

NASSERISM AND SOCIALISM

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THE military régime in Egypt since 1952 has been analysed in remarkably divergent terms. Observers and specialists alike have tended to emphasize two main aspects: nationalism and dictatorship. In spite of many differences the European Left has come close to the general and mostly adverse conclusions agreed upon by the leading political scientists of the West. The main difference is that whereas the Right has felt, and still feels, a deeply rooted hatred of "Nasserism," the Left is still seeking a way out of its confusion while at the same time deploring the political repression against the Egyptian Left.

In Egypt itself, these past twelve years are looked upon as a revolutionary and empirical transition from feudalism to socialism. Such informed opinion as is able to find an outlet in the Press appears divided between a wide range of descriptive categories: state capitalism, the welfare state, Arab socialism, scientific socialism, democratic and co-operative socialism—to list only the main ones. Thus the analytical problems involved are not only those of the hitherto West European centred social sciences: the same difficulties and the same uncertainties confront the Egyptian theoreticians.

This essay tries to sum up the main thesis of a recent work by the present writer,¹ which has provoked a wide ranging and vigorous discussion, and it will also endeavour to take the analysis further. It makes no claim to a final, dogmatic solution of the question, for such an attitude would be fundamentally opposed to the author's view of scientific research in general.²

I

A first approach may be attempted at the infrastructural level, i.e. the economic, political and sociological aspects of the régime. The problems of periodization lie mostly outside the scope of this essay, but on the basis of the work mentioned above, we can distinguish three main stages since the *coup d'état* of 23 July 1952.

Until then, Egypt, though enjoying a large degree of formal independence, was in fact a semi-dependent state, ruled by the agrarian wing of the Egyptian bourgeoisie in alliance with foreign capital, under the aegis of the palace. Its colonial-type economy could be characterized as an under-developed capitalistic one, with a predominantly agrarian structure. The confusion between agrarian capitalism and feudalism

which existed in most political circles in Egypt led to the political developments initiated by the "Free Officers" being described as **anti-feudal**. In fact, as all serious research has shown, the Egyptian economy has been predominantly of the capitalistic type since the last quarter of the nineteenth century—with large-scale production for the market, especially of cotton, and a growing use of wage-earning **labour**—although there remained many, often deep rooted, features of (Oriental) feudalism, especially in Upper **Egypt**.³

From the 1919 Revolution to the *coup d'état* of 1952, the Wafd was allowed to rule for a bare seven years, though holding an undisputed electoral majority. This gave more than twenty-five years to the minority parties, representing the right-wing of the Egyptian bourgeoisie: especially the Liberal-constitutional party, for the big landlords (since 1923); the Saadists, closely linked with the industrial and financial fast-growing sections of the Egyptian bourgeoisie (since 1937); the Independents, who represented mostly the palace, foreign vested interests, and sections of big capital. This arrangement was imposed on the Egyptian people by military occupation, and the British gave support to whatever forces opposed the militant national liberation movement. This policy could work because of the inefficiency of the Wafdist leadership, especially after 1945, as well as the repression of the Left since the early 'thirties.

However, it was clear to all that the unsolved and growing problems of Egypt were bound to provoke a more radical solution. This was attempted in the violent nationalist upheaval of 1935, which brought the Wafd back to power, and led to the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936; and also immediately after World War II, when the re-emergent Marxist Left, together with the trade unions and the Wafdist youth and Liberal wing, created the Workers' and Students' National Committee (1946) as a new centre of leadership for the liberation movement. It was this alignment of forces which, after the repression of 1946 and then of 1948–50, brought back the Wafd to power in 1949, encouraged its reluctant leadership to denounce the 1936 Treaty (in 1950), and launched guerrilla action against the British base in the Canal Zone (October 1950 to January 1951). The stage was thus prepared for a "National Front" government, based on popular action and inspired by the Left, and under the benevolent patronage of Mustapha al-Nahas, the ageing leader of the Wafd.

On 26 January 1952, Cairo was stormed by squads of right-wing extremists and large fires were started. The "National Front" leadership was inept in its handling of the situation and its most active forces were away in the Canal area; the people were apathetic, and the army and the police forces were either benevolent towards the extremists or indifferent. Within twenty-four hours, the country being under martial law and curfew, the **constitution** was suspended, the Wafd was dismissed, and the guerrillas were arrested. Four palace-led Cabinets

failed in succession. Then, on 23 July, the "Free Officers" seized power.

1. The first stage of the military régime (1952–56) was aimed at modifying the structure of power in order to create a modern national, independent, industrialized society. This was achieved, at the top of the socio-political structure, by the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic of Egypt, the dissolution of all existing parties and organizations (except the Moslem Brotherhood, until 1954), the elimination of the traditional political tlites, largely influenced by the European, mainly French and British, liberal tradition (*ahl al-kafâ'a*: the capable men); and these were gradually replaced by a new type of official—officers, economists, technocrats, engineers, mostly with an American, German and British background (*ahl al-thiqd*: the trusted men).⁴ At the bottom of the pyramid, this policy was to be tackled by agrarian reform which sought to weaken the economic basis of the landowning capitalists, while greatly increasing the number of small landowners as well as redirecting capital investment to industry. It also aimed at the elimination of communist influence in the countryside, which was already in ferment by 1951. There was also formed the "Liberation Rally," a para-military formation, ideologically parallel to the Moslem Brotherhood. It was hoped that local capital, mostly invested in land, would accept the official enticement, backed by a mass of new legislation, to invest in industry with the help of the newly established Industrial Bank and the Permanent Council for the Development of National Production. In the event, however, seventy per cent of new investment went into the building industry.

In its endeavour to establish a social basis, the military régime was unable to persuade the industrial and financial sections of the Egyptian bourgeoisie to support it in the task of social transformation.

