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THE IDEOLOGY OF GAMAL ABDEL NASSER

by

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I attempt to ascertain the ideology of Gamal Abdel Nasser, a man who has become, to his people, a symbol of liberation, and in the eyes of many independent observers, a statesman of high stature.

The thesis is entirely based on his speeches, press interviews, and the National Charter which he presented to the National Congress of the Popular Powers on May 21, 1962.

In general I restrict myself to description and refrain from criticism. An adequate critique of the various elements that go to make up Abdel Nasser's ideology would require a more profound knowledge of political theory than I can claim to possess.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first deals with Abdel Nasser's principles of foreign policy, i.e., peaceful coexistence, positive neutrality, non-alignment, the right of self-determination for all nations and above all the preservation of international peace. Each principle is studied in detail.

Chapter two deals with Abdel Nasser's concept of Arab Nationalism and Arab unity, and examines in particular his notions of the form, content and bases of Arab unity, of the means by which unity can be accomplished and finally the role of the U.A.R. in the Arab national movement.

The third chapter is concerned with his concept of democracy, and includes an analysis of his ideas on the inherent connection between political democracy and social freedom, as well as a statement of his views on political parties and popular organizations and the principle of collective leadership.

The fourth chapter treats his concept of socialism in both its theoretical and practical features.

The fifth chapter takes up Abdel Nasser's concept of the individual and the sixth chapter his concept of religion.

In the conclusion an attempt is made to tie together and compare the various elements of his ideology.

Chapter I

ABDEL NASSER'S CONCEPT OF FOREIGN POLICY

A. Abdel Nasser's Basic Principle : The Indispensability of World Peace.

Abdel Nasser's foreign policy since the Revolution of July 23, 1952 has been affected by the radical changes that have taken place in the world situation after the Second World War. The Charter has indicated these changes as follows:

First - The spectacular success of the national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Secondly - The emergence of the Communist camp as an enormous international force.

Thirdly - The great scientific and technological advances which annihilated the physical and psychological distances between nations, opened up unlimited horizons for human development, and so increased the destructiveness of weapons as to transform them into deterrents against war.

Fourthly - The consequent increase in the weight of moral forces in the world and in particular of the United Nations, the non-aligned states and world opinion generally.¹

In the light of these changes, the U.A.R. has come to believe in the indispensability of the peaceful solution of international

¹U.A.R., The Charter, May 21, 1962. p. 13.

problems and has accordingly supported and continues to support any move aiming at the maintenance of world peace. "One of our main objectives", said Abdel Nasser on January 27, 1958, "is to save the world from the ravages of war, and to spare no effort to bring the present cold war to an end so that we can devote all our attention to building up our country".

But peace in Abdel Nasser's view does not merely mean the absence of war. Peace, he emphasized in his speech at the Bandung Conference, is a concomitant of a sound world society based on social justice and respect for the freedom of all peoples.¹

World peace and the role of the small powers

The problem of peace and war concerns all the nations of the world since it affects them all. "The problem of peace and war does not belong to the big powers alone. It is the right of the entire human race to have a word regarding this problem. This right stems from the sacrifices made by the various peoples in building up world civilization and also from their interest in peace and security."²

Although Abdel Nasser believes that the time had gone when the big powers could alone determine the shape of the future, he does not deny that the big powers hold in their hands the crucial lever in the preservation of peace. "The big powers represent", as he put it "the nerve system of the world."³ None the less he is of the opinion that when it comes to lessening world tension, the possibilities of success are stronger in the U.N. than outside it.

¹ April 8, 1955.

² September 27, 1960.

³ Ibid.

Imperialism and world peace

Imperialism is one of the main factors contributing to world tension. It has increasingly tended to take on subtle and indirect forms, such as domination of peoples from within, the formation of economic monopolies, the attempt at undermining the confidence of the smaller nations in their capacity to develop themselves, etc.

For all these reasons the Charter called for "fighting against imperialism with all the country's potentialities and in every possible way, exposing it in all its shapes and masks and waging a battle against it in all its dens."¹

Military Alliances and world peace

Similarly, military alliances are a danger to world peace because they lead to a competition between the Big Powers for the support of the smaller nations. Such rivalry drives them into the cold war, thereby undoubtedly adding to world tension. Abdel Nasser has accordingly opposed military alliances, bases, and spheres of influence, and refrained from binding himself in any way to any of the two blocs in the cold war.²

Disarmament and world peace

The problem of disarmament is ultimately linked to that of maintaining world peace, and its solution, Abdel Nasser believes, is predicated upon the existence of a real desire to disarm on the part of the Big Powers. He is also of the opinion that disarmament negotiations should

¹The Charter, p. 81.

²July 22, 1958.

be carried within the framework of the United Nations and that the participation of the non-aligned countries is essential and will contribute positively to the reduction of tension.¹

In the speech he delivered at the U.N. on September 27, 1960, Abdel Nasser also called for the removal of military bases, the stopping of nuclear tests, the disposal of the stock piles of the nuclear weapons of the Big Powers, the reduction of military budgets and the establishment of adequate controls. "The funds used for armaments should be spent to promote the welfare of humanity", he asserted. "It was really a great shame", he continued, "that in the twentieth century there should still be primitive communities, that people should die of hunger and be deprived of basic human necessities". America and Russia each spent 41 billion dollars annually on armaments and armies. The total expenditures of all the Big Powers amounts to 100 billion dollars. Were those funds to be used for the advance of human welfare, the world would be a happier habitation, prosperity and peace would prevail and the causes of conflict would disappear.² The problem of under-development which bedevils the world, today, would also become less acute, although in this regard the ending of imperialism in Africa is essential.³ Also he expressed himself strongly in favour of the peaceful use of atomic energy. If there were people in this world who insisted on using atomic progress almost exclusively in the production of bombs, a thing that carried in its fold destruction and ruin "it is our right", he said "to differ with them."

¹September 27, 1962.

²August 11, 1959.

³Ibid.

We believe in peace and in the right of nations to peace. If the world has succeeded in discovering the great secret of the atom, then the world must be able to prove that its moral and spiritual strength is stronger than its muscles and stronger than its ability to threaten ... failing that, the world will destroy itself. This is our logic."¹

¹Ibid.

B. Derivative Principles

Peaceful coexistence

Abdel Nasser's adoption of the principles of peaceful coexistence in international relations flows from his belief in world peace and in the necessity of reducing world tension.

There are two kinds of peaceful coexistence, the one between the Big Powers themselves and the other between the big powers on one hand and the small powers on the other. "Very often", Abdel Nasser said, "peaceful coexistence is thought of only in reference to the Big Powers, the reason is not far to seek: world peace depends first of all on the big powers ... none the less, for the sake of world peace and world cooperation, there must also be peaceful coexistence between the Big Powers and the Small Powers and between the imperialist states and the states under imperialism."¹

Peaceful coexistence implies that it is not only possible but also necessary that nations existing under different social, economic and political systems live together in peace and cooperation. Moreover, no state should impose its political system or its ideology on another state by force or the threat of force.² And the right of each nation to live in its own way and to conduct its affairs as it sees fit should be recognized. Only thus could peaceful coexistence and world cooperation become a reality.³

Non-alignment and positive neutrality

A second derivative principle of Abdel Nasser's foreign policy

X¹ April 18, 1955.

² December 23, 1958.

³ January 1, 1955.

is that of non-alignment or more accurately, "positive neutrality". At the conference of the non-aligned states held in Belgrade in September 1961, non-alignment was viewed as involving the cooperation of the non-aligned states "in solving problems which affect world peace and security," and "in encouraging and helping all nations struggling for independence and equality."¹ Non-alignment was also considered as the only alternative to the policy of dividing the world into blocs and the intensification of the cold war.

"Positive neutrality" on the other hand was defined by Abdel Nasser in one of his interviews with the American press as "political interaction with the world events."

Positive neutrality and non-alignment, said Abdel Nasser on another occasion, enable the state to "go neither east nor west, right nor left."² Ours is a policy of cooperation with all countries. We befriend those who befriend us and are hostile to those who are hostile to us."³

Positive neutrality and non-alignment endow the U.A.R. with the freedom to adopt any foreign policy it chooses. Tying itself to the wheels of one of the camps while it is a small nation only renders it a "camp follower with no weight or say in any thing."⁴ Hence Abdel Nasser's concern to withstand the encroachment of any big power, "We will not", he repeatedly said "take instructions from London or Paris or Washington, or

¹ April 18, 1955.

² February 21, 1959.

³ February 28, 1959.

⁴ March 20, 1958.

Moscow or any other capital in the World. Our policy emanates from our land", "from our conscience".¹

i. Political Non-Alignment

When the British troops left Egypt, Abdel Nasser realized that it was in Egypt's interest to cooperate with the East and the West. He could not join the Western Camp because of its unpopularity with the mass of the Arabs; and he could not join the Eastern Camp because of ideological differences. But the East had an advantage over the West in that it had never dominated the Arab peoples, and was not burdened with a past of broken promises. Moreover the East was not hampered by anything like the Balfour Declaration and the unrewarding Western commitment to Zionism and Israel.²

Prior to 1959, Abdel Nasser also felt that whereas the U.S.A. and the United Kingdom were always trying to impose their views on Egypt, the Soviet Union gave the Egyptian cause full support. When the U.S.A., for example, refused after the Suez Crisis to supply Egypt with wheat and froze Egyptian assets in Washington, the Soviet Union hurried to provide the grain Egypt needed. When the U.S.A. denied Egypt the arms it required for its defence against an Israel amply supplied by France, the Soviet Union did not hesitate to meet Egypt's requirements.³

There were those in America who complained of the Egyptian attacks on the U.S.A. and the absence of such attacks on the Soviet Union, interpreting this to mean a leaning towards the Eastern Camp and not a policy

¹September 17, 1957.

