a short political guide to the ARAB WORLD

by Peter Partner

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A SHORT POLITICAL GUIDE TO THE ARAB WORLD

by
PETER PARTNER

"In A.D. 622 Mohammed became the founder of a state as well as of a religion. The community of Moslem believers became a political society—and it has continued to be so, in one form or another, until the present day." This is the thesis of a book which has the dual purpose of presenting a coherent and simple picture of the Middle Eastern political scene, and also of putting Arab nationalism into its proper historical and cultural background. It describes the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the "vital interests" of the Western powers during the early modern period. Analyzing the political and economic geography of the new Middle East as settled by the 1919 treaties, it depicts the social and economic problems which are peculiar to this "undeveloped" area.

The main narrative section of the book describes the rise of modern Arab nationalism and the entry of Russia on the Middle Eastern scene. Nasser gets full attention, and so does the Communist problem, both inside and outside Iraq. The story is brought down to the beginning of 1960.

The most original chapter of the book is that on the theory of Arab nationalism; much of the author's material and the way he interprets it are likely to be new to the general reader, and he casts an original light on the possibilities of a struggle between Arab nationalism and Communism.

A separate chapter deals with North Africa, and with the complex issues of the Algerian problem.

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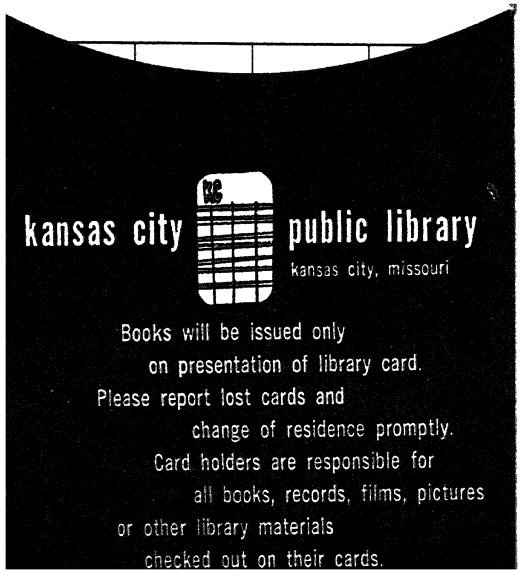

A SHORT POLITICAL GUIDE TO THE ARAB WORLD

A Short Political Guide to the Arab World

PETER PARTNER

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BOOKS THAT MATTER

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For Leila May

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Chapter One

THE OLD ORDER

I. ISLAM AND THE ISLAMIC STATE

1. *Towards understanding the Islamic State*

At the moment of his migration from Mecca to Medina in A.D. 622 Muhammad became the founder of a state as well as of a religion. The community of Muslim believers became a political society – and it has continued to be so, in one form or another, until the present day.

That Muhammad should have been a political leader is explained not by personal ambition but by the nature of his revelation, and by the social conditions of seventh-century Arabia. In Muhammad's message the believers are a political unit; they live, fight and pray together. The society which he set out to reform was tribal, though at the same time urban and merchant. The imperatives dictated by a monotheistic God cut across the tribal morality which was the only morality Arabia knew. For the community of Muslim believers to exist side by side with the unbelievers was impossible; peace obtains within Islam and war obtains without. As long as he could, Muhammad lived in Mecca under the protection of such tribal leaders as would recognize him, but when their protection was withdrawn, his only course was to move, and to set up a non-tribal state. 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's' was for him an impossible doctrine, since the Arabian tribes did not make the distinction between public law and private conduct which lies behind that injunction. The primitive condition of social Arabia forced Muhammad – in spite of the essentially religious content of his message – into effecting a fusion or symbiosis of church and

state. How inevitable this was in such a society may perhaps be seen from the similar symbiosis of church and state in barbarian western Europe of the Dark Ages. Only advanced societies can dissociate religion and politics – even in principle.

It is similarly fruitless to seek in Islam the very foundation of western politics – the *polis*, or the association of citizens of the city for a moral and social end. This is not for the reason that Muhammad was a desert nomad, for he was in fact a merchant city-dweller, a member of a civilized trading class which moved freely through Arabia, Syria and Abyssinia. But the Arabian town, and after it the Islamic town, are fundamentally different from the western and Mediterranean town. They are above all places of exchange, marts for long-distance trade. They are secondly places of prayer. They are thirdly – and only subsidiarily – places of government. In the Islamic town the markets and the mosques dominate; government and municipal buildings are a poor and transient third. The acropolis of Athens: the town halls of England and the Low Countries: the great buildings of the medieval Italian communes – all these are a phenomenon strange to Islam. Autonomous political associations centred in the city hardly exist, because the state is founded on a single religious imperative. Where the state is itself a religious community, government is a mere means of achieving the ends of religion, and not an end in itself. In the west politics have always possessed moral autonomy: they have been an end; in Islam they have never been more than a means.

The intermingling of religion and state is to be found among the fundamental precepts of Islam. The 'five pillars' of Islam are to serve God without associating anyone with him, to acknowledge Muhammad as his messenger, to carry out ritual prayer, to pay the poor rate, and to fast in the month of Ramadan. From a period immediately following Muhammad's death, the poor rate was a government tax, paid to the public treasury. Inversely, the booty captured by Muslims during the Conquests was divided by the government among the believers according to a fixed

scale. Muslims paid no taxes apart from the poor rate, while non-Muslim subjects bore the main burden of taxation. The state was run for the benefit of the Muslims, but they were under a religious obligation to fight for it. The Quran makes the duty of fighting the pagans into a religious one; it is a *jehad* or holy war.

Muhammad's position in the Islamic state was not always that of a supreme autocrat. In his earliest years at Medina he was little more than a chief judge, and there are references in the Quran to those who opposed his power. But after the submission of Mecca in 630 his supreme power was undisputed, and where he was not present was exercised by his deputies. That power he transmitted to the caliphs, or lieutenants of the Prophet, who were chosen after his death.

The caliphs' powers were undefined and unlimited, but they were not for a long period exercised in the same manner as those of a king or emperor. No matter how secularized the office tended to become, the basis of the powers of the caliph was religious: he was essentially the *imam* or prayer-leader of Islam. But both the first Umayyad dynasty of caliphs and the Abbasid dynasty which supplanted them in 750, drifted farther from the idea of religious leadership towards secular autocracy. The Umayyads had the reputation of being secular-minded, and the Abbasids claimed to be restoring the religious quality of the caliphate; but in fact it was the Abbasids, in their capital at Bagdad, who finally succeeded in endowing the caliphate with most of the attributes of Persian despotism.

Behind the duty of obedience to the caliph as representative of the Prophet, lay the duty of obedience to Allah, and indeed the later caliphs termed themselves 'deputy of Allah' instead of deputy of the Prophet. The powerful feeling of the absolute monarchy of God is one of the most pervasive elements of Islam, and it contributed towards making the caliphate into an absolute rule. In spite of the frequent and bloody occasions on which caliphs were in fact displaced, there is practically no doctrine of the right of active resistance against an unjust caliph. The caliph

should conform to various moral requirements, but if he does not do so the community has no right to displace him. Since government is for the purpose of ensuring man's eternal destiny and not his temporal well-being, there is no basis for Whiggism in Islam.

A further reason for the failure of Islam to produce a political doctrine other than that of absolutism, was the failure of Greek thought to take root there. In spite of the great cultural adaptability of the Arabs, and the great syncretist civilization which they enjoyed from the eighth to the tenth centuries A.D., the doctrines of the Greek thinkers never took intellectual root among them and were firmly rejected by the orthodox. The philosophers as a class were thrust out to the fringe of Islamic civilization, patronized only by a few enlightened rulers who were politically strong enough to disregard the criticism of the pious. Most of the greater Islamic philosophers, particularly such men as Ibn Sina (the 'Avicenna' of the medieval west), were men tainted or connected with heresy. Unlike Christianity, which came to birth in a deeply Hellenized civilization, Islam came under Greek influences only when already a fully formed doctrine. The last of the great Arab philosophers, Al-Ghazzali (1058–1111), after a great spiritual crisis denounced most of the Hellenizing philosophers as corrosive of true religion, and Al-Ghazzali was perhaps the greatest formative thinker of Islam. In the history of Islamic political thought there are a few thinkers who have turned to Plato and Aristotle for their theories, but none of these have had more than a tiny and peripheral influence on the Islamic political tradition.

Islamic law, the *shari'a*, was one of the great cultural achievements of medieval Islam. As a code of law based primarily on the Quran and the 'traditions' of the Prophet it was a religious law expanded over the whole social field. The *shari'a* deals with criminal law, with succession, with marriage, with the religious mortmain lands, and with every aspect of human life touched on by the Quran. It is true that even in the medieval empire there were other laws, both local and administrative, which ran beside

the *shari'a*. But the *shari'a* remained as a comprehensive expression of the religious character of the state. Varied though it is according to the various orthodox rites of Islam, it is still a testimony to the unity of the faith.

In so far as Islamic law is based on the divine revelations made to the Prophet in the Quran, with the addition of the sayings later attributed to the Prophet, the *shari'a* is not clearly distinguished from theology. Legal doctrine and opinion are the decisions of theologians as well as lawyers, and indeed the *shari'a* is as much a system of ethics as a system of law. Technically the autocracy of the caliphate did not make the caliph into a lawgiver: Islamic law is expressed through the consent of the community and not the will of the caliph. But in fact it has never been difficult (within limits) for the authority of the state to obtain a legal opinion from the theologians, made to suit its own political convenience.

2. *Arabs and non-Arabs in the Islamic Empire*

What was the Islamic community and how far was it Arab? Muhammad's own attitude is full of ambiguity, largely because it changed at various times in the Prophet's career, and because he was unable to foresee that he was founding a huge multi-racial empire. The Quran was revealed to Muhammad in Arabic: 'We have revealed the Quran in the Arabic tongue so that you may understand it.' Allah could have raised up prophets in other nations, but did not choose to do so.

At one point in Muhammad's career it seems that he gave a place in the Islamic community not only to the Muslim believers but to those tribes and people who, without being Muslims, accepted Muslim protection. But this concept did not survive; the less so because Muhammad tended to assimilate to the Islamic community the characteristics of the pre-Islamic Arabian tribe. Though it superseded tribalism, Islam was itself a kind of monster-tribe, retaining tribal habits in its character of a universal religion, just as Judaism had already done. The relation of early

Islam to the idolatrous peoples without was not unlike the relation of one Arab tribe to another. The first actions of Muhammad at Medina were to organize a series of caravan-raids on the tribal pattern.

It is particularly enlightening that when the Arab conquests began to stretch over peoples who were patently non-Arab, those of the conquered peoples who became Muslim were organized as tribal clients and called the *Mawali*. The *Mawali* were only second-class Muslims; their share in warfare and its booty was inferior to that of the other tribes. Not unnaturally, they were resentful of their position, and the *Mawali* played an important part in the development of early Islamic heresy.

But the *Mawali* were not excluded from Arabdom for long; the period during which the leadership of the Islamic Empire remained ethnically Arab was not a long one. The enormous extent of the Arab conquests, and the dependence of the Arabs on other races for the technique of government, ensured that this was so. Within a century of the death of Muhammad, the Empire stretched from the Atlantic and the Pyrenees to the Indies, and to the Jaxartes in central Asia. The Arabs, as a tribute-gathering class, attempted to preserve their ethnic purity, but in vain. During the Abbasid period, which begins in 750, the *Mawali* became accepted as full Arabs, and only among the Abbasid family and the highest aristocracy, was the ethnic distinction of Arabdom preserved.

While the ethnic meaning of 'Arab' gradually lost its content under the Abbasids, the word acquired a quite new cultural meaning. Arabic was the language of administration and religion – it could not be otherwise, since religion and administration were interdependent. The Quran is the uncreated word of God, dictated to Muhammad by the Angel Gabriel. As the immediate word of God, and not one mediated, as were the Christian scriptures, through men, the Arabic text of the Quran had a literal sanctity which made the language in which it was written the basis of religion and culture. The recitation of the Arabic

text has an absolute value which follows on its God-given nature. Only in Persia was there real resistance to the cultural supremacy of Arabic. Elsewhere in the Empire Arabic became both the language of the people and the language of culture. 'Arab' became the description of those who spoke it, and the community of Islam became almost wholly identified with the Arabic-speaking world.

The political unity of the Arab world was short-lived, and with political disunity religious splits automatically followed. The Abbasids themselves, when they seized power in 750, did not manage to preserve intact the whole Umayyad Empire. The single member of the Umayyad family who escaped the attention of the Abbasid executioners managed to reach Spain, where he founded the Umayyad caliphate of Cordoba.

The most important way in which the particularism of the component parts – and sometimes classes – of the Empire showed itself, was through the religious sects. Against Ali, the husband of Muhammad's daughter Fatima, the first great religious civil war was launched as early as 656. The Shi'ite sect which supported the claims of Ali to the caliphate was adopted by a whole series of political oppositions during the following centuries. The Persian group adopted Shi'ism, and Egyptian particularism showed itself in the establishment of a Shi'ite ('Fatimite') caliphate. Class antagonisms in Islam usually manifested themselves – as they often did in Christendom – in heresy. The Khariji ('seceders') were puritan democrats whose main objection was to the claim that the caliph ought to be a member of Muhammad's tribe, the Quraish. The Isma'ilis, a branch of the Shi'a, were in part a lower-class movement against the Arab aristocracy. The ninth-century Qarmatians, another Shi'ite sect, preached an aggressive and bloodthirsty communism; connected with their doctrine was that of the Assassins, the murderous sect of the 'old man of the mountains'.

With the decline of the Abbasid caliphate in the ninth and tenth centuries, the political unity of the Muslim world fell

into ruins. A patchwork of dynasties, some heretical, some acknowledging one caliphate, some another, occupied the Muslim political scene. In Bagdad the caliphs became puppets of the Seljuk 'sultan' ('he with authority'); the temporal and spiritual powers were divorced. Final ruin came with the conquest of Bagdad by the Mongols in 1258. It was under these circumstances – though the phenomenon had been latent ever since the secularist policies of the early Umayyad caliphs of the seventh century – that the orthodox and pious of Islam came to view the caliphate with disgust or total indifference, and to cultivate the non-political and passive pietism which became a peculiar mark of Islam. Instead of protesting politically, as did the sects, the orthodox accepted caliphal authority while deploring its exercise. After 1258, they came gradually to disregard it. Sufi mysticism, which was the channel into which orthodox or near-orthodox piety began to flow at this time, was a powerful social force, deeply rooted in brotherhoods and pious guilds, and spread all over the territory of Islam. In one sense the extravagantly proliferating Sufi orders, whose activities ranged from sober prayer meetings to fire- and glass-eating, are a testimony to the cultural and regional particularism of Islam. But they testify to the unity of Islam no less than to its diversity, for many of the greater orders were dispersed all over western Asia and North Africa; a travelling dervish might receive his education in Arabia and Egypt, and be hospitably received in Tunisia and the Horn of Africa.

II. THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND THE WEST

1. *The Turks and Islam*

In part at least, the Ottoman Turks restored the glories of a united Islam. But they took away, for five centuries, the possibility of an independent Arabdom, and Arab nationalists bore them considerable ill-will for it. How far it can truthfully be said that the Ottomans took away from the Arabs anything that they

had not already lost, is doubtful. The only 'Arab' state conquered by the Turks which was not in irremediable decay, was the Mamluk state of Egypt and Syria. The Mamluks themselves were a dynasty of Turkish slaves; and in any case they afterwards succeeded, as did all the North African provinces, in enjoying internal autonomy under Ottoman suzerainty.

The claim that the caliphate had been transmitted to the Ottoman sultans was made only late in the history of the Empire. It was as Turkish rulers that they held their power, and only secondarily (if at all) as vice-regents of the Prophet. They preserved and even sharpened the distinction between the secular and the spiritual administration. The Shaikh-al-Islam as the head of the religious organization of the Empire was on a par with the Grand Vizier. As head of the religious judiciary he had considerable independence, and was sometimes able successfully to oppose the Sultan. The Ottomans, indeed, had a great deal more respect for the religious law than the Mamluks.

The Ottoman Empire cannot be considered a true successor-state to the early Arab Empires. Its Islamic territories were much smaller. At its utmost extent it did not include Morocco, and it exercised only an indirect suzerainty over the other 'Barbary' states of North Africa. In Arabia it ruled the Hejaz and the Yemen, but always with an unsteady hand, and really doing little more than keep open the pilgrim road to Mecca. Persia and the old central Asian provinces up to and beyond the Oxus, it never conquered. The European provinces, on the other hand, were peopled largely by Christians.

What distinguish the Ottoman Empire even more sharply, are its racial character and its administration. The language of the Empire was Turkish. The Ottomans preserved themselves remarkably clearly from the Arabs in culture, even if they freely intermarried, and at some periods it was reckoned unworthy to speak Arabic – even if the speaker were born an Arabophone. The administration of the Empire, notoriously, was in the hands of the *devshirme*, or ex-Christian slaves, levied

from the European Christian population, and educated by the state. Thus government officials could not be of Arab descent, and even when in the late seventeenth century the civil service was opened to free-born Muslims, it was opened to Turks rather than to Arabs. Equally the Janissaries, so long as they remained a slave corps, were predominantly of Christian origin.

The autonomous life of the Arab peoples went on to a surprising extent under the Ottomans, largely because of the complete insulation of the Turkish official classes from the merchant and middle classes who were the main sections of the Arabic educated population. There was no attempt at colonization: the Ottomans remained as it were extraneous to their own Empire. There was no renaissance of Arab literature and thought, but there was not the entire stagnation which is sometimes supposed.

Orthodox Islamic culture, however, failed to recover from its medieval decline. The learning of the great universities and schools, which had been the glory of Islam as late as the thirteenth century, had silted up: orthodox Islamic philosophy and theology became no more than the stultified repetition of medieval texts. The impetus had gone out of orthodox religion, and it now spent itself in the multitude of dervish sects or brotherhoods. And as the impulse of the Sufi brotherhoods became spread out over tens of thousands of assocations of simple and illiterate people, their doctrines became vulgarized into a loose and superstitious popular bigotry. This was not the fate of all the brotherhoods, but it sufficed to make irresponsibility and fatalism accepted by the common people as a religious duty.*

Politically, the great period of the Ottoman Empire lasted from the fifteenth to the late seventeenth centuries. As late as the beginning of the seventeenth century, some English travellers described it as the greatest of all modern empires. But by the mid-eighteenth century it was evident that the Turk was in full decline; the army and the administration were corrupt, and the

* H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West, II*, pt. 1, p. 205.

young Russian empire was amputating huge tracts of the Ottoman lands.

By the end of the eighteenth century the Turks were beginning to realize the disastrous consequences of the technical superiority of the west. Early attempts at modernizing the army and the government met with fierce resistance, and led to a revolution in 1806. Beside the gradual break-up of Ottoman power in Europe went something of equal importance for Islamic society: the penetration of Ottoman markets by the manufactures of European industry. By 1840 the *souqs* of Damascus were full of the cheap goods of Birmingham, Lyons and Manchester. Economic imperialism had begun, and at the same moment the penetration of the Ottoman Empire by European customs and goods was beginning to create a new cultural phenomenon, the Levantine, or Europeanized oriental.

As the decline of the Ottomans became apparent, the Muslim as well as the European subject peoples became restive. In Arabia from 1745 to 1818 there was a revolt which was no less significant from a religious than from a political point of view. A religious reformer, Muhammad Ibn Abdul-Wahhab, reacting strongly against the decadent dervish brotherhoods, made a puritan appeal for a return to the practices of the first three centuries of Islam. He rejected the caliphate of the Ottoman sultans, and secured the help of the dynasty of Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud in organizing a new puritan 'Wahhabi' state, which threw off the Ottoman rule and conquered Arabia as far as the borders of Syria and Iraq. The success of Wahhabism was a double portent, showing not only the political weakness of the Turks but the tremendous explosive content of Islamic radical reformism.

2. *The Ottoman Empire and the Powers*

The period of systematic intervention by the western powers in the Near East begins with Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798. By occupying Egypt, Napoleon clearly showed the British that their Indian Empire could be threatened by a hostile power

which could close the Suez portage. Egypt had entered into the strategy of British imperial communications.

A second 'vital interest' which grew out of the weakness of the Ottoman Empire was the question of Russia's drive to control the Straits of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles and to open the Mediterranean to her Black Sea fleet. With this question was linked that of Russian imperialism in the Balkans and Russian 'protection' of the Christians of the Near East. This was what nineteenth-century statesmen understood by 'the Eastern Question'. But it was linked with the survival of the Turkish Empire as a political unit: thus both the Egyptian question and the question of the Straits were eventually one – as Palmerston's diplomacy was to demonstrate.

The powers vitally interested in the Eastern Question were Great Britain, Russia, Austria and France. Of these, Great Britain had the most to lose and Russia the most to gain. British interest was to avoid a 'settlement' of the Eastern Question and to prop up the Ottoman Empire so far as she could do so without betraying the subject Balkan Christians. She wished to keep Egypt out of hostile hands and the straits out of Russian hands, and to widen the régime of protection for European traders (the 'capitulations') so as to keep the eastern markets open to British trade. Russia was interested above all in the Balkans, but the combination of her interests there with her ambitions over the straits tended to end in a policy of dominating the whole Turkish Empire. France had trade interests in the Levant, and her connexion with the Maronite Christian minority in the Lebanon together with the interest in Egypt which Napoleon had aroused, combined to give her the desire to win something from Ottoman weakness.

None of the powers, in fact, desired the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Each was too fearful of the advantages its neighbours might gain, to want to risk a general mêlée in the Near East. But each power attached conditions to the survival of the Ottoman Empire, which the others were unwilling to accept. Through

this muddled clash of interests the powers stumbled into the Crimean War.

The career of Muhammad Ali in Egypt was in some senses a test case for the policies of the powers. Muhammad Ali was an Albanian mercenary who seized power in Egypt in 1805 during the disorders after the French withdrawal, massacred the last of the Mamluk aristocracy, and founded a new state, which although it continued to recognize the suzerainty of the sultan, was effectively autonomous. Muhammad Ali was not an Arab, but he set Egypt free from the Ottoman as she had not been since 1517, and he was the first Islamic ruler to have the desire and the means more than superficially to westernize the state.

The attitude of the powers to Muhammad Ali was one of increasing suspicion. Quite early in the game he offered England friendship and privileges if she would consent to his seizure of Syria and Iraq, thus creating a friendly 'Fertile Crescent' power across the route to India. Far from inspiring confidence, it was probably this suggestion which finally turned Palmerston against Muhammad Ali. The idea that he might overturn Ottoman power and seize the caliphate was in any case distasteful to a power as deeply committed as was Great Britain to the stability of the Ottoman Empire. But what was decisive was the threat to British influence in the Persian Gulf, and the further threat of a great oriental power which might link up with Russia through Northern Iraq and Kurdistan. British communication with the east did not merely depend on Egypt, but on the whole zone of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, Persian Gulf and Red Sea. It is significant that at this period, when British fears of Egyptian expansion were acute, Great Britain annexed Aden.

Muhammad Ali then turned to France, the one power which was willing to risk the uncertainties of a general Ottoman collapse. In 1832 his son Ibrahim had defeated the Turks and conquered Syria, and in 1833 only Russian intervention prevented him from going to Constantinople. The sultan sent an army against Ibrahim, which was totally defeated at Nezib in 1839.

A period of negotiations followed, in which the European powers bargained with Muhammad Ali, as to what he might exact from the Ottomans for his victory. Encouraged by France, he held out for too stiff a price: Syria and Crete were more than Palmerston and Russia were willing to allow him. France was unable to back up her protégé by force, and in 1840 Ibrahim was expelled from Syria and utterly defeated by a small allied force under the English Admiral Napier. The first attempt to create a new non-Ottoman state in the Fertile Crescent had failed.

The treatment of Muhammad Ali by the powers sprang more from the conservatism of a generation which thought in terms of the balance of power, than from any reactionary desire to suppress oriental national movements – it certainly occurred to no one to think of Muhammad Ali in this light. It was Nicholas I's desire to stand firm with Austria and Prussia in Europe, which had the effect of lining up Russia beside England to preserve the Ottoman Empire intact. This, combined with British fears for the security of the route to India, secured Muhammad Ali's overthrow.

3. *Egypt and the Sudan*

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the purely archaic and oriental structure of earlier Ottoman society had disappeared; its final period was described in the eighteen-twenties by the Englishman Lane, in his classic *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. The shell of eastern society was still archaic, but the core had begun to undergo the most profound changes, the most important of which was the opening-up of the Near East as a mass market for western industry. Egyptian cotton had revolutionized the Egyptian economy, just as the Suez Canal had revolutionized the position of Egypt in world communications. Railways were being built or contemplated all over the Ottoman Empire; so were ports able to handle modern shipping. Factories and modern schools began to appear.

