

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSES OF
INSTABILITY IN SYRIAN POLITICS

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF M.A.
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NAMAN NAZIR NAKFOOR
1956



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**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSES OF INSTABILITY
IN SYRIAN POLITICS**

An Abstract of a thesis

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Master of Arts**

by

**Naman Nazir Nakfoor
January, 1956**

In her first ten years of independence, Syria had passed through a series of coup d'etats witnessing violent changes of leadership. Her constitutional life was suspended on two occasions by two military leaders. The army became so involved in politics to the extent that five coup d'etats were staged in a period of four years. The whole independence period could be characterized as one of instability and chaos. In this thesis an attempt is made to investigate the causes of this situation.

One of the causes was the lack of experience in self-government on the part of Syrian leaders. When independence was won in 1946, those who came to power were nationalist leaders who had bravely fought the French and refused to cooperate with them. Until then, their life was spent majorily in resistance movements rather than governmental work. They were not adequately prepared for their new role.

A second cause of instability was itself cuased by two major developments in the Arab world. The rivalry between the Hashimites and the Egyptian-Saudi Camp for the leadership of the Arab world was intensified after the formation of the Arab League. Syria became the target and battle ground of their rivalries. Their continuous meddling in her domestic and foreign affairs contributed greatly to her instability. The second major development in the area was the Arab-Israeli War in which the Syrians, together with other Arabs, lost face and prestige. The nationalist regime was considered responsible for loosing the war and was forced out of power. The Army, which staged the coup d'etat,

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set up a precedent which was resorted to four times in the four years to follow.

The third major cause of instability is the lack of consensus among Syrian leaders and political parties on certain vital issues relating to the nature and role of government. The distribution of power among the different branches and agencies of government, the position of the church in the state, the economic and social functions of government and many others are issues that have not yet been settled.

With the lack of experience on the part of its personnel, the meddling of its neighbors in its own affairs and the complexities of the problems, the government was expected by the people to do the impossible in the shortest possible time. It was expected to turn Syria into a fully modern progressive and democratic state after living for ages under an under developed feudal and autocratic system. Impatient with slow work, the Syrians were forcing one government after another out of power. Their concept of change was reduced simply to change in top governmental personnel. Whenever things went wrong, they blamed it on the government. Changes in government always brought with them new hopes of a change in the situation. After ten years of experience in this technique, it is hoped that the Syrians realized their mistake. The task of building up a country is one that requires hard and patient work on the part of the people as well as the rulers.

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INTRODUCTION

In a period of thirty years Syria was ruled by one King, a foreign power, a number of civilian native governments, and three military dictators. During the same period she had adopted four different constitutions. Under the native constitutional rule cabinets were changed at the rate of one every six months. One ruling clique followed another, all searching with little success for a panacea to the complicated problems of that small country. The question of why Syria was unable to find the solution to her problems poses a challenge to any one interested in the political development of this country. This thesis is an attempt on the writer's part to face this challenge.

It should, however, be made clear from the beginning that the attempt was not, by all means, successful. The reasons for this are many:

1. Very little has been published in Western languages about Syria. The collecting of material for this work was one of the greatest obstacles with which the writer was confronted.
2. Nothing has been written by individuals who took an active part in the internal and external affairs of Syria. Many of those leading personalities passed away without leaving their memoirs or diaries and we shall never hear from them. Those who are still living have not yet published any work. In addition, the bulk of the official documents of the government have not been released nor have they leaked out.

3. The complicated nature of the problems and issues involved is another source of difficulty. This was best illustrated by the words of one writer on the subject who said, "If those who speak or write about political conditions in the Arab states in general and Syria in particular sometimes seem confused or occasionally contradict themselves, it may be because there are confusing factors and contradictory indications in the situation itself. Mistrust, rather, the speaker or writer who makes it all sound very simple and logical for he is probably guilty of oversimplification."¹

Instead of being discouraged by these handicaps, the writer was, rather, intrigued by and attracted to the subject. It is hoped that this work will help in shedding a ray of light on certain aspects of the political life of this small country.

The work is divided into four chapters.

Chapter I covers the historical background preceeding the period under discussion. Although the emphasis is on the period 1945-55, a treatment of the period from the beginning of the twentieth century is essential if one is to understand the mentality of some of the ruling elite who began their political life at that time and have played a leading role in the politics of the country during the period under study. Not only the mentality of the ruling elite was influenced by the past but, also, many of the problems that will be treated are deep rooted in it.

Chapter II deals with the regional problems of the Arab world and their impact on the course of events in Syria. This includes the Arab

League and other schemes of unification proposed from time to time.

There is definite evidence that such regional affairs have played a leading role in the domestic political life of Syria.

Chapter III deals with political leadership. Here the different political groups striving for leadership on the political scene will be discussed. Political parties and their programs will be fully analysed. The political and social orientation of such groups, together with the philosophies and ideologies guiding their actions, will be treated. This naturally leads to the topic of Westernization and its impact on Syria's political institutions and life. The role of the army in politics will be portrayed since the army is one of the many groups striving for leadership.

Chapter IV consists of summary and conclusions.

A useful source of material was the Official Journal of the Syrian Republic in which all the laws, legislative decrees and ministerial orders are published. The Journal also records the parliamentary debates of the Syrian Legislature of which extensive use has been made. The Journal is a weekly published in Arabic and all the issues from 1946-54 have been reviewed by the writer.

Other sources consisted of articles published in a number of Journals and periodicals. For factual data extensive use was made of the New York Times and Les Cahiers de l'Orient Contemporain, a French periodical. Books written on Syria for this period are few. All that are available have been consulted.

CHAPTER I

Historical Background

As has already been mentioned in the introduction, some of the basic problems of Syria are rooted in the period preceeding that which is the center of interest. Moreover, some of the leading Syrian political figures started their political careers in this period. This chapter is written to clarify those problems and to give an understanding of the background of some of those leaders.

It is, however, difficult to set a date in the history of Syria where all relations with the past are completely cut off. The events of every period have their roots in the preceeding one and history is a continuous process. The date chosen for this background period is the beginning of the Twentieth century. It was at this time that Syrians began mobilizing their efforts and organizing themselves for the sake of gaining independence from the Turks. It is at this time that they learned the principles of the French Revolution and attempted to practice them at home.

Struggle for Independence Prior to the Mandate

The contact of Syria with the West came much earlier than the beginning of the Twentieth century. Early in the seventeenth century French missionaries began to settle in Syria.¹ Their activities were limited in scope due to the persecution of the Ottoman government. Americans first arrived in 1820.² It was under the rule of Mohammed Ali

(1833-40) that French and American missionaries started to carry out their activities on a larger scale.

These early contacts between the native Syrians on one hand, and the French and Americans on the other, resulted in a movement for the revival of the Arabic language. This movement was partly motivated by the missionaries' desire to utilize the language in order to study the native culture and, partly, by the natives' desire to use the language as a tool for the reviving of their culture and heritage. The early literary societies which were formed soon began to engage in political activities. Ibrahim Yazigi, a member of the Syrian Scientific Society established in 1857, composed a poem which was considered to be the first call for Syrian unity and the germ of Syrian nationalism.³

It was at the Syrian Protestant College, now the American University of Beirut, that the first movement aimed at independence was organized in 1875. The first five initial members were all Christians, but were later on joined by members of all religious creeds. The society, a secret and revolutionary one in nature, had its headquarters in Beirut and branches in Damascus, Tripoli, and Sidon. On one of the placards that the members used to hang on the walls at night, the following statement was once found: "By the sword may distant aims be attained; seek with it if you mean to succeed."⁴

The platform of the society consisted of:

1. The grant of independence to Syria in union with Lebanon;⁵
2. The recognition of Arabic as an official language in the country;

3. The removal of the censorship and other restrictions on the freedom of expression and the diffusion of knowledge;
4. The employment of locally recruited units for local military service only.⁶

The platform is a careful blend of Western innovation and native requirements, a process which has continued to manifest itself in Syrian politics ever since.

Aside from awakening the national feeling on a small scale the movement achieved nothing. It survived for few years and finally disbanded.

Sultan Addul-Hamid succeeded to the Ottoman throne at the time when some educated elements of his Empire were pressing for reform and some sort of constitutional rule. Under pressure from European powers he promulgated a constitution in 1876. Soon afterwards the Russo-Turkish war began and the Sultan used it as an excuse to suspend the constitution. His action resulted in the disappointment of the intellectual elite of the Empire, Turks and Arabs alike. The period 1877-1908 was one in which Arabs joined hands with Turks in the fight against the despotism of the Sultan.⁷

On the 24th of July, 1908, the Sultan was forced by a military group of his own army to restore the constitution, and in 1909 the same group forced him to abdicate. The group which led this coup d'etat became known as the Committee on Union and Progress.

This change of government in Constantinople was joyfully received in every part of the Empire, including Syria. It was not long, however,

until the Young Turks began to reveal their true policy of Pan-Turanism with little or no regard to the rights and interests of the non-Turkish elements of the Empire. In the first elections under the new regime, constituencies were apportioned in such a manner as to favor the Turkish elements. Not only did they manage to elect a majority of Turks where there was no Turkish majority, but they also managed to elect a great majority of their nominees through the control of the electoral machine.⁸

Syrian and other Arab nationalists became convinced that the Young Turks were no more eager to fulfill their aspirations for autonomy and self-government than their predecessor Abdul-Hamid and that they had to do it for themselves by themselves. A score of societies were established, some in secret some in the open. They were not exclusively Syrian societies, but Arab societies in which Syrians together with other Arab nationalists were working together. It is necessary to mention a few words about each of the leading ones.⁹

Al-Mountada al-Arabi (The Literary Club) was founded in Constantinople under the leadership of Abdul-Hamid Zehraoui in 1909. The members were mainly students, government officials and men of letters. The rank and file membership was predominantly recruited from students all over the Arab countries. Its main political aim was the achievement of Arab independence.

Al-Ia-Markaziah (The Decentralization Party) was founded in Egypt in 1912 and had numerous branches in Syria and Iraq. Although the headquarters were in Egypt the founders were all Syrians by

nationality. Their aim was not complete separation with the Ottoman Empire, but rather, the decentralization of administration so that the Arab countries might obtain a certain degree of local self-government. The party itself was highly centralized with the control vested in a Committee of Twenty.

Al-Qahtaniya was established in Constantinople in 1909. Among its leading members were a number of high ranking Arab officers in the Turkish army. It was a secret society and great care was taken in the choosing of its members. The society's program aimed at creating an independent Arab kingdom which would be linked with the Ottoman Empire which would become a Turko-Arab Empire similar in structure to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is interesting to note that some Young Turks were in favor of practically the same scheme. In one of his speeches at Damascus in 1914, Djemal Pasha, Commander of the Fourth Turkish Army said, "Gentlemen, the programme for the welfare of the Arabs which our party means to carry out in its entirety is more comprehensive than anything you can imagine. I, myself, am not one of those who think it a harmful or dangerous thing that the two races, Arab and Turkish, should secure their unity while remaining separate nations, subject to the same Khalif."¹⁰ It is to be remembered, however, that such a concession on the part of the Turks came during the war and was meant to appease the Syrian nationalists and secure their support.

Due to the betrayal of one of its members and because of its secretive nature, the society was dissolved without contributing anything to the Arab cause.

Jamiyat al-Arabiya al-Fatat (The Young Arab Society) was founded in Paris in 1911. The founders were seven Arab students studying in Paris. Its aim was to achieve Arab independence. The founders were extreme nationalists and the society could be labelled as the most radical of them all. In 1913 its headquarters moved to Beirut and in 1914 to Damascus. It played an important role during World War I in allying Syrian public opinion on the side of the allies against the Turks. Due to its secret nature, membership did not exceed two hundred.

These were the four leading societies but other minor ones were also founded. If one is to consider these societies as the embryos of political parties in Syria, which is a fair assumption, the following important remarks should be made:

1. In most of these societies the students played a major role. In the case of Al-Fatat they, themselves, took the initiative. This is a phenomenon in Syrian politics which still exists up to present day. One possible explanation of this phenomenon is that students are much more exposed to Western Cultures and ideas and become more interested in adopting them. Another explanation might be that students do not have enough social activities and sports that might keep them busy. Instead they direct all their youthful energies to politics.

2. In one of these societies, at least, army officers played a major role. Again the interest of the military in politics still manifests itself in Syria to the present day. The series of coups and counter coups that took place in the country 1949-54 is a definite evidence of the army's interest in politics.

3. Membership in these societies in all cases was small and highly exclusive. In the case of the two secret ones this is perfectly natural, but in the case of the others it seems to reflect a trend which is still characteristic of political parties of today. Very little effort is made by party leaders to extend their work to the grass roots of society, to the masses.

4. None of the societies had more than one item on its platform; namely, Syrian independence. This was also the case of political parties formed during the French mandate period. Political parties existing in 1945, when Syria achieved its full independence were, virtually left without a platform and they hastily composed them with very little thought or planning.

Such was the situation in Syria and the Arab world when World War I broke out in 1914. The war presented the Syrians with an opportunity to free themselves from Ottoman domination. Late in 1914, the Turks declared war on the Entente Powers and it became obvious that the Arabs had only one course to follow, that of joining the Entente. A number of their leaders started negotiating with the French directly,¹¹ but the majority preferred to negotiate with the British and selected for that purpose Emir Hussein of Mecca to become their spokesman.¹² Emir Hussein started his negotiations with Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner at Cairo, in June 1915.¹³ In his first letter to the High Commissioner, Hussein, as a price for his support to the British, asked that Great Britain acknowledge the independence of all the Arab portion of the

Ottoman Empire. The boundaries of this area, as set by Hussein himself, were as follows:

"On the North by the line Mersina-Adana to parallel 37 N. and thence along the line Birejik-Urfa-Mardin-Midiat-Jazirat-Amadia to the Persian frontier; on the East by the Persian frontier to the Persian Gulf; on the South, by the Indian Ocean (with the exclusion of Adana whose status will remain as it is); on the West, by the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea back to Mersin." 14

MacMahon was hesitant to agree to these claims, but, when pressed further, he conceded Hussein's claims in the area, with the exclusion of the districts of Mersina and Alexandretta, and the portions of Syria lying to the West of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo on the basis that such districts could not be considered purely Arab. MacMahon made the reservation that His Majesty's Government would accept Hussein's claims only to those portions in which she was free to act without detriment to her ally France. It was also made very clear to Hussein throughout this correspondence that France had certain interests in Syria which she was determined to keep, and that England would not help Hussein against the French in case their interests clashed in the future.

Being aware of the Turks intentions to depose him, Hussein was willing to compromise by deferring the settlement of the disputed portions till after the end of the war.

The French must have suspected some sort of an agreement between the Arabs and the British so they insisted on reaching an agreement with Great Britain on the future of the Ottoman Empire. This agreement,

reached in May 1916, became known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement.¹⁵

Under its terms the western part of Syria went to France, and the Vilayats of Baghdad and Basra to Great Britain. Both nations were to be free to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desired or as they might deem fit to establish after agreement with the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States. Palestine was to be internationalized. In the rest of the area there was to be established one Arab state or a confederation of Arab states where France and Great Britain were to have divided spheres of influence.

When the war ended in 1918 Great Britain found herself in an embarrassing situation with her pledges to the Arabs and her agreement with the French basically in conflict. What happened in the Paris Peace Conference with respect to the Arab world was, in essence, a triangular struggle with the Arabs struggling for full independence, the French fighting for a privileged position in Syria and Great Britain playing the role of a compromiser. In Lloyd George's own words the British position was as follows,

"This put us in a very awkward position, as we were friends with the French, but also friends with the Arabs who had fought gallantly on our side against the Turks and contributed materially to our victory. It was therefore entirely in our interest that the French and the Arabs should get on better terms with one another."¹⁶

Faisal, Hussein's son, who led the Northern Campaign of the Arab revolt, together with the famous Lawrence of Arabia, made two trips to Europe for the purpose of presenting the Arab case to the Peace Conference. Faisal was not able to gain full independence for the peoples he represented

because France had specific claims to that part of the world, and Great Britain could not make up her mind whether to support him or support the French.

The only major power which was not involved in this problem was the United States. In an attempt to adhere to his own Fourteen Points, President Wilson insisted on the consultation of the peoples of that area as to the type of government they wished to have. He suggested the formation of a commission of inquiry to visit the disputed areas and assess the desires of the indigenous population. Both France and Great Britain accepted the idea. The commission was to be composed of representatives from the U. S., Great Britain, France and Italy. All except France appointed their delegates.¹⁷ Fearing that participating in the commission without France might provoke further unpleasantness, Great Britain decided to withdraw and so did Italy.¹⁸ President Wilson, nevertheless, decided to send a purely American commission which became known as the King-Crane Commission.

At the time that the King-Crane Commission was conducting its inquiry in Syria, a Syrian Congress met in Damascus on April 7, 1919, to deliberate on the type of government for Syria. On March 7, 1920, the Congress met again and declared Syria an independent constitutional monarchy with Faisal as the first King.¹⁹ The declaration was intended to frustrate the plans of the Allies who were scheduled to meet soon and settle the question. It was thought by the Syrian political leaders that such an action would face the Allies with a fait-accompli and would force

them to think twice before agreeing on any other scheme.²⁰ The Supreme Allied Council, nevertheless, met in San Remo, Italy, and decided in April, 1920, to place Syria under French mandate. The formal treaty legalizing the mandate is known as the Treaty of Sevres signed on the 10th of August, 1920.²¹ Articles 94-97 covered the mandate for Syria, Mesopotamia, and Palestine. Article 94, paragraph I, read as follows:

"The High Contracting parties agree that Syria and Mesopotamia shall, in accordance with the fourth paragraph of article 22, part I (Covenant of the League of Nations), be provisionally recognized as independent states subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone."

Signatories to the Treaty were: United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, The Union of South Africa, India, France, Italy, Japan, Armenia, Belgium, Holland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Turkey. Hedjaz was supposed to be represented, but did not send any delegates, neither did she sign the treaty. The mandate for Syria and Lebanon came definitively into force on September 29, 1923.

The period that followed the San Remo agreement until the actual occupation of Damascus by the French in July, 1920 was one of anarchy and chaos in Syria. The French were clashing with the natives constantly and the situation was moving from bad to worse. Faisal was aware of the fact that the French would enforce the mandate by arms, if necessary. "No one," he said, "is under any illusions regarding the aims of the French policy, which is to create trouble through the country, make my task in the Eastern zone impossible, then intervene with their army and impose their will by force of arms upon the entire nation."²² Feeling that

he was not strong enough militarily to meet the French forces, he was willing to reach an agreement, and he expressed his readiness to revisit Europe and resume his negotiation with the concerned powers, but General Gouraud, then French High Commissioner in Syria, blocked his wish.²³

On July 14, 1920, the General sent Faisal a four days' ultimatum demanding five concessions, of which the acceptance of the mandate by the Syrians was the most important.²⁴ Faisal asked for two days extension which was granted. Five hours before the expiration of the ultimatum Faisal cabled Gouraud his acceptance of its terms, but Gouraud never acknowledged its receipt. He sent him a much stronger ultimatum. Feeling that he had compromised enough, Faisal and his entourage decided to resist French pressure at the expense of an armed clash.²⁵ On July 24, the two forces clashed in Maysaloun where the Syrians suffered a bad defeat and on the 25th, the French troops entered Damascus. Faisal was ordered by the French to leave the country which he did on the 28th.

Thus ended the short independent regime in Syria, the first in almost four centuries. The reaction of the Syrians to the course of events, and particularly to the attitude of the big powers, was extremely bitter and resentful. If one has to trace the origin of what might be called the distrust and dislike of foreigners by Middle Easterners he may choose this period as the starting point. The deposed King was well liked and

"He has never been forgotten in Syria. Too short for positive achievement, his regime has aroused enthusiasm and loyalty throughout the country. His government had had more solid foundations in the popular consent than any perhaps since the Ummayyad time. The generation which

remembered Faisal could never forgive the French, nor give to their rule more than a forced acquiescence.²⁶

There is no single event which has had more influence upon the history and politics of Syria than the treatment which the country received at the Paris Peace Conference. It has influenced Syrian politics in two very important ways. First, it created so much dissatisfaction that the Syrians have never since trusted the Europeans. The nationalist movement, which drew on western principles and institutions for guidance, was slowly transformed into a bitter, anti-Western and chauvinistic group. The present foreign policy of Syria cannot be understood unless there is an awareness of the psychological impact of this period.²⁷

The second way in which the peace settlement influenced Syrian politics can be considered as a natural outcome of that mentioned above. As a result of this betrayal by the West, the Syrians never acknowledged the French mandate, nor did they show any interest in cooperating with the French authorities. The policy followed by their political leaders was one of passivity and resistance. The efforts which could have been directed toward construction and development of the country were mainly consumed in fighting the French. The Syrian leaders were not hesitant to make it quite clear to the French that they would fight them until they left their country. In his very first meeting with Syrian leaders General Gouraud was told by one of them that his stay in the government palace would not be very long.²⁸ It is granted that a number of Syrian politicians did cooperate with the French, but the majority fought them tirelessly.

