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SHI'ITE LEADER FADLALLAH VIEWS ISLAM, LIBERATION, GOVERNMENT

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[Interview with Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, Shi'ite religious leader, by Jubran Tuwayni and Hashim Qasim: "AL-NAHAR AL-'ARABI WA AL-DUWALI Conducts Frank Dialogue With Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah; Lebanon's Khomeyni Speaks: Muslim Lebanese Politicians Are Sectarian"; date and place not specified]

[Text] With the rise and growth of religious currents in the Middle East area and in Lebanon, the signs have increased and religious symbols and leaders have emerged to project their visions and to enter into and engage in the political game and in the existing conflicts through the broad and wide-open door, especially in the wake of the evident decline that has afflicted the liberal political experiment, which has collided with conventional structures and values, and in the wake of the attempt of the said experiment's endeavor to subjugate and exploit the conventional forces without making any effort to develop and enhance them.

In light of the blazing conflicts which take a sectarian turn at times and a religious turn at other times, matters have become muddled and intricate. However, the religious view as well as the sectarian views have declared themselves, assuming that they are the solution.

Scholar Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, one of the most prominent representatives of the religious current in Lebanon and one of those who adopt an option that is tantamount to a solution to the Lebanese problem, believes that the difference between religions is a difference in details and particulars and does not touch the essence. ✓

What is interesting in Scholar Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah's interview with AL-NAHAR AL-'ARABI WA AL-DUWALI is that he rejects and condemns sectarian action, parties and movements because they divide through their concepts, programs and acts. He also believes that the state, with its symbols, officials and institutions, has not mobilized all the Lebanese forces to liberate the soil. ✓

Here is the text of the interview:

[Question] Your Eminence, let us speak frankly, first to clarify numerous issues to the readers and then to introduce you better. Some words are reiterated by some people who nickname you Lebanon's Khomeyni. What is your comment on this title?

[Answer] To start with, I believe that this word is an honor to a man when he rises up to its level because I understand the word Khomeyni to mean a man who proceeds in life from the position of his thought which is founded on Islam as a course for life and who faces the international, regional and local political reality from a frank position founded on protecting the people or protecting the nation from all the negative aspects in this obvious political reality. This is why we believe that Khomeyni tops the list of the leaders of freedom in the world, regardless of what some people say when discussing his thought or some of his modes of action. We cannot deny two facts: The first is that Khomeyni is a man who carries Islam from its message-oriented position, not from its narrow sectarian position, and a man who carries the message of freedom to all the powerless in the world, be they Muslims or non-Muslims. This is why I believe that this name honors the man who tries to emulate it. However, I do not consider myself up to this level but rather consider myself just a man who carries this thought which is the thought of Islam. I am not carrying this thought just now but have been carrying it for 30 years and I have written books in this regard. I live with the people. I lived in al-Nab'ah for 10 years and then lived in the south and the [southern] suburb. I am greatly worried by the injustice under which the people live as a result of the local, Israeli and imperialist reality. This is why I consider myself concerned with opposing this reality with the modest capabilities at my disposal and with the capabilities that the people possess for deliverance from this reality. We also carry Islam and live at the same time with the concern of freedom for all the Lebanese, both Muslims and Christians, and for the entire area.

[Question] Is this message of Islam the message of the thought of the political Islam or the message of the thought of the religious and sectarian Islam?

Complete Way of Life

[Answer] The truth is that we refuse to talk about Islam within a sectarian framework because sectarianism confines you to the framework but does not speak about anything concerning the content. We think of Islam as being beyond the Western concept formulated for religion, namely the concept that says that religion is just an ethical relationship between people and just a relationship of worship between man and his creator. We understand Islam as a complete program for life. This is not a new understanding. When we observe Islamic legislation and Islamic jurisprudence which try to deal with all the personal, social and political issues concerning man, we realize that Islam represents a complete program for life, not just a theory. We realize this on the basis of the political events which have taken place in the area for the past 50 or more years, for example. No, we believe that studying Islamic legislation, not just its philosophical and intellectual aspects, confirms that Islam is not just something that lives in the mosque

or in the conscience but something that lives in life. The mosque is a starting point for man to cleanse himself spiritually so that he may perform his role in life from a pure position. The same goes for worship which links man to God so that he may mingle with life through God and may move in life from a position of responsibility and not from a selfish position. It is on this basis that we proceed in our understanding of the political thought of Islam. It is an understanding emanating from the position that Islam is an intellectual program for life, exactly the same as the other intellectual programs for life. Consequently, we do not make a distinction in our understanding of Islam between what is religious and what is political.

[Question] You have stated that Islam is a program [manhaj]. Don't you think that the word way [nahj] is sounder and means that Islam is a creed, a law and a system of life and not a philosophical vision? In the past, Islam was present in the people's life. Today, Islam is remote from the international development that has taken place, whether at the level of forces or the level of economic systems and technological development. Islam, as a law, a creed and a system, seems as if it were outside life. There is more of a spiritual and ideological embracing of Islam than there is a presence of Islam in life. You are trying to return Islam to the reality whereas Islam has departed from the reality. You are an Islamic political movement, not a purely religious movement.

[Answer] When I say that Islam is a creed and a law that emanates from a philosophical view, it is well known that philosophy is derived from intrinsic contemplation. It may also be derived from studying the nature of the given facts found in religion, in books or in history. As to what you have said about Islam being remote from life at the level of the state's technology and the level of freedom, this is true. But Islam has not moved far from life insofar as the individual is concerned. We in the Islamic societies find that we have a continuation of the Islamic creed and the Islamic practice in all transactions and relations, not only in personal affairs but also in purchase, lease and mortgage transactions. They are natural and spontaneous practices that have not moved far from people's ordinary life. The ordinary man has his concern, meaning that when he is afflicted with a problem, he asks: What is the rule of Islam on this issue? We say that Islam has not moved away from the individual's life, but rather the contrary. We have before us the results of the political movement of Islam in the people's life. These results have not emanated from the void but have rather emerged from the depth of the Islamic identity which lives in man's soul and which always causes man to worry when faced with non-Islamic situations in the reality under which he lives. Therefore, we say that projecting Islam as a way of life in Islamic society will deal with the problem of duality from which man suffers, considering that the Shari'ah [Islamic law] represents something sacred in his life. The Islamic system of government provides a solution to a problem existing in reality.

Lebanon and Islamic State

[Question] Isn't this in contradiction with the current makeup of Lebanon [al-tarkibah al-lubnaniyah]?

[Answer] This is true. However, there is a certain point. Sometimes we speak of the idea and other times we speak of the movement of the idea, regardless of whether the movement assumes a religious quality or some other quality. We believe that the makeup of Lebanon does not permit under the present circumstances anything called an Islamic system of government or an Islamic state in Lebanon. Any man who thinks differently under the objective circumstances existing in the arena is either an idealist or a dreamer. Islam, like any other way of thought, cannot survive with coercion, force or violence. To move at the Islamic level, you must proceed from a base that is open intellectually, spiritually and politically to Islam so that the Islamic system of government may be a natural result of this openness. At present, when we proceed in Lebanon with Islam from an intellectual position, we live Islam as a religion and as a way of life within the Islamic framework in which we live our personal, individual and social lives. At the same time, we call the others to Islam, considering that the creator of any idea invites others to adopt it. Our call is made in civilized ways--"and debate with them in the kindest manner." I believe that the Islamic projection on the issue of dialogue is more advanced than any other projection in the world because the world projection says: "My opinion is right, with the possibility of being wrong, and the opinion of the others is wrong, with the possibility of being right." Islam says: "And I and you are on all matters equal." You must believe that you stand at an equal level with the others. This makes it possible for us to speak to all people: with the atheists, with the Christians, with the Jews and with anyone with an open heart and without any intellectual complex. If the others are convinced of our thought, then the reality under which man lives with conviction provides the opportunity for another qualitative step in the process of correcting this reality.

[Question] And if he is not convinced?

[Answer] Then there can be no coercion in religion. I will then coexist with him. When you want to crystallize any thought in the world, the natural circumstances for its crystallization must be present. You cannot crystallize it through consensus. If we wanted consensus, then there would not be any opportunity for any thought to rule the world. Naturally, we rule through the majority and through prevalent public opinion. Then the minority, any minority, demands the protection of its humanity and its freedom from the majority. This is natural.

[Question] You have said that it must be ideal thinking?

[Answer] If we overlook the objective circumstances.

[Question] Ideal thinking means an aspiration or a goal, meaning that whoever thinks of transforming Lebanon into an Islamic state is an idealist in his thinking?

[Answer] Insofar as idealistic thinking versus realistic thinking is concerned, there is a difference between idealism as a value and idealism as a way of thinking that seeks to live within the framework of the reality. The

latter expression is a philosophical expression. We say that we are realistic, meaning that we move and project ideas within the framework of the objective circumstances existing in the arena. When this is impossible, we project other ideas and consider them an advanced step toward achieving the objective by civilized means that do not nullify man's humanity or his freedom.

[Question] You have spoken about the majority. Are you demanding that a public referendum be held on these issues?

[Answer] I believe that the people must achieve the present and future life they want to live. We do not consult people on whether Islam is a right or not. This is something in which we believe. We consult people on all their present and future issues. We feel that the Lebanese reality is not a popular reality but rather a reality imposed from above. This is why we believe that the people must be vigilant and that there must be a public referendum on all the issues raised.

[Question] You say from above. What do you mean by this?

[Answer] I mean by "from above" the elite that plans for the country from the position of the political reality that has imposed planning from above. For example, the 1943 charter in Lebanon was achieved through consent among political leaderships as a result of a certain circumstance emanating from a choice between two things: either remain under the French Mandate or reach a settlement. We consider the 1943 charter a settlement on which the people were not consulted. But this point was swept aside on the grounds that the charter was the lesser of the two evils. Thus, we consider the Lebanese reality an undemocratic reality, meaning that the rule is not a popular rule because we notice that there is in Lebanon a certain class, regardless of whether it is Christian or Muslim, that tries to control the political game in this country and that, in many cases, defaces the image of the people.

[Question] Had you been involved in the 1943 decision, what would you have chosen for Lebanon?

[Answer] The fact is that I do not have a clear idea of the delicate circumstances undergone by the country at that time. Naturally, we would choose not to stay under the mandate. But when we choose something, we choose it under its own circumstance, considering that if we overcome the circumstance, then we would move differently.

[Question] Do you think that the charter of the new Lebanon must be founded on the numerical majority or on an equal distribution among the sects?

[Answer] I have chosen a different phrase which, though somewhat literary, reflects the meaning. I choose the phrase the "Lebanon of the human distribution." Human means that man lives in it as a human being, the same as in the other countries. I do not understand such a thing as Lebanon's special position and I do not understand the sensitivities which I consider to be a big lie and a big illusion. I believe that we are people like other people

who think, who disagree with each other and who have different affiliations. This is why I say that man in Lebanon should live his humanity and should choose through this humanity the system he wants, the thought he wants and the political reality he wants. But to come to one man and say, for example, you are allowed everything while others are not allowed anything, then herein lies the secret of the Lebanese problem throughout history. I say that the Lebanese situation that is founded on sectarian distribution will hurl us into a new war every 10 years or so. Despite the security situation that is perplexing everybody and despite the explosions, I have told people in a number of Friday sermons that we must be patient and must endure pain to achieve the new situation so as to spare ourselves 100,000 victims every 10 years.

Fear

[Question] Throughout the past 40 years, the Muslims have been afraid of the Christians because the Christians have been in control of the decisionmaking and the Christians have been afraid that the decisionmaking would move to the hands of the Muslims who would monopolize it, with the Christians thus becoming subjects living in a Muslim country. What do you say?

[Answer] The elements of fear are present in one form or another in all countries of the world. There is a majority and a minority in every country of the world and all disputing factions fear something. Democracy is partisan life and every party out of power is possessed by fear insofar as the ruling party's actions are concerned. However, there are in some countries of the world controls that limit this fear. Such controls perhaps don't exist in the Third World countries. This is the special characteristic distinguishing the Third World. The problem of fear and counterfear is a human problem that may vary in intensity and in discussion. But what is projected in Lebanon is that the problem of the Christians is a problem of fear in the big Islamic ocean existing in the area, thus cancelling their role and presence. The problem of the Muslims in Lebanon is that they have come to live in a state of fear on the grounds that the Christians are in control of the decision-making and that, therefore, they exploit the humanity of the Muslims. The truth is that the solution does not lie in sectarian distribution. At present, we are in favor of anything that leads us out of the state of Israeli military and political pressure and out of the state of lost security. But when you want to think of the future, you must think of the roots of the problem. Does the Lebanese problem emanate from mutual fear between the Muslims and the Christians? The problem lies in an unbalanced system of government and in an uneven government in the area. So far, we don't feel the presence of a big problem for the Christians in our area, for example. There are the problems of the Copts in Egypt and there are problems in Iraq and Syria. This is normal but it is not a problem that defeats coexistence and defeats freedom. True, it is a problem that complicates life. But you do not tackle a problem with another problem. We are dealing with the Christian problem by creating a new problem among the Muslims. This is the reality in Lebanon. Let us speak objectively. A feeling of being done a total injustice has now developed among the Muslims and it is similar to the feeling of the colonized toward the colonist. This feeling that there

is a dominant faction and a powerless faction is interacting internally and will provide the opportunity to all the external elements [to intervene] and you will not be able to stop them because when you live under a certain condition and do not feel intrinsically strong and when you feel that the others seek support from the outside world, then you are doomed to seek support from the outside world. This reality that exists in Lebanon makes every sect an independent state with its interests, privileges, conditions and relations and thus we will continue to be ruled by others for 1,000 more years and the issues of liberty will turn into mere balloons in the air. We say that the action for the future lies in enlightenment.

We use the words Muslim and Christian, empty them of their meaning and fill them with rancor and hatred. In what way do the Christians want to preserve their existence--as a tribe, as a set of values, as a way of thought or as a way of life?

[Question] As a way of thought?

[Answer] Good. The Christians as a way of thought in Christianity or the Christians as a way of thought in materialistic Europe? There is a connection between the reality of the Christians here and the reality of the Christians in Europe. In Europe, the Christian way of life does not exist. In Europe, a man is either an atheist or a secularist. You notice that LE MONDE objected to the pope's actions when the pope visited France. France is secular and atheistic. There are faithful Christians in Europe and America. But the situation in Europe, the European values and the values held by the Lebanese Christians are not the values of true Christianity but rather the values of materialistic Europe. If the Christians want to preserve the Christian faith and values, then let them make themselves clear. There is a Christian faith, Christian values and a Christian course of life. This faith can--and this comes within the framework of missionary work--stand face to face with the Muslim faith so that their adherents may engage in a totally free dialogue, as Christians and Muslims engage in dialogue on other things.

Morally, Christian values are reflected in the individual's personality as a human being and in the movement of his relations. I don't think that these values are far from the values of Islam generally. Yes, there are particular characteristics existing in Christianity and particular characteristics existing in Islam. Christianity as a way of life has no law and no legislation and this is why it believes that it has nothing to do with the arena of evaluation [al-taqyim]. Christianity accepts any law issued, not in its capacity as Christianity but in its capacity as an institution that says we have nothing to do with this law and it is something over which we have no power. Thus, Christianity is not in conflict with Islamic legislation except for some issues that pertain to personal relationships such as bigamy and divorce. We are exerting efforts to change man so that he may think objectively. This is what we seek. We feel that this is very difficult to achieve with a sermon, with advice, with a speech or by forming a party, a movement or something else. We must plan for this objective. There may be phases. We may encounter a crisis in some cases. With us,

the solution lies in overcoming the crisis. There is a difference between overcoming a crisis temporarily and finding a solution to the problem.

Solution in Lebanon

[Question] But where is the solution to the problem?

[Answer] The solution to Lebanon's problem lies in establishing in Lebanon a system of government that views man through nothing other than his humanity.

[Question] In other words?

[Answer] In the sense that as a human being, I have my rights to my particular characteristics and my general characteristics.

[Question] By abolishing political sectarianism? ✓

[Answer] You may use this phrase, i.e., abolish the political barriers that create in one man complexes against another.

[Question] The presidency of the republic belongs, by tradition, to the Maronites. Do you consider that this arrangement is supposed to remain within the solution or do you demand its abolition?

[Answer] There isn't in Lebanon a faction that possesses any of its positions according to man's reality in Lebanon. We cannot understand why the presidency of the republic should be for the Maronites, the premiership for the Sunna and the Chamber of Deputies' speakership for the Shi'ites. What is the human intellectual and political condition under which we live? Why shouldn't the presidency of the republic belong to the Orthodox or the Catholics? I do not want to enter into this labyrinth and I do not wish to talk about this issue from a position of political instigation. I am speaking in human terms. The issue is one of the fear of the Christians. Then why the Maronites? If the issue is, in the view of those who think in this manner, an issue of the Christians, then let them make the presidency for the Christians. Why the Maronites? The Maronites are not different from the others insofar as the Christian faith generally is concerned. The Maronites may have a special tribal characteristic, meaning that they are one of the Christian tribes. Why should they monopolize everything?

