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Editorial

This issue of *Khamsin* continues the crucial debate on religion in the Middle East and its reactionary impact on politics in the region today. This theme is taken up in two articles:

The first is the concluding half of Israel Shahak's major critical study of the Jewish religion, the first part of which was published in *Khamsin* 8. Shahak's theme is that Judaism must be understood historically as an evolving entity, adapting itself to changed circumstances. Shahak shows how deeply a number of important Jewish religious themes have penetrated into Zionist ideology, despite its nationalist and outwardly secular appearance. As the State of Israel and its institutions continue their theocratic drift, we consider that this contribution by Shahak is particularly opportune. It is essential background for understanding some of Zionism's more bizarre and regressive features, which are on the rise today.

The second article, by Azar Tabari, traces the political evolution of Iran's Shi'ite clergy from the late 19th century through to their seizure of state power in February 1979. The author is interested in the reasons why the clergy were able to sustain themselves in politics for so long, the various stages of their involvement, and their militant revival in the second half of the 1970s. Of special interest to all those on the left in particular who underestimated Khomeini and the reactionary character of what he stood for, is Tabari's discussion of Khomeini's theory of government. Her conclusion that the left generally made a grievous error in allying with the clergy and Islamic opposition against the Shah and later in supporting Khomeini's regime, however critically, is of great importance for militants in other Middle Eastern countries.

In this issue of *Khamsin* we are publishing a major contribution by Patrick Clawson on the structure of Egyptian capitalism and the changes it has undergone during its entire history. He argues that these changes can only be understood as the result of developments in the international structure of capitalism and the evolving demands of the advanced capitalist economies. In the light of Sadat's open door policy to the West – so-called *infitah* – and his break with Nasser's state capitalism, this is a subject of great importance and one which must be taken up in future issues of *Khamsin*. The article poses important general questions on the prospects for capitalist development in backward countries. It also provides an essential backdrop for understanding some of the particular problems that Egypt is facing today, and which other Arab countries may very well face tomorrow.

The Jewish religion and its attitude to non-Jews

Israel Shahak

PART III. SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF CLASSICAL JUDAISM

A great deal of nonsense has been written in the attempt to provide a social or mystical interpretation of Jewry or Judaism 'as a whole'. This cannot be done, for the social structure of the Jewish people and the ideological structure of Judaism have changed profoundly through the ages. Four major phases can be distinguished:

1 The phase of the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judah, until the destruction of the first Temple (587 BC) and the Babylonian exile. (Much of the Old Testament is concerned with this period, although most major books of the Old Testament, including the Pentateuch as we know it, were actually composed after that date.) Socially, these ancient Jewish kingdoms were quite similar to the neighbouring kingdoms of Palestine and Syria; and – as a careful reading of the Prophets reveals – the similarity extended to the religious cults practised by the great majority of the people.¹ The ideas that were to become typical of later Judaism – including in particular ethnic segregationism and monotheistic exclusivism – were at this stage confined to small circles of priests and prophets, whose social influence depended on royal support.

2 The phase of the dual centres, Palestine and Mesopotamia, from the first 'Return from Babylon' (537 BC) until about AD 500. It is characterised by the existence of these two autonomous Jewish societies, both based primarily on agriculture, on which the 'Jewish religion', as previously elaborated in priestly and scribal circles, was imposed by the force and authority of the Persian empire. The Old Testament Book of Ezra contains an account of the activities of Ezra the priest, 'a ready scribe in the law of Moses', who was empowered by King Artaxerxes I of Persia to 'set magistrates and judges' over the Jews of Palestine, so that 'whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgement be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.'² And in the Book of Nehemiah – cupbearer to King Artaxerxes who was appointed Persian governor of Judea, with even greater powers – we see to what extent foreign (nowadays one would say 'imperialist')

coercion was instrumental in imposing the Jewish religion, *with lasting results*.

In both centres, Jewish autonomy persisted during most of this period and deviations from religious orthodoxy were repressed. Exceptions to this rule occurred when the religious aristocracy itself got 'infected' with Hellenistic ideas (from 300 to 166 BC and again under Herod the Great and his successors, from 50 BC to AD 70), or when it was split in reaction to new developments (for example, the division between the two great parties, the Pharisees and the Sadduceans, which emerged in about 140 BC). However, the moment any one party triumphed, it used the coercive machinery of the Jewish autonomy (or, for a short period, independence) to impose its own religious views on all the Jews in both centres.

During most of this time, especially after the collapse of the Persian empire and until about AD 200, the Jews outside the two centres were free from Jewish religious coercion. Among the papyri preserved in Elephantine (in Upper Egypt) there is a letter dating from 419 BC containing the text of an edict by King Darius II of Persia which instructs the Jews of Egypt as to the details of the observance of Passover.³ But the Hellenistic kingdoms, the Roman Republic and early Roman Empire did not bother with such things. The freedom that Hellenistic Jews enjoyed outside Palestine allowed the creation of a Jewish literature written in Greek, which was subsequently rejected *in toto* by Judaism and whose remains were preserved by Christianity.⁴ The very rise of Christianity was possible because of this relative freedom of the Jewish communities *outside* the two centres. The experience of the Apostle Paul is significant: in Corinth, when the local Jewish community accused Paul of heresy, the Roman governor Gallio dismissed the case at once, refusing to be a 'judge of such matters';⁵ but in Judea the governor Festus felt *obliged* to take legal cognizance of a purely religious internal Jewish dispute.⁶

This tolerance came to an end in about AD 200, when the Jewish religion, as meanwhile elaborated and evolved in Palestine, was imposed by the Roman authorities upon all the Jews of the Empire.⁷

3 The phase which we have defined as *classical Judaism* and which will be discussed below.⁸

4 The modern phase, characterised by the breakdown of the totalitarian Jewish community and its power, and by attempts to reimpose it, of which zionism is the most important. This phase begins in Holland in the 17th century, in France and Austria (excluding Hungary) in the late 18th century, in most other European countries in the middle of the 19th century, and in some Islamic countries in the 20th century. (The Jews of Yemen were still living in the medieval 'classical' phase in 1948.) Something concerning these developments will be said later on.

Between the second phase and the third, that of classical Judaism, there is a gap of several centuries in which our present knowledge of Jews and Jewish society is very slight, and the scant information we do have is all derived from external (non-Jewish) sources. In the countries of Latin Christendom we have absolutely no Jewish literary records until the middle of the 10th century; internal Jewish information, mostly from religious literature, becomes more abundant only in the 11th and particularly the 12th century. Before that, we are wholly dependent first on Roman and then on Christian evidence. In the Islamic countries the information gap is not quite so big; still, very little is known about Jewish society before AD 800 and about the changes it must have undergone during the three preceding centuries.

Major features of classical Judaism

Let us therefore ignore those 'dark ages', and for the sake of convenience begin with the two centuries 1000-1200, for which abundant information is available from both internal and external sources on all the important Jewish centres, east and west. Classical Judaism, which is clearly discernible in this period, has undergone very few changes since then, and (in the guise of Orthodox Judaism) is still a powerful force today.

How can that classical Judaism be characterised, and what are the *social* differences distinguishing it from earlier phases of Judaism? I believe that there are three such major features.

1 *Classical Jewish society has no peasants*, and in this it differs profoundly from earlier Jewish societies in the two centres, Palestine and Mesopotamia. It is difficult for us, in modern times, to understand what this means. We have to make an effort to imagine what serfdom was like; the enormous difference in literacy, let alone education, between village and town throughout this period; the incomparably greater freedom enjoyed by *all* the small minority who were not peasants – in order to realise that during the whole of the classical period the Jews, in spite of all the persecutions to which they were subjected, formed an integral part of the privileged classes. Jewish historiography, especially in English, is misleading on this point inasmuch as it tends to focus on Jewish poverty and anti-Jewish discrimination. Both were real enough at times; but the poorest Jewish craftsman, pedlar, landlord's steward or petty cleric was immeasurably better off than a serf. This was particularly true in those European countries where serfdom persisted into the 19th century, whether in a partial or extreme form: Prussia, Austria (including Hungary), Poland and the Polish lands taken by Russia. And it is not without significance that, prior to the beginning of the great Jewish migration of modern times (around 1880), a large majority of all Jews were living in those areas and

that their most important social function there was to mediate the oppression of the peasants on behalf of the nobility and the Crown.

Everywhere, classical Judaism developed hatred and contempt for agriculture as an occupation and for peasants as a class, even more than for other Gentiles – a hatred of which I know no parallel in other societies. This is immediately apparent to anyone who is familiar with the Yiddish or Hebrew literature of the 19th and 20th centuries.⁹

Most east-European Jewish socialists (that is, members of exclusively or predominantly Jewish parties and factions) are guilty of never pointing out this fact; indeed, many were themselves tainted with a ferocious anti-peasant attitude inherited from classical Judaism. Of course, Zionist 'socialists' were the worst in this respect, but others, such as the Bund, were not much better. A typical example is their opposition to the formation of peasant co-operatives promoted by the Catholic clergy, on the ground that this was 'an act of anti-semitism'. This attitude is by no means dead even now; it can be seen very clearly in the racist views held by many Jewish 'dissidents' in the USSR regarding the Russian people, and also in the lack of discussion of this background by so many Jewish socialists, such as Isaac Deutscher. The whole racist propaganda on the theme of the supposed superiority of Jewish morality and intellect (in which many Jewish socialists were prominent) is bound up with a lack of sensitivity for the suffering of that major part of humanity who were especially oppressed during the last thousand years – the peasants.

2 *Classical Jewish society was particularly dependent on kings or on nobles with royal powers.* In the Appendix we discuss various Jewish laws directed against Gentiles, and in particular laws which command Jews to revile Gentiles and refrain from praising them or their customs. These laws allow one and only one exception: a Gentile king, or a locally powerful magnate (in Hebrew *paritz*, in Yiddish *pooretz*). A king is praised and prayed for, and he is obeyed not only in most civil matters but also in some religious ones. As we shall see in the Appendix, Jewish doctors, who are in general forbidden to save the lives of ordinary Gentiles on the Sabbath, are commanded to do their utmost in healing magnates and rulers; this partly explains why kings and noblemen, popes and bishops often employed Jewish physicians. But not only physicians. Jewish tax and customs collectors, or (in eastern Europe) bailiffs of manors could be depended upon to do their utmost for the king or baron, in a way that a Christian could not always be.

The legal status of a Jewish community in the period of classical Judaism was normally based on a 'privilege' – a charter granted by a king or prince (or, in Poland after the 16th century, by a powerful nobleman) to the Jewish community and conferring on it the rights of autonomy – that is, investing the rabbis with the power to dictate to the other Jews. An important part of such privileges, going as far back as the late Roman Empire, is the creation of a Jewish clerical estate

which, exactly like the Christian clergy in medieval times, *is exempt from paying taxes to the sovereign* and is allowed to impose taxes on the people under its control – the Jews – for its own benefit. It is interesting to note that this deal between the late Roman Empire and the rabbis antedates by at least one hundred years the very similar privileges granted by Constantine the Great and his successors to the Christian clergy.

From about AD 200 until the early fifth century, the legal position of Jewry in the Roman Empire was as follows. A hereditary Jewish Patriarch (residing in Tiberias in Palestine) was recognised both as a high dignitary in the official hierarchy of the Empire and as supreme chief of all the Jews in the Empire.¹⁰ As a Roman official, the Patriarch was *vir illustris*, of the same high official class which included the consuls, the top military commanders of the Empire and the chief ministers around the throne (the Sacred Consistory), and was out-ranked only by the imperial family. In fact, the Illustrious Patriarch (as he is invariably styled in imperial decrees) outranked the provincial governor of Palestine. Emperor Theodosius I, the Great, a pious and orthodox Christian, executed his governor of Palestine for insulting the Patriarch.

At the same time, all the rabbis – who had to be designated by the Patriarch – were freed from the most oppressive Roman taxes and received many official privileges, such as exemption from serving on town councils (which was also one of the first privileges later granted to the Christian clergy). In addition, the Patriarch was empowered to tax the Jews and to discipline them by imposing fines, flogging and other punishments. He used this power in order to suppress Jewish heresies and (as we know from the Talmud) to persecute Jewish preachers who accused him of taxing the Jewish poor for his personal benefit.

We know from Jewish sources that the tax-exempt rabbis used excommunication and other means within their power to enhance the religious hegemony of the Patriarch. We also hear, mostly indirectly, of the hate and scorn that many of the Jewish peasants and urban poor in Palestine had for the rabbis, as well as of the contempt of the rabbis for the Jewish poor (usually expressed as contempt for the ‘ignorant’). Nevertheless, this typical colonial arrangement continued, as it was backed by the might of the Roman Empire.

Similar arrangements existed, within each country, during the whole period of classical Judaism. Their social effects on the Jewish communities differed, however, according to the size of each community. Where there were few Jews, there was normally little social differentiation within the community, which tended to be composed of rich and middle-class Jews, most of whom had considerable rabbinical-talmudic education. But in countries where the number of Jews increased and a big class of Jewish poor appeared, the same cleavage as the one described above manifested itself, and we observe the rabbinical class, in alliance with the Jewish rich, oppressing the Jewish poor in its own

interest as well as in the interest of the state – that is, of the Crown and the nobility.

This was, in particular, the situation in pre-1795 Poland. The specific circumstances of Polish Jewry will be outlined below. Here I only want to point out that because of the formation of a large Jewish community in that country, a deep cleavage between the Jewish upper class (the rabbis and the rich) and the Jewish masses developed there from the 18th century and continued throughout the 19th century. So long as the Jewish community had power over its members, the incipient revolts of the poor, who had to bear the main brunt of taxation, were suppressed by the combined force of the naked coercion of Jewish 'self-rule' and religious sanction.

Because of all this, throughout the classical period (as well as in modern times) the rabbis were the most loyal, not to say zealous, supporters of the powers that be; and the more reactionary the regime, the more rabbinical support it had.

3 *The society of classical Judaism is in total opposition to the surrounding non-Jewish society, except the king (or the nobles, when they take over the state).* This is amply illustrated in the Appendix.

The consequences of these three social features, taken together, go a long way towards explaining the history of classical Jewish communities both in Christian and in Muslim countries.

The position of the Jews is particularly favourable under strong regimes which have retained a feudal character, *and in which national consciousness, even at a rudimentary level, has not yet begun to develop.* It is even more favourable in countries such as pre-1795 Poland or in the Iberian kingdoms before the latter half of the 15th century, where the formation of a *nationally based* powerful feudal monarchy was temporarily or permanently arrested. In fact, classical Judaism flourishes best under strong regimes which are dissociated from most classes in society, and in such regimes the Jews fulfil one of the functions of a middle class – but in a permanently dependent form. For this reason they are opposed not only by the peasantry (whose opposition is then unimportant, except for the occasional and rare popular revolt) but more importantly by the non-Jewish middle class (which was on the rise in Europe), and by the plebeian part of the clergy; and they are protected by the upper clergy and the nobility. But in those countries where, feudal anarchy having been curbed, the nobility enters into partnership with the king (and with at least part of the bourgeoisie) to rule the state, which assumes a national or proto-national form, the position of the Jews deteriorates.

This general scheme, valid for Muslim and Christian countries alike, will now be illustrated briefly by a few examples.

England, France and Italy

Since the first period of Jewish residence in England was so brief, and coincided with the development of the English national feudal monarchy, this country can serve as the best illustration of the above scheme. Jews were brought over to England by William the Conqueror, as part of the French-speaking Norman ruling class, with the primary duty of granting loans to those lords, spiritual and temporal, who were otherwise unable to pay their feudal dues (which were particularly heavy in England and more rigorously exacted in that period than in any other European monarchy). Their greatest royal patron was Henry II, and the Magna Carta marked the beginning of their decline, which continued during the conflict of the barons with Henry III. The temporary resolution of this conflict by Edward I, with the formation of Parliament and of 'ordinary' and fixed taxation, was accompanied by the expulsion of the Jews.

Similarly, in France the Jews flourished during the formation of the strong feudal principalities in the 11th and 12th centuries, including the Royal Domain; and their best protector among the Capetian kings was Louis VII (1137–1180), notwithstanding his deep and sincere Christian piety. At that time the Jews of France counted themselves as knights (in Hebrew, *parashim*) and the leading Jewish authority in France, Rabbenu Tam, warns them never to accept an invitation by a feudal lord to settle on his domain, unless they are accorded privileges similar to those of other knights. The decline in their position begins with Philip II Augustus, originator of the political and military alliance of the Crown with the rising urban *commune* movement, and plummets under Philip IV the Handsome, who convoked the first Estates General for the whole of France in order to gain support against the pope. The final expulsion of Jews from the whole of France is closely bound up with the firm establishment of the Crown's rights of taxation and the national character of the monarchy.

Similar examples can be given from other European countries where Jews were living during that period. Reserving Christian Spain and Poland for a more detailed discussion, we remark that in Italy, where many city-states had a republican form of power, the same regularity is discernible. Jews flourished especially in the Papal States, in the twin feudal kingdoms of Sicily and Naples (until their expulsion, on Spanish orders, *circa* 1500) and in the feudal enclaves of Piedmont. But in the great commercial and independent cities such as Florence their number was small and their social role unimportant.

The Muslim world

The same general scheme applies to Jewish communities during the classical period in Muslim countries as well, except for the important

fact that expulsion of Jews, being contrary to Islamic law, was virtually unknown there. (Medieval Catholic canon law, on the other hand, neither commands nor forbids such expulsion.)

Jewish communities flourished in the famous, but socially misinterpreted, *Jewish Golden Age* in Muslim countries under regimes which were particularly dissociated from the great majority of the people they ruled, and whose power rested on nothing but naked force and a mercenary army. The best example is Muslim Spain, where the very real Jewish Gold Age (of Hebrew poetry, grammar, philosophy etc) begins precisely with the fall of the Spanish Umayyad caliphate after the death of the *de facto* ruler, al-Mansur, in 1002, and the establishment of the numerous *ta'ifa* (faction) kingdoms, *all based on naked force*. The rise of the famous Jewish commander-in-chief and prime minister of the kingdom of Granada, Samuel the Chief (Shmu'el Hannagid, died 1056), who was also one of the greatest Hebrew poets of all ages, was based primarily on the fact that the kingdom which he served was a tyranny of a rather small Berber military force over the Arabic-speaking inhabitants. A similar situation obtained in the other *ta'ifa* Arab-Spanish kingdoms. The position of the Jews declined somewhat with the establishment of the Almoravid regime (in 1086–90) and became quite precarious under the strong and popular Almohad regime (after 1147) when, as a result of persecutions, the Jews migrated to the Christian Spanish kingdoms, where the power of the kings was still very slight.

Similar observations can be made regarding the states of the Muslim East. The first state in which the Jewish community reached a position of important political influence was the Fatimid empire, especially after the conquest of Egypt in 969, *because* it was based on the rule of an Isma'ili-shi'ite religious minority. The same phenomenon can be observed in the Seljuk states – based on feudal-type armies, mercenaries and, increasingly, on slave troops (*mamluks*) – and in their successor states. The favour of Saladin to the Jewish communities, first in Egypt, then in other parts of his expanding empire, was based not only on his real personal qualities of tolerance, charity and deep political wisdom, but equally on his rise to power as a rebellious commander of mercenaries freshly arrived in Egypt and then as usurper of the power of the dynasty which he and his father and uncle before him had served.

But perhaps the best Islamic example is the state where the Jews' position was better than anywhere else in the East since the fall of the ancient Persian empire – the Ottoman empire, particularly during its heyday in the 16th century.¹¹ As is well known, the Ottoman régime was based initially on the almost complete exclusion of the Turks themselves (not to mention other Muslims by birth) from positions of political power and from the most important part of the army, the Janissary corps, both of which were manned by the sultan's Christian-born slaves, abducted in childhood and educated in special schools.

Until the end of the 16th century no free-born Turk could become a Janissary or hold any important government office. In such a regime, the role of the Jews in their sphere was quite analogous to that of the Janissaries in theirs. Thus the position of the Jews was best under a regime which was politically most dissociated from the peoples it ruled. With the admission of the Turks themselves (as well as some other Muslim peoples, such as the Albanians) to the ruling class of the Ottoman empire, the position of the Jews declines. However, this decline was not very sharp, because of the continuing arbitrariness and non-national character of the Ottoman regime.

This point is very important, in my opinion, because the relatively good situation of Jews under Islam in general, and under certain Islamic regimes in particular, is used by many Palestinian and other Arab propagandists in a very ignorant, albeit perhaps well-meaning, way. First, they generalise and reduce serious questions of politics and history to mere slogans. Granted that the position of Jews was, *on the average*, much better under Islam than under Christianity – the important question to ask is, under *what regimes* was it better or worse? We have seen where such an analysis leads.

But, secondly and more importantly: in a pre-modern state, a 'better' position of the Jewish community normally entailed a greater degree of tyranny exercised within this community by the rabbis against other Jews. To give one example: certainly, the figure of Saladin is one which, considering his period, inspires profound respect. But together with this respect, I for one cannot forget that the enhanced privileges he granted to the Jewish community in Egypt and his appointment of Maimonides as their Chief (*Nagid*) immediately unleashed severe religious persecution of Jewish 'sinners' by the rabbis. For instance, Jewish 'priests' (supposed descendants of the ancient priests who had served in the Temple) are forbidden to marry not only prostitutes¹² but also divorcees. This latter prohibition, which has always caused difficulties, was infringed during the anarchy under the last Fatimid rulers (*circa* 1130-80) by such 'priests' who, contrary to Jewish religious law, were married to Jewish divorcees in Islamic courts (which are nominally empowered to marry non-Muslims). The greater tolerance towards 'the Jews' instituted by Saladin upon his accession to power enabled Maimonides to issue orders to the rabbinical courts in Egypt to seize all Jews who had gone through such forbidden marriages and have them flogged until they 'agreed' to divorce their wives.¹³ Similarly, in the Ottoman empire the powers of the rabbinical courts were very great and consequently most pernicious. Therefore the position of Jews in Muslim countries in the past should never be used as a political argument in contemporary (or future) contexts.

Christian Spain

I have left to the last a discussion of the two countries where the position

of the Jewish community and the internal development of classical Judaism were most important – Christian Spain¹⁴ (or rather the Iberian peninsula, including Portugal) and pre-1795 Poland.

Politically, the position of Jews in the Christian Spanish kingdoms was the highest ever attained by Jews in any country (except some of the *ta'ifas* and under the Fatimids) before the 19th century. Many Jews served officially as Treasurers-General to the kings of Castile, regional and general tax collectors, diplomats (representing their king in foreign courts, both Muslim and Christian, even outside Spain), courtiers and advisers to rulers and great noblemen. And in no other country except Poland did the Jewish community wield such great legal powers over the Jews or used them so widely and publicly, including the power to inflict capital punishment. From the 11th century the persecution of Karaites (a heretical Jewish sect) by flogging them to death if unrepentant was common in Castile. Jewish women who cohabited with Gentiles had their noses cut off by rabbis who explained that 'in this way she will lose her beauty and her non-Jewish lover will come to hate her'. Jews who had the effrontery to attack a rabbinical judge had their hands cut off. Adulterers were imprisoned, after being made to run the gauntlet through the Jewish quarter. In religious disputes, those thought to be heretics had their tongues cut out.

Historically, all this was associated with feudal anarchy and with the attempt of a few 'strong' kings to rule through sheer force, disregarding the parliamentary institutions, the Cortes, which had already come into existence. In this struggle, not only the political and financial power of the Jews but also their military power (at least in the most important kingdom, Castile) was very significant. One example will suffice: Both feudal misgovernment and Jewish political influence in Castile reached their peak under Pedro I, justly surnamed the Cruel. The Jewish communities of Toledo, Burgos and many other cities served practically as his garrisons in the long civil war between him and his half-brother, Henry of Trastámara, who after his victory became Henry II (1369-79).¹⁵ The same Pedro I gave the Jews of Castile the right to establish a country-wide inquisition against Jewish religious deviants – more than one hundred years before the establishment of the more famous Catholic Holy Inquisition.

As in other western European countries, the gradual emergence of national consciousness around the monarchy, which began under the house of Trastámara and after ups and downs reached a culmination under the Catholic Kings Ferdinand and Isabella, was accompanied first by a decline in the position of the Jews, then by popular movements and pressures against them and finally by their expulsion. On the whole the Jews were defended by the nobility and upper clergy. It was the more plebeian sections of the church, particularly the mendicant orders, involved in the life of the lower classes, which were hostile to them. The great enemies of the Jews, Torquemada and Cardinal Ximenes, were also great reformers of the Spanish church, making it

much less corrupt and much more dependent on the monarchy instead of being the preserve of the feudal aristocracy.

Poland

The old pre-1795 Poland – a feudal republic with an elective king – is a converse example; it illustrates how before the advent of the modern state the position of the Jews was socially most important, and their internal autonomy greatest, under a regime which was completely retarded to the point of utter degeneracy.

Due to many causes, medieval Poland lagged in its development behind countries like England and France; a strong feudal-type monarchy – yet, without any parliamentary institutions – was formed there only in the 14th century, especially under Casimir the Great (1333-70). Immediately after his death, changes of dynasty and other factors led to a very rapid development of the power of the noble magnates, then also of the petty nobility, so that by 1572 the process of reduction of the king to a figure-head and exclusion of all other non-noble estates from political power was virtually complete. In the following two hundred years, the lack of government turned into an acknowledged anarchy, to the point where a court decision in a case affecting a nobleman was only a legal licence to wage a private war to enforce the verdict (for there was no other way to enforce it) and where feuds between great noble houses in the 18th century involved private armies numbering tens of thousands, much larger than the derisory forces of the official army of the Republic.

This process was accompanied by a debasement in the position of the Polish peasants (who had been free in the early Middle Ages) to the point of utter serfdom, hardly distinguishable from outright slavery and certainly the worst in Europe. The desire of noblemen in neighbouring countries to enjoy the power of the Polish *pan* over his peasants (including the power of life and death without any right of appeal) was instrumental in the territorial expansion of Poland. The situation in the 'eastern' lands of Poland (Byelorussia and the Ukraine) – colonised and settled by newly enserved peasants – was worst of all.¹⁶

A small number of Jews (albeit in important positions) had apparently been living in Poland since the creation of the Polish state. A significant Jewish immigration into that country began in the 13th century and increased under Casimir the Great, with the decline in the Jewish position in western and then in central Europe. Not very much is known about Polish Jewry in that period. But with the decline of the monarchy in the 16th century – particularly under Sigismund I the Old (1506-48) and his son Sigismund II Augustus (1548-72) – Polish Jewry burst into social and political prominence accompanied, as usual, with a much greater degree of autonomy. It was at this time that Poland's Jews were granted their greatest privileges, culminating in the establishment of the

famous Committee of Four Lands, a very effective autonomous Jewish organ of rule and jurisdiction over all the Jews in Poland's four divisions. One of its many important functions was to collect all the taxes from Jews all over the country, deducting part of the yield for its own use and for the use of local Jewish communities, and passing the rest on to the state treasury.

What was the social role of Polish Jewry from the beginning of the 16th century until 1795? With the decline of royal power, the king's usual role in relation to the Jews was rapidly taken over by the nobility – with lasting and tragic results both for the Jews themselves and for the common people of the Polish republic. All over Poland the nobles used Jews as their agents to undermine the commercial power of the Royal Towns, which were weak in any case. Alone among the countries of western Christendom, in Poland a nobleman's property inside a Royal Town was exempt from the town's laws and guild regulations. In most cases the nobles settled their Jewish clients in such properties, thus giving rise to a lasting conflict. The Jews were usually 'victorious', in the sense that the towns could neither subjugate nor drive them off; but in the frequent popular riots Jewish lives (and, even more, Jewish property) were lost. The nobles still got the profits. Similar or worse consequences followed from the frequent use of Jews as commercial agents of noblemen: they won exemption from most Polish tolls and tariffs, to the loss of the native bourgeoisie.

But the most lasting and tragic results occurred in the eastern provinces of Poland – roughly, the area east of the present Soviet border, including almost the whole of the present Ukraine and reaching up to the Great-Russian language frontier. (Until 1648 the Polish border was far east of the Dnieper, so that Poltava, for example, was inside Poland.) In those wide territories there were hardly any Royal Towns. The towns were established by nobles and belonged to them – and they were settled almost exclusively by Jews. Until 1939, the population of many Polish towns east of the river Bug was at least 90 per cent Jewish, and this demographic phenomenon was even more pronounced in that area of Tsarist Russia annexed from Poland and known as the Jewish Pale. Outside the towns very many Jews throughout Poland, but especially in the east, were employed as the direct supervisors and oppressors of the enserfed peasantry – as bailiffs of whole manors (invested with the landlord's full coercive powers) or as lessees of particular feudal monopolies such as the corn mill, the liquor still and public house (with the right of armed search of peasant houses for illicit stills) or the bakery, and as collectors of customary feudal dues of all kinds. In short, in eastern Poland, under the rule of the nobles (and of the feudalised church, formed exclusively from the nobility) the Jews were both the *immediate exploiters of the peasantry* and virtually the only town-dwellers.

No doubt, most of the profit they extracted from the peasants was passed on to the landlords, in one way or another. No doubt, the

oppression and subjugation of the Jews by the nobles were severe, and the historical record tells many a harrowing tale of the hardship and humiliation inflicted by noblemen on 'their' Jews. But, as we have remarked, the peasants suffered worse oppression at the hands of *both* landlords and Jews; and one may assume that, except in times of peasant uprisings, the full weight of the Jewish religious laws against Gentiles fell upon the peasants. As will be seen in the Appendix, these laws are suspended or mitigated in cases where it is feared that they might arouse dangerous hostility towards Jews; but the hostility of the peasants could be disregarded as ineffectual so long as the Jewish bailiff could shelter under the 'peace' of a great lord.

The situation stagnated until the advent of the modern state, by which time Poland had been dismembered. Therefore Poland was the only big country in western Christendom from which the Jews were never expelled. A new middle class could not arise out of the utterly enslaved peasantry; and the old bourgeoisie was geographically limited and commercially weak, and therefore powerless. Overall, matters got steadily worse, but without any substantial change.

