



President Bourguiba Jericho Speech (1965)

Jericho, March 3, 1965

Dear brothers,

I feel in this moment a double feeling of emotions and of pride. Moved, I am, when I think of the magnitude of the disaster that we underwent in Palestine seventeen years ago. However, at the same time, the enthusiasm that animates you, the savage will that I read on your faces, the determination to re-conquer your rights, all that comforts me and consolidates my optimism.

You undoubtedly know that while the Tunisian people carried out a rough fight against the most contemptible form of colonialism, still made a point of contributing its share in the war of Palestine. Of all the corners of Tunisia, young people and old men run here to take part with in the struggle whose stakes was assuring the integrity of Arab and Moslem land, which they regarded as their second fatherland. The Tunisian people managed, at the end of twenty-five years of fighting, to create a solid and modern State on a Muslim land, free of any Co-sovereignty and any form of political or military domination.

However, we think in Tunisia that our action is not circumscribed within our interior borders, Tunisia which fought colonialism is conscious of the role that it must play in the liberation of every inch of the Arab nation that remains under foreign grip. I have already proclaimed in the first Arab Summit conference, that Tunisia was decided to place at the disposal of the Palestinian cause all its potentialities. I proclaim it again today. It is however, a point to which I would like to draw your attention: you are the holders of a violated right; for this reason you owe to yourselves to be at the front line for the reconquest of Palestine. It is of my duty with all frankness to inform of certain number of truths, which you must keep present in mind: On the one hand, your role in the fight is of a primary importance. It is what you should never lose sight of. On the other hand, I would like to say, in this moment when I am addressing all the Arabs everywhere they are, that my personal experience, resulting through a hard and long fight, taught me that enthusiasm and passionate demonstrations of patriotism, are not enough to achieve victory. It is a necessary, but not sufficient condition. The spirit of sacrifice and contempt of death, one needs a lucid commandment and a thinking head that can organize the fight, see far, and anticipate the future. However, the rationally conceived struggle implies a precise knowledge of the adversary's mentality and an objective appreciation of the balance of powers so to avoid adventure and the useless risks which would worsen our situation.

It is thus necessary to arm ourselves with lucidity, to work out our plans carefully and to create all the conditions of success. It is necessary to prepare the men and to equip them with proper means. It is also necessary to reinforce our fighting potential through the support of the international opinion. To avoid any precipitation dictated by passion, we need to act; with understanding in order to reach the goal, here is the essential.

When all these conditions are met, then our cause will triumph, more so because the Right is on our side. It is up to the people in charge to join the assets of success. We missed these assets when we had, a few years ago, engaged in the battle. This time, it is without respite that we need to work to join them together. We must benefit from the experiences and impose to ourselves hard reflexion effort. We are already on the right way; but the way is long. To reach the goal, our action requires loyalty, seriousness, and moral courage.

It is extremely easy to indulge in blazing and bombastic proclamations. In another way, it is just as difficult to act with method and in earnest. If it appears that our forces are not sufficient to destroy the enemy or to pare it out of our grounds, we would have no interest in ignoring it, or hiding it. It should be loudly proclaimed. Force is to us then to resort, at the same time as continues the fight, with the means that enable us to reinforce our potential and to bring us closer our objective by successive stages. The war is made of tricks and smoothness. The art of war is based on intelligence; it implies a strategy and a meticulously prepared process.

It does not matter that the way leading to the goal is direct or tortuous. The person in charge for the battle must insure the best route leading to the goal. Sometimes, requirements of the fight impose contours and turnings.

It is true that the mind accepts more easily of the straight line.

However when the leader see that this line does not lead to the goal, he must take a turning. The short-sighted militants could think that he gave up the pursuit of the goal. It is up to him to explain that this turning was intended to avoid the obstacle that could not be overcome in a direct way. Once the obstacle circumvented, the walk can resume on the main road to victory.

More than one Arab leader found himself in the impossibility to act in this manner. However, our defeat and the stoppage of our troops at the borders of Palestine prove the deficiency of our commanders. The impotence of the armies to deliver the victory despite the combatant's enthusiasm proves that the conditions for success were not gathered.

Today, the heads of states are seriously working to set up command that is at the level of its responsibilities. Nevertheless, that could not be enough. It is necessary that the people refrain from obstructing, by their passion overflows, their leaders' action. Their stubborn attachment to a certain policy should not put their political leaders in difficulty for executing their plans. We should not accuse of defeatism or of compromising any particular Arab leader, for his proposed partial or provisional solutions if these represent necessary stages on the way of the main objective.

For the people not to obstruct the execution of the agreed plans, it is necessary, as was the case in Tunisia that the people have confidence and rely on their leaders. It often happened to me to resort to the "policy of stages" when I found myself in the obligation to be the master of certain situations.

When certain militants showed reserves, I strove to convince them that my method could only lead to victory, especially when it appeared that our adversary showed some signs of weakness. It was then necessary to shake its positions of force, to affect its moral and to reinforce our position more at the same time.

As for the policy of the "whole or nothing", it brought us to the defeat in Palestine and reduced us to the sad situation we are struggling with today.

We would not have any way to succeed in Tunisia if we didn't abandoned this policy and accepted a step by step advance towards the objective. With each step, each conquest by the Tunisian people of a new strategic position, France yielded part of its privileges; for it was, the lesser evil for it. It then believed it had the capacity to stop the process. However, each conquered strategic point increased our leveraged more our means of action. The process became thus irreversible, step-by-step, France found itself driven back to the last battle, the battle of Bizerte where it could only yield finally.

In Palestine, on the contrary, the Arabs pushed away the compromise solutions. They refused the division and the clauses of the White Paper. They regretted it then.

If we had, in Tunisia refused in 1954, the internal autonomy as a compromise solution, the country would be have remained until this day under the French domination.

It is thus essential that the commander has the freedom of manoeuvre, is able to take any type of initiative, and should have some qualities of sincerity, probity, devotion, and perspicacity.

I made a point of coming and sharing with you this reflexion as a brother, broken for a long time with the anti colonial fight. I inculcated the concepts that I have just exposed you in your Tunisian brothers who ended up adhering to all my action plans.

They did sometimes feel uneasy though. Despite all this, they accepted to commit themselves under my impulse in such or such experiment because they already tested my devotion and my perspicacity. They noted the results. Today we are free and independent.

This is what a brother wanted to say in this occasion of my visit. Here is the advice that I believe is in my duty to give you and to all the Arabs. It is necessary to support the feelings and enthusiasm by a clear vision of the facts, so that our action could be effective.

I say it as a man who is completely disinterested, a man for whom you cannot dispute sincerity, nor the deep affection that he carries towards you.

We are reaching the goal. We will not spend seventeen or twenty years more deploring "the lost fatherland". To hold only to feelings would condemn us to live centuries in the same status. It would be the dead end.

From the Arab nation, voices must speak out to the people with frankness, knowing that the fight must continue with all it comprises in terms of turnings, steps, tricks until the day when we snatch a complete and final victory, not only for ourselves, but also for the future generations.

I ask of you to reflect on my proposal. Each one of us would have to be accountable before god and his conscience, for his deeds and intensions.

My dearest wish, is that the Muslims live within a very tight communion of hearts and that their leaders achieve among themselves a better understanding and fight all types of complexes: Inferiority complex with respect to an overestimated forces of the enemy, Superiority complex that might precipitate us into a surely avoidable catastrophe, thanks to unceasing recourse to the reason and to intelligence.