

# **The Thinker and the Fighter for Freedom**

**Afif Al Bizri**

By

Nasr Al Shimaly

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Translated by

Yusra Al Ayoubi

Twelve years passed since the departure of the eminent brother, the dear friend, and the unforgettable companion.

The result of June war 1967, like an earthquake, had done in the Arabic structures. Confusion overwhelmed, certainty was shaken, balance disordered, connotation lost, word stumbled, when the results came in contrast to the state of relaxation and national feelings of safety, owing to the demagogic Arabic information. The Arabic citizen, if he did not expect victory and liberation, he never expected defeat which ended in the occupation of the whole Palestine together with Sinai and the Golan heights!

It is true that the Arabic nation greatly awakened, but it was not a rational awareness. It might be only mere sentimental upraise owing to our insufficient knowledge, either of our nation or our Zionist foe or the world in which we live, while the Arab region was overwhelmed by torrents of poetry, analysis, and political or military programs. Tens of war groups were formed, but all were protected by the spirit of the nation, its magnitude and earth dimension. A good declaration of the Algerian President, Hawary Bou Median, for example, was enough to calm the

people, to give them more security and confidence. While in reality all were aware of the danger, but they did not acknowledge it.

I remembered the period which had followed the war, twelve years ago when the thinker and the fighter for freedom, the grand brother, the dear friend and the unforgettable companion General Afif Al Bizri left us.

During this period I was assigned to manage the Unity Institution of which the Damascene paper Al Thawra, other paper and circulation were published. I was authorized to study the status of the institution before any decision was taken to see its capability to continue. The direction to its liquidation was more powerful! The bitter results of the war were influencing all domains and all levels, the whip of defeat was lashing the back, and its fire brand grilled the hearts.

This hard equation tormented us. How to reconcile between what existed and which became invalid; and the future concept which is not clear yet? How to tackle our daily problems by unsatisfactory means; which are available, and to offer satisfactory faculties from sources scarce and ambiguous in nature?

For my part in addition to what I mentioned of dealing with daily works of the institution together with preparing data to decide its fate and other common responsibilities. I have to give Al Thawra paper my primary effort and interest, the least, that the daily editorial was an urgent work to me. We were overburdened exhausted from the atmosphere, revolving in endless circle day and night! We felt some content of the results of our daily effort, but the future was ambiguous! By the way, it may be understood that in these hard circumstances, that I and some of my colleagues were under stress which I remember now with sadness, when I was consulted by some of my leading companions: “you will not fulfil all what is needed from you in one day and night. Be compassionate to yourself and to your colleagues”.

### **A character of an exceptional scope**

It was in this period and circumstances, when I had the honour to know personally General Afif Al Bizri. Of course he was known to me as to many others. He was one of the pioneers in the fighting for the freedom of the Arab nation; there is no one who doesn't recall him of a glorious event or an exceptional national stand. I was assigned, by the president at that time, Dr Noor Al Deen Al Atasy, to collaborate with General Al Bizri

in publishing a newspaper on behalf of the “National Defence Committee” that the grand departed was its chairmen. As soon as we met, a warm intimate relationship fastened us, to my good luck, by links which were never to be broken, but were renewed and developed continuously till the day of his departure.

Soon I discovered in the character of General Al Bizri this exceptional scope: the independent scientific free thinking, theoretical and practical, with which he discerns issues and gives sincere and unbiased conclusions of valuable human worth.

We were in great need of this kind of men, who are not blinded by dazzling light, nor deafened by drum beating. Men who, the current affairs; do not stop them from foreseeing the future and visa versa. Men who are not caught by the current narrow battlefield; thus they don't see the relationship of the battlefield to the whole world. From the point of view of General Afif Al Bizri the June war was a mere chapter in an open international war. It is neither the first nor the last chapter, nor it is limited to Arabs alone, nor ought it to be their greatest occupation, nor the roof of their distress. The Arab nation ought to appropriate itself to possess the efficient means to share in changing the international monopolizing system. It has all the qualification to do that!

### **Forming a theory of an important significance**

It happened, as in myths and tradition, or as in contemporary science, that the fate of great causes relies on mere paying attention, mere finger pointing to the right direction! Things will be never the same after, the difference between believing that the Earth is flat or it is globular. The difference between an illusory view; and a view relies on sense knowledge.

There is no place for illusion. The unjust international relationship and the corrupt international regimes must be changed! This is the direction to which we must pay attention. Of course it is only one dimension, but not the greatest. Thus spoke General Al Bizri constantly without being tired or bored.

The most important in the biography and character of General Al Bizri is his vast mentality, he is the author of a theory which relies on fundamental basics unable to be shaken, a case greater than the individual

and their restricted ages, greater than accidental events, however they are grand and resonant.