Internal conditions within the Jewish community moved in a similar course. In the period 1500–1795, one of the most superstitions-ridden in the history of Judaism, Polish Jewry was the most superstitious and fanatic of all Jewish communities. The considerable power of the Jewish autonomy was used increasingly to stifle all original or innovative thought, to promote the most shameless exploitation of the Jewish poor by the Jewish rich in alliance with the rabbis, and to justify the Jews' role in the oppression of the peasants in the service of the nobles. Here, too, there was no way out except by liberation from the outside. Pre-1795 Poland, where the *social* role of the Jews was more important than in any other classical diaspora, illustrates better than any other country the bankruptcy of classical Judaism.

Anti-Jewish persecutions

During the whole period of classical Judaism, Jews were often subjected to persecutions¹⁷ – and this fact now serves as the main 'argument' of the apologists of the Jewish religion with its anti-Gentile laws and especially of Zionism. Of course, the Nazi extermination of five to six million European Jews is supposed to be the crowning argument in that line. We must therefore consider this phenomenon and its contemporary aspect. This is particularly important in view of the fact that the descendants of the Jews of pre-1795 Poland (often called 'east-European Jews' – as opposed to Jews from the German cultural domain of the early 19th century, including the present Austria, Bohemia and Moravia) now wield predominant political power in Israel as well as in the Jewish communities in the US and other English-speaking countries; and, because of their particular past history, this

mode of thinking is especially entrenched among them, much more than among other Jews.

We must, first, draw a sharp distinction between the persecutions of Jews during the classical period on the one hand, and the Nazi extermination on the other. The former were *popular movements, coming from below*; whereas the latter was inspired, organised and carried out *from above*: indeed, *by state officials*. Such acts as the Nazi state-organised extermination are relatively rare in human history, although other cases do exist (the extermination of the Tasmanians and several other colonial peoples, for example). Moreover, the Nazis intended to wipe out other peoples besides the Jews: Gipsies were exterminated like Jews, and the extermination of Slavs was well under way, with the systematic massacre of millions of civilians and prisoners of war. However, it is the recurrent persecution of Jews in so many countries during the classical period which is the model (and the excuse) for the Zionist politicians in their persecution of the Palestinians, as well as the argument used by apologists of Judaism in general; and it is this phenomenon which we consider now.

It must be pointed out that in all the worst anti-Jewish persecutions, that is, where Jews were killed, the ruling élite – the emperor and the pope, the kings, the higher aristocracy and the upper clergy, as well as the rich bourgeoisie in the autonomous cities – were always on the side of the Jews. The latter's enemies belonged to the more oppressed and exploited classes and those close to them in daily life and interests, such as the friars of the mendicant orders.¹⁸ It is true that in most (but I think not in all) cases members of the élite defended the Jews neither out of considerations of humanity nor because of sympathy to the Jews as such, but for the type of reason used generally by rulers in justification of their interests – the fact that the Jews were useful and profitable (to them), defence of 'law and order', hate of the lower classes and fear that anti-Jewish riots might develop into general popular rebellion. Still, the fact remains that they did defend the Jews. For this reason all the massacres of Jews during the classical period were part of a peasant rebellion or other popular movements at times when the government was for some reason especially weak. This is true even in the partly exceptional case of Tsarist Russia. The Tsarist government, acting surreptitiously through its secret police, did promote pogroms; but it did so only when it was particularly weak (after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, and in the period immediately before and after the 1905 revolution) and even then took care to contain the break of 'law and order'. During the time of its greatest strength – for example, under Nicholas I or in the latter part of the reign of Alexander III, when the opposition had been smashed – pogroms were not tolerated by the Tsarist regime, although *legal* discrimination against Jews was intensified.

The general rule can be observed in all the major massacres of Jews in Christian Europe. During the first crusade, it was not the proper armies

of the knights, commanded by famous dukes and counts, which molested the Jews, but the spontaneous popular hosts composed almost exclusively of peasants and paupers in the wake of Peter the Hermit. In each city the bishop or the emperor's representative opposed them and tried, often in vain, to protect the Jews.¹⁹ The anti-Jewish riots in England which accompanied the third crusade were part of a popular movement directed also against royal officials, and some rioters were punished by Richard I. The massacres of Jews during the outbreaks of the Black Death occurred against the strict orders of the pope, the emperor, the bishops and the German princes. In the free towns, for example in Strasbourg, they were usually preceded by a local revolution in which the oligarchic town council, which protected the Jews, was overthrown and replaced by a more popular one. The great 1391 massacres of Jews in Spain took place under a feeble regency government and at a time when the papacy, weakened by the Great Schism between competing popes, was unable to control the mendicant friars.

Perhaps the most outstanding example is the great massacre of Jews during the Chmielnicki revolt in the Ukraine (1648), which started as a mutiny of Cossack officers but soon turned into a widespread popular movement of the oppressed serfs: 'The unprivileged, the subjects, the Ukrainians, the Orthodox [persecuted by the Polish Catholic church – I.S.] were rising against their Catholic Polish masters, particularly against their masters' bailiffs, clergy and Jews'.²⁰ This *typical* peasant uprising against extreme oppression, an uprising accompanied not only by massacres committed by the rebels but also by even more horrible atrocities and 'counter-terror' of the Polish magnates' private armies,²¹ has remained emblazoned in the consciousness of east-European Jews to this very day – not, however, as a peasant uprising, a revolt of the oppressed, of the real wretched of the earth, nor even as a vengeance visited upon *all* the servants of the Polish nobility, but as an act of gratuitous antisemitism directed against Jews as such. In fact, the voting of the Ukrainian delegation at the UN and, more generally, Soviet policies on the Middle East, are often 'explained' in the Israeli press as 'a heritage of Chmielnicki' or of his 'descendants'.

Modern antisemitism

The character of anti-Jewish persecutions underwent a radical change in modern times. With the advent of the modern state, the abolition of serfdom and the achievement of minimal individual rights, the special socio-economic function of the Jews necessarily disappears. Along with it disappear also the powers of the Jewish community over its members; individual Jews in growing numbers win the freedom to enter the general society of their countries. Naturally, this transition aroused a violent reaction both on the part of Jews (especially their rabbis) and of those elements in European society who opposed the

open society and for whom the whole process of liberation of the individual was anathema.

Modern antisemitism appears first in France and Germany, then in Russia, after about 1870. Contrary to the prevalent opinion among Jewish socialists, I do not believe that its beginnings or its subsequent development until the present day can be ascribed to 'capitalism'. On the contrary, in my opinion the successful capitalists in all countries were on the whole remarkably free from antisemitism, and the countries in which capitalism was established first and in its most extensive form – such as England and Belgium – were also those where antisemitism was far less widespread than elsewhere.²²

Early modern antisemitism (1880–1900) was a reaction of bewildered men, who deeply hated modern society in all its aspects, both good and bad, and who were ardent believers in the conspiracy theory of history. The Jews were cast in the role of scapegoat for the breakup of the old society (which antisemitic nostalgia imagined as even more closed and ordered than it had ever been in reality) and for all that was disturbing in modern times. But right at the start the antisemites were faced with what was, for them, a difficult problem: How to define this scapegoat, particularly in popular terms? What is to be the supposed common denominator of the Jewish musician, banker, craftsman and beggar – especially after the common religious features had largely dissolved, at least externally? The 'theory' of the Jewish race was the modern antisemitic answer to this problem.

In contrast, the old Christian, and even more so Muslim, opposition to classical Judaism was remarkably free from racism. No doubt this was to some extent a consequence of the universal character of Christianity and Islam, as well as of their original connection with Judaism (St. Thomas More repeatedly rebuked a woman who objected when he told her that the Virgin Mary was Jewish). But in my opinion a far more important reason was the social role of the Jews as an integral part of the upper classes. In many countries Jews were treated as potential nobles and, upon conversion, were able immediately to intermarry with the highest nobility. The nobility of 15th century Castile and Aragon or the aristocracy of 18th century Poland – to take the two cases where intermarriage with Jews was widespread – would hardly be likely to marry Spanish peasants or Polish serfs, no matter how much praise the Gospel has for the poor.

It is the modern myth of the Jewish 'race' – of outwardly hidden but supposedly dominant characteristics of 'the Jews', independent of history, of social role, of anything – which is the formal and most important distinguishing mark of modern antisemitism. This was in fact perceived by some Church leaders when modern antisemitism first appeared as a movement of some strength. Some French Catholic leaders, for example, opposed the new racist doctrine expounded by E. Drumont, the first popular modern French antisemite and author of the notorious book *La France Juive* (1886), which achieved wide

circulation.²³ Early modern German antisemites encountered similar opposition.

It must be pointed out that some important groups of European conservatives were quite prepared to play along with modern antisemitism and use it for their own ends, and the antisemites were equally ready to use the conservatives when the occasion offered itself, although at bottom there was little similarity between the two parties. 'The victims who were most harshly treated [by the pen of the above-mentioned Drumont] were not the Rothschilds but the great nobles who courted them. Drumont did not spare the Royal Family . . . or the bishops, or for that matter the Pope.'²⁴ Nevertheless, many of the French great nobles, bishops and conservatives generally were quite happy to use Drumont and antisemitism during the crisis of the Dreyfus affair in an attempt to bring down the republican regime.

This type of opportunistic alliance reappeared many times in various European countries until the defeat of Nazism. The conservatives' hatred of radicalism and especially of all forms of socialism blinded many of them to the nature of their political bedfellows. In many cases they were literally prepared to ally themselves with the devil, forgetting the old saying that one needs a very long spoon to sup with him.

The effectiveness of modern antisemitism, and of its alliance with conservatism, depended on several factors.

First, the older tradition of Christian religious opposition to Jews, which existed in many (though by no means all) European countries, could, if supported or at least unopposed by the clergy, be harnessed to the antisemitic bandwagon. The actual response of the clergy in each country was largely determined by specific local historical and social circumstances. In the Catholic Church, the tendency for an opportunistic alliance with antisemitism was strong in France but not in Italy; in Poland and Slovakia but not in Bohemia. The Greek Orthodox Church had notorious antisemitic tendencies in Romania but took the opposite line in Bulgaria. Among the Protestant Churches, the German was deeply divided on this issue, others (such as the Latvian and Estonian) tended to be antisemitic, but many (for example the Dutch, Swiss and Scandinavian) were among the earliest to condemn antisemitism.

Secondly, antisemitism was largely a generic expression of xenophobia, a desire for a 'pure' homogeneous society. But in many European countries around 1900 (and in fact until quite recently) the Jew was virtually the only 'stranger'. This was particularly true of Germany. In principle, the German racists of the early 20th century hated and despised Blacks just as much as Jews; but there were no Blacks in Germany then. Hate is of course much more easily focussed on the present than on the absent, especially under the conditions of the time, when mass travel and tourism did not exist and most Europeans never left their own country in peacetime.

Thirdly, the successes of the tentative alliance between conservatism and antisemitism were inversely proportional to the power and

capabilities of its opponents. And the consistent and effective opponents of antisemitism in Europe are the political forces of liberalism and socialism – historically the same forces that continue in various ways the tradition symbolised by the War of Dutch Independence (1568–1648), the English Revolution and the Great French Revolution. On the European continent the main shibboleth is the attitude towards the Great French Revolution – roughly speaking, those who are for it are against antisemitism; those who accept it with regret would be at least prone to an alliance with the antisemites; those who hate it and would like to undo its achievements are the milieu from which antisemitism develops.

Nevertheless, a sharp distinction must be made between conservatives and even reactionaries on the one hand and actual racists and antisemites on the other. Modern racism (of which antisemitism is part) although caused by specific social conditions, becomes, when it gains strength, a force that in my opinion can only be described as demonic. After coming to power, and for its duration, I believe it defies analysis by any presently understood social theory or set of merely social observations – and in particular by any known theory invoking interests, be they class or state interests, or other than purely psychological ‘interests’ of any entity that can be defined in the present state of human knowledge. By this I do not mean that such forces are unknowable in principle; on the contrary, one must hope that with the growth of human knowledge they will come to be understood. But at present they are neither understood nor capable of being rationally predicted – and this applies to all racism in all societies.²⁵ As a matter of fact, no political figure or group of any political colour in any country had predicted even vaguely the horrors of Nazism. Only artists and poets such as Heine were able to glimpse some of what the future had in store. We do not know how they did it; and besides, many of their other hunches were wrong.

The zionist response

Historically, zionism is both a reaction to antisemitism and a conservative alliance with it – although the zionists, like other European conservatives, did not fully realise with whom they were allying themselves.

Until the rise of modern antisemitism, the mood of European Jewry was optimistic, indeed excessively so. This was manifested not only in the very large number of Jews, particularly in western countries, who simply opted out of classical Judaism, apparently without any great regret, in the first or second generation after this became possible, but also in the formation of a strong cultural movement, the Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*), which began in Germany and Austria around 1780, was then carried into eastern Europe and by 1850–70 was making itself felt as a considerable social force. I cannot enter here into

a discussion of the movement's cultural achievements, such as the revival of Hebrew literature and the creation of a wonderful literature in Yiddish. However, it is important to note that despite many internal differences, the movement as a whole was characterised by two common beliefs: a belief in the need for a fundamental critique of Jewish society and particularly of the social role of the Jewish religion in its classical form, and the almost messianic hope for the victory of the 'forces of good' in European societies. The latter forces were naturally defined by the sole criterion of their support for Jewish emancipation.

The growth of antisemitism as a popular movement, and the many alliances of the conservative forces with it, dealt a severe blow to the Jewish Enlightenment. The blow was especially devastating because in actual fact the rise of antisemitism occurred just after the Jews were emancipated in some European countries, and even before they were freed in others. The Jews of the Austrian empire received fully equal rights only in 1867. In Germany, some independent states emancipated their Jews quite early, but others did not; notably, Prussia was grudging and tardy in this matter, and final emancipation of the Jews in the German empire as a whole was only granted by Bismarck in 1871. In the Ottoman empire the Jews were subject to official discrimination until 1909, and in Russia (as well as Romania) until 1917. Thus modern antisemitism began within a decade of the emancipation of the Jews in central Europe and long before the emancipation of the biggest Jewish community at that time, that of the Tsarist empire.

It is therefore easy for the zionists to ignore half of the relevant facts, revert to the segregationist stance of classical Judaism, and claim that since all Gentiles always hate and persecute all Jews, the only solution would be to remove all the Jews bodily and concentrate them in Palestine or Uganda or wherever.²⁶ Some early Jewish critics of zionism were quick to point out that if one assumes a permanent and ahistorical incompatibility between Jews and Gentiles – an assumption shared by both zionists and antisemites! – then to concentrate the Jews in one place would simply bring upon them the hate of the Gentiles in that part of the world (as indeed was to happen, though for very different reasons). But as far as I know this logical argument did not make any impression, just as all the logical and factual arguments against the myth of the 'Jewish race' made not the slightest difference to the antisemites.

In fact, close relations have always existed between zionists and antisemites: exactly like some of the European conservatives, the zionists thought they could ignore the 'demonic' character of antisemitism and use the antisemites for their own purposes. Many examples of such alliances are well known. Herzl allied himself with the notorious Count von Plehve, the antisemitic minister of Tsar Nicholas II;²⁷ Jabotinsky made a pact with Petlyura, the reactionary Ukrainian leader whose forces massacred some 100,000 Jews in 1918-21; Ben-Gurion's allies

among the French extreme right during the Algerian war included some notorious antisemites who were, however, careful to explain that they were only against the Jews in France, not in Israel.

Perhaps the most shocking example of this type is the delight with which some zionist leaders in Germany welcomed Hitler's rise to power, because they shared his belief in the primacy of 'race' and his hostility to the assimilation of Jews among 'Aryans'. They congratulated Hitler on his triumph over the common enemy – the forces of liberalism. Dr Joachim Prinz, a zionist rabbi who subsequently emigrated to the USA, where he rose to be vice-chairman of the World Jewish Congress and a leading light in the World Zionist Organisation (as well as a great friend of Golda Meir), published in 1934 a special book, *Wir Juden* (We, Jews), to celebrate Hitler's so-called German Revolution and the defeat of liberalism:

'The meaning of the German Revolution for the German nation will eventually be clear to those who have created it and formed its image. Its meaning for us must be set forth here: the fortunes of liberalism are lost. This only form of political life which has helped Jewish assimilation is sunk.'²⁸

The victory of Nazism rules out assimilation and mixed marriages as an option for Jews. 'We are not unhappy about this,' says Dr Prinz. In the fact that Jews are being forced to identify themselves as Jews, he sees 'the fulfilment of our desires'. And further: 'We want assimilation to be replaced by a new law: *the declaration of belonging to the Jewish nation and Jewish race*. A state built upon the principle of the purity of nation and race can only be honoured and respected by a Jew who declares his belonging to his own kind. Having so declared himself, he will never be capable of faulty loyalty towards a state. The state cannot want other Jews but such as declare themselves as belonging to their nation. It will not want Jewish flatterers and crawlers. It must demand of us faith and loyalty to our own interest. For only he who honours his *own* breed and his *own* blood can have an attitude of honour towards the *national will of other nations*.'²⁹

The whole book is full of similar crude flatteries of Nazi ideology, glee at the defeat of liberalism and particularly of the ideas of the French Revolution³⁰ and great expectations that, in the congenial atmosphere of the myth of the Aryan race, zionism and the myth of the Jewish race will also thrive.

Of course, Dr Prinz, like many other early sympathisers and allies of Nazism, did not realise where that movement (and modern anti-semitism generally) was leading. Equally, many people at present do not realise where zionism – the movement in which Dr Prinz is an honoured figure – is tending: to a combination of all the old hates of classical Judaism towards Gentiles and to the indiscriminate and ahistorical use of all the persecutions of Jews throughout history in order to justify the zionist persecution of the Palestinians.

For, insane as it sounds, it is nevertheless plain upon close examination

of the real motives of the zionists, that one of the most deep-seated ideological sources of the zionist establishment's persistent hostility towards the Palestinians is the fact that they are identified in the minds of many east-European Jews with the rebellious east-European peasants who participated in the Chmielnicki uprising and in similar revolts – and the latter are in turn identified ahistorically with modern antisemitism and Nazism.

Confronting the past

All Jews who really want to extricate themselves from the tyranny of the totalitarian Jewish past must face the question of their attitude towards the *popular* anti-Jewish manifestations of the past, particularly those connected with the rebellions of enserfed peasants. On the other side, all the apologists of the Jewish religion and of Jewish segregationism and chauvinism also take their stand – both ultimately and in current debates – on the same question. The undoubted fact that the peasant revolutionaries committed shocking atrocities against Jews (as well as against their other oppressors) is used as an 'argument' by those apologists, in exactly the same way that the Palestinian terror is used to justify the denial of justice to the Palestinians.

Our own answer must be a universal one, applicable in principle to *all* comparable cases. And, for a Jew who truly seeks liberation from Jewish particularism and racism and from the dead hand of the Jewish religion, such an answer is not very difficult.

After all, revolts of oppressed peasants against their masters and their masters' bailiffs are common in human history. A generation after the Chmielnicki uprising of the Ukrainian peasants, the Russian peasants rose under the leadership of Stenka Ryazin, and again, one hundred years later, in the Pugachev rebellion. In Germany there was the Peasant War of 1525, in France the Jacquerie of 1357–8 and many other popular revolts, not to mention the many slave uprisings in all parts of the world. All of them – and I have intentionally chosen to mention examples in which Jews were *not* targets – were attended by horrifying massacres, just as the Great French Revolution was accompanied by appalling acts of terror. What is the position of true progressives – and, by now, of most ordinary decent educated people, be they Russian, German or French – on these rebellions? Do decent English historians, even when noting the massacres of Englishmen by rebellious Irish peasants rising against their enslavement, condemn the latter as 'anti-English racists'? What is the attitude of progressive French historians towards the great slave revolution in Santo Domingo, where many French women and children were butchered? To ask the question is to answer it. But to ask a similar question of many 'progressive' or even 'socialist' Jewish circles is to receive a very different answer; here an enslaved peasant is transformed into a racist monster, if Jews profited from his state of slavery and exploitation.

The maxim that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it applies to those Jews who refuse to come to terms with the Jewish past: they have become its slaves and are repeating it in Zionist and Israeli policies. The State of Israel now fulfils towards the oppressed peasants of many countries – not only in the Middle East but also far beyond it – a role not unlike that of the Jews in pre-1795 Poland: that of a bailiff to the imperial oppressor. It is characteristic and instructive that Israel's major role in arming the forces of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua, and now those of Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile and the rest has not given rise to any wide public debate in Israel or among *organised* Jewish communities in the diaspora. Even the narrower question of expediency – whether the selling of weapons to a dictatorial butcher of freedom fighters and peasants is in the long term interest of Jews – is seldom asked. Even more significant is the large part taken in this business by religious Jews, and the total silence of their rabbis (who are very vocal in inciting against Arabs). It seems that Israel and Zionism are a throw-back to the role of classical Judaism – writ large, on a global scale, and under more dangerous circumstances.

The only possible answer to all this, first of all by Jews, must be that given by all true advocates of freedom and humanity in all countries, all peoples and all great philosophies – limited though they sometimes are, as the human condition itself is limited. We must confront the Jewish past and those aspects of the present which are based simultaneously on lying about that past and worshipping it. The prerequisites for this are, first, total honesty about the facts and, secondly, the belief (leading to action, whenever possible) in universalist human principles of ethics and politics.

The ancient Chinese sage Mencius (fourth century BC), much admired by Voltaire, had written:

'This is why I say that all men have a sense of commiseration: Here is a man who suddenly notices a child about to fall into a well. Invariably he will feel a sense of alarm and compassion. And this is not for the purpose of gaining the favour of the child's parents or of seeking the approbation of his neighbours and friends, or for fear of blame should he fail to rescue it. Thus we see that no man is without a sense of compassion or a sense of shame or a sense of courtesy or a sense of right and wrong. The sense of compassion is the beginning of humanity, the sense of shame is the beginning of righteousness, the sense of courtesy is the beginning of decorum, the sense of right and wrong is the beginning of wisdom. Every man has within himself these four beginnings, just as he has four limbs. Since everyone has these four beginnings within him, the man who considers himself incapable of exercising them is destroying himself.'

We have seen above, and will show in greater detail in the Appendix, how far removed from this are the precepts with which the Jewish

religion in its classical and talmudic form is poisoning minds and hearts.

The road to a genuine revolution in Judaism – to making it humane, allowing Jews to understand their own past, thereby re-educating themselves out of its tyranny – lies through an unrelenting critique of the Jewish religion. Without fear or favour, we must speak out against what belongs to our own past as Voltaire did against his:

Écrasez l'infâme!

Jerusalem, September 1980

APPENDIX

TALMUDIC AND RABBINICAL LAWS AGAINST GENTILES

As explained in Part II, the Halakhah, that is the legal system of classical Judaism – as practised by virtually all Jews from the 9th century to the end of the 18th and as maintained to this very day in the form of Orthodox Judaism – is based primarily on the Babylonian Talmud. However, because of the unwieldy complexity of the legal disputations recorded in the Talmud, more manageable codifications of talmudic law became necessary and were indeed compiled by successive generations of rabbinical scholars. Some of these have acquired great authority and are in general use. For this reason we shall refer for the most part to such compilations (and their most reputable commentaries) rather than directly to the Talmud. It is however correct to assume that the compilation referred to reproduce faithfully the meaning of the talmudic text and the additions made by later scholars on the basis of that meaning.

The earliest code of talmudic law which is still of major importance is the *Mishneh Torah* written by Moses Maimonides in the late 12th century. The most authoritative code, widely used to date as a handbook, is the *Shulhan 'Arukh* composed by R. Yosef Karo in the late 16th century as a popular condensation of his own much more voluminous *Beyt Yosef* which was intended for the advanced scholar. The *Shulhan 'Arukh* is much commented upon; in addition to classical commentaries dating from the 17th century, there is an important 20th century one, *Mishnah Berurah*. Finally, the *Talmudic Encyclopedia* – a modern compilation published in Israel from the 1950s and edited by the country's greatest Orthodox rabbinical scholars – is a good compendium of the whole talmudic literature.

Murder and genocide

According to the Jewish religion, murder of a Jew is a capital offence and one of the three most heinous sins (the other two being idolatry and adultery). Jewish religious courts and secular authorities are commanded to punish, even beyond the limits of the ordinary administration of justice, anyone guilty of murdering a Jew. A Jew who indirectly causes the death of another Jew is, however, only guilty of what talmudic law calls a sin against the 'laws of Heaven', to be punished by God rather than by man.

The Jewish religion and its attitude to non-Jews

When the victim is a Gentile, the position is quite different. A Jew who murders a Gentile is guilty only of a sin against the laws of Heaven, not punishable by a court.¹ To cause indirectly the death of a Gentile is no sin at all.²

Thus, one of the two most important commentators on the *Shulhan 'Arukh* explains that when it comes to a Gentile, 'one must not lift one's hand to harm him, but one may harm him indirectly, for instance by removing a ladder after he had fallen into a crevice... there is no prohibition here, because it was not done directly.'³ He points out, however, that an act leading indirectly to a Gentile's death is forbidden if it may cause the spread of hostility towards Jews.⁴

A Gentile murderer who happens to be under Jewish jurisdiction must be executed whether the victim was Jewish or not. However, if the victim was Gentile and the murderer converts to Judaism, he is not punished.⁵

All this has a direct and practical relevance to the realities of the State of Israel. Although the state's criminal laws make no distinction between Jew and Gentile, such distinction is certainly made by Orthodox rabbis, who in guiding their flock follow the Halakhah. Of special importance is the advice they give to religious soldiers.

Since even the minimal interdiction against murdering a Gentile outright applies only to 'Gentiles with whom we [the Jews] are not at war', various rabbinical commentators in the past drew the logical conclusion that in wartime all Gentiles belonging to a hostile population may, or even should, be killed.⁶ Since 1973 this doctrine is being publicly propagated for the guidance of religious Israeli soldiers. The first such official exhortation was included in a booklet published by the Central-Region Command of the Israeli Army, whose area includes the West Bank. In this booklet the Command's Chief Chaplain writes: 'When our forces come across civilians during a war or in hot pursuit or in a raid, so long as there is no certainty that those civilians are incapable of harming our forces, then according to the Halakhah they may and even should be killed... Under no circumstances should an Arab be trusted, even if he makes an impression of being civilised... In war, when our forces storm the enemy, they are allowed and even enjoined by the Halakhah to kill even good civilians, that is, civilians who are ostensibly good.'⁷ The same doctrine is expounded in the following exchange of letters between a young Israeli soldier and his rabbi, published in the yearbook of one of the country's most prestigious religious colleges, *Midrashiyat No'am*, where many leaders and activists of the National Religious Party and Gush Emunim have been educated.⁸

Letter from the soldier Moshe to Rabbi Shim'on Weiser

'With God's help, to His Honour, my dear Rabbi,

'First I would like to ask how you and your family are. I hope all is well. I am, thank God, feeling well. A long time I have not written. Please forgive me. Sometimes I recall the verse "when shall I come and appear before God?"⁹ I hope, without being certain, that I shall come during one of the leaves. I must do so.

'In one of the discussions in our group, there was a debate about the "purity of weapons" and we discussed whether it is permitted to kill unarmed men – or women and children? Or perhaps we should take revenge on the Arabs? And then everyone answered according to his own understanding. I could not arrive at a clear decision, whether Arabs should be treated like the Amalekites, meaning that one is permitted to murder [*sic*] them until their remembrance is

blotted out from under heaven,¹⁰ or perhaps one should do as in a just war, in which one kills only the soldiers?

‘A second problem I have is whether I am permitted to put myself in danger by allowing a woman to stay alive? For there have been cases when women threw hand-grenades. Or am I permitted to give water to an Arab who puts his hand up? For there may be reason to fear that he only means to deceive me and will kill me, and such things have happened.

‘I conclude with a warm greeting to the rabbi and all his family. — *Moshe.*’

Reply of R Shim'on Weiser to Moshe

‘With the help of Heaven. Dear Moshe, Greetings.

‘I am starting this letter this evening although I know I cannot finish it this evening, both because I am busy and because I would like to make it a long letter, to answer your questions in full, for which purpose I shall have to copy out some of the sayings of our sages, of blessed memory, and interpret them.’¹¹

‘The non-Jewish nations have a custom according to which war has its own rules, like those of a game, like the rules of football or basketball. But according to the sayings of our sages, of blessed memory, [— — —] war for us is not a game but a vital necessity, and only by this standard must we decide how to wage it. On the one hand [— — —] we seem to learn that if a Jew murders a Gentile, he is regarded as a murderer and, except for the fact that no court has the right to punish him, the gravity of the deed is like that of any other murder. But we find in the very same authorities in another place [— — —] that Rabbi Shim'on used to say: “The best of Gentiles — kill him; the best of snakes — dash out its brains.”

‘It might perhaps be argued that the expression “kill” in the saying of R Shim'on is only figurative and should not be taken literally but as meaning “oppress” or some similar attitude, and in this way we also avoid a contradiction with the authorities quoted earlier. Or one might argue that this saying, though meant literally, is [merely] his own personal opinion, disputed by other sages [quoted earlier]. But we find the true explanation in the Tosafot.¹² There [— — —] we learn the following comment on the talmudic pronouncement that Gentiles who fall into a well should not be helped out, but neither should they be pushed into the well to be killed, which means that they should neither be saved from death nor killed directly. And the Tosafot write as follows: “And if it is queried [because] in another place it was said *The best of Gentiles — kill him*, then the answer is that this [saying] is meant for wartime.” [— — —]

‘According to the commentators of the Tosafot, a distinction must be made between wartime and peace-time, so that although during peace-time it is forbidden to kill Gentiles, in a case that occurs in wartime it is a *mitzvah* [= imperative, religious duty] to kill them. [— — —]

‘And this is the difference between a Jew and a Gentile: although the rule “Whoever comes to kill you, kill him first” applies also to a Jew, as was said in Tractate *Sanhedrin* [of the Talmud], page 72a, still it only applies to him if there is [actual] ground to fear that he is coming to kill you. But a Gentile during wartime is usually to be presumed so, except when it is quite clear that he has no evil intent. This is the rule of “purity of weapons” according to the Halakhah — and not the alien conception which is now accepted in the Israeli army and which has been the cause of many [Jewish] casualties. I enclose a newspaper cutting with the speech made last week in the Knesset by Rabbi Kalman Kahana, which shows in a very lifelike — and also painful — way how this “purity of weapons” has caused deaths.

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'I conclude here, hoping that you will not find the length of this letter irksome. This subject was being discussed even without your letter, but your letter caused me to write up the whole matter.

'Be in peace, you and all Jews, and [I hope to] see you soon, as you say.
Yours – *Shim'on*.'