²November 19, 1957.

³January 27, 1958.

of non-alignment, but there was no reason to oppose the Soviet Union as long as it cooperated with Egypt on an equal and friendly basis and with no conditions or restrictions. But when the Arab Communists, supported indirectly by the Soviet Union, began opposing the Arab nationalist trend especially in Syria and Iraq, Abdel Nasser's friendship to the Soviet Union did not stop him from attacking Communism. Troubles arose between Abdel Nasser and Khrushchev. They started when Abdel Nasser attacked the Syrian Communists. Khrushchev's reaction was shocking to Abdel Nasser: "The answer" said Abdel Nasser "came from Khrushchev in such a manner as to suggest that he had assumed responsibility for the protection of Arab Communists." Abdel Nasser protested to Moscow against such interference in Arab affairs. Then came the 1959 Communist Congress at Moscow. Here also, Khrushchev made remarks which hurt Abdel Nasser's dignity. Subsequently Abdel Nasser sent Khrushchev a letter in which he pointed out that his friendship with the Soviet Union did not exist because of the Communists in the Arab World but in spite of them and that it was a relationship built on the fact that each state had its own ideological beliefs. Khrushchev in his reply stressed the necessity of strengthening Arab-Soviet friendship regardless of the existing ideological differences. He also stated that "Our attitude towards you and towards the country you lead could not change regardless of any political circumstances", and added that the attitude of the U.A.R. towards its own Communists was a domestic affair in which the U.S.S.R. did not propose to interfere.¹

Then came Abdel Nasser's troubles with Iraq and his attack on Iraqi Communists, especially after the Shawwaf revolt in March 1959.

¹February 21, 1959.

Khrushchev's comment on that was that Abdel Nasser was a young man, passionate and hotheaded and that when he talked about communism he armed himself with the language of imperialists. This convinced Abdel Nasser that Moscow had really emerged as the protector of Communists against Arab Nationalism. He had accordingly no alternative but to tell the Russians that he did not accept this new type of colonialism.¹ The result was that the enormous Soviet goodwill built over three years of friendship was lost in less than three weeks. But these bad relations did not last long although Abdel Nasser stopped speaking about them in his speeches.¹

ii. Military Non-Alignment

Military pacts and common defence treaties, Abdel Nasser says, are a new, disguised form of imperialism.² The defence of the Arab countries should be the exclusive responsibility of the Arabs. This policy had been derived from the Arabs' past experience. Abdel Nasser, like many other Arabs, used to ponder over the situation in which the Arab people found themselves after the Palestine crisis in 1948. How the Arabs could defend themselves against aggression was a problem to which he gave much thought. Different and contradictory opinions have been advanced by Arabs on this subject. Some thought that the Arabs, being a small nation, simply had no way of attaining peace or ridding themselves of foreign domination and that it was, therefore, absolutely necessary to accept some form of foreign domination and depend on some big nation for security.³ Abdel Nasser rejected this view, he felt that the experience of

¹February 21, 1959; March 13, 17, 22, 30, 1959 and April 17, 1959.

²February 27, 1958.

³March 20, 1958.

the past indicated that the real cause of Arab weakness was disunity. In Palestine, for example, the Arabs were defeated because they had seven armies instead of one. A united Arab nation could defend its heritage relying on its own resources without entangling itself in undesirable foreign connections.¹

At one point, early in 1954, Abdel Nasser declared in a Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Arab Countries that Egypt was ready to cooperate with the West provided this cooperation comes through the Arab League and not through pacts or agreements with individual Arab states.² But in 1955 the West launched the Baghdad Pact system and while aspiring at attaching all the Middle Eastern Arab States into it, set Iraq on a path divergent from that of its sister countries. Abdel Nasser's reaction was naturally negative. "We did not like to see the occupation go out from the door to come back from the window under a new name and a new guise",³ he said "Had it been a truly Arab defence pact, Egypt would have been the first to acclaim it. We stood against it because it represented an attempt to perpetuate foreign control and foreign spheres of influence in the area."⁴ Anthony Eden himself - said Abdel Nasser - had asserted in a speech in 1955 before the House of Commons that through the Baghdad Pact the British would have a strong voice in the Middle East.⁵

To Abdel Nasser, the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1958 represented another attempt to place the responsibility of defending the Arab homeland

¹ Ibid.

² March 24, 1956.

³ May 15, 1958.

⁴ February 26, 1958.

⁵ January 27, 1958.

in non-Arab hands. It spoke of filling the vacuum created by the absence of Britain and France from the Middle East and of defending the area against the "danger of communism". In fact, however, it aimed at (i) turning the attention of the Arabs from the Israeli danger (ii) creating an imaginary enmity between the various Arab peoples (iii) supplying some Arab countries with ineffective arms (iv) and combining some Arab countries in the same framework with Israel.¹ Had there been a vacuum in the Middle East, the British, French and Israeli aggressors should have been able to fill it.² As to communism, pacts and military alliances are not the means that could defeat it. Only a nationalist policy could cope with it. The real trend among the Arabs is nationalism and not communism.³

Existing military pacts have two general characteristics. One is a disparity between the military strength of the member states, and between their rights and obligations. It is the Big Powers who control the pacts, while the small powers are simply followers.⁴ They are "pacts between foxes and sheep and the foxes cannot but eat the sheep."⁵ The other characteristic of these pacts is that they are directed against a possible danger and not the real one. Abdel Nasser believes that the real enemy of the Arabs is not the Soviet Union but Israel. A defence against the Soviet Union alone diverts the attention of the Arabs from a real danger existing in the heart of the Arab land itself to a

¹September 8, 1957.

²March 10, 1957.

³July 1, 1957.

⁴January 27, 1958.

⁵March 19, 1958.

possible danger from the North.¹

The Baghdad Pact advocated unity with Britain, and the Eisenhower Doctrine with the U.S.A. against a possible Russian aggression. But why is the possibility of aggression on the part of the British or French excluded. When Abdel Nasser met Anthony Eden in Cairo on February 20, 1955 at the time when the British Foreign Secretary was promoting the cause of the Baghdad pact in the Middle East, he asked him whether he thought Britain would attack Egypt militarily one day. Eden's answer was: "Britain? attack you militarily? Is that possible? This is something unimaginable."² In 1956 aggression came, and not from the Soviet Union but from Britain, France and Israel.³

iii. Economic Non-Alignment

Political imperialism and economic imperialism are interconnected. An imperialist country usually imposes on client countries a kind of economic specialization best calculated to promote its own interests. It also tries to keep those countries as much dependent on it economically as possible. Britain, for example said Abdel Nasser, transformed Egypt into a big cotton field, a source of supply for the Lancashire textile industry.⁴ This explains why cotton constituted 80% of the exports of Egypt and why Britain kept on repeating that Egypt could only be an agricultural country and not an industrial one.

When an imperialist state loses its political influence over a country, it resorts to a policy of economic pressure. This is illustrated

¹ July 23, 1957.

² March 20, 1958.

³ May 4, 1958.

⁴ The Charter, p. 43.

by the conduct of Britain and the U.S.A. towards Egypt after the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company. They froze its assets in their banks and refused to trade with it.

When the imperialist countries give economic aid to any country they usually expect that country to be under their sphere of influence. For example, the Eisenhower Doctrine offered economic aid and defence against Communism but with political strings. Abdel Nasser has - he tells us - a "complex" against economic aid because it was economic aid that brought the British occupation of Egypt in the 19th century. "Political occupation" was a result of "economic occupation".¹ This is the problem that Abdel Nasser faced when he wanted to finance the High Dam. The High Dam was an urgent necessity for Egypt. It would reclaim an area of two million feddans i.e. about one-third of the total area under cultivation, and would help to raise the low standard of living and provide work for many of the unemployed. The project was first considered in 1924, but was not realized on account of the lack of funds. It was revived in 1952, but 800 to 1000 million dollars were needed to put it into effect. Egypt turned to the International Bank for assistance. The Bank hinged a favorable response to Egypt's settlement of its conflict with Britain and Israel. The Bank, hinting at the absence of a parliamentary system in Egypt also asked for a plebiscite to be held on the project. Abdel Nasser took this to mean a refusal.

Eventually, however, the Bank agreed to advance 200 million dollars to Egypt under three conditions:

¹July 26, 1956.

1 - Continued flow of the necessary foreign currency from Britain and the U.S.A.

2 - A voice for the Bank in the determination of the development program of Egypt. i.e. a kind of guardianship of the International Bank over the Egyptian Government.

3 - Restriction of the general expenditure of the state.

Egypt was also to abstain from contracting any foreign debt or signing any agreement entailing economic burdens such as that signed with Russia for buying arms.¹ Abdel Nasser questioned the complaints about the economic conditions of Egypt when the United Nations Year Book indicated an increase in the national income of the country as well as in its industrial and agricultural production.

Britain and the U.S.A. which agreed to pay 16 million and 54 million respectively, both imposed conditions which virtually amounted to a desire to control Egypt's economy.²

All this proves the political character of Western economic aid³ and this point is more definitely substantiated by the sudden withdrawal in July 1956, for purely political reasons, of the western offers to finance the dam.

The right of self-determination for the colonial nations

Abdel Nasser supports the right of self-determination for colonial peoples. He does not believe in the necessity of foreign mandates over underdeveloped nations.

¹ July 26, 1956.

² Ibid.

³ Abdel Nasser now receives substantial aid from the west but this should not be viewed as necessarily involving a change in Abdel Nasser's attitude towards such aid.

