

THE LINK

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SYRIA

The "Fertile Crescent" of old is now the modern nation of Syria, an ancient land experiencing radical change in much of its national life. The nature of its government, the role of its women, the structure of its economy, and the methods of its education system have all been touched by international trends of recent times.

History

Before 1918 the term "Syria" applied to the whole territory now encompassing the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan. Its present-day frontiers largely reflect the interests and prestige of the outside powers of Britain and France. At the end of World War I, in accordance with the Sykes-Picot agreement produced by the collusion of Britain, France, and Czarist Russia, Syria came under French influence in the breach of Allied promises to create a greater Arab kingdom. A provisional French administration was formed in Syria's coastal district, and an Arab government under Emir Feisal, son of the Sharif of Mecca, was established in the interior.

The Syrian nationalists in March, 1920, proclaimed an independent kingdom of Greater Syria (including Lebanon and Palestine) but, despite the wishes of the people, the April 1920 San Remo Conference granted France a mandate for the whole of Syria. In July, French troops moved to implement the mandate by force and, after defeating the nationalists in the famous battle of Maysaloun, they occupied Damascus.

Syria regained its independence on April 17, 1946. It now participates in the activities of the non-aligned

nations and is a member of the Arab League and of the United Nations.

Syrian Society

The Syrian people in 1973 were estimated to number 6.8 million, including about 186,000 Palestinians. Their population growth rate is a high one, averaging 3.3 per cent a year. With an overall rate in 1970 of about 87 persons per square mile, Syria is one of the most densely populated countries in the Middle East. About half the population is under 15 years of age, and nearly half — 44 per cent in 1971 — are urban dwellers. An estimated 1,458,000 people live in the capital city of Damascus, which is also the country's largest city. Damascus claims to be the oldest, continuously inhabited city in the world, dating from about 2000 B.C.

Latakia is Syria's oldest and principal seaport. Major ports are Baniyas and Tartus.

The 1970 census shows that men outnumber women by about five per cent.

Arabic is the official and spoken language, although Kurdish, Armenian, Turkish, and Syriac are spoken in some villages. Aramaic, the language of Christ, survives in the village of Maaloula.

Between 1968 and 1971 Syria's major export markets were Arab, socialist, and European Economic Community countries. The largest share of its imports comes from socialist and EEC countries.

Syria's total labor force was estimated in 1973 to be less than two million. Agriculture employed 67 per cent of the labor force, transport and communications 2.3 per cent, trade

and catering 6.7 per cent, and financial and other services 10 per cent.

Syria's main natural resource is agricultural land. The cultivable area is estimated at about 8.8 million hectares, or 47 per cent of the total. Agriculture accounts for about 65 per cent of total exports, of which cotton is the most important. Imports include machinery, equipment, and metal products, with foodstuffs, textiles, and chemical products next in importance.

Gross foreign exchange reserves rose to \$165 million at the end of August, 1972.

Syrian Economy

Since the early 1960s Syria's economy has changed greatly. It has discarded its commercial laissez-faire system for a more central and regulated economy. Banks, insurance companies, medium and large industrial firms and wholesale and foreign trade are now under public control.

The 1971 change in government brought about economic liberalization, particularly in external trade. The private sector was assured of a clearly defined role, and Syrian capital and talent abroad were encouraged to return.

From 1966 to 1971 the public sector accounted for about 67 per cent of the total fixed investments.

Economic growth has averaged 4.8 per cent during 1966-70 and almost tripled in 1971. Gross fixed investment increased by 19 per cent in 1971, while private investment jumped sharply to 30 per cent.



Mechanized agriculture in the fertile fields of Syria

Agriculture. Farming provides the livelihood of 70 per cent of Syria's people, about one third of its domestic output, and about 27 per cent of the national income (approximately \$4,111,000).

Overall economic growth is highly dependent on agricultural production, which fluctuates with weather conditions. Of a total cultivable area of 8.8 million hectares (22 million acres), about 5.9 million are under cultivation.

Of some two million hectares of irrigable land, about half a million are presently irrigated. To increase the irrigated area, the government has launched several projects which have doubled agricultural production. The most prominent of these projects is the Euphrates Dam, being built with the assistance of the Soviet Union. It will double the present irrigated area and will provide 800,000 kilowatts of electricity initially and later 1,200,000 kilowatts.