2. The second stage (1956–61) started with the Suez crisis. Having succeeded in obtaining Britain's agreement to the gradual but complete evacuation of the Canal base (19 October 1954), the military government launched its offensive against the Bagdad Pact (1954–55), and then switched to the economic problems facing Egypt; in the first instance, to the High Dam project. This conjunction of political-military-economic issues brought about John Foster Dulles' refusal of financial aid for the High Dam scheme. This was followed by the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company and the three Powers' aggression against Egypt.

The result, to the outside world, was unexpected. Fifty-five French and British-owned firms were either "Egyptianized" or nationalized, under the aegis of the "Economic Institution," which came to represent State-owned firms as well as the initial State participation in firms. Thus the Suez aggression inaugurated the public sector of the Egyptian economy and provided a further incentive to economic planning. The State was thus endowed, by imperialism, with the necessary resources

for it to become a senior partner with the most important groups among the Egyptian bourgeoisie.

The second stage of the military régime thus appears as a coalition between the military apparatus and the financial and industrial sections of the bourgeoisie (and especially the Misr group). But this coalition, according to the officers' view, was to work mainly in the economic field: political control, the "power of decision," should continue to rest entirely in their hands.

During the early years (1956–58)—the Bandoeng period—the régime appeared ready to grant a certain amount of "National Front" concessions and measures, especially after the release of communists and Left personalities in the middle of 1956. The publication of the left-wing daily *Al-Missâ'*, the promulgation of the 1956 Constitution, the elections to the "Council of the Nation," and the establishment of the "National Union" as the only permitted political formation, in which the nominees of the military apparatus and their bourgeois allies found their place, are the main new political facts of this period. In foreign affairs, the doctrine of positive neutralism proved an inspiration to many countries who were similarly opposed to military pacts.

By the end of 1958, the situation was changing rapidly. There was communist opposition to organic unity with Syria and a preference for federalism; the Communist movement itself, after a generation of factional strife and struggle, had established the (second) Communist Party of Egypt (28 February 1958). The emergence of a National Front régime under General Qassem after the Iraqi revolution of 14 July 1958 was looked upon as an 'alternative' in Egypt. There was repression against the communists and the Left (January–March 1959); and there was also penetration in depth of the Syrian administration and economy by the military group and by leading sections of the Egyptian bourgeoisie.

On the home front, however, the military group continued to wield a monopoly of political power; and the Egyptian bourgeoisie again displayed a conspicuous lack of enthusiasm for the economic policy of the régime. In particular it showed a marked reluctance to invest in the industrial sector. Something had to be done to restore some degree of harmony to the alliance.

3. The third stage, still under way, started with the laws of nationalization of July 1961. The military régime had earlier shown its hand by nationalizing the National Bank of Egypt and the Misr Bank (11 February 1960). By the beginning of 1962, all banks, all heavy industry, insurance, and the key economic enterprises were State-owned; all middle-scale economic units had to accept a fifty-one per cent State participation in their capital ownership and therefore in their administration. There was further an extensive medium and light sector of economic activity in which the State's participation was enforced and the whole network was made to fit into the newly created "Public

Organisms" of which, at the beginning, there were thirty-eight. This constituted the public sector as against the private one. Economic planning had begun with the first Five Year Plan (1960–70) whose aim was the doubling of the gross national product in all fields of the economy.

The "third revolution" of 12 August 1963 brought a new wave of legislation which nationalized 228 companies in industry, transport and mines. Former shareholders were to receive compensation, in the shape of State bonds bearing four per cent interest, payable in fifteen years. Another 177 companies (including all internal transport and three arms factories) followed on 11 November 1963; then came the turn of six land companies (18 November 1963).

This profound modification of the key sectors of the Egyptian economy had to find reflection in the socio-political field; and it was the task of the National Congress of Popular Forces (made up of national capitalists, peasants, workers, the liberal professions, civil servants, university teaching staffs, students, women—the armed services were added later as one of these "forces") to discuss the draft of the Charter of National Action, presented to its members by President **Gamâl Abdel-Nasser** on 21 May 1963. This important document proclaimed, *inter alia*, that "socialism is the way to social freedom" and that "scientific socialism" is the suitable style for finding the right method leading to progress."⁹ The Charter was adopted despite fanatical opposition inspired by the Moslem Brotherhood. A new organization, the Arab Socialist Union, was to be established as the central organ of political activity and it was intended to represent all popular forces, the workers and peasants being entitled to fifty per cent of the seats in all the committees of the Arab Socialist Union as well as in the future Council of the Nation.

II

It is not difficult to understand why these developments have led to intellectual and political confusion and why there has been a marked tendency to oversimplify the definition of the new society that is emerging in Egypt. It has been variously estimated as socialism at one end of the scale and, at the other, as leading to the establishment of a new bourgeoisie which will become the tool of neo-imperialism.⁰

1. In the field of economics, the following facts can be established: (i) The controlling position of imperialism has been uprooted and both the economic resources of the country as well as the power of political decision are now entirely in Egyptian hands.

(ii) Until 1963, private ownership was still the dominant mode of production in the Egyptian economy as a whole and especially in the sectors of landowning and the building industry. The estimates of the 1962–63 Budget put the private sector's contribution to national income

at 65·8 per cent of the total, thus leaving only 34·2 per cent to the public sector. The proportion of private and public, measured by national income contribution, naturally varied widely between different parts of the economy, private being represented by 93·8 per cent in agriculture, 87·5 per cent in building, 79·1 per cent in commerce, and 56·4 per cent in industry." However, the new wave of nationalization measures of August 1963 brought eighty per cent of industry into the public sector; and the November decrees aimed at making the public sector a majority influence in commerce, transport and armaments factories. But agriculture remained relatively untouched, as did building.

It is now clear that the strategic sectors of the national economy have been taken away from the Egyptian bourgeoisie and brought under the ownership and control of the State.