The right of self-determination is one of the principles of the U.N. charter and was adopted by all the conferences in which Egypt participated, the Bandung Conference of 1955, the Brioni Conference of 1956, the Accra Independent African Conference of 1958 and the Casablanca African Conference of 1961.

At the Bandung Conference Abdel Nasser declared that Egypt, which endured foreign rule for a long time stood ready to defend the freedom of all nations and to help the developing nations to fulfil their hopes and aspirations. He also felt that the U.N. charter has imposed special responsibilities on the imperialist states, one of which being the development of self rule in the colonies, but that the imperialist states had avoided these responsibilities and tried to maintain their control as long as possible.¹

Nations should not interfere in the internal affairs of others. All nations should respect the right of every country to adopt political and social systems that suit it best. No great power should utilize a small state for the realization of its own aspirations and the materialization of its own policy. Finally all peoples should be equal in rights and should live together and work for peace.²

¹April 14, 1955.

²February 2, 1959.

Chapter II

ABDEL NASSER'S CONCEPT OF ARAB

NATIONALISM AND ARAB UNITY

Abdel Nasser's General Concept of Arab Nationalism

Arab nationalism is "an expression of solidarity among Arabs everywhere."¹ It is a "message of love and fraternity". It is a strategic necessity that protects the Arab world against ambitious imperialists.² It is not merely a political movement but also a social philosophy and a complete economic mobilization. Its energy and enthusiasm must be converted into sweat and effort. Its aim must also be a decent standard of living for all Arabs.³

Unity, freedom, strength and Arab nationalism are interconnected. "If freedom is achieved, then unity and strength are inevitably attained; and if strength is attained, then unity and freedom must ultimately be won."⁴

The call for Arab nationalism is not a racial call; it is not the call of any one person. Arab nationalism emanates from the

¹ April 25, 1959.

² March 6, 1959.

³ February 21, 1959.

⁴ September 3, 1958.

conscience of the Arab people and works for their interest.

Arab nationalism is an old and long struggle; a continuous and bitter struggle for the freedom, independence, integrity and dignity of the Arabs.¹ It shows its strength whenever the Arab countries feel the threat of danger as in the time of the Crusades and again in the present conjuncture of events.

Abdel Nasser's Concept of Arab Unity

The factors leading to unity

Arab unity is the main aim of Arab nationalism. The Arab nation "is no more in need of giving evidence of the unity binding its people. Unity has passed that stage and is identified with Arab existence itself."²

The unity of the Arab people is based first and foremost on "the unity of language which makes for a unity of mind and thought";³ secondly on "the unity of history which makes for a unity of conscience and sentiments";⁴ thirdly on the unity of hope, the basis of the unity of the future and of fate";⁵ and fourthly on strategic necessity: The military defence of an area, which is a world cross-road and a rich center of oil production, against persistent foreign encroachment.⁶

¹February 25, 1959.

²The Charter, p. 77.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶July 22, 1957 and November 25, 1957.

The struggle inside the Arab World and Arab Unity

In spite of the several factors making for unity, unity has been late in coming because of the artificial division of the Arab World by the imperialist states. Besides, notwithstanding the unity of hearts that pervades the Arab people, disunity exists among some Arab governments, a disunity that will disappear after the liberation of every Arab people from the domination of reaction and of the hangers-on of imperialism.

According to the Charter, those who see only the differences among the Arab governments, are looking at the matter in a superficial way. "The mere existence of those differences is in itself an indication of the existence of unity." The differences point to the crucial struggle that is gripping the Arab World: The struggle in every Arab country between the popular progressive elements and the forces of reaction.¹ In this struggle imperialism has an important part. In order to perpetuate its control, it aims at perpetuating Arab division; but it has become incapable of directly confronting the people and has found its natural hideout within the palaces of reaction. By thus taking cover behind the exploiting elements which it directs, it has helped to advance the date of the social revolution.

The break-up of the union between Egypt and Syria has to be ✓

¹The Charter, p. 77.

viewed in the context of this struggle. It has uncovered the hidden methods of imperialism and reaction. The methods of military coup d'etats, of individual opportunism, and the methods generally adopted by the ruling reaction can only indicate that the old regime in the Arab World is in dark despair and gradually losing its nerves, while hearing at a distance from its isolated palaces the steps of the masses advancing towards their objectives.¹

Unity cannot be imposed

Unity should not and cannot be imposed. Honour should attend both ends and means. Coercion is not only an immoral action, but also constitutes a menace to unity itself.² "We would not under any circumstances", said Abdel Nasser in March 1959, "impose unity or federation, for such unity or federation must be sustained by the will of the people in the particular Arab country... An Arab unity which is not sustained by the unanimity of the people would be harmful, for it would lead to civil war."³ This is why Abdel Nasser refused in September 1961 to counter the separatist coup d'etat in Syria with a military operation. He left it to the Syrians to settle the issue among themselves.⁴ The national unity inside Syria was to him more important than the continuation of the union.⁵

¹Ibid., p. 78.

²Ibid., p. 79.

³March 22, 1959.

⁴September 30, 1961.

⁵October 6, 1961.

Abdel Nasser maintained that there are four pre-requisites for a solid and enduring union: First, the free independent choice of the people seeking union; secondly, the people of any particular Arab country should complete the elements of its local national unity before it enters into the union; and thirdly, the people should in their majority be definitely sure that it is union that they seek;¹ and fourthly, the adoption of socialism should precede entry into the union.²

The form of Arab unity

Abdel Nasser does not insist on any particular form of union. Of course, in 1958 he and the Ba'th opted for a unitary form of union between Syria and Egypt and for a while after Syria's secession he spoke of the sufficiency of a "unity of objectives". Now the accent seems to be on federalism. This at least was the principle on which the prospective union between Egypt, Syria and Iraq in the new U.A.R. was expected to function.

As is known, the 1963 Unity Manifesto proclaimed that the new state will have a single president and a bicameral legislative system. One house, the House of Representatives will be chosen on the basis of proportional representation. In the other, the Council of Federation, each state will have equal representation. The powers of the

¹July 9, 1960.

²The Charter, p. 78.

federation would include foreign affairs, defence, national security, finance, economic planning, education, justice and communication. By way of elaboration the document stated that the powers of the federal state also included foreign representation in all its aspects, taking into consideration, however, regional angles in some affairs such as trade and culture.

Finally it should be noted that though Abdel Nasser does not insist on any particular form of union, he none the less, made it clear in no uncertain terms, as pointed out elsewhere,¹ that the union must be based on socialist principles.

The role of the U.A.R. in the fulfilment of Arab unity

In The Philosophy of the Revolution, Abdel Nasser says that he cannot "ignore that there is an Arab circle surrounding us and that this circle is as much a part of ourselves as we are a part of it, that our history has been merged with it and that its interests are linked with ours. These are actual facts and not mere words." Although he admits that there are also an African circle and an Islamic circle, yet he believes that "there is no doubt that the Arab circle is the most important... and the circle most closely connected with us." This shows that Abdel Nasser hoped to play a role in the Arab world from the start.

The constitution of 1956 pointed in the same direction. It

¹See p. 23.

declared Egypt to be a part of the Arab Nation and indissolubly linked to it in its present conditions and future destinities.

But quite apart from declarations, Egypt's revolutionary government has from its inception - and increasingly since 1955 - championed the cause of every Arab people struggling for its freedom. It would be enough to mention in this respect Abdel Nasser's persistent support to the Algerians, his assumption of the main burden of the conflict with Israel, and the commitment of his military forces on the side of the revolutionaries of Yemen. In these and other instances, the U.A.R. was put forward as the vanguard of the Arab peoples and the base of their struggles. To be the Arab vanguard was, moreover, viewed not as a matter of preference but of duty.

It was natural, therefore, that the U.A.R. should take upon herself also the responsibility for propagating the call to unity and popularizing the national idea. In fulfilling this responsibility the U.A.R. does not hesitate for one minute before the argument that in such a role it would in fact be interfering in the internal affairs of other Arab countries. But in this sphere, the U.A.R. takes care, says Abdel Nasser, not to be involved in the local party disputes of Arab states. "This would place the call for unity and its principles beneath its levels."¹

¹The Charter, p. 79.

Chapter III

ABDEL NASSER'S CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

Introduction

To Abdel Nasser democracy is intimately connected with socialism. The word "democracy" cannot be applied to a government run by feudalists or capitalists. Even if a "democratic" façade existed, such a government would in reality be a dictatorship by exploiting classes.

Democracy basically means social justice and rule in the interest of the whole nation.¹ There can neither be liberty nor democracy without equality. The land Reform Laws of 1952 and 1961 and the socialist laws of July 1961 have helped the spread of social justice.

A problem that has claimed much of Abdel Nasser's attention has been the creation of a political organization that can express in a genuine way the feelings and aspirations of the mass of the people. The experience Egypt had had with parties was not, in his view, encouraging. One of his more constant themes has been that whenever there were partisan disagreements "imperialism was always

¹July 22, 1961.

the winner."¹

None the less, whatever his real inclination - and his suspicion of parties is deep - his public pronouncement on this subject have not always been consistent. Thus in 1953 we find him referring to the multi-party system² and in 1958 to the two party-system as the right democratic system.³ But his most favourable plan has been the single organization embodying--as he put it-- the whole nation. The past attempts in this direction were the Liberation Rally (Hayet et-Tahrir) (1953-1956) and the National Union (el-Ittihad el-Kawmi) (1956-1962). Presently the Arab Socialist Union (el-Ittihad el-Ishtiraki el-Arabi) is thought to be the real answer. Abdel Nasser hopes that the very badly needed national unity can be achieved under the aegis of this union. The change from one popular organization to another illustrates Abdel Nasser's pragmatic approach, his political advance by the method of trial and error.

