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MIDEAST/N. AFRICA

Part I

From Palestine to Palestine: A Diaspora Journey

BY HISHAM H. AHMED

JERUSALEM, Israel

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In spite of the many tragedies they have endured, many Palestinians have become achievers in different parts of the world. Few, however, have become as renowned as Ibrahim Abu-Lughod.

Dr. Abu-Lughod, a refugee from Jaffa in 1948, went on to become a distinguished political scientist. He left a crumbling Palestine in 1948 as a refugee. Now he has returned to help rebuild his homeland as a leader and scholar. What follows is the first part of his life narrative.

HHA: *What can you tell us about yourself?*

IAL: Let's talk about my formative years, which from my standpoint, were determinative in my life. In the first place, I want to say that I actually was born on a day of rebellion. In the same year, my father established a foundry that was intended to support the industrialization of Palestine. It was the first Palestinian Arab foundry to address the issue of industrial development.

HHA: *You were born on a day of rebellion?*

IAL: That is, in the same year as a rebellion, in 1929. In that year you have **Thawrat al-Burak**, which was an important watershed.

HHA: *What was the date?*

IAL: I was born on February the 15th. In the life of Palestine, it was a troublesome period. The foundry was established under great difficulties because my father didn't have enough capital. He was not a capitalist; he was a worker. He learned the trade first from the Germans and then from the Jews. The Germans were succeeded by the Jews on the border between what became Jaffa and Tel Aviv. There was a German company called Wagner which was put under the custody of the British government when the Germans and the Turks were engaged in the First World War. It was seized by the British, and that was essentially the last time my father worked there. He shifted, probably a little later, and he began to work with German Jews who had a similar factory. They probably administered the same factory, the Wagner, but I don't know if that was the case. He learned the trade as well as the importance of an industrial system. They rendered services to the Palestinian public—motor diesels, water pumps, etc. All of these were things our farmers needed. At that time my father was drawing a salary of the equivalent of thirty

Hisham H. Ahmed is an ICWA Fellow compiling oral narratives of the Palestinian people.

Current Fellows & Their Activities

Bacete Bwogo. A Sudanese from the Shilluk tribe of southern Sudan, Bacete is a physician spending two and one-half years studying health-delivery systems in Costa Rica, Cuba, Kerala State (India) and the Bronx, U.S.A. Bacete did his undergraduate work at the University of Juba and received his M.D. from the University of Alexandria in Egypt. He served as a public-health officer in Port Sudan until 1990, when he moved to England to take advantage of scholarships at the London School of Economics and Oxford University. [The AMERICAS]

Cheng Li. An Assistant Professor of Government at Hamilton College in Clinton, NY, Cheng Li is studying the growth of technocracy and its impact on the economy of the southeastern coast of China. He began his academic life by winning the equivalent of an M.D. at Jing An Medical School in Shanghai, but then did graduate work in Asian Studies and Political Science, with an M.A. from Berkeley in 1987 and a Ph.D. from Princeton in 1992. [EAST ASIA]

Adam Albion. A former research associate at the Institute for EastWest Studies at Prague in the Czech Republic, Adam is spending two years studying and writing about Turkey's regional role and growing importance as an actor in the Balkans, the Middle East and the former Soviet bloc. A Harvard graduate (1988; History), Adam has completed the first year of a two-year M. Litt. degree in Russian/East European history and languages at Oxford University. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

Cynthia Caron. With a Masters degree in Forest Science from the Yale School of Forestry and Environment, Cynthia is spending two years in South Asia as ICWA's first John Miller Musser Memorial Forest & Society Fellow. She is studying and writing about the impact of forest-preservation projects on the lives (and land-tenure) of indigenous peoples and local farmers who live on their fringes. Her fellowship includes stays in Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka. [SOUTH ASIA/Forest & Society]

Hisham Ahmed. Born blind in the Palestinian Dheisheh Refugee Camp near Bethlehem, Hisham finished his A-levels with the fifth highest score out of 13,000 students throughout Israel. He received a B.A. in political science on a scholarship from Illinois State University and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California in Santa Barbara. Back in East Jerusalem and still blind, Hisham plans to gather oral histories from a broad selection of Palestinians to produce a "Portrait of Palestine" at this crucial point in Middle Eastern history. [MIDEAST/N. AFRICA]

Sharon Griffin. A feature writer and contributing columnist on African affairs at the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Sharon is spending two years in southern Africa studying Zulu and the KwaZulu kingdom and writing about the role of nongovernmental organizations as fulfillment centers for national needs in developing countries where governments are still feeling their way toward effective administration. She plans to travel and live in Namibia and Zimbabwe as well as South Africa. [sub-SAHARA]

Pramila Jayapal. Born in India, Pramila left when she was four and went through primary and secondary education in Indonesia. She graduated from Georgetown University in 1986 and won an M.B.A. from the Kellogg School of Management in Evanston, Illinois in 1990. She has worked as a corporate analyst for PaineWebber and an accounts manager for the world's leading producer of cardiac defibrillators, but most recently managed a \$7 million developing-country revolving-loan fund for the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) in Seattle. Pramila is spending two years in India tracing her roots and studying social issues involving religion, the status of women, population and AIDS. [SOUTH ASIA]