Agricultural cooperatives have multiplied by about 17 per cent, totalling 1,350 by the end of 1970 and having more than 80,000 members.

Agrarian reform is complete. About 1,500,000 hectares have been distributed among 55,000 families.

The cotton harvest, only 12,400 tons in 1945, now yields 400,000 tons annually. Further increases are predicted.

Industry. During the 1966-70 period, industry grew about nine per cent a year. Syria's Third Five-Year Plan caused an industrial renaissance, and businessmen and manufacturers are continuously setting up new plants.

In 1973, industrial production was valued at 898 million Syrian liras (about \$225 million), an overall increase of 15 per cent over 1972. The general industrial production index rose from 100 in 1965 to 177 in 1973. (In some industries, including mining and petroleum, the index skyrocketed from 100 in 1965 to 2,284 in 1973.)

The private sector now plays an important role in Syria's industrial life. During 1972-73, private industrial projects mushroomed. In 1973, permits issued for industrial projects totalled 1,993 (the 1972 total was 770). The value of industrial machinery and equipment imported in 1973 by the private sector amounted to 96 million Syrian liras, up from 70 million the preceding year. The worth of capital invested in these projects was estimated at 128 million liras in 1973. It was set at 99 million liras in 1972.



Textile factory



Oil refinery at Homs

Oil. Syria is a moderate oil-producing country, with a potential yield from proven reserves estimated at 300 million tons. New oil fields have been discovered along the border with oil-rich Iraq.

Oil production rose from a million tons in 1968 to five and one half million tons in 1973 and six million in 1974. In 1975, Syria has produced 10.5 million tons worth 2.3 billion liras (\$600 million).

Two international pipelines run through Syria, the ex-Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) pipeline, and the Trans-Arabian Pipeline from Saudi Arabia to Lebanon. The two lines can carry about 55 and 25 million tons of crude per year respectively.

In 1971 Syria received about \$82 million in transit dues. Following Iraq's nationalization of IPC, Syria took over the IPC pipeline and, in accordance with a new agreement signed with Iraq, will receive about \$160 million a year from transit dues and operating costs.

Fourth Five-Year Plan. The Third Five-Year Plan (1970-75) was pegged to the ambitious Euphrates Dam project. The next five-year plan (1976-80) will focus on heavy industry and on light and processing industries.

Government

"The Syrian Arab Republic is a democratic, socialist, sovereign state," according to its 1973 Constitution; it "is a part of the Arab homeland," its people "are a part of the Arab nation," and "sovereignty belongs to the people."

The People's Council holds legislative power. Its members are elected publicly, secretly, and directly for a four-year term. The president of the Republic, elected for a seven-year term, assumes executive power. He nominates the president of the Council of Ministers, the ministers, and the assistant ministers.

Under the Constitution, the "judicial power is independent" and the "High Constitutional Court considers the constitutionality of laws." The Constitution designates the Baath Party as "the leading political party" but does not outlaw or prohibit other political parties or interest groups. People's Council members are in fact chosen to represent the society's various social, political, and economic sectors, such as workers, peasants, professionals, and women. A few Communists have been named to the Council.



Central Bank in the heart of modern Damascus

Foreign Policy

Syria's foreign policy is based on two principles: realization of Arab aspirations in unity, freedom, and socialism; and cooperation with all peoples struggling for liberation, progress, and the elimination of imperialism and exploitation.

Syria sees in the unity of the Arab homeland the logical answer to the major problems of the Arab peoples, particularly the Zionist-imperialist threat. The resolutions and recommendations of its ruling Arab Baath (Renaissance) Socialist Party repeatedly stress this principle and call for a progressive formula for Arab unity.

Internationally, Syria also sees its struggle as part of the worldwide struggle against the vestiges of imperialism and exploitation, especially in the Third World. It believes in bolstering solidarity and cooperation among all peoples struggling for liberation and progress against imperialism in all its forms. It will strengthen all ties of friendship and cooperation with all countries that have shown understanding and support for the Palestine case and for the Arabs' right to fight against the Zionist danger. For Syria this point constitutes a major criterion in defining its relations with all nations.

Syria further works for the development of its ties with the Socialist states.

A practical application of Syria's foreign posture was clearly reflected in the policy speech delivered by Foreign Minister, Abdel Halim Khaddam, before the thirtieth session of the U.N. General Assembly. The following excerpt deals with the Middle East crisis:

The explosive effects of the tense situation in the Middle East region may not be confined to the region alone. The situation, rather, threatens world security at large, for the following reasons.