Reply of Moshe to R Shim'on Weiser

'To His Honour, my dear Rabbi,

'First I hope that you and your family are in health and are all right.

'I have received your long letter and am grateful for your personal watch over me, for I assume that you write to many, and most of your time is taken up with your studies in your own programme.

'Therefore my thanks to you are doubly deep.

'As for the letter itself, I have understood it as follows:

'In wartime I am not merely permitted, but enjoined to kill every Arab man and woman whom I chance upon, if there is reason to fear that they help in the war against us, directly or indirectly. And as far as I am concerned I have to kill them even if that might result in an involvement with the military law. I think that this matter of the purity of weapons should be transmitted to educational institutions, at least the religious ones, so that they should have a position about this subject and so that they will not wander in the broad fields of "logic", especially on this subject; and the rule has to be explained as it should be followed in practice. For, I am sorry to say, I have seen different types of "logic" here even among the religious comrades. I do hope that you shall be active in this, so that our boys will know the line of their ancestors clearly and unambiguously.

'I conclude here, hoping that when the [training] course ends, in about a month, I shall be able to come to the yeshivah [=talmudic college].
Greetings – *Moshe*.'

Of course, this doctrine of the Halakhah on murder clashes, in principle, not only with Israel's criminal law but also – as hinted in the letters just quoted – with official military standing regulations. However, there can be little doubt that in practice this doctrine does exert an influence on the administration of justice, especially by military authorities. The fact is that in all cases where Jews have, in a military or para-military context, murdered Arab non-combatants – including cases of mass-murder such as that in Kafr Qasim in 1956 – the murderers, if not let off altogether, received extremely light sentences or won far-reaching remissions, reducing their punishment to next to nothing.¹³

Saving of life

This subject – the supreme value of human life and the obligation of every human being to do the utmost to save the life of a fellow-human – is of obvious importance in itself. It is also of particular interest in a Jewish context, in view of the fact that since the second world war Jewish opinion has – in some cases justly, in others unjustly – condemned 'the whole world' or at least all Europe for standing by when Jews were being massacred. Let us therefore examine what the Halakhah has to say on this subject.

According to the Halakhah, the duty to save the life of a fellow Jew is

paramount.¹⁴ It supersedes all other religious obligations and interdictions, excepting only the prohibitions against the three most heinous sins of adultery (including incest), murder and idolatry.

As for Gentiles, the basic talmudic principle is that their lives *must not* be saved, although it is also forbidden to murder them outright. The Talmud itself¹⁵ expresses this in the maxim 'Gentiles are neither to be lifted [out of a well] nor hauled down [into it]'. Maimonides¹⁶ explains: 'As for Gentiles with whom we are not at war . . . their death must not be caused, but it is forbidden to save them if they are at the point of death; if, for example, one of them is seen falling into the sea, he should not be rescued, for it is written: "neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy fellow"¹⁷ – but [a Gentile] is not thy fellow.' In particular, a Jewish doctor must not treat a Gentile patient. Maimonides – himself an illustrious physician – is quite explicit on this; in another passage¹⁸ he repeats the distinction between 'thy fellow' and a Gentile, and concludes: 'and from this learn ye, that it is forbidden to heal a Gentile even for payment . . .'.

However, the refusal of a Jew – particularly a Jewish doctor – to save the life of a Gentile may, if it becomes known, antagonise powerful Gentiles and so put Jews in danger. Where such a danger exists, the obligation to avert it supersedes the ban on helping the Gentile. Thus Maimonides continues: ' . . . but if you fear him or his hostility, cure him for payment, though you are forbidden to do so without payment.' In fact, Maimonides himself was Saladin's personal physician. His insistence on demanding payment – presumably in order to make sure that the act is not one of human charity but an unavoidable duty – is however not absolute. For in another passage he allows a Gentile whose hostility is feared to be treated 'even gratis, if it is unavoidable'.

The whole doctrine – the ban on saving a Gentile's life or healing him, and the suspension of this ban in cases where there is fear of hostility – is repeated (virtually verbatim) by other major authorities, including the 14th century *Arba'ah Turim* and Karo's *Beyt Yosef* and *Shulhan 'Arukh*.¹⁹ *Beyt Yosef* adds, quoting Maimonides: 'And it is permissible to try out a drug on a heathen, if this serves a purpose'; and this is repeated also by the famous R Moses Isserles.

The consensus of halakhic authorities is that the term 'Gentiles' in the above doctrine refers to *all* non-Jews. A lone voice of dissent is that of R Moses Rivkes, author of a minor commentary on the *Shulhan 'Arukh*, who writes:²⁰ 'Our sages only said this about heathens, who in their day worshipped idols and did not believe in the Jewish Exodus from Egypt or in the creation of the world *ex nihilo*. But the Gentiles in whose [protective] shade we, the people of Israel, are exiled and among whom we are scattered do believe in the creation of the world *ex nihilo* and in the Exodus and in several principles of our own religion and they pray to the Creator of heaven and earth . . . Not only is there no interdiction against helping them, but we are even obliged to pray for their safety.' This passage, dating from the second half of the 17th century, is a favourite quote of apologetic scholars.²¹ Actually, it does not go nearly as far as the apologetics pretend, for it advocates *removing the ban* on saving a Gentile's life, rather than making it *mandatory* as in the case of a Jew; and even this liberality extends only to Christians and Muslims but not to the majority of human beings. Rather, what it does show is that there was a way in which the harsh doctrine of the Halakhah *could have been* progressively liberalised. But as a matter of fact the majority of later halakhic authorities, far from extending Rivkes' leniency to other human groups, have rejected it altogether.

Desecrating the sabbath to save life

Desecrating the sabbath – that is, doing work that would otherwise be banned on Saturday – becomes a duty when the need to save a Jew's life demands it.

The problem of saving a Gentile's life on the sabbath is not raised in the Talmud as a main issue, since it is in any case forbidden even on a weekday; it does however enter as a complicating factor in two connections.

First, there is a problem where a group of people are in danger, and it is possible (but not certain) that there is at least one Jew among them; should the sabbath be desecrated in order to save them? There is an extensive discussion of such cases. Following earlier authorities, including Maimonides and the Talmud itself, the *Shulhan 'Arukh*²² decides these matters according to the weight of probabilities. For example, suppose nine Gentiles and one Jew live in the same building. One Saturday the building collapses; one of the ten – it is not known which one – is away, but the other nine are trapped under the rubble. Should the rubble be cleared, thus desecrating the sabbath, seeing that the Jew may not be under it (he may have been the one that got away)? The *Shulhan 'Arukh* says that it should, presumably because the odds that the Jew is under the rubble are high (nine to one). But now suppose that nine have got away and only one – again, it is not known which one – is trapped. Then there is no duty to clear the rubble, presumably because this time there are long odds (nine to one) *against* the Jew being the person trapped. Similarly: 'If a boat containing some Jews is seen to be in peril upon the sea, it is a duty incumbent upon all to desecrate the sabbath in order to save it.' However, the great R 'Aqiva Eiger (died 1837) comments that this applies only 'when it is known that there are Jews on board. But . . . if nothing at all is known about the identity of those on board, [the sabbath] must not be desecrated, for one acts according to [the weight of probabilities, and] the majority of people in the world are Gentiles.'²³ Thus, since there are very long odds against any of the passengers being Jewish, they must be allowed to drown.

Secondly, the provision that a Gentile may be saved or cared for in order to avert the danger of hostility is curtailed on the sabbath. A Jew called upon to help a Gentile on a weekday may have to comply because to admit that he is not allowed, in principle, to save the life of a non-Jew would be to invite hostility. But on Saturday the Jew can use sabbath observance as a plausible excuse. A paradigmatic case discussed at length in the Talmud²⁴ is that of a Jewish midwife invited to help a Gentile woman in childbirth. The upshot is that the midwife is allowed to help on a weekday 'for fear of hostility', but on the sabbath she must not do so, because she can excuse herself by saying: 'We are allowed to desecrate the sabbath only for our own, who observe the sabbath, but for your people, who do not keep the sabbath, we are not allowed to desecrate it.' Is this explanation a genuine one or merely an excuse? Maimonides clearly thinks that it is just an excuse, which can be used even if the task that the midwife is invited to do does not actually involve any desecration of the sabbath. Presumably, the excuse will work just as well even in this case, because Gentiles are generally in the dark as to precisely which kinds of work are banned for Jews on the sabbath. At any rate, he decrees: 'A Gentile woman must not be helped in childbirth on the sabbath, even for payment; nor must one fear hostility, even when [such help involves] no desecration of the sabbath.' The *Shulhan 'Arukh* decrees likewise.²⁵

Nevertheless, this sort of excuse could not always be relied upon to do the trick and avert Gentile hostility. Therefore certain important rabbinical

authorities had to relax the rules to some extent and allowed Jewish doctors to treat Gentiles on the sabbath even if this involved doing certain types of work normally banned on that day. This partial relaxation applied particularly to rich and powerful Gentile patients, who could not be fobbed off so easily and whose hostility could be dangerous.

Thus, R Yo'el Sirkis, author of *Bayit Hadash* and one of the greatest rabbis of his time (Poland, 17th century), decided that 'mayors, petty nobles and aristocrats' should be treated on the sabbath, because of the fear of their hostility which involves 'some danger'. But in other cases, especially when the Gentile can be fobbed off with an evasive excuse, a Jewish doctor would commit 'an unbearable sin' by treating him on the sabbath. Later in the same century, a similar verdict was given in the French city of Metz, whose two parts were connected by a pontoon bridge. Jews are not normally allowed to cross such a bridge on the sabbath, but the rabbi of Metz decided that a Jewish doctor may nevertheless do so 'if he is called to the great governor': since the doctor is known to cross the bridge for the sake of his Jewish patients, the governor's hostility could be aroused if the doctor refused to do so for his sake. Under the authoritarian rule of Louis XIV, it was evidently important to have the goodwill of his intendant; the feelings of lesser Gentiles were of little importance.²⁶

Hokhmat Shlomoh, a 19th-century commentary on the *Shulhan 'Arukh*, mentions a similarly strict interpretation of the concept 'hostility' in connection with the Karaites, a small heretical Jewish sect. According to this view, their lives must not be saved if that would involve desecration of the sabbath, 'for "hostility" applies only to the heathen, who are many against us, and we are delivered into their hands . . . But the Karaites are few and we are not delivered into their hands, [so] the fear of hostility does not apply to them at all.'²⁷ In fact, the *absolute* ban on desecrating the sabbath in order to save the life of a Karaite is still in force today, as we shall see.

The whole subject is extensively discussed in the *responsa* of R Moshe Sofer – better known as 'Hatam Sofer' – the famous rabbi of Pressburg (Bratislava) who died in 1832. His conclusions are of more than historical interest, since in 1966 one of his *responsa* was publicly endorsed by the then Chief Rabbi of Israel as 'a basic institution of the Halakhah'.²⁸ The particular question asked of Hatam Sofer concerned the situation in Turkey, where it was decreed during one of the wars that in each township or village there should be midwives on call, ready to hire themselves out to any woman in labour. Some of these midwives were Jewish; should they hire themselves out to help Gentile women on weekdays and on the sabbath?

In his *responsum*,²⁹ Hatam Sofer first concludes, after careful investigation, that the Gentiles concerned – that is, Ottoman Christians and Muslims – are not only idolators 'who definitely worship other gods and thus should "neither be lifted [out of a well] nor hauled down", but are likened by him to the Amalekites, so that the talmudic ruling 'it is forbidden to multiply the seed of Amalek' applies to them. In principle, therefore, they should not be helped even on weekdays. However, in practice it is 'permitted' to heal Gentiles and help them in labour, if they have doctors and midwives of their own, who could be called instead of the Jewish ones. For if Jewish doctors and midwives refused to attend to Gentiles, the only result would be loss of income to the former – which is of course undesirable. This applies equally on weekdays and on the sabbath, provided no desecration of the sabbath is involved. However, in the latter case

the sabbath can serve as an excuse to 'mislead the heathen woman and say that it would involve desecration of the sabbath'.

In connection with cases that do actually involve desecration of the sabbath, Hatam Sofer – like other authorities – makes a distinction between two categories of work banned on the sabbath. First, there is work banned by the Torah, the biblical text (as interpreted by the Talmud); such work may only be performed in very exceptional cases, if failing to do so would cause an *extreme* danger of hostility towards Jews. Then there are types of work which are only banned by the sages who extended the original law of the Torah; the attitude towards breaking such bans is generally more lenient.

Another *responsum* of Hatam Sofer³⁰ deals with the question whether it is permissible for a Jewish doctor to travel by carriage on the sabbath in order to heal a Gentile. After pointing out that under certain conditions travelling by horse-drawn carriage on the sabbath only violates a ban imposed 'by the sages' rather than by the Torah, he goes on to recall Maimonides' pronouncement that Gentile women in labour must not be helped on the sabbath, even if no desecration of the sabbath is involved,²⁵ and states that the same principle applies to all medical practice, not just midwifery. But he then voices the fear that if this were put into practice, 'it would arouse undesirable hostility,' for 'the Gentiles would not accept the excuse of sabbath observance,' and 'would say that the blood of an idolator has little worth in our eyes.' Also, perhaps more importantly, Gentile doctors might take revenge on their Jewish patients. Better excuses must be found. He advises a Jewish doctor who is called to treat a Gentile patient out of town on the sabbath to excuse himself by saying that he is required to stay in town in order to look after his other patients, 'for he can use this in order to say, "I cannot move because of the danger to this or that patient, who needs a doctor first, and I may not desert my charge"'. . . With such an excuse there is no fear of danger, for it is a reasonable pretext, commonly given by doctors who are late in arriving because another patient needed them first.' Only 'if it is impossible to give any excuse' is the doctor permitted to travel by carriage on the sabbath in order to treat a Gentile.

In the whole discussion, the main issue is the excuses that should be made, not the actual healing or the welfare of the patient. And throughout it is taken for granted that it is all right to deceive Gentiles rather than treat them, so long as 'hostility' can be averted. And this *responsum* is cited by a British rabbi as binding on Jews to this day.³¹

Of course, in modern times most Jewish doctors are not religious and do not even know of these rules. Moreover, it appears that even many who are religious prefer – to their credit – to abide by the Hippocratic oath rather than by the precepts of their fanatic rabbis.³² However, the rabbis' guidance cannot fail to have some influence on some doctors; and there are certainly many who, while not actually following that guidance, choose not to protest against it publicly.

All this is far from being a dead issue. The most up-to-date halakhic position on these matters is contained in a recent concise and authoritative book published in English under the title *Jewish Medical Law*.³³ This book, which bears the imprint of the prestigious Israeli foundation *Mossad Harav Kook*, is based on the *responsa* of R Eli'ezer Yehuda Waldenberg, Chief Justice of the Rabbinical District Court of Jerusalem. A few passages of this work deserve special mention.

First, 'it is forbidden to desecrate the sabbath . . . for a Karaite.'³⁴ This is

stated bluntly, absolutely and without any further qualification. Presumably the hostility of this small sect makes no difference, so they should be allowed to die rather than be treated on the sabbath.

As for Gentiles: 'According to the ruling stated in the Talmud and Codes of Jewish Law, it is forbidden to desecrate the Sabbath – whether violating Biblical or rabbinic law – in order to save the life of a dangerously ill gentile patient. It is also forbidden to deliver the baby of a gentile woman on the Sabbath.'³⁵

But this is qualified by a dispensation: 'However, today it is permitted to desecrate the Sabbath on behalf of a gentile by performing actions prohibited by rabbinic law, for by so doing one prevents ill feelings from arising between Jew and gentile.'³⁶

This does not go very far, because medical treatment very often involves acts banned on the sabbath by the Torah itself, which are not covered by this dispensation. There are, we are told, 'some' halakhic authorities who extend the dispensation to such acts as well – but this is just another way of saying that *most* halakhic authorities, and the ones that really count, take the opposite view. However, all is not lost. *Jewish Medical Law* has a truly breath-taking solution to this difficulty.

The solution hangs upon a nice point of talmudic law. A ban imposed by the Torah on performing a given act on the sabbath is presumed to apply only when the primary intention in performing it is the actual outcome of the act. (For example, grinding wheat is presumed to be banned by the Torah only if the purpose is actually to obtain flour.) On the other hand, if the performance of the same act is merely incidental to some other purpose (*melakhah she'eynah tzrikhah legufah*) then the act changes its status – it is still forbidden, to be sure, but only by the sages rather than by the Torah itself. Therefore:

'In order to avoid any transgression of the law, there is a legally acceptable method of rendering treatment on behalf of a gentile patient even when dealing with violation of Biblical law. *It is suggested that at the time that the physician is providing the necessary care, his intentions should not primarily be to cure the patient, but to protect himself and the Jewish people from accusations of religious discrimination and severe retaliation that may endanger him in particular and the Jewish people in general.* With this intention, any act on the physician's part becomes "an act whose actual outcome is not its primary purpose" . . . which is forbidden on Sabbath only by rabbinic law.'³⁷

This hypocritical substitute for the Hippocratic oath is also proposed by a recent authoritative Hebrew book.³⁸

Although the facts were mentioned at least twice in the Israeli press,³⁹ the Israeli Medical Association has remained silent.

Having treated in some detail the supremely important subject of the attitude of the Halakhah to a Gentile's very life, we shall deal much more briefly with other halakhic rules which discriminate against Gentiles. Since the number of such rules is very large, we shall mention only the more important one.

Sexual offences

Sexual intercourse between a married Jewish woman and any man other than her husband is a capital offence for both parties, and one of the three most heinous sins. The status of Gentile women is very different. The Halakhah

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presumes all Gentiles to be utterly promiscuous and the verse 'whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue [of semen] is like the issue of horses'⁴⁰ is applied to them. Whether a Gentile woman is married or not makes no difference, since as far as Jews are concerned the very concept of matrimony does not apply to Gentiles ('There is no matrimony for a heathen'). Therefore, the concept of adultery also does not apply to intercourse between a Jewish man and a Gentile woman; rather, the Talmud⁴¹ equates such intercourse to the sin of bestiality. (For the same reason, Gentiles are generally presumed not to have certain paternity.)

According to the *Talmudic Encyclopedia*:⁴² 'he who has carnal knowledge of the wife of a Gentile is not liable to the death penalty, for it is written: "thy fellow's wife"⁴³ rather than the alien's wife; and even the precept that a man "shall cleave unto his wife"⁴⁴ which is addressed to the Gentiles does not apply to a Jew, just as there is no matrimony for a heathen; and although a married Gentile woman is forbidden to the Gentiles, in any case a Jew is exempted.'

This does not imply that sexual intercourse between a Jewish man and a Gentile woman is permitted – quite the contrary. But the main punishment is inflicted on the Gentile woman; she must be executed, even if she was raped by the Jew: 'If a Jew has coitus with a Gentile woman, whether she be a child of three or an adult, whether married or unmarried, and even if he is a minor aged only nine years and one day – because he had wilful coitus with her, she must be killed, as is the case with a beast, because through her a Jew got into trouble.'⁴⁵ The Jew, however, must be flogged and if he is a Kohen (member of the priestly tribe) he must receive double the number of lashes, because he has committed a double offence: a Kohen must not have intercourse with a prostitute, and all Gentile women are presumed to be prostitutes.⁴⁶

Status

According to the Halakhah, Jews must not (if they can help it) allow a Gentile to be appointed to any position of authority, however small, over Jews. (The two stock examples are 'commander over ten soldiers in the Jewish army' and 'superintendent of an irrigation ditch'.) Significantly, this particular rule applies also to converts to Judaism and to their descendants (through the female line) for ten generations or 'so long as the descent is known'.

Gentiles are presumed to be congenital liars, and are disqualified from testifying in a rabbinical court. In this respect their position is, in theory, the same as that of Jewish women, slaves and minors; but in practice it is actually worse. A Jewish woman is nowadays admitted as a witness to certain matters of fact, when the rabbinical court 'believes' her; a Gentile – never.

A problem therefore arises when a rabbinical court needs to establish a fact for which there are only Gentile witnesses. An important example of this are cases concerning widows: by Jewish religious law, a woman can be declared a widow – and hence free to re-marry – only if the death of her husband is proven with certainty by means of a witness who saw him die or identified his corpse. However, the rabbinical court will accept the hearsay evidence of a Jew who testifies to having heard the fact in question mentioned by a Gentile eyewitness, provided the court is satisfied that the latter was speaking casually ('*goy mesiah lefi tummo*') rather than in reply to a direct question; for a Gentile's direct

answer to a Jew's direct question is presumed to be a lie.⁴⁷ If necessary, a Jew (preferably a rabbi) will actually undertake to chat up the Gentile eyewitness and, without asking a direct question, extract from him a casual statement of the fact at issue.

Money and property

1 *Gifts.* The Talmud bluntly forbids giving a gift to a Gentile. However, classical rabbinical authorities bent this rule because it is customary among businessmen to give gifts to business contacts. It was therefore laid down that a Jew may give a gift to a Gentile *acquaintance*, since this is regarded not as a true gift but as a sort of investment, for which some return is expected. Gifts to 'unfamiliar Gentiles' remain forbidden. A broadly similar rule applies to almsgiving. Giving alms to a Jewish beggar is an important religious duty. Alms to Gentile beggars are merely permitted for the sake of peace. However there are numerous rabbinical warnings against allowing the Gentile poor to become 'accustomed' to receiving alms from Jews, so that it should be possible to withhold such alms without arousing undue hostility.

2 *Taking of interest.* Anti-Gentile discrimination in this matter has become largely theoretical, in view of the dispensation (explained in Part II) which in effect allows interest to be exacted even from a Jewish borrower. However, it is still the case that granting an interest-free loan to a Jew is recommended as an act of charity, but from a Gentile borrower it is mandatory to exact interest. In fact, many – though not all – rabbinical authorities, including Maimonides, consider it mandatory to exact as much usury as possible on a loan to a Gentile.

3 *Lost property.* If a Jew finds property whose probable owner is Jewish, the finder is strictly enjoined to make a positive effort to return his find by advertising it publicly. In contrast, the Talmud and all the early rabbinical authorities not only allow a Jewish finder to appropriate an article lost by a Gentile, but actually forbid to return it.⁴⁸ In more recent times, when laws were passed in most countries making it mandatory to return lost articles, the rabbinical authorities instructed Jews to do what these laws say, as an act of *civil* obedience to the state – but not as a religious duty, that is without making a positive effort to discover the owner if it is not probable that he is Jewish.

4 *Deception in business.* It is a grave sin to practice any kind of deception whatsoever against a Jew. Against a Gentile it is only forbidden to practice direct deception. Indirect deception is allowed, unless it is likely to cause hostility towards Jews or insult to the Jewish religion. The paradigmatic example is mistaken calculation of the price during purchase. If a Jew makes a mistake unfavourable to himself, it is one's religious duty to correct him. If a Gentile is spotted making such a mistake, one need not let him know about it, but say 'I rely on your calculation', so as to forestall his hostility in case he subsequently discovers his own mistake.

5 *Fraud.* It is forbidden to defraud a Jew by selling or buying at an unreasonable price. However, 'Fraud does not apply to Gentiles, for it is written: "Do not defraud each man his brother";'⁴⁹ but a Gentile who defrauds a Jew should

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be compelled to make good the fraud, but should not be punished more severely than a Jew [in a similar case].'⁵⁰

6 *Theft and robbery.* Stealing (without violence) is absolutely forbidden – as the *Shulhan 'Arukh* so nicely puts it: 'even from a Gentile'. Robbery (with violence) is strictly forbidden if the victim is Jewish. However, robbery of a Gentile by a Jew is not forbidden outright but only under certain circumstances such as 'when the Gentiles are not under our rule', but is permitted 'when they are under our rule'. Rabbinical authorities differ among themselves as to the precise details of the circumstances under which a Jew may rob a Gentile, but the whole debate is concerned only with the relative power of Jews and Gentiles rather than with universal considerations of justice and humanity. This may explain why so very few rabbis have protested against the robbery of Palestinian property in Israel: it was backed by overwhelming Jewish power.

Gentiles in the Land of Israel

In addition to the general anti-Gentile laws, the Halakhah has special laws against Gentiles who live in the Land of Israel (*Eretz Yisra'el*) or, in some cases, merely pass through it. These laws are designed to promote Jewish supremacy in that country.

The exact geographical definition of the term 'Land of Israel' is much disputed in the Talmud and the talmudic literature, and the debate has continued in modern times between the various shades of Zionist opinion. According to the maximalist view, the Land of Israel includes (in addition to Palestine itself) not only the whole of Sinai, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, but also considerable parts of Turkey.⁵¹ The more prevalent 'minimalist' interpretation puts the northern border 'only' about half way through Syria and Lebanon, at the latitude of Homs. This view was supported by Ben-Gurion. However, even those who thus exclude parts of Syria-Lebanon agree that certain special discriminatory laws (though less oppressive than in the Land of Israel proper) apply to the Gentiles of those parts, because that territory was included in David's kingdom. In all talmudic interpretations the Land of Israel includes Cyprus.

I shall now list a few of the special laws concerning Gentiles in the Land of Israel. Their connection with actual Zionist practice will be quite apparent.

The Halakhah forbids Jews to sell immovable property – fields and houses – in the Land of Israel to Gentiles. In Syria, the sale of houses (but not of fields) is permitted.

Leasing a house in the Land of Israel to a Gentile is permitted under two conditions. First, that the house shall not be used for habitation but for other purposes, such as storage. Second, that three or more adjoining houses shall not be so leased.

These and several other rules are explained as follows: '... so that you shall not allow them to camp on the ground, for if they do not possess land, their sojourn there will be temporary.'⁵² Even temporary Gentile presence may only be tolerated 'when the Jews are in exile, or when the Gentiles are more powerful than the Jews,' but 'when the Jews are more powerful than the Gentiles we are forbidden to let an idolator among us; even a temporary resident or itinerant trader shall not be allowed to pass through our land unless he accepts the seven Noahide precepts,⁵³ for it is written: "they shall not dwell in thy land,"'⁵⁴ that is,

not even temporarily. If he accepts the seven Noahide precepts, he becomes a resident alien (*ger toshav*) but it is forbidden to grant the status of resident alien except at times when the Jubilee is held [that is, when the Temple stands and sacrifices are offered]. However, during times when Jubilees are not held it is forbidden to accept anyone who is not a full convert to Judaism (*ger tzedeq*).⁵⁵

It is therefore clear that – exactly as the leaders and sympathisers of Gush Emunim say – the whole question as to how the Palestinians ought to be treated is, according to the Halakhah, simply a question of Jewish power: if Jews have sufficient power, then it is their religious duty to expel the Palestinians.

All these laws are often quoted by Israeli rabbis and their zealous followers. For example, the law forbidding the lease of three adjoining houses to Gentiles was solemnly quoted by a rabbinical conference held in 1979 to discuss the Camp David treaties. The conference also declared that according to the Halakhah even the ‘autonomy’ that Begin was ready to offer to the Palestinians is too liberal. Such pronouncements – which do in fact state correctly the position of the Halakhah – are rarely contested by the Zionist ‘left’.

In addition to laws such as those mentioned so far, which are directed at all Gentiles in the Land of Israel, an even greater evil influence arises from special laws against the ancient Canaanites and other nations who lived in Palestine before its conquest by Joshua, as well as against the Amalekites. All those nations must be utterly exterminated, and the Talmud and talmudic literature reiterate the genocidal biblical exhortations with even greater vehemence. Influential rabbis, who have a considerable following among Israeli army officers, identify the Palestinians (or even all Arabs) with those ancient nations, so that commands like ‘though shalt save alive nothing that breatheth’⁵⁶ acquire a topical meaning. In fact, it is not uncommon for reserve soldiers called up to do a tour of duty in the Gaza Strip to be given an ‘educational lecture’ in which they are told that the Palestinians of Gaza are ‘like the Amalekites’. Biblical verses exhorting to genocide of the Midianites⁵⁷ were solemnly quoted by an important Israeli rabbi in justification of the Qibbiya massacre,⁵⁸ and this pronouncement has gained wide circulation in the Israeli army. There are many similar examples of bloodthirsty rabbinical pronouncements against the Palestinians, based on these laws.

Abuse

Under this heading I would like to discuss examples of halakhic laws whose most important effect is not so much to prescribe specific anti-Gentile discrimination as to inculcate an attitude of scorn and hatred towards Gentiles. Accordingly, in this section I shall not confine myself to quoting from the most authoritative halakhic sources (as I have done so far) but include also less fundamental works, which are however widely used in religious instruction.

Let us begin with the text of some common prayers. In one of the first sections of the daily morning prayer, every devout Jew blesses God for not making him a Gentile.⁵⁹ The concluding section of the daily prayer (which is also used in the most solemn part of the service on New Year’s day and on Yom Kippur) opens with the statement: ‘We must praise the Lord of all . . . for not making us like the nations of [all] lands . . . for they bow down to vanity and nothingness and pray to a god that does not help.’⁶⁰ The last clause was censored out of the prayer books, but in eastern Europe it was supplied orally, and has now been restored

into many Israeli-printed prayer books. In the most important section of the weekday prayer – the ‘eighteen blessings’ – there is a special curse, originally directed against Christians, Jewish converts to Christianity and other Jewish heretics: ‘And may the apostates⁶¹ have no hope, and all the Christians perish instantly’. This formula dates from the end of the first century, when Christianity was still a small persecuted sect. Some time before the 14th century it was softened into: ‘And may the apostates have no hope, and all the heretics⁶² perish instantly’, and after additional pressure into: ‘And may the informers have no hope, and all the heretics perish instantly’. After the establishment of Israel, the process was reversed, and many newly printed prayer books reverted to the second formula, which was also prescribed by many teachers in religious Israeli schools. After 1967, several congregations close to Gush Emunim have restored the first version (so far only verbally, not in print) and now pray daily that the Christians ‘may perish instantly’. This process of reversion happened in the period when the Catholic Church (under Pope John XXIII) removed from its Good Friday service a prayer which asked the Lord to have mercy on Jews, heretics etc. *This* prayer was thought by most Jewish leaders to be offensive and even antisemitic.