(iii) The State controls the objectives, the tempo and the methods of growth of the national economy as a whole through the organs of planning, and within the framework of the Ten Year **Plan**. As the State also provides about ninety per cent of new capital formation, it can clearly impose its own priorities in economic development, such being large-scale industrialization, the High Dam, prospecting for new sources of energy, and desert land recovery. Economic planning, however, is still based on the individual enterprise and it is regulated, in a broad way, by the market. This is well shown by the much publicized data relating to the profits of the nationalized firms.

(iv) Thus the considerable industrial build-up, although it lays considerable emphasis upon the heavy and strategically important industries, still encourages the consumption pattern of a welfare state type of economy; and through the "demonstration effect" it permits a pattern of imports with a bias towards durable consumer goods, such as T.V. sets and household equipment. Voices are being raised in Egypt itself against the dangers of this situation⁸ and at the same time it is recognized that Egypt's rate of economic growth during the decade 1952-62 has been somewhat inferior to that of other countries.⁹ Clearly the creation of new industries, even though accelerated, will not, on this pattern, lead to a rate of economic growth which will transform Egypt into a predominantly industrial society within a reasonable period of time.¹⁰

(v) Although there are considerable **difficulties** in assessing, with a high degree of accuracy, the extent to which different leading social groups are reaping the benefits of the new economic course, two groups **stand** out clearly: the **middle** and big landowners (but not the old landed aristocracy) and the new power Clite, described in a later section.

This new power Clite or managerial class, it must be noted here, is not **comparable** with the entrepreneurial class which came to the fore during the late eighteenth century and nineteenth century in Europe and North America; and it has nothing in common with the leading strata of the socialist countries. This, in itself, does not constitute a weakness; it only does so when control by a mass political organization is lacking.

(vi) The repression against the Marxist Left has given considerable encouragement to economic co-operation with, and reliance upon, Western Germany and the United States. By mid-1963 half the wheat supplies were coming from the U.S.A. while Western Germany received a record number of Egyptian students, especially technologists, and at the same time a growing, and very expensive, network of loans and joint enterprises was being built up. The year 1963 brought some unexpected developments, among them being the attempt to curtail Egypt's commitments in the Yemen by a thinly disguised wheat blackmail threat by the United States; growing complaints about the stringent conditions of West European (mainly German) financial and economic assistance;¹¹ and, above all, by the opposition to Egyptian influence in Middle Eastern politics as a whole.

(vii) To sum up: the Egyptian economy appears as a mixed economy. It is still in many ways capitalistic: the land remains nearly untouched by nationalization; the public sector, though under the direction of manager (technocrats) is still ruled by the market and (public) profit incentive; and planning, and foreign aid particularly, tend to strengthen this pattern, at least in the short run. It is a relatively fast-growing economy with a central state-capitalistic sector (the public sector) of unusual proportions;¹² but every new wave of nationalization, while it weakens the power of private capital, only provides more solidly entrenched positions and power to the technocrats.

The transition to socialism can be said to be taking place when the delegates of the "popular forces" direct the political and economic life of the country. At present Egypt is ruled by a powerful State apparatus and an economic technocracy. Socialism further requires that economic development and planning shall develop the capital goods sector and not, as is at present happening, be concerned with the building of a welfare society (which is now the main support of the military-technocratic power élite). These are the two main economic prerequisites to socialism, and for the rest we must turn to a consideration of the socio-political situation.

III

S

In the socio-political field, the following appear to be the main features:

- (i) The dismantling of the (traditional) Egyptian bourgeoisie has been accomplished, as already noted, in two stages.
- (ii) The bourgeoisie has been replaced by an Establishment, controlling the strategic, dynamic sectors of the economy and of society as a whole: that is, the public sector of the economy, the State apparatus (the armed forces and security services), and the political and ideological organizations and institutions (civil service, foreign affairs, publishing, the arts and the mass media).

These new leading cadres have been recruited mainly from the petty and middle bourgeois strata, but they include some from the old ruling groups: senior officers, technical experts (economists, engineers, university professors), administrators and organizers.¹³

(iii) The officers' corps is now organically integrated with the leading economic, administrative and political groups. All those who had to leave the armed forces, or who have elected to do so, have been appointed to the upper ranks of the non-military establishment. About 1,500 officers have come within this category between 1952 and 1964.

(iv) The new power élite can be defined more as a technocracy, largely under German and American influence in their attitudes and approach, rather than a mere bureaucracy. This technocratic Clite is superimposed on the huge traditional Egyptian bureaucracy, which is still growing fast but which today wields less power than it did under the inefficient ministers of the former régimes. The Press is continuously engaged in campaigns to improve the efficiency of this passive bureaucracy and to try to force it to adapt itself to the needs and tempo of the technocratic élite.¹⁴

The dangers of the situation whereby this highly concentrated technocratic Establishment sits astride the bureaucratic pyramid become more apparent when we analyse the structure of manpower and the labour force in Egypt. In 1960 seventy-seven per cent of the population could be reckoned within the manpower category although only 32.6 per cent were in the labour force. This labour force, moreover, apart from those in agriculture was heavily concentrated within the tertiary sector. The broad divisions are: 21.7 per cent in the infrastructure and services: 10.6 per cent in commerce: 54.3 per cent in agriculture: 10.6 per cent in manufacturing and 2.8 per cent in building and construction.¹⁵ These figures show clearly the extent to which the dynamic sector—manufacturing—is limited in the Egyptian economy today. Under such conditions, the over-concentration of economic, political and ideological power in the hands of the technocratic—bureaucratic Establishment may well prove harmful to Egypt's future development.

(v) The new power élite gathered strength in the struggle against the Egyptian Marxist Left (the Communist Party and the large fringe of progressives and militants). The anti-communist repression has continued, with different degrees of severity, since August 1952, and it reached a high point, first, between 1954 and 1956, and then again from January 1959. While there is a general State law prohibiting all political parties, there is a specific anti-communist law, dating from the late 1920s, and which has been strengthened by the military régime. No other such law applies to any other organized ideology. Yet the general line of Egyptian Marxism, despite its persecution, has been one of critical, but not conditional, support of the régime, and its objectives have been the promotion of a popular-democratic national state.