The popular organizations referred to were not conceived of as one-party organizations. They purported to represent the whole nation with the exception of a few "reactionaries". The party on the other hand was held to represent always only a minority of the people, despite appearances to the contrary.

One feature, which in Abdel Nasser's view, illustrates the

¹July 22, 1959.

²June 17, 1953.

³January 27, 1958.

democratization trend is the progress towards a collective leadership. A presidential council (Majlis Ri'asat) was formed in 1962 to share the executive power with the president.

When all is said, the principal aim behind any form of government whatever its name remains--said Abdel Nasser--the preservation of the independence of the country and the reconstruction of society on lines which would assure the well-being of the mass of the people.

Abdel Nasser's Concept of a Sound Democracy

"Democracy" is defined in The Charter as "the assertion of the sovereignty of the people, the placing of all authority in their hands and the consecration of all powers to serve their ends".¹ It is justice, equality and the closing of the gap between classes. It is dignity for all.² It is less a matter of law or of forms of government than a question of providing equal opportunities for all classes.³ It is not possible to set up true democracy unless it is accompanied by social democracy and unless equality among all citizens is achieved; otherwise masters would be driving slaves to the election booths to elect only their oppressors. "Social democracy is a prerequisite to political democracy."⁴

Egypt suffered much from a class of dictatorship masquerading under the name of democracy. It was a dictatorship of capital

¹The Charter, p. 31.

²December 23, 1959.

³July 23, 1954.

⁴February 27, 1959.

and of feudal power, of a minority behind a parliamentary façade.¹

Abdel Nasser asserts that his democracy differs from that which characterizes the Western or the Communist countries. In the West, democracy is in practice "a dictatorship by the class of capitalists",² in the east it is in theory "dictatorship by the proletariat",³ but the claims of democracy and democratic principles are no more than "a screen behind which the Communists... hide themselves so that a minority can control the majority".⁴

To have democratic freedoms it is necessary first to define "the enemies of the people" and to disarm them. True democracy is for the people and not for their enemies.⁵

Democracy in the Pre-Revolutionary Period

According to Abdel Nasser, the society in the pre-revolutionary period was characterized by the existence of a multi-party system, a corrupt rule, selfishness, individualism, the monopoly of the government by one class, an imperialism working to keep the country backward, great class discrepancies, wide differences in the standards of living, in education, health and the various social benefits.

¹ November 25, 1962.

² November 11, 1961.

³ December 3, 1961.

⁴ March 15, 1959.

⁵ November 25, 1961.

In the pre-revolutionary period there were organizations and parties but they were not really representative of popular forces because of two reasons:¹

First--most of these organizations, especially those that participated in the pre-revolutionary governments were a reflection of class interests and relied on the cooperation of the feudalists and the exploiting capitalists. They were not therefore established on a popular basis even though some of them were able during the struggle for independence to move large groups of people. Logically enough, they did not pursue the struggle to its conclusion because of their indirect connections with imperialism. Besides, as the national struggle for social freedom began, they tried to turn their eyes away from the real battle.

Secondly--even if there were before the revolution political organizations, which did not express the interests of the ruling class, the effectiveness of these organizations was in most cases limited or negative because of the pressure of the ruling class upon them. Moreover these organizations were moved by emotion and passion, or alienated from the real sources of the nation's life and unable to face the inevitability of social change.

For more than a quarter of a century the few feudalists and capitalists who monopolized the means of livelihood of the peasants

¹July 2, 1962.

and workers, monopolized also their votes and therefore parliamentary life. The majority of the deputies and lords came from the same families that monopolized the high governmental positions. They divided among themselves the spoils of the party system. How could elections be free under such conditions? "Democracy... therefore during this period was a shameful force. The people... had no power whatever" and party conflict only "kept the people busy and fretted away revolutionary energy."

The revolutionary leaders which had championed the popular struggle in 1919 had degenerated and increasingly surrendered before the power of the palace and the imperialists. They knelt down seeking the favours that would lead to the seats of power, abandoning the people and losing whatever dignity they had. The point was finally reached where a change of cabinets could be effected by the payment of a certain price to the king or his cronies. But in 1952 all those who participated in the policy of "Bargain and give in" and all the existing political leaderships in public life collapsed under the ruins of the old regime.

Abdel Nasser's Concept of Parties and Popular Organizations

In 1953 and 1958 Abdel Nasser characterized the present history of the U.A.R. as "a transition period", a period in which the nation must remain united and the parties forbidden. He said that once this period is over, no objection would be offered to a multi-party system or a two-party system. But in The Charter of 1962 he seems to have abandoned this idea.

Abdel Nasser believed--at least in the 1950's--that if he would allow parties to come into being, it is most probable that he would have three parties on his hand. One would advocate alliance with the west and rely on some reactionaries and feudalists. A second would advocate alliance with the Soviet Union and rely on communism. The third would urge a policy of non-alignment and positive neutralism. There would be a fierce conflict between the three parties that would disrupt the unity of the country and serve only foreign interests. This is what he was trying to avoid.

The experience he had in the early years of the revolution was another factor in Abdel Nasser's hostility to parties. At the beginning of the revolution he asked the parties and the Wafd in particular to prepare themselves to take power into their hands. But he insisted first on the party ridding its ranks from exploiters and applying the six principles of the revolution and above all the one dealing with social justice and the execution of the land reform laws. The Wafd, Abdel Nasser says, did not accept. He finally realized that he was too naive. The feudalists could not be expected to liquidate voluntarily the economic bases of their power.¹

Abdel Nasser did not only turn against a multi-party system but also against the one-party system. To him the one-party system meant that a small group, say 5 or 10 percent of the people, would

¹November 25, 1961.

monopolize policies, while the rest of the people would remain outside the sphere of political work.¹ Egypt had therefore to try something new--a system whereby all the citizens would participate, and all foreign influence would be excluded. Abdel Nasser tried first the Liberation Rally (1953-1956) and then the National Union (1956-1962) and lastly the Arab Socialist Union (from 1962). However, the first two experiments failed due to several reasons:²

First--the "revolutionary forces", in facing the "inevitability" of social change, were not able to devise a plan which could serve as a guide for revolutionary work on which all efforts could meet. The Charter spoke about this subject in detail. Because of the absence of such a plan the popular organizations were beset by confusion and individualism.

Secondly--the revolutionary thinking in the decade of (1952-1962) emphasizing as it did national unity, fell into the mistake of imagining that the monopolizing classes shorn of their exploiting privileges could still accept unity with the people. But actually several collisions occurred inside the popular organizations between the revolutionary forces and the anti-revolutionary forces, which paralyzed the work of the organization and sometimes turned it away from its revolutionary tasks.

The two experiments were not however without benefit. They

¹November 26, 1959.

²July 2, 1962.

helped by trial and error to clarify revolutionary thought.

The Arab Socialist Union

In the view of Abdel Nasser a great responsibility devolves on the people of the U.A.R.: to fulfil their historical mission as a base for an Arab movement that aims at liberating the Arabs from every form of domination or exploitation, foreign or domestic. This duty, Abdel Nasser says, has made it necessary to prepare the popular forces in the U.A.R. and organize them democratically in such a way as to continue the work of the revolution and guarantee its renewal and protection. In a statement he made on July 2, 1962, Abdel Nasser also emphasized the following points:

1. The organization of the popular forces should be made on the basis of a detailed study that guarantees their real preparedness. At the same time the popular representation should be large.
2. The revolutionary national work should pursue aims clearly defined in a "Charter". The experience of the past should be put in the service of the new experience.
3. The people themselves should lead the way to the future.

In line with this statement, the preparatory committee of the National Congress of the Popular Powers was formed to study the way in which powers could be gathered in the national congress. It discussed the problems of the U.A.R. in "complete freedom." This freedom "the nation had not known before" in its parliamentary and legislative councils. Abdel Nasser himself participated in the

discussions of the Preparatory Committee and on May 21, 1962 presented The Charter. He showed in it the road to what he thought to be the ideal political organization which could bring both political and economic democracy.

Subsequently, the Arab Socialist Union was formed. It was viewed (1) as the political framework for the activity of the cooperating popular forces, (2) as an embodiment of the people's authority and as such higher than all authorities, (3) as a guarantee for the development of a sound democracy particularly through the insistence on (i) 50% representation of the peasants and workers, (ii) the principle of collective leadership, (iii) the right of criticism and self-criticism and (iv) the envisaged transformation of state authority into popular councils.¹

The Arab Socialist Union starts in the local unit--the village, the factory or a comparable group and from there spreads until it covers all of the U.A.R. It is organized in the following order:

One--all the members constituting a village, factory or any other basic unit form a congress and elect an executive committee.

Two--all the members of the executive committees of the basic units form the congress of the district (Muhafazah). This congress elects the district executive.

Three--all the members of the district executive committees form the General Congress of the Arab Socialist Union. This Congress

¹Ibid.

elects the Supreme Executive Council of the Arab Socialist Union.¹

The organizations at all levels are to be guided in their work by the Charter; and their congresses are to meet periodically to determine policies and supervise the activities of the executive committees.

The organizations at all levels are also to be responsible for mobilizing the elements capable of leadership and organizing their efforts, and for eliciting the needs of the masses and endeavoring to satisfy them efficiently.

Upon the General Congress of the Arab Socialist Union alone will devolve the right to decide on the way of electing the Representative Assembly that is to write the permanent constitution of the U.A.R. Upon this congress also will fall the duty of studying in detail how the armed forces could be connected with the aims of the popular struggle, and how their absolute loyalty to these aims could be secured.