The Mandate

The mandate for Syria and Lebanon came definitively into force on September 29, 1923, and ended in May 1946. Actually, however, France was in occupation of Syria from August 1920. The story of these twenty-some years is a long and sad one. This thesis will limit itself only to the study of those aspects of the mandate which left their impression on the independence period.

Administration

The problem of how to administer Syria appears to have given the French a great deal of trouble. It was well known to the French, even before they took over, that the spokesmen of Arab nationalism were in favor of a great Arab unity. This was manifested in the different platforms of the Arab societies, in the Hussein-MacMahon correspondence, and in the many pronouncements of Faisal in the Peace Conference and elsewhere. Instead of respecting the aspirations of the Arabs, the mandate formula divided the area into a number of separate entities. Not satisfied with that, the French embarked on a policy of dividing their mandated area, Syria and Lebanon, into five separate states; Lebanon, Damascus, Aleppo, Alouite, and Djebel Druze.²⁹ The justification of such a division, according to the French, was that those states were created with respect to the religious and social characteristics particular to certain populations.³⁰ Instead of attempting to mold these different ethnic and religious groups into one national unit, France helped perpetuate them. This was noticed by the chairman of the Permanent Mandate

Commission when he asked the French representative, 'Whether the mandatory power ought not to have given preference to a system of fusion rather than to a system based on separatism.'³¹

Up to 1922 each of the five states was ruled by a governor, in most cases selected from the natives, and assisted by a representative council. Feeling that such a division was not natural, the French High Commissioner in 1922 created a federal council for three of the states; Damascus, Aleppo, and Alouite. Djebal Druze and Lebanon were not included.³² The federal council was composed of 15 members with each state electing five members. In turn the council elected a president who was supposed to be a native.

The federal council was a favored step toward future reunification of the divided area. It was granted the power to legislate except for a certain number of local regulations which were left to the jurisdiction of the states. For some unknown reasons the federation was dissolved by a decree dated 5 December, 1924, and was replaced by a Syrian state composed of the previous two states of Damascus and Aleppo. The Alouite state retained self-autonomous rule and the status of Djebal Druze remained as it was before.³³ It was not until 1936, that both the Alouite and the Djebal Druze joined the Syrian state in what is known today as political Syria.³⁴ Up to that time, the three states had no connection with each other, except through the office of the High Commissioner.

An evaluation of the effect of such changes in administration on the situation in Syria was made by the Permanent Mandate Commission

when it stated ;

"The Commission thinks it beyond doubt that these oscillations in matters so calculated to encourage the controversies so inspired by the rivalries of races, clans and religions, which are so keen in this country, to arouse all kinds of ambitions and to jeopardize serious moral and material interests, have maintained a condition of instability and unrest in the mandated territories." 35

Aside from changes in the administrative setup of the country, the mandate was characterized by frequent change of High Commissioners. In the first five years alone, the post of the high commissioner was held by five officials, excluding Acting High Commissioners. 36

The administrative policies of the mandatory power left two main impacts on the country which were very noticeable during the period of independence. These were: 1. The autonomous status granted to Djebel Druze and the Alouite made their assimilation into the Syrian state later on quite difficult. Both districts were a source of trouble to the central government and created crucial problems. 2. The change of rulers and regimes became one of the most serious diseases of the Syrian body politic. Political instability in the country after French evacuation became the rule rather than the exception. It seems that the Syrians, because of this experience under the French, received the impression that a change of rulers is always the solution of the crisis. Instead of searching for a practical solution for their problems, they were always looking up for a change of regimes or governments. The governments were constantly changing, but the problems remained unsolved. During the independence period governments succeeded each other with no change in

policies, but were still given approval by the people with the hope that a change in personalities might be the answer to their problems.

Strength of Constitutional Tradition

Article one of the Mandate stipulated that France, within a period of three years from the coming into force of the Mandate, should promulgate an organic law for Syria.³⁷ The Mandate came into force on September 29th, 1923, and so Syria was supposed to be enjoying a constitutional life by September 29th, 1926. It was not until May 14th, 1930, that Syria had its constitution, and the years that followed witnessed a series of constitutional crises in which the constitution was suspended on two occasions.

It was after the bloody riots of 1925 that the Syrians approached the French with the desire to "forget the past and inaugurate a period of cooperation."³⁸ M. Ponsot, then French High Commissioner, appointed on February 12, 1928, Sheikh Taj al-Din al-Hassani to head a provisional government for the purpose of conducting an election for a constituent assembly. Elections were held on the 24th of April, 1928, resulting in a victory for the nationalists.³⁹

The Assembly, which was elected for the purpose of framing a constitution, convened on June 9, and appointed a committee which in turn selected a sub-committee to prepare the draft. The draft was ready in about two months and the Assembly met on August 9 to discuss it and vote on the articles one by one. The assembly was asked by M. Ponsot to revise six of the articles before any vote was taken. The six articles were:

2, 73, 74, 75, 110 and 112.⁴⁰ Article 2 dealt with Syrian unity; articles 73, 74, 75, and 112 dealt with the President's power to grant pardons, conclude treaties, appoint and receive diplomatic representatives, and declare marshal law, respectively. Article 110 dealt with the organization of the future army. When the assembly refused to revise any of the six articles, M. Ponsot, on August 10, suspended it for three months and later on indefinitely. Finally, M. Ponsot had to give in, and on May 22, 1930, he surprised every one by promulgating the original draft with some minor changes and the addition of article 116 which read in part as follows: 'No provisions of the present constitution is or can be in conflict with the obligations contracted by France in respect of Syria, more particularly in regard to the League of Nations.'⁴¹

With the promulgation of the constitution, a date was set for a general election to be held on January 22, 1931, but, due to the bloody disturbances that swept the country as a result of French intervention in the elections, the date was postponed till April, 1932.⁴² Elections were held at that time and Syria for the first time under the mandate had a parliament of her own.

The chief interest of the newly elected parliament was the termination of the mandate and the basing of Franco-Syrian relations on a treaty relationship instead. Both the French and the Syrians agreed to the principle of reaching such a treaty. A draft treaty was signed on November 16, 1933, but due to the lack of agreement on the form of Syrian unity, the High Commissioner again suspended the parliament on November 26.⁴³

It was not until 1936 that the French again decided to compromise with the nationalists. This decision was really forced on them by internal and external pressures. The year 1936 started in Syria with strikes, demonstrations and violence. The strike lasted sixty days in which French enterprises were completely boycotted, schools were closed and every thing went dead.⁴⁴ On the international scene, Mussolini occupied Ethiopia. Both France and Great Britain became aware of his threat and were willing to compromise with the nationalist forces in the Middle East. Furthermore, a new government took over in Paris whose head, Leon Blum, and foreign minister, Yvon Delbos, were more sympathetic toward Syria's aspirations.⁴⁵

On March 21, 1936, a Syrian delegation left Damascus for Paris for the purpose of negotiating a treaty with the new French government. Agreement was reached and a treaty was signed by both parties in August 1936. Elections for a new parliament in Syria to study and ratify the treaty were held in November 1936, which resulted in an overwhelming victory for the nationalists. The new parliament convened on December 21, 1936, and on the second day it ratified the treaty, indicating that the Syrians were fairly satisfied with its terms. The French parliament, on the other hand, failed to ratify it and for the three years that followed, cabinets and parliament in Syria were chiefly occupied with persuading the French to do so. During this period, Syrian Prime Ministers were spending half of their time in Europe negotiating with the French. The internal situation in Syria was deteriorating and riots and disturbances took place frequently.

Cabinets followed one another with great rapidity.⁴⁶ Finally, the High Commissioner issued a decree suspending the parts of the constitution dealing with the organization of the legislative and executive powers, dissolved the parliament, and handed in the executive power to a general board of directors acting under his supervision. Constitutional life remained suspended until 1943.

According to the spirit of Article I of the mandate charter and to various pronouncements of French officials, the mandate was designed to prepare Syria for independence and self-government. In the words of M. de Caix, accredited representative of France to the Permanent Mandate Commission and once an acting high commissioner in Syria,

"The mandate is a provisional system designed to enable population which, politically speaking, are still minors to educate themselves so as to arrive one day at full self-government. This presupposes that the mandatory power will gradually create native organizations in the mandated territory such as may, when complete, be able to ensure entirely the government of the country and such as may, if they carry out their duties in proper manner, render the intervention of the mandatory unnecessary."⁴⁷

A brief look at the French record in Syria as presented above will indicate that France did not really prepare Syria to rule herself. During the 23 years or so of French Mandate, Syria had a parliament for only four years. During these four years, France, due to her disregard to Syrian aspirations, kept the parliament and the cabinets busy with negotiating and establishing a treaty relationship between the two parties. It is not the writer's intention to discredit French policies and behavior in

Syria. It is, rather, to establish the point that by the time Syria had gained her independence she did not have enough experience in self-government and constitutional practices, and France is to be blamed for that. The constitution was suspended on different occasions and with no hesitation on the part of the French High Commissioners. Parliaments were dismissed frequently and cabinets were changed with more ease than changing displays in show windows. The relative ease with which the constitution was changed three times during the period of independence, the acquiescence of the Syrian people to military dictatorships for five years, and the lack of respect for constitutional institutions, can only be understood, partially at least, in the view of the lack of experience in constitutional government; the very thing that France was supposed to foster in Syria during her mandatory regime.

The Winning of Independence

The last phase of the struggle for independence took place during World War II. When France fell in to the hands of Germany, Syria and Lebanon came under the control of the Vichy regime. On June 8, 1941, British and French allied forces entered the two countries for the purpose of liberating them. On that same day General Catroux issued a declaration in which he promised the two countries full independence and the termination of the mandate.⁴⁸ At the same time Sir Miles Lampson, British Ambassador to Cairo, declared the support of His Majesty's Government to Catroux's declaration.

It did not take long before the Syrians discovered the real intentions of France and Great Britain and that they did not really mean what

they had promised. It was the British who first revealed their true nature. Speaking in the House of Commons on September 9, 1941, Prime Minister Churchill said, "We recognize that among all the nations in Europe the position of France in Syria is one of special privilege, and in so far as any European countries have influence in Syria, that of France will be pre-eminent."⁴⁹ When the honorable members asked him why, he simply answered, "because that was the policy which we had decided to adopt." This privileged position for France in Syria and Lebanon was not recognized, however, by either the U. S. or the U. S. S. R. Moreover, Syrian and Lebanese nationalists refused to accept any claim of this sort, declaring that they had never recognized the mandate to start with.⁵⁰

The promised independence was, nevertheless, granted officially on September 27, 1941, and a new government was set up in Syria. The Syrian people received the news with indifference because the grant of independence meant very little to them as long as constitutional life was still suspended and as long as French and British military troops were still on their soil.⁵¹ The nationalists were insisting on the restoration of constitutional life by the recalling of the dismissed parliament or by conducting new elections. French authorities finally decided to conduct new elections on July, 1943. The returns gave the Nationalist Bloc headed by Shukri al-Kuwatli, who was elected President, an overwhelming victory.⁵²

The newly elected parliament convened soon afterwards. One of its first acts was to delete Article 116 from the constitution.⁵³ This

gave Syria complete control of her political institutions. With constitutional life restored to the country there still remained, however, many stumbling blocks in the way of complete independence the most significant of which were a number of administrative services that were retained under French control. One of those was the Troupes Speciales whose status in 1945 led to large scale fighting between the Syrians and the French. These troops were Syrians incorporated in the French army. Syria wanted an army of its own realizing that no independence is complete or safe without a national army to protect it. Syria started pressing France for the transfer of these troops to her. France refused to hand in these troops before her future relations with Syria were defined in a treaty. Syria was not ready to negotiate a treaty with France and, with both sides refusing to give in, the situation deteriorated into an open fight that was stopped only by British intervention.

In this struggle, the United States, who was starting to show some interest in the Middle East, stood behind the Syrians. In a note to the French provisional government, the United States warned France against using any force or applying pressure to secure a privileged position in Syria and Lebanon.⁵⁴ Although Great Britain had to intervene in favor of the Syrians, she was still ready to support certain French claims there. Churchill stated again in the House of Commons that, "We trust that these states (Syria and Lebanon) will be firmly established by the authority of the world organization and that French privilege will also be recognized."⁵⁵

At the time when this clash between the Syrians and the French

was reaching a high point, the Arab countries were trying to organize the Arab League. They considered the Syrian case as a test of their power. The Syrian president made a tour of Arab countries to gain the moral support of their leaders. He visited both King Ibn Saud and King Farouk of Egypt. His visit to Egypt coincided with the time when representatives were arriving to Cairo for the first Arab Union Conference.⁵⁶ Such a coincidence was not without significance. It was to remind the French in particular, and the West in general, that the Arabs would act in unity on issues concerning any of their member states. The press in Egypt lent a great deal of support to the Syrian case.

With United States and Arab support behind them, the Syrians became more demanding. They were not satisfied now with the Troupes Speciales, but were demanding the complete withdrawal of French and British troops from their country. The Syrian government was notified of a Franco-British agreement concluded on December 13, 1945, in which the two powers have decided to withdraw their troops from Syria. The Syrian parliament was not satisfied with promises any more and it began putting pressure on the government to refer the question to the United Nations. Sharp criticisms were directed against the Prime Minister and his cabinet for failing to take the necessary measures to get rid of any remaining French influence. The cabinet interpreted the attitude of the parliament as a withdrawal of confidence, so it asked for a new vote of confidence which was granted with the understanding that it adopt a tougher policy with the French.⁵⁷

The case was finally referred to the United Nations Security Council.⁵⁸ Syria and Lebanon jointly brought to the attention of the Council the presence of French and British troops on their soil. They said they had expected that these foreign troops would be withdrawn immediately on the cessation of hostilities with Germany and Japan, but that a Franco-British agreement made the withdrawal subject to conditions which were inconsistent with the spirit and letter of the U. N. Charter.

Since France and Great Britain were parties to the dispute, the only dissenterested major powers were the United States and the Soviet Union. Both were on the side of the Syrians and Lebanese. Mr. Vyshinsky was called by M. Bidault, "plus Royaliste que le roi."⁵⁹ He gave the Syrian-Lebanese case whole hearted support. A number of resolutions were introduced during the debate, but none of them was passed. A United States resolution carried a majority, but was vetoed by the Soviet Union. However, France and England expressed their willingness to abide by the terms of the resolution. The resolution as amended to read as follows:

"The Security Council takes note of the statements made by the four parties and by the other members of the Council; expresses its confidence that foreign troops in Syria and Lebanon will be withdrawn as soon as practicable; and that negotiations, independently of other issues, will be undertaken by the parties without delay and requests the parties to inform it of the results of the negotiations."⁶⁰

An agreement was soon reached between France and Great Britain on the terms of the evacuation. With regard to Syria, troops were

to be evacuated by the end of April, 1946.⁶¹ In the first two weeks of April the process was completed, and Syria became a full sovereign state at that time.

One can add this period, from 1943-46, to those few years in which Syria enjoyed a constitutional life, but again the efforts of cabinets and parliament were mainly directed toward achieving full independence.

Political Parties and Political Activities in the Period, 1920-43

The mandate period can be described, in terms of political activities, as one of negative struggle against the French in which native talents were consumed in destructive activities instead of constructive efforts. Very few of those who took control of government affairs after independence had any experience of a governmental nature under the mandate.⁶² A barrage of political parties appeared on the political scene in this period. Between 1933 and 1938, for example, 25 different minor parties were known to have existed none of which remained in existence after that period.⁶³ In addition to that, several major parties were founded of which the Nationalist Bloc was the most influential.

Apart from fighting the French, political parties and leaders were fighting each other constantly. The most serious clash was that which took place among the nationalists, between Dr. Shahabandar and Jamil Mardam. The two belonged to the same party, the Peoples Party, founded in 1925 by Shahabandar. Mardam later on left the party and joined the Nationalist Bloc whose leader was Hashim al-Atassi. On July 6, 1940, Shahabandar was assassinated and three leaders of the Nationalist Bloc,

of whom Mardam was one, were accused of plotting the killing, but were found not guilty. ⁶⁴

The Nationalist Bloc, which dominated the political scene toward the end of the mandate, diverted all its attention to the conclusion of a treaty with France. Its policies, domestic as well as foreign, were opposed by various political groups. Both the Bloc and its opponents were staging a fight in which personal feuds overshadowed political views. ⁶⁵

Thus, Syria found itself, at the beginning of its independence, ruled by men who had little if any experience in government and with no ideological parties of any significance. Instead, she had inherited a number of political groupings centered around personalities and dedicated to fighting each other.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

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Chapter I

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4. Ibid., p. 83.
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57. For the proceedings of the debate see: The Official Journal of the Syrian Republic. Part III, sessions 9 & 10, (Damascus: Government Press), 1945. Later referred to simply as Official Journal.
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CHAPTER II

Inter-Arab Relations

The most outstanding problem in inter-Arab relations in the post-second war period has been that of Arab unity. Its impact on Syria's political life has been greater than any other Arab country for the simple reason that Syria, on the one hand, is surrounded by two Arab countries, Iraq and Jordan, whose ambition is to annex it, and influenced, on the other hand, by two other Arab countries, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who are determined to block that ambition. Caught in the middle of these two warring blocs, Syria has suffered a great deal of instability and chaos since its independence. The issue has divided public opinion of the country into two camps: those supporting the Hashimite projects and those opposing them. Those who are against any unity of any sort usually join the second camp. The argument of the second camp is usually based on the grounds that they are the seekers of a larger unity of all Arab countries and that a partial unity with Iraq or Jordan would hurt the chances of such a scheme.

The issue has been so prominent in Syria's politics that, for the first time in any Arab state, it has been included in two of its constitutions. Both the constitution of 1950 and 1953 had provisions for Arab unity. However, both provisions reflected, as will be shown later, the

actual lack of any agreement on the issue. While they both provided for unity, they nevertheless declared Syria a fully independent and sovereign state whose independence and sovereignty should be absolutely preserved.

Apart from its inclusion in the constitution, the goal of Arab unity is a very crucial part of the platform of the majority of political parties in the country. With the exception of the Syrian Nationalist Party, which advocates unity of Syria with Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Palestine only, and the Communist Party, which refers to cooperation rather than unity among Arab states, all other political parties are ardent supporters of Arab unity. None of them, however, has a definite plan or project as to how such a unity may be achieved.

This chapter, will illustrate the development of the problem together in all its ramifications. All of the different forces that operated for and against it will be discussed. In most cases only the official position of the Syrian government will be dealt with. The position of the different political parties and groups outside the government will be dealt with in the next chapter.

I. Prospects of Unity Prior to WWII

As it has already been mentioned in the first chapter, the Arabs around the turn of the century began mobilizing their forces to free themselves from their Ottoman rulers. The different political parties and groups that led the movement were working for the independence and unity of the Arab world.¹ During the First World War, when they joined hands with the Allies against Turkey and Germany, they were promised

some sort of unity by the British through the Hussein-MacMahon correspondence.² When the war ended their representative at the Peace Conference, King Faisal of Arabia, did his best to fulfill the aspirations of the Arabs for independence and unity, but failed completely due to British and French imperialistic interests in the area. Instead of getting independence, the Arab countries, with the exception of Arabia, were placed under mandates; in place of unity the area was divided into five major political entities: Iraq, Trans-Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. Syria, furthermore, was sub-divided by the French into different smaller administrative and political units.³ The chances of any Arab unity were seriously injured. Faced with this situation the fragmented Arab countries in the inter-wars period turned all their efforts to rid themselves of their new masters. With the exception of King Abdullah (at that time Emir) of Trans-Jordan, Arab leaders gave up, at least for the moment, their claims for unity. Abdullah alone made it his life long dream to achieve what he called the Greater Syria project, a unity scheme of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. It was not until World War II, however, that the prospects of unity again brightened.