William F. Foote. Formerly a financial analyst with Lehman Brothers' Emerging Markets Group, Willy Foote is examining the economic substructure of Mexico and the impact of free-market reforms on Mexico's people, society and politics. Willy holds a Bachelor's degree from Yale University (history), a Master's from the London School of Economics (Development Economics; Latin America) and studied Basque history in San Sebastian, Spain. He carried out intensive Spanish-language studies in Guatemala in 1990 and then worked as a copy editor and Reporter for the Buenos Aires Herald from 1990 to 1992. [THE AMERICAS]

Teresa C. Yates. A former member of the American Civil Liberties Union's national task force on the workplace, Teresa is spending two years in South Africa observing and reporting on the efforts of the Mandela government to reform the national land-tenure system. A Vassar graduate with a *juris doctor* from the University of Cincinnati College of Law, Teresa had an internship at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies in Johannesburg in 1991 and 1992, studying the feasibility of including social and economic rights in the new South African constitution. While with the ACLU, she also conducted a Seminar on Women in the Law at Fordham Law School in New York. [sub-SAHARA]

British pounds. A pound was worth about 6 or 7 bucks. He was making a very good salary because he was highly skilled.

Secondly, his foundry was probably one of the earliest-stock sharing corporations. People actually had stocks. They were owned by relatives, of course, lots of them. They didn't have much money, but they had faith that my father would not waste their money. You know, they gave five pounds here, five pounds there.

The foundry started with a minimum capital of about five thousand dollars and ended up in 1948 having capital of about 72,000 British pounds. At that time a pound was worth \$5, that is about 350,000 dollars. For the size of Palestine, this was a major operation. It satisfied, and my father was determined that he would satisfy, the Arab needs. He took business away from the Jews. He had the idea of national capitalism. He was not articulate in the Marxist tradition, but he had the idea nonetheless

I grew up in that industrial firm. As a kid I traveled all over Palestine, so I had an advantage. I traveled with the workers who used to go and repair the motors, install them, and so forth. I got to know Palestine as I was growing up in a way that very few people did. Now I pride myself on the fact that I can get into a car and drive anywhere. I know my geography very well. I can take you from here to the Golan without making a single mistake. Despite the changes in landscape, the general direction of going to Gaza, going to Bir Saba, going to Haifa to the seashore, and going all the way to the north of Palestine—I have no problem. That comes from my early childhood. I actually enjoy being in Palestine, and I attribute this to the fact that I saw its variety at a very early age. It left an indelible mark on me.

So this was the period of industrial development, industrial capitalism, and the split between the Arabs and the Jews. I grew up with that. We needed to do certain things for our community, for self-sufficiency, to meet our needs. I grew up with that. That's one thing that came from my father. I call my father a person with the Protestant ethic. He was a Muslim, but I call him that because he was tremendously motivated by duty and so forth. He was not a greedy capitalist. When he died, we were not rich. We were adequately provided for.

My father supplied industrial implements for *Dar il-Aitam-al Islamiyye* (The Islamic Orphanage). He was

a supporter of the mufti in a silent way. I call it mainstream politics. He was important in the foundation of that school.

My father was involved in the national movement in a self effacing way. The factory was closed in 1937 by the British with what we called "red wax." That meant you couldn't open it. The charge was that the factory produced landmines and other instruments for the revolt against the British.¹ They couldn't prove it, but they arrested my father. I know the prisons that the Israelis now use, because they put him (my father) in Sarafand. Sarafand is now the place where they torture our people. They send them there for torture and confession. I got to see all the prisons because my father was an inmate. I learned directly the punishment that is meted out to our people.

The national struggle was a reality to us. From 1936, I remember strangers staying at our home. From their attire they were obviously peasants. They would sleep at our house. When the British would come in

"The change was that the factory produced landmines... for the revolt against the British."

for a *kabsiyyeh* or *mudahameh*, [i.e. a raid on the house], they would find this guy with us. They asked us kids, "Who is this guy? Who is this guy?" We were briefed every time we had a stranger. We were told that he was our cousin on our mother's side because his name is Mohammed Mahmoud. And we were Abu-Lughods. He was a stranger, you see. We would say, for example, "He is our cousin, and he is visiting from some other

place, from the north of Jaffa." We wouldn't say that he came from some specific place. That is how we learned to cheat for the national purpose. We were not conscious at that time, but we became very conscious, very early, that the British were on the lookout for rebels. These house guests were rebels who came to the factory either to take money or the weapons that the factory produced for them. This occurred on a limited scale. We learned that as children.

We learned to go to demonstrations. I remember the first demonstration that I ever participated in. I remember it as if it happened yesterday. I was just about 7 years old — 1936-37. It was during the general strike, actually, in 1936. During the general strike, I went with my younger brother. I took him on my shoulders because he was only three. I saw the British beating on the heads of our people. It was a major demonstration. I saw the blood coming down. Because I was frightened, I said to my brother "*Inte shayif? Inte shayif?*" ("Do you see? Do you see?") I was saying it out of anxiety, and the poor kid, he's saying "*Ona shayif. Ona shayif.*" ("I see. I see.") The man the

1. In 1936, a Palestinian revolt, known as the Great Arab Rebellion, erupted against the British. Lasting three years, it was marked by a six-month-long strike, the longest recorded strike in human history at the time.