First, there is the strategic position of the Middle East region. It is the crossroads for three continents and is situated on two oceans and three seas, and through it pass the most vital international communications routes. Secondly, there is the interconnection and intertwining of international interests in this region. All of us remember how the October War placed the super-powers on the brink of a devastating nuclear war. Thirdly, there is the economic significance of this region due to the enormous quantities of oil stored therein. All of us remember the great crisis suffered by the world economy due to the October War.

Since one of the main purposes of the

(U.N.) Charter is to deal with anything that jeopardizes world peace and security, the tense situation in the Middle East ranks foremost among the problems to be solved. It is high time for the international community to put an end to Israel's acts that are based on domination, expansion and challenge to the United Nations Charter and the flouting of United Nations resolutions.

Israel's history is a series of challenges and defiance of the United Nations Charter and contempt for its resolutions, starting with resolution 181 (II) and the resolutions relating to the return of the (Palestinian) refugees, compensation for them, to the resolutions relating to Jerusalem and ending with the laws protecting the Holy Places and the resolutions that prohibit any changes in the archaeological sites in the occupied territories.

Another matter that is no less dangerous than the former is Israel's violation of human rights. Israel is exercising the worst type of oppression and racial discrimination against the Arab inhabitants residing in Palestine.

Israel's case is different from that of the other members of this Organization. Israel's admission to the United Nations, based on resolution 273 (III) of 11 May 1949, was linked to two conditions: first, an undertaking to honor the obligations of the United Nations Charter from the day it became a member of the United Nations; and secondly, implementation of resolution 194 (III) dated 11 December 1948 relating to the need to allow the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

The then Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs solemnly pledged to accept those two conditions. But, needless to say, Israel has not fulfilled either of them. The undertaking to honor the obligations of the Charter was a false undertaking. The resolution on the return of the refugees has remained mere ink on paper, although the United Nations has been reaffirming it every year since 1950. The same applies to resolution 181 (II). Israel occupies areas equalling four times the area granted to it under the said resolution.

Israel, which was admitted to the United Nations by resolution 273 (III) and under the two mentioned conditions, does not deserve to be a member of the international community. It is constantly violating the United Nations Charter and resolutions; hence, the conditional resolution endorsing Israel's membership must, after an experience of over a quarter century, be reconsidered in the light of Israel's non-compliance with the obligations of the said resolution.

In 1967 Israel perpetrated a new aggression and occupied territories belonging to three states, including Syria's Golan Heights. It is refusing to withdraw from the Heights under the pretext of "secure boundaries." It is very strange to talk about secure boundaries in the age of missiles and sophisticated weaponry ... Which of the two sides needs secure boundaries? Is it Israel whose history abounds with aggression, or the Arabs who have always been the victim of aggression? What would become of the political map of the world, and what would be the fate of world peace if each state advanced the pretext of secure boundaries to commit aggression against its neighbors and acquire territorial gains?

The slogan of secure boundaries raised by Israel is in reality a slogan behind which it conceals its expansionist intentions in order

to keep hold of the occupied Arab territories.

We have tried on many occasions through the United Nations to compel Israel to withdraw from those territories. We have exerted strenuous efforts towards the implementation of the United Nations resolutions, especially those relating to Jerusalem and the securing of the national rights of the people of Palestine. The majority of world opinion stood on our side in support of our just struggle. However, all those efforts were in vain. Israel has persisted in its intransigence and determination and keeps pursuing its aggressive and expansionist policy, building colonies and chasing the Palestinians to exterminate them.

In the face of all this we had only one recourse: the October War, which we fought with willingness, honor and courage. We were determined not to stop until we realized the objective of liberating our territories and securing the legitimate rights of the people of Palestine. Certain factors emerged during the war which led to the adoption of Security Council resolution 338 (1973). Our country accepted it in a cable that I sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in which I stated that our understanding of the resolution was based on the following two principles: first, complete withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since June 1967; and secondly, securing the national rights of the Palestinian people.

Many thought that the Israelis learned from the lessons of the October War. However, the facts disprove that belief. The Israelis have once more begun to talk in the same manner and to use the same language used prior to the October War. They are reaffirming their unwillingness to withdraw from all the occupied Arab territories, notably the Golan

Heights, which the Israeli statements and declarations are considering a "part of Israel." The Israelis are adamant in refusing to recognize the Palestinian people, thus ignoring not only its existence, but also the international will that recognizes such existence, as manifested in General Assembly resolution 3236 (XXXIX).