It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that the leading cadres of

the régime are recruited from two ideological groups: the German-American and the Moslem Brotherhood. At the end of 1963 the Arab Socialist Union was under the direction of Major Hussein al-Shafei (from the Moslem Brotherhood wing of the Free Officers); Dr. Abdel-Qbder Hâtem, Minister of Culture and National Orientation (typical of the American cadre); and Kamal Rifaat (an enlightened technocrat, with Titoist sympathies).¹⁶ The Union had absorbed those who belonged to the Moslem Brotherhood¹⁷ but only a few Left personalities, and these in their individual capacity.¹⁸ The overall economic direction of the economy is in the hands of Vice-President Abdel-Latîf al-Boghdâdî (a former manager of Misr Airways, and known to represent the alliance between the officers' corps and big business) and Dr. Abdel-Moneim al-Kayssoûni (a capable economist of the Liberal school).¹⁹ The president of the Executive Council, Ali Sabri, a highly efficient administrator, had, up till 1952, a conspicuous pro-American past. These are only a few names, but they show an unmistakable trend. So much so, that Ahmad Bahâ Eddine, the editor of the daily *Al-Akhbâr*, could write that "what we discover first, inside the U.A.R., is that the revolution has concentrated its efforts on building the 'material characteristics' of socialist society without concentrating on its 'human characteristics,' i.e. the socialists! There can be no socialism without socialists! . . ."²⁰ This is now sought, inside the framework of the Arab Socialist Union, through the creation of an inner core of educated political cadres. It is said that they will comprise a larger proportion of the Left.²¹

(vi) Over-centralization and anti-Marxism—in a State whose official philosophy and policy are described as "scientific socialism"—impart a highly autocratic flavour and style to present-day Egyptian society. Every step forward comes as a decision of the State machine from above, never as an initiative from the people. While no other political parties have been allowed, the régime has proved itself unable to inspire and organize its own party. The result has been a growing and widespread political apathy, in a country that hitherto was notably ebullient. If the State insists on doing everything by itself, and by order, then why not watch from afar?²²

It must be emphasized that this political apathy is a new phenomenon. It did not exist before 1959. Even the crisis of the spring of 1954 did not stop political activity, contact and discussion; and this was followed by the period of the opposition to the Bagdad Pact, the Suez crisis and the "Bandoeng" period. Between 1939 and 1959 Egyptian Marxism had succeeded in attracting the best of Egyptian youth to its philosophic ideas and to its vision of an Egyptian renaissance; and it had become the intellectual dynamic for both the intelligentsia and the working class in the main cities. Because of the lack of contacts with the international Communist movement in general, and the Soviet Union in particular, Egyptian Marxism was compelled to find a way forward by developing

its own theoretical position within a distinctly national framework (and this long before the theory of "polycentrism" was formulated).²³ Its ideas and theories met with the respect of the non-Marxist sections of the intelligentsia and informed patriotic opinion. The severe repression of 1959 therefore deeply affected not only the Marxists but progressive groupings in general. The attempt to destroy this body of thought and action was to bring about a general crisis in all fields of intellectual and political life. The intellectuals were singled out, but they were only the symbols of a far wider crisis of Egyptian society and one which involved the gravest dangers for the whole course of Egypt's future.

IV

Much can be gained, at this point, by turning our attention to the problem of the **superstructure** of Egyptian society.

(i) Throughout the ages Egyptian history illustrates certain special characteristics which have involved over-centralization in its administrative structures from its earliest days. The struggle of the Egyptian people to live and work amid deserts has meant that there must always be a central authority responsible for artificial irrigation, the regulation of the Nile level, drainage and the allocation of water. Since this could not be supervised by some regional authority, the land of the Pharaohs came to be the seat of the oldest centralized and unified State in history, and the most compact of the "hydraulic" societies. In later times the regulator of water supply was to be the main controller, or owner, of economic resources and activity. This has happened twice in modern history: the first time under Muhammad-Ali and then today, with the military régime led by Gamâl Abdel-Nasser. Private ownership is but a recent development in Egyptian economic history and was only introduced late in the nineteenth century.

This centralized control and management, and sometimes ownership, in the economic field under a single State authority was bound to enhance the role and importance of the State apparatus to an unusual degree. Further, if we take into account the geo-political vulnerability of Egypt, the need to build a strong army was a logical consequence. It is, therefore, no coincidence that army leaders should wield economic power during many periods of Egyptian history: after the eviction of the Hyksos; during the Mamluk era; under Muhammad-Ali; and today, in the form of the present military régime, with its control over the public sector.

These developments in the economic sphere were inevitably reflected in matters of ideology; and from the Pharaohs to Gamâl Abdel-Nasser the master of temporal power has also been the centre of a unified spiritual power. Here is the source of the long tradition of theocracy in Egypt; and we should remember that even before Coptic (i.e. Egyptian) monotheism came to the fore, the Pharaonic pantheon showed a clear

tendency towards unity; and this trend was also powerful behind the **Sunnite** Islam of Egypt.

(ii) This last point can serve as an introduction to the general analysis of ideology.