He early mentioned the **integration of human societies in one human system through all ages**. It is nonsense to talk about a society existing alone as if in isolated island. The system of the human society is one being. We have to understand the strong relation between social relation progresses in one particular society and the progress in the system of human societies interrelated together. The growth of society system is similar to the growth of a living being, from the early simple stage of his infancy to the elevated stages of his existence, from the primary communal system, to slave system, to the Islamic Arabic hand craft system. Then to capitalism and socialism! Every society took over its suitable role in a definite period to push the whole historic operation. Every society, though dissimilar, grew and developed in the domain of the whole system of human society: Nations, races, states etc. The human groups in the system, in every period of their history, are the basic elements interactive in the system.

In fact it is a very important theory, where Stalin definition of the Nation seems failing. On this basis we can prevent many gross mistakes leading to perversion in a number of social, mental and political issues. It means a concept and dealing with human ages in a correct way, hence with the present American European age which contains the contemporary Human Society system!

### **Modesty and Pride, Simplicity and Shrewdness**

I merely mentioned the important theory General Al Bizri brought up, but I'm not here to explain more. I ought to say that without this progressive theory which he explained in his conversations and books, it will be so difficult to understand the role of our Nation in Human history, in our present time and the coming one!

However, the complicated circumstances and the great difficulties by which our Nation faced prevented recognizing the most important foresight in the personality of General Al Bizri, this rare unparalleled man, when his spark of life came to an end.

General Al Bizri owned modesty and pride, naturalness and constructive shrewdness, great courage and understandable precaution, social naturalness and brilliant preference, the resounding laugh over

misfortunes however bad as if he never knew sadness and deep sighing of a broken heart.

He lived in austerity in his life, moral generosity, fighting for freedom, ascetic and worldly-wise with certitude in principles and doubt in transmutations!

Reaching his eightieth, he used to walk with his life companion, more than ten kilo meters. He was never forgotten from Damascus streets, and when the time of his departure came, he was just back from his daily walk. People in the streets glanced at him with honour and glory as he was walking with his erect stature and strong balanced steps. He became guide whom no one can imagine his absence from life with his radiant venerable gait which had given great confidence in oneself, in Man and the Future. No human duty failed him in spite of the difficulty of the deed, an example of faithfulness, loyalty, the foremost recognizing and conforming to principles. What might remain to a nation which abandoned principles?

His voice trembled, his eyes filled with tears, to see or hear about the miserable and afflicted. His old friends, though younger, were never forgotten by him when harmed or harassed by time. His friendship to Colonel Adnan Al Maliki powerfully continued through his brother Riyad Al Maliki. My family will never forget as long as they live his dignified appearance, in the same day, in the same hour, in feasts and occasions, year after year!

### **Nationalist Patriot and International Leftist**

General Al Bizri was never in his life admitted by any party in organizing way. He used to assure that in more than one occasion. He was perhaps more acquainted with the Communist party than other ones, in one stage or another. But was frequently very near to all national movements: National, progressive or Islamic. Moreover he was incorporated in all their interests. His enthusiasm to the Russian revolution, especially in its premier phase was similar to the Iranian revolution, the Algerian or the Palestinian revolutions. He cherished the same sentiments to the Communist martyr Farajallah Al Houlou, or to the Shiite martyr of Hisbullah Abbas Al Mousawi, or to the Palestinian revolution martyr Khalil Al Wazir, or the martyr of the Bath party Al Akhdar Al Arabi, or the martyr of the Cuban revolution Guivara!!!

By the way of speaking about martyrs, General Al Bizri firmly believed that the side which killed Adnan Al Maliki is the one which killed Anton Sa'adeh and Ghassan Jedid. It's the C.I.A.! He supported his conviction by informative data overlooked by him as a member of the Court staff charged by Al Maliki cause. He asked God to have mercy upon them, considering them martyrs and victims of the American Imperialism.

In return, he considered himself one of the American victims, when he was overturned from his active position in the acme of his ripeness, his vigour and donation, pensioned off arbitrarily in 1958. Never the less, he used to speak about Abdul Nasir friendly, in fact mixed with blame and anger, because of his illusion resulted from his wrong calculations.

It was not easy for General Al Bizri to be torn from the heart of public life when he dedicated himself heart and soul for the freedom of his country he was the leading power to fulfil the unity between Syria and Egypt. But in spite of his inner pain and angry sentences, he was open-minded to the circumstances of the Egyptian revolution, and Abdul Nasir circumstances through and after the Unity.

Once I said to him when he was speaking about these circumstances: "You are speaking as one sentenced to death with suspended execution!" He soon answered: "But without suspended execution!" He felt, rightfully that he was murdered in the year 1958. The unexpected blow; to what he felt as murder; had not left his countenance and tone. Nevertheless he continued to mention Abdul Nasir's positive conduct in what is great as well as what is small, for example, his interference for his family welfare after being dismissed, when the security organs used to annoy them. The president ordered then that no one should harm them, and the status of the family pertained to him personally. General Al Bizri appreciated this act ever after.