This organization is viewed as "the fixed assurance" for making the Egyptian revolution a revolution for the people and by the people."²

The Concept of Parties in the Unity Manifesto of 1963

The Unity Manifesto of April 17, 1963 promised to allow "the

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

formation of popular organizations in member regions with a view to enabling the popular will to express itself freely and in an organized manner within the framework of a political front embracing all popular organizations." The Manifesto also envisaged "a unification of political leaderships at the federal level in order to guarantee the coordination of the activities of popular organizations", and thus help "to protect and consolidate the union."

This statement is vague and open to conflicting deductions. On the one hand, one could deduce from it that the Ba'th and Abdel Nasser did not agree on the subject of parties; on the other hand it is also possible to read into it that Abdel Nasser accepted to allow parties in the U.A.R. The future alone would reveal its real purport.

The Main Themes of Abdel Nasser's Concept of Democracy

Political Democracy is inseparable from social democracy

According to The Charter, political dominance reflects economic dominance. If feudalism is the economic power prevailing in a certain state, undoubtedly the political freedom in this state could only be the freedom of feudalism because it controls economic conditions, it dictates the political shape of the state. The same applies when the economic power is in the hands of exploiting capital.¹

Before the Revolution of 1952, the power of the feudalists

¹The Charter, p. 34.

and the "exploiting capitalists" over the economy of Egypt naturally and inevitably enabled them to dominate political activities in all their forms. The alleged democracy of those years was nothing more than the dictatorship of reaction.¹ Political democracy is meaningless in the absence of a social democracy. Suffrage is of no value to one who is not free to earn a living.² No citizen can really exercise his vote in freedom unless (1) he is free from exploitation in all its forms (2) he enjoys the opportunity to possess a fair share of the national wealth and (3) he is free from any anxiety that is likely to undermine the security of his life in the future.³

Political democracy cannot exist under conditions of class dominance:

If political power is in the hands of any one class then democracy is non-existent for "democracy means... the... sovereignty of the people--the entire people."⁴ Class struggles are a reality. But they must be resolved peacefully, within the framework of national unity and by means of eliminating class distinctions. The Revolution has taken this task upon itself and will prevent the reaction from returning to power. Its work will be facilitated by "cooperation between the powers representing the toiling people". Such cooperation is the legitimate substitute for the collaboration between feudalism

¹Ibid., p. 35.

²Ibid., p. 24.

³Ibid., p. 38.

⁴Ibid.

and the exploiting capital. It alone is capable of replacing reactionary democracy by true democracy."¹

The people, in their popular and political organizations, as the leaders of national action.

Popular and political organizations should represent the majority of the population. The new constitution must, therefore, guarantee that the peasants and workers will secure half the seats in such organizations and at all levels, including the House of Representatives. The Unity Manifesto of April 17, 1963 gave expression to the same point of view.

The authority of the elected popular councils must always be raised above the authority of the executive machinery of the state. This would enhance the political initiative of the people and safeguard the revolutionary drive from stagnation. Similarly, the local government must gradually transfer the authority of the state to the people. For the people are in a better position to assess and cope with their problems.

Popular organizations, especially cooperatives and trade unions can play an effective role in promoting a sound democracy. "These organizations should form a vanguard force in the various fields of national democratic action. The development of the cooperative and trade union movements provides an endless source to

¹Ibid., p. 39.

the conscious leadership that directly feel the reactions and responses of the masses".¹

Collective leadership

Collective leadership, Abdel Nasser says, has become a necessity after ten years of the revolution. The President of the Republic had very great, even unlimited powers.² But they were used only to develop the nation and to preserve its independence.

In 1958 an American journalist asked Abdel Nasser whether he was a dictator. His answer was that "If mobilizing all popular forces and guiding them in the process of building their future can be described as dictatorship, then I am a dictator. But let me remind you that the shepherd who guards the sheep against the attacks of the wolf... is considered a domineering dictator from the point of view of the wolf... This was said by Abraham Lincoln. Judgment of things differ depending upon the angle from which they are viewed".³

Of late Abdel Nasser has tended to emphasize collective leadership. Collective leadership, he mentioned, should be formed at all levels, in the village and in the city. At present, a Presidential Council (Majlis Ri'asat) shares with the President in the executive power, and for the future a parliament is contemplated

¹Ibid.

²May 26, 1962.

³January 27, 1958.

which will elect the President.¹

The Charter also dwells on collective leadership: "Collective leadership not only guards against the individual running loose, but also confirms and ensures the reign of democracy in its sublime form."² Collective leadership also ensures the perpetuity of organization and obviates the risks that are concomitant of too much a dependence on one individual.³

Similarly the Unity Manifesto of April 17, 1963 underscored the principle of collective leadership.

Criticism and Self-Criticism

According to the Charter, criticism and self-criticism are among the most important guarantees to freedom. Connected with these principles is the freedom of speech which is considered to be the first premise of democracy.⁴ All guarantees, the Charter insists, should be provided for the preservation of this freedom and particularly of its most outstanding form: freedom of the press.

True democracy, the Charter adds, eliminates the contradiction between the people and the government, when it transfers the press into a popular means. "But, like the representative councils, the free press should be an honest censor" of the popular government. In the pre-revolutionary period, strict laws curtailed the freedom

¹Op.cit.

²The Charter, p. 40.

³September 24, 1962.

⁴Op.cit., p. 65.

of the press. Moreover, technical progress had converted the press into a complicated capitalist operation. The press could therefore survive only if it was supported by the ruling parties representing the interests of feudalism, or if it relied on exploiting capital and its advertisements.

But the law of press organization of May 1960 ensured the independence of the press and vested its ownership in the people or more accurately in the Arab Socialist Union.

Democracy and freedom of education

In the past there was no freedom of education. The "reactionary rulers" only propagated the concepts which suited their own interests. "Successive generations of youth were taught that their country was neither fit for nor capable of industrialization. In their textbooks they read their national history in distorted versions. Their national heroes were described as lost in a midst of doubt and uncertainty while those who betrayed the national cause were glorified and venerated."¹

The educational programs turned out successive generations of Egyptian youth into civil servants to work for the existing systems. But nowadays all this has changed, history is being taught as it should be. The new curricula of education aim at enabling the individual human being to reshape his life.

¹The Charter, p. 41.

Democratic action in this field will provide the opportunity for developing a new culture with new values. Such a culture would be profoundly aware of man and sincere in expressing him. It would throw light on the facts of his thought and feeling. It would move the creative energies latent in him, the efforts which would be reflected in his experience of democracy.

Chapter IV

ABDEL NASSER'S CONCEPT OF SOCIALISM

Introduction

At the beginning of the Revolution Abdel Nasser did not have a socialist ideology apart from some vague belief in social justice and a determination to eliminate feudalism and end the monopoly of capital. He advanced in the domestic field in a pragmatic, experimental and tentative fashion.

His first measure in reducing the gross inequalities of Egyptian life was the Reform Laws of 1952 which limited landownership to 200 feddans. A year later - in 1953 - he referred to the necessity of removing class differences, raising the standard of living, and industrializing the country. But although the government had difficulty finding the needed capital, Abdel Nasser did not introduce any changes in industry similar to those in agriculture. In 1954, however, the government began participating on a large scale in industry. Heavy industries such as iron, steel, rubber, etc. were established. In this year the High Dam project was also seriously discussed for the first time with foreign experts. Moreover planning of production received considerable emphasis and a special body was set for this purpose.¹

¹September 2, 1954

In 1956, Abdel Nasser's thinking ran along cooperative lines and his attack on social exploitation in all its forms became sharper. The Suez Canal Company and other foreign companies and banks were nationalized. In 1957, however, Abdel Nasser refused to limit land ownership to less than 200 feddans, preferring to increase the number of land-holders by reclaiming more lands and establishing agricultural cooperatives. He refused as well to take possession of the "national capital". National Capital, he said, should be kept as it is and be directed into the right investments. The Economic Administrative Organization was formed as a means for the government to participate in industry.

When in 1957 he was asked whether the political and economic system of Egypt was socialistic or capitalistic, he answered that it was cooperative. In 1958, however, he depicted Egypt as a socialist, cooperative and democratic society. But, he added, that definition mattered little. It was practice that counted. In the same year he also said: "Our theories and views emanate from the needs of our country which may be summed up in the nation's sweeping desire to do away with corruption in all its forms; including corruption in the domain of capital ..., the government, consequently, adopted a system of controlled economy, or to be more accurate, a system of controlled capitalistic economy."¹

One problem that bedevilled Abdel Nasser was that the people were not used to investing their money in industrial projects, but preferred instead to invest it in farm-lands or urban buildings. It was more and more realized that initiative had to come from the government.

¹January 27, 1958.

In 1961 on the ninth anniversary of the Revolution, Abdel Nasser issued a series of decrees which were revolutionary in character and determined the basis of the new socialist democratic and cooperative society. By virtue of these decrees:

1 - Land holdings were reduced to a maximum of 100 feddans.

2 - 75 companies in Egypt and 74 in Syria, including all banks and insurance companies as well as many other enterprises, were nationalized.

An additional 79 companies in Egypt and 12 in Syria were partially nationalized, the state taking at least 50% of the shares. Individuals were forbidden to own more than a total of L.E. 10,000 worth of stock in a number of companies, Anything over this was to become state property. Compensation was decreed in the form of 15-year negotiable bonds at 4% interest.

3 - The labourers of any company were to be represented on its board by at least two members out of seven.

4 - The profits of all types of companies in both regions of the Republic were to be distributed in the proportion of 75% for the shareholders and 25% for staff and workers.

5 - The income tax rate was raised to 90% on income exceeding L.E. 10,000 per annum, against a maximum rate of 80% for income in excess of L.E. 30,000 under the old law.

6 - No individual could hold more than one job.