II. World War Two and Arab Unity

It was on May 29th, 1941, at the same time that Rashid Ali al-Gailani and his entourage escaped from Iraq after their ill-fated uprising against the British, that Mr. Eden, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, declared in his Mansion House speech that, "His Majesty's Government will give their full support to any -- scheme" -- that the

Arabs desire for "a greater degree of unity than they now enjoy."⁴ The Arab response was quite favorable and they became more enthusiastic toward the Allied cause.

King Abdullah, always on the alert, started an extensive campaign for the realization of his life long dream. On July 2, 1941, he communicated to the British government a resolution adopted by his cabinet requesting the realization of Syrian unity.⁵ The British government's reply was not very encouraging. They thought that time was not ripe yet for such a project and that any unity plan had to meet the consent of Syrians first.⁶ Abdullah diverted his attention to Syrian leaders and started corresponding with them. Their response was one of cautious approval.

In 1943, Nuri as-Said, a prominent Arab politician and Prime Minister of Iraq, took the initiative in working for a 'Fertile Crescent' unity. He submitted an elaborate plan to R. G. Casey, British Minister of State in the Near East.⁷ The basic items of the plan were as follows:

1. Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan shall be reunited into one state.
2. The form of government of this state whether monarchical or Republican, whether Unitary or Federal, shall be decided by the people of this state themselves.
3. There shall be created an Arab League to which Iraq and Syria will adhere at once and which can be joined by the other Arab states at will.
4. This Arab League shall have a permanent council nominated by the member states, and presided over by one of the rulers of the states who shall be chosen in a manner acceptable to the states concerned.

5. The Arab League Council shall be responsible for the following: a) defense b) foreign affairs c) currency d) communications e) customs f) protection of minority rights.
6. The Jews in Palestine shall be given semi-autonomy. They shall have the right to their own rural and urban district administration including schools, health institutions, and police subject to general supervision by the Syrian state.
7. Jerusalem shall be a city to which members of all religions shall have free access for pilgrimage and worship. A special commission composed of representatives of the three theocratic religions shall be set up to ensure this.
8. If they demand it, the Maronites in the Lebanon shall be granted a privileged regime such as they possessed during the last years of the Ottoman Empire. This special regime like those to be set up on paragraphs six and seven shall rest on an international guarantee.

There is no doubt that such a plan was the work of an extremely shrewd and skillful politician and diplomat. It had something for everybody. For the Maronites in Lebanon Nuri promised a special status; for the Jews he promised home rule; for the minorities he promised protection. For the British he based his plan on public support, the thing they asked for. For the ruling class in each country he reserved to them a part of local administration. For world Christianity he promised free access to Jerusalem. By the same token he promised the same thing for world Jewry and the Moslem world. In short he was aware of all the aspects of the problem and was able to envision a very well thought out scheme to fit them.

Since he first approached Great Britain, one can fairly assume that Nuri As-Said was relying on British support for the implementation of his plans. What worried Great Britain more than anything else in the

area was the Jewish problem. So Nuri As-Said undertook with great effort to convince the British that his plan was the only solution for that problem. He emphasized the advantages for the Jews in such a larger unity in terms of absorbing enough Jewish refugees from Europe. It looks, nevertheless, that British response was not very encouraging and the question had to recede to the back stage for a while.

III. The Formation of the Arab League

At the time Iraq was working for a Fertile Crescent unity, Mustafa Nahas Pasha, Prime Minister of Egypt, was toying with the idea of an Arab League.⁹ Late in 1943 he issued an invitation to all Arab countries to participate in negotiations aiming at the establishment of an Arab League. In that year he held a series of conversations on the subject with all the leaders of the Arab states. As a result, a preparatory committee entrusted with the job of drawing a plan for the union was set up, and, after holding many meetings between September 25 and October 7, 1944, its representatives from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Trans-Jordan signed what became called as the "Alexandria Protocol." The Protocol, later adhered to by Yemen and Saudi Arabia, provided for the establishment of a League of Arab States. Following a series of committee meetings and preparations, a pact for the proposed League was drawn up and signed on March 22nd, 1945, by representatives of six Arab states. Yemen joined in signing later.

The pact, in contrast to Nuri as-Said plan, provides for a loose confederation of the Arab states. Its preamble refers simply to the desire of strengthening the close relations and numerous ties which link the

Arab states. It goes on to say, "And anxious to support and stabilize these ties upon a basis of respect for the independence and sovereignty of these states (the contracting parties) --- have agreed to conclude a pact to that end---." ¹⁰ It is evident from the language that the pact was intended to support the status quo in the Arab world. Moreover only unanimous decisions were made binding on all the member states of the League. Majority decisions bind only those states which have accepted them (Art. 7). Any member can withdraw on one year's notice (Art. 18).

Many of those who have written on the Arab League have concluded that it was an organ set up mainly to stop the Zionists from taking over Palestine. While this is partially true, it is also equally true, that it was mainly set up to stop any member state from expanding at the expense of the other. Article 8 provides that, "Each member state shall respect the system of government established in the other member states. Each shall pledge to abstain from any action calculated to change established systems of governments." It seems that the main objective of the pact was to block the Greater Syria or the Fertile Crescent projects rather than to stop Zionist expansion. Subsequent events have shown that the members of the League have consumed more time and energy in fighting among themselves than in fighting Zionism.

The timing of Nahas' invitation to Arab leaders to exchange ideas on Arab unity, coming right after Nuri as-Said had announced his Fertile Crescent plan, suggests that the main purpose of Egypt was to block Iraq's expansionist appetite. Ever since that time, the sometimes hidden, sometimes open, rivalry for leadership in the Arab world has

centered around Syria with Iraq continuously agitating for unity and Egypt subverting her efforts. So far Egypt, supported by Saudi Arabia, has won every battle.

IV. Syria's Independence vs Unity Plans

Between 1943-47, most of the agitation for Syrian unity came from King Abdullah. In 1944, he published the Hashimi White Book which contained his unity scheme in details. The reaction in Lebanon came from Antoine Arida, Maronite Bishop of Beirut, who declared on September 10, 1945 Lebanon's resistance to any scheme of union or unity. He demanded that the independence of Lebanon be guaranteed by France, Great Britain, U. S. A. & U. S. S. R.¹¹ The reaction in Syria was not favorable either. In a speech to the Syrian parliament, President Quwatli stated that Syria agrees to the plan for a Greater Syria only if the new state is democratic, republican, and has Damascus as its Capital.¹²

King Abdullah's project was discussed in the March 1945 conference of the Arab League, ^{but} no final decision was made. It is suspected, however, that Syria and Lebanon were not in favor. When Faris El-Khoury, then Syria's Prime Minister and delegate to the Conference, reported to the Parliament, he was exposed to sharp questioning on foreign policy. A section of the Parliament was dissatisfied because the Conference failed to recognize the aims of a "Greater Syria."¹³ Prime Minister El-Khoury replied that the most immediate aim of Syria was complete independence of all the Arab states and that any unity scheme was premature. Furthermore, the unity proposal should spring from all states concerned instead

of from only one. His cabinet fell on this foreign policy issue.

King Abdullah did not retreat in the face of all this opposition. On November 11, 1946, in his speech from the throne at the opening of Parliament, he formally announced the Greater Syria scheme as a principle of Transjordan foreign policy.¹⁴

Response from Syria and Lebanon was quick and sharp. On November 13, 1946, Lebanon's foreign minister, Philip Taqla denounced the King's policy as inconsistent with the policy which prompted Lebanon to join the Arab League.¹⁵

The opposition of Syria was just as vigorous. The question was discussed in Parliament on November 23, 1946.¹⁶ There was a unanimous denunciation of Abdullah's schemes. The main points in the debate were:

1. That Syria is an independent state not tied by any treaty to foreign powers while Jordan is still under British virtual domination.
2. Syria is a democracy of the Republican type, while Jordan is ruled dictatorially by the King.
3. Syria is ready to join any union if it was based on complete independence.
4. Syria was the first Arab country to express its willingness to work for a complete Arab unity.

One representative went as far as calling Abdullah's project a Zionist scheme. The acting foreign minister, Mr. Khalid Al-Azm, assured the parliament that the government had no intentions whatsoever to change the constitutional form of Syria. He was as critical as others of the project. He stated that Syria is not ready to lose the independence

for which she so dearly fought.

With the possible exception of Iraq no other Arab Government reacted favorably. Egyptian newspapers published the report of an interview between Kermit Roosevelt and Ibn Saud in which the King was said to have described Abdullah as "Just a minor Ottoman official who has managed to get himself crowned King and a secret ally of the Zionists."¹⁷ Egypt did not take an open position on the issue although she was throwing her weight against it in the Arab League.

It is appropriate to inquire at this moment why all this opposition to Syrian unity in Syria and Lebanon? Reference was made to Abdullah's correspondence with Syrian politicians in 1941. One of those contacted was Faris El-Khoury who expressed his approval of the plan. In 1945 the same Faris El-Khoury reporting to the parliament said that the plan was pre-mature. In 1945, as mentioned before, a section of the Syrian Parliament criticized the Government for failing to work for a "Greater Syria." In 1946, the same delegates bitterly denounced Abdullah and his plans. What happened in Syria to cause this change? The plan was still the same, the top politicians on both sides were still the same. The only interpretation one can think of is the gaining of independence by Syria. In 1946, when Abdullah declared his intentions, Syria was enjoying complete independence for the first time in twenty five years and only the second time in 450 years. Every Syrian was proud of that, and no single Syrian was ready to give it up. Aside from this emotional psychological factor, there was a ruling class in Syria who took complete charge of

government for the first time. They were enjoying their new role.

They had fought and suffered all their life, and now it was time for them to be rewarded. They were in no mood to give their vested interests away.

V. The Final Stage, 1949 to 1954

The years 1947-49 were loaded with events in the Arab world, especially the Palestine question which was carrying all the headlines. Arab leaders were trying to unite and face the threat at hand. Since the Greater Syria project had been a cause of disunity and ill feelings among them, they avoided bringing it up at this time. It is possible, on the other hand, that both Nuri as-Said and King Abdullah were convinced of the impossibility of achieving unity as long as the Syrian and Lebanese leaders who were then in power remained there.

On March 30, 1949, the ruling class in Syria was ousted by a military coup d'etat. The leader was an army colonel named Husni Zaim. This must have been a great relief for Abdullah and as-Said. Nuri-Said lost no time and judging that the opportunity was then open, he sent on April 1st, 1949, Jamal Eaban to Damascus with a letter to Faris El-Khoury, President of the Syrian parliament, in which he expressed Iraq's readiness to offer any help and support to the new regime.¹³ The messenger called on Zaim first and later reported that the Syrian military leader was very pleased and encouraged by Iraq's attitude. Since then events moved so fast in Syria and the Arab world that one could hardly catch up with them. Diplomats, politicians, and military personnel were daily flying between Amman, Baghdad, and Damascus. Zaim expressed

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his support to Iraqi-Syrian unity.¹⁹ Public support for unity, caused by the Palestine tragedy, was running high. Edward Alliyah, secretary of the Arab Office in London, reporting April 15th, 1949, on political development in the Arab states said that he found "intense and almost universal urge toward the formation of a single state composed of Syria, Iraq, Transjordan and Arab Palestine."²⁰

Negotiations for a Syrian-Iraqi treaty were underway only ten days after Zaim took over. On April 16th Zaim formed a cabinet and one of its first acts was predicted to be the signing of the treaty. On April 17, Iraq recognized Zaim's regime while Egypt, Sandi Arabia and Lebanon refrained from doing so.²¹ On April 18th, Azzam Pasha, Secretary General of the Arab League, arrived at Damascus to confer with Zaim. His arrival, coinciding with the departure of Nuri as-Said, indicated the extent to which Syria had become the center of activity in the Arab world.²² Azzam was received very cordially by Zaim who was very careful not to offend other Arab countries by his reapproachment with the Hashimite. He assured Azzam of Syria's continued loyalty and support to the Arab League. No one knew exactly what Azzam's mission was, but later developments had shed some light on its purpose. In all probability, his purpose was to frustrate the Hashimite efforts of unity with Syria. Most likely he communicated to Zaim King Farouk's desire to meet him in Cairo. So, on April 21, Zaim visited King Farouk and came back a completely changed man. What Farouk did to him no body knows for sure. In his conversation with foreigners, after he came back, he expressed resentment against the emphasis placed abroad on plans for various kinds of

political unification with neighboring states.²³ In an attempt to clarify this sudden change some had argued that the United States was interested in preserving the pre-coup d'etat balance of power among Arab countries in order to comply with Ibn Saud's policy, and that, since Zaim was anxious to gain United States sympathy and recognition, he had changed his pro-Nashimite tendencies.²⁴

Iraq and Jordan were both worried about and displeased with the recent developments. On April 22 while Zaim was still in Egypt, Iraq threatened to boycott the Arab League if any pressure is put on Zaim to prevent him from strengthening relations with her and Jordan. There were reports of Jordanian military concentrations on Syria's borders. On April 26, Zaim ordered Jordan's borders closed and issued a defiant challenge to King Abdullah. "It seems," he said, "that my unexpected visit to King Farouk worried certain Arab countries who were under the impression that I undertook the coup in Syria to afford them a new crown."²⁵ He went on to say that if Jordan wanted to reunite with the Mother Country (Syria) she will be welcome. He warned Jordan against the use of force boasting that his army is second in strength only to Turkey in the Middle East.

Great Britain threatened to withdraw subsidy to Jordan if Abdullah attempted the realization of Greater Syria by force. The United States, Great Britain, and France sent notes of recognition to Zaim on the 28th. Recognizing Zaim's regime at this critical moment gives great validity to the interpretation of Zaim's change of policy. Many questions about

the attitude of the Great powers in this respect will remain unanswered for some time. Why did Great Britain, for example, object to a Syrian-Iraqi unity headed by a faithful Hashimite ally? Why did France side with Syria where she was kicked out three years earlier?

The question calmed down for a while and then flared up again in June. Iraqi forces were reported to have concentrated on Syria's border; Zaim ordered his army to march to the Iraqi border, recalled the Syrian minister from Baghdad, and threatened to sever diplomatic relations with Iraq in the case of Iraq's attempt at aggression.²⁶ At that time Egypt came out in support of Syria. The Egyptian press was printing warnings to Nuri as-Said and the Egyptian Government promised to send help to Syria in case of a clash with Iraq.²⁷

The chances of a Fertile Crescent Unity by now became nil. Zaim was definitely won over to the Saudi-Egyptian Camp thus restoring Syria's traditional regional policy. King Abdullah now declared that he would never use force to achieve his project.²⁸ Nuri as-Said resigned and a cabinet headed by a Pro-Egyptian was formed.

On August 14, 1949, Zaim was ousted by another military coup d'etat lead by Colonel Sami Hinnawi. Once again the change of the rulers in Syria provided Jordan and Iraq with a chance to try for unity. In September the chances for unity were promising. Negotiations between Amman, Baghdad, and Damascus were at full scale. Nuri as-Said drew a plan which was less ambitious than his original "Fertile Crescent Unity" idea. Its Main features were:²⁹

1. Military Alliance with a joint chief of staff.
2. Complete or modified customs union.
3. Abolition of visa requirements.
4. The possibility of a political council made up of foreign ministers, finance ministers, and economy ministers of both countries.
6. Jordan to be brought in one way or another.

Egypt failed this time to exert pressure on Syrian leaders to block unity as she did with Zaim. Thus, she was looking for other ways to block Iraqi-Syrian unity. She ~~now~~ brought up the question in the Arab League in order to secure a guarantee from all members to respect the status quo in the area. The committee failed to produce an agreement, and the question was put aside.³⁰ Then, an Arab Security Pact was proposed and sponsored by Farouk himself. This was intended to be a substitute for the Iraqi-Syrian unity.

Meanwhile, in Syria, the army decided to restore constitutional life which had been suspended by Zaim. Elections for a Constituent Assembly took place in November with the People's party winning a plurality. The Assembly first met on December 12, and a bill was presented by the Government asking the Assembly to pass a provisional Constitution according to which affairs would be run until the Constitution was prepared and passed by the Assembly. The articles of this provisional Constitution were:

1. The Assembly elects by absolute majority on the first ballot and simple majority on the second ballot, a president of the state who enjoys the same rights and prerogatives as the President of the Republic.

2. The President nominates the Prime Minister and Cabinet members.
3. The President assumes, in cooperation with the Cabinet, both legislative and executive powers, in accordance with the laws in effect since August 15, 1949, until the Constitution is passed.³¹

The debate over the bill showed to what extent the members of the Assembly were suspicious of schemes that might encroach on Syria's independence and sovereignty. Mr. Husni Barazi asked both the Prime Minister, Hashim Al-Atassi, who was considered the majority candidate for the Presidency, and the President of the Assembly to give a statement defining their foreign policy toward Arab unity so that nothing could be done without the knowledge of the Assembly.³²

Very few members of the Assembly were ready to give the future President, as provided in the proposed provisional constitution, complete control over executive and legislative powers. So when the bill came out from the committee charged with its study it was amended as follows: Article (2) was dropped and Article (3) was amended to read:

"The President assumes, in cooperation with his Cabinet, legislative powers with the exception of foreign agreements, and executive powers in accordance with the laws in effect since August 15, 1949, until the Constitution is passed, on condition that this will not exceed three months."³³

Hashim Al-Atassi was elected President at the same meeting by a majority of 89 votes out of 100. The President was well known for his pro-Arab unity tendencies. In his opening address to the Assembly he stated that Syria was facing many difficulties which urge her to strengthen her cooperation and unity with other Arab countries. He called on the

Assembly to be aware of these problems and work realistically to face them.³⁴

On December 17, the Constituent Assembly discussed the text of an oath to be taken by the President and members of his cabinet. A committee on the oath prepared the following text, "I swear by God the All Mighty that I shall respect the laws of the state, defend the country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, protect its wealth, and work for the achievement of Arab unity."³⁵ A hot debate followed on the last phrase of the oath, "Arab unity." Akram Hourani, led the opposition. Surprisingly enough he was joined by Moustapha Sibai, a religious leader and a strong pan-Islamist. The argument of the opposition was based on two main points:

1. The lack of complete independence in some Arab countries made unity impracticable.
2. The monarchical system in some countries did not comply with Syria's republican tradition.

Mustapha Sibai went so far as to state that monarchy does not fit with Islamic traditions and principles.³⁶ The pro-unity camp was led by Munir Ajlani and Hassan Hakim who argued that unity was the end that justified all means.

The oath as formulated by the committee was, nevertheless, passed by a majority vote.

The anti-unity camp had one alternative; to find a friend in the Army. Thus on December 19, the day assigned for the President to take oath, Hinnawi was ousted by a third coup d'etat led by Colonel Adib Shishakly.

There is no doubt that the connection between the coup and the oath is very strong. It is reported that soldiers who participated in the coup were shouting in the streets of Damascus, "We are Republicans, we don't want a king."³⁷

What took place in Syria in the last part of December is still a mystery. The president did not show up on schedule to take the oath. On the 27th, he sent to the Assembly a letter of resignation, but it was refused unanimously.³⁸ On the 24th, Nazim Qudsi, a leader of the People's Party was asked to form a government which he did on the same day, and resigned on the 27th.³⁹ On the same day Kahlid Azm formed another Cabinet. On January 4, 1950 the New Prime Minister presented his cabinet's program to the Assembly. It spoke in general and vague terms. On foreign policy he made reference to cooperation among Arab countries rather than to Arab unity. He stated his cabinet's decision was to retain the Republican form in Syria.⁴⁰

On January 7th, 1950, the President took the oath before the Assembly while none of the cabinet members were present.⁴¹ He then delivered a short speech in which he referred to the critical situation in the country and hoped that the Assembly would face the problems with faith and courage.