Apart from the fixed daily prayers, a devout Jew must utter special short blessings on various occasions, both good and bad (for example, while putting on a new piece of clothing, eating a seasonal fruit for the first time that year, seeing powerful lightening, hearing bad news, etc etc.) Some of these occasional prayers serve to inculcate hatred and scorn for all Gentiles. We have mentioned in Part I the rule according to which a pious Jew must utter a curse when passing near a Gentile cemetery, whereas he must bless God when passing near a Jewish cemetery. A similar rule applies to the living; thus, when seeing a large Jewish population a devout Jew must praise God, while upon seeing a large Gentile population he must utter a curse. Nor are buildings exempt: the Talmud lays down⁶³ that a Jew who passes near an inhabited non-Jewish dwelling must ask God to destroy it, whereas if the building is in ruins he must thank the Lord of Vengeance. (Naturally, the rules are reversed for Jewish houses.) This rule was easy to keep for Jewish peasants who lived in their own villages or for small urban communities living in all-Jewish townships or quarters. Under the conditions of classical Judaism, however, it became impracticable and was therefore confined to churches and places of worship of other religions (except Islam).⁶⁴ In this connection, the rule was further embroidered by custom: it became customary to spit (usually three times) upon seeing a church or a crucifix, as an embellishment to the obligatory formula of regret.⁶⁵ Sometimes insulting biblical verses were also added.⁶⁶

There is also a series of rules forbidding any expression of praise for Gentiles or for their deeds, except where such praise implies an even greater praise of Jews and things Jewish. This rule is still observed by Orthodox Jews. For example, the writer Agnon, when interviewed on the Israeli radio upon his return from Stockholm, where he received the Nobel Prize for literature, praised the Swedish Academy, but hastened to add: ‘I am not forgetting that it is forbidden to praise Gentiles, but here there is a special reason for my praise’ – that is, that they awarded the prize to a Jew.

Similarly, it is forbidden to join any manifestation of popular Gentile rejoicing, except where failing to join in might cause ‘hostility’ towards Jews, in which case a ‘minimal’ show of joy is allowed.

In addition to the rules mentioned so far, there are many others whose effect is to inhibit human friendship between Jew and Gentile. I shall mention two examples: the rule on 'libation wine' and that on preparing food for a Gentile on Jewish holy days.

A religious Jew must not drink any wine (the term also includes other alcoholic drinks, except beer) in whose preparation a Gentile had any part whatsoever. Wine in an open bottle, even if prepared wholly by Jews, becomes banned if a Gentile so much as touches the bottle or passes a hand over it. The reason given by the rabbis is that all Gentiles are not only idolators but must be presumed to be malicious to boot, so that they are likely to dedicate (by a whisper, gesture or thought) as 'libation' to their idol any wine which a Jew is about to drink. This law applies in full force to all Christians, and in a slightly attenuated form also to Muslims. (An open bottle of wine touched by a Christian must be poured away, but if touched by a Muslim it can be sold or given away, although it may not be drunk by a Jew.) The law applies equally to Gentile atheists (how can one be sure that they are not merely pretending to be atheists?) but not to Jewish atheists.

The laws against doing work on the sabbath apply to a lesser extent on other holy days. In particular, on a holy day which does not happen to fall on a Saturday it is permitted to do any work required for preparing food to be eaten during the holy day or days. Legally, this is defined as preparing a 'soul's food' (*okhel nefesh*); but 'soul' is interpreted to mean 'Jew', and 'Gentiles and dogs' are explicitly excluded.⁶⁷ There is, however, a dispensation in favour of powerful Gentiles, whose hostility can be dangerous: it is permitted to cook food on a holy day for a visitor belonging to this category, provided he is not actively encouraged to come and eat.

An important effect of all these laws – quite apart from their application in practice – is in the attitude created by their constant study which, as part of the study of the Halakhah, is regarded by classical Judaism as a supreme religious duty. Thus an Orthodox Jew learns from his earliest youth, as part of his sacred studies, that Gentiles are compared to dogs, that it is a sin to praise them, and so on and so forth. As a matter of fact, in this respect textbooks for beginners have a worse effect than the Talmud and the great talmudic codes. One reason for this is that such elementary texts give more detailed explanations, phrased so as to influence young and uneducated minds. Out of a large number of such texts, I have chosen the one which is currently most popular in Israel and has been reprinted in many cheap editions, heavily subsidised by the Israeli government. It is *The Book of Education*, written by an anonymous rabbi in early 14th century Spain. It explains the 613 religious obligations (*mitzvot*) of Judaism in the order in which they are supposed to be found in the Pentateuch according to the talmudic interpretation (discussed in Part II). It owes its lasting influence and popularity to the clear and easy Hebrew style in which it is written.

A central didactic aim of this book is to emphasise the 'correct' meaning of the Bible with respect to such terms as 'fellow', 'friend' or 'man' (which we have referred to in Part II). Thus §219, devoted to the religious obligation arising from the verse 'thou shalt love thy fellow as thyself', is entitled: 'A religious obligation to love Jews', and explains: 'To love every Jew strongly means that we should care for a Jew and his money just as one cares for oneself and one's own money, for it is written: "though shalt love they fellow as thyself" and our sages of blessed memory said: "what is hateful to you do not do to your friend"'

... and many other religious obligations follow from this, because one who loves one's friend as oneself will not steal his money, or commit adultery with his wife, or defraud him of his money, or deceive him verbally, or steal his land, or harm him in any way. Also many other religious obligations depend on this, as is known to any reasonable man.'

In §322, dealing with the *duty* to keep a Gentile slave enslaved for ever (whereas a Jewish slave must be set free after seven years), the following explanation is given: 'And at the root of this religious obligation [is the fact that] the Jewish people are the best of the human species, created to know their Creator and worship Him, and worthy of having slaves to serve them. And if they will not have slaves of other peoples, they would have to enslave their brothers, who would thus be unable to serve the Lord, blessed be He. Therefore we are commanded to possess those for our service, after they are prepared for this and after idolatry is removed from their speech so that there should not be danger in our houses,⁶⁸ and this is the intention of the verse "but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour",⁶⁹ so that you will not have to enslave your brothers, who are all ready to worship God.'

In §545, dealing with the religious obligation to exact interest on money lent to Gentiles, the law is stated as follows: 'That we are commanded to demand interest from Gentiles when we lend money to them, and we must not lend to them without interest.' The explanation is: 'And at the root of this religious obligation is that we should not do any act of mercy except to the people who know God and worship Him; and when we refrain from doing merciful deed to the rest of mankind and do so only to the former, we are being tested that the main part of love and mercy to them is because they follow the religion of God, blessed be He. Behold, with this intention our reward [from God] when we withhold mercy from the others is equal to that for doing [merciful deeds] to members of our own people.'

Similar distinctions are made in numerous other passages. In explaining the ban against delaying a worker's wage (§238) the author is careful to point out that the sin is less serious if the worker is Gentile. The prohibition against cursing (§239) is entitled 'Not to curse any Jew, whether man or woman'. Similarly, the prohibitions against giving misleading advice, hating other people, shaming them or taking revenge on them (§§240, 245, 246, 247) apply only to fellow-Jews.

The ban against following Gentile customs (§262) means that Jews must not only 'remove themselves' from Gentiles, but also 'speak ill of all their behaviour, even of their dress'.

It must be emphasised that the explanations quoted above do represent correctly the teaching of the Halakhah. The rabbis and, even worse, the apologetic 'scholars of Judaism' know this very well and for this reason they do not try to argue against such views inside the Jewish community; and of course they never mention them outside it. Instead, they vilify any Jew who raises these matters within earshot of Gentiles, and they issue deceitful denials in which the art of equivocation reaches its summit. For example, they state, using general terms, the importance which Judaism attaches to mercy; but what they forget to point out is that according to the Halakhah 'mercy' means mercy towards Jews.

Anyone who lives in Israel knows how deep and widespread these attitudes of hatred and cruelty towards all Gentiles are among the majority of Israeli Jews. Normally these attitudes are disguised from the outside world, but since the

establishment of the State of Israel, the 1967 war and the rise of Begin, a significant minority of Jews, both in Israel and abroad, have gradually become more open about such matters. In recent years the inhuman precepts according to which servitude is the 'natural' lot of Gentiles have been publicly quoted in Israel, even on TV, by Jewish farmers exploiting Arab labour, particularly child labour. Gush Emunim leaders have quoted religious precepts which enjoin Jews to oppress Gentiles, as a justification of the attempted assassination of Palestinian mayors and as divine authority for their own plan to expel all the Arabs from Palestine.

While many Zionists reject these positions politically, their standard counter-arguments are based on considerations of expediency and Jewish self-interest, rather than on universally valid principles of humanism and ethics. For example, they argue that the exploitation and oppression of Palestinians by Israelis tends to corrupt Israeli society, or that the expulsion of the Palestinians is impracticable under present political conditions, or that Israeli acts of terror against the Palestinians tend to isolate Israel internationally. In principle, however, virtually all Zionists – and in particular 'left' Zionists – share the deep anti-Gentile attitudes which Orthodox Judaism keenly promotes.

Note on the attitude of the Halakhah to Christianity and Islam

In the foregoing, several examples of the rabbinical attitudes to these two religions were given in passing. But it will be useful to summarise these attitudes here.

Judaism is imbued with a very deep hatred towards Christianity, combined with ignorance about it. This attitude was clearly aggravated by the Christian persecutions of Jews, but is largely independent of them. In fact, it dates from the time when Christianity was still weak and persecuted (not least by Jews), and it was shared by Jews who had never been persecuted by Christians or who were even helped by them. Thus, Maimonides was subjected to Muslim persecutions by the regime of the Almohads and escaped from them first to the crusaders' Kingdom of Jerusalem, but this did not change his views in the least. This deeply negative attitude is based on two main elements.

First, on hatred and malicious slanders against Jesus. The traditional view of Judaism on Jesus must of course be sharply distinguished from the nonsensical controversy between antisemites and Jewish apologists concerning the 'responsibility' for his execution. Most modern scholars of that period admit that due to the lack of original and contemporary accounts, the late composition of the Gospels and the contradictions between them, accurate historical knowledge of the circumstances of Jesus' execution is not available. In any case, the notion of collective and inherited guilt is both wicked and absurd. However, what is at issue here is not the actual facts about Jesus, but the inaccurate and even slanderous reports in the Talmud and post-talmudic literature – which is what Jews believed until the 19th century and many, especially in Israel, still believe. For these reports certainly played an important role in forming the Jewish attitude to Christianity.

According to the Talmud, Jesus was executed by a proper rabbinical court for idolatry, inciting other Jews to idolatry, and contempt of rabbinical authority. All classical Jewish sources which mention his execution are quite happy to take responsibility for it; in the talmudic account the Romans are not even mentioned.

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The more popular accounts – which were nevertheless taken quite seriously – such as the notorious *Toldot Yeshu* are even worse, for in addition to the above crimes they accuse him of witchcraft. The very name ‘Jesus’ was for Jews a symbol of all that is abominable, and this popular tradition still persists.⁷⁰ The Gospels are equally detested, and they are not allowed to be quoted (let alone taught) even in modern Israeli Jewish schools.

Secondly, for theological reasons, mostly rooted in ignorance, Christianity as a religion is classed by rabbinical teaching as idolatry. This is based on a crude interpretation of the Christian doctrines on the Trinity and Incarnation. All the Christian emblems and pictorial representations are regarded as ‘idols’ – even by those Jews who literally worship scrolls, stones or personal belongings of ‘Holy Men’.

The attitude of Judaism towards Islam is, in contrast, relatively mild. Although the stock epithet given to Muhammad is ‘madman’ (*meshugga*), this was not nearly as offensive as it may sound now, and in any case it pales before the abusive terms applied to Jesus. Similarly, the Qur’an – unlike the New Testament – is not condemned to burning. It is not honoured in the same way as Islamic law honours the Jewish sacred scrolls, but is treated as an ordinary book. Most rabbinical authorities agree that Islam is *not* idolatry (although some leaders of Gush Emunim now choose to ignore this). Therefore the Halakhah decrees that Muslims should not be treated by Jews any worse than ‘ordinary’ Gentiles. But also no better. Again, Maimonides can serve as an illustration. He explicitly states that Islam is not idolatry, and in his philosophical works he quotes, with great respect, many Islamic philosophical authorities. He was, as I have mentioned before, personal physician to Saladin and his family, and by Saladin’s order he was appointed Chief over all Egypt’s Jews. Yet, the rules he lays down against saving a Gentile’s life (except in order to avert danger to Jews) apply equally to Muslims.

References to Part III

1 See, for example, *Jeremiah*, 44, especially verses 15–19. For an excellent treatment of certain aspects of this subject see Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, Ktav, USA, 1967.

2 *Ezra*, 7, 25–26. The last two chapters of this book are mainly concerned with Ezra’s efforts to segregate the ‘pure’ Jews (‘the holy seed’) away from ‘the people of the land’ (who were themselves at least partly of Jewish descent) and break up mixed marriages.

3 W.F. Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, Funk & Wagnall, New York, 1955, p103.

4 It is significant that, together with this literary corpus, *all* the historical books written by Jews after about 400BC were also rejected. Until the 19th century, Jews were quite ignorant of the story of Massadah and of figures such as Judas Maccabaeus, now regarded by many (particularly by Christians) as belonging to the ‘very essence’ of Judaism.

5 *Acts*, 18, 15.

6 *Ibid*, 25.

7 See note 6 to Part I, *Khamsin* 8, p58.

8 Concerning the term ‘classical Judaism’ see note 10 to Part I and note 1 to Part II, *Khamsin* 8, pp58–9. (*Ed.*)

9 Nobel Prize winners Agnon and Bashevis Singer are examples of this, but many others can be given, particularly Bialik, the national Hebrew poet. In his famous poem *My Father* he describes his saintly father selling vodka to the drunkard peasants who are depicted as animals. This very popular poem, taught in all Israeli schools, is one of the vehicles through which the anti-peasant attitude is reproduced.

10 So far as the central power of the Jewish Patriarchate was concerned, the deal was terminated by Theodosius II in a series of laws, culminating in AD 429; but many of the local arrangements remained in force.

11 Perhaps another characteristic example is the Parthian empire (until AD 225) but not enough is known about it. We know, however, that the establishment of the national Iranian Sasanid empire brought about an immediate decline of the Jews' position.

12 This ban extends also to marrying a woman converted to Judaism, because (as we shall see in the Appendix) all Gentile women are presumed by the Halakhah to be prostitutes.

13 A prohibited marriage is not generally void, and requires a divorce. Divorce is nominally a voluntary act on the part of the husband, but under certain circumstances a rabbinical court can coerce him to 'will' it (*kofin oto 'ad sheyyomar rotzeh ani*).

14 Although Jewish achievements during the Golden Age in Muslim Spain (1002–1147) were more brilliant, they were not lasting. For example, most of the magnificent Hebrew poetry of that age was subsequently forgotten by Jews, and only recovered by them in the 19th or 20th century.

15 During that war, Henry of Trastámara used anti-Jewish propaganda, although his own mother, Leonor de Guzmán, a high Castilian noblewoman, was partly of Jewish descent. (Only in Spain did the highest nobility intermarry with Jews.) After his victory he too employed Jews in the highest financial positions.

16 Until the 18th century the position of serfs in Poland was generally supposed to be even worse than in Russia. In that century, certain features of Russian serfdom, such as public sales of serfs, got worse than in Poland but the central Tsarist government always retained certain powers over the enslaved peasants, for example the right to recruit them to the national army.

17 During the preceding period persecutions of Jews were rare. This is true of the Roman Empire even after serious Jewish rebellions. Gibbon is correct in praising the liberality of Antonius Pius (and Marcus Aurelius) to Jews, so soon after the major Bar-Kokhba rebellion of AD 132–5.

18 This fact, easily ascertainable by examination of the details of each persecution, is not remarked upon by most general historians in recent times. An honourable exception is Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe*, Thames and Hudson, 1965, p173–4. Trevor-Roper is also one of the very few modern general historians who mention the predominant Jewish role in the early medieval slave trade between Christian (and pagan) Europe and the Muslim world (*ibid*, p92–3). In order to promote this abomination, which I have no space to discuss here, Maimonides allowed Jews, in the name of the Jewish religion, to abduct Gentile children into slavery; and his opinion was no doubt acted upon or reflected contemporary practice.

19 Examples can be found in any history of the crusades. See especially S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, vol I book 3 chap 1, 'The German Crusade'. The subsequent defeat of this host by the Hungarian army, 'to most

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Christians appeared as a just punishment meted out of high to the murderers of the Jews.' (*Ibid*, end of the chapter.)

20 John Stoye, 'Europe Unfolding 1648–1688', *The Fontana History of Europe*, p46.

21 This latter feature is of course not mentioned by received Jewish historiography. The usual punishment for a rebellious, or even 'impudent' peasant was impalement.

22 The same can be observed in different regions of a given country. For example, in Germany, agrarian Bavaria was much more antisemitic than the industrialised areas.

23 'The refusal of the Church to admit that once a Jew always a Jew, was another cause of pain for an ostentatious Catholic like Drumont. One of his chief lieutenants, Jules Guérin, has recounted the disgust he felt when the famous Jesuit, Père du Lac, remonstrated with him for attacking some converted Jews Named Dreyfus.' D.W. Brogan, *The Development of Modern France* vol 1, Paperback Harper Torchbooks, 1966, p227.

24 *Ibid*.

25 Let me illustrate the irrational, demonic, character which racism can sometimes acquire with three examples chosen at random. A major part of the extermination of Europe's Jews was carried out in 1942 and early 1943 during the Nazi offensive in Russia, which culminated in their defeat at Stalingrad. During the eight months June 1942 – February 1943 the Nazis probably used more railway wagons to haul Jews to the gas-chambers than to carry much needed supplies to the army. Before being taken to their death, most of these Jews, at least in Poland, had been very effectively employed in production of equipment for the German army. The second, rather remote, example comes from a description of the Sicilian Vespers in 1282: 'Every Frenchman they met was struck down. They poured into the inns frequented by the French and the houses where they dwelt, sparing neither man nor woman nor child. . . . The rioters broke into the Dominican and Franciscan convents, and all the foreign friars were dragged out and told to pronounce the word *ciciri*, whose sound the French tongue could never accurately reproduce. Anyone who failed in the test was slain.' (S. Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers*, Cambridge UP, 1958, p215.) The third example is very recent: In the summer of 1980 – following an assassination attempt by Jewish terrorists in which Mayor Bassam Shak'a of Nablus lost both his legs and Mayor Karim Khalaf of Ramallah lost a foot – a group of Jewish Nazis gathered in the campus of Tel-Aviv University, roasted a few cats and offered their meat to passers-by as 'shish-kebab from the legs of the Arab mayors'. Anyone who witnessed this macabre orgy – as I did – would have to admit that some horrors defy explanation at the present state of knowledge.

26 One of the early quirks of Jabotinsky (founder of the party now led by Begin) was to propose, in about 1912, the creation of *two* Jewish states, one in Palestine and the other in Angola: the former, being poor in natural resources, would be subsidised by the riches of the latter.

27 Herzl went to Russia to meet von Plehve in August 1903, less than four months after the hideous Kishinev pogrom, for which the latter was known to be responsible. Herzl proposed an alliance, based on their common wish to get most of the Jews out of Russia and, in the shorter term, to divert Jewish support away from the socialist movement. The Tsarist minister started the first interview (8th August) by observing that he regarded himself as 'an ardent supporter of zionism'. When Herzl went on to describe the aims of zionism, von

Plehve interrupted: 'You are preaching to the converted'. 'Amos Elon, *Herzl*, 'Am Oved, 1976 (Hebrew), pp415–9.

28 Dr Joachim Prinz, *Wir Juden*, Berlin, 1934, pp150–1.

29 *Ibid*, pp154–5.

30 For example see *ibid*, p136. Even worse expressions of sympathy with Nazism were voiced by the extremist *Lohamey Herut Yisra'el* (Stern Gang) as late as 1941. Dr Prinz was, in Zionist terms, a 'dove'. In the 1970s he even patronised the US Jewish movement *Breira*, until he was dissuaded by Golda Meir.

References to Appendix

1 Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 'Laws on Murderer' 2, 11; *Talmudic Encyclopedia*, 'Goy'.

2 R Yo'el Sirkis, *Bayit Hadash*, commentary on *Beyt Yosef*, 'Yoreh De'ah' 158. The two rules just mentioned apply even if the Gentile victim is *ger toshav*, that is a 'resident alien' who has undertaken in front of three Jewish witnesses to keep the 'seven Noahide precepts' (seven biblical laws considered by the Talmud to be addressed to Gentiles).

3 R David Hallewi (Poland, 17th century), *Turey Zahav* on *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Yoreh De'ah' 158.

4 This concept of 'hostility' will be discussed below.

5 *Talmudic Encyclopedia*, 'Ger' (= convert to Judaism).

6 For example, R Shabtay Kohen (mid-17th century), *Siftei Kohen* on *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Yoreh De'ah' 158: 'But in times of war it was the custom to kill them with one's own hands, for it is said, "The best of Gentiles – kill him!"'. *Siftei Kohen* and *Turey Zahav* (see note 3) are the two major classical commentaries on the *Shulhan 'Arukh*.

7 Colonel Rabbi A. Avidan (Zemel), 'Tohar hannesheq le'or hahalakhah' (= 'Purity of weapons in the light of the Halakhah') in *Be'iqvot milhemet yom hakkippurim – pirqey hagut, halakhah umehqar* (= *In the wake of the Yom Kippur war – chapters of meditation, Halakhah and research*), Central-Region Command, 1973; quoted in *Ha'olam Hazzeh*, 5 January 1974; also quoted by David Shaham, 'A chapter of meditation', *Hotam* 28, March 1974; and by Amnon Rubinstein, 'Who falsifies the Halakhah?' *Ma'ariv*, 13 October 1975. Rubinstein reports that the booklet was subsequently withdrawn from circulation by order of the Chief of General Staff, presumably because it encouraged soldiers to disobey his own orders; but he complains that Rabbi Avidan has not been court-martialled, nor has any rabbi – military or civil – taken exception to what he had written.

8 R Shim'on Weiser, 'Purity of weapons – an exchange of letters' in *Niv Hamidrashiyyah*, Yearbook of Midrashiiyyat No'am, 1974, pp29–31. The yearbook is in Hebrew, English and French, but the material quoted here is printed in Hebrew only.

9 *Psalms*, 42, 2.

10 'Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven', *Deuteronomy*, 25, 19. Cf also *I Samuel*, 15, 3: 'Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.'

11 We spare the reader most of these rather convoluted references and quotes

from talmudic and rabbinical sources. Such omissions are marked [— — —]. The rabbi's own conclusions are reproduced in full.

12 The *Tosafot* (literally, Addenda) are a body of scholia to the Talmud, dating from the 11th–13th centuries.

13 Persons guilty of such crimes are even allowed to rise to high public positions. An illustration of this is the case of Shmu'el Lahis, who was responsible for the massacre of between 50 and 75 Arab peasants imprisoned in a mosque after their village had been conquered by the Israeli army during the 1948–49 war. Following a pro forma trial, he was granted complete amnesty, thanks to Ben-Gurion's intercession. The man went on to become a respected lawyer and in the late 1970s was appointed Director-General of the Jewish Agency (which is, in effect, the Israel branch of the Zionist movement). In early 1978 the facts concerning his past were widely discussed in the Israeli press, but no rabbi or rabbinical scholar questioned either the amnesty or his fitness for his new office. His appointment was not revoked.

14 *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Hoshen Mishpat' 426.

15 Tractate 'Avodah Zarah, p26b.

16 Maimonides, *op cit*, 'Murderer' 4, 11.

17 *Leviticus*, 19, 16. Concerning the rendering 'thy fellow', see note 14 to Part II, *Khamsin* 8, p60.

18 Maimonides, *op cit*, 'Idolatry' 10, 1–2.

19 In both cases in section 'Yoreh De'ah' 158. The *Shulhan 'Arukh* repeats the same doctrine in 'Hoshen Mishpat' 425.

20 Moses Rivkes, *Be'er Haggolah* on *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Hoshen Mishpat' 425.

21 Thus Professor Jacob Katz, in his Hebrew book *Between Jews and Gentiles* as well as in its more apologetic English version *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, quotes only this passage verbatim and draws the amazing conclusion that 'regarding the obligation to save life no discrimination should be made between Jew and Christian'. He does not quote any of the authoritative views I have cited above or in the next section.

22 Maimonides, *op cit*, 'Sabbath' 2, 20–21; *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Orah Hayyim' 329.

23 R 'Aqiva Eiger, commentary on *Shulhan 'Arukh*, *ibid*. He also adds that if a baby is found abandoned in a town inhabited mainly by Gentiles, a rabbi should be consulted as to whether the baby should be saved.

24 Tractate 'Avodah Zarah, p26.

25 Maimonides, *op cit*, 'Sabbath' 2, 12; *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Orah Hayyim' 330. The latter text says 'heathen' rather than 'Gentile' but some of the commentators, such as *Turey Zahav*, stress that this ruling applies 'even to Ishmaelites', that is, to Muslims, 'who are not idolators'. Christians are not mentioned explicitly in this connection, but the ruling must *a fortiori* apply to them, since — as we shall see below — Islam is regarded in a more favourable light than Christianity. See also the *responsa* of Hatam Sofer quoted below.

26 These two examples, from Poland and France, are reported by Rabbi I. Z. Cahana (afterwards professor of Talmud in the religious Bar-Ilan University, Israel), 'Medicine in the Halachic post-Talmudic Literature', *Sinai* vol 27, 1950, p221. He also reports the following case from 19th century Italy. Until 1848, a special law in the Papal States banned Jewish doctors from treating Gentiles. The Roman Republic established in 1848 abolished this law along with all other discriminatory law against Jews. But in 1849 an expeditionary force sent by France's President Louis Napoleon (afterwards Emperor Napoleon III)

defeated the Republic and restored Pope Pius IX, who in 1850 revived the anti-Jewish laws. The commanders of the French garrison, disgusted with this extreme reaction, ignored the papal law and hired some Jewish doctors to treat their soldiers. The Chief Rabbi of Rome, Moshe Hazan, who was himself a doctor, was asked whether a pupil of his, also a doctor, could take a job in a French military hospital despite the risk of having to desecrate the sabbath. The rabbi replied that if the conditions of employment expressly mention work on the sabbath, he should refuse. But if they do not, he could take the job and employ 'the great cleverness of God-fearing Jews.' For example, he could repeat on Saturday the prescription given on Friday, by simply telling this to the dispenser. R Cahana's rather frank article, which contains many other examples, is mentioned in the bibliography of a book by the present Chief Rabbi of Britain, R Immanuel Jakobovits, *Jewish Medical Ethics*, Bloch, New York, 1962; but in the book itself nothing is said on this matter.

27 *Hokhmat Shlomoh on Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Orah Hayyim' 330, 2.

28 R Unterman, *Ha'arets*, 4 April 1966. The only qualification he makes – after having been subjected to continual pressure – is that *in our times* any refusal to give medical assistance to a Gentile could cause such hostility as might endanger Jewish lives.

29 Hatam Sofer, *Responsa on Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Yoreh De'ah' 131.

30 *Op cit* on *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Hoshen Mishpat' 194.

31 R B Knobelovitz in *The Jewish Review* (Journal of the Mizrahi Party in Great Britain), 8 June 1966.

32 R Yisra'el Me'ir Kagan – better known as the 'Hafetz Hayyim' – complains in his *Mishnah Berurah*, written in Poland in 1907: 'And know ye that most doctors, even the most religious, do not take any heed whatsoever of this law; for they work on the sabbath and do travel several parasangs to treat a heathen, and they grind medicaments with their own hands. And there is no authority for them to do so. For although we may find it permissible, because of the fear of hostility, to violate bans imposed by the sages – and even this is not clear; yet in bans imposed by the Torah itself it must certainly be forbidden for any Jew to do so, and those who transgress this prohibition violate the sabbath utterly and may God have mercy on them for their sacrilege.' (Commentary on *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Orah Hayyim' 330.) The author is generally regarded as the greatest rabbinical authority of his time.

33 Avraham Steinberg MD (ed.), *Jewish Medical Law*, compiled from *Tzitz Eli'ezer* (*Responsa* of R Eli'ezer Yehuda Waldenberg), translated by David B. Simons MD, Gefen & Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem and California, 1980.

34 *Op cit*, p39.

35 *Ibid*, p41.

36 *Ibid*, p41. The phrase 'between Jew and gentile' is a euphemism. The dispensation is designed to prevent *hostility of Gentiles towards Jews*, not the other way around.

37 *Ibid*, p41–42; my emphasis.

38 Dr Falk Schlesinger Institute for Medical Halakhic Research at Sha'arey Tzedeq Hospital, *Sefer Asya* (= *The Physician's Book*), Reuben Mass, Jerusalem, 1979.

39 By myself in *Ha'olam Hazzeh*, 30 May 1979 and by Shullamit Aloni, Member of Knesset, in *Ha'arets*, 17 June 1980.

40 *Ezekiel*, 23, 20.

41 Tractate *Berakhot*, p78a.

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42 *Talmudic Encyclopedia*, 'Eshet Ish' (= 'Married Woman').

43 *Exodus*, 20, 17.

44 *Genesis*, 2, 24.

45 Maimonides, *op cit*, 'Prohibitions on Sexual Intercourse' 12, 10; *Talmudic Encyclopedia*, 'Goy'.

46 Maimonides, *op cit*, *ibid*, 12, 1–3. As a matter of fact, every Gentile woman is regarded as *N.Sh.G.Z.* – acronym for the Hebrew words *Niddah*, *Shifhah*, *goyah*, *zonah* (= unpurified from menses, slave, Gentile, prostitute). Upon conversion to Judaism, she ceases indeed to be *niddah*, *shifhah*, *goyah* but is still considered *zonah* (prostitute) for the rest of her life, simply by virtue of having been born of a Gentile mother. In a special category is a woman 'conceived not in holiness but born in holiness', that is born to a mother who had converted to Judaism while pregnant. In order to make quite sure that there are no mix-ups, the rabbis insist that a married couple who convert to Judaism together must abstain from marital relations for three months.

47 Characteristically, an exception to this generalisation is made with respect to Gentiles holding legal office relating to financial transactions: notaries, debt-collectors, bailiffs and the like. No similar exception is made regarding ordinary decent Gentiles, not even if they are friendly towards Jews.

48 Some very early (first century BC) rabbis called this law 'barbaric' and actually returned lost property belonging to Gentiles. But the law nevertheless remained.

