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The Socialism of the
Ba'th Party

By
George Philemon Khuri

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in the Department of Political Studies
and Public Administration of the

American University of Beirut,
Beirut, Lebanon.

May, 1966.

The Socialism of the
Ba'th Party

Khuri.

To my parents.

Preface.

Although socialism in the Arab world is a new phenomenon, it already constitutes a formidable force in some Arab countries engendering a process of rapid social, political, and economic transformation. The socialist Arab Ba'th Party represents a major pan-Arab socialist movement.

The present study endeavors to present the socialist thought of the Party and the major lines of Ba'thist socialism. This presentation is limited in intent and scope. It has not been planned to trace the origins of the socialist concepts of the Party, or appraise the Party's socialist ideology in the light of the current Ba'thist experiment in power. Nor has our study been intended to draw contrasts and make comparisons between the Ba'th movement and other Arab and non-Arab socialist movements. The whole purpose of this study is to make an objective presentation of the socialist thought of the Party.

In consistency with the limited purpose of this study personal evaluations have been scrupulously avoided, with the exception of some comments made in the Conclusion. Thus, it is only a modest step towards understanding Ba'thist socialism.

The source-material used comprises Party documents as well as the works of top Party leaders. The most important documents are The Resolutions of the Sixth National Conference, and The Theoretical Premises, both of which appear in volume six of The Struggle of the Ba'th (a collection of Party documents), and The Resolutions of the Eighth National Conference on Economic Affairs. Other basic material includes works by Michel 'Aflaq, the founder of the Party, and Dr. Muneef ar-Razzaz, his successor to the General Secretaryship of the Party. In like manner the bibliography comprises only primary sources which deal, in part or in full, with our topic.

Finally, I am particularly indebted to my adviser, Dr. Fayez Sayegh, for his invaluable guidance and cooperation.

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CHAPTER I

The Economic, Political and Social Context of Ba'thi Socialism.

A. The Feudal Heritage.

The decades which witness the birth and evolution of the Ba'th Party are pregnant with the symptoms of social fermentation, an evident sign of the profound, multi-dimensional process of social, political, and economic transformation. As the Arab World gets exposed to the multiplicity of factors and forces making for modernization, it trails behind it the legacy of the past centuries during which it experienced a prolonged political disintegration, as it suffered subjugation to the Ottomans and to western imperialist nations. Thus we find the Arab countries stepping into statehood with a mosaic of political systems, varying in constitutional patterns, when not lacking them at all, but still sharing generally a backward agrarian economy, and its concomitant class order.

As the old fabric of social, political, and economic relations began to crumble, the immediate consequences were progressive in so far as they signified the introduction of new political and economic factors which have served as a catalyst speeding up the pace of social development.

Prior to the commencement of this process of change, feudalism, while it definitely implied a lot of injustice,

was rather cooperative in nature. Feudal lands did not belong to individuals, but to whole tribes, and tribal chieftains, while retaining authority occupied their posts in the service of their tribes, with no unbridgeable differences separating them from their Kinsmen.

The advent of three factors altered the situation:

1. Feudal estates were granted to notables by the Sultans. These notables had no ultimate relationships with the estates, and were often far removed from them.
2. The new system of land registration on the basis of private ownership vested this ownership in the hands of tribal chieftains.
3. The improvements on the mode of living, and the emergence of new needs induced these chieftains to exploit the land to their personal advantage. In consequence, the once intimate and cooperative relationships which had obtained between chiefs on the one hand and tribesmen on the other, were eroded.⁽¹⁾

1. Muneef Ar-Razzaz, The Features of the New Arab Life. (4th. ed; Beirut: Dar Al-'ILm lil-Malayeen, 1960), pp. 116-119, (In Arabic.)

The peasant now became a wage labourer, sinking into increasing poverty, while landlords multiplied their wealth. He lost the human aspect of his relationship with his former chieftain and with the rest of the clan. The nature of the new order came into full light when the independence struggle began to recede as the Arab countries stepped into independent statehood. A feudal capitalist class rose to power in all the Arab countries, exercising full autocratic authority, exploiting the people and hindering them from developing their human potentialities. In short, the Ba'th Party could conceive the Arab nation as one crushed under a feudalistic, capitalistic, economic system inflicting upon it social injustice and causing an inequitable distribution of wealth among its citizens.

While internal conditions favored the evolution of the feudalist capitalist class, this class became the adapted child of imperialism, if not its own creature.

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1. Ibid.
 2. Michel Aflaq, The Struggle for One Destiny (3rd. ed.; Beirut: Dar al-Adaab, 1963), pp.113 & 116. (In Arabic.)
 3. Dar at-Tali'a, The Struggle of the Ba'th (Beirut: Dar at-Tali'a, July 1963 - December 1965), Vol. II, p.56. (A collection of the documents of the Ba'th Party. In Arabic.)

It is true that it led the national struggle against the imperialists, yet, as soon as the causes for this conflict were eliminated, or receded to the background, both parties were quick to recognize their common interests, and the benefits they could reap from mutual cooperation. Both depended on each other for survival: imperialism encouraged the growth of the feudal capitalist class in order to secure its interests, as against the interests of the people as a whole; and this class depended extensively on imperialism for protection as it found itself threatened by the people. The basic relationship stems from economic interests, for both parties thrive on exploitation: feudalism and capitalism exemplifying the exploitation of the indigenous people, and imperialism standing for the exploitation of the under-⁽¹⁾developed countries by the industrialized countries. Thus, we ultimately arrive at the simple fact that feudalism and capitalism signify the existence of an economic, political,⁽²⁾ and social order which enslaves and exploits the people.

This order entails grave consequences to society.

Peasants and workers are reduced to mere machines, and

1. Muneef ar-Razzaz, "Why Socialism ... Now?", Dar at-Tali'a, Studies in Socialism (Beirut: Dar at-Tali'a, 1960), p.124. (In Arabic.)

become destitute of the basic human qualities which engender progress. Shorn of their economic, political, and social rights, and crushed in body and soul in their economic plight, sunk in poverty, disease, and ignorance, they can only breed to supply the needs of the feudal capitalist class.

Indeed, all the calamities which have befallen the Arabs since W.W.I. can be traced back to definite, specific, economic, political, and social conditions.⁽¹⁾ Arab society is literally in a diseased state. The destiny of the nation is at the mercy of a handful of professional politicians representing the interests of the feudalist capitalist minority.⁽²⁾

As a result, the vast potentialities of the nation are being wasted, instead of being utilized in the general interest of all the people. The Arab nation cannot, accordingly, hope to achieve economic, social, educational or moral progress, for its people have been "robbed of the vitality of life, and the essence of humanity."⁽³⁾ Nor can it aspire towards any genuine and wholesome achievement on the national level. Its unity remains a distant dream.

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1. Ibid.
 2. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. I, p.253.
 3. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of the New Arab Life, p.120.

Feudalism and capitalism, the close allies of imperialism, both the co-exploiters of the people, are vehemently opposed to Arab unity. For unity threatens their vested interests, unless it takes a formal, superficial, shape, shorn of any real content, one among the handful of monarchs and rulers, which would serve only to fasten the grip of the exploitative classes on the people. Therefore the Ba'th Party rejects any scheme for unity under the tutelage of the traditional leadership.⁽¹⁾

Such is the legacy of the past: "Millions are dying... being doomed... are suffering ... living under death-spelling conditions ... (in) hunger, ignorance, disease, hopelessness ... and it is our duty to liberate them from the murderers ... killers ... from the feudalist, the merchant, the professional politician, and from all the life-destroying circumstances connected with their being."⁽²⁾

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1. Ar-Razzaz, "Why Socialism ... Now?", Studies in Socialism, p. 131.
 2. Naji 'Alloush, Revolution ... and the Masses (Beirut, Dar at-Tali'a, 1962), p. 325. (In Arabic).

B. Socialism and Arab
Nationalism

1. Nationalism

While nationalism in Europe might be said to have already set on its eventide, having been discredited for excesses which proved calamitous to Europe and to the world; while it manifested itself as an aggressive force, both among the European nations themselves, and vis-a-vis the countries of Asia and Africa during the colonial era; and while Europeans aspire to some supra-national political order; nationalism in Africa and Asia has evolved, with the eclipse of colonialism, as the spear-head of the struggle for independence.

Moreover, while nationalism in Europe was above all a bourgeois exploitative nationalism, not only in regard to the colonies, but also vis-a-vis the European working classes, nationalism in Afro-Asia united all classes, at least during the struggle for independence. It acquired a revolutionary force against imperialism. For the revolution against imperialism was instigated by nationalist motivation.⁽¹⁾

1. Al-Ba'ith, October 27, 1965

2. The nation is the best setting for human growth.

The nation is believed to be the natural and most fitting ground for the development of the higher human traits in the individual. Now since the nation is thought of as being primarily constituted by the masses of the people who through their suffering "represent the noble reality of the nation", and constitute the massive bulk of its human wealth, the liberation of the people from the social and economic fetters paralyzing general progress, and perpetuating the state of impotency of the whole nation, is the fundamental condition for its "resurrection". Therefore, the road to nationalism is a socialist road which not only includes the material conditions of life, but makes of these the necessary means for releasing, as it were, the potentialities of the Arab genius and the Arab personality, the creativity of the Arab people, towards the great objective of Arab nationalism: the celebrated Arab
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renaissance.

3. Nationalism and national reconstruction.

Nationalism, in a number of cases, did not confine

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1. Abdullah Abdul-Daim, Socialism and Democracy
(Beirut: Dar al-Aadab, n.d.), pp. 84-85. (In Arabic.)

itself to the achievement of independence. Arab nationalism, as conceived and preached by the Ba'th Party, has taken a radical step towards, and is bent on reconstructing the nation from within: reconstructing it economically., politically, and socially, yet, the nation cannot realize this basic quest if the economic system permits the exploitation of the majority by the minority. Hence, socialism becomes the natural and logical system for "realizing the humanity of the national concept"⁽¹⁾. It follows that "nationalism in Asia and Africa is a means of liberation from imperialism and from every internal exploitation."⁽²⁾

Despite the fact that the bourgeoisie and the feudal class were instrumental in achieving independence, liberation "from every internal exploitation" cannot be carried through by this class since this liberation is to be carried against its vested interests. It is the masses who have to carry on the struggle. And it is not only a struggle for certain socialist reforms: the objectives are broader, and more inclusive; they are set on a national basis and, as will be

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1. Abdullah Abdul-Daim, The National Culture (Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1960), p. 57. (In Arabic.)
 2. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. VI, 235.

explained, include the pre-requisite of Arab unity. The national cause is thus left to the workers, peasants, the little bourgeoisie, and the educated revolutionary groups. These have nothing to lose as the regional barriers, the protective fabric of regional vested interests, fall. The conclusion readily presents itself: the road to Arab nationalism is the road to socialism as well; it is the road of the toiling masses of the people.⁽¹⁾

4. Socialism derives from nationalism.

Still a further point may be adduced in this regard. The Arab world remained comparatively isolated from the forces that have been reshaping the world, and ushering it to what we might loosely call the modern era. It had remained confined to the legacy of its past and contented with it, with only marginal efforts at modernization that did not take root in Arab soil. But with the termination of W.W.I., the process of modernization was accelerated. The national question came first and foremost, and from it issued the need for social reform. In other words, the national

1. Ibid., p. 252.

question as such has drawn attention to the appalling state of the nation and, consequently, to the acute need for a radical social reform.

Thus socialism in the Arab world actually derives from Arab nationalism. Article four of the Constitution of the Party states that "socialism is necessary for Arab nationalism, being the ideal system which allows the Arab people to develop its potentialities and genius, enables the nation to increase its production, raises its morale and strengthens the ties of brotherhood among its members."⁽¹⁾ Nor has it primarily ensued from a consideration of the phenomena of poverty and social injustice, except in so far as these were related to the problems of the Arab countries which were pre-eminently national in character. It is historically demonstrable that "socialist thought has appeared as a consequence to the general national awakening which has stamped the history of this area since the beginning of this century."⁽²⁾

All this invites the conclusion that the realization of socialism is a fundamental condition for the very survival

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1. Constitution of the Arab Renaissance (Ba'ath) Party, translated from Arabic for academic use by the Department of Public Administration, Am. Univ. of Beirut, 1957.
 2. Studies in Socialism, preface, p.7

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of the Arab nation. It provides the positive remedy for the diseased state of the nation. It is the only course for building its under-developed economy. But it is noteworthy to mention that the Ba'th Party does not consider that the contradictions of the bourgeois stage should first crystallize before socialism commences.⁽²⁾

One last point to be noted here is derived from the nature of the basic relationship between socialism and Arab unity. If it signifies anything, Arab nationalism implies Arab unity. From this fact socialism derives a fundamental aspect of its relationship with nationalism. "The material basis of socialism acquires its full range of application when it has for its arena the Arab nation as an economic and human unity."⁽³⁾ It is unequivocally affirmed that socialism cannot be applied in a perfect form except in the condition of complete Arab unity. Only in this condition will the full human and material resources necessary for its application become available. Thus the Arab socialist experiment should basically acquire a nationalist character, for only on the

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1. Michel Aflaq, Towards Resurrection (3rd.ed.; Beirut: Dar at-Tali'a, 1963), p.216. (In Arabic.)
 2. Mustafa al-Hallaj, "Views in Arab Socialism," Studies in Socialism, p. 63.
 3. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. VI, p. 247

level of the whole nation will it grow into all its dimen-
(1)
sions.

5. The special character of Arab socialism.

Furthermore, Arab socialism is to be conditioned by Arab nationalism. That is to say it should meet the requirements of Arab nationalism. The Arabs are among the millions of people who are struggling for the attainment of socialism, of the socialism which fits best their distinct problems. Thus the Party preaches an Arab socialism. But while this Arab characterization of socialism stresses the basic principle of the Party, i.e. Arab nationalism, still this characterization does not constitute an original Arab formulation of socialist principles. For socialism is fundamentally "a seeking of the humanity in every individual"; it is a message to the toiling and oppressed, and has a common heritage of human thought and struggle. Particularities arise only in so far as this toiling and oppressed man, this rebelling individual, seeking his freedom, is actually the product of a specific society, with its unique national character, and is conditioned by particular circumstances issuing from the historical experiences of his society. Accordingly, he

1. Ba'th Party, The Resolutions of the Eighth National Conference on Economic Affairs, April, 1965, p.9.
(A Party document. In Arabic.)

is not an abstract man, but a being bearing with him the special stamp of his nation. Thus, when he seeks a just social system, he does so through his being an Arab. That abstract person who is not subject to the influences of history and society does not exist.⁽¹⁾

6. Socialism protects Arab Nationalism from Nationalist excesses and neo-colonialism

Yet another relationship is cited between Arab nationalism and socialism. Socialism, the Party believes, guarantees that the new approach to the concept of Arab nationalism will not slip into national fanaticism of the fascist variety, nor will it lapse to an anachronistic, self-defeating concept, bearing a traditionalistic religious guise. Socialism, and its concomitant principle of liberty, guard Arab nationalism from nationalist excesses. It is inconceivable to the Ba'th Party that a socialist nationalism could be fanatical. For the basic philosophy of socialism implies the eradication of racialism, exploitation, and domination of one group by another.⁽²⁾

And finally socialism is the means for combating neo-

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1. Jamal al-Atasi, "Socialism: Past and Future," Studies in Socialism, pp. 102 - 104.
 2. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, p. 95.

colonialism. For neo-colonialism manifests itself through foreign and Arab capital invested in the Arab world and exploiting its resources. A socialist economy would naturally put an end to this exploitation.⁽¹⁾

It is fitting to conclude that only by liberating the people from poverty and deprivation can the conditions for the existence of the good Arab citizen be created: the Arab citizen who can lend a palpable expression to the meaning and essence of his nationalism. For nationalism remains an empty word so long as oppression, poverty, and deprivation prevail.⁽²⁾

Thus socialism is not a fortuitous aspect of Arab nationalism, but one of its cardinal traits. We may not even speak of a nationalism and a socialism, but of a nationalism which is in itself socialism. Should this nationalism not be itself socialism, it would perish. Besides, stressing the Arab character of Arab socialism, that it is in the very core of Arab nationalism, permits the latter to develop freely without being bound by concepts and principles external to it, and thus renders it free to formulate its own concepts of man, morals, history, and politics.⁽³⁾

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1. American University of Beirut, the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Arab Documents, 1963, p.460.
 2. Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, p.223.
 3. Ibid., p.346.