But the hard armature of the modern state, the apparatus of

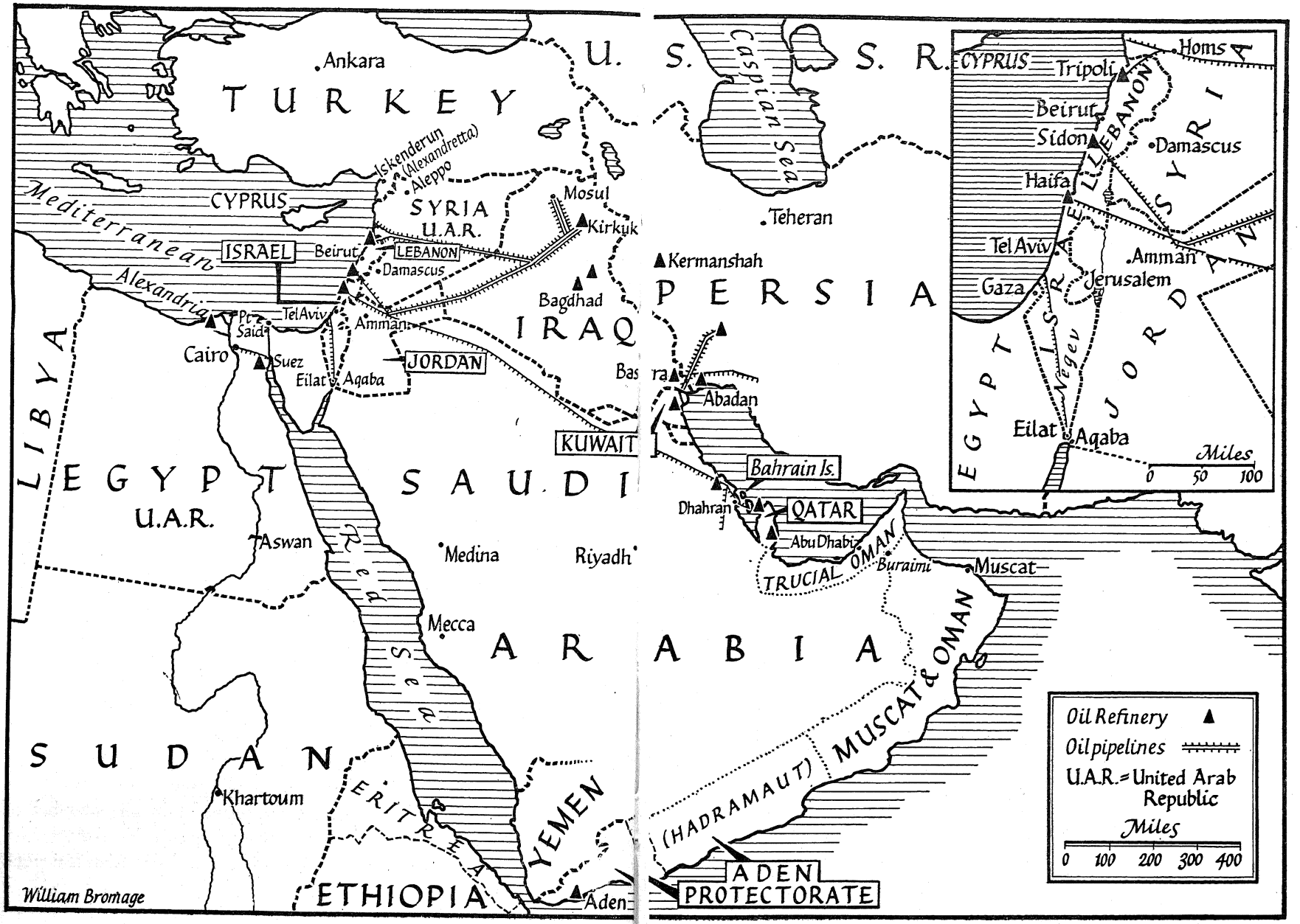
modern government, was still almost totally lacking. The efforts of Isma'il in Egypt and Mustafa Rashid Pasha in Turkey were inadequate to the size of the task. The new economic power remained in the hands of Europeans, or, at best, of the Christian minorities. The organization of the state, despotic and irresponsible, was not fundamentally changed. The primitive financial apparatus of despotism was unable to deal with the demands made on it by even a partial modernization, and both Egypt and the Ottoman Empire proper drifted into chronic insolvency *vis-à-vis* the European companies.

That economic insolvency must soon become political insolvency was first demonstrated in Egypt. Muhammad Ali had obtained the hereditary government of Egypt for his descendants under Turkish suzerainty. His grandson Isma'il, who succeeded in 1863, attempted to force the pace of modernization by measures which compelled him to raise loans on ruinous terms. The Suez Canal, as a result of a particularly unscrupulous set of transactions, was paid for almost entirely by Egypt. The breakdown of the Egyptian Debt payments in 1876 led to the appointment of a European Commission of the Debt to supervise Egyptian finances. Isma'il riposted by the formation of a 'liberal' ministry and by attempting to appeal to national feeling against foreign intervention. He was too late, and his manœuvre led in 1879 to his deposition.

One of Isma'il's devices had been to encourage mutiny in the Army, where the economies of the Commission of the Debt had caused much discontent. In 1881 a certain Colonel Ahmed Arabi led a revolt which forced the new Khedive, Tewfik, to appoint a liberal nationalist ministry. Ahmed Arabi was unable to work in harmony with the constitutionalists for long, and by 1882 he was virtually the nationalist dictator of Egypt.

The Arabi régime was in part inspired by the prophet of nineteenth-century Islamic nationalism, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani,* and was directed by the ideas of Islamic and Egyptian indepen-

* See Ch. 5 below.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William Bromage

dence, rather than by the Europeanized 'constitutional' liberalism of the pashas. It was an Egyptian régime in a sense that the Turkish ruling class could not achieve. But it was impossible to convince the powers that the new government was inspired by anything but 'race hatred and fanaticism'. This opinion was confirmed by racial riots at Alexandria, when (under considerable provocation from the Christians, and perhaps not without the instigation of Tewfik's agents) a Muslim mob caused the deaths of a considerable number of Christians. The British naval squadron which was lying off the port intervened. To quote Lord Cromer, 'England stepped in, and with one rapid and well-delivered blow crushed the rebellion'. Arabi was defeated at Tel-el-Kebir, his régime overturned, and the Khedive established in power with the support of British troops.

Gladstone satisfied himself that Ahmed Arabi was an odious dictator. But this was not the reason for Britain's intervention in 1882. British intervention was motivated first by the expectation that the nationalist régime would throw off the Anglo-French financial control, and second (a motive less discussed but at least as powerful) by her anxiety that the Suez Canal should not pass into hostile hands. Britain did not have – and never acquired, even at the height of jingo imperialism – any wish to take Egypt as a colony. But she had to keep the route to her Empire open. This was the mainspring of her policy up to 1956.

Why Great Britain intervened alone, and without the co-operation of France, belongs to European and not to oriental history. Gambetta had in 1881 wished for an Anglo-French occupation, and that this did not take place was due only to the reluctance of French opinion to agree to diverting troops to the Mediterranean in the face of what was imagined to be a German threat. As a result Great Britain became the effective protecting power of Egypt for fifty-four years – if not for seventy-two. Effective – but only in fact and not in law. Egypt's situation as a province of the Ottoman Empire made it impossible for Great Britain openly to assume the protectorate, for any

such move to partition the Ottoman Empire would precipitate a crisis which Great Britain, least of all the powers, desired. It was remembered only too clearly in London that Bismarck had suggested Britain's taking Egypt, against Russia's taking Constantinople. No bargain could have been less to British taste.

What now appears to be the most important and permanent effect of British intervention in Egypt was the reconquest and colonization of the Sudan. This huge territory of a million or more square miles, was conquered by Egypt between the reigns of Muhammad Ali and Isma'il. It was never securely held, and the revolt of Muhammad Ahmed, the 'Mahdi', in 1881, was not particularly surprising. Muhammad Ahmed was the head of a religious brotherhood or '*tariqa*'. He proclaimed himself to be the Mahdi or right-guided one, who had come to complete the work of the Prophet, conduct the final holy war, and inaugurate the final triumph of Islam.

The Mahdi was carried to power in the Sudan by a tribal and religious explosion which the Egyptian army was powerless to stop, and which led to the isolating of Gordon in Khartoum and his death there in 1885. Great Britain was not willing, in view of her own uncertain position in Egypt in 1885, to undertake the conquest of the Sudan there and then, and a Mahdist régime was left relatively undisturbed in the Sudan until 1896. By that time the British position in Egypt was well-established, and the threat that France would occupy the Sudan from the west made British action there inevitable. Kitchener was sent with an Anglo-Egyptian army to undertake the reconquest, which was completed by 1899.

Having conquered the Sudan 'with' Egypt, Great Britain found herself uncertain how to dispose of it. If she annexed it, international protest – and particularly French protest – was likely to be violent. She did not want to give it outright to Egypt, because it was not certain that the British occupation of Egypt would endure for ever, and without Britain it was feared that Egypt would be unable to defend the Sudan against the ambitions

of other great powers. A further factor was Cromer's desire to avoid imposing on the Sudan the régime of European legal privilege (the 'capitulations') which obtained in Egypt. The extraordinary (and at that time new) expedient of a condominium was hit upon; Great Britain and Egypt would govern the Sudan jointly. In 1899 this was thought of as a kind of British guardianship on behalf of Egypt. It could not then be foreseen that the new idea of trusteeship on behalf of native peoples would one day transfer the benefit of British guardianship from Egypt to the Sudanese, and lead to the creation of a new state.

4. *Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire*

The last decade of the nineteenth century saw the rise of a movement of Ottoman nationalism, which blamed the despotism of the Sultan Abdulhamid for the woes of the Empire, rejected the Sultan's Pan-Islamic ideas, and looked forward to the establishment of a secular, modern Ottoman state, which would unite all the peoples of the old Empire, Muslim and Christian, in a new nationalism.

These, the ideas of the 'Society for Union and Progress', had a fatal fault: they contradicted the two most important principles on which the Empire was built. The Empire was an Islamic community – under the Caliph-Sultan, *the* Islamic community – in which Christians were necessarily subordinate to Muslims. Secondly, the racial variety of the Empire could be overcome only by asserting Islam as its basic principle. The idea of Ottoman nationalism was an impossible one, and was only a transition stage in the growth of new forms of national consciousness, which had already undermined the Ottoman Empire at its base. Thus the Turkish revolution of 1908, and the apparent triumph of the Society for Union and Progress, did not bring with it a renaissance of the Ottoman Empire – which, on the contrary, continued to be dismembered even more rapidly by the powers. By 1911 most of the Ottoman European possessions had gone, and Italy had invaded Tripolitania.

It was at this point that Arab nationalism, which in the latter part of the nineteenth century had existed only as a floating idea in the minds of a few theorists, began to emerge into practical politics – although no western statesman at that time would have called it 'practical politics'. Publicly, Arab societies were founded from 1909 onwards to ask for 'decentralization' – a sort of local Arab autonomy inside the Empire, with Arabic recognized as an official language. Secretly, other societies were founded at the same period for the liberation of the Arab countries from the Turk. Membership of the secret societies included Syrians (both Christian and Muslim) and Iraqis. Particularly important was the military secret group known as *al-Ahd*, which was formed largely by young Iraqi officers. The secret societies had contacts outside the lands under direct Ottoman government, particularly at Cairo, where the Syrians domiciled in Egypt were important, and at Paris, where the movement received a good deal of encouragement from certain of the French.

Besides these subversive movements, Ottoman rule in the Arab lands was meeting opposition of quite a different sort. Turkish rule in Arabia had never been more than spasmodically effective. In the Yemen, the theocratic dynasty of the Imams, after a series of rebellions, had extracted favourable terms from the Turks in 1911. North of the Yemen, Muhammad Ibn Ali, the 'Idrisi', kept the province of Asir in a state of anti-Turkish rebellion. In central Arabia the young Abdul-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud was beginning to reconstitute the Wahhabi power of his ancestors, which had been crushed in 1818 by Ibrahim Pasha. In the Hejaz, the Hashemite Hussein Ibn Ali, the Grand Sharif of Mecca, was willing to change his allegiance. The condition of Arabia was in truth no more turbulent than it had been for centuries under Ottoman rule. But never before had there been the chance of linking a revolt in the desert with revolt in Syria and Iraq.

Chapter Two

ARAB NATIONALISM UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE WEST

I. THE MAKING OF THE MODERN NEAR EAST

1. *The Arab Revolt and the Allied Settlement*

Before the end of the nineteenth century some Englishmen had suggested the possibility of backing the claims of the Sharif of Mecca to the caliphate, in opposition to the Ottoman sultan. The fomenting of rebellion in Arabia had thus been considered in British circles long before 1914, and on the outbreak of war advances were made by Kitchener to the Sharif Hussein, almost immediately. Hussein was perhaps an unlikely leader for a national revolt. Devious if ambitious, he had spent most of his life under surveillance at Constantinople. But as an eminent member of the Quraish family (the family of Muhammad), and as custodian of the holy places, he could claim to be a religious and a political leader.

Hussein demanded in return for Arab help to the Allies the recognition of Arab independence over a huge area, from northern Syria to southern Arabia. Great Britain vaguely conceded the principle of Arab independence for the whole area claimed. She then proceeded, however, to make particular qualifications which excepted some areas from the agreement – notably lower Iraq – and general qualifications which cast a good deal of doubt on what she understood by 'Arab independence' – notably a general refusal to act against the interests of France. The Hussein-McMahon correspondence, in which this so-called bargain is contained, is a shapeless tangle, from which very little that is definite can be deduced – and both sides were aware of it.

The critical question was whether France was to be allowed to make territorial claims in the Arab Levant. McMahon made it fairly clear that she intended to do so, and that Great Britain was not going to stop her. Hussein assumed that French intervention was going to be confined to the Christian area of Mount Lebanon, and declared that he nevertheless could not accept it. There the matter rested when in 1916 the Arab Revolt became a military fact.

Great Britain, France and Russia proceeded, in the spring of 1916, to agree on the partition of the Ottoman Empire. In these negotiations, called the Sykes-Picot Agreement, it was the Eastern Question in its traditional form which determined what was done. The long-delayed partition was at hand, and it was impossible to refuse Russia her claim to Constantinople and the Straits. France and Great Britain required compensation to counterbalance the enormous extension of Russian influence in the Near East which was now threatened. A secondary object of the agreement was to get France and Russia to agree to the new Arab state which Britain had promised to Hussein.

The agreement assigned Russia a large part of Eastern Anatolia and Armenia. Great Britain and France each allocated to themselves very large spheres of influence in the Near East; in each case they distinguished between one area in which Great Britain or France would be the 'protecting power' which 'advised' an Arab government, and another area which the European power could either annex or govern indirectly, as it saw fit. France was to be the protecting power over most of Syria and the district of Mosul, and was to have the option of direct control over Southern Anatolia and the Syrian littoral excluding Palestine. Palestine was to be under international control. Great Britain was to be the protecting power over the territory running from Aqaba to Kirkuk, and was to have the option of direct control of Lower Iraq; she was also to have Haifa and Acre.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement was not the cynical betrayal

which most Arabs have since represented it. But it shows clearly that the British Government did not understand the word 'independence' as Hussein understood it. However independent the Arab state contemplated by the Sykes-Picot Agreement was to be, it was to have 'advisers', and advisers (as A. J. Balfour pointed out) whose advice must be followed; and assuredly no state can be described as really independent which has habitually to follow foreign advice supported, if the worst comes to the worst, by troops, aeroplanes and tanks.

As if this clutter of conflicting obligations and ambiguous promises were not enough, Great Britain added in 1917 the further obligation of the Balfour Declaration, by which she promised to assist 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people'. There had been no mention of Palestine in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, and this new and revolutionary concession to Zionism came as a fresh qualification to the many which had already been placed upon 'Arab independence'.

The Balfour Declaration was an indication of the changing direction of allied policy. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was a document of the old-style realistic imperialism. The Balfour Declaration belongs to a different era, an era in which the democratic statesmen were to live in a public atmosphere of heady idealism. The Peace Conference of 1919 was to be dominated by the principle of national self-determination, and the politicians who three years before had been moving peoples round the chessboard in the style approved by centuries of usage, had to sit down at the conference table and treat the niceties of ethnic groups as the most important principle of world statesmanship.

The allies, therefore, had the task, at the Peace Conference, of interpreting the Sykes-Picot Agreement in the light of principles which were not present to the minds of the statesmen who framed it. The results of this strange process were bizarre, as they were bound to be.

One thing was certain: that France would not allow Hussein's son Feisal, who had been installed in Damascus and Syria in 1918, to retain his position there. The stubborn refusal of France to recognize Feisal in Syria, and the unwillingness of Great Britain to give France the lie direct in favour of Feisal, determined the end of Hussein's dream of a great Arab state under Hashemite leadership. Once Great Britain refused to support him, the forcible ejection of Feisal from Syria, which followed in 1920, was a foregone conclusion. Syria and Lebanon were formed into a mandate under French control.

Great Britain, on the other hand, now that Russia was no longer to make any gains in the Near East, did not require the direct control of Iraq, and was indeed willing to compensate Feisal for his failure in Damascus, by giving him an Iraqi kingdom under British mandate. This was a highly artificial business, for Feisal was neither known nor liked in Iraq, and the existing nationalist movement there (such as it was) had to be forcibly displaced in his favour. The nomination, which followed a bloody tribal rebellion in Iraq in 1920, was put into effect in 1921. The new state became substantially independent in 1922. Another Hashemite, Feisal's brother, Abdullah, was given the emirate of a new (and poverty-stricken) territory of 'Trans-Jordan', also under British Mandate. In Arabia, both Hussein in the Hejaz and his rival Ibn Sa'ud in Nejd, became independent rulers. In Palestine a British mandate was set up, pledged to establish a 'national home' for the Jews, though without any mention of the political consequences this might entail.

The multiple illogicalities of this settlement are not surprising, seen against the illogicalities of the bargains which preceded it. Perhaps its most serious defect was that it left the countries of the Arab Near East enjoying degrees of independence which varied inversely with their culture and economic power. Egypt and Syria, the most advanced states of the Arab world, were left tightly embraced in the leading strings of Great Britain and France. Iraq, which lagged far behind the other two, enjoyed a

far greater degree of independence, and the primitive Arabian states were the freest of all.

On the other hand, the establishment of the mandatory principle in Syria and Iraq was of great importance. Whether France intended ever to quit Syria or not, she could not, under the terms of the mandate, treat Syria as if it was Algeria, or even Tunisia. The principle of self-determination had not been entirely without effect.

The most puzzling and anomalous of all the situations created by the settlement was that of Palestine. The mandate contained no whisper of a Jewish state, although the public declarations of Zionists were well known, and the Zionist memorandum to the Supreme Council at the Peace Conference spoke of 'the establishment of a Jewish National Home and ultimately the creation of an autonomous Commonwealth'. Nor could the subtle and profound A. J. Balfour have doubted the ultimate issue there when he wrote that 'Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land'. But Balfour was a Zionist, and the officials who were to administer the mandate were not.

2. *The shape of the modern Near East*

By far the richest and most highly developed of the Arab Near Eastern states in the post-war period was Egypt. With a population of 14,000,000 (1927), a highly organized economic structure, and a lively and rapidly growing Arab culture, Egypt was the most industrialized and sophisticated of all the Arab countries, and the only one whose ruling class had any real understanding of the west. But Egypt suffered from appalling over-population, and from the weakness of a single-crop economy: her dependence on the world cotton market was almost absolute. Her ruling class was Turkish rather than Egyptian, and cut off completely from the peasantry and the

middle class. And her political life continued to be dominated by the British occupation.*

Syria and Lebanon also possessed an old and strong cultural tradition: but by contrast with the more or less homogeneous population of Egypt, jammed cheek by jowl down the narrow Nile valley, the Syrians were bewilderingly diverse. Mount Lebanon, with its predominantly Christian population, had enjoyed a separate status even under Ottoman rule, and after the religious clashes of 1860 this status had been guaranteed by the powers. Muslim heretical sects, particularly the Druze and the Shi'ites,† produced further political division, and the Alawis and the Kurds in Northern Syria added to the confusion. French rule accentuated these divisions; inevitably the French administration played heavily on the Catholic Maronites, but it also tended to foment other particularisms, particularly those of the Alawis.

Economically Syria and Lebanon were weak: they depended on cereals (which in turn depended on a capricious rainfall) and on entrepôt trade. Damascus had entirely lost her position as a caravan city, and was in decay. Beirut had become an important port, though it was challenged in the twenties by the rise of the British-sponsored port of Haifa. Both countries had been sending emigrants to America and elsewhere for fifty years, and they were considerably helped by the remittances which the emigrants sent back to their villages. They benefited from French capital investment in the public sectors and French administration – however deleterious the occupation may have been politically.

Iraq is geographically in a different zone, and has a rather different economic character. Although the northern province of Mosul is not unlike Northern Syria, the Lower Tigris–Euphrates valley is south of the date-palm line, and has a sub-tropical character. Until the development of the oil industry had reached a very advanced stage, Iraq was poor and backward. The cereal and date cultivation of the south was on a very primitive level

* See sec. II below, sub-sect. 1.

† P. 15.

and apart from her oil Iraq had no place in even the minor channels of world trade.

Like Syria, Iraq is split by important racial and religious divisions. The Kurds form a more important proportion of her population (one-fifth), than of any other Arab state. The Arab Shi'ites are a yet more important fraction (between one-third and one-half). Their proximity to Shi'ite Persia, and the existence of several holy Shi'a cities, make them especially dangerous to the unity of the state. In the first century of Islam it was from Iraq that Ali obtained his main support, and the Iraqi Shi'ites have not forgotten this.

Trans-Jordan was the poorest and most primitive zone of all, and amounted to little more than an *ad hoc* assemblage of the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes of southern geographic Syria and the northern fringe of Arabia. Primitive as was the government organization which it enjoyed, even this was impossible without British subsidies.

Adjoining these states, which considered themselves Arab, were two others of a different character. In Turkey Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) performed the double feat of overturning the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, which would virtually have abolished Turkey and turned it into a colonial zone for Greece, France and Italy; and also of converting the Turkish state, which he had saved, into the first westernized Islamic state in history. All this was done with little help from any other power, save the benevolent neutrality of Russia. The historic importance of Mustafa Kemal's reforms is still far from exhausted, not only in Turkey but in the Islamic world as a whole.*

In Palestine the new factors of British government and Jewish colonization began slowly to transform the area into one directed by modern concepts of economy and government. The capital which the Jews brought into Palestine made an appreciable contribution to its development, although the Arab peasantry were excluded from all but the most indirect benefits of Jewish

* See Ch. 5. below.

enterprise. Haifa became an important port, and the economic structure of the country became of a modern type. In the early twenties the British administration began to act on the idea of keeping a balance between Jew and Arab, and the volume of Jewish immigration was controlled. An important Arab middle class took shape beside the Jewish immigrant class, and the Zionist concept of a modern western Jewish society superseding an archaic Arab peasantry, was shown to be an illusion.

In Arabia, even more than in Trans-Jordan, the traditional society persisted through the inter-war period. Oil was not yet a sufficient factor to make any perceptible difference to the traditional social and economic structure. In central Arabia and the Yemen, the amputation of hands and heads continued to be the normal procedure of justice. The main changes were political. Abdul Aziz Ibn-Sa'ud in 1926 drove the Hashemite dynasty out of the Hejaz, and united – or at least federated – most of Arabia under a single tribal kingship. The driving forces of the new power were the personality of Ibn Sa'ud and the ferocious puritanism of the Wahhabi sect which he led.

On the fringes of Arabia, between 1919 and 1939, the British Aden Protectorate knew its best patriarchal period, and even extended British treaty domination over the tribes of the Hadhramaut. The Arab treaty states of the Persian Gulf* continued their poor and conservative course, and the theocratic Imamate of the Yemen preserved the most ferocious tribal conservatism of all.

3. *The Pattern of agriculture and society*

The fundamental economic activity of the whole Near East was, and is, agriculture. The peasantry which carries out this agriculture was, and is (with the exception of Egypt), organized on a social and economic basis of profound archaism.

The relationship between the peasant and the land which

* See Ch. 4, sect. III below.

has existed since the Middle Ages in western Europe – the profound attachment of a land-owning peasantry for a fertile soil – in the Near East does not exist. What does exist is something more akin to the slave-owning Roman *latifundia*, than to the agrarian society which grew out of the settlements of the free barbarian warriors of the European Dark Ages. Unlike western society, which until the Industrial Revolution was dominated by the countryside, in which land-owning was the basis of titles of honour, the eastern countryside has for millenia been dominated by the towns as if by parasites. Land-owning has been nothing but a source of revenue to be enjoyed in the towns, and the cultivation of the land has seldom been a matter of the slightest interest to a gentleman. A mere instrument of exploitation to the landowner, the peasant has also been subject for millenia to the brigandage of the nomad, whose margin of life turns on what he can steal from the settled zones.

These conditions have grown, in part, from the physical difficulties of exploiting the soil. Save in Egypt, where the harvest is guaranteed by the inundations of the Nile, Near Eastern agriculture depends on a margin of rain which must moisten the crops in March and April, and which can never safely be predicted. The soil is light and easily worked. It has been exploited for century after century by the *fellah*, often without the slightest attempt on his part to replace what he has taken out of it, or even to retain it in place. Deforestation and the destruction of flora have led to the light soil being carried off from the surface. The ruins of twelve Byzantine cities can be seen north of Aleppo, where now the land is bare rock and stones. The forests of Lebanon and Syria have disappeared, destroyed by the negligence of centuries, and the proverbial riches of the east have gone with them.

Of the three basic types of land-owning, none is satisfactory. The great landowners, who may be either urban or (less often) nomad aristocracy, usually exploit their territories on the basis of share-cropping, taking a proportion of the harvest. Until the

early fifties, most of the agricultural land of the whole area belonged to such great landowners. Peasant-owned lands are either farmed communally and in rotation (so that the good farmer has periodically to hand over his land to the bad every year), or else held individually. The individual peasant holdings are fragmented to an impossible degree, because of the Quranic laws on the division of inheritances.

Up to a few years ago, capitalistic farming was practised only in Egypt. In most of the remaining parts of the Near East, the landed proprietor was indifferent to the conditions under which his land was farmed: he was accustomed to a low return from the land, and was not by tradition or inclination capable of facing the immense task of capital investment and technical expertise which even a relative improvement required.