49 *Leviticus*, 25, 14. This is a literal translation of the Hebrew phrase. The King James Version renders this as 'ye shall not oppress one another'; 'oppress' is imprecise but 'one another' is a correct rendering of the biblical idiom 'each man his brother'. As pointed out in Part II, the Halakhah interprets all such idioms as referring exclusively to one's fellow-Jew.

50 *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Hoshen Mishpat' 227.

51 This view is advocated by H Bar-Droma, *Wezeh Gvul Ha'aretz* (= *And This is the Border of the Land*), Jerusalem, 1958. In recent years this book is much used by the Israeli army in indoctrinating its officers.

52 Maimonides, *op cit*, 'Idolatry' 10, 3–4.

53 See note 2.

54 *Exodus*, 23, 33.

55 Maimonides, *op cit*, 'Idolatry' 10, 6.

56 *Deuteronomy*, 20, 16. See also the verses quoted in note 10.

57 *Numbers*, 31, 13–20; note in particular verse 17: 'Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him.'

58 R Sha'ul Yisra'eli, 'Taqrīt Qibbiya Le'or Hahalakhah' (= 'The Qibbiya incident in the light of the Halakhah'), in *Hattorah Wehammedinah*, vol 5, 1953/4.

59 This is followed by a blessing 'for not making me a slave'. Next, a male must add a blessing 'for not making me a woman', and a female 'for making me as He pleased'.

60 In eastern Europe it was until recent times a universal custom among Jews to spit on the floor at this point, as an expression of scorn. This was not however a strict obligation, and today the custom is kept only by the most pious.

61 The Hebrew word is *meshummadim*, which in rabbinical usage refers to Jews who become 'idolators', that is either pagan or Christians, but not to Jewish converts to Islam.

62 The Hebrew word in *minim*, whose precise meaning is 'disbelievers in the uniqueness of God'.

63 Tractate *Berakhot*, p58b.

64 According to many rabbinical authorities the original rule still applies in full in the Land of Israel.

65 This custom gave rise to many incidents in the history of European Jewry. One of the most famous, whose consequence is still visible today, occurred in 14th century Prague. King Charles IV of Bohemia (who was also Holy Roman Emperor) had a magnificent crucifix erected in the middle of a stone bridge which he had built and which still exists today. It was then reported to him that the Jews of Prague are in the habit of spitting whenever they pass next to the crucifix. Being a famous protector of the Jews, he did not institute persecution against them, but simply sentenced the Jewish community to pay for the Hebrew word *Adonay* (Lord) to be inscribed on the crucifix in golden letters. This word is one of the seven holiest names of God, and no mark of disrespect is allowed in front of it. The spitting ceased. Other incidents connected with the same custom were much less amusing.

66 The verses most commonly used for this purpose contain words derived from the Hebrew root *shaqetz* which means 'abominate, detest', as in *Deuteronomy*, 7, 26: 'thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing'. It seems that the insulting term *sheqetz*, used to refer to all Gentiles (see Part I), originated from this custom.

67 *Talmud*, Tractate *Beytzah*, p21a,b; *Mishnah Berurah* on *Shulhan 'Arukh*, 'Orah Hayyim' 512. Another commentary (*Magen Avraham*) also excludes Karaites.

68 According to the Halakhah, a Gentile slave bought by a Jew should be converted to Judaism, but does not thereby become a proper Jew.

69 *Leviticus*, 25, 46.

70 The Hebrew form of the name Jesus – *Yeshu* – was interpreted as an acronym for the curse 'may his name and memory be wiped out', which is used as an extreme form of abuse. In fact, anti-zionist Orthodox Jews (such as Neturey Qarta) sometimes refer to Herzl as 'Herzl Jesus' and I have found in religious zionist writings expressions such as 'Nasser Jesus' and more recently 'Arafat Jesus'.

Corrigenda

The following corrections should be made in Parts I and II of I Shahak's article on the Jewish religion published in *Khamsin* 8.

Page 38, line 18, for '*sheqetz*' read '*sheqetz*'.

Page 48, lines 26–27, for 'six volumes, or *tractates*,' read 'six volumes, each sub-divided into several *tractates*,'.

Page 54, lines 12 and 15, for 'unleavened' read 'leavened'.

Role of the Shi'i clergy in modern Iranian politics

Azar Tabari

What is the Shi'i clergy as such doing in Iranian politics? Apart from the more widely-discussed question of why and how they became leaders of national politics and later holders of state power, the question remains as to what the motivation and goals of the clergy itself, as a distinct social grouping, have been throughout its prolonged involvement in contemporary Iranian politics.

The history of this involvement can be marked off with the prominent role they played in the nineteenth-century protests against economic and political concessions made to non-Iranian nationals, particularly with their leading role in the Tobacco Protest of 1891–92. But already with the constitutional movement (1906–1911) it seemed that they were bypassed as leaders of national politics by modern parliamentary nationalists. Later, in Reza Shah's period (1925–41), the drive towards consolidation of a modern bourgeois centralised state further reduced their social significance and political weight. In the turbulent years of 1941–53, the clergy seemed to simply move in the shadow of Mosaddeq's National Front. It was only in the aftermath of the 1953 defeat and the eclipse of the National Front that theological circles in Tehran and Qum showed signs of new life. Starting in the early 1960s, new discussions, a reorganisation and a more centralised hierarchy of the clergy began to take shape. Later the emergence of Islamic thinkers such as Shari'ati and the increasing prominence of Khomeini and his supporters within the clergy gave a new impetus to and indication of revival of the clergy's independent role in oppositional politics, leading to their eventual seizure of power in February 1979.

How can we understand this sustained political involvement of the clergy over the past century, its initial prominence, its subsequent ebb and marginalisation, and its modern militant revival?

Shi'ism in Iran

Contrary to contemporary nationalist and anti-Arab mythologies, Iran has not always been a Shi'i society since the early centuries of Islam. Indeed, prior to the rise of the Safavids in the sixteenth century, religious power in Iran was divided between several competing Islamic currents. Although the Shi'is had scattered citadels of control (especially Qum) as well as congregations in most cities, the four Sunni schools

were more prevalent and practically all the famous Iranian theologians – Ghazali, for example – were Sunnis.¹ It was only in the course of the consolidation of Safavid hegemony in the sixteenth century that Shi'ism was forcibly imposed as a monolithic national religion. The creation of the elaborate Shi'i clerical apparatus with its differentiated hierarchy and specific judicial and administrative strata was an integral part of the construction of the centralised Safavid state. Moreover, the pre-eminent role of the Shi'i clergy gave the Safavid polity a structural and ideological profile distinct from its Ottoman rival.² According to contemporary sources, quoted by Ravandi, clerical and state power had become so intertwined that it was customary for Safavid shahs to marry the daughters of the supreme Shi'i clergy (although male offspring were killed at birth to eliminate potential threats to the lineage).³

However, in the post-Safavid period, particularly during the reign of Nader Shah (1736–1747), the Shi'i clergy lost its position of power within the state and Shi'ism was demoted to the status of a fifth Islamic school alongside the four Sunni schools. Prominent Shi'is were persecuted and many of the clergy fled to Najaf and other sanctuaries in Iraq. Yet at the same time the general weakening of centralised state authority throughout the eighteenth century allowed the local clergy 'to assume the role of the local governors, arbitrators of disputes, executors at law and so forth'.⁴ Meanwhile the settlement of a long divisive theological dispute within Shi'ism prepared the way for the clergy's resurgence in the nineteenth century: the Akhbaris, who had contested the clerical prerogative of *ijtihad* (independent judgement), were definitively defeated by the superior organisation and armed might of the Usulis. The Usuli victory had important political consequences. During the decades of persecution the Akhbaris had gained a broad following based on the fear of social and political involvement that the power of *ijtihad* implied. Had they continued to be the dominant current within Shi'ism, the legitimacy of the clergy's political role would have been drastically undermined, and it is doubtful whether an organised clerical hierarchy would have survived. Their defeat, on the other hand, helped to precipitate a militant revival of the social and political leadership of the clergy.⁵

The return of relative political stability under the long reign of the Qajars (1795 onwards) stimulated economic growth and expansion. In particular, the increase in trade with Europe gave an unprecedented impetus to commercial activities and urbanisation. With the official support of the Qajar shahs, the revitalised Shi'i clergy greatly extended its spheres of influence and range of administrative power. It re-established control over the courts, *waqf* lands and innumerable other social and political functions. Each *mujtahid* (independent legist) was distinguished by his own retinue of mullahs and gangs: the former transmitted the *mujtahid's* influence to the local population, while the latter, representing his executive power, were charged with collection of religious taxes (*khums* and *zakat*) as well as the administration of

religious punishments. Only the death sentence remained subject to ratification by the shah.⁶

There was, however, an important difference between this revival of clerical power under the Qajars and the earlier role of the Shi'i hierarchy in the Safavid state. Although the nineteenth-century clergy enjoyed great power and influence derived from their control over many functions ordinarily associated with state administration, they were not a *formal* part of the state executive as they had been in the time of the Safavids. The semi-autonomous position of the Shi'i administrative and judicial institutions was perhaps more advantageous to the conquest of an organic social hegemony than their officially incorporated status under the Safavids. For instance, discontented social layers could now turn to the Shi'i clergy for assistance, and the homes of the clergy became famous as sanctuaries for such diverse proscribed groups as persecuted grain merchants or bandits. On the other hand, the clergy could deploy its popular base and its ability to manage social discontent as potent bargaining counters against the court and the secular state bureaucracy. Repeatedly during the nineteenth century it mobilised the masses to thwart the state's attempts to undermine or restrict its power.

After 1850 the areas of conflict between clergy and state began to widen considerably, as the religious hierarchy opposed all initiatives to modernise and strengthen the Qajar government (secular courts, modern schools, a new army, etc). Clerical resistance to reforms in the state apparatus that might threaten their own prerogatives was also linked to the struggle against economic concessions to foreign non-Muslims. In this manner the traditional social interlocking of the clergy and the native merchant community acquired a new socio-political expression in the form of a clerically-led movement against western penetration in any form – whether as administrative rationalisation, economic competition or simply the diffusion of non-Muslim ideas.⁷

The clergy, however, did not enjoy a monopoly of influence over popular unrest. Increasingly their leadership role was contested by a new generation of reformers and modernisers. While sharing most of the clergy's apprehension about the increasing subordination of the Iranian economy to world market forces, as well as militantly opposing the Qajars' concessions to European imperialism, the young Iranian reformers (like their counterparts in Japan, Egypt and Turkey) believed that national cultural and political sovereignty could only be preserved by the adoption of European technology and forms of government.⁸ They opposed the old regime from an opposite point of view to that of the clergy, seeking radical reforms at all levels to modernise the state structure and establish a constitutional government. After the failure of a series of half-hearted state reforms, this modernist component of the opposition abandoned any hope in the reformation of the Qajar monarchy or in progress through existing organs of power. Although eventually the reformers and the clergy were driven into joint opposition against the Qajars, their alliance within the constitutional

movement remained uneasy and full of conflict. Before examining more closely the respective roles of reformers and clergy in the mass struggles that eventually overthrew the Qajar dynasty, it is first necessary to survey the socio-economic forces that gave rise to this new political phenomenon of a modernising reformism in Iran.

The social and economic background to the constitutional movement

As already mentioned, the accession of the Qajars coincided with a reversal of the long decline and economic stagnation that had followed the collapse of the Safavids. Like other Middle-Eastern countries, Iran was profoundly affected by the vast expansion of international trade associated with the Industrial Revolution. Yet, the Iranian case differed from that of other Middle-Eastern countries because Iran's strategic geographical location made it a principal terrain for the collision of British and Russian empire-building. It was never formally colonised by either, and Anglo-Russian rivalry had paradoxical consequences for the subsequent development of the country.

On the one hand, it was deprived of some of the 'positive' effects of colonialism, such as the development of railroads and foreign capital investment in mines and agriculture. The central government was barred from seeking relations with capitalist third parties or private entrepreneurs by a series of symmetrically restrictive treaties extorted by Russia and Britain which gave the two rival imperialisms veto-power over Iran's economic relationships.

On the other hand, the relative 'neglect' of the country by foreign capital allowed the native merchants more space for growth than in certain other parts of the region. This led to the emergence of a considerable layer of wealthy merchants, engaged in wholesale trade and banking, with their own international networks. By the end of the nineteenth century, Iranian commercial colonies existed in Istanbul, Baghdad, Baku, Tiflis, Calcutta, Bombay, Marseilles, London and Manchester. The dimensions of some of these trading operations can be gauged by the estimated wealth of the Amin al-Zarb family, put at 25 million tumans (1 tuman equalled about 10 francs at mid-nineteenth-century exchange rates). This figure should be compared with the total annual government revenues of the same period – about 50 million francs.⁹

This dramatic expansion of Iranian commerce persisted until the middle of the century, when it was constrained by an acute fiscal crisis as the cash needs of the central government rocketed while its real income stagnated or fell. A major source of the difficulty was the exigency of military modernisation. Two wars with Tsarist Russia (1813 and 1828) had not only cost Iran some of its richest northern provinces and forced it to yield humiliating economic concessions, but also compelled the government to seek foreign equipment and advisers. Both could only be obtained at very high cost, including further

economic concessions. Moreover, expanded economic relations with Europe took the Qajar shahs and their entourages on repeated visits abroad which drained the meagre treasury of further foreign reserves. The financial crisis of 1866 and the decline of the price of silver relative to gold greatly aggravated the government's desperate plight. Painfully the exchange value of the Iranian silver *qeran* fell from 1 franc in 1864 to 0.5 franc by 1900 with corresponding losses for the entire national economy.

In response, the central government tried to avoid financial disaster by a combination of two stratagems: first, the sale of state-owned land to private parties (the early Qajar shahs had succeeded in re-establishing governmental control over most of the agricultural provinces) and the increase in the price of state offices (local governorships were auctioned to the highest bidder who would, in turn, mercilessly tax the peasantry);¹⁰ and secondly, through loans from Russia and Britain procured by massive political and economic concessions (thus, customs revenues of the northern borders were granted to Russia, those of the Gulf ports to Britain). These measures had a deleterious impact on Iranian merchants and traders. They now had to pay import taxes to the Russian and British concessionaries, as well as new road tolls to the government. They were also deprived of their customary function of being the exclusive money-lenders to the central government (which also rebuffed their proposals for the establishment of a joint bank). The preferential tax status of foreign concessionaries and the dumping practices supported by Russian and British banks increased the competitive advantages of foreign manufacturers, while several attempts at the establishment of local factories by Iranian merchants ended up in bankruptcies. As early as 1844 native merchants had formed a League for the Prohibition of European Merchandise, which demanded that the government prohibit such imports 'principally because of the ruin to which Persian manufacturers are reduced by the constant and immense importation of foreign goods'. Not surprisingly this petition and other subsequent appeals fell upon the deaf ears of a Qajar regime which had already mortgaged national economic autonomy for the sake of treaties with Britain and Russia. Thus began the long period of growing tension between the merchant community and the Qajar shahs whom the former blamed for allowing a foreign fetter to be put on the development of Iranian commerce and manufacturing.

Emergence of political opposition to the Qajars

Expanded relations with Europe brought more than Russian matches and English textiles; it also opened up Iran to the influx of new ideologies. From the early nineteenth century, government officials, merchants and other members of the upper circles of society began to send their sons and nephews to Europe to learn more about the secrets of

'civilisation and modernisation'.¹¹ Naturally they seized upon those institutions that seemed most intimately connected to European economic superiority: modern systems of scientific education, chambers of commerce, and the like. But nothing impressed them so much, nor seemed to be so quintessential to European success, as the existence of a constitution and a parliamentary system.

The specific world-view of these modernising strata is vividly revealed in a remarkable article in *Habl al-Matin* (a Persian paper published in Calcutta in the early twentieth century), addressed to 'Honourable Merchants':

'Today the world of commerce is linked together like a chain and is like a single factory . . . If you do not carry on your trade according to contemporary practices and if you continue with the habits and customs of the tent dwellers of a thousand years ago, the supervisor of the trading machine – whose esteemed name is Science – will replace you . . . Today the world is rotating on the pivot of science. In Europe there are schools for every position, high and low. Let us leave aside commerce – even for coachmen and cart-drivers there are schools . . . How much more regrettable, then, that you merchants do not yet have a school of commerce! . . . You have not as yet established a chamber of commerce in Tehran and are not aware of its benefits. It is owing to the lack of a chamber of commerce that you are steadily regressing . . . In Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan and other cities European businessmen are constantly setting up shops, obtaining concessions and opening bank branches – and trade is slipping from your hands . . .'

The writer then details a long list of all the damage which Iranian merchants suffered as Europeans made increasing inroads, and then concludes:

'Passengers between England and America during their six-day cruise can talk by wireless to their people whenever they want. Why is it that the honoured post office of the eminent government of Iran is still conveyed by asses and camels as it was centuries ago? Because we lack knowledge and a chamber of commerce.'¹²

Other writers gave priority to the reformation of the state bureaucracy. In 1886 an important government functionary and close confidant of Nasir al-Din Shah submitted a secret report warning that to preserve its independence Iran must emulate the example of Prussia, whose rationalised bureaucratism had elevated it from poverty and crisis to one of the major world powers. The shah was further advised that he should not hesitate to import foreign experts if learned Iranians could not be found.¹³ Despite a flood of manifestos and reform proposals, the Qajars' attempts at internal modernisation never got very far. The combination of Iran's semi-colonial subservience to Anglo-Russian imperialism and the vehement opposition of the Shi'i clergy to 'anti-Islamic' innovations severely restricted the possibilities for

reform from the top down. Thus the main intellectual and material impetus for change was shaped outside and in opposition to the government, in the merchant colonies of Istanbul and Calcutta, and nourished by Iranian students and intellectuals in London and Paris.

Their strategy for reform revolved around a near-obsession with constitutionalism, and a vast body of literature developed about this 'secret' of European civilisation. This was not so surprising, considering the economic and political dilemma of the Iranian elite which progressively saw the growth of its wealth and power impeded by the capitations of the Qajar dynasty to its Russian and British rivals. Moreover, they faced an autocratic government with no effective way of changing its policies – an arbitrary government whose decisions often seemed to reflect only the irrational whims of the shah. Against this despotic and sclerotic regime, they posed the alternative of a parliamentary government inspired by a resolute nationalism.

The earliest Iranian account of a European parliamentary system was probably the detailed account of the British Parliament in the memoirs of Mirza Salih, who had spent four years in England at the end of the Napoleonic wars studying languages, natural philosophy and printing.¹⁴ A half-century later, another dignitary, Mustashar al-Dawlah, on his return from Europe wrote an essay, *One Word (Yak Kalimah)* that perfectly encapsulated the vision of subsequent generations of reformers:

'During this period [1866–67] I observed that progress in France and England was a hundred times more advanced than in Russia . . . What could have been the reason behind such an unbelievable achievement . . . ? The secret lies in one word [*yak kalimah*], the *law* . . . In France and other civilised countries, the citizens debate justice and injustice through their representatives; there will thus be no opposition to the law, because it is they themselves who rule and have made the law . . . The will of the people and their approval are the basis of all governmental policies; this comprehensive principle is of paramount importance, the truthfulness of which cannot be questioned by any wise man.'¹⁵

In another famous travelogue, an Iranian merchant from Istanbul attempted to summarise the problems of Iran. There are two maxims, he wrote, for running the country: one, according to the old Iranian saying that the kings know what is good for the country; another, that the people know what is good for the country. If a country is run according to the first maxim, there follows the state of affairs as in Ghaznayn, Maragheh, Isfahan, and Qazin (different Iranian provinces), while the second maxim produces the modernity of London, Paris, Washington and Berlin. In a particularly interesting passage, he drew attention to the case of Japan:

'The Japanese alphabet [sic] is a thousand times more difficult than ours . . . Yet this nation, with these educational obstacles, in a brief time

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has surpassed others in scientific education, industries, statesmanship and the progress of civilisation.' In contrast to the massive efforts of the Japanese to industrialise, he bitterly complained that the Persian rich refused to form banks or corporations, preferring to bury their gold in safes. They attempted to get rich quickly through fraudulent trading methods, while foreigners monopolised the development of Iran's resources. They speculated in land, instead of building factories. At the root of these problems he identified the 'negligence of the state and the laziness of the nation'. 'A country can be considered civilised only if the state and the nation are not at conflict . . . National and state affairs can only be put into order if the opinion of the nation is put into practice . . .'. He then traced the history of European political traditions from Greek democracy to the establishment of the English Parliament – 'thanks to this Parliament, the wealth and welfare of that country has increased constantly'. Finally he returned to the example of Japan, whose constitution was enacted in 1868. Before that time, Japan 'like Iran, was an autocracy, an ignorant, unscientific nation without concern for sciences of civilisation and humanities. But now, thanks to a constitutional regime, it has reached the highest levels, as any ignorant idiot knows.'¹⁶

The Japanese case was indeed a recurrent and popular theme in Iranian constitutional literature. Japan's stunning defeat of Tsarist Russia in 1904 was interpreted by Iranian reformers as decisive proof of the superiority and strength of a constitutional regime. As Nikkie Keddie has noted: 'Not only was Asian pride, hitherto battered by a continuous stream of western conquests, bolstered by this victory, but the fact that the only Asian constitutional power defeated the only major western non-constitutional power strengthened the fight for constitutional government as the panacea for internal ills and the "secret" of western strength.'¹⁷

The different currents of Iranian constitutionalism were primarily distinguished by how they located their newly acquired notions of modern politics in relation to the old and still predominant role of Islam. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the Shi'i clergy were courted by all sides. Their power was based on their institutional influence as well as their sociological links with the urban classes. On the one hand, the '*ulama*' (doctors of religion) were still the religious and traditional cultural leaders of society, and the entire educational system was still based on clergy-run schools (*maktab khaneh*) of the classical type. On the other hand, most '*ulama*' were connected through intimate family ties with the mercantile and artisanal strata who turned to them for leadership. As Gallagher has observed, 'to the extent that the clergy as *shi'a* symbolised a vital aspect of Iranian national consciousness, they inevitably suffered from the spread of foreign influence in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, all the more because the urban bazaar classes on which they relied for a counterweight to the political power were hard hit by

western commercial intrusion.'¹⁸ The leading role of the '*ulama*' in the successful protest movement against the Tobacco Concession in 1891–92 greatly increased their influence and prestige. They were thus a central force, which had to be allied with, manipulated or combated, but never ignored.

There were two kinds of constitutionalist responses to the role of the clergy. First there were the 'nationalists of a modern type, with ideas still found in Iranian nationalism – rejection of Islam, anti-clericalism, agnosticism, westernism, anti-imperialism, glorification of the pre-Islamic past, and hatred of modern Iranian actuality.'¹⁹ The most prominent of these early secular nationalists were Akhund Zadeh, Mirza Agha Khan Kermani, and Talibov. They glorified a pre-Islamic Iranian past which was identified with national splendour and power. Akhund Zadeh, for example – although personally opposed to all religions – wrote 'to his Zoroastrian friend that this religion should be preserved and protected, and conscious efforts should be made not to let any Zoroastrian be converted to Islam.'²⁰ Similarly, Kermani blamed Islam for the decline of the Persians, and anti-Arab, anti-Islam chauvinism coloured all his major writings.²¹ Talibov also shared these anti-Islamic beliefs and advocated the complete secularisation of law.

Nonetheless the pressure of Islamic conformity was so strong that even these fervent anti-clerical nationalists had to make concessions and adapt their discourse to popular piety.²² Talibov, for instance, was once forced to cloak his secular convictions in the following formula: 'Whatever is against civilisation is perpetually forbidden in our noble religion which will be the basis of law in Iran. Any Muslim, including the writer of these lines, whose heart and tongue do not approve this fact is an infidel. Neither are they Muslims who do not consider the law a supplement to religion and a guardian for the enforcement of the religious law.'²³ Even the militant Kermani resigned himself to a utilitarian attitude towards the clergy: 'Since philosophy has no strength amongst the Iranian people, and because they are all oppressed and in need of fanaticism . . . one must resort to certain means to reform their situation . . . If we ask for very limited assistance from this half-alive horde of mullahs, maybe we shall reach our aims faster.'²⁴

Some anti-clerical nationalists were completely utilitarian in this regard and refrained from any overt attack against Islam or the '*ulama*'. Malkam Khan, himself an Armenian by origin, openly affirmed that it was not possible to contest religion. 'One should make allowance for the fanatic people of the country; for success in reformation, the intelligent young man must learn religious science as well as French law.'²⁵

A second, smaller group of nationalist thinkers, however, genuinely tried to reconcile their religious beliefs with nationalism and constitutionalism. Mustashar al-Dawlah, for example, attempted a synthesis of Islamic and modern juridical principles by painstakingly dividing all laws into religious and non-religious, and advocating the equality of all

citizens, regardless of faith, within the boundaries of non-religious law.²⁶ This second category of nationalist ideologues also shared many common objectives with the pro-reform wing of the clergy who were attempting to find theoretical Shi'i justifications for constitutional government.

Shi'i theory of government and constitutionalism

The rise of the constitutionalist movement posed a particularly complex challenge to the Shi'i clergy. Prominently involved in the protests against the Tobacco Concession, they had also been influenced (like their Sunni counterparts) by the general anti-foreign agitation of Jamal al-Din Afghani and kindred figures. But the flourishing of constitutionalist ideology presented a problem of a different order; it forced them to take a stand toward an overall political project that was rapidly gaining popular currency.²⁷ At stake was no longer the struggle about a particular reform, this or that concession or unjust act, but the very structure of power in Iranian society. Initially, the response of the clergy was ambiguous and ambivalent. On the one hand, they had their own grievances against the Qajar regime as well as being sensitive to the generally rebellious and oppositional mood throughout the country. On the other hand, they were highly suspicious, if not openly inimical, to the diffusion of the 'new foreign ideas'. These contradictory pressures eventually culminated in a split between pro-constitutional and anti-constitutional wings of the clergy.

It is important to appreciate the specific ideological framework in which these political tensions within the clergy were articulated. Traditional Shi'i theories of government, for example, had always divided history into two distinct epochs: the period before AD 874, when the imams (the apostolic successors of the Prophet) were present on earth, and therefore no governmental problems existed since the judgement of the imams was presumed infallible; and the period following the 'occultation' (disappearance into hiding) of the Twelfth Imam when the questions of governmental structure and legitimacy of authority became controversial. It was this very problem of the 'absent imam' that allowed the pro-constitutionalist clergy to advocate what basically amounted to a semi-secularisation of Islam. The essence of their argument was that, in the absence of an infallible imam, a completely just Islamic government was in any case impossible, so believers had to seek the least imperfect state form. In their view, the clearly superior government was one that maximised the participation of the entire Shi'i community: since no one is infallible, wider participation lessened the dangers of error.

The most famous of these attempts to use traditional Shi'i theology to ground an organic critique of absolutism was Na'ini's treatise, *The Admonition and Refinement of the People (Tanbih al-Ummah*

wa-Tanzih al-Millah). The book was published in the spring of 1909; the period in Iranian history known as the 'Brief Tyranny' (June 1908 to July 1909) when Muhammad 'Ali Shah had dissolved the first parliament, and the constitutionalist armies were still fighting their way from Tabriz, Gilan and Isfahan towards Tehran. It was in this period that the anti-constitutionalist clergy, led by Shaykh Fadl-Allah Nuri, increased their agitation for the establishment of an Islamic parliament based on the *shari'a* (Islamic canonical law). Nuri referred to the Constitutional Revolution as the 'great sedition', which 'consisted of three stages – 1 discourse and presentation; 2 writing and declaration; 3 practice and test. The call for the first stage was favourably received by all, literate and illiterate, because it was presented in a pleasant way. The second stage involved the writing of the Constitution and freedom of press; such freedom gives sanction that one may write freely against religion, religious people and the '*ulama*'. In the third stage, the constitutionalists began to practice whatever oppression they could.' He further argued that 'the most important problem of all is the drafting of a constitution. This matter involves three innovations, all of which are against Islam and are forbidden: 1 writing a law contrary to Islamic law; 2 forcing subjects to obey a law which is not presented by the *shari'a*; and 3 punishing subjects for their failure to obey the written law.'²⁸

Na'ini's text was a response to this critique. He argued that 'there remains no room to doubt the necessity of changing a despotic regime into a constitutional one. This is true, because the former consists of three sets of usurpations and oppressions: 1 it is a usurpation of the authority of God and injustice to Him; 2 it is a usurpation of the imam's authority and an oppression of the imam; and 3 it is also an oppression of the people. In contrast, a constitutional system only oppresses the imam, since his authority is usurped. Thus, a constitutional regime reduces three sets of oppression to merely one; consequently it is necessary to adopt it.'²⁹

Na'ini also attacked the clergy's attempt to make the constitutional government religiously unlawful, pointing out in rebuttal that both Shi'i and Sunni theology actually recognised the legitimacy of a parliamentary state. 'It is permissible in the Sunni tradition because the system of election of parliamentary representatives corresponds to the doctrine concerning the authority of the "people of loosening and binding" (*ahl al-hall wa-l-'aqd*). As for the regime's legitimacy among the Shi'a, during the Great Occultation the *mujtahids* are responsible for the Muslims' affairs. If a number of *mujtahids* or their envoys give their approval to parliamentary decisions, the constitutional system would also become lawful according to the Shi'a.'³⁰ Thus Na'ini was calling upon the Shi'i *mujtahids* to issue a *fatwa* (verdict) making the constitution and the parliamentary system religiously lawful. Against Nuri's accusation that the writing of a constitution represented an anti-religious innovation, he replied that 'legislation would be an innovation

(*bid'at*) and consequently against Islam only if one stipulates a non-Islamic clause as a provision of the *shari'a* and then puts it into effect. But if one does not associate the non-Islamic provision with the *shari'a* then there would be no innovation.'³¹

Finally, Na'ini attempted to seal his argument with a further invocation of Islamic tradition: 'since the interference of the people, that is to say, their participation in the elections, prevents the tyrant from exercising oppression, the people's right to, and their responsibility for, state affairs are established under the principle of *nahy-i az munkar* [ban on atrocity] which is an obligatory duty of every individual and can be realised through the institution of popular elections.'³²

With the military victory of the constitutionalists in July 1909 and the election of a second parliament, these rather esoteric debates receded into obscurity. The subsequent decade in Iran, however, was marked by a weak, incompetent government as well as by gradual but deepening disillusionment with the utopian promise of constitutionalism. The pro-constitutionalist clergy, in particular, was doubly disillusioned since the changes that did occur were at the expense of their traditional functions. It began to seem that, after all, the 'secret' of European civilisation was not actually the panacea for the problems of Iran. This evolving climate of social disintegration and political demoralisation paved the way for the emergence of Reza Khan's power and the establishment in 1921 of a centralised military-based state.³³

Reza Shah's reforms and the conflict with the clergy

Reza Shah's reign (1921–1941) was built on a dual foundation of massive repression and limited reform. He brutally crushed several local popular uprisings, generally eliminated all political opposition (from communists to liberal democrats to protesting clergy), and launched a series of administrative and economic reforms. Ironically, many of these reforms – the establishment of a modern educational system, the creation of a conscripted regular army, the founding of a secular judicial system, and so on – were precisely reforms which the most radical proponents of constitutionalism had long fought for. For this reason, many former constitutionalists and parliamentarians came to lend disgruntled support to Reza Shah. On the other hand, those who remained in opposition to his dictatorial rule and gangster-like methods tended merely to quibble with details of his reforms. Constitutionalist opposition was therefore partly disarmed by the shah's theft of some of its programme. (A not dissimilar situation arose in the early 1960s in relation to the National Front's attitude to the reforms of Muhammad Reza Shah.)

