

The Red Minaret

Memoirs of

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Chapter Three

The Fifties

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Memories of Jerusalem

In 1954, two important personalities visited Jerusalem. **The first visitor was the Second Guide of the Muslim Brothers, Sheikh Hassan al-Hudaybi.** His visit took place before events at Manshiyyah and the subsequent crackdown against the Brothers. He also visited Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and other countries before returning to Egypt. In Jordan, al-Hudaybi was given a great reception by the Muslim Brothers there. As his plane landed in the Qalandia Airport in Jerusalem, a large number of the Brothers were there to greet him; at their head was Muhammad ‘Abdul Rahman Khalifah. Ahead of his car, a number of the Brotherhood’s youth rode on motorcycles. He arrived in Jerusalem and visited *al-Aqsa* Mosque. I saw a great number of people and personalities greet him in one of *al-Aqsa*’s courtyards; he is a very dignified personality, having been a judge in the Egyptian High Court. Haj Radi al-Salaymeh, who was then the delegate of the Jerusalem Branch, related to us that he had a shop in Cairo in al-Rawdah district, and that he had played the role of a mediator between Imam Hassan al-Banna and Judge Hassan al-Hudaybi. Thus, he used to convey instructions from Hassan al-Banna and bring back answers from Hassan al-Hudaybi. For al-Hudaybi had joined the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood without making that move public. Haj Radi al-Salaymeh used to speak regularly on this subject. Hassan al-Hudaybi delivered speeches in Jerusalem, Amman, Damascus among other places. In Damascus, Ba‘th Party members attempted to provoke him during some of his lectures. He ended his tour in Lebanon, and then returned to Egypt. After his return, things started to evolve, as Nasser considered him his primary enemy among the Muslim Brothers.

The second visit was that of the Iranian leader Nawwab Safawi (*Navwab Safawi*), who was the leader of the “Fedayan-e-Islam” Organization—meaning the “Devotees of Islam,” a somewhat strict group. It is said that he was behind the killing of ‘Ali Razmara, the prime minister of the Shah’s government in the early fifties. Nawwab Safawi came to Jerusalem and met with the Muslim Brothers. He visited the front lines; and while his escorts were with him, he crossed the armistice line and headed for the areas under Israeli occupation. His escorts grabbed him and stopped him from going further. He told them he wanted to see the Jews, so that if he were killed, the Iranian people would rise up for the sake of the Palestinian issue. This was Nawwab Safawi. He was very passionate about the Palestinian issue, and he understood the Muslim



Brotherhood. This story shows that the relationship between the two Islamic sects, the Sunnis and the Shi'ites was not always as tense as it is today and the Islamic Conference in 1953 was even attended by Ayatollah al-Kashani, Iran's greatest religious scholar.

Nawwab Safawi went to Egypt and participated in a celebration convened by the MB early in 1954 at Cairo University. There, a clash took place between the Brothers and the Liberation Rally, manipulated by the Revolutionary Command as an organization pitted against the MB. I heard him deliver an address on Sawt al-'Arab Radio Station before this station sided with the revolutionaries in Egypt. In this address, he talked about the Muslim Brothers and praised them. After that, the Egyptian regime could no longer tolerate him. So they expelled him from Cairo and he returned to Iran. Two years later, he was executed on the orders of Prime Minister Hussein Fatimi who was loyal to the Shah of Iran.

When the decree to dissolve the MB was issued in Egypt toward the end of 1954, the execution of six leading members of the MB took place, and large-scale arrests were made. The Jerusalem branch produced a play in the branch in Wadi al-Joz. I participated in the writing of the play before I went to Egypt to continue my studies. The play was about al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi and Sa'id Ibn Jubayr. We wanted to give an impression of what the Muslims who call to Islam faced from some of the tyrants. The play was a success when presented in the Brothers' branch in Jerusalem. I remember that during 1955, a graduation ceremony for the students of al-Rashidiya School was to be held. The principal of the school, 'Abdul Latif al-Husseini, came to our class along with 'Abbas al-Kurd. At that time Mr. al-Kurd was one of the leaders of Hizb ut-Tahrir, as I mentioned earlier. He used to teach us English language and history; and he was an outstanding teacher. He broke away from Sheikh Nabahani because the latter was authoritative in his views. Later, others were to leave the party for the same reason. The principal asked; "Can you plan a graduation ceremony including some activities?" I held up my hand. I presented him with a play called "The Traditions of Our Father Ibrahim," written by 'Ali Ahmad Bakthir. It was published in *al-Muslimun* magazine, issued by Sa'id Ramadan. The play spoke about Egypt before the era of Saladin and during the Fatimid rule. It tells the story of two ministers who had dealings and contacts with the Crusaders, who are also called the Franks (*al-Faranjah* in Arabic). One of the ministers was named Dirgham and the other Shawir. The story took place during a bad period in the history of the *Ummah*. The play spoke about them and about Saladin. I told Mr. 'Abbas al-Kurd that the play was ready. He was pleased; and the principal agreed to hold the festival; while Hizb ut-Tahrir was against it because, as I had mentioned earlier, it wanted people to dedicate themselves only to the

issue of the return of the Islamic State, i.e., the Islamic Caliphate. The decision was made. In al-Rashidiya, we had two classes; each of 35 students. Among these, Hizb ut-Tahrir had a majority of 20 students, the Brothers had 10, while the Ba'athists had two and the Communists had two; a useful political map of party power at that time. Preparatory work was done for that show, as well as many rehearsals of the play at which all the cadres of the student Brothers in their final and penultimate years participated. The play was a great success. On the day of the ceremony, I was asked to deliver a speech in the name of the graduates. I delivered it on behalf of al-Rashidiya School's 1955 graduates. During the play, some angry members of Hizb ut-Tahrir cut off the electricity. There was a number of active Brothers, I remember among them Zakariyya Qneibi, Ibrahim Abu 'Arafah, and others, who immediately restored the current, and the ceremony continued successfully. It took place in the Umariyyah School in al-Rawdah, close to *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Al-Menshiyyah Incident

Al-Menshiyyah incident occurred toward the end of 1954. I was then in my fourth year of secondary school; the year in which we take the Jordanian matriculation exam; which is the same as the former Palestinian matriculation. George Khamis entered the class. He was our English language teacher and the most capable among al-Rashidiya's teachers. He used to teach in the Arabic College in Jerusalem, the most prestigious college in all Palestine. Mr. Khamis, looked at me, smiled and moved his hands in the gesture of shooting and said bang, bang... five times. I did not comment, for I knew that he was referring to an incident that took place the day before, which was the attempt to shoot Nasser. For, during my studies, I used to keep close to the radio, at a time when nothing could connect you to the world better than, first, the radio, and second, the newspapers. I was studying, and at the same time listening to the festival being held in al-Menshiyyah Square in Alexandria. And as I had mentioned earlier, we, in Jordan and Palestine in general, and we, the Brothers, in particular, had our attention turned to Egypt where there was a crisis brewing between the Egyptian revolution and the MB.