British were beating looked like he was dying. The blood was spilling. It was a frightening experience, so I went home, taking my brother with me of course. Then my mother scolded me, not for going to the demonstration, but for taking my younger brother who was too young to understand. I was old enough to understand. The paradox of it is that I was not young enough to understand, but my brother was. I was scolded for taking someone who didn't understand, but it was ok for me to go. I have remembered that ever since. You don't get scolded for things connected with the national movement. My mother learned that from my father. He did that and got punished for it, but he got reinforcement and approval from the community.

The second factor that affected my life was the school I attended. We are eternally grateful for the school that we went to. You get your education first at home, and then you go to school. At the high school level, which I remember, we had exceptionally, exceptionally able and committed teachers.

HHA: *What was the name of the school?*

IAL: Al-Amariya Government Secondary School in Jaffa. I wrote it so many times that I got sick and tired of the name. Al-Amariya Government Secondary School. It was a full high school, that is it became a full high school in my years.

HHA: *Who were some of your teachers?*

IAL: One of the teachers was a person by the name of Abdallah-al Rimawi who became one of the leaders of the Ba'ath in Palestine and Jordan. He became a member of the cabinet as a Ba'athi. He was highly ideological and a graduate of the American University of Beirut. He taught us mathematics, so it had nothing to do with civics. He was a role model; he taught us. We would stay in the *saha* (playground) and, instead of playing with stones or whatever, these teachers would be around. They were answering questions and talking about the British. The British were the enemies. The Jews were subsidiary to the British. It's imperialism. It was a correct diagnosis, by the way. I think it remains true until today. So he was one. He was a bright guy, very able, a very good teacher, but also a nationalist.

There was another person by the name of Ahmed al-Sabe'a from Qalqilya who taught us chemistry. Again, he had nothing to do with social science. He was methodical, more moderate and controlled than Abdallah. He was much more controlled in language,

but he had the same commitment. He used to encourage us to travel, to see places, to see the kibbutz, to see what the Jews have so that we could catch up to them. The Jews were modernizers, and they viewed the challenge partially in cultural terms. We were more backward than they were. Unless we developed, we were going to lose the battle.

Now this was very early in the struggle.

We also had Shafiq Abu-Gharbiyyeh; he is a brother of Nihad Abu-Gharbiyyeh.² He is the younger brother, and he taught us Latin. I'm not so sure now, but I think he also taught us English. We stopped studying Latin because we went on strike. Latin was not a priority for us. We went on strike and because of the tension, he taught us some English. When the troubles began in 1947, he went back to Hebron. He was killed while making a landmine in Jerusalem.

We had Hassan Al-Dabbagh, who taught us Eng-

lish. He was a modernizer. We had probably the best teacher of history I ever had, a person by the name of Zughdi Jarallah. He was a nephew of Sheikh Husam, who was nominated to assume the office of mufti against Hajj Amin al-Husseini. He would have been the mufti, had the British not appointed the mufti. Zughdi Jarallah taught us history, and he could always call on history to explain what was happening. He was moderate in his views. He told

us that if we didn't accept the partition, we would lose it all. He said that. We replied that it was only because he was related to Husam, who didn't like the mufti. That's what we accused him of, but he was an exceptionally good teacher. He taught us how to cope with our adversity. He was a nationalist in his own particular way. He remained true to that. I used to see him afterwards.

Our school was a leading school in the town. I learned how to organize demonstrations and student strikes there. Some people I now see remind me of this. They were in the *Kulliyyeh al-Orthodox* (Orthodox College). We used to organize demonstrations at our school, and we would go and get the kids from the other schools. Some of these people now (they were younger than I was) ask me if I remember when I used to go to their classes and kick them out to go and demonstrate. We were supported by our teachers. We didn't need to use violence to go to the demonstrations because we were organized. We gave speeches. We demonstrated in a controlled manner against the Balfour Declaration or whatever. The occasion was usually a national occasion. We did that

"We stopped studying Latin because we went on strike."

2. Nihad Abu-Gharbiyyeh is today (June, 1995) in charge of the Palestinian school system in Jerusalem.

starting in 1946, when our school was closed by the department of education as a punishment. We reopened it ourselves. Then the inspector general came. Mr. Farrow was a terrible Irishman, from northern Ireland, a vicious man. He came to scold us and tell us that he would not open the school unless we committed ourselves never to go on strike. My brother was the student leader at the time. He spoke to him in English: "We will never do anything of the sort. We are part of the people." In any case they reopened the school and we won. Other schools took a monetary pledge. They charged the parents a certain amount of money—30 pounds, and if the students went on strike, the parents would lose the money. It was a payment of a fine in advance.

I think early childhood and socialization, as American social scientists discovered a long time ago, are very important. What you get at home and in school is crucial. We didn't get it in the mosque; the mosque did not play the same role.

These teachers were early role models. I remember these teachers, and I still see some of them. There is a teacher in Gaza named Farid Abu-Wardeh who is a wonderful guy. He came new to the school and taught us Arabic. He came with this fantastic command of Arabic from *Dar al-'Aalum* in Cairo. We were very impressed with him. He turned out to be a leftist, a communist. In terms of our political orientation, one of the supporters of the National Liberation League played a very important role. This was the ex communist party, you see. At that time it was led by Emile Tuma and Fouad Nassar. There were a number of other people as well. They used to issue the newspaper *il-Ittihad* in Jaffa. We occasionally distributed that newspaper.

