

Borhaneddin Al Abbooshi writes, «I hate aggression regardless of who commits it against who... I composed these poems when Hitler invaded Poland and then France, which made me hope that France would thereby be forced to withdraw its troops from Syria and Lebanon, and that Britain, too, might have to quit the Arab countries under its rule. We are *not* with Hitler, but at the same time, we are definitely against the British and French occupation of our countries. What we want is to be independent and free from all occupation.»

When the British solicited the support of the Arabs, Al Abbooshi wrote a poem entitled «We Will Not Be Bitten Twice by the Same Snake,» which is a reference to Britain's betrayal of the Arabs in the aftermath of World War I. Addressing the British, he says:

*Having murdered our peace  
And brought us terror and death,  
You now want to make friends with us!*

*There is blood on the hand you extend to us,  
As there is blood on the soil whose love you seek!  
You have sold us wholesale to Zion,  
And now you come to buy our friendship!*

Bitterness was coupled with absolute distrust of the intentions of the colonial powers. Thus, when General Spears headed for Damascus to «save» it from the French, Al Abbooshi wrote «History Repeats Itself,» a poem in which he suspects the British general of being «another Lawrence in disguise.» This is a reference to Lawrence of Arabia, who early in this century came to Arabia, and lived with the Arabs for many years as a dear friend. When he returned to Britain, it was disclosed that the «dear friend» had been a spy for the British administration. In a sarcastic vein, the poem addresses General Spears thus: «How many pillars do you intend to make?» (Pillars is a reference to *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, the book which Lawrence wrote upon his return from the Arab world.) In his notes to the poem, the poet makes the shrewd remark: «When the British administration made that plot [Lawrence's espionage mission in Arabia], it perhaps miscalculated the consequences. Whatever immediate benefits it may have gained therefrom, such benefits are nothing compared with the damage it has caused European, especially British, long-term interests in the region. Having alienated *nations* from one another, colonialism, blinded by aggressiveness and narrow self-interest, is now intent on making nations distrust *individuals* of other nations.»

Another outstanding poet of this period is Hassan Al Bohairi, whose poems are different laments of one and the same event – the steady drowning of the homeland. He published three volumes of poetry, all of which are deeply stamped with grief and apprehension. Typical of his poems is «Haifa Dwells in our Eyes,» which depicts the sublimity and natural beauty of his home city – its groves and shore, its mountains and woods. In a sad tone he then adds:

*So great is our love for you  
That if we are separated from you  
We shall certainly cease to be  
Though we may continue to breathe.*

In this and other poems, Al Bohairi stresses his belief that one's homeland is not just the place of one's birth and residence, but an integral component of one's consciousness and relationship with life. Nor is it merely a political entity, but a psychological, cultural and spiritual reality of utmost significance to all those belonging to it, both as individuals and as a community.

In «A Voice from Palestine,» the poet's sadness gives way

### Correction

In Part II of «Palestinian Literature 1900–48», printed in *Democratic Palestine* no. 44, page 29, we omitted one line from the excerpt of Ibrahim Tukan's poem «*Al Fedai*». To correct this mistake, we print the excerpt below in full:

*If he in prison died,  
And not a tear  
From a wife or friend  
Was ever shed  
In mourning for him;  
If, coffinless, he was thrown away  
On hill or plain –  
Seek not to know  
Where his body lies now  
For his name, though unknown,  
Is in the mouth of time.*

to a more positive sentiment:

*But tears, however abundant,  
And sighs, though deep,  
Cannot save our Palestine.*

*The enemy is making it impossible.  
For us to live in it or live for it;  
Therefore let us die for it.*

With Fadwa Tukan, who is mainly a post-*nakbah* poetess, we have the most mournful voice in Palestinian poetry. In less than eight years she had to lament both the sudden, untimely death of her dearest brother, Ibrahim, and the loss of her homeland. To her, Ibrahim had been not only a loving brother, but an intimate friend and devoted teacher. His death stamped her mind and her poetry with a distinctive melancholic touch. The titles of her volumes of poetry indicate this tenor: *The Spring of Pain*, *Alone with Days*, etc. Of this major aspect of her poetry she says, «With his death, fate dealt my heart a blow that triggered an inexhaustible spring of pain whence all my songs flow.»

In an apostrophe to Ibrahim's soul entitled «Dream of the Memory,» she asks if he knows what has befallen the homeland; if he can see members of the bodies of his people «scattered across roads... their eyes gouged out and thrown into the mud.» In this and, indeed, in the majority of her later poems, her grief for a *personal* loss, the death of her brother, is inextricably fused with her grief for a *national* disaster, the *nakbah*.

Abdul Karim Al Karmi is rightly called the Poet of the *Nakbah*. Except for a handful of songs, his poetry depicts the crying injustice suffered by Palestinians in the period 1947–48: the death, the horror and the misery. Addressing a fellow homeless refugee, he says:

*Together, brother, we go;  
Therefore carry your wound  
And walk by my side.*

Then, predicting the ultimate outbreak of a Palestinian *armed* revolution, he goes on to say:

*If you and I did not burn  
Who would light the dark night  
Engulfing us  
And all those sharing our plight?  
How else could we see the way back  
To the land of love and light?*

In another poem, he says to a weeping refugee: