

**MICHEL CHIHA**

# **LEBANON**

## **AT HOME AND ABROAD**

Translated from the French by  
**LEO ARNOLD and JEAN MONTÉGU**



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This book is the translation of a French work «Visage et Présence du Liban», which appeared in 1964 among the publications of the Cenacle. It brings together five lectures given by Michel Chiha. The first was delivered at the Catholic Youth Centre in 1942, and the remaining four at the Cenacle in 1948, 1950, 1951 and 1953 respectively.

We have also published an Arabic translation by Fuad Kanaan, bearing the title « لبنان في شخصيته وحضوره » .



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**to H. E. CHARLES HELOU**

**President of the Republic**

**we dedicate  
these lectures which were almost all given  
from the platform of the Lebanese Cenacle  
by one who was and still is  
his Excellency's revered friend,  
and who would doubtless have liked  
to write them for him  
now that the destiny of Lebanon  
is entrusted to his hands  
to be its refuge and guide.**

**29th December 1964**

**MICHEL ASMAR**



## A TESTIMONY

A speech delivered on December 27th 1962 by His Excellency Mr. Philippe Takla, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the home of His Excellency Mr. Henri Pharaon, President of the Board of Trustees of the Lebanese Cenacle, on the occasion of the publication of the Arabic edition of this book.

*It is not easy to speak about Michel Chiha. Along with some other gifted men, he brought together in his person certain aptitudes and abilities which were so diverse that many people have alleged a kind of contradiction in him. However, he possessed a wonderful faculty for canalizing them all, like so many tributaries, into one stream and for directing them towards one final end: Lebanon.*

*An idealist and a realist at the same time, Michel Chiha, thanks to the wide range of his mind, could build bridges linking the genius of the dreamer with that of the realist. This is an enterprise which only those who have faith venture upon, and in which wise men alone succeed. Therein lies the secret of great men.*

*Was it not he himself who said: «Lebanon is the land where dream and reality dwell together»? The whole of his life bears witness to his struggle to achieve the synthesis of the two both in himself and in his country; and the fruits of his efforts are plain to see in all domains, leaving their stamp on many of our activities and institutions.*

*The history of Lebanon between the beginning*

of the First World War and the end of the Second is in outline the outcome of the campaign led by Michel Chiha and people like him, whichever side they might have been on. They were an elite which could keep abreast of events and of a special Mission in life, which meant becoming aware of Lebanon's real personality — a personality uniting the past with the present and launching into the future all the determination of an age-old people, the determination to revive its splendour and to resume its essential role in the service of civilization and progress.

Michel Chiha took part in political life only for a while, but he did not retire from it without leaving his own impress upon it: the Constitution. Everything in the spirit and letter of that Constitution that has to do with the representation of the people in a country well-known for the diversity of its communities, with the sharing out of responsibilities among the various branches of the state's administrative machinery, and with the ratification of basic liberties, casts full light upon the thought of this great Lebanese personality and upon the path he chose after retiring from the political scene. In other respects it seems to me that the only reason why he retired was that he realized that his place was to be among the leaders who, removed from the thick of the fray, set forth plans and direct the battle.

The part he played in the life of the nation was that of the architect who creates and of the leader who defends the work in hand. Although apparently different, these two roles become one in essence and purpose. Michel Chiha was convinced that the work in which he had a share and of which he was a staunch defender went beyond the passing cares of everyday life. And the appeal he made in one of the lectures making up this new book reveals a deep concern and reminds one of the anger of Christ with those who profaned the Temple. He said: «What, in spite of everything, we are building up is not a hostel for the traveller,

*an entrepot for the merchant or a passport office for the immigrant and the emigrant. Along with the Lebanon of today we are building up a hospitable and humane homeland».*

*In the two decisive phases of the modern history of Lebanon — the day when it was fixed within its present frontiers and the day when it became master of its own destiny, — the day, that is, when the task was to breathe the spirit of Ancient Lebanon into its new body and to bring it back to life again with the knowledge of what it had been throughout the ages and in the course of civilization, — the day when the task was to bring together the mountains and the coastal strip, the spinal column and the lungs of one single body, — the day when the task was to break down the veil between sons of one and the same homeland, to reconcile them and to bring them closer together, their disputes not resulting from any clash inherent in their scale of values, but being the consequence of that diversity of theirs which is a source of enrichment, — the day when the task was thereafter and in the midst of the dangers surrounding both ourselves and the world at large to respond to Lebanon's appeal to satisfy its longing for complete freedom and total independence, — the day when the task was to set up the basis of co-operation between Lebanon and kindred Arab countries within the League's Treaty, and between it and the world in the sphere of politics, culture and economics, — the day when the task was to point out to Lebanon, the Arab States and the world the danger of mass immigration of Jews into Palestine, the creation of the state of Israel and Zionist aims, — on that very day at all these tasks Michel Chiha was a driving force. With faith, wisdom and foresight — a foresight verging upon prophecy — he stirred up and guided those who dedicated themselves to them.*

*Having brought out the personality of Lebanon and having defined its calling, Michel Chiha, when it came to the organization of the state's power*

and the way to get it moving, had opinions and ways of thinking which showed a perfect knowledge of the country's position, its traditions, the characteristics and qualities of its people, and of the needs of the age. Respect for freedom was always uppermost in his mind, convinced as he was that Lebanon could live only by freedom, the only true basis for all our public institutions. As early as 1942 he was proclaiming that democracy is the only form of government which suits Lebanon... «with an assembly to be the meeting-place and centre of unity for these communities, with a view to exercising joint control over the nation's political life. Once you abolish the assembly, you unavoidably transpose debate to the sanctuary or to its shadow, and by so much you slow down the formation of a civic sense... Lebanon is not a country of impulsive movements or coups d'Etat... It must avoid tyranny, the domination of some by others, and upheavals in any form».

Michel Chiha kept repeating, preaching and teaching these truths with courage and disinterestedness.

As he saw it, freedom was an indivisible whole; it must thus extend from the sphere of religion and politics into economics in which it would manifest itself in initiative, trade and the movement of people and capital, as well as into the sphere of culture in which it would make its influence felt in intercourse between Lebanon and the world, without distinguishing between East and West. «The sources of Lebanon's wealth are not to be found in the minuteness of its geographical extent but in the breadth of its spirit. These sources reach out to the four quarters of the earth. The whole world is our stage. As long as we remain, as in the past, a cross-roads for those of other countries, it is our duty to go out and meet them in every clime, dealing with each in his own language».

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You will have to excuse me if, in my attempt

*to speak of Michel Chiha, I have been content to use his own language. But when all is said and done, neither of us has done anything else than speak of Lebanon, that homeland which he loved and praised in his poems and prose and which he cherished with his mind and heart.*

*Having at one time been the possession of an elite, his thought is now putting life into most of our ways of acting and acts as a point of reference when great events occur. His philosophy has become one of the bases of our national life, though it seemed forbidding to many of those who heard him or read his works while he was still alive.*

*It is enough realize that his great dream is becoming a reality; Lebanon will keep the name of Michel Chiha inscribed in the Book of Remembrance which grateful nations dedicate to the builders of homelands and states.*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*It is said that commemorating a great man means celebrating his renewed birth; the absent one in whose name we meet here tonight is fully present in this Lebanon of ours.*

**Philippe TAKLA**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
Lebanon Today ... ..	15
Values ... ..	49
The World of Today ... ..	79
Lebanon in the World ... ..	109
The Presence of Lebanon ... ..	141

*Know thyself*

## **LEBANON TODAY (1942)**

Lecture given at the Catholic Youth Centre,  
Beirut, in 1942, terminating a series of seven  
lectures on «Lebanon in the course of History»

With more than five thousand years of history behind it, the Lebanon of today is no longer surprised when people say that it is young. It has got used to it. It thereby justifies its other name Phoenicia if it is true that this name is the same as that of the fabled phoenix, the bird with the fiery plumage which dies at one time, only to be reborn from its ashes at another. And the solemn opening of Sophocles' «Oedipus Rex» should be applied to the Lebanese rather than to the Thebans descended from Cadmus the Phoenician: «Children of aged Cadmus, his young offspring...».

It would apparently be correct to maintain that Lebanon, born yesterday, according to what certain people say, this Lebanon of ours so many centuries old, has just about reached the use of reason. Such is the irony of fate.

What are we going to do this evening after a journey spread out over periods of unequal length, still leaving however several noteworthy periods of Lebanese history unexplored due to lack of time? It will be an attempt to reclassify and put things together, an effort to find out what we are, and to explain it in the light of what we were at one time, to be sure, but especially in the light of the very nature of things.

If this effort proves successful it will bring home to us

the conditions required for the relative stability of our country throughout the vicissitudes of our history which has been extraordinarily eventful.

The much-coveted and very perilous geographical setting (depending on one's point of view) which is ours does not make it possible for us to hope for anything better than that kind of stability, while subordinating its very existence to the resoluteness of our soul and will and to the action of our intellect. We have lived dangerously in the past, and we are condemned to do so. We shall always have to ward off or canalize the torrent, wherever it comes from, unless we want it to carry us off.

We in fact command, and to an increasing extent, a vital network of roads to which peoples stronger than ourselves have requested access and will continue to do so in times of crisis as well as in times of peace. If we let them through, we are liable to be overwhelmed (if an enemy is passing through), and if we refuse to let them through, we must expect to see them force a way through (if it is not defended by others than ourselves). The events of this present war, coming upon those of the war of 1914-1918 in the Near East, are yet another example of our everlasting adventure. Add to this also the ulterior motives and the greed that inspire some of the people in our neighbourhood and of which we can be the object.

However, because of our position in space, because no so-called world power can afford to take no account of us at all (since we are located in a spot and on a thoroughfare which both have worldwide importance), and furthermore because we are a mountainous country where it is still possible to fortify and defend oneself, and lastly because, along with a favourable climate, we possess a long seaboard, we have become, somewhat paradoxically considering the risks we run, a place of refuge, a sheltering-ground for the oppressed and banished,

with the consequences and burdens which such a privilege brings with it. And since our territory is small, since our mountains cannot shelter and feed millions of people, whenever our country gets overpopulated, the question of emigration arises.

It is obvious that we, and not our neighbours lying inland from us (the density of their population is extremely low), need land to live upon. Nor is this an entirely new state of affairs. If, three thousand years ago, the Phoenicians helped to populate Cyprus, Cilicia and the Archipelago as far as Hellas, if, at the peak of their power from the tenth to the sixth century B.C., they founded Utica, Cadiz and Carthage, if they went practically all over the world, both known and unknown at that time, they did so *to a certain extent* for the same reasons which have been sending the Lebanese abroad for a hundred years, first to Egypt, and then to the four corners of the earth.

We realize that in developing our theme this evening we shall have to guard against a tendency to systematize things. With this in mind, we shall recall that over against any theory there is always living reality with its vagaries and whims.

♦♦

As regards the extent of our territory, *the Lebanon of today* is practically the same as the original Lebanon-Phoenicia; however, if we want to locate the whole of the metropolitan Phoenicia of the past, going along the shore of the Mediterranean from south to north, we ought to go from Mount Carmel and Acre to the Aradus of the Ancients (now the island of Ruad) and to Antaradus which is Tartus. Ruad, a citadel of northern Phoenicia, matched Tyre in the south. As we look north from Tartus we would be justified in remembering a

link with Latakia, once the «Laodicea of Lebanon», and with the surrounding countryside.

The range of the Lebanese mountains is our backbone, in a literal and figurative sense, running parallel to the sea and to the chain of cities by the sea. In our day as in former times it is more wooded in the north than in the south, the north being less easy of access. Scarcely inhabited at the time of Byblos' and Tyre's glory, and filled with the cries of many wild animals, it was submitted to what was the equivalent of royal taxation for the exploitation of its forests, as later on in the time of the Roman Empire. It thus constituted a reputedly inexhaustible reserve for the shipyards and ship-owners along the coast. The few trees remaining on the mountainside, itself too often laid bare, are all we can see of the forests of old. After the disappearance of wild life, the goatherd joined hands with the woodman to finish off the young shoots. That is how pastoral epics are written.

Parallel both to the mountains and the sea, the high plateau between Anti-Lebanon and Mount Lebanon (the Beqaa) is our main granary today. Because of its great extension northward it was called Coeli-Syria or hollow Syria, but Phoenicia of Lebanon was another name in Roman times; and it is not for us to question the justness of this title, and how it fits in with the nature of things. Baalbek's great monuments were at that time in their first glory and for at least two centuries the Third Legion, the «Gallica» garrisoned in Phoenicia, had been moving between the coast and the high plateau, between Berytus and Baalbek, in the ordinary course of its duties.

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Looked at on a map of the world, this Lebanon of ours

is minute. From the eastern end of the Mediterranean on which it is situated it looks across to Gibraltar at the other end, beyond Tunisia, beyond Carthage, that is to say. The Phoenicians who set out from Tyre, striking due west in search of a promontory to settle in, although they did not at that time follow the coastline, trading from port to port as they went, were to land at that place where they set up their great overseas colony on African soil, leaving Crete on the right after having stopped there. Malta, Gozo and Pantelleria lie along this route, and we know that they occupied these islands.

As we consider Lebanon's geographical position let us note that placed as we are at the meeting-place of three continents we are obviously an ideal bridgehead, but also one of the world's look-out posts.

Contenau could write about the Phoenicia of the past, even at this early stage, as follows:

*«Phoenicia appears as a narrow pass between Africa and Asia, since the great Syrian Desert, practically impassable, stretches beyond Lebanon. On the other hand Phoenicia is linked with the Sinai peninsula and Egypt through Palestine in the south; to the north there is a link with the upper valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates. We can well imagine that Phoenicia could not remain aloof from the rivalries of the ancient world; it had to submit to them or else take sides. To occupy it was a question of strategic importance, besides being indispensable to a great empire because of its resources. Whoever occupied it possessed an open door leading either into Africa or into Asia, a 'march' constituting at once a rampart of self-defence and a jumping-off place for a future invasion».*

What ought we to change in this definition to apply it to the present ? Nothing, it would seem, except that the desert

has been crossed in a variety of ways, that the route has been diversified, that it has become more necessary and wider, and that it is forever waiting for the most up-to-date vehicles fit for first-class service.

It would be quite easy for us to locate the hub of a propeller with three blades representing Africa, Asia and Europe. We occupy what may be called a key position. The land and air route to India passes, and will continue to pass to an increasing extent, through our latitude. (The «Yellow Cruise», which we remember, took Beirut as its starting-point in Asia to finish up at Peking in China; this is in fact the shortest way).

In this connection we may be permitted to quote a passage taken from a lecture given in this very hall thirteen years ago (\*) : «There are several routes of world-wide importance to be located if we want to know where we come from and where we are going, routes belonging to the past and routes belonging to the future, with their outlets and their crossings. We here are at the end or the beginning of one of these routes. All northern Asia, almost seven hundred million strong, have no alternative but to pass through our land to reach the Mediterranean which is the heart of the Ancient World; it matters little whether it be a little more to the north or a little more to the south; but this Asia with its teeming millions stretching from the Persian Gulf to the Sea of Japan, when it makes greater use of the railroad, the car or the aeroplane, and when Europe wants to link up with it by a land or air route, they will both come this way...»

We must also mention another route, one which comes

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(\*) Cf. Michel Chiha, «Problèmes et préjugés de chez nous» — Some of our problems and prejudices.

from the north and intersects the other; the Orient Express. This situation will last until railways become old-fashioned and give way to the means of transport of the future. Such is our position on this planet. Let us remember that we lie between the latitudes of 30 and 40 degrees north and that while we have mountains that are habitable at all altitudes and a wide front onto the sea our climate is very mild but very varied also, suitable for man and a wide range of crops. The Lebanese countryside possesses features which are very typical of southern Europe. It bears a striking resemblance to the countryside of the large islands in the Mediterranean. It contrasts, sometimes violently, with the landscape to be seen in the oasis, the steppe and the desert which are yet so near. In some ways, our country has a kind of island destiny which geology alone would deny it. Not long ago we saw geologists mistakenly claiming to explain what we are in terms of the depths of soil rather than the heights of the mountains.

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Lebanon today covers an area of about 10,500 square kilometres, a quarter the size of Switzerland. A little over a million inhabitants live on this narrow and uneven territory, that is to say about a quarter of the population of Switzerland; the density of the population of Lebanon is thus the same as that of Switzerland: about 100 people to the square kilometre; but though we are a mountainous country like Switzerland, we are less favoured, we have an average productivity that is less satisfactory because a considerable portion of our territory to the east and north-east is arid and hitherto almost uninhabited.

When it comes to assessing what we are in demographic terms we should stop to ask ourselves a few questions: *Who are the people alive at this moment who go to make up the Lebanese race today ?...* It is essential that we know this before

all else if we wish to recognize ourselves, if we wish to discover the living features of this land in order to speak about its affinities and resemblances later on. What are the deeply-rooted rights of inheritance belonging to the Lebanon of today which can enhance the «*ius soli*» by the «*ius sanguinis*» ? It is certainly not going to be easy to say what they are.

However, we shall set about the task, though doubtless in a summary fashion, the time at our disposal not permitting us to complete such an inquiry. Only after this will it be possible for us in our quest to define what we are, to pass quickly from our origins and from our history to the labels of religious affiliation by which we are classified, and from there to our customs and laws and to the national and international life of Lebanon today. «*The past always has some message for man*», wrote Fustel de Coulanges in the introduction to his «*Cité Antique*». «*Man can easily forget it, but he always keeps it within him. For the state in which he finds himself in any particular era is the product and summing-up of all previous eras.*»

It would seem indisputable that the Lebanese people as a whole, if not each individual, must accept an ancestry that goes much further back than the one adhered to arbitrarily by some people in the interests of a certain policy. This, at all events, is a matter in which opinion should be tempered with prudence. Among so many conquests which we have undergone, just another conquest was not enough to transform a whole population from one generation to another, nor even from one millennium to another. The men who lived on our shores fifty, forty, thirty or twenty centuries ago, and whose civilization and mode of expression we do not exhume with enough respect, however terrible wars may have been and however frequent emigrations may have been from the earliest times, would no doubt recognize their genuine posterity in the Lebanese of today. Reason itself does not allow us to believe

that their stock could have completely disappeared, even relying only on a reckoning based on probabilities. We can take it as quite certain that the ethnographer who would study the Lebanese will have a lot to do. It is maintained, for instance, that we are a purely Semitic people. Indeed! It would seem very rash to say out and out that we are. On this point we could quote some famous discussions. Let us be content with quoting some passages, as up-to-date as we can find, and with briefly recalling the succession of our adventures in the course of history so as to bring out the complexity of our case.

*«Prehistory indicates the existence of a very densely-packed population of aborigines along the coast and this population does not appear to be Semitic» (Contenau). «As we might expect, anthropology has nothing certain to tell us about the existence of an exclusively dolichocephalous race in Phoenicia in historic times as it would if we were dealing with pure Semites. The elements are already very mixed up» (Contenau).*

*«The first historical fact indicates the penetration of Egyptian influence at Byblos, an influence which was to be profound throughout the whole country in the course of the second millennium» (Contenau).*

*«... various pieces of information gathered over a rather wide area would lead us to observe a certain Semitic homogeneity throughout the whole of Phoenicia-Palestine as far as the extreme south in the third millennium. On the other hand, this homogeneity is much better attested in the opposite direction, towards the north...» (Raymond Weill, «La Phénicie et l'Asie Occidentale», p. 25).*

*«The Indo-European invasion (which swept down from the north only from about 2,000 B.C. onwards) covered Asia Minor and Armenia, producing those peoples who were to take so prominent a part in the history of the second millennium*

*and of which the main ones are those of the Hittite family. This came about by the intermingling of invaders with the already existing population (non-Semitic Asianics). At the same time, other floods of invaders occupied the middle Euphrates and central Syria in the west whence, moving southwards, they reached Palestine.*

*«In this Syria-Palestine of the second millennium which was discovered in this way we shall come across a new and very important constituent of the population resulting from the arrival of the Indo-Europeans» (Weill, p. 80).*

*«By the time they arrived, the Indo-Europeans, who had come (from the north) from a vast cold region where civilization was in a rudimentary stage, were chiefly nomads who tilled the soil... (we should open a bracket here to add: they introduced the horse which was completely unknown in the East before they descended upon it)» (Weill, p. 93).*

*«We observe from the pre-Indo-European Asianic Hittites that at a very early date there was an interchange, a movement and an intermingling of peoples between Syria-Palestine and Asia Minor ... it is quite natural that as from the beginning of the Indo-European period after 2,000 B.C. mass-movements and migrations should have taken place just as easily... As regards the presence of an important Indo-European element in Syria-Palestine, there can be no doubt about it, as it is clear from the documents about this country that we are soon to find in Egypt in the first period of the New Empire in the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries. The information they contain is of vital importance to us» (Weill, p. 94).*

From the prehistoric period up to the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B. C., as far as the tablets of Tell al Amarna, the only well-established fact in the field of ethnography concerning those countries which interest us here is thus that

there was intermingling and confusion. The melting-pot of races and human types is this bridge linking the Eastern Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf. The men of this distant past, as they journey on, some going north, others going south, meet and are brought together whether they like it or not on this soil the central seabord of which is today our homeland.

Although the situation since the fourteenth century B. C. has become better known and clearer from the ethnographer's point of view, it is no less disconcerting.

Before saying a word about it, I would like to quote a particularly instructive page written by the late Father Lammens about the great invasions of which what is now the Levant had been partly the object since the period of Tell al Amarna until Alexander's conquest. He writes: *«Living isolated on their land broken up into small estates and confined within the recesses of their mountains, hidden in forests of centuries-old cedars and behind the ditches of their torrential rivers, the inhabitants of the minute Syrian States led a clan-life and wore each other down in domestic struggles: north against south, highlanders against lowlanders; Syrians from the hinterland trying to force an outlet to the sea at the expense of those dwelling along the shore of the Mediterranean, namely the Phoenician Republics. In the midst of these fratricidal wars they all forgot to guard the approaches, the Pylae in the Taurus and the fords across the Euphrates, thus leaving the barrier that was the desert wide open. They witnessed the invasion coming from the Hebrews, the southward drive of tribes from Anatolia, Aegean pirates and Philistines (the latter probably coming from Crete) landing on the coast, and the uninterrupted procession of conquerors from East and West: Babylonians, Egyptians, Hittites, Assyrians, Persians, Macedonians. Lack of unity and sense of nationhood had blunted moral vigour. The Phoenicians, being more supple, did not give up. Without*

*entering into open conflict with the Assyrians and Persians, they forced the invaders to reckon with them and to make them pay for the use of outlets to the sea. They took on the profitable task of acting as go-betweens for Asia and the Mediterranean World» («La Syrie», p. 8). The most important thing to emerge from this passage is the historic distinction between what Father Lammens calls the Phoenician Republics and what surrounds them, not only as regards frontiers but also political methods.*

It was only fitting to point this out in passing. We see the signs of conflicting interests in it depending on whether we are a people called to live by the sea or on the confines of the desert. People who make their living by trade and sailing the seas, or by tilling the land or by feeding their nomad flocks — so many kinds of life as a society, so many ideas on government and freedom, so many opportunities and risks as diverse as mankind itself.

Egyptian power which had been paramount in Phoenicia for so long went into decline from this time on. As far as we are concerned the end of a great chapter is in sight. After a long struggle between the Hittites coming from the north and the Egyptians — a struggle which lasted more than twenty years, and which was carried on within a radius of about a hundred kilometres around the Lebanon of today and ending in a peace imposed by the weariness of both sides — the towns of Phoenicia gradually moved towards a period of three centuries of independence the history of which is obscure. The following remark made by Maspéro comes in appositely here: *«Syria is placed in such a position that it can be independent only on condition that it has no powerful neighbours»*. Weill writes as follows on this matter: *«As soon as this region (which he calls the land of Phoenicia-Palestine) is entrusted to her own destiny we hear no more of her... each of the towns*

*and principalities which she comprises turns in upon itself*» (this refers to the well-known controversies over the free town and the autonomous «municipium»). During this period, however, Phoenicia was experiencing the beginnings of her greatness as a colonial power; it is easy to imagine her engaging in commerce and industry at the time, possessing a considerable fleet of merchantmen, and having a very heterogeneous population such as the great Mediterranean ports have nowadays. It is conceivable that in those days Phoenicia was comparatively overpopulated, finding it necessary to establish trading posts overseas and in nearby countries not only for merchandise but also as a place to settle its own children; in this connection we should remember that *«the Phoenicians had dealings with the outside world both by land and sea, using caravans and ships»* (Maspéro).

Wars of conquest and big invasions started up again at the beginning of the ninth century B.C. From the demographic point of view the result of all this was to send the triumphant armies of new empires, which in their turn had become «world» powers, marching between the Euphrates and the Red Sea. It was an uninterrupted movement, causing much upheaval, with Phoenicia-Lebanon and Syria invariably in the thick of it all. The ebb and flow added new elements to the human population everywhere it went and the intermingling of races became more involved and widespread.

For almost three centuries after the year 875, approximately, the Assyrians were masters of Phoenicia which had become their vassal but which, as always, had managed to preserve its own personality; after this, two Aryan races, the Medes and the Persians, were masters here for more than two hundred and fifty years until Alexander's victory at Issus in Cilicia which was a Phoenician colony. Persian power collapsed in 333 while Greek language and civilization penetrated every-

where with the Greco-Macedonians. After the death of Alexander, his generals met near Homs and partitioned the empire for the first time; after several ups and downs, we find Phoenicia and Syria entrusted to Seleucus who fixed his capital at Antioch, while Egypt went to Ptolemy.

Meanwhile Rome, which had destroyed Carthage, was expanding rapidly and was beginning to impose her law on the world. Pompey arrived in Syria in 64 B.C. along with his legions and firmly implanted the Roman Empire there, an Empire which, carried on later by the Eastern Empire, kept its hold on our country for almost seven centuries. At the same time, Christianity was born and Jesus of Nazareth, coming our way, arrived at the confines of Tyre and Sidon. From the sixth to the seventh century, the Chosroes were in violent conflict with Byzantium over Syria, and submitted it to the horrors of invasion; thereafter the Arabs came up from the south, overcame Heraclius at the battle of Yarmuk with only 25,000 men and were no doubt the first to be surprised when they found themselves masters of the land at so little cost to themselves.

The events which we have summarized in this way depict a series of migrations and movements of population, of comings and goings, and of upheavals in the ethnographic situation, all crowded on to this little chessboard of ours. The whole thing is improbable, in the strict sense of the word. Future events are not to be any less so. The important thing is that the thirteen centuries which, starting from the point we have now reached, lie before us, should not lead us to imagine that the forty centuries before them never existed. We shall certainly not forget that we are at present dealing with the Lebanon of *today*. However, the Lebanon of today is not just mountains and seashore, it is a community of men. *In order to derive knowledge about the present, and instruction for the future,*

*from the past, it was our duty to pick out the characteristics of these men.*

*In the early days of Islam the main way of classifying individuals which, under the rule of Byzantium, was on a national basis (either one was or was not a citizen of the Empire), became by force of circumstances based on religious affiliation. To be sure, political Islam obviously takes its rise from Islam as a religion. The Caliph is the Commander, not of the Syrians or the Arabs or the Egyptians or the Andalusians, but of the believers. What we sometimes ascribe to some kind of turn of fate, without thinking about it very much, arises out of an historical fact. Henceforth the ethnographic question will be coupled with the question of religious affiliation which is to predominate. And political Islam automatically makes a numerical assessment of the various religious groups under its authority and allots a graded system of personal status to them with a varying scale of disabilities and privileges.*

We must now move quickly ahead in order to reach our own times. We see (for less than a century, incredible though this may seem) the Ummayyads at Damascus; then the Abbasids at Bagdad; finally the Fatimids at Cairo, each in turn lords of the ancient Phoenician coast and of the mountains where the people were more than once to be driven to revolt, ill-treated and dispersed. In Lebanon under the Ummayyads we see the Mardaïtes coming from the confines of the Taurus and eventually merging with the Maronites who had found a refuge and set up a homeland in the Lebanese mountains long before them. Above all we see the Crusaders on the territory that is now Lebanon at the end of the eleventh century.

Beirut, for instance, was occupied by King Baldwin towards the middle of May 1100 and was to belong to the Franks until July 1291, namely for more than 180 years, and the Frankish

period as a whole was to last all this time. Now barely twenty-five years have elapsed since 1918. Let us use this fact to bring home to ourselves what the 180 years of the Frankish kingdom stood for in the past. In those days people did not travel at will, and it can be taken as certain that many people from the West who came here in thousands from all over Europe, including Scandinavia, never went back again. *«Mixed marriages became more and more frequent, especially in the towns»* (Lammens). *«Our wives' relatives and their children stay with us. Languages have become family property, common to citizens of both nations»* (Foucher de Chartres).

About the same time as this, perhaps a little before or after, dissenters from orthodox Islam and adherents to new sects came into Lebanon and Syria from the north and the south and community by community took over a natural bastion which was considered a refuge. This is in keeping with the rest of our history. Ismailis, Nusairis, Druzes and Shiites: those concerned were always threatened or persecuted communities, each one perched on its mountain, just as the Christians had done and continued to do. Apart from a few movements of the population, they are still right there where they were at that time. *Let us note that, in our country just as in other countries around us, mountains are the fief of minorities, and this is not hard to explain.*

I shall not spend any more time over this summary of our history. Others besides myself have spoken about it at length and from another point of view. I shall simply recall that since the time of the Mamelukes, and including the Seljukids before or after them, the Mongol invasions and the destructive passage of Tamerlane, the peoples of Lebanon were more than once the object of terrible commotions. *«In the course of the fifteenth century»*, writes Lammens, *«especially after the departure of Tamerlane's hordes, Beirut became the meeting-place*

*for all the peoples of the Mediterranean... an indescribable mixture... all the languages of the Mediterranean, all races... all the dregs, all the flower of rival civilizations are driven on to this corner of the Phoenician seaboard, compelled by considerations which were more imperative than their differences of race and religion among themselves*». Fortunately for us, the mountains became henceforth more rigid, more conservative and more austere.

Then the Ottomans came, while a little later a Lebanese dynasty really worthy of the name rose up over against them. These astonishing Maans, whose dynasty was to be prolonged by the Chehabs, were aware of the deeply-rooted originality of this country underlying its singular characteristics, and in this awareness there was, as it were, an instinct for its destiny and Lebanese tradition in their blood.

From the time of Fakhreddin II, the «Facardin» who left such a strong impression on people in the West, the population of Lebanon grew steadily, thanks to new and mainly Christian influxes of population from the Near East. Lebanon, while asserting her own personality to an increasing extent, became more and more a land of asylum as well, thus fulfilling one of the functions proper to her.

Invasions became less and less frequent owing to the extent of the Ottoman Empire into which Lebanon was incorporated and the measures taken to defend it. (However, there were to be such things as Bonaparte's effort and Ibrahim Pasha's expedition). Persecution in other countries drew clergy and layfolk and eventually almost all the leaders of the Eastern Christian rites to Lebanon. We only have to look around us to realize this; the fact cannot be the outcome of chance.

Having enumerated the facts, too briefly or at too great length, according to one's particular point of view, we thereby

come up to the Lebanese of today, that people eleven or twelve hundred thousand strong which we are and which is the living substance of so turbulent a past.

Not the least among the ironies of fate is the fact that the Ottoman princes who fell from power and were exiled found their last refuge on our soil. In order to understand Lebanon it should also be remembered that at least a tenth of its present population, coming from abroad for twenty-five years at the very most, has been Lebanese only for a very short time and that it lives all too often in a system of traditions brought in from abroad which are not always the same as ours. Armenians, Russians, Turks, Iraqis and even Kurds, along with so many others, have found here the home that they lost and, despite the harshness of the times, some of the joy of life. Without wishing to contrast the two facts, but to give a complementary illustration from our own case, let us add to the above remarks the changes in the demographic situation *which can be put down to the emigration* that was so massive towards the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth. And let us remember a matter of fact never to be forgotten, and true at least for the last twenty-five years, namely the marriages between people from Lebanon and people from the West, which means that there are thousands of children in this country today of mixed parentage to which they appeal.

Will anyone after this say that the Lebanon of today is Semitic? Will anyone say that it is Arab? Everyone will form his own judgment. Father Lammens, who I suppose will be credited to some extent, used to debate whether Syria itself was Arab. In his view it has an original character, it is Syrian. For our part, and with even more decisive arguments, we shall say that *the population of Lebanon is Lebanese, quite simply*, and that, with due reservations made in the case of

those very recently naturalized, it is at present no more Phoenician than Egyptian, Aegean, Assyrian or Medic, Greek, Roman, Byzantine or Arab, with or without consanguinity, or European by alliance or Turk for that matter. At the very most we say that it is a Mediterranean type, probably the least easy to determine. It has a structure all its own, and no other. Nor will it be possible to explain the Lebanon of today without taking it for exactly what it is.

This population, very attached in spite of everything to its native soil, takes a passionate love and nostalgia for it away with it when driven by force of circumstances to travel abroad and seek its fortune. Though unfortunately less prolific than before, a fact that must henceforth be considered a danger, it has the peculiar ability to increase by immigration to a great extent, just as it decreases by emigration to no less an extent.

*The future of Lebanon thus emerges in the apparently contradictory forms of traditionalism and mobility, but also in the steadfast form of faith.*

Let us not forget that we are in an East forever in ferment and literally ill with the desire to understand and explain things, a promised land for uneasy minorities, a High Place whence every prayer freely makes its way up towards to the most transparent and star-filled of heavens... In such a way that we find we have become a mosaic of religions without equal on this earth, *and that within the nation and the city, the only way in which we can now give ourselves a name is by referring to our belief or to our mode of worship.* The main reason why this last characteristic exists nowadays is, along with the frightening force arising from habit, the instinctive mistrust shown by the weak and the fear some have of being dominated by others. No one would speak of minorities if he did not himself fear a majority. But it does happen that *in*

*some spheres fear becomes excessive and illusory. And diversity in ancestry and faith has contributed greatly to diversity in customs and laws, as is clear from the laws of personal status. As we are at the moment, we would, I think, be considered an impossibility in the light of pure reason if we did not live with the calm assurance with which we face the philosophers.*

And in fact we are a necessity. We must remember moreover that *as regards the outside world* our geographical situation means that we are a halting-place and a bastion of the greatest importance on a route which is becoming one of the world's highways.

But the interest shown in us by the West and by the rest of the world is subject to other motives. *On the religious level* what could be more natural than that missionaries should come our way? The highly-placed spiritual authorities whom we obey could not overlook us. Nor could they overlook our nearness to the Holy Places where the One God is adored in different ways. Here we are steeped in Ancient History, in the History of Religions and in Sacred History. *The man of religion came to us in the threefold capacity of pilgrim, missionary and scholar.* From this was born his function as teacher which gradually developed and became in itself enough to justify his presence among us. This teaching, which was at first primary, filled out by degrees into secondary, and then into the higher reaches, only to expand into Universities with a wide range of activity and great reputation.

*In the realm of science and intellectual work*, developments have occurred in many fields, and the result has been to attract very large numbers of foreigners to Lebanon.

Teachers and pupils coming from directions for the most part quite different became more and more numerous. The teaching of theology, for instance, resulted in the creation of

the seminary; and the teaching of medicine resulted in the creation of the clinic and the hospital, with patients coming from near and far. We should point out that in this last domain a form of competition that bodes ill for the future is becoming more and more noticeable and that we must rapidly improve our techniques and the methods we follow if we are not going to be left behind.

*In the scientific and literary order* we must notice that Lebanon by nature possesses much that attracts the presence of the archeologist, the historian and the publicist, and, from the practical point of view, the skilled printer. We have only to look around to realize this. This brings us to the question of languages, a question which would be so simple if it were not complicated by the pointless susceptibilities of some people. Arabic is a magnificent language and it is the language of millions of people; we would not be true to ourselves if we, the Lebanese of this twentieth century, gave up the idea of becoming masters of it as we have been for a hundred years. For us it must be a legitimate ambition to know it and teach it in an altogether superior way, so that while maintaining our prestige and position we may have the opportunity to give the Arab world at all times its greatest writers, its greatest journalists and its greatest poets.

But is it not immediately clear that if a country like ours is not bilingual (and even trilingual if possible), it is quite simply decapitated ? We have in fact been keeping up a number of living and dead languages for ages in this country. What would there be for us to hand on to the East if we did not take it from the West (the reverse being equally true) and how would we keep and develop the indispensable contacts which are made necessary by education at all levels, by travel, by trade, by tourism in this country, and by the presence of Lebanese emigrants in their thousands in all parts of the

world, to say nothing of the overriding demands of politics imposed upon us by our geographical position, if, besides Arabic, but no less perfectly, an international language were not at our command ?... Even before the invention of the alphabet Lebanon-Phoenicia could not but be multilingual, and this in itself marks its superiority. Since Alexander's conquest it has never ceased to be at least a bilingual country both officially and in fact; and if in the course of their four centuries of rule the Turks did not succeed in imposing their language, while certain western languages were getting the upper hand, it was because Turkish was not a means of conversing with the rest of the world. And the Turks noticed this and went so far as to provide the surprising example of a people who, caring nothing for prejudice, suddenly give up the age-old characters of their alphabet to borrow the West's which, used by practically all the white race (to which we belong) is itself derived from the alphabet of the Phoenicians. Only a rather antiquated and childish chauvinism could induce us to sacrifice our most significant and vital interests in this matter and to exclude, in this twentieth century, what our predecessors considered indispensable in the days of Rome and Byzantium. We would be harming ourselves and the neighbouring countries towards which we realize we have obligations.

I suggest you think over the following remark made by Arthur Ruppin, a noted sociologist who was an assistant lecturer at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem until his recent death: *«Since the war (the First World War), the use of English has naturally increased among the Jews in Palestine who, like all other nations, will no doubt have to speak an international language other than their own»*. This point is worth remembering unless we really want to become deaf only to become dumb later on. However, I shall not go so far as to recommend that we for our part resurrect

Phoenician, Aramaic or Syriac just to keep up with our very enterprising neighbours who have thought fit to resuscitate Hebrew as a means of self-preservation and defence. We are reasonable people here, and I hope that fanaticism will not push us that far.



Having reached this stage, I shall repeat two short sentences from a lecture of which I have already said a few words and which I mention with the sole purpose of relying upon the authority of Father Lammens who honoured me with his unreserved approval in an article in the periodical «Al-Mashriq» for February 1931:

*«From the point of view of economics, which is one of interchange, when we talk about routes we unavoidably have in mind the absence of obstacles and barriers; whenever a vital route has been closed, there has always been some conqueror to force a way through»; and from the political point of view, «a people cannot grow and maintain itself as a nation on one of these important routes, used and naturally coveted by twenty other nations, without being very strong on its own or without being in league or alliance with another nation which is strong. And this is why these countries have not known complete independence — or at least have only had a transitory and partial acquaintance with it».*

Now we are in a sense masters of the route, and we are not strong. We cannot thus presume to open and close this route at will. Our history is, as we have seen, as old as the world and as old as we are. *This is the main reason why the lords of the world pay close attention to what happens to us.* We have also seen that it is not the only one. There is indeed the fact that such great powers and their civilization along

with them cannot be indifferent to our fate and to the spiritual heritage which we stand for without failing both in their moral duty and in their politics. At certain periods in history we may have kept away from international life and its demands; for instance, during the period immediately following the discovery of the sea route to the Indies via the Cape of Good Hope which coincided with the zenith of Ottoman power which it would have seemed rash to attack. *But with the help of science and other discoveries everything has changed, and in such a way that we are very unlikely to be forgotten before the end of the world.*

Such is this Lebanon of ours, so unimposing and so small in extent. We have considered it, not in isolation, but along with neighbours who are even more exposed and vulnerable (because they are geographically less easy to defend).

It is not our intention to deny that the route on which we are situated and the fortress-like refuge dominating it have certain advantages for us which may become more important from the *intellectual* and *economic* point of view. But it is obvious that this situation has serious drawbacks, and that it constitutes a constant threat to us on the *social* and *political* plane.

It keeps us in a state of *continual ferment*. Our case is the nearest thing to perpetual movement: along with the *arrival* in the cities (a movement sometimes reaching massive dimensions) of people who become incorporated in them without being socially and politically prepared for it and without the necessary resources, there is an *exodus* of people who leave and go far away, taking their traditions with them in their luggage, with no thought for the harm caused to the country's equilibrium by their departure.

These people are, on the one hand, new plants which have not had time to become properly acclimatized and which grow

in a haphazard fashion, and on the other, fully-grown oak-trees transplanted in some distant clime, and no one thinks of asking whether, once they have gone, there will still be enough greenery and shade.

Think also of the lowering of our birth-rate and of our physical and moral endurance. *How can we establish homes and traditions if, in addition to so many upheavals, we have to cope with others arising out of a policy which was for so long just a work of destruction?*

*It seems to me that we are here faced with what should be the first principle of our «doctrine», namely that politically speaking Lebanon is not a country of impulsive movements and coups d'Etat. It is a country which tradition must defend against force. Every jolt it receives to some extent places the good done in the course of time in jeopardy. The evidence for this could not be clearer. Putting it in the straightforward language of the doctors, we could say that while trying to digest a heavy meal, Lebanon is always exposed to cerebral haemorrhage by those who cause her trouble; this is quite unreasonable. In our case, slow but profound evolution is always to be preferred to revolution.*

*We shall therefore counteract any excessive tendency to upset our equilibrium with stable organizations which will later on resist all incursions if we can manage to keep them intact just for ten years (this will be possible only if they are made to conform in every way to the nature of things). We all see where we have got to after a whole series of revisions and, even more striking, the state of affairs at the end of each stage looks like being exactly the same as at the beginning. What is needed in Lebanon today is adequate knowledge and understanding of its geographical position and of what one might call the natural disabilities under which it labours; and then of the nature of the various groups which together go to*

*make up the Lebanese people. No laws which ignore these profound truths, whether they be organic or ordinary, will ever survive long in Lebanon. With this knowledge and understanding behind us, we can therefore say:*

1. *Since it is a country comprising associated minorities of different religious communities, Lebanon cannot last long, politically speaking, without an assembly to be the meeting-place and centre of unity for these communities with a view to exercising joint control over the nation's political life. Once you abolish the assembly, you unavoidably transpose debate to the sanctuary or to its shadow, and by so much you slow down the formation of a civic sense; (again, when you have no assembly, you have nothing to put in the way of too great pressure coming from outside).*

2. *Since the social strata which compose it are very varied, ranging from extremely archaic ways of life to extremely civilized ones (we have only to look around to realize this) Lebanon, having enough laws of personal status as it is, cannot provide itself with laws which would in fact be valid only for such and such a sector of the population, for this town or that region. In some cases, the greatest progress in legislation could go hand in hand with the gravest errors in government and administration. A country's laws are laid down for the use of all its inhabitants, with at least an average sufficient to justify them.*

*It is obvious that the application of such a principle must leave room for some exceptions and plenty of breadth of interpretation. But you must bear it in mind unless you want the law itself to be at the origin of rebellion or injustice.*

3. *Since it is surrounded by envious neighbours and is the object of territorial claims that are now being rescinded as long as too many serious blunders are not committed, and*

*since, on the other hand, it is threatened by the encroachments of people seeking a promised land, Lebanon, in order to keep its truculent people relatively happy and to cut short the enticements offered by her neighbours, must act in such a way that her taxation laws and her laws in general leave room for some advantages, some kind of premium and a measure of toleration as compared with the laws of other countries, at least for a while. This seems elementary, the important thing being to last in order to become stable.*

*4. Since it is a country standing at the crossroads of important routes and to a certain extent has become a public square, Lebanon must strengthen the structure of its traditions by means of its laws, thereby consolidating the Lebanese family by all the means in its power, and teaching our children to subordinate the temporal to the spiritual and comfort to freedom.*

When speaking of problems of demography, we had occasion to mention Switzerland. There you have one of the places in world from which we Lebanese of the twentieth century can learn a very great deal. Switzerland, which loves her freedom above all else, is also first and foremost a practical, thrifty and sensible country. After what is known as a «patrician» period which was one of the most flourishing in its history, democracy has reigned there for a hundred and fifty years.

As in this country, the mountains play a considerable part in Switzerland's national life and on the whole the Swiss are not used to useless discussions and long periods of idleness. On the contrary, it is a country where people have a passion for work and do not waste their time with empty words. It is also a country where races, languages and religions meet as in this country, though the differences are less marked, on a relatively small territory with a population of four million people. Now what do we observe in Switzerland? First of all that

remarkable territorial and political division into *twenty-two cantons each of which is a sovereign state with its government and the legislative, executive and judicial system that goes with a sovereign state*; there are even three cantons which are divided into semi-cantons for topographic, political or other reasons. And above these canton governments, there is of course a government for the whole of Switzerland with its institutions, assemblies and laws. There are thus twenty-two states in Switzerland, not counting the subdivisions, numbering *on the average* 200,000 people each; *individually and collectively they acquire peace and concord among their citizens at the cost of one of the world's most complicated and clumsy political machines*. The middle-class Swiss and the Swiss peasants and workers, who are so careful about expenses, think, however, that this burdensome historic organization of their social life is not a luxury, and that there is nothing lavish about it. They know that to it they owe their strength and the lasting peace that unites them. *They* do not complain, as we hear it so often repeated here, about wearing a garment too wide for their shoulders.

Whereas in our case, every time for the past twenty years we have had an assembly of which *the first object was to strengthen the will to live in common here*, an assembly in which it was possible for Maronite, Sunni, Shiite, Druze, Greek Orthodox, Melkite and the others to debate among themselves in the framework of the common good, away from the particular concerns of their religious affiliation for a while, we have done everything to bring discredit upon this assembly and ruin it.

Certain people, it must be said, readily lent a hand in this good deed. Their responsibility is great. In this particular case, understanding nothing about what concerns us, they thought that theories valid perhaps for Béarn or Touraine could be equally well applied here.

And yet our case on the whole is much more delicate than Switzerland's. *At all costs it calls for solutions dictated by moderation and wisdom which involve first of all the patient initiation of the Lebanese into the meaning of the general interest. It rules out tyranny, the domination of some by others, and upheavals in any form, as deadly dangerous.*

So under the pretext of simplifying matters, of giving us governments that measure up to our stature, a pygmy-like stature (as if in this way one could reduce things indefinitely), we have gone out of our way to destroy what was represented as the image, obviously a bit rustic but very accurate, of the Lebanese people with its disparities and contrasts.

Instead of doing our best progressively to improve an indispensable institution, we have treated it every time like a diseased limb to be got rid of without asking ourselves whether the body will be able to go on working once it is deprived of this limb. We have been acting like Penelope for twenty years. Such has been our noble adventure. And yet when in 1861 and later in 1864 the Great Powers, with open-handed France bringing freedom in the van, turned their attention to us once again and charged their ambassadors to take counsel about the organization of Lebanon's future (the Lebanon of those days was less complex than it is today), *six persons representing six sovereigns of which the most democratic was at that time the Queen of England decided to give Lebanon an elected assembly representative of its various communities, as they considered that to be necessary in the circumstances.* And Lebanon experienced a fifty-year period of peace and quiet.

After this, people can talk as much as they like about the advantages or disadvantages of democracy when there is question of our basic laws; *we shall answer firmly that we here are a number of associated minorities of different reli-*

*gious affiliations whose purpose is to come together in a spirit of fraternity to an increasing extent in the realm of politics, and that our traditions and methods, if they are to be what they are, are beyond the ken of the abstract laws of sacrosanct democracy.*

It may be asked how this assembly is to be constituted and what would be its powers. That is another question which I do not intend to touch upon this evening. For the moment the principle of the thing is the main point. It may also be said that this assembly will be second-rate, that it will not include the best brains in the country, that it will lack due proportion and that it will not work properly. My answer would be that this is quite possible; we would have to act in such a way that either it or the one that succeeds it works better; rather than let it go to the devil we would have to make its task easier, and not make a laughing-stock of it; for a time we might even have to relieve it in part of some rather delicate commissions, remembering (without losing sight of the main purpose of its existence) that in a country in which so many Powers are interested a national assembly is never a luxury item and is always better than mistakes and abuses shrouded in silence. If Fakhreddine and Beshir were on this earth in the circumstances in which this country has been in for eighty years (and especially for the last twenty-five years) they would not act otherwise. With a realism worthy of their intelligence, they would certainly put the really important things of life before subtle argument and mere impatience.

This has been a long discussion on minorities and on the national assembly, and I trust you will excuse me for it. It seemed to me that if we left it out it would not be possible in all conscience to bring this meditation on Lebanon Today to an end. And this induces me to conclude my discussion of too vast a subject without, needless to say, having exhausted it.

No one would deem us worthy of respect if we were to allow it to be forgotten that Tyre existed two thousand years before the foundation of Rome. However, we would be wrong to take pride thereby in the present state of Tyre. The past on its own is not a heritage. Something from it should still exist at present. But how could we become conscious of our civil and political rights and duties if it meant nothing to us to read the names of our cities on the maps of Phoenicia in its very early days and to remember, for instance, that Tripoli owes its existence and later on its Greek name to a Phoenician settlement where Tyre, Sidon and Ruad each had its 'town', its particular quarter? This is not a question of fobbing ourselves off with illusions and words. Our little country is definitely one of the fairest and most charming in the world; less beautiful is the man-made organization or disorganization to be seen in it, the living city, the absence of architecture both in men's minds and in the things they build. *In these latitudes we must first of all understand what an enormous benefit the mountains are for us. We must henceforth, and for a variety of reasons, go back up these mountains, which are these days just a district outside town, instead of coming down from them.* And in a general way we must get back to the land, rehabilitate it, and we must love the peasant and, along with him, the tall trees, the water from the springs, the field and the orchard; we must steep ourselves once again in the grandeur of nature which does not allow us to be petty-minded.

In return for this we shall be able, without getting lost, to go on being what we are, but only in return for this. In fact we know the rules of discipline to which our future is subject and these rules presuppose a natural atmosphere which does not sap our energies. To be sure, the difficulties we are faced with are great and their solution calls for all the resources of mind and heart. There is too much confusion of ideas, theories and attitudes among us and so many people think

they are made for government that the West regards us with curiosity as a country of generals without any troops. Along with this we have to face dangers of all kinds which take their rise in our midst, on our frontiers and beyond the seas. We shall overcome these difficulties if we can make our will and our courage measure up to them. What in spite of everything we are building up is not a hostel for the traveller, an entrepot for the merchant or a passport office for the immigrant and emigrant. Along with the Lebanon of today we are building up a hospitable and humane homeland.

There are times when we may undergo a feeling of dismay and fear when faced with the complexity of the national and international factors governing our destiny. To sustain our faith we have the glorious past that we have lived through and survived.

That same nature which shows us its peaceful and powerful face is always ready, while letting us pass through, to play with us as would a storm. A centrifugal force has been casting us along with our speculations and dreams from one continent to the other ever since «far-off days»; while a force in the opposite direction has been forever drawing movements of men on the march towards our homes. The same will be true for the distant future. To explain all this there is the international highway, religious convictions and uneasiness and unsatisfied yearning. Just as we move around a lot on earth, we must cause a stir in heaven.

Centuries have come and gone over our trials and vicissitudes. Conquerors and their conquests have vanished and we remain. We are a place where men acclimatize themselves wherever they come from, where civilizations meet, where beliefs, languages and liturgies bow low to each other; a Mediterranean country first and foremost but like the Mediterranean itself, sensitive to everyman's poetry. The Lebanon of

today, independent and untouchable, belonging equally to all her sons, can and must affirm her right to live. The reason why she exists is as strong as ever. Whether we be from the mountains or plains, from towns on the coast or the marches, we Lebanese have the duty to serve her with dedication and, if necessary, to fight in order to bequeath her, magnified and consolidated, to the Lebanese of tomorrow.

#### 1949 — Note

On page nineteen we spoke of «a link with Latakia, once the 'Laodicea of Lebanon'». In 1942, relying on an unverified text, we confused 'Laodicea of the sea' (Latakia) with 'Laodicea of Lebanon' which appears to have been Qadesh, south of Lake Homs, but applied to the latter locality as to the northern coastal district, our observation seems to us to keep its force.

## **VALUES**

Lecture given on June 7th 1948, concluding a series of lectures arranged by the Cenacle, the theme being «Rebuilding the Lebanese House»

I must make a confession. Without looking to see where it would lead me, I have placed my subject on an absolute level. The notion of value had to be clarified both for myself and for you. In a rather arbitrary way I have taken a long time over it. So much so that we will come on to «Rebuilding the Lebanese House» only in the latter pages. It seems to me that placing the notion of value in a sufficiently clear light and going back to its sources means applying it profitably to all countries and consequently to Lebanon. I hope that you will not have to consider wasted the time we devote to this notion of value, necessarily rather philosophical.

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In order to meditate upon the notion of value we must think in terms of a hierarchy.

It is clearly a question of *order* and *subordination*.

One boon is above another; one thing is below another (or better, one category of things, one category of boons). But it does happen that circumstances *upset* values. A little water amid the dryness of the desert, a little water in the hollow of a man's hand, enough to save his life, would be worth

all the gold in the world. It is likewise reasonable that for the ordinary person at the end of his days wealth is nothing *if it be not for the good of others.*

Before being able to assess and classify things, we have to get to the bottom of them! One by one we have to take away the bandages (sometimes semi-transparent) which we have over our eyes. Undoing the knot is a slow business; our intelligence and sight gradually get used to what they see. To cover the whole range of values, this presupposes, though in differing degrees, education, the teaching of relevant subjects and, to the same or to a greater extent, the innumerable forms of experiment.

An ignoramus would be unmoved when confronted with the Acropolis. A certain materialism would set more store by a workman or a docker than by a contemplative; and there are still many people who prefer the noise in the streets to Beethoven. In short, a layman would often attach no value to what would dazzle a connoisseur. Without even suspecting it, he could do the sort of thing that gave the Vandals their reputation.

Although taste and judgment are sometimes inborn, they usually have to be formed. Apart from natural disposition, a more or less long-standing habit is needed for people to understand the arts, to see the difference between a masterpiece of painting and a dauber's effort, and in architecture the difference between a fine building and a shapeless mass. This is a question of aptitude and training — a question of sensitivity and logic. Without doubt, there are some very gifted souls which grasp and measure everything one might say instinctively, but they are very few in number.

Individuals and nations need culture in order to give the value which produce personalities and heritages their

proper rank. They need the lessons taught by time and the benefits of tradition, the wisdom which has gone before them, that is to say. There are rules for them to follow, examples for them to recall and *a whole field of classical learning for them to know and fathom in the face of the legitimate daring of the inventions of daily life.*

A certain level of civilization is thus required at this stage in order to pass judgment upon principles and manners, upon the grandeur of institutions and the purity of lines, and finally upon what is noble and fair.

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The history of values is long or short according to the angle from which one considers it. I do not claim to go through its phases with you, and I refrain from any desire to philosophize systematically about a matter of which some particular aspects and fine points escape me. I shall bring to your attention some facts and impressions that occur to me; that and no more.

In this question of values, it is the done thing to speak of the Greeks, Plato and Aristotle, in their company to pass through the Middle Ages so full of hard work and silence, to go through the Renaissance and with it the humanism that was coming into being, to enter upon the modern world with Kant and others, to give a central position to Nietzsche, and lastly to question a series of contemporary thinkers. As far as I am concerned, it is too long since I was at school and among the treatises for me to undertake such a task. In any case, it would be tedious in proportion to its grimness and dryness. We are not here this evening to draw up an inventory aimed at giving the final touches to, and sounding the uttermost depths of a word that *contains everything*. We shall try

to get there as luck will have it, by a shortcut or by a round-about way.

The history of values is short in the sense that only this twentieth century has taken up the notion of value to make a *general theory* out of it and has begun to investigate it as it has done with stellar space, prehistory, matter right down to the atom, and practically everything else.

*We are right in thinking that every action of ours, including the most abstract, in the long run implies an evaluation, and that the notion of value dominates our whole life, tacitly or formally.* The loftiest spirituality is directly linked to values: «What doth it profit a man», says Holy Scripture, «if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul ?» There you have a precise and striking evaluation. It puts us in the midst of the realm of values and at the same time before the infinite. And if the devil had not reckoned that he was winning, he would not have made his pact with the aged Faust.

We should always act by giving preference to what has more value rather than to what has less. But that is where our judgment gets led astray into pitiful acts of folly.

What about enjoyments of the lower order, artificial paradises, the flowers of evil if you like (which have, however, nothing in common with Baudelaire's great inspiration)? Do they have a value in the context of man's destiny? What about alcohol and the giddiness it brings, the nightly round of play and dance? What about the bitter pleasures the reality of which is seen for what it is in the bleakness of morning when we have to settle some strange accounts?

*«Stupidity, error, sin, stinginess*

*Beset our minds and torment our bodies...*

Baudelaire was very well versed in values. Beyond the

tortuous machinations of the Evil One, he set the right value upon the flights of the spirit. With a superb stroke he placed suffering on the highest level at the very beginning of a work in which everything seems at first to be the wrong way round.

*«Blessed be thou, my God, who hast given us suffering as a divine remedy for our impurities...»*

Here we have what could be called an unexpected value and one which, though everywhere abounding, is not highly quoted on the market.

Likewise Pascal, Pascal the Jansenist, a master in values (and what a master!) and obsessed by the abyss, made a study of man's entertainment. *«Being unable to cure death, misery and ignorance, and in order to make himself happy man took it into his head not to think about them at all»*. The value to be assessed in this case is oblivion, transitory oblivion, balm and escapism. *«Hence it comes about»*, Pascal goes on to say, *«that men have such liking for noise and commotion»*. But we shall come back to Pascal, who cannot be overlooked or exhausted by an inquiry such as this into the things of the spirit.

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Since in the last analysis *everything has got something to do with values* we must enter upon this world of ours with honest intentions and with a pair of scales in our hand. When one has not thought about it one imagines that there is not much to it. Not as regards its substance, but as regards its extent. *The limitless field of values cannot be guessed.*

First and foremost, at least in the case of the uninitiated layman, the word 'values' makes people think of

the market and the stock-exchange, the clamour of auction sales and the contradictory prices put on things by the crowd that wants to buy and sell. Stocks and shares, speculation about values on the market, illusions about values, realities or just mirages, valueless samples, etc.; a well-known vocabulary comes to mind with labels stuck on to objects; then the notion becomes slowly purer; it loses its material connotations, it rises up. The writer, in his turn, is concerned about values: the *value of expressions*, the *value of words*. (At this point Polonius' anxious question to Hamlet comes to mind: «*What readest thou, My Lord? — Words, words, words*»). As it spreads wider the term takes on the many meanings given it by usage and the lexicon. *We meet it in mathematics, music and painting*. It is applied with surprisingly good effect to numbers, sounds and colours. In the end we perceive that it is a domain which mounts up to the most abstract sciences and to the rarest virtues. And just as we have to hack our way through overgrown and disused paths to get back to springs whence rivers and streams flow, *a classification is indispensable, and more than one may be necessary*; a provisional classification, the beginnings of a classification at least.

Absolutely speaking, it is possible to distinguish the following values: *economic values* (starting with the grain of wheat, everything goes to make up wealth); *logical values* (besides knowledge and the rational appreciation of things, these include such things as the mastery of the exact sciences, physical and natural sciences); *ethical and moral values* starting with the natural law (to these have been added *social and political values* which are very topical at this moment and which bring about the variety within human societies, over and above the personality of each human being).

There are of course *aesthetic values* which bring us into the realm of taste and the arts; but they are sometimes linked

with logical values because they imply a criticism, a judgment and a choice.

Within the framework of logical and moral values, *philosophical values* are to be spread out. And right at the top, and at least for most of mankind, there are *spiritual values* which rise out of moral values, and there are *religious values*, those of metaphysics and faith. The latter pervade this life with the future life in view and dwell in the high places of prayer. They seek out and adore the sovereign power.

Thus we start with something trivial, some ordinary object, something produced by the earth and by an ascending process calling for co-operation between intuition, intelligence and heart we follow the paths indicated by study, laboratory work and meditation until we reach *«the divine thought, mistress of all since the foundation of the world»* (de Véricourt: *«Les pouvoirs biologiques de l'homme sur l'homme»*, *Etudes*, April 10th 1948).

As regards *economic values*, everyone knows them without always completely identifying them. Exchange value, intrinsic value, market value — these expressions do not belong entirely to political economy, they are in common use in daily life. They are used of our ordinary daily bread as well as of the services we do for each other, of our little tin boxes as of the holes to be seen in them. Furniture, dwellings, merchandise and debts, temporal goods of all kinds, anything and everything that goes to make up what is called wealth and which we go after with such ruthlessness, all these things have a price fixed to them on the scale of economic values. However, nowadays more than in the past, this large category of values to which our needs and desires naturally go out and which has been seriously affected by the results of wars, by the evil of the times and by the excessive claims of the crowd is melting like wax and vanishing like dreams.

As we go up the scale and reach the other values — *logical and aesthetic values, moral values* — we find, on the contrary, that the value of a human being comes quite definitely before the value of an object. *Everything has to begin with man. He is the essential aspect. It is he who counts above all else. It is no longer a fortune that is being evaluated, an attempt is being made to measure learning, talents and wisdom.* It is science, it is art, it is the poetry incarnate in this soul, in that mind; it is the culture and inquisitiveness of the mind; it is solid achievement and potentialities. As soon as we leave the world of economics to which so many blind people give pride of place we rise slowly until we taste of the masterpiece (and reject the rest), that is to say, until we feel the exaltation of what is transcendent both within and without us.

*In this world of values in which spirit plays the first part and which produces the elite*, what we love, what we look for is no longer the material thing (except beauty in material form: you remember Keats: *«a thing of beauty is a joy for ever»*), it is substance and force in speech, it is shrewdness in judgment and look, it is loftiness of view, it is moral quality, it is courage and daring, it is disinterestedness, it is behaviour in civilized society and, if you will, as the supreme expression of the soul's strength, it is: *«that contempt for death like a flower on the lips»*, to quote a verse from Samain.

We then find ourselves faced with a duality, a kind of separation of heritages: *on the one hand we have what can be settled by money*, and on the other and at quite a different level we have *what can be settled by greatness*. From this comparison, from this contrast which forces itself upon our reason, there immediately and unhesitatingly results *the primacy of the spiritual*.

The sculptor's and painter's masterpiece takes its value

from the mind and its reflection.

In values of all kinds there is *the subjective value and the objective value*, there is the value that things have in themselves and the one we attribute to them. As we have just said, there is the value of the man who made the masterpiece, the poem — the man who achieved the victory —, the value that comes before the intrinsic worth of the masterpiece, the poem and the victory. You have Phidias coming before anything carved in marble by Phidias, Plato before any of Plato's Dialogues; Alexander thinking about the achievements of Alexander. But by a natural process, the masterpiece that outlives the genius that made it produces echoes upon each generation and on each person who approaches the wonder in a rational way. *And this impact delights us to the extent to which we are accessible to what is true, to what is beautiful and to what is good.* This happens when we communicate with the outstanding representatives of humanity, the thinkers, the poets, the mystics and the first class artists, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Theresa of Avila, Michael Angelo, Shakespeare, Pascal, Racine, Beethoven, etc... By giving definite names we bring out the subjective side of values with greater clarity. There are about a thousand million men alive these days, whether very near or very far from here, who know absolutely nothing of these names and many others. Do you think about this sometimes? *The world is still very far removed from knowledge.* Despite (though in some cases because of) our discoveries it is going to take a very long time before higher values make enough impact upon men's sensitivities and minds, and before mankind can subsist, rise up and go forward, instead of going on as it is, from fall to fall.

Once again, we are not going to get involved in scholastic disputes on the possible classifications of values. What I am trying to propose here are personal reactions and in no way

the decision of the philosophers. We are far, however, from having some which can be held as definitive.

If in what I am saying there is only a satisfactory approximation, a substantial element of truth, that will do. *For the thing I am seeking with you is an awakening to a sense of values, it is an overall view which would make it possible for us to identify values, their nature and standing more quickly and with less uncertainty.*

In the midst of all the noise that goes on around us, the tumult, and the confusion of minds and tongues, we all discover that the sense of values is blunted, that we are no longer as strict and as exacting as our forefathers, and that our judgments are often worth about as much as the unstable money of these days when compared with the stable money of the not too distant past. False money is everywhere to be found these days, and, like it, our opinions are falsified. We think little of what would have been of much greater worth in other days, *when the soul's faculties were in a better state of equilibrium*. This does not of course mean that these times are not the most astonishing and the most extraordinary of all; they are full of discoveries, possibilities and, if I may say so, of the infinite. But, to quote a scientist of today of whose writings I know only one sentence, and this I read two weeks ago and noted down with you in mind (Dr Lavalée, quoted in an article in *Etudes*, April 1948 : *La déconvenue d'un siècle de progrès*) : *«A tragic lack of concord has become apparent between the dazzling success of technology and the disappearance of civilization; through knowledge (a logical value) we have become demi-gods, through manners (moral values) we have gone back to the barbarians. To be divided up in this way is an intolerable plight».*

In fact and without any doubt, what is being falsified is literally the meaning of the true, the beautiful and the good!

What is beautiful? What is good? What is true? What is truth? said Pilate. But it so happens that *we find another classification* for the three words already mentioned — a more abstract classification and one that groups them even better.

*The true, the fair, the good:* these are familiar words, and it is strange that we dream about them. They seem to be in full flight at this moment. One wonders where to seek them, so great is the anarchy and so great the illusion and error that have laid hold on everything. These words are so short, these monosyllables are almost inseparable; they are like simple substances in chemistry (if there be such things, after splitting the atom). They seem irreducible. In the same way, they are almost indefinable. Is it possible to explain them properly except by themselves ?

We are told that the true is that which is in conformity with truth; that the beautiful is that which pleases mind and eye; that the good is that which is in conformity with one's duty. But you realize how feeble these definitions are and how they lack clarity and force. We must agree that we do not explain very much when we talk in this way. At bottom, these concepts are evident, and they should be as obvious as the noonday sun. *But in all this we must take into account the mentality and opinion of each person.* Evident concepts which are in fact quite relative and subjective. Strange to say, the true, the beautiful and the good are not the same for all men. They could not be so for us who are gathered here at this moment. We would disagree quite a lot in the very name of the true, the beautiful and the good.

For everything changes even without our moving one step; this is very definitely the case if just one hour's flying time can take us so far from the familiar scenery of our own country. What is true on this side of a mountain is false on

the other. Things are still like that everywhere and more than ever. So it is that, as it was three centuries ago and at all times, *«three degrees of elevation from the pole upset the whole of jurisprudence, one meridian fixes the truth»*.

*«After being in force for a few years»*, Pascal goes on to say, *«fundamental laws change; law has its periods... how strange that justice should be hemmed in by a river !...»* Where are values? Nevertheless, we certainly feel that they must not be lost...

In Europe alone in recent years we have seen concepts so opposed to each other as to be as different as night is from day, and to result in war. Look how everything has changed and is changing from London to Paris, Rome, Berlin, Warsaw and Moscow.

Take any one political regime and then another; compare them: *half of the values we speak of disappear immediately*. As in the (comparatively recent) Dark Ages we witnessed the fury of the iconoclasts, so now in our own day destruction is wrought upon whole categories of spiritual, moral and material boons. The East points a mocking finger at the West, its past, its stability and its gods. The West sees in the East a monstrous phenomenon, an aberration that does away with the meaning of life and death. Men in their millions, thinking they are in possession of the truth or looking for it, let themselves be fobbed off with sheer nonsense, and undergo frightful deformation at the hands of propagandists. How many people in this mad world still agree about the essence of the true, the beautiful and the good? However, in our heart of hearts, and without even making a great effort to accomplish this vertical descent within ourselves, *we find this natural law*, this basic value, this voice nagging us in solitude and silence. *This law in its simplicity possesses a really explosive power, and irresistibly points out to us at*

*least the essence of the true, the beautiful and the good on the plane of morality and conscience. The same could not doubtless be said of logical, aesthetic and economic values. These call for a gift, an initiation, a training, facts and figures, experience, and lastly the inexhaustible lesson taught by science on the move and everyday life; but are we going to deny the miraculous natural law that quite independently of anything else upbraids us for an evil deed, that causes us remorse at midnight and that shows us we are wrong when human law itself says we are right, are we going to deny, I say, without lying, its primordial value and its immediate presence ?*

Doubtless also it is not in its power to assess *on its own* the true, the beautiful and the good on the moral plane that is its domain. *The only reason why we are emphasizing it is in order to bring out an innate and permanent element in the changing world of values*, a universal and constant element, which is constant in its simplest injunctions and which shows the man who has his wits about him the final unity of his origin and race.

For the rest, in this world which is in a perpetual state of flux, every civilization sets forth its own values and along with them has its own controversies and disputes. What a field for investigation and enumeration there is among the *values of the past, the present and the future !*

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Many values from the past are dead, while others have survived and grown. Contact with earlier civilizations is necessary not only in history, but in ethics, aesthetics and everything else. We have already gone back a very long way in the past. But this is just a way of speaking, because five or

six thousand years is very little when compared to the absolute...

After a long night, people on this earth are now trying step by step to find the origins and the first manifestations of life. *Man is enthusiastically in search of man; what he is looking for is his true worth in the past.*

The past has had its values from century to century and from millenium to millenium. In so far as they are decipherable and intelligible, *it is possible to insert these values in the systems we have today*, i.e. into the true, the beautiful and the good, or more precisely, into the economic, logical, and moral values, etc.

*In the realm of economic values*, quite a careful list of objects dating back to prehistoric times and to the still uncertain beginnings of history has been drawn up. *As regards moral and logical values*, before the invention of ideograms, which are signs, and before the invention of the alphabet and words, all we have to go on is inference and hypothesis to supplement (where this is possible) the written expression of thought — the recorded account of the human adventure. *As regards aesthetic values*, it can be said that we know some of them, such as the rock paintings — those products of art in its most primitive form — to be found on the inner walls of caves and which still possess life and the power to move the observer. Again, we have tools hewn out of hard stone and ivory which are sometimes the work of refined art and are so tastefully finished.

Money, the economic value which itself became the measure of economic values, appeared only very late — seven or eight centuries B.C. Before this time, people bartered one thing for another; goods produced directly or indirectly by agriculture served as standards; a quantity of corn, a sheep,

for instance. *Moral and logical values, however, emerged slowly. The Far East, the Middle East and the Near East bear impressive witness to these values from the distant past. At that time Europe and America did not yet exist.*

The clearest fact about values that antiquity has left us is that there were vigorous reactions in the face of life and death, in the face of beauty, love and immortality. We find practically everywhere nothing but temples, votive offerings, remembrance of and reverence for the dead, hymns to the divinity, pictures of fate and the gods, etc.

As early as the time of Hammurabi, two thousand years B.C., *laws were basically moral values.* About the same time, the alphabet (a thing of priceless worth) was taking shape and gave tidings of the first sacred books. A few centuries later and we are in Homer's day; a few more, and we reach the time of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. *In the Eastern Mediterranean at this time the realm of values was a burning light. It is Hellenism in its glory.* On the fringe of the prophetic and legislative epoch in Israel a pre-Christian philosophy was born, dazzled by the discovery of time and space and looking for the unknown god. Then comes Christianity and what proceeds from it. Values become clear, detached from things of earth, spiritualized. With the revelation of the Spirit, knowledge of the spirit asserts itself in a wonderful way. *This is the triumph of spiritual values.* The martyrology fills out with the names of those who die with a song on their lips, for an idea, for a faith, reckoning that there are values infinitely surpassing the things of men.

Rome in her power and Rome in her decline, Byzantium, the Middle Ages and modern times have lived in this troubled atmosphere, *but in the stability of a civilization in the ascendant that gave Europe and half the world their structure and greatness.* The Reformation came, the Encyclopedists came, the

Revolution came, then other revolutions, then the time of marvellous discoveries and finally, emerging from terrible wars, Marxism ruling the state. This is the basic conflict at present, the apocalyptic conflict dividing the world as it has never been divided before and questioning the most lofty values, values for which generations have, in a kind of rational and mystical intoxication, willingly lived and died.



*In the context of values, what ought we to think, what ought we to say about the world of today ?* It is obvious and there is no doubt about it that it is out of true, it is at war with itself over traditional values and illusory values, and it claims on the one hand to build up a society out of nothing while on the other a tremble is felt right from the depths. Fortunately, we see the spirit reacting with that limitless force which one expects of the spirit.

In spite of all the theories and all the discoveries, man's life, if limited to the life of the body, is not very much and never will be very much. It is really very little indeed if it does not seek and find anything beyond sickness, suffering, decrepitude and death.

*But what interests us is not just the spiritual and religious point of view (though when it comes to finality this dominates all the others) it is also, through it, the political and social aspects which produce the nations, legislation and human beings of today. Thus it is that in fact religious values, whether we like it or not, set the pace for moral values to a great extent. Man's basic attitudes change according to whether the Eternal is the supreme value or not. Codes of law based psychologically upon eternal justice impose*

their authority or collapse according to whether the soul is immortal or not. *If left to its own devices, the loftiest virtue, based on a natural intransigent honesty and on a sense of honour carried to its highest pitch, will not resist certain temptations very well.* You remember the story of the mandarin : a button which could kill, thousand of miles away without anyone suspecting anything, an unknown mandarin a hundred years old living in a lost city in remote China, if this dark and fleeting gesture could, without leaving any traces, bestow a fortune running into millions upon the man who made it, how many men among the less wicked, and how many decent people would hesitate to press that button? What manmade laws would stop crime committed in secret and darkness, if the unwritten legislation made plain to our consciences by the natural law, if the divine law did not directly exert its force? *«Moral sensitivity is quick to vanish once the feeling for the sacred has gone»*, wrote Dr. Alexis Carrel. Thus, one by one, these values are lost.

It is because the standard of values was no longer what it was that totalitarian Germany, in spite of her genius and power, let herself be dragged into the most grievous and inexcusable crimes in the name of reasons of State and in the name of science, eugenics and the future of the race. Other totalitarian regimes have shown like excesses in other sectors. In their eyes, man's personality is nothing, the infinite worth of the human soul is nothing, and the salvation of the individual is nothing. Everything can and must be sacrificed to a monster called the State or the Party, to an ephemeral and soulless fiction that reduces us to dirt without giving a moment's thought to the splendour and promises of our destiny which are yet as plain to see, if only they would deign to look at them, as the sad plight of our human condition and as our misery.

The distressing word «dereliction» is applied to humanity by a certain school of contemporary philosophy. This word, which stands for all the frightful abandonment of teeming humanity, alone and with nothing to fall back upon, on a minute planet revolving in the immensity of space, rings out like a funeral note. It sounds like an invitation to homicide to be committed on oneself and others. What values pertaining to light, music, poetry and beauty could stand firm in the face of this despairing word? How can you expect even the highest values not to get lost in philosophies like these, or that a society be reborn and live, or that a renaissance could develop and last?

*In our day and at this very hour the crisis in values has reached a very crucial stage throughout the whole world. Spiritualism and materialism are quarrelling and snatching life and death from each other. The first speaks of charity, self-denial, detachment, hope, love, eternity and basic values. It says all this in every language. The second speaks of economic equality, far-reaching claims, class struggle, war within society and levelling out everything by every available means with an eye to some future and very questionable golden age, excluding the resurrection and God's justice. Values are thus discussed, argued about, exalted or debased to the utmost extremes of violence and sacrifice.*



*The future, however, lies in values, in the real ones, in those which generations have recognized as sound and important. The relative nature of well-being and luxury, which give rise to artificial needs, is perfectly obvious. The greater the importance we attach to comfort, the more we fall into artificiality, and the more we tie ourselves to objects of secondary*

importance of which we cannot deprive ourselves any more without feeling it. Well-being and comfort are indeed fine and good things, and a thing which is a mere luxury is often very attractive, but *if a value is not to betray us*, it must reside in the pleasure taken by the mind and heart *rather than in the pleasure of possession*, and especially in an infinite hope.

In action and movement, the future should tend towards a relative and noble detachment, facilitated by training guided by the spirit and by a general attitude taken by the State — an intelligent, conscious, humane and exemplary attitude, in so far as this is possible, and finally by a better understanding of moral and aesthetic values. The future as it should be lies in that serenity which makes people want truth, beauty and happiness for all mankind. Our age is putting selfishness on trial, but in a brutal way, letting itself go to excess unreasonably, and madly giving itself up to the vice of envy when faced with the rapacity of ambition, and to the kind of disease that will not tolerate the happiness of others at any price. *Again, the future lies in the harmony of values among themselves* and in a certain equilibrium between the values that puts everything in its place, and puts the things that make the soul great before those that are gnawed by worm and rust. However wonderful it may be, a world lacking moral values would be a monster.

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*Let us now see, as far as we can, what are the values in this country and what we would like them to be:*

*Knowledge of economic values goes a long way in our land.* The illusory values in this category receive their recompense here; everyone finds fault with them, sets them aside and rejects them, despite the fictions and laws. While we are on this point, let us observe that laws here too often have just

a relative value. Without being prejudiced in any way, we could ask ourselves, and we must have the courage to be brutally frank in this matter, which part of our legislation is the most devoid of values. This goes back to an almost congenital lack of discipline, but in spite of everything it calls for a reaction which cannot be put off.

Except in the realm of the arts, in which the number of initiated Lebanese is still very small, material things are nowhere assessed with greater accuracy and greater precision than here. The Lebanese know how to buy and they know how to sell, but save in exceptional cases they are far from understanding the importance of completed work, of careful attention given to detail, of things which add quality to taste and which, to such a great extent, *give things their value and attach us to them*. Those who lived on our shores in ancient times knew this much better than we do. On the Phoenician shores in former times the delicate craft of the jeweller and goldsmith, work in stone, marble and bronze far surpassed the dull work produced these days. Everything is rough-and-ready nowadays, everything is slapdash and mediocre.

Perhaps through vanity and perhaps also because we are more superficial than is permissible, we are still too attached to the façade in every respect, and to a façade that is, moreover, lacking in architecture and grace; we know all too little about what makes the harmonious beauty of even the simplest interiors and which raises a society and a nation above the ordinary up to the level of a great civilization. Yet it is with gladness that we note the real progress that has been made in this sector of material life over a number of years. An effort is obviously being made and it is becoming more general. In some of its aspects the Lebanese house bears witness to this.

And then we often commit that sin against the spirit

which consists in assessing a man in terms of the money he is worth rather than of all the other considerations. This is a very serious fault because it reveals a misappreciation and an inexcusable contempt for values of the first class.

Money is given too much importance here — money, that is to say, considered from the point of view of possession and not for what can be done with it. I would certainly like, and so would all of us, there to be much more of it at the disposal of the true, the good and the beautiful, of education and instruction, of science and the arts, of moral and physical hygiene, and, finally, of the countless human and social needs placed upon us by a new world; but let us beware lest among us money be given exaggerated importance in our definition of man. Let us remember that money can give rise to greatness only in so far as it serves an ideal in generosity and integrity, and especially in so far as it is not used to lead men's consciences astray or to benumb them.

In Lebanon, economic values could stifle spiritual values unless we show ourselves attentive to the changes in ideas and morals, and if we become the indiscriminate prey of material things. See how great the threat is and how real the danger: Palestine is suffering cruelly for having allowed the landowner to place the value of land above the value of the homeland.

Lebanon is at a crossroads which, along with spiritual values, attracts temporal business concerns that do good and bad business. *Around us and in the midst of us there is an enormous power of attraction and enticement.* This is the time to recall that if all good things in this world have a value, *they are not all for sale.* There must be some that are not on the market, *for the good of all the people, and for the service or salvation of all.*

This country, this country of ours (others besides our-

selves in the vicinity are in the same position) has always lived dangerously. It is living, and is called upon to live in this way. It is surrounded with temptations and covetousness. In so far as we prefer, for instance, commercial facilities and commodities to legitimate liberties and to basic liberties we shall be on the brink of perdition. The big traders, the merchants of Beirut, the industrialists and all those in whose hands lies the prosperity of the city ought to give more thought to this. All is well when we reconcile all the interests at stake *without having to sacrifice the main thing*; but for us values — material values — cannot be what they are in America, for instance, for a citizen not bothered or threatened by anyone. We must have greater care for the moral soundness of this country, for its endurance and for its staying power than for its material wealth.

We do not forget that values vary according to circumstances of time and place. This is made clear by the Republic of San Marino, twelve thousand independent men on a rock in the heart of Italy. For centuries these men have been putting their independence above everything. Had they been incorporated into Italy, they would have had fewer difficulties and wider horizons. Although Italy is a great and very beautiful country, they preferred to keep their freedom.

In order to build up the Lebanon of this generation and of tomorrow — Lebanon which, after a long period of repression, fortunate circumstances have enabled to go forward with unexpected speed — and if we want the work to be lasting (if we want the intellect to rule the discussion and with it the highest values) we will have to be sure that the morale and the higher forces of this country will in no case give way. *This is very definitely a question of education and morals*, as we all realize. There is one thing that makes itself necessary in a startling way, namely a *hardening of personality and*

*character* in the infinite flexibility and the limitless adaptation of Lebanese life. Now we certainly do not shine when it comes to character. We must confess our sin in this respect. If prosperous trade, healthy industry and developed agricultural life (the dangers in the agricultural sector are less serious) are a prime necessity for us, and if we need merchants and industrialists, traders and financiers of high ability, *we need citizens more*. What is going on in Palestine must serve as a lesson to everyone.

*Unless Lebanon starts turning out real citizens, it may be threatened in the course of time.* This is a fact established by the whole of our history throughout four thousand years of political and social life. To a certain extent the same is true for our neighbours as well. The formidable proximity of Israel comes on top of many long-standing dangers. For not just beautiful music will come forth from Israel, but a bid for hegemony backed up by the sublest of intellectuals, by the most rigid discipline and by the most varied and powerful of ways of infiltration.

It is by *individual and collective discernment of values* and by *a return to a hierarchy of values* that has apparently got lost that Lebanon will consolidate what it has acquired. *The first point* is that it be guided in this direction and with perseverance, as the compass indicates the Pole Star. *The second* is that it should discourage less or encourage more the best people in the State. This order and this rectification can become the general rule only through the instrumentality of governments whose main aim is the increase in moral and spiritual values and which consequently condemn *everything that demoralizes and that enervates, in the strict sense of the word, a people often called upon by fate to put up a resistance.*

The «time» factor is considered with particular satisfaction among the political values to which the greatest impor-

tance is attached in our day. We have always thought of time as a gentleman who can sometimes straighten out awkward situations. *But it is not possible with impunity to leave to time the moral and technical guidance of the Administration of the State or the moral and social guidance of the Nation.* This guidance must necessarily come from a series of positive actions on the part of the government and the representatives of the State.

But let us make a quick summary in order to draw a conclusion.

*Economic values* are among the best known and the most flourishing in this country; some of them, however, and not the least, are now being threatened. At the economic level, which inevitably leads to the political level, the immediate proximity of the State of Israel is a very serious danger. A force such as this cannot grow alongside us without bringing pressure to bear upon our vital organs and without causing our means of subsistence to become scarce. The way in which the Palestinian affair has developed might lead us to revise what we think of many economic values in Lebanon today.

*Logical values*, of which the object is a wide sector of knowledge and the sciences, we chiefly owe to foreign education which in a liberal spirit we have sought, called for and received for the last eighty years. The whole of mathematics, physics, chemistry, natural history, biology, etc., come under this heading. In this way we can on the one hand measure their importance and, on the other, the share in the various branches of knowledge that it is permissible for us to claim. We are far from the main centres of science but the prospects of a bright future are ours. If we want to achieve this future, it lies with us to broaden research and the scope of the laboratory together and to give greater play to the values that make for

prestige and power first of all and which bring intellectual and material enrichment. These values are an essential means towards civilization, but on condition that they are controlled by morality and judgment. Good and evil, together proceed from the split atom as from the tree of knowledge.

We have already said something in passing about *aesthetic values*. It cannot be said here that they have the upper hand. Painting, sculpture, architecture, music and the fine arts in general, some of which were marvellous two thousand years ago, do not amount to much, though there are some outstanding exceptions; but it is pleasing to note that they are still alive or coming to life again. Talents are emerging and our hope is being born again with them. We have had enough of ugliness and shapeless pieces of work, enough of faults against proportion and taste, enough of blameworthy mistakes. In order to establish contact with the beautiful we have got to the stage of seeking out nature which is so admirable here, and of digging up objects left by antiquity in this venerable land. We must face the sombre fact that in Lebanon it is still too often man that does violence to nature, ruining the country-side, stripping trees of their branches, letting young shoots perish, and, finally, blocking both the street and the horizon with a ghastly block of flats. Although this is not so frequent, it is still lamentable. In the concern we ought to have for values, we must cure ourselves of this trouble.

As regards *moral values* and things pertaining to *ethics*, let us remember that they carry over from philosophy into politics.

Obviously, we all know of great moral values and lofty virtues, both individual and collective, in Lebanon. There are some very noble traditions, memorable examples of loyalty to the community, to the land and to the past, and a deep sense of the solidarity of mankind. All this is no doubt to be found

in varying degrees, but there are gaps in it all as well — gaps which first of all can in all justice be said to be the work of an age that overturns everything and which, more than any other, is riddled with passions and perverse instincts. It would be madness to drift along with the current instead of going against it. *Before all else, moral values are to be placed as quickly as possible in the front rank of everything to do with the structure of the State, the government of the State, the representation of the nation in the State, and the administration of the State.* In this way the people would be given a good example instead of taking scandal, as happens too often; in this way, were the storm to break, discipline and salvation would come to us. *It is in the name of ethics and moral values* that we stop to consider this need, requesting that values be put, or put back, in their place.

*For privilege and favour are far gone.* It is not that there is any lack of moral teaching among us, but lessons and harangues are not enough. Example is the death of precept.

*Lastly, the school of morality and the school of character become merged together.* What use is it to know the law unless one learns to respect the law? Civic sense and professional conscience are an effect of training and example.



Look closely in this country at the kind of thing that calls forth criticism and blame; you will usually find some offence against the law. Now it is law that lays down obligations and customs and protects freedom and rights. The fault lies with men.

Repeated violations that go unpunished cause rules and laws to become obsolete. The reason why we have to stress moral values is that life today is full of these lapses. Whenever

law is not properly applied, it automatically gives rise to monopoly and privilege in favour of those who care nothing for it.

Thus, among the values that are not properly upheld in this country, we must number rules and laws; this is a serious matter in which every citizen must have the courage to take stock of his errors, *starting with the legislator*. What makes us explain the situation as clearly as we have is a passionate desire for freedom and our love for this country which deserves that all its children, and not only the elite, should learn to assert their personality in the constant development of human dignity.

Spiritual and religious values are still the source of greatest consolation to us. The Lebanese were able to remain in the high places of worship; they have not cut themselves off from the divine and the eternal. The spirit of tolerance itself formed Lebanon right from the beginning, and is consolidating the Lebanon of today; freedom of conscience in brotherhood and all lawful freedom also had, and still have, a share in this. Let us frankly recognize the benefits of the spiritual order in this. And now we make our appeal for social reforms along the lines indicated by the mind and heart, for social progress which the state of mankind makes so necessary, and lastly for those values which are to a great extent the necessary condition for man's dignity.

In this matter it is more and more necessary that our country should blaze the trail and set an example; that it should not become a slave to what others do, and that while taking into account the diversity of the human elements of which it is composed it should make progress *thanks especially to a rectification of political and social behaviour and by the inculcation of growing respect for one's fellow-men and for the opinion of one's fellow-citizens*.

Our task is considerable and our responsibilities are far-reaching. We have met with a large measure of understanding and sympathy from nations (the Arab nations and the others). International life has proved favourable to us and rich in benefits. Spiritual and intellectual values have served us wonderfully well. Lebanon is liked in other countries and commands respect, despite the modest dimensions of its territory. We owe it to ourselves (and it is also a duty to mankind) to exert all our energy to give pride of place in all we do to spiritual values and human values. Our intentions are loyal and our mission is clear. Lebanon's role is to discover values, vindicate them and live by them. Whether there be question of customs, culture, humanism, science, intellect or business, we are compelled to measure up to a great destiny. *To get there, we shall make our principles fit our actions and put our house in order.*

Our future is thus based on knowledge of values and the hierarchy that exists among them. We would have no excuse if we got lost on the way.



# **THE WORLD OF TODAY**

Lecture given at the Cenacle on November 6th 1950

How does each one of us see the world of today? There are no limits to this question. It is one of those questions which, drawing us out of our habits and our familiar ways of thinking, bring us up to the abyss.

An attempt must be made to see the earth, its continents and its nations, not as they would be seen from Sirius, but as we see the moon in its fulness on a summer's night, or as we turn a spherical map of the world.

Our way of looking at it will thus be to stand back, and our judgment on men and things, on the present and the future will stand to gain by being free from passion.

The world of today is indeed the same as that of yesterday and the same as that of all times. And yet it is so different from the past, even from the past which is not very far behind us! Just as trees change their bark, and just as some animals change their form, the earth changes as well, as does everything living on its surface. Everything undergoes modification — ways of thinking, customs, nations, ways of looking at life, and our attitude as regards everything that comes to an end and everything that has no end.

It is impossible to enter upon such a subject without a certain amount of uneasiness, poetry, and the ability to dream.

But did I really choose this subject for you? It came quite naturally because a title was needed for a lecture that had been promised and because in such a situation it is wise to set oneself at ease and, as far as possible, to leave the windows open.

In the vague state of mind in which I was at that time *the most suitable thing was to choose the widest horizon and the most extensive subject-matter*. In any case, why should one limit oneself, why should one stop at details when, on one evening or another, one could place the whole world out in front?

The age of specialization is on the decline, in spite of appearances. We now have the turning-point of general views, of the synthesis and of the most imposing prospects. In the complicated state of science, *the result of it all is an inevitable simplification*. As a result of research and discovery, three quarters of the theses and books contained in our libraries have become out of date or things of the past. Hundreds of thousands of books which were once «highly thought of», as used to be said, no longer count. They have less value than the interpretation of dreams.

Learned people from all branches of science and arts are reaching the point where everything comes together. The mathematician, the physicist, the chemist, the naturalist and the biologist are in continual dialogue with each other as with the philosopher and poet. For some conclusion is needed to all this work and it is no longer possible to be content with just one aspect of the world. Time is indeed short. It is truer to say that it is fleeting by. As far as possible, we have therefore to see everything and say everything at once.

Is a rigid plan possible in these circumstances? A plan is always possible, but what use is it to stick to it too closely?

Again, such a plan would be longer than the discourse. It would merge into it.

Let us try to say the main things in an hour, to say what occurs to us and what we shall be able to say. Our only care will be not to stray deliberately from the truth.

What is the world of today to the mature man? It is almost the same as it is for the child whose mind is beginning to open up to knowledge. It is rather like the journey of Alice in Wonderland. The huge expanse of space, the heavenly bodies that rush on their course, and the globe that turns with us on its surface; the republics and kingdoms, the order, disorder, the anarchy, the light, the folly and the hope, there you have the setting in which man lives. It is not possible for us to rise above this abode where we live save with our mind. In a sense it is a prison, but how wonderfully free is its access to space! It is a disappointing and transitory dwelling, but how full of delights it is! It is a curious bundle of enigmas, including the incredible matter of fact which is *man; man worrying about his destiny, man lost in thought with the heavens stretched out before him.*

*Let us try to see what this world is at this moment —* this world which is so different from its far-distant beginning when «the spirit of God moved over the waters» — this unappeased and unsated world which is the result of so many phenomena and «cogitations» and is the temporary outcome of an unending march in time.

Life has been in existence on the earth for at least a thousand million years. The drop of blood that is in our veins may be as old as this. How far has man, that living and new creature who goes back to ancient times, how far has he got with investigations aimed at discovering his own physical origin ?

Nothing absolutely definite can yet be said by science on this central point. There are only high degrees of probability. I believe simply, I believe firmly, and I hope you all believe, that the soul of each one of us is directly created by God. The glory of God shines forth in it more than in all the rest of visible creation. It makes man what he is: a potential god; out of him it makes the very image of God. It is the soul that explains and justifies what Bergson said so admirably in reference to the earth: a machine for producing gods.

As regards things composed of matter and things composed of a living body, an incalculably long period may have elapsed since the first appearance of life; you and I — living creatures that have stemmed from forms of life now extinct — proceed from the very well-springs of the past.

The world of today is just that — a spring season that is inconceivably old; a summer that has seen untold harvests, an autumn and a winter which herald, await and clearly betoken a victory over death, just as they do the resurrection and the renewal.

Infinitesimally small in itself, the earth goes round in this planetary system which, along with our sun, is a speck of dust imperceptibly small in the Milky Way, our 'galaxy', as they call the nebulae and the groups of stars. We now know that in this Milky Way which the sky in August shows us in all its brightness from east to south and of which we are part (people did not even suspect this until quite recently), there are at least a hundred thousand million stars; and we know that just this Milky Way alone stretches about 100,000 light years in space; and we know what the speed of light is.

If only to give us a better idea of how small we are, let us remember, lastly, that the whole Milky Way, our Milky

Way, the one in which the earth is just a speck of dust, although so huge, is only one of the five hundred million milky ways discovered by the most powerful telescopes or recorded by photography, and that in this expanding universe there is reason to believe that there are at least a thousand times as many, i.e. *five or six hundred thousand million galaxies* and milky ways *at inconceivably great distances from each other*. This is something that surpasses our understanding. There is also reason for believing that this ceiling which makes our head reel when we think of it will be pierced one of these days.

*This must not be overlooked in the world of today.* The surprise was beyond all expectations, and wanting to measure the skies could ruin the intelligence of the man who cannot be humble enough to add an act of faith to his knowledge. Only the spirit can face such things. Again, it must know its own limitations. If all men thought about this there would be fewer problems, fewer complications and fewer unbridled passions in our distraught human race. We would be less intent upon things that perish and upon gain of a disorderly nature, whether it be acquired in good order or bad, and more intent upon knowledge and love.

But we shall not lose our way in the infinite expanse of the galaxies in which just one unwise move or one hour passed in dreaming would get one lost. We must stay on earth *in order to see how far we have got and what is going on there in the middle of this century.*



Only a few years ago, vast tracts of land on the earth were unknown. When I was a child, the names of explorers on the move and of famous travellers were music to my ears,

and the stories told about their discoveries and exploits added the attractions of legend to the interest of history. Since that time, the explorer has practically nothing more to justify his existence, and the traveller has no longer anything heroic about him. The battle has stopped because there is nothing to fight about, though there may be people willing to fight. Unexplored snow-covered regions were crossed or flown over; the poles were discovered. The element of mystery that there was in nature vanished like a dream. As the world of the stars was becoming transparent, the dark continents were one by one being conquered and stock was taken of them. Here and there there are still, no doubt, some steppes and deserts that have not been trodden by the foot of man, e. g. western Brazil, central Australia and the north of Asia and America, but the aeroplane can see everything, and the vertical take-off machine will one day soon land wherever you like.

Once man had reconnoitred the surface of his planet, of set purpose he next dug into its bowels, sometimes in search of minerals and coal and sometimes in search of his origins. And now we have on the one hand paleontology and its uncertainties, but also the great lessons it has for us, and on the other we have petroleum which brings war and peace with it, precious stones, gold, uranium and any of those things that make for the too often inhuman alliance between wealth and power.

People have not been as worried as they should by the fact that, while the aspect of mystery in nature was disappearing, the power to cause wonder was withering, and fairy-stories were doomed. To a certain extent, life was losing its charm, and the illusions of former times, and the delightful stories told by our grandmothers were being lost. This meant that there was so much melancholy in store for the disillusioned man.

«Once upon a time» is a way of telling a story that does not impress anyone these days. This is it that makes people say either with bitterness or sadness: *there are no children any more*. From this time on man has been setting his face against the supernatural which he needs more than ever. But all that was yesterday. The men of my generation are actually those who belong to the period of transition. Their position is right in the middle of the drama. You could say that centuries have elapsed between their childhood and their mature years. In this respect they are like the Patriarchs in Genesis.

Side by side with this, our planet has shrunk in proportion to the increase in the speed achieved by man. There is nothing novel about this, but speed, which emerged from a long period of infancy as a result of the steam engine and the railway, has increased at a startling rate with the advent of air travel.

Distances have ceased to exist. The long walks and the sea journeys of former times now seem hard to believe. A few hours' flying are enough to cross the oceans. Along with the other wonders we all know of, here is now the whole series of discoveries made during this half-century without parallel in history — a series that is either infernal or celestial, according to the way you look at it. The earth is like Vulcan's forge. It encroaches upon the realm of the gods. A hitherto unheard of advance has been made in the construction of machinery — an advance to which nothing in the history of man is comparable. And now at the end we have the machine itself boldly coming to help our thought. There are machines at present which co-operate speedily and as it were intelligently with man in certain functions involving calculation and research. Along with so many others, a new science has been born which is already making a powerful contribution towards simplifying our work.

An earth with no mysteries on the material level, in which everything is located and explored; prodigies of speed which make it possible to be in one place after another almost without delay, and the violent overthrow of a body of century-old traditions and of a whole way of thinking and living — there you have in brief one aspect of what has been achieved. To this must be added the extraordinary advent of the atomic age with all its repercussions.

The world of today is going through an intellectual, moral and material upheaval unlike anything since the time of the first man. New ages are thus being ushered in, and they are just beginning, and the future is rich in luminous vistas to which no limit is set. *By feeling the impact of this tremendous shock men and nations painfully develop, trying to adapt themselves as they do so.*



In 1900, the British Empire, then at its peak, was the world's first power. Other powers in Europe, with France in the lead, figured very prominently. No decisions were taken without them, and they played a very great part in the «concert of nations». Again, in 1914 Europe seemed mistress of the world. The United States, it is true, already had the rank of a star of the first magnitude, but they were far from being what the First World War made them to be. The shadow of the so-called «colonial» powers covered our planet. The impartial judgment of future generations will be that their effort was often more constructive and humane than is thought, that we have been unjust towards them and that the rest of the world, without the obviously self-seeking intervention of Europe, *would be largely a world to be colonized today.* Nations cannot be expected to be completely free from self-interest; and even philanthropy we see mixed with a kind of righteous egoism.

The charity of the Marshall plan, so worthy in itself, is surely proof of this also.

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904 was the first occasion for a long time on which Europe's reputation was tarnished. The First World War, won with the rather late co-operation of the Americans, paved the way for the supremacy of the United States. The Second World War associated Europe with Asia, against Asia and Europe. This was to be catastrophic both for Asia and for Europe.

From the time of the First World War, Marxist communism destroyed Imperial Russia, that majestic, almost divine and decrepit establishment. Along with it a new religion, a materialist, revolutionary religion was set up *with a political program of universal conquest*. A contemporary thinker has felicitously defined it as a «secular religion». In order to defeat Germany and Japan in the Second World War the unnatural coalition had to be made — the imposed coalition of this same revolutionary communism that had become the Third International with the civilization of the West. *We witnessed the paradoxical alliance of the classical democracy of Europe and America with Marxist power of which the main aim was to destroy that very democracy. Dire need forces men into the most lamentable deviations.*

In this particular case, history will record a real lack of intelligence on the part of the West. To have gone so far as this, *the statesmen of Europe — the Europe of history — had sacrificed the very future of their civilization and the peace of the world to nationalism in its narrowest sense.*

In such a way that the end of the Second World War — that dreadful slaughter and heaping up of ruins — was only the deplorable beginning of a war of a different kind — the most abominable of all. For years now we have been witnessing

the work of revolution going on in secret in all countries, *while one half of the world is strictly cut off from the other so that the long communist experiment which cannot be carried out in the open air may go on in a sealed vessel.*

The so-called cold war, in which the most recent episode was yet one of the hottest (we are referring to Korea, of course), this diabolical war which attacks the nervous system, the muscles of the heart and the substance of the brain, and, finally, the «psychological make-up» of man, collectively or individually, the cold war spreads its poison throughout the world even more than the intermittent ventures of Hitler's National Socialism. Today, all the religions that believe in the Creator and profess the reality of his power have naturally come closer to each other to defend the spiritual. The inaugural meeting of the present session of the United Nations began with a prayer.

*The thing at stake in the extraordinary attack being made on the rest of humanity, in the name of materialistic Marxism and a philosophy based solely upon economics, by three hundred million people who are more or less convinced or giving their consent, is quite definitely the presence or absence of a civilization that recognizes the things of the spirit.*

*This heart-breaking conflict dominates the world of today. It provides it with its driving force. Nations undergo violence or resist it because of this wholesale contradiction.*

Let us note in passing one of the main differences between materialistic Marxism and the Nazism that was so recently triumphant. In the countries subject to Marxism, there is no question of looking for room in which to live; there is no lack of space. It is true that the imperialism of pre-revolutionary Russia tried to find an outlet to the high seas over a period of three

centuries, but the room to live in sought by communism corresponds to the intellectual and material domination of our whole planet. From this comes the persistent attempt at world-wide revolution whose purpose is to bring down all resistance from within. One single crack in the system is enough to bring out the contrast between a nominally democratic régime in which freedom exists in theory and individual freedom no longer exists, and a régime in which freedom really exists, and in as many and marvellous forms as in the United States and Switzerland for example. Another basic difference is that Nazism, however cramped for space it may have been and in fact was, defended the right to possess land almost as the English people do now, whereas Marxism in its extreme form, though having vast tracts of Eastern Europe and Siberian Asia at its disposal, reduces this right to practically nothing or abolishes it. Thus the country which was the most cramped for space defended what was rejected and done away with by the country with plenty of wide open spaces.

The world of today presents us with a tangle of apparently insoluble problems. Let us see who are the principal actors in this world's drama in the middle of the twentieth century. We are dealing with nations and groups of nations, with forces joined together rather than with isolated ones, and by that very fact, with the so-called United Nations among which disunity so clearly reigns. Each of us will find the moral powers, with the Holy See at their head, asserting themselves through the others.

A) First of all, the U.S.S.R., *bestriding Europe and Asia*, the U.S.S.R. and its satellites, that is to say 350 million people, about a seventh of the world's population not counting China.

B) Then, *in Asia*, Mao Tsé-Tung's China, over against what is left of Nationalist China: *450 million people*, an overwhelming figure and the world's highest for any one nation — almost a fifth of mankind.

C) *In America:*

- a) *the United States*, the world's leading power with *150 million inhabitants*.
- b) *Latin America*; *120 million people* gathered together in almost twenty nations, starting with Mexico and going south to the tip of Chile and the Republic of Argentine.

D) *In Europe*, and on all continents in association with it:

- a) *The United Kingdom and its dominions* (including India): *500 million people*, more than a fifth of the world's population.
- b) *Western Europe*, France, Italy, Benelux, the Scandinavian countries, etc... and everything which, in various ways, depends on them: about *300 million people*.

E) *In the Near East*, the countries belonging to the Arab League, *40 million people*; and Israel, which must be given the distinction of being named separately, *Israel: from twelve to thirteen hundred thousand people in Palestine*, and in fact ten times as many throughout the world.

F) Finally, almost *400 million people* sharing the rest between them; *East Africa, South-East and South-West Asia, including Japan*. What an irony of fate, and what a lesson taught by destiny it is that puts Japan for the time being in this residual category after so much pride and power !

All this mass, from two thousand three hundred million

to two thousand four hundred million men in all, *goes to make up just two camps* in the United Nations (with well-known exceptions and, as they say, with the usual reservations); two camps which, irreconcilably opposed to each other today, are locked in a battle of apocalyptic dimensions.

We shall quickly pass some brief remarks of a very general nature about the way in which the lords of this huge chess-board are distinguished from each other, and about the way in which they interest us most.

*The USSR and her satellites* (minus China) : this is one of the two camps in the United (and disunited) Nations, and is the one in which thorough-going Marxism and international revolution hold sway. Everyone knows the influence exerted by the USSR; everyone weighs up her power or supposes it. Here you have one of the world's most important forces. In open conflict with it are the world's religious forces, the civilizations that draw their inspiration from spiritual sources and the defenders of the traditional democracy which rose out of the historical forms of freedom in England, and later out of the French Revolution.

With all her doors closed, the USSR is carrying out an experiment on a colossal scale. It is all going on behind what is called the iron curtain, which is the most jealously guarded barrier on this earth, and is a barrier which no one can attempt to cross without immediate danger to his life. The raising of the curtain upon this huge scene covering more than a quarter of the earth's dry land will be slow in coming. Indeed, it will not be possible to raise the curtain *as long as the average standard of living in the USSR is below that of other civilized countries, and as long as systematic constraints are the rule.*

Unless the USSR makes progress with her doctrine, she will *go back*. To the same extent, because of the curtain and

because she is not mistress of the seas, she is condemning herself to loneliness, despite the extent of the territory she covers. *No one questions* the fact that in one domain or another she has achieved impressive results through the dictatorial methods she uses. With this we agree without any hesitation: considerable progress is being made in the USSR. But England, the Scandinavian countries, for example, and many other countries in Europe, but especially America, have done much better by means much more humane. According to the most reliable and serious witnesses, the general situation in the USSR after thirty years does not compare with the kind of life, «the way of life» as the Americans call it, enjoyed by the others. We should take as our standard of comparison, not the most disinherited countries, *in which, however, and in spite of everything, the freedom bestowed by the natural law is still a thing of priceless worth, but the whole of the West where freedom exists in so many forms, where man's rights are recognized, and where the family, the basic unit of society, has not been enslaved and absorbed by the Party and the State.*

*Thorough-going Marxism is world-wide by definition, and the USSR is good proof of this.* It attacks the whole of our planet. Everywhere is to be found the marvellous organization, open or in secret depending on the place, the network of cells and the life lived in secret and subject to discipline with a view to the revolution that has been set up as a principle, pending a doubtful and far-off golden age.

Marxism in power is an experiment unprecedented in scope that runs counter to the past in its entirety and which seeks to shake the world to its foundations.

We are here a few hours by air from this immense power which, when it was Russia with a traditional régime — Holy Russia — cast its shadow over the Near East. All that is left

now is the memory and the incense of that venerable past. If the Russia of old was to a tragic extent a land of serfs, one is at a loss when one tries to describe the Russia of today in purely human terms. Is there such a difference between being the chattel of the State, that is to say, basically, of a small group of men and being that of a man?

Let us recall, in passing, that Moscow supported Israel, that is to say, a form of *religious racism*, of *exasperated racism*, with the utmost vigour, thereby agreeing with the United States, for once. The explanation is to be found on the one hand in the embarrassment it would thereby cause others, and on the other in the hopes based on the revolutionary ferment that Israel inevitably carries with her.

*Mao Tsé-Tung's China is quite a different thing.* It is one of the world's oldest civilizations, one of its most refined, rejuvenated under the inspiration of new men (in the sense of newness of mind) and which, through the revolutionary ardour manifested today, is at bottom defending its originality and personality. China's confusion very largely results from fear of Japan. For to the Chinese, Japan is what Prussia still seems to be to many French people.

It is hard to see China adapting itself in the long run to the rigours of Marxist discipline. Mass production, with all its monotony, seems incompatible with the real China which is the homeland of porcelain, bronze, jade, and of the finest materials — the land of most exquisite colours, and, lastly, of art in innumerable forms. This is why, when we think of China today, we cannot see it developing for long as Moscow has done. They are two different mentalities, at present curiously harnessed to one and the same doctrine, and unable to follow the same path indefinitely. With the dialectic of Mao Tsé-Tung, who is so anxious about his policy for the

«Artists and Writers of the New China», one may contrast the thought of Lin Yutang, the contemporary author of such famous books as: «My Country and My People» and «The Importance of Living». Let us recall some significant sentences from the second of these two works which is so characteristic but inspired by such a disillusioned philosophy. The sentences chosen are pointed remarks which, through the night of the present, cast vivid light on the future:

*«Looking at Chinese literature, philosophy and art as a whole», writes Lin Yutang, «it has become quite obvious to me that a doctrine of wise disenchantment and sound enjoyment of life constitutes their message and common teaching. It is their most frequently occurring, their most characteristic and most consistent theme». This is the reaction of eternal China. In our opinion, if China is to break once and for all with its «wisdom», thousands of years old, and to take a different path it can do so only as the result of some kind of faith and not of a denial of the spiritual. Four hundred and fifty million people are affected by this attitude of mind.*

*«Whereas in the West madmen are so numerous that they are put into asylums», remarks Lin Yutang, struck by the mental strain to be found in the West, «they are so rare in China that people venerate them».*

Again, while discussing Marxism, he writes: *«A complete annihilation of the paternal instinct seems to be the purpose of the Marxist State in which family affection and loyalty are openly denounced as being bourgeois sentiments that are doomed to disappear in a different material setting».*

Lastly, here is a statement that is equally valid for Lin Yutang's China as for the rest of the world: *«The unceasing advance made by progress will certainly one day reach a point at which man will get tired of it and will begin to take*

*stock of the conquests he has made in the world of matter*. How would China, she who places her civilization above all others, give up the wonders of her past by obstinately clinging to the path on which she is at present ?

What one says about the world of today cannot be valid if one overlooks the mass of humanity that was the Middle Empire, as the Chinese, until quite recently, used to call their country. The tendencies observable in China and the future of China have a bearing upon the future of the whole world. The Near East is very anxious about the Middle East. We would like to see Lebanon being better informed about things in the Far East, China and the rest.

Crossing the Pacific, let us come to the *United States*. This is the world's new wonder. Christopher Columbus in 1492, and those who, one after the other, discovered the New World after him did not imagine that four centuries later the United States, at that time little more than desert wastes, would be the leading power, that its population would be what it is, and that, above all, its resources would be what they are.

There were 23 million Americans in 1850 when they already possessed their present metropolitan territory, with just a few changes since then.

In 1920 they were 105 million; as the papers reminded us the other day, they were 130 million in 1940; today they are 150 million strong. Their main characteristic is that nine tenths of them are of European stock and that they have a civilization that is European in origin. But these children of the Europe of old, to whom we Lebanese have, on our part, added our bloodbrothers in large numbers, have grown so much that they have taken on the appearance of a colossus. And now their civilization has so distinguished itself in material progress that it is becoming increasingly necessary to talk

about an «*American civilization*». For them, England is still, to a great extent because of the language, what Spain and its «*hispanidad*» is for Latin America, but (notwithstanding all the respect due to Shakespeare and the Encyclopaedia Britannica) with a filial sentiment that is declining and has for some time been taking patronizing forms.

Over against the USSR, the shadow of the United States covers the world. The wonders of mechanical science have, one may say, placed the fate of the world in the hands of the Americans. The present possibilities for the United States on the level of material progress are incalculable. I have taken the following lines for you from quite a recent inquiry made by a correspondent of the Zurich New Gazette, M.S. Wolff. It is entitled: «The United States — The World's Chief Economic Power», and the following quotations will give some idea of the situation:

*«The United States is the richest country in the world. Although its population is, in round figures, only six per cent of the world's population, it contributes one third of the whole of the world's production», that is to say «out of all the goods produced throughout the world in the course of one year, the citizens of the United States have one third at their disposal and they can use them to satisfy their material needs». — «It follows from this that every citizen of the United States can consume eight times as much as the other inhabitants of the world», on the average.*

Here are some other figures:

*«The average real income per capita rose from 859 dollars in 1939 to 1209 dollars in 1948. In other words, the population of America at present possesses, on the average, 50% more commodities each year than was the case ten years ago».*

According to the «Bureau of Agricultural Economics»

the *per capita* and *annual* consumption of meat rose from 58 kgs to 69 (ommitting fractions), the consumption of milk from 159 kgs to 193, and the consumption of eggs from 329 to 374.

This is a nation that is not only well-fed but *satiated*. Notice that this remark is true for practically all Americans because these average figures necessarily apply to practically all of them. For instance, if practically all Americans did not enjoy the advantage of having each more than one egg a day, such a consumption would be unintelligible if allowance is made for infants and old people, and those suffering dyspepsia and liver trouble.

Can Marxism or Communism in any form stand up to this and look these quantities and facts in the face? And how can one help thinking that if the Americans are to deserve their position of eminence *the time for spiritual values* (already widely represented in America, to be sure) *must come for them?*

Another fact is that at the beginning of 1949 the number of people employed in the American economy reached 61½ million. This means that there was what one might call full employment both for men and women not too old to work. Unemployment in America would, at the very most, correspond to laziness in this East of ours.

Agriculture, on its part, is seen using *extraordinary methods*, together with an ever-dwindling labour force. «As a result of increasing mechanization in agriculture», says Wolff, «during the last twenty years (despite the considerable increase in the population) the number of people employed in agriculture fell from 10,450,000 in 1929 to 8,266,000 in 1947», and that was while agricultural productivity in America was on the increase. An agricultural population of only 8,000,000 can feed a population of 150 million and still export one tenth of

*what it produces. These 8 million agricultural workers have more than 9 million motor vehicles at their disposal, to say nothing of other equipment. This is how the America of today is fitted out.*

*Let us notice here, along with Wolff, that the «Soviet Union, while enjoying the same favourable conditions, namely, a wide expanse of land and petroleum deposits, has tried to import into her own country the methods used in American agriculture but without achieving the same result in the entirely different climate of her own economy».*

*As regards American industry, «at the end of 1948 it was producing twice as much as before the war». And «the production of machinery is almost three times as much as before the war».*

*So here we have a giant country, equipped in such a way and so far ahead of the rest of the world on the material level, that we must ask ourselves whether industrial competition with it, competition that is not a form of charity, is still possible. We should also ask ourselves about what atomic energy has in store for the quarter of the century upon which we are entering, without daring to look further into the future. Here we have every reason to state, and I make bold to say, with a shudder, that the future is in God's hands.*

*Lastly, the war in Korea has shown the speed with which American military might develops and organizes itself. We have been presented with the spectacle of reaction in a flash and of a command which, however tough it may be, is not afraid of the occasional setback. With all this before us, we have, I think, the elements required for the formation of an overall judgment about the United States in order to make a reasonable assessment of the present and the future.*

We have spread ourselves on the USSR, China and the United States. For the rest, *which in the realm of the spirit is by no means the least*, and which represents practically all the past and the whole of history, we must cover the ground more quickly.

With about 120 million people in it, *Latin America* comprises about twenty nations and huge reserves for settlement and stocks of wealth. In this part of the New World we find a mentality that is closer to that of the Mediterranean than the North's. As in all the warmer regions of the earth, restlessness is also more frequent there. Although Latin America is not free from political quarrels that are proper to America, it has no quarrels with nations overseas, *except on the level of doctrine*. It enters upon world wars and emerges from them, in the natural spirit of American solidarity. *But the things of the spirit hold a prominent place there, with certain exceptions*, no doubt.

In the things of the spirit, there are more similarities between Latin America and Latin Europe than there are between Anglo-Saxon America and Anglo-Saxon Europe. Between her and us, the Lebanese, a feeling of brotherhood exists and is growing.

Passing through Latin America we find ourselves on the threshold of Europe — *illustrious and unhappy Europe which cannot be separated from her ramifications throughout the world*.

*The United Kingdom and her associates*, including India (when India became a republic she wisely kept up an alliance which is a safeguard for her) — the United Kingdom and her associates add up to 500 million people. This is more than a fifth of the world's population, and is *the world's most numerous and heterogeneous political community*. As the poli-

tical links between England and the Commonwealth become more tenuous and subtle, it is noticeable that the end of the British Empire is, fortunately, not an imminent danger. The Phoenix is reappearing in new plumage. It is a truth clearer than daylight that the West and this Empire (and, let us say quite frankly, the Near East along with them) are interdependent, and that if one of them perishes, so will the other. England and France together are the two nations in whose hands the fate of the West chiefly lies. *If the building is to stand firm, the others concerned must certainly commit themselves.*

In order fully to appreciate England's importance in the world, it is sometimes necessary to ask oneself what disfigurement our planet would undergo if England and everything connected with it did not exist. We are, of course, thinking along the same lines about France, whose history, which is so eventful, and whose language and tradition are so precious and dear to us and to all civilizations worthy of the name.

A prejudice against the English, occasioned by the misfortunes of history and sometimes legitimate, exists in the minds of people on the Continent. But this attitude has become in a few years as outdated as the episodes of the Hundred Years War. The England of today is a collective, political, intellectual, moral and social enterprise, worldwide in extent, which is a guarantee of order and civilization for the world. Mr. André Siegfried, whose mature wisdom is equalled by long experience, says: *«English political genius is able, as I believe and dearly wish, once again to accomplish the miracle of proving that the illogical can exist»*. Allowing the instinct for self-preservation and reason their rights, is the British establishment of today and tomorrow really as illogical as that?

But we cannot speak of England and the British Empire these days without Western Europe entering into the matter and covering it.

*Our grandnephews will see the manifold heritages of the West merged into one or else, God forbid, they will see them no more. If the unity of the world is to be achieved, in this way alone will it be propitious. For a rational Near East (and we hope that ours is) Western Europe goes, and there is no paradox here, in a straight line (or almost) from the Persian Gulf to the North Cape.*

*The whole of classicism, right from the origins of mankind, is there.*

*Renewal in all its forms is to be found potentially there.*

What is known as Western Europe : France, Italy, Benelux, the Scandinavian countries, Germany, Spain, Greece of course, and everything which in various ways depends on them (everything Hellenic going with Greece), and also the combination of this West with Asia Minor, the Levant and Arabian Peninsula (Jazirat al-Arab as the Arab world has rightly named it) — all this goes to make up 350 million people who, despite misfortune and adversity, still have, thank God, their importance on this earth; but we shall give the Arabs their rightful place in a moment.

Western Europe has taken on a new appearance no doubt for geographical and historical reasons, *but also for logical reasons which make Turkey claim a place within the Atlantic Pact.* The whole of the Mediterranean is in fact now being seen for what it is: *an enclave of the Atlantic*, whereas it was for so long almost the whole world.

With twelve centuries of primacy in Europe behind it, France is at the centre of the western enterprise. The mission confided to this enterprise is to defend *the Mediterranean*

*regions of three continents, starting with the Atlantic. All the past, including that of the fine civilization built by the Arabs, leads up to this; 'all the past', that is to say, a long and glorious history that no one dwelling in the East of classical times can deny without losing something.*

When the veil shrouding the future becomes a little more transparent, Mediterranean solidarity will become so decisive a fact that much of the resistance met with today will seem as useless as that put up by feudal lords in the West at the decline of the Middle Ages.

*Our good wishes go out to the West that is now emerging, because it cannot live in isolation from any of the civilizations of the basin of the Mediterranean. The West of which we speak, to which Turkey is only too glad to get herself attached, is in fact one of the most characteristic aspects of the world of today.*

Now that the Mediterranean has 'come down in the world' as a highway useful in war (the expression is, once again, André Siegfried's), fresh reasons of a spiritual and economic order interest the politicians and strategists in its future. *And it is perfectly clear that by reason of its longest seaboard the Arab world is a Mediterranean world.*

*So then, the 40 million people belonging to the countries of the Arab League find themselves living in the very places where history was born. It is with these places, along with Ancient History, that the teaching of the history of the past starts in the West. Here lies the deep-seated link, the natural link to which not sufficient attention is given (in the Near East no less than in the West) and which is the key to a solidarity so basic that it cannot be set aside.*

*Taken by themselves in the world of today, what are*

*the countries of the Arab League of which we are one? When it comes to military might, practically nothing, and this must be said with honesty and courage, but when it comes to geography and history they are something of priceless value. If they cannot do much by themselves, their strength lies in an intelligent and comprehensive policy which is that of their destiny. Together they present a network of highways and crossroads, and they are unable to defend the passage through them; (and petroleum, that «industrial fuel and explosive political substance» as it has been aptly called, lies in rich layers in their basement). Are there not here the basic elements of a permanent policy? Given their geographical position, how can the countries of the Arab League think for one moment of shutting themselves up in isolation at the crucial moment?*

*The interdependence of nations is becoming in fact everywhere perfectly obvious; and we shall come on to this after saying a word about Israel.*

*No one would hear of it two or three years ago. The Jewish national home was theoretically just a humanitarian enterprise, but now, in the heart of the Near East, we have a Mediterranean power, apparently very small, and in fact world-wide. For those who can read the signs, it has for a long time been showing the characteristics of a world power.*

*If imperialism means anything and if racialism means anything, Israel is by definition the world's most racist and imperialist power. There are just over a million people in Israel but, tacitly at least, there are, with all due respect to Arthur Koestler, ten or twelve times as many citizens of Israel in other countries, with the extraordinary situation known to all of us.*

*In speaking of the world of today one would not be acting seriously if one did not speak separately about Israel*

— Israel which for us has again become politically the neighbour it was in the distant past, in the time of Phoenicia.

Who can question the worldwide character of Israel which spreads out its feelers everywhere, or question the influence it wields and, side by side with official diplomacy, the network of unofficial diplomacy it controls?

No one has paid greater tribute to the qualities and genius of Israel than I have; nor has anyone put people more on their guard against this formidable reality. Here I would like to be as objective as one should be and to say simply this: Neither the Arab countries nor the great powers have yet properly taken the measure of what this reality and its active presence stands for. *Wisdom is now to be sought in unceasing and calm reflection. To the south of Lebanon, right on our frontier, as on those of Egypt, Jordan and Syria, there lies one of this world's most impressive forces* where the unfathomable and the invisible far surpass what can be touched and seen. What the future will bring to those on either side *can now depend only on Israel's prudence, moderation and good faith.* Lebanon is too small a country to be able to threaten this invading neighbour. But Israel should be more afraid of her own ambitions and cravings than of the countries surrounding her; *let her fear the abiding menace she herself is for her own race !*

Having reached this point, and having, I think, pointed out the main things, we can, as we consider the essential characteristics of the world of today, find them faithfully reproduced in the organization of the United Nations which shows its constituent elements and its nature better at a distance than in the towers of Babel it is erecting for itself. Bringing together almost all nations on earth (it is still astonishing that Italy, Spain and some other countries are not yet in it; in the case of Spain, it is true, the doors have begun

to open within the last few days only) *the UNO shows forth the basic discord in the world: two camps in tragic opposition to each other, and within each of them there are obvious signs of dependence and interdependence. Apart from duress and violence, nations take sides not for reasons of nationality or for considerations arising out of economics, language or race, but to satisfy a way of thinking and believing.*

Nationality, customs and even blood-relationship have been subordinated to a phenomenon of conscience (and, to some extent, of lack of conscience). Coming after the various forms of chauvinism in the last century, after the different forms of racialism and murderous crimes committed in the name of the principle of national differences and racial intransigence, *this phenomenon of conscience is the world's greatest innovation. The Internationals and their inhuman sectarianism have succeeded to the various forms of exasperated nationalism. The reason put forward by the strong man settles everything.*

*You have all been able to observe how people vote at the United Nations, how interdependence and dependence dominate, and how they explain a long series of misfortunes, hypocritical actions and stratagems.*

But human nature wants it this way, and so do history and legend as well. The ins and outs of the journey made by the earthen-ware pot and the iron pot mentioned in the fable are known to us.

The following way of expressing this evident truth comes from André Siegfried, already quoted: *«Nowadays real independence is allowed only to quite a small number of nations that are, in the correct sense of the word, imperial».*

*However, the effort being made by nations to unite is great and serious. It bears witness to a desire and a will for brotherhood and justice. Perhaps one day right will at last*

triumph over might. But we can show scepticism about it for a long time to come.

Another obvious fact is that beyond the frontiers, and in relative respect for, or on the contrary in repudiation of, the rights of man, *far greater groups of human beings are emerging.*

For instance, we can expect to see people with spiritual convictions, faced with the materialists, recognizing each other better and at a greater distance and beckoning to each other in the name of resurrection and of life.

But the apocalyptic struggle is reaching its paroxysm. *On the one hand there are people fighting for this earth and merely for this fragile existence, on the other they are fighting for a hope, a revelation, an after-life and something infinite.*

*One last remark: there is a materialism that is Marxist, just as there is one that is not. Reduced to its purely earthly dimensions, the problem between rationalist liberalism and thorough-going socialism is only a question of method and procedure, the limited purpose being, before returning to dust for ever, that everyone preserve a little happiness in this life.*

On my part, I would like to declare here that, reduced to such stunted proportions as these, the presence of all mankind on this earth would be worth no more than the accident that brought it about, 'blind and stupid chance'.

On my part (and I am sorry to testify in this personal way), taking into account everything regarded by science as certain or probable, man is a higher animal born not only of the flesh, but of will and spirit. Passing through a purification, he is destined to rise up to the sovereign Power that made him. *And if the world of today is to stop being to this degree*

*the narrow, insatiable and jealous world of ambition, envy, anger and hatred, it must be related to what is eternal, to its beginning and its end, and there is no other way out.*

The world of today is floundering more than ever between economic and spiritual values. It is floundering in daily life, in literature, arts, sciences, in every way. This is a basic problem, it is not just a question of method that is being asked. All the riches of the United States and all their comfort leave man with a thirst, with a dry throat and yearning to drink, in spirit, the only water that quenches thirst. All the world's industry is powerless in the face of the slightest moral suffering. Into a wounded heart neither democracy nor Marxism can pour balm.

Eating better, being better housed and dressed are not the kind of thing to reconcile us with death. *The world's true grandeur lies in the fact that it suffers through its soul.* To this extent it is great. Dictators as well as economists are powerless against this kind of woe. Here there is need of the feeling of compassion, affection and love hoping for the eternal justice.

Of the two camps opposing each other in the world, one is, at bottom, fighting for a vain conceit, and there is no doubt that the other is, at bottom, fighting *for its soul*. Beyond the theories and the statistics, all the controversies amount to this. Such is the world of today in its majesty and in its distress. But we must rely upon God's grace ! It will be understood why we are finishing up with God, having started with the stars.

# **LEBANON IN THE WORLD**

## **FUTURE PROSPECTS**

Lecture given at the Cenacle on December 17th 1951

When we speak of prospects, in a figurative sense, we speak of what seems likely to happen at some future time.

Clear-sightedness and foresight both presuppose prospects, and it is the proper function of man not to separate the present from the future.

Looking ahead and seeing ahead thus imply a combination of intelligence and imagination in thinking and looking -- a reasonable amount of imagination (for imagination and intuition often meet) and with it the intelligence that is needed to discern *the possibilities and realities of tomorrow* amidst the mass of images and ideas that come our way.

The future prospects for a country go beyond the horizon uncovered by the naked eye. They are not distinct from that country's situation *with regard to the world, nor from its relations with the world*. These relations may not always be the same, but they are always on the increase and are inevitable, *because the general trend of the discoveries being made is to make everything universal*.

It takes *just one event* to change everything in the world, and *this has often been observed in the past*. The greatest civilizations spring from religions and philosophies that were born from the enlightenment of the mind, from

a flash of light. Whole centuries can be dominated by an accident of history.

This foreword will have meaning only in so far as it creates an atmosphere and a frame of mind and in so far as it predisposes us for the logical search for a future towards which our curiosity is directed. We shall look at our little country in much the same way as we look at a film in which narrative and scenery are found together, or at a property in which *experiment and imagination are added to the work of nature*.

We shall not consider ourselves bound by rigid order or by some already established plan «ne varietur» so as to feel tied down by it. *A study and an assessment of the present of which the ultimate object is in the future must leave room for a large amount of freedom. I could not tell you immediately what I am going to tell you later on* (this was true at the time of writing; I knew nothing about it, I did not yet know it; but at least I knew in a vague sort of way that it would have something to do with the conditions for the continued existence of this little Lebanese country, with its active presence in the world *and with what is to become of it*, which is, properly speaking, its future as it unfolds — its future *in action*).

We shall discover our subject together as we go further with our observations and reflections. It may be that a certain disorder will soon become apparent, because I thought I ought to write just as if I were speaking to you extempore without having too much recourse to references and sources.

So I shall speak to you first of all about certain teachings concerning freedom in theory and concerning economics before considering relations with other countries. *In spite of all the movements in the other direction, the political future of our country depends upon a liberal economy.*

I think I have had living experience of this country for as long as half a century since the age of reason rather as one has living experience of a novel or a chapter from history. I shall speak to you about it in accordance with what I know of it from my own observation, as well, I think, as with what I have learnt about it from others.

*For its own children, a country is an old acquaintance:* it is a part of the earth to which one belongs through long-standing and permanent connections. It can also happen that these connections be quite recent, too. How many citizens of the United States today are descended from parents or grandparents born in the United States? How many people who are Lebanese by birth have been Americans for only thirty or twenty years? How many of our fellow-citizens have been Lebanese for less than thirty years? However, the trend has grown, the connection has been established by choice, by option, by habit and by a whole range of unpredictable events, of actions, reminiscences, promises, sentiments and, lastly, love in various forms.

*Nationalism is a great thing so long as it can be set aside when mankind, and the fate of the world along with it, is at stake. The legitimate rights of an assembly of nations would in principle be enough to subordinate the interests of a particular nation to the demands of an international duty. There must be no more fooling about with things like this.*

Our country is our home, or, better, the home of our fathers. But the age in which we are living requires us to take an interest in the home of other people also. It requires a common stock *not only of principles and sentiments but also of services and contacts*. There no longer exists the kind of righteous egoism that lets people limit the world to a frontier or a dividing wall.

*The Lebanese must have learnt this better than have the others since they have been ranging over the world.*

✱

*Geography and history provide the background for the future of Lebanon. There it is at the nub of continents and in the heart of the Ancient World, abounding in high places, clear skies, fruit trees, sweet water, fresh air and beautiful scenery next to that inner sea which saw the birth, growth, decline and death of dominations and empires. It has heard everything, seen everything and known everything. It is still moved by the confidences made to it by the Ancient World.*

Among the men of early times, its inhabitants set out on the first available boat and looked for adventure far off. One attempt after another — one initiative after another — drove them on to the open sea. They took the risks that came their way, passed through the storm, after shipwreck landed on unknown shores and met other men as we would discover another inhabited planet; with a view to making commercial exchanges, they took with them merchandise of their own fashioning or, according to their taste, objects they had wrought and decorated in beautiful colours; they brought back metals and raw materials. They spread the knowledge of languages and news from afar. They were multilingual right from the beginning, and they have never ceased to be so. *They will be so to an ever-increasing extent.*

From this there were born relations, trade, entrepôts, services and later on the maritime city and the colony. Once incorporated into a new world which offered no outlet to the ocean, the Phoenicia of ancient times had no air to breathe, and the men from these shores, lest they be walled up, often departed *never to come back again.*

*The Lebanese will go on travelling more and more. Perhaps it was for them that the aeroplane, after the ship, was invented. Their enterprises will spread out more and more in time and space. It will be necessary, nevertheless, that they return to the country and that permanent departures from it do not increase in number. We would not be able to live without emigration, but if emigration became too vast, it could be the end of us. Again, is it enough to emigrate for emigration to look like conquest? «A certain power to expand and a certain material civilization» must «be added» to the settlement in another country. Everything connected with the thousand things of beauty, finery and art which Phoenicia made or sold in the course of trade shows that what Phoenicia offered distant lands was an education in taste and was imbued with the sense of progress and even refinement within civilization. All this could be seriously affected by sumptuary laws.*

When we speak of Lebanese trade, today as much as yesterday and tomorrow, we speak mostly of quality and luxury articles, — the luxury article which is condemned in certain periods and by certain régimes; but it is the luxury article in its nobility that fills museums and marks the great eras of history.

*On the map, Lebanon occupies the place of a predestined country. The main content of its inheritance is made up of humane qualities, and of the resources of the intellect.*

These qualities appear for what they are only in the form of surprising results which discourage statisticians; so far there are no statistics that are valid for journeys made in spirit and migrations of thought. In daily life, on the other hand, our faults are obvious and people talk about us. No nation is without its faults. This is perhaps the opportunity,

*with an eye to the future*, briefly to analyse some aspects of what makes us strong and what makes us weak.

*Strength in this country means first of all being quick to understand, quick to act and to come to terms with the obstacle, while waiting to overcome it.* It means possessing enough freedom to enable us not to discourage action; it means not stupidly subordinating the value of things to the fickle value of paper money; finally, it means seeking wealth *in order to spread it and to make it bring happiness.*

In two different orders there are two things in particular, apart from wars or in post-war periods, that have ruined Europe and what depends upon it: *firstly the abuse of laws and the abuse of devaluations.* Europe does not yet fully realize that by making its legal system so complicated it has given people headaches, and that by so often ruining its money it has demoralized the citizen and destroyed social life. *False money has put an end to confidence, and crushing legislation has put an end to initiative there.* A kind of inquisition in matters of taxation has created what are in fact monopolies there in favour of the cleverest and craftiest. *They who had the greatest civic sense have gone under as at Thermopylae: «passer-by, go tell Sparta that we died here to obey her laws»;* while those people prospered whose fortune took the supple, secret and shifting form of roving wealth.

*Contemporary forms of legislation are nowadays too often just the mask of morals and not their reflection.* One can sometimes think about present-day laws the way La Rochefoucauld thinks about hypocrisy: it is the homage paid by vice to virtue.

In the struggle for life, law has become the foe, just as the cruel play of devaluations has periodically ruined the efforts of the most deserving and virtuous of men.

*Setting aside some Northern countries, no executive power will ever manage seriously to apply laws that do violence to nature and laws that are too exacting without making the disorder worse. The history of the maximum price has been known at least since the time of Diocletian's famous Edict. But does anyone go back to history any more?*

*In this country, fortunately, the value of money, land and enterprises is not exposed to the shortcomings of the State. People do not readily lend money to the State because they fear the State's prodigality and insolvency. Besides, it is better that, as far as possible, the State should not become a debtor. It is the State that threatens society with collapse when it spends too much. When the State cannot pay any more, it devaluates and parts with the very substance of its budget, stupidly, indiscriminately and pitilessly ruining its citizens' savings, patrimonies and social structures.*

Moreover, we must be on our guard against confusing, in this delicate matter, the legislation of a *de facto* state with the cause that brought it about.

*We want no inhuman laws in Lebanon, and we want stable currency. We must take a firm stand with regard to this intention and desire. It is mainly for this reason that, taking the amenities of nature into account, foreigners think that we are a happy country. The more moderate our laws are, the more we make psychology the basis of our legislation (that is to say, the knowledge of men and manners), the more we abide by contracts and the more we become the refuge for persons and property, the better will we defend the moral, social, administrative and political order. We shall remember that a lawgiver has no right to pass a law to which he knows that he will not submit.*

It is well known that foreigners visiting us think that we are a land blessed by the gods. *They see peace and plenty*

*here, whereas we import almost everything and we export practically nothing, which seems a sort of miracle. Work is more easily done (I am not saying there is more of it) here than elsewhere, because the State has not yet got to the stage at which, in the name of would-be economic principles and rigid, harassing social theories, the public authorities make it impossible to breathe. Excess in this matter must be abolished forever.*

*In order to live and last, Lebanon must raise a dissenting voice against the craze for making laws and imposing taxes in the West. It makes a plea for freedom to the utmost extent to which people can be free without harming their neighbour and, of course, their country. It is apprehensive of the mistakes that technicians from the West might, in all good faith, suggest to those who govern us. It is also apprehensive of the restless ideologies of the East. This is because people can also be led astray by good faith.*

*The West is superior to us in the exact sciences, in things mechanical and in statistics, and it will remain so indefinitely. It is not superior to us in political philosophy, in knowledge of human nature and in economic and financial science. Its scientific psychology is not as good as our empirical psychology. We investigate man and the depths of his soul better than they do; we do the same for freedom and forces that do not yield to pressure, and again, better than they do. It is this that in practical life has made Beirut, for instance, one of the world's last open markets. It is up to us to place Lebanon on still more solid foundations and to increase its prosperity by deliberately going against prejudice. We shall not do violence to human nature under the plea of governing ourselves better. There are some deadly illusions to which we shall not conform.*

*As regards the economic, budgetary and social rulings of*

*the West, we must not be slavish imitators, but only attentive observers. If the legislation in force in England or in a Scandinavian country were applied here to the letter, this country's trade, which is responsible for its standard of living, would not withstand it for one year. At the end of the exercise there would be bankruptcy and mass emigration. And in the midst of the disaster this country would subsequently lead a wretched existence under the thrall of people grown rich off a dreadful black market.*

*Lebanon's future is basically subordinated to freedom. Freedom in belief, freedom in enterprise. Breadth of outlook in the political system and in the social system. Rectification of morality out of respect for legitimate freedom in all domains. The widest possible abolition of constraint and hindrance. There are many things a small country can afford which bigger countries must forgo. Small countries have advantages which they will learn to understand better and which are as yet unknown to them. In practical matters one of the vital sectors of our general policy will be more and more the economic and fiscal question.*

*It must be remembered that a fiscal law is firstly a psychological and moral problem. Laws must not be made just for a quarter or half of the population. People cannot be forced to pay too heavy taxes if the majority of those concerned do not consent and if they rebel against them. Otherwise there will be widespread tax-evasion and corruption which will finally leave the State powerless and gasping. It will also be the end of morality in business, and the end of scrupulous citizens weighed down with a cost price heavier than that borne by competitors who are less bothered by civic sense and virtue. Chancellors of the Exchequer in all countries should understand that in this situation there is a real case of legitimate self-defence.*

A golden rule could be stated as follows: *It is not enough to make laws; lawgivers must legislate for themselves before legislating for others. In Lebanon this is the very standard of measurement for laws of the future.*

But if our strength lies in freedom and tolerance taken together in various forms, *our weakness lies in an individualism which makes discipline useless and collective enterprises so laborious and easily spoiled.* This is the other side of the picture.

Yet, we obey a kind of law of necessity within us.

*The need we feel to act swiftly in deciding and to be bold in undertaking things — which we consider the first element in success — makes the formality and corporate nature of deliberation distasteful to us. In the course of our commercial activity everything has to be done telegraphically, one may say. A journey has to be decided upon between evening and morning; a risk has to be taken without delay, and chances have to be taken as soon as they offer themselves. Excessive formality and too rigid control do not permit any of this. In this way we see the extent to which the West's strict and complicated methods are at variance with truly Mediterranean genius. The ingenuity of the Near Easterner is a basic element in his assets — an integral part of his stock-in-trade; and this ingenuity becomes effective only outside or above regulations and restraint.*

*Lebanon will destroy itself to the extent to which it encroaches upon the liberty of its citizens; contrariwise, it will prosper to the extent to which it makes it full and effective. A budget for the Lebanese State which really allows for the future will always have to be of an original and personal character. It is sheer madness to set up our rules here in accordance with those of other countries, whether Western or Eastern. A rational Lebanese budget will first of all make life comfortable for*

those who have to perform incredible feats of acrobatics to finance it.

These cursory remarks do not exhaust the subject. *In the material life of the Lebanon of tomorrow as in that of today, they show the importance of freedom — that vital freedom which is already playing so great a part in our spiritual life and in our intellectual life.*

*Once again, everything in this country is based on freedom and the future depends on it. Side by side with freedom Lebanon's chances will increase and this little land will maintain and develop in an orderly way a prosperity for which the complementary conditions are stability and intelligent thinking.*

Either we are to export *ideas and services* freely, in visible or invisible form; or else we shall stop exporting anything, and then it will be Job's dunghill.

It is perhaps fortunate for us that large-scale industry is ruled out for us by nature herself, because the social problem is inevitably complicated by industry. *But what industry not possessing at least ten million customers can still withstand competition from industrial powers that produce goods for whole continents? Who these days can hold out against the world's best laboratories and techniques serving an unlimited number of customers?*

*Our role as distributors of services and merchandise certainly has its value also. It provides us with the whole world as our field of action. The device we are working on is an intellectual instrument. It does not get out of date, and nothing competes with it in the field of purely mechanical objects.*

*Commercial possibilities open to the Lebanese will in the future grow to the exact extent to which industry becomes centralized in the bigger countries; and they will be so by force of circumstances. Our age is one of centralization; the fabulous*

economic power of the United States is the result of natural and almost inevitable centralization.

*Being ten years ahead in industry betokens henceforth a superiority that is almost decisive. How can you outdistance the country you are competing with in these conditions? How are you going to make up the time lost?*

*Lebanon's opportunities lie much more in distribution than in manufacture on our own territory and abroad. This seems perfectly obvious to us. If the foreigner is to receive us we must receive him as well. And distribution must not be confined to material goods; but also and specially it must include services, that is to say knowledge and experience.*

*We shall remain purveyors of ideas. In this domain we must possess, just as others have their factories, everything which, as far as quality is concerned, stems from intelligence and art. The teacher is our man, the doctor is our man, the artist is our man, the hotel-keeper is our man, and so is the qualified craftsman, just like the merchant, the commission-agent, the commercial broker and the commercial traveler ---- just like, if you will, the Phoenician of old.*

All these professions make freedom the prime necessity and the first rule. Our nature, our heritage and our geographical position point out the way we must take and impose it on us. *The widest eclecticism, knowledge, curiosity and, lastly, movement, thus provide the background for the future of the Lebanese.* We will never mass-produce anything and we will plant practically nothing on a massive scale, but we must make ourselves capable of expending every effort to produce what is out of the ordinary and which outclasses it, and all this in the most abundant variety.

*As we have been saying in writing for a long time, Lebanon's future lies primarily in the things of the mind and in*

*things to be gauged by their quality.*

This is equally true of our trade, our agriculture and our minor industries. It was to give proof of fertility of mind and to show originality in everything that we were created. Men and nations have not all the same mission on this earth. *They were not created to accomplish the same tasks.*

*Diversity is part of our destiny. It presupposes only a few laws and an administration which confines itself to the essentials: the minimum of formality and the broadest horizons.*

*Setting forth the prospects for a country means placing oneself before the widest horizon. What I propose to do now is to talk to you about Lebanon in the Arab world, as regards the future — about Lebanon, Israel's neighbour, about Lebanon in the Mediterranean world and finally about Lebanon as she stands on the world's highroad. This is an ambitious train of thought, and it may be disappointing. I must warn you that we shall talk about this in a rambling way without bothering too much about literary form.*

We shall say as much as the hand of the clock and your patience permit.

#### LEBANON IN THE ARAB WORLD

In order that the Arabs may be able to achieve their destiny harmoniously, people must recognize the existence of different kinds of sensitivity, ambitions, make-up and appearances among them. The West seems to know nothing of these differences, and it must be made aware of them so that there may be an end to widespread confusion.

To ensure its own future and that of neighbours linked with it by ties of brotherhood, it is Lebanon's duty to

clarify the situation. It is no secret of politics that the dreams of the four dynasties and the five monarchies of the Arab League, to say nothing of the republics, are often contradictory; and that tangible realities are hidden behind illusory words. It is not fanciful to state that between one climate and another, between one latitude and another, the Arab world has a different understanding both of democracy and of how to govern.

This is based on the most venerable traditions and the most distant past.

*The Arab world of the Mediterranean does not react in social, intellectual and political matters in the same way as the Arab world of the Shatt-al-Arab and the Hadhramaut.* If Damascus itself were governed from Cairo, or Cairo from Damascus, or both of them from Baghdad, it is to be feared that the same terrible events that occurred during the great age of the Arabs would happen again. One of the best-authenticated facts of history is that the Umayyads, the Abbasids and the Fatimids, whose feats are interwoven with their misfortunes, sought each other's death in their times. Their reigns form a chain of dramatic events resulting from a great variety of ambitions and inclinations.

It is our heartfelt wish that the Hashimites and the Sa'udi Arabians carry on in the recently-established amicable relations between them; but our anxiety about the future is still great. The Arab League is a noble and beautiful thing. It is one of the most legitimate marks of the Ancient World, but lest it be one day broken up by the wrath of sedition-mongers and rabble-rousers, it must not be subjected to a trial too heavy for it to bear. You have Arabs just as, in many ways, you have Europeans. Attempts will be made to do for the Arabs what is being done to unite Europe; but despite certain indications, this will be more difficult.

*Lebanon's task is to use all her efforts to bring about equilibrium among the Arabs to further their collective well-being. The opportunity open to the Arabs lies in equilibrium and not in a merger that would result in clashes of temperament and disorder.*

What Lebanon is doing for the Arabic language, the Arab community and Arab politics is clearly of the greatest importance. But it is also Lebanon's duty to take no part in the confusion of continents and races, and to save the Arabs from the decadence that would be their lot if they were to let themselves be drowned in the Indian Ocean. The southern Mediterranean belongs mainly to Arabic-speaking people from Morocco to the gulf of Alexandretta. This shore of the mother-sea is long enough for the Arabs to revel in breathing the oxygen and iodine of this sea and for them not to disown it. *Whereas if they took upon themselves the weight of the Asian masses, they would thenceforth only have the rank of underlings in an enslaved civilization.*

We find the symbol of a rational and fervent brotherliness in the common struggle for Palestine and Jerusalem. *But let it be asked: What effective help have Palestine and Jerusalem found throughout Asia and from one end of the Indian Ocean to the other? If the whole Near East trembled in the face of this difficulty and at this gaping wound, almost the whole Middle East remained motionless when it did not show itself hostile.* It is in keeping with Lebanon's character for it to clarify this obscure and worrying situation, a situation which certain people, lured on by the generosity of their souls as far afield as Indonesia, perhaps do not see properly.

*If the Arab world wants to live, it must consider its «territorial» attachments before its «ideological» attachments. It must first of all know the shores on which its homes are fixed. For Arabs, this is a rule of life and salvation. If elementary,*

middle and higher education in Lebanon does not do this, it has done nothing; it has made all its lessons in geography and history serve the purposes of an illusion and an error. Finally, if a regrouping has to be made in order to escape from the explosion of the hellish devices of our age, it will have to be made around the Mediterranean — that sea which has people living on its northern and southern shores who may be rightly compared to the Americans of the north and south.

*The prospects for Lebanon in the Arab world are exciting because they rise more out of the spiritual, intellectual, linguistic, political and social order and out of a brotherliness in the spirit than from the purely material and utilitarian order.*

*All around us we have an enormous part to play, the most honourable there is; and if we can escape from vanity as well as from turgid rhetoric and the verbiage of the demagogues, if we can show proof of modesty and disinterestedness, we shall worthily fulfil this role which is so noble and human.*

*Our immediate neighbours are Syria and Israel.*

*Syria stretches along our frontiers to the north and east. It has its personality just as we have ours. However, it is threatened more than we are; and so it has to defend itself against a very great variety of ventures, and we can say what these ventures are if we make the round of its frontiers. No danger, however, is as great as the one to which it is exposed by a false conception of the Arab world. On the pretext of making it greater, it is sometimes called upon to give up its distinctive character. Yet it is enough for it to refer back to its history to carry on along the lines of its own destiny.*

If Syria ever lets itself be tempted by seas other than the Inner sea, it will be disfigured and will be lost. *The people governing it would then no longer have their main concentration of population between the coast and, so to speak, the coastal towns: Damascus, Homs, Hamah and Aleppo are all four of them a hundred or a hundred and fifty kilometres from the Mediterranean, no more. Another majority would then govern Syria — it would then be another world.* Whereas Syria and ourselves, since the earliest times and the earliest days of Phoenicia, owe our origin to the same geological shake-up which, had it gone a bit deeper, would have made Lebanon an island; while Syria, as it is at present, remained split between the Mediterranean climate and the continental climate. The population of Syria, at least three quarters of it, is Mediterranean. Nomadism in all its forms — all the tribes evidently — is to be found in the remaining quarter.

To the north and east, then, Syria runs along our frontier and between it and us understanding must grow and co-operation must increase. This presupposes that Syrian policy in general be guided along lines which more or less meet up with our own conception of the world. This presupposes that she must keep her doors and windows open. Please God, this will come about.

#### LEBANON, ISRAEL'S NEIGHBOUR

To the south there is Israel; here you have something new on the earth, one of the strangest adventures of this century and one of the most far-reaching in its consequences.

*Israel is in fact not like any other country. Having Israel on one's frontier means having a power that is worldwide in its own way — that is the very school of racialism, in which the standing of citizens is determined by a religion which is exclusive at least in fact; it is a human workshop constantly*

on the move, where ill-regulated ambitions are always bubbling up; it is, lastly, a paradoxical combination of realism, materialism, intellectualism and illuminism. *To the south of Lebanon, at our very door, the most extraordinary political experiment is being carried out.* By becoming a state, Israel is becoming the capital of worldwide Judaism — a people who have representatives of the first rank in all nationalities and in the principal governments and which plays a very great role in the political life of the United States, the United Kingdom and many countries; it has immense resources also, and contacts, well-known or in secret, right throughout the world. It is enough to state this, and it is enough to consider the particular character of this anachronistic — and at the same time revolutionary — power to bring out the political, economic and social causes of concern which it creates for Lebanon and which no Lebanese citizen with his wits about him may overlook.

For my part, I have said and written a hundred times what I believe to be the evident truth about Israel. Vigilance as regards our new neighbour to the south is more important than any other. According as Israel, without encountering new obstacles, makes progress on the path of her ambitions, or as life will be more difficult for her, we shall have to face dangers of various kinds; *but whatever we do, we shall no longer enjoy tranquility, at least lasting tranquility.* This must be boldly said to the Lebanese people because it is the truth.

Israel's presence a couple of steps from here has enormous political, social and economic repercussions on our future, as well as repercussions of an international nature. All the nations in which Israel possesses influence, starting with the United States, look towards this part of the world in another way. The misfortunes undergone by the Holy Places and the vicissitudes of Jerusalem ought to draw people's attention and

keep it at least as much as Israel; but scientific propaganda and clever intrigue have benumbed people's vigilance. Yet it must be hoped that they will wake up with a start, one day.

Whether there be question of national defence, industry, trade, agriculture, finance or what have you, whether the frontiers be open or whether they be closed — these are, given Israel's presence, so many new problems which arise for us. *Israel makes systematic immigration and an accelerated program of settlement the basis of a policy of conquest and room to live in.* The more its population grows, the more its weight will make itself felt along the frontiers and the more these frontiers will have to be defended in order to resist the pressure.

The recruiting of Israel's population is by definition *international*, like Israel (despite the uniqueness of its stock), and *racialist*, like Israel. It finds its expression simultaneously in world-wide military recruitment. The descendents of Jewish generations settled in the West even before Augustus, or since Vespasian and Titus, contribute to it. *Whether we like it or not it is an army of foreign Jews that is defending Israel;* they are Germans, Russians, Poles, Englishmen, Czechs, Hungarians, Rumanians and many others, whose covetousness is much more dangerous than that of the West in former times. And the population of Israel, both present and future, is and will remain for the greater part an incredible mixture of Westerners who after centuries of trying have not been assimilated and who have left the West, considering themselves stateless persons.

*On the one hand, on the economic plane, Israel cannot live without powerful industries; and if it becomes industrialized with the technical and financial means at its disposal, it is invading the whole neighbourhood, and is crushing everything. On the other, Israel cannot breathe without intensive trade; but its trade benefits from relations, contacts, influences, entre-*

pots, credits and facilities of all kind throughout the world. You can guess the priorities and advantages that flow, and will flow from being such a solidly-built commonwealth of race, ambitions and interests. Under the impulse given it by the State, Israel's trade will constitute in the Eastern Mediterranean an inevitable challenge to all enterprises, to all ports, to all trade, to all agencies and to all professions *which presuppose some service to be provided.*

Finally, at the gates of Asia, Israel acts as a ferment for discord with a faint odour and taste of revolution to it. *People do not imagine how favourable revolution is to Israel and how it serves its ultimate goals.* Socially speaking, the whole of Israel is a laboratory and a field for experiment for those whose Jewish intellectual activity and sociology, taking their stand on the past and the future, make them formidable specialists.

Some people cynically think that Israel's second generation will not be as good as the first and that degeneration will set in from the third on. *We do not share this unhealthy frame of mind.* In any case the diaspora, the «dispersal» throughout the world, can supply Israel with population indefinitely. No one can state without being rash what in the long run will be the effects of the physical, social and moral climate in Israel; but, having stated it in writing twenty times, I want to emphasize here that in defending Lebanon and Israel's other neighbours against Israel's ventures, it is certainly not because I wish the Israelis and in a more general way the Jews failure and misfortune. God preserve us all from such a perverse and base attitude! On the contrary, we would like them all to be happy and to live in prosperity, *provided only that this happiness be not at our expense, and that they themselves be not the cause of our unhappiness. Therein lies the whole tragedy of the situation.* In this we show ourselves more generous and just than many other nations.