Ideology, family values, industrial establishment—all were congruent in terms of their direction in a national commitment. This was exceptionally important in my formation.

HHA: Was the 1936-39 rebellion too early for you to remember?

IAL: Oh yes. I remember only my father's going to prison. I remember how the British beat me up. The British imposed curfews, as the Israelis do. We were kids, aged nine or ten. I remember an incident in which there was a curfew. The kids would go to a soldier and say, "Hey, fuck you George." We understood the meaning of fuck,³ and every British was a George. All of them were George, like an American Mac. First my brother was arrested by a British patrol

and taken to the police station, which was less than a mile from our house. They put him there, slapped him on the face and released him. Everyone who was arrested became a hero. I was competing with my older brother, and I wanted to be a hero. I was younger than he. So when we saw a policeman on a motorcycle, we did the same thing. "Hey, fuck you George." These bastards came chasing us. I remember it so distinctly. We entered a bakery. I was so embarrassed entering the bakery. It was closed, of course, but we entered from the side of the house. The British soldier came (this is the army, not the police). They came in and found me, red-handed as it were. I was standing there doing nothing. They arrested four of us on that raid.

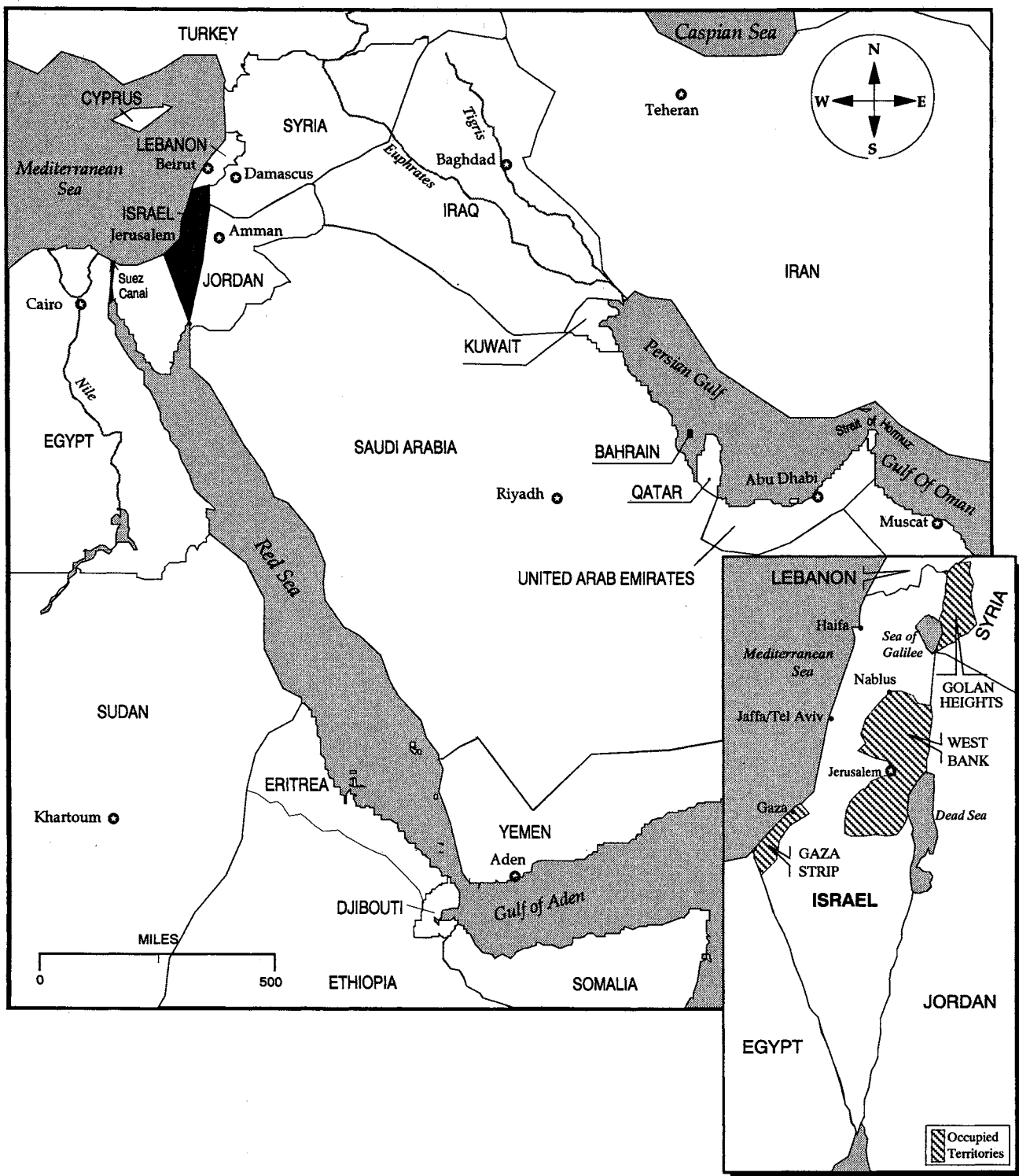
This was in 1937-38. They were on four motorcycles and they put us in front of them. One grabbed us, and they also arrested other kids. They were really furious. They made us run in front of the motorcycles. They were carrying whips. I was dressed in a *fustian*, not pajama. This was street clothes. Today in that kind of environment you wear a pajama. You go out with it. At that time we had *fasati*, like a robe or *galabiye*. I put it in my mouth so I could run. These bastards—you know we got tired. They whipped us and really kept us on the run. All the people had their doors open and called to us, "Come here Ibrahim! Come here Mohammed!" We were afraid they would come and get us, so we went with them. We went about a mile and a half to their headquarters. There were a number of army jeeps.