C. Socialism and Arab
Unity

1. The primacy of Arab Unity.

The first of the three "basic principles" of the Constitution of the Ba'th Party asserts that "the Arab homeland (is) an indivisible political and economic unity" and that "no Arab country can live in isolation from another Arab country". Indeed Arab unity ranks highest in the scale of values of the Party. Faith in a single Arab nation is the first article of belief. All other objectives derive from that of Arab unity. They are intended to supplement Arab unity in the realization of the objectives of which it is the primary condition.

To begin with, certain clarifications ought to be made. There are two alternatives for achieving Arab unity: the one brought about under the leadership of the feudalist capitalist class, the other attained through the struggle of the masses of the people. The feudalist capitalist class has its own schemes for Arab unity, and exploits them in order to distract the attention of the people from their social demands, and to create a counter-force to oppose the advancement of the social revolution gathering momentum in Arab society. This unity looks suspect

and gloomy. It engenders more exploitation as it is primarily a unity of the exploiting traditional classes, and the state thus created would be "a state of slaves"⁽¹⁾.

It follows that under its traditional leadership the Arab world cannot hope for a genuine unity, for "a unity of the people and for the people". The autocratic and exploitative nature of this leadership renders the feudalist and capitalist class an impediment to Arab unity.

2. The Path to Arab Unity.

The struggle for Arab unity has, then, to take the form of the struggle against those groups who derive certain interests from the fragmented state of the Arab nation. First among these are the owners of vast capital and estates, the capitalist and feudalist class. Socialism becomes imperative,⁽²⁾ the pre-requisite of Arab unity. And, simultaneously, unity provides the proper framework of struggle for socialism, as it strengthens the masses and amply provides the requisite

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1. 'Aflaq, The struggle for One Destiny, p. 14.
 2. Abdullah Abdul-Daim, The Arab Homeland and the Revolution (Beirut: Dar al-Aadab, 1963), p. 273. See also Ar-Razzaz, "Why Socialism ... Now?", Studies in Socialism pp. 132 - 133.

material conditions and resources for a viable socialist state. Thus "Arab unity and socialism are two problems inseparably connected on the... economic level,"⁽¹⁾ towards the ultimate goal of the liberation of man from exploitation and enabling him to regain, as it were, his humanity.⁽²⁾ Socialism becomes really the factual content of Arab unity ... which makes unity the human and economic framework (which is) the more harmonious with the comprehensive and radical nature (of the Arab renaissance).⁽³⁾"

3. The urgency of Arab Unity

Socialism has a more immediate bearing on Arab unity. The industrialization of the Arab countries is presently proceeding without any coordination on the national level due to the state of disunity. The result is a duplication of efforts and the wasting of resources, and the growth of competing industries in the various segments of the Arab nation. Once the inevitable unity is achieved, a collision of interests will be unavoidable. These considerations accentuate the need for hastening the realization of Arab

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1. The Struggle of the Ba'ith, Vol. VI, p.255
 2. Ibid., Vol. IV, p.205.
 3. Ibid., Vol. VI, pp.254-55

unity, in order that much, otherwise wasted efforts and resources, might be put into better service. For the more the economies of the Arab countries develop on separate lines, the greater the sacrifice and the heavier the burden will be which an eventually unified economy will have to sustain. Thus economic unity stands out as an urgent necessity for channelling the resources of the Arab countries in a way conducive to the good of the nation as a whole, and would be a fitting prelude for political unity. (1)

However, the difficulties of Arab socialists do not end here. Should a socialist regime be established in one country, Arab socialists would be faced with the dilemma of the need for quick industrialization and reform in the absence of a comprehensive plan on the national level. At the same time it does not fall to a single country alone to plan for the industrialization and development of the whole Arab nation, nor can it do so. Thus the new socialist regime will encounter a multiplicity of difficulties should it attempt to implement socialism in any one segment by itself.

1. Al-Hallaj, "Views in Arab Socialism," Studies in Socialism, pp.56-61.

But should a socialist regime falter in its efforts to effect agrarian and industrial reforms, should it hesitate to press forward its plans for industrialization and for developing and improving the agricultural sector, the whole socialist movement would be discredited in the eyes of the masses, the millions of workers and peasants being disappointed as their hopes and expectations would not have materialized. ⁽¹⁾ Thus the trend is for the implementation of socialism in one or more segments of the nation, as the case may be. Initiatives on the part of any one segment of the nation, and the adoption of all necessary measures to raise the standard of living of the masses, and to effect economic, labour, and agrarian reforms become, accordingl⁽²⁾y imperative. The socialist experiment in Syria stands to demonstrate this trend.

4. Unity: The quest of the masses.

Viewed from another angle, the linkage of socialism to unity charges the latter with great momentum, rendering it the living quest of the masses, springing from the realities of daily life. Indeed it is the only way for making unity a "vital

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1. Ibid.,
 2. Arab Documents. 1963, p.460.

fact in the life of the people, sought by every worker whenever he seeks his bread, demands a wage increase ... and whenever a poor oppressed peasant reclaims his right to his product and seeks his freedom from oppression.⁽¹⁾ This socialist approach to unity enables it to acquire its new and revolutionary character, signifying a decisive departure from traditional methods, means, and content. The cause of unity becomes espoused by the masses, and buttressed by their struggle for the betterment of their general condition, no longer being a subject of political negotiations and agreements among traditional Arab governments.⁽²⁾

1. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, p.219.
2. Ibid., p.111.

CHAPTER II

Exposition of Ba'thi Socialism

A. General Features of Ba'thi Socialism

1. No special theory of socialism

The first and foremost characterization of the socialism of the Ba'th Party is its being an Arab socialism. This simply signifies that its conceivers have meant it to be an answer to the problems of the Arab nation. For, above all, the Party is dedicated to the task of bringing about an Arab resurrection, the resurrection of the Arab nation. The introduction of socialism to Arab society is considered a basic condition not only for the resurrection of the nation, but even for its survival. For this resurrection and this survival are dependent on the improvement of the lot of the Arab individual, by securing to him "the just needs of life"⁽¹⁾.

In this effort, the Party points out that it does not seek an original formulation of socialist principles. When Ba'thists speak of socialism they refer, rather, to the social, political, economic, and humanitarian problems with which it deals, critically evaluated in the light of the special needs

1. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, pp.33 & 116.

of the Arab nation, as conditioned by its special historical, social, and human circumstances. ⁽¹⁾ The socialist system which the Ba'th Party seeks is not, thus, pre-determinable in its details, though its major lines and aims are clearly discernible and distinct. For the Party recognizes a set of basic principles without which no socialist system can be said to exist. But particulars are to gradually crystallize in a way befitting the special general conditions of the nation, and the transitory circumstances obtaining at any one period.

While it could be expected that this kind of approach to socialism might lead to laxity and confuse the system, throwing it to a state of chaos, the Party hastens to warn against such a turn of events. Vigilance should be kept that the system might not turn against itself and defeat its purpose. It asserts that there is much difference between gradual progress and retreat, and between leniency and chaos. The main objectives should be well established and clear cut from the outset. ⁽²⁾

In a recent appraisal of its socialist approach, the Party states that it rejects both western reformative socia-

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1. Al-Atasi, "Socialism: Past and Future", Studies in Socialism, pp.95-96.
 2. Abdul-Daim, The National Culture, pp.72-74.

lism, and a stalinist application of it. True to its pragmatic method, it relies on the realities of the objective world in evolving its theory. While it accepts the scientific method which is founded on certain permanent principles, it recognizes the fact that the special conditions and particularities of a given situation affect the prediction of scientific laws. The socialist concept of the Party has been derived from a profound and faithful evaluation " of the requirements of the Arab struggle against imperialism and reaction". Thus the distinction is drawn between the scientific approach of the Ba'th and the blind adoption of scientifically based programs tailored for foreign situations, and lacking the characteristics of the Arab scene. (1) After all, any attempt at socialism which is not grounded in an objective scientific assessment of the conditions of the society concerned is liable (2) to fail. Nevertheless the Party believes that "the beneficial experiments of nations are the property of humanity, and we ought to be open towards these experiments, and know them in order to benefit from them and adopt (of them) what befits our interest and conditions ... " (3)

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1. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. VI, pp. 233-34, & 237.
 2. Economic Resolutions, p. 34.
 3. Ibid., p. 41.

There remains one cardinal point to be mentioned in this regard. The Party has been primarily occupied with national issues since its formation, and its struggle has been pre-eminently political. Besides, emphasis on nationalism incumbent during the struggle with the Arab communists accounts for the lack of clarity in the socialist concept of the Ba'th. Also, the emphasis on the nationalist character of Arab socialism has not developed a theoretical content.⁽¹⁾

1. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol VI, pp. 282 - 83.

2. Basic Characteristics of Socialism

While socialism might be considered an end in itself in as much as it is an economic ordering of society, yet in as much as any economic ordering serves a particular social and political philosophy, socialism is only a means to an end. This end is none other than man himself: it is "a seeking of the humanity in every individual"⁽¹⁾, the liberation of man "from the mastery of things"⁽²⁾. Socialism creates the proper conditions which enable man to exploit his potentialities and develop his talents⁽³⁾. Thus, "socialism is not only the creation of an equitable economic condition, but it is also, and above all, a concept of man and society based on scientific and rational principles which consecrate faith in man's ability to define his destiny, legislate his (political) systems, and organize the affairs of society on (a basis of) rationality and freedom."⁽⁴⁾ It "means to us the modern Arab society, firmly set on a basis of unity, justice, and liberty, according to a modern scientific humanitarian concept, and under a popular democratic

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1. Al-Atasi, "Socialism: Past and Future", Studies in Socialism, p.103.
 2. Ibid., p.100.
 3. Abdul-Daim, The National Culture, p.57.
 4. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. VI, p.245.

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rule." Hence socialism provides us with a concept of the modern Arab state, towards which the Ba'th aspires; it provides methods and means for economic and social organization, for the redistribution of land, and for industrialization. It sets a basis for the relationships among individuals in society, and between individuals and the state⁽²⁾

It accomplishes all this by itself being a way of understanding society and its problems. It helps man to understand the complications and implications of these problems, and enables him to appreciate the value of unified effort and struggle against oppressive social conditions. "The socialist view point opens our eyes at the laws which make history, just as the scientific viewpoint opens our eyes at the laws which make chemistry."⁽³⁾ It encompasses life at large, and is the natural outcome of man's understanding of his human circumstances. So it enables men in all walks of life to seek and attain their liberation: "The liberation of the peasant from servitude to the soil, the liberation of the worker from servitude to

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1. Al-Atasi, "Socialism: Past and Future," Studies in Socialism, p. 101.
 2. Ibid, pp. 101-102.
 3. Ar-Razzaz, "Why Socialism ... Now?", Studies in Socialism, p. 135.

the machine, and the liberation of the enslaved from the fetters of tyranny, myth, and exploitation." ⁽¹⁾ At the point of its consumation, socialism is the total liberation of man.

Socialism deals, thus, with economics, ethics, morals, science, history, and all the aspects of life. This is as much true also of tribalism, feudalism, and capitalism. All signify actual socio-political and economic conditions, the characteristics of which science has discovered, and all of which depend on the basic truth that the economic set up and relationships in society determine its other aspects, that the nature of economic relationships among the people determine ⁽²⁾ all the aspects of their life, that material conditions acquire spiritual significance vis-a-vis man, and that his struggle for improving these conditions is actually the ⁽³⁾ struggle for recovering his humanity.

However, this is not to belittle the significance of other factors which affect man and society . For just as economics impinge on history, literature, social and political ⁽⁴⁾ relationships, it is also affected by them.

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1. Ibid.
 2. Ar-Razzaz, "Why Socialism ... Now?"; Studies in Socialism, pp.119-21.
 3. 'Aflaq, The Struggle for One Destiny, p.45.
 4. Ar-Razzaz, "Why Socialism ... Now?", Studies in Socialism, pp. 119-121.

3. Socialism as an economic system.

In its economic aspect socialism is a movement directed at a radical change in the system of the ownership of the means of production, including land, and a new ordering of labour and the distribution of production. It endeavours to establish an economy radically different from capitalist economy, which is rooted in competition and exploitation, replacing it by a system which recognizes the priority of human labour.⁽¹⁾

In the field of production, the distinctive feature of socialism is the nationalization of public assets and the vital industries, an equitable distribution of land, and governmental supervision or direct control of external and internal commercial activities.⁽²⁾ It entails a just distribution of the national income. The master rule is: from each according to his capacities, to each according to his contribution.⁽³⁾ The possibility of distributing wealth on the basis of "from each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs,"

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1. Al-Atasi, "Socialism: Past and Future," Studies in Socialism, pp. 99-100.
 2. 'Aflaq, "Arab Socialism to be Determined according to the Objectives of the Arab Renaissance," Studies in Socialism, p.31.
 3. Jamal Al-Atasi, "Socialism: Liberation through Struggle," Studies in Socialism, p.112.

is rejected. Differences in the purchasing power of citizens, which arise from the differences of their capacity for work, and enable them to gratify their needs and desires in varying degrees, are accepted.

However, the distribution of incomes alone will not permit the development of ever widening differences, for socialism abolishes inherited privileges of wealth. The individual is left alone with his personal abilities. This by itself does not leave sufficient room for the growth of excessive differences of wealth among the people. ⁽¹⁾ But it should be noted that the Party does not intend through socialism to affect an equality in ⁽²⁾ poverty. In this last endeavour it ought to avoid both rightist and leftist excesses. The rightist bourgeois mode of thought, hesitant and attached to bourgeois interests, forms an obstacle in the path of socialization. On the other hand, leftist emulations which do not issue from a proper understanding of material conditions, but from blind enthusiasm, are no less an obstacle in the path towards

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1. Al-Hallaj, "Views in Arab Socialism," Studies in Socialism, pp. 66-77.
 2. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. II, p. 248, See also Arab Documents, 1963, -p.460.

(1)
socialization.

It is, perhaps, fitting to conclude with the general characterization with which 'Aflaq describes socialism. Put in its simplest terms, socialism means the sharing of the resources of the nation by all its citizens with the intention of improving their life and the conditions of their nation. Simultaneously, socialism has another meaning, a "natural and loveable" one which belongs to all nations in all times, a meaning more enduring than a concept. We may understand it to mean the return of the people to the natural lawful condition which ensures to each his due according to what he deserves; and that proper conditions should obtain enabling the people to develop their talents and capacities. Socialism is not a strange and difficult thing, nor a body of complex theories. It is a simple and logical matter. (2)

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1. Economic Resolutions, p.34.
 2. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, p.216.

B. Revolution, Violence,
and Gradualism.

1. The Case for Revolution

Article (6) of the Constitution of the Party states:

"The Arab socialist Party is a revolutionary party which believes that its main objectives - the revival of Arab nationalism and the building up of socialism - can only be achieved through revolution and struggle, and that reliance on slow development and contentment with partial and superficial reform threaten these objectives with failure and loss. The Party therefore decides;

" ...

" (c) to rise in revolt against corruption in all spheres of intellectual, economic, social and political life."

Revolution (inqilab) in Ba'th ideology denotes a number of implications. It includes a coup d'état; a comprehensive and radical change in the nation which displaces the corrupt economic, political, and social order by an entirely new one; and a profound change within the individual affecting

his understanding and concepts, and his whole attitude to life and to his nation.