Even where the will exists among the landed proprietors to improve the land – as it has at certain periods and in certain provinces of Syria – the capital for improvement has not easily been found. Rates of interest in the inter-war years were as high as fifteen to twenty per cent. Small wonder that the landowners preferred to use their capital for short term mercantile projects with early returns at a high profit than to sink it in long-term projects for improving the land, which may in any case be ruined by the extreme uncertainty of the harvest.

The eastern agrarian problem is first of all the problem of water and soil conservation, and then the problem of farming. In both cases it is hard to see how it can be attacked by any agency but that of the state. The capital required to finance even a minor irrigation scheme runs into millions of dollars. But when the dams and the canals are built, the problem of farming remains. And here the difficulty is not only one of social abuses which can be regulated by law, but also of the peasant himself, the *fellah*, who exists now under more or less the same conditions as he has existed for unnumbered centuries. The two problems can be re-labelled as problems of capital investment and agrarian reform. But the fact remains that no amount of irrigation, no amount of

confiscation of land and its redistribution to the peasants will begin to solve the agrarian problem, because so long as the *fellah* remains the *fellah*, indifferent to the land on which he works and incapable of improving it, ignorance, under-nourishment and bad farming will remain also.

Beyond these already torturing problems is the problem of over-population. For the past century and a half the population of the Near East has been rising – in twentieth-century Egypt, spectacularly – in the rest of the area steeply during the past thirty years. This is a problem which weighs heaviest upon Egypt, which has all the available agricultural land already under intense cultivation, but which is in fact universal. All the agricultural populations of the Near East are under-employed.

In the inter-war period the only state which possessed the capital and the technical expertise to begin to affront the agrarian question was Egypt. On British initiative she had already built the Aswan dam in 1902, and the whole delta had been put under a uniform irrigation system which made possible perennial cultivation. Elsewhere there were improvements in irrigation, by the French in the Orontes Valley and elsewhere, and by the British in the Tigris–Euphrates. Of agrarian reform in the interest of the peasant there was scarcely a whisper. The fiscal reforms in Egypt were under British guidance directed in a way on the whole favourable to the peasant. But the complete political predominance of the urban landowning class all over the Middle East made a true agrarian reform impossible. It may even be said that benevolent western help did not always or in all ways assist the peasant. The new irrigation system in Egypt was a success, but it broke up the social unity of the Egyptian village. The land registration systems introduced by the British and French in Syria and Iraq were the occasion of appalling injustice, since land held communally by the village or tribe was registered personally in the name of the sheikh.

The system of *latifundia*, combined with the almost total absence of industry, ensured the political domination of the

landowning class and prevented the growth of a really numerous and powerful middle class. Such as it was, the substantial Arab bourgeoisie tended to be enrolled as clients of the great landowners, under the system of political patronage and nepotism which pervades all Mediterranean and eastern countries. The lesser bourgeoisie, minor shopkeepers and civil servants, was not powerful enough to strike out on its own political programme, and saw the hope of social improvement only in the expulsion of the foreigner and the ending of 'colonial' exploitation. Thus there appeared a type of monolithic nationalist party of which the classic example was the Egyptian Wafd, at times connected with great financiers and landowners, but with the lower *bourgeoisie* and small land owners as its most militant supporters. Student demonstrations and street riots were its typical manifestation.

The part of the peasant in this political system was to elect his landlord. The 'democratic' constitutions which the British gave to Egypt and Iraq in the twenties placed these countries in the hands of the land-owning classes as firmly as any instrument which could have been devised. The landowners and the police between them were always able to secure the election of their candidates, as surely as the Irish Protestant landowners secured theirs before the Emancipation. It is significant that the Muslim Brotherhood, which was one of the few effective protests of the oriental *petite bourgeoisie*, wanted to take away the vote from the peasant, and restrict political power to the towns.

The proletariat played no part in the oriental political scene, because of the absence of large-scale industry. In consequence, socialism of a modern type was excluded from politics also, and was confined to a few intellectuals. Only in the early forties did industry and the ancillary services become important enough for labour movements to begin to make an effective appearance. They had existed in Egypt from the beginning of the century, but only as a phantasmal force.

II. THE INTERESTS OF THE POWERS

1. *The inter-war years*

The inter-war period was in a sense an armistice in the history of the Near East. For the first time for over a century, the interests of Great Britain and France were no longer opposed there by an active Russia. Germany for the time being was out of the running, and when she recovered her policies were directed at other objectives. The United States was interested in protecting her oil interests, but her activities went no further than this. Great Britain and France were too closely linked in Europe to permit themselves the luxury of active rivalry in the Near East. Their vital interests being thus cheaply protected, the two powers could permit themselves what they felt to be a considerable degree of liberalism in their relations with the nascent Arab states.

The old-style imperialism had suffered a major defeat in Great Britain, when in 1919 the India Office advocates of an Iraq closely attached to the Indian Empire were defeated by the partisans of an independent Arab Iraq. When this new state was set up, the British advisers rapidly did their work in mounting the essential government machinery, and by 1922 a qualified independence had been granted. In 1930, after further quarrelling at home between liberal and less liberal imperialists, Great Britain gave up the mandate in exchange for a treaty of alliance which guaranteed her the use of air bases, and whose effect was to make the British Ambassador in Bagdad remain a weighty force in Iraqi politics.

Oil was a new factor in the policies of the powers, and was still by no means the dominant factor which it later became. Nevertheless, it was already important. The inclusion of Mosul in Iraq rather than in the French mandate of Syria was largely as a result of oil interests – though the big discoveries there did not come until 1927. Oil interests in the inter-war period were governed by the Red Line agreement of 1928, which allotted interests in the Iraq Petroleum Company to British, French and American groups. The area of operation of the company was to

be that of the former Ottoman Empire, including Arabia and excluding Kuwait. To transport the oil, pipelines were built from Kirkuk to Tripoli, in Lebanon, and to Haifa, in Palestine. Thus France and Britain had a joint interest in the oil, and in the security of the pipelines to the Mediterranean. To be added to this was British interest in keeping a foothold in Iraq and the Persian Gulf states, in order to protect her still more important oil interests in Persia. Yet the total oil reserves of the Near East were still largely undiscovered and untapped in 1938, when production in the whole area was only six million tons.

In Iraq the economic and social development of the country was too retarded for nationalism to take the form of a mass movement. The Iraqi *bourgeoisie* was tiny, and offered no political foothold for a nationalist party. Political life in Iraq centred, on the whole, round the great landowners, the tribal leaders, and the new ruling group, led by such men as Nuri Said and his brother-in-law, Ja'far Al-Askari, which had come into power with the advent of the Hashemite dynasty. Nuri Said and Ja'far Al-Askari were both Iraqi officers in the Turkish army who had served Feisal during the Arab revolt. They were thus peculiarly attached to the Hashemite dynasty and to the British, who had placed Feisal on the throne. Nuri Said was a politician of great ability, who negotiated the 1930 Treaty which governed Iraqi relations with Great Britain until the Bagdad Pact was signed in 1955. No lickspittle of the British, Nuri Said had his own Arab nationalism. But it was a nationalism of the princes rather than of the people, which took no account of the social effects of westernization. Although he dominated Iraqi politics until his fall and death in 1958, it may be doubted whether Nuri Said ever went far beyond the political ideas of the Ottoman Empire which had trained him. Even the name of the first political party which he founded (*al-Ahd*, i.e. the Covenant) harkened back to the title of the Arab officers' secret society of 1914.*

* See p. 29 above.

In 1936 Iraq gave the first important example of a phenomenon soon to become standard in Arab politics – the political role of the Army. Deprived by electoral corruption of its normal political function, the nationalist *bourgeoisie* tended to turn to the Army, in which its sons and cousins were serving. The Army *coup* was not merely an act of Praetorian power but a political alliance between the middle-class nationalist groups and the soldiers. This was first shown by Bakr Sidqi's military *coup* in 1936, which after the murder of Ja'far Al-Askari placed the nationalist opposition in power. The bloodshed of that and the following year also gave an indication of the murderous violence which ran under the surface of Iraqi politics. In 1938 a counter-*coup* of another section of the Army brought Nuri Said back into power, in uneasy alliance with the nationalist leader Rashid Ali al-Gaylani.

Iraq was sufficiently on the fringe of British strategy for the British Government to take the disturbances there philosophically. Egypt, on the other hand, was reckoned one of the pivotal points of British military power, and the military installations of the Canal base showed that there was no intention of a complete withdrawal. So long as she remained in India, Great Britain could not lightly abandon her position in Egypt. But nationalism in Egypt was more powerful and better organized than anywhere else in the Arab world, and the desire to retain the old indirect control, in the presence of this powerful national movement, set the British Government an ultimately insoluble conundrum. The confident and full-blooded imperialism of Cromer was dead, but the strategic needs were if anything more urgent.

The situation of Great Britain in Egypt was controlled, first of all, by her declaration of a protectorate in 1914. This protectorate received international recognition in 1919, and was written into the Treaty of Versailles. But it was unacceptable to Egyptian opinion, and seemed on the face of it to go further than Britain's real needs demanded. Nationalist agitation under Sa'ad Zaghlul grew to a pitch which paralysed government, but the Milner

mission of 1919 was unable to negotiate the compromise solution which Britain wanted. In 1922 Lord Allenby therefore proclaimed, on behalf of Britain, the termination of the protectorate, and declared Egypt 'an independent sovereign state'. This declaration was contradicted, however, by the reservations which followed: communications, defence, foreign interests and the Sudan were reserved to Great Britain. What was in fact unilaterally conceded was not independence but internal autonomy. The British military occupation continued.

The effect of internal autonomy was to set up a triangle of power in Egypt, of the British, the king and the nationalist party.* The Egyptian monarchy (as it now became) had not, since the fall of Isma'il, possessed such power as accrued to it under the western-type constitution of 1923. King Fuad's hostility to the Wafd deprived it of the strength to exact from Britain a relaxation of the reserved matters in the 1922 declaration, and when in 1936 a treaty was at last negotiated with Great Britain, its terms hardly more than modified those of 1922. Britain ended the military occupation but retained the right to garrison and defend the Canal. The position of the Sudan (which had been the stumbling block for all the earlier negotiations) remained substantially unchanged.

In Palestine it did not take long for the obscurity of issues which attended the beginning of the British mandate to be brutally dispelled. There can be few instances where the conviction of that school of British imperialists which thought that colonial government was a matter of administration and not of politics, has led them into a more cruel impasse. By the early thirties the racial antagonism of Jews and Arabs was already drifting towards disorder. The Jewish Agency was already a quasi-governmental institution, bringing fear and hate to the hearts of the Arabs. In 1936 Arab resistance to further Jewish immigration stiffened into terrorism and revolt, and Great Britain, finding herself in the unenviable position of holding the

* Little, *Egypt*, p. 143.

ring between Arab and Jew, began to hesitate between the alternatives of an eventual Arabo-Jewish state, or of partition. No decision had been reached by the outbreak of war, but by 1939 the British Government was leaning towards the former alternative.

The little Emirate of Trans-Jordan had virtually no other prop, economic or diplomatic, than British power, and in this stony and arid territory the British romantic image of Arabdom, formed by Wilfrid Blunt and Doughty and given its modern dress by T. E. Lawrence, had its brief hour of realization. Abdullah's military force, the Arab Legion, was a British toy. From the beginning Trans-Jordan was a bankrupt project, politically as well as economically; Abdullah's political impotence was already demonstrated when in 1936 he was powerless to aid the Arab revolt in Palestine, and in the following years his advice proved ineffective in influencing British policy in the adjoining territory.

It is doubtful whether, in these years, Great Britain ever had an Arab policy as such. Most British experts were very well aware of the profound divisions of the Arab world, and were extremely sceptical of the possibility of future Arab unity. In practice, 'extreme' nationalism as exemplified by the Wafd or by Rashid Ali was distasteful, because it frustrated British interests. No doubt men educated in British public schools and influenced by our experience in India were far happier to deal with oriental princes than with middle-class Levantines who recalled the despised Babu, and for this reason British representatives tended to think themselves more at home with Bedouin potentates and Hashemite princes than with the bourgeois nationalist leaders. But all this had little effect on policy, which was dictated by the strategic interests of Empire. Romanticism is not a charge easily brought home against diplomatists.

Without desiring to do so, Great Britain by her policy of flexibility in the Arab countries made difficulties for France in Syria and North Africa. The French mandate in the Levant had from the start reflected French centralization and inflexibility.

When Great Britain concluded the Iraqi treaty of 1930 and the Egyptian treaty of 1936, she unwittingly aggravated an already tense political situation in the Syrian mandate, and provided fuel for nationalist demands as far afield as Tunisia and Morocco. A French treaty was signed with Syria in 1936, not dissimilar in principle to the British treaties, but opposition in both France and Syria, and Syrian dissatisfaction with French failure to defend the Sanjak of Alexandretta from Turkish annexation, led in the end to a political breakdown. The treaty was never ratified, and by the outbreak of war the Syrian constitution had been suspended, with France resuming direct government.

2. *The Second World War and its aftermath*

The Second World War immediately placed all Great Britain's strategic dispositions in the Near East on test. They involved her in a struggle for life in which she was bound to show little respect for Arab susceptibilities, and which led her into at least one political error which had serious effects. But it was also a period in which for the first time since 1919 Britain again began to show interest in the possibility of a pan-Arab state.

The response of the Arab peoples to the Allied war was on the whole negative, when it was not hostile. The defence of democracy meant little in countries where so-called democratic institutions were mere props for corruption. Radical Arab nationalism was almost everywhere pro-Axis, not only in the case of the notorious Mufti of Jerusalem and of the Iraqi opposition leaders, but with Egyptian nationalists such as the Muslim Brotherhood* and General Aziz al-Misri.

The first political crisis came with the Iraqi *coup* of 1941. For three years the Iraqi politicians had been governing only with the consent of the military leaders. In the summer of 1940 Naji Shawkat interviewed Von Papen in Istanbul, and on 1 April, 1941, there was a military *coup d'état*, leading to the exile of the Regent, the flight of Nuri Said and the main pro-British elements,

* See below, Ch. 5.

and the establishment of Rashid Ali al-Gaylani at the head of a pro-Axis government. The British replied by military action; the R.A.F. detachment at Habbaniyah near Bagdad was reinforced, and by a remarkable desert march a small force from Trans-Jordan succeeded in overthrowing the régime at the end of May. Rashid Ali fled, and after a few months Nuri Said returned to power, the political strength of the Army for the moment broken.

The Egyptian crisis of 1942 was productive of more permanent effects. At the end of 1941 both the Egyptian politicians and the young King Farouk were understandably doubtful of Allied victory, and although Egypt had fully carried out her obligations under the 1936 treaty until that point, the British Embassy began to doubt for the future. When, at a critical moment in the desert war, Hussein Sirry resigned, the British were threatened with the appointment of a temporizing ministry. To avoid this Lord Killearn (then Sir Miles Lampson) insisted with Farouk that the Wafd leader, Mustafa Nahas Pasha, be appointed as Prime Minister. To back up his demand, on 4 February, 1942, the Ambassador had the Palace surrounded by British armoured units, and arrived in person to make his request. Nahas Pasha was appointed, and his government stood firm with the British. But Killearn's action alienated the young Farouk: he never forgave Britain for this brutal humiliation. Equally serious was the blow delivered at the Wafd party. Its unity had already been split by Nahas Pasha's quarrel with Ahmed Maher, but the acquiescence of the former in the British *coup* of 1942 discredited the Wafd with the main current of Egyptian nationalism. To the ordinary Egyptian, the European war was a matter of relative indifference, but no party which had abetted this piece of open bullying could claim to be a party of national unity. After 1942 the Wafd began to lose its character of a universal and national party, and the Egyptians were looking for something to replace it.

In 1941 British and Free French forces had invaded Syria and Lebanon, then held by General Dentz for the Vichy régime. The

Free French forces were placed by the Allies into the position of the former mandatory power, but de Gaulle's government failed to reach any sort of satisfactory compromise with the Syrian and Lebanese national movements. French insistence on a large share in government led to a fresh breakdown of constitutional politics, and a series of crises which ended, in 1945–6, with the complete and final withdrawal of France from the Levant. Anglo-American failure to support de Gaulle, which was the direct reason for the withdrawal, earned Great Britain and America a black mark with de Gaulle and his supporters.

The all but catastrophic decline of British power after the end of the war could not be foreseen in the heat of the battle. But it was already evident by 1941 that arrangements of the type of the Egyptian and Iraqi treaties would no longer be sufficient to hold together the British defence interests in the post-war period. At the same time the Middle East Supply Centre was co-ordinating the economies of all the Arab countries under British control, and gave the specious appearance of a restoration of the economic unity of the Near East. The idea began vaguely to simmer in British official circles that Arab nationalism could perhaps be harnessed for good purposes, by the promotion by Great Britain of a loose federation of the Arab states. Thus the nationalist agitation against the treaties could be stilled, without Great Britain having to pay for it in cash. It was a vague concept, in strong contrast to the realistic policies of the inter-war years. The policy was first formulated by Sir Anthony Eden in a speech in 1941, which promised support for any scheme of Arab unity which commanded general approval among the Arabs.

The question of the unity of the Arab states was naturally seen by the two strongest of them – Egypt and Iraq – in terms corresponding to their own ambitions. Nuri Said had for some time been the sponsor of a 'Fertile Crescent' scheme, which was to unite Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Trans-Jordan into a single state under Hashemite leadership or influence, with the possibility of a further union with Iraq. This idea was supposed to solve the

Palestine question by offering semi-autonomy to the Jews within the framework of the Arab federation. Egyptian ideas were directed towards a larger and looser federation under Egyptian leadership. In the event the Egyptian concept won, because looser, and not involving any immediate political changes. In 1945 Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Sa'udi Arabia and Trans-Jordan signed the Arab League Pact. Plans of regional unity were excluded by the Pact, which declared its intention of safeguarding the 'independence and sovereignty' of the member states. The seat of the Arab League was to be in Cairo, thus giving Egypt a sort of formal primacy in the Arab world. Great Britain, knowing that Iraq had been defeated in the negotiations leading up to the Pact, did not receive the Arab League with enthusiasm, but her declared policy on Arab unity precluded any expression of disapproval.

The Arab League was an important step in the growth of Arab nationalism, because it began to awaken all over the Near East the idea that Arab unity could be realized in the near future. But its immediate political future was dark, for before the test of the Palestine War it was utterly to collapse.

The Second World War had one further result, which gave warning of the coming change in the balance of power. After the entry of the Soviet Union and the United States into the war, Persia became a corridor for the delivery of American war material to Russia. For the first time since the period preceding 1914, Russia acquired an established position in Persia, which she used in order to demand a Russian-dominated zone in Azerbaijan, and to seek oil concessions. Persia was strong enough to react against the threat, and in 1946–7 she secured enough western diplomatic help to force Russia to withdraw her troops and return Azerbaijan. At the same period, Russia attempted by bullying Turkey to obtain control of the Straits. Anglo-American resistance in 1946–7 frustrated the attempt. But the policy displayed in the Russo-German negotiations of 1940, that 'the territorial aspirations of the Soviet Union centre south of its

national territory in the direction of the Indian Ocean' had received a trial run.

Soviet policy in the Arab Near East had no such convenient lever as was afforded in Persia. After a short spasm of activity in the early revolutionary period, communist intervention in the Arab world had settled into a long period of stagnation. A few zealots like Khalid Bakdash who were to be the future leaders of communist Arabism were being trained, but the labour movements which were the essential raw material for communist leadership were almost entirely lacking. The Arab communist parties were tiny, and split into conflicting factions. The materials for a 'Popular Front' policy were also lacking. There had been certain left-wing elements in the Iraqi *coup* of 1936, but Arab socialism was hardly more powerful than Arab communism.

But if it brought Russia no immediate political advantage, the Second World War decisively changed the psychological conditions of the Arab attitude towards the Left. In the inter-war period extreme nationalism had tended to look to fascism for support, if not for a model, on the principle that the enemies of the colonial powers must be the Arabs' friends. Pseudo-fascist parties like the Misr al-Fatat (or Green Shirts) in Egypt, and the *Parti Populaire Syrien* were typical of this period. The defeat of Germany and the rapidly apparent hostility between the Anglo-Saxon powers and Russia produced a parallel but opposite reaction. At the end of the war left-wing socialism became fashionable in nationalist circles in an entirely new manner. Wealthy nationalist business men, who before the war had avoided the left wing like the devil, began to put in an appearance at socialist rallies. The nationalist Left had not come into existence, but the conditions for its existence had been fulfilled.

Chapter Three

ARAB NATIONALISM – THE BREAK-THROUGH

I. THE DECLINE OF THE PRINCES

1. *The Palestine war*

From the end of the First World War until 1945 Great Britain had dominated the Near East virtually unopposed. The eleven years which followed saw the decline and fall of British power in the area; and the cessation of that influence which in a thousand ways, visible and invisible, had penetrated into the very substance of eastern government and politics. The first sign of revolution, the Palestine war of 1948, was for a time held to be the cause of the British decline; but in truth it was only the first major symptom.

The first sign of British difficulties in the eastern Mediterranean was her turning to America in 1947 to assume the political and economic burden of propping up Greece, Turkey and the Balkans; Britain was in no position to assume the heavy burden of subsidies and military aid.

In 1947 Great Britain left India, but in the following few years the political consequences of this action were unclear. The importance of Egypt as a base was held to be unchanged, and negotiations had already been opened with the Egyptian Government to modify the 1936 treaty in a way which would leave the British Army a foothold in Egypt. The negotiations broke down over the status of the Sudan, and further talking was overtaken by the war in Palestine.

In Palestine the Arab revolt of the pre-war years had been replaced, in the post-war years, by a Jewish revolt. Quite apart from the permanent crisis caused by the refusal of the British

mandatory government to admit more than a stated quota of refugees, it was evident that the hour of decision for the formation of a Jewish state was rapidly approaching. Jewish terrorist gangs began to work to break down the whole fabric of mandatory government, and came extremely near to doing so.

Great Britain was in no mood for a fight to a finish in Palestine, and in 1947 she prepared to surrender the mandate, and, in effect, to leave the Arabs and Jews to fight it out. The United Nations, to which Great Britain referred the problem, in November 1947 resolved on the partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state. During these transactions the Soviet Union and the United States were in agreement for partition. Whether the Soviet Union foresaw the full consequences of her policy is not known. More probably she merely anticipated the multiple embarrassments which a Zionist state was bound to create for Great Britain, and shelved her own theoretical hostility to Zionism in order to promote it.

By the time the United Nations' resolution was passed, the Jews in Palestine were fully armed, and the Arab states were as prepared for war as their chaotic military organization allowed them to be. To put the United Nations' resolution into effect would have required the services of a large alien army – an army which no one had the slightest intention of providing. On the contrary, British forces were already withdrawing from Palestine, in the midst of growing chaos, and by 14 May, 1948, when the British mandate ended, a war between the states of the Arab League and the Zionist state which came into being on that day, was already in progress.

It is often said that Arab unity rests on opposition to Zionism. There is little enough to be said for this statement even in terms of theory, but in practice all that the Jewish challenge in Palestine did was to reveal Arab disunity. Of the Arab League powers, the two which were vitally interested in Palestine were Egypt and Trans-Jordan. Egypt had a common frontier with Palestine, and the largest army of the Arab powers, and she hoped that the issue

of the war would make definite the seizure of the initiative in the Arab world which she had attempted in 1946. Trans-Jordan, led by the same Abdullah whom the British had placed in power in 1921, saw at last an opportunity to create a viable Arab Palestinian state out of the Bedouin nucleus of Trans-Jordan. Although Trans-Jordan's army was tiny, it was efficient, and her frontier was contiguous with the heart of Palestine. The remaining two Arab powers with military or economic strength, Iraq and Sa'udi Arabia, had no common frontier with Palestine and no hope of territorial gain from the war. There was real anti-Zionist feeling in Iraq, but the Iraqi monarchy had no intention of pulling cousin Abdullah's chestnuts from the fire for him. Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ud had little interest in the Palestine war, and made no more than nominal gestures of assistance.

There was, in consequence, hardly an attempt at a combined Arab strategy in Palestine, and the issue of the war depended on the success or failure of the Egyptian and Trans-Jordan armies, each operating largely in ignorance of the other's intentions. This was the more serious in that, although it might seem that in fighting six sovereign states with a total population of forty millions Israel was a David against Goliath, from a purely military point of view there was little or no disparity. Israel came into being fully mobilized and organized for war: in spite of their much greater total population the combined armies of the Arab states (certainly the armies they could field in Palestine) were smaller than the Israeli armies.

The decadence of the Egyptian state ensured the ignominious defeat of the Egyptian army. The supplies of Czechoslovak arms which reached the Israelis during the first armistice of 1948 enabled the Israelis to thrust the Egyptians back into Sinai when fighting was resumed. In spite of wild over-spending and wilder talking, Egypt had miserably failed. The Trans-Jordan army, which was helped by an Iraqi contingent for a period, had better success. Although driven out of Lydda, Ramle and Latrun – and hence pushed considerably back in the area which the United

Nations' partition would have allotted to the Arabs – Trans-Jordan forces managed to hang on to a fairly considerable area of territory beyond Jordan, including the old city of Jerusalem. The Emirate of Trans-Jordan became (in 1950) the Kingdom of Jordan.