Suddenly, I heard the sound of bullets being fired, it was a live transmission. Nasser was delivering a speech, and we heard the sound of about five bullets. Then Sheikh al-Baqouri, as I recall, took the microphone. He was one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, but Nasser was able to convince him to work with him as minister of endowments. He started reciting a verse of poetry "I want him alive... he wants me dead..." immediately after the shots

were fired. He directed his thinly concealed criticism at the Muslim Brotherhood before any investigation was conducted, and before the picture of what had happened became clear. As for Nasser, he continued his speech saying; if Nasser gets killed, all of you are Jamal ‘Abdul Nasser. That was all I heard on Radio Cairo about al-Menshiyyah incident.

Later I pursued the incident, and found some evidence that raises serious questions. For example, in the Egyptian newspapers, it was said that Nasser was wearing a white shirt and carrying a red ink pen. When his bodyguards pulled him away, the red ink spilled on his shirt and appeared as blood, adding to the crowd’s agitation. I also read in those newspapers that the gun from which the bullets were fired had disappeared; and that, one or two days later, a person came to Cairo on foot, carrying that gun.

The accused was a former member of the MB. His name was Mahmud ‘Abdul Latif; and it was said that he was one of those who had fought in Palestine. He was an ordinary worker; but it was said that he was a sharpshooter. Later, a large number of the Muslim Brothers were arrested. Al-Menshiyyah incident was the ideal opportunity for the Egyptian regime to strike the MB, claiming that it was a “terrorist movement” intent on assassinating President Nasser. Thousands were arrested that night. Six of the Brothers were executed later, all of them of the MB’s leadership; and among them ‘Abdul Qadir ‘Awdeh, a very important personality. A year earlier, when the dispute between Nasser and Muhammad Najib occurred and huge demonstrations filled the Cairo streets, the person instigating those demonstrations was ‘Abdul Qadir ‘Awdeh; so he had to pay the price.

Among those executed, there was also Muhammad Farghali, Mahmud ‘Abdul Latif and another person called Hindawi Dweir. Focusing on Hindawi Dweir; it was said that he was a member of the MB and had been temporarily suspended. It looked like Nasser’s secret service was able to recruit him. This is my analysis and that of others as well. This person was told to stage a play; so he gave Mahmud ‘Abdul Latif, who was a very simple person, the gun and the bullets. Were these real bullets or was the firing a mere sound? This was not confirmed by any subsequent investigation. The incident did not have the hallmarks of the teachings of the MB Movement, for it had never sanctioned targeting Nasser. This was further confirmed by what I later read in the book *The Game of Nations* by the American Miles Copeland. This book appeared toward the end of the fifties and the author points out that the American secret service helped in producing the play, with the aim of justifying the crackdown on the MB Movement, the biggest Egyptian popular movement of that time.

I remember that when the six brothers were executed, they all stepped forward with courage. And when Hindawi Dweir was brought to the gallows, he said at the last moment; “I believed that I will be pardoned.” Historically, this is a logical outcome. For sometimes, the one who plans and plots a scheme becomes the one to dispose of, so that all evidence of the scheme disappears forever with him.

The incident at al-Menshiyyah had a major impact on the Jordanian political arena and on the Brothers. A very well-organized campaign began, led by Egypt. I recall the Egyptian Consulate in Jerusalem distributing free of charge a number of Arabic books, among them “The Brothers and Terrorism” and “The Brothers, the Satans of Terrorism.” What is disturbing is that many renowned authors spoke out against the Muslim Brothers in these books, among them Muhammad al-Tabi‘i and Nasiruddin al-Nashashibi. Even Taha Hussein wrote on this subject. Others wrote implying that the MB Movement was “a terrorist movement.” Yet others compared them to the *Hashashin* (The Assassins), saying that the name of the Hashashin leader was Hassan (Hassan al-Sabbah), and the Brothers’ leaders are named either Hassan al-Banna or Hassan al-Hudaybi. That the Hashashin used to deceive the youth with hashish, and the Brothers deceive them with religion. This fierce campaign continued throughout 1954 and 1955.

The Matriculation Exam and Moving to Egypt to Study

I presented my matriculation exam in 1955 and I had prepared well. However, two months before taking it, I entered the hospital because of an infection in the colon. I remained there for treatment three weeks, during which I read Arabic literature written by Muhammad Hassan al-Zayyat. I used to enjoy in equal measure the subjects of Arabic language, history and the various sciences; I admired the famous poet al-Mutanabbi and memorized many of his verses.

Exam time came and I got good results, thanks to *Allah* Almighty. I ranked 19th in the Kingdom of Jordan and first in the Jerusalem District. Afterwards, I was called to Amman for an interview. In the Ministry of Education there, I met a short man who interviewed all the students. His name was Khalil al-Salem, (he later became a minister), and there was someone else with him. He told me I could study on a scholarship from the Jordanian government at the American University of Beirut or Baghdad, to study mathematics, which I passed with distinction, physics, which I passed with high grades, or history. I was offered my choice of one of those subjects, so that I could return and become a teacher. I told them that this was not my wish, preferring engineering. I was told they



would not fund engineering. They asked if I had an UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) identity card. I said yes (for as I had mentioned earlier, we left Jerusalem for Jericho; so they considered us refugees and gave us UNRWA cards). I was referred to UNRWA, which had its main headquarters in Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem. It was headed by Salamah Khalil and I had a meeting with him. He gave me an exam and informed me that UNRWA had chosen me to study engineering in Egypt. And so I went to Egypt in October 1955 to take the *Tawjihi* exam, the Egyptian General Certificate of Education exam. I studied one year for the *Tawjihi* exam, then five years to get my engineering degree.

I will speak about my trip to Egypt in brief: before leaving, I had a meeting with the late Khattab al-Sayyid Khattab, may *Allah* have mercy upon him, an Egyptian MB freedom fighter, who played a role in our upbringing. He met me and advised me to be careful and to carry nothing with me to Egypt. I took his advice and took nothing with me apart from a copybook in which I used to copy beautiful poetry verses, especially those of the Arab poet, al-Mutanabbi. I traveled with UNRWA's student delegation; this was my first trip outside Jerusalem and my first ever by plane. We took a plane from the Qalandia Airport (Jordan had two airports, one in Amman and the other in Qalandia in Jerusalem) and I arrived in Cairo with UNRWA's student delegation, made up of outstanding students who ranked first in their respective classes. Beginning with my seventh year elementary and until the end of my secondary education, I had ranked first in my class, thanks to *Allah* Almighty.

I disembarked at Cairo Airport, and I had **with me my Jordanian passport 1955, issued to me by the Passport Department in Jerusalem.** After I had boarded the bus, they called my name over the microphone to descend to be checked after my passport had already been stamped. I stood by the security officers in Cairo Airport. They told me; bring your belongings, we want to search them thoroughly. So they did so meticulously. The UNRWA representative was standing close to me. They told him, while looking at me; these people do not come here to study, but to engage in political activities. This was my first confrontation with a group of Arab security officers in an Arab country. With deep interest, they found the copybook. They expected to find in it names and information. When they found poetry, they threw it in my face and said "leave." This incident taught me to be disciplined and reserved throughout the period of my studies in order to graduate from Cairo University.

Together with the Palestinian and Jordanian Brothers in Egypt

In Cairo, I undertook three major activities. My first activity: studying for *Tawjihi*, and then continuing my studies in the Faculty of Engineering. My second activity was working with the Palestinian League, in which I participated upon my arrival. This was a Palestinian student association. There were several leagues that included all the Palestinian students from the WB and GS, as well as the Palestinians from everywhere else. There was also the Jordanian League with which we had good relations, as well as the Syrian league, the Libyan League, and so on. I will speak about each in detail. As for my final major activity, it was that with the MB Movement.