We know that there are Christians who are called "persecuted Shi'ites," as the political language says. I know that the Orthodox are persecuted more severely. If we want to think with an open mind, then we should question. But questioning is forbidden because of "Lebanon's special position."

Weapons and Deception

[Question] There is a reality, namely the 1943 Lebanon is a Lebanon of equality among the sects so that we may split an equal percentage of shares. After 1943, the situation did not improve. Rather, fear became a

common denominator among the Christians and the Muslims. What is to be done now? Who decides? What formula? Democracy? Are you for the democracy of sects or the democracy of man?

[Answer] You have kindly pointed out that instead of improving on the 1943 charter, we have retreated. Why have we retreated? Because we considered the 1943 charter a sacred and untouchable charter and considered the constitution untouchable. Thus, the citizen has been raised with a backward political mentality and we have been able to focus, arouse and deepen in this citizen the sectarian instincts that create a dangerous situation.

Fear and counterfear create a perplexing situation that solves nothing. Those speaking for the Christians do not represent the Christian worker, intellectual and merchant. Those who speak for the Christians represent the political princes, the sons of the political princes, their companions and their followers. Let us all lift our hands from the citizen and we will then find that the Christians are not as afraid as they are depicted as being. I lived with the Christians for 10 years. I lived in al-Nab'ah and used to go to the eastern precincts. I lived with the situation of the Muslims and the Christians. The Muslims were the workers in the Christians' factories in the area. I had meetings with Christian intellectuals and merchants and I did not really feel the presence of a Christian-Islamic complex among the people, except for what people remembered from history and for a few cases existing here and there.

But how can Lebanon be restored after the war? It is enough to open the crossing points to see how the Lebanese live with each other. The Muslim has no complex insofar as going to the eastern area and working with the Christians is concerned. But he has been afraid of the roadblocks, and this is also the situation for the Christian. The problem is not that the Muslim does not want to work for the Christian or vice versa. The problem lies in the acts of kidnapping perpetrated by this or that side. If we eliminate from the people's life a certain class of armed and deceptive men, then I guarantee that the Lebanese can coexist, rather live together and engage in dialogue without any hatred. Emigration means a protest against the reality existing internally. /L

Islam in Government

[Question] Do you think that your Islam is being implemented by those who represent Islam in the government?

[Answer] No, I don't believe that my Islamic thought is the thought of those who are in the government. From my knowledge of the history of the Christian politicians, I find that they are traditionalists and atheists. They go [to church] but do not carry the Christian faith [in their hearts]. These politicians have not truly confronted the outcome of the moral coup that has taken place on the basis of the Christian faith. I also don't believe that the Muslims present in the Islamic political arena think along Western or Marxist lines or think along Islamic lines. To them, Islam is a sectarian and tribal affiliation. We want to bring the Lebanese citizen

out of this situation. When you, as a Christian, don't think of Christian values in your dealings with me, then you pose a danger to me. The same goes for the Muslim's dealings with the Christian. Our danger emanates from the fact that we have charged the train with hatred and have abandoned the true image of religion. The talk about cultural multiplicity makes me feel that the phrase is somewhat trivial. Christian culture means acting on the basis of that which is Christian, namely on the basis of faith in God and of a culture that emanates from God. Being influenced by cultures does not mean cultural multiplicity but rather means a cultural cocktail.

[Question] What is your opinion of a society where Christians embrace Islamic political thought?

[Answer] Let the Christians proceed on the basis of their Christian thought to meet with Islamic political thought.

I have a complex against the Muslim ruler who does not rule justly among the people. The Christian officials in Lebanon bless all kinds of America's persecution of the liberties of peoples and they have no complex against Israel's persecution of the inhabitants of the south. We are not against the European and Western culture in all its details. We differ in our method of thinking. European culture is founded on a materialist base. However, I do want to take advantage of the scientific progress achieved in Europe, the United States, the West and the East. Science is human. It is not European, American, Islamic or Christian. Western culture was founded on certain intellectual bases with which we disagree.