We are not warmongers, we are rather working for peace. The peace we understand is that which secures a comprehensive solution for our cause on the basis of the United Nations resolutions. Our view proceeds from the fact that any attempt that does not deal with the core of the problem, that is, the people of Palestine and its expulsion from its homeland, will be doomed to failure, and would, in any case, be no more than a temporary truce.

It was with this understanding that we signed the disengagement agreement on the Golan. We made a point of mentioning explicitly in the agreement that the agreement is only a step towards implementing Security Council resolution 338 (1973). We have never believed in the soundness of the partial steps or step-by-step policy, as designated by its initiators, because such a policy ignores the unity of the cause and represents the situation as a border dispute between Israel and Egypt, or between Israel and Syria, or between Israel and Jordan, while it is between the Arabs as a whole and Israel, for an indivisible cause, namely, the restoration of the national rights of the people of Palestine and the recovery of all the occupied Arab territories.

It is for that reason that these steps are fraught with danger. They are moving us far from peace and not bringing us closer to it. They give the impression that peace in the

region is within reach, while actually the stalemate and calm that prevail bear within the seeds of a new flare-up. The peace we are striving to attain with the help of this Organization and with the support and backing of all peoples, is that just peace that restores to us all our occupied Arab territories, and to the people of Palestine their national rights. We reject any attempt to impose settlements that impair the rights of our people. Accordingly, we view the recently signed Egyptian-Israeli agreement as moving us farther from the road to peace. . . . How can we consider that agreement a step toward peace when it has paved the way for a United States presence in the area, and when it has made the United States a main party to the conflict, with all the dangers underlying such presence — dangers that threaten the future of our people, who can clearly recall how the United States became involved in Vietnam?

We are against that agreement because it permits the aggressor to persist with its expansionist and aggressive policy and gives it security in Sinai, so that it may throw all its weight, and practice its terrorist acts, against the other Arab fronts. We are against that agreement because it ignores the legitimate rights of the people of Palestine to self-determination and the establishment of its national entity in its homeland.

We want a just and durable peace. However, such a peace can be realized only within the framework of the following two principles: first, Israel's unconditional withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied during the June 1967 aggression; and secondly, Israel's undertaking to carry out the United Nations resolutions relevant to the Palestinian cause, notably General Assembly resolutions 3236 (XXIX) and 3237 (XXIX) of 1974.

Syrian Jews

Of the several minorities that have lived for centuries in Syria, none has received more publicity in recent years than the 5,000 Jews presently making their homes there.

The American Jewish Committee would like its supporters to believe that Jews in Syria are suffering from various indignities. Their life, it has said, is "fraught with harassment, restrictions, terror, torture, and even rape and murder."

The Western media sometimes echo this erroneous story. Syrian officials often point to the favorable article that appeared recently in the *National Geographic*. Its publication precipitated such a storm, plus threats of boycott, that for the first time in its 184-year history the magazine made an official retraction saying it had "erred." John Cooley, correspondent of *The Christian Science Monitor*, wrote an article in 1971 quoting the president of the Damascus Jewish community as saying, "The Syrian Jews are living better lives than many other people in this country."

CBS and Mike Wallace, co-anchorman of "60 Minutes," were also pressured by the American Jewish Committee for reporting in February 1975 that "today life for Syria's Jews is better than it was in years past." But the network and Wallace did not budge. In a second showing of the program, according to *The New York Times*, Wallace amplified, saying, "Our associate producer spent four weeks in Syria, our producer three, I spent a week. Prior to going and upon our return, of course we checked, verified and re-checked our information, and broadcast what we believed was a fair and accurate report. That is not to say that a word here, a phrase there, might be arguable."

A British reporter, David Hirst, writing for *The Guardian* of London, said he spoke to "several" Syrian Jews and found that "they speak in a free and unterrorized way." Hirst did find that they suffer from "some unfortunate restrictions" which stem from "the political and security considerations of a country which deems itself to be at war" with Israel.