The Arab states (excluding Iraq, which not possessing a common frontier with Israel preserved the fiction of a state of war) signed armistices with Israel at Rhodes in February 1949. Refusing stubbornly to recognize Israel, they would not talk of peace. To lessen the tension, Britain, France and the United States in 1950 issued a tripartite declaration, promising to control all future supplies of arms to Israel and the Arab states, so as to prevent an arms race. They also promised to take action against any future attempt to violate the 'frontiers or armistice lines' of Israel. Thus the three western powers guaranteed the existence of Israel within the boundaries it had achieved in the 1948 war.

A further international responsibility was created by the flight from Israel of some nine hundred and sixty thousand peasant refugees. Most of them took refuge in Jordan, where they lived, initially, under circumstances of appalling hardship. Two hundred thousand were in the Egyptian-controlled Gaza strip, which became an extraordinary, isolated little sink of human misery. The Arab governments seemed sometimes to take something close to pleasure in denying responsibility for the care of the refugees, and the United Nations (dimly admitting a degree of failure in their inability to enforce the 1947 resolution) undertook to feed and house them on a temporary basis. Israel showed no more awareness of responsibility than the Arab states for their situation. With no land to till and no work to do, they are now well on the way to becoming a permanent displaced minority.

The consequences of the Palestine war were no less profound for the western powers than they were for the Arab states themselves. In both cases, the most important result was probably on an emotional and not a diplomatic level. All the resentments and frustrations of over twenty-five years suddenly found a catalyst

in the Palestine defeat. Perhaps the dim realization that the way things had gone was due to a decline in western power no less than to Arab impotence; and also to the very size of the disaster played a part in shaping the peculiar vehemence of Arab feeling on Palestine. Arab resentment and fury went far beyond the millions of Arabs who were directly affected by the defeat. At its worst, it was mob hysteria. At its best, it was expressed by the Palestinian liberal, Musa Alami, whose book *The Lesson of Palestine* drew the conclusion that the Arab states must cease to depend on western help to organize and defend their states, and must organize and defend them for themselves. Obvious and banal though this may sound, its application meant a revolution – or a series of revolutions.

So far as Great Britain ever had a policy of becoming *the* pro-Arab power, the Palestine war ended it. Tied by the 1950 declaration to guaranteeing the frontiers of a state the Arabs would never recognize, she had gone a long way towards losing her special position of predominance in the Near East. Agreements with particular Arab governments were still possible, but always bedevilled by the spectre of Israel. In particular, the problem of revising the 1930 Iraqi Treaty and the 1936 Egyptian Treaty in a way suitable to the exigencies of the cold war remained unsolved. The Treaty of Portsmouth of 1948, which was to replace the 1930 Iraqi Treaty, provoked a near revolution in Iraq which brought down the government and prevented the Treaty's ratification.

The strategic interest of Great Britain in the Near East had also been profoundly modified. No longer even a primarily Imperial affair, it was now part of the defence of the western world against Russia. This enlarged the strategic importance of Egypt, which besides being a staging post to the east was now considered as the key to the defence of the Near Eastern area from attacks aimed at the Straits, the Canal, and the Persian Gulf. Already, to a considerable extent, the material and the strategic thinking behind British strategy were American. But America's policy was to stand behind rather than over Britain in

the Near East, and to accept the confusion of British with western interests which was bound to result. There was little understanding in America of the extent to which American participation in the Tripartite Declaration of 1950 perforce involved the United States in Near East politics. Israel was thought of as a problem apart – Israel, indeed, seemed to most Americans to be a western state embedded in a group of oriental states. The only Arab country with which the United States were in any degree involved was Sa'udi Arabia, where the oil fields were now a major factor in American oil interests, and where the United States Government had secured a lease on the military air base of Dhahran.

2. *The fruits of defeat*

The Palestine war shook profoundly all the established governments of the Arab League. Having pledged themselves to Arab nationalism by the formation of the League, and pledged themselves further to defend Arabdom against the Jews, when the day of reckoning came the governments were unable to honour any of their promises, and they stood exposed for the Arab world to see, as the selfish and corrupt organizations they were. Only Jordan claimed some shreds of honour, but Abdullah's expansion of the kingdom in fact brought nothing but disaster to his successors, for the attempt to graft the sophisticated and westernized population of west-bank Jordan on to the nomadic Bedouin nucleus of the east-bank (with the added burden of 700,000 landless beggars) could only end in failure.

In Egypt it was impossible to hide the glaring corruption which had brought about defeat, or its intimate connexion with the court. The Muhammad Ali dynasty had never been particularly loved in Egypt, and the lease of new life which the 1923 constitution had given it had now expired. Mismanagement brought about a serious economic crisis in 1951, which the corrupt speculations of the royal entourage on the cotton market did nothing to solve. Since 1949 the Muslim Brotherhood had been

evidently aiming to overturn the state, and their chances of doing so seemed good.

In Iraq government was firmer and more efficient (or relatively so), but the gulf between the governing group and the educated population was becoming more and more apparent. The rejection of the Portsmouth Treaty in 1948 was accompanied by something not far off a national rising, and when Nuri Said began to re-impose himself on Iraqi politics from the end of 1949 onwards, he underpinned his system by using the security police, which had previously operated against communists, against the middle-class nationalist radicals. Even the Iraqi electoral system, with its rural peasant constituencies, would hardly serve his purpose any more, and he turned towards suspension of the constitution and the dissolution of political parties.

In Sa'udi Arabia the paradox of a puritan and theocratic despotism founded on oil was leading to bizarre corruption. It was as though Calvin's Geneva had suddenly made a fortune from its casino. The huge revenues which accrued to the state from oil were accounted for in a medieval fashion – which is to say that they were not accounted for at all. There was (and is) no budget. There was as yet no national *bourgeoisie* to call the royal family and the tribal leaders to book, but the exigencies of government and of the oil industry were rapidly creating one, and by a further paradox, the oil industry was also creating an industrial proletariat direct from a tribal society. The stern Wahhabi doctrine which had created the Sa'udi state was rapidly forgotten, and what forces of renewal there were pointed in a quite different direction.

In Syria there was no princely dynasty, but the nationalist *bourgeoisie* which had been in control since the expulsion of the French felt the shock of popular reaction. In 1949 there was a series of military *coups d'état*, the first by Husni Za'im, who was murdered, as was his successor Hinawi. In December Adib Shishakli established a relatively successful military dictatorship, which endured into 1954.

The Syrian *coups d'état* were partly the result of the interplay of the various Syrian minorities and factions, Druze and Kurd, Aleppo and Damascene. The third *coup* represented a protest against the current of Syrian opinion which wanted to merge Syria in a Hashemite Fertile Crescent scheme.* But there was also at work in Syria a kind of radical pan-Arab nationalism, with a socialist flavour, which was new in Arab politics. Traces of it were to be found in all the main Syrian political groups; Za'im and Shishakli were vaguely aware of a need for social reform, and Shishakli's young relative, Akram Hourani, was from the late forties preaching a sort of socialist nationalism. The Damascene *haute bourgeoisie* was not going to allow any vehicle to pass it on the road to power, and several of the leading families, including the faction led by Khalid al-Azm, began to flaunt a strange pseudo-Muscovite nationalism, and to patronize the Partisans of Peace. In 1953 these tendencies were given a powerful organ of expression by the foundation of the Ba'th or Arab Renaissance Party, which grew from a merger of the parties of Akram Hourani and Michel Aflaq. Woolly though the programme of the Ba'th party was, its combination of extreme pan-Arabism with a vague 'anti-feudal' socialism was profoundly effective, and it rapidly acquired support not only in Syria but in Jordan and throughout the Arabian peninsula. The secret of its success was that without parading the abstract paraphernalia of Marxism it appealed to the profound social disquiet which lies behind Arab nationalism. The future of the Ba'th party was to be influential and explosive.

3. *The Egyptian Revolution*

The Wafd party came into power (if power it can be called) in 1950, to lead an Egyptian state which was showing alarming signs of decomposition. Nahas Pasha began to negotiate with Britain on the future of the British forces in the Canal Zone, but his internal position was so weak that he could make no concessions which would not at home be interpreted as weakness, and

* See Ch. 2, sect. II.

the negotiations trickled into the sand. In October, 1951, almost at the same moment as the western governments proposed to Egypt the setting up of a joint Middle-Eastern Command (Middle-East Defence Organization), Nahas Pasha put through the Egyptian Parliament proposals for the unilateral denouncing of the 1936 treaty by Egypt.

The Egyptian and western governments were hopelessly at cross-purposes. Just at the moment when the west prefaced its invitation to participate in western defence by the flat statement that 'Egypt belongs to the free world and in consequence her defence and that of the Middle East is equally vital to other democratic nations', currents of neutralism were beginning to circulate in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry. The British government declined to accept Egyptian abrogation of the 1936 treaty, but offered to continue to negotiate.

From the moment of abrogation, the Egyptian government began to cease to be in control of the situation. It sanctioned guerilla tactics against the British forces on the Canal – tactics which could only be carried out by the Muslim Brotherhood and extremist organizations which two years before the government had tried to suppress. The affair of the Egyptian 'commandos' with whom the Egyptian police co-operated culminated in the siege of the police headquarters of Ismailia by the British, and the deaths of forty or fifty of the defending force. The immediate result, on 26 January, 1952, was the burning of a large part of the modern quarters of Cairo, probably carried out in its initial stages with the connivance of the government.

It was now evident that power was no longer in the hands of government in Egypt, and the time for a revolution ripe. Had this occurred three years before, power might have gone to the Muslim Brotherhood. But its leader, Hassan al-Banna, had been murdered in 1949, and the 'Free Officers' of the Egyptian Army had in the interim prepared a *coup*. In the early summer of 1952 the king discovered that a plot was in the offing, and prepared to strike against them. They rapidly persuaded General Muham-

mad Neguib to assume the titular leadership of the group, and on 23 July, 1952, they anticipated the government's move by carrying out their own *coup d'état*. No one moved to defend the old order, which fell without a blow. Farouk abdicated in favour of his infant son, but the nominal continuance of the monarchy lasted less than a year. On 18 June, 1953, the monarchy was terminated, and Egypt proclaimed a republic.

II. WESTERN INFLUENCE: THE LAST PHASE

1. *Oil and development*

The intensive exploration and working of Near East oil was largely the result of the Second World War. Production rose steeply, until by the early 1950s Near Eastern oil production was about a third of United States' production and a sixth of world production. More than three-quarters of Europe's oil requirements were by this time met from the Near East. The proved reserves of Near Eastern countries amounted to well over half the world's proved reserves. The most startling of the oil discoveries were made in the tiny and primitive sheikdom of Kuwait. But politically the most important were in Sa'udi Arabia and Iraq.

The fields in Sa'udi Arabia were exclusively the concession of American companies. They went seriously into production in the early forties, but were not opened up to full production until the revision of the 1928 Red Line agreement in 1948 allowed other major American companies to enter into Aramco. The completion of the Tapline project in 1950 allowed oil to be pumped from the Arabian desert to the Lebanese coast. Payment of royalties to the Sa'udi Government was settled by a key arrangement of 1950 on a so-called 'fifty-fifty' basis, of equal sharing of profits by government and company. The resulting income amounted to about three-quarters of the revenue of the Sa'udi Government.

Aramco was prolific of welfare projects, but the Sa'udi Government was entirely unfitted to administer a modern state.

The largest single heading of expenditure was the royal family and the capital. The second largest was the army. There was no sign of any capability of a proper management of public money, no budget, and no attempt to use the oil revenues for the benefit of any but the governing group. Agricultural development, for which the government possessed money in abundance, was hardly attempted.

Oil production in Iraq was exploited in a far more rational way, and the setting up of the Iraq Development Board is one of the major achievements of Hashemite rule in Iraq. In 1952 seventy per cent of the revenues accruing to the Iraqi state from oil were allocated to a Development Board, whose function was to develop the resources of Iraq, and raise the standard of living of the people. The revenue of the Board was in excess of fifty million sterling a year. Its main aims were to improve agriculture and communication, and the two great flood control and irrigation schemes which it carried out on the Tigris and Euphrates are among the major works of this kind in the Near East. It was estimated that the standard of living of the Iraqi people would be doubled within twenty years. Observers in London, who felt the possession of a television set to be a guarantee of western democratic sympathies, looked forward eagerly to the day when the Iraqis would be economically cushioned against revolution. The Board also promised some kind of an answer to the central problem of all Near-Eastern oil countries. The tendency is for oil countries to invest their oil royalties in the stock market of London and New York, thus re-investing the money in the industrial economies of the west, instead of using it to increase the productivity of the oil-producing country. As minerals are a non-replaceable asset, the oil countries run the risk of exhausting their mineral assets, without increasing their productivity. To live on royalties is to live on capital.

The great weakness of the Iraqi Development Board was its technician's view of a political and social problem. While political life in Iraq was at a standstill it was impossible to affront

the social problem which it was the Board's real function to solve. What the Board threatened to do was to irrigate huge areas for the benefit of an archaic class of tribal landlords. Without a radical land reform, even the positive achievement of water control was useless. Some attempt to meet criticisms of this kind was made in the later stages of the old development plan, by allocating more money to education and hospital services. But land reform was still not mentioned, nor did the plan do enough to expand Iraqi industry. The way was blocked by Nuri Said's Ottoman indifference to the social question. In so far as the Development Board was successful, it tended to increase the numbers of the skilled artisan and middle class, who found themselves citizens of a state which denied them any real political rights.

The idea of 'development' was pursued in other Near-Eastern countries, by Great Britain, by the American Point Four and technical aid administrations, and by the International Bank. Particularly notable was British work in the Sudanese Gezira. Most Arab countries of the Near East were receiving technical aid in various forms by the mid-fifties, and a large number of worth-while things were done, particularly in water control and the improvement of agriculture. But some of the more ambitious development loans broke down, partly because of the supervision which the International Bank wanted to maintain over the countries to which it loaned money, and the relatively high rates of interest which it wanted to charge. Syria, in particular, refused all International Bank assistance. It was in any case hardly unnoticed by the Arab states that the maximum of United States aid (quite apart from the aid of the American Zionists) went to Israel, which received almost as much economic aid as Pakistan, and four times as much as any Arab state.

Egypt under the Free Officers' régime launched into a vast programme of 'Plans' and public works. The most important of these was the Aswan High Dam, a huge project whose total cost was estimated in 1955 at £E241 million. This project, of course,

lay at the origins of the 1956 crisis. The severe economic crisis which hit Egypt after 1956 crippled the execution of the Ten-Year Plan which was to complement the High Dam, and to effect the partial industrialization of Egypt.

The technical and materially progressive character of 'development' made a strong appeal to the United States, which tried to mix the political with the technical, by the Johnston missions to regulate the control of the Jordan waters. In order to help an agreement between Israel and Jordan over the disposal of the waters of the Jordan for irrigation, President Eisenhower sent his adviser Eric Johnston to the Near East on a series of missions, in 1954–5. The border incidents on the Jordan and Egyptian frontiers were increasing daily at this time, and it is scarcely surprising that Johnston collected nothing but abuse for his pains.

The question of oil revenues and development also leads to another, which is critical for the relations of the Arab states to one another. The distribution of oil fields takes no account of politics, and its exploitation has led to anomalies, the most obvious of which is that of Kuwait, which with a population of 200,000 produces more oil than any other state in the Near East. From an ideal point of view it is evident that some of these anomalies could be overcome by an Arab Development Bank, through which countries such as Iraq and Sa'udi Arabia, which have far more oil revenue than they can possibly invest in their own development projects, should lend it to the non-oil producing countries. Though it has been discussed both inside the Arab League and out, this project has not yet been fulfilled.

2. *The new régime in Egypt*

The new rulers of Egypt were soldiers, associated with no civilian political group, bringing their own ideology and imposing it willy-nilly upon the country. Most of Nasser's non-technical advisers were, and remained, the officers who surrounded him before the *coup*. The Army tended to become a new ruling

caste, rather than a class, though this tendency was modified by the rule that soldiers who were ministers must resign from the Army.

The first two years were devoted to making the régime absolute. The first victim was the Wafd party, which not unnaturally thought that the revolution was sent by God to eliminate the king and give power at last to the 'national' party. The disillusionment of Ali Maher and the Wafd leaders did not take long. Installed for a short time as Prime Minister, Ali Maher opposed the Free Officers over the agrarian reform. The result, in the autumn of 1952, was not only his resignation but the dissolution of the Wafd itself, the closing down of the Wafd press and the trial of some of the Wafd leaders. The second stage, and the most important, was the struggle with Neguib. So far as the Free Officers were concerned, Neguib was a last-minute piece of necessary window-dressing: he had played no previous part in the movement, and they did not intend to keep him. But as President and Prime Minister of the new republic he had a dangerous popularity and a great deal of power, and was inevitably the focus for the forces of opposition. For a few delicate days early in 1954 it looked as though Neguib might overthrow his patrons. But Nasser outmanœuvred him in the end, and by mid-1954 Neguib's power was broken. The third and final stage was the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood, which to a great extent had been the force behind Neguib. The excuse of an attempt to murder Nasser in October, 1954, was enough for the liquidation of the Muslim Brotherhood leadership. Two were executed, and the 'Supreme Guide' consigned to prison. Nasser was left as President and Prime Minister, the possessor of absolute power.

The political ideas of the Free Officers were vague, but radical. In so far as most of them came from a modest social class, and in so far as the Army had accustomed them to the idea of the free promotion of the talented, they stood for a sort of middle-class Bonapartism. But their very nationalism made them into radicals, in that the 'feudal' landed class whom they were pledged

to overturn was only partly Egyptian, but more often Turkish or cosmopolitan or Copt. The 'typical' Egyptian was the formerly despised '*fellah*', and to 'Egyptianize' society was, from one point of view, to re-organize it for his benefit. The extent to which they intended to redistribute wealth was shown almost immediately, by the agrarian reform of 1952, which was forced on them by nothing but their own convictions. Yet they were not socialists by any western standards, and far from believing in the conflict of classes, they took their main stand on a doctrine of national unity.

The 1952 agrarian law expropriated properties of more than two hundred acres – it has to be remembered that in the Nile valley a property of two hundred acres is worth about four thousand pounds net per annum. The reform affected about a tenth of the land in Egypt. Its effect was not to create a new class of small peasants, but a network of government co-operatives, with peasants farming the land on a strip system, using co-operative equipment and marketing. In effect it is state socialism, a tendency which went furthest in 'Liberation province' which farmed reclaimed land by a system of state communities resembling the Israeli *kibbutz*. But this radical socialist trend affects only a small part of the land of Egypt. Other sections of the agrarian law attempt to provide for the reduction of rent and the raising of agricultural wages. These have turned out to be the most difficult part of the reform to implement, and the second has proved virtually impossible, in a country with a huge and permanent agricultural unemployment. But the will to give the *fellahin* a legal status for their land holding and to benefit their condition by state social action, is in itself of enormous importance. No Egyptian government had concerned itself with the fate of the *fellahin* – that is to say, with the fate of most of Egypt's citizens – since the British gave up the direct control of the agricultural services. And that there has been a real improvement in the condition of at least a section of the *fellahin* under the new régime, is undeniable.

It was easier for the Free Officers to have a social policy, because in spite of the reactionary nature of the old régime the men capable of conceiving and directing a social policy were more numerous in Egypt than anywhere else in the Arab world. In education and medicine the new government could put its hand on men able to execute reforms, and it used them.

But when other aspects of the new régime are considered, it is easy to see why it has disclaimed the outright title of 'socialist'.* In labour relations, the trade unions are not allowed to interfere with party absolutism, and the right to strike does not exist. Trade union organization is controlled by the Liberation Rally itself, the party of the Free Officers. In industry, moreover, the push towards the industrialization of Egypt has been made through exclusively capitalist means. What interests the régime is that industry should exist, and that it should be Egyptian.

The Constitution of 1956 does not provide any real clarification of the political ideas of the régime, save to endorse its authoritarianism. The National Assembly which it set up had to work through a party organization, the National Union, which screened all the candidates for election. The President – Nasser – has complete authority, and the only control of his relations with the Assembly is a provision for a referendum.

3. *The Bagdad Pact and the drift to neutralism*

The assumption of power by a strong government allowed Egypt a freedom of movement which she had not possessed since the end of the Second World War, and enabled her, at last, to negotiate final settlements with Great Britain on the two great issues of the Sudan and the Canal. All previous negotiations had broken down, because Egyptian ministers were too weak at home to be able to make concessions, and – in the case of the Sudan – because of Farouk's ambition to rule as far south as the Fifth Parallel. Both these obstacles were now removed. Neguib was therefore able to respond to the British approval of the Sudanese self-

* See Ch. 5, sect. III.

government statute of 1952 by 'calling Britain's bluff' and offering to co-operate in offering self-determination to the Sudan. In 1953 Great Britain and Egypt, as *co-domini*, appointed an electoral commission to determine the wishes of the Sudanese, and promised to withdraw their troops (which in fact were entirely British troops) as soon as the Sudanese Parliament opted for self-determination. Neguib had previously made agreements with both the main Sudanese political parties, and the Free Officers probably anticipated that the Sudan would unite with Egypt of its own free will. If so, they were disappointed, for the Sudan opted for independence, and bade farewell to both its masters.

The critical question which regulated the Canal Base, was the extent to which its re-occupation by British forces in an emergency could be linked to a general western defence system in the Near East. The idea of a 'northern tier' defence pact was in the air, and Britain, if she was going to evacuate the Canal, wanted to be able to return in the event of an attack on any member of the 'northern tier' – certainly on Turkey or Persia. After some tough negotiating, in October, 1954, Great Britain agreed to withdraw her troops from the Canal, on condition that she could re-occupy the base if there were an attack on any of the states which had signed the Arab League Defence Treaty, or on Turkey. The 1936 treaty was at last abrogated, and replaced by something which more or less met British requirements, while satisfying Egyptian *amour-propre*.

1954 was an important year in the history of the western defensive system. The end of the Korean War saw the United States in a hurry to complete a system of world alliances. The European Defence Treaty broke down but was quickly replaced by the Nine-Power Treaty of London. The South-East Asia Treaty Organization was formed in September. With Persia now back in the western fold and Moussadeq in jail, with Pakistan beginning to accept American military aid, the possibility of the 'northern tier' alliance which the American Secretary of State, Dulles, had hopefully mentioned in his Near East tour of 1953, seemed, at last,

to be a real one. The shadow of this policy had already fallen across the Egyptian Treaty negotiations, in the attempt to include Persia and Turkey into the arrangements covering the Canal. Egypt was evidently no candidate for a defensive alliance, as had been painfully discovered in 1951–2. But the United States did not despair of good Egyptian behaviour, and a considerable dollar subsidy went to Egypt in 1954.

The inevitable next move was the extension of the system of western defensive alliances to at least some of the Arab countries, and here lay the fatality which was to make good relations between Egypt and the western powers practically impossible. Quite apart from his own Pan-Arabism, and from any of his rhetoric about an Arab Empire from Gibraltar to the Caspian, Nasser had inherited from the previous régime a situation in which Egypt had successfully outbid Iraq for the leadership of the Arab League. Had Nasser been no dictator, had he never written a word of the *Philosophy of Revolution* and been no more Pan-Arab than Nahas Pasha, the situation, though less acute, would have been in essence the same. No Egyptian statesman could with equanimity see Iraq enter an alliance which would threaten to break up the Arab League over which Egypt presided.

The signs of approaching change began in the spring of 1954, with the Turco-Pakistan agreement, and the United States agreement to provide arms to Iraq. In the summer it was evident that Iraq was considering entry into a western-inspired pact, and the Egyptians argued hard to dissuade Nuri Said from going on. Whether or not Nuri Said misled Nasser about his intentions when he visited Cairo in September, 1954, is not known: the accounts directly clash. But this was the turning point, and the moment when it was decided whether Egypt could have the good relations with Iraq which were a pre-requisite for her good relations with the west. Agreement was prevented, partly by the genuine wish of Iraq for protection against Russia and the genuine dislike of Egypt for non-Arab military alignments; partly by the purely selfish aspirations of the two countries. Egypt wanted to

continue to lead the Arab League; Iraq (and particularly the Regent, Abdal-ilah) still dreamed of *Anschluss* with Syria.

There was a further factor in the situation – Israel. In 1954 'border incidents' multiplied. Nasser was genuinely alarmed by the military inferiority of Egypt, and anxious to get arms. To acquire them, he turned to America. But the United States were impelled by two motives which made it impossible for them to satisfy Nasser: their concern for Israel, and their anxiety to rope Egypt into western defence. A few weeks after the signature of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in October, the arms talks between Egypt and the United States broke down over the insistence of the Americans that a large American military mission be set up in Cairo to supervise the use of the arms.

It was therefore predestined that the signature of the Bagdad Pact between Turkey and Iraq in February, 1955, should split the Arab world. Having made a last-minute attempt to stop Iraq by diplomacy within the Arab League, Nasser attacked her with unprecedented bitterness and hostility. By October, 1955, Great Britain, Pakistan and Persia had acceded to the Pact, and the political maps showed an impressive dark-shaded group of 'Bagdad Pact countries' across Russia's southern border.

The United States put all the preliminaries for the Bagdad Pact into motion, but Great Britain alone among the western powers acceded to it, and became the dominant power within it. It approximated closely to the old British idea of a zone of influence from Constantinople to the Persian Gulf and India. It also solved the awkward problem of finding something to replace the 1930 Iraq Treaty, after the failure of the 1948 Treaty of Portsmouth. But the United States had second thoughts, and soon began to wonder whether the 'northern tier' was a sufficient defence area when the nations south of the tier were so difficult to live with – whether half a regional defence system was better than none at all.