They had what we called at that time *jasous* or *amil*, [i.e. a collaborator], from the al-Madani family. He was a carpenter and understood some English. The four of us stood there. As children, we acted like we were crying, "We didn't do anything. We didn't do anything." Since he knew we were lying, that collaborator al-Madani beat each of us. He slapped us on the face even after we had had the experience of whipping. He started scolding us, "Son-of-a bitch. Uncultured kids! You cause problems to the authority." He scolded us and hit us. He threatened us that if we did it again, we would be taken to jail. "I mediated the problem for you now," he said. As children, we acted as if we were thanking him, with false tears.

They wanted to release us; however, they had to take us back themselves. Otherwise we would be imprisoned because there was still a curfew. Had we gone back walking, the police would have imprisoned us again. Who took us back? A son-of-a-bitch with a whip! He did the same thing to us on the way back,

"They made us run in front of the motorcycles. They were carrying whips."

3. The only English expression the father of this interviewer knows is "Fucking Arabs," as he used to hear it from the British during the Mandate in response to Palestinian clashes.



whipping us to keep us running while he rode a motorcycle. We kept running until we got to a certain place. Then the horn was blown, which meant that the curfew was over. That officer wanted to exercise his power over us: he wanted to take down our names. If he were to catch us again, he would beat the hell out of us. As the horn blew, and we sat there frightened in front of him, someone threw a rotten orange at his head. He left us and went to look for whoever threw it. We ran away. He tried to catch the other guy, but he was quite smart. It is like throwing stones at the soldiers today. We saw the rotten orange hit his head and heard the kid screaming, "Fuck you George!" At the beginning we were crying, but when that happened, we started laughing.

That was the first time I was arrested. The second time I was with my brother. My brother Ahmed was released, but they took me into the same police station. This time they had learned their lesson: they didn't release the kids. Instead they made us work. They had a garden full of green grass, like lawns in the States. They wanted to transform it into a tennis court. Our task was to pull out the grass with our hands. There was a British police officer whom we called Abu-Nyab,⁴ who was a sadist. We used to fear him because he walked around with a baton in his hand. He was literally a sadist; he specialized in torture. We were trying to pull out the grass, but the grass wouldn't come out. He would beat us and tell us to keep working. We finished the whole job in two hours. We started crying. We didn't want to be imprisoned. We wanted to become *zu'aama*, leaders. My brother became a *za'ain*. I wanted to be one too. Retrospectively, God damn that type of nationalism. We had to go through beating and torture to become leaders.

We finished the whole work in two hours. What could they do with us? The curfew was still on. So they asked us to move the grass from one side of the garden to the other—only to keep us working. We got tired. We were being beaten continuously. That *'aak-rout*⁵ Abu-Nyab didn't leave any of us alone. He kept beating us. He was a sadist. At that time I didn't know what a sadist was. As I remembered Abu-Nyab later on (he had no other name), I connected him with sadism. After that experience with him, I had to be very careful. Imprisonment wasn't good.

I have to be very careful. I have been obeying the law ever since. I don't want to be punished. Punishment does not guarantee leadership. I learned that lesson from them. So in the States, in all my work, I

never violated the law! I may violate its spirit, but I don't lie. I don't want the punishment. This is something I learned back then.

But these times were important. I can see the courtyard. I see it before my eyes. The same courtyard, the same *hashish* (grass). The same Abu-Nyab, the son-of-a-bitch, he beat the hell out of me. He was awful with all the people in town. He used to tear up their skin for no reason. He was a sadist. I can't forget his face. He was incredible. That is how we are formed.

HHA: *What about your life after the rebellion?*

IAL: In the 1940's just before the break-up of Palestine, I learned to organize the student union. The first All-Palestine Students' Union was established in Jaffa. You can check it in the newspapers of the time. I traveled throughout Palestine to get representatives from cities and schools, so that we could have a general assembly meeting in Jaffa. As a result, the kids stayed in our home. All the things that we did in later years, we actually practiced in Jaffa. The motive at the time was to defend the city. We were surrounded by Tel Aviv. How could we survive in the context of the national movement as students?

Some of us actually participated in the struggle of 1948. We offered first aid. They put us at the checkpoints because we spoke English. We were supposed to be able to tell who the Jews were. I don't know why they thought we could identify the *khawajat*.⁶ They called on us to help. Eventually we carried guns, which we didn't know how to use. In 1948 I participated in the volunteers. A number of students did that. I don't think we shot anybody. I don't think our weapons were even usable, but we went on patrol. We were in a fortification between four and twelve every night until the total disintegration of Palestine. We took our exams during this period. The final matriculation exam was supposed to take place in June, but we took it in March. The British knew that things were not going well. Without having passed that exam, I could not have gone to the university.