The clergy's dissatisfaction with Reza Shah, however, was more substantive and irreconcilable, since practically every area of the regime's innovation in administration and state policy directly intruded upon the

traditional prerogatives of the 'ulama'. Modern schools and universities were organised on a national scale, destroying the ancient monopoly of the clergy and devaluing the role of the old *madrassa* system. Top state bureaucrats were now recruited, not from the *madrassa*, but directly from the university or from among those who had been sent abroad on government scholarships. From 1926 onwards, the jurisdiction of religious courts was systematically delimited and finally abolished altogether (although the lower clergy were still employed by the state in notary and registry functions). The establishment of a Ministry of Endowments curtailed the discretion of the clergy in administering *waqf* properties, while the rationalisation of the tax system, which imposed new fiscal levies upon consumer goods like tea and sugar, forced the clergy in many areas to give religious sanction to counting state tax payments as part of *khums* and *zakat*. Even in the arena of social services, the construction of new hospitals, public baths, libraries, orphanages, and so on, represented a serious encroachment upon a crucial sphere of traditional clerical hegemony. Finally, in 1936 the state directly attacked certain religious practices – ordering the compulsory unveiling of women in public ceremonies and public places, and banning certain traditional Shi'i rituals like the cutting of one's forehead during 'Ashura' ceremonies.

Except for certain figures such as Modarres, however, the clerical response to this expansion of state authority was largely an unhappy silence. The clergy was chastened not only by the regime's exemplary repressiveness, but also by its awareness that there was broad popular support for many of these modernist reforms. In fact the first systematic formulation of the positions of the clerical opposition was delayed until 1944, three years after the abdication of Reza Shah. Khomeini's book, *The Discovery of Secrets (Kashf al-Asrar)*, was a reply to the writings of Kasravi³⁵ and his followers, who had condemned the clerical opposition to Reza Shah as a reactionary mixture of fanaticism, superstition and even corruption. Khomeini utilised a variety of polemical devices to refute these charges and to clarify the reasons for clerical resistance to the regime. Since Kasravi was assassinated in 1945 by the *Feda'ian-e Islam*, the debate was never continued, and Khomeini's book remained relatively unknown until its re-publication in 1979. Its retrospective significance, of course, consists of the insights that it provides into the political evolution of Khomeini's thinking. The first half of the book is rather tediously devoted to theological exegesis, but the second half presents the first programmatic assertion of the clergy's political role to have been advanced since the days of the original constitutional movement. It also contains many of the political ideas that Khomeini would elaborate almost thirty years later (1971) in his *Velayat-e Faqih* (often translated as *The Islamic Government*). A synopsis of the passages of *Kashf al-Asrar* that deal with governmental reform will aid in establishing the general outline of modern Shi'i political ideology in its Khomeinist version.

The first principle of Islamic government, according to Khomeini, is that the only acceptable legislator is God. 'No one but God has the right to govern over anyone or to legislate, and reason suggests that God himself must form a government for people and must legislate. The laws are but the laws of Islam.' (p184).³⁶ Furthermore, 'this law that legislates everything, from the most general problems of all countries to the specifics of a man's family, from the social life of all of humanity to the personal life of a man living alone in a cave, and from before man's conception in the womb to after his placement in the tomb – this law is nothing but God's religion: Islam. We shall later provide incontrovertible proof that Islamic law relating to government, taxation, legal and criminal codes – on everything concerning the administration of a country from the formation of an army to the formation of ministries – lacks nothing. It is you who are ignorant of this, and all our misfortunes stem from the fact that a country which, in fact, possesses such laws, has extended a begging hand to alien countries and has implemented their forged laws, conceived from the poisonous minds of selfish men.'

Khomeini's second principle is that a true Muslim should only 'obey God, His Prophet, and those in authority among you' (*Qur'an*, 4,62). 'Who are these people of authority and what kind of people should they be? Some say that they are kings and rulers, and that God has ordered people to obey and follow their kings and sultans. Thus they would say that God has enjoined obedience to Mustafa Kamal Pasha as president of Turkey or to Reza Khan as shah of Iran. Further the Sunni would consider all the caliphs of Islam, including Mu'awiya bin abi Sufyan, Yazid Ibn Mu'awiya and other Ummayyid and Abbasid rulers as divinely-sanctioned authorities . . . Now we ask our God-given reason for judgement: God sent the Prophet of Islam with thousands of heavenly laws and established his government on the belief in the uniqueness of God and Justice . . . Would this same God order men to obey [Mustafa Kamal] Ataturk, who has disestablished state religion, persecuted believers, oppressed the people, sanctioned moral corruption, and in general opposed the religion of God? Moreover, would he order us to obey [Reza Khan] Pahlavi, who, as we all know, did all that he could to uproot Islam? . . . We must conclude that people of authority cannot be kings and rulers. And a glance at the record of the caliphs, even according to the *Hadith* and the Sunni histories, would support the same conclusion.' (pp109-110)

After reiterating the orthodox Shi'i doctrine that the imams were the legitimate authorities from Muhammad's death to AD 874, Khomeini argues that in the contemporary world the most legitimate authority should be vested in the *mujtahids*, the *faqih*s, those most knowledgeable in the laws of Islam. In his later 1971 book he specifically calls upon the *faqih*s to assume directly the leadership of government, but in 1944 he was not yet prepared to go so far. 'When we say that government [*hokumat* and *velayat*] in our time belongs to the *faqih*s we do not mean to say that the shah, the ministers, the soldiers, and the dustmen

should all be *faqihs*. But we do propose the following: According to the same procedure by which a constituent assembly is formed, and this assembly then chooses a new ruler . . . we can form such an assembly, but composed of pious *mujtahids* who are wise in divine law, just, free of temptation and ambition and desiring nothing but the welfare of the people and the implementation of God's laws. These religious men would then elect a just sultan who would not disobey divine law nor practice oppression nor transgress against people's property, life and honour . . . Similarly for the *Majlis*, why should it not be composed of pious *faqihs* or be placed under their supervision?' (p185)³⁷ 'Clearly, even the *mujtahids* do not have the right to allow *anyone* to rule. Even the Prophet and the imams were not allowed by God to do this. They can only confer authority upon someone who does not violate God's laws – these being founded on reason and justice – and who accepts the formal law of the country to be the divine laws of heaven, and not European laws or worse.' (p189)

Khomeini also discusses at length the clergy's view of the 'harmful' changes wrought by Reza Shah's reforms and administrative initiatives. His critique comprises the following five salient elements.

1 He is rather obsessed with the pervasive moral corruption and cultural decadence which he sees as resulting from these policies. 'The clergy insist that this shameful unveiling [of women], this "Movement of Bayonets,"³⁸ has wrecked both spiritual and material damage upon our country in gross violation of the laws of God and His Prophet. The clergy insist that this melon-shaped hat, a foreign left-over, is a disgrace to the nation of Islam, forbidden by God and damaging to our independence. The clergy insist that these co-educational schools, mixing young girls and lustful young boys, destroy chastity and manliness . . . They insist that these shops selling wine and these factories making alcoholic drinks erode the minds of our youth, debasing reason, health, chastity and courage amongst the people – by God's decree the drinking and selling of wine are forbidden, and these places should be shut down. They also insist that music creates a mood of fornication and lust, undermining chastity, manliness and courage – it is forbidden by religious law and should not be taught in schools lest it promote vice.' (pp213–214)

2 Khomeini condemns the principle of universal conscription introduced by Reza Shah on the grounds that it coerces youth, exposes it to corruption and prostitution, and ultimately only trains it in the arts of thuggery and robbery. Instead he proposes the adoption of an Islamic approach to national defence, which in peace time would be based on a volunteer army inspired by religious motivation that would be deepened by Islamic education. In wartime, compulsory service would be founded on the universal obligation of *jihad* which Islam imposes upon every able-bodied Muslim man. (pp242–245) Again the key to the

mobilisation of the nation would be religious propaganda, and he proposes the establishment of a special ministry for this specific purpose. It would seek not only to inspire each citizen, but also to train them to proselytise others. (pp246–248)

3 Khomeini surveys the various traditional taxes levied in Islam (see pp225–258), and proposes a new tax system based on traditional religious principles. In particular, he condemns import taxes as damaging to commercial interests, although he accepts the idea of limited tariffs on foreign goods provided they do not unjustly penalise domestic merchants and traders. (pp226–267)

4 Not surprisingly he opposes the existing Ministry of Justice and its judicial procedures. In his opinion, the restoration of judges trained according to Islamic law would simplify trial procedures and eliminate costly lawyers' fees and parasitic judicial personnel. (pp296–301) Moreover, he claims that the full implementation of the Islamic penal code would eliminate injustice, theft and corruption within a year. 'If you want to eradicate theft from the world, you must cut the hands off thieves, otherwise your prison sentences will only help thieves and perpetuate theft. Human life can only be made secure through the guarantee of punishment, and only the death penalty ensures society's survival, since prison sentences do not solve any problem. If adulterous men and women were promptly given a hundred lashes each, venereal disease would disappear in this country.' (pp274–275)

5 Khomeini expresses his deep scepticism about the utility of 'modern medicine and European surgery', glorifying traditional methods and practices instead. (pp279–281) Furthermore, he ridicules the Ministry of Culture and national media, which he saw as transmitting and teaching only moral corruption. (pp282–283)

In conclusion, Khomeini emphasises that it is because of the very completeness and integrity of Islam as a legal, cultural and political order, that the European powers, conspiring to defeat and colonise the Muslim countries, aim above all to uproot its institutions and to substitute alien laws and customs.

As I have already argued, the appearance of Khomeini's book, despite its obscurity at the time, marked a certain watershed in the development of Shi'i political consciousness. Whereas the clergy had for decades been reacting instinctively and in piecemeal fashion to the transformation of Iranian society, Khomeini recognised with some perspicacity that the accumulation of changes was resulting in a new social and political structure. He was the first amongst the clergy of his rank to attempt systematically to understand the implications of the conflicts between an emerging bourgeois state and the old Islamic institutional order. Yet his ideas had little immediate impact, and he remained an

isolated figure even amongst the clergy for several decades. The majority of the Shi'i hierarchy continued to remain aloof from national politics, while in the turbulent period following the second world war nationalist politics were dominated by the more or less secular forces of the Tudeh Party and the National Front.

Post-1953 developments and a new politicisation of the clergy

The CIA-backed coup of 19 August 1953 which overthrew Mossadeq also sparked off a crisis in the ranks of Iranian nationalism. In the subsequent recomposition of the nationalist movement, clerical elements for the first time began to assume an active political and ideological leadership in the struggle against the Pahlavi dynasty. Important figures from the National Front, such as Bazargan and Taleghani, broke away and founded the Freedom Movement, 'as a bridge between the universities and the theological circles . . . since the entry of religious leaders into struggle was the need of the time and desire of the people.'³⁹ In 1955 Taleghani arranged for the republication of Na'ini's book – out of print since 1909 – with his own introduction, which emphasised the responsibility of the clergy in politics.

Meanwhile in Tehran and Qum the clergy were beginning to discuss how to organise themselves. In Tehran regular lectures on the clergy's role in politics and the need for reforms of the hierarchy created great excitement, with many of the most prominent clerical figures in today's Khomeini regime contributing to them. The proceedings were regularly published in a journal, *Guftar-e Mah (Lecture of the Month)*. Akhavi has summarised the main themes of these lectures as follows: '1 the need for an independent financial organisation for the clergy; 2 the necessity of a *shura-yi fatva* – i.e., a permanent committee for *mujtahids*, the members of which were to be drawn from the country at large, to issue collective authoritative opinions in matters of law; 3 the idea that no shi'i society is possible without the delegation of the Imam's authority; 4 an interpretation of Islam as a total way of life, therefore incorporating social, economic and political issues into the religious ones; 5 the need to replace the central importance of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) in the *madrasa* curricula with *akhlaq* (ethics), '*aqā'id* (ideology) and *falsafa* (philosophy); 6 the need for a new concept of leadership of youth based on a correct understanding of responsibility; 7 the development of *ijtihad* as a powerful instrument for the adaptation of Islam to changing circumstances; 8 a revival of the nearly defunct principle of *al-amr bi-ma'ruf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar* (command the good and forbid the bad) as a means of expressing a collective and public will; 9 specialisation among *mujtahids* and making *taqlid* (emulation of a *mujtahid*) contingent upon it; 10 the need for mutuality and communal spirit to overcome the individuality and mistrust that pervades Iranian culture.'⁴⁰

While these Tehran lectures were taking place, Khomeini was holding regular weekly meetings in Qum with other clerical leaders to discuss their attitude towards new governmental policies. This was the period of the implementation of the American Point Four programmes, as US advisers pushed the newly restored shah to make fiscal and social reforms that would put the shattered Iranian economy on a more solid capitalist foundation. The land reform programme, together with increased infrastructural investment and expanded credit for local capitalists, accelerated capital accumulation in Iran while undermining traditional sectors. The influx of American advisors, in particular, reinforced the anti-foreign elements in Khomeini's outlook; while the fact that many of the entrepreneurs who profited most from the new government policies were either Jewish or Baha'i, increased his fears for the future of Islam. With the death in 1961 of Ayatollah Burujirdi, the chief Shi'i *mujtahid*, the last obstacle was removed to Khomeini's surfacing as leader of the clerical opposition. Although Burujirdi had opposed the clergy's involvement in politics, he had nonetheless helped establish much of the organisational apparatus that would be indispensable to Khomeini's rise. As Algar has noted, 'one important achievement that is to his [Burujirdi's] credit is the reorganisation of what is called *Hauza-yi Ilmiya*, the teaching institute in Qum. He established a network for the dissemination of religious knowledge throughout Iran as well as the collection of *zakat* and *khums*.'⁴¹ This gave invaluable financial stability and independence to the clerical hierarchy as well as an organisational structure that proved vital during the 1977-79 mass mobilisations.

From Autumn 1962, Khomeini's various manifestos and agitation propelled him into increasing confrontation with the central government, leading to the famous 5 June 1963 demonstration which the army so ruthlessly crushed. To this day, there is a tremendous amount of confusion, both inside and outside Iran, over the issues involved in this confrontation and their significance for future events. It is important therefore to try to give a detailed account of what exactly happened and why.

One common misconception has been that Khomeini's opposition to the shah was an outgrowth of clerical resistance to agrarian reforms which were seen to threaten *waqf* lands as well as the interests of land-owner kinsmen of the clergy. This oft-repeated claim has no factual basis. Aside from pilot land distribution schemes initiated in the early 1950s, the substantive land reform bill was passed in spring 1960, then amended and implemented from January 1962 onwards. The first demonstrations and petitions of Khomeini and his followers, on the other hand, only began in October 1962; and they were not directed against the agrarian reform (already legislated more than two years before and in active progress for over nine months), but against the new local election bill which the Cabinet had passed on 7 October 1962. (The

Cabinet had assumed charge of the legislative process following the dissolution of both Parliament and the Senate by royal decree in the preceding year). Never at any point during the passage or implementation of the land reform bill, nor in subsequent years, was agrarian reform as such disputed by Khomeini or his followers. Once, when the original bill was being discussed in Parliament in February 1960, Ayatollah Burujirdi had written a letter to Ja'far Bihbihani, his nephew and a member of Parliament, complaining that the bill was ill-advised and contrary to the *shari'a*.⁴² Also a few lower-rank mullahs agitated here and there against the bill, but the main figures in Qum, and specifically Khomeini, issued instructions to their followers *not* to oppose the land distribution programmes. In fact, the nearest they came to any formal criticism of the reforms were simply some general remarks about how the government was handing over domestic industries and agriculture to foreigners and non-Muslims.

At the same time, however, the clergy reacted very sharply against proposals concerning women's equal rights and suffrage. There were many explicit statements by religious leaders, including Khomeini, that equal rights for women was a violation of the *shari'a*. Indeed the new local election bill which sparked off the first open protests in October 1962 was seen as so objectionable precisely because it would give the vote to women and replace the Qur'an in the swearing-in ceremony with 'my holy book' (i.e. would recognise the holy books of other religious groups). To oppose this bill Khomeini called a meeting of the top clergy in Qum. The meeting resolved to send a telegram to the shah demanding the annulment of the bill, as well as to dispatch envoys and messages to the clergy throughout the country, warning them about 'the dangers that the bill entails for Islam and for the people of Iran'.⁴³

It is very indicative of the ideological outlook of the clergy that the election bill rather than the land reform should have been the catalyst for the emergence of organised opposition to the shah. The shah's programme consisted of the total suppression of all opposition, the massive strengthening of the repressive apparatus (army, police and SAVAK), and the implementation of structural changes – such as the land reform – that would facilitate capitalist growth. From the clerical viewpoint, this was the final stage in the undermining of traditional Islamic society which had been first initiated in the mid-nineteenth century by reformist ministers such as Amir Kabir, continued by the constitutionalist movement, and then accelerated by the pro-foreign, anti-clerical policies of Reza Shah and his son. By the early 1960s, however, the clergy had come to accept the necessity of certain reforms, provided they were based on Islamic precepts, rejected foreign influence and were supervised by the clergy. The principal reason why the local election issue rather than agrarian reform became the storm centre of clerical protest was that it could be much more clearly and unambiguously linked to a defence of Islam on a populist basis without overtones of the class interests of the Shi'i hierarchy. Moreover, as the early

manifesto of Khomeini's group stressed, female suffrage condensed a broad array of traditionalist moral and social concerns: 'women's participation in social affairs is prohibited and must be prevented, since such participation involves many *harām* and corruptive interactions'. The linkage between the specific controversy over the election law and the defence of Islam *per se* was quickly explained by the oppositionists at Qum. For example, in one of his telegrams to the prime minister, Khomeini vividly sketched out his familiar motifs of foreign conspiracy and internal decadence: 'It is incumbent upon me, according to my religious duties, to warn the Iranian people and the Muslims of the world that Islam and the Qur'an are in danger; that the independence of the country and its economy are about to be taken over by zionists, who in Iran appear as the party of Baha'is, and if this deadly silence of Muslims continues, they will soon take over the entire economy of the country and drive it to complete bankruptcy. The Iranian television is a Jewish spy base, the government sees this and approves of it . . . ' ⁴⁴

Confronted with such massive and unexpected protest against the local election bill, the government was forced to back down and annul the legislation. It is important to note that at this point the clergy did not yet see itself engaged in all out opposition to the regime; rather it still hoped to persuade the shah and his advisors to adopt Islamic policies. A famous speech of Khomeini's immediately after the defeat of the election bill provides insight into the confident hopes and aims of the clergy at this early stage in the development of the movement. 'The independence of all the Islamic countries is owed to these people [the clergy], it is they who have so far defended Islamic sovereignty; it has also been these invaluable men who have always calmed the rebellious masses, but only in so far as national independence has not been endangered. Otherwise, Islam makes insurrection and rebellion the imperative duties of the clergy; this is why the recent movement of the clergy was a religious and Qur'anic insurgency – indeed, it was according to their holiest obligations as Muslims that they engaged in this . . . Moreover, had a word been issued, a public explosion would have occurred. Who quenched this fire? Why don't they [the government] understand this? Why are they trying, by every means, to alienate and break the support of the clergy? . . . Why do they not instead rely on the clergy? . . . If people see that the government protects the interests and welfare of Islam and Muslims, and that it serves the nation, then they will support the government . . . But, alas, the government cannot comprehend these facts, it refuses to understand that without the clergy the country has no backbone . . . I advise the shah not lose this force! . . . To give such advice is *wajib* . . . it is the duty of the '*ulama*' and the clergy to give advice and to show the way to everyone, from the shah down to the most minor officials . . . ' ⁴⁵

The 1963 referendum

A second round of conflict between the government and the clergy arose over the issue of the 26 January 1963 referendum. The referendum put to the vote a six-point programme that included land reform, women's suffrage, the nationalisation of forests and pastures, and a workers' profit-sharing scheme. The referendum was interpreted by the clergy as both a rejection of its demand for greater influence in the government and a further attempt to curb its social influence and political role. Moreover, the referendum was obviously part of a strategy to create popular support for the regime and divide the clergy's mass base. Faced with these threats to its social survival, the clergy abandoned hopes of influencing the regime and went over to frontal opposition, starting with the call for a boycott of the referendum. It is important to emphasise, however, that none of the specific planks in the referendum were by themselves the sole cause of clerical opposition; rather the clergy was opposing the *whole project* that the government was embarking upon. Moreover, as Khomeini's statement on this occasion makes quite clear, the clergy was beginning to project its own global alternative 'Islamic' programme.

He first rules out a referendum as unconstitutional, but goes on to say that, 'for the time being, because of certain considerations, we will ignore the fact that a referendum or a national approval is worthless as far as Islam is concerned.' He also protests against the holding of a referendum in an atmosphere of intimidation, repression and fear; pointing out that people do not understand the consequence of their vote and that 'people who are responsible to the law and to the nation have fooled His Highness to do this job for them . . . If these people want to do something for the good of the people, why do they not turn to the programme of Islam and Islamic experts, so that all classes will enjoy a comfortable life, and so that all will be happy in this and the other world?

'Why are they instituting cooperative funds that are robbing the fruits of the peasants' labour? With the establishment of these cooperatives, the Iranian home market will be lost, and both merchants and farmers ruined while other classes will consequently suffer a similar fate . . . The clergy registers the danger for the Qur'an and our religion. It seems that this compulsory referendum aims to lay the basis for the removal of the clauses [in the constitution] linked to religion. The Islamic 'ulama' had previously felt the same danger to Islam, Qur'an and country when the government took measures to change the local elections. Now it seems that the enemies of Islam are trying to achieve the same things through fooling a bunch of naive people . . .'

This time, however, the government was determined to refuse concessions to the clergy, and went ahead with its referendum. The continuing agitation from Qum resulted in repeated clashes between the army and the city's *tullab* (religious students), culminating in

Khomeini's famous public denunciation of the shah in his '*ashura*' speech of 3 June 1963. His subsequent arrest in the early morning of 5 June sparked riots and demonstrations in Qum and Tehran that were crushed by the army. The Tehran demonstration, in particular, was significant because not only did the traditional clerical followers come out onto the streets, and the bazaar close down in protest; but for the first time the students in Tehran University also joined in support. The students were led by the Student Committee of the National Front, the only remaining active wing of the almost moribund National Front. Previously, this committee had refused to endorse the clerical opposition to women's suffrage and had instead advanced the slogan, 'Reforms Yes! Dictatorship No!' But with the virtual disintegration of its parent body (which, like the first constitutional movement, now found its reform programme coopted, and even in some respects surpassed, by the dictatorship), the student National Front turned toward Khomeini as the viable symbol of opposition. Although the student role in the 5 June 1963 demonstration was limited, it remains historically significant as the first *rapprochement* between the nationalist movement on the campuses and the anti-shah clergy. With socialism discredited and secular nationalism in disarray, Islam, unscathed by the disaster of 1953, came forward to fill a political vacuum, offering itself as *the* radical alternative to the shah's tyranny.

Emergence of a mass Islamic movement

The socio-economic transformations in the next fifteen years provided the material force – discontented and dispossessed millions who identified Islam as their salvation – to make this alternative a potent reality. The development of Iran as an underdeveloped capitalist, semi-industrial society magnified traditional inequalities and created new ones. Millions were uprooted from the land by the development of agricultural capitalism while urban employment totally failed to keep pace. Construction booms were fitful and uncertain; the industrial labour market grew slowly or sometimes not at all. Moreover, the recession of 1975–77 brought 30 per cent inflation and a million unemployed. The result was the burgeoning of giant slums around the cities and the creation of a huge class of new urban paupers. Tehran alone had expanded from a population of one million to five million within fifteen years, and the majority of its new population were declassed and uprooted immigrants who filled the endless slums of the city's southern part. Traditionally fatalist, deprived of any coherent social organisation and strength, the displaced poor were mesmerised by clerical agitation around the themes of Islamic charity and the voluntary equalisation of wealth. If only the rich would follow Qur'anic teaching and give proper alms, poverty would go away; if the rich refused this obligation, however, it became the sacred duty of the poor to restore a moral order

congruent with Islamic religion. Idealising a minimal reliance upon possessions, the clergy attacked the rich for their lavish habits and moral decadence. As the clergy became increasingly involved in local neighbourhood organisation and the initiation of 'Islamic cooperative shops', it seemed more and more drawn toward an almost utopian image of a generalised but righteous poverty as the most desirable future.

The clergy's attacks on the rich – particularly the non-Muslim bourgeoisie around the Peacock Throne – also struck a responsive chord in the mass of traditional urban petty bourgeoisie. The mass production of consumer goods and the growing centralisation of distribution had ruined broad strata of this class. As the plight of the traditional petty bourgeoisie became increasingly desperate, the more they were willing to participate in and even lead the popular fury against big capital and its foreign associates. The petty bourgeoisie was especially bitter at the failure of the shah's government to provide any protection against the onslaught of mass-produced goods or foreign competitors. This bitterness was intensified in a violent direction by the government's response to the economic crisis of the mid-1970s: in order to clear room for the further expansion of big capital within the internal market, the regime abetted the wholesale elimination of small producers.⁴⁶

It was, then, these desperate layers of the urban petty bourgeoisie and the urban poor who provided the strongest mass support for the Islamic movement which began to proselytise them in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As the clergy deepened and expanded its hegemony within the popular sectors, Khomeini sharpened and refined his political ideology. No longer was a ruler nominated by the clergy a sufficient guarantee of Islamic justice; now he held that the clergy itself had to assume power. 'If the rulers are to follow Islam, they must follow the *faqih*s and must ask the *faqih*s about the laws and decrees. Under such circumstances, it is clear that the *faqih*s are really ruling. Therefore the act of government must formally belong to the *faqih*s and not to those who due to their ignorance of the laws must follow the *faqih*s.' Developing this conception in his *Velayat-e Faqih*,⁴⁷ he outlines a 'programme of struggle for the establishment of an Islamic government'. As a necessary first stage he proposes a period of propaganda and education amongst the masses, concentrated not so much on traditional theological themes as upon the political, economic and legal doctrines of Islam, 'in order to create a social current, so that the conscious, pious and dutiful masses would gradually organise themselves in an Islamic movement, would rise up and form an Islamic government.' (pp174–175) He also suggests that the clergy use traditional Muslim gatherings, like Friday prayers or the annual *hajj* (pilgrimage), as means of conducting mass political education. (pp179–180) Furthermore, he advocates the employment of public ceremonies, such as '*ashura*', as political protests through which the masses would be gradually steered into a fighting force to destroy the regime. (p182) Thus, at one and the same time, Khomeini's book is both a statement of programme and a manual for activists.

The prominence given in our discussion to Khomeini's writings and leadership should not, of course, be allowed to overshadow some consideration of Shari'ati's contribution to the growth of Islamic militancy. Although Khomeini's narrow focus on the question of state power proved decisive in the struggle against the shah, Shari'ati's numerous lectures and writings contributed in a unique way to the ideological renaissance of Islam amongst an entire generation of Iranian youth. We cannot properly evaluate Shari'ati's role here, but Algar's observation seems quite accurate, although we do not share his positive estimation: 'there is a certain stimulating quality in his [Shari'ati's] writings, a mind at work, which is a rare thing in the Muslim world . . . Whatever one may think of this or that statement or doctrine of Dr Shari'ati, his achievement that cannot be denied is that he led back a large part of the alienated middle-class generation to an identification with Islam . . . People were ready to participate in the revolution under the leadership of Imam Khomeini to a large degree because of the influence upon them of Dr Shari'ati.'⁴⁸

It is important to emphasise that the recent Iranian experience represents a totally *unprecedented and unique* experiment in Shi'ism's long history: It is the first time that the clergy have operated the state directly without a secular structure either superimposed on it (as during the Safavid period) or parallel with it (as during the Qajar epoch). Many of the problems faced by the clergy in the period since February 1979 stem from the novelty of this experiment; Muslim clergy learning to rule a twentieth-century capitalist society. Despite the repeated assurances of most of the left that it is an impossible project, I see no *a priori* reason why it cannot be successful within certain limits. For one thing, even its ultimate unfeasibility – a case that has yet to be cogently demonstrated either logically or historically – does not automatically imply the emergence of a crisis favourable to the revolutionary left; on the contrary, it is possible to imagine the alternative outcome of a slow disintegration of society in its modern class structure and a profound social retrogression. It is more likely, however, that the clerical stratum will partially adapt itself to the exigencies of capitalism and international politics, many modifications and some concessions will be made, and the remaining problems attributed to 'internal counter-revolution and imperialist conspiracy.'

Finally it is necessary to stress that this historical survey of the clergy's political role once again shows how the left's alliance with the Islamic opposition against the shah, as well as its support for the Khomeini regime, have been short-sighted and politically disastrous. It should be clear that throughout the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century the basis of the clergy's opposition to the state was a reactionary resistance against the smallest social reforms. Even its struggle against the odious Pahlavi military dictators was not based on any intention of creating a socially more progressive or politically more tolerant regime, but only on intransigent opposition to any change that

would diminish or undermine its own traditional prerogatives and powers. The clergy's attitude towards an authentic socialist government would, if anything, be even more antagonistic and violent than its hatred of the Pahlavi shahs. The experiences of the Bolshevik revolution in Central Asia were indicative of the huge contradictions between all varieties of Islamic traditionalism and social revolution. Socialists must grasp this elementary lesson and its implications if they are ever going to have any hope of transforming Muslim societies.