The Party strives for a comprehensive and radical revolution which is to involve all the people. For the drastic alteration in the nation's life sought by the Ba'thi revolution (inqilab) cannot be realized by means of the armed forces, but through the struggle of the people. "The army might cooperate with the people, but it cannot alone realize a revolution (inqilab) in the sense understood by our Party."⁽¹⁾ Nor can this alteration be achieved by means of slow evolutionary methods. In order that the Arab nation might be able to bridge the wide chasm separating^{it} from the present state of advanced nations, and free itself from torpidity, corruption, and exploitation, it has to take the path of revolution. Gradual reform would cause it to lose sight of its goals, would obscure them and endanger its very survival. Indeed, gradualism can only cause a further deterioration in its condition.⁽²⁾ "The change of one social system to another, (specially in the under-developed countries)

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1. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. IV, pp.21,39,& 40.
 2. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, pp.77 and 167.

has to take place by means of a qualitative leap ... which eliminates the rotten economic basis of society, and the political, legal, social, and educational framework.⁽¹⁾"

It is only logical that the Ba'th Party rejects the progressive gestures which the feudal and capitalist regimes make, whether in regard to social reforms or towards general Arab issues. For it considers such gestures as an attempt to conceal realities and distract the people from their real interests and aims. The feudal and capitalist class is the captive of its own social, political, and economic interests, and therefore cannot go as far in its reforms as to restore to the people their rights; for this, in the nature of the case, leads to its disintegration as such.⁽²⁾ In other words, any reforms which aim at adjusting the capitalist economy to new conditions with the ulterior aim of prolonging its life, are rejected, despite the fact that they might affect certain undeniable improvements.⁽³⁾

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1. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. VI, p. 246.
 2. Ar-Razzaz, "Why Socialism ... Now?", Studies in Socialism, pp. 135-36.
 3. (Anon.) "The Role of Economic Programming and its Requirements," Studies in Socialism, p.161.

One apparent contradiction confronts us at this point. The Party stresses its rejection of gradual methods and parliamentary means, in order that it may concentrate its efforts on developing the means of mass struggle, involving all kinds of violence. Justification of this course has been found in the dictatorial police - like nature of political regimes in the Arab world, which attempt to submerge this fact behind a façade of parliamentarianism.⁽¹⁾ On the other hand, the Party envisages a parliamentary system of government, and never fails to declare its attachment to democracy. Article (14) of the Constitution of the Party states that "the system of government in the Arab State shall be a parliamentary constitutional system."

This apparent contradiction resolves itself as it is pointed out that the Party discredits the traditional parliamentary regimes. The democracy it preaches is a popular democracy which enables all the people to have their say in the affairs of their nation, through a wide diversity of popular organizations functioning at all levels. But above all it is a democracy to be practiced within the framework and in the service of the general objectives of the Party.

1. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. V, p. 20.

The revolutionary effort has naturally to be directed against those groups which have vested interests in the standing political and economic order, and has to be shouldered by those who suffer the injustices of the current situation. It is then obvious that the ruling feudal capitalist class forms the target of the revolution, while the masses of the people, "the workers, the peasants, and all the educated groups who reject life in an oppressive backward society, ... should array themselves in a single front, for the present social order cannot be changed except by struggle and revolution (inqilab)."⁽¹⁾

True to this policy line, and under the stress of difficult circumstances, the Party in its efforts to "exterminate tyrannical" rulers, has had to resort to "ferocious struggle". In their pamphlets and articles the Ba'thists often used such language as: "The day when (the masses) will themselves grasp the reins of their government will be a grim day to those who block their way. Gibbets and death tools will be erected, and they will be made an example to (other) red-handed tyrants. ... That day is close at hand; prepare your coffins, and dig your graves (ready) for the moment your treacherous rule will totter ..."⁽²⁾

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1. Al-Atasi, "Socialism: Liberation Through Struggle," Studies in Socialism, p.116.
 2. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. V, pp.32 & 175.

The logic of revolution reaches further still in justifying violence and non-democratic means. While it is advised that violence should not be used where it can be avoided, nevertheless, where and when it is imperative, hesitation to employ it might aggravate still further certain situations which would ultimately need severer measures and more violence to rectify. Moreover, the use of violence as a means to establish and defend a revolutionary regime is logically derived from the revolution itself. Personal preferences do not count here. The authority which is arrived at, and more precisely, usurped, by force, has, in the nature of the case, to use force to defend itself during its early stage. "The usurpation of authority by armed violence cannot but bring about, whether we like it or not, ... the use of force against those who oppose authority. This is a general truth which applies to every armed event."⁽²⁾

The Party believes that it is obliged, in the fulfillment of its mission, to deal rather harshly with the people in order to awaken their self-consciousness.⁽³⁾

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1. Abdul-Daim, The Arab Homeland and the Revolution, p.59.
 2. The Preparatory Committee for the Seventh National Conference, The Crisis of the Socialist Arab Ba'th Party through its Experiment in Iraq (n.d.), pp.109-110. (A publication of the leftist group of the Party. In Arabic.) See also Economic Resolutions, p.38.
 3. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, p.161.

The unipue characteristic of this harsh struggle is the fact that it is primarily motivated by love of the people, and not by hatred and bitterness, envy and desire. Love in its truth, says 'Aflaq, is not merciful, for to love the people is to desire for them a happy and respectful life. In striving towards this end, the Ba'th will not avoid the use of coercive power against all those who impede the progress of the people towards the good life; the implication being that even the suffering masses of the people who will be the first beneficiaries of the revolutionary system, might resist it out of their ignorance and their traditional attachment to the exploiting classes.⁽¹⁾

2, The case for gradualism.

Gradualism , however, is not without its advocates in the top leadership of the Party. Despite the fact that events have been running in the opposite direction, this approach should not, perhaps, be discarded. The ex-Secretary General, Muneef ar-Razzaz, speaks of implementing reforms conducive to socialism without need for violence, and in fact are

1. Ibid ., p.224.

designed to forestall it. To avoid the confiscation of land as practiced by revolutionary systems, and the long-lasting bitterness which results, land owners might be induced to sell their lands for long term installments, with strict limitations on ownership and high progressive taxes reaching to 100% on extensive holdings. The reform of commerce can also take place without the necessity of violent measures. A gradual take-over of large and medium size industry by the government and by public organizations can be employed. Proper long term compensation should be provided for. These measures, together with high progressive taxes, would gradually melt down amassed wealth, redistributing it in society at large. Violence and revolution, which are unavoidable only if the standing government persists in its reluctance to introduce reforms, can thus be averted.⁽¹⁾

Thus socialism can be gradually implemented, and can be "the result of a natural absorption, as much as is possible, of the capitalist system."⁽²⁾ Basically, the revolutionary trend of the Arab movement would be retained. For the revolutionary

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1. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of the New Arab Life, pp.211-14.
 2. Abdul-Daim, The National Culture, p.67.

principle means above all the presentation of radical solutions to the problems of society. And socialism itself is a revolutionary principle "because it is a comprehensive and complete solution to the problems of society which rejects piecemeal reforms and does not accept half-solutions." The significant thing to note is that "the arrival at revolutionary principles does not necessarily and always occur by violent means."⁽¹⁾ Still a further affirmation is made. It is wrong to believe that gradualism is not a revolutionary means. What is important is progress, development, according to a set plan leading to a complete revolution, and fully maintaining the socialist spirit all through. Within the limits of this gradual reformative approach, its advocates still sound the warning that gradualism should not lead to a truce with corruption at the expense of the long expected revolution, and that there should not be any hesitation in taking all necessary steps to execute the plan. Difficulties should be encountered one at a time, the next step being prepared in the light of the current one. Nor is this the longer of the two roads: for the violent coercive implementation of

1. Ibid., pp.67-68.

socialism at one stroke might produce consequences the detrimental effects of which it would take long to remove, even though primary success is achieved. (1)

The fitting conclusion which seems to run harmoniously with the course of events is the affirmation that the deterioration of Arab society, the meagerness of its production, and the "fearful" differences among its classes render futile any attempt at reform which falls short of a radical change of the very foundations of society. It is the opinion of 'Aflaq that moderation and extremism are not a matter of opinion and disposition, but a question depending on the condition and needs of society, in the light of which there is no room for choice. The Arab nation needs to be saved from utter extinction. The socialism which suits it cannot be but revolutionary (inqilabiyyah) in its concept, revolutionary in its method, that it might fulfill its mission. "The problem at hand is the livelihood of tens of thousands of the Arab people, even though this should require the death of (few) scores of hundreds of Arab feudalists." (2)

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1. Ibid., pp.68-70.
 2. 'Aflaq, "The Determination of Arab Socialism in accordance with the Objectives of the Arab Renaissance," Studies in Socialism, pp.32,33, & 35.

C.

Class Struggle
and Exploitation

Frequent reference is made to the notion of class and class struggle through - out Ba'thi writings. But no effort has been made to expound the official Party line in these areas with the exception of the recent attempt during the Sixth National Conference, which presented the official view-point of the Party in general terms. Consequently one has mainly to rely on references to this problem found in the writings of the top leaders of the Party. Though one cannot be sure of how much they represent the official Party line, and how much they are only personal judgements; nevertheless they constitute a body of ideas which at least indicate the general trend and orientation of Ba'thi thought regarding these matters. Here it should be pointed out that view-points expressed in the material cited do not contribute to a homogeneous whole. Contradictions appear at a number of points. These might have arisen from two sources: first, the material cited extends through a relatively long period of time during which opinions and judgements could have changed; and second, these opinions and judgements belong primarily to individuals as such, and naturally vary according to their individual authors. However it may be, the following

is a general account of Ba'thi thought regarding class struggle and exploitation taken as a whole, and proceeding from mere hints and vague or indefinite references to this phenomenon, to its ultimate and official recognition by the Party. But this presentation does not follow a chronological order.

1. Notion of Class.

It is perhaps proper to start by identifying the classes which the Party recognizes as such, in order to elucidate the general class concept of the Ba'th.

Throughout their writings Ba'thists speak of the feudal and capitalist class, at times referring to both as constituting a single class. While the feudal class reaches back in its origin to past history, the capitalist class appears with the introduction of large-scale commerce and industry. The justification for considering them as almost a single class derives from two considerations: first: both are considered as exploitative classes, and second, members of the traditional feudal class have become themselves capitalists.

Reference is also made to the class of peasants and the class of workers. A rather more articulate classification

appeared during the Sixth National Conference. Now the peasantry is described as a largely immobilized class, whereas the workers are more class conscious. The little bourgeoisie forms another class. Its allegiance is split between the Party and the capitalist class. Finally, mention is made of the educated class this is not a class in the full sense, for those who are supposed to constitute it are affiliated either with the feudal capitalist class, or with the masses of the people. But it has a distinct revolutionary tradition and is often referred to as the "educated revolutionary groups"⁽¹⁾.

2. Social disparities and imperialism.

Being primarily concerned with the individual, the Party naturally looks with bitter dissatisfaction at the grim economic condition of the millions of the Arab people, deeply sunk in a state of poverty, and leading a most miserable life. The first premise is that this great disparity between the very rich and small minority and the very poor and vast majority is unnatural; it has not been due to any basic difference in character or abilities, for people are born equally rich in the potentialities with which nature endows the human being. Only in society do varia-

1. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. VI, pp. 314-16.

tions develop, and only society is responsible for disabling the majority of its members from developing their potentialities, and denying them the opportunities to lead a better life, save in very exceptional cases. This social order is designed to serve the interests of the rich minority which takes full advantage of its wealth, power, and social prestige to preserve it and perpetuate the conditions which enable it to exploit the people.⁽¹⁾

The struggle against imperialism has underlined the contrasts between the exploiting minority and the exploited majority, and sharpened the consciousness of the exploited regarding their grievances. In fact it was this struggle which initially uncovered the nature of the ruling class; for it was discredited in leading the struggle for national liberation as its members associated it with the imperialists, and as both were accused of thriving on the exploitation of the people. The Arab governments were charged with complying with imperialism and its designs because they needed to protect their privileged position among their people. On these premises, the effective struggle against imperialism was discovered to be the struggle against the ruling classes.⁽²⁾ This struggle was to free the people from both external

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1. Al-Atasi, "Socialism: Liberation through Struggle," Studies in Socialism, pp. 108-10.
 2. 'Aflaq, The Struggle for One Destiny, p. 28.

(1)
and internal exploitation.

We are led along the lines of this argument to the conclusion that there are two very broad classes in the Arab countries: the people, in general, and the enemies of the people; the toiling masses and their exploiters who include not only the feudalists and capitalists, but also professional politicians and other interested groups, all of whom "nourish on their blood, while they verge on death, and towards the realization of their needs (i.e. the needs of the exploiters), whims, and lowly pleasures, they rob the persecuted masses of their liberty and bread and justify to themselves their cooperation with the imperialists ..."⁽²⁾

During the independence struggle the feudalist capitalist class received the support of the people, as the Arab countries could not afford an internal split while they encountered the imperialist nations. But once independence was achieved, the people turned against their governments and the interests and classes these governments represent.⁽³⁾ The elimina-

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1. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. V, P.37.
 2. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, p.223. See also The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. II, p.52.
 3. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. I, p.198.

tion of these has now become the next aim of the masses of
(1)
the people.

The immediate justification for putting an end to the feudal and capitalist class altogether is derived from the fact that the governments representing it have failed to put limits on the excesses of the "monopolists and exploiters" who continue to multiply their wealth at the expense of the suffering and poverty of the people. Quite the contrary. The
(2)
governments are a tool in the hands of these interested groups.

3. Socialism free of class struggle.

The reason for the rejection of class struggle hinges on the desire to avert, or at least not to sharpen, internal conflicts and disunity. The taxing task of rebuilding the nation necessitates the participation of all classes; so it is not permissible to isolate any class from this compre-
(3)
hensive national effort.

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1. 'Aflaq, The Struggle for One Destiny, p.140.
 2. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. II, pp.65 and 152.
 3. Abdul-Daim, The National Culture, p.66, and, 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, p.207.

Moreover, Ba'thi socialism stems from "human love", and the national sentiment which fuses and transcends class struggle. For, when this sentiment emanates from a belief in human ideals, it can transcend economic conflict and economic interests by virtue of the higher value the national sentiment embodies. Besides, the Ba'thists specially reject the premise that the ties of class are stronger than those of nationality. In practice, this has led to the subordination of the working class in communist countries to Soviet hegemony. (1)

Nor does Ba'thi socialism believe in the inevitability of class struggle, or that the gulf separating the capitalist class from the working class will necessarily grow wider and wider. It does not see how the clash between these two classes can be unavoidable.

Alongside this affirmation runs the warning that this line of reasoning should not be considered a defence of capitalism. The only intention is to demonstrate that "it is wrong to say that there is no way to reach socialism except

1. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, p.222.

through a class struggle justified by the inevitable widening of the disparities between the capitalist class and the working class." ⁽¹⁾ The rejection of class struggle on the part of Ba'thi socialism ought not to suggest any sort of a truce between capitalist exploitation and socialism. For either socialism is an inclusive system, or it does not exist at all. Nor would the socialism advocated by the Ba'th end up by becoming a leftist parliamentary movement. It would lose its justification if amid this "corrupt reality" it gets transformed into a reformative movement. ⁽²⁾

The reliance of the Ba'th movement primarily on the struggle of the oppressed masses does not ensue from a concept which believes in class struggle. It only signifies the belief that these masses, through their suffering and by virtue of being the vast majority of the people, do represent better than any other section of the people the "noble reality of the nation". ⁽³⁾

As to struggle itself, differentiation should be made between class struggle and the struggle for implementing socialism. Socialism cannot be realized without a struggle against

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1. Abdul-Daim, The National Culture, p. 63.
 2. Ibid., pp. 61-65.
 3. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. III, p. 95.

the interests it displaces, or even without resort to a coup d'état.⁽¹⁾ But this kind of struggle need not take the form of class struggle. As recently as 1964, Salah al-Bitar affirmed in a policy statement, in his capacity as Prime Minister, that "if we say that no justification exists for flaring up class struggle, we mean that the realization of the principle of terminating the special privileges of the reactionary groups, and the restoration to all the people of their rights ... can take place through the revolution - after it has been strongly established - without hatred or vengeance; and all citizens can feel assured of their security, safety, and dignity."⁽²⁾

4. Recognition of Struggle in the Arab Nation.

The existence of struggle in the Arab nation is recognized on many fronts. 'Aflaq tells us that there is a struggle between two minorities: the one is identified with traditionalism and clings to reactionary regimes as these serve its interests; the other trusts that the inherent capabilities of the

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1. Abdul-Daim, The National Culture, p.67.
 2. Arab Documents, 1964, p.247. In this statement Bitar recognizes class struggle, but does not admit the necessity for inflaming it.

Arab nation reach far beyond its present attainments. This latter minority represents the forces tending towards liberation, progress, and creativity. (1) 'Aflaq describes this struggle as one between the masses of the people, and the exploiting reactionary class, and believes that the good Arab citizen would be a product of it. (2)

This struggle assumes an objective form as a struggle between the class which owns the means of production and that deprived of such ownership. It constitutes a major section of the national problem, and is very basic to the general progress of the nation. For the exploiting class will not abandon its wealth and forsake its interests merely by being called upon to do so in the name of nationalism or progress. Struggle is thus necessary for the revival of the nation. (3)

As to the limited boundaries of class struggle in itself as an economic phenomenon, the Party admits that exploitation of labour by capital has precipitated class disparities, and has awakened the people, who have become more aware of their rights, to the reality of the new situation. Exploitation ever drives

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1. 'Aflaq, The Struggle for One Distiny, p.26.
 2. Michel Aflaq, "Our Viewpoint of Capitalism and Class Struggle," Studies in Socialism, p.27.
 3. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, pp.207 & 222.

apart the classes it creates and sharpens economic differences
(1)
breeding hatred and discontent.

However, there are definite limits on the nature and scope of class struggle in the Arab world. The Arab countries are still under-developed and lack a large - scale industry with the consequent absence of a proletariat in the full sense. Class consciousness has not been fully crystallized. The toiling class is not yet fully aware of its rights, and frequently lends its support to the exploitative feudal system. To this state of affairs may be added poor political experience, low educational levels, and the lack of organizational skills. Alongside all this, and due partly to under-development, existing capitalism has not yet become an all prevailing factor, save through its cooperation with imperialism. Thus a massive cultural and educational effort, the Party believes, is a necessity in order that the masses might be prepared to play a positive role in
(2)
the state.

Having come to this, the Ba'th Party asserts that class struggle is in fact a reality characterizing modern society. But this

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1. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. II, p. 249. See also Ar-Razzaz, The Features of the New Arab Life, p. 183.
 2. Jamal al-Atasi, "Ethical Socialism," Studies in Socialism, p. 287.

struggle is not credited with the universality attributed to it by Marxism, which, the Party believes, disregards the historical growth of nationalism and erroneously maintains that the ties of class are superior to those of nationalism.⁽¹⁾

Moreover, the Party believes that such objective conditions, as the rise of socialist regimes, which abolished feudalism and removed the political and economic dominance of capital over government, "enable the revolution to realize its objectives according to a revolutionary planning which does not require the flaring up of class struggle, and which peacefully resolves class contradictions."⁽²⁾

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1. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, pp.222.
 2. Arab Documents, 1964, p.247. (Policy Statement by Prime Minister S. al-Bitar.)

5. Class struggle: a definite force reshaping society.

Prior to the Sixth National Conference, which was convened in 1963, there were only very few and passing references to class struggle as a revolutionary platform, so to speak, in Ba'thist literature. An early statement in this regard asserted that socialism, among other things, is the belief that the struggle and interests of classes are factors which make history, and which produce the ethical standards conducive to class interests. (1) Consequently the workers can defend their rights only through "tenacious and continuous struggle". The rich class cannot continue to increase its wealth without its continued exploitation of the workers and peasants. "That it may live, the workers and peasants should perish." (2) So it is a question of life and death. The survival of the poor classes necessarily implies that the rich class should perish. Hence, a sustained struggle should be carried until the socialist society is established. This struggle manifests itself in different forms: the workers should make financial contributions to their syndicates, or party; should rally to strikes and demonstrations; should show themselves at the

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1. Ar-Razzaz, "Why Socialism ... Now?", Studies in Socialism, p. 134.
 2. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. II, p. 250.

ballots; and should not "hesitate to sacrifice themselves, to die - when they are asked to." ⁽¹⁾ Actually class struggle has existed simultaneously with feudalism though, it is implied, it was dormant and unconscious. The increasing awakening of the people has stirred up this struggle, and the attachment of the feudal class to its privileges has characterized the struggle with bitterness and tension. In this context, the role of the Party is one of rallying popular forces and organizing the struggle towards the achievement of socialism. ⁽²⁾

At the Sixth National Conference the Party made an effort to elucidate its attitude towards the theory of class struggle. Perhaps this conference marks the real beginning of the split which has been manifesting itself within the Party since 1963. For the approach to this problem was no longer left to personal judgements and dispositions, but became an issue of contention within the Party as it laboured towards an official formulation of its attitude to it. The previous neglect of this problem was explained during the conference as having been due to the exigencies of the national struggle, and the opposition to Arab Communists. Certain writings of the

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1. Ibid., pp.250-51. See also The Struggle of The Ba'ath, Vol. V, pp.8 & 25.
 2. The Struggle of The Ba'ath, Vol. II, p.19.

Ba'th, we are told, tended to idealize nationalism, and ran in a contrary course to scientific knowledge and historical evolution. "Thus socialism was considered ... as a part of the national problem, which obscured to some minds the reality of class struggle as an objective fact and a basic struggle platform for Arab nationalism."⁽¹⁾

Class struggle now becomes the focal point for the understanding of social problems, and the guiding strategical principle. Assertions are made to the effect that " ... the first principles of the scientific socialist national thought in social and economic analysis follows the dialectical method, and starts from the recognition of contradictions in the nationalist society, and the existence of a struggle among the classes characterized by the disposition to realize two objectives simultaneously: national unity and the elimination of exploitation. This contradiction will not be resolved by itself, nor will it end by virtue of a few good - intentioned reformists, nor by means of piling up marginal reforms within the framework of the society against which we are struggling."⁽²⁾ The

1. Ibid. , Vol. VI, pp. 250-51.
2. Ibid. , p. 245.

idea of cooperation among classes should be blotted out. The struggle against reactionary forces requires a prolonged and tenacious struggle on different levels and on all fronts: social, political, administrative, military, and educational. It is necessary to totally uproot all reactionary forces.

"Reaction was not merciful to the toiling masses for thousands of years, therefore the masses will necessarily give a clear and ultimate articulation of the problem of class struggle: either we live, or reaction; and any other middle-of-the-road accomodation is a falsehood or a deception, the result of which will be the salvation of reaction."⁽¹⁾ Moreover, it is the task of the Party to rally the people into direct class and political struggle, particularly so since class struggle and social contradictions will grow more sharp and tense during the socialization process.⁽²⁾

To conclude, it might be said that the ambivalence in the Party's writings regarding class struggle stems from two considerations. First is the emphasis on nationalism as the Ba'th is primarily a nationalist party, which emphasis was necessary not only for the struggle for independence, but also for preparing the ground for Arab unity, and for meeting

1. Ibid., p.296.
2. Ibid., pp.277 & 282.

the communist challenge with its contra - national implications. Second is the nature of the social composition of the Party which heavily draws on the intellectuals of the class of the little bourgeoisie with their moderate tendencies. Thus while they admitted quite early the existence of class struggle, they did not attempt to capitalize on it, and preferred to relegate it to the background. Also, the fact that the Party failed for long to project its concepts in a crystallized form and adopt an official party line, gave much room to individuals as such to pass varying judgements on the matters which were often a response to immediate problems, and did not derive from theoretical considerations.

Even now it is still too early to pass a final judgement on the Bathist attitude towards class struggle. Since February 1966, the leftist wing of the Party has been in power in Syria, and it has announced its intentions to honour the recommendations and the decisions adopted at The Sixth National Conference, which, as we have seen, assign a fundamental role for class struggle. How events might turn out is anybody's guess.

D. Socialism and Liberty.

Liberty is one of the fundamental aims of the Ba'th Party. The second principle of its Constitution states that "freedom of speech, assembly, belief, and art (are) sacred things which no authority can diminish." In a process of self-criticism, the Party admits that it has not attempted to clarify its social and class concept of liberty in a complete manner. It has condemned individual and bureaucratic dictatorship, but it has not defined clearly its view-point of bourgeois parliamentary democracy, nor has it formulated the conceptual framework of liberty in its objective state by linking it to the revolutionary stage being experienced by the Arab people and by revolutionary classes in Arab society. It has not visualized a representative pattern of government which is radically revolutionary, popular, and democratic at the same time.⁽¹⁾

Nevertheless, Party literature abounds with references to the question of liberty in its many aspects. A review of the material available helps us to fix down a few cardinal points which may indicate the general attitude of the Party to this question.

1. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. VI, pp. 261-62.

1. A general demarcation of liberty.

Liberty is believed to be the solid basis of socialism, and socialism is considered as a fundamental condition for liberty. They are complementary to each other. ⁽¹⁾ But what is this liberty like? Definitely it is not a liberty which constitutes a license to the individual to behave according to his personal whims and ambitions free of any checks. "Liberty is to allow free natural growth to man and the growth of his talents as far as it is possible, and the provision of necessary regulations to put a limit to his negative passions which harm him and other people." ⁽²⁾ The security of life and of human production ought to be ensured against all intruders, and for all the people. The classical liberties (the natural rights of man: The right of expression, of association, of belief, and the right to elect representatives) are essential, but their limitations alter with the changes which take place in society.

The boundaries between the liberties and rights of the individual and state are not constant, but shift according to

1. Ibid. , pp. 285.

2. Waheeb al-Ghanim, "Socialism and Human Liberty," Studies in Socialism, pp. 144-45.

the changes which society in its entirety undergoes, and depend⁽¹⁾ on the time, place, and general condition of each society. For liberty is to be assessed in given objective situations, in order to learn how it ought to be practiced, or to what degree it ought to be limited. In this endeavour, theoretical approaches do not help. Liberty is not a certain entity existing by itself, for which we ought to search in order that we may possess. It is something built up cumulatively, an aim towards which one ever approaches, and whose meanings gradually and continuously widen acquiring new aspects and dimensions. "It is the result of the confluence between an ideal which acquires new meanings through development, and a reality which we attempt to draw towards the ideal."⁽²⁾ In very broad terms, liberty is not chaos, but its contrary; neither is it dictatorship, but a golden means: it is the free system which neither destroys the freedom of the individual, nor the freedom of the group.⁽³⁾

2. The miscarriage of liberty.

History demonstrates that complete individual liberty

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1. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of the New Arab Life, p. 105.
 2. Abdul-Daim, The Arab Homeland and the Revolution, p. 27.
 3. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. I, p. 153.

has proved highly inimical to society. It has been misused to the advantage of those who possess power, and, implicitly, the ability to misuse it. Very restricted measures of liberty have been gradually granted to the bulk of the people just as a precautionary measure to forestall revolutions. But this is mere trickery. The liberties enumerated almost in every constitution do not secure real liberty to the people, the majority of whom are enslaved to feudalists and capitalists, on whom they depend for their livelihood. For those who own the land and the means of production are the real masters of the people, as they possess the power to employ them, to enable them to earn their living. Thus unrestricted private ownership has made foul play of human liberty through the economic power it vests in the hands of those few who possess. Therefore the Ba'ith Party condemns this form of ownership.

3. Socialism as a remedy restoring liberty to the people.

We have seen that economic oppression is a result of the concentration of wealth, i.e. economic power, in a few hands. The remedy for this situation is to be found in a

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1. Al-Ghanim, "Socialism and Human Liberty," Studies in Socialism, p.144.
 2. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of the New Arab Life, pp.95-97.
 3. Al-Ghanim, "Socialism and Human Liberty," Studies in Socialism, pp.145-146.

system which deprives the feudalists and capitalists of the means by which they gain this power. Public ownership fulfills this need. Economic liberty, and the other liberties to the degree it affects them, is achieved when the masses become the owners of wealth. The absence of economic liberty naturally leads to the absence of political liberty, although the latter also suffers when it gets concentrated in a few hands. Thus just as democracy aims at enabling the masses to share political power, so too, socialism aims at enabling these masses to share economic power.⁽¹⁾

This new economic liberty is just the contrary of the old laissez faire concept of economic liberty. It is gained precisely by controlling the traditional economic liberty as a means for improving the lot of the masses, raising their standard of living, and providing them with the opportunities which enable them to develop their potentialities.

4. Socialism should avoid state capitalism.

The material form this new liberty takes is the social ownership of the means of production, the control and administ-

1. Muneef ar-Razzaz, Liberty (Beirut: Dar al-Ilm Lilmalayeen, 1965). p. 88. (In Arabic.)

ration of these means by all sorts of social organizations. If the state represents this ownership it should be set on democratic bases, else the whole aim of public ownership would be lost, and an increase in the tyranny of capital and political power combined would be the final outcome.⁽¹⁾ For liberty cannot be divided; its component elements complement each other. Just as the freedom of thought and expression are void of any real content when they are subject to reactionary bourgeois forces, so too social democracy would be gravely impaired if it liberates man from his economic serfdom only to throw him into a state of political serfdom, i.e. into the hands of dictatorial regimes. It is not only a matter of hunger; it is above all a matter of human dignity. Man should be made his own master and the proprietor of his own thoughts.⁽²⁾ It is not permissible, therefore, that socialist systems throw man into the "dictator-ship of the socialist revolution, and later the dictator-ship of the state representing the revolution."⁽³⁾

The great and basic problem which should be the focus

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1. Ibid., pp. 89-90.
 2. Abdul-Daim, The Arab Homeland and Revolution, pp. 43-44.
 3. Abdul-Daim, The National Culture, p. 71.

of attention in implementing socialism, is the stage during which the balancing and reconciling of the "vitality and completeness of the socialist system and the humanitarian means conducive to it" is attained. (1) It is important that the idea should remain unchanged during implementation, and that the manner of implementation should partake of the nature of the idea. (2)

5. Limitations on personal liberty.

It is questionable whether it is possible to free man without trespassing on his freedom, or whether the revolution which aims at freeing man can avoid ending up by destroying his freedom. Admittedly, a certain degree of man's freedom necessarily suffers at the hands of revolutionary regimes dedicated for freeing him from the various forces which subjugate him, and for the demolition of which the revolution takes place. But the problem which requires serious consideration, lest the revolution completely destroy freedom, is the establishment of the proper limits beyond which the revolution ought not to interfere with

1. Ibid. , p. 71.
2. Ibid. , p. 72.

the individual's freedom. For it is admitted that among the conditions necessary for freeing man is the initial and partial limitation of freedom as such.⁽¹⁾

The fact that the revolution seeks to free man implies that man is not really free. And we have seen that man loses his freedom when certain individuals exploit this freedom in the service of their personal interests. In other words, it is man's interests that first interfere with the freedom of other men. In order to safeguard this freedom, government, or the revolution, has the full right to curb those interests and limit the freedom to pursue them.⁽²⁾

Thus the liberty which the revolution permits is an "austere liberty" which refuses to let things go their way. It stands in harmony with all the limitations designed to extirpate exploitation and all activities inimical to society and the nation at large. Whereas revolutionary movements take advantage of the liberties granted under feudal capitalist regimes, exploiting them in the further-

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1. Abdul-Daim, The Arab Homeland and Revolution, p.26.
 2. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of the New Arab Life, p.104.

ance of their own objectives, once in power they sharply restrict
(1) liberty. Any form or interpretation of it which does not diffe-
rentiate between the people and its enemies should be discredited. (2)
The permissible liberty should square with the basic aims and
principles of the revolution, of the Arab national movement,
to the exclusion of any other freedom permitting non-nationalist
movements, capitalism, and feudalism to function. The revolution
cannot afford to weaken itself and render society accessi-
ble to antagonistic political forces. (3)

Moreover, during the early stage of the revolution, with the commencement of socialization, of rebuilding the nation, opposition comes not only from those groups and classes basically opposed to its aims, but even from large sectors of the people themselves, in whose interest the whole task is attempted. This is largely due to the influence exerted by reactionary forces

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1. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. IV, p.44.
 2. Ibid., pp.43-44.
 3. Abdul-Daim, The Arab Homeland and the Revolution, pp.54 & 66.

by virtue of sheer continuity and due to the ignorance of the masses. Thus the revolution might well find itself obliged to curb the freedom of the people, limit the activities of workers, syndicates, and even take repressive police measures against the workers and the people as a whole. Upon this already complex situation, factors pertaining to international conflicts, which impinge on the internal situation, are super-imposed. So that the revolution might be able to face the conspiracies of reactionary elements at home and the intrigues of foreign powers, and to check the extravagance of leftist groups, it is forced, even in spite of itself, to confine liberties and limit them, both in depth and breadth. It finds itself drifting towards dictatorship.⁽¹⁾

Furthermore, the formidable tasks and responsibilities which the revolution has to shoulder in under-developed countries dictate a special manner of action which must be quick, forceful, and strict. Socialism replaces private ownership with social or state ownership of the means of production. It has to speedily plan for the increase in production, make available the necessary capital and, wisely dispensing with the limited amount already available, create skills, and control education. It has also to

1. Ar-Razzaz, Liberty, pp.192-93.

coordinate the welfare of the working class with the necessity to save as much as possible of the national income for the sake of capital investments.