If the record of events does not tell the full story of what happened in Syria in this period of chaos and confusion, it at least tells that there was a sharp struggle fought between the supporters of unity on one side and the Army and the opponents of unity on the other. Moreover, it

is quite obvious that Shishakly was by then running the show. The Azm cabinet was able to survive only because its foreign policy was consistent with that of Shishakly. Akram Hourani, Shishakly's best friend, then became the minister of defense.⁴²

With Shishakly firmly controlling the affairs of Syria, the chances of a FertileCrescent Unity dwindled again, and Syria reverted back to her traditional regional policy. Saudi Arabia and Egypt began trying to strengthen their ties with the Shishakly regime. So, in February 1950, Saudi Arabia generously granted a six million dollar loan to Syria. At the same time the two countries concluded a commercial agreement. The loan was to be paid within a period of seven months in three installments of two million each. The interesting part about the loan was that Syria paid no interest at all to Saudi Arabia.⁴³ The purpose of the agreement was stated as "the strengthening of brotherly ties between the two states and their desire to cooperate and collaborate in every possible way."⁴³

In an exchange of notes between Marouf Dawalibi, Syria's Minister of Economy, and Abdallah Al-Sulaiman of Saudi Arabia, the latter informed the former of his government's decision to grant Syria a number of mechanical instruments to be used in the construction of the Latakia sea port. Later on, he informed him that his government had decided to put at the disposal of the Syrian Government, and at Saudi Arabia's own expense, one or two of the greatest engineers employed in the port of Jidda to offer technical help to the sister state, Syria.

The attitude of the members of the Constituent Assembly was a mixture of gratitude and suspicion. Mr. Dawalibi was criticized by certain members of the Assembly for allegedly making a statement against Iraq. The critics stated that Saudi Arabia's friendship should not be sought at the expense of Iraq or any other Arab country. Many of the Assembly members were suspicious of the political implications of the loan, but Prime Minister Azm denied that there was any political implication in the loan.⁴⁴

At the same time Iraq and Egypt signed a pact with each promising not to interfere in Syria's political affairs for a period of five years. They both promised to help Syria restore her constitutional life. The pact was very unpopular in Iraq and the majority of the Cabinet rejected it and subsequently the Cabinet collapsed.⁴⁵

Arab leaders by then became more interested in strengthening Arab ties in general rather than uniting two or three countries. Thus the Arab Collective Security pact was introduced in the League and on June 16, 1950, it was initiated by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria and Lebanon.⁴⁶ Only Iraq & Jordan did not sign until later.

It is suspected that by mid-1950 Iraq had given up all hope of a Fertile Crescent Unity, and was looking for allies outside the Arab area. She turned to Turkey, Pakistan and the West. In Jordan King Abdullah was assassinated in July 1951, and his successors were not interested in carrying on the fight for a Greater Syria. Unity in any form once again became a dream.

Thus, the rivalry of the Egyptian-Saudi camp with the Hashimite, mainly personal in nature, has blocked all efforts of unifying Syria with any of her neighbors to the East or South. It did not strengthen the Arab League, neither did it improve the chances of a larger Arab unity. It has generated so much ill feeling that this may possibly wreck the League. Above all, it has thrown Syria into a virtual state of chaos and turmoil, suffering from one military coup after another. How it divided public opinion will be discussed in the next chapter.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter II

1. Supra, pp. 4-6 .
2. Supra, p. 8. .
3. Supra, pp. 14-18.
4. Khadduri, M., "The Fertile Crescent Unity." The Near East And The Great Powers, Frye, R. N. (Ed.) p. 139.
5. Ibid., p. 141. For the substance of King Abdullah's Greater Syria project and his claims to the Syrian throne see: King Abdullah's Memoirs, translated from Arabic by George Khuri, (New York, 1956), pp. 261-269.
6. Khadduri, op. cit., p. 141.
7. For the whole plan and commentary see J. C. Hurewitz, Documents of Near Eastern Diplomatic History (New York: Columbia University School of International Affairs, 1951), pp. 266-267.
8. It could be argued that this item was included in order to comply with British policy.
9. For the story of the Arab League's foundation see: Khadduri, "Towards An Arab Union: The League Of Arab States" American Political Science Review, (Feb., 1949), pp. 90-100. See also A. M. Hourani, op. cit., pp. 303-307.
10. For the text of the pact consult: E. Y. Doutsos-Chali, The Arab League 1945-1955, reprinted from The International Conciliation Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, 498 (May, 1954), pp. 444-447.
11. Khadduri, op. cit., p. 143.
12. New York Times, Feb. 28, 1945, 17:2: See also Farazot, op. cit., p. 214.
13. New York Times, April 6, 1945, 7:5

14. Khadduri, op. cit., p. 145.
15. Ibid., pp. 145-146.
16. For the whole debate see: The Official Journal, Part III, 7th ordinary session, 6th meeting, (Nov. 23, 1949), pp. 60-65.
17. G. E. K. "Cross Currents Within the Arab League - The Greater Syria Plan" World Today, 4, (1948), p. 21.
18. Khadduri, op. cit., pp. 156-157.
19. Ibid., p. 156.
20. New York Times, April 15, 1949, 7:6; also on public feeling see New York Times, April 23, 1949, 3:6.
21. Ibid., April 17, 1949, 27:2.
22. Ibid., April 18, 1949, 7:2 - For a thorough coverage of the problem in this period see Cahiers de l'Orient Contemporain, XVIII-XIX (1949), p. 127-132. Later referred to as simply Cahiers.
23. New York Times, April 22, 1949, 12:6.
24. Loc. Cit.
25. Ibid., April 26, 1949, 19:3.
26. Ibid., June 16, 1949, 13:1.
27. Ibid., June 19, 1949, 14:1.
28. Ibid., May 25, 1949, 11:2.
29. Ibid., Sept. 28, 1949, 14:4.
30. Ibid., Oct. 22, 1949, 3:6.
31. Official Journal, Part III, 1st Session 1st meeting of the Constituent Assembly, (Dec. 12, 1949), p. 11.
32. Ibid., 2nd meeting, (Dec. 13, 1949), p. 31.
33. Ibid., 3rd meeting, (Dec. 14, 1949), p. 47.
34. Ibid., 1st meeting, (Dec. 12, 1949), p. 7.

35. Ibid., 4th meeting, (Dec. 17, 1949), p. 52.
36. Ibid., p. 53.
37. New York Times, Dec. 20, 1949, 1:3.
38. Official Journal, op. cit., 7th meeting (Dec. 27, 1949), p. 76.
39. Ibid., 8th meeting, (Dec. 29th, 1949), p. 78.
40. Ibid., 9th meeting, (Jan. 4, 1950), pp. 89-90.
41. Ibid., 10th meeting, (Jan. 7, 1950), p. 94.
42. Some light is thrown in this period by George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, pp. 256-257.
43. For the text of the two agreements and exchange of notes see the Official Journal, op. cit., Part I, 1950, pp. 695-697.
44. For the debate on the loan see, Official Journal, op. cit., Part III, 13th meeting, (Feb. 13, 1950). pp. 165-167
45. New York Times, Feb. 10, 1950, 14:4.
46. The text of the pact together with other suggested plans and a fair coverage of the League's activities in that period are found in Cahiers XXI, (1950), pp. 60-68.

CHAPTER III

In Search for Solutions

The regional problem was not the only one which faced Syria in its early stage of independence. A number of other major problems confronted the country, and in searching for solutions to them the leaders had to follow a trial and error approach. One way of looking at the period 1945-1954 is that of considering it a period of experimentation. The problems were many and complicated, the issues were vague and the leaders lacked experience and, in many cases; sincere intentions.

This chapter deals with these problems and issues, the attempted solutions, and various other solutions proposed by political parties and groups. A brief statement of the major problems and issues has to be made first. These included:

1. The type of Government in Syria: Republican, or Monarchical; Democratic or Totalitarian.
2. The relationship of the church to the state: a complete secular state; a theocracy; or a blend of the two.
3. The distribution of wealth; by the state or free enterprise; among the few or the many.
4. Inter-Arab relations: based on pan-Islamism, pan-Arabism, or Syrian nationality; federation, confederation or a loose league.
5. International affairs; with the West, the East or to remain neutral.

The Zaim Regime

Husni al-Zaim, Chief of Staff of the Syrian Army, staged his military coup d'état on the 30th of March 1949, ousting the discredited nationalist regime that had been in power since independence. He came to power with no definite program, apart from ridding the country of the previous regime. It seems that the most outstanding factor that influenced his decision to take power was the attacks of the Parliament on the army. In the period that followed the Palestinian War, both the government and the army were blaming each other for the lack of success. On the second day of his coup, Zaim declared that "the army was compelled to undertake this change of regime because of attacks against it inside, as well as outside, The House of Representatives."¹ There is no evidence that Zaim had prepared for his coup or that he had drawn a positive program of reform to be implemented once he gained power. Be that as it may, he was faced with the above mentioned problems from the first day of his rule.

Zaim's Position on the Type of Government

The first problem which confronted him was that of the type of government. Should he be satisfied with the ousting of the former president and his cabinet and keep the old parliament or should he dissolve parliament? In case he dissolved parliament should he call an immediate election or should he rule by decree for a transitory period? If he decided to call for a new parliament, who was going to manage the affairs of the country until the parliament was elected? On all these questions

Zaim had to make a prompt decision. In his first communiqué to the nation, he promised to establish a 'national democratic government.'² He also promised to retreat to his barracks after that government was established. To be fair to him, he tried for two days to consult with a number of politicians in order to form a civilian government, but failed to recruit the support of any of them.³ So, on the 16th of April, he decided to take complete charge of the government and by the end of his regime he was a well established dictator. It is clear that Zaim had taken a definite position on this issue. Dictatorship seemed to him to be the best alternative. Within a few days he dissolved the parliament⁴ and political parties, suspended the constitution, and was ruling by decrees. By two legislative decrees he closed 75 daily newspapers and magazines.⁵ On the 25th of June, 1949, he was elected to the presidency of the Republic in a one man race polling 729,116 votes out of 730,731 cast in the first direct popular election for that office.⁶ Zaim continued to rule by decree without a constitution or parliament until he was deposed on August 14, 1949.

Zaim's Position on the Church vs the State Issue

Although Zaim did not go as far as Ataturk in the way of complete secularism, he took a big step toward that goal. During his short term in power he revolutionized the whole legal system of Syria. He passed new civil, commercial, and penal codes.⁷ In all these he drew on the Egyptian experiment in modern codification where an attempt at

synthesis between Islamic and Western principles was made.⁸

Many writers have seen in Zaim another Ataturk and had he stayed in power long enough, it might have been possible for him to have achieved a completely secular system in Syria. The fear of such a possibility was manifested in the strong opposition to his reform measures by religious groups. The reforms were attacked as being inspired by western imperialism and he was personally attacked as being a Kurd, alien to the Arab and Moslem cultures.⁹

His Position on the Distribution of Wealth Issue

The promises of Zaim in this respect were much brighter than his actions. During his term in office he spoke as the champion of the common man. He promised land reform, social justice, and equality for everyone. In the early days of his regime he established by legislative decree an "Inquiry Commission of Five" to investigate cases of misuse of authority and illicit enrichment on the part of the previous regime.¹¹ The commission initiated its action by confiscating the property of the outgoing Minister of Defense, Ahmad al-Sharabati, as well as that of his father. It also decided to sue the former President and a former Prime Minister, Jamil Mardam, for illicit enrichment. This was as far as the commission went. After few months in office, Zaim himself was using the public treasury for his personal pleasure more than any of his predecessors. All his promises about social justice and distribution of property, were forgotten. He and his entourage were running Syria as a family estate.

His Position on Inter-Arab Relations

His position on this issue was discussed fully in chapter two. Summarizing it again, Zaim began as a friend of the Hashimite family, (Jordan and Iraq) and ended as their enemy.

His Position on International Affairs

On this problem Zaim stood definitely on the side of the West. His relations were particularly intimate with France. Official visits, personal messages and presents were exchanged between the two states. In an interview accorded to the Cazette of Lausanne, Zaim declared, "France is our friend and we shall do anything to keep her friendship. Our relations are actually excellent. I firmly desire that all the misunderstandings that occurred between preceeding governments and France shall be entirely dissipated and that a new era of understanding and collaboration be opened between Paris and Damascus."¹² His relationship with the United States was also very friendly. The United States Government was pressuring Great Britain to use its influence with the Hashimites in order to stop their intrigues against the Zaim's regime.¹³ The U. S. recognized his regime together with Great Britain on April 27, 1949, and was interested in keeping him in power.

His friendship to the West was further proven by the agreements he concluded with them. On the 20th of April, 1949, he ratified a financial agreement with France.¹⁴ On the 16th of May he concluded another agreement with the Trans-Arabian Pipe Line Company.¹⁵ He also concluded another agreement with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.¹⁶

This pro-western attitude cost Zaim a great deal of popular support. Unquestionably it alienated the Communists. It also alienated the advocates of neutrality. Above all it outraged the nationalist elements who had not yet forgotten the abuses of the French Mandate.¹⁷ Three years of independence were not enough to make them forget their struggle against the French, neither did it create any illusions in their mind as to France's real desire to come back to the country at the first possible chance.

The Fall of Zaim

Thus, in a very short time Zaim had declared his position on all these issues and by so doing invited all sorts of opposition. From the liberals and democrats came opposition to his dictatorial practices and inclinations. Religious leaders and pious Syrians vigorously opposed his secular policies. Pro-Arab unionists and friends of the Hashimites furnished the opposition to his regional policies.¹⁸ The feudal and vested interest class feared him tremendously and the common man was disappointed with his false promises. In a few months in office he managed to alienate the majority of the people. He wanted to change in a few days a status quo which had existed for centuries. That was too large a task for any one man, let alone a military figure with very little political talent. On the 14th of August, 1949, he was overthrown and executed by another comrade-in-arms, Colonel Sami Hinnawi. .

Hinnawi's Regime

On his first day in power Hinnawi made it clear that he would not rule the country single-handedly. He recalled the dissolved parliament and charged Hashim al-Atassi with the duty of forming a cabinet which he did on the 10th of August, 1949.¹⁹ Although things were back to normal in few days, there was a general feeling on the part of the leaders that something should be done to overhaul the entire governmental system that existed prior to the Zaim coup if they desired to avoid any violent upheavals in the future. Thus, it was agreed to call for the election of a Constituent Assembly for the purpose of framing a new constitution. The Assembly was elected on November 15th, and held its first meeting December 12th, 1949. While debating the text of an oath to be taken by the President of the state, a third coup d'etat was staged by another army Colonel, Adib Shishakly.²⁰ Hinnawi was arrested and few days later dismissed from his office as the Army Chief of Staff.

Shishakly's Regime

The new strong man of Syria must have learned some lessons from his friend Zaim. He decided to solve the problems facing him gradually. For two years he preferred to rule from behind the scenes, keeping an eye on the government and communicating his wishes through the defense minister.²¹ At the same time, he was strengthening his position among the mass of Syrians.

However, the problems that faced his predecessor were still unsolved and, whether he wanted to solve them gradually or at once, he

was forced to face these issues. Since the issue of Inter-Arab relations, as was pointed out earlier, figured very prominently in his coup, it is the logical starting point for the discussion of his regime.

Shishakly's Position on Inter Arab Affairs

There is no doubt that Shishakly was opposed to any project of unity with Iraq or Jordan. The events that preceeded and followed his coup, as discussed in Chapter II, prove this point. It remains to be known, however, whether his opposition to such a project was on the grounds of isolationist tendencies or on the basis of a sincere belief that such a unity might slow down or even prevent the achievement of a larger one including all the Arab states.

On the surface, Shishakly showed a great interest in the creation of a strong unified Arab State. Shortly after he took over the affairs of government he paid visits to most of the capitals of the Arab countries and on his return from each one he had declared that the main purpose of these visits was to strengthen Inter-Arab relations and create a unified Arab state.²² He always spoke in terms of "one Arab nation" and "one Arab state." Article (4) of the Constitution of the Arab Liberation Movement, (ALM), a party created and lead by him, speaks of one Arab State and Article (6) mentions Syria as a part of that state.²³ In his speech in Aleppo inaugurating the Movement, he declared, "Syria is a part of the Arab Homeland and the Syrian people are part of the Arab Nation,"²⁴ The Constitution of 1953, known as the Shishakly constitution, expressed the idea of an Arab state.²⁵ Article (1) Section (3) stated that the Syrian

people form a part of the Arab Nation. "The State shall within the frame of sovereignty and republican regime endeavour to realize the unity of this Nation." 26

All this, however, does not prove that Shishakly was a sincere supporter of a strong all-embracing Arab unity. Section (2) of the same article mentioned above, states that Syria is an indivisible political unit. No part of its territory may be ceded. The contradiction between section two and three of the same article is obvious. How could Shishakly, after becoming the President of the Republic and the guardian of the constitution, be working for an Arab Unity without violating section (2) of this article? The Unity that section (3) provided for would definitely require the giving up of Syrian territory and Syrian sovereignty.²⁷ One can argue that section (2) was simply intended to act as a constitutional block to prevent the pro-Iraqi union elements of Syria whose possible return to power Shishakly was apprehensive of. This might be true, but he also placed a constitutional block in his own way. If he was really serious about Arab unity the door was open for him to avoid such a constitutional block. He could have inserted in the constitution a clause to the effect that in the event of a general agreement among all Arab states to create a unified state, Syria would be ready to give up its sovereignty and territory. This was not done and hence, it seemed that Shishakly was simply paying a lip service to the idea of an Arab unity.

Shishakly's Position on the Form of Government

The position of Shishakly on this issue is very delicate and, as

such, is hard to define. On one aspect of government he made his position very clear; he was in favor of a republican form of government in preference to the monarchical form. Article (7) of the Arab Liberation Movement (ALM) states that "the people are the source of authority and the form of government is Republican. . . ."²³ In one of his statements he declared that, "the Republican form of government is the only progressive one which truly reflects the expression of the national will of the people."²⁹ On the occasion of the anniversary of his first coup d'état, he made a still stronger statement to this effect:

"My brothers," he said to a number of his fellow officers, "a bit over a year ago a plot was arranged whose success would have meant the imprisonment of the majority of us. The authors of the plot had sworn the destruction of Syrian independence and her Republican regime in favor of a throne which, under the cover of a phony union, would have opened the door for imperialism in our country."³⁰

Furthermore, Article (4) of the 1953 Constitution stated that Syria is a democratic and fully sovereign Arab Republic. So there seems to be no doubt that Shishakly was completely in favor of a Republican form of government.

The difficulty arises, however, in defining his position on the question of the distribution of power in the Republic. Was he a dictator, was he a member of an oligarchy ruling Syria, or was he a democrat at heart who had to take certain undemocratic measures in order to establish a real democratic regime?

In order to understand his position on this issue, it is necessary to divide the period since his first coup d'état on August 14, 1949, to his

fall on February 27, 1954, into three different periods. The first one began on August 14, 1949, and ended on November 29, 1951, when Shishakly dismissed the cabinet, arrested the Prime Ministers together with some members of his Cabinet, and soon after, dismissed the Parliament and the President of the Republic. This was the most complicated period in the history of the country. All the constitutional institutions were formally in operation. There was a Constituent Assembly which was turned into a Parliament after the promulgation of the Constitution. There was a President of the Republic elected constitutionally by Parliament. There were Cabinets responsible to Parliament. Political parties were in operation. Neither of these institutions, however, had enough freedom to operate within Constitutional limitations. Whenever their action ran into opposition by Shishakly they had to give in. His position during this period was a negative one. He was watching the Cabinets and Parliament very closely permitting what he liked and stopping what he disliked.³¹

The second period extends from November 29, 1951, to July 10, 1953, when the Syrian people approved by referendum a new constitution and elected Shishakly as the President of Syria. In this period Shishakly and a group of trusted friends ruled Syria dictatorially. In this group, Shishakly was the leader and ultimate power. Not only did he oppose what he disliked, but he was acting on every matter with no regard to any opposition. 'Nothing,' wrote P.M.G., 'has gone officially against his

orders. Often things have been held up for weeks or months until he had time to take up the case, or, at least, until his personal position on the matter became known. . . "32

The third period began on July 10, 1953, and ended on February 27, 1954. In this period Shishakly was elected President of Syria and was ruling constitutionally.