Abdul Nasser decided to fight the Bagdad Pact with all he had. As on the later occasion of the refusal of the Aswan Dam

credits, no one in the western chanceries anticipated the violence and bitterness of his reaction. He also discovered, almost immediately, a field where big diplomatic gains can be made by small countries at no apparent cost – the field of neutralism. At the Bandung Conference of Asian powers in April, 1955, he emerged in the quite new role of the Asian leader of world status. Nehru was little less annoyed by the Bagdad Pact than was Nasser, though for different reasons, and he was not undisposed to sponsor Nasser as a neutralist leader. With Nehru, Nasser met Chou en-Lai. Contact with the communist east had begun.

Chapter Four

ARAB NATIONALISM UNDER THE SHADOW OF RUSSIA

I. THE SUEZ CRISIS AND ITS AFTERMATH

1. *Russia and the Arab world*

In her dealings with the Arab world, Soviet Russia possesses two instruments, international policy and the communist parties of the Arab countries. Of these, until the summer of 1958, only international policy was of real importance.

One of the inspired guesses of Lenin divined the revolutionary force of the Asiatic masses, and in the first few heroic years of the Revolution there was some real expectation of revolutionary action among the countries of the former Ottoman Empire. When this faded out, and when Kemalist Turkey, of which much was hoped, disappointed Soviet expectations, Soviet interest in the Near East became little more than academic. The intricate and often absurd controversies of the Soviet experts, in which the real shape of the Near East emerges weirdly distorted in the Leninist mirror, have been described by Walter Laqueur in a fascinating book.* But one of the theoretical issues was a real one, with vital effects for Soviet policy. What was the attitude of the party to be towards 'bourgeois nationalism' in the Arab countries? Was the next step in the east to be the expulsion of the colonial interests by the bourgeois nationalists, and if so was the party to support them? On the whole, in spite of some hesitation, the official policy was to deny the obvious, and to assert that nationalist parties like the Egyptian Wafd were only pretending that they wanted to get rid of the imperialists. This

* See p. 137.

line was of course taken in a wider context than the Near East, and the 'betrayal' of Chinese communism by Chiang-Kai-Shek played an important part in its formation.

Besides the question of nationalism simply understood, there were the questions of Pan-Islam, Pan-Arabism, and Zionism – and to these the Soviet Union, with its millions of Turkish peoples, had to add Pan-Turkism. With thirty millions of Islamic peoples within its boundaries Russia could not too easily either bless or curse Pan-Islam, and on balance it was cautiously hostile. Pan-Arabism got a slightly better press, but was never a major pre-occupation of Russian experts before 1955. That the Arab communist parties failed to satisfy the really zealous Arab nationalists, is evident from the defection of men like Michel Aflaq from the party. Zionism was from the beginning disapproved and fought, and this attitude was never substantially modified, even at the time of Russian patronage of Israel in 1947–8. Pan-Turkism was always considered a dangerous heresy.

After the Second World War the Soviet Union was extremely slow either to see the possibilities which awaited it in the Near East, or to change the line of non-co-operation with bourgeois nationalism. This holding-off has been represented as a consciously executed tactical move, but evidence for this is hard to find. It is more likely that it was dictated partly by failure to sum up the Near East situation, and partly by the fact that the Soviet Union, with its material resources disastrously expended by the war, was engaged in a world struggle on many other fronts. Certainly Stalin was not shy to use the more obvious and traditional Russian diplomatic methods against Persia and Turkey.

The strength of the Arab communist parties, though not contemptible, was not impressive. In Egypt, which as industrially the most advanced of the Arab countries might be expected to have the most powerful communist party, in the early fifties the party was split into a number of warring groups, and had been for some years. It had played an important part in the anti-Wafd movement of the mid-forties, but in the degree of influence it

was able to exercise on labour movements, it was less powerful than the Muslim Brotherhood. The Wafd had cautiously patronized the party, and then turned against it, and during the Palestine war most of the communists were jailed. Under the Free Officers' régime it had co-operated with the Muslim Brotherhood in plotting against the government, and when Abdul Nasser turned against the Brotherhood in 1954, he turned against the communists as well. As the sweet winds of neutralism began to blow through Egypt early in 1955, there was a slackening of the imprisonments and trials.

Syria possessed the most united of the Arab communist parties, and the most able leader, the Kurd Khalid Bakdash. When the Shishakli Government fell in 1954 and constitutional government was restored, Khalid Bakdash became the first communist deputy to be elected to an Arab parliament. The fellow-traveller 'Partisans of Peace' movement in the early fifties had created an atmosphere favourable to the patronage of communism by some of the most important sections of the Damascene ruling *bourgeosie*. Finally, the party was not without influence in the army.

Jordan was a peculiarly favourable ground for communist action after 1950, because of the split between the westernized and discontented west-bank elements and the monarchy, and because of the huge refugee population and the wretched economic conditions. By 1954 a communist-led National Front party had appeared (although the government forbade it), and the communists were a strong force in Jordanian politics.

In Iraq, the communist movement had been savagely hit by the security police ever since the trials and executions of communist leaders in 1947–9. Communists in Iraq were not especially numerous, but they were particularly powerful among the students and the intelligentsia. They played an active part in the riots of 1948 and 1952, and were not without influence in the trade unions. In spite of opposition within the party they showed willingness to co-operate with the right-wing nationalist opposi-

tion, just as the Egyptian communists were willing to work with the Muslim Brotherhood. The party leadership was hard hit by the executions of 1949, and leaders of real ability were slow in coming forward. The Iraqi communist movement was on the whole given greater prestige and influence than it deserved, as a reaction against the repressive character of the régime. Iraqi socialists found themselves penned into the same detention camps as the communists, and although this doubtless did not give rise to touching friendships, it created what amounted to a Popular Front built by the Iraqi Government against itself.

2. *The Suez war*

At the same moment, in February, 1955, that the Bagdad Pact was being formed, Israel made a particularly savage and effective raid across the armistice lines into Gaza. Abdul Nasser did not possess the armed strength to retaliate in force, and from that time the issue of modern arms became obsessive in Egyptian foreign policy. The 'commando' raids which Egypt launched across the Israeli border in retaliation were little more than a propaganda device to disguise Egyptian weakness.

It was at this point that the Soviet Union, which was genuinely alarmed and angry at the Bagdad Pact, saw at last the opportunities which Egypt offered. Daniel Solod, the Russian Ambassador in Cairo, was one of the best Russian orientalists, and no doubt he instructed his government accurately. In the spring and summer of 1955 a new line was launched, which marked a decisive turn in Soviet Near East policy. Bourgeois nationalism was to be supported openly; to be treated as an ally. Two offers could be made to Abdul Nasser which at that moment of frustration and anger with the west he would find profoundly attractive – trade and arms. Negotiations went on through the summer, and in September Abdul Nasser jubilantly announced the purchase – or rather the barter – of a large quantity of modern arms of all kinds from Czechoslovakia.

The Soviet arms deal was just as immediately disruptive of the

fabric of Near East politics as the Bagdad Pact – and in its long term effects far more so, for it brought Russia back into the Near East after an absence of forty years. Immediately, its effect was to nullify the arms clause of the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, which was the main international guarantee of the existence of Israel. France about this time began to supply Israel with arms, and Israel began to contemplate the 'preventive war' which she waged as the Sinai invasion of October, 1956. The arms deal also had an effect far more serious for Abdul Nasser than any insult he could have offered Great Britain – it alienated the United States, which had been willing until now, disregarding British annoyance over his hostility to the Bagdad Pact, to treat Abdul Nasser as a friend. 'The issue was,' said Dulles, 'do nations which play both sides get better treatment than nations which are stalwart and work with us?' Nevertheless, Egypt continued to negotiate with Great Britain for the sale of cotton, and to negotiate with both Britain and the United States for economic aid, and particularly for aid to build the Aswan High Dam.

The sharpness of the divisions which split the Arab world was accentuated, and the conflict grew more bitter. Egypt was able to count Sa'udi Arabia on her side, not only because of the feud between the Sa'udi and Hashemite royal houses, but because the Sa'udi régime, after the death of Abdul Aziz Ibn Sa'ud, was reacting sharply against his policy of cautious alignment with the west. At a time when the Buraimi oasis dispute* was at its height, it did not displease the Sa'udi rulers to have a fling against the Bagdad Pact. Syria was in the midst of a steady swing towards the left, and although an Egyptian alliance was opposed, it was effected.

In Jordan the many incompatible elements which made up the state began at last to shake it to pieces. When General Sir Gerald Templer arrived in Amman to request in a far from tactful manner that Jordan accede to the Bagdad Pact, the young king was finally alienated, and the mob rioted in a way which showed

* See p. 95.

clearly where popular sympathies lay. To try to hold Jordan down by force meant pitting the Bedouin element in the kingdom against the urban element, and staging something not far from a civil war. Moved partly by this fear, partly by nationalist sentiment, and partly by personal pique, King Hussein in March, 1956, brusquely dismissed Glubb Pasha, the British Commander of the Arab Legion.

The ignominious packing home of Glubb was a not unimportant element in increasing the tension in the Near East, and the anticipation and desire in Britain for a coming 'showdown'. For a state which Britain had created, and which had been its pensioner ever since its creation, to throw aside the British connexion like so many old clothes, was felt to be an insult not far short of intolerable.

Realism was a quality hard to find in Near-Eastern affairs in the spring of 1956. If Great Britain lacked realism in expecting to enjoy the benefits of the Bagdad Pact and the Anglo-Egyptian 1954 Agreement at the same time, Abdul Nasser showed an equal lack of it in expecting Anglo-American financial support at the same moment that he took arms from Russia and attacked the Bagdad Pact. It was particularly serious that the Aswan Dam project, for which he was offered the huge loan of 270,000,000 dollars, was one on which the whole social and economic policy of the new régime ultimately hinged. An alternative Russian loan had been hinted at but never (so far as is known) formally offered. The form of the western loan was that Great Britain and the United States jointly offered a loan to Egypt of 70,000,000 dollars; attached to this loan, *and dependent upon it*, was an International Bank Loan of 200,000,000 dollars.

The recognition of Communist China by Egypt in May, 1956, completed the process by which Abdul Nasser had undermined his own position in Washington. On 19 July, almost at the same moment that Nasser overcame his scruples and made to accept the western conditions for the loan, its offer was curtly withdrawn by the United States. The Egyptian reaction took exactly a week.

On 26 July, in a speech full of hostility against the western powers, Abdul Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal.

The nationalization of the canal was not a decision made overnight; plans had been matured over a long period. Nor was it entirely unexpected by the western powers. But the manner in which it was announced was taken by Great Britain and France as something not far short of a declaration of war. It was not only Great Britain which had reached the end of its patience with Egypt by July, 1956. The Algerian war, which had now been going on for almost two years, was regarded by France as having been largely fomented and supplied by Egypt, and a decisive blow against Nasser was thought to be essential.

While the Conference of Canal Users was assembling in London in August, British and French forces were concentrating in the Mediterranean. The proposals of the Users' Association were rejected by Egypt early in September, and the dispute was taken to the Security Council. There an Anglo-French resolution which would have imposed the Users' Association on Egypt was vetoed by Russia. But negotiations were not by any means at an end, and Hammarskjöld, the United Nations Secretary General, had every intention of continuing them. Nor had France and Great Britain shown any sign of declaring them terminated.

In the meanwhile, Israel had been concentrating her forces for an invasion of Egypt, which on 29 October she proceeded to carry out. Whether the government of Great Britain had prior knowledge of the impending attack is unknown, but on 30 October, without informing their American allies, the British and French governments delivered ultimatums to Egypt and Israel which required them to withdraw their forces to ten miles from the Suez Canal. Air attack on Egypt (though not on Israel, which had accepted the ultimatum) began the next day.

By the time Anglo-French forces were ready to land in Egypt the war which they had come to stop was already over, and both Egypt and Israel had accepted the cease-fire resolutions of

the United Nations General Assembly – the crushing and immediate victories of Israel in Sinai having deprived Egypt of any alternative. The Anglo-French landings at Port Said took place, nevertheless, on 5 November.

On the same day a Russian note referred ominously to possible rocket attacks on London and Paris, and other veiled threats were made to send 'volunteers'. In the absence of United States support the operation could not be continued, and on 6 November Great Britain and France announced a cease-fire.

The decisive element in the Suez crisis, apart from military force, was the policy of the United States. In a conflict which could not be localized to the Near-Eastern area, and in which Russia threatened to take an active part, the attitude of the United States was bound to be decisive. John Foster Dulles had not, in the negotiations of that summer, taken an attitude in any way hostile to Great Britain and France, and so far as the international status of the canal was concerned he was on their side. But he was not on their side as far as Abdul Nasser was concerned; he did not see the removal of Nasser as a condition *sine qua non* for the stability of the Near East. Particularly on the eve of a presidential election, it was virtually impossible for the United States to take action which involved the risk of world war, under circumstances which left it far from clear that any valuable advantage was to be gained, or that any important point of principle was involved.

The only positive part which Russia had played in the crisis was her veto of the Anglo-French resolution in the Security Council, and her note of 5 November. This action had not been unimportant for Egypt – it was of more value than Russian arms had proved to be for her. But only when events had receded enough to become hazy in the popular mind could it be pretended that Russia had saved Egypt. The real saviour of Egypt was America.

In spite of attempts to pretend to the contrary, the defeat of the Anglo-French attack on Egypt was the greatest single blow to the

western position in the Near East of the whole modern period. Nasser had snatched political victory from military defeat. The whole Arab world had swung vigorously into sympathy with him, and his personal prestige had arrived at its peak. The rulers of Iraq trembled, well aware that they could not for long continue to dominate the country. In Syria, forces were being released which must soon bring the country either to Egypt or to a popular left-wing government. Jordan had acceded to a unified military command with Egypt and Syria, and had broken off the treaty with Great Britain. Britain and France appeared to the Arab world as the allies of the Jews, defeated by the disinterested friendship of Russia and the heroism of Egypt. Quite apart from the material damage done to the economies of the two powers by the blocking of the canal and the loss of oil supplies, the political defeat was overwhelming.

3. *The entry of America*

The withdrawal of the Anglo-French forces from Suez left the United States uncomfortably aware of a 'power vacuum' in the Near East – or, in less theoretical terms, of the daily growth of Russian influence there. In order to stiffen the forces in the Near East which remained friendly to the west, and also in order to mobilize the opinion of Congress and the nation and to obtain the necessary credits, Dulles and President Eisenhower launched the 'Eisenhower doctrine' at the beginning of 1957. The effect of the doctrine was to offer arms and economic aid to those states of the Near East which would accept them, and to guarantee the military assistance of the United States to any power in the Near East which was threatened by 'armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism'.

In so far as the Eisenhower doctrine represented the acceptance by the United States of political responsibility for maintaining the stability of the Near East, it was a great advance on the hot-and-cold American policies of the preceding few years. But the peculiar form in which it was promulgated made it a diplomatic

instrument of doubtful value. The doctrine was a unilateral declaration by the United States, and it completely lacked the elements of parity and mutuality on the part of the Arab governments which would have made it a source of real strength. It was no great surprise that apart from the Bagdad Pact powers, the only Near Eastern state specifically to accept the doctrine was Lebanon – and events were to prove this acceptance to be a doubtful blessing. Even Sa'udi Arabia, which from an economic and technical point of view was closely tied to the United States, would have none of it. King Sa'ud was willing to visit America, where he proceeded to demand arms to the value of a quarter of a million dollars. But though he talked amiably with Eisenhower, he refused his doctrine.

The first application of the new line of American policy came with the Jordanian crisis of April, 1958. In Jordan the king was unable to control the radical nationalism with which he had compromised in dismissing Glubb. The Ba'th party was rapidly beginning to dominate not only the political life of Jordan, but the army. To anticipate the *coup d'état* which he foresaw as imminent, the young king acted alone, expelled General Ali Abu Nuwar, who had advised him in the dismissal of Glubb, and called on the Bedouin troops in the army for help. At the height of the crisis the American Sixth Fleet moved to the Palestinian coast with the implied intention of assisting Hussein. The king in fact rode out the storm, though at the price of imposing authoritarian rule backed by the Bedouin elements of the army.

What the new American policy quite failed to do, was to put a stop to the growth of Russian influence in Syria. Syria was subject, in this last year of her existence, to alarms of every sort. The spasmodic attempts of Iraq to get the great landowners of northern Syria to carry out a unitary *coup d'état* in Iraq's favour, were reducing the Syrians to a bad state of plot fever. Sa'udi Arabia raised the temperature still further, by political bribery on a scale which shocked even Damascus. As it was the Ba'th party in Jordan which was primarily hit by the action of Hussein –

and of the Sixth Fleet – the Syrian Ba'th felt itself directly menaced.

Political life in Syria was directed by a 'National Front' in which the communists were strong but very far from dominant. But the prevalent tone of régime was left-wing, and was much influenced by the ambitions of the patrician Khalid al-Azm, who in order to out-manœuvre the Ba'th policy of union with Egypt was invoking the direct assistance of Russia. Russian arms came into Syria in very large quantities in 1956–7, and at the end of 1957 economic agreements were announced which directed the main foreign trade of Syria towards the communist countries.

The political struggle in Syria was complex, but it reduced itself to a three-cornered fight between the Ba'th, the Communists, and the older nationalist parties. The main issue was the form which union with Egypt should take – for no one dared publicly oppose union of some kind. The Ba'th wanted fusion; the bourgeois nationalists and the communists – though for very different reasons – wanted a loose federation, and in consequence wanted to protract Syria's separate existence by leaning on Russia. The debate went on from the summer of 1956 to the end of 1957, and at the beginning of 1958 was settled in favour of the Ba'th solution of a single state.

The formation of the United Arab Republic in February, 1958, was thus by no means the solution wished for by Russia. It submitted Syria to the same dissolution of political parties as obtained in Egypt, and meant that from having an influential part in government the Syrian Communist Party suddenly became illegal. Khalid al-Azm rapidly found himself in disgrace with the new régime, and went into exile. The sovietization of Syria had been halted, not by the Eisenhower doctrine but by the very political party which the Sixth Fleet had threatened in the Jordan crisis of April.

In the meanwhile, Nasser's world status had continued to grow. At the beginning of 1958 he held an Afro-Asian conference at Cairo which, although attended by delegates and not by

governments, represented an appreciable step forward in his programme of bidding for the leadership of the anti-colonialist movements in black Africa. In April, 1958, he visited Russia on terms which allowed him to treat Khrushchev as an equal. The worries which the economic situation of Egypt caused him, however, were not dispelled by the loans and commercial agreements which he concluded with the U.S.S.R. Although Russia and China took most of the Egyptian cotton crop, they required Egypt to accept in exchange goods which were not those which she really needed. The shortage of dollars and sterling was such that Egypt was virtually unable to deal with countries outside the communist block. Nevertheless, in the spring of 1958 Abdul Nasser was at the height of his power. The Hashemite countermove of an 'Arab Federation' of Iraq and Jordan was a weak one. A bankrupt Jordan, barely held down by military force, was a poor acquisition for Iraq, and everyone knew it, Nor did the drift of Sa'udi Arabia to an anti-Egyptian position disquiet him; the Sa'udi monarchy was in the spring of 1958 undergoing an internal crisis, and was in no state to challenge Egyptian leadership of the Arab League. Its neighbour, the Yemen, acceded to the U.A.R. in March, 1958, though on the basis of a loose confederation, which made little difference to the way the Yemen was governed.

4. *The Lebanese crisis*

The little state of Lebanon has always had a special position in the Arab world, as the only Arab state in which Christians have anything approaching the status of a majority. This does not mean that Lebanon is anti-Arab; in fact its cultural position was second only to that of Egypt, and from the beginning of this century some of the most distinguished and influential theorists of Arab nationalism have been Lebanese Christians.

Lebanon both profited and lost by her privileged position under the French mandate. Culturally and economically she became one of the most advanced regions of the Near East. The

Lebanese Christians acquired a dominant position in the state, which they retained, largely, after the end of the mandate. They also obtained the demarcation of a 'big' Lebanon, whose frontiers included, with the area surrounding and north of Tripoli, a zone which was largely Muslim. Lebanon thus became a state evenly balanced between Muslim and Christian; this was recognized in the 'National Pact' of the Lebanese parties in 1943, and also in the Constitution. It was the practice that the President was a Christian, the Prime Minister a Muslim. A similar religious duality ran right through the government, and especially through the parliament, to which a deputy nominated by one religion must be elected by the voters of the other.

Depending for its very existence on an active will to co-operate between Muslims and Christians, Lebanon was hit from 1956 onwards by the impact of radical Nasserist nationalism on the Muslim population. This impact could have been withstood, had it not been for the peculiarly aggressive character of the government of the Christian President, Chamoun, who was determined to keep his own *clientèle* in power against all comers. The Eisenhower doctrine thus came at an unfortunate moment for Lebanon, for it was inevitably seized by Chamoun and his able Foreign Minister, Charles Malik, as a prop for a threatened régime. Strong in the acceptance of the doctrine, Chamoun proposed to change the Constitution in order to secure his own re-election for a further term as President. The result was to sharpen the resistance of the opposition, until in April, 1958, it provoked a minor civil war, or at the very least a sort of armed general strike. The entry into the field of the Druze tribal leader, Kemal Jumblatt, enabled the Muslim opposition to defy the Government. As the summer approached, the struggle in the Lebanon became less and less a matter of party, and more and more one of religion; and the whole country began to disintegrate in confused communal strife.

The Lebanese Government continued to seek to place the struggle on an international level, and eventually put its complaint

of the support of the rebellion by Syria, before the Security Council. How far the Lebanese opposition was *primarily* supplied and encouraged by the U.A.R., was a matter of much doubt. Nevertheless, on 15 July, 1958, the Eisenhower doctrine was invoked, and a force of United States troops landed in Lebanon. This followed, on 14 July, a *coup d'état* in Bagdad which put an end to the Hashemite régime overnight.

II. THE IRAQI REVOLUTION

1. *The first stage*

For a few weeks in the summer of 1958 it seemed as though western intervention in the Near East was likely to be on a scale larger than that of Suez. The Iraqi army *coup* of 14 July was just as sweepingly successful and as unopposed as the Egyptian *coup* of 1952, save that in the tradition of violence which had always characterized Iraqi politics the leaders of the *ancien régime*, including the King, the Regent, and Nuri Said, were all ruthlessly murdered.

The western powers reacted to the Iraqi revolution with extreme alarm. Not only had the one Arab state of the Bagdad pact been suddenly eliminated, but the threat was aroused of a wider Pan-Arab revolution which would sweep away the remaining western political positions – Lebanon, Jordan, Aden and the Gulf states – and would again cut off western oil supplies. The immediate result was the landing of American troops in Lebanon and of British airborne troops in Jordan. But instead of beginning a period of massive intervention, the Iraqi crisis in fact marked the end of the activist period of American policy which the Eisenhower doctrine had begun. After prolonged diplomatic cannonading the Arab states submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations, in mid-August, a mild resolution which asked the Secretary-General of the United Nations to put in hand the 'practical arrangements' to enable foreign troops to be withdrawn from Jordan and Lebanon. As none of the fatal

eventualities, which they sought to avoid by moving in their troops, had in fact occurred, Great Britain and the United States were only too glad for the opportunity to withdraw without losing face. Lebanon had by this time managed to patch up her national unity under the leadership of General Chehab; and at least temporarily the Lebanese factions realized that they had been on the edge of destroying themselves. In Jordan, King Hussein had had time to recover from the shock of the Iraqi rising, and to reorganize the security of his state so as to hold down the many revolutionary elements. In October the British and American troops were withdrawn.

Abdul Nasser continued to be the central figure of the Arab world through the summer of 1958. Consulted personally by Khrushchev after the Iraqi revolution, he also had the lion's share of the credit for the ephemeral re-union of the states of the Arab League, which led to the diplomatic solution in U.N. of the Lebanon-Jordan crisis, and to the withdrawal of the western troops.

But the new régime in Iraq retained the fraternal affections of Egypt only for a few months. The second article of the new Iraqi constitution proclaimed that Iraq was 'part of the Arab nation', as did the constitution of the U.A.R. for Egypt and Syria. But understanding of the 'Arab nation' differed in Cairo and Bagdad. By September the most prominent admirer of Nasser and supporter of the Ba'th party in the Iraqi revolution, Abdul Salam Aref, was in disgrace. In October he was arrested, and in December a reported plot led to the arrest of all the prominent Ba'th leaders. An attack on the Ba'th was an attack on Egypt, and Abdul Nasser treated it as such. The end of 1958 saw the Arab world just as bitterly divided as in 1957.

2. *Iraqi nationalism*

Iraq is not a homogeneous whole, either by race or religion.* Its large Kurdish population is linked with the Kurds of Turkey,

* See pp. 35–6 above.

Persia, Syria and Russia, and in 1945 a sector of it approved the setting up of an ephemeral 'Kurdish Republic' under Russian patronage. The task of balancing Sunni and Shi'ite elements in Iraq has also always been a serious and delicate one.

Iraq is also, in spite of its oil revenues, at an early stage of social and economic development. Save for the oil companies there is virtually no industry. The Iraqi peasantry is just as miserable as the Egyptian peasantry, save that its exploitation has been until now on a tribal and not on a capitalist basis. The cadres of the Iraqi middle class which possess technical experience and the ability to lead are few in comparison with those of Egypt. Education is far less developed. By comparison with Cairo, Bagdad is very provincial.