The following quotations are excerpted (with minor editing) from Hirst's article of February 27, 1975:

- *The considerations might seem exaggerated, but they do not amount to persecution.*
- *Other things which, in the American Jewish Committee's version and many others like it, are said about the Syrian Jews are false.*
- *They are not forbidden to own cars, telephones, and television sets.*
- *There is no ten o'clock curfew . . . and a young Jew denied that he was restricted to a 2.5 kilometer limit from the center of Damascus.*
- *Jewish property does not automatically revert to the state on death. Most Jews live in the Jewish Quarter, along the Street called Strait (of Biblical tradition), but many run profitable businesses in modern parts of the city.*
- *Religious studies and the teaching of Hebrew are not forbidden. Like all private institutions of the kind, the two Jewish schools financed from Paris and New York have to follow the government curriculum under the supervision of a representative of the Ministry of Education.*
- *Jews are not barred from Syrian universities. There are 33 of them at Damascus University, and there must be more of them at Aleppo. This is higher than the national average, and proportionately, represents a good three to four, and till recently 20 times more than the number of Palestinian students in Israeli universities.*
- *The Jews have their days of fear, during wars for example, but they mostly agree that, far from getting worse, their situation has improved, with that of most Syrians, since President Assad took full power in 1970.*



Hafez al-Assad

At no time in Syria's modern history has the ancient country known a more stable period than that led under Hafez al-Assad. The 45-year-old soldier-turned-statesman became involved in politics in his teens, about the same time in 1940 that the Arab Baath Socialist party was founded. Under French rule he spent some time in jail.

Assad graduated from the Air Force college and received further training in the Soviet Union.

Assad was assigned to Cairo in 1959, the year after Syria and Egypt merged into the United Arab Republic. There he became a leader of a group of Syrian officers known as the Military Committee, who were sympathetic to Baath principles (public ownership of the means of production, land redistribution, Arab unity, and opposition to imperialism).

When Syria broke away from Egypt in September, 1961, the Military Committee remained a strong force inside the Baath Party. But Assad, who opposed the secession, was removed from the armed forces by the secessionist Syrian regime and assigned a civilian post.

The Military Committee was instrumental in the revolution that brought the Baath Party to power on March 8, 1963, ushering in an ambitious socialist program. Assad was named commander of the Air Force and elevated to the rank of general.

Factionalism marked the first

years of Baath rule, culminating in another uprising on February 23, 1966, by a radical wing of the party. The radicals' success was assured when Assad leaned to their side, bringing about the ouster of the president. Under the new regime, Assad retained his command of the Air Force and the all-powerful Ministry of Defense.

The June 1967 Arab-Israeli war severely tested Assad's military leadership. The factionalism that punctuated al-Baath's early years continued into the late 1960s, occurring mainly between the Party's military wing, led by Assad, and the civilian wing, led by Salah Jadid.

The 1967 split came about from Assad's insistence that priority be placed on liberating all Arab-occupied territory and on strengthening Syria's diplomatic stance by improving ties with other Arab states. At home he favored drawing more support from the urban middle class to the Baath program. Jadid favored more emphasis on domestic economic development along Marxist lines and considered Assad's view insufficiently revolutionary.

The final clash between the two leaders was precipitated by Syria's armed intervention on behalf of the Palestinian guerrilla movement in its armed conflict in Jordan with King Hussein's forces. Assad refused to commit the Syrian Air Force, arguing that the Arabs' target should be Israel rather than Jordan. When Jadid tried to oust Assad, Assad was able to command the loyalty of the army and to take control of the government on November 16, 1970, in a bloodless coup.

Assad immediately launched what he called "corrective movement" to erase the mistakes of his predecessors. He repealed martial law; gave more freedom to the media; restored various civil rights; liberalized foreign trade; permitted Syrians to travel abroad without restrictions; and granted amnesty to a number of political exiles. To encourage the repatriation of skilled Syrians, he lifted all restrictions on Syrian nationals' holding funds in foreign banks.

Assad also began a third five-year development plan and encouraged private enterprise in tourism, construction, and transportation.

His political reforms included widening his government to include Communists, Nasserites, and rival socialists. The People's Council was

chosen, and its seats allotted representation to a broad spectrum of Syrian society.

In March 1971 Assad was elected president under the Provisional Constitution in a national plebiscite. Five months later he was chosen secretary-general of the Baath Party.

Further institutionalizing his reforms, the President founded the National Front, a coalition of Baath and non-Baath parties. The new 18-member body, which Assad heads, is considered the highest political authority in Syria.