It is believed that personal liberty under such a system of rigorous planning and control is non-existent, while it appears very broad under capitalism. "But we ought to remember that this 'liberty' is actually open only to a very small minority of the people which owns capital or the know-how. The rest of the people are enslaved to the experiences of the exploitationist systems.⁽¹⁾ The socialist system does actually cripple the freedom of capitalists, and from the point of view of their interests it does 'harm' these interests, but it really liberates the people from their enslavement to capital. However, this liberation might not lead to an increase in the liberty enjoyed by the people, for the state might take the place of capital in enslaving the people, unless the people itself has

1. Ibid., p.189.

mastery over its own affairs both in government and in industry, or production. Thus political liberation is inseparable from economic liberation.

In short, the transition into socialism brings in its wake a vast increase in the authority of the state which encompasses not only the economic sphere, but also the political sphere, and even personal liberties, that it may insure the success of socialization. This success cannot be without a "real battle" with reactionary elements, which are willing to wage a battle on all fronts and all levels "for the sake of preserving their liberty to enslave others."⁽¹⁾

1. Ibid., p.190.

CHAPTER III

Envisaged Reforms

A. Capitalism Versus Socialism

1. Private ownership

The limits of private ownership are broadly defined in the constitution of the Party. The following articles are pertinent:

- Article 30: "Under the supervision of the state and in agreement with its general economic programme, land ownership shall be limited according to the ability of the owner to cultivate it fully without exploiting the efforts of others.
- Article 31: "Ownership of small industries shall be limited in conformity with the economic standard enjoyed by the rest of the citizens of the state.
- Article 33: "Ownership of buildings is open to all citizens provided that the latter shall have no right to lease and utilize them at the expense of others, and that the state shall guarantee a minimum ownership of landed property for all citizens.
- Article 34: "Ownership and inheritance are natural rights which shall be protected within the limits of the national interest."

While private ownership is thus allowed, it is a limited and qualified ownership. For ownership has a direct bearing on the political status of individuals affecting their freedom. Political freedom remains an empty expression unless a new form of ownership, which would enhance the freedom of all the people, is evolved. It is human freedom at large which should be the determining factor in every economic system. Should the right to ownership become a hindrance to the full development and growth of the human personality, it becomes an evil. But just because man should be free to satisfy his needs and desires, because property is originally the immediate means for the satisfaction of needs, and consequently because property is the substantial expression of man's desires, man should have the right to property, with the condition that this right be exercised within the limits beyond which human liberty is jeopardised.

Thus the complete freedom of private ownership should not be allowed, as it leads to monopoly and the accumulation of wealth on the one hand, and deprivation and poverty on the other. The Party, accordingly, condemns unlimited private ownership. For it corrupts society, leads to exploitation, and consequently hinders society from realizing its primary function, the development of human life, and the sharing by all its

members of all the rights and privileges accruing from society. The basic principle is the harmonization of the freedom of the individual with the wholesome development of society.⁽¹⁾

During the Sixth National Conference, this policy was reinforced. It was affirmed that the recognition of an absolute form of the right to private property, despite the restrictions that could be placed upon it, remains a kind of "little bourgeois" mentality. The true socialist approach considers human work as the only source of value. Consequently, any private property which goes beyond the limits of personal use cannot but be exploitative, and therefore impermissible, regardless of how narrow the area in which it is allowed might be.⁽²⁾

2. Necessity of state interference in the economy.

The Party believes that the faltering of the economy in the Arab countries and its inability to maintain a steady growth has been the necessary result of the feudal bourgeois economic system. National capital is being employed in commerce, land holdings, and light industries which ensure quick profits, entail a minimum of risks, and do not need heavy financing. This capital

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1. W. al-Ghanim, "Socialism and Human Liberty," Studies in Socialism, pp. 145-146 & 154-156.
 2. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol VI, p. 283.

has thus been unable to create the necessary conditions for industrial progress. The increasing poverty and backwardness suffered by the people, and the widening rift between the rich and the poor, are in good measure the consequence of this economic condition.

Thus the capitalist system is not capable of mobilizing the immense work potential present in the form of unemployed labour abundant in rural areas, of organizing production according to scientific methods, and of channelling the wasted resources of the nation into fruitful employment. While the world stands at the threshold of the automation era, the Arab world still finds itself unable even to realize the first industrial revolution. Socialism provides the only solution. It is through socialism that the Arab world might forestall a further widening of the gap between it and advanced nations. The national bourgeoisie or capitalist class should be eliminated altogether, along with its mentality, its mode of production, and the social relations it creates.⁽¹⁾

It is true that national private capital has contributed to national economic development. But its pace has been so slow

1. Ibid. , pp. 286-87.

that it cannot carry effectively the task of leading the industrialization process. Besides, as skills and resources, as well as capital, are scarce, the nation cannot afford to lose any of them by permitting private capital to exploit them for its limited and special interests. Society has to take this responsibility by its own hands.⁽¹⁾

Moreover, capitalism in the Arab world, as in all under-developed countries, cannot thrive except if the workers are deprived of any improvement in the standard of living. For should it extend to them those benefits and services they obtain in advanced countries, it would not be able to withstand foreign competition, even with the help of protective tariffs. It can progress only under the conditions which favoured the growth of western capitalism in the nineteenth century: conditions of complete and merciless exploitation. Consequently, any measure designed to protect the working class is certainly an obstacle to the progress of capitalism in under-developed countries. "It is absolutely impossible to combine progress in production and the raising of the standard of living of the working classes

1. Ar-Razzaz, Liberty, p.185.

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under the capitalist system."

The new economic order is to proceed according to the method of trial and error in discovering the best procedures it ought to follow. While socialism undermines the capitalist system, it still has the task of laying its own foundation. As every situation has its special particularities, ready-made solutions and plans do not offer much help. Every socialist experiment, while benefiting from the amassed experiences of socialism in other countries, still has to evolve its own procedures which best fit its circumstances. (2)

3. The role of private capital.

In recognition of the many difficulties which the revolution is bound to encounter, the Party admits that it does not expect a smooth transition from capitalism to socialism. The revolution "might find it necessary to temporarily retreat on a number of issues, ... and at times might even be

1. Ibid., p.186.

2. Al-Hallaj, "Views in Arab Socialism," Studies in Socialism, pp.85-86.

obliged to withdraw." Transitory circumstances might oblige the revolution to take a course on certain matters contrary to its ideological principles; this deviation might be dictated by its sheer inability, at given stages, to force its principles through.⁽¹⁾

This probably provides us with the explanation of Ba'thi encouragement of private capital in Syria, and in Iraq during the Ba'thi regime. The Party believes that national capital is necessary at the present stage for strengthening national production and industrializing the country. In performing this task, it should appreciate and understand labour problems and the just labour claim to a share in profits, and should encourage labour syndicates which would help further good cooperative relations between capital and labour.⁽²⁾

During the Eighth National Conference, recommendations were presented to the effect that necessary measures should be taken to encourage small capitalists to participate in governmental projects in specified proportions. It is not difficult,

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1. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. VI, p.279.
 2. Ibid., Vol. II, p.241.

it was affirmed, to find a proper and successful method for this participation in the development plan according to which the private sector would be a small partner of the state under the proper conditions which would not permit the re-institution⁽¹⁾ of capitalist relationships in the economy.

In a policy statement in 1964, ex-Prime minister Salah al-Bitar spoke of the contributions which private capital had made to national economic development, not withstanding the fact that it had entangled the economy with international capitalism and with imperialism, and led to the corruption of political life in Syria. However, the special conditions of Syria indicated, the statement affirmed, that private capital could play a positive role in national economic development, specially as the proper political, economic, and social circumstances had obtained with the advent of the Revolution. For the feudal capitalist class had been isolated from government and could no more influence the economic policy of the country. Consequently, the state invited the participation of national

1. Economic Resolutions, p.27.

private capital in new industrial projects. As a re-assuring gesture, the state undertook to protect private ownership of the means of production, and ensured "reasonable profit" to capital.⁽¹⁾

The same was true of the Ba'thi regime in Iraq. Among the policy decisions included in the development program was "the encouragement of private capital to participate in development projects within the economic plans, and its freeing from taxes for a reasonable period, provided it ties itself to the aims of the revolution and respects the laws which determine (the Revolution's) social objectives."⁽²⁾

4. Capitalist versus socialist production:
social aspects.

Capitalism has effected vast improvements in the means of production. But, throughout the history of its development the working class has suffered bitterly, marking the course of this development with violent uprisings. Simultaneously the artisan class disintegrated and was forced to join "the armies of

1. Arab Documents, 1964, pp.249-50.
2. Ibid., 1963, p.461.

miserable workers". The whole system of capitalism in its full growth negates the values it espouses: freedom of competition has been replaced by great monopolies, and cartels and trusts have become the fashion of the day. All of this has been accomplished at the expense of the masses in a manner reminiscent of "the lawless state of nature"⁽¹⁾.

The worker has become an appendage to the machine, while the peasant on the land has sunk to a state of serfdom under feudalism, and relations of the peasant and the worker with the landlord or capitalist, "who might not need to take any more trouble than to count his money," have lost all their human characteristics.⁽²⁾ Socialism is charged with the task of stamping the material progress which has been attained under capitalism with the human characteristics which should qualify production and the relationships stemming from it.⁽³⁾

Under capitalism production is profit-oriented. No moral or humanitarian considerations induce capitalists to

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1. Al-Hallaj, "Views in Arab Socialism," Studies in Socialism, see pp.46-50.
 2. Al-Atasi, "Socialism: Liberation through Struggle," Studies in Socialism, pp.109-110.
 3. Al-Hallage, "Views in Arab Socialism," Studies in Socialism, p.51.

produce the commodities which the masses need most. Human effort and raw materials are employed in the production of luxuries which only the rich can afford to enjoy, while the vital needs of the millions of the people are only poorly attended to. Socialism reverses this condition.⁽¹⁾ Production under socialism is primarily employed in securing the essential needs of all the people, in raising the general standard of living, and in building up the national economy. While the highest prices attract production under capitalism, "our motto, we the socialists is: 'production is for the people'⁽²⁾". This does not imply that the individual should freeze his demands, nor that luxuries would be totally missing. It is only that the power to satisfy the demand for luxuries would directly depend on the personal income of every individual. However, conditions might arise which make it necessary to deprive all the people of certain luxuries in order that a wholesome national economy might be founded.⁽³⁾

One further feature of the difference between production under socialism and capitalist production is the fact that socialism, on ethical grounds, refuses to compete with capitalism with a view to outproducing it in the amount of production. It

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1. Ibid., pp.64-65.
 2. Ibid., p.68.
 3. Ibid., pp.67-68.

denounces the idea of using the wage incentive as a whip to extract labour's vitality. Socialism cannot compete with capitalism in this regard unless it highly taxes the capacities and endurance of human nature - which would negate its first premise, the improvement of the lot of the workers and the alleviation of their pains.⁽¹⁾

1. Ibid., pp.87-90.

B. Economic Reform

1. Profit motive.

The standing economic system is characterized by sharp contrasts between huge fortunes and extreme deprivation. It is illegitimate and based on the worst kinds of exploitation. Its telos is profit, its morality is founded on wealth which is the sole measure of value and which is responsible for much of the political and social corruption pervading society.⁽¹⁾

The pre-dominance of the profit motive greatly influences the over-all orientation of the economic system, with drastic consequences for society. More often than not, specially in under-developed countries, those kinds of economic activity which ensure excessive profits do not bring about any real good or progress to society; indeed, they may even harm it. The profit motive sanctions the ill consequences for society brought about by those economic activities. The Ba'thists

1. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of The New Arab Life, pp.192-94.

believe that had the public interest been the dominating spirit of the economy, industry would have grown significantly, cultivated areas would have been multiplied, and national wealth would have by far outgrown its present amount. Thus, such a profit-oriented economic system lowers the national income, leads to a very unjust distribution of wealth, and tenders luxuries more than necessities.⁽¹⁾

The profit motive as such, i.e. as an urge for amassing wealth, is experienced only by that minority which owns capital. The majority of the people have not had this experience. They are motivated by the desire to gain money to secure their livelihood. Whether consciously or otherwise, they seem to behave in a way which indicates that they consider money as means to an end only. When it transcends its essential nature as the means to satisfy the needs of life, profit no longer remains the motive force behind production as such, and becomes an abnormality which the feudal capitalist system has established as the social ideal.

The Ba'thists call for the abolition of this kind of profit motivation, but they do not mean to abolish profit altogether.

1. Ibid., pp.194-98.

They want merely to rectify the afore-mentioned abnormality. Then, and only then, profit would occupy its rightful place among the multiplicity of other social factors which induce the individual to live a productive and creative life. ⁽¹⁾ Indeed the profit incentive would still be employed to encourage the workers and employees in the public sector to improve and increase production by allotting to them a share in the profits of the establishments where they are employed. ⁽²⁾

2. Necessity of reform and its general characteristics.

The reform which socialism embodies is based on the principle which decides that the good of all is prior to the good of the individual; and that benefits are measured against needs, and not in abstraction. ⁽³⁾ Economic reform stands out as the most urgent and most important undertaking of socialism because the economic factor is believed to rank among the most important factors which influence society. ⁽⁴⁾ For how can a nation, two-thirds of whose people live on a mere subsistence level, hope to achieve any

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1. Ibid., pp. 222-224.
 2. Economic Resolutions, p. 21.
 3. (Anonymous,) "The Role of Economic Programming and its Requirements," Studies in Socialism, p. 165.
 4. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of The New Arab Life, p. 190.

progress as long as this economic condition lasts? "No political rights, no education, no moral ideals, not even the sway of religion can influence such a people to the better, unless a sound economic basis is laid for this": economic reform is "the pulp of real reform"⁽¹⁾.