From a theoretical point of view it would be concluded that Shishakly, in the first two periods, assumed the role of a dictator while in the last period that of a democratic president. In practice this was not true. Shishakly continued to enjoy as much power in the third period as he did in the first two. He was the head of the executive branch while his party was in complete control of the legislative. Still nothing could go against his orders. Again, from a practical point of view, Shishakly, even in the first two periods was less of a dictator than the preceeding democratically elected parliamentary regimes. 33

Actually, therefore, the battle was not fought between democracy and dictatorship. "Such an impression," writes Professor Hanania,

"would be altogether false for if dictatorship has triumphed in the Arab world, its triumph has not been against democracy, but against the negation of democracy -- that is, an alliance between feudalism and a corrupt urban oligarchy. For while it is true that in the pre-dictatorship period there were parliamentary facades of democratic government in both Syria and Egypt, it is equally true that all this democratic paraphernalia was merely the means by which the small ruling minority tried to give a respectable and constitutional appearance to the fact of its continued power. The institutions of democracy existed in the pre-dictatorship period, but not democracy itself. 34

It is necessary at this stage to deal briefly with the Turkish Constitution as it attempted to solve some of the major problems of governmental organization.

Its most outstanding feature was the adoption of the presidential form of the United States which had previously been included in a draft constitution by Zaim that was never ratified.³⁵ Although the new Constitution gave the President more powers than those under the 1930 or 1950 constitutions, Congress retained some of its most powerful prerogatives.³⁶ Article (34) gave Parliament the power to ratify all treaties effective for more than one year. Article (35) gave Parliament the right to grant, by a vote of an absolute majority of its members, an amnesty for crimes committed before the amnesty proposal was submitted. Article (36) gave it the concurrent power, together with the President, to introduce bills. Financial bills could be introduced by the president or by at least one-fourth of the deputies of the Chamber. Article (37) gave Parliament the sole right, subject to certain limitations, to adopt the budget. In general, the legislative branch was not deprived of its major powers in the new constitution.

The most fundamental change in the 1953 constitution, as far as the chief executive was concerned, was the method of his election. According to Article (36) of the 1930 Constitution and Article (70) of the 1950 Constitution, the president was elected by the Chamber of Deputies. Article 81, Section 1 of the new Constitution stipulated that the President of the Republic be elected directly by the people. Coupled with the

provision in Article 64, section 2, that the president had the power to appoint, dismiss, and accept the resignation of his ministers by a decree communicated to the Chamber of Deputies, the new Constitution had altered the whole system of power relationships that existed previously.

While in the past Cabinets were under the mercy of the legislatures always threatened by a no-confidence vote,³⁷ they became completely independent from them and only responsible to the chief executive. One can conclude then that theoretically, the Shishakly constitution created a sort of a balance of power that did not exist before. No longer did any branch of government dominate another. Previously it was the legislature that had dominated the executive. The advantages of this innovation are not difficult to discover. One has only to review the political situation in the period after independence to see these advantages. Long ministerial crises, such as the one in 1948 that lasted 17 days, were quite frequent.³⁸ The formation and fall of cabinets overnight, such as the one in 1950, were also frequent.³⁹ All this had led in the past to a confused state of affairs. Very few cabinets stayed long enough in office to plan and implement a definite long-range program. The sheer thought of falling any moment discouraged the cabinets to plan on a long-range basis. The President's hands were tied in such situations and he had no power to control it except by means of his personal influence if he happened to be a strong one.

The cabinet and the legislature were then in a continuous state of war which was not always fought on the basis of differences in approach,

policies, or principles. In many cases the struggle was fought on personal issues. The outgoing cabinet in many cases returned to the legislature to form the opposition, together with other aspirants to the cabinet posts, against the ingoing one. Most of the manoeuvring was then motivated by the desire to see the new cabinet fall so that the old one, with some modifications, could get back to power.

No doubt Shishakly was very aware of this situation. In one of his speeches to a delegation of Lebanese reporters, shortly after he staged his second coup, he declared :

It is regrettable that the responsible leaders of the past have lost six years of independence during which not a single reform was introduced in Syria. The years of colonialism have left in our country some deep cuts that can only be cured by energetic, hard, and prompt action. These years of colonialism have left us far behind the civilized world. The governments that have taken over since the departure of the foreigner were paralysed when it came to acting. No sooner did they prepare a program than they fell. The parliamentary system which is certainly the system of the most advanced countries, had become with us an obstacle to all reforms by reason of fighting interests, partisan lusts, and regional and confessional fights. The present regime became a necessity. The things it has realized are witness to that. In a few weeks, it has promulgated certain legislation that would have taken the preceeding anarchial systems tens of years to elaborate. 40

Aside from this blessing of the new constitution, it improved the situation from another point of view. By making the chief executive and the legislature independent from each , it made them both responsible to the people. Both had to come back to the people for re-election. Instead of fighting each other for a cabinet post, they were thrown in a race to win the public support of the Syrians. Both had to prove to the

people their desire and ability to serve them. The system made the people the final judge.

Shishakly's Position on the Church vs the State Issue

Although Shishakly can be considered very close to his predecessor, Zaim, on this issue, he was more of a politician and attacked the problem with more caution and reserve.⁴¹ He was aware of the still strong opposition to any extreme secular trend in politics. Thus his attitude on the issue, (as expressed at least) could best be defined as a compromise. To please the proponents of a theocratic state he inserted Article (4) in his Constitution. The Article states that:

1. The religion of the President of the Republic is Islam.
2. The Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) shall be the main source of legislation.
3. Freedom of belief shall be protected. The State shall respect all divine religions and shall guarantee the free exercise of their rites, provided this does not lead to a breach of public order.
4. Personal status affairs of religious Communities shall be maintained.

Furthermore, Article 21, Section 5, paragraph 5, stated that, "Religious teaching for each religion in all the aforementioned stages shall be in accordance with its own creed.

Aside from these two articles, the Constitution does not make any other reference to Islam. Islamic jurisprudence was drawn upon very little in forming the Constitution, itself a basic law. Most of its provisions were borrowed from Western constitutions.

It is worth noticing, in this respect, that Shishakly took a slightly different position on this issue in his capacity as the leader of his party, the ALM. In no place does the party Constitution mention the word Islam. Article (5) states that,

The State derives its legislation from the national heritage of the Arabs and from the practical needs of the nation. It shall revise all legislation inconsistent with the spirit of the present age and our national heritage. 42

Articles 12-15 mention the encouragement by the State of a number of educational institutions, but do not mention anything about religious institutions or teaching. Unless Shishakly meant by 'national heritage' the same as 'Islamic Jurisprudence' the difference in his position here from that in the Constitution is evident.

Shishakly's Position on the Distribution of Wealth

Shishakly's policies on national economy and the distribution of wealth were included in general terms in the Constitution of his party, the ALM, Articles 22-35. The same policies were spelled out in more detail in Articles 28-39 of this Constitution. The following are the main points included in these articles:

1. The State was given a very powerful and decisive role in the direction and development of the economic life in the country. Article 29 gave the State the right to organize and direct all the elements of national wealth, ownership, capital, and labor, in such a way as to secure strength for the country, realize social justice, and be utilized in the interest of all the people. To achieve these goals, Article 30 provided for the establishment of a 'Council of National Wealth.' Article 31, Section 1, gave the State the right to nationalize by a law any organization or project relating to public interest. Section 2, of the same Article provided for the possible establishment of government agencies enjoying financial and administrative

independence for the execution and administration of specific projects. Article 34, section 2, provided for the regulation, by the State, of property ownership by foreigners.

2. Private property was provided for in Article 34, Section 3, "Private ownership shall be guaranteed within the limits of compatibility with public interests and social justice."
3. Work was made a right and a duty of all citizens, (Article 38, Section 1). The State was given the right to regulate the relationships of the worker to the employee and to national economy.

Most of these provisions or principles were not new. They were provided for in the previous Constitution of 1930. Some of the language, however, was new. The words "direct," "supervise," "administer," "organize" were not used before. Instead, words such as "improve," "encourage" and "legislate" were used. No doubt it meant the adoption of a policy of "dirigisme" or "etatisme" where the state becomes the supreme organizer of national economy. This is not communism, nor even socialism. It is rather an expediency forced upon the state in a society where any development of industrial or agricultural nature is not likely to be undertaken by private citizens. Such projects would require huge capital which is only available in countries where savings are high. In Syria and the Middle East in general savings are negligible, if not absent. Society in the Middle East is divided into two classes: the majority who are poor and unable to save and the rich who do save but do not invest. The Middle East has been described by Mr. A. Y. Badre of Lebanon "as an example of a hand to mouth economy."⁴³ The lack of investment keeps output low and low output fails to provide

surplus savings for investment. A vicious circle is thus created.⁴³

In such a society the state has two alternatives. The first is to adopt a hands-off policy thus helping the vicious circle to remain vicious, the rich to become richer and the poor poorer. The other alternative is to step in and supplement the private sector of the economy with a public one aiming at developing national wealth in such a way as to make it possible for every citizen to enjoy a better life. This was the alternative Shishakly believed in and pursued.

Shishakly's Foreign Policies

The general basic objectives of his foreign policies were laid down in Article 36 of the ALM Constitution. It said: "the Foreign Policy of the State is inspired by the national interest. It shall strive for the emancipation of the Arabs. It rejects imperialism in all its forms. It participates in the attainment of happiness for humanity and it defends peace."⁴⁴

Another general and broad statement about foreign policy of the Shishakly regime was made by General Fawzi Selo who said:

With the commencement of the new regime we have been happy in the field of international policy to extend our friendship to those who desire it and to reciprocate all professed good and sincere feelings. Syria indeed cannot live in isolation in a world whose distances have become entangled, particularly as she rightly aspires to participate, in collaboration with other nations of good will, in the establishment of principles of justice, peace and prosperity.⁴⁵

These are the general vague lines of foreign policy usually issued by the majority of foreign affairs spokesmen all over the world. However,

from a survey of treaties concluded and actions taken by the regime, it is possible to determine two major specific foreign policies for Syria under Shishakly. The first was a policy of increased commitment to and participation in the U. N. and its various specialized agencies. Here is a list of the agreements concluded between Syria and some of the U. N. Agencies in that period:

1. A technical assistance agreement between Syria and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was ratified on the 6th of April, 1952.
2. An agreement with UNESCO was ratified on the 19th of May, 1952.
3. An agreement with World Health Organization (WHO) was ratified on the 2nd of September 1952.
4. An agreement with the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) was ratified on the 3rd of September, 1952.
5. Another Agreement with UNLSCO was ratified on 20th September, 1952.
6. An agreement with UNESCO was ratified on 20th September, 1952.
7. Leg. Decree 119, October 6th, 1953 provided for the adherence of Syria to the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Aside from these agreements, the regime concluded many agreements of an international nature not pertaining to the U. N. A few of them are cited below:

1. On the 12th of March 1952, Syria signed the Convention of the International organization of Universal Aerial Observatories.
2. Ratified the Peace Treaty with Japan signed in San Francisco the 3th of September, 1951.

3. Ratified the Convention of Geneva for the Protection of Civilians in time of war, the treatment of Prisoners of War, etc.
4. Adhered to the International Agreement on Opium signed at the Hague.

The second major specific foreign policy of the Shishakly regime was the concluding of treaties, commercial and otherwise, with non - Great Powers. Six of these were concluded:

1. A treaty of friendship and commerce was concluded with India on the 29th of April, 1952.
2. A commercial and exchange of goods agreement was concluded with Czechoslovakia on the 6th of October, 1952.
3. A treaty of Commerce with Greece was concluded on the 27th of December, 1952.
4. A treaty of non-aggression and a cultural agreement was concluded with Spain the 31st of December, 1952.
5. A convention of technical aid was concluded between the Ministry of Agriculture and the French Technical Committee on Agricultural Cooperation and Experimentation for the purpose of creating research centers and agricultural experiments in Syria.
6. A commercial agreement was concluded with Yugoslavia on the 4th of December, 1953.

These two policies taken together can be considered as a substitution for another alternative in the foreign policy of a country such as Syria, that of committing one's country to one of the two camps: the United States or the Soviet Union. There is no evidence that the Soviet camp had applied any overt pressure on Shishakly to join the Soviet bloc. Neither is there any evidence of Shishakly flirting with that camp. As far as the Western camp, there was some pressure applied and plans

presented to tie Syria, and other Arab countries, to the West.

Shishakly resisted the pressure and rejected the plans.

One of these plans was the U. S. Technical Assistance offer to Syria under Point Four Program that was rejected by the Azm government in June of 1951. The refusal was based on suspicions that technical experts sent from the U. S. would pry into Syrian internal affairs and that such experts would lay the ground work for Western imperialistic penetration.⁴⁶ Although there is no definite proof that such refusal was dictated by Shishakly, it is safe to say that he approved of it. Late in that year he took all government work in his hands and he did not attempt to reopen negotiations with Point Four authorities. If he was in favor of the agreement he was in a position to sign it later when he took over.

A second plan was presented by the three big Western Powers, United States, United Kingdom, and France for the Defense of the Middle East. Syria refused this also. On this case we have Shishakly's views stated plainly. Answering a German reporter who interviewed him on his attitude on Middle East Defense, Shishakly declared,

It is natural that the defense of the Middle East should be the right of the Middle Eastern States. Any pact or agreement that does not take into consideration the rights of those states and their sovereignty or that does not realize their aspirations, will not secure the preservation of peace nor give it any serious guarantees.⁴⁷

Mr. Zafir Al-Rifai, Syrian foreign minister at that time, in another statement on the subject has added that, "the Arab States have no interest at present to side with this camp or the other prior to taking

into consideration their national interests and rights. "48

It thus becomes clear that Shishakly pursued a policy of neutrality in world affairs. His position was typical of other Arab states at that time, especially Egypt. It also reflected the popular opinion on the issue.

Thus Shishakly, although moving slower than Zaim, had gradually taken a position on all the issues. It was apparent to him, however, that any position he took, if not supported by the masses of the people, would undoubtedly face strong opposition.⁴⁹ He was convinced that sheer force was not enough to keep him in power indefinitely. A power captured by force can always be taken away by force.

In search for a popular base for his power, Shishakly attempted first to cooperate with and recruit the support of certain political parties and groups. A parliamentary group^{headed} by Akram Hourani was won to his side.⁵⁰ The honeymoon did not last long and Hourani not only withdrew his support from Shishakly, but later became one of his outstanding opponents. Looking some place else for support he attempted to conclude a modus operandi with the Populist Party which had a relative majority in parliament. This did not work either. He could not possibly turn to the Nationalist party whose leaders were a part of the discredited Nationalist regime. None of the other political parties with the possible exception of the Syrian Nationalist Party,⁵¹ was ready to support him. Finally, he decided to outlaw all existing political parties and form one single party under his own leadership. This he did in late 1962 when he

launched a movement called "The Arab Liberation Movement."⁵² It is quite significant to remark that, although meant to be a political party, the name "party" was avoided. This can be explained in two ways. First, if the movement was called a party, Shishakly would have been forced to raise the ban on other political parties and by so doing invite open opposition. Second, the concept of party could have meant to him a machinery for serving a particular interest or group. Hoping to get support from all groups and interests, he avoided the use of the word, "party."

Although on the surface, the movement attracted a sizable segment of the population and although it scored a major victory in the elections of October 1953, by winning 60 out of the 70 seats in parliament,⁵³ it, nevertheless, failed to acquire deep roots in the hearts of the people.⁵⁴ With the absence of strong popular base for his regime, Shishakly was forced out of power in February 1954. Thus ended the period of military rule in Syria.

In concluding this section a few words might be mentioned in comparing and contrasting the two military rulers of Syria. Both resorted to unconstitutional means in capturing and consolidating their power, but while Zaim was mostly interested in his personal aggrandizement, Shishakly was working for what he sincerely thought was good for Syria.

- The second contrast between the two is in their approach to solving the Country's problems. While Zaim chose to move fast and hit hard, Shishakly preferred to move slow and compromise. What accounts for this

difference in their actions or approaches might be due to the fact that Shishakly was more of a politician than Zaim. This was illustrated in the area of foreign affairs. Against obvious anti-western feelings among the Syrians, Zaim followed an extremely pro-western foreign policy.

No doubt that differences in their backgrounds, personalities, influence of their entourage on their decisions, and many other factors might be responsible for differences in their behavior.

Having discussed the position of the Army, as taken by two of its spokesmen, on the various issues, political parties and their programs will be treated in the following section.

Political Parties⁵⁵

In Syria a score of political parties are fighting a continuous battle for survival and leadership. It is not the writer's concern, except perhaps incidentally, to deal here with the organization of each party, its leadership and clientele, the relationship of leadership to clientele, its class structure or other related subjects. The intent here is to relate the different parties to the issues and problems that the Syrian people face and to show where each one stands.

Only two of the major parties dealt with have had a chance to participate effectively in government: (1) The Nationalist party, whose leaders dominated the pre-military coups independence period, and the Populist party that won a majority in the election following the second coup. In both cases formal positions can be compared with their practical actions. In the case of other parties, only the theoretical position

is treated. Whenever data are available, party ideology will be contrasted with party action.

Only parties with considerable following that were in existence in the period 1945-1954 are dealt with. The Arab Liberation Movement is not treated here because it has been covered in the part on Shishakly. The parties dealt with here, according to their order of treatment are:

1. The Moslem Brotherhood
2. The Socialist Cooperative Party
3. The Syrian Social Nationalist Party
4. The Populist Party
5. The National Party
6. The Arab Renaissance Socialist Party
7. The Communist Party.

The Moslem Brotherhood

The foundation of the Brotherhood as a party goes back to 1935 when its first branch was established in Aleppo. Other branches were established in other cities under different names until it was united in 1945 into one single organization under its present name.⁵⁶ Its leader and spokesman today is Shaik Mustapha Sibai. It is differentiated from all other parties in Syria in that its ambitions are not limited to Syria alone nor to the Arab world alone, but covers the whole Moslem world.⁵⁷ This does not mean that the party has organized branches in all these countries; it simply means that it aims at creating such a wide organization.

The Party's Position on the Type of Government

The Brothers believe in the republican form of government.⁵⁸ When the subject of Arab unity, specifically that of Iraq, Jordan and Syria was debated in the parliament late in 1949, Sibai was one of its most vocal opponents on the ground that it would cost Syria its republican regime.⁵⁹ It is difficult, however, to determine whether his opposition to unity with Jordan and Iraq was based on his attachment to the republican regime or on his hatred to the Hashimite family. The bitter animosity between the late King Abdullah of Jordan and Hajj Amin el-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, is well known in the Arab world. It is also known that Sibai is one of the outstanding supporters of Husseini. Assuming that Sibai is a devout Moslem, one can hardly believe that he is such an ardent supporter of republicanism when the only type of government known to the Moslem world was monarchic~~al~~. Nevertheless, one has no proof at present to determine his real views on the subject. On the surface, at least, he appears to be for the republican form of government.

The Brotherhood Position on the Relationship of the Church to the State

This point needs very little elaboration because from the name of the party one can suspect fairly easily the attitude it takes on the issue. To them Islam and the State are inseparable. Their motto is, 'Islam is a religion and a State, a Koran and a sword, a Mosque and a School, a Code of law and morality, justice and brotherhood, life and eternity.'⁶⁰ In other words, Islam should dominate, regulate, and

guide every aspect of human activities. When the clause on the religion of the state in the 1950 draft constitution was under discussion Sibai and M. Mubarak, another Brotherhood leader, argued endlessly in favor of adopting Islam as the religion of the state.⁶¹

The Party's Position on the Distribution of Wealth

The Brotherhood believes in some sort of vague undefined socialism that they call "Moslem Socialism." It stands for social justice for all the classes in society, rejects feudalism and calls for the improvement of living standards for the peasants, workers, and all underprivileged classes.⁶² They do not believe in using violence to achieve objectives. They rather believe that such socialism is going to win over other systems without the resort to revolts and bloodshed, but by reason of predetermination.⁶³

The Party's Position on Regional Problems

This subject was mentioned above. The party is for a complete Arab Unity and very close cooperation between the Arabs and other friendly Moslem countries in the World.⁶⁴ They were in opposition to any unity with the Hashimite countries as was mentioned in chapter II.

The Party's Position on International Affairs

The Brothers are bitter opponents of imperialism and its forces. Imperialist powers are listed as the United States, the United Kingdom and France. They went as far as advocating cooperation with the Soviet Union, not because they have any love as such to the Soviet regime, but

because they hate the West. In one of his statements, Sibai argued:

They say that the Russian menace is a threat to civilization and that cooperation with Russia is not in the benefit of humanity. But what did we gain out of British, American, and French civilizations? Did we gain anything but the dispersal of our men and children, the exploitation of our countries, and our subjugation to Zionist domination? If these were the fruits of their civilizations how do they expect us to adopt them? Let the U. S. and England together with their armies and civilization go to hell and let us preserve our own countries and Arabism. Let them all go to hell with no regret or pity as long as they wish us nothing but misery, shame, and enslavement. ⁶⁵

Many public figures had attacked the West and called for cooperation with the Soviet bloc, but never before with such a bitter and resentful language.

