

## **The Silver Platter**

**Natan Alterman**

[First Published in *Davar*, December 26, 1947]

*"A State is not handed to a people on a silver platter."*

*Chaim Weizmann*

...and the land was silent. The incarnate sun  
Flickered languidly  
Above the smoldering borders.  
And a nation stood – cloven hearted but breathing ...  
To receive the miracle.  
The one miracle and only ...

The nation made ready for the pomp. It rose to the crescent moon  
And stood there, at pre-dawn, garbed in festival-and-fear.  
– Then out they came  
A boy and a girl  
Pacing slowly toward the nation.

In a workaday garb and bandoleer, and heavy-shod,  
Up the path they came  
Silently forward.  
They did not change their dress, and had not yet washed away  
The marks of the arduous day and the night of the fire-line.

Tired, oh so tired, forsworn of rest,  
And oozing sap of young Hebrewness –  
Silently the two approached  
And stood there unmoving.  
There was no saying whether they were alive or shot.

Then the nation, tear-rinsed and spellbound, asked,  
Saying: Who are you? And the two sighed  
Their reply: We are the silver platter  
On which the Jewish State has been given you.

They spoke. Then enveloped in shadow at the people's feet they fell  
The rest will be told in the annals of Israel.