

parties in the Northern Region as "an important step to build a viable political organization to defend the union".¹⁷ The Arab Nationalists may have not been as naive as the Ba'thists have been in supporting the decree which brought an end to party life in Syria. After all they had very little to lose and much to gain. Unlike the Ba'th, the ANM never had the opportunity to build a grass root movement in Syria before the establishment of the Union. They were latecomers to the scene, and their general ideas did not attract more than a few high school and university students. With the dissolving of the Ba'th and the other major political parties, the Arab Nationalists dynamic youth could stand on a par with the elder politicians. Surprisingly, few of them rose to the higher organs of the newly found National Union.

If the domestic policy of the U.A.R. was favorable to the ANM, its Arab and foreign policy was even more so. Indeed the late 'fifties could be described as the heyday of the Arab Nationalists for they could depend on the support of the U.A.R. whether they were fighting the pro-West government of Sham'un in Lebanon or the Communist supported regime of Kassem in Iraq. Thanks to Col. Abdul Hamid al-Sarraj, the Arab Nationalists did not lack the weapons needed in those hot spots. Moreover, the Northern Region became a sanctuary and a training ground for ANM members from the neighboring Arab states.¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Statement by Col. Abdul Hamid al-Sarraj, personal interview, June 28, 1970.