When I arrived in Cairo in October 1955, a year had passed since the crackdown on the MB Movement began. The climate was that of a classic repressive police state. My reception at the airport was only the beginning. The regime was repressive toward the MB, being a movement with far-reaching influence, and was targeting its social, political and cultural resources. No one spoke about the Brothers any more. In my walks in Cairo's streets, or when I rode the bus, I used to enjoy reading the slogans on the walls (join the battalions of the Muslim Brothers). These slogans reminded me of the Brothers' resistance in the Suez Canal in 1951.

I studied for *Tawjihi* in al-Nahariyyah School, located in Bab al-Hadid. With me was a special group of students from UNRWA. I remember an important incident that took place that school year, 1955–1956. I got a call from the person in charge of the university students who were members of the Jordanian MB. There was an organization for the Jordanian Muslim Brothers who were from Jordan with its two banks, the east and the west, and another for the Palestinian Brothers from the GS. He told me that there was a Syrian Brother wanted by Egyptian Security Forces, and that we should secure a hideout for him in the homes of the student Brothers, until we were able to get him out of Egypt. There were three other Brothers in my apartment. So I told them what needed to be done, and they agreed to help. We contrived a way to let the Syrian Brother into the apartment safely. First, one of the Brothers started a quarrel with the male servant, who subsequently left the apartment, which seemed the normal thing to do. There remained the building's guard.

Almost all of these guards or doormen were under the control of the State Security Investigations Service (SSIS). This doorman used to bring us food. So, as our apartment was in al-Giza, we asked him to go to al-Giza Square and get us something. During his absence, one of our groups brought the Syrian

Brother and let him into the apartment, quietly and without being noticed. I have no idea whether this Syrian Brother is still alive; his name was 'Adnan Istwani and he had entered Cairo Airport carrying a sum of money with him; as the Brothers abroad used to send money to the families of imprisoned Brothers. Airport Security discovered the money on him, and the penalty for that was several years' imprisonment. So he left the money with them and escaped in to Cairo. So we took him in and kept quiet about his presence with us. He stayed for about 10 days. On one of those days, when I was alone with him, we heard violent knocking on the servants' door. Each apartment had two doors, the main door and the servants' door, which had iron stairs. I said to myself; here they come, and I went to investigate. I asked who it was. And someone answered; this is the pipes repairman, do you need any work doing? I answered no; while, Brother 'Adnan's face had turned shades of yellow and red.

Ten days later, we moved him to another Brothers' apartment in another area, in the same discreet way. He kept moving until a Brother who was an active member in Jerusalem, named Mahmud, came from Jordan. He stayed for a while; then something was arranged for the Syrian Brother. Mahmud was able to give up his passport and hand it to him. 'Adnan placed his picture in place of that of Mahmud. Thus he was able to leave, assuming a different identity. Mahmud checked with the Jordanian embassy, stating that his passport was missing. After that, he sent each of the four of us a Parker pen, a valuable gift at that time, although two of us had their pens stolen from us, typical of the atmosphere prevalent at the time.

There is something worth noting that happened while the Syrian Brother was at our house. I had left al-Nahariyyah School on my way to al-Giza. We were told that if we noticed that we were being followed, we should not go home. When I rode Bus no. (9), from Bab al-Hadid to al-Giza, I noticed than an Egyptian wearing the traditional flowing robe (*dashdashah*) was staring at me. I knew that I was being followed, so instead of getting off the bus at my stop, I got off at the next one. From there, I took the direction of the Nile; I noticed that he kept on following me. Then we came to a lower class neighborhood; there, I was able to hide very fast. I waited until after the evening prayer before I returned home, being sure I had lost the man. Our activities in Egypt at that time forced us to be on the highest level of alert, and to have a sense of security, control and discretion. Some of our Brothers were not able to finish their stay; some were arrested, while others were expelled and it was therefore necessary to pay attention to security matters.

Regarding my studies, I got 86 in *al-Tawjihi* exam, a very high grade that could have enabled me to study medicine at Cairo University. I ranked seventh

among the outstanding Jordanian students who were admitted to the Faculty of Engineering, where we started our studies in 1956. No sooner had we started our classes than the Tripartite Aggression occurred. There was a course that students found difficult, called descriptive geometry. The professor, who had graduated from the UK, used to say; very simply, if you cannot continue, there you have the Faculty of Agriculture or the Faculty of Arts nearby, you can join them; and everyone would laugh. With me in the preparatory class was Brother Ribhi Bishtawi and others. Thanks to *Allah* Almighty, I graduated from the Faculty of Engineering without needing to repeat a single course. I passed all of them, which was a condition for not losing the scholarship. My financial situation was average, and it is likely that my father could not have supported me. So I had to rely on *Allah* then on myself.

I remember well that during my first year in the Faculty of Engineering, events in Jordan were escalating; and that there was a fierce attack by Egypt and nationalistic and leftist forces on the MB in Jordan. There were a great deal of lies propagated, which prompted the Jordanian and Palestinian Brothers' organization in Egypt to issue an secretive internal statement.

There was a festival to be held at Cairo University, in which many personalities were to speak. Many speakers attacked the Brothers in Jordan. Everybody was occupied with this festival and I had in my hand two sets of statements. I threw the first set and remained fixed in my place. The Egyptians began reading what was written in the statement and saying that it contradicted what they were hearing from the stage. Then I threw the second set of statements, remaining in my place. By the time the festival was over, I had returned to the Faculty of Engineering, having missed only one lecture. This is an example of the covert work we did in Cairo.

Our primary focus in the MB Movement was strict internal adherence; we had very secretive units, and we used to meet in different places and in different students' apartments. Each group gathered and operated alone, i.e., the Jerusalem areas apart, the same for the Amman areas and Nablus areas; so that, when targeted, we could maintain the highest level of secrecy. Any Muslim Brother from the GS who was arrested was treated the same as the Egyptian Brothers, because GS was under Egyptian rule. But if he happened to be from Jordan and was arrested, he would be sent to prison, lashed for three days, then deported. Of those deported, I remember very well Brother Shehadeh and Brother Fayez al-Hazina. I remember also Brother Hassan Khrais, who was then affiliated with the Muslim Brothers. The president of the Jordanian League was arrested and would have been deported, if it were not for the intercession of Commander 'Abdullah al-Tell, who was then a political



refugee in Cairo; and this Brother was allowed to remain in Cairo. These were the precarious conditions under which we used to operate in Egypt. Every time we passed a college year successfully, we used to thank *Allah* for His blessings, and because He enabled us to advance one more year toward our graduation.

In addition to our internal work, we had another activity, which was going on trips. We used to organize our trips in a very careful manner; working together with the Brothers from the GS; for although we did not belong to the same organization, we used to coordinate with each other. Of those we worked with in Egypt, I recall the Brothers Muhammad Siyam, ‘Abdul Rahman Baroud, ‘Umar Abu Jbara, and numerous others. When we used to go together on trips, we would exchange information. For example, when we used to go to al-Qanater al-Khairiyyah, we used to divide ourselves. Some of us would ride bicycles, others would take the train and yet others would take the bus. When we used to meet in the playgrounds, we used to play football; a normal activity for youth that does not attract attention. When we used to sit down to eat, we would introduce ourselves to each other and exchange information.