The Socialist Cooperative Party

The party was founded in 1940 under the leadership of an ambitious young man with dictatorial tendencies named Faisal Al-Assali. He was made the life-long leader of the party and his relationship with the rank and file was based on unquestioned obedience. ⁶⁶ It is a one man party. Two thirds of a chapter on the party, written by one of its members, was devoted to the glorification of Al-Assali in such a way that made him look like a charismatic leader or God's gift to Syria. In one of his campaign speeches in 1947, he said: 'I have come to fight tyranny and tyrants, to champion the case of the poor and weak, depending on God who promised me victory.' ⁶⁷ The party had no appeal or power outside of Damascus and vicinity. ⁶⁸

The Party's Position on the Form of Government

Although the leader of the party himself had dictatorial tendencies, he was never on good terms with the military regimes. He spent most of his time during this period in jail or in voluntary exile.⁶⁹ For that reason, he appeared to be as the champion of representative government and the most threatening danger to military dictatorships. This apparent inconsistency is to be explained in the fact that leaders with dictatorial aspiration would favor working under a democratic system until they came to power. It makes their job of capturing power much easier. From the type of organization he chose for his party, it is an educated guess that had Al-Assali ever captured power, he would have established himself as the absolute ruler of the country.⁷⁰

The Party's Position on the Issue of the Church vs the State

Although the position of the party on this issue was never made clear, it is possible to argue that the church was given a vital part in the affairs of the state. It is hard to visualize a party with a leader surrounded by a religious halo on one hand and a secular platform on the other. Moreover, the party's concept of nationalism seems to be a mixture between Arab nationalism and Islam.

The Party's Position on Regional Problems

The party advocates the establishment of a federation among all Arab and Moslem states with a federal government and a federal congress at the top.⁷¹ The federation would handle those aspects concerned with economic, political and military matters. Aside from these

aspects the member states would preserve their independence. The party is opposed to any union of Syria with other Arab states such as the Iraqi-Syrian unity.⁷² It is for an all embracing unity.

Its Position on the Distribution of wealth

Their position on this issue is spelled out in detailed manner. They describe themselves as "moderate Socialists." Their program provides for the direction of the economy by the state in a way that secures the improvement of living standards, the mechanization of agriculture, and heavy industrialization. They advocate the nationalization of all public utilities and big industries. They respect the right of private property, but favor the organization of agriculture on the cooperative farms system. Their program calls for free education and health facilities for everyone. On labor, they advocate a wide social security program; wages are to be paid according to production.⁷³

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party was founded in 1932 by another man with dictatorial tendencies. The foundation of the party was based on a contract between the leader and founder; Antoun Saadi, on one hand, and the believers in his message on the other hand. According to this contract, Saadi became the life-long leader of the party and the believers became the members who defended the cause of the party and supported Saadi in all his legislative and executive actions.⁷⁴ Saadi was the final authority on all matters related to the party and the

members were supposed to manifest unquestionable obedience to his authority. The party operates in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan.

Since its founding the Party has been at odds with the French authorities in Syria and Lebanon and, later, with the Syrian and Lebanese governments where the struggle finally developed into an open fighting with the Lebanese government. This was the revolt of summer 1949 in which the Leader was captured in Syria, prosecuted and sentenced to death by Lebanese authorities.

The Party's Position on the Type of Government

There is nothing in the party's principles, as stated and explained by Saadi, which refers, even in a remote way, to the type of government the party would have established had it succeeded in capturing power. The organization of the party, however, is such that some sort of an authoritarian regime would have been expected. Had Saadi captured power before he was executed he would have been, according to the contract, placed at the head of the government for the rest of his life. Whether he would have made himself a president, elected every four or five years under a facade of popular election, or a king cannot be predicted.

Its Position on the Relation of the Church to the State

The position of the party on this issue is the clearest and best defined of all parties. The party advocates a complete separation between the state and the Church.⁷⁵ In his elaboration of this principle,

Saadi said :

'the idea of political and religious inseparability is incompatible with the concept of nationalism in general and the Syrian Nationalism in particular. The national unity will never be achieved on the basis of making the national state a religious one.'

The party calls for the prevention of clergymen from interfering in the political and legislative affairs of the state. This was meant to be an attack on the tremendous authority which the clergy, as a class, wields in political matters in Syria and the Arab world in general. It was also an attack on the different 'Personal Status' laws and various religious courts that still exist in the country. The third of the party's reform principles calls for the elimination of all religious and confessional barriers that separate the citizens in the state. Taken altogether the three principles aim at creating a completely secular state. This aim by itself might not be unique to the party, but the emphasis put on it, and the frankness with which it was advocated, are unique.

Its Position on the Distribution of Wealth

The policy of the party on this issue could be stated in two words, "state control." "The national wealth of the State," says Saadi, "should be subject to its national interest."⁷⁶ The state is the most effective factor in the economy. It would organize production, wages, distribution of property, and capital. The state does not support one class interest against the other; no class interest is subordinate to the other. All class interests are subordinate to that of the state. Thus the party is against feudalism and unionism, at the same

time.⁷⁷ Both are destructive to the state national interest. The party leaves room for private capital and enterprise in the national economy but subject to the regulation of the state.

Its Position on Regional Affairs

The party here, also, takes a well defined position. It is the only Syrian party that does not call for Arab Unity or believe in Arab Nationalism.⁷⁸ The party distinguishes between the Syrian Nationalism and other Nationalisms. Syria is the home of such a nationalism. Its boundaries are the Taurus mountains and the Bakhtiari Mountains to the North; the Suez Canal and the Red Sea including the Sinai peninsula to the South; the Mediterranean Sea to the west including Cyprus; and a line crossing the Arabian desert to the Persian Gulf to the East.⁷⁹ It includes what is now Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, a part of Egypt and a part of Iraq. According to Saadi, the people living in this area constitute one nation distinct from other nations living elsewhere. The relationship of Syria to the rest of the Arab world is one of cooperation rather than complete unity.⁸⁰

Its Position on International Affairs

The party is well known for being strongly anti-Soviet and anti-Communist. The feud between it and the Communist party in Syria and Lebanon is traditional. Writing on this point, J. S. Roucek points out that the party, "is the only fighting anti-Communist political organization in the Arab world that makes anti-Communism the primary plank

in its appeal to the populace.⁸¹ Being such a bitter enemy of Communism does not put the party automatically on the side of the West. In fact the position of the party in relation to the West was never clear. There were accusations from its opponents, specially the Communists, that the party was supporting the Axis during World War II. It was accused of being a British agent, and in the latest assassination affair in Syria it was accused of conspiring with the United States for the overthrow of the government. If all these accusations were supported by evidence they make the party's foreign policy purely opportunistic. The evidence is lacking, however, and that makes the position of the party on international affairs, apart from being anti-Communist, indefinite.

The People's Party

Since its formation in August 1948 this party has been a dominating factor in Syrian politics. Except for periods when the army ruled, the party, since the first coup d'etat, has dominated almost every cabinet.⁸² In the elections of 1949, the Populists captured more seats in the constituent Assembly than any other group.⁸³

The Party's Position on the Form of Government

The party takes a very clear position on this issue. It stands for a constitutional representative republican form of government. That the party had participated in power in a period when the military was wielding extensive extra-constitutional authority⁸⁴ does not by itself

make the party's attachment to constitutional government meaningless. The participation was meant to avoid political crises and to attempt to restore constitutional government to the country short of a showdown with the Army.⁸⁵ When it was completely convinced that a showdown was the only alternative, it did not hesitate to bring it on. On July 13, 1951, the party's paper challenged the military to dissolve the parliament and elect a new one subservient to their orders and wishes. It said that, "As long as parliament is obliged to accept a government that it does not want, why not oblige the public to accept a parliament the public does not want." The paper talked openly of the military's tacit veto power over government decision and challenged its exercise.⁸⁶ On September 24, the issue was raised in the Assembly and Rushdi Al-Kikhia, leader of the party, urged the government to take control of the police force.

"When the party accorded its confidence to the government," said Kikhia, "it was on the understanding that it will conduct its business with full sovereignty accepting no orders from nobody. Let us see the government take control of the police force."⁸⁷

Finally, on November 24, after a long cabinet crisis, Marouf Al-Dawalibi, a Populist leader, daringly challenged the military by forming a cabinet with the portfolio of Defense given, for the first time since the first coup d'etat, to a non-military man.⁸⁸ The challenge was too much for the Army to take. The next day they struck by dissolving the cabinet, arresting the prime minister and other members of the party and later suspending constitutional life altogether. Thus,

looking at the situation in retrospect, one can defend the position of the party in participating in power at a time when the Army was exercising extra-constitutional authority inconsistent with the party's conception of government. At the time when they acquiesced in, they helped to preserve a facade of constitutional government at least, but when they resisted, the country lost all its constitutional institutions.

The Party's Position on the Issue of Church v State

The position of the party on this issue is not very clear. There is very little in its constitution which might interpret its position decisively. In its legislative policy, the party advocates the reform of existing legislation by enacting "progressive and modern laws on the hands of specialists who would take into consideration the Arabic heritage, and securing the interests of the people and the needs of the country."⁸⁹ In the 1980 Constitution, drafted by the Constituent Assembly dominated by the party, Islam was made the source of legislation in the State, (Article 3.). Islam was also made the religion of the President of the Republic. The controversy at that time was over the proposed clause, 'Islam is the religion of the State' and the party should be credited with, or discredited for, the non-ratification of that clause. It was, undoubtedly, in a position to ratify it if it wished to do so.

The Party's Position on the Distribution of Wealth

The party does not differ much from other parties in its position

on this issue. It gives the state a vital role in directing the national economy in a way profitable to the majority of the citizens. "Whereas the individual is the basic foundation of the society," declares the party, "it is the duty of the state, then, to secure for its citizens all the means and ways capable of developing their talents and raising their standard of living."⁹⁰ On the basis of this general principle, the party stands for social justice, social security, minimum wages, trade unionism, old age benefits, free health service, free education, land reform, industrialization, and other social demands that are spelled out in great detail. The party, when in power, had achieved a considerable part of its program, a part of which was carried beyond mere legislative acts.⁹¹ That the party has not yet been able to achieve all its program is due to many factors. The short time it stayed in power, which was mostly consumed in a continuous struggle with the military, the opposition of influential private interests, and other complicated factors.

The Party's Position on Inter-Arab Affairs

The theoretical position of the party on this issue is stated in its constitution. Its practical position could be determined from its action. From the theoretical point of view, the party declares that "the Arab in all their countries are one nation possessing all the spiritual, political, economic, and social elements of complete unity."⁹² To achieve such a desired goal the party advocates the following of two immediate steps: (1) a federal union between Syria and the other Arab

countries, and (2) the use of the Arab League as a means to unify foreign policy and representation of the Arab countries, their defense, their legislations, custom duties, economies, and currency.

In the practical field, the party did not stick very close to its principles. In the early stages of the Zaim regime, when he was flirting with the idea of federal union with Iraq, the party supported him. When he reversed his course of policy and took an unfriendly attitude toward such a union, the party withdrew its support and opposed him openly.⁹³ Their action was consistent with the first of the immediate steps mentioned above. When Minnawi overthrew Zaim and called for popular election at a time when the projected Iraqi - Syrian federation was reaching its peak, the party took a slightly different position during the campaign. It declared that it favored a federation with Iraq on condition that Iraq repudiated its treaty with Great Britain. On November 9th, a week before the elections, the party published a manifesto in which it declared that,

The Palestinian disaster requires the revision of the structure of the Council of the Arab League in such a fashion as to permit the Arab countries of uniting in any way that can restore to Palestine its Arabism and defend the Arab world against the danger of Zionist expansion. This aim could be attained by way of establishing a federation between Syria and the rest of the other Arab countries which had achieved their independence and sovereignty. . . .⁹⁴

Here the party seems to have shifted from its theoretical position. As mentioned above, the party theoretically advocates the use of the Arab League as a means to unify foreign policy and

representation of the Arab countries, to unify defense, legislation, currency, and so on. The principle did not stipulate that such a step would be taken only with those members of the Arab League who had achieved their independence and sovereignty. Iraq was not the only member of the League that had a treaty with western countries. Jordan had a treaty with Great Britain; Egypt had one with Great Britain, and Lebanon had a financial agreement with France. Saudi Arabia was closely tied economically with the United States and so was Yemen. If the party makes the same stipulation on unity with all these countries, it is obvious that it was not willing to unite with any.⁹⁵

Moreover, Dr. Marouf Al-Dawalibi, a Populist leader and Minister of National Economy in the Azm Cabinet which took over after the first Shishakly coup, visited Saudi Arabia where he negotiated a loan and trade agreement which was suspected to be the price paid by Saudi Arabia to Syria for the rejection of the union project with Iraq.⁹⁶

The party continued, however, to advocate a project of Arab States federation and its leader, Mr. Al-Kudsi, when he was a prime minister, was jumping from one Arab capital to another supposedly trying to convince the rulers and leaders of the Arab world of the necessity of his project.⁹⁷ It is very doubtful whether he was convinced himself.

The Party's Position on International Issues

In its constitution, the party advocates in the field of foreign policy, 'the establishment of relations with foreign powers on the

grounds of reciprocal interests and the non-preference of one power over the other except when the national interest dictates otherwise.^{'98}

In practice the party, when in power in 1950-51, refused to commit Syria to any of the two major camps. Its foreign policy was directed toward the establishment of relations with Arab States, and some small non-Arab ones. Apart from agreements concluded with Arab states, only three other agreements were concluded in this period.

1. A civil aviation agreement with the Netherlands ratified on the 19th of July, 1950.
2. A friendship treaty with Pakistan was ratified on the 1st of May, 1951.
3. A similar treaty with Afghanistan was ratified on the same day.

Otherwise, the party's approach to the East-West cold war can be described as one of neutrality with frequent attacks on the West and occasional flirting with the East. The one party leader who combined the two was Dr. Marouf Al-Dawalibi. In answer to the pressure exerted on the Arab countries by the West to conclude a final peace treaty with Israel, Dr. Al-Dawalibi speaking in his personal capacity, not officially, (he was then the Minister of National Economy) once proposed ' that a plebiscite be conducted in the Arab world so that the whole world will know that the Arabs prefer thousand times to become a Soviet republic rather than to be used as bait for Israel.'⁹⁹ Few days later Dr. Al-Dawalibi received the Soviet ambassador to Syria and declared after the meeting that the discussion dealt with the exchange of Soviet machinery for Syrian goods.

The Nationalist Party

Although the party was established legally in 1947, it had its origin in the National Bloc, a working alliance between certain individuals and groups formed in the late 'twenties' in opposition to French mandate.¹⁰⁰ Most of the leaders of the Bloc became the leaders of the National Party and they had dominated the politics of Syria from the independence until the first coup d'état. Their claim to leadership has been their long and stubborn struggle against France. They had exploited this issue successfully for a period of five years until this reservoir of prestige was blown up in 1949 when the party was held responsible for the loss of Palestine.¹⁰¹ In March, 1949 the first coup d'état suddenly ended the party's mandate on Syrian politics. It played a very minor role in politics all during the period that followed until the fall of Shihabiy's regime.

The Party's Position on the Type of Government

The position of the party on this issue has changed since it was ousted from power. When it was in power the party advocated a republican form of government based on popular representation.¹⁰² The party was so proud of its republican form of government that it was not ready to give it up at any cost. When it was thrown out of power, it reversed its policy sharply and renounced its attachment to republicanism.¹⁰³

Although the party, when in power, was theoretically for a democratic republican form of government, it soon became clear that it was really for the facade of such a government using it simply as a means

by which a small ruling minority tried to give a respectable and constitutional appearance to the fact of its continuing power.¹⁰⁴ The most explicit evidence of such a situation was the constitutional amendment passed in 1947 by a parliament dominated by the party which allowed the re-election of the President of the Republic and then proceeded to re-elect President Kuwatli for another term.

Its Position on the Distribution of Wealth

The party's position here needs very little elaboration. It has been so far shown that the party, while in power, exploited the many for the enrichment of the few. Its theoretical position does not differ much from other parties. It calls for a great degree of government intervention in the direction of national economy so as to secure social justice for everyone.¹⁰⁵

The Party's Position on Inter-Arab Affairs

Again here the party changed its position when it was ousted from power. While in power the party joined the Arab League¹⁰⁶ which was a very loose confederation of Arab States. It strongly opposed both the Greater Syria and the Fertile Crescent projects.¹⁰⁷ It used the same arguments against such projects that the Populist party used against the Iraqi-Syrian Federation when the latter was in a position to take practical action in that direction. When the party was out of power it came all-out and with no reservations in favor of the Syrian - Iraqi Project,¹⁰⁸ taking the same position that the Populist Party took when

it was out of power. Even in the theoretical realm, the party is more reserved toward an Arab unity than all the other parties. It simply calls for 'the strengthening of political, economic, educational, social and legislative ties among the different parts of the Arab homeland.'¹⁰⁹ In no place in its program does it mention the word 'Arab Unity,' so common with other parties.

The Arab Renaissance Socialist Party

As it existed at the time Shishakly was overthrown, the party was the amalgamation of two older parties: (1) The Baath (Renaissance) party founded in 1940 by a handful of people uniting for the purpose of fighting imperialism in the Arab world;¹¹⁰ and (2) the Arab-Socialist party founded in 1950 by Akram Hourani for the purpose of countering the influence of the Populist Party.¹¹¹ The date of amalgamation is not known, but most likely it took place in 1953 when the leaders of both parties were in voluntary exile in Lebanon.

Since Hourani and his party have accepted the whole program of the Renaissance Party,¹¹² it will be the only one discussed here.

The Party's Position on the Form of Government

The party believes in a representative constitutional republican form of government in which the people are the only source of authority.¹¹³ The record of the party appears to substantiate this principle. It fought the Nationalist regime, accusing it of exploiting the country in the interests of the few feudal families. It had, very effectively,

opposed the legislative decree No. 50 intended to cripple individual liberties. It opposed the re-election of Kuwatli to a second term. It campaigned hard for the adoption of a direct electoral system.¹¹⁴ It was one of the most violent opponents of the military regimes. One of its members in the Assembly very daringly opposed the intervention of the Army in politics.¹¹⁵ Its leaders were forced to leave the country because of their tough opposition to Shishakly. In the period 1949-1954 it participated in government only once, in the Atassi cabinet.¹¹⁶ After the election of 1949, its representative in the cabinet, Mr. Aflak, resigned charging the government with misconduct and fraud in the conduct of the election.¹¹⁷ So it seems that the party's actual record had been very consistent with its principles.

The Party's Position on the Church vs the State Issue

The party is the only one in Syria, that has a Christian leader and founder, Mr. Aflak.¹¹⁸ It is in this frame of reference that the position of the party on this issue should be viewed. The party believes in full secularism. When the third article of the 1950 draft constitution became a hot controversial issue, the party championed the opposition to the provisions in the article that made Islam the religion of the state and that of the president of the Republic. The party was engaged in a bitter fight with the exponents of the article that led in many cases to bloody battles.¹¹⁹ The credit for eliminating the clause that would have made Islam the religion of the state should go, in the first place, to this party.