Let us consider briefly the development of the modern intellectual situation,* from the time of the cultural renaissance initiated by **Muhammad-Ali's** envoy to Europe, **Rifâa Râfeh al-Tahtâwi** (1801-73). Two main trends can be distinguished—**Islamic fundamentalism**²⁵ and liberalism. The first, initiated by **Gamâl Eddine al-Afghânî** took shape with his reluctant disciple, **Cheikh Muhammad Abdoû**. Their aim was to promote a new renaissance in the lands of Islam by criticizing decadent tradition in the light of common sense and reason but still within the framework of religion. Religion must continue to hold the central position in social life and politics. All factors which lead to disunity, such as political parties, should be proscribed, although discussion could be allowed to take place within a unified and centralized organization and the religious education of the people would gradually prepare the way for representative government; but, **Abdoû** proclaimed, only a benevolent despot "could promote the renaissance of the East," and he added: "fifteen years would be enough." This trend came to have its right wing—the *Salafiyya*—with the *Al-Manâr* group of **Rachid Ridâ** and, above all, the Moslem Brotherhood. Its radical wing, however, continued its search for a reasonable degree of liberalism within the framework of Islam; and this was the work of **Alî Abd al-Râziq**, his brother **Mustapha**, and later, of **Khâled Muhammad Khâled**. The second main trend, liberalism, was launched towards the end of last century, by a group of Lebanese émigré thinkers and writers who had found refuge in Egypt (the *Al-Muqtataf* group and above all **Shibli Shumayyil** as well as **Farah Antoûn**). About the same time a number of prominent members of the new Egyptian bourgeoisie and intelligentsia were also searching for the conditions which would lead to a national renaissance. Among these were the *Al-Garîda* group of **Loutfi al-Sayyid**, **Qassem Amîn**, **Ahmad Fathî Zaghloûl**, and **Saad Zaghloûl**, who was to create the *Wafd* and lead the revolution of 1919. On the left of this group stood the socialists, **Shumayyil** and **Antoûn** and, particularly, **Salâma Moussa** and **Abdel Rahmân Fahmi**. It was this broad trend which has been largely responsible for the development of modern Egyptian culture and politics from 1919 to 1959. The central figures are **Taha Hussein** and **Tawfiq al-Hakim**, and they were accompanied and followed by large numbers of active intellectuals. On the left of this main group were the Egyptian Marxists, who first appeared in 1922, but whose influence has been more powerful since 1939. Finally, on the right of this liberal trend another group was developing under **German-American** influence and it was closely linked with the Egyptian bourgeoisie (the *Akhbâr al-Yôm* group, with **Abbas al-Aqqâd** as its intellectual leader).

The Free Officers who carried through the 1952 revolution mostly came from the radical wing of Islamic fundamentalism. Some belonged to the Moslem Brotherhood but only very few to the Marxist groups.²⁶ The majority, under Gamâl Abdel Nasser, were at first naturally inclined to Islamic fundamentalism. This was their intellectual tradition and it provided a respectable justification for their professional emphasis upon authority as well as for their contempt for discussion and factions. Moreover, they believed that their traditional faith would help to unite the nation behind them and that, as an ideology, it was not only more efficient than the vague ideas of the Wafd but even more important, that it would provide an effective counter to the ideas of Marxism, potentially the only serious opposition. This was the position at any rate until the 1954 crisis with the Moslem Brotherhood. It was, however, in the process of grappling with the many difficult problems of the take-off after independence that a change was forced upon the Egyptian leadership. Their central problem was the creation of a modern society in Egypt. This was first attempted during the second main stage of the revolution—between the years 1956 and 1961—in alliance with the big bourgeoisie, and with the landlord class excluded. Although in the end the alliance was to end in failure, one important result was that Islamic fundamentalism developed a virulent anti-Marxist orientation.

This failure provoked a major crisis of ideas and policy. It was a serious blow to the Establishment and even more to the right-wing elements in the political leadership. Gamâl Abdel-Nasser himself had been for years moving slowly to a pragmatic vision of the future²⁷ and he was gradually appreciating the need for a rethinking of fundamentals. This was to be the business of the 1962 Congress: "The socialist solution to the problem of social development in Egypt—with a view to achieving progress in a revolutionary way—was *never a question of free choice*. The socialist solution was an *historical inevitability* imposed by reality, the broad aspirations of the masses and the changing nature of the world in the second part of the twentieth century"²⁸—so reads Section 6 of the Charter entitled "On the Inevitability of the Socialist Solution." And Section 9 on "Arab Unity,"²⁹ following as it did the famous speech of self-criticism of 16 October 1961, came very close to an abandonment of the policy of organic and centralized unity, put forward in the years 1956 to 1961. It began, moreover, to approach the policy advocated by the Egyptian Marxists. This may be summed up as, first, the need for unity in the struggle against imperialism; second, an emphasis upon the oneness of culture and historical traditions of the Arab world; and third, the necessity for international policies which would further the reunification of the Arab world in ways that would respect the traditions and the needs of each individual country. Paradoxically, it was just these ideas of the Marxist

Left which were made the pretext for the repression which began in January 1959.²⁹

V

What, exactly, are the fundamental contradictions in the present situation of Nasserism? By answering this question we shall also be able to assess the chances of socialism.

The United Arab Republic can be characterized as an advanced independent, autocratic State with a predominantly State-capitalistic planned economy. It has gone further than many comparable societies in the way of control over its own resources and in the establishment of its own inalienable sovereignty. The Cold War setting of the international situation has provided Egypt's leaders with the opportunity to develop a new type of neutralism which, in a number of important respects, has brought increased support to the economy. There are, however, some critical points in the present situation whose problems are becoming progressively more difficult:

(i) The régime is trying to accelerate the rate of economic growth, but for this it needs an organized popular support which at present does not exist. The State apparatus, which is still growing, is not only *not* an alternative but it will increasingly act as a drag upon the forces of change. Over-centralization, which has taken an anti-Marxist turn, has destroyed or alienated or neutralized a considerable reserve of political and intellectual cadres whose participation is now essential. There can be no solution to Egypt's economic problems, made much more acute by the high birth rate and the lack of land,³⁰ without the re-establishment of political liberty. The argument being developed here is that there can be no take-off into sustained economic growth without the political mobilization of the mass of the people: "There can be no socialism without socialists."