The ideological justification for these practical means came in the 1962 Charter, which in effect is an articulation of the Egyptian ✓ experience of the preceding ten years.

The Egyptian Society in the Pre-Revolutionary Period

The Revolution of July 23, 1952 inherited a society in which foreign rule, feudalism and exploiting capitalism dominated the country. The people were divided into two classes, masters and slaves or a ruling class and an oppressed class.¹ British imperialists ultimately guided the political and economic destinies of the country in a direction that served their interests and the interests of their agents: the feudalists and capitalists. In this, they had the support of the king and the several political parties that existed at that time.²

Class differences were so great that only about five per cent of the people owned the means of production in the country, while all the others worked just to provide profit for this minority.³ Naturally the standard of living was very low and the increase in population was depressing it even more. In November 1953 the population was 22 million. Their average annual per capita income was E.E. 30, as compared to E.E. 500 in England and E.E. 750 in the United States.⁴ Economic, social and educational backwardness prevailed.

In brief, there was no social justice: Land was unjustly distributed, industrial ownership was monopolized and trade - confined to a few hands as it was - was an instrument of exploitation.

¹February 23, 1953.

²The Charter, p. 6.

³November 25, 1961.

⁴November, 27, 1958 and November 18, 1953.

The Road to Socialism and the Inevitability of the Socialist Solution

The Revolution had the responsibility of changing the existing conditions, and from the very beginning took upon itself to:

- 1 - Destroy imperialism and its stooges.
- 2 - End monopolies and the domination of capital over the government.
- 3 - End feudalism.
- 4 - Establish social justice.
- 5 - Build a powerful national army.
- 6 - Establish a sound democratic system.¹

The second, third, fourth and sixth principles expressed social ends. The first and the fifth principles pointed to the means by which those ends could be achieved. All the principles aimed at creating "a society in which well-being would prevail". The four social principles were of two categories, "negative and positive"² as Abdel Nasser called them. The negative principles aimed at ending certain conditions, namely "feudalism" "monopoly and domination of capital over the government". The positive principles aimed at establishing certain conditions namely "social justice" and a "sound democratic system". The negative values applied to the eradication of the sordid past conditions while the positive values related to the establishment of sound new conditions.

Today, however, the society that Abdel Nasser seeks to establish in Egypt is what he calls "the democratic, socialist, cooperative society", a society "free from political social and economic exploitation",³

¹The Charter, p. 6.

²Ibid.,

³March 23, 1959.

"blessed with prosperity and welfare"¹, "a society in which every individual feels that he has the same opportunity as his brother; that nothing differentiates him from others except his work and his efforts".² Such a society would be based on "individual ownership that is not used for exploitation but for the good of all and on the cooperation of the worker with the owner of the work".³ "The gap between classes must be narrowed".⁴ All these features can be summed up under the term "social freedom". "The way to social freedom is socialism with its two supports, sufficiency and justice".

The socialist solution to the problem of economic and social underdevelopment in Egypt is an inevitable one. The Charter says: "The socialist solution was a historical inevitability imposed by reality by the broad aspirations of the masses and the changing nature of the world in the second part of the twentieth century".⁵

The capitalist states achieved progress by exploiting the wealth of other nations; this is why the capitalist experiment was correlated with imperialism.⁶ The countries of the capitalist world reached the period of economic drive on the basis of investments they made in their colonies. For example, the wealth of India, which British imperialism seized was the beginning of the formation of the British savings used in the development of agriculture and industry in Britain. For Britain,

¹ November 27, 1958.

² August 4, 1959.

³ June 1, 1956.

⁴ February 22, 1959.

⁵ The Charter, p. 43.

⁶ Ibid.

to reach its highest productivity in the Lancashire textile industry, Egypt had to be transformed into one large cotton field, thus pumping blood through of artery of British economy but leaving the Egyptian peasant starved.¹ The age when some countries could exploit the wealth of others has passed even though traces of exploitation still remain as in Africa.²

There have been, it is true, experiments of progress that have realized their objectives but "at the expense of increasing the misery of the working people, either to serve the interests of capital or under the pressure of ideological applications which went to the extent of sacrificing whole living generations for the sake of others still unborn".³ But the nature of the age no longer allows progress through such methods. The new human values put an end to colonialism and to the Corvée system. Socialism is now the right method leading to progress.⁴

Freedom of capital is not the road to progress, because in the underdeveloped countries, capital in its natural development cannot lead the economic drive inasmuch as it cannot exist side by side with the great capitalist monopolies of the developed countries except as a client or at the price of heavy governmental protection. Moreover, the gap between the advanced and the underdeveloped countries is so wide that the progress cannot be left to individual efforts motivated by mere selfish profit.⁵ Besides, a fair distribution of income is just.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 44.

⁵ Ibid.

as important as an increase in production and this accents even more the necessity for social planning and social action. Efficient planning is the only method which, according to the Charter, guarantees the use of all resources be they natural, material or human in a scientific, practical and humane way and with a view to the common good and the greater welfare of the masses.¹ Hence the need for an organization that can mobilize the forces of production, raise their material and intellectual efficiency and relate them to the production process.² This highly efficient organization is the state in its public sector.

The Definition of Socialism

According to the Charter, socialism means the establishment of a society on a basis of sufficiency and justice, of work and equal opportunities for all.³

Socialism is not just the transfer of the ownership of the means of production from individuals to the state or to the society. Nor is it just the control of the national economy with a view to the good of all. Socialism must embrace scientific and political solutions of the problems of the individual and society.⁴

Egypt's circumstances differ from those of other nations and this is why it cannot imitate the pattern of any other society.⁵ "The Arab revolutionary experiment cannot afford to copy what others have

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 46.

³ Ibid., p. 31.

⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

⁵ November 27, 1958.

achieved"¹ Abdel Nasser said. Socialist action is not compelled to observe literally laws formulated in the nineteenth century.² A new situation for socialist experiments have been created due to progress in the means of production, the development of nationalist and labour movements in the face of the domination of imperialism and monopolies, the increasing chance of world peace as a result of the influence of moral forces and of the balance of atomic terror.³

Therefore socialism does not mean observing rigid theories which have not arisen out of the nature of the national experience. "The real solution to the problems of one country cannot be imported from the experience of another. But no country can afford to dispense with experience. National experience does not assume a priori the falsehood of all previous theories nor does it categorically reject all the solutions reached by others. On the contrary, it needs all the intellectual substance it can get hold of to illumine its thoughts, because it is in a stage of "intellectual adolescence" finding the way to maturity by trial and error."⁴

Abdel Nasser has no fixed pattern of socialism. The pattern evolves and is modified as the circumstances of the U.A.R. dictate and in line with changing conditions. This is why socialism is a "contin-
uous process".⁵

¹The Charter, p. 12.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 33; and August 8, 1959.

⁵November 27, 1958.

Some might ask for the theory on which Abdel Nasser bases his system. His answer to such a question would be that the system is something and the theory is something else. The system could be set up when the necessary existential basis for it has evolved and then it would be capable of more than one theoretical interpretation. Both the Communist and the Western ways of life have been expressed in a plurality of theories. Besides, the U.A.R. is still in a stage where application precedes theory.¹

The Main Characteristics of Abdel Nasser's Concept of Socialism

The theoretical and philosophical features

i. Elimination of class distinctions by peaceful means:

Abdel Nasser does not deny the existence of divisions within society or that there are exploiting and exploited classes.

While taking cognizance of the reality of class conflicts, Abdel Nasser does not admit of the inevitability of violent resolution of these conflicts. On the contrary he believes that class exploitation and class differences can be eliminated without bloodshed, without civil war and by purely peaceful means.² Moreover, Abdel Nasser does not aim at establishing the political dominance of any one class. His objective is a unified nation: "In no circumstances shall we distinguish between... one class of people and another".³ The domination of one class over other classes lays down the seeds of conflict between these classes.

¹November 25, 1961.

²July 22, 1961.

³March 23, 1959.

An oppressed class waits for the opportunity to destroy its oppressors.

In Egypt, he maintains, there was "the capitalist and the feudal class"; the middle class which consisted of the professionals, the shop-keepers and the middling merchant; and the working class which included "the worker, the peasant, the office worker, and everyone who draws a wage in order to live... The working class embrace the president of the Republic who lives on his salary as well as the simplest worker who lives on his wage".¹ "The feudal class and the capitalist" class was an exploiting class while the others were not.

ii. Abdel Nasser's socialism keeps a balance between the individual and society:

While Abdel Nasser places the interest of the group above the interest of the individual, he regards individual freedom as sacred. The group has to be protected from the tyranny of the individual and the individual from the tyranny of the group. This balance is necessary because the individual and the group must complement each other. The ideal of a peaceful and progressive society can only be achieved by safeguarding the interest of both the individual and the group. According to the Charter, a free man is the basis of a free society. "The freedom of an individual to shape his destiny, to define his position in society, to express his opinion, ... and to take an active part in leading ... the evolution of his society is an inalienable human right which must be protected by law".² This right can be exercised only when the individual is free from

¹July 22, 1961.

²The Charter, p. 64.

all forms of exploitation. The nature of the age does not allow the repetition of the old experience by which individualism degenerated into selfishness or the individual lost his humanity by force.

iii. The Recognition of Non-exploiting Individual Ownership

Popular control over the means of production does not entail a thorough nationalization of the resources of the country or the total abolition of private ownership or the encroachment on the legitimate right of inheritance. The Charter envisaged:

First - The creation of an efficient public sector that would lead progress in all domains and bear the main responsibility for the development plan.