I remember once that it was necessary for us to meet. Large-scale meetings were rare; but this time such a meeting of 20–25 Brothers was necessary. It was decided that the venue for this meeting would be an apartment in al-Duqqi. All the student Brothers came; however, I noticed that one of them brought with him a friend, who was not committed (not a member of the MB). This chance to meet was about to be lost; and it would be hard to arrange another. So I went straight to that Brother and said; Brother Jabr, there is a Brother from the league who has come from your country and wishes to see you right away. It is important that you go see him, so go. Jabr left, taking with him his friend. Thus, we were able to finish the task at hand fast; and that important meeting was successfully concluded.

Among the leaders who worked with us, there was ‘Adnan Nahawi, who had become a Doctor of Engineering. He was also a poet and came originally from Safad in Palestine. There was also Brother Riyad al-Za‘nun, the brother of Salim al-Za‘nun, who was one of the MB leaders in GS, Brother Muhammad Siyam and Brother ‘Abdul Rahman Baroud. We used to meet and coordinate our work in the utmost secrecy. Among those who worked with us also, there was Daud ‘Abbas, Hassan ‘Abdul Hamid and ‘Umar Abu Jbara. All three got arrested and later released. I met them in Kuwait after 1962, but I shall talk about that later.

Among the important things we did during this period was our work in the Palestinian League. In Cairo, there were, as I had previously mentioned, several leagues, most of which were under the Muslim Brotherhood umbrella. Before the crackdown on the Brothers in 1954, the scholarship center in the General

Headquarters of the MB was the party that supervised these leagues, including the Jordanian, the Palestinian, and the Libyan leagues.

When I went to Cairo in 1955 I immediately started working for the Palestinian League's elections, which were held annually. The Brothers, the Communists and the Ba'athists each had a list of candidates. These were the major political forces then. I believe that, in that year, there was an understanding between the Brothers and the Communists as both were opposed to the military regime in Egypt, This understanding was not to remain.

Heading the list of the Brothers' League was the student Yasir 'Arafat. He had other names with him, such as Khamis Shaheen, 'Abdul Fattah al-Hammoud, and Najib Abu Laban. Some of them were close to the Brothers and others were independent. This list won; and I worked hard to help it succeed. In 1955, I was active to make a list headed by Yasir 'Arafat win the elections.

After 1956, Yasir 'Arafat finished his university education. The one who ran next was Salah Khalaf, a.k.a. Abu Iyad; and we supported him. There was fierce competition, as there were three lists. The Brothers' list headed by Salah Khalaf, the Ba'athists list headed by Faruq al-Qaddumi, and a third for the Communists. Most winners belonged either to the Brothers' list or that of the Ba'athists. I recall that we met in the administration office of the Palestinian League. When the results came out, Salah Khalaf turned to us and asked us to pray two rak'ats as a token of thanks to *Allah* for helping us win these elections. Salah Khalaf was studying Arabic at al-Azhar University. Later on, I read his book "A Palestinian Without an Identity." There were other candidates in other elections that we supported; among them for example, 'Ali Nasser Yassin, who became the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) representative in Kuwait, and was assassinated there. He originally came from the northern region of the WB. I had good relations with him and we used to support him.

One of the activities in which I participated **in the Palestinian League** in Cairo was that of the journalism committee, which was composed of party members and independents. Among the party members, there were Communists, Ba'athists, and Muslim Brothers. I represented the MB Movement; and with me, there was a brother who was close to us. His name was Khalil al-Khalidi, and he was considered one of us. Of the Ba'athists, there was Lutfi 'Abdul Majeed, and from the Communists, Marwan Doudin. I remember that, in one of the sessions, these two asked that additional members be added to the committee, so that they would become the majority; but we refused. So they launched a fierce campaign against the Brothers and Muhammad 'Abdul Rahman Khalifah. They left the committee in anger to the outer hall. By chance, one of the Brothers from the GS was listening to the Qur'an being recited; so they shut the sound



and uttered unseemly insults. Then they grappled with that Brother, and a fight ensued between the Brothers on one side, and the Ba‘thists and Communists on the other. Chairs were broken and the battle widened. The Brothers came from their apartments and houses. I recall that a Brother from the Rafah region, whose name was Khalil Za‘rib, gathered the Brothers and told them that, in spite of the fact that we were persecuted in this country by the regime, we would not allow ourselves to be humiliated by these groups.

The Brothers took a firm stand vis-à-vis those who abused the Holy Qur’an. Following this incident, the person in the Egyptian Secret Service in charge of the eastern students visited; his name was ‘Abdul Hameed al-Saghir. When he sat down with the Ba‘thists and the Communists, he told them he knew they had been the ones who provoked the Muslim Brothers. Afterwards, things quieted down.

The next day, there was a trip scheduled for the students to Isma‘iliyyah. We traveled in three buses. The Brothers rode in one, and were chanting a popular chant of the time “*Allah* is great, and He is above the cunning of the aggressor.” In the second bus rode the Ba‘thists and the Communists, and they were chanting “Peace has returned O Nile!” The third bus carried the independents. On this trip, there were provocations from both sides; but no new battle erupted. The Brothers left the league after too many arrests occurred in their ranks. Later on, disagreements broke out between the Ba‘thists and the Communists, reflecting events in Iraq. Then they withdrew from the league because of disagreements between them and the Egyptian regime. This was when the Nationalists emerged.

When the pressure on us from state security intensified, we made the decision to freeze all student activities; but we did not abandon the league lest it be taken over by the Communists. I remember well that the elections of the year that followed took place in one of the halls of the summer theater in ‘Imad al-Din Street in Cairo. We decided to send 100 Brothers to ensure that the Communists would not control the elections. When the representatives of the Communist Party appeared on stage, they were greeted with thunderous applause. But when the Ba‘thists and Nationalists took the stage, they received lesser applause. So we understood that, if elections took place, the Communists would win by a landslide. We were contacted by the Nationalists and the Ba‘thists. Of the Ba‘thist students, I remember one from the Ghantous family; and from the Nationalists, I remember ‘Isa Abu Sheikha among others. They told us they needed help.

At that time, events were occurring in Iraq that split the Iraqis into Ba‘thists and Nationalists, against the Communists. We met and decided to support the weak elements among the Ba‘thists and the Nationalists, against the Communists.

The Brothers asked Brother Nader and I to bring them the results; as the latter were supposed to be announced at one o'clock in the morning. We went to see a detective movie in Cairo, and then headed to the league at one a.m. to see the results. When we arrived there, we saw some of the Communists cursing the Muslim Brothers; we knew immediately that the results were not in their favor. In fact, the Ba'athists and the Nationalists won; and the league was not handed over to the Communists. The Ba'athists and the Nationalists subsequently offered us seats on a number of committees.