(ii) By relying to a large extent on foreign aid, and by listening to bourgeois counsels during the 1956-61 period, the régime is now faced with an even *more* dangerous situation. The idea of Arab unity paved the way for the Baath, whose strategic role is first to wrest the initiative from Nasserism in the Arab world, and then to assist in its destruction, after having liquidated the communists.³¹ At the same time there is on the part of Nasserism a determination to stand by Arab revolutionary movements. This has led to the all-out support which was given to the Algerian Democratic Republic, as well as to the Yemeni expedition, and it is this sort of role in international affairs, unthinkable a few years ago, which gives to Nasserism in this present period a marked anti-imperialist stance. It follows that conflict with the United States in particular is likely to be resumed,³² in the context of a domestic situation in which the Egyptian leadership can rely on its own State power, and the *general* sympathies of the Arab masses, but in which it still lacks

the ability to mobilize and develop mass initiative. And such mass support is required, not only to sustain and encourage its anti-imperialist stand in international affairs, but to curb and combat the many opposition groups within its own society.

That the army came to play such an important part in the moulding of contemporary Egypt might appear to some as unfortunate, but it is, in fact, the way all nations have achieved Statehood—by the sword. It is this in part, at any rate, which accounts for the considerable impact of Nasserism on quite wide sections of radical opinion in the under-developed countries of the world. In general, it must be said that **Gamâl Abdel-Nasser** has gone further than his forerunner, Mustapha Kemal Atatürk and further than most Latin-American nationalist-reformist politicians, such as **Peron**.

Nasserism? The word itself—an Egyptian prototype of national development—was unknown until recently. It has come to mean that mixture of radical independence, the reconquest of national identity, and emphasis on social progress, which is usually described as nationalism but which it may be more accurate to characterize as the "nationalitarian stage" of development, to indicate the period during which the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America are freeing themselves from imperialism and neo-imperialism, recovering and building up their own national identities in the world context of the Cold War.²³

The fact that the national state in Egypt has taken an autocratic form and that such a prominent position is occupied by the army²⁴ must not be allowed to confuse one's analysis, nor should these facts be taken as an "unmistakable" sign of the reactionary character of the régime. For there is no such thing as an irreversible fatality in historical development²⁵ and full weight must be given to both the positive as well as the negative features in the situation.

The outcome of the present position will depend on the inner evolution of the two main radical currents of thought and action: Nasserism on the one hand, and Egyptian Marxism on the other. The first has changed in many ways since 1952, for it has learnt the dangers of political apathy and the absence of mass organization; it has begun to understand and expose its own reactionary brethren, and it has arrived at the point where the Charter of 1962 could be formulated as a middle of the road programme, acceptable to wide sections of the national movement. It is true that the lower ranks and many leading personalities still refuse to speak of scientific socialism and continue to adhere to the ideas and the concept of Arab socialism, as a weapon against Marxism. But 1963 has witnessed the cautious release of several dozens of political prisoners; and it is now possible to make a distinction between the radical wing of the régime, headed by **Gamâl Abdel-Nasser**, which is still taking the initiative, and the powerfully entrenched reactionary vested interests. In one important respect, the dangers and the lessons of right-wing nationalism—that is, the **Baathist** offensive,

with strong Western, mainly American, support—have been understood; but only, so it appears, inasmuch as they constitute a menace to the frontiers of Egyptian influence.³⁰

On the other side, Egyptian Marxism, even under the conditions of widespread repression, has shown a resilience that has enabled its cadres to maintain their political appeal to the Egyptian people; and the influence of their ideas has continued to grow. Their political approach since 1952, emphasized since Suez and the foundation of the second Communist Party of Egypt, has been to encourage a popular-democratic content to the national movement and thus to launch the socialist stage in the Egyptian renaissance. The Marxists see their historical role, therefore, not in developing an alternative array of forces in opposition to Nasserism but in putting Nasserism on the road to socialism. In Algeria, the socialist revolution, under the leadership of Ahmed Ben Bella, within a general framework of reference that is both national and Islamic, is showing the way to national reconciliation, as well as emphasizing the central importance of the peasant revolution.

Speculation about the future in Egypt may be summarized thus: the choice is either a coalition of the two main radical trends in the national movement, which will allow Egypt to make full use of its potentialities, at home, in the Arab world, in the world struggle against imperialism, and to begin to move towards socialism; or the elimination of these possibilities by the combined action of pro-imperialist forces in the Arab world together with reactionary forces within the Egyptian Establishment.

Twelve years have elapsed since the main radical trends in the Egyptian national movement began their passionate debate and their fratricidal "war in darkness." The time has now come, and the situation is now more clearly defined, to proceed to a more frank, straightforward and confident dialogue. There is no other path forward.

Cairo-Paris (C.N.R.S.)

NOTES

1. *Egypte, société militaire* (Paris, 1962), referred to hereafter as *Egypte*.
2. This refers to articles and essays published in Cairo (1956-59), and, particularly, to the Introduction to the series *Maktabat al-afkâr*, published, under this title, as a preface to the Arabic translation (by Adly B. Abdel-Malek) of V. Gordon Childe, *History* (Cairo, 1959), pp. 5-14; this Arabic theoretical platform for open Marxism was brought to the attention of the European reader by J. Berque: *Les Arabes d'hier à demain* (Paris, 1960), p. 102, n. 24.
3. Credit for this analysis should be given, above all, to Ibrahim Amer's *Al-ard wa'l-fallâ', al-mas'ala al-zirâ'iyya fî Misr* (Cairo, 1958). He made a highly significant use of Marx's ideas on "Oriental despotism" (and the whole concept of the "hydraulic society," developed by K. Wittfogel), and I acknowledge my intellectual debt to him.
4. These are Muhammad Hassanein Haykal's labels, in *Azmat al-mouthaqqafîn* (Cairo, 1961).