In order that this reform might come to fruition, therefore, efforts should concentrate on multiplying the wealth of the nation by more properly and fully utilizing its rich resources, ensuring the flow of considerable wealth to society, which would raise the general standard of living and lend poignancy to all economic reform.⁽²⁾

The distinguishing mark of economic reform is the freedom of the individual from need, oppression, and economic exploitation, and the creation of the suitable conditions which enable him to utilize his capacities.⁽³⁾ The feudal capitalist economic systems in the Arab world, being overpowered by blind economic forces, do not fulfil this end. Besides its exploitative nature, private capital, being profit-oriented and comparatively

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1. Ibid., p.120.
 2. Ibid., pp.216-219.
 3. Ibid., p.190.

weak, cannot address itself to the task of rebuilding the economy, realizing full employment, and thereby improving the economic standard of all the people.

Thus it is incumbent upon the state to take the initiative. But the confiscation of private property to this end should be gradual, lest it should utterly dislocate the prevailing order of things in a manner bearing disagreeable consequences. It is the government's duty to represent society in this endeavor, employing various methods other than direct confiscation - such as progressive income and inheritance taxes, the fixing of profits ceiling, as well as a minimum wage level. ⁽¹⁾

3. Commerce.

Concerning commerce, article 36 of the Party Constitution informs us that "the state shall have direct control over internal and external trade with a view to abolishing exploitation of the consumer by the producer, protecting the trade, protecting national

1. Ibid., pp.213-215.

production from foreign competition and ensuring an equilibrium between exports and imports." In fact, commerce as understood and practiced in free-enterprise systems has no place in the socialist system the Ba'th envisages, particularly in regard to export and import trade. "It is a crime to allow middlemen to arbitrarily control the markets, raising prices at times, lowering them at others, ... procuring thus huge profits unparalleled in agriculture and industry, i.e. in the process of real production."⁽¹⁾

Trade, as practised under capitalism, is not admissible. Free of restraints it constitutes a positive danger to the country. Exporters buy local products at the lowest possible prices and export them at the highest possible, at times depriving local consumers from satisfying their needs of the products of their own country. Monopolies also arise and further add to this improper situation. Importers, on the other hand, at times import certain commodities which disadvantageously compete with local products. They also import costly luxuries, which

1. Ibid., pp.206-207.

weigh heavily on the national economy, in response to the desires of the wealthy class.

The ultimate and decisive solution for this state of affairs is the complete supervision and control by the government of the export - import trade. Syndicates and cooperatives may assume responsibility for imports and exports under government supervision. The government on its part should formulate an export policy allowing the exportation of all products of which the country has a surplus, and an imports policy which gives priority to necessary capital and consumption goods. Benefits accruing from these commercial transactions would ultimately find their way to the people as a whole. ⁽¹⁾ Internal commerce is to be transferred mainly to consumer cooperatives, ⁽²⁾ only luxury goods being left to the free care of merchants.

This policy was officially endorsed during the Sixth and Eighth National Conferences. The necessity for nationalizing the import-export trade was particularly emphasized because it had been in the care of the upper bourgeoisie, which class is bitterly opposed to the Revolution and closely associated

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1. Ibid., pp.207-209.
 2. Ibid., p.212.

with feudalist and imperialist interests. (1) The role of middlemen is to be dispensed with in the future, the state assuming the responsibility of importing raw materials and (2) exporting local products, directly dealing with retailers.

4. Nationalization.

"Public utility institutions, major natural resources, and big production and transport facilities are the property of the nation to be operated by the state directly, and all foreign companies and concessions shall be cancelled." (Art. 29 of the Constitution of the Party).

An elaborate argument for the nationalization of "big production" is advanced. The national industry is a small-scale industry and is consumptive in nature, the Arab countries being under-developed and lacking, under the feudalist - capitalist system, the capacity of growth and development. It is not economical because it lacks the advantages of mass production, and is not able to create the conditions requisite for

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1. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. VI, p.335.
 2. Economic Resolutions, p.21.

large-scale industry. Therefore it is paramount that this sector of the economy should be nationalized in order to invigorate it and vitalize the whole economy.⁽¹⁾ Nationalization should include all important production sectors, the means of financing projects, public assets, the basic public transportation facilities, large building holdings, foreign trade, and the basic sectors of internal trade. This would enable the popular revolutionary authority to completely direct the economy, and would constitute the first step towards the full socialization of society, the transfer of the private ownership of the means of production to the ownership of all the people.⁽²⁾

The pace of nationalization should be appropriate to the economic conditions of the country concerned. Equitable compensation should accompany nationalization. This becomes a necessity where nationalization takes a gradual course, otherwise the yet non-nationalized assets would be scared and immobilized to the great disadvantage of the national economy.⁽³⁾

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1. The Struggle of the Ba'ith, Vol. VI, p.336.
 2. The Struggle of the Ba'ith, Vol. VI, pp.287-88.
 3. Abdul-Daim, Socialism and Democracy, pp.48 & 50.
See also Ar-Razzaz, The Features of The Modern Arab Life, p.212.

The methods of nationalization and of supervision and control of a planned economic system, vary according to general conditions, the kind of production, and the needs of the people.

The state might directly own certain sectors of production, special syndicates or cooperative societies might fulfil this function, and municipalities might take over certain types of production. Many kinds of production enterprises which do not share the nature of basic needs might be left free of controls, though should still be guarded against misuse, exploitation, and chaos.

The complete nationalization of all kinds of production has two drawbacks: first, it charges the state with a huge responsibility, and, secondly, it weakens the spirit of ingenuity which constitutes, probably, the only virtue of individualistic enterprise. This is why it would be preferable for nationalization to be confined to those sectors which directly impinge on the interests of all the people.⁽¹⁾

Nationalization might be only partial. Under this condition the state (or government) would be the joint owner

1. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of The New Arab Life, pp.199-200.

with the people (presumably syndicates and cooperatives), providing a large proportion of capital. Simultaneously, simple industries would remain in private hands. But in all cases government control should include all the sectors of the economy and at all levels, supervising the amount of capital invested, the rate of growth, and preventing the re-appearance⁽¹⁾ of exploitation, and ensuring to the workers their full rights.

As to the nationalized industrial establishments, they are the property of society, which entrusts them to the care of the workers who hold the right to administer them. For all the workers of an establishment are the general body which should hold authority in it. This is the aim of democratic administration in industry, together with the development of socialist relationships⁽²⁾ among the workers.

After all, nationalization (says ex-Prime Minister al-Bitar) is not a magic word without which there can be no socialism. It is one of a large number of means for the realization of socialism, and is closely related to and dependent

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1. Ibid., p.201.
 2. Economic Resolutions, pp.43 & 45.

on the economic conditions of the country concerned. (1)

Following are the measures which were recommended during the Eighth National Conference:

- (1) The implementation of labour democracy from top to bottom, and the elimination of bureaucracy.
- (2) The preservation of factors of individual motivation, and the encouragement of creativity among the workers.
- (3) The realization of collective leadership, and the creation of socialist values among the workers. (2)

Finally, the Ba'thists sound the following warning. In under-developed countries lacking the material basis required for supporting socialism, nationalization ends up creating state capitalism. While this has a positive value, in as much as it spurs progress and evolves the proper conditions for socialism, it should not obscure the long - term objective of social transformation, i.e. the evolution of a fully socialist Arab society. Thus vigilance should be exercised lest socialist democracy be thinned out and bureaucratic practices develop. (3)

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1. Arab Documents, 1964, p.250.
 2. Economic Resolutions, p.44.
 3. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol.VI, p.288.

5. Planning.

Socialism reverts to economic planning in constructing the socialist society. It governs and directs production and consumption according to the needs of society, controls prices, and decides on primary and luxury goods, ensuring that each individual is getting his necessities for minimum prices, and preventing the rights of any one individual from pervading those of others. This planning should also see to it that "no piaster should be spent on luxuries except when the people's necessities are supplied."⁽²⁾

The fundamental principle of socialist planning is that all resources should be harnessed and utilized in the service of man. This is not confined to the basic structure of the economic background only, but also social factors are given due consideration. Economic laws are considered as social laws which ought to express the need and desire of society to develop itself and achieve continued progress. This implies that economic laws should not be abandoned to the vacillations of mechanical

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1. (Anon.,) "The Role of Economic Programming and its Requirements," Studies in Socialism, pp.162-63.
 2. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of the New Arab Life, p.199.

forces, but should be subjected to human will in the realization of human progress. Thus planning acquires social and political connotations, and no longer remains confined to purely economic considerations.⁽¹⁾

In conclusion, it is asserted that the backwardness suffered by the Arab people can be overcome only through economic development and the realization of the socialist revolution. Socialist planning is the only effective method which brings the human, material, and natural resources of the nation into fruitful utilization.⁽²⁾

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1. (Anonymous,) "The Role of Economic Programming and its Requirements," Studies in Socialism, pp.164-65.
 2. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol.VI, p.290.

C.

Labour Reform.

The major lines of the labour reform intended by the Ba'th Party are depicted in article 40 of its Constitution. This article provides us with a concise but comprehensive account of how the Party approaches the labour problem; and it remains our basic document on the subject, since Party literature gives only scanty information on this matter. It states:

- "(a) Labour is compulsory for all able-bodied persons and the state shall ensure mental or manual labour for all citizens.
- "(b) Income from work must ensure at least a decent standard of living for the worker.
- "(c) The state shall guarantee the livelihood of all disabled citizens.
- "(d) Equitable legislation shall be enacted, fixing the daily working hours for labourers, granting them a weekly holiday and an annual leave with pay, safeguarding their rights, ensuring social security against old age, and indemnity in respect of service - incurred partial or total disability.
- "(e) Free trade unions for labourers and farmers shall be formed and encouraged so that they may become a good means of defending labour's rights, raising their standards, developing their efficiency, affording them opportunities for betterment, promoting the collective spirit among them and representing them in the high labour tribunals.

"(f) Special labour tribunals shall be established, on which the state, the labour unions and the farm workers shall be represented. These tribunals shall decide disputes arising between the labourers on the one hand and the factory managers or the state representatives on the other."

1. Syndicates.

Syndicates occupy a prominent position in the labour sector. Every individual has the right to join others to form a syndicate comprising those who practise the same kind of work. The syndicate is regarded as the best school for democracy, and for training responsible leaders in the various spheres of activity in society at large. For within their syndicates the workers should enjoy the freedom of opinion alongside other freedoms, and should exercise it in handling the affairs of their syndicates. ⁽¹⁾

These characteristics of syndicate life acquire much significance under socialism. For then the syndicate ceases to be a mere association entrusted with guarding the particular interests of its members. It becomes a state organization which either is charged with full responsibility for a certain establish-

1. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of The New Arab Life, pp.145-46.

ment, or participates, with other organizations, in the process of production. Moreover, it is an educational institution training the good citizen. Without it democracy is sought in vain.

Thus special rules are to be formulated for directing the activities of syndicates. The method of directing these activities ought to be democratic - taking the form of direct elections for local directory organizations, and either direct or indirect elections for central directory bodies. All, however, would remain under governmental supervision.⁽¹⁾

2. Right to work.

Society is held responsible for securing to its members their jobs. If the individual fails to find work, and remains unemployed despite his willingness to work, it is the fault of society. Consequently, until work is found for the individual, society ought to pay him a sum of money which would secure for him his bare necessities.⁽²⁾

1. Ibid., pp.219-22.
2. Ibid., p.135.

3. Wages.

A minimum wage level should be established. But it cannot be permanently fixed and universally applicable. It should be appropriately measured against the prevailing standard of living. This standard should take into account all necessary needs: proper food, sanitary housing, and sufficient and decent clothing; and it should leave the individual a residue which would secure for him the satisfaction of his simple and necessary desires, and enable him to care for the health of his family, educate his children, and provide himself with a good measure of recreation.

If the state secures for him medical treatment and free education, or if companies supply their workers with free housing facilities, the wage level might be lowered.⁽¹⁾

During its struggle to improve labour conditions under the feudal - capitalist system, the Party occasionally presented various demands to this effect. These were naturally inspired by the prevailing circumstances, and were a response to particular situations. One such noteworthy reform demand was made

1. Ibid., pp.137-138.

public in 1955. It included the following points:

- (1) Fixing a minimum wage standard.
- (2) Prohibition of all kinds of dismissal save through special courts.
- (3) Providing for weekly and annual paid vacations.
- (4) Insurance of freedom of syndicate activities, and of joining syndicates; and the obligation of management to deal directly with syndicates.
- (5) The recognition of syndicates, by the state and labour institutions, as possessing a "moral personality".
- (6) Cancellation of all legislation which prohibits the workers and syndicate members from holding political views.
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1. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. III, p.126.

D. Agrarian Reform.

1. Preliminary statement.

According to the traditional pattern of agricultural production, the family constitutes the productive unit. This pattern still relies on old agricultural tools and methods, embodying two major drawbacks: it conceals an actual unemployment, and has only a low production capacity. Regarding unemployment the increase of family membership on the limited plot of land, develops an excess of man-power which is wasted; as to low productivity, the family is such a small productive unit that it is beyond its capacity to benefit from the immense improvements in agricultural techniques.

There are two solutions to this problem, the capitalist solution and the socialist one. Should the modernization of the agricultural sector take place at the hands of capital, it would deprive small peasants of their land and transform them into paid workers. For the capitalists would buy the land from the peasants and introduce modern techniques to agriculture. This would enable them to arbitrarily decide on wages for agricultural labour and on market prices.

The socialist solution provides for the formation of large cooperative units which would possess technical and economic viability, while the state would provide them with economic assistance, agricultural specialists, and machinery. (1)

2. Land ownership.

Article 30 of the Party Constitution states that "under the supervision of the state and in agreement with its general economic programme, land ownership shall be limited according to the ability of the owner to cultivate it fully without exploiting the efforts of others." The basic principle to be applied in agrarian reform is, thus, that "the land is to him who sows it," by employing his personal effort. Any other form of land ownership, according to which one party would own the land and the other would sow it, is corrupt and unproductive. It grants the owner a part of the produce, without his having contributed any personal effort. This would impoverish the peasants and deprive them of a certain portion of their own produce, of which they are the only rightful possessors by virtue of their own toil. It also discourages those peasants who are only temporarily employed from introducing necessary

1@ Al-Hallaj, "Views in Arab Socialism,"
Studies in Socialism, pp.55-57.

improvements.

A complementary principle governing land ownership is that no man should own more land than he can cultivate himself, and that no man should own a piece of land which would fall short of supplying him with an income sufficient to provide him with his necessities. For the income accruing from any land holding should not be less than that obtained by any ordinary citizen. These are the two extreme limits of land ownership.⁽¹⁾

Questions arise as to whether the state should charge itself with the responsibility of agricultural production, treating the peasants as though they were workers at the nationalized factories; whether it should delegate this responsibility to cooperatives and syndicates; or, finally, whether it should leave it to free individual enterprise. The prevailing opinion seems to favor a fourth solution, which is a combination of all of these. The argument is that the variation in the nature of crops, and the different kind of treatment which

1. Ar-Razzaz, The Feature of The New Arab Life, p.204.

each requires, call for variegated methods to take care of agricultural production. Thus, for example, certain kinds of agricultural activities (such as vegetable and fruit production) need persistent care characterized by a "personal touch". Private ownership is most appropriate for this kind of agriculture. Other kinds of crops (such as grains) need the cooperation of large numbers of workers; they are therefore most susceptible to mechanization. Here cooperative associations and collective farming provide the most effective arrangement. But even that form of agricultural production relegated to private care would be incorporated in cooperative associations. The only difference between it and other forms is the private ownership of land. For no matter what form agricultural production might take, cooperative associations cannot be dispensed with.