The Brothers and the Beginnings of the Palestine Liberation Movement (Fatah)

During this period, and under the difficult circumstances of 1956–1957, we the delegates used to meet and exchange information. I represented Jordan; and the Brother who represented GS was Khalil al-Wazir. There was someone representing Libya and another representing Syria. Sometimes we used to meet in the Orman Botanical Gardens, walk and exchange information, each about his country. Thus I got to know Khalil al-Wazir, who was a polite, shy, reserved and disciplined young man. I never saw him again. One day he went to Kuwait, and from there he announced that he had joined the Fatah Movement.

Yasir 'Arafat, he was a dynamic student who served his fellow students. It was of no concern to him to graduate in five years. He used to contact the Egyptians to get tuition exemptions for students. When he gave a speech in the league, and when he was its president, I noticed that he employed some tactics. He would be introduced by the Master of Ceremonies as the speaker; he would be standing in the last row. So he would pass between the rows, saluting students on the right and on the left until he reached the platform, where he delivered his speech. This was Yasir 'Arafat.

In 1956 when the Tripartite Aggression occurred, the students volunteered to defend Egypt. Yasir 'Arafat volunteered with the Egyptian students; while we volunteered with the Arab students. Late in 1957 Yasir 'Arafat founded the Palestinian Students Alumni Union for those who graduated and had lost their right to belong to the Palestinian league. A year later, he left for Kuwait.

During this period, we noticed that the Egyptian secret service, while very severe with the student Brothers, gave freedom of movement to Yasir 'Arafat. He was allowed to travel to attend the conference of The International Union of Socialist Youth, which was held in Czechoslovakia.

During this period, student Brothers sat as members of the administrative board of the Palestinian League. These Brothers were Fayez al-Hazina and Kamel al-Shorbaji, who were totally disciplined. They tried to apply all the policies of the MB. Fayez told us that the Egyptian secret service officer, in light of events in Jordan with Nasser, had summoned Yasir 'Arafat and Salah Khalaf and asked them to sign an affidavit that they had no connections with the MB Movement. They agreed.

During 1957, we began hearing about the formation of the Palestine Liberation Movement (Fatah). The primary founder was Yasir 'Arafat, aided by Khalil al-Wazir. Afterwards, the two left for Kuwait. Regarding 'Arafat, when we used to support him in the League, he was not one of the Brothers, but was close to them. It was said that, before I came to Egypt, he had connections with the Brothers. This claim needs verification and documentation. As for Khalil al-Wazir, he was a Brother, and was the delegate of the GS. While he was in GS, he looked forward to working for the Palestinian issue. I also learned that when 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Abd al-Ra'uf was in GS, he was taking care of a number of young men, among them Khalil al-Wazir, preparing them for resistance against the occupation.

At the time when the Brothers went to Kuwait, a magazine called *Falastinuna* (our Palestine) was being published in Beirut. Its editor-in chief was a Lebanese Islamist brother called Toufic Houry. It was supported financially by the MB Movement in Kuwait. It was the first publication to present Fatah's ideas. During these early days, there were no frictions between us and the Fatah Movement. The Brothers in Jordan were made aware of this information at that time. We, the university students, had a suggestion for our brothers in Jordan, in order to prevent the loss of their youth who had started to join the Fatah Movement. This suggestion was that they should establish a section for Palestine in the General Headquarters to work for the Palestinian issue. Unfortunately this step was not taken and the drain of zealous youth from the Brothers continued.

What made matters worse for the Brothers was the strike against them in Egypt, coupled with Nasser's achievements and his great popularity. This is in addition to the Fatah Movement, which wanted groups of young men to work for Palestine and focus on its issue, away from party affiliations. For a while, we had a reasonable relationship with this core of Fatah. However, as time passed, friction between us materialized and worsened; both when we were students and afterwards, in Kuwait and Qatar; all because they started taking our natural support.

Many of Fatah's leaders have their background in the MB Movement. When we travelled as a delegation from Hamas to Tunis to visit 'Arafat toward the end

of 1992, there was a picture of “Fatah Movement martyrs” hanging on the wall of his office. When some of those present criticized the MB Movement, I said to ‘Arafat, “Brother ‘Arafat! You know the Brothers’ role in founding the Fatah Movement.” Then in front of everyone present, ‘Arafat asked me if I see the picture of the martyrs and added that the overwhelming majority of those were Muslim Brothers. In fact, this was true; for among those who joined Fatah early on, there was ‘Abdul Fattah al-Hammoud, who died in a car accident in 1968 on the Irbid-al-Mafraq road, he was originally from the local branch of ‘Aqbat Jaber. He studied in Cairo University in the Mining, Petroleum and Metallurgical Department of the Faculty of Engineering. He graduated before me and went to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA); and was one of the founders of Fatah. Among the Brothers, there was also Khalil al-Wazir, Rafiq al-Natsheh and Muhammad Yusuf al-Najjar.

The most important internal event of 1960 was the formation of the first covert Palestinian organization of the Muslim Brothers in the GS and of those from the Strip who work in the Gulf. I was asked to attend this meeting which took place in an apartment located in al-Manyal area in Cairo. About 15 brothers gathered there, some of whom had come from the Gulf, and others were students residing in Cairo. During this meeting in 1960, it was agreed to form an organization of the Palestinian Muslim Brothers. This organization was separate from that of the Muslim Brothers in Jordan, as the Brothers’ organization in Jordan comprised the east and the west banks. I was asked to convey this decision to the Muslim Brothers in Amman including to Muhammad ‘Abdul Rahman Khalifah. Afterwards, the Palestinian MB Movement became a member of the Executive Bureau of the MB Movement in the Arab countries, which moved outside Egypt following the strike against the Brothers there, and was, for a period of time, headed by ‘Issam al-‘Attar. The organization constituted the basis on which, decades later, the Hamas Movement was to be based.

When we went to Kuwait, the time for choosing sides began for any Brother who was working at once with Fatah and with the Brothers. You either worked with Fatah or you worked with the Brothers. I remember the session in which I met Muhammad Yussuf al-Najjar. It took place in the home of Abu ‘Awdeh Thawabteh and al-Najjar asked if he can stay with the Brothers and with Fatah. We told him that he had to decide. And he decided to stay with Fatah. This was in 1962 or 1963, I do not exactly recall. Thus the first friction that took place between us and Fatah came against the background of drawing active cadres from the MB Movement. When Palestinian MB Movement was founded in 1960, the process of pulling away members stopped. I remember in 1963 that Salim al-Za‘nun met Hassan ‘Abdul Hamid, a leader of the Palestinian Brothers

in Kuwait who I had previously worked with. Al-Za'nun had apparently told him that it seemed that the Palestinian Muslim Brothers had acquired an organization, for Fatah were no longer able to pull any of them away.

The Stance vis-à-vis the Tripartite Aggression of 1956

During 1956 the nationalization of the Suez Canal took place. This canal was dug in the 19th century and was under the control of the English, the French and others. They formed a company to manage the canal. When the Americans and the English started pressuring Nasser, he retaliated by nationalizing the Suez Canal. We, the Muslim Brothers across all the Arab countries, and Jordan in particular, stood by Nasser in his decision to nationalize the Canal in 1956, just two years after the strike against the Brothers. We viewed it as a patriotic action. During my vacation in Jerusalem, a big festival was held in al-Rashidiya School, attended by the main parties that held influence in the street; the Brothers, Ba'athists, Communists, and the Nationalists. At the festival, the young people of the MB were in control. They went up on the roofs of tall buildings and cheered in a manner that allowed them to dominate the festival. The first speaker was the delegate of the Jordanian Communist Party. She grabbed the microphone and never let go of it. The festival was over while she was still gripping that microphone.