The setting of the 1958 revolution was thus widely different from the setting of the Egyptian revolution of 1952. So also was the nature of the seizure of power. In 1952 the Free Officers seized power in a highly developed constitutional state which was petrifying from political inanition and lack of leadership. It was a situation not unlike the 1922 fascist revolution in Italy. In 1958, Brigadier Abdul Karim Kassem seized power from a centralized if unstable despotism, which was governing vigorously up to the moment of its fall. The attitude of the revolutionary socialist intellectuals and army leaders to political parties and constitutional government was thus in strong contrast to the attitude of the Egyptian Free Officers. To Abdul Nasser and Muhammad Neguib, political parties and a constitution meant the Wafd, and the Wafd meant corruption and inanition. No Wafd had existed in Iraq, and the Iraqi revolutionary group were Girondists, tending to idealize the nationalist parties and the free constitution which Nuri Said had denied them. Thus in Egypt the natural tendency of the revolution was towards a monolithic party dictatorship; in Iraq it was towards an alliance of revolutionary groups. Kassem, who was the acknowledged leader of the revolution, was the leader and arbitrator of the groups.

However long the plotting of the revolution may have taken,

the political and social intentions of its leaders seem at the outset to have been vague. In discussing Arab union, they anticipated a long transition period before union with Egypt could be contemplated – but it was contemplated. Their social policy seems initially to have been limited to the idea of agrarian reform.

In one important respect revolutionary Iraq differed from any other Near Eastern state. There was a powerful Communist Party, which enjoyed not only the toleration but the encouragement of the government. Although weakened by disunity, the Iraqi Communist Party played an important part from the beginning; it armed irregular forces and was apparently also able to control them. The pro-Egyptian activities of the Ba'th party thus met the furious hostility of the communists and the Kurds; the communists because they did not want to be dissolved and persecuted as the Syrian Communist Party had been after the *Anschluss* with Egypt, and the Kurds because Egyptian rule would make them into an unimportant instead of a dominant minority. Nor is it to be excluded, in view of the previous collaboration of Kurdish leaders with Russia, that Kurds and communists were bound together even before the revolution broke out. And in crushing the embryonic revolt of Abdul Salam Aref, Kassem acted as the ally of the communists and the Kurds.

Abdul Nasser accepted the Iraqi challenge, but he treated it at first as coming not from Kassem but from the Iraqi communists. On 23 December he made a violent speech at Port Said, attacking the Syrian communists as the enemies of Arabism, and pointing out (quite accurately) that they had opposed the union of Syria with Egypt because it meant the end of their policy of 'opportunism'. Wholesale arrests of communists in Syria followed, and Khalid Bakdash, the leader, disappeared – to turn up again rapidly in Bagdad.

On 8 March, 1959, there was a military revolt in Mosul in northern Iraq, led by Colonel Abdul-Wahhab Shawwaf. The revolt represented the reaction of the great landowners and tribal

leaders of northern Iraq; it was supported by the Shammar tribe, whose lands go over the boundary into Syria, and was encouraged and assisted from Syria. It was rapidly suppressed. But it had two important consequences: first the expropriation or imprisonment of many of the landed *bourgeoisie* of northern Iraq, and second the development of the Iraqi-Egyptian quarrel into a bitter feud. Blood had been shed, and not a little.

The Kurd irregulars who had the agreeable task of looting and pillaging the rebels returned to the attack in Kirkuk on 14 July, when there was a massacre of the Turcoman community. But by this time, Kassem, confronted by the growing power of the Communist Party, and by his own inability to impose order on the country, was attempting to suppress the political parties. The communists, who still had no representative in the government, refused to comply, and found support from the socialist left-wing. In January, 1960, by licensing only a small and dissident wing of the Communist Party and refusing to recognize the main communist group, Kassem appeared in an indirect way to be resisting the communist bid for power. The Iraqi régime still has not found a point of balance. Far from uniting the country, the revolution has brought to a head the problem of Kurdish nationalism in Iraq, and Kassem appears to be faced by an alliance of the Kurds with the Communist Party which makes a united national movement impossible.

3. *Iraq, Egypt, Russia and the West*

The quarrel of Egypt and Iraq took place under the shadow of Russian patronage. Iraq had from the beginning sought Russian help. As a country less developed than Egypt, it had far more room for technical assistance. Russia gave credits for 550,000,000 roubles, floods of advisers, and large consignments of modern arms. In 1960 Iraq seems, from a cultural, economic, and technical point of view, to be in the same process of 'Sovietization' which threatened to overtake Syria three years ago, although Kassem now appears to be offering resistance.

Egyptian use of Russian assistance was more selective, though in the economic sphere committal enough: the communist countries were still taking most of the cotton crop. But the most important commitment was the Russian offer, made in October, 1958, to build the first stage of the Aswan High Dam. The equivalent of 100,000,000 dollars of credits was offered (as against 270,000,000 by the west in 1956) and a further 100,000,000 were hoped for from the World Bank. So deeply was the prestige of the régime bound up with the High Dam – which is indeed the only way in which Egypt has an economic future – that Abdul Nasser could not easily renounce it. The critical economic position of Egypt after the Suez crisis only made the issue of the dam more urgent.

Khrushchev in the spring of 1959 rapped Abdul Nasser on the knuckles for his uncharitable attitude towards Kassem. Unable to disregard the violent reproaches which Abdul Nasser directed against communism in general, and the Syrian Communist Party in particular, he permitted himself a little irony about the 'young and impulsive President' who had allowed himself to plot against Iraq. But both Russia and the U.A.R., however uneasily, kept well within the diplomatic decencies; and the economic aid and co-operation went on. Work on the High Dam began in 1960, and it became apparent that Russian aid was not going to be restricted to the 'first stage'.

The Soviet Union has thus succeeded to the old British problem of keeping a favourable position in an Iraq and an Egypt which persist in mutual hostility. And, in effect, the bone of contention between Egypt and Iraq continues to be Syria. Syria was by 1959 beginning to regret the bargain of the previous year. Syria is ruled by Egyptians: a progressive adjustment of its original autonomy has whittled it away almost to nothing. Syrian trade languishes, and thinks itself subordinated to Egyptian interests. The agrarian reform, maladroitly drafted without taking count of the different agricultural conditions, has alienated the *bourgeoisie* of northern Syria. And Abdul Nasser fears the

rebirth of the alliance of the Syrian *bourgeoisie* with the communists: hence the violence of his anti-communist campaign.

It cannot be said that the comparison between the two régimes, as they appear in 1960, yields a facile contrast between a progressive and (in the western sense) socialist Iraq, and a merely Pan-Arab Egypt which lacks social consciousness.* In fact, the social content of Egyptian nationalism has been growing rapidly for the past four years, and in February 1959, Abdul Nasser defined Arabism as 'a social philosophy, a group of tendencies which find their expression in complete social planning'. This is far from the *Philosophy of Revolution*, but the social record of the régime does not entirely give him the lie. Although it is secondary in the Egyptian mind to the expulsion of colonialism – and bound up with it – there is in the U.A.R. an element of ethical co-operative socialism which has already found practical expression in the agrarian reform. The proportion of theoretical socialists in the Iraqi ministries is certainly larger; but the cadres to carry out a social policy in Iraq are lacking. Nor does Iraq, any more than Egypt, possess the material resources to raise the standard of living of the peasantry to an appreciable degree and in a short period. To make Iraq into a model socialist state: to build up its industry from the beginning and give its agricultural strata a decent standard of life, will be a long, difficult, perhaps impossible task.

While this quarrel has developed, the western powers have watched Iraq with a benevolent neutrality which seems not to exclude hope for the return of the prodigal, and Egypt with a sour and distant eye. The factors against making a bid for Egyptian friendship have been heavy for Great Britain and France, though perhaps less so for the United States. The character of the Egyptian régime makes it impossible to stop nationalist propaganda for the freeing from colonialism of Aden and the Gulf States. The French objection to Egyptian 'intervention' in

* See below Ch. 5, and above, Ch. 3.

Algeria remains unchanged. And on the other side, there would be much to lose by pressing Kassem so hard that western oil supplies were cut – perhaps not only in Iraq but in the Gulf and Persia as well. Great Britain, however, in 1959 settled with Egypt the financial account for the Suez war and restored diplomatic relations. Trade began to flow again on a limited scale, but both in trade and diplomacy Egypt's face continued to turn towards the East.

In March, 1959, the United States signed military pacts with Persia and Pakistan, thus underwriting what remained of the structure of the Bagdad Pact. In the Arab countries, save for the thankless and expensive task of subsidizing Jordan, the United States has no lever with which to exert influence. So far as it was planned to increase the overall strength of the western powers in the Near East, the Eisenhower doctrine had failed.

III. THE SUDAN AND ARABIA

1. *The Sudan*

The huge territory of the Sudan, occupying an area the size of western Europe, faced from its independence in 1956 the task of uniting peoples different in race and religion. The Muslim north, relatively prosperous and advanced, confronts a south of a different racial composition, largely Christian or pagan, and conscious of its cultural and economic inferiority.

The dominating problem of the Sudan is its relations with Egypt, expressed first in the question of the renewal of the movement for union, and second in that of Sudanese control of the Nile waters. In 1954 the National Unionist Party, until then the main hope of an Egyptian *Anschluss*, executed a memorable manœuvre by which it declared for independence. The clumsy interference in the Sudan which Egypt perpetrated in 1955 failed, and succeeded only in antagonizing the groups previously pro-Egyptian.

The Sudanese attempt at constitutional government lasted

for less than three years from the time of independence. The political parties were split into warring fragments, partly by the refusal of one section of the National Unionist Party to consider the question of union with Egypt as closed, partly by the subsequent dependence of the pro-western *Umma* Party on the support of the southern parliamentary group and the breakaway section of the Unionists. The general elections of 1958 brought no solution, and government gradually began to clog up, unable, in particular, to decide on a firm policy of relations with the western powers.

The Sudanese impasse was solved at the end of 1958 by a military *coup d'état* of a conservative and pro-western stamp, carried out by the Army generals on behalf of the groups which lay behind the *Umma* Party. United States aid was accepted by the military government, and the country seemed to be directed towards alignment with the west. But the firmness of the military government seemed in some doubt. There was an abortive counter-*coup* in May, 1959, and the military régime evidently lacks the popular urban support which characterizes the Egyptian and Iraqi régimes.

The Sudanese scene is complicated by the Muslim religious fraternities. The *Ansar* sect, the successor of that founded by Muhammad Ahmed*, is the main strength of the *Umma* Party, and appears to be the supporter also of the military régime. The *Khatmiyyah* sect was the supporter of the National Unionist Party until the time of its split.

The relations of the U.A.R. with the Sudan have not been entirely placid. In 1958 Abdul Nasser made territorial claims on the northern Sudan which seemed intended to feel out the way towards annexation. The attempt failed decisively, but the ambition of the U.A.R. to repair the failure of Neguib in 1952–4, and to achieve union, is undoubted. However, Sudanese consent for the flooding of Wadi Halfa and for the subsequent re-division of the Nile waters was provisionally obtained in 1959. How far

* P. 27 above.

the U.A.R. will seek to achieve its aims by playing on the internal divisions of the Sudan, remains to be seen.

2. *Arabia*

(a) *Sa'udi Arabia.* Sa'udi Arabia is the only major Arab state ruled by absolute princes. So far as it ever had an expansionist policy in the Arab world, this came to an end in 1958, when the accusations of a million pounds spent by King Sa'ud to stop the Egypto-Syrian union, produced an internal crisis in Arabia. The result was that King Sa'ud handed over to his brother Feisal the government and foreign policy of the country, in order to carry out a reform policy. Feisal had the reputation of being nationalist and pro-Egyptian, and in fact the clashes between the two countries came to an end. But what was more important was the question of reforms. Ministries in the modern sense have existed in Sa'udi Arabia only since the beginning of the last decade; in 1958 there were nine ministers, of whom five were royal princes. Even the unification of the government of the two kingdoms of Nejd and the Hejaz, which together make up the Sa'udi realm, has only recently been completed.

The main penalty paid by the Sa'udi monarchy for its archaism, is that it has run dangerously into debt – not a 'public' debt in the modern sense, but a debt incurred by the personal extravagance of the royal family and household. The first problem before the Emir Feisal has been to have the finances audited and the royal expenses controlled. Whether he has succeeded in doing so is not yet clear. The basic political structure is still despotic, and it will always be possible for the king to throw off controls by simply resuming the plenitude of royal power. Should this occur, and then meet with resistance, the Sa'udi monarchy would be faced with its first true constitutional crisis.

Sa'udi government would be impossible without two foreign factors, the oil revenues, and the technical help of Egyptian and Palestinian advisers. Without the Egyptians and Palestinians

there would be no civil service and no schools. A generation of Sa'udi Arabians capable of running their own country has not yet come into being. But there is a nucleus of a 'national' opposition, which has been supported by Cairo as the 'Free Sa'udian' movement.

The relations of Sa'udi Arabia with America are not governed by treaty in anything except the Dhahran airfield, and even here the rights held by the United States are not sufficient to make the airfield of much value in a military crisis. The Sa'udis have accepted American aid, and particularly military aid; it is not yet clear whether the Emir Feisal has abandoned the old policy of an ambitious and expensive army.

The main problem of Sa'udi foreign policy is the question of the boundaries of the Persian Gulf area. There are boundary disputes with several of the Trucial Coast sheikhdoms, but principally with Abu Dhabi and Muscat. The Muscat dispute has two aspects, both of which intimately involve Great Britain. The Buraimi oasis dispute (which is with both Abu Dhabi and Muscat) was taken to international arbitration under British auspices in 1955, but the arbitration failed, with the British representative protesting against Sa'udi bribery. Great Britain thereupon occupied the oasis. Hardly surprisingly, Sa'udi Arabia has taken a strong line in rejecting the claim of the Sultan of Muscat over Oman, and in supporting Ghalib bin Ali, the Imam of Oman, against the Sultan* and the British troops who have assisted the Sultan, In this, Sa'udi Arabia has taken the same 'nationalist' line as the U.A.R.

(b) *The Yemen.* The theocratic and medieval Imamate of the Yemen was one of the first Arab states to welcome Soviet aid. From 1955 onwards treaties of friendship and assistance were made, and from early 1957 large amounts of Russian arms and large numbers of Russian and Chinese advisers began to arrive, in a country which until the preceding year had been closed to all

* See below, p. 97.

foreigners. The Crown Prince, Muhammad al Badr, led a pro-Soviet and 'anti-colonialist' party, and in the absence and ill-health of the Imam, communist activity thrived. The return of the Imam from Italy in the summer of 1959 marked a reaction: imprisonments and executions followed, and the feudal government looked to its power.

The adhesion of Yemen to the United Arab Republic in 1958 was federal and not a union on the Syrian model. Yemen in effect has conserved its independence and possibly the power to go against Egypt in matters of foreign policy. The federation nevertheless affects British relations with Egypt, since the Yemen claims that the whole Aden Protectorate is part of the Yemen, and has fomented a series of frontier incidents.

(c) *The Gulf States.* The treaty relations of Great Britain with the Persian Gulf states, which amount to *de facto* protectorates, date from the struggle of the Indian Government with slave traders and pirates in the early nineteenth century. The Gulf States are all despotic, and most of them primitive in organization. Oil has made one or two of them fabulously rich, and has induced the British Government to be unwilling to give up what would be otherwise an unenviable political position. Besides the oil found on the mainland, the States also have off-shore rights over oil discovered in the waters of the Gulf.

The richest of the Gulf States is Kuwait, which with a population of 200,000 has the largest oil production of any Arab state, and one of the largest proved reserves of any country in the world. Kuwait was claimed as a part of the Ottoman Empire, and Iraq has occasionally tried to make good a claim on it. The investment and development use of the oil revenues of Kuwait has been in a sense model: the Sheikh has devoted a very handsome part of the revenues to every conceivable kind of social service. But that this goose should go on freely laying its golden eggs for ever under British protection, is inconceivable. As in Sa'udi Arabia, the administration is almost entirely in the hands

of Egyptians and Palestinians, who have the political opinions which might normally be expected of them.

Qatar is less rich in oil, but substantially well off. The island state of Bahrein is also a considerable oil producer; here the Persian Government has an old claim to sovereignty, which it continues to press. In the seven Trucial States, the oil is hoped for, but not yet exploited on any scale. Muscat and Oman, again, live on hopes of oil. The Sultan of Muscat has in fact never exercised more than an occasional sovereignty over Oman, which technically (according to the Sultan and the British Government) had internal autonomy until by its behaviour in the early nineteen-fifties it forfeited even that. The theocratic Imam of Oman, Ghalib bin Ali, with the approval of Sa'udi Arabia and Egypt, raised revolts against the Sultan in 1955 and 1957. The second revolt provoked British intervention of a discreet but old-fashioned type, and the occupation by a small British force of Nizwa, the chief fort of the interior. The revolt then collapsed, or continued only in the fertile imagination of Cairo Radio.

(d) *Aden: Colony and Protectorate.* The British colony of Aden is technically distinguished from the protectorate – the latter being a large complex of tribes and sheikhdoms in treaty relations with Great Britain. In practice this distinction is rather hard to maintain, and Aden is the capital of the protectorate rather than a separate entity. On the other hand, Aden is socially and economically a very different affair from the protectorate. The refinery and the bunkering have given it an appreciably industrial air. There are trade unions (capable of striking) and an Arab middle class (as nationalist as any other).

The British solution of limited self-government for Aden itself is unlikely to lead to anything but conflict, since the educated classes of Aden want something incompatible with continuance in the Commonwealth. The only British advantage is that doubtless most of them would prefer Great Britain, if the only alternative were the Yemen. The British solution for the

protectorate is a federation, and a beginning was made in this by the federation of six of the western emirates early in 1959. But the co-operation which Great Britain obtained from these rulers was marred by the recalcitrance of Lahej, the largest of the states of the eastern protectorate. In July, 1958, the Sultan of Lahej was displaced for co-operation with the Yemen: he moved to Cairo. His removal, however, was effected without resistance, and in the autumn of 1959 Lahej decided to adhere to the federation of the western emirates.

British policy in Aden and the protectorate is influenced by two main factors: by the possibility of finding oil there, and by the need for a base to protect the British position in the Gulf States. The area of Arabia ruled or protected by Britain amounts still to about one-third of the peninsula. Most of this is desert, but oil and the hope of oil make it an area hard to quit. Conversely, it is an area which the Arab nationalist programme is virtually unable to abandon.

Chapter Five

THE IDEA OF AN ARAB NATION

I. ISLAM AND THE WEST

1. *The essentials of the problem*

The Arabs were once Islam, but they are so no longer. The spiritual problem of the Arabs in the modern world is ultimately a part of the problem of Islam – that is, of a confession embracing hundreds of millions of souls, from Nigeria to Pakistan and Indonesia. How complex is the map of Islam can immediately be grasped from the career of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, who has a good claim to be considered the founder of Arab nationalism. Born in 1839, either in Persia or Afghanistan, al-Afghani's political career took place in Afghanistan, in Egypt, in Turkey, in India and in Persia. His main works were written in Persian and not in Arabic. He was an important influence on the Arabi rising in Egypt in 1882, and (although it occurred after his death in 1897) on the Persian Revolution of 1906.

Al-Afghani stated the Islamic problem in its classical form. The Islamic peoples possess a great transcendental religion, and have behind them a glorious imperial past. Yet their present state is degraded and oppressed. He attributes this to two main causes, one material and the other spiritual. On the one hand are ignorance, poverty and superstition, which prevent the Muslims from accepting the challenge of western technical progress, and from expelling the westerners from the Islamic countries. On the other hand are spiritual backwardness and failure to carry out the divine law, which prevent the Muslims from rising from the

moral slough in which they find themselves. It is a philosophy of moral and political activism. To the paradox that Islam is the only religion (as he sees it) by which the happiness of nations can be attained, and yet that the Muslims find themselves in the evil state in which they are, al-Afghani answers in the words of the Quran, 'Verily, God will not change the condition of a people unless they change their own condition'. Both on a material and a spiritual level, the enemy is tradition, inertia, and secular conservatism. In the early history of Islam there had been a period when individual judgement and criticism had been permitted, in order to modify and formulate the dogma by which the Islamic community should live. That period was declared by orthodox theologians to be closed, but al-Afghani demanded that it be re-opened, and the light of rational criticism again allowed to play upon religion. The result would be something akin to the European Renaissance and Reformation – a comparison which al-Afghani expressly implies, though it is one which is beset with pitfalls. Al-Afghani himself is Calvin rather than Luther: the apostle of a religion enforced by direct political action rather than of a religion of isolated protest. On the one hand he points to what came (misleadingly) to be called Islamic liberalism: to the revision of Muslim doctrine in the light of modern conditions. On the other hand he points to nationalist radicalism, and to the idea of liberation from the foreigner as an end in itself. Later Islamic thinkers tended to take up either one side or another of al-Afghani's teaching, and thus to appear to the world either as obscure and harmless religious teachers, or as dangerous political agitators. But the source of their ideas was the same.

It is still early to answer the question, whether or not al-Afghani's ideas were valid. Lord Cromer, the friend and protector of al-Afghani's Egyptian disciple, Muhammad Abdu, was deeply sceptical, and quoted with approval Lane-Poole's remark that an upper-class Muslim must be 'either a fanatic or a concealed infidel'. Certainly al-Afghani was at least a little of both. To assent

to the stupendous theocratic claims of Islam, and then to compare them with the pitiful political reality, must make a man something of a fanatic. To assert (as al-Afghani asserted) that Islam is the religion of reason, and thus in no way contradictory of western scientific knowledge, is to ignore the long history of the progress of Greek rationalism in the culture of medieval Islam, and of its eventual and final defeat at the hands of Islamic orthodoxy. There have been several attempts to insert Greek intellectualist philosophy into the structure of Islam in the same way that it was inserted by the Fathers of the Church into Catholic Christianity. But all failed, and if al-Afghani wanted to make the attempt again, he was re-opening a controversy which had been closed for at least nine centuries.

The question is an agonizing one, which goes to the heart of the Muslim difficulties. Matthew Arnold described western culture as based on 'Hebraism' whose governing idea is 'strictness of conscience', and 'Hellenism' whose governing idea is 'spontaneity of consciousness'. In Islam there is only Hebraism: only the idea of patient obedience to the Law: the accent is on 'firm obedience' (to use Arnold's phrase), and not on 'clear intelligence'. The attempt to impose Hellenism on Islam has been made long ago, and failed. Yet if Islam proves unable to come to terms with the western tradition, with its indigestible Greek content, it will have met defeat and must face death. Failure to meet the western challenge on intellectually equal terms will mean the victory of western civilization on the level of the technical and the vulgar. Failure will mean the isolation and decay of Islam and of the Muslim intellectual *élite*, and the decline of the Muslim religion to the level of folk-lore; while the Muslim people will be overwhelmed by the universal triumph of the television and the juke-box. It is a prospect not easy for an ancient culture and an ancient religion to face, and we must attempt (although it is not easy) to forgive the successors of al-Afghani for at least a degree of fanaticism.

2. *Islamic modernism and its critics*

The leaders of 'Islamic modernism' have in fact been only in a very limited sense 'westernizers' – far less 'Hellenizers'. The great emphasis of such figures as Muhammad Abdu (1849–1905) and Rashid Rida (1865–1935) has been on the criticism and revaluation of the sources of Islam and Islamic law. They aimed at doing for Islam something akin to what was done for Christianity by the scientific Biblical criticism of the nineteenth century – but they have been infinitely less radical in their treatment of the Quran than most Protestant Biblical critics in their treatment of the Bible. That they gave the impression of being more 'westernizing' than they in fact were, is partly due to the syncretist tendencies of the Islamic mind. When Muhammad Abdu claimed for Islam that it was liberal, tolerant, favourable to the critical spirit and to the spirit of political equality, he was not speaking of his fundamental preoccupations, nor from a profound knowledge of European liberal thought. He had in fact learned French only when forty-four years old, and his knowledge of European thought was always extremely superficial. But he made the claim, because he considered that Islam included all these things *and more*. So far as there is a rationalist element in Muhammad Abdu, it is something more likely to have come to him from early heterodox Muslim thinkers like Ibn Sina, than directly from European sources. To anything like systematic westernization, Muhammad Abdu and his school were definitely hostile.

The great task which these 'modernists' set themselves – primarily in Egypt, where they were centred, but ultimately for the Arab world – was to break down the diehard traditionalism of the Muslim canon lawyers; to accustom the educated Muslim population to a gradual revision of Muslim law in the light of modern traditions (e.g. in the emancipation of women); and to restore to the educated Muslim his sense of self-respect. The modernists wanted to give him the conviction that he could face the modern world without a

total capitulation to the values and modes of thought of the west.

How far the modernists succeeded in this immense task is not yet clear. Essentially their audience was the educated Egyptian *bourgeoisie*, which more than the conservative clerical *ulema* class was willing to give them a hearing. Indirectly their influence was profound; it is probably not too much to say that they created the whole climate of modern nationalism. As the message reached the periphery of the circle it became – like all others – coarsened and vulgarized. In its most brutally popularized form, it became the doctrine of the Muslim Brotherhood, and in this form it secured mass support of a kind denied to the subtle doctrines of the scholars.

From the start, however, the gradualism of the Islamic modernists and the nature of their doctrine as a long-term educational programme, were compromised by the political implications of what they taught. Al-Afghani laid it down that it was necessary both to re-educate and renew Islam – which is evidently not only a great but a long task – *and* to bring to an end the foreign domination of all Islamic countries – which is a task demanding immediate and violent political action. The immediate policies of the Egyptian modernist scholars were of compromise and moderation. But their eventual aims were the same as those of the political activists. The greatest of all the Wafd politicians and the founder of a party of national opposition to the British in Egypt, Sa'ad Zaghlul (1859–1927) was a pupil of Muhammad Abdu.

