses due to the favourable terms granted to the foreign French companies in Syria. This correspondence also states that these acquired rights could be subject to no

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1. Bayan al-Jabhah'an Mashru' al-Mu'ahadah... p. 10.

2. Ibid, p. 14.

future change, unless, the contracting parties (Syria & France) agree to the proposed change. The Front refuses to recognize these rights on the grounds of the expenses they involve, saying, that the Iraqi treaty does not include such provisions.<sup>1</sup>

The ninth correspondence binds, unconditionally, the Syrian currency to the franc. The Front objects to this measure because it causes a great depreciation and fluctuation of the Syrian pound.

The Front also points out, that the fourth protocol dealing with the judiciary, does not specify that the official language in the Syrian courts is Arabic ; a thing which it ought to have made clear.<sup>2</sup>

Because of the above-mentioned criticisms the United National Front was not ready to accept the draft treaty of 1936 as a final arrangement, or even as a first step towards the satisfaction of the national demands.<sup>3</sup> The Front even attacked the Kutlah Party itself on the grounds that it was not trying to satisfy the nationalist demands but to win popularity at the expense of the national benefit.<sup>4</sup>

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The attitude of the Front towards the Kutlah passed into two main stages. The first stage extends from November 1935 to

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1. Ibid. p. 10.

2. Ibid. p. 12.

3. Bayan ila Sha'ab Suriyah al-Nabil. (Damascus, 1938), p. 1.

4. Ibid. p. 8.

February 1936. During this period the Front tried to cooperate rather than to oppose the Kutlah Party. However, even during that period, the Front did not refrain from criticizing the actions of the Kutlah, but the purpose of its criticism was intended to help the Kutlah continue its negotiations with France rather than hinder these negotiations. The Front acknowledged the achievements of the Kutlah during the decade that preceded 1936 ; the Front demanded the restoration of the constitution of 1928<sup>1</sup> which was the outcome of the Kutlah's efforts, but which the Front, nevertheless, considered to be essential for the solution of all problems.<sup>2</sup> The Front also agreed with the Kutlah on the basis upon which the negotiations with the mandatory power should be carried. The Front pointed out that it was agreed with the Kutlah on all essential issues,<sup>3</sup> and it went so far as to publish some of the pronouncements of the Kutlah and show the points of similarity existing between the Kutlah and the Front.<sup>4</sup> Briefly, the Front during this period was more of a supporting than of an opposing party to the Kutlah.

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1. Bayan al-Jabbah al-Wataniyyah ila al-Ummah al-'Arabiyyah.... (Damascus, 1936), p. 8.

2. Ibid. pp. 22 - 23.

3. Ibid, p. 14.

4. Ibid. pp. 9 - 13.

The second stage in the history of the Front extends from February 1936 until the abolition of party-life in Syria in 1938. During this period the Front showed relentless opposition to the Kutlah pointing out its mistakes and accusing it of disregarding the nationalist aspirations, and agreeing to such measures that would cause great damage to the unity, independence and sovereignty of the country. It pointed out that the treaty which the Kutlah considered one of its political successes, was really a crippled document detrimental to Syria's future development<sup>1</sup>; and that the Kutlah, in complete disregard of the programme it professed to follow, has turned out to be, in practice, ready to cooperate with the French rather than stick to the nationalist demands. Consequently, the Front directed its criticisms to the treaty that were mentioned above.

The Front made direct attack on the Kutlah by criticizing its method of negotiation. It accused the Kutlah of being too hasty in starting the negotiations with France,<sup>2</sup> accepting to include in the Syrian unity the states of Latakiah and Jebel Druze, contrary to the aims of the Kutlah, proclaimed on the tenth of January 1936.<sup>3</sup> The Front wondered " what happened to the Kutlah that it accepted to negotiate on such basis."<sup>4</sup>

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1. See, Bayan al-Jabhah'an Mashru' al-Mu'ahadah... passim.  
See also Bayan al-Jabhah ila al-Ummah al-Arabiyyah... passim.
  2. Bayan al-Jabhah ila al-Ummah al-Arabiyyah ... p. 18.
  3. Ibid, p. 14.
  4. Ibid, p. 19.

The Front said that the Kutlah started the negotiations on a very shaky basis. To prove its point the Front gives the following information. In a letter of the French High Commissioner to the Prime Minister of Syria, the High Commissioner allowed a Syrian delegation, to go to France and present its views to the French Government in Paris.<sup>1</sup> The text of the letter shows that the purpose of the delegation was not to negotiate a treaty, but only to prepare for the negotiation of a treaty.

