

In Remembrance of

Emile Tuma

On August 27, 1985, Emil Tuma, Palestinian historian and writer, died at the age of 66. Tuma was born in Haifa, Palestine, in 1919, and remained in his homeland after the establishment of the Zionist state. In addition to his writings, he is best known for his prominent role in the Committees to Defend the Land, and his membership in the polit-bureau of Rakah - the Israeli Communist Party.

It has been a year since Emile Tuma passed away. Tuma was a prominent intellectual and militant who deserves to be remembered. We can review his life in his works, for he spent his life working for the national cause; the overwhelming majority of his works focus on the history of the Palestinian national movement and the development of the Arab national movement.

ARAB UNITY

Tuma's most interesting work was a study entitled *Arab Unity in the Historical Development*, which was a summary of his PH.D. thesis in Moscow. The study was published as a book in 1971, by the Lebanese publishing house, Dar Al Haqqa. The study was a controversial one at the time, due to the topics it discussed and the debate among Arab progressive circles about the importance of Arab unity and the responsibility of the progressive forces for its success or failure. Tuma's study reviewed the attempts to establish a single Arab state, from the time of Mohammed Ali Pasha, until the union of Syria and Egypt in 1958. Tuma made a great contribution to crystallizing a position on unity, although many of his conclusions raised a lot of controversy.

THE ROOTS OF THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION

One of Tuma's many other important works was his book, *The Roots of the Palestinian Question*. Despite its brevity, this book gives the reader a great deal of information about the Palestinian cause in the period from the start of Europe's ambitions vis-a-vis the Arab countries, until the UN's adoption of the partition plan for Palestine on November 29, 1947.

Many books, in many languages, have dealt with this period, but *The Roots of the Palestinian Question* is one of the few that dealt with the issues in a class and socialist perspective. It described the struggle as being more than a local one. In the first half, the book points out that before Zionism

was formed in the minds of the Jewish bourgeoisie, its general outlines were formed in the minds of the British colonialists. Britain wanted to control the Far East, and thought of exploiting the Jews as a foothold in the area, in the face of French claims to protect the Catholics, and Czarist Russia's claims to protect the Orthodox. This was the British Zionism that thought to create a state for the Jews. On the other hand, there was the French Zionism that also aimed to tempt the Jews. We all remember the famous promises of Napoleon when he arrived in Egypt, and again when he was besieging Acca. He promised the Jews to restore their «ancient glory» and rebuild their «old Jerusalem Kingdom,» if they would help him.

In another chapter of his book, Tuma accurately analysed the history of the Jews before Zionism. He wrote about the birth of Zionism, and the conditions and ideologies that made it a reactionary movement, doomed to flourish on hatred, myths and the sympathy of the imperialist forces. Dr. Tuma said that Zionism could not at all have «any common language with the Arab masses,» which made the confrontation «not only inevitable, but also planned by Zionism from the beginning.»

The book then moves on to the national movement in Palestine, showing that, until the Balfour declaration, it was part of the Arab national movement. The Palestinian national movement contributed to confronting the degenerate Ottoman Empire, and struggled to establish an Arab state, but World War I dealt a blow to the Palestinian and Arab national movement as a whole. First, there were the repressive measures of the butcher, Jamal Pasha, against the Arabs. Then, more crucial, there was the disaster of «the success of the Hashemite dynasty in controlling the developing Arab national movement,» which later resulted in King Abdullah's conspiring against the future of Palestine.

The book moves on to a subject

which has always been controversial, namely, the role of the Arab national movement in Palestine, and in leading the Palestinian struggle. Dr. Tuma believes that the movement was essentially formed by land owners and prominent feudal families, such as the Husseini, Nashashibi, Hadi, Tamimi and Madhi families. It was not a reflection of the social forces most harmed by the British imperialist and Zionist policies. In fact, according to Dr. Tuma the mandate authorities «played a major role in reinforcing the positions of the land owners in the leadership of the Arab national movement.» The mandate authorities also engineered the feud between the Husseini and Nashashibi families. The struggle between the two families greatly harmed the Palestinian struggle, as was confirmed by the Palestinian historian, Mohammed Azzah Darwazeh, in his book on the contemporary Arab movement. Dr. Tuma believed that the feud was only a struggle involving the degree of conciliation with the British, the Husseinis being less conciliatory and the Nashashibis more so. Yet this did not prevent the Palestinian national movement from playing a prominent role in leading the struggle and putting forward the demands of the Palestinian people, confronting the British rule.

The book also includes a detailed discussion of the 1929 revolt, known as Al Buraq uprising, and the 1933 uprising, sparked by the eviction of Palestinian farmers (the Hawarneh and Zubeidat clans) from their lands, and the accelerating Zionist immigration to Palestine.

In another chapter, the book discusses the rise of the Palestinian parties between 1931 and 1935. This began when veteran activists of the Arab national movement, who worked with the Fatat (New) Arab Association, established the Independence Party (Al Istiqlal) in August of 1932.

The book also contains detailed research into the 1936-1939 revolt and the Qassam movement that motivated