You can divide your time between studying and fighting. It is possible to do two things at the same time. I learned that people can do quite a lot in terms of organizing their lives, their time, and their energy. All of us can do a lot more than we actually do. I learned that lesson in Palestine. I was a good boy at home. I lied to my mother and told her that I was going to study with my friends. I went home and never

"They wanted... a tennis court. Our task was to pull out the grass with our hands."

4. A reference to someone with big teeth and a large jaw.

5. A foul word in Arabic.

6. A term coined by Palestinians in reference to foreigners.

told her that I was on the front. I learned to do my national duty, and I also performed quite well in school.

You should know that Farouq al-Qaddoumi is a classmate of mine.⁷ Shafiq al-Hout is a classmate of mine.⁸ So there was a whole group.

HHA: *These are classmates of yours. They are in one capacity or another in the PLO, as are you. Tell us about these people during those years.*

IAL: I actually claim to have trained Shafiq. I'm older than he is by a year and a half. He is a bright fellow, very competent and an excellent speaker. His Arabic is super, very articulate. At that time he was a handsome young boy. Qaddoumi was interested in politics, but we would not include him in our clique because he came from outside. He came from Kufur Qaddoum.⁹ He was probably born in Jaffa for all we know, but at that time he was a stranger. His oldest brother, who supported the family, was a policeman. They were subject to mobility. So Farouq and his brother were in our school. He wanted to be incorporated into what we called the power clique, the gang. We were a gang, literally bullies, but bullies in the political sense. We were doing things that weren't conventional.

There were other people who didn't go into politics. Everyone who was with us at that time became important in some field. For example Baha' Abu-Laban, in Canada, is one of the founders of the AAUG.¹⁰ There are a number of such characters whom I could count who have Ph.D.'s or master's degrees or have gone into engineering and done very well. They did not become prominent in the public sense. But Shafiq and Farouq, and to some extent I, became prominent. All of our class did exceptionally well. We had tremendous motivation and good training. Many of us did well in public life—industry, business, and so forth.

I'll tell you something else about us. At best, we were members of the lower middle class, except me. My father made me an exception. We were very meticulous about performance and quality, and we had tremendous motivation to achieve high status. Jaffa as a city was very important in national politics. It was not dominated by the A'ayan (notables) like Jerusalem. It had sufficient heterogeneity and homogeneity. It was more level in its class structure. It was more in-

"If you stood at the minaret, you could shoot and see someone getting killed on the other side."

dustrial and commercial, outgoing to the sea, more open to the outside and less tied by tradition. Therefore people like us could actually entertain the idea of being active in the national movement without thinking about our age. Our parents were there; our brothers were there. Shafiq had an older brother who was a student of Khalil al-Sakakini.¹¹ He was active in the political process. He wanted to recruit people to undertake commando activities against the British and the neighboring city of Tel Aviv.

We were next to Tel Aviv of course. We saw Tel Aviv and the Jews. It was actually within walking distance of where we were living. There was an enormous advantage in that. First, you see what a modern establishment is. You see a different pattern of social and economic life. If you are curious, you can learn how to organize life in a different way. We learned from them. We went to their schools to see what they had. We learned that we should have a library. We didn't have a library, but we made the school get a library. Originally we didn't have a lab.

Then we got a good lab. We learned that the Jewish schools had them. Then we would come back to our school and fuss. If you went to the *kuttab*,¹² you wouldn't know that you need a lab. You go and see a more modern establishment. They probably saw that in Jerusalem too. Proximity had this advantage.

Proximity brought also the tension. We were always aware of the danger that Tel Aviv posed for the city of Jaffa. Whenever there were troubles, the two cities were totally cut off. Jaffa became, in fact, a totally Arab city, when before it was a mixed city. Tel Aviv was an exclusively Jewish city. Two cities stood side-by-side in a hostile relationship. They could interact with each other when peace prevailed. Then overnight the rebellion began in 1947. It literally began from the mosque which is now being repaired—*Jame'a Hassan Baik* we call it. It started from there. If you stood at the minaret, you could shoot and see someone getting killed on the other side. We were in such close proximity. The tension and threat were there. Tel Aviv itself stands on land taken from the city of Jaffa. The people of the city knew the identity of the people who sold the land. I can tell you that they were despised. We accused the landlords. We made the normal accusations that we make against those who transfer land.

7. al-Qaddoumi has been the head of the PLO's Political Department, the equivalent of the ministry of foreign affairs.

8. al-Hout served as the PLO representative in Beirut.

9. A village near Nablus, in the northern part of Palestine.

10. A Palestinian scholar.

11. A well-known Palestinian writer.

12. Traditional primary school system for teaching basic reading, writing and Koran recitation.

We grew up in this tremendously conscious environment, constantly struggling against the British. As a kid I remember the curfews and arrests. It was just as the Israelis have been doing with our people. When I spoke about the *intifada* in the United States, it was nothing new to me. This is exactly what we lived through before. The Israelis imprison the sons or grandsons whose fathers and grandfathers were in the same prisons under the British. If you trace family history, you are bound to see the grandson in the same prison as the grandfather. When the *intifada* broke out and I began to see where they were putting people, I said that publicly in the States. The grandfathers went to the same prisons and were tortured by the British. Now their grandchildren are being tortured by the Israelis. This kind of history leaves its mark on you. It is always part of you.