Furthermore, the Kutlah agreed to acquiesce to the demand of the High Commissioner concerning the respect of the directive texts that were supported by the League of Nations. This, the Front says, implies that the text of the mandate should not be violated; and that the different constitutions that were drawn up for the different states of Syria should not be abolished; and the system of Common Interests should be maintained.<sup>3</sup> These texts, the Front points out, would not only make the unity of Syria impossible, but would also infringe on the financial, economic and political sovereignty of the country. The Kutlah does not even put some reservations of its own to counteract those of the French Government.<sup>4</sup>

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1. For the text of the letter of the High Commissioner, see, *Ibid*, pp. 2 - 3.

2. *Ibid*. p. 19.

3. *Kalimat al-Jabhah al wataniyyah.* passim.

4. *Bayan al-Jabhah al-Wataniyyah ila al-Ummah al-Arabiyyah*, pp. 19-31.

France may also conclude a similar treaty with Lebanon, and then claim that a political union between Syria and Lebanon would be incompatible with the international obligations of France. How, asks the Front, would it ever be possible for Syria to exist without having an outlet to the sea ; or to agree to the division of its coast from its interior when these two parts share national and economic interests, beside their common history, and political aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

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The internal organization of the United National Front is very simple. Special attention had been given by the framers of its by-laws that the party should be made as efficient as possible, without going too far in the violation of democratic principles.

The by-laws provided for a Central Committee made up of twelve members, chosen by the active members of the party. This Central Committee resided in the capital and determined the policy of the party on all issues. These twelve members chose a General Secretary who represented the party on all formal occasions and who eventually became its leader. They also choose a treasurer and an accountant<sup>2</sup>. All party officials were unpaid.

The organization of the Front was highly centralized. It placed all powers in the hands of the twelve members of the Central Committee. Once they were chosen, neither the rank and file of the

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1. Ibid., p. 22.

2. Article 9 of the party's constitution.

party, nor the committees of the branches could effect their removal. The only check that had been placed on the Central Committee was that the duration of office, of the committee in question, was decided upon by all the active members of the Front<sup>1</sup>. This was indeed a unique practice for it demanded from all the members of the party to make their decision on how long the elected Central Committee would stay in office. A question usually fixed in the by-laws and not subject to change at every election. The difficulty of applying such a measure would have become obvious had this measure been applied, but it never was. Throughout the period of its existence no sufficient pressure was exercised on the Central Committee so as to force it to resign.

The only reason for putting such a measure in the by-laws was that the formulators wanted to put up a show of responsibility of the Central Committee to the rank and file and, at the same time, insure a long tenure of office.

No provision in the by-laws assigned any powers to the committees of the branches, not to speak of the rank and file, to initiate policy. The committees of the branches could carry out such measures that had a strictly local character<sup>2</sup>. In this way, the Central Committee became the sole and unchallenged formulator of the party's policy.

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1. The Constitution of the party article 9.

2. The Constitution of the party article 11 paragraph 1.

The only time the rank and file of the party could give suggestions to the Central Committee, was at the general party congresses which were not convened unless there arose an " extreme necessity ". The time when this " necessity " arose had to be decided by the Central Committee.<sup>1</sup>

Article 10 of the party's by-laws provided for the method in which decisions in the Central Committee, and any other organ of the party, should be taken. All decisions, it said, should be taken by an absolute majority of the members present. In case of a tie, -then the vote of the General Secretary decides the issue. The quorum of every meeting is reached when the absolute majority of the total membership, attends. If this is not reached at the first meeting, then the meeting is postponed a maximum period of 10 days. On the second meeting the number of members who attend, whether forming a majority or a minority, constitute a quorum.

All the above-mentioned measures have the common purpose of assuring centralization within the party. In fact centralization was necessary in a country where public opinion was not prepared enough to give a sound judgement on matters concerning policy. Syria, at that time, needed rapid action and people who could make quick decisions. This could not be secured if the democratic principles were to be fully observed.

The country needed leaders to decide and act rather than meetings to discuss. It was therefore necessary to invest the leaders

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1. Constitution article 11 paragraphe 2.



with wide powers. It might be said that better decisions and a healthier policy would have been followed, had there been a higher degree of public participation in the formulation of the party's policy. Yet, the evils of the age were so numerous and the demands of the country so obvious that any sincere person could, with little difficulty, discern the right path, to satisfy the national aspirations.