References

- 1 Michael Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1980, p28.
- 2 For a detailed description of the Safavid state apparatus, see Mirzorsky, *Tadhkirat al-Muluk*, London 1943.
- 3 Ravandi, *Tarikh-e Ijtima'i-e Iran (A Social History of Iran)*, Tehran, 1978, vol 3, p481.
- 4 Hamid Algar, 'Iran and Shi'ism', in Kalim Siddiqui (ed.), *The Islamic Revolution in Iran*, London, 1980, p5.
- 5 For a fuller discussion of the theological issues involved in the dispute between the Usulis and the Akhbarris, see Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785–1906: The Role of the Ulema in the Qajar Period*, Berkeley, 1969, pp33–36.
- 6 For an intricate description of the social and administrative powers of the clergy under the Qajars see, *ibid*, pp11–21, 60–72; also Ravandi, pp491–527.
- 7 Algar, *Religion and State*, pp131–36, 169–83, 224.
- 8 For a very instructive review of the intellectual changes in this period, see F. Adamiyat, *Andishe-y Taraqqi va hokumat-e ganun (The Thought of Progress and Rule of Law)*, Tehran, 1972, esp. chapters I–IV.
- 9 See Charles Issawi (ed.), *The Economic History of Iran: 1800–1914*, Chicago, 1971, pp43–48.
- 10 *Ibid*, p76. A consequence of these futile attempts at stopping foreign competition and stimulating local manufacturing was the movement of the vast accumulated wealth of merchants into land speculation. The government's desire to sell all state land to obtain instant cash met with eager buyers, as merchants found it profitable to buy large plots of land to plant such export crops as rice, cotton, fruits and tobacco. This combination of large landed estates with urban-based commercial interests emerged in that period and remained a prominent feature of agrarian relations in Iran until the land reforms in the early 1960s.
- 11 *Tamaddon* and *tajaddod* became watchwords symbolising Europe to the yearning Iranian mind. It became a point of honour to be in favour of *tamaddon* and *tajaddod*. Those against them were looked upon as enemies of the nation, of progress and development. It is a tragic irony of present-day Iran that these same two words have now become derogatory labels hurled at intellectuals and anyone opposing the rule of the clergy. Today they have become equated with unforgivable adaptation to the 'West.'
- 12 A fuller version of this article is quoted in Issawi, *op cit*, pp67–68.
- 13 Fereydoon Adamiyat, *Ideology of the Iranian Constitutional Movement* (Persian), Tehran, 1976, p17.

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- 14 Abdul-Hadi Hairi, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran*, Leiden, 1977, p.13.
- 15 Quoted *ibid*, pp31–33.
- 16 Adamiyat, pp92–99. The expression translated as 'any ignorant idiot' is in Persian literally 'my aunt' – a common derogatory way of speaking(!)
- 17 Nikkie Keddie, 'Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, IV (April 1962), pp265–95.
- 18 Charles Gallagher, 'Contemporary Islam: The Plateau of Particularism, Problems of Religion and Nationalism in Iran', *American Universities Field Staff Reports*, New York, 1966, p14.
- 19 Keddie, pp287–88.
- 20 Hairi, p27.
- 21 See Philip Bayat Mangol, 'The Concepts of Religion and Government in the Thought of Mirza Aga Khan Kirmani, a Nineteenth-Century Persian Revolutionary', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, V (1974), pp381–400.
- 22 See Algar, *Religion and State*, pp76–77.
- 23 Quoted in Hairi, p47.
- 24 Quoted in Adamiyat, p30.
- 25 Quoted in Hairi, p40. This utilitarian adaptation to Islam was not limited to nationalists. The tiny nucleus of social democrats included a legal faction which called itself 'The Defenders of Islam Faction of Iranian Social Democracy'. Here are excerpts from a leaflet they issued on the occasion of the declaration of the constitution in 1906: 'Toilers of the world unite! We, Social Democrats, the true defenders of Islam, send our congratulations to the freedom lovers of the world on this day of declaration of the Iranian constitution. We salute all the clergy and the merchants who support the people, and all the Islamic Majahe-deen in Tehran, who have all sacrificed their wealth and lives to reach their sacred goals . . . We, the Islamic Majahedeen, who are the men of God, cannot stop at the gains made so far. We must hoist the red banner of liberty . . .' (Quoted in Pavlovich, Teria and Iranski, *Three Essays on the Constitutional Revolution of Iran* (Persian translation), Tehran, 1978, p38.)
- 26 Hairi, p32.
- 27 Many clergymen, of course, did not concern themselves with this problem and simply went along with the constitutionalists. Sayyed Tabataba'i, for example, one of the two most famous clergymen involved in the constitutional movement, once said: 'We ourselves had not seen a constitutional regime. But we had heard about it, and those who had seen the constitutional countries had told us that a constitutional regime will bring security and prosperity to the country. This created an urge and enthusiasm in us, so we strove to establish a constitutional regime in this country.' (Quoted in Adamiyat, p226.) Afterwards, when conflicts broke out between the clergy and the constitutionalists over many articles of the constitution (in which the latter almost always outmanoeuvred the former), and when over severe objections of the clergy a secular judiciary was voted into the constitution, the same Tabataba'i – clearly feeling betrayed by his secular allies – is quoted as saying: 'with the establishment of these judicial courts, what else is there left for the clergy to do?' (*Ibid*, p419).
- 28 Hairi, p199.
- 29 *Ibid*, pp193–4.
- 30 *Ibid*, pp296–97.
- 31 *Ibid*, p199.
- 32 *Ibid*, p206.

33 It has become commonly accepted that Reza Khan was a British stooge and that his 1921 coup was planned and aided by the British. It is true that following the Russian Revolution British policy in Iran changed from supporting a weak Qajar shah to desiring a strong centralised state as a bastion against the Bolshevik 'threat' to the Indian sub-continent. It is also true that it was General Ironside who, impressed by Reza Khan's military performance in suppressing local uprisings, laid the groundwork for the 1921 seizure of power. (See Richard Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1921*, vol 3, Princeton, 1966, pp354-69, 383-389.) However, it is essential to take into account how the political disillusionment and demoralisation following the constitutional regime allowed Reza Khan to win support from many former leaders of the Constitutional Revolution. This also partially explains why he faced very little resistance in the central provinces, although it took fierce fighting and ruthless repression to crush the powerful autonomist forces in Kurdistan, Azarbaijan, and other outlying regions.

34 See, Fischer, pp95-120.

35 Kasravi was one of the most important and prolific historians of Iran. Although not an atheist, he opposed all existing religions and organised a circle of followers in search of the 'true religion'.

36 All references are to the 1979 Persian edition of *Kashf al-Asrar*.

37 The constituent assembly and majlis described in this 1944 work are strikingly similar to the Assembly of Experts convened in the summer of 1979 and the current Islamic Assembly. When Khomeini first announced his scheme for the Assembly of Experts, many of his bourgeois-nationalist allies felt betrayed while much of the left felt disillusioned. But, as a study of his earliest writings so clearly shows, it was not Khomeini who had reneged on promises or disguised his schemes; the fault was the wishful thinking and ignorance of his nationalist and left-wing collaborators.

38 Soldiers were ordered to tear apart women's veils on the street with their bayonets.

39 From an early pamphlet issued by the Freedom Movement to explain its aims, and recently quoted by Bazargan in one of his election pamphlets in order to bolster his claim that it was leaders like himself who had dragged the clergy from their mosques into politics, which they were now ungratefully forcing him out of.

40 Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran*, Albany, 1980, pp119-20.

41 Algar, 'Iran and Shi'ism', p12.

42 Akhavi, p91.

43 A full account of these events appears in Sayyed Hamid Rouhani, *An Analysis of the Movement of Imam Khomeini*, (in Persian), Qum 1977. This 960-page book contains an invaluable complete compilation of Khomeini's statements and lectures from this period; otherwise its primary distinction is its revolting anti-Jewish, anti-Baha'i bigotry.

44 *Ibid*, pp177-78.

45 *Ibid*, pp197-205.

46 For a fuller discussion of these points see M. Ja'far and A. Tabari, 'Iran: Islam and the Struggle for Socialism', *Khamsin* 8.

47 First published in 1971, it is a transcript of a series of lectures given by Khomeini. All quotations are from the Persian third edition.

48 Algar, 'Iran and Shi'ism', pp47, 49.

The development of capitalism in Egypt

Patrick Clawson

In the last two hundred years, the Egyptian economy has undergone qualitative organisational changes, changes more profound than any quantitative increase in output. In 1800, Egyptian society consisted mainly of peasants producing for their own consumption and for tribute payments. Tribute went to tax farmers who effectively ruled the countryside. Today, Egypt has a capitalist economy, in which production is organised by firms. The vast majority of the population must work for wages. The market, not the home, is the source of consumption goods and the destination of production. The aim of production is profit, not the satisfaction of needs.

The central claim of this article is that these changes in the Egyptian economy have been primarily the result of the changing requirements of the advanced capitalist economies. The theory states, in brief, that in the 19th century the search of European capitalist industry for raw materials re-orientated Egyptian agricultural production towards the market, rather than home use. Egyptian industry did not develop, because the European industrial capitalists sought markets, not competitors. But industrial capital gave way to finance capital in the Europe of the early 20th century. Being based on large firms which have finance for expansion, which can spread risks, and which are not tied to one location or industry, finance capital regards the whole world as possible sites for investment in profitable industry. Industrial production in Egypt was encouraged by finance capital from the 1920s on.

The theory used here contrasts with the view that Egypt's development has essentially paralleled the European experience but at a slower pace and a later date.¹ The latter view implies that economic growth has been constrained primarily by the lack of savings and by the lack of investment opportunities (due to restricted markets). This theory predicts all-round development, including industrialisation, whenever income and savings rise. The theory used here implies that rising incomes in the early period of the internationalisation of capital (the period of raw material exports) would lead to increased imports of manufactured goods. Local industry would be blocked by competition from advanced country producers. In a later period, local industry and economic infrastructure would develop independently of changes in income, thanks to foreign capital. This theory, it will be argued, corresponds better to Egyptian experience. In nineteenth-century Egypt, rising income led to increased imports, with savings moving

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overseas or into land purchases. After World War I, domestic industry and infrastructure expanded even in the 1930s, when income and savings plummeted.

The conventional economists' theory of development and trade also says that capital would flow into areas rich in natural resources and labour but short in capital. The theory used here implies that foreign capital would not invest much in Egypt (and then only in cotton production) during the early period of the internationalisation of capital, when capitalists from advanced countries sought solely raw material and markets for their industry. In a later period, firms were larger and therefore more able to bear the risks and large capital costs of foreign investment in general industry.

Another hypothesis examined in this article is that Egyptian economic development has gone through distinct stages, each with its own dynamics. In the first stage, commodity production replaced production for home or local use; in the second, capitalist production replaced non-capitalist commodity production. This view contrasts with two widely held theories. Wallerstein's followers hold that Egypt has been basically a capitalist country since at least the early 19th century, when agricultural production was increasingly oriented towards the world market. This article will show that pre-World War I Egypt was non-capitalist in two important ways: the labour process did not rely on wage labour and production was not directed towards profit maximisation (the aim was rather the satisfaction of traditional needs). Integration into the world market does not automatically give rise to capitalism. The second widely held view contested here is that Egypt remained until recently, or is still today, a non-capitalist society of a neo-feudal sort. On the left (e.g. Samir Amin), it is argued that foreign capital has prevented the development of Egypt, preserving pre-capitalist elements and causing economic stagnation. Later sections will demonstrate the growth of capitalist agriculture and industry in Egypt since World War I and the pivotal role of foreign capital in this growth.

In the last sixty years, radical writers have stressed the profoundly negative effect of European (and US) capitalism on Third World economies. Unfortunately, radical authors all too often assume that the demands placed by advanced country capitalists on the Third World have stayed constant over the past few centuries. Despite the homage paid to Lenin's *Imperialism*, many quickly abandon his concept of an imperialist stage of capitalist development in favour of theories of continuing search for raw materials and markets. Few are the authors who seek to determine how the rise of monopolies in the advanced countries changed the character of advanced country – Third World relations. The term *imperialism* is identified with colonial conquest and forcible plunder, not with a set of relations produced by the capitalist accumulation process. A major thesis underlying this article is that capital accumulation in the advanced countries has gone and is going through distinct stages, based on the concentration and centralisation

of capital. Marx laid bare the dynamics by which large units of capital triumph over small. The first stage of industrial capitalism, analysed by Marx, was entrepreneurial (so-called competitive) capitalism. As firms triumphed over entrepreneurs, monopoly capitalism emerged. In our day, multinational corporations and state capitalism have continued the process of concentration and centralisation of capital.

Each stage of capitalism has had its corresponding dynamic of advanced country – Third World relations. A thought-provoking but extremely unsystematic discussion of these different stages is in Christian Palloix's *L'économie mondiale capitaliste et les firmes multinationales*. Palloix identifies the stages with the circuits of capital discussed by Marx in Volume II of *Capital*. Marx wrote that each individual sum of capital goes through a circuit: production – sale – money sum – purchase of labour and inputs – production. Marx looked at the circuit in three ways: first, as the circuit of buying and selling goods; second, as the circuit of extending and recouping money; and third, as the circuit of using materials to produce a product in order to procure more materials for production. Marx argued that each of these circuits becomes the province of a particular fraction of capital: Commodity-capital (merchants), money-capital (bankers), and productive capital (industrialists). Palloix argues that each of these circuits has been internationalised in turn during the different stages of accumulation in the advanced countries. That is, the rise of the world market was only one moment in the continuing process by which capitalism knits together the world economy. The rise of the world market was followed by the rise of world-wide investment and it is now being followed by the rise of world-wide production.

Growth of the market

The growth of the market in nineteenth-century Egypt had two sides: the increased consumption of goods bought on the market and the increased production for markets. The growth in demand was partly a desire for simple consumer goods which could not be made at home, such as matches. Initially, a more important element was Muhammad 'Ali's determination in the 1810s to increase his military power. (Based on the experience of the French invasion under Napoleon, 'Ali felt that maintaining the power of the Egyptian state required modernising the economy to produce weapons in the European style). The major factor behind the growth of market relations in Egypt in the nineteenth century was not Egyptian desire for European goods. The key element was the exploding European demand for industrial raw materials and foodstuffs. Egypt had considerable trade just before the rise of European industrial capitalism, but this trade was largely the transshipment of luxury goods.² Domestic production was not much affected. Europe's new industries demanded more and more raw material as well

as food for the urban populations. Before 1800, the European demand mostly took the form of France's growing need for wheat to feed its expanding urban population. A major factor in Napoleon's invasion was his desire to secure a potential granary, which had already begun to supply southern France.³ But Egyptian wheat exports never grew to major proportions. Not only was competition from Russia and the US fierce, but the Egyptian peasants were in the habit of eating the wheat.

Cotton was found to be the ideal crop for Egypt's climate and soil, which could produce high yields of the most desirable cotton (long fibre cotton). Like most backward societies, Egypt specialised in the production of a raw material which could not be produced in Europe. The story of how cotton transformed Egypt has been told many times.⁴ The US civil war caused a major boom: cotton cultivation rose from 150,000 acres in 1861 to 1,250,000 in 1865. By the 1900s, cotton was grown on one-third of the land, the physical maximum given the rotation system used then.

The internationalisation of capital, not any conditions internal to Egypt, was the principal factor behind the growth of cotton production, and therefore of the market, in Egypt. There is little evidence for Issawi's thesis that the character of Egyptian institutions is the primary factor in development because these institutions affect the ability to take advantage of increased exports. The character of Egyptian institutions changed considerably over the period before World War I, but the character of development remained the same; more cotton exports and more manufactured-goods imports. Egyptian monoculture began under Muhammad 'Ali, who tried to impose state monopoly in agricultural production. His efforts failed when he ran into a fiscal crisis, partly because the massive state expenditures on irrigation works to increase cotton production produced no revenue (irrigation water has always been free of charge in Egypt), and partly because the state bureaucracy was not up to its assigned task of coordinating production. Muhammad 'Ali was unable to increase his revenue at the expense of the European merchants because of their greater financial resources and because the power of the European states was brought to bear on him to insist on freedom of action for the foreign merchants. No matter whether state-owned or privately-run, no matter whether under the corrupt Egyptian khedives or the post-1882 British occupation, cotton monoculture spread. The institutional structure had little to do with this.

Changes in land tenure: Private property and debt peonage

Besides the increase in cotton production, the nineteenth century witnessed the rise of private property in land in Egypt. As in many pre-capitalist societies, in Egypt each parcel of land had been subject to various claims: the right to usufruct belonged to one peasant, the right

to a certain tribute (not a regularised rent, but something more flexible) to a lord, perhaps other tribute to other lords or the state. No one person 'owned' a title which could be alienated – each person's claim, rather, could be transferred independently, based on certain rules. To the extent to which this system's replacement by private property was the product of the cotton economy, the increased production of cotton for the world market was the cause for a basic change in Egyptian land tenure.

Before the 1820s Egyptian society had been 'neo-feudal' – an ambiguous term chosen to avoid a debate on the nature of Mamluk Egypt. The towns were dominated by trade; production was solidly controlled by guilds.⁵ The direct producers (fallahin) were tied to the soil; they were free to decide what crops to raise. Particularly in Upper Egypt, land was held by village communities and periodically redistributed, with the village as a whole responsible for taxes and for corvée on public works (primarily the irrigation canals). In eighteenth-century lower Egypt, taxes were evidently individually assessed, and those who paid taxes regularly could pass their land on to their heirs. Moreover, there is evidence that Lower Egyptian peasants were operating on the fringes of the market economy; taxes were often collected in cash and some cash crops – mostly wheat – were grown.

Muhammad 'Ali attempted to establish direct state control over the land, replacing the older decentralised system. From the late 1830s, the central government's direct control was eroded through the rise of new forms of land control.⁶ These new forms did not evolve back towards 'neo-feudal' arrangements, in the old pattern of state control alternating with landlord control. Land tenure took a new form instead: private land ownership. The appearance of private ownership is inexplicable except by reference to the growth in commodity production. Demand for income to purchase commodities led some, especially the state, to cede rights in return for ready cash. The same demand led others to want complete control over land. The availability of manufactured goods meant a demand broader than when needs were limited to what could be produced at home, so that sharing output with others who had claims on the land became more of a burden. Local notables sought to eliminate the rights of the peasants, especially the age-old usufruct rights (*nominal* ownership always remained with the state).

Private land ownership developed most rapidly among the holders of large estates, who were eager to assert their control over the rival claim of the state and the fallahin. Muta'ahiddin (estate holders who were nominally tax-farmers) were able early to change their status to that of private landowners, reducing the cultivators to sharecroppers. Estate holders were the principal beneficiaries of the laws by which land under state ownership (sometimes nominal) was sold at a low price. Under Khedive Isma'il's law of 1871, land was sold for six years' taxes. Sa'id's Land Law of August 5, 1858, had allowed the acquisition of full ownership on some land in return for five consecutive years of tax payments

and tilling the land. (It is unclear how wide an effect this provision had). It has also authorised the sale and mortgage of land.

The main characteristic of the 1820-1882 period in the countryside was the decline of pre-capitalist relations, such as the village community, and the rise of semi-capitalist relations, such as commodity production and private land ownership. The relations were *semi-capitalist* in several senses. The labour process was not capitalistic wage labour. The producers retained some control over the means of production (some rights over land; ownership of tools for the sharecroppers), even though they had generally lost what control they previously had over the land. The extraction of surplus was not through profit but tribute, such as the *corvée* which was common well into this century. Capitalist relations of production imply production for accumulation rather than for need. Production in Egypt was largely for the purpose of satisfying needs, which were expanding under the impact of the new products offered by capitalist industry. Certainly the dynamic of this period was towards the destruction of the old 'neo-feudal' relations, but these were not being replaced by fully capitalist relations.⁷ Those like A.G. Frank who conflate commodity production and capitalism are unable to explain why the rise of commodity trade in Egypt did not lead to general accumulation of capital; e.g., industrialisation. As shown in the next section, the same forces which led to commodity production – the rise of capitalist industry, searching for raw materials and markets – also prevented the development of capitalist production in Egypt, which would have had to compete with the capitalist industry in the advanced countries.

From the late nineteenth century until after World War II, Egyptian agriculture was dominated by the '*izba* system of debt peonage. This system arose because of the increasing demand for cotton, the expansion of whose production required capital beyond the means of the small farmer. Much of the money for the debt peonage system came from overseas. We shall argue that the '*izba* system represents a transition from one stage in the internationalisation of capital to another. As in the earlier period, the focus is on the expansion of raw material production: as in the later period, foreign capital invests in Egypt to increase output. The debt peonage system is also a transition from the earlier non-capitalist commodity production to the later capitalist system.

The spread of commodity production into the Egyptian countryside was soon followed by the spread of debt. Peasants were first forced to seek seasonal credit, to be repaid when the cotton was harvested, in order to survive while the cotton was growing and in order to expand cotton production, which required expenditures on irrigation systems. Seasonal credits were soon stretched out into, or supplemented by, longer term loans secured by land as collateral. The cotton merchants, source of the early financing, were initially reluctant to make mortgage loans because Muslim and Ottoman law forbade foreclosure and forbade the ownership of land by foreigners. With the establishment of the

Mixed Courts in 1875, foreign (mostly French) land law soon came to rule, at least insofar as dealings with foreigners were concerned. Mortgage lending soared thereafter: from under £E1 million in 1876 to £E6–7 million in 1883, over £E30 million in 1905, and about £E60 million in 1914.⁸ Mortgages were not only for outstanding debts; many of the mortgages went for the purchase of land. While the percentage of land in large estates was roughly constant, many individual estates were being fragmented through inheritance and new estates were formed through mortgage-financed purchase of new land.

While landlords may have been expanding their estates, peasants were becoming landless in large numbers. It seems plausible that the dispossession of the peasants from the means of production was the result of increased exactions by the ruling class (taxes, tribute payments of various sorts, etc). Earlier, the ruling class's demands on the fallahin were limited to the surplus over necessary consumption. Now that the means of production – land – had become a commodity, the ruling class could make higher demands on the peasants, which they had to meet by selling their land. Under the British occupation, data were collected on land-ownership. These data can be combined with the population censuses to derive estimates of the number of landless (making reasonable estimates about family size).⁹ Owen, in *Cotton in Egypt*, estimates that one-quarter of the rural families were landless in 1907. He quotes a British report to the effect that 53 per cent of the population of Upper Egypt, 40 per cent of Middle Egypt, and 36 per cent of the Delta were landless in 1917. The size of the landholdings by small owners was dropping.

The 'izba system, which evidently came to predominate by the turn of the century, was based on absentee landownership with a paid supervisor, daily wage labourers called *tarahil* (usually migrants), and annual labourers called *ta'maliyya*.¹⁰ The *ta'maliyya* were paid in cash and in kind, with the latter consisting of either the non-cotton portion of production or the plots which were not used that year for cotton under the rotation system. The landlord often provided working capital to these workers, who frequently fell in debt and whose wages largely went to reduce the debt. Work in the cotton fields was therefore in practice labour for which no payment was received. The system could at times approximate rent in kind or a neo-feudal system. Unlike feudalism, the peasants had no claim to the land's usufruct nor were they tied to the land. In other times and places the system could approach capitalism, especially when much labour was done by the *tarahil* and when the landlord was mostly concerned with profit maximisation (rather than the prestige and security of landownership). One major difference between the 'izba system and capitalism was that the landlord or his representative controlled political and judicial power, so that there was almost no possibility of regularised contractual relationships with penalties for non-fulfillment.

The 'izba system was largely the product of the internationalisation

of capital, in that it arose in direct response to increased foreign demand for Egyptian cotton. That the demand for cotton was met via a system of debt peonage was largely the product of the availability of capital to finance the debts, in that the peasants were eager to expand their output while maintaining their current income – which could only happen if they incurred debt. The finance for the expansion of cotton production came largely from abroad. Foreign cotton merchants were the leading source of seasonal credit, which was important in facilitating the switch to cash crops. Money would flow from European money markets through international merchant banks (which had begun as trading houses) down to the large estate-holders and to local money lenders (often ‘Levantines’ – Greeks, Jews, Copts, etc). From these activities, the merchants-becoming-bankers branched out into providing longer term loans. Nearly all mortgages were provided by foreign capital (at least 80 per cent in 1914). Mortgage loans were the main form of foreign investment in Egyptian companies from 1883, the earliest date for which data exist.¹¹ Mortgage loans remained about one-half of all foreign capital in Egyptian firms throughout the pre-World War I period.

Part of the mortgages funded by foreigners came from land companies, which prospered greatly in the boom years before 1907. These companies bought land to sell in lots to Egyptians, and generally financed the sales themselves. After the crash of 1907, the land companies often held on to their land; they leased it to fallahin for cotton production.¹² Foreign ownership of land, strictly forbidden by Muslim law, had already reached 11.5 per cent of all land (550,000 acres) by 1896, the first year for which there are data. Foreigners owned 23 per cent of the estates of over 50 acres (503,000 out of 2.19 million acres). By World War I, foreign ownership had risen to 13 per cent (711,000 acres).

The combination of debt peonage and foreign money-lending primarily reinforced the cotton economy based on non-capitalist production rather than encouraging capitalist development. To be sure, the debt peonage system created a small pool of wage labourers who could be drawn upon for industrial production – the tarahil. The loans relieved the pressures, however, which would have otherwise forced the mass of peasants to abandon all possibility of continuing small-scale production. The loans therefore held back the development of a vast proletariat by preserving small production. Besides retarding the growth of the potential labour force, the loans retarded local industrial production (a prerequisite to capitalist development) by making cotton cultivation more attractive. The foreign capital was tied to the cotton economy: foreign money was essentially available only for projects that expanded cotton output, rather than being extended on the basis of highest profitability regardless of industry. To draw upon Marxist concepts, the money lent in Egypt during this era was usurers’ capital, not capitalistic credit. While capitalistic credit is used to expand

capitalist production and is extended wherever high rates of profit are to be found, usurers' capital reinforces the non-capitalist system of production to which it is tied. Usurers' capital reinforces the poverty of the producers under the old system by enslaving them in debt without transforming the relations of production to a new system with higher productivity of labour.

Blockage of industrial production 1800–1919

The nineteenth century, which witnessed such an explosion in cotton production, saw Egyptian industrial production actually decline. This drop in industrial output was not due to poverty – Egypt was rich by contemporary standards.¹³ Nor was it due to unfavourable government policies: this section will demonstrate the extensive government support for industry. This section will argue that the principal cause for the lack of industrial development was the pressure, both economic and political, from already established industrial producers in Europe – that is, from the internationalisation of commodity capital.

Muhammad 'Ali's efforts to modernise Egypt's economy included the establishment of many local factories, but these faced great barriers. European merchants not only exported cotton from Egypt; they also imported manufactured goods from Europe. Many of the factories established by 'Ali had higher production costs and lower quality than European products. The domestic textile industry, nevertheless, had become the principal source of cheap cloth by the early 1830s; it employed 30–40,000 workers, or one half the total labour force in 'Ali's factories. Survival of the factories was partly due to their status as state monopolies (dubiously enforced) and to their guaranteed market in the army. Nearly all of the factories closed in the late 1840s, to be replaced by European imports. 'Ali's failure to create modern industry in Egypt was not preordained. While he faced the barrier of uneven development relative to Europe, the unevenness had not yet become so vast as to be unbridgeable. 'Ali might have been able to succeed, as Japan did several decades later when the gap had widened further. The failure of 'Ali's factories was due not only to market forces (cheaper production in Europe) but also to the European powers, who imposed free trade on Egypt by pressuring the Ottoman Sublime Porte to outlaw monopolies and to limit tariffs to 8 per cent. 'Ali was forced to implement these measures in the 1840s. Industry disappeared, not to reappear until the 1920s. The domination of capitalist industry in Europe meant the internationalisation of commodity capital *only*; European industry was openly antagonistic to any potential industrial competitors.

Like 'Ali, later rulers tried to foster increased production *and* independence (economic as well as political) from Europe. These goals were largely contradictory. Thanks to the European textile industry, there was a large demand for cotton for the foreign market. It became

profitable to expand cotton output; but the expansion of cotton exports tied Egypt's economy closer to that of Europe. The emerging Egyptian land-owning class successfully lobbied for massive state expenditures on irrigation works and railroads. These raised Egyptian income, but the loans necessary to finance them tied Egypt to its European creditors. Especially until the establishment of the Mixed Courts in 1875 to handle cases between foreigners and Egyptians, foreigners could make outrageous claims on the government which the government was then forced to honour, due to pressure from the consuls. The greater the profits accruing to the foreigners, the less was available for taxation by the Egyptian government, so the more the government was forced to borrow. The result: ever-growing powers for the European creditors who were closely linked to the cotton merchants. The Europeans enforced the limits on import duties, for tariffs cut into their trade. Given already established European industry, free trade blocked the development of Egyptian industry in spite of repeated attempts to establish industry with state funds.

There is a widespread myth that Egypt's foreign state debt was acquired solely through the extravagance of the Egyptian ruling class. The khedives may have led a decadent life-style, but their foreign loans were at least partially for the expansion of cotton production and even for general capital accumulation. The loans, which totalled about £100 million in 1880, had been raised largely for railroads, irrigation works, and the Suez Canal.¹⁴ Interest on the loans was eating up vast amounts. While the nominal interest was about 4 per cent, the effective interest rate was inflated by the practice of discounting the loans so that the Treasury received roughly two-thirds of the nominal value. The khedives were caught by their contradictory goals; they wanted to accumulate quickly and to become independent of Europe (and Turkey). They hoped to use loans to fund accumulation to break free of European domination, but they ended up reinforcing that domination. The large foreign-held public debt forced the khedives to encourage cotton commodity-production and more specialisation in producing raw materials for export.

As the government's financial situation deteriorated, European control escalated. The 1878 Commission of Inquiry report resulted in the hiring of 1,300 Europeans for the government service. Isma'il, rebuffed in his attempts to resist the encroachments on his powers, was forced out in 1879, to be replaced as khedive by the more pliant Tawfiq. Tawfiq quickly lost control of the situation. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani's protonationalist agitation (heavily laced with Islamic revivalism) struck a chord among the masses of small landowners threatened by the land seizure law of 1876. When agitators in the army (led by Colonel 'Urabi) joined with Afghani's forces, the revolt threatened European control, and the British invaded – and remained in effective control for over sixty years. Legally, however, the British had few powers for most of these years: Egypt was a province of the Ottoman Empire until 1914 and independent after 1936.