The Party's Position on the Distribution of Wealth

As its name clearly indicates, the party believes in socialism which it considers to be the 'ideal system' for Syria and the Arab world.¹²⁰ Its social program, however, does not differ much from other parties. The only measure that the party advocates, which is absent from other parties programs, is the participation of workers in the management of industry and the sharing in its profits.¹²¹

The Party's Position on Inter-Arab Affairs

Its general principle states that the Arabs are one nation that has a natural right to live in one state and direct its own affairs.¹²² It is the only party that was ready to give up a part of Syria's sovereignty in favor of an Arab union. Jalal Al-Sayid, one of its members in the Assembly suggested that the 1950 draft constitution includes a provision to that effect.¹²³ It thus appears that the party was the only one to take a sincere and honest attitude toward unity. The party gave its support to the Iraqi-Syrian federation project.¹²⁴ It fought Zaim when he opposed the federation and criticized the Azm government for its unfriendly policy toward Lebanon.¹²⁵ The whole record of the party shows that it has always opposed any action which might hurt the chances for Arab unity or create any hard feelings among Arab states.¹²⁶

Its Position on International Affairs

The party is an exponent of a strict neutrality in world affairs. In theory and practice the party has stuck to this policy.¹²⁷ In

explaining the reasoning behind such a position, Mr. Aflak, in one of his articles wrote,

Had the Arabs today been living under a system free from foreign domination and imperialist fears, and had they been called upon to take sides in the cold war, they would have, most likely, sided with the Western democratic camp which is closer to their ideals and nationalist interests. They would have taken such a position in spite of all the defects they can see in the Western democratic systems and in spite of the possibilities of emancipation and progress they see as inherent in the dictatorships of the Eastern camp. This is because they are fully convinced that freedom is the essence of their life. It has been the basic foundation of their early renaissance and it shall always be so in the future. But the present situation in the Arab world with the attitude of the West to their problems being as it is and the support they are getting on the Palestine problem from the Soviet Union, leads to the conclusion that the interest of the Arabs cannot be served at all by siding with the West. They are thus forced to stay neutral. 128

The Communist Party

The Communist Party in Syria is no different in its objectives from any other Communist party outside the communist orbit. They all try to subvert the established regimes in order to take over and turn their respective countries into socialist states belonging to the Soviet camp. Their tactics might differ from one place to another but the major objective remains the same.

Its tactics in Syria with respect to the issues involved are as follows; it advocates a democratic republican form of government which makes it easier for it to operate more freely. It believes that

the only way to achieve socialism is by operating under a republican democratic regime guaranteeing its citizens and parties complete political freedom.¹²⁹

It generally has no respect for religion unless it serves its objectives. Thus one expects it to be against any ties between the church and the state.

Its position on the distribution of wealth is strictly Marxist. It works for complete socialization of the economy and means of production.

On Inter-Arab affairs it advocates cooperation, rather than unity, among Arab states. It opposes the Iraqi-Syrian federation on the ground that it is a British Imperialist project.¹³⁰

On the international issue, it goes without saying that the party advocates friendship with the Soviet Union. It opposes all schemes backed by the West, such as the Middle East Defense pact. Its main propaganda line is centered around the objective of discrediting the West.

Commenting on the program of the Communist parties in the Middle East, which is very applicable to Syria, Mr. Khadduri remarks that,

Their program advocating a complete reorganization of society based on the doctrine of world communism, is probably the most constructive (as well as destructive in its sweeping denunciation of existing conditions) so far offered by any Middle Eastern group in opposition to the ruling class.¹³¹

General Observations About the Parties in Syria

The Similarity of Programs

It is quite evident, from this whole discussion of political parties and their programs, that, although they differ on certain issues, they all seem to agree on a few. The area of common agreement seems to be clearer on the issue of the distribution of wealth. In that field, all of the parties advocate socialism in varying shades and degrees. This is very similar to the attitude of French political parties where even a very conservative party would call itself the Radical Party." Socialist doctrines in Syria, as in many countries elsewhere, seem to have become a mark of political respectability. "Every other Syrian one meets," writes Alan Ray, "describes himself as a socialist."¹³² Syrian political parties, and the military by the same token, are only reflecting ~~interpreting~~ the aspirations of the majority of the enlightened public opinion.

The question arises, however, if all political parties are in favor of a socialistic program, if they all advocate land reform and fair distribution of wealth and property, why is it then that very little has been done in that field so far? There are two possible answers for the question:

1. A party's program on paper is something and its practical program is something else. Not all the parties believe in what they advocate. The Nationalist Party is the best illustration of this. In theory, it was for the people, in practice it served its own individual interests only. It is possible to argue that most parties existing in Syria do not

believe in what they advocate, or at least, they are not honest about it.

2. Political parties are not the only powers that guide Syrian politics. A very influential group on the political scene is what might be called 'independents.' There is always a goodly number of them in parliament.¹³³ A part of this group represents private interests for which they fight bitterly. In 1951, when parliament was debating a land reform bill, a quorum was lacking for two days because deputies representing great landowners deliberately were staying away.¹³⁴ Another illustration of the powerful influence of private interests in Syria is the rejection of U. S. Point Four Aid. Point Four technical experts were interested in helping Syria to turn a large swamp area in the north into small privately-owned model farms. This was opposed by three interest groups: (1) Syrian big capitalists, (2) Leventine French financial interests, and (3) absentee landlords.¹³⁵ These groups were in favor of dividing the newly cultivated area among themselves. They had enough influence to block the Point Four plan under the disguise of imperialist penetration.

This eventually leads us to another question. How do these interest groups manage to have their influence and representatives in parliament and Cabinets? The answer to that is found in the Syrian social system where a great segment of the society still lives under a quasi feudal system. Political ideas of socialism, equality and freedom have not penetrated to this class yet. Even the Communist party, which considers the peasantry as their second best clientele, has not yet been able to capture their imagination. The head of the party in Syria, Khalid Bakdash, in one of his reports declared,

"Our progress among the working class and the peasantry has been very slow and if it continues at this rate it cannot produce the necessary results with the required speed and in conformity with the requirements of the development of the international and home situation."¹³⁶

If the Communist party has failed to woo the peasantry, it is hard to think of any other political party which can do it. In the elections of 1949, Akram Haurani, the leader of the Arab Socialist Party with some appeal to the peasantry, was the only one on his list who won a seat in the Assembly. The rest of the winners in his district were feudal representatives.¹³⁷ Even in the city among enlightened public, representatives of private interests can win political battles through bribery and lavish spending of money.

A second area of common agreement among political parties is the issue of Arab unity. As we have seen, the majority of political parties consider Syria as a part of the Arab world and advocate its unity with other Arab countries. Why then was such a unity not achieved? The answer lies partly in the attitude of other Arab countries. Syria, by herself cannot achieve such a unity unless she imposes it upon the others. It is said that, in 1944 when the idea of the Arab League was discussed among Arab leaders, Syria was the only state that was for complete unity.¹³⁸ The other countries were not ready for such a step. This might be true, but it seems to me that Syrian leaders have been for unity when they thought nobody else was, and against it when somebody else was for it. There is no political leader in Syria, or elsewhere in the Arab world for that matter, who can come out publicly against unity. No one will dare to if he expects any public support. But there has been very few who were ready to give up a part of their country's sovereignty for that cause and it is impossible to see how any unity can

be achieved without the giving up of some sovereignty. One is led to believe, then, that the reference to Arab unity by Syrian political parties is no more than lip service and a political necessity to capture the support of the people who, in the majority, genuinely believe in an Arab unity. The politicians and leaders have some vested interests in the government and are not willing to give them up.

Commenting on this point, Mr. Emile Eustani, a Lebanese deputy and a pan-Arabist, once stated that the majority of Arab political leaders advocate Arab unity until they are in power; then they reject it. He mentioned specifically the names of three Syrian leaders: Kuwatli, Atassi, and Shishakli who, when out of power, were outspoken in their support to unity. When they were in power their support shifted into opposition.¹³⁹

The Lack of Party Discipline

There is almost no party discipline in Syrian political parties. Quite similar to the situation in the U. S., party members in parliament are not bound to follow their party line or policy if there is any. The Populist Party can be taken as an illustration of this point. In March 1951, the Kudsi Cabinet fell on the issue of inter-Arab unity and the international situation. Kudsi, a Populist leader was for complete neutrality in world affairs. His strongest opponent was Hassan Al-Hakim who was in favor of cooperation with the Western Camp.¹⁴⁰ The resignation of Kudsi was followed by the resignation of Rushdi

Kikhia, another Populist leader, from the presidency of the Assembly. In August of the same year, Hassan Al-Hakim, still a great supporter of cooperation with the West,¹⁴¹ formed a cabinet with five members of the Populist party in it. Even his foreign minister was a Populist. It is true, that in the final run, the politics of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister came in conflict, but it is difficult to see how party members would participate in a government whose policy run opposite to that of their party. Party members in parliament may vote against party instructions, can join cabinets without party permission, and can make declarations and pronouncements contrary to the party line. In all these cases they are never censored, punished or even expelled.

Classification of Parties

Having discussed the various political parties and their programs and having made few generalizations as to their characteristics, it is possible to classify them into two categories: (1) ideological parties and (2) non-ideological ones. Ideological parties are those who have a certain specific ideology that distinguishes them from the others and makes their fusion with others almost impossible. A member in any of these parties in this group cannot possibly shift his allegiance to another party unless his ideology undergoes a basic change. Non-ideological parties are those who lack such an ideology. In the first group we have :

1. The Communist Party whose ideology is Marxian. Many planks in other party platforms come very close to those in the Communist party platform and vice versa, but the party is yet basically different from others.
2. The Syrian Social Nationalist party whose distinguishing ideology is Syrian Nationalism, the distinction it makes between Syrian Nationalism and Arab Nationalism.
3. The Moslem Brotherhood whose ideology is the inseparability of the state from the church.

The rest of the parties fall in the non-ideological group. There seems to be no logical reason for their separate existence. A comparison of their programs shows that they all believe basically in the same thing. In certain cases, their views are stated almost in identical language. They all agree on Arab unity, socialism or planned economy, a constitutional republican form of government, and neutrality in world affairs. Why then, don't they unite into one party? One possible answer is that in this group emphasis in a party is placed on personalities rather than on ideologies. The clash^{is} motivated by personal differences and not by ideological ones.¹⁴² Parties are simply a vehicle for capturing power, and when achieved, principles are soon deserted.

One might ask another question, "what about the clash between these parties and the military? Do they not both advocate the same principles?" The constitution of the Arab Liberation Movement founded by Shishakly and the Constitutions of these parties express very slight disagreements on aims. Why then did these parties and Shishakly clash so violently? The answer here, in the writer's estimation, is that the military differed with these parties on the methods of implementing

programs. While the army was ready to adopt any method even at the expense of constitutionality the majority of parties in this group insisted on implementing their programs and achieving reform progressively within the frame work of constitutional institutions.¹⁴³ There would have been no reason for Shishakly to form his own party had been able to reach an agreement with the leaders of the established parties as to the methods of reform.

It is not intended to argue, however, that the clash was a clear-cut struggle between the army on one hand and civilians on the other. There can be no doubt that the army's emphasis on the ends and its disregard to the means was approved and supported by a considerable section of the population. Shishakly's Liberation Movement was met with great enthusiasm by many young elements. On the other hand, not all the Army was in favor of sacrificing the country's constitutional regime for reform. Hinnawi, as a representative of such a group, restored the civilian regime to the country after his predecessor Zaim had destroyed it. Those Army leaders who spearheaded the revolt against Shishakly, certainly were not in favor of his approach.

It becomes clear then that among the non-ideological parties the struggle is either centered around personalities or on the method of achieving reform. Among the ideological parties, although they differ on methods, the struggle is basically ideological. It is a clash between imported ideologies and native ones, between the new and the old.

Ever since the country was exposed to Western culture and thought, it has been faced with the problem of what to adopt or reject from the outside, what to keep or reject from its own heritage and traditions. The clash gave birth to all types of arguments and trends which can be reduced to three, each represented by one of the ideological parties. First, we have the complete adoptionists who advocate borrowing a total alien system and ideology and transplanting it into the society. This trend is best illustrated by the case of the Communists who advocate the transplantation of the Marxist ideology. They might be willing to make certain temporary modifications to fit the native social structure, but in the long run they strive for the creation of a totally new system having nothing in common with the old.

Also belonging to this group are those who believe in the borrowing of the whole Western way of life, and rejecting the whole past. They were described by one writer in their admiration to the West as 'plus Royaliste que le Roi.'¹⁴⁴ These are not organized in a political party, but their way of thinking appeals to a sector of the society, no matter how small it is.

On the other extreme, there are those who appreciate nothing in the West or at least who do not admit that the West has much to offer for them. This is the ideology represented by the Moslem Brothers. To this group, Islam as a way of life has inherent in it all the forces of renaissance. It is capable of creating in Syria a social

and political system comparable, if not better, than that of the West. Syria need not borrow anything from Europe in order to solve its problems; all she has to do is follow Islam.

Students of this school of thought tend to be very bitter toward the West because they see in it a threat to their own existence and beliefs. Consequently, they tend to be the extreme nationalists. Reference was made in this Chapter to the vicious attack on the West by Moustafa Sibai, the leader of the Erotherhood.

In between the two extremes fall those who are willing to borrow from the West what is good and useful and at the same time keep what is good and useful from their native culture. This group is represented by the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. In the attempt to formulate his ideology, the leader of the party, Antoun Saadi, borrowed the concept of nationalism from the West, but based it on native elements. "The Syrian Social Nationalist Movement," he said, "derives its essence from the gifted talents of the Syrian nation and its cultural political nationalist tradition."¹⁴⁵ He borrowed the concept of the secular state from the West as well as the concepts of social justice and social equality but he rejected the concept of constitutional representative democracy. It seems most likely that Saadi, concluded that representative democracy does not fit the country, at least in its present stage of development. Thus we see that his ideology is basically western, but tailored differently to fit the domestic situation.

In this group of what might be called "adaptionists" fall all of the non-ideological parties whose classification as such does not keep them out of this ideological struggle. True, their emphasis is on personalities and their battles are fought on these grounds, but they can hardly avoid being faced with the same problems. Each one of them has a platform or a program of reform which is a mixture of western concepts and institutions together with native traditions and values.

In general, it could be said that the majority of the parties and people belong to this center group which is ready to adopt Western and even non-western concepts and institutions to their own way of life. Those who refuse to inject any alien concepts in their system or those who advocate the adoption of a complete foreign system are in the minority.¹⁴⁶

Thus, the multiple party system in Syria, the differences in ideologies, approaches and proposed solutions, the clash of personalities, and the complicated nature of the problems all contributed to the causes of instability over these ten years of independence.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter III

1. New York Times (March 31, 1949) 8:3.
2. Cahiers, XVIII-XIX (1949), p. 158.
3. Ibid., p. 159 also see New York Times (Ap. 1, 1949), p. 24.
4. Legislative Decree No. 2 Official Journal, Part I, p. 830
5. Legislative decree No. 149 Official Journal, Part I, (1949), p. 939 & legislative decree No. 157 Official Journal Part I, (1949), p. 945.
6. Official Journal Part I, (1949), p. 1894.
7. For the text of these codes see: Civil Code; Official Journal Part I, 1949, p. 1413; Commercial Code, Ibid., p. 2325; Penal Code, Ibid., p. 2029.
8. Herbert J. Liebesny, "Impact of western law in the countries of the Near East." A Symposium on Muslim Law reprinted from the George Washington Law Review (Washington, D. C., 1953), pp. 139-140.
9. Cahiers, XVIII-XIX, p. 161.
10. Ibid., p. 159.
11. Decree No. 8, Official Journal Part I, (1949), ~~Leg.~~, p. 932.
12. Cahiers, XIX (1949), p. 158.
13. Loc. cit.
14. Official Journal Part I, (1949), p. 1059.
15. Ibid., p. 1385.
16. Ibid., p. 1786.
17. Cahiers, XIX, (1949), p. 158.

18. Loc. Cit.
19. Loc. Cit.
20. Supra. Chapter II, p. 18.
21. In this period Shishakly was very reluctant to assume full power. What he stood for was not always known, but what he stood against was always expressed to and imposed on Government. See Ghassan Twaini, The Logic of Force (Beirut: Dar-Bierut, 1954), p. 55.
22. Cahiers, XXV (1952), pp. 38-39.
23. Political Parties in Syria (Damascus: Dar ar-Rawalad, 1954), p. 215.
24. Bulletin of Syrian Information (Damascus: Directorate General of Information, August, 1953), p. 164.
25. This was no innovation on the part of Shishakly because the 1950 Constitution had a similar clause. It was an innovation, however, as far as other Arab countries are concerned.
26. The 1953 Constitution can be reviewed in the Middle East Journal, 7 (Autumn 1953), pp. 520-538.
27. Compare this situation with the one discussed by Twainy, op. cit., p. 50.
28. Political Parties in Syria op. cit., p. 215.
29. Cahiers, XXII (1950), op. cit., p. 217.
30. Cahiers, XXIII, (1951), p. 97.
31. Twaini, op. cit., p. 55.
32. P. M. G. "President Shishakly and the Shaping of Syrian Policy." World Today, IV (December, 1953), p. 521.
33. P. M. G. op. cit., p. 524.
34. Farid Hanania, "Dictatorship--What Breed?" Al-Kulliyah Magazine (July, 1953), p. 5.

35. The idea of having the people directly elect the president instead of having him be elected by Parliament was not new to Syria. As early as 1947 the Mardam cabinet proposed a constitutional amendment to that effect, but failed to get it ratified by parliament. See: Haffar, op. cit., pp. 123-124.
36. For the texts of the different Syrian Constitutions see: Hellen Davis, op. cit., 1st ed. (1947), pp. 262-276; Ibid., 2nd ed. (1952) pp. 402-433. See also the Middle East Journal, 7 (Autumn, 1953), pp. 520-538.
For a profound review of Syria's Constitutional Development consult: M. Khadduri, Middle East Journal, 5 (Spring, 1951), pp. 137-160; Burhan Dajani, in the Al-Kulluyah Magazine, (28 September 1953), wrote another interesting article on "The Duality in Syrian Constitutional Life."
37. Haffar, op. cit., p. 111.
38. Cahiers, XVI, (1952), pp. 245-246.
39. Ibid., XXI, (1950), pp. 92-93.
40. Ibid., XXV, (1952), p. 72.
41. "The Syrian Army" argues Majid Khadduri, "emphasizing liberalism before anything else, has paid only lip service to religion and proved to be lukewarm to conservative and religious groups." Khadduri, Majid, "the role of the Military in Middle East Politics." American Political Science Review, 47 (Je' 53), p. 518.
42. Political Parties in Syria, p. 216.
43. Speech by A. Y. Badre of Lebanon to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, February 10, 1948.
44. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 221.
45. Second Statement on Achievements of Syria's Government of the New Regime (Damascus: Directorate General of Information, March 27, 1952), p. 87.
46. New York Times, Je 8, 1951, 7:1. According to New York Times and Joseph Roucek, "Syria, a lesson Geopolitics" Current History 22-23 (Spring, 1952), p. 224. The American proposal was rejected by feudal lords and their supporters. The U. S. suggested the development of the Ghab Valley, a vast swamp area, into model small-holding farms. The French supported by feudal lords favored the establishment of large estates in the area.

47. Cahiers, XXV, (1952), p. 138.
48. Cahiers, XXV, (1952), p. 138.
49. G. Twaini, op. cit., p. 8.
50. Ibid., p. 61-62.
51. Farazat, op. cit., p. 263.
52. Bulletin of Syrian Information, op. cit., (August 1953), pp. 61-62.
53. Farazat, op. cit., p. 270.
54. Twaini, op. cit., p. 93.
55. Most of the data on this section is drawn from a source book on Political Parties In Syria, published in Damascus, 1954. The chapter on each party was written by an influential member of the party itself.
 I shall purposely shy away, as far as possible, from using terms such as left and right, conservative and liberal which might lead to a great deal of confusion due to the fact that in the Middle East and Syria these terms might carry totally different connotations from those accepted in the United States.
56. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 11.
57. Ibid., p. 39.
58. Ibid., p. 34.
59. Official Journal Part III, 4th Meeting (1949), p. 53.
60. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 27.
61. Official Journal Part III, 38th Meeting (July 24, 1950), pp. 636-638.
62. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 31.
63. Loc. cit.
64. Ibid., p. 32.
65. Official Journal Part III, 24th Meeting (April 24, 1950), pp. 406-407.
66. Political Parties, op. cit., p. 52.

67. Ibid., p. 53.
68. Farazat, op. cit., p. 243.
69. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., pp. 55-60.
70. Al-Assali made some reference to his future plans in one of his speeches on April 1st, 1950. He argued that a democratic regime with absolute liberty is not fit for Syria because the people have not reached a degree of education to qualify them for such a type of government. Although he advocated a "popular energetic regime" he most likely meant benevolent dictatorship. See Cahiers, XXI (1950), p. 100.
71. Ibid., p. 60.
72. Ibid., p. 58.
73. Ibid., pp. 60-62.
74. Ibid., op. cit., pp. 71-72.
75. Ibid., pp. 118-120.
76. Ibid., p. 121.
77. Saadi takes an extremely peculiar attitude on trade unions. He believes that labor unions are becoming military establishments with the continuous purpose of fighting and asking for more gain without any thoughtful or logical consideration of future results. Ibid., p. 122.
78. Ibid., p. 114.
79. Ibid., p. 116.
80. Ibid., p. 115.
81. Joseph S. Roucek, "Syria, a lesson in Geopolitics" Current History, 22-23 (1952), p. 223.
82. See Appendix.
83. The figures here vary. See Cahiers XX, (1949), p. 251.
84. When the Assembly was debating the Cabinet program of Prime Minister Kudsi, a Populist, the question of Army interference in politics was brought out. Mr. Mulki, a deputy, asked another deputy if he can swear that the Army officers were not putting pressure on deputies to give their vote of confidence to the Cabinet. The Prime Minister did not deny that such pressure was used.

85. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 187.
86. New York Times (July 14, 1951), p. 4.
87. Cahiers, XXIV, (1951), p. 219. The military was insisting on keeping control of the policy forces.
88. Only three cabinets since the 1st coup d'etat did not have a military man in the Defense Ministry. (1) The Kudsi government of December 24, 1949 which lasted only a few hours; (2) the Azm cabinet of December 28, 1949 which had Akram Hourani in the post. He was then a strong ally of the military; (3) Marouf Al-Dawalibi's Cabinet. See Appendix.
89. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 160. The same term "Arabic heritage" was used by Shishakly's party the ALM.
90. Ibid., p. 162.
91. Ibid., pp. 174-176.
92. Ibid., p. 157.
93. Cahiers, XVIII-XIX (1949), p. 157.
94. Ibid., XX, (1949), p. 25.
95. In support of this argument, reference can be made to the statement of the Chief of the Syrian delegation to the Council of the Arab League, Mr. Al-Kudsi, a party leader. When the Iraqi-Syrian federation project was brought up, he said, "I wish that the Syrian question may not be discussed here because it is purely a domestic question. . . If the Council insists on discussing it, the Syrian delegation will not approve of that for it is not permissible for any state to interfere in the internal affairs of another state." Cahiers, XX, (1949), p. 219. Certainly this is not the attitude to be taken by a leader of a party which looks to a federal union of his country with others. Lenczowski takes a different point of view. He believes that the party was in favor of union with Iraq. See his book The Middle East in World Affairs, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), p. 255. He does not bring any evidence to support his point of view.
96. Supra. Chapter II, p. 50.
97. Cahiers, XXII, (1950), pp. 187-188.

98. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 159.
99. Cahiers, XXI, (1950), p. 47. However, another party leader seems to disagree with Dawalibi. While discussing the land reform clause in the 1950 draft constitution, Ali Buzo, was convinced that the only way to fight Communism was land reform. He was quite afraid of Communism. See Official Journal, Part III, (1951), p. 702.
100. Farazat, op. cit., p. 22.
101. LENEZOWSKI seems to think that it could have been possible for the party to stay in power indefinitely had it not been for the problem of Palestine. Lencowski, op. cit., p. 251.
102. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 194.
103. Cahiers, XX, (1949), p. 250.
104. See Farid Hanamia, "Dictatorship - What Breed?" Al-Kulliyya Magazine (July, 1953), p. 5. See also Lenezowski, op. cit., p. 251.
105. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., pp. 196-203.
106. Syria ratified the pact of the Arab League on the third of April, 1945. See Official Journal, Part I, (1945), p. 503.
107. See above Chapter II, p. 40.
108. Cahiers, XX, (1949), p. 250.
109. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 193.
110. Ibid., p. 229.
111. Lencowski, op. cit., p. 256. Also Cahiers, XXI, (1950), pp. 99-100.
112. Farazat, op. cit., p. 261.
113. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 243. On the 3rd anniversary of the election of Kuwatli to the presidency, the party's paper wrote an editorial in which it argued that the republican regime is the best one to fit the aspirations of the Arabs. Farazat, op. cit., p. 239.
114. Farazat op. cit., p. 241.

115. Cahiers, XXIV (1951), p. 219.
116. This excludes Hourani who joined other Cabinets before the two parties were amalgamated.
117. Cahiers, XX (1949), p. 252.
118. Antoun Saadi, the founder of the Syrian Social Nationalist party is another one, but he is a Lebanese and he started his political career in Lebanon.
119. Cahiers, XXI, (1950), p. 99.
120. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 243.
121. Ibid., pp. 247-248.
122. Ibid., p. 240.
123. Official Journal, Part III, (1950), p. 644.
124. Official Journal, Part III, (1950), pp. 307-308.
125. Cahiers, XXI, (1950), p. 96.
126. The only unexplainable action of the party in this respect is its fusion with the Hourani party which in 1949 was one of the strongest opponents of Iraqi-Syrian unity. It could have been that Hourani had changed his views on the subject for he is, no doubt, an expert in changing partners and positions.
127. For its theoretical position see Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., pp. 246-247; on its reaction to the pro-western policies of the Azm Cabinet see Cahiers, XVII, 1949, p. 50; Also see Cahiers, XXIII, (1951), pp. 49-52.
128. Farazat, op. cit., pp. 239-240.
129. See Farazat, op. cit., pp. 195-196. Also Political Parties in Syria, p. 259.
130. Khalid Bakdash, "Report to the plenary session of the Central Command of the Communist party in Syria and Lebanon." (held in January, 1951), Middle East Journal, 7 (September, 1953), p. 211.
131. Khadduri M., "the role of the Military in M. E. Politics" op. cit., pp. 515-516.

132. Alan Ray, "Palace Politics in the Damascus Oasis" Commentary, XV, (February, 1953), p. 154.
133. In the 1949 elections they were the largest group in parliament. See Cahiers, XX, (1949), p. 251.
134. New York Times, (September 5, 1951), p. 19.
135. Ibid., (Je. 10, 1951), p. 24.
136. Khalid Bakdash, "Report delivered before the plenary session of the Central Command of the Communist Party in Syria and Lebanon." Middle East Journal, 7 (Spring, 1953), p. 208.
137. Cahiers, XX, (1949), p. 252.
138. Khadduri, M., "Towards an Arab Union;" The League of Arab States" American Political Science Review, (February, 1946), p. 96.
139. Hoss, A. M. Political Tragedies in the States of the Arab League (Beirut: Dar il-Fikr, 1954), pp. 32-33.
140. Cahiers, XXXIII, (1951), p. 98.
141. Although Hakim in his ministereal declaration restrained his favoritism to cooperation with the West, no one could have any illusions that he still held the same views. See Cahiers, XXIV, (1951), p. 218.
142. Twaini, op. cit., p. 100. See also Farazat, op. cit., p. 22.
143. When Shishakly came into conflict with the parties, he announced in one of his speeches that, "the army shall realize what it wants **and** will destroy anybody who stands in its way." Twaini, op. cit., p. 65. He did by dissovling parliament and political parties, suspending the constitution and forcing the president of the Republic to resign.
144. Z. N. Z. "Youth and Politics in the Near East." World Today, VII (1951), p. 105.
145. Political Parties in Syria, op. cit., p. 117.
146. For a more detailed and profound treatment of this topic of Westernization, see Hourani, op. cit., Chapters III, IV, & V.

CHAPTER IV

Summary and Conclusions

In the previous three chapters, an attempt has been made to show that there were three principal causes for political instability in Syria.

The first was the lack of sufficient experience in self-government. For four hundred years prior to World War I, Syria was ruled as a Turkish province where her people had had very little chance to participate in the management of their own affairs. Shortly after the war she was placed under French mandate for the avowed purpose of preparing her for independence and self-government. It soon became evident to the Syrians, however, that France's main interest was to exploit them rather than educate them. Fired with nationalist aspirations, the majority of Syrian leaders refused to accept the French as masters. Instead of consumming their energies in constructive work, the Syrian leaders were forced to adopt a policy of non-cooperation and resistance. Frustrated with this attitude, the French resorted to various methods of subjugating the Syrians by force. Instead of using their resources in developing the country politically and economically, they used them in fighting and suppressing the nationalist movement. Uprisings, demonstrations and strikes dominated the whole mandate period.

When independence was achieved after World War II, the country's leadership passed to the anti-French nationalist elements who had established a brilliant record in fighting the French, but had no experience in government work. Shukri Kuwatli who was elected the first president under independence had previously held only one cabinet office for three months. The majority of those who came to power after independence lacked adequate previous experience in their jobs.

The second cause of instability in Syria was of regional nature and scope. In the post-World War II period, some major developments took place in the Arab world of which two had a direct and deep impact over the domestic situation in Syria. The formation of the Arab League in 1944 brought seven Arab states in closer contact with each other. The rivalry between the Hashimites, on one hand, and the Egyptian-Saudi camp, on the other, was intensified. Both Iraq and Jordan had expansionist ambitions in Syria while Egypt and Saudi-Arabia were determined to stop them. In the course of carrying out their policies, both camps resorted to intrigue, pressure, threats and direct intervention in the affairs of Syria. This, more than anything else maybe, was responsible for the violent disturbances which swept the country for a period of time. The second major development in the area was the Arab-Israeli war. The loss of prestige suffered by the Syrians, together with other Arab states, led to a series of domestic upheavals in the Arab world. Syria was the first country to witness the consequences of the defeat. The nationalists who fought the French so brilliantly proved to be incapable of

winning the war in Palestine and had to go out. Impatient to see them voted out, the army chose to force them out, establishing, by so doing, a precedent which was resorted to four times in the four years to follow.

The third cause of instability was the lack of consensus on certain major issues relative to the political, social and economic aspects of life. The most fundamental of these issues was the nature of government desired by the Syrians. Although the republican form of government seemed to be accepted by the majority of those interested and active in politics, there were still certain influential politicians who were ready to accept a monarchic system. It is to be remembered that monarchy has deep roots in the long history of the caliphate under which the Syrians lived from the early rise of Islam to the beginning of the French mandate. It does not seem probable, however, that such a system will ever be revived. While the republican form seems to be the choice of the majority of Syrians interested and active in politics, a final agreement has not yet been reached over the distribution of power within the system. Should the executive dominate the legislature or visa versa or should they be equal? Should the president of the Republic be elected directly by the people or indirectly by the parliament? Should his cabinet be responsible to him or to parliament? Should there be a supreme court with judicial review powers? Until these questions are settled in a way devotedly adhered to by a majority, attempts to change the established balance of powers will continue to occur.

Closely related to this issue is the one relative to the position of

the church in the state. Should Islam be the main source of legislation? Should it be the religion of the state? Should it be the religion of the head of the state? or should there be a complete separation of church and state? These are controversial issues over which enlightened public opinion is sharply divided and might, at any time, become a source of instability.

A third major issue which caused and will continue to cause instability is the economic problem. Syria is a predominantly agricultural country where the land ownership is anything but equitable. A great percentage of the land is owned by a few feudal lords while the majority of the peasants own very little or nothing. Their standard of living is low and their situation is deplorable. The distribution of land on a more equitable basis is a huge task facing the government and the country. Not only the peasants but also the industrial workers in urban centers suffer from economic deprivation. In addition to their low wages they have very little guarantees against sickness, unemployment, or old age. They are getting aware of their condition and struggling for its betterment. Their dissatisfaction contributed a great deal to the instability of government. Unless this whole economic problem is solved satisfactorily, it is likely to become the most crucial issue in the near future.

These, then, were the major causes of instability in Syria. By the method of trial and error, the first ten years of independence were spent in searching for solutions to these problems. Two new constitutions were promulgated, each introducing, formally at least, new ideas and

principles. New electoral laws were enacted providing for better representation and wider popular suffrage. Women were granted suffrage rights. A land reform bill was passed. Industrialization and farm mechanization were pushed forward with the state protection and guidance. Legislations were passed on social security, labor relations, progressive income tax and many other aspects relating to the social and economic life. If one judged the progress of Syria during this period by the volume of enacted legislation, he would conclude that the country ranks among the most advanced and modern nations. Such a conclusion, however, will be far short of reality. It is hard to determine the exact degree of progress and success achieved, and no doubt there was some, but it is safe to say that it fell far below the desires of the Syrian people. At the end of ten years, the Syrians were no less dissatisfied than they were at any other time before. Dissatisfaction and disappointment, in fact, reached the point of virtual indifference. The people, who jubilantly applauded the ousting of Kuwatli in 1949, accepted him back in 1955 with evident indifference.

The basic question becomes "why, then, did Syria fail to solve her problems?" One possible answer, at least, could be suggested. It is the Syrian approach to politics and their concept of government. In their desire to catch up with the west, the Syrians have become impatient with slow planning and gradual accomplishments. They frequently forget that they have lived for ages under a system of life fundamentally different from the one they desire to achieve. They fail to realize that

the change of a long established way of life requires careful planning, sufficient time and inexhaustible patience. Not only do they seek fast change, but they place the whole burden upon their government. If it fails to produce fast results, it has to leave office. A new government takes over and it soon meets the fate of its predecessor. The situation resembles that in France and leads to the phenomenon known in French politics as "Immobilism."

In this process of changing cabinets and rulers, the role of the people, as citizens responsible for the contribution of their share in arriving at a solution for their problems, is completely lost. An example or two might help to clarify this point. One of the duties of a citizen, for example, is to pay his taxes with honesty, but if he failed to do so, the blame falls squarely upon the government. Another one of his duties is to vote conscientiously for the representatives of his choice, but if he sells his vote, exerts illegal pressure on his fellow citizens or fails to vote, the government is solely to blame.

The government in Syria is expected by the people to do the impossible, is given no time to do it and is condemned and thrown out of office if it fails to do it. This is the dilemma of Syrian politics.

No attempt is made here to defend the various governments which ruled Syria in this period. They cannot escape responsibility for their failures. The Syrian peoples, on the other hand, should share the blame for failing to discharge of their duties as responsible citizens. When they expect the government to do everything for them, they are,

in fact, asking for a totalitarian state. If they are interested in establishing a democratic society, they have to realize that democratization is a slow process that demands hard and patient work on the part of the people as well as the rulers.

APPENDIX

Following is a list of the different cabinets which came to power during the period of Military coup d'etats. The name of the cabinet member is given first followed by his portfolio and his party affiliation when possible. The data was collected from Les Cahiers de l'Orient Contemporain.

1. The first Azm Cabinet; December 10, 1948 - March 30, 1949.

Azm, Khalid - Prime Minister, Foreign Affairs and Defense (non-parliamentarian)

Azmy, Adel - Interior (nationalist party)

Jabiri, Majid - Idine - Public Works (non-parliamentarian)

Sinnawi, John - National Economy (non-parliamentarian)

Fifai, Ahmad - Justice, Health and Social Works

Darazi, Muhsin - Education (non-parliamentarian)

Jibara, Hassan - Finance (non-parliamentarian)

Ayish, Mohammad - Agriculture

2. Zaim Cabinet; April 16, 1949 - June 25, 1949.

Zaim, Husni - Prime Minister, Interior and Defense (Army)

Irsian, Adel - Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs (Independent)

Atassi, Faidi - Education, Health and Social Works (Populist)

Jibara, Hassan - Finance

Kourani, Assad - Justice and Public Works

Sakkal, Fathalla - National Economy

Ibish, Nuri - Agriculture (Independent)

3. Farazi Cabinet; June 23, 1949 - August 14, 1949.

Farazi, Muhsin - Prime Minister, Foreign Affairs and Interior

Shihabi, Mustafa - Justice

Atfa, Abdalla - Defense (Army)

Sakkal, Fathalla - Public Works

Ibish, Nuri - Agriculture (Independent)

Mardam, Khalil - Education, Health and Social Works

4. Atassi Cabinet; August 14, 1949 - December 19, 1949.

Atassi, Hashim - Prime Minister (Populist)

Atassi, Faidi - National Economy (Populist)

Hourani, Akram - Agriculture (Arab Socialist)

Kabbara, Sami - Justice (Independent)

Khihia, Rusdi - Interior (Populist)

Kudsi, Nazim - Foreign Affairs (Populist)

Aflak, Michel - Education (Renaissance)

Atfa, Abdalla - Defense (Army)

Jabiri, Majid - Iddine - Public Works

Asyoun, Fathalla - Minister without portfolio (Populist)

Azmi, Adel - Minister without portfolio (Nationalist)

5. First Kudsi Cabinet; December 24-25, 1949.

Kudsi, Nazim - Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs (Populist)

Atassi, Faidd - Defense and National Economy (Populist)

Khatib, Zaki - Justice (Independent)

Sibai, Hani - Education (Populist)

Kanbar, Ahmad - Interior (Populist)

Mubarak, Muhamad - Public Works (Moslem Brotherhood)

Ass, Shakir - Finance (Populist)

Azim, Mahmud - Agriculture

Shalhoub, George - Health (Populist)

6. Second Azm Cabinet; December 23, 1949 - May 29, 1950.

Azm, Khalid - Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs (Independent)

Hourani, Akram - Defense (Arab Socialist)

Dawalibi, Marouf - National Economy (Populist)

Atassi Faidd - Justice (Populist)

Sibai, Hani - Education (Populist)

Kabbara, Sami - Interior (Independent)

Mubarak, Muhamad - Public Works (Moslem Brotherhood)

Azm, Abdul-Rahman - Finance (Independent)

Asyoun, Fathalla - Health (Populist)

Nizam-Iddine, Abdul-Eaki - Agriculture (Republican Front)

7. Second Kudsi Cabinet; June 4, 1950 - September 6, 1950.

Kudsi, Nazim - Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs (Populist)

Earmada, Rashid - Interior (Populist)

Khatib, Zaki - Justice (Independent)

Jibara, Hussan - Finance

Selo, Fawzi - Defense (Army)

Jandali, Farhan - Education (Populist)

Ass, Shakir - National Economy (Populist)

Shalhoub, George - Public Works (Populist)

8. Third Kudsi Eavinet; September 6, 1950 - March 9, 1951

Kudsi, Nazim - Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs (Populist)

Khatib, Zaki - Justice (Independent)

Sibai, Hani - Education (Populist)

Ass, Shakir - Finance (Populist)

Kanbar, Ahmad - Public Works (Populist)

Shalhoub, George - Health and Social Work (Populist)

Jandali, Farhan - National Economy (Populist)

Bouzo, Ali - Agriculture (Populist)

Earmada, Rashid - Interior (Populist)

Selo, Fawzi - Defense (Army)

Hakim, Hassan - Minister without portfolio (Independent)

9. Fourth Kudsi Cabinet; March 20, 1951 - March 21, 1951

Kudsi, Nazim - Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs (Populist)

Atassi, Faidd - Interior (Populist)

Ass, Shakir - Finance (Populist)

Jandali, Farhan - Education (Populist)

Dawalibi, Marouf - National Economy (Populist)

Intaki, Rizkalla - Public Works (Populist)

Bouzo, Ali - Agriculture (Populist)

Selo, Fawzi - Defense (Army)

Khatib, Zaki - Justice (Independent)

10. Third Azm Cabinet; March 27, 1951 - July 30, 1951.

Azm Khalid - Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs (Independent)

Kabbara, Sami - Interior (Independent)

Nizam-Iddine, Abul-Faki - Agriculture and Justice (Republican Front)

Selo, Fawzi - Defense (Army)

Mulki, Raif - Education and National Economy (Independent)

Tabbara, Sami - Health and Public Works (Republican Front)

11. Hakim Cabinet; August 10, 1951 - November 10, 1951.

Hakim, Hassan - Prime Minister and Finance (Independent)

Atassi, Faïd - Foreign Affairs (Populist)

Asyoun, Fathalla - Health and Social Works (Populist)

Ass, Shakir - National Economy and Agriculture (Populist)

Barmada, Rashid - Interior (Populist)

Hawmad, Abdul-Wahhab - Education (Populist)

Selo Fawzi - Defense (Army)

Kouja, Hamid - Public Works and Communications (Republican Front)

Hassan, Abdul-Aziz - Justice (Republican Front)

Mubarak, Muhammad - Agriculture (Moslem Brotherhood)

12. Dawalibi Cabinet; November 28-29, 1951.

Dawalibi, Marouf - Prime Minister and Defense (Populist)

Sibai, Hani - Education (Populist)

Kanbar, Ahmad - Interior (Populist)

Ass, Shakir - Foreign Affairs (Populist)

Bouzo, Ali - National Economy (Populist)

Shawwaf, Muhamad - Health and Social Works (Populist)

Shahin, George - Public Works and Communications (Populist)

Ajlani, Munir - Justice (Independent)

Azm, Abdul-Rahman - Finance (Independent)

Mubarak, Muhamad - Agriculture (Moslem Brotherhood)

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