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The finances of the United National Front, were regulated by article 12 of its by-laws. This articles mentions the monthly dues as the only source of the party's income. Although no other source is mentioned, it is safe to suppose that any contribution would have been welcomed. It is interesting to note, however, that article 12 did not consider it the duty of every member to pay these dues, but only a contribution made by every member out of his own will and volition. This shows that, actually, these dues were not intended for strict recruitment. The same article also mentions that one third of the dues collected by the branches shall be sent to the Central Committee of the party - a measure which adds to the interrelation of the Central Committee to the branches. These monthly dues formed an important source of the party's income, but were not, however, the only one.

The most outstanding characteristic of the United National Front was in the regulations it set down for the acceptance, in the party, of individuals and groups. Article 14 said that no member would be accepted in the party except after the consent of the Central Committee, and after the consent of the administrative committees in the different districts. This article went on to say, and here is the singular practice, that any political party or organization that

wished to merge into the United National Front might do so after winning the consent of the Central Committee. The Front therefore had put more restrictions on the entrance of individuals in the party than on the entrance of organizations which might include hundreds of individuals. Moreover, to face the possibility of a whole organization merging into the Front, and to include provisions in the constitution for such an event, was, and still is, a unique practice.

From this characteristic fracture of the Front, some interesting generalisations might be drawn. First, that the political organizations of the day, were very similar in their political programmes, but that, despite their similarity they wished to remain distinct entities with a separate existence and personality.

Second, that political parties during the period of the mandate were not made up of homogeneous groups, but that every party had its internal dissensions and groups. For it is very difficult for an outside group to lose its individuality completely when it joins another group.

Third, that the political parties were not representative of a particular class or group interest, but managed, however inefficiently, to work for the interest of all classes at the same time. This was only possible because the feeling of hate for the French mandate had cut through all classes of society. To have that feeling was enough to admit one into any nationalist political organization.

The United National Front felt that the basis, on which party-divisions were drawn, was unsound. Consequently, it often called for unifying all efforts, and for the formation of one organiza-

tion that would take upon itself alone the defence of the national interests.<sup>1</sup>

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The People's Party, the Kutlah Party, and the United National Front, were three typical political organizations that appeared in Syria during the period of the mandate. All the other minor political parties that were formed during this period followed, basically, the same pattern in their programmes and internal organization.

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1. Party leaflet entitled, " D'awah ila Taw'hid al-Sufaf ",(undated.)

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

From this general survey, one definit conclusion can be drawn : that despite their number and their unceasing activities, the political parties that appeared during the period under consideration (1918-1939) made no material contribution to the history of Syria, and achieved none of the purposes for which political parties are set up.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the country was passing through a period of crisis during Feisal's regime, and that the mandatory power imposed serious restrictions on the activity of parties during the period of the mandate. Yet, it is also true, that political organization during both periods suffered from serious defects which might rightly be considered among the chief causes of the down fall and end of Feisal's regime and the continuation of the restrictions imposed by the mandatory power.

In this chapter the main defects of the Syrian party system during the period shall be enumerated, and some solutions shall be proposed.

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Indeed the basic defect, in the Syrian political life as a whole, which had a remarkable effect on the political parties, was the lack of a politically mature public opinion.

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1. For the functions of Political parties see Wilson, op. cit., p.332.

It may be difficult to define political maturity, and still more difficult to define <sup>public opinion.</sup> Some have even said that to define " public opinion " is to try to define the indefinable<sup>1</sup>. But the lack of a clear definition of anything is no proof of its non-existence. As often as none you unfailingly recognize it when you meet it<sup>2</sup>. It was easily recognizable in Syria during the period under consideration. It made itself obvious in the demands of the political leaders which the people echoed and applauded. It was felt in the numerous manifestations which continued almost uninterruptedly between the two world wars. For the people of Syria were very responsive to political stimuli and readily answered the call of political leaders. In fact, Syria, contrary to what might be expected in a new democracy, did not suffer from the apathy of the average voter except to a very small degree. Political activity had permeated all classes of urban society, and keen interest in political affairs rapidly developed. In other words, it was not so much political consciousness which parties had to create among the masses, as it was how to direct and control that consciousness.