You really must know the final part of this. Our class had good values in terms of learning. Our school and other Palestinian schools transmitted strong values in terms of education and achievement. This is an important element. It wasn't only that we learned politics and ideology, but behavior. They inculcated values. That stayed with us. We have become achievers in education and politics.

We took the exams in March, 1948. This was a period when the Jews were bombarding the city of Jaffa with mortar fire. We were bombarding them too. We had battles every night. Read the papers of the time, and you will see. Daily we knew people who got killed. We buried them. We took the exams as if nothing existed, because that was our future. I couldn't go to the university if I didn't pass that exam. Of course we passed it. In May 1948, we left Jaffa. Jaffa fell, and I became a refugee in Nablus. From Nablus I went to Amman.

While in Nablus in July, we were listening to the radio. Radio Jerusalem, the Jewish radio, announced the results of the Palestine matriculation. We listened—my name, Shafiq's name, and all my friends. They mentioned us by name. With the end of the mandate, the only department of education that remained in Palestine was the Jewish department. There was no Arab department. Menachem Mansour announced the results. He was one of the highest Jewish officers in the department of education. The high Arab officer wasn't there. He didn't have the results, but the Jews had the results and announced them. I went to the post office in Nablus and sent a telegram to Shafiq, telling him that he had succeeded. He didn't hear the broadcast since he was in Beirut. It was such a thrill—we passed! There we were—refugees with no future. Of course, we didn't have the certificate or the transcript. I got it only after I went to the States because there was no communica-

tion with the Jews across the border. When I went to the States I got admitted to college because my brother was there. He certified that I had finished and so forth. When I got to the States, I wrote to this Menachem Mansour in the department of education, and he sent me my certificate. That was in 1949. Isn't that incredible?

HHA: *Retrospectively, how would you evaluate the planning of the national activities that you witnessed?*

IAL: It was a disaster. I wish I could finish my writing on the subject. I'm writing something on the fall of Jaffa. We have a broad national history that misses very important details. We know that Haifa fell; we know that Jaffa fell; we know Salame fell. We don't know the processes by which they fell. One element that we notice across the board is the lack of a national leadership. The national movement sitting in Damascus or Cairo was actually not a leadership. It did not pay attention in the least to the national struggle. It did not and could not. It was prevented.

It is irrelevant how we classify it, but it was not present. We had a city of some 75,000-80,000 people at the time, and we assumed there was a national leadership to organize the defense. After the troubles began in November 1947, we barely established what we called the national committee. I know each member of that committee, since I worked for it as a student. That committee was ineffective and partisan. It wasn't all

Mufti's men, but it was dominated by them. It was a reasonable committee, but it had no resources. Reflecting on it now, I think it was incompetent in terms of the national struggle.

The leadership was living in the 1930's, not in the 1940's. In the 1930's we could always beat the Jews. But times had changed; we had not. So when I talked to members of the committee, they assured me that the rain was very good, because they (the Jews) were not accustomed to the rain. Of course, after I went to the States and Europe, I learned that they are more accustomed than we are. They can function better in adverse weather than we can. They (the committee members) were sanguine. They thought the Jews were cowards. This was the dominant ideology. They cannot fight, but we can. We didn't know a thing about organization or logistics.

We had a total of 1500 fighters for the city of Jaffa. Each took one shift. That means 500 men, very poorly armed with Turkish guns and all sorts of things. We blamed the national military committee of the Arab League for sitting in Damascus and not sending weapons. We had entrepreneurs who would go and buy weapons. They collected money from people. We had no training. There was no systematic

"This was a period when the Jews were bombarding Jaffa with mortar fire."

way of dealing with training.

The fighters were drawn from two sources. First, people were drawn from the area itself, from one district, motivated by national purpose or their own purpose, i.e. defending their own turf. Second, people were drawn from the unemployed. It was the lowest class of people. Nobody from the middle class would carry a gun because our values at the time were negative toward people who carried guns. The assumption was that this was the work of street people, and we were from good families. All the fighters were from these classes. When the situation got hot, they left. There was no discipline.

We had a wonderful commander, who was probably Bosnian. At that time we called him Yugoslav, but he was a Muslim. I suspect now, in retrospect, when I began to understand European politics, that he was one of those guys sent by the mufti. He was probably from, not the Chekniks, but the other group that was hiding from the Nazis. Tito began to persecute them. They were essentially war criminals. We had four commanders in the city. The commander who dealt with me could barely speak even English. He didn't know any Arabic. I remember how he treated us. He was a disciplinarian. He was a tough military commander. As long as he lived, the part of the city that was adjacent to Tel Aviv remained in our hands. He made counter-attacks and so forth. He was injured. After that, the whole city collapsed. He had charismatic leadership and, of course, discipline.

We were poorly disciplined and equipped. There was no social organization. Although there was a national committee, its writ was very limited, and its conceptualization of the battle left a great deal to be desired. Throughout the battle between November and May, very few supplies came into the city from either that national leadership or the Pan-Arab League. A few Iraqis came, but they were bandits. They were looting since they were not paid. There was no organization.

