

two prominent leaders of the ANM were themselves among the founding leaders of the Kata'ib. Whether the Kata'ib was the precursor of the ANM or only the training ground for the latter's future leaders is of little significance.

But what is the Kata'ib? In what circumstances did it emerge? And what is its contribution to Arab politics?

The Kata'ib or the terrorist organization which was brought to light for the first time following the abortive attempt to assassinate Col. Adib Shishakli, Assistant Chief of Staff of the Syrian Army, on October 11, 1950, was an outgrowth of the Palestinian nakbah [disaster]. As the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 drew to a disastrous close for the Arab states, popular resentment against the governments manifested itself in strikes and demonstrations and it was obvious that major changes were inevitable. At this time, the radical Arab youth especially among the Palestinian refugees who were ejected from their home in Palestine looked about desperately for signs of change in the Arab World. The Ba'thists hopefully offered themselves as the instrument of this change but their reformist ideas failed to fulfill the expectations of the masses who went into the streets seeking a more militant leadership. In these circumstances a group of young radicals who had severe misgivings about the gradualist tactics of the opposition parties, including the Ba'th, were meeting in Damascus, Beirut and Amman to put the founding stone of the Kata'ib, a clandestine paramilitary organization, dedicated to the liberation of Palestine.