[Question] Christian thought separates church and state?

[Answer] This is natural in Christian thought.

[Question] But you are telling the Christian that you advocate an Islamic policy and want him to accept you?

[Answer] An open-minded Islamic policy, i.e., a policy that reconciles the sectarian with the intellectual. I want the Christian to understand that I think of policy from the Islamic angle.

[Question] Meaning that you separate the Islamic religion from the Islamic state?

[Answer] Islam is, by its nature, a state.

[Question] This is the contradiction.

[Answer] On the contrary, there is no contradiction. I tell the Christian: You separate the church from the state because you have no legislation, so why do you have a complex toward my shari'a?

[Question] The Christian believes that the revealed shari'a is rigid.

[Answer] Let us discuss rigidity. Is the shari'a rigid and is it incapable of progress? We say that there are flexible rules in the Islamic interpretation that guarantee tackling all the issues of development in a manner that ensures man's interest. Development is of two kinds: the development of life through the nature of the movement of life and development emanating from the presence of a predominant thought. What I mean is that if Marxism prevails and the country's movement turns into a Marxist movement, you cannot tell me to develop because my thought is rigid and is not developing with the movement of life that has become Marxist. The fact is that it is the movement of Marxism in life through the elements of force. There is a difference between your being the advocate of thought who tackles the problems of life from the position of his thought and your creating development for the benefit of an idea that has imposed itself and considered itself one of the links of development. The world is moving nowadays on the basis of capitalist thought. Communist thought, regardless of how much it expands, represents a limited corner in the world. Communist thought is rigid because it develops in the Marxist manner.

[Question] There is, in your opinion, capitalist thought, Marxist thought, communist thought and Islamic thought?

[Answer] Marxist thought is communist thought. Marxism and communism are moving against the existing line of life. We do not want to ask Islam to develop for the benefit of Western culture, which is the antithesis of Islam. This culture has developed the world in one way and Islam wants to develop the world in a different way.

[Question] So you consider Islamic thought a political idea?

[Answer] Islam is a course of life that moves politically through its values.

[Question] You are demanding that the state apply Islamic thought on the ground. What thought and what course do you want now?

[Answer] The state has not been applying anything, not Marxism and not liberalism. It is applying the tribal situation taken from here and there. Why? Because Lebanon was not intended to be a state. They wanted Lebanon to achieve privileges for a certain sect within the framework of the state, namely the Maronite sect. This is why I demand that a referendum be conducted among the non-Maronite Christians so that they may express their opinion on whether this state represents their aspirations, their humanity and their Christianity or not.

[Question] If the Christians come without a referendum and say that they don't want Lebanon to follow the Islamic course or thought, would you accept this non-Maronite Christian opinion or would you demand that a referendum be held for all the Lebanese people to choose a political course for Lebanon?

[Answer] I do not tackle problems in this manner. The Lebanese people must be given the opportunity to express their opinions freely and each faction must accept and debate the thought of the other faction objectively. Agreement can be reached on a temporary formula while the dialogue continues. These problems are not solved with a referendum. I say temporarily until we agree on the very big future formula. Let the system of government in Lebanon be as humanitarian as it is in any countries of the world. The Lebanese can then proceed to discuss all the issues as they are discussed in all countries where there are different opinions. We must put all the political princes on an island in the sea and let the Lebanese discover their humanity. As long as these princes are present, the slogan of freedom and all other slogans are futile.

[Question] Are you for having a political party for Islam?

[Answer] In fact, I personally feel that Islam must live in the open air. I do not believe in the partisan framework for Islamic action. One may need to organize its capabilities. It is not necessary that the organization take the form of a Western-style party (cells, officials and so forth). We believe in Islam on the basis that it should be the people's thought and life.

[Question] Do you support the formation of a legal Islamic party?

[Answer] Let Islam be left for Islam and let intellectual and political Islam have the freedom to move in the open air so that it may express itself freely. We can then move with the others from the position of mutual respect.

[Question] Ultimately, you are the advocate of a call for revolution?

[Answer] By civilized means.

[Question] Meaning?

[Answer] With wisdom. Islam does not contain the word revolution. Man is the maker of changes and he, not economics, race or anything else, is the basis of change. We only consider one factor: man. If man changes, the reality changes. Man is the maker of the reality.