It is not an accident that we lost Palestine. I knew it then. Later on as I began to study, I addressed myself to the issues more systematically. It was a hopeless battle. In my writing I have said that we lost the war in 1939, when the British broke our rebellion. It was hopeless. We were simply living on the memory of the 1930's without a change, at a time when we had no leadership. The leadership was outside, and we had no resources. We did not generate enough internally to be able to withstand the pressure. The reverse happened to the Jews. That is, from the 1930's, the Jews began to build their own arsenal and troops. They acquired their weapons and training through

the British army. We were facing a different kind of adversary.

HHA: *During that period of your upbringing, what kind of a future did you want for yourself?*

IAL: I wanted to be a lawyer. I pinned my hopes on finishing high school in Jaffa and going to Cairo law school. Now why Cairo? We didn't really have a law school in Palestine. There was an institute in Jerusalem, which I knew about. But Cairo was very important, because my image of a lawyer came to me from Egyptian movies. There is a famous Egyptian personality, Yusef Wahbeh. He used to stand up in the movies and say, "Dear judges and jurors..." We loved his voice and narration, as the British did. It was impressive. It was an arena of intellectual struggle through the law. It gave you an opportunity to orate. I wanted to be a lawyer. Second, I understood that lawyers are prominent people involved in the political process. We were a mandate, not independent. I wanted to be a part of the national movement. That is how I calcu-

lated. I had no doubt about what I wanted to do. Then 1948 came. If it had come a bit later, I would have been in Cairo. If I had finished high school, I would have gone to Cairo. I had no doubt. We had enough money for me. We had had enough money to send my brother to the States to study engineering.

HHA: *What year did he go?*

IAL: He went to Syracuse in 1946. He finished two years in the States before Palestine was lost. We had enough money to send him, meaning at that time \$2000 a year. This enabled him to pay tuition, live and to travel all the way to California as a student on vacation. He didn't even work. He stopped studying in the third year, and he was happy to quit engineering. We sent him to study engineering because we wanted him to replace my father as manager of the company. He had to be a technician—that is what we thought. He hated engineering, but he conformed to the values of the family. We sent him with full expectation that when he finished he would come back and be the manager of the company. Then Palestine fell apart.

HHA: *The disintegration of Palestine meant personally for you that many hopes were dashed. You finished the exams in March, and in May, Jaffa fell. It was a great loss. Personally what did you go through?*

IAL: Let's put it this way. Around April 27, I knew there was no hope for us in the city because part of the city had already fallen. All the surrounding areas had fallen. We were besieged after Deir-Yassin and Qastal, two events that were quite decisive. People in Jaffa panicked. You had the beginning of the exodus. I would say that the exodus of people from the city

"People in Jaffa panicked. You had the beginning of the exodus."

began in February-March. We occupied the apartment of someone who had left presumably on a honeymoon. We took the apartment because our section of the city was too dangerous to live in. We prevailed upon the landlord to let us live in it on a temporary basis. My oldest brother Hassan had a family of three kids. These people were in the apartment: my younger brother, my sister and my mother. Because my father had died in '44, we were responsible. We decided that we would ship them out. We were fighters. My brother was fighting on one front and I on another. We were fighters. We were not going to leave the city and let it go. We put them on a truck to Nablus. Some cousin or somebody would find them. We were worried about the women—all of the things that are associated with the exodus. Also, that freed us to be full-time fighters. By May 1, very few people were left in the city. My brother and I were separated; we didn't even see each other once they left. It became difficult to find food since the bakeries closed. It became really difficult.

For the life of me, I am trying to find out who announced that there would be a ship, the last ship that would rescue people. People left either by bus or truck. They left by small boats, some of which never arrived, either to Gaza or Beirut. But this was a ship, a big ship, either a British ship with Belgian sailors or a Belgian ship with English sailors. I have no recollection. I know it was a ship. I know the sailor was a Belgian because I'll tell you what he said. In any case, it was the first of May. There were three of us fighters,

all high school kids. We decided that it was hopeless and foolish. Most of the city had fallen. So we decided to get out, and this was an opportunity. We couldn't go through the land route because the Jews would shoot us from the colony called Natar. It is still around today. It intersects the road. We were teenagers, so we had no doubt that they would shoot us.

We decided to go by boat to take advantage of this opportunity. It was going to Beirut. We went and left our guns exactly in the place we used to sleep on the front. We went and took what we call a jarem because the boats didn't dock in the port of Jaffa. They docked outside. To get to them you needed a small rowboat called a jarem. The ship was full with the last remnants of the city. When we arrived at the boat, we looked at each other and scolded ourselves. There we were. We were part of the national struggle, and we had been trying to prevent people from leaving. Now we were doing what they did, and we were embarrassed. We decided to go back. Three hours later we heard the ship blow its horn. An announcement said, "This is the last chance." I have no idea who made that announcement. Until today I am trying to find out. I went to the public record when I was in Britain. I want to find out who made that announcement. Until today I have no answer. We decided to go back. We went back and got in. The boat was full of people, and there was no place to sit. I remember one of these sailors came and talked to us, and he said, "How can you young people, who are educated, escape from your country and abandon it without fighting?" □

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