The main opposition to the modernist school of Abdu has come from those who want to abandon the idea of an Islamic theocratic state, and to treat Islam as though it were a disestablished church on the European pattern. These are the thorough westernizers, who want to cut the Gordian knot. If Islam is a medieval and recessive doctrine, then (as this school reasons) any state which professes Islam is bound by the theocratic nature of the religion itself to be pulled back into a medieval and anti-

progressive world. The pattern for this movement was provided by the régime of Mustafa Kemal in Turkey. The Turkish revolutionaries were forced into the 'disestablishment' of Islam by the existence of the caliphate in their midst, and its identification with the fallen reactionary régime. Instead of proceeding, after the deposition of the last Caliph-Sultan, to reform the caliphate (as the Egyptian modernists wanted him to do) Mustafa Kemal only waited two years before abolishing it. The régime which he then set up was as close to a non-confessional state as any country with a wholly Muslim population could conceivably attain to.

The lynch-pin of the Kemalist régime was the existence of a powerful Turkish nationalism which could be perfectly easily distinguished from Pan-Islamic nationalism – as Arabic nationalism cannot. One of the main aims of the Turkish movement was the 'purification' of the Turkish language from Arabic 'contamination'. The language of the Quran, the foundation of Arabic nationalism, was thus specifically rejected. A myth of a great Turkish tradition, extending far back in history before Islam, was assiduously invented. Evidently, there were ways open to Turkish nationalism which were closed, or not more than half-open, to Arab nationalism. But the example was, nevertheless, not lost. From 1924 onwards, powerful currents in Arab nationalism have tended towards the idea of a secular state. This has become an element in 'romantic' nationalism, in 'progressive' socialist nationalism, and in North African nationalism.

Some advocates of a western and secular state have had profound knowledge of western culture, and have advocated its acceptance for its own sake. The greatest apologist for this policy has been the Egyptian writer, Taha Hussein, but many North African intellectuals follow a similar line. An opposite wing has no interest in western culture in itself, but advocates the abandonment of Islamic traditionalism, so that the Muslim peoples may swiftly find the way to technical advance, and thence to political power. 'Ignorance based on religious doctrine has tied our people

with knot on knot; the best any man can do is to untie one of these knots.' So the contemporary Nejdi writer, Abdullah Ali al-Qasimi.

The debate on the Islamic state is far from closed in the world of Islam. Since 1946 Turkey itself has had second thoughts on the thorough-going secularism of Mustafa Kemal, and some of the more extreme measures of secularism have been modified; and some observers see signs of an 'Islamic Renaissance' in Turkey. In Pakistan the official doctrine is that of a confessional Islamic state, which Indonesia has hesitated to attempt. Events in all these countries will continue to influence the Arab world.

II. THE ARAB NATION

1. *Definitions*

The definition of the Arab nation is one of the most delicate problems before the Arab nationalist, and the problem which throws into the harshest light the incompatibility of modern Arab nationalism with its religious foundations. The very word 'nation' has no real equivalent in classical Arabic, whose descriptive words relate either to a man's tribe, or district (*watan*, the French *pays*), or religious group. The *umma* or the total community of Muslims is a grouping far too large to be useful to Arab nationalism – although the Islamic modernists used the word as though it still applied to the Arabs as a group, and refused to admit that it contrasted with a man's *watan*. The *watan*, whose maximum meaning is the English 'country', was too small a word – though it satisfied Sa'ad Zaghlul and the Egyptian Wafd, and no wider definition of the nation was current in Egypt before 1952. But the word eventually used to translate nation was *qaum*, which means 'group', or, by extension 'people'.

An ethnic definition of Arabdom is impossible, and no Arab nationalist has ever seriously attempted it. It is patent enough that Moroccans, Egyptians, Sudanese and Iraqis are not of the same

race in an ethnic sense. A religious *definition* of Arabdom is also impossible, though it is evident that religion is a part of the bond which unites the Arab peoples. But to make it a definition is to stumble on the difficulty of the religious minorities (Copts in Egypt, Maronites and Orthodox in Lebanon) and of the Islamic sects (Shi'ites in Iraq; Druze in Lebanon and Syria). It is also to meet the difficulty that the Arab revolt, which launched Arab nationalism as a political force, was undertaken by the Arabs as the allies of the Christians against a Muslim power (Turkey). The best that can be done is to define Arabdom by language – as is done in the constitution of the Ba'th party. 'An Arab is anyone whose language is Arabic, who lives in the Arabic homeland or aspires to live therein, and who believes in his connexion with the Arabic people.' This is vague enough. It is in fact impossible for the Arab nationalist to deny that an Arab may have a double loyalty to his country or fatherland (*watan*) and to the Arab nation (*qaum*) as a whole. Thus, at the very foundation of Arab nationalism there is a fatal possibility for divided loyalties.

2. *Romantic and religious nationalism*

Romantic Arab nationalism is the attempt to express in Arab terms the kind of nationalism current in Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. It is a vague and many-sided tendency rather than a movement, beset continually by misunderstood European ideas and idioms. It has a bad press with some European scholars. But in spite of its occasional half-bakedness, of its rhetoric and its ominous terrorist and totalitarian tendencies, romantic nationalism deserves respectful consideration. It has at least the merit of being anchored, however uncertainly, in the modern world. The moral experience of many Arab statesmen inspired by romantic nationalism is a valid one, spoiled often by xenophobia and *sacro egoismo*, but not contemptible. If we want to know what is the profit and loss of such nationalism, we have only to read our own national histories.

In the eyes of romantic nationalism, the Islamic 'modernists' are in fact traditionalists. Instead of disputing with learned canon lawyers on Quranic texts, the romantics have tried to express themselves in modern terms. As political theorists they are on the whole vague and unsatisfactory. But they can count on their side not only academic theorists but the modern intelligentsia – often on novelists with a sophisticated and effective knowledge of sociology, such as the Egyptian and Iraqi social-realists.

The earlier stages of the movement were on the whole arid. It is hard to get excited about al-Kawakibi's plagiarisms from Alfieri, or (fifty years later, in the 1930's) about the Emir Shakib Arslan's *Why have the Muslims become backward?* The European reader also tends to become unhappy with the Hegelian and totalitarian terms in which someone like Sati al-Husri (a follower of Feisal, and later educational adviser to the Arab League) expresses himself: 'Patriotism and nationalism before and above all – even before and above freedom'. The Arab flirtations with fascism in the thirties have left their mark on some sections of the Arab mind.

With romantic Arab nationalism (as with some of its European counterparts) history takes the place of political theory. Michel Aflaq, the theorist of the Ba'th party, even rejects an abstract theory of nationalism – 'Arab nationalism is not theoretical but gives rise to theories: it is not the product of thought but nourishes it'. Although the 'liberal' rights of personal liberty, freedom of speech, democratic representation and so on are given some sort of place, they are also contradicted by the assertion (of both Aflaq and Nasser) that the philosophy of revolution exists without being explicit, and that its conclusions ought to be imposed on the nation, even against the nation's 'apparent' will.

The direction in which this kind of nationalist is travelling is indicated by the way in which he interprets Arab history. Abdul Nasser – not, after all, a professional intellectual – insists

on having it both ways. He glorifies both pre-Islamic, Pharaonic Egypt, and the medieval Islamic empire – thus enabling himself to claim leadership of Egypt, of Africa, and of Islam. Michel Aflaq places the beginnings of Arab decadence at the time when the Arabs conquered their vast empire, and so were 'lost in a sea of foreign peoples' (among whom were the Egyptians).

Nasser's 'role in search of a hero' in Arab nationalism has received the attention due to a man who could give himself the title part. But his observation is more than histrionics or publicity. There is, in romantic nationalism, a deep urge to find a heroic leader on whose shoulders the enormous burden can be placed – a man who (as Jacques Berque has written) can reconcile the irreconcilable. Nasser is not the only man to have played this part, though he has played it with more success than most. Required of the hero is a sense of tragic destiny, and a histrionic but real courage. Feisal also was a tragic hero. Bourguiba is too westernized, too adult for such a part.

It is impossible to attribute a coherent political structure to anything so inchoate and shifting as the ideas of the romantic nationalists. The Ba'th constitution – and, indeed, the constitution of the United Arab Republic – contain ideas which point towards a liberal state, and others which point towards 'democratic' totalitarianism. In Egypt and Iraq (though not in Syria or Lebanon) the old parliamentary system sponsored by the European powers is hopelessly discredited. It is realized, moreover, that it is necessary to make a nation before you can endow it with liberal institutions. But the note of liberalism is not absent – Michel Aflaq's writings, indeed, bear a strong resemblance to those of Mazzini.

The 1950's have seen one violent clash between romantic nationalism and conservative Islamic nationalism, in which the latter decidedly had the worst of it. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928 and in effect began to translate into immediate political and moral practice the line of

doctrine developed by Muhammad Abdu and his school. By following both the moral and the theocratic drive of the modernist movement – demanding both moral renovation and political action – al-Banna produced an organization which from the exterior appeared to be a cross between the Y.M.C.A. and the Mafia. The success of the Muslim Brotherhood was considerable. Apart from a network of branches and cells which by 1946 had made it one of the most powerful political forces in Egypt, the Brotherhood also owned a complex of business enterprises which gave it great economic power. It trained 'phalanxes' of militants for para-military and terrorist operations, under the direction of a special branch of the hierarchy called the 'secret organ'. It was a formidable organization – so formidable that in 1946 the Wafd delcared war on it, and for three years it suffered persecution, culminating in the assassination of the 'Supreme Guide', Hassan al-Banna, in 1949.

The 1952 revolution brought the Brotherhood into the sun only for a brief season. Their ideas were too different, and their organization too compact, for them to come to terms with the Free Officers. Inevitably the Brotherhood drifted into opposition and backed Neguib. Part of its own programme was the abolition of parties – but it had not occurred to the Brotherhood that it would not be the one party to survive. In 1954, after the fall of Neguib, the Brotherhood was crushed, its secretary executed, its 'Supreme Guide' sent to life imprisonment.*

Yet the ideas of the Brotherhood did not entirely fail to make an impression on the Nasserist régime. On the great issue of an Islamic or a secular state, Abdul Nasser has mingled radical with conservative ideas. Islamic teaching is compulsory in the schools, and questions of personal status are judged by Muslim law in all cases where a Muslim is involved – it is true that at the same time he abolished the *shari'a* courts, but the total effect of the reform was more conservative than radical.

* Ch 3 above.

III. SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. *The progressive creed*

Behind all the political movements of the Arab world stand the poverty and ignorance of the Arab masses; the plight of an agricultural society which the industrial world has pauperized; the nightmare of population growth. No political programme is of any value to the Arabs which cannot offer economic strength and social justice.

The nationalist movements, particularly so long as they were in the hands of the *haute bourgeoisie*, displayed for a long time a disgraceful indifference to the social problem. But the Islamic reform movement cannot be similarly accused. Egyptian modernism, basing itself on ideas which we would call medieval, or at least Chestertonian, claimed Islam to be a principle of economic reform, for which fortune was not an end in itself but a means of serving God. Laying down a line which was followed by the Muslim Brotherhood and (in terminology at least) by Abdul Nasser, the modernists worked out an economic ideal midway between mercantilism and socialism. Departing from the ideal of the communal solidity of the Islamic group, they denied the concept of a class war, and opposed to it an economic ethic founded on co-operation. It is perhaps not too far-fetched to compare these ideas with those of the nineteenth-century Christian socialists.

The social ideas of some of the romantic nationalists are not in essence very far removed from this, although sometimes enunciated with a slightly Marxist accent. The Ba'th party calls itself a socialist party, and declares vaguely that 'socialism will cause the Arab genius to unfold in the most complete manner'. But when it has demanded agrarian reform, the nationalization of public utilities, and some rather vague measures for the protection of labour (which make no reference whatever to trade unions), the Ba'th programme stops sharply, and proceeds to guarantee the rights of property and inheritance. This is scarcely

socialist; like the Muslim Brotherhood, the Ba'th seems to aim chiefly at bettering the lot of the urban lower middle classes. 'Socialism, freedom and unity are aspects of the same thing,' said Akram Hourani. To say this is to give a very limited meaning to socialism.

But in spite of its vagueness the Ba'th programme belongs to the prevailing tendency of Arab thought in that it is 'progressive'. Not entirely unreasonably, many Arabs decline to accept ready-made economic or political programmes from the west, and insist that there must be a new and particular formula to fit their case. 'No Communism and no Imperialism.' But progress, whatever happens. In the past ten years the revolutionary idea has made tremendous strides. Conservatism has gone to the wall; great as are the reserves of traditional Islam, it is for the moment on the defensive. Any creed that wishes to survive in the contemporary Arab world must proclaim itself progressive – although it will be allowed considerable latitude in interpreting the term.

The social record of the revolutionary régime in Egypt is of capital interest and importance. Abdul Nasser came to power rather more than vaguely aware of the importance of the social question. The first act of the Free Officers (and this is too often forgotten) was to pass the agrarian reform law. Abdul Nasser himself, in the *Philosophy of Revolution*, states clearly that the normal sequence of events is for the social revolution to follow the political revolution. He also states his objection to the normal course of the social revolution – that it means class war, while the pressing need is for national unity.

The current official doctrine of the Egyptian régime is that it is 'socialist, democratic, co-operative'. 'Socialism, from the negative point of view, means abolition of the great estates, of monopolies, and of exploitation. From the positive point of view socialism means economic development accompanied by the spread of social justice which allows everyone the opportunity of a decent life' (Abdul Nasser).

What this has meant in practice is the collectivization of agriculture on a growing scale, and a '*dirigiste*' programme of industrialization, which aims at directing capital into industry under government supervision – but without abandoning capitalism. The enemy of the Arab countries is represented, not as the capitalist system itself, but as 'non-productive capitalism', or capitalism of a kind which is reluctant to invest in the industries which are important for development. To make the capitalists do so, Egypt has resorted to devices like the strict control of all new building, and of campaigns against 'extravagance' (e.g., luxurious company offices) and 'individualism' (e.g., the formation of cartels).

2. *Socialism*

For the past fifteen years the intelligentsia of Bagdad and Cairo have been heavily imprinted by Marxism. Most of the more interesting literature which has come out of these cities in the same period has been 'social-realist'. A large number of the intellectuals who now form the governing class of Tunisia and Morocco were formed or influenced by French Marxist socialism. The idea of resistance to 'internal colonialism' is widespread among the intellectual *élites*. In Syria, by 1957 the communist leader Khalid Bakdash was able to threaten a popular front of left-wing forces which was menacing enough to make the Ba'th party force the pace for union with Egypt. The communist parties proper were small, weak and divided.* But the progressive idea was in the air.

The turning point for left-wing socialism came with the Iraqi revolution of 1958. The entry into office of pupils and disciples of Harold Laski, and the open co-operation with communism, mark an era in Arab socialism – the first Popular Front. The break with the Ba'th party and the quarrel with Nasser, which were complete by the spring of 1959, accentuated the contrast between theoretical socialism on a European model in

* See above. Ch. 4, sec. 1.

power in Bagdad, and the vague 'co-operative socialism' of the United Arab Republic.

Whether the contrast between socialist Iraq and revolutionary nationalist Egypt is quite as clearly defined as it at present seems, remains to be seen. Apart from the communists, it is not clear that the Iraqi left is Marxist; it is mostly Anglo-Saxon in training, and the possibility remains (though it seems a diminishing one) that it will emerge as an ethical socialism of an approximately English type. In this it is to be compared with the Egyptian Free Officers' movement, which was also strongly influenced by Anglo-Saxon socialists and sociologists. Nor is it clear that the measures of the Iraqi régime yet outdistance the social measures of the U.A.R. Agrarian reform and '*dirigisme*' are as far as the Iraqi régime has yet gone – in any event, even before the revolution a good deal of industry in Iraq was state-owned. In Iraq the trade unions are to all appearances no more free than in Egypt. But it would be futile to deny that Iraqi socialism has every appearance of being far more theoretical, Marxist, and dogmatic than the pragmatic social policy of the U.A.R.

It is impossible to prophesy whether or not the Arab world is on the edge of a 'progressive' race, in which nationalism will scramble to turn itself into socialism, and Arab parties will outbid one another in their progress towards the left. In any case, this question is more likely to be answered by the day-to-day turmoil of political events, than by the inner logic of ideas. Two tendencies may be registered, which seem to point in different directions. On one hand, for the past twenty years the tendency of the Arab world has been to press more and more towards the extreme, the heroic, and the desperate. This has culminated in the Algerian war, which is the most savage and indeed the only really bloody war of liberation to be waged by any Arab nation. Continuing to meet, in the present, with frustration and defeat, even in spite of the apparent victories of nationalism; with poverty and over-population gaining on them the Arabs may feel compelled to carry over the spirit of heroic desperation – *futuwwa* – into the

social war, and to turn the arms which they intended to use on the colonialists on one another. On the other hand, it has to be remembered that the conditions in which a social war could be waged in the Arab world are utterly unlike those of the west. Socialism is an historical generalization formed from European and not from oriental history. That the social war will displace nationalism, which is so profoundly rooted in Arab history and religion, cannot with any safety be predicted.

Chapter Six

THE MAGHREB

I. THE ARAB WEST

1. *History*

THE 'Maghreb' is the Arabic word for 'the West'. In its widest sense it is North-West Africa north of 26° N. and east as far as 25° E. – a very approximate and unhistorical boundary, which runs a good deal north of the southern limits of Libya and the French Sahara.

Like the rest of the Arab world, the Maghreb is the creation of the Muslim conquest. Its occupation was part of the wider sweep to the west, which by the ninth century had brought Sicily and most of Spain into Muslim hands. Like the Muslim east, the Maghreb knew only very short periods of political unity, and experienced long periods of religious heresy and schism.

In one important sense Arab culture in the Maghreb failed to drive out its competitors as thoroughly as in the Near East. The Berber inhabitants of North Africa, although they accepted and welcomed Islam, did not all give up their mother tongue. Berber continued to be the language of a large number of North African tribes, in spite of the fact that it did not possess a written form. Over a third of the inhabitants of Algeria and Morocco are still Berber in language and customs.

Both in the Christian and the Muslim tradition, North Africa has been an area of extremism and dissent. To Christians of the late Roman Empire it was the country of Tertullian, Cyprian, of St. Augustine and the Berber Donatist movement which Augustine ferociously fought. In the early Muslim period the western Maghreb adopted the puritan Kharijite heresy, and

rather late the Fatimids, the Shi'ite dynasty which conquered Egypt, first established themselves in Tunisia. In the eleventh century one of the great Moroccan dynasties, the Almoravids, came to power on the crest of a great wave of religious revivalism, whose distinctive feature was the fortified monastery (*ribat*). A century later a further bout of unitarian puritanism in Morocco led to the supremacy of the Almohads.

Politically the Maghreb was always a patchwork of dynasties. Its two main centres were Morocco (which is a European form for the name of the town, Marrakesh) and 'Ifriqiya', which corresponds to Tunisia and eastern Algeria. No government controlled both these areas for more than a short time. The Moroccan dynasties were more concerned with Muslim Spain (which was part of the empire of the Almoravids and Almohads) than with Ifriqiya.

The struggle between the desert and the sown, always an important factor in Arab history, was particularly savage in the Maghreb. The period of most bitter struggle, which led to the final destruction of the old Romano-Punic agriculture of Ifriqiya, was the invasion of the Beni Hillal in the twelfth century. The result was the abandoning of most of the inland plateaux of Tunisia and eastern Algeria, and the withdrawal of the sedentary farmers to the littoral.

Early modern Europe knew the Maghreb as 'the Barbary coasts'. In Morocco the native Sharifian dynasty which still holds the throne began to reign in 1660. Algeria, Tunisia and Tripolitania were in the hands of three 'Regencies', technically subject to the Ottoman Empire but in fact quasi-independent. The budgets of the Regencies were balanced by organized piracy against Christian shipping in the Mediterranean.

Unlike the Near East, which was for centuries insulated against the west by the Ottoman power, the Maghreb has never seen a real end to the Crusades. Long before the Muslims were finally expelled from Spain, Spaniards and Portuguese had carried the struggle to the North African coasts. In the sixteenth

century Charles V more than once turned the whole armed force of the Habsburg Empire against the Regencies. Oran, Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli were all for short periods in Spanish hands.

The history of the Barbary states after the sixteenth century is one of slow decay. From a position in which they could threaten the whole Christian Mediterranean, the Regencies gradually declined to a state where their pirate fleets were little more than a nuisance. Conflict between Christian and Muslim went on continuously, none the less. Desultory and self-interested as it was, Barbary piracy possessed at least the undertones of religious war.

2. *France and the Maghreb*

The French attack on Algeria in 1830 sprang from an expansionist colonial drive rather than a desire to put down piracy. It sprang also from the close French connexion with the Arabo-Ottoman world, which dated from the sixteenth century. It was not unconnected, finally, with the desire to bring back North Africa to the church.

The occupation of Algeria cannot be compared with the religious and cultural mission which France undertook in the Levant. Algeria from the start was a colony, and from the start France intended to put the land into the possession of French settlers. The statute of 1834 provided for a Governor-General of Algeria under the direct control of Paris. From the beginning it was not clear whether Algeria was a colony in the ordinary sense, or a prolongation of France itself. The indigenous governments, in any case, were destroyed, and in the course of the revolt of Abdelkader and the repressions which followed it, the feudal Arab aristocracy was destroyed also. The destiny of the Arab social order was finally decided in 1863, when tribal ownership of land in Algeria was abolished. The splitting of tribal lands into individual lots, and their free sale to French colonists, meant the end of the patriarchal order and of those who survived among its leaders. The Algerian tribes and their nobility suffered the fate of the Irish in seventeenth-century Ireland.

The occupation of Tunisia in 1881–3 was a natural extension of French ambitions in North Africa. It was governed by the treaties of Bardo and La Marsa, which placed foreign policy and administration in French hands. Ottoman sovereignty had been affirmed over Tunisia as recently as 1871, and in order to assume the protectorate France was forced to assert that Tunisia was a sovereign state. The struggle for Africa was at its height, and the jealousies of the powers made subsequent annexation difficult. The Beys remained in Tunis, politically impotent but legally sovereign. French colonization of Tunisia proceeded, but not with the assurance of absolute possession which France enjoyed in Algeria.

The final act of French imperialism in North Africa, the occupation of Morocco, came only in 1912, after a series of international disputes. The Treaty of Fez ended these by excluding Germany from Morocco, and establishing a French protectorate over all but the northern zone, which was assigned to Spain, and Tangier, which was to be given international status. As in Tunisia, the sovereignty of the Arab government was expressly saved, and much of the social structure of the country was preserved intact.

Morocco had to be pacified as well as occupied. The authority of the Sultan was decadent – this, indeed, was one excuse for the occupation. Lyautey, the greatest of French agents in North Africa, assumed and carried out the task of pacifying the *bled es siba*, the disobedient mountain areas. To this was added, in 1925, the quelling of the revolt of Abdelkrim, which had begun in the Spanish zone, and spread to the south. The pacification of Morocco was not complete until 1934.

The character of the French occupation of Algeria thus differed widely from that of Morocco and Tunisia. In all three countries investment and settlement went according to the standard colonial pattern. But the assimilation of Algeria to France gave it a special position. At the beginning of the last decade there were about 1,000,000 non-Muslims in Algeria

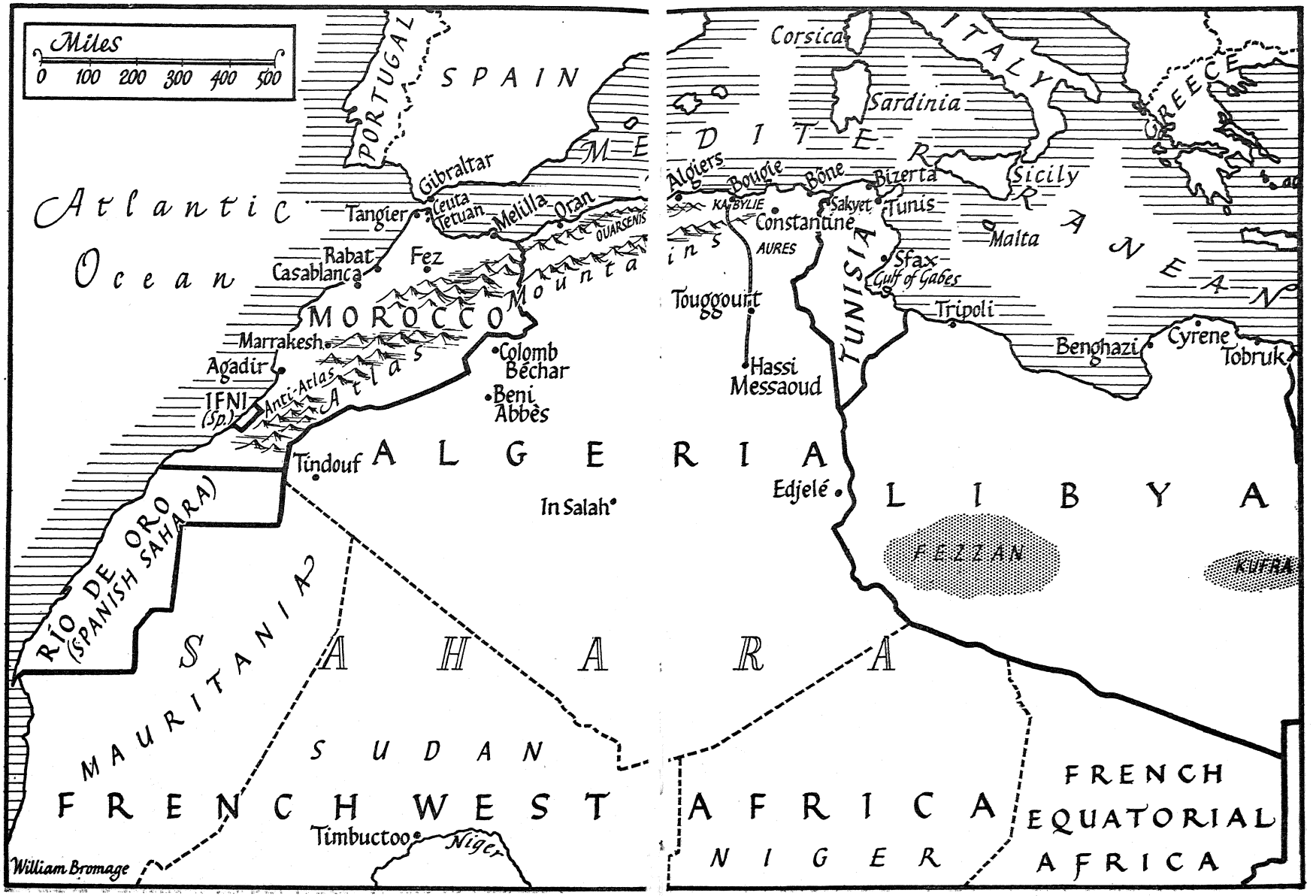
(including 140,000 Jews) to 9,000,000 Muslims. In Morocco (both zones) there were about 450,000 Europeans to 9,250,000 Muslims. In Tunisia about 250,000 Europeans to 3,500,000 Muslims.