Throughout the whole of history, since the rule of Byzantium and since Islam, the part of the Ancient World in which the Jews were best received and the less persecuted is certainly the one occupied by the Arabs today; there it was that the greatest spirit of brotherliness and the greatest respect for human dignity were shown to the Jews.

There is no antisemitism in Lebanon, nor can there be. Our Jewish fellow-citizens would be the first to bear witness to this. We are not defending ourselves against Judaism but against Zionism. *Otherwise we would be going against the very reason for Lebanon's existence, against its fundamental principles, against its abiding intellectual and religious tradition and against the best-established of its political traditions.*

*Actually, the clear-cut example given by Lebanon would have prevented the birth of the State of Israel — an anachronism in this century; it is the showing forth of the basic qualities of a government in which religious communities and minorities are well-balanced because they receive their rights.*

No one tries to be more objective than we do in passing judgment on Israel; but in spite of appearances there are many antizionists among the most serious-minded Jews; there are many who think that it is an anomaly fraught with danger to have *at one and the same time* a Jewish government to itself and so many Jews in the governments of the world and in international organizations — to have a State of its own while still wielding power in other countries along with the ambiguous situations and suspicions that such a false and bold position quite rightly provoke.

*But the facts are there staring us in the face, and the dangers that we run are as obvious as they are formidable. If we did not take fright at them we would be regarded as naive and credulous.*

As it is at present, Lebanon finds it hard to keep her children on her land, and Lebanese emigration, which has been on a large scale since the Phoenicians but was kept within bounds for a while, is again becoming a source of worry. Meanwhile Israel, though less favoured by nature than Lebanon is, Israel, with so much arid and desert land, announces for 1953 and starting from coming year *the settlement of 600,000 new immigrants on its soil*. We draw our information about this from Israeli publicity now in circulation in the United States of which the purpose is to obtain the loan of five hundred million dollars. The government of the United States on its part makes a gift of tens of millions of dollars (fifty million is, I think, the latest figure) *precisely to favour immigration to it*. This, no doubt, is in order that rations may get shorter and that the pot may boil a bit more.

But in so doing, do not people at Washington and in the State of New York in particular see *that what is being prepared is explosion and war?*

*As a result of this, the prospects for Lebanon and for the other neighbours of Israel are very dark.* Everyone should know this: Israel, where there is hardly enough to eat one's fill, where rationing is stricter than in England and prices much higher, and where, in spite of the flood of dollars that are granted by America, money is in a grave state of deterioration, *Israel with its policy of immigration is leaving itself open to the worst, voluntarily and cheerfully, in order at all costs to have a large population.* It thereby discloses the extent of its purposes and makes new acts of aggression inevitable.

Where is Balfour's national home, subordinated to respect for the rights of others? Where are the peaceful scenes of the family around the fireside of which the Bible speaks?

It is now a country at arms that is holding us in suspense, a country whose armaments get bigger every day. The women are mobilized there. They have plans for the future that breathe the spirit of violence and conquest; ambitions there are being unleashed which are linked with the far-off days of David and Solomon. There are fifteen million men who are among the most powerful in politics and finance and who keep this sacred fire — or blaze — going in most of the countries of the world; there are already two million Jews in Soviet Russia; there are four million in the State of New York, which is the most powerful state under the star-spangled banner and in which, when it comes to elections, success depends on them.

*Immigration into Israel, encouraged by the blind indulgence of the Nations, is the highroad to catastrophe; here we have one of the least known but most formidable factors, among so many others, which may lead to world war.*

*Now that it has been launched, Israel would resign itself to the cataclysm in order to be sure of its own salvation. We would not go so far as to say that it is calculating on it, but the thought gives us cause for the deepest concern. At any rate, this is how its way of acting can be interpreted. Among numerous passages, it is enough to read carefully, in order to be sure of all this, the first fifty or sixty pages of the Government Year Book of Israel for 1950, which is an official document, and to confront them with the facts. It is not the least apocalyptic aspect of Israel's venture. Here is a sample:*

«The Jewish nation is not only a political and national unit — it had been the embodiment of moral will and historical vision right from the time it appeared on the stage of history.

«It is not possible to understand the history of the Jews,

their struggle for existence or the attitude they have adopted at all times and in all countries, both when they were a nation with roots in their own territory and more or less autonomous as well as when they were a wandering race dispersed in exile, *unless we perceive the ideological unity of the people in its persistent struggle*. The struggle is not merely an economic, political and military one. It is also spiritual, moral and intellectual. *The Jewish people has been fighting this battle since the most remote times, without ceasing, and it will so continue until the end of time, until the vision is fulfilled*.

This passage, which gives only a poor idea of the whole, is taken from a lecture by Mr. Ben Gurion on education in the army and among the people to the General Staff and superior officers of the «Israel Defence Army». The extracts from this lecture, which cover 35 tightly-packed pages, come at the beginning of the Government Year Book. Every Lebanese politician, not to say all Lebanese, should know them.

*Hence as regards Israel, Lebanon's future is dark and all fears are well-founded, in peace as in war*. Unless we here and those who guide the world's destiny acquire a deeper knowledge of the problem, everyone's fears, even the most serious, may prove correct. There is an unknown factor here of which Prophets perhaps possess the secret.

We must now widen our vistas to take in the Mediterranean scene.

#### LEBANON IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

Lebanon, a small maritime republic with a coastline of two hundred kilometres and an average width of only fifty, is in its element under the heading «Mediterranean».

*But according as Westerners locate it in the Near East*

*or the Middle East they consider it Mediterranean or on the contrary, by a kind of violent twist to things, they cut it off intellectually and socially from that sea. For the incorrect definition of the Middle East now current implicitly destroys the balance of the Mediterranean world. It arbitrarily removes Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and the other countries of the Eastern Mediterranean from the climate of their mother-sea so as to incorporate them, against the nature of things, into that of the Indian Ocean. There is a grievous error here the results of which directly concern politics and civilization, seeing that it stupidly subordinates Mediterranean politics and civilization to the altogether relative convenience of a strategy which has other duties and, no doubt, other outlets.*

*Along with the Near East as a whole, Lebanon belongs first and foremost to the Mediterranean, whereas the Middle East, in the proper sense of the term, belongs primarily to the world of the Indian Ocean. We now have the seas delimiting continental regions.*

To illustrate our point let us here repeat something which we put forward so often elsewhere: *in a general way, the Near East takes its bearings at the windows it has on the Mediterranean; the Middle East, at the windows it has on the Indian Ocean; the Far East, at its windows on the Pacific. These are openings whose dimensions are always growing, but which disclose landscapes and customs differing from each other.*

*The Near East has the peculiarity of being African, Asian and European together; geographically and historically it goes from Egypt to Greece, whereas the Middle East and the Far East are exclusively Asian. Putting the problem in this way clarifies it sufficiently.*

Arabs are to be found from the Atlantic to the Shatt-

al-Arab; *there are no more after this*, just as there are Europeans to be found as far as Turkey. The Turks are part of the Parliament of Europe at Strasbourg. How would they feel at ease if they were confined solely to the Middle East? The Persians, whose territory also reaches the Caucasus, have hardly seen the Mediterranean again since the time of Darius.

To come back to ourselves, the Lebanese, our future in the Mediterranean sphere is primarily a result of the past. In the first days of history the Mediterranean belonged to the sea-going Phoenicians, and, as to the more recent text, we can refer in this matter to the impressive preface written by Mr. Ibrahim Abdul-Al to the important book by Fathers Poidebard and Mouterde and Mr. Lauffray on the port of Sidon and on the ancient ports of the Eastern Mediterranean.

At the present moment, the future of which we speak can be inferred from Mediterranean solidarity since speed has reduced the dimensions of that sea to so little. It is no longer possible to divide up the Mediterranean into compartments, as they used to do in the past, without the people who live around its shores being the losers. It is no longer possible to do this without brutality. There are whole civilizations which owe their origins to their Mediterranean climate and which are at this moment seen to be exposed to the same dangers.

Egypt, Syria and ourselves must, *within the framework of the Arab League*, together defend our Mediterranean character; if not, we shall be plunged into chaos and pushed back into darkness. These resounding words are not an exaggerated way of describing the impoverishment that would overtake us and the political down-grading which we would come in for. *In the Near East we represent half of the area that bears this name, and whose ancient history is the most memorable in the world.* In the Middle East, we no longer count for anything

and our defence is now only the defence of occasional interests. We invite everyone to study this matter carefully.

From this point on, Lebanon's future becomes broader and clearer. Our mission in the historical world meets up with our mission in the geographical setting. It becomes a question of self-realization and of duty in the spiritual and intellectual order — of preserving and defending a heritage several thousand years old against the forces of disintegration and death.

*Our calling to universalism begins with the Mediterranean, from the time that the Mediterranean was the world. Now that it is no longer but a lake, and that one can go from Europe to Africa in an hour, there is a decisive reason for not tearing it in two, either from north to south or from East to West. Without this vital link neither greatness nor life are possible for the Arab countries. We cannot place it in jeopardy without becoming the slaves of other slaves. For the world is shrinking at a giddy pace. A day and a half would at the moment be enough to go round the world at the latitude of the Mediterranean.*

Rather than looking in the direction of Indonesia (which, for Lebanon, would be like looking towards the Philippines, for some strange reason, rather than looking in the direction of Spain), let us find in the Mediterranean those complementary forces which, with the co-operation of the great Western powers, will save the civilizations founded by the monotheistic religions. Lebanon would appear to be the ideal meeting-place for this purpose, *provided that we give the mind every chance to develop there.*

In our Mediterranean setting and in our service of Mediterranean civilizations, the future offers us almost unlimited possibilities if we get organized and persevere in the effort.

The time is coming when we will go to the big cities of Europe and people will come from them, as we go to the cities of Syria when Syria is so kind as to welcome us.

#### LEBANON IN THE WORLD

*There remains our presence in the world.*

It is our profession to be constantly on the move, to finish going round the world only to start again, and finally to settle in some distant land.

Travelling and emigration give rise to, or maintain, Lebanese activity in all climes. There is no country in which a Lebanese person has not settled; and this is as old as history. But the future is going to commit us to travel even more. We could not limit our undertakings to our territory which is so small and narrow without suffocating.

If the Phoenicians used to travel for months on end to find an entrepot that they had lost, or to reach a hospitable shore, their present-day descendants are admirably provided for by the speed-up in means of transport. When people think of limiting the number of cars in Lebanon, it is like slowing down the circulation of the blood here. A people which, without raw materials and industry, succeeds in such a marvellous way in keeping up and raising its standard of living must not be thwarted, in spite of the occasional bottleneck, by the would-be foresight of governments. Without cars, ships and planes this nation would be like a legless cripple still moving around on his hands over incredible distances.

*More than ever, the future for the Lebanese will involve much travel.* Without being stupid, we cannot forcibly prevent our people from leaving. If we did, we would thereby cause misery and give rise to disorder; but our duty, given their

prodigious eclecticism and the elusive changes which they undergo, is to facilitate *work in all its forms* in this country. This is elementary logic. *The State must accept the inevitable. It will have to give up a conformist economic and financial policy, and courageously go to the utmost limits of liberalism; or else, out of a predilection for what it calls principles, it will itself become responsible for increasing emigration and all its tragic consequences. The ideal would be to let the Lebanese travel as they wish, while at the same time making a country suited to their nature, a country that would encourage them not to leave, and, at all events, to come back.*

A people which draws seven eighths of its resources from abroad can by no means be committed to a closed economic policy — to a protectionist and inquisitorial policy — without being suffocated. *Restrictive laws* must be reduced to practically nothing in this country. The size of this country makes this possible, as does the favourable fact that it is industrialized only to such a small extent. *The Lebanese are not made for working at mass-production; it is not in their temperament, nor does their genius lie in it. What we have here is diversity, helped out by ingenuity — the redeeming feature.*

It is to be recommended that our apples be always of the same quality, and that this quality be fine; less recommendable is it that the Lebanese finish up in a factory and become stultified by repeating the same movements behind machines. *That is the work of a robot; it is not our task and there will never be any future for us in that line.*

So just as every person has his bent or his calling, all peoples have their own path to follow. For us, a mediocre and unvaried life would always lack light and attraction. *The best educational method for us would be to discover individual aptitudes and gifts and to get them to develop as fully as possible. It would be a serious mistake to think that there*

*are such things as uniform economic or social laws throughout the whole world.* Every brain has its ideas, and the bodily life of every person is determined by whether he can remain fixed or can move around. The indefinite repetition of the same movement may be all right for the Western worker employed in mechanical industry; an element of risk, together with novelty, adventure and travel is unavoidably necessary for the Lebanese. Statistics would be the most unpleasant of the sciences in this country. I say this with most sincere esteem for statisticians and their rules, and I know some astonishingly gifted and learned ones in the Republic. But someone may ask: how would one start taking a serious census here, in this country where people with one occupation only are becoming scarce, where variety and ubiquity are the rule, and where perhaps all the Lebanese present in this hall have, as I myself have, three or four regular occupations quite different from each other?

*We must exercise all our ingenuity in tracking down individual vocations instead of thwarting and bullying them; we then have to find scope for them; lastly, and at all events, we have to raise the morale of the Lebanese to a certain level of enthusiasm. The worst possible government we could have in this country would be one that would make pessimists out of this people. That is the basic guidance to give people — the one which, from the point of view of statistics, justifies the first and most enthusiastic efforts.*

Shall I recall the definition of Lebanon which, as a humorist of sorts, I once gave: *a country of generals without any troops, I said. What kind of response would you get if you asked a bunch of generals to do fatigues?*

Lebanon's future is only opening up. The important thing, the urgent thing, is to give this people, as circumstances require, a wide range of practical knowledge together with ge-

neral ideas — an education, a philosophy and an ethic of the highest degree, and to let them move around almost as the whim takes them, *precisely in order that they may make their own way in life.*

*The policy that suits us, and the economic system we need are based upon freedom — freedom in all its legitimate and orderly forms.* Because of this, we are inevitably in conflict with totalitarianism of whatever kind it may be. We are the very homeland of free enterprise, and we are the friends of those who support it wherever they may be. In these terms Lebanon will fulfil its mission (because it has got one), either with regard to itself, the countries of the Arab League, the peoples of the Mediterranean, or finally with regard to what, with and without the United Nations, international duty makes possible in the world.

*A small country, to be sure; a very small country; a small nation, perhaps, but certainly not a small people.*

# **THE PRESENCE OF LEBANON**

Lecture given at the Cenacle on October 29th 1953



**The founder of the Cenacle introduced  
the speaker as follows:**

**Mr. Chiha,**

*The Lebanese Cenacle is proud to inaugurate its new series with «The Presence of Lebanon» which we are going to hear in a moment. In yesterday's number of the newspaper «Al Amal» this inauguration was compared to the «Mass of the Holy Ghost» which marks the beginning of the academic year and in which the blessing of Heaven is invoked upon the year's activities. It would be rash of us to want to introduce you to an audience which is here to show its affection and admiration for you and which once again comes to draw upon the inexhaustible and life-giving well-springs of your thought.*

*One of the lectures you gave earlier on from this platform ended with these words:*

*«A small country (speaking of Lebanon, of course), to be sure: a very small country; a small nation, perhaps, but certainly not a small people».*

*You intend to speak to us this evening about this people in order to tell us that it is a great people. We share your faith in it. But by listening to you saying it, you who are such an active and hard-working man of this people and have profound experience drawn from books and from life, — by listening to you say it, our faith cannot but be strengthened. As a poet (for let us not forget that you are the author of «La Maison des Champs» — The House in the Fields) you have discerned what may be called the soul of peoples and you are trying to make us aware of it.*

*It is our wish that the sacred emotion which you experience when in the presence of Lebanon's personality will, by the captivating magic of your style, be this evening conveyed into the soul of your audience — and tomorrow into the soul of all those who must take an interest in the destiny of our dear country.*

*Thanking you warmly for your kind co-operation, we now hand over to you.*

**Michel Asmar**

If, after some hesitation, I had to put a quotation as an epigraph to this lecture, I would suggest these two lines from Phaedrus:

*«And since when, Lord, have you feared the presence  
Of these peaceful places so dear to your childhood?»*

Dearer and sweeter still in our mature years.

*Lebanon is inexhaustible.* Through it one can see the world as I see the sea from my window on the promontory.

Yet by dint of delving into this country and of telling of it, one is afraid of tiring the listener and the reader. But in a modest way, things Lebanese take on the dimensions of history. *Right from the beginning we have been of those who saw the birth of whole peoples. We have been so by heredity and by instincts;* and we are so situated in space and time that *when we speak of ourselves we can speak of everything.* Few nations have this privilege. It is the good fortune of certain chosen shores and of certain high places and localities eternal in their message.

We are numbered among the nations with the best qualifications for knowing and teaching the historic past in its entirety, because we have lived through it, and it so happens that, paradoxically, we know less about it than do many other

people.

It occurred to me that this featureless title «*The Presence of Lebanon*» would allow me to move around in your company as I liked. After so much talking and so many speeches, I have no other plan than to cast fuller light upon this country; to bring out its personality and structure from certain points of view, to illustrate better the originality of its characteristics, and to share some new glimpses and views of our horizon with you. From year to year, just like stock-taking, we must bring to light what we know and what we feel.

*Phoenicia is first and foremost the sea. Mount Lebanon is by definition the mountain region. The interpenetration of mountain and sea made our republic.*

One day long ago the mountain got the upper hand over the sea, when Ottoman domination, fearing the sea, closed it off. The mountain then became the refuge for freedom while chains closed the entrances to ports in the time of Suleiman the Magnificent's successors.

It was fitting to show, right from the first step, the sea and the mountain brought together in this country of ours. Along the two hundred kilometres of coastline, do we not see the Lebanese mountains so often and so harmoniously bathing in the sea?

There are always some less well-known aspects of a country, great or small, to be discovered and described with new words and new imagery. It is always possible to cast a different light on them, as in the case of those great subjects chosen by masters in painting and sculpture — subjects chosen a hundred times over, and renewed a hundred times over.

*One is present by that which marks one out, not by what is confused and can be lost.* Lebanon and the Lebanese have been sufficiently distinct from the rest of the world since the beginning to enable one to speak of a presence as old as the world.

Historical atlases used in teaching at all levels start with Ancient Egypt; they show a Mediterranean coastline *going from the Nile Delta to Lebanon — no further. History in the strict sense of the word starts there.* It finds us on its way very soon. Then gradually space opens up and the historian seizes hold of it. The whole of the Ancient History of the East then develops.

Amidst vicissitudes without number we are, I will not say caught up in all the undertakings recounted by history, *but in all its adventures.* We are ever present in the thick of it in one way or another; and the first page of our atlas — the «Vidal-Lablache» of the primary and secondary schoolboy which has been reprinted for sixty years — the first page of our atlas, I say, shows, since the fourth millenium B. C., *«the route taken by Egyptian expeditions towards the Euphrates» between Tyre and Hermon.*

So from the very first *the world's highway traces out its way* before our eyes — a route that is flexible and always abreast of the known world. Further to the south, this route was later to become the maritime route to Suez when Ferdinand de Lesseps extended it. Since then it was to be subjected to the accidents of politics and to the violence caused by wars: in 1939, as in 1914, it was for a while necessary to go back to the long way round via the Cape of Good Hope.

*But discoveries and peacetime quickly bring us back to the shortest routes.*

The shortest way is now by air, and is as free as the air.

The shortest way passes through Lebanon and takes people from New York, London and Paris on to India, China and Australia. *As regards the sea, it is entirely up to us not to allow an unhealthy nationalism to close it to our initiative, as in the dark days of the Padishah.* In this connection we shall shortly outline an interpretation of contemporary nationalism, for the benefit of the Lebanese and others, if it takes their fancy.



Do we attribute too much importance to our little country? Of course not. To admit that Lebanon follows a path peculiar to itself does not mean harming the Arab world; on the contrary, it means shedding fuller light upon it. *Moreover, if the Arabs, under the false pretext of wanting to be self-sufficient, were to slow down the pace of international exchange in this century of high-speed mechanization, what would become of them as a whole?*

*In order to lead a full life, it is above all necessary to find out one's vocation, develop one's bent and follow one's own path. Acting in this way simply means obeying the dictates of nature. The same is true for the pleasure taken in travelling which is proper to these shores, and for the pleasure taken in moving from one place to another; so also for the hereditary and instinctive bent for commerce and barter which extend our presence to the ends of the earth.*

The Lebanese people bear little resemblance to their immediate neighbours, whether to the north or to the south; its plain is narrower and its mountains are higher.

The contemporary English historian, Arnold Toynbee, makes a penetrating remark in his great work: «A Study of History». Among the basic driving forces behind the historic

evolution of nations he includes what he calls «the stimulus of pressure» — «a continuous external pressure». This is, putting it briefly, what Lebanon has always had to undergo. *This is what has always made us live «dangerously»*, by making life hard for us latterly in the neighbourhood of Turkish provinces under orders from Constantinople, with the complementary result, clear for all to see, that our mixed villages, with Christians and Druzes in them for instance, and which, thank God, have lived as brothers with each other for a long time, often form a stronger race than those where there are only Druzes or Christians. A hard life leaves a permanent mark on people. It teaches them manners and seasons them; it toughens people's characters and more quickly and more efficiently makes a man of one.

But all the Lebanese have literally *a combination of sea and mountain as their homeland*. They are a race of sea-going highlanders, very different from those surrounding them. We would have liked it to be otherwise, we could do nothing about it; and this gives the answer to the illusions of those who imagine that the whole Near East of Asia and Africa is made of the same stuff. Between the Arab living by the sea and the Arab living inland, whether we like it or not, there is geography and the sea; this in no way rules out mutual and natural love; there is the fact that the one goes cheerfully to the ends of the world while the other keeps his obsession for pastoral life with its dairy products and pastures. Are we going to say that the Arab of the glorious King of Arabia, of the glorious general Neguib and of the glorious general Shishakly are the same? Surely not. Each has his character and his customs, as each has his traditions and his glory. Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo are superimposed and do not merge into each other. Which of the three is ripe to rule the other two?

Lebanon is, before all else, a Mediterranean maritime republic. Two hundred kilometres of coastline, and an average width of only fifty — there, under different names, you have the whole of Phoenicia for the last five or six thousand years. On the continent of Europe facing us, Venice and Genoa in their heyday never had much more.

Lebanon is by nature, birth and necessity a maritime nation; and in this country the mountains are precisely the citadel covering the sea and guarding the sea. The whole of Lebanon is like that Sea Castle which is one of Sidon's main architectural features. The most distant ancestors of us the Lebanese lived on small islands and desperately defended themselves there. *Tyre and Sidon were island formations, Ruad still is.* We are not talking politics at the moment, but history; we make no claim whatsoever to annex Ruad but, as far as history is concerned, Phoenicia goes «from Carmel to Aradus», which is none other than Ruad. We cannot deny this, all we would do is to ask Syria, if only for love of Tortosa and Laodicea (i.e. Tartous and Latakia), not to take offence at it and to understand us. For the Lebanese, let us say it now lest there be any uncertainty about it, are glad to see a Syria according to their heart prospering alongside them. What they wish for, what they desire is that Syria, solicited by East and West in turn, be faithful to her own destiny.

*The capital and the main towns of Syria and almost all the population of Syria are a hundred kilometres from the Mediterranean, or a hundred and fifty at the most. How could this be overlooked and why should Syria overlook it?*

It is not possible to deal with Lebanese political economy or politics while underestimating the part played by sea and continents in our national existence. Eyes which see only the Anti-Lebanon and the horizon to the East are suffering from double short-sightedness. The Anti-Lebanon is like the curtain

of trees hiding the forest (and this screen is bare, alas). *Our task, together with Syria's, — our future task is to populate these slopes with trees and then with human beings. This would give us something else as frontier than just desert and wind.*



*We have mentioned the nationalism which is a collective form of self-love. This generous and explosive notion (especially in the last century) must nowadays be gone into more thoroughly. It has taken a different direction, and has taken on another aspect. The innumerable ways in which Lebanon makes its presence felt, and its being found everywhere, thanks to the Lebanese of the «diaspora», that is to say those of us who emigrated both in time and space, mean that we give the word nationalism its correct value in this twentieth century in which the notions of humanity and that of the unity of the world have made such progress. We must make clear the difference between systematic, rigid nationalism and all that is perfectly legitimate and most noble in national feeling and in the love of one's country.*

*There are spiritual and physical ties that link a man and his country, or, better still, a man and his province. Just as one becomes attached to one's house, or as one belongs to the abode of one's ancestors more than it belongs to us, one is tied, as to a well-loved face, to a corner of land, to a landscape, to a town, to a suburb and to their horizons; this gradually takes on the dimensions of one's country.*

*It is very moving that one should find one's country, whatever it is, the most touching and the most endearing of all. This is more true of a territorially small country than of a bigger one.*

*For it is a rather artificial kind of nationalism to love a*

country as big as a continent and about which one knows very little. In this case there is more pride and vainglory than love in the national sentiment; there is the link of solidarity, gregarious by nature, *forged by the masses*. The small province meant much more to the individual when people travelled simply by stage-coach or on horseback, and when the other provinces seemed so distant.

With centralized monarchy, administrative organization, roads and increased speed of communication, nationalism has grown since the Middle Ages. In France it has taken on its modern form since the time of Richelieu. *Now, it is because of increased speed of communication and of roads that it seems to be losing ground at present. The effects of extreme slowness have become similar to those of extremely high speed.* Up to the quarter of this century that has just passed, there was an acute form of nationalism everywhere which has now been left behind; but a Frenchman or a German still cannot love the European homeland as they love France and Germany respectively. In the same way, before Washington and the United States, although the States were at the time very young, jealous nationalism existed from one State to another.