I remember that the popular radio station *Sawt al-Arab* (the Arabs' voice) was broadcasting proceedings. The station's representative did not like the Brothers' cheers, so he called a number of Ba'athist, communist and nationalist party members; and they met in a nearby school. He said to them; cheer, so I can broadcast your cheers over *Sawt al-Arab*, because I cannot broadcast those of the Muslim Brothers. In addition, and for the first time following the festival, the Brothers organized a demonstration in which regular students participated. We, the university students, also participated, along with a number of men from the general public. We were cheering the nationalization of the canal and the resistance to the British and to imperialism. This was a positive step and it added power to the Brothers.

Actually, we in the MB Movement used to differentiate between our dissatisfaction with the regime in Egypt and coming to Egypt's defense. Hence, we joined the Arab students who numbered 600–700, including the Palestinians. We demanded to be trained and led by 'Abdullah al-Tell, who was a political refugee in Cairo. In the end, we were trained by a group of Egyptian officers. Following our training, one officer came to us and said; whoever wishes to die, let him stand in this line, because we are sending you to Gaza. I was among

those who had decided to die and I stood in that line. One of my relatives called me and ordered me back but I insisted for I was strongly motivated to stand alongside the Egyptian people.

The atmosphere was very encouraging, as you repeatedly heard the patriotic song “*Allah* is great, and He is above the cunning of the aggressor.” This was then the most important chant in Egypt. We remained in training for three weeks in; and we were drilled in the use of the English Lee-Enfield rifles. They took us outside Cairo. I remember that a shipment of new Soviet semi-automatic Simonov rifles arrived; and I remember that the Egyptian trainer had in front of him a wall and a target. He told us, if you see an Israeli, fire at him thus. He fired, but hit neither the target nor the wall. As we stood, a Palestinian young man stepped forward, seemingly well-trained, and he hit the target on the mark. This absurd situation made everyone laugh. Yet, they paid no attention to us. I recall that the weather was very cold, it was November, and the aggression had started on October 29th. They did not provide us with blankets. Fortunately we were close to a factory where there were plenty of discarded cut papers. So we used to slip ourselves between them to get warm. Then they moved us to another location and told us that the Israeli paratroopers would descend there. I loved hunting; so I was delighted at the thought of hunting those paratroopers.

Among the Brothers who were with me, I recall Dr. Sa‘id al-Halais, who was then a volunteer, and is currently living in Kuwait. Also Dr. Hakam Abu Zahra, who was the brother of my friend Nabil Abu Zahra, and others. As I recall, we had with us groups of Arab students who were Communists. At that time, they were chanting “Shepilov! Shepilov! Eden is dying in fear of you.” We remained there for three weeks, and then we returned home. This was an experience in which I participated with sincerity. Until this day, I still hold the view that the Islamists should differentiate between any political disagreements with the regime and the essential contradiction with the outside enemy and with imperialism. The imprisoned Egyptian Brothers sent Nasser a message saying; let us out so we can stand by you. No doubt that, in 1956, Egypt was the target of three countries, and the Egyptians resisted. Moreover, American and Soviet pressures played a role in the withdrawal of the Israelis from Sinai, and the withdrawal of the British and French from the Suez Canal and Port Sa‘id, which they bombarded and destroyed.

Conditions in Jordan

The most important event in Jordan was the attempt to make the country join the Baghdad Pact. When the English sent Gerald Templer to Jordan, people took to the streets in huge demonstrations in the East Bank, the West Bank, Jerusalem, Nablus, Hebron, Amman and Irbid, rejecting this visit and the suggestion that Jordan would join the Pact. Some people were killed, and the government forced to resign. The Baghdad Pact was English-made. Its headquarters were in Baghdad and it included Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan. Its aim was containment of the Soviet Union. They wanted to drag into it, in addition to Iraq, other Arab countries. So pressure was exerted on Jordan. As for Egypt, they failed to move it into the pact and they failed with Jordan too amid public outrage. Great vitality was enjoyed by students and workers in Jordan during that period and they were the ones who frustrated this attempt.

The political parties took to the streets together, in spite of the differences between them. These included the Muslim Brothers, the Ba‘thists, the Communists, the Nationalists, and the Nasserites. As for the rise of Hizb ut-Tahrir, it went into decline after they issued a fatwa that participation in such demonstrations is not religiously allowed, as they distract from establishing the Islamic State. Thus they lost much of their popularity, and the party started to decline because it did not go along with public sentiment.

I recall that early in 1956, state elections were held in Jordan. The number of parliament seats contested was 40. The Brothers got four seats, 10%, the Ba‘thists two seats and the Communists two; while Hizb ut-Tahrir won one seat. This was the only time that this party participated in elections, because afterwards they took a stance against elections. Their representative in those elections was Sheikh Ahmad Da‘ur.

In 1957, there was **an attempted coup in Jordan**. During that year, tensions grew in the Kingdom between the MB Movement on the one hand, and the Ba‘thists, Nationalists and Communists on the other. There was a core of Ba‘thists in the Jordanian army; and they held influence with the cabinet of Sulayman al-Nabulsi. This is a sensitive point, for we can say that the Ba‘thists, the Nasserites, the Communists and the National Socialist Party, wanted to get rid of both the regime and of the Muslim Brothers.

We must not forget that the Brothers had sustained a crushing blow in 1954 in Egypt; when a number of them were jailed and some were executed. Actually, some locations of the Brothers in Jordan were subjected to attacks, and bullets were fired at their branch in ‘Aqbat Jaber. While in Jerusalem, there were preparations for a demonstration during which torches would be

carried, with the aim of burning the MB's branch in Wadi al-Joz and other areas. The Muslim Brothers decided to defend themselves. Thus the interest of the Jordanian regime coincided with that of the Brothers. For there was an attempt to topple the Jordanian regime, and concurrently, there was an attempt to crush the Muslim Brothers. So the fact of the matter is that the steadfastness of the Brothers in Jordan helped the Jordanian regime remain steadfast. Afterwards, these events were interpreted as collusion or an alliance between the two sides, which was absolutely not true.

The most serious attempt originated at the Zarqa army barracks. The scheme called for moving from Zarqa toward the king's palace. History tells that the soldiers and officers of the Jordanian army were against this attempt. The MB Movement then included military as well as civilian members. Thus you could find in the army soldiers and officers from the Muslim Brothers, and soldiers and officers from the Ba'athists. This attempt failed and the targeting of the Jordanian state and of the MB Movement simultaneously prompted the MB to oppose the attempted coup. Of course many things were subsequently written, and many accusations were hurled against them, but the fact is that we had the right to defend ourselves.

The proof that this matter was a meeting point between the Jordanian regime and the Brothers is that, on 14/7/1958, when the Baghdad coup against Hashemite rule in Iraq occurred, and crimes were committed such as mass killing and trailing people on the ground, acts that no true Muslim can sanction, British forces entered Jordan. The Brothers took a stance against the arrival of these forces and issued press releases and gave speeches to that effect; as a result, Muhammad 'Abdul Rahman Khalifah was arrested. This is the answer to those who try to accuse the Muslim Brotherhood of collusion with the regime in Jordan. The Brothers are principled, and they have the right to defend themselves. That is why, a year later, they confronted the British forces that descended on 'Aqaba, in the Amman area and in other places, following the Baghdad coup.