The political parties had to curb the sentiments of an enthusiastic populace and help formulate sound and rational opinions, based on definite plans and conforming to a subtle general policy. Briefly, the political parties had to create a mature public opinion.

But instead of leading, the political leaders were themselves driven by the emotionalism of the mob. Consequently,

1. Wilson, op. cit., p. 243.

2. Gorry, op. cit., p. 266.

the efforts of both came to naught. None of the party leaders had the <sup>nerve</sup> ~~power~~ to stand against the tide of emotionalism, or to attempt persuade the people of the futility of emotionalism, when even a nation-wide revolt (1935-1936) had already proved useless.

Political maturity, however, would not have solved all evils, for those evils had a long history behind them and were deeply rooted in the minds and hearts of the majority of the population. But had there been a politically mature public opinion the effects of those evils would have been markedly mitigated.

Chief among those evils was the spirit of provincialism or sectionalism. Although the mandatory power profited a great deal from the existence of this spirit, and tried, by a number of measures, to insure its continuation, yet, in fairness to the mandatory power, it did not create it. This spirit had existed during the Ottoman regime when allegiance to the district or locality came next to the allegiance to the Sultan-Caliph. Under the Turks, the Druzes insisted upon what practically amounted to self-government and immunity from military service. " They had no sentiment of solidarity with other Syrians."<sup>1</sup> When the

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1. Kohn, op. cit., p. 395.

religious influence of Istanbul was weakened after the Revolution of 1908-1909, this provincial spirit acquired new vigour, remaining even when nationalism became the new moving force in Middle East politics. Provincialism stood as one of the main obstacles in the way of nationalism. It divided the allegiance of citizens between the State and the province.

The mandatory power found in this situation an effective weapon to establish its rule in the country. It tried therefore to make each province an independent or a semi-independent state, justifying its actions on the grounds that this was what the people had got used to during the period of Ottoman administration. It overlooked the fact that the Ottoman administration was bound to follow these lines because of the extensiveness of the Empire's territory, as it overlooked that such an administration was not necessary in a small state like Syria.

This situation had a direct effect on the activity of political parties, making difficult for them to acquire a national character. They had to restrict their activity to some province, and sometimes to some city. Political activity, therefore, centered mainly around such cities as Aleppo, Damascus,<sup>1</sup> Hama and Hama.

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1. Damascus was more active politically than Aleppo, this was due to three reasons : -

1. Damascus is situated at the center of the Arab World while Aleppo is on its fringes. 2. The inhabitants of Aleppo include a great Turkish or Turkified group, while the population of Damascus is purely Arab. 3. Aläppeans, on the whole, care more for commercial prosperity than for political activity.

As an immediate result of this situation there grew in Syria a schism between the urban and the rural districts. While the cities became the center of political activity, the rural areas were neglected. The political parties did not try to establish branches in those areas, but limited their activities to the cities. The country grew unconscious of its national character and could no longer feel with the rest of the nation. The mandatory power profited tremendously from this situation and was able, by concentrating most of its propaganda and influence in the rural areas, to win a support to its measures which allowed it to prolong its stay in Syria. In fact, the support that the candidates wanting to cooperate with the French received came almost exclusively from rural areas. The village felt that its interests were not defended and were even sacrificed for the interest of the city. This feeling would never have arisen had the political parties had the foresight to make the rural areas share in their activity.

There was still another schism of a much more dangerous character than the previous ones. A schism much more difficult to abolish when it was most essential that it should disappear, namely, the schism between the rulers and the ruled. The people looked with suspicion and distrust on the government; they did not feel that the government worked for their benefit. They were convinced that government worked for the interest of those who govern and not for the interest of those who were governed. This feeling had existed during the Ottoman period when the representative of the Sultan was a ruthless tax - collector who used his office



to insure for himself a financially easy life when he got back to his home town. This idea was strengthened during the period of the mandate when the French authorities tried to put in the leading posts those men who were most likely to safeguard the interests of France in the country; What Mario Annodi says of France in this respect, is also applicable to Syria, " the figure of the average deputy in the citizen's mind did not emerge as that of a public servant, but of a mediocre person interested in a political career, mindful of the affairs of those nearest him, and not above the reach of corruption."<sup>1</sup> This lack of confidence would have greatly decreased had the political parties been clearly divided and well-organized. The people would have been able to choose those whom they could trust and those whom they could not, on a sound ideological basis. But with the vagueness which existed in party lines, the shifting membership among their ranks, the lack of clear programmes, and the personal funds among the leaders, very few deputies in the Syrian representative bodies escaped the suspect of the masses. No one, however, tried to change the attitude of the masses towards government. Although this attitude might have been a useful one during the period of the mandate, by making the task of government very difficult for the mandatory power, the political leaders did not have the insight to consider the difficulties with which a national government would be faced should it ever take office.