President Assad has played an active role in the Arab world. He cemented his ties with Egypt and Libya by forming a three-member Federation of Arab Republics, and he exchanged state visits with several Arab leaders. Jordan and Syria formed in June 1975 a top-level joint committee to coordinate their relations.

Since Arab efforts to dislodge Israel from the occupied Arab territories or to win its acceptance of Palestinian national rights were not successful, Syria and Egypt waged war on Israel on October 6, 1973.

Diplomatic relations with the United States (broken off after the June 1967 war) were restored in June 1974. In the following months Assad met repeatedly with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, but he since has become increasingly critical of Kissinger's step-by-step approach toward peace in the Middle East, particularly of his successful efforts to obtain a separate agreement between Egypt and Israel. Assad holds that the reconvening of the Geneva conference with the participation of the Palestinians would pave the way for a comprehensive Mideast settlement.

Education

Education is free at all levels in Syria, and is compulsory for about a million primary school children. Students in preparatory and secondary schools number about 350,000, and in technical and trade schools, over 12,000.

The country's three universities, in Damascus, Aleppo, and Latakia, have about 50,000 students.

The Syrian educational system consists of six years of compulsory primary education, three years of lower-secondary education, and three years of upper-secondary

education. In addition to the state secular schools, there are religious and secular private schools and special schools operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees.

Syria's literacy rate ranges between 40 and 50 per cent. The government throughout the country provides adult education classes and literacy training.

The government attempts to adapt the educational system to the manpower needs of the country, officially encouraging, for example, the vocational-technical fields.

The language of instruction, even at the university level, is Arabic.

The Syrian Ministry of Education had a budget of 714 million liras (\$200 million) in 1975.

University Education. The government has given to the universities the task of disseminating the cause of Arab unity and preparing a new generation to take its place in the Syrian socialist society.

The establishment of a medical institute in Damascus in 1903 formed the nucleus for a Syrian university. A law institute in Beirut, then a part of Syria, was established ten years later. At the outbreak of World War I, the medical institute was relocated to Beirut.

Medical and law institutes were re-established in Damascus after the war and during the country's brief independence, which came to an end in 1920 with the imposition of the French mandate.

The Syrian University was formed in 1923.

After independence from the French in 1946, Syria saw a marked expansion in all levels of education. Science, letters, engineering, and education were established at the Syrian University. A faculty of Sharia (Islamic) Law opened in 1954, and in 1956 the School of Commerce and Business administration was added to it.

Reorganized in 1958, the Syrian University was renamed the University of Damascus.

In the late 1960s, the University of Aleppo expanded to include faculties of agriculture, languages, medicine, sciences, economic sciences, and veterinary sciences. The number of faculties at the University of Damascus reached 12.

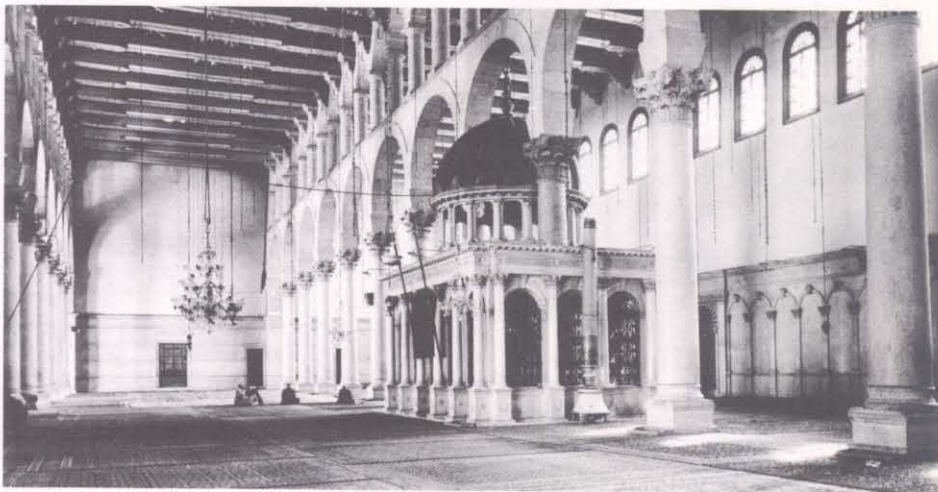
The country's third university in Latakia, on the Mediterranean, was

opened in 1970 with faculties of arts, agriculture, and science.