5. *Mithâq al-'amal al-watani*, English text, The Charter (Cairo, 1962), pp. 57-8.
6. American sources have no hesitation as regards the socialist nature of the régime; see M. H. Kerr: "The emergence of a socialist ideology in Egypt," *Middle East Journal* (xvi, 1962, no. 2), pp. 127-44; Ch. Issawi: *Egypt in revolution* (Oxford, 1963); both have little to say about Egyptian Marxism, Communism and pre-Nasserite socialism. The second formulation can be found in Hassan Riad's: "En Egypte: société militaire et capitalisme d'Etat," *Revolution* (no. 1, septembre 1963), pp. 68-74, (no. 2, octobre 1963), pp. 42-52; also in Avraham Ben-Tzur: "Le socialisme de Nasser," *Nouvelles Perspectives* (juin-juillet 1963), p. 80-96.
7. "The U.A.R. Budget estimates 1962-63," National Bank of Egypt Economic Bulletin, (xv, 1962, nos. 2 and 3), pp. 108-25; *Al-Ahram*, 30 June 1962.
8. A detailed survey of public spending—"I15 mat5 youmkin an yastamirr istih-lâkouna fi'l-ziyâda 50 milyôn gounayh koull sans?"—undertaken by *Al-Ahram* (1, 2, 3 and 4 August 1963), revealed that public spending on commodities was rising by some 50 million Egyptian pounds per year: from 876 millions in 1959 to 1,050 millions in 1962. This had to be brought under control, this influential newspaper implied, if economic development was to bear fruit. And Ihsan Abdel-Qoddoûs: "There are people who think about socialism thus: "why not sell the factory and buy a T.V. set and refrigerator for each worker, with its price? These people are dangerous and destructive!" (Rose-el-Youssef (quoted from here on as R.Y.) no. 1843, 7 October 1963.)
9. Ch. Issawi: "The period 1952-62 has been one of rapid economic and social advance all over the world—not only in the developed regions, but in most parts of the Middle East, Asia and Africa, and large parts of Latin America. . . . It should be noted that the per capita (Egyptian) rate of growth since 1952 has been slightly below the world average," op *cit.*, p. 47, n. 3. However, Dr. Abdel-Moneim al-Kayssoûni, Minister of the Treasury and Planning, declared, in his Press conference of 17 October 1963, that the U.A.R. rate of economic development during the year 1962-63 was nearly double that of most other countries: 8.5 per cent, as against an average of three to four per cent (*Al-Ahram*, 18 October 1963). Dr. Abdel-Râziq Hassan, head of the Research Dept. at the Industrial Bank, complained about the contradictions of official data, as provided by Dr. Kayssoûni and Dr. Aziz Sidky, Minister of Industry ("Kayfa naqiss al-kifâya al-intâgiyya?" *Al-Ahram*, 5 November 1963).
10. By 1969-70, manufacturing is expected to represent 11.7 per cent only of the labour-force (as against 10.6 per cent in 1959-60), while agriculture will have gone down slightly: 49.9 per cent, as against 54.3 per cent (*cf.* the under-mentioned "Population and manpower"). By then, the working class will be even more differentiated from the *fellahs* than today; both more specialized and more bureaucratic, as long as genuine political activity remains blocked, and their militant leaders banned.
11. This is what the Research Department of the National Bank of Egypt has to say: "Experience has shown that loans from the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. have been obtained on favourable terms. . . . However, loans from Western Europe do impose some burden on the balance of payments because of their short term nature and comparatively high rates of interest," in "Stabilisation of the U.A.R. economy," *N.B.E. Econ. Bull.* (xvi, 1963, nos. 1 and 2), p. 2.
12. Even a professor of economics and a high-ranking official such as Dr. Hussein Khallâf hesitates to speak of "socialism" (*cf. Al-tagdîd fi'l-iqtissâd al-Misri al-mouâsser*, Cairo, 1962, pp. 455-64).
13. *Egypte . . .*, pp. 45-6, 104, 107, 174-7, 366. C. Issawi, having dismissed the "inter-war period" intelligentsia, writes: "It was this combination of social scientists, many of whom took cabinet or high administrative posts during the early years of the Revolution, with entrepreneurs, managers and administrators, which was to sustain the new régime during its first decade," op *cit.*, p. 93-4. On this latter element, *cf.* H. Harbison and I. Abdel-Kader Ibrahim: *Human*

- resources for Egyptian enterprises (New York, 1958). The best informed description is Hassan Riad's: "Les trois âges de la société égyptienne," *Partisans* (no. 7, 1962), pp. 22-50, (no. 8, 1963), pp. 42-58; and the above mentioned articles in *Révolution*.
14. Particular mention should be made of the "page of opinion" (*safhat al-ra'y*) of *Al-Ahram*, and the round tables organized and publicized by the influential weekly, *Rose el-Youssef*.
 15. "Population and manpower," N.B.E. Econ. Bull. (xvi, 1963, nos. 1 and 2), p. 5-16.
 16. Together, they constitute the "Committee of socialist propaganda and thought" of the A.S.U. (*Al-Ahram*, 4 October 1963); as such, they are to supervise the Higher Institute for Socialist Orientation (*Al-Ahram*, 16 April 1963). R.Y. published the abridged text of Kamal Rifaat's report on Yugoslav socialism in nine instalments (nos. 1831 to 1839, from 15 July to 9 September 1963).
 17. *Le Monde* (22-23 September 1963) spoke of the "rehabilitation" of members of the Moslem Brotherhood who had been deprived of their political rights, following a decision of the State Council.
 18. Hussein al-Shafei "assimilated" ex-members of "Ikhwiin al-Hourriyya" (the secret organization of pro-British Palace circles, before 1952). The communists, Moslem Brothers (this was lifted by the above mentioned decision), usurers, drug smugglers and other criminals were all to be deprived of A.S.U. membership (*Al-Ahram*, 2 April 1963).
 19. Cf. his typescript Ph.D. Econ. thesis, Monetary policy in agricultural raw material producing countries with special reference to Egypt (University of London, 1942).
 20. *Al-thawra al-ichtirâkiyya, qadâya wa mounâqachât* (Cairo, 1962), p. 56. And Ihsân Abdel-Qodofis: "Those who don't understand socialism are not entitled to explain socialism on the pages of the newspapers" (R. Y., no. 1798, 26 November 1962); Dr. Fuad Mohieddine: "We are witnessing ideological disintegration. Among the high ideals presented by the Press, radio, T.V. and the theatre, some are capitalistic, and some are socialist; ideology is nearly absent from the information media"; Muhammad Auda: "We can only regret to see non-socialist and unpolitically conscious trade-union leaderships, some of which were agents of capitalism" (R. Y., no. 1847, 4 November 1963); etc.
 21. Cf. the full text of draft statutes, and the final ones, of the A.S.U. (*Al-Ahram*, 17 November and 8 December 1962). There is not a single known socialist in the "supreme executive committee" (*ibid.*, 29 October 1963). Later, one single Marxist member was included in the general committee. Elections to the 7,000 committees of the A.S.U. (*ibid.*, 5 December 1962) comprising 4,310,851 members gave a 57 per cent majority of seats to peasants and workers; 7.66 per cent abstained, and 7.11 per cent were invalid (A., 14 June 1963).
 22. About political apathy, cf.: "Intaziroû al-taalimat" (R. Y., no. 1840, 16 September 1963); "Al-nâs wa'l-nifâq" (R. Y., no. 1841, 23 September 1963); "Allazîn ichtarokofi fî koull tanzîm" (R.Y., no. 1814, 18 March 1963); "Al-wouzarâ" wa'l-maqâed al-khâliyya" (R.Y., no. 1815, 25 March 1963); etc. Already, by September 1963, there had been 90,000 formal appeals to the Executive Committee against abuse, thus assimilating the A.S.U. to the State (R. Y., no. 1842, 20 September 1963).
 23. M. Rodinson's "L'Égypte nassérienne au miroir marxiste," *Les Temps Modernes* (no. 203, avril 1963), pp. 1859-87, rightly insists on this aspect of my analysis, but says nothing of historical national specificity.
 24. Some recent works, in European languages, provide an introduction, namely: M. Jamal Ahmad, *The intellectual origins of Egyptian nationalism* (1960); N. Safran, *Egypt in search of political community* (1961); A. Hourani, *Arabic thought in the liberal age 1798-1939* (1962).
 25. I have found it necessary to use this term—instead of the unspecified "Islamic

- modernism"—for reasons explained in *Egypte . . .*, pp. 199-204, and in the Introduction to my forthcoming study, *Matériaux pour l'étude de la pensée arabe contemporaine*.
26. C' P. J. Vatikiotis, *The Egyptian army in politics* (Bloomington, 1961), pp. 44-68; and *Egypte . . .*, pp. 204-18.
 27. One can hardly fail to remember Atatürk's words: "But what can we do if we don't resemble democracy, we don't resemble socialism, we don't resemble anything? Gentlemen, we should be proud of defying comparison! Because, Gentlemen, we resemble ourselves." (Quoted by C. Issawi, *op. cit.*, p. 46.)
 28. *The Charter*, pp. 57-68, 105-10; italics are mine.
 29. Cf. the full dossier published by the "League of the progressive Egyptians abroad": *The great crime against the Egyptian people* (mimeo., January 1962, no indication as to place of publishing), pp. 112.
 30. C' the above mentioned "Population and manpower," and Dr. Ali al-Geretli, "*Al-soukkân wa'l-mawâred al-iqtissâdiyya fi Misr* (Cairo, 1962).
 31. Cf. the author's "*Le mouvement d'unité arabe et la situation internationale*," *Croissance des Jeunes Nations* (no. 23, 1963), pp. 19-20; and the round table "*L'Egypte et l'unité arabe—recontre-débat avec Anouar Abdel-Malek*," *Démocratie Nouvelle* (no. 6, juin 1963), pp. 72-81; (no. 7, juillet-août 1963), pp. 73-84.
 32. G. Lenczowski rightly states: "As for relations between Cairo and Washington, they can never be expected to attain a level of cordiality, largely on account of American commitments to third parties who have unsettled political accounts with Nasser's régime." *The Middle East in world affairs* (3rd ed., Ithaca, 1962), p. 532.
 33. M. H. Haykal dates back the use of the word "Nasserism" to the Egyptian campaign against the Baghdad Pact ("*Al-khatar al-Nâsseri*," *Al-Ahram*, 25 January 1963). Cf. my "Qu'est-ce que le Nasstrisme?" *Croiss. Jnes. Nat.*, *ibid.*, pp. 27-8.
 34. The role of the army in the new, "socialist," Egypt, has been formulated by Gamâl Abdel-Nasser himself ("We want no politicians inside the army. But the army, as a whole, is a force in the midst of national politics." (*Al-Ahram*, 27 July 1962), and Marshal Abdel-Hakim Amer, to the returning troops from the Yemen ("You are the army of the revolution which moved forth on 23 July, without any wish or desire but the interests of this people! *ibid.*, 8 November 1963). Specialists would detect a somewhat more traditional approach in this latter speech. Cf. our "*Le rôle des militaires dans les récents coups d'État*," *Le Monde diplomatique* (no. 108, avril 1963), p. 4.
 35. Hassan Riad: "*Comme hier son prédécesseur*, la bourgeoisie aristocratique, un jour, la bureaucratie nasstrienne se dtmasquera, passera dans le camp occidental. deviendra un appendice de l'imptrialisme" (*op. cit.*, *Révolution*, no. 2, 1963, p. 52).
 36. This is exemplified by M. H. Haykal's editorials, reflecting the President's views, about the Baath, and more so, by the U.A.R. government's attitude to Irâq.