Secondly - The existence of a private sector that would, without exploitation, participate in the development of the countries within the framework of the overall plan..." Both sectors would be under the control of the people.¹

Abdel Nasser distinguishes between exploiting and non-exploiting ownership: "When I speak of exploiting owners", he said "I am not referring to all owners, but only to those owners who exploited their ownership to attain maximum profits at the expense of the people".² He also said: "I am not against individual property but against exploiting property".³

Abdel Nasser's socialism aims at granting property to the propertyless and limiting the ownership of those who possess too much.

¹ Ibid., p. 45.

² July 22, 1961.

³ October 16, 1961.

Private capital has its place in the national economy. But the state has to watch over it. And capital should never be allowed to have power over the government.

The private sector has to be guided by the social policies that are applicable in the public sector: it must have a minimum wage for the worker, fixed and fair prices for its goods and services. On the other hand, confiscation of property is excluded except in the interest of the general good and against equitable compensation.

The socialist laws of July 1961 served the owners by providing them with a reasonable profit without exploitation. It is not true that the laws restricted individual initiative based on work and risk. In the past everything was based on opportunism rather than work, and on the protection of monopoly which excluded every possibility of risk. Moreover, individual initiative, as it existed, was incapable of shouldering the responsibility of nationalist aspirations. The new investments now directed towards industry are much larger than the amounts invested in the year preceding the Revolution. The re-distribution of wealth does not impede development; it actually invigorates it, since it increases the number of people able to invest.¹

Foreign capital, on the other hand, is a bit different, because the under-developed countries, especially the colonies, regard it with doubt. The people prefer to be sovereign over their lands. This is what makes them set conditions under which foreign capital may be invested in the country. National experience has shown that world capital is "always

¹ The Charter, pp. 60-61.

striving after unexploited raw materials in areas not yet ready for any economic or social revival where it could obtain the highest share of profit".¹ However, foreign capital will be accepted in the following order of preference:

- 1 - Unconditional aid
- 2 - Unconditional loans that can be refunded without difficulty or strain.
- 3 - Investments in indispensable operations, especially those requiring new experience difficult to find in the national domain.²

iv. A Democratic Socialism Representing the Popular Will

Abdel Nasser's socialism is also viewed as a democratic socialism in the sense that it aims at the establishment of a socialist society in which the mass of men will be free from every kind of exploitation, will enjoy equal opportunities in life and a fair share of the national wealth.

Abdel Nasser's socialism also places a premium on the democratic value of freedom. In a socialist society the individual will be free as a consumer and as a producer. He will be free as a consumer because the goods and the services necessary for him will be available. He will be free as a producer because the opportunity to work will be open for him. This does not mean equality for all people, because Abdel Nasser's socialism does not disapprove of the differences that nature has imposed, but only of the privileges that some enjoy in consequence of their class position. The connection of socialism and democracy does not include the control of individual behavior, but the control of possible

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., pp. 61-62.

opportunities. There is no limit to the freedom of the individual unless it clashes with the interests of society as a whole or with other interest groups.

The people do not control only the means of production but also the government, for the representation of the workers and the peasants is not less than 50% in all the governmental organizations. Socialism and democracy are the two wings of freedom,¹ so does the Charter assert.

v. A socialism that believes in God and religion

Abdel Nasser believes that socialism and religion do not conflict. Unlike communism, Abdel Nasser's socialism reserves a place for God and religion. This point is discussed at length elsewhere.²

The Practical Features of Abdel Nasser's Socialism

i. The creation of a strong public sector

The public sector is the basis of the national economy and it is much wider than the private sector. In fact, it includes the most important part of the national economy in the fields of industry, foreign commerce and public services. The private sector is subordinate to the public sector and the two work together to achieve the required plan.

The public sector was created because the process of achieving progress could not be left to the spontaneous efforts of the private sector which has already proved its incapability of shouldering this task. The fulfillment of the main development plan is accordingly the responsibility of the public sector.³

¹ Ibid., p. 64.

² See chapter VI on Abdel Nasser's concept of religion.

³ Ibid., p. 46.

The idea of the public sector sprang naturally in the course of the national struggle "as a result of the people's determination to nationalize the foreign monopolies and restore the country's resources to popular ownership".¹

In the wake of the 1956 aggression on Egypt, the British and French capital active in the country was added to the public sector. That capital was seized from the people in the period of capitulations and at a time when national wealth was subjected to the looting of foreign adventures.² Then came the July 1961 nationalization laws which expanded further the public sector.

It is important to understand the true meaning of nationalization. It is nothing more than "the transfer of a means of production from the sphere of private ownership to that of public ownership".³ It is not a blow to individual initiative as the enemies of socialism say, but rather a guarantee to, and an expression of the range of general interests in instances determined by the requirement of the socialist transformation which is effected for the benefit of the people.⁴

Also nationalization does not lead to a decrease in production: Experience has shown the ability of the public sector to cope with great responsibilities with maximum efficiency. Nor is nationalization a punishment inflicted upon private capital, as some opportunistic elements have alleged.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 49.

⁴ Ibid.

The Charter has defined the sphere of the public sector. Thus, in the field of production in general, the major production operations such as railways, roads, ports, airports, power stations, dams, means of transportation and other public services - have been reserved to public ownership.

In the field of industry most of the heavy, medium and mining industries have also been withdrawn from the sphere of private activity.

In the field of trade, foreign trade has been brought under full "popular control". The public sector has also to take charge of at least one-quarter of the internal trade.

In the field of finance, the banks and insurance companies have come within the framework of public ownership.

As far as agricultural land is concerned, individual ownership has been limited to 100 feddans. The ownership of buildings has also been placed beyond exploitation, by virtue of the laws of progressive taxation.¹

ii. Enlarging the basis of private ownership in agriculture

In the pre-revolutionary period, millions of peasants suffered from "feudalism". Their wages were extremely low and they were perpetually in debt to their "feudal" lords. Their sufferings were manifested in the several agrarian rebellions that took place in that period.

The land was then very inadequately distributed: 71 % of the land-owners owned only 13 % of the arab land. Whereas 60 persons averaged

¹ Ibid., pp. 47-48.

each 4545 feddans, 2 million averaged only 0.39 feddans.¹ Whatever the justification for the inviolability of private property, there could be no excuse for such great differences in land ownership. Hence the 1952 Laws of Land Reform which limited land ownership to 200 feddans. But the landowners found ways and means to evade the provisions of the law. Through fictitious bequests and sales, some landlords continued to own 3,000 feddans and to treat the peasants as their serfs.² In July 1961 land ownership was therefore again limited this time to 100 feddans and, limitation covered the whole family namely: The father, the mother and the children that were out of age. Land in excess of these limits was distributed among the small farmers. The families affected by this law were to sell the excess land in cash to the agricultural cooperative societies or to others within eight years.³ Evidently Arab socialism does not believe in nationalizing agricultural land, but views limited individual ownership as the practical and productive solution of the agricultural problem.

Moreover, the aim of horizontal extension of agriculture--the reclaiming of the desert and the wast land-- is to provide private ownership to the landless.⁴ But it should be clear that this in itself is not a sufficient solution to the problems of the land-workers. This is why vertical extension in agriculture through raising the productivity of cultivated land is necessary.

¹ July 23, 1954.

² July 26, 1961.

³ The Charter, p. 48.

⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵ Ibid.

iii. Cooperation in some fields

There are different kinds of cooperation: one is between the peasants; another is between the workers and the owners of the work; and a third is between all workers and the government.

In the past every peasant used to work alone, the small peasant succumbing to the exploitation of money lenders. He used to submit to the domination of the big land-owners who tried to usurp his small holding in order to add it to theirs. The peasant was helpless, unable to improve his land or market his harvest. He used to feel insignificant and lost in this individualistic society.

After his distribution of the land to the peasant, Abdel Nasser tried to find out ways and means of strengthening their economy. At first he helped small peasants to finance and market their products, and provided them with seed, fodder and fertilizers. He then found out that the only way to develop the peasants' economy was to establish cooperative societies all over the country. The peasants of the villages have thus been induced to join hands and organize the work among them. Their cooperative unions protect them from unfair competition and from money lenders and insure them against catastrophes and crises. They also facilitate the resettlement of peasant families on reclaimed lands,¹ and by pooling agricultural resources enable the farmers to make use of the most modern machines and the most advanced production techniques.²

¹June 1, 1956.

²The Charter, p. 55.

should be within the reach of every citizen in every part of the country. Similarly health insurance must be expanded to embrace all citizens.

Each citizen must also receive an education which suits his abilities and talents and must secure the job which accords with his interests and the type of education he had received. The Charter also guarantees insurance against old age and sickness.¹

The budgets for social services have increased to a great extent since the revolution. Education has even become free throughout its stages from the elementary schools to the university.²

v. A Socialism that depends on scientific application

The major economic and social problems that confront the application of socialism must be resolved on a scientific basis. Scientific planning is the best method which guarantees the increase in production and the raising of the standard of living, because it is the guarantee for the sound exploitation of actually existing resources or those that are latent or potential. At the same time, it guarantees the distribution of fundamental services and the raising of the standard of the services offered. Any revolutionary action should be scientific, for the revolution does not merely entail the wiping out of the past but also the building of the future. "Science is the true weapon of revolutionary will".³

¹The Charter, p. 62.

²October 16, 1961.

³The Charter, p. 74.