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1. Marx, M., Foreign Governments, (New York, 1949), p. 149.

Added to all the above-mentioned dividing factors may be mentioned the influence of religious fanaticism. This factor is one of the most dangerous misfortunes which could befall a State. Its influence, however, has often been exaggerated during the period under consideration. It is true that religious heads had a great influence on the political development in Syria, but the role religion played as a dividing factor in the Syrian body-politic was limited. The spirit of nationalism, fanned by the necessity of unity against a common foreign danger, greatly mitigated the influence of religious fanaticism. The mandatory power, however, tried to revive this spirit, hoping thereby to win the sympathy of part of the population when it proved impossible to win that of all of it. " (The French) made the mistake of ignoring the change produced by a new epoch in the outlook of the various Syrian sects and religions, hitherto rigidly divided ..... The rise of Syrian national consciousness ... was a fact that the French sometimes ignored and sometimes combated."<sup>1</sup>

The reaction to this policy was that the national political leaders became increasingly aware of the evils of religious fanaticism. Consequently, the programme of every political party clearly mentioned that the party considered all citizens equal in rights and obligations, and that no distinction would be made on grounds of religion. In this respect, the political parties, shared in developing among the people an allegiance higher than that of

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1. Kohn, op. cit., p. 391 - 393.

religion. The continuous political unrest and demonstrations made the people aware of a cause for which the effort of every individual was an absolute necessity. Furthermore, it was very difficult to develop a religious fanaticism between the Syrian Moslems and Christians, for religious fanaticism does not find a fertile ground except in those countries where the members of at least two religious groups are equally or almost equally divided. Only then would every group be afraid of falling under the sway of the other. In the case where different religious groups are not evenly divided minority groups do not expect to have government exclusively or largely in their hands. This was the case in Syria. Confronted with an overwhelming Moslem majority the Christians did not contemplate the idea of becoming the sole or even the main political force ; rather, they saw in cooperation with the majority, the best method for the achievement of the national good. The mandatory power realized this fact, and therefore did not try in Syria, as it tried in Lebanon, to establish an antagonism between Moslems and Christians only, but tried also to extend that antagonism to the different sects of the same religion. It gave the Alaouites, who formed a majority in the district of Latikia, a semi-independent status and tried to win them over to its side against the national movement.

Although religious influence was not very great, it was great enough to cause serious concern to the political parties. During Feisal's regime and throughout the period of the mandate,

religious heads were able to exert a marked influence over the masses.<sup>1</sup> The duty of the political parties was therefore to weaken the influence of religion by reminding the people of the secular character of modern nationalism.

Those were some of the evils from which the Syrian body-politic generally suffered. The political parties, however, suffered more seriously from internal factors.

(1) Of these the lack of solidary within party-lines was the first. On the whole, members of the political organization did not feel an attachment to the party to which they belonged, and if they sometimes did, it was only the result of a temporary wave of enthusiasm. Accordingly, membership in the political parties was not steady. This observation was specially true of the parties which appeared during Feisal's regime. During the mandate, although the members of one party might join another party, the change was among nationalist organizations. Rarely do we hear of a member of a nationalist organization quitting his party to join a positivist, or "moderate", organization.

This lack of solidarity explains why the parties which appeared during Feisal's regime did not continue during the mandate period, and that the majority of parties which appeared during the mandate period had a short span of life. Those which survived the mandate period had to introduce drastic modifications into

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1. See above p. 60 - 61.

their programmes which made them seem like completely new parties rather than the continuation of already existing ones.

② Among the chief reasons for the lack of solidarity also was the absence of good internal organization in the Syrian political parties. There is no record of a single well-organized party in Syria during the period under consideration. None of the political parties provided for strict rules of membership ; there were no provisions for division of power and the allocation of responsibility within the party ; there were no rules providing for the administration of party-organs.

When it came to practice all rules were suspended to assure the temporary increase of the party's support. All members were recruited without any test, consequently any figure given as to the membership of each political party was purely an approximate one.