Syria's universities follow an "open door" policy of admissions, generally admitting anyone holding the Syrian upper-secondary school certificate (although not necessarily to the faculty of one's choice). At the end of each academic year, the Higher Council of Universities, with recommendations from the individual university council, determines

institutes also exist, including the Higher Industrial School in Damascus, the Damascus Oriental Institute of Music, the Damascus Institute of Technology, and the Aleppo Institute of Music.

Women's Education. More than 7,000 women graduate each year from Syrian universities. About 19 per cent of the total enrollment of students in higher institutions are women.



The tomb of St. John the Baptist in the Omayyad Mosque

the size of student enrollment in each faculty for the following year. When the quota in one faculty is reached, students with lower grades are directed to openings in other schools.

The Higher Council plans and coordinates higher education in Syria, but the Ministry of Higher Education has the supreme authority over all higher education matters.

Higher Institutes. Complementing the three universities are several higher technical and teacher training institutes.

Teachers for the country's secondary schools are trained at the Faculty of Education of the University of Damascus, established in 1946.

Secondary school teachers are also trained at several secondary teachers' training institutes, which provide a one-year program in educational theory and practice, open to university graduates who hold a first degree in arts and sciences.

The University of Aleppo oversees four institutes — Agricultural Research Center, Intermediate School of Medicine, Technical Institute for Agriculture, and the Technical Institute for Engineering.

Several four-year professional

The Women's Movement in Syria

"We have a happy observation," the Syrian Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Sabah Kabbani, told the all-women Washington Club in early 1975. "The proportion of successful achievers (among students in Syria) is larger for women than for men."

The Ambassador was highlighting only one of the many achievements of the Syrian women's movement since independence in 1946.

Enrollment of women at schools and universities has increased, for example, and women now are members of more professions — and more belong to the labor force — than at any previous time. Over 16 per cent of the labor force in 1968, or 489,000 were women, compared with only 5.4 per cent (110,000) in 1960.

Some statistics: The number of girls' schools in 1970 jumped to 419, from 194 in 1945. Figures are even more impressive for coeducational institutions; in 1945, 128 schools for boys and girls existed, but by 1970 the number had skyrocketed to 3,128.

In 1948, 102,497 boys and 45,531 girls were enrolled in primary

schools. Twenty-five years later, girls' enrollment was 289,240, or 35 per cent of the total, indicating a six-fold increase for girl students and a four-fold growth for boys.

The increase in women's enrollment at the university level has been equally remarkable. Eleven women students were enrolled in 1945; in 1974, the number rose to 10,713.

The present Syrian Constitution requires equality in citizens' rights, duties, and opportunities, with special opportunities for women. It further stipulates that all citizens have the right to education without cost, the right to earn a wage, and

the right to enjoy freedom of expression.

Women were given the vote in 1949.

The General Women's Federation, established in 1967, has championed the women's uphill fight for liberation. It is one of the "popular organizations" through which the ruling Arab Baath Socialist Party mobilizes the energies of the people. Four representatives of the women's federation sit on the People's Council (national legislature).

The federation's chief target is the elimination by 1980 of illiteracy among women. It has founded many

adult education centers to work for this objective. It has also started day-care centers to help working mothers and, to guarantee a productive role for the Syrian women, has sponsored kindergartens and vocational education. Instruction in first-aid treatment and the carrying of arms as part of the training in civil defense has been introduced.

Influencing legislation has been another federation task. Some recent amendments adopted include allowances for children, maternity leave, and an hour off from work for breast-feeding during the six months that follow pregnancy.

Use this CONVENIENT ORDER FORM for books, etc.

W.F. Abboushi, *THE ANGRY ARABS*. 285 pp. \$8.95. Westminster Press. With a view to satisfying the awakening interest of the American public in the Arab world and with a desire to contribute toward an honorable and workable peace between Arabs and Israelis, the author clearly presents the Arabs' values, customs, goals, traditions, etc. Our price \$5.75.

Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, editor, *THE TRANSFORMATION OF PALESTINE*. 522 pp. \$15.00. Northwestern University. Distinguished scholars reexamine the history and development of Palestine during the mandate period and the issues underlying the Arab-Israeli conflict. Our price \$9.00.

Margaret Arakie, *THE BROKEN SWORD OF JUSTICE; ISRAEL, AND THE PALESTINE TRAGEDY*. 195 pp. £1.50 (paperback). Quartet Books. The author out of her vast experience with various U.N. agencies traces the development of U.S. foreign policy in relation to Israel and of pro-Israeli pressures on the White House and Congress. Our price \$3.45.