British policy was aptly summarised by Lord Cromer, Consul-General from 1882 to 1907. The first priority was balancing the budget and then reducing taxes. Over the first twenty years, taxes were cut a total of £E1.6 million per annum, which Cromer said meant a drop in per capita taxation from £E1.030 to 0.787¹⁵ (The Egyptian pound was equivalent to sterling until 1945). This tax reduction implied a massive cutback in state expenditures, especially since £E79.5 million (out of a total of £E241 million spent in the first twenty years of the occupation) went for interest on the debt.

Cromer's second priority was, 'All of the large sums of money which the government could spare were devoted to remunerative public works.' The British consistently pushed every available penny into expanding the irrigation system. British engineers designed many new canals and drainage networks; the first Aswan Dam was built (1898–1902) at a cost of £E3.5 million. The railroad and telegraph systems were expanded and rates slashed by up to 50 per cent. By 1913, expenditures on the irrigation system, railroads, and telegraphs made up £E6 million out of the £E13 million budget.

The public works expenditures were an expression of the oft-stated assumption that Egypt depended on the production of cotton. Contemporary opinion, Egyptian as well as British, assumed that the fertility of Egypt's soil guaranteed its prosperity. When cotton yields began to decline around 1900, there was intense debate about how to restore the yields. No-one suggested diversification of the economy to cut dependence on cotton. The promotion of agriculture was not some sinister plot by the British to block industrialisation; it was an effort to govern in the best interests of the Egyptian people. However, the result was the same: there was essentially no Egyptian industry in the period before World War I.

The lack of industry is often mistakenly attributed to the free trade policies of the British. A famous example: when the first modern textile mill since Muhammad 'Ali's time was opened in 1899, Cromer promptly insisted on an 8 per cent excise tax to offset the 8 per cent import duty. Lacking government assistance and faced with negative effective tariff protection (since it imported its machinery), the mill closed in 1907. Cromer may have been convinced of the virtues of free trade and laissez-faire, but the point is that these principles did not hinder the government from providing substantial support to the cotton sector. The government was hardly neutral between industry and agriculture. It was pouring vast resources into infrastructure and technical assistance for agriculture, while at the same time it was not willing to make the slightest effort to help industrialists.¹⁶

British opposition to government aid for industry was of major importance in blocking the development of capitalist relations of production in Egypt from 1882 to 1919. The emergence of capitalist relations was also blocked by other British policies – policies which reflected the internationalisation of commodity capital. Encouragement

The development of capitalism in Egypt

of cotton exports, (coupled with the expansion of the European textile industry) reinforced the cotton sector, reducing the desirability of investment in other sectors. The increasing British technological lead over Egypt made the establishment of local industry progressively more difficult. European competition displaced local producers of many commodities; the traditional guilds generally disappeared by the mid 1800s. The rule of cotton was not to be the first stop along a road of development which would lead to eventual industrialisation. The rising income of the cotton economy translated into decreased production in many other sectors. The lack of linkages between cotton production and the rest of the Egyptian economy was not the accidental product of Egyptian institutional structure, as Issawi implies. All-round development, especially the rise of industry, could come only when there had occurred some fundamental change in the relation between Egypt and the world economy.

Foreign capital and local industry 1919–1945

Following nearly a century of expanding cotton exports and of reliance on European imports as the source of manufactured goods, the Egyptian economy shifted gears after World War I. Cotton exports stagnated and local industrial production substituted for imports of consumption goods. The last sixty years in Egypt have seen the development of capitalism in industry and agriculture. The main thesis of this article is that Egyptian capitalism developed largely due to foreign capital.

In the last few decades, a major theme of radical writers on development has been that foreign capital retards the industrialisation of the backward countries. Baran provided the classic statement of this theory in *The Political Economy of Growth*. In *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, Frank developed the thesis by arguing that industrialisation in Latin America occurred when, and to the extent that, the hold of the metropolis over the periphery weakened. Amin updated the theory to say that Third World industrialisation is the produce of successful struggle against foreign capital. In *The Arab Nation*, Amin writes that Arab industrialisation could begin only after 'the national bourgeoisie... imposed a revision of the international division of labour on imperialism.' There is some truth in this recent radical view: in the early period of the internationalisation of capital, foreign capital did oppose the development of local industry. This article will show that in the later period, however, foreign capital actively promotes capitalist development. The recent radical view, with its one-sided emphasis on the retarding effects of foreign capital, is as mistaken as the earlier view of Lenin and Marx which stressed foreign capital's contribution to capitalist development.¹⁷

Foreign capital invested in Egyptian industry during this period

because of the rise of imperialism. Finance capital came to dominate industrial capital in the advanced countries. Industrial capital was interested in the backward areas only as a source of raw materials and as a market for output. Industrial capitalists were not prepared to invest in the backward areas because they were interested in the accumulation of capital in their own enterprises. Such investment requires that each individual capital be of sufficient size to undertake large and risky ventures overseas. Finance capital is characterised by huge corporations which have access to finance through banks and credit markets and which can spread the risk of chancy but potentially highly profitable ventures. The giant firms of the modern era have often saturated their local market, and must turn to new markets overseas to sustain growth. In short, finance capitalists do not stay limited to their initial industry, firm or country; they invest in whatever project offers the highest rate of return. Therefore, when profit rates in Europe dropped during the 1930s, British and French capitalists increased their investments in Egypt, where profits had stayed high.

The growth of Egyptian industry, while aided by the local nationalist movement and by state assistance, depended primarily on foreign capital because only it could provide the extra foreign exchange necessary for the import of machinery required to establish industry. Foreign capital prepared the way for local industry in an indirect way as well. The cotton economy, the product of foreign capital's demand for industrial raw materials, had created a pool of potential wage labourers by dispossessing some peasants of any right to the land and thereby forcing them into wage labour. The cotton economy had also brought into Egypt bourgeois ideas, including nationalism, which was a chief reason for local support for industrial growth. The main story of this section is not about the indirect and ideological role of foreign capital, however, but about its direct, more narrowly economic role.

While the rise of industry was certainly facilitated by the changing attitude of landowners and merchants – now more willing to accumulate capital by investment in industrial production – Egyptian industry was essentially established by foreign capital. Figures quoted by Crouchley¹⁸ indicate the great importance of foreign-owned industries. In 1934, 77 per cent of the assets of manufacturing and commercial corporations and 85 per cent of the assets of all firms were in companies with foreign participation. This overstates the importance of foreign capital in that the data refer to corporations only. Gritly estimates that over 50 per cent of the industrial capital was in corporations, presumably including most of the modern, non-handicraft production. At least 35 per cent of all industrial capital was, therefore, in firms with foreign participation. But Crouchley's data understate the importance of foreign capital in at least two ways. Foreign-owned producers, even more than other large producers, had access to more bank loans than did small producers, so that foreign-owned firms would have had an even greater percentage of total capital

than their percentage of share capital. Second, an important group in the establishment of local Egyptian industry were foreign citizens living in Egypt. When the Egyptian Federation of Industry was established in 1922, the eleven directors all lived in Egypt but only three were Egyptian citizens.¹⁹ None were representatives of foreign corporations. There were 226,000 Egyptian residents listed in the 1927 Census who were citizens of European countries. Many of these people had lived in Egypt for decades. It seems reasonable to include these local residents who were foreign citizens among the holders of foreign capital. But in Egyptian government statistics assets held by foreign citizens living in Egypt are included as 'locally-held assets'. The figures therefore understate the extent of foreign control over Egyptian industry.

In theory, all local firms including those with foreign participation were controlled by Egyptians. Progressively tougher laws were enacted in the 1930s and 1940s requiring Egyptianisation of corporations. The 1947 law required 51 per cent of the capital, 40 per cent of the board of directors, 75 per cent of the salaried employees and 90 per cent of the workers to be Egyptian. But the laws were frequently ignored or obeyed in appearance only. Gritly makes clear that locals had little part in day-to-day management: 'It is frequently alleged that the foreign controlling interests retain the substance of power while the Egyptians sitting on the board, being straw men, are suffered for compliance with the letter of the law.' All in all, Egyptian industry was largely owned and run by foreigners, and there is precious little evidence that foreign capital was opposed to industrialisation.

Unlike many radical theories, this theory of the internationalisation of capital implies that industrialisation is not possible without the support of foreign capital. The only possible sources of technology and expertise are foreign. The import of manufactured goods had destroyed their local production, so that the only source of machine goods was overseas. This economic reality forced Egyptian nationalists to work with foreign capital. Bank Misr, which was founded out of the nationalist outpouring of the 1919 revolution, was initially opposed to any cooperation with foreign capital. By the 1930s, when the real industrial boom began, Bank Misr had shifted its attitude. It was forced to seek foreign technology and to take foreign partners who threatened to set up local production competing with Bank Misr firms.

As both manufactured consumption goods and machine goods had to be imported, the rise of capital accumulation in the 1920s and 1930s raised the demand for imports. There was no corresponding growth in exports. The only source of export earnings was the export of raw materials (cotton), yet the demand for raw materials was no longer growing so rapidly. In short, the rise of industry meant pressure on the balance of payments. Without foreign money capital, imports of goods for the new industries could not expand. It was Egypt's good fortune to enter this stage in the internationalisation of capital with a large reserve of foreign exchange which could speed the initial capital accumulation.

During World War I and its immediate aftermath, the value of cotton exports soared as the price of cotton rose. The increased revenue was used to liquidate debt and accumulate holdings of some £E150 million in foreign investments. These funds cushioned Egypt's fall during the late 1920s and 1930s as the price of cotton dropped precipitously because European industry ceased its expansion. In the 1930s, average cotton exports were £E23.4 million, down from the £E43.1 million average of 1915–1929.

During the 1930s, Egypt experienced a sharp foreign exchange squeeze. Since the Egyptian pound was fully convertible to sterling until World War II, the drop in export earnings meant an immediate drop in importing capacity, there being no possibility for currency manipulation. The entire brunt of the drop in imports was borne by consumption goods, whose imports fell by over 70 per cent in the 1930s compared to the 1920s. Local production filled only half the £E30 million drop in consumer imports. From at least £E7 million in 1929, industrial value added rose by no more than £E18 million to a maximum of £E25 million in 1940. In other words, Egyptian industrialisation in the 1930s occurred in spite of a considerable drop in income, *contra* the conventional theory that industry is constrained by the extent of the market. Furthermore, industry was able to expand in spite of a sharp fall in export earnings, *contra* theories of export-led growth.

The progress of import-substituting industrialisation – or, as seen from the perspective of the advanced countries, export-substituting investment – was substantial. By the outbreak of World War II, Egyptian industry provided all of the local consumption of sugar, alcohol, salt, and cigarettes; 90 per cent of shoes, cement, and soap; 80 per cent of furniture and matches; 40 per cent of textiles. Egypt was largely self-sufficient in most consumer goods even before World War II gave a great boost to local industry.

Nationalism, colonialism and capitalism 1919–1936

The growth of industry was greatly aided by the rise of the nationalist movement. The nationalists called for the establishment of Egyptian industry to reduce dependence on Europe. Public boycotts of English banks, department stores and products were organised in the early 1920s at times of Anglo-Egyptian crisis.²⁰ The nationalists also pressed the government to aid industry. Despite the defeat of the Wafd (then a nationalist party) by the Palace and the British, the government broke with its past practice and began to aid industry. The 8 per cent excise tax on locally-produced textiles was repealed in 1925. Tariffs on manufactured goods rose steeply in the early 1930s when Egypt gained control over tariff policy. When Bank Misr ran short of funds in 1926, Parliament entrusted it with public deposits rather than let it go under. State aid was undoubtedly an important determinant of the pace of

local capital accumulation; it is not clear, however, that this aid was essential. Tariff barriers are often said to be crucial to initial industrialisation. Yet in Egypt industries were at times established before any tariff protection existed. The key factor was the rise of finance capital ready to invest in profitable ventures in any sector of the local economy.

A major institution in organising the rise of Egyptian industry was Bank Misr. Founded in 1920 by Egyptian nationalists (*Misr* is the Arabic name for Egypt), the Bank had deposits of £E3,190 thousand by 1925. These funds came largely from landlords. Furthermore, large landlords were the main investors in the industries set up by the bank.²¹ Bank Misr was established precisely to foster local industry. Initially, it set up firms with little regard to profitability, so that it sometimes ran short of funds. Through such firms as one of the world's largest textile mills, printing presses, button factories, linen-spinning mills, Bank Misr dominated the entire Egyptian economy until its nationalisation in 1960.

Marxist writings about the Third World often argue that economic development, especially industrialisation, will be led by the 'national bourgeoisie'. This layer is said to be composed of small capitalists who are developing industry and whose interests are antagonistic to imperialism. It is distinguished from the 'comprador bourgeoisie' – the large bourgeoisie, based on trade, tied to foreign capital, and totally reactionary.²² This distinction makes little sense in the Egyptian context. The richest people in Egypt were heavily involved in the Misr group and thereby in promoting industrialisation; the so-called comprador bourgeoisie was actively developing industry. Furthermore, the industrial wing of the bourgeoisie sought the cooperation of the British imperialists and of foreign firms. The economically 'progressive' capitalists were not interested in an anti-imperialist alliance with the popular masses.

The Egyptian ruling class was indeed split, but not along 'national' versus 'comprador' lines. One section of the ruling class was making the transition to capitalist relations proper. This section had its origins in those landlords or merchants who were moving into industry or into capitalistic control over agricultural production. The other section of the Egyptian ruling class remained rooted in commerce and landowning. It was this section which poured its savings into the purchase of land, to the disgust of the industrialising bourgeoisie which decried the speculation in rural and urban land. Though this section had been largely displaced economically, it retained political power until 1952. The Palace group (which retained control of the state administration even during the brief periods of Wafd rule) was most obviously controlled by the large landowners, but even the Wafd was opposed to a progressive land tax or to land reform. Membership in the Senate was open only to those owning over 150 acres. With such political power, the landlords could win substantial aid from the state. For example, the Agricultural Credit Bank set up with state aid in 1931 had £E12.6

million in outstanding short-term loans in 1951 for seeds, fertiliser, and cultivation expenses. The state was also providing substantial aid to industry, which reflects the unity between the two sections of the ruling class. The two sections were different moments in a process of transition to a capitalist class, rather than fundamentally antagonistic groups. While overstating the unity of the two groups, Amin was generally correct when he wrote in *L'Egypte nasserienne*, 'The Egyptian bourgeoisie can in no way be distinguished from the bureaucracy . . . [The Misr group's] success brought the support of the landed aristocracy, which thereby began to "bourgeoisify" itself.'

The British clung to their colonial hold on Egypt until 1956 in spite of militant nationalist opposition.²³ After crushing the revolution of 1919, the British slowly ceded some of their rights. British troops remained until 1953, including a formal military occupation during World War II; they left only to return during the tripartite aggression of Britain, France, and Israel. According to radical theory, this colonial occupation should have entailed suppression of local industry for the benefit of importers from the mother country. This did not happen: British firms were actively involved in the growth of Egyptian industry. British colonial control was not to *prevent* Egyptian industrialisation but to *guide* it along lines suitable to England. The British government wanted to guarantee British firms a major role in the new industries. This policy meant encouraging Britain's local allies, the landlords, to transform themselves into capitalists – a slow process. The governments of other advanced powers were also eager to help firms from their countries. The US government championed political rights for Egypt and land reform. The former would reduce the British advantage; the latter would destroy the landlords' power, which would both speed up industrialisation and shift power to the industrialists who were less friendly to the British. Local nationalists such as the Free Officers responded with friendship towards the US.

Egypt's experience lends no support to the conventional radical thesis that economic development depends upon the success of a militant nationalist movement or upon state planning – a point to which we shall return below.

Agriculture becomes capitalist 1919–1970

One side of the penetration of capitalism into Egypt was the growth of industry. This section examines the other side, the growth of capitalist agriculture as distinct from non-capitalist commodity producing agriculture which was the most important at the turn of the century. Since most Egyptians lived in the countryside, capitalism cannot be said to have fully transformed Egypt until it dominated agriculture. The first thesis of this section is that agricultural capitalism developed in Egypt about the same time as the rise of industry, culminating in the land

reform of the early 1950s. The theory that Egyptian agriculture is traditional or neo-feudal in character is shown to be inaccurate. Both rural and urban Egypt were capitalist by the late 1950s. The second thesis is that the motivation for and the effect of the reform was to encourage the development of capitalism. The land reform was not meant to be nor was it a step towards rural socialism. While the development of capitalism in agriculture was not the *direct* result of the internationalisation of capital, foreign capitalists and foreign powers certainly supported the reform, and they were important in the victory of the Free Officers who were dedicated to reform.

The transformation of Egyptian agriculture was important for continued industrial growth. The debt peonage system impeded industrial development in several ways. Debt bondage reduced the availability of labourers from the countryside. The landlords diverted income which could potentially have been used for investment into consumption and into land purchase. Rather than increasing productive capital, funds spent on land purchase only raised land prices. The Egyptian Federation of Industry *Yearbooks* in the late 1940s were full of increasingly shrill attacks on the pouring of money into land purchase rather than industrial expansion. The 1952 *Yearbook* was effusive about the land reform: 'the land reform could be one of the finest pledges for the future of our industry.' A similar sentiment was voiced by 'Abd al-Galil al-Emari, Finance Minister (cited by Naguib in *Egypt's Destiny*). He explained how the reform reduced the desirability of investment in land in the mid-1950s, thereby encouraging the accumulation of capital in industry:

'The Egyptian economy has suffered until now from an obstacle that has prevented its development – the tendency of the wealthy to invest their capital in the farmlands . . . This form of investment has not created wealth; it had merely concentrated the wealth already present. Thus Egyptian farmlands have become a bottomless pit, absorbing the bulk of our capital . . . The principal objectives of the land reform project are to direct new capital investment toward land reclamation and commercial and industrial enterprises.'

The political leadership was explicitly aware of the importance of the land reform for industrial growth. Naguib, the first leader of the Free Officers' government (who was ousted largely for his failure to move quickly on the land reform) wrote, 'In essence the reform's basic objective is to force a transition from real estate to industry. Egyptians are land-crazy. This passion must be checked; their accumulated capital must be fed into the industrial sector.'

Because land reform was such a spur to industry, it was heavily encouraged by western advisors. Warriner maintains that one of the main reasons for the reform was that 'land reform was very much in the air internationally. America's advocacy of land reform was said to be a green light, and State Department influence certainly played a part in the preparation of the decree.'²⁴ Part of the reason for US support for

land reform was the desire to replace declining British imperialism. By supporting the reform the US helped strengthen the industrialist section of the ruling class, which was already inclined to look to the US for support. Besides the economic motivation of freeing capital for industrial investment, the land reform was meant to and did reinforce the power of the industrialists by destroying the landlords' power and by muting peasant protest.

In the decades before the 1952 land reform, there had been considerable movement towards capitalist relations in the countryside. The direct producers were losing control over the means of production and over the production process, while there was emerging a class which directed production and which owned the tools and the product. The 1947 Population Census indicated that labourers were probably one-third of the agricultural population. Another one-fifth, the cultivators on leased land, were close to being wage labourers. Whether the land was in an 'izba or rented for cash, the tenant had essentially no control over the cotton crop. The landlord's agent dictated the timing of all operations, provided the equipment, and commanded the labour force while production was in swing. The oft-cited data on landholdings hide the trend toward capitalist production. The data on landholdings are misleading for several reasons. First, an individual may hold land in several villages; each plot in a separate village would be counted as a different landholding. Second, many farms were sub-divided into smaller landholdings which were rented out separately. Some of these small plots were owned by absentee landlords such as small traders from the cities. The tenants of these plots were generally farmers who ran large-scale operations of over 20 acres. These farms relied on wage labour. Unfortunately, the only data available on farm size are from 1957, after the initial wave of the land reform. Still, they present a striking picture of concentration: more than half of the land was in the 4 per cent of the farms which had over 20 acres.

The final smashing of pre-capitalist relations in agriculture took place with the land reform proclaimed in 1952. Out of a total cultivated area of six million acres, 145,000 were sold at a great discount in lots of less than 10 acres by owners eager for cash instead of government bonds. (Such sales were banned in October 1953.) It is likely that much of the 160,000 acres owned by foreigners in 1954 was sold in this way. In addition, 877,000 acres were distributed by the reform authorities by 1966 (348,000 of which were disbursed from 1952 to 1961).

The breakup of the absentee-owned estates resulted in two forms of land ownership. One was semi-capitalist farms owned by rich ex-peasants. These farms, about 10 to 20 acres, were worked by family labour supplemented with some permanent workers and many seasonal workers during the peak seasons. The other form of land ownership encouraged by the reform was state-run cooperatives. Land distributed under the reform was organised into cooperatives in which membership was mandatory and which were tightly controlled by the state. 'The new

occupants of the expropriated estates were made to join the "local" cooperative operating within the boundaries of the village where the holdings were situated. They were made to sign an undertaking, agreeing to purchase from them all the requirements (seeds, fertilisers, insecticides, etc) for the operation of their holdings, and to dispose of all their produce through cooperative channels.²⁵ While the cooperatives were theoretically run by elected boards, actual power rested in the hands of a supervisor. The supervisor exercised almost complete control over the cotton production process. He decided when the land was to be plowed, irrigated, and sprayed; he did not allow the peasants to enter the fields for harvest until he gave the word (for fear they would steal the crop); he sold the cotton, with the peasants getting little, if anything, from the receipts after deductions for taxes, debt repayment, seed, fertiliser, etc. The peasants lost control over the means of production, over the product, and over the production process. They had, in essence, become an agricultural proletariat.

While the cooperatives were formed largely to maintain productivity, they also had the effect of creating the nucleus of a state capitalist bourgeoisie in the countryside. When the reform decree was issued, there was concern that the parcellation of land into small plots would reduce productivity. The land was distributed, however, only when a cooperative was formed (implying a slow pace of distribution). The beneficiaries received their land in three pieces, corresponding to the triennial rotation system. The cooperative fields were then laid out in large blocks (made up of pieces owned by many fallahin), each of which was under the same crop. This facilitated the centralised control exercised by the Agrarian Reform staff – a staff largely drawn from the academic-intellectual petty bourgeoisie. The cooperatives were in no way socialist in the classical sense, that is, socialism as workers' control over the means of production. The direct producers had little if any control over the production process, in spite of their nominal ownership of the land.

State influence over the rest of agriculture also increased from the late 1950s on. In the early 1960s, the government made a major effort to extend the system of supervised cooperatives to non-reform land and to consolidate the land within each village into several large blocks within which each landowner would be required to plant the same crop.²⁶ The plan led to increased output where implemented, but it did not spread far because of the intense opposition from small landowners who were forced to get into debt to buy food during the years when their land was in a block devoted to cotton production. A more important way in which the government controlled agriculture was through the ever-expanding system of compulsory deliveries. The system was begun in the early 1950s with compulsory delivery of wheat. Marketing of cotton through cooperatives, begun in 1953, was made compulsory for all cotton production in 1965. The system was extended soon thereafter to other crops. Not surprisingly, the price for compulsory deliveries was

20-50 per cent below the free market price. Besides being an effective system of taxation, government marketing extended state control over the agricultural sector in that the state could heavily influence the output of each crop by changing the compulsory delivery price. The state, in sum, had a major say in determining the output mix on 85 per cent of the land and it directly controlled another 15 per cent. The claim that this state influence was socialist will be disputed below, where the Nasserist state is shown to be under the control of a small elite, i.e., not to be a workers' state.

By the late Nasser period, Egyptian agriculture was thoroughly capitalist. There was a large sector of private capitalism, with farmers who relied on seasonal and permanent wage labourers to supplement the labour of family members. There was a smaller but still significant sector of state capitalism. This was a great change from the 1910s, when agriculture was organised along debt peonage lines. The rise of capitalist agriculture occurred in roughly the same period as the beginning of Egyptian industry: the decades following World War I up to 1956. The link is more than casual though not necessarily causal. The industrialists encouraged land reform because they thought it would free capital for investment in industry. The reform was by no means a step towards socialism in the countryside.

The character of Egyptian society in the late 1950s

The previous sections have shown that capitalism grew in Egypt in the decades before 1956. This section will present some statistical evidence about the class structure of Egypt in the late 1950s. The main thesis is that capitalism was overwhelmingly dominant in Egypt at that time. Prominent Egyptian radicals, especially Amin and Hussein, have argued that most Egyptians in the late 1950s were irregularly employed and marginal to the economy – what they call 'proletarianised masses'. Hussein, who often cites Amin's data, explicitly draws the conclusion that capitalism had not developed much in Egypt by 1957. Hussein implies that the allegedly low level of development is due to the influence of foreign capital. This section will show that, contrary to Amin and Hussein, Egypt had undergone considerable capitalist development. The disappearance of pre-capitalist forms of production had been accompanied by growth of capitalist industry and agriculture.

Amin's presentation suffers from several methodological flaws. To mention only the most serious: he assumed that the entire rural population was engaged in agriculture, despite extensive data to the contrary. Since 'landless peasants' was calculated as a residual category, this error greatly inflated the number of landless. Furthermore, the landless were treated as a homogeneous mass, even though some were regular wage labourers, some were tenants, and yet others were temporary labourers. A similar error was made with respect to the urban

unemployed: labour force figures were deducted from the urban adult population, and the residual was included as 'proletarianised masses'. There was only the most cursory discussion of the treatment of family members, which is a vexing question not only for urban families (where wives generally do not work for a wage) but also for rural families (where many relatives, such as younger brothers, sons-in-law and wives, work without pay for the head of the household).

Based on assumptions which give an upward bias to the number of 'proletarianised masses' and a downward bias to the number of proletarians and semi-proletarians, one can make a rough estimate of Egypt's class composition in the late 1950's.²⁷ the picture is quite different from that painted by Amin and Hussein. The proletariat (in the strict sense) was a large social force in Egypt, at least 30 per cent of the population. The proletariat broadly speaking includes another 50 per cent (7 million), for a total of 80 per cent. This broader group includes three social layers left out of the more narrowly defined proletariat. First, there are the 3.5 million rural temporary labourers. Most economists (Hansen excepted) argue that there is extensive disguised unemployment in Egyptian agriculture. This conclusion ignores the highly seasonal nature of work patterns in agriculture.²⁸ The rural temporary labourers are largely proletarianised, for they are in no sense dependent on pre-capitalist production processes. Under the tarhila system, they work for a contractor on public works projects for 4–8 weeks at a stretch, usually four times a year, plus three months in agriculture, a total of seven months' intense work per year. Second, the 2.5 million farmers with less than 5 acres and third, the million urban marginal masses depended primarily on wage income, so these two groups also should be included among the proletariat. The proletariat was certainly the largest social class.

Egypt had certainly changed much from the days of the cotton economy. The graph of the value of Egypt's cotton exports (see Clawson, *The Internationalization of Capital in the Middle East*) is certainly dramatic. From 1880 to the early 1920s the trend is steadily up. From the 1920s on the trend is down, with a particularly sharp drop during the 15 years of depression and war (1930–1945). Perhaps this is simplistic, but it certainly supports the basic thesis of the present article, namely, that Egypt's economic development since the penetration of European capitalism has undergone two distinct stages. During the second stage, the stage of all-round capitalist development, cotton exports stagnated while industrial production increased threefold from the early 1930s to the late 1950s (and sixfold by the late 1970s). This record is hard to reconcile with the radical theory that foreign capital blocks industrial development, especially since foreign capital was the principal initiator of Egyptian industry.

State capitalism in Egypt under Nasser

In contrast to the argument that the Nasser years represent a socialist transition and a break from the previous capitalist stagnation, the next two sections will argue that Egypt under Nasser basically continued on the same pattern of development as before: capitalist industrialisation. In order to demonstrate that the Egyptian economy was state-capitalist during the 1960s, this section will show that the state owned the principal means of production and tightly controlled the rest, and that the economy was capitalist. The first point argues against the notion that the state merely acted on behalf of private capitalists who were actually in control; the second, against the theory that Egypt was socialist. Once the continuing capitalist nature of the Egyptian economy has been demonstrated, we can turn (in the next section) to the character of its ties with the world economy.

The Nasser regime was at first quite sympathetic to private enterprise, but it became progressively more dedicated to state-capitalism from the mid-1950s on. In 1956–57 there was a dramatic shift in the state's involvement in the economy. From encouragement of private capital accumulation through infrastructure and through loans, the state moved to take complete control over investment and substantial control over production. In the early years of the July Revolution, the government had concentrated on increased loans to industry through the state-controlled Industrial Bank (££2 million in loans by 1958, ££4.2 million by 1960). There had also been substantial expenditures on infrastructure, largely through the Permanent Council for the Development of National Production (PCDNP). It was after the events of 1955–56 (Nasser's prominent role at Bandung, the Israeli raid on Gaza, the abortive agreement with the US-UK-IBRD on financing the High Dam, the Czech arms deal, the Canal nationalisation, the tripartite aggression) that the state asserted control over investment, because of the conviction that private capital – especially foreign capital – retarded growth. The government's actions were not part of some carefully thought-out, long-prepared plan to increase state power over the economy.

Once the political decision had been made that the state had to direct investment in order to step up the pace of capital accumulation, the wheels of bureaucracy moved into high gear. A National Planning Committee was formed. It supervised the selection of projects for an industrial plan, based largely on proposals made by the now dissolved PCDNP. Government participation in investment rose to 30–40 per cent. Private investment was carefully regulated to steer investment towards industry. Real estate speculation (a major activity since the land reform) was curbed by requiring permits for new buildings and by regulating rents. Mixed committees of businessmen and government officials were established to draw up detailed plans; distinguished foreign experts were brought in. The first plan was issued in the fall of 1959.

The plan, which ignored the advice of experts and businessmen, was quite absurd. In 'Le financement des investissements' Samir Amin pointed out the fictional assumptions necessary to 'produce' adequate finance for the massive anticipated expenditures. The plan implicitly assumed that household savings would rise from £E45 million in 1958 to £E81 million per annum and that households' liquidity preferences were so high that demand for bank notes would rise £E37 million over the plan period (bank-notes pay no interest and need not be 'repaid', unlike government bonds). The plan assumed that 84 per cent of the increase in consumption over the plan period would be for industrial goods produced in