No records were kept of the party's activities, and the rank and file were rarely informed of the measures the party has taken or expects to take. Dues were not regularly collected and the party funds depended almost always upon the contributions of a handful of individuals.

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the party leaders. The parties had not yet realized the importance of peaceful propaganda in influencing public opinion. Consequently, no propaganda agency is heard of until the middle thirties.<sup>1</sup> Political clubs were neglected despite their necessity for the education of public opinion. As a result, the political parties could not keep their members bound to the party. (3)

As a result of the lack of organization the political parties faced serious financial difficulties. None of the wealthier people who preferred to stay out of the limelight of politics trusted any political party enough to contribute to it what might insure for it an easier financial life. Thus the main source of income of political parties was from the contributions of party members and from party dues.

Non-political organizations such as trade-unions, associations of workers, of landlords, of employees etc... the contributions of which form the main source of income in all modern parties, were non-existent or were still in a very rudimentary stage during the period under consideration.<sup>2</sup>

Weak internal organization and limited income were two important factors which contributed to the weakness of party life in general. The most important factor, however, which contributed to that situation was the lack of a clear ideology for the Syrian political parties. None of the parties had a systematic scheme of ideas, a literature, a manner of thinking characteristic of them. (4)  
(5)

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1. In 1934 was founded the Propaganda Office of Fakhri Al-Baroudi.

2. For the beginnings of the Labour Movement in Syria see, "Nashrat Mutasalsilah fil-Iktisad al-Ijtima'i. (Damascus, 1938.)"

This is not to say that they had no specific aim, for all aimed at independence and unity. But such aims were too limited and could not insure the long continuation of the organizations professing them. These aims, however essential, ought not to have been considered ultimate goals, as they actually were, but only means for the achievement of higher goals and further ideals. Distant and unattainable goals are often essential for the animation of the masses, and for keeping them cohesive bodies.

As a result of the lack of ideological parties there was no ideological opposition among the different Syrian parties. Such an opposition, however, ought to have been the essential, if not the only, basis upon which political parties must differ. Although there were no ideological clashes among the Syrian parties, there was no unified or concerted action either. What was therefore the basis upon which political parties differed ? What were the factors that divided the people, or the obstacles that stood in the way of unified action ?

To answer this question is to determine one of the greatest factors which made the Syrian political parties weak, loose, and ineffective. Members of every party were bound to their organization by a person to whom they paid primary allegiance This person was often the head of a family. David says, " En Syrie musulmane, comme dans la plupart des pays d'Islam, l'opinion publique n'est faite que par les chefs des familles puissantes, dont tous les efforts tendent à organiser la défense de leurs intérêts particuliers, par les fonctionnaires ou par ceux qui



aspirent à le devenir."<sup>1</sup> " These great families still exercise almost unrestricted power in Syria and Mesopotamia. In Egypt Zaghul pasha's struggle and that of the ruling class which he led strove to break the power of this oligarchy; later, in Syria, General Sarrail made the first unsuccessful efforts in that direction."<sup>3</sup>

Due to the allegiance that the individual felt to his family, there was formed in Syria a number of minor political groups sometimes acting independently and sometimes cooperating with a greater group, without, however, losing their identity. These divisions were present within the major parties such as the Kutlah and the Istiklal parties. It has been noticed, for example, that most of the political leaders of Syria had, at one time or another, belonged to al-Fatat or al-Istiklal parties. Consequently, all the parties which were formed in Syria were off-shoots from the above-mentioned organizations.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed these personal and family feuds were among the chief reasons for the desintegration of political party life after 1920. They account also for the large number of minor political parties which appeared in Syria during the period of the mandate - a thing which added to the already existing confusion in Syrian party-life.

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1. David, op. cit., p. 21.

2. Kohn, op. cit., p. 286.

3. From an interview with the late Adil al-Azma. Beirut, 10/3/52.

The lust for leadership and fame did Syria a great deal of harm and lay at the base of all the serious divisions which occurred in nationalist lines.

Syria suffered from having too many leaders when it needed only a few. The importance of leadership in a political organization is an acknowledged fact. It is indispensable to secure unity. It was most unfortunate that throughout the period under consideration, there was not in Syria a single political leader capable of winning the respect and allegiance of minor political leaders and of doing away with the imaginary differences which opportunists tried to create among the different political groups.

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