At any rate, in such a socialist system as the Ba'th envisages, the government ought to participate in, and supervise, production and consumption. Agriculture cannot be left to free enterprise, specially as it will remain, despite industrial growth and development, the basic factor in the economy of the Arab world. ⁽¹⁾ In implementing its policy towards the agricultural sector, the government could effect all the above mentioned

L. Ibid., pp.203 & 205.

reforms in a single step, or it could choose a gradual course. This might involve the establishment of maximum limits on land holdings which should be decided on in the light of the productive capacity of the land, the kind of crops, and whether the land is irregable or not. Progressive taxes should be charged, reaching up^{to} 100% on excessive holdings.⁽¹⁾

3. Cooperatives.

Cooperative associations are a basic feature of socialist agrarian reform. The agricultural sector may be organized according to a variety of patterns within the socialist framework, collective farming and cooperative associations featuring among the most favored patterns.⁽²⁾

Cooperatives would help farmers to obtain their needs, machinery, and chemicals, to sell their products, and act as the means of contact between them and the government. All agricultural products of a public consumption nature and of significance to the country's economy should be sold to

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1. Ibid., pp.209 & 211.
 2. Economic Resolutions, p.26.

cooperative associations, which would dispose of them according to government directions. The same holds true of other products related to agriculture, such as the rearing of sheep, cattle, poultry and bees.⁽¹⁾

During the Sixth National Conference, the policies described above were endorsed, with collective farming selected as the only agrarian framework for the development of socialist relationships, which relationships constitute the major goal and the underlying principle behind revolutionizing the agricultural sector. Should land be distributed on the basis of private ownership of the individual plots by the peasants, this would lead, as past experience has demonstrated, to the development of a little bourgeois class with conservative inclinations. Besides, the socialist relationships help in bringing out the peasantry from its historical isolation and create the necessary conditions for popular democracy. What is needed is not only an agrarian reform, but an "agrarian revolution" which would pave the way for rapid economic progress.⁽²⁾

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1. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of The New Arab Life, p.206.
 2. The Struggle of The Ba'ith, pp.289, 333 & 334.

CHAPTER IV

Socialism and Democracy

A. The Interdependence of Socialism and Democracy.

A profound and organic relationship makes socialism and democracy complementary to each other, neither of which being able to exist by itself and still fulfil its message. This is explained by the role each plays in human life: socialism liberates man from serfdom to unjust economic conditions, and democracy liberates him from oppressive political conditions. ⁽¹⁾ From the nature of this relationship the conclusion is easily drawn that democracy is not merely an optional factor which could be dispensed with in socialist systems. Quite the contrary, it is an integral part of it, a cardinal condition without which socialism cannot hope for a complete fulfilment of its message. "Any deviation in the application of democracy within the socialist society necessarily leads to the deviation of socialism itself." ⁽²⁾ Both are instrumental in a complementary manner, in enabling man to fully develop his potentialities.

1. Abdul-Daim, Socialism and Democracy, pp.56-58.
2. Ibid., pp.48-49.

Indeed the failure of democracy in the Arab world may be attributed, to a considerable degree, to the fact that democracy does not really take root and grow healthily except in the context of a socialist order which enables the individual to freely express his will. For socialism abolishes the domination of one class by another, is conducive to the raising of the educational standard of the citizens enabling them to maturely express their political opinion, and ends the monopoly of the exploiting class over the mass communication media, making them accessible to all the people. ⁽¹⁾ In other words, democracy remains void of any material content until the toiling masses are set free from their total preoccupation with securing the means of their subsistence, which objective it is the task of socialism to realize. ⁽²⁾

B. Limitations of Democracy.

"We trust in the democratic popular system (of government), and mistrust every absolutist dictatorial regime." ⁽³⁾ However, a dictatorial regime might accomplish great reforms, specially in the economic and social sectors. But it is only on rare occasions that the state might justifiably resort to dictatorial

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1. Abdullah Abdul-Daim, The New Arab Generation (Beirut: Dar al-Ilm Lilmalayeen, 1961), pp.155-156.
 2. The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. II, p.184.
 3. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of the New Arab Life, p.173.

methods, as it finds other paths towards the fulfilment of its goals blocked, or as these methods might become necessary in certain circumstances.⁽¹⁾

No clear - cut solution is possible. The nature of the problem does not permit of a decisive solution prepared in anticipation of events. The problem has to be tackled under specific and immediate circumstances. As to the employment of violence inherent in non-democratic methods, differentiation should be made between an employment of violence accompanied with a sharp awareness and anxiety for preserving intact the principle of freedom, and a licentious resort to and employment of violence sanctioning it as a principle and a method of its own right.⁽²⁾ However it may be, it remains the responsibility of the power holders to gradually drop dictatorial methods with a simultaneous adoption of democratic methods.⁽³⁾

Thus while due recognition should be made of the fact that the application of democracy is related to the conditions prevailing in society, this premise should not be used to

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1. Ibid., p.176.
 2. Abdul-Daim, The Arab Homeland and the Revolution, p.60.
 3. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of The New Arab Life, p.177.

justify the perversion of democracy. The basic guide is that efforts should always be made to attain the highest possible degree of democracy within the special objective conditions obtaining in society at any one time. Furthermore, these conditions are not to impinge directly on the democratic principle as such, but on the method of its application. (1)

One major qualification of democracy as applied in a socialist revolutionary system derives from the fact that neither the revolution nor the socialism it preaches serve the interests of all the people. There is at least a section of the people which is antagonistic to the aims of the revolution and the majority of the people. This section has no right to supervise authority or share it. It is the peasants, the workers and the educated revolutionary groups who are practically related to the revolution, through the identity of interests, who hold this right. (2) The invasion of almost every aspect of life by state planning and control under socialism comes up of necessity against the forces which it displaces. While this is inevitable under any socialist system, it is eminently so when such a system takes

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1. Abdul-Daim, Socialism and Democracy, p.82.
 2. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. VI, p.299.

the way of r^evolution. "The mere occurrence of the armed revolution implies the severity of the battle and the violence of the combatting forces."⁽¹⁾ The seizure of power by the revolution does not necessarily imply the final capitulation of its enemies. They would conspire time and time again to dislodge the revolution from its seat of authority, and by violent means too. So "if it is the nature of a socialist regime to augment the authority of the state, it is of the nature of a revolutionary regime, of any kind it may be, to defend its existence at any cost."⁽²⁾ The conclusion is quick to follow: popular democracy implies a wide range of democratic rights to the masses, but it also implies "the necessity for isolating political and class forces antagonistic to the socialist revolution."⁽³⁾

Finally mention should be made of still another factor which bears immediate and substantial consequences for democracy. The illiterate peasants and workers lack the capacity to share in authority and control it. These masses which have for centuries suffered oppression and exploitation cannot by a sudden jump

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1. Ar-Razzaz, Liberty, p.191.
 2. Ibid.
 3. The Struggle of The Ba'ith, Vol. VI, p.299.

assume the administration of the country. Besides, their passions and irrationality considerably determine their opinions and their will. Therefore it is the task of the Party to prepare the masses to directly exercise authority. In the meantime the Party, which is the revolutionary vanguard of the people, exercises control of authority and conducts it in the interest of the classes related to the revolution. (1)

C. The Identity of the New Democracy.

Broadly speaking democracy is a mutual interaction between the leadership and the people. (2) It is an attitude in the first place, a spirit which ought to permeate all the people and affect every member in society, imbuing him with the feeling of citizenship, making him appreciate his rights and duties, and feel that his opinion is valued, and that it is on him and his comrades that the policy of the state, the syndicate and society depends.

This spirit cannot permeate society save by experience, and the more the citizen practices the rights which democracy

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1. The Struggle of The Ba'ith, Vol. VI, pp.299-300.
See also Abdul-Daim, The New Arab Generation, p.147.
 2. The Struggle of The Ba'ith, Vol. IV, p.206.

accords to him the more grows his consciousness and appreciation of their importance. They include the freedom of thought, expression, criticism, of supporting the policies which suit his affiliations, joining the groups he chooses, and participating in parliamentary, municipal, syndicate, club, and society elections just as he wills. Through practicing these freedoms the people, even the most inert and disinterested, become motivated by the democratic spirit which persistently acquires more depth and meaning.

The basic and ultimate role of democracy in a socialist system is the arrival at a stage where the authority of the workers would develop from an authority exercised on behalf of the masses to an authority directly exercised by the masses, by means of the gradual displacement of direct state administration by types of independent social administration. The new type of democracy would thus take the form of a direct popular control of economic and social activities.

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1. Ar-Razzaz, The Features of The New Arab Life, pp.145-146.
 2. Ibid., p.182.
 3. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. VI, p.332.
 4. Abdul-Daim, Socialism and Democracy, p.39.
 5. Arab Documents, 1964, p.246.

Finally, the question is posed as to the material form the democratic system of the Ba'th might take. No pre-arranged pattern is claimed. Much of the process of implementing socialism depends on trial and error in the light of the objective scientific consideration of the conditions obtaining in society. It is by means of actual experiments, which as frequently miss the aim as they turn out to be correct, that the correct and final solution might be found. For the early stage central planning, financing and control are necessary. But decentralization should be the long term objective. For a heavy-handed centralization leads to an excessive concentration of power and does not allow room for the sharing of authority by the people as a whole, through their popular organizations.

Besides, decentralization relieves the top leadership from the concentration of responsibilities to a degree at which they become a heavy burden, which the leadership is not capable to handle efficiently.
(1)

D. Safeguards of Democracy.

An obvious threat to democracy in a socialist revolutionary system is the growth of bureaucracy. The masses, organized in

1. Economic Resolutions, pp.42 and 48.

their syndicates and cooperatives, are the only alternative to, and the safeguard against, bureaucracy. This alternative simultaneously substantiates socialism with its democratic humanitarian content.⁽¹⁾

Popular action and participation is the marrow of democracy. Thus democracy should not ensue only from action at the top, but should be achieved and sustained by the efforts of the people. The true measure of democracy is not its being for the people, but of the people and by the people. Parties, syndicates, and cooperatives constitute the sinews of democracy. Their activities, however, should bear the stamp of major national objectives. Ample room should be provided for these activities and for multiplicity and diversity, but only within the limits⁽²⁾ of these objectives.

Besides, democracy is a primary condition for obtaining the desired results of nationalization. Should nationalization vest the ownership of the means of production in the hands of a non-democratic state, or even should the social organizations

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1. The Struggle of The Ba'ith, Vol. VI, pp.288-289.
 2. Abdul-Daim, The Arab Homeland and the Revolution, pp.66 & 68.

charged with the responsibility of running the means of production be lacking in democratic practices, the effort for freeing man from exploitation would not have succeeded. Only through collective responsibility for the administration of the economy can this aim be realized. "The ownership by a dictatorial state of the means of production is neither the liberation of the individual, nor is it socialism. It is only the addition of economic power and ⁽¹⁾ oppression to political power and oppression." Thus the democratic system gives socialization its revolutionary content, guarding it against bureaucratic influences and susceptibilities by entrusting the administration of the means of production to the producers themselves. ⁽²⁾ The final assertion becomes obvious: the democratic administration of the means of production is a fundamental condition for the practice of popular democracy on the political plane. ⁽³⁾ The application of democracy to one sector of the nation constitutes a safeguard of democracy in the nation as a whole.

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1. Ar-Razzaz, Liberty, p.90.
 2. Economic Resolutions, p.39
 3. The Struggle of The Ba'ith, Vol. VI, p.276.

CHAPTER V

The Ba'th Party and the Arab Communists.

The Ba'th Party has had to define its attitude towards Communism in the Arab world. For both are political movements operating in society, and each bears a mission of social transformation drawn along the lines of its own principles.

The attitude of the Ba'th, as will be demonstrated, has not been entirely consistent, except, perhaps, in its theoretical formulation. On the tactical plane, political expediency has dictated an incongruous policy line towards the Arab Communists.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the Ba'thist point of view, in broad lines, regarding their attitude towards the Arab Communists, with reference to basic disagreements on the theoretical plane, conflicting policies and aims regarding political issues, and areas of possible tactical cooperation.

It should be noted in advance, however, that the Ba'th Party does not seem to have taken much pain to articulate the specific points of disagreement with Communism, specially in the field of political theory.

A. General Theoretical Disagreements

1. The national issue.

Whereas the Ba'th Party attributes the highest value to the concept of nationalism, as the most appropriate natural condition for the full growth of human traits, the Communists regard nationalism as only a transitory stage, and believe that a contradiction exists between it and humanitarianism. They disregard the historical and spiritual growth of nationalism: the traditions, institutions and special characteristics which have evolved with nationalism, and which have become the distinctive features of different nationalities. (1)

Communism, the Party maintains, has been a reaction to the social and economic conditions which prevailed in Europe, and to the excesses and belligerence of nation-states. It has not evolved as a remedy for the particular problems besetting the Arabs. Indeed, Communism attacks Arab nationalism while the latter has not yet emerged from infancy; it attaches the Arab nation to world Communism asserting that the Arabs cannot achieve any progress except through Communism. This

1. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, pp.112-113.

Communist approach to Arab problems threatens to submerge the national character of the Arabs, and confounds Arab thought, still groping for its identity, disabling it from discovering the proper solutions to the problems of the Arab nation. Here (1) lurks one of the major threats which Communism poses to the Arabs.

The Arab nation is formidably rooted in its traditions and culture, which have crystallized during its past history. It stands as a great nation and is conscious of its "immortal mission"; it has a civilization of its own, and therefore cannot "walk in the shadow" of any other nation. While smaller nations might find in Communism an "elevating force", the (2) Arab nation finds its cultural heritage threatened by Communism.

Besides, while Communism was a negative response to nationalism in Europe, while it was preached to disinherited and estranged classes, whose only common denominator was the negative feeling of dissatisfaction and the loss of any sense of the implications and significance of nationalism, Arab socialism is stamped with the positive spirit of Arab nationalism. Indeed, it

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1. Ibid., pp.198-99.
 2. Ibid., p.197.

can be said that Arab nationalism and Arab socialism are
(1)
identical.

From these premises the conclusion can be drawn that the Arab nation has its special and distinct way for erecting its socialist society. It is anxious to benefit from the experiences of other nations, but it is equally anxious not to lose its identity and surrender the task of socialization to any party which claims guardianship over the socialist movement in the world, bearing in mind that Ba'thist socialism rejects the Communist premise regarding the uniformity and identity of socialism and the scientific laws governing its application throughout the world.
(2)
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2. Communist materialism.

The Ba'th Party views Communism as a "Materialistic, negativist, hateful movement", sharply contrasting, one would assume, with the spiritually oriented thought of the Party. Ba'thist
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1. Ibid., pp.203-204.
 2. Salah al-Bitar, Arab Policy in Principle and in Practice (Beirut: Dar at-Tali'a, 1960), pp.140-41. (In Arabic.)
 3. 'Aflaq, Towards Resurrection, p.345.
 4. Ibid., p.88.

thought rejects the materialistic concept of communism regarding historical and social development. It affirms, on the contrary, that the spiritual factor greatly influences the course of history and human progress.

This materialism also impinges on the individual and sacrifices him to the exigencies of social development. Dictatorship steps in, and society acquires mechanistic characteristics which replace spiritual values to the great disadvantage of the individual. Religion suffers too, being itself a spiritual value. Communism adopted a negative attitude to religion due to the fact that religious institutions in Europe were closely allied with reactionary exploitative forces, and has ended by discarding religion altogether. The Ba'thists claim that they have superseded this attitude towards religion, and stress the importance of the religious factor in society, and its ability to cope with the needs of a dynamic world.