### **Eager anticipation coupled with work**

General Al Bizri remained to the last day of his life full of hope, confidence and will, longing to emerge an Arabic progressive movement fit for our great Arab nation to match its unjust foe in battle field. Meanwhile he believed that it is unsuitable for our Nation to be merely confronting only one arm of the foe arms, when it had been the Nation that principally contributed in liberating Man one day! The real foe is the International foe that found it. It is the American Imperialism! He was never tired to repeat that and assure it.

He always looked over Zionist settlers in Palestine in deep pain and disdain, defining them as Khazar mercenary groups, coming recently to Judaism, creating a mere boundary state as the foe arm in our region by the support of the International system. He was not tired to repeat that all over again and assure that the principal foe is the American Imperialism!

This eager anticipation to an Arabic liberating movement on a required level was not mere waiting, but was coupled by many tiresome attempts to fulfil that, especially with the Palestinians. His attempts were never a mute dream, nor were put in the status of supervising, sermonising or gloating over their misfortune. He was not occupied by these attempts alone, to neglect his occupation of the great problems of his Arab nation and Man in general. He always came to rescue any positive direction, however deficient, by advice and deed, and hurried for help if one group of the Palestinian revolution needed him to the fore trench giving attention to all big and small matters, more active and vigorous than a lion cub.

### **Quick Sight on his life**

I'll stop at this brief improvised account, and provide a glance on the life of General Al Bizri, as I heard it from him or researched it by myself.

Since the thirtieth, General Al Bizri shared in public life in an efficient way as a Colonel in the army, and in the sphere of movements active for independence especially in Syria and Lebanon, which exposed him to supervision and restraint from French colonial organs, especially after he adhered to Rashid Ali Al Kilani revolution in Iraq 1941; where he was inflicted by hard judgement in prison, then sentenced to death in absentia.

After the crimes done by the British army against the Iraqi people, and the persecution of national personalities in Iraq and abroad, General Al Bizri became a fugitive from both British and French Colonialism. He became cached a year and a half, then he returned to the army when the international circumstances changed.

In 1945 he was captured by the French and transferred to the Military prison in Beirut, because he had formed a movement, hostile to the French in the army, but he soon escaped from prison adhering to the national government and was followed by many officers.

General Al Bizri actively shared in the Independence of Syria and Lebanon. He then formed the National Army after the French Evacuation.

Afterwards he armed it with weapons from the Eastern Block. Meanwhile, he helped the Algerian revolution by French weapons that Syria owned in 1955.

General Al Bizri was an eminent military and political commander in the unbalanced war of 1948 on the land of Palestine. He was a prominent witness on the mysteries of the disaster, Arabic or International. Moreover he owned the power of giving opinions, notices and analysis unmatched for the continuous struggle of the Arabic nation.

During the National era, General Al Bizri shared in the public life as a stubborn fighter against Imperial alliances, dictatorial systems and foreign conspiracies and plans which the region had been exposed during the fiftieth.

Since 1955 General Al Bizri was a remarkable member in the gathering of troops to face the enormous challenge internally and externally, then to become at the head of the military branch of this coalition when he became Chief of General Staff of the Syrian Army before the Unity between Syria and Egypt in 1958

During the three aggressive war on Egypt, General Al Bizri was the Commander of Syrian troops which proceeded towards Transjordan to defy the imperial aggression, when he made important communications with Arab commanders of troops, especially with the Iraqi Abudul Karim Kassem, which influenced the success of the Iraqi's July revolution in 1958.

From his position as the Commander of the army and the armed forces , General Al Bizri shared in military, political and informative role in defying the Turkish mobilization on Syria in 1957 revealing its aims, instigation and the International powers which support it, especially that of the American.

At the end of the same year, General Al Bizri was the eminent personality in the delegation which established the Unity between Syria and Egypt in 1958. He became the Commander in Chief of the first Syrian army in the armed forces of the United Arabic Republic.

Since 1958 General Al Bizri was dismissed from the Arabic official life!

In 1967 he took command of the committees formed in Syria named Defending the Nation, to face up the general confrontation following the results of the war.



Three decades before his death, General Al Bizri had enormously contributed to public life, especially in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine by his research works, many lectures and books. His efforts were always devoted to explain the essential causes of the Nation suffering.

General Al Bizri viewed well the early stages of the Palestinian revolution and the deficiencies that appeared from the beginning. He early warned the Commanders of the Palestinian revolution from the results if they did not remedy the enormous deficiencies. Until the last day of his life, he was making great efforts advising and constructing them in the battle field in order to correct the course of the Palestinian struggle.

General Al Bizri had predictive foresight, profound knowledge, modesty, great affection and sympathy towards the suffering and well being of his Nation and his people. He spent the last three decades of his life in austerity, providing look after himself and his family, always occupied by the public care, interested in all its events, never to slip any of them from his memory.

He was born in 1914 and died in Damascus on Friday 28/1/1994.

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