Robert B. Betts, *CHRISTIANS IN THE ARAB EAST*. 293 pp. Lycabettus Press, Greece. A comprehensive study of the Arabic-speaking Christians and the role they have played in the Middle East from the time of the Islamic conquest up to present day developments. Valuable demographic statistics included. A comprehensive bibliography in the appendix. Our price \$10.00.

Ray Cleveland, *MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA*. 91 pp. \$2.25 (paperback). Stryker-Post Publications. The author gives a short historical background of the early empires in these areas, followed by a treatment of each of the present countries. This treatment consists of a set of statistics, a short history, description of the culture, outline of economy and finally an analysis of the future prospects. Maps included. An excellent study book. Our price \$2.00.

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The Arts in Syria

Syria boasts a rich and influential cultural heritage. The earliest alphabet originated there, and so did the oldest song yet discovered, found on clay tablets dating back to the fourteenth century B.C.

Artistic expression blossomed under the Omayyad Caliphate, producing many poets who served as models for later generations of Arab writers. The modern Arab nationalist movement, centered in Syria during World War I as Arabs struggled against Ottoman rule, precipitated a revival of Arabic literature and language. Such Syrian poets as Omar Abu Risha and Nizar Kabbani, who have countless followers in the Arab world, continue to influence modern Arab poetry.

Syrian scholars of the past influenced Greek culture, particularly philosophy, and the School of Law in Beirut (then a part of Syria) contributed to the development of legal thought throughout the Roman world. Syrians also influenced Roman art, evidenced in the fact that an architect from Damascus designed the Forum of Trajan in Rome.

One influence on ancient Syrian culture was Christianity, which flourished there. From Antioch, the site of the first organized Christian Church, Saint Paul journeyed to preach his gospel. Five popes were Syrian.

Among Syria's respected painters

of the 1960s are Mahmoud Jalal, noted for historical scenes, and Lu'ay Kayyali, acclaimed for his expressionism. Adham Ismail, another famous Syrian painter, filled his paintings with symbolic political content.

Although the theater in Syria received an early start in the nineteenth century, it won full-fledged governmental endorsement only in the 1960s with the coming of the Arab Baath Party. A National Theater where several Arab theatrical troupes perform annually has been founded in Damascus. Syrian television, founded in 1960, also contributes to the development of drama and theater.

Although the cinema industry is still in its infancy, many Syrian films have won prizes at international festivals. A recent Syrian production, *The Dupes*, attracted wide attention in Paris because of its political overtones.

Artistic and literary production in Syria is at present characterized by its portrayal of society and national issues in a humanistic framework. Modern-day poetry has as its dominant themes Arab unity and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Tourism

Syria enjoys unrivaled tourist attractions, including a Mediterranean climate and countless ruins reflecting the country's rich history.

Its history is, according to one writer, "to a certain extent the history of the civilized world in a nutshell." As a cradle of the oldest civilizations, it is a gold mine for the scholar and the archaeologist.

Relics from the third to the second millennium B.C. are also among the remains of ancient empires — Assyrian, Persian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic — that punctuated Syria's history.

In Damascus one finds St. Paul's Gate, one of the oldest churches in Christendom; the Roman ramparts, Byzantine chapels, and the Great Mosque where the tomb of St. John the Baptist is venerated. Palmyra, with its marble and granite buildings, is reputedly the largest area of ancient ruins in the world. Tourists are delighted with Aleppo and its tall citadel, a reminder of Saladin; Latakia, whose port was designed by the Phoenicians; the Roman theater of Bosra, and the Byzantine cathedral of St. Simeon and Stylites, and the Royal Palace of Mari.

By 1990 Syria expects an estimated two-and-a-half million visitors. To serve them it has recently established a Ministry of Tourism and is building new highways, railways, border and visa facilities, and international hotels.

One of Syria's greatest attractions is the Damascus International Fair, which opened in 1954. An estimated two million persons visit it annually.

THE LINK aims at maintaining contacts among Americans who believe that friendship with the people of the Middle East is essential to world peace, who would contribute to this goal by spreading understanding of the history, values, religions, culture and economic conditions of the Middle East, and who would—in this context—press for greater fairness, consistency and integrity in U.S. policy toward that area.

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