The underdeveloped nations could make a start supported by advanced science and thereby have a superior starting point to that from which other advanced nations began. They would have a strong impetus to catch up with the advanced nations and even surpass them.¹

Here the important role of universities and scientific research centres comes into relief. Their responsibility in shaping the future is not less important than the responsibility of popular authorities. "Without science, popular authorities may inflame the enthusiasm of the people. With science they can hope to realize popular demands".²

Scientific research centres are required to develop themselves so that science would be in the service of society. Science for society and not science for its own sake should be the motto of the cultural revolution at the present stage. This is not to say that science at this stage of development should be confined to the problems of every-day life, but "we cannot afford to waste a moment on the threshold of the atomic age. We lagged behind in the age of steam and the age of electricity. This underdevelopment, although arbitrarily imposed by imperialism, has and still is costing us a great deal. We are now required at the dawn of the atomic age to join those who have embarked on this age".³

¹ Ibid., p. 75.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Chapter V

ABDEL NASSER'S CONCEPT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

According to Abdel Nasser, the society of the pre-revolutionary period was an individualistic society¹ wherein each one looked after his own interests regardless of others. The feudalist cared to increase his land and wealth regardless of the bad and worsening condition of the peasants. Likewise the capitalist and the factory owner desired to increase their capital and gains regardless of the condition of the workers and the consumers.

The new socialist order, while placing a premium on social cooperation, seeks also the liberation of the individual.² It has taken away the privileges of the feudalists and capitalists to deliver the individual from economic exploitation. This is why the revolution could not rest with ^{the} initial removal of the king, but had eventually to get rid of all "the small kings" that throve on the backs of the people.³

In Abdel Nasser's view, the interest of the individual and of the nation are complementary and not antagonistic.⁴ The nation, he believes, cannot be strong unless the individual is strong.⁵

¹ July 28, 1959.

² March 27, 1955.

³ June 25, 1954.

⁴ November 20, 1953.

⁵ June 20, 1954.

The nation needs every one of its citizens particularly in its present process of socialist construction. To be of service, every individual must, however, have confidence in himself and in his ability. The backwardness of Egypt, Abdel Nasser said, was due to a loss of confidence on the part of its citizens.¹

Abdel Nasser entertains respect for the individual. The individual, he thinks, has an inner value and importance, no matter how simple or menial the work he does. The individual should, therefore, be free. If he is free, the nation is free. A free individual is an effective element in building up the republic.² The freedom of the individual must be based on the liberation of his will. Otherwise no democracy can be established.³ But the freedom of an individual has its limits. It ends where the freedom of another begins. Freedom and license should not be confused. Besides there is a category of individuals whose freedom has been somewhat circumscribed by action of the state. Abdel Nasser has issued decrees isolating specified individuals--mainly men of capital and ex-feudalists suspected of using their wealth for political ends--from participating in the popular organizations or the election of the National Congress. The Unity Manifesto of 1963 included similar restrictions. It isolated among others:

¹June 17, 1953.

²December 28, 1959.

³February 28, 1959.

1. Any one who was tried and was accused of being a separatist, conspirator or exploiter.

2. Any one who deals or shall deal in the future with foreign political organizations, i.e. serves or will serve as an agent of foreign powers.

3. Any one who worked or works for the enforcement of the domination of the exploiting classes.

For Abdel Nasser, there can be no rights without obligations. Before looking for his rights, the individual should accomplish his duties for one reason: his rights are duties for his brother. If every one performs his duties and asks for his rights, the society shall be sound; but if everyone ignores his duties and yet asks for his rights, then he will not find his rights because they are with the rest.

Chapter VI

ABDEL NASSER'S CONCEPT OF RELIGION

On the Role of Religion in General

Abdel Nasser has an "unshakable faith in God, His prophets and His sacred messages."¹ The freedom of religious belief is regarded as inalienable in Egypt's "new free life",² because religious ideals infuse spiritual energy into the people, arm them with the patience and courage with which to confront and overcome all difficulties.³ The eternal spiritual values that are derived from religions can guide man and illumine the candle of faith in his life, bestowing on him unlimited capacities for serving truth, goodness and love. In their essence, all divine messages constitute human revolutions which aim at reinstating man's dignity and happiness. This is why the primary duty of religious thinkers is to preserve for each religion the essence of its divine message.

On Religion and Socialism

To Nasser, religion and socialism are compatible. "The essence of religion does not conflict with ^{the} facts of our life; the

¹The Charter, p. 10.

²Ibid., p. 63.

³Ibid., p. 76.

conflict arises only in certain situations as a result of attempts made by reactionary elements to exploit religion--against its nature and spirit--with a view to impeding progress. These elements fabricate false interpretations of religion in flagrant contradiction of its noble and divine wisdom."¹

Religion as such implies justice and equality. It is opposed to exploitation.² Socialism, with its two pillars of sufficiency and justice, takes effect by giving every individual his share in the wealth of his country, thereby fulfilling the law of God. To take away the wealth of the people is irreligion.³ When 5% of the people own most of the wealth of the country this is an infraction against religion, humanity and the nature of man.⁴

The essence of all religions, the Charter says, is to assert man's right to life and to freedom. In fact, the basis of reward and punishment in religion is equality of opportunity for every man. Every individual starts his religious life before his Maker with a blank sheet, so to speak, on which are recorded his deeds accomplished by his own free will. "No religion can accept a system of class distinction, by which the majority inherit the punishment of poverty, ignorance and disease, while a small minority monopolizes the reward of all prosperity. God in His great wisdom has made equality of

¹Ibid., p. 64.

²February 22, 1962.

³July 22, 1962.

⁴July 26, 1961.

opportunity the basis of His judgment of all peoples."¹

Religion and Sectarianism

Abdel Nasser abjures sectarianism and looks upon it as a weapon of deception, a tool fanning religious fanaticism with a view to safeguarding the dominance of the feudalists and of capital.² Sectarianism aims at setting the workers against one another, preserving the sovereignty of the ruling class.³ "Between the leaders of political sectarianism and the religious leaders, there is nothing in common" Abdel Nasser says. "Does any political sectarian go to a mosque or to a church? There is no sectarianism and exploitation of religion except in politics. Why is this? Because only thus are the interests of the reactionary elements secured."⁴

Arab Nationalism and Religion

There should be no difference between Moslems and Christians. They are all tied together by Arabism. "Religion is for God and the homeland is for every individual among us."⁵ Arab nationalism is progressive. It is based neither on religion nor on racialism, but

¹The Charter, p. 64.

²July 22, 1961.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵February 18, 1960.

on brotherhood and love.¹ It shuns sectarianism and regionalism. All "Arabs", whatever their faith or wherever their abode are equal.² The bullets of the enemy do not differentiate between a Moslem and a Christian. In the Palestinian war the Arabs of both religions were driven out of their homes.³

Religion and nationalism are also viewed as means of defence against communism. Abdel Nasser frowns upon the atheistic propensity of communism: "In 1949", he relates "the communists wanted me to join their party. As I have always been keen on increasing my knowledge and enlarging my understanding, I got them to send me their literature. On going through it, I found their atheism and their un-Islamic approach foreign to my mind. I consequently refused their invitation to become a Communist."⁴ But Abdel Nasser is not inclined to exploit Islam for propaganda purposes, not even against communism. He has never instigated such propaganda from the government side, he tells us. But he cannot stop other people from making an issue of it. After all, as Nehru himself often says, communists go about nowadays like religious crusaders producing strong reaction among Orthodox people. "I am a religious man..." said Abdel Nasser on one occasion, "but religion is not merely the offering of prayers or attendance at Mosques. It is primarily a matter of good conduct."⁵

¹February 15, 1960.

²February 27, 1958.

³August 10, 1953.

⁴April 17, 1959.

⁵Ibid.

CONCLUSION

By and large Abdel Nasser's ideas are practical and pragmatic. It is enough in this respect to recall his assertion that politics is a matter of trial and error or to refer to his frequently voiced distrust of ready-made theories. It is also clear that most of his ideas evolved gradually and in answer to Egypt's pressing - and one might say - frightful needs, or, at least, as a result of his own view of these needs. Almost invariably, it will be further remembered, his acts came first, his theoretical formulations later.

However, these formulations have not been altogether devoid of doctrinaire elements. This is clear, for example, in his insistence on the "inevitability" of socialist and revolutionary solutions, or in his adherence to the theory that in all countries "political systems are nothing but direct reflections of prevalent economic conditions." But even these doctrinaire elements appear to have been adopted because they were relevant or practically meaningful. An economic interpretation of politics undoubtedly explains a great deal of the Egyptian past. It is also of some advantage to affirm that an already adopted solution is an imposition of history - quite apart from the truth or untruth of the idea.

The doctrines just cited obviously form part of the Marxist

world - view, which brings us to our second general observation: Abdel Nasser's indebtedness to Marxism. This is unmistakable in his description of pre-revolutionary Egypt. It is not infrequently apparent even in his terminology: "criticism and self-criticism", "collective leadership" are well-known Communist formulas. The inseparability of political from social democracy is a basic Marxian notion. So are the ideas of class conflicts, class exploitation, and class dominance. But Abdel Nasser's borrowings from Marxism seem to have extended only as far as his practical requirements dictated. Accordingly, unlike Marxism, he rejects atheism and proclaims the indestructability of "spiritual truths". Similarly, he desists from complete abolition of the private appropriation of the means of production and prefers to distinguish between "exploiting" and "non-exploiting" property. Again he shuns violence and opts for bloodless revolutions and peaceful resolution of class conflicts. Finally, contrary to the universal aspirations of Marxism, his ideas, while transcending in their purview the confines of Egypt, do not encompass more than the Arab nation. All these differences have, to be sure, their roots in Egypt's--and Abdel Nasser's--peculiar circumstances.

Some of the differences also betray traces of liberalism in Abdel Nasser's ideas. Certainly his distrust of violence - and, incidentally, his seeming reluctance to impose Arab unity by force - point in a liberalist direction. So does his professed belief in "the inner value and importance of the individual". On the other hand his intolerance of political competitors and his suspicion of political parties

point in an opposite direction.

Generally, the impression that emerges is that of an eminently practical, benevolently autocratic revolutionary.

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