One of the most important events that took place during the fifties was the union between Egypt and Syria in February 1958. This union, which took place during the rules of Nasser and Shukri al-Quwatli, was welcomed by the Arab public, the Muslim Brothers included. That is because unity is power, and the MB Movement does not only call for building a Muslim society under Muslim rule, it also calls for Arab unity and Islamic unity. These are among the basic principles held by Imam Hassan al-Banna. In fact, everyone welcomed this step; the Brothers in Jordan did, as well as the Brothers in Syria, Egypt and all other Arab countries. Our overall assessment was that we supported the union and we wished it had been a union based on Islam.

Alas, this union did not survive, because it was not established on solid grounds. A regional territorial discord occurred between the Egyptians and the Syrians. It seems that when the Egyptian regime sent ‘Abdul Hakim ‘Amer and a number of Egyptian officials to Syria, they did not take into account the Syrian internal political dimension. And so contradictory factors multiplied until 28/9/1961, when the union collapsed and was disbanded. Furthermore, as the Muslim Brothers in Jordan and in the other Arab countries were with the Union, they were opposed to its disbandment, regardless of the oppression they were subjected to in Egypt and in Syria. It was strange to see that the Ba‘th Arab Socialist Party supported the separation, while the Muslim Brothers were against it.

Evaluating Nasser’s Era

It is necessary to evaluate Nasser’s experiment in brief. When the revolt of the Free Officers erupted on 23/7/1952, the MB stood firmly by it. It is well known that the MB’s youth were the ones who then stood guard over embassies and other institutions; and the ones who spread out in Cairo. Furthermore, the Brothers had a role in the formation of the Free Officers Movement during the days of Hassan al-Banna. A number of their senior officers were members of the Brotherhood; among them, ‘Abd al-Mun‘im ‘Abd al-Ra’uf who laid siege to King Faruq’s palace, and a number of other Free Officers. This relationship continued until 1954 when it became strained. Then came the blow directed against them. No doubt that Nasser succeeded in weakening the MB Movement, in particular during the struggle against Hassan al-Hudaybi; and was able to infiltrate the Secret Apparatus headed by al-Sindy. This weakened the Brothers; in spite of the fact that, when the Egyptian regime dissolved the Egyptian parties, it allowed the MB Movement to remain active. Another blow was directed against the MB Movement in 1965–1966 with the execution of the great Islamic writer Sayyid Qutb. Thus the Brothers sustained two major blows; a large number of them were imprisoned, some for as long as 25 years.

In spite of all of the above, if we wish to evaluate Nasser from an objective and scientific perspective, we find that, had this man come to an understanding with the Islamic movement, many things would probably have been different. That is why we now note that the Islamic and the nationalist movements are once again working in cooperation and understanding with each other. Had this state been achieved at the beginning of the revolution, and the nationalistic

movement led by Nasser came to an understanding with the MB Movement, perhaps great victories would have been achieved in contemporary Arab history. But this is history's habit.

Nasser's rule was autocratic, repressive, and suppressive of all freedoms, including freedom of expression. I recall, for example, that the letters that used to come to us from Jordan or from other Arab students would be opened and checked. So I wrote poetry describing this surveillance, and I added that if they could, they would monitor our dreams as well.

The atmosphere was one in which we would work in total secrecy. It was a time of suppression of freedoms, arrests and repression. As an example of repression, I cite the following: I had an Egyptian man working for me as a domestic servant, cleaning the house and cooking. One day, I was drawing on the table with the aid of a long ruler. All of a sudden, he asked me, "You Mr. Ibrahim, who pays for your expenses and your education?" I told him that 75 countries do; seeing that I was getting my scholarship money from UNRWA, an agency of the UN who had then 75 member countries. He said in unbelief, "Oh *Allah!* 75 countries pay for your expenses!" I told him, yes. Few days later, Muhammad disappeared and did not come home. By the end of the day, he came; he had been beaten and his face was all swollen; he was in really bad shape. We asked him what had happened. He answered, "O Mr. Ibrahim! You told me 75 countries, and this brought this attack on me" (meaning that this got me into trouble). The beating happened because there was a theft. So security forces gathered all these poor servants and subjected them to beatings to make them confess. When it was Muhammad's turn, they asked him whom he was working for. He answered, Mr. Ibrahim and 75 countries. So they said to him, "you son of..." and the beating intensified. We laughed a lot at the absurdity of this incident; as it gives an idea of the repression practiced in Egypt then, which extended to everything and everyone.

In spite of the severity with which I characterize this regime, it had a positive side. For anyone who wishes to evaluate a ruler, must take into account his positive as well as his negative points. For we cannot forget that, in 1955, Nasser equipped the Egyptian army with modern arms. One of the objectives of the Tripartite Aggression was to destroy these arms. Then Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal and took an honorable stand in confronting that aggression. He went to al-Azhar and announced "we will fight and we are not afraid." He was speaking about himself and the Egyptian people. He also formed a union with Syria, which was the first in modern times. It is true that it has failed, but it gave the signal that the future of the Arab nation lies in unity. Among his other achievements, we can cite agrarian reform; in spite of the fact that there was a



difference of opinion between him and the Brothers as to the number of hectares to be allotted. But this is merely procedural; for this reform gave a role to the Egyptian farmer and the Egyptian worker. No one can deny that.

As for his most important achievement, it was the building of the Aswan High Dam. I visited this dam twice, in 1955 and again in 1960. This project was supported by the Russians, after the Americans had withdrawn their support. It was an immense project. The dam has a storage capacity of up to 130 billion cubic meters of water. It increased significantly the agricultural land available in Egypt and prevented floods. No doubt that there were negative aspects to this project, which some people had indicated; such as hindering the production of alluvium. It was a giant project to which the Muslim Brothers contributed a major role. Whoever reads the memoirs of Osman Ahmed Osman (The Arab Contractors) and one of Sadat's ministers, will find out that a large number of those who worked on building the High Dam, as employees of The Arab Contractors Company, were engineers' members of the MB Movement. This fact caused Osman to be accused of accommodating the Brothers because he was on good terms with Hassan al-Banna, seeing that the latter founded the MB Movement in Isma'iliyyah, and Osman was a native of that city. Thus the Brothers had a role in building the dam as engineers. This answers those ridiculous people who used to say in the Egyptian media that the Brothers wanted to murder the two famous singers Muhammad 'Abdul Wahhab and Umm Kulthum; also that they wanted to demolish the High Dam; among many other lies. In fact the Brothers were involved in laying the foundations of this endeavor. I recall a number of those who worked on the High Dam, and then with me, in 1966, on the Khalid Ibn al-Walid Dam in Jordan, in diverting the Yarmouk River. I mention among them Engineer 'Abdul Ra'uf Shabayek, who was a member of the MB Movement.