[Question] You are for a humane revolution?

[Answer] I am for the Islamic humane revolution that wants to bring about change by civilized means. I proceed from the Islamic idea which says that when you want to win over a man, you should win over his thought with means that give him the impression that you respect his thought to enter his heart before you enter his mind. I believe in turning our enemies into friends. You cannot turn your enemy into a friend with the rifle. Yes, if your enemy wants to abolish your existence and your humanity, then the primitive means is to confront him with that with which he confronts you. Kindness in tackling issues is the basic condition whereas violence is a

transient condition. When an imperialist country does not understand dialogue, then you cannot reach an understanding with it through dialogue and you try to face it with the suitable means.

[Question] If we want to find titles for the plans projected in Lebanon, what would you call the current Lebanese State Plan?

[Answer] I have already said the tribal state.

[Question] What is your opinion of the plan of the Phalange and the Lebanese Forces?

[Answer] Racism.

[Question] What if we take Nabih Birri's and Amal's plan?

[Answer] Sectarian.

[Question] Walid Junblatt's plan?

[Answer] Sectarian.

[Question] The Sunna plan in Beirut?

[Answer] In fact, you cannot determine the presence of a plan in the Sunna movement.

Sha'ban

[Question] Do you think that your thought agrees with Shaykh Sa'id Sha'ban's thought?

[Answer] In the nature of the thought, yes. But we differ in the means of the thought.

[Question] Do you think that the thought of the Sunna Muslims in Lebanon can meet with your Islamic political thought?

[Answer] There is a movement within the Sunna with which I meet intellectually. I am not working for the Shi'ites only.

[Question] Have you met with Christians and been able to discuss your ideas with them?

[Answer] The truth is that I have not been successful in holding numerous meetings. There was an invaluable meeting with Bishop Gregoire Haddad but I have not had the opportunity to meet with many Christian brothers.

[Question] Are you optimistic or pessimistic regarding Lebanon's future?

[Answer] In fact, I do not concern myself with optimism or pessimism. What determines optimism or pessimism insofar as the future of Lebanon is concerned is the nature of the developments in the regional, local and international situation. We create the instruments, means and atmosphere of optimism and pessimism.

[Question] You have already spoken of the regional situation. Do you think that there is a conspiracy against Lebanon? What is its objective and who is its initiator?

[Answer] The word conspiracy is a disturbing word. Through its strategy, Israel is thinking of expanding politically and geographically at the area's expense. Israel is thinking of becoming the European oasis in the area and it wants to eliminate Lebanon's role in services and tourism. This is why we consider Israel's schemes in Lebanon a kind of conspiracy. There may be other regional forces that have expansionist interests and ambitions in Lebanon. This is not evident in the strategy but is perhaps evident in the political background of these forces. In Israel, there is an expansionist strategy. In the other regional areas, there are ambitions, ideas and fear of Lebanon. However, the Israeli danger is the main danger. To us, the Israeli danger is a danger of survival whereas the other dangers are political dangers.

[Question] How do you evaluate the policies concerning the occupied Lebanese territories?

[Answer] I believe that the state is not seriously concerned with the issue of liberation. There is a crisis which the state wants to overcome with propaganda and with some exhibitionary issues. A state concerned with the occupied territories must fight, not with weapons but by helping the occupied territories to stand fast. It must set up an emergency budget and it must not approach the south's budget the way it approaches the municipal budgets. A state concerned with the liberation issue thinks of how to embarrass the enemy. The state must create a political climate that embarrasses the enemy--a military operation carried out by an army unit in any way possible to embarrass Israel before the world. The 17 May accord was born to be abolished. It was meant to be born so as to brighten Israel's image on the one hand and to give the Lebanese regime the opportunity to emerge from the crisis in a certain way. Abolition of the 17 May accord has diverted our attention from all political and economic reform. As for the position of the other political forces, besides the state, it is a propaganda position insofar as the occupied territories are concerned. Regrettably, the issue of liberation in Lebanon is an exhibitionary and propaganda issue and not a real issue. Those who make statements are numerous and those who collect money to overcome their internal financial problems are numerous. Open-minded and nonsectarian Islam has been able to put itself in the position of liberation in every sense of the word.

[Question] Does liberation come before unification or vice versa?

[Answer] We do not want to sink in the maelstrom. We will unite only through liberation.

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