France has invested thousands of milliards of francs in the Maghreb, created communications, developed certain forms of industry, transformed much of the traditional agriculture. In education, although ultimately insufficient at all levels, the work of France was remarkable, and will no doubt remain as the most permanent and valuable work of French imperialism in North Africa. But the special position of Algeria has created a profound social and cultural disequilibrium among three countries hitherto in balance. In Tunisia and Morocco the preservation of an Arab government and of Arab cadres of society has meant that in the modern period an Arab *bourgeoisie*, weak in numbers but with a sense of leadership and responsibility, has been able to come into existence. In Algeria traditional Arab society was largely destroyed, but no modern Arab *bourgeoisie* was created to replace it; its place was occupied by several hundred thousand Europeans. Thus, although Algeria is the most westernized and industrialized of the three countries, its Arab middle class is small, weak and ill-trained. Education in Arabic hardly existed in Algeria.

3. *Spain and the Maghreb*

Spanish penetration into the Maghreb dates from the fifteenth century and earlier, although there was a long gap between the sixteenth-century occupations and those of the modern period. The Río de Oro to the south of Morocco was penetrated in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and the Spanish occupation of northern Morocco did not take place until after the Treaty of Fez in 1912. The enclave of Ifni was not taken until 1934.

For a variety of reasons, but mainly because she was politically and economically too weak to undertake a colonial programme on the scale of that of France, Spanish intervention in North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Tindouf
ALGERIA
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FRENCH WEST AFRICA
Timbuctoo
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Sfax
Gulf of Gabes
Touggourt
TUNISIA
Tripoli
Benghazi
Cyrene
Tobruk
Hassi Messaoud
Edjelé
LIBYA
FEZZAN
KUFRA
NIGER
FRENCH EQUATORIAL AFRICA

Africa quite lacked the method and thoroughness of that of France. The two *presidios* of Ceuta and Melilla have been in Iberian hands since the fifteenth century, and it would be at least as difficult for Spain to abandon them as for France to abandon Algeria. But these are two garrison towns with a population of about 150,000 all told. Spanish policy in the northern protectorate proper has been elastic and compromising. General Franco has always held himself out as the friend of Islam, and the nationalist revolution of 1936 represented itself as friendly to Moroccan nationalism. Nor has the Muslim world entirely rejected Franco's claim; the attitude of many Muslim governments to Spain is distinctly warmer than to other European powers, and the Muslim Brotherhood has sometimes suggested that Spanish Catholicism is nearer to Islam than the atheism and rationalism of the rest of Europe.

When the Sultan of Morocco was deposed in 1953 (as is related below), Spanish sympathy with the Moroccan nationalists was outspoken. When the Sultan returned and the French protectorate ended in 1955–6, Spain was ready to renounce her rights in the northern zone, and she withdrew in 1956.

The only flaw in Spanish relations with Morocco since the protectorate was renounced, has been her continued possession of Ifni, the coastal enclave in southern Morocco. Ifni is of no apparent value, but Spain has shown no signs of renouncing it, although it has been several times attacked by the 'Southern Army of Liberation' – a force not under the control of the Moroccan government. Spanish reluctance to give up Ifni probably stems from the fear that this would weaken her position in the Río de Oro, on which Morocco also has claims.

II. NATIONALISM IN THE MAGHREB

1. *The development of North African nationalism*

No significant nationalist movement existed in North Africa before the First World War. Nationalism was awakened in

Morocco by the revolt of Abdelkrim, which began in the Rif in the Spanish zone in 1921, and ended by a menacing extension to the French zone which brought it close to the capture of Fez in 1925. In Tunisia in the early nineteen-twenties the 'Destour' or constitutional party was demanding internal autonomy, and securing for this the support of the Bey. Both these movements, however, were linked with the traditionalist elements in Arab life. Not until the nationalist movement began to extend to the *petite bourgeoisie* and the lawyers were the modern nationalist parties formed. This began in the early nineteen-thirties, when Habib Bourguiba formed the Neo-Destour party in Tunisia in opposition to the old Destour, and when the attempts of the French protectorate in Morocco to encourage Berber separatism stimulated the formation of the first Moroccan nationalist parties.

The relation of the new nationalist parties to Islamic and Pan-Arab nationalism was a complex one. The most modern and 'Kemalist' of the parties was that of the Tunisian Neo-Destour, which was decidedly hostile to the religious conservatives, and not very open to oriental influence. The 'African Star' party of Messali Hadj in Algeria was more Islamic and more oriental in inspiration, and at the same time not without a glancing acquaintance with the Communist Party. Allal al-Fassi, the most important leader of the new Moroccan nationalism, had an education almost exclusively Islamic and Arabic, and was closely connected with the religious confraternities. In this he is an exception among North African nationalists, most of whom were more occidental in outlook than the average nationalist of the Near East in the same period. But Islam and the Pan-Arab idea were always present. Throughout the nineteen-thirties Shakib Arslan, a Druze aristocrat converted to orthodox Islam, and a fluent if not very profound exponent of Pan-Arabism, was a powerful influence, from his office at Geneva, on the whole nationalist movement in North Africa.

The first of the nationalist parties of the Maghreb to be able to present a serious political challenge to the French authorities

was the Tunisian Neo-Destour, which by 1938 was a powerful organization – though its maximum strength arrived only with the appearance of a nationalist trade union movement in 1944. In Morocco the nationalists were handicapped by a split of the movement in southern Morocco, and by the geographical difficulty that part of the country was ruled by Spain. On the other hand, the promises made by Franco to the nationalists in the northern zone in 1936 did much to increase nationalist pressure in the French zone. In Algeria nationalism was weak and divided. Messali Hadj and the religious conservatives were openly hostile to the extremely westernized point of view of Bendjelloul and Ferhat Abbas. In the pre-war period the more westernized Algerians found themselves cut off both from the conservative wing of Arab society and from the political world of the French settlers. They still hoped for an enlightened emancipation of the Muslims by France, and their politics were moderate.

But the attitude of France to the growing Arab nationalism of the Maghreb was negative and repressive. The French left wing flirted with the 'advanced' Arabs in Algeria, but even at the time of the Popular Front government in Paris, few concessions of any moment were made to North African nationalism. Demonstrations by the Tunisian Neo-Destour were put down by force. Only among isolated liberal elements in France was there any appreciation of the strength or the importance of the nationalist resistance.

2. The course of North African nationalism

(a) *Morocco.* The evident weakness of France after 1940 made it plain in North Africa, in spite of the popularity which the Pétain régime for a time enjoyed there, that the hour of nationalism was about to strike. In Morocco the initiative was seized by the Sultan, who, from the time of his interview with Roosevelt in 1943 (an interview which under normal conditions of French rule would never have taken place), grasped the possibilities of the

situation. At the same time the Istiqlal (Independence) party was formed, and began to acquire the monolithic and national character of the Egyptian Wafd. Beginning as the party of the intelligentsia and the Islamic conservatives, Istiqlal became also the party of the urban masses – and Morocco is the most urbanized of all the countries of the Maghreb.

The Moroccan crisis began with the Tangier speech of the Sultan in 1947, in which he appealed to Pan-Arab feeling, and proclaimed his fundamental sympathy with the Arab League. For France, for whom the least reference to oriental Arabism was taboo, the Sultan had proclaimed himself 'unreliable'. Further demands by the Sultan for the revision of the Treaty of Fez caused France to attempt to trump the Arab card by a 'Berber' one. Thami al-Glawi, the feudal lord of Marrakesh, had already accused the Sultan of being 'the Sultan of Istiqlal and not the Sultan of Morocco'; and his assistance was now obtained. In 1951 al-Glawi and the French Residency organized a march of the Berber tribes on Fez and Rabat.

The Sultan turned aside this move by a partial capitulation. In 1953 a fresh march of the tribes was organized, this time openly to demand his deposition. This was readily accorded by the Resident-General, and the great crisis of Moroccan nationalism began.

The ensuing two years confirmed the status of Istiqlal as a national party, and of the exiled Sultan, Sidi Muhammad Ibn Yusuf, as a national leader. Terrorism and mass opposition to the French régime broke out, on a scale which seems to have been far more violent than the exiled leaders of Istiqlal were able to control. An 'army' began to operate against the French in the south. Unable to control a movement of this size and violence in a country over which her control was only indirect, France in 1955 recalled the exiled Sultan and promised the termination of the protectorate, which duly took place in 1956.

The revival of an independent Arab government in Morocco took place, in a sense, under good auspices – a national indepen-

dence party and a ruler accepted as a national leader. But the tensions and divisions which subsisted under the brief cover of national unity were soon to make themselves felt. To begin, the theocratic and absolute monarchy itself was contradicted by the westernizing and 'democratic' tendencies of the radical wing of Istiqlal. Secondly, the country itself was split by wide regional differences, and by tensions between countryside and town. It was not going to be easy to graft the ex-Spanish territory of the north on to the centralized organization of southern Morocco. Thirdly, Istiqlal itself was challenged by a rival party (the Democratic Independence Party) which dated from the schism of 1937.

Nor were the international problems of Morocco of small difficulty. The Algerian war, the flood of refugees which poured over the frontier from Algeria and the stream of men and arms which poured back for the benefit of the rebels, meant that the relations of Morocco with France were from the start embittered and difficult. On the other hand, the Moroccan economy is still dominated by French trade and investment. French troops remain in Morocco, and Spanish troops in the northern zone. The inability of the government to stop the attacks on Ifni also meant that relations with Spain were strained in 1958–9.

Moroccan foreign policy is western in complexion; there are large American bases there (although it was announced in 1959 that these would be relinquished), and American aid has been taken on a fairly large scale. But Morocco is also a member of the Arab League, and the Sultan (now termed the King) toured all the countries of the Arab League in early 1960. Neutralism is not completely ruled out.

After two years of independence, the many conflicting forces in Morocco began to emerge into the open. The radical wing of Istiqlal quarrelled with the conservative party leadership. At the beginning of 1959 there was a party schism. The radicals were given cabinet office, and a government came into power under the patronage of the powerful and able Mehdi ben Barka, while

the leader of the party, Allal al-Fassi, was reduced to expelling ben Barka and to taking the official leadership into opposition. The quarrel between the two wings of Istiqlal favours the game of the palace, and does not seem to bode well for a smooth transition from absolute to constitutional government.

(b) *Tunisia.* Tunisia is a small country with a homogeneous Muslim population, where it has proved easier to achieve an organized and united nationalist movement than in Algeria or Morocco. The Tunisian leadership was of high quality, and has produced two men of real stature, Habib Bourguiba and the trade union leader Ferhat Hached. The latter after 1944 built up a trade union movement of real power, independent of the communist unions, geared to the nationalist Neo-Destour party.

French policy in Tunisia was not entirely without a hesitantly liberal trend; on the other side Bourguiba displayed a moderation and a modernity of outlook superior to that of any other North African leader – an outlook which procured him the enmity of the extremist Pan-Arab nationalists and the religious conservatives. He was therefore able to co-operate when the Schumann government in 1950 produced a cautious plan of reforms, and to accept the formula of 'internal autonomy' which the Moroccan nationalists would have had him contemptuously reject.

In the event, the attempt at compromise in Tunisia failed. In 1952–3 the same state of virtual civil war broke out in Tunisia which was to follow a year later in Morocco. It was ended by the decision of the Mendès-France government to grant internal autonomy. This was accepted by the Neo-Destour, and applied in 1955. But the wider independence granted to Morocco in 1955 by the termination of the treaty of Fez, caused the question to be re-opened. In 1956 France conceded Tunisia complete independence.

After independence the main problem of Tunisian foreign policy, as of Moroccan foreign policy, was the Algerian revolt,

which poisoned relations with France, and kept the Tunisian Government under the shadow of an Algerian army based on Tunisian soil and virtually governing the frontier areas. The crisis of Tunisian relations with France came with the bombing of the Tunisian village of Sakiet Sidi Yusuf, in February, 1958, by French air forces. This incident, which had important consequences in stiffening resistance to France in North Africa and in gaining world sympathy for the nationalist movement, made the drift away from collaboration with France into a decided policy. Bourguiba was enabled to stand the diplomatic consequences, by the political and economic support which he managed to secure from the United States. But the economic situation of Tunisia remained serious, and Bourguiba was careful not to push his quarrel with France to the point of final rupture. French forces still hold the NATO base of Bizerta, and Tunisia in 1959 agreed to the construction of an oil pipeline from the French Sahara to the Tunisian coast. And Bourguiba still appears to hope that his mediation between France and the rebels may prove the final solution to the Algerian question.

Tunisian relations with Egypt have proved difficult, because of Egyptian patronage of the Tunisian opposition. Salah ben Youssef, a Tunisian trade union leader who was exiled after an attempt to seize power in 1955, was harboured by Cairo, and the Tunisians accused Cairo of connivance in a Youssefist plot on Bourguiba's life in 1958. This led to a quarrel with Nasser, and to Tunisia's withdrawal from the Arab League in the same year. Morocco and Libya failed to withdraw from the League in sympathy, in spite of their close connexion with Tunisia, and one of the aims of the visit of the King of Morocco to the Middle East early in 1960 was to reconcile Egypt with Tunisia.

The internal position of Tunisia after independence seemed a strong one; neither the old Destour nor the Youssefist extremists presented a serious danger, and the deposition of the Bey in 1957 placed Bourguiba in power as President of the new Republic. But in spite of Bourguiba's great popularity the radical and

socialist elements in the Neo-Destour and the trade unions were not quite satisfied with him, though this feeling was probably due mainly to the rancour of passed-over politicians. The difficult economic situation and the threat of a split among the nationalist intelligentsia had only slightly blemished, by the end of 1959, the picture of Bourguiba as leader of a united Tunisia.

(c) *Algeria.* The presence of a European colony which eventually grew to almost a million people attracted government and private investment to Algeria on a scale otherwise inconceivable; it brought it about a third of the way to becoming a modern country. But French colonization split Algeria into two societies – a politically privileged and a politically under-privileged. For the whole period of the Third Republic, from 1870 to 1940, French citizenship was conceded to Muslims only extremely grudgingly, on conditions which made it certain that few would apply and fewer still be granted the concession. Europeans and Muslims lived each under their own law; apart from a limited participation in local government the Muslims of Algeria had no political rights.

As in Tunisia, French post-war policy in Algeria fluctuated between attempts at liberalism and 'firmness'. The tentative extension of a limited franchise to Muslims was followed by the disastrous rising in the Constantine area in 1945, whose ferocious suppression contributed more than anything else to the pall of hate and distrust which has hung over Algeria for the past fifteen years. The operations of repression included naval and air bombardment, and cost in the neighbourhood of six to eight thousand Muslim lives.* The Algerian Statute of 1947 was intended to conciliate the Muslim opposition by allowing them a Muslim College within the Algerian Assembly, which was placed in charge of Algerian local affairs under the Governor-General.

* See Ch.-André Julien, *L'Afrique du Nord en Marche*, p. 304–5.

If the Statute of 1947 had been passed during a period of political normality, and if the French administration in Algeria had been prepared loyally to carry it out, there would have been an opportunity for the Algerian nationalists to become a constitutional party within a French framework. But the memory of the 1945 repression was fresh in the minds of Ferhat Abbas and his followers, who continued to drift from a moderate programme of Algerian autonomy towards something far more aggressive. The elections of 1948 and 1951 were managed so as to exclude any substantial representation of the nationalists in the Assembly. These were years of embittered deadlock; a policy of conciliation had been entrusted by Paris to men who had no intention of conceding anything.

In November, 1954, the long stalemate was broken by violence. From the Aurés mountains in the east, the rebellion took firm root in the largely Berber provinces of Constantine and Kabylia; after a few months it spread to Oran, the Ouarsenis, and all the populated areas of Algeria. The rebels were townsmen rather than tribesmen: the movement into the *maquis* was led by the educated and half-educated sections of Arab society. For two years the French security forces were overwhelmed. Farms were burned; mines and quarries brought to a stop. The Europeans were pushed back into the towns, and large areas of the country came under the direct control of the rebels. But by the end of 1956 the French troops in Algeria had been reinforced up to 350,000 men, and the drift towards an independent Arab government on its own territory halted. Twenty thousand or so armed rebels were driven into the hills, and for a political stalemate was substituted a stalemate of force.

In that first two years of the rebellion Arab Algeria was, in the darkness of the insurrectional night, utterly transformed. The paralysing archaism of Arab and Berber society, with their elaborate hierarchies of kinship, their attachment to social and religious forms which are not only pre-modern but pre-Islamic; their depression (less marked among the Berbers but still

important) of the status of women – all this, under the exigencies of the revolutionary war, largely disintegrated. The rebels presented themselves with most of the paraphernalia of the modern state – and particularly with their own tax-collectors and their own judges. Women as well as men fought in the *maquis*, quitting the veil for denims and gun holsters. The rebellion was a decisive victory for the modernist party against the religious party of Messali Hadj, which was bloodily proscribed. It was a rebellion of the young; most of the field commanders were straight from high school or university. In two years Arab society was more drastically modernized than a French initiative could have achieved in twenty.

While the rebel administration grew like a mushroom in a cellar, the French administration disintegrated. Government continued, but it was military and not civil government. Outside the towns the French administration had always been thin on the ground, and now it practically disappeared altogether. From late 1955 the army began to set up the *Sections Administratives Specialisées*, which amounted to a new method of rural government. By the end of 1957 Algeria was being run by the army – in one sense the revolution of 13 May, 1958, was only the extension to France of the military government which had already prevailed in Algeria.

From the beginning, the repercussions of the Algerian revolt had stretched out far beyond France. Directed from Tunis and Cairo, supplied with arms by the communist countries, operating from the Tunisian and Moroccan frontiers, the rebels (recognized as a 'government' by the Maghreb powers in 1958) directed a considerable international diplomacy. Algeria was not a small factor in the French decision to launch the Suez venture in 1956. The Afro-Asian powers sponsored a number of motions in the United Nations in favour of the Algerian rebels, and in 1958 such a motion came very close to success in the General Council.

The United States were silently critical of French policy in Algeria, and their abstention from voting in the United

Nations on the Algerian issue aroused serious alarm in France. When General de Gaulle launched his offer of an Algerian settlement in September 1959, he apparently took full account of world and American opinion. The solution he offered provided for three eventualities, to be laid before the whole Muslim and European population of Algeria as a referendum. The first is independence and secession (though whether this would involve the partition of Algeria was not disclosed); the second, total assimilation into France; the third, regional autonomy within a French federation. The timing proposed was that this settlement should take place within four years from the point where the loss of human life in Algeria had dropped to below 200 lives in a single year. De Gaulle's proposals brought the Algerian question to an entirely new stage. The fatal word 'independence' had been at last pronounced; no new revolution had thereupon broken out in Algiers; the army had shown itself willing to enforce on the *colons* a situation other than the *status quo*.

Early in 1960 Algeria was still a grim and blood-soaked field of human suffering. In the sense that nothing resembling a rebel army was in active operation in the inhabited areas of Algeria, the French Army had succeeded in mastering the rebellion. In the sense that terrorism by individuals and bands up to a hundred or so in number continued, it had not. If the army could be reassured that no Dien Bien Phu was threatened in Algeria, there seemed some small hope that the de Gaulle proposals might one day form the basis of a solution. But so long as the Algerian *colons* are the ultimate arbiters of French policy in Algeria it is clear that no solution is possible. In the disorders following the dismissal by de Gaulle of General Massu in the beginning of 1960 the *colons* challenged the authority of Paris to impose a settlement in Algeria, and were sharply though not decisively defeated by de Gaulle's firm maintenance of public order and of the principle of self-determination in Algeria. But at the same time de Gaulle's secret negotiations with the Algerian rebel leadership broke down, and the hopes of an early agreed settlement were dimmed.

Whatever the result of the de Gaulle proposals, it is evident that social conditions in Algeria are being irrevocably changed by the war and the Gaullist régime. In the country areas – the *bled* – the rebels themselves have transformed the mentality of the population. In the towns the development of industry and the townward drift of tens of thousands of peasants from the insecurity of the *bled* has created a new urban proletariat. Finally, the 'regroupment' camps operated by the army have bodily moved over a million-and-a-half Algerian peasants from their homes to centres supervised by French troops. The structure of Arab society has been attacked at its base; the network of tribal and clan relationships largely dissolved. While a century of French occupation had destroyed only the Arab aristocracy, six years of war have gone far towards breaking down the traditional cadres of the peasantry. The social revolution in Algeria, though different in character, appears to be as profound in depth as any of the other momentous social changes which are taking place in the Arab world.

(d) *The Sahara Territories.* The four million square kilometres of the French Sahara are now administered by a new ministry set up in Paris. This solicitude for the southern wastes arises from the mineral wealth which is now being exploited there – the oil wells of Hassi Messaoud are already established as the most important in Africa, and others on the Libyan frontier may become equally productive. By the end of 1959 the Hassi Messaoud oil was being piped to Bougie on the coast, and within a further year it was expected that the oil from Edjelé would begin to arrive at the Tunisian coast. The total output of these wells is expected in a short time to exceed the total consumption of France, and to become an important factor in the supply of Europe.

The creation of the Saharan territories in 1957 was effected for political purposes. They include the whole of what was the Algerian Sahara, besides huge areas of the French Sudan, Niger and Chad. It is evident that the mineral wealth of the Sahara is

one of the most important factors in French policy in Algeria, and that it will be vital in any future settlement of the Algerian problem. General de Gaulle specifically reserved the operation, control and handling of Saharan oil to France, in his outline of an Algerian settlement, but it was noticeable that he did not proclaim a determination to separate the political control of the Sahara from that of Algeria, in the event of Algerian independence.

3. *Libya*

Libya is a creation of very recent history, and comprises three areas widely different in population and character, separated from one another by long stretches of desert. The two coastal strips of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica are separated by the waste of the Gulf of Sirte. The oases of the Fezzan lie far in the interior. The population of Tripolitania, largely urban, with a considerable Italian minority and a large Berber element, has little in common with that of Cyrenaica, which is almost entirely Arab and nomadic, and is attached to the Senussi religious order which has given Libya its royal dynasty.

Libya was ceded to Italy by the Ottoman Empire in 1912, and was the scene of a very considerable colonizing effort under Fascism. In Cyrenaica the Italians encountered bitter resistance from the Senussi religious order, a foundation of the nineteenth century (its founder was an Algerian) which attained very considerable power in north-east Africa. The country was not pacified until 1931, when the leaders of the order went into exile.

The end of the Second World War saw a period of chaotic uncertainty about Libya's future. After a long international wrangle the proposal to return Tripolitania to Italy failed, and it was decided to make the head of the Senussi order, Sayyid Muhammad Idris al Senussi, the king of a united kingdom of Libya (UNO decision, 1949–50).

The hesitations which accompanied this decision were in part justified by the internal dissensions which split the Libyan

kingdom. The Berber and non-Senussi elements in Tripolitania were unwilling to be ruled by an absentee king; the Cyrenaicans resented the placing of all the effective government authorities in the Tripolitanian province. The first 'party' to appear in Tripolitania was a 'constitutional' version of the old Berber leagues; it was hastily dissolved (1951) and its leader Beshir al-Saadawi exiled.

Libya houses a large American air base (Wheelus Field), and is on the whole inclined towards the west, though with hesitations a little like those of Morocco. It is allied to Tunisia by treaty and in close relations with Morocco; it has recognized the F.L.N. 'government' of Algeria. It is a member of the Arab League, but has friendship treaties with Great Britain, the United States and France; a small force of British troops is still based in Libya. It would be difficult for Libya to survive without the considerable economic aid received from Great Britain and the United States, though this may change now that oil has been discovered in Libyan territory.

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THE AUTHOR:

PETER PARTNER was born in 1924, and educated at Barnet Grammar School and Magdalen College, Oxford. Trained as a medieval historian, he spent four years in Rome writing a doctoral thesis on the history of the Popes and published a learned monograph on the Papal State. He was also the Rome correspondent of *The Observer*. He has traveled widely in the Near East and North Africa and has been writing and broadcasting on the contemporary Arab world since 1955. His particular interests are economic development and the theories of Arab nationalism. He now teaches history at Winchester College. He travels as much as he can during the holidays, usually in North Africa.

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