B. Differences Regarding Political Issues.

On the level of immediate political confrontation and

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1. Ibid., pp.210-11. See also Elias Farah, "The Development of The Socialist Movement in The Arab Homeland," Studies in Socialism, p.183.
 2. Ibid., pp.126-127.

practical attitudes towards real political issues, the Communists have adopted a policy diametrically opposed to the national interest. They take full advantage of that measure of democracy which is permitted in the Arab countries to obstruct the realization of nationalist aspirations, among which Arab unity ranks highest.⁽¹⁾ Well organized propaganda campaigns have been launched by the Communists against Arab unity and Arab nationalism. Arab communist parties have concentrated their efforts at awakening local separatist feelings and racial fanaticism.⁽²⁾ They have incited ethnic and sectarian minorities harbouring resentment against Arab nationalism and arrayed them in a single front together with western imperialism against Arab nationalism.⁽³⁾

The Ba'th Party charges the Communists with betraying the Arab cause on a number of major issues. They played a subservient role to western imperialism during W.W.II, and betrayed the Arab cause in Palestine in 1948.⁽⁴⁾ They joined reactionary forces in the bitter campaign which was launched against the creation of the United Arab Republic.⁽⁵⁾ In Iraq, they pursued an opportunist

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1. Al-Bitar, Arab Policy in Principle and in Practice, p.137.
 2. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. IV, p.67.
 3. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. I, p.89.
 4. Arab Documents, 1963, p.54.
 5. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. IV, p.86.

policy and involved themselves in a series of bloody events which in effect weakened the people's capacity to stand up against imperialist designs and machinations. They gradually attacked national parties, sparing no effort to dominate all other parties and groups, and gain control of the regime as a means to further communist interests and realize communist aims.

Finally, communism in the Arab world has had a very detrimental effect on the Arab revolutionary movement. It has competed with the purely nationalist groups in enlisting popular support, thus diverting part of the people away from the course of the struggle for the realization of national objectives, and absorbing a portion of the revolutionary potential which, otherwise, should have been harnessed for the promotion of national interests. Besides, communism has added one other facet to the already complex problem of minorities in the Arab world, the implication being that Communists themselves have come to form a new minority.

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1. Ibid., pp.107-108.
 2. For full details see: The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. VII, pp.58-72.
 3. Sa'doon Hmadah, We and the Communists in the Present Crisis (Beirut: Dar at-Tali'a, n.d.), pp.31 , 33 and 35. (In Arabic.)

C. Cooperation with The Communists.

The logical conclusion one might draw is that the communist movement in the Arab world is antithetical to the interests of the Arab nation, and consequently no effort should be spared to confine communism and eradicate it. "Our enmity to the Communists should continue, be deepened, and become more comprehensive."⁽¹⁾

Though this inference seems sound, tactical considerations and transitory circumstances have on several occasions induced the Ba'th Party to collaborate with the Arab Communists" for saving the nation from the conspiracies of imperialism and the ruling faction."⁽²⁾ But at its best cooperation with the Communists remains a dubious and risky affair because of their opportunism. It is only possible when they are so weak as to be unable of influence and dominate their partners.⁽³⁾

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To sum up, the Ba'th Party recognizes the progressive

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1. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. VII, p.81.
 2. The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. V , p.90.
 3. Hmadah, Op. Cit., pp.34-35. See also The Struggle of The Ba'th, Vol. IV , pp.106-107.

nature of the communist movement, but rejects the communist system of government as well as some crucial elements of the communist ideology (such as its materialism, its outlook on nationalism, and its theory of class struggle). The Ba'th does not admit that communism is the only solution for the problems of the world, ⁽¹⁾ though it admits that communism is founded on well studied scientific principles, and that its theoretical background "has opened expanding horizons of know-
⁽²⁾ledge to Arab thought."

1. Hmadah, Op. Cit., p.74.
2. Al-Ba'th, October 27, 1965.

CHAPTER VI

The Left and Right of the
Ba'th Party

With the Ba'th Party's accession to power in Iraq and Syria in February and March, 1963, respectively, internal differences among the Party members on policy issues began to appear on the surface. ⁽¹⁾ During the Sixth National Conference, which was convened between October 5 and 23, 1963, the leftist group asserted itself and forced through its major premise, the ⁽²⁾ concept of class struggle. This group separated itself from the main body of the Party and called itself the "Leftist Socialist Arab Ba'th Party". The first symptom of this actual separation appeared when a large number of Party organizations boycotted a Party meeting in Damascus on February 13, 1963, and reached its climax in November of the same year with the events which ⁽³⁾ terminated the Ba'thi regime in Iraq. Here follows a general exposition of its views and criticism of the traditional Party in so far as these pertain to its socialist concepts.

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1. For examples see: The Crisis of the Ba'th Party, pp.88-98.
 2. Ibid., pp.45 , 115 and 136.
 3. Ibid., pp.5 and 11.

A. The Hetrogeniety of The Class Composition of The Party.

The vagueness of the ideology of the Party and the ambivalence of its broad socialist mottos drew to its ranks center and rightist elements, and even "good intentioned" conservatives were not repulsed by these mottos. This created within the Party a gradation from left to right. During the period characterized by negative struggle against traditional regimes, the broad objectives of the Party and the emotionalism, which is the concomitant of this kind of struggle, were sufficiently strong to submerge the class differences and interests which claimed the allegiance of Party members. But where the class origins of Party members did not favor the growth of socialist beliefs, where the Party member was not held to his Party by ideological conviction, but merely by the organizational framework of the Party, allegiance to class remained stronger than (1) allegiance to the Party. "The right wing of the Party has not hesitated and will not hesitate to (make) alliance with the right outside the Party." (2) The insistence on the right to private ownership and the rejection of class struggle amply

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1. Ibid., pp.27-31.
 2. Ibid., p.12.

demonstrated the strong claim which class interests made on
the individual.⁽¹⁾

B. The Bourgeois Characteristics of the Party.

The progressiveness of the Party has been half-hearted and relativistic. It stands as the unequivocal expression of the ideology of the little bourgeoisie and its political ambitions. Rightist elements reject the concept of class struggle as a basic factor of social dynamism, while traditional elements recognize it as a necessary evil, constituting a factor of "disunity and internal discord". They are anxious to ameliorate it, reduce its bitterness, and prevent it from assuming full dimensions, lest the little bourgeoisie should be ousted from their leading positions.⁽²⁾
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Due to its elitist outlook, the Party relies on what could be described as intuition, instead of employing the scientific

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1. The Leftist Socialist Arab Ba'th Party, The Political Declaration of the Seventh National Conference. [January 1965], p.55.
 2. By "traditional elements" is probably meant 'Aflaq, ar-Razzaz (former secretary generals), al-Bitar (former Prime Minister) and Abdul-Daim (a prominent Party member and a former minister), as their writings tend in this direction.
 3. Ibid., pp.55-56.

approach to the understanding of social problems. While it has grasped the general features of the "Arab reality", it has failed to unearth the deep roots nourishing it. It has attributed the backwardness and corruption pervading Arab society to a lack of "authenticity". It is true that corruption is there in society, but it is not a personal trait of individuals; it is embedded in the class system and in exploitation. "The corruption of the individuals is the reflection of the corruption of a social system built on class (distinctions)."⁽¹⁾

In general Party thought has been static and idealistic in orientation. Its notion of "authenticity" has rendered the Party incapable of grasping the reality of historical change, let alone directing its course. This has induced it to take refuge in its past, justifying its aloofness from the masses by assuming the role of the all-wise leader who looks condescendingly on the ignorant masses. The traditional Party line has been lacking the consciousness of the passage of time, considering the historical movement as an eternal repetition of a certain renaissance that took place at some past epoch.⁽²⁾ Socialism

1. Ibid., pp.69-70.
2. Ibid., p.64.

remained essentially a feeling of revolt and rejection, satisfied with agitation for revolution, and with broad mottos for a revolutionary theory. The rejection of the corner stone of the revolutionary theory, namely class struggle, left the Party without a revolutionary strategy. Lacking this theory and this strategy the Party has been left to opportunism and adventure at the hands of the little and medium bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy, while the bulk of the Party proceeded towards the revolutionary stage.⁽¹⁾

Such criticisms were voiced during the Sixth National Conference. It was admitted that "the important positions occupied by the little bourgeoisie in the Party impeded class struggle from assuming full proportions ..."⁽²⁾ The access of bourgeois elements to leading positions in the Party, and the reliance on an intuitive vision of the future in place of scientific analysis of phenomena, incapacitated the Party and rendered it unable to have early cognizance of "the real dynamics of human development" or to "understand the laws of

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1. The Crisis of the Ba'th Party, pp.52-53.
 2. The Political Declaration of the Seventh National Conference, p.73.

(1)
social change."

C. Class Struggle: a Revolutionary Theory.

The revolutionary theory, and specifically the theory of class struggle, "uncovers the political character of class forces in society, and clarifies the objectives of each class, its guise and its probable course."⁽²⁾ No revolution can be said to exist without a theory. Strategic planning, which depends for its "raw materials" on revolutionary theory, is based on an objective study of class forces determining, during various stages, the basic objectives of the revolution, its power, the objectives of its enemies and their possible tactics, and the proper instance "for delivering the fatal blow"⁽³⁾. "Without such a theory, any progressive movement will necessarily be transformed⁽⁴⁾ to an opportunist, reformist, partial, and superficial movement."

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1. Ibid., pp.73-74. See also The Struggle of the Ba'th, Vol. VI, pp.282-84.
 2. Ibid., p.78.
 3. Ibid., See pp.75-76 and 78-79.
 4. Ibid., p.76.

Instead: Party thought has been confounded because it relies on intuition, because it is characteristically elitist in spirit, and because it lacks a theory altogether; specifically, because it has rejected "the corner stone of revolutionary theory, i.e. class struggle. "This truth - alone - explains the split of the socialist Arab Ba'th Party..."⁽¹⁾

D. Identification of the Left Wing of the Party.

The leftist Ba'th Party, as the new organization describes itself, aims at forming a nucleus of a "revolutionary socialist peasant, and labour political movement, struggling for unity on a democratic socialist basis."⁽²⁾ Its purpose is not merely to develop the traditional bourgeois Party line, within the bourgeois framework of the Party, but it is dedicated to effect a shift in kind from the little bourgeois concepts to the scientific socialist approach. It condemns the elitest spirit of the traditional Party, and its assumption of the guardian's role over the people. It assumes an open⁽³⁾ attitude towards the other leftist groups in the Arab world.

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1. Ibid., p.76.
 2. Ibid., p.116.
 3. Ibid., pp.116-17.

The new organization, it is stressed, ought to be homogeneous in its class composition. It should guard against the little bourgeois mentality and methods. It pledges to combat all symptoms of bureaucracy, opportunism and "undemocratic ways". Members ought to dedicate their daily life to the masses. Simplicity of life and genuine spontaneous intermingling with the masses should be the watch words. For the masses are the solid core of the democratic socialist revolution. (1) (2)

It regards the bourgeoisie, which originally led the struggle against reactionary forces in the Arab world, as an obstacle in the path of socialist progress, as it has been transcended by the masses in the struggle for socialism. Past attempts to develop the Party ideologically and in regard to its class composition have failed, as rightist elements drove the political and ideological struggle within the Party to a final split. (3)

It preaches "merciless violence" against the classes and political groups opposed to socialism, brushing aside "false

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1. Ibid., pp.118-19.
 2. Ibid., p.72.
 3. Ibid., p.116.

bourgeois ethics". Every revolution has the right to defend itself, though vigilance ought to be exercised lest revolutionary violence become indistinguishable from fascist terrorism. "Revolutionary violence ought to ensue from an unequivocal and extremely strict revolutionary legality ... and this violence should be exercised ... on the basis of laws sanctioning it and defending the forward thrust of the ⁽¹⁾tioling masses."

1. Ibid., p.104.

CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

Having acquainted ourselves with the major premises of the socialist thought of the Ba'th Party, it is opportune to make a few observations by way of conclusion.

We have seen how the Party conceives and evaluates the interdependence of socialism with all other aspects of national life; and we have noted the method it advocates for realizing socialism. But although the socialist system envisaged by the Ba'th comprehends the wide variety of factors which it necessarily involves, it is deficient in vividness and tangibility. For the socialist principles of the Party are mainly couched in the terminology of broad mottos and general humanitarian principles.

For instance, Ba'thist thought revolves around socialist principles without revealing their substantive contents. It speaks of socialism as that viewpoint which "opens our eyes at the laws which make history", but fails to explain what these laws are. It refers to the "equitable economic conditions" which

are the pre-requisites of human development, but it does not define these conditions, nor does it set a program specifying how it proposes to achieve them. Similarly, the Party's notion of freedom has remained the captive of generalizations, and the concepts of democracy and collective leadership have lacked any substantive framework. The most that one can learn from a study of Ba'th literature, regarding these questions, is that personal liberty and democracy are permissible only within an area specified by the undefined notions of the national interest and the requirements of the revolution. For long, the attitude of the Ba'th to class struggle remained ambivalent: while Ba'thist recognized the existence of this phenomenon in Arab society, they simply ignored it from the beginning until the Sixth National Conference, when this issue was, at least officially, settled by the full recognition both of class struggle and of the necessity of employing it as a party platform. It has still to be seen whether this new policy will really take roots or not.

The inconsistencies of Ba'thist thought appear also in the hesitant character of the approach to the question of revolution. The Party Constitution clearly states that

the Party is a revolutionary party whose socialist aims "can only be achieved through revolution and struggle," (Article 6). Yet no less a Party authority than Muneef ar-Razzaz, until recently the Party's Secretary-General, speaks of the possibility of avoiding violence and pursuing a gradual course towards socialism. Indeed, the revolutionary concept is rendered obscure by the assertion that socialism itself is a revolutionary principle no matter which methods are employed for achieving it. Thus the meaning of revolution becomes so inclusive as to lose its significance.

A general assertion can perhaps be made at this point. The literature of the Ba'th Party as a whole does not express the viewpoints of a particular school of thought; nor has it evolved a distinct ideology. While it has drawn largely on the international heritage of socialist thought, it has not evolved a distinct system of its own. While inconsistencies in Ba'thist writings may be largely due to differences of opinion among Party members, this fact does not justify the failure of the Party as such to develop a systematic program based on clearly stated theoretical premises.

However, a number of considerations, which probably have been of consequence to Ba'thist thought, should be

mentioned here. First, the Party has been primarily involved in political struggle on the internal and external fronts, against traditionalism, capitalism, and imperialism. Its literature, consequently, abounds with speeches and articles which do not possess the characteristics of serious study. Secondly, the Party has time and again stressed the fact that it does not intend to give an original formulation of socialist principles. On the contrary, it readily adopts from the socialist experience and literature of other nations what fits the conditions of the Arab nations. Thirdly, in evolving the socialist system which is most appropriate to the Arab nation, the Party depends on trial and error. This is probably the most important factor which accounts for this absence of a systematic ideology. For the Ba'th Party has only recently established itself in authority, and consequently, it seems it has not had the opportunity to put its general socialist principles into actual practice, thus removing the ambiguities which becloud them. Although it has held power in Syria for about three years, this period might not have been long enough to enable the Party to develop its programs. For it has been preoccupied with defending itself against antagonistic forces outside its ranks, and very much involved with internal dissensions as well. In any case and under any circumstances a period of three years might be considered too short for any

socialist regime to develop its characteristics.

Nevertheless, the Sixth National Conference might be considered the watershed in the development of Party thought. At this conference, the Party conducted a comprehensive and critical analysis of its concepts and past policies, and laid the foundations for future development. It passed from the twilight of general principles into a comparatively more precise presentation of socialist ideas. The concept of class struggle was officially adopted, and the absolute right to private ownership, no matter how restricted it might be, was condemned as signifying the mentality of the little bourgeoisie. Labour, it was affirmed, is the only source of value.

But, since that conference, events have been moving at a rapid pace, and have been characterized by a heated struggle between the Party and opposing groups, as well as by factionalism within the Party. In short, the past three years may be described as a period of transition. The final outcome is still unpredictable.

Despite all the shortcomings and ambiguities, however, we still may speak of a Ba'thist socialism. No matter how

general the principles, or broad and vague the mottos might be, they definitely stand for something. Ba'thist principles and mottos do connote a socialist system of thought, and provide the basis for a socialist regime. In so far as Ba'thist thought censures inherited privilege, and condemns exploitation; in so far as it approaches the economic question from the viewpoint of the interest of society as a whole, and channels both human and material resources towards the public interest; and thus, in as much as it concerns itself with man as a social being and attempts to improve his condition through reforming society as a whole, Ba'thist thought is decidedly socialistic.

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