*When one's homeland is too great, territorially, it leads one back to love for one's province.* This is why the wheel of fortune has turned in favour of regionalism and decentralization.

*When the world is united — supposing that it will be at some time — and even if it is now made up of only two or three collective «forces» (are not people talking of a third force these days?), the small countries will see a rebirth of love for a town, a village, or some humble district.* We Lebanese are by birth possessors of this sentiment. To judge from the history of the nineteenth century (and the famous na-

tionality principle along with it) nationalism is mainly a form of pride, whereas *we* speak primarily of love.

*«Alas! When next shall I see smoke rising  
From hearths in my little village — what the season  
When again I shall behold the plot around my lowly home  
To me 'tis a realm, and greater far than that ?»*

Joachim du Bellay wrote this at Rome in the middle of the sixteenth century. Is it not the very theme sung by the exile and the emigrant, by the Lebanese from what are called the «far-off» lands of America?

*When the world gets near to unity, what earthly homeland will there be to love? one wonders. Will it be Saint-Exupéry's «land of men» lost in the stars? Or will we have to come back to less widely-scattered things to love?*

Thanks to the favour of the gods, Lebanon is the size of a province. A Lebanese person could know it hamlet by hamlet, peak by peak, valley by valley and could quite rightly regard the whole of it as «his house, his field and his delights».

On this shrinking globe of ours, as distances fade away, less extensive places we have a special liking for can be distinguished. In a way, this can be reconciled with the ambition to become a «citizen of the world». *If the round earth were now just one country, it would no longer be possible to talk about nationalism except with regard to human beings on another planet.* But then there would still be the «memory of the fair home of our childhood» where we would surely want to live and die.

These remarks suggested to us by the notion of nationalism are valid for the restless Arab world. If Arab unity could be brought about in spite of the geographical difficulties, which

are less noticeable in Europe itself, and if Arab unity were brought about prematurely, the result would be to tie the Egyptian, the Syrian, the Iraqi and the inhabitant of Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad much more to his town and province than to a world unknown to him. Provincialism would then become as violent as exasperated nationalism. A breach would occur similar to the one that made the Umayyads fall victim to the Abbasids; for history repeats itself. *While political truth lies in brotherly intimacy.*

*The lesson to be learnt from this is that we must no longer try to think too big when it comes to territory, unless there is question of building up a collective «force», and not a homeland.*

The confusion between ideological nationalism and love of one's native land is still widespread. The future will remove it. I can tell you this much in confidence that, *as regards the future, this Lebanon of ours as at present constituted seems to me to have ideal dimensions for its inhabitants.*

*When Asia, from here to Kamchatka, would be just one country, how could we want to give our lives for it?* The descendants of those who in the past died for the Ottoman Empire or for the Austro-Hungarian Empire are today wondering what they died for.

Maurice Barrès' type of nationalism, for instance, though quite genuine and moving when concerned with his native province Lorraine, may in our day seem too zealous and less strictly valid.



*Lebanon's presence is to be found firstly in one's heart.*

The foreigner who has lived in this country wants to

come back to it because he likes it. Few shores, few vistas stir up such affection; to the traveller it is like a sign in the heavens. While we complain about the disorder in which, politically speaking, we live, the foreigner is envious of so much mild climate and light. Other countries no doubt have Lebanon's power to attract, *but with different kinds of attractions*. There is something decisive about the tribute paid by the visitor, however instinctive it may be. *It indicates the happiness of the whole being*. There is a joy about life here which persists when one goes away because it keeps the recollection alive and makes it sweet. Along with the spiritual atmosphere with which the Lebanese countryside is impregnated there goes a kind of physical delight. Elsewhere it is the arts and sciences that are the cause of wonderment; here it is nature in a despoiled and mystical state — rustic vegetation, or the moving bareness of the soil which carries a humanism within it. Our hard white rock is itself like living flesh. «Summer, like rock of pure air», wrote Valéry. Where, pray, is this more true than here?

*There is a sentimental presence of Lebanon* about which one can speak in just the same way as Barrès used to speak about the countryside in Lorraine, but with wider vistas and with a horizon of a different extent. There is a sentimental presence of Lebanon which is part of my plan for this evening, and we shall come back to it before we leave. But there are other aspects of this presence which appeal to me and entice me. Am I to say, setting modesty aside, along with the fabulist, that our stage is the world? It could be so. I simply want to recall thereby that Lebanon, to this extent alone in the Arab world, has links, which are personal and which it considers vital, with all the lands and all the seas on the face of the earth. *It has been everywhere present from the beginning, in one form or another; and in a sense it lives off this world-wide presence*. For Lebanon it is something inborn, a thing of

nature; and for the Arab world, which for a century it has spent so much effort in trying to draw out from isolation, it is a boon from heaven. Without Lebanon, apart from its representation in diplomatic circles, the Arab world would be very poorly represented throughout the world.

In order to comment upon them and to illustrate my lecture, I want to quote some sentences from Arnold Toynbee here which are very valuable for the tribute they pay to Lebanon, its personality and its gifts. *They establish the link between the present and the past excellently.* They clearly show the Lebanese of today as the heirs of the Phoenicians, the direct heirs who are revealed by their character, aptitudes, behaviour and achievements as by an identity card.

*«In modern times, the highlanders of the Lebanon have emulated the historic exploits of the Phoenician islanders of Tyre and Aradus by seeking their fortunes abroad and making a livelihood as traders and shopkeepers far and wide»* (Toynbee: A Study of History, T. II p. 56).

**THE WHOLE LEBANESE ECONOMY IS TO BE FOUND POTENTIALLY IN THESE LINES BY THE GREAT ENGLISH HISTORIAN.**

*«In the light of the local precedents it looks as though the Lebanese had been stimulated to emulate the Phoenicians by the barrenness of their native mountain, while the agreeableness of the Jabal Ansariah (the Alawi range in the north) had inveigled the Nusayris into vegetating in a Philistine (i.e. pertaining to the Palestinians in the south) sloth»* (Toynbee, id.). As you see, this brings us back to the stimulus of pressure.

Comparing the Philistines of the distant past with their Phoenician neighbours, Toynbee goes on to say:

*«While the Philistines were browsing on the Shephelah*

(the Shephelah is the coastal district — what we in Lebanon would call the «Sahel» of Palestine) *like sheep in clover and were moving inland, at their peril, in search of pastures new, the Phoenicians whose maritime horizon had hitherto been restricted to the short range of the coastwise traffic, between Byblos and the Delta of the Nile, now launched out into the open sea and won a second home for the Syriac civilization* (as you know, «Syriac» stands in general for the Aramaic language) *in the western basin of the Mediterranean and on the coasts of the Ocean beyond»* (Toynbee, id. p. 52).

**THE WHOLE OF LEBANESE DESTINY IS TO BE FOUND IN THIS PARALLEL DRAWN BY TOYNBEE;** our politics, our trade, our industry and our monetary and financial policy.

And I am placing this theme at the heart of my subject, for *Lebanon's true presence is there*. The inhabitant of this country leaves it without hesitation, *so much is he possessed by the passion for travel and trade*; but in such a way that, though emigrating more easily than anyone else, from far more than from nearer at hand, he never ceases to sigh and languish with love for his village and for an unproductive land. It has been so for the four or five thousand years that the activity of this coastal region has been centered upon the sea and overseas countries and that the thick population of this country has not been separated from the fruitfulness of the sea.

*It is from the presence of Lebanon in foreign countries (and no doubt also from the presence of other countries in Lebanon) that this country, that has nothing lying underneath it and no raw materials, draws vast quantities of things it needs to survive.* It also draws upon the tireless moving around, movement at a distance, the subtle intelligence, the agility of mind, the natural disposition for travelling and the readiness to move on the part of the Lebanese. Without hesitating, a

Lebanese man would go on business as far as China, *even if it were a hostile China*. I shall here draw my argument from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Quotations from English sources are decisive. They show why and how much the English more than the rest of the West ought to understand us; what they themselves are doing on such a greater scale and although times are hard for them is like what we have been doing for so long.

*«The Phoenicians were essentially a seafaring nation. Fearless and patient navigators, they ventured into regions where no one else dared to go, and, always with an eye to their monopoly, they carefully guarded the secrets of their trade routes and discoveries, and their knowledge of winds and currents».*

(It was not for nothing that the Pole Star was called the Phoenician Star).

*«... they alone (the Phoenician merchants) were able to maintain a profitable trade in the anarchic times of the 22d and 23d dynasties (825-650 B.C.) when all other foreign merchants were frightened away».*

To deny an exceptional «itinerant» calling to the Lebanese of this century one would have to abolish the past in its entirety; one would have to imagine that our shores which have formed this roving race no longer have the same migrant winds and the same virtues. *It would be madness to presume to enclose this country and people within the walls (which are shaky, anyway) of the economics now in fashion*. The most gifted Lebanese and the most enterprising Lebanese earn their living far from their native soil or by providing services to which the produce of their native soil is practically extraneous. Their presence is worldwide (as are the services they provide). The prudent thing to do is to respect and make easier the way of life which has given them their rank and prestige in inter-

continental trade.

This way of life which justifies their liking for risks and which shows that courage pays off it would be a bit late to think hazardous. Those who have not understood that Lebanon would die politically and socially if it no longer wished to live save on olives and cheese and on customers from its immediate neighbourhood have not understood Lebanon at all. They are the victims of theories foreign to the psychology and traditions of this people; or else they are the victims of a political way of thinking which, taken to its logical conclusion, would endanger even the personality of this country.

«Does a butterfly become caterpillar again?» The same goes for us. Under the pretext of submitting us to would-be classical laws, ruthless theoreticians do violence to our destiny at the risk of destroying our very presence. Let Lebanon perish, they think, rather than one postulate of their economic theory!

*Political economy is still a relative and confused science.* It has to be interpreted as the Sibylline oracles are interpreted. Political economy, all the Lebanese should know, is for us like the tongues of Aesop. It contains the best and the worst. *We can live or die at its hands.* Everything depends on the use we make of its hypotheses, its experiments and its calculations of probability. If it recognizes us as an original people, as a special breed of people, we can with respect seek its suggestions and advice; but if, by means of knocking us about, it tries to get us into line, as they do with the façade of buildings on the street, then we must rise up against it. One abiding principle enlightens all the discussion: «*The letter kills and the spirit gives life*».

*The whole of Lebanese legislation and political economy must take one basic and inherent factor into account: Lebanese*

*activity abroad and with people from abroad. This has been the secret of our prosperity for dozens of centuries. If we are lacking in understanding and justice towards others, our turn to be ill-treated will come. The manifold and innumerable resources which Lebanon draws from the four corners of the world and from all climates, if pretentiously harassed in the name of one economic theory or another, or in the name of one ideology or another, could quite simply dry up. Lebanon's presence abroad imposes on the Lebanese of the metropolis (in the sense of the ancient metropolises), as well as those seeking their fortune overseas, a knowledge of languages, customs, means of transport of all kinds, of the international transit network, of the quality of ports of call, of fitting out entrepôts, of the costs of handling and lastly of the cost of the entire voyage, whether it be of merchandise or of the merchant who makes his tracks through sea and sky. This presupposes many journeys and indefinitely implies a large number of them.*

The rule to be formulated from all this is: *The reception we give to the foreigner must be at least as open-minded and amicable as the one he gives us or which we expect from him: «Thy neighbour as thyself». Xenophobia in Lebanon brings slow death with it; it is a kind of suicide.*



At this point in the lecture I shall briefly resume the plan which I used almost two years ago in a lecture entitled: *Lebanon in the World*, given in this same hall and to the Lebanese Cenacle. It will not be quite in the same words, nor will the purpose be the same, although when one gets to the bottom of reality in things Lebanese, despite oneself one finds oneself using the same way of thinking, the same vocabulary and the same imagery.

Thus I shall speak to you in broad outline and without any claim to learning about what it means for us to be simultaneously present in the civilizations of the Arab world, of the Mediterranean world and of the Anglo-Saxon world which are all familiar to us.

*I shall not speak to you about Israel this time because we would have to deal with an absence. For as long as the United Nations do not, by their own presence, assign impassable boundaries and frontiers to Israel's claims and ambitions, we and all the Arabs will be absent from that extensible venture, we shall be absent from that ill-defined venture which endangers so many spiritual and human values.*

Arab civilization (with a slight difference of meaning one might say: Arab civilizations, as we would for Mediterranean civilizations and Anglo-Saxon civilizations, for many things change from Greece to Spain, from Syria to Morocco and from the United Kingdom to the United States), Arab civilization is obviously to a very large extent ours. But people do not live at Beirut (nor even at Damascus) as they do at Ryad, Jidda and Sana'a in the Yemen. The country best representing genuine Arab civilization is of course Arabia itself; and it is quite clear from this that an intermediary civilization has established itself in the biggest Arab capitals. This is to be seen in clothing, housing, customs, entertainment, education, conversation and conventions; along with the town dress of each one, nothing illustrates this better than the evening dress of the elite: «black tie, white tie». It is true, the Turks have bravely and brilliantly set an example.

All things considered, Arab civilization claims us as her own and we claim her as the dominant civilization, but, to tell the truth, not much more than the Mediterranean and Anglo-Saxon one. A little reflexion on this matter shows Lebanon in its true historic light. *The Mediterranean civiliza-*

tions which preceded that of the Arabs on these shores — the Greek and Hellenistic, the Roman, the Byzantine and, after the Arabs, those of the Middle Ages, humanism and modern Europe — *still persist in the laws, liturgies, customs and ways of self-expression and living*. How many words in current Lebanese Arabic come from Italian and French, and through them from Latin and Greek?

*Clearly, the principle of communicating vessels has been at work between Arab civilization and the western ones, and in a more perceptible way in Lebanon. The fact is observable in different degrees in Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan. In Lebanon things have blended harmoniously together better for well-known geographical and historical reasons. This is natural and quite in order.* Lebanon's function as «link between the East and West» is no longer placed in doubt. This truthful and well-worn phrase has become one of the definitions of our country.

English people of the school of Lawrence, hardly having left London for Cairo, used to like putting on the burnus and bedouin-style sandals. This always looked like a kind of carnival to the Arabs. In Lebanon the question never arises.

The Lebanese are at ease in the Arab setting as in the Mediterranean and Anglo-Saxon setting. They would be at ease in Korea, Japan and anywhere, I think. But it is obvious that the Mediterranean is the climate we flourish in, it is for us eastern Mediterraneans our lake, as it is for those of the West, the South and the North. I have a Druze gardener from the mountains at Sofar whose brother has been living and prospering for twenty years and more at Palma in the Canaries. He plants banana trees there and lives like a Spanish islander there. I have no idea what westerly wind brought this rural rustic straight to the Canaries. Now, from the neighbouring village, people go to Jamaica, Santo Domingo and,

from a little further away, to the United States and Canada. I do not claim that these peasants who emigrate arrive at the finer points of the civilization they adopt, but they do get adapted as the result of an unequalled ability to assimilate. The Syrians emigrate also, less than the Lebanese, no doubt; they do so to the extent to which the Mediterranean possesses them, at any rate, to the extent to which an ancestry with many aspects to it left it in their blood.

*We are present, I say, in the heart of multiform Mediterranean civilization, and in all the countries rising out of it, and this means that in this country it feels at home.* It is a necessary presence and a reciprocal presence. If we did not have a broad classical Mediterranean education here, we would surely not have enough air to breathe.

It is not certain that within the Arab League everyone makes an equitable assessment of things. This is the opinion of more than one person, it is not the expressed conviction of all. *But do we not see in India today, without the British, that English is spoken so that people can understand each other there! For you know that there are about two hundred languages spoken in India.*

*The important thing, the essential thing is that there be ideas before languages; it means knowledge before ways of expressing that knowledge; it means the ability to understand, before the letters of the alphabet.*

In Lebanon we are committed to a plurality of languages as we are to a plurality of manners. One may receive more attention than the others, but the need for the one is no less than the need for the other (or others). Without languages, I once wrote, we in the Near East would become like the deaf waiting to become dumb. By good fortune everyone has easy access to languages here, and the Spanish spoken by my Druze from Palma in the Canaries, though not up to that of Cervantes

and Calderon, is nonetheless a basic part of that man's capital as he works amidst his banana trees.

In Lebanon, as everywhere, languages are the principle means of being present in the world. Just as Chinese is no longer of any use outside China, so, with only Arabic, one would have to have recourse to an interpreter on arrival at the airport. There are some famous bonzes who need reminding of this.

*Hence it comes about that the presence of Lebanon and all the Near East in the civilization of the Mediterranean presupposes or calls for familiarity with one or several of the principal languages of the Mediterranean. In this connection, let us remember the Swiss who have four official languages, not one of which is proper to Switzerland; the Swiss pride themselves on sharing, without interpreters, in three of Europe's main literatures. That is just what this century is all about; that is what it imposes and demands. And we shall not do the Swiss the discourtesy of considering them less patriotic than the Arabs.*

*A great writer is a great writer whatever the language he writes in; why should we translate him and betray him if we can read him in the original? A great poet is a great poet whatever be his vocabulary. People in the West would derive as much pleasure from reading Al-Ma'arri, Al-Mutanabbi and other masters of Arabic literature if they could read them in Arabic as would the Lebanese from reading Dante and Shakespeare in Italian and English and Pascal, Racine and Goethe in French and German. Our little country occupies the best place in the world for this. Intellectually as well as materially it is by nature one of the most rightfully free zones in the whole world.*

*But just as is Mediterranean civilization, Anglo-Saxon*

*civilization is without question one of our spiritual and temporal homes. Along with the civilization of the Arabs, they both increase a man's happiness and opportunities. We could live in France as in Italy, in Spain or in Greece, we could live in England as in Germany or in the United States, enjoying a fulness of mind and heart which would leave Lebanon in the first place in our affections.*

This outstanding aptitude is surely a form of contemporary humanism — humanism in the best sense of the word. We are familiar with the fragrance of Rome, the glory of Paris, the light of Athens, the charm of the royal boroughs of England and of the English countryside and the haunting romanticism of the German Rhineland. *We are acquainted with all this and we know we must become attached to it in order to let the human spirit soar to commanding heights. The Western Mediterranean and the adjoining region along the Atlantic possess powerhouses of the spirit — famous universities where knowledge in all its breadth aspires to truth in all its fulness. How would we sever ourselves from all this in exchange for the loneliness of an extreme form of nationalism and a jealous nationalism at that?*

*We would like all the universities in the world to have a chair for the teaching of Arabic; but for the love of Arabic (and of Lebanon, too) let steps be taken to allow the whole of science and all the world's literatures to flourish beneath the Lebanese sky! What we are seeking here is all the world's poetry, not just that of one language. What we are seeking here is universal knowledge, not just that of the countries of the League. Reducing them to so little would mean despising the destiny and opportunities of the Arabs. Why do some people give the Arabs such a constricted breast and such short breath? The Arab himself remembers that he penetrated into the heart of the West in one drive. Now that accounts have been settled,*

*perhaps the time has come to bring oneself up to the level of one's dreams.*

*Lastly, fully to convince oneself today of the interdependence of nations is the rational way of guaranteeing their independence.*

*The only kind of independence that remains intact is that of the spirit. In the temporal sphere, this kind of independence is not subordinated to anything.*

Now considerations such as these bestow an exceptional status on Lebanon's presence in the Near East, in the Mediterranean world, in the Arab world and in the civilizations of the West, thanks to the speed of this modern age. If, from all I have just said, there do not emerge a personality and a mission, I have not achieved my purpose; but Lebanon's presence at the crossing of the ways and right to the end of them is no doubt ringing in your ears and clear in your sight.

You will recall that this little country on the threshold of western Asia is not comparable to anything in the whole of Asia or in the rest of the world. It is at once the consequence and synthesis of the greatest historical and social variety. Its originality consists in living by its liberalism and tolerance, its standing invitation to travel and the quality of its hospitality. *The most striking characteristic of the Lebanese is how they bring back so many treasures from so far. They do no harm to other Lebanese at a distance: they do not misuse the sweated labour or their fellow-countrymen. The socialist, no more than the sociologist, has no right to bear them any ill-will.* Besides, no one in the world more readily incurs expense or is more lavish in generosity.

We shall leave it to any gloomy economist to panic about the fact that the Lebanese as a rule live above their

material resources. The fact does not disturb us. From the social point of view this is better than that whole groups should suffer harm. And then, it has been going on for five thousand years. *In any case, we do not think that this country is living above its intellectual means.* Understanding in business matters is an integral part of its capital.

*Everything the Lebanese have built up, everything they possess and everything they have spent have resulted from an effort made far from home more than from a heritage.* When one asks so little from one's own country one should not become the object of base jealousy there. Lebanese taxation laws as well as our teachers of monetary and taxation law should remember this consideration based on elementary psychology.

The money earned in the Canaries, in Jamaica and in Santo Domingo would remain in those islands or would go elsewhere if it occurs to people here not to let it in freely. It was the effort expended far from here that built the Lebanese village before building the towns. This is why there is something different about our mountain villages that distinguishes them from all the other villages in the Near East.



*Lebanon's presence involves the Lebanese in often being absent.* This is the normal thing in the case of people whose sea (and nowadays air) routes are the ordinary ways of getting around. The readings I have used in order to get this bird's-eye view of things with you were mostly taken at random; everywhere I found something to be remembered in connection with what I had to tell you. These readings were certainly not superficial. They are shot through with the thrill of the past —

rather like the poetry of history, for there is no living history without its poetry. If history does not bring out the personality of nations and men, it has done nothing. For you and for me this evening, *the important thing is the personality of Lebanon.*

There is something more touching about this personality than all others, because through all the obstacles and accidents arising out of trade and exchange and throughout the struggle for its bodily survival it has always taken on the appearance of a struggle for the spirit. *If the Lebanese earn their living where they can, they did so originally in defence of a faith.* Their mountains are a refuge for the spirit. All the religious minorities here have, right from the beginning, subordinated the temporal to the spiritual. This is the case for all of them.

In Lebanon, these minorities have found an asylum against oppression and a refuge where they could be free in the high mountains. And as bread was short, they went looking for bread in the four corners of the world.

*Lebanon's secret lies in the fact that the mountains were gradually populated by harassed men who were being tracked down. These men had left their belongings behind them to save their lives and their souls.* Once they had settled down, they went to seek their fortune beyond the seas, thereby linking up with a tradition going back to time immemorial.

I was talking just now about the austere reading I had done. It was not all like that. I have always believed that poetry is the best introduction not only to literature but also to science. It stirs up that state of mind which makes invention and divination possible. Poetry, in the purest sense of the word, is the harmonious brief way of expressing everything.

I was also speaking of a certain sentimental presence of Lebanon. You can see it making itself felt more strongly

than all the arguments proposed by politics and economics. While the Lebanese roam the world getting married abroad and marrying off their children, our little country does not get merged with anything around it; it defies time and *assimilates everything*.

Generations and empires pass and it remains — a living invitation to enjoy the happiness of life, provided the ravings of the ideologists and reformers do not in the end ruin that happiness.

Among the reading I did there is one passage which one would not think likely to be relevant to Lebanon but which is so striking in its simplicity that I thought I would quote it to you by way of conclusion. It gives in a nutshell the answer to the theoreticians who advocate a closed economy for Lebanon and to those who favour a policy of preventing it from looking out into the wide open spaces. It comes from a book by Mr. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer, of which the title is «*Beautés de la Provence*». Whether Mr. Jean-Louis Vaudoyer expresses himself in verse or in prose in it, he does it with the rhythm and accents of true poetry. Writing of the activity of the Phoenicians in the chapter called «*Trois Jours à Arles*» he says:

*«Theirs are all the seas — known and unknown. They set up their fabulous entrepôts in the right places. They come, go, and come back again. They are not colonists but traders. As commission-agents and importers, they traverse the seas as do sellers of oddments our countryside. The Celts are still the sole masters of Arles and its district, but the Phoenicians do business there. They were peaceable, versatile, secretive...*

*The sources of Tyre's wealth were at the ends of the earth».*

«*The sources of Tyre's wealth were at the ends of the earth*». That is a great little sentence upon which I must dwell with you. *It admirably defines this Lebanon of ours*. In a flash the poet has seen things better than the economist. With a word he has located those distant and invisible gold-mines. He has explained the Lebanese situation without becoming embarrassed by there being no exports. He has discovered that the purveyor of ideas is a trader just like the rest; *and even a trader more deserving than the rest*.

We, in our turn, shall say, but with the will to turn over the uneven soil of this country until we make the earth's finest orchard out of it:

«*The sources of Lebanon's wealth are still at the ends of the earth*».

#### NOTE

This lecture was the last Michel Chiha gave from the Cenacle's platform. However, he was to speak once more from it on January 26th 1954 in the course of a ceremony arranged in his honour when he received the Honorary Degree of Doctor from the University of Lyons and was created High Officer of the National Order of the Cedar. Habib Abi-Chahla, Elie Tyan, Ghassan Tueni, René Habachi, Mouhieddine Nsouli and Charles Helou shared in the homage paid by the Cenacle to one of its most brilliant lecturers and a member of its Board of Trustees — he who had living experience of Lebanon in his body, his heart and his mind «throughout half a century since the age of reason». The address Michel Chiha gave that evening was impregnated with deep emotion; some people felt that he had an intuition of his approaching end. Michel Chiha was to die on December 29th that same year.