We can evaluate Nasser's era as being one of Arab advancement. However, it was not based on internal understanding among various nationalistic and Islamic forces, and this is left to history to evaluate. Today, the situation is better, because there is understanding based on mutual grounds, among the Nationalists, the Islamists, the Brothers, and even the Nasserites, of the important and basic issues related to the *Ummah*, regarding the Israeli and American threats, solidarity with Palestine (all of Palestine), Arab unity, and the unity of the *Ummah*. When Nasser proposed to the Brothers participation in the government, he did not do so on objective grounds. The proposal came in 1953 to Sayyid Qutb and others to join him. He should have made this proposal to the MB Movement. But by that time, tensions were in the air. So he did not wish to address the MB or accord them any importance, instead singling out individuals from among them. There are many regimes that try to pick out individuals when

faced with a difficult political stalemate. At that time, Sayyid Qutb consulted with al-Hudaybi and asked his permission. In 1953, Sayyid Qutb declined the post of education minister; this took place before the crisis between the Brothers and Nasser erupted.

In 1960 I visited Alexandria and asked about the address of Khattab al-Sayyid Khattab (mentioned earlier), who was sentenced to death. He disappeared in Egypt during the fifties. Then when a pardon was issued for the Brothers, he reappeared and opened a shop in Alexandria selling used furniture. A Brother named Salah and I managed to reach him. We remained three days with him as his guests. He used to take us to *fajr* prayer in a mosque located in an area called al-Ibrahimiyyah in Alexandria. This man is a living example of the Muslim Brothers. After saying farewell to him in 1960, and after I graduated in July of 1961 and left Egypt, I never saw him again.

Many writers have written about what they called the Egyptian revolution. Among the books that I had read, there is one called *Misr Mujtam' Jadid Yabnih al-Askariyyun* (Egypt: A New Society Built by the Military) by a Communist Party leader named Anwar 'Abdul Malik. This book was written in the fifties. It touched on various issues, from a Marxist and not Islamic perspective. The book notes that the Islamic dimension (even after the strike against the Brothers) has appeared in some writings; among them, the book *Ishtirakiyyat al-Islam* (The Socialism of Islam) by Mustafa al-Siba'i, the General Supervisor of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement in Syria. This book was printed in a popular edition by the Egyptian government. 'Abdul Malik said that this book was one of the most widely circulated books in Egypt. Of course, the revolution government wanted to show itself close to Islam, in the sense that Islam has within it a socialist dimension. I have read al-Siba'i's book and found it to be a good and valuable read. Islam's economic system holds within it a very important dimension of preserving public funds. I recall this honored prophetic saying, "People are partners in three: pasture, water and fire." This saying brings us to the subject of nationalization. I am one of those who view Islam's economic system as an integral one.

When the Muslim Brothers first came on the scene, the most important issue upon which they focused was the establishment of social justice, found in the book written by Sayyid Qutb. For if a society is not stable economically and socially, it cannot advance. It is not acceptable, as happens in contemporary society, that one group of wealthy and influential individuals along with the mafia should hold sway over all of society; while large sectors of the public can hardly make a living. This state of affairs leads to disorder in the society. Muslim society, throughout history, has been a balanced and a strong society.



We have witnessed how an equitable society was able to conquer the world in a very short time; reaching as far as India, China, and Andalus in Spain. But even the socialism that the Egyptian government had borrowed was not applied well. It did not understand or take into consideration other aspects of the human being. It is not a choice between economics, security, and politics that should be considered. Rather all these together should be taken into account in order to have a balanced society.

Other Activities

I loved engaging in **literary activities**. I recall that when I went to Egypt in 1955, I took part in the commemoration of the poet Ibrahim Naji, who was a very progressive Egyptian medical doctor and poet. In *Tawjihi*, we used to read his texts in our Arabic Literature class. He died at that time, and I participated in his commemoration. I remember attending several lectures at the Ewart Memorial Hall in the American University and the Muslim Youth Hall in Cairo. At the latter, I attended lectures by Taha Hussein, Bint al-Shati' and other Egyptian men of letters, whether Arabist or Islamist. (At the doors of the Muslim Youth Society, Hassan al-Banna was assassinated in February 1949). I enjoyed this climate during my *Tawjihi* year. However, when I started my engineering studies, poetry evaporated, and mathematics and geometry took its place.

As for other events at the university, an Egyptian student became my companion. He used to call me constantly. I suspected him, but I let good intention prevail. One day, maybe after he trusted me, he told me that he was a member of the Egyptian Liberation Organization, and that they participated in the arrest of anyone who went out to perform their *fajr* (morning) prayer, during that period of time, presuming they must be a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. I made no comments. In my conversations with him, I was keen on refraining from saying anything other than what is written in *al-Ahram* newspaper, which I used to read daily. Thus a long time passed until he trusted me. We never used Islamic expressions, such as *Assalamu 'Alaikum*, or calling each other Brother. We wore no beards, and we were always clean-shaven. Otherwise, we could not ensure the continuation of our education, had it become known that we tended toward the MB Movement.

In 1957, I was living with my younger brother; and with us, we had Usama and 'Issa. At one-thirty in the morning, we awoke to find men standing over us, telling us to get up. They woke us up, forced us to stand against the wall and they told us to raise our hands. They searched the apartment thoroughly. They had with them an officer in charge; but they were wearing civilian clothes. One

of those searching the apartment came back to the officer and told him, there is no one here. The officer stroked my shoulder gently and said; “You are good students. All right now, go back to sleep, learn and study.” Then they left the apartment. We heard later that some of the Brothers had escaped from the Liman Tora Prison. And al-Ma’adi where we were staying was close to that prison. They had information that we, in this apartment, sympathize with the Brothers; so they came to our apartment to search for the escapees. After a period of time, a massacre occurred in Liman Tora, when the Egyptian police attacked the prisoners, most of whom were university students and professors; and some were highly respected personalities in Egyptian society. About 25 persons were killed with gunfire, and their story is well-known. We learned about this incident and were moved by it. One day, a person that I knew well asked me to deliver the names of those victims to Jordan. During the summer vacation, when I returned to Jordan, I handed them over to Brother Yusuf al-‘Azmi, who published them in *al-Kifah al-Islami* newspaper. It was a journalistic scoop, having the names of the 25 killed in Liman Tora massacre published.

I would like to mention the names of the Brothers who were with me in the Faculty of Engineering in my last years there; they were Usama and Ahmad al-Agha from the GS, Ahmad Minqara from Lebanon, and Amin Shahin from Egypt. Later I learned that Amin Shahin was arrested and had died in prison. This group of ours graduated in 1961 from the Faculty of Engineering, Cairo University.

This Book

This book is not merely the autobiography of Mr. Ibrahim Ghusheh, it is also a living testimony of the Palestinian and Jordanian Muslim Brothers' experience over a fifty years span.

Ibrahim Ghusheh was the official spokesman for Hamas during the period 1991–1999. His memoirs provide rich material and information published for the first time. These are the memoirs of a man who was present during the political decision-making of the Hamas Movement, especially in the first twelve years following its inception.

Ghusheh's memoirs are characterized by their clarity and candor. They bring to light many of Hamas' stands and viewpoints regarding a number of issues, which could be considered points of controversy among researchers, in particular during the period leading to *al-Aqsa Intifadah*.

Without a doubt, this book is indispensable for all those interested in Palestine studies and the contemporary history of the Palestinian issue.

The Red Minaret

Memoirs of

Ibrahim Ghusheh

(Ex-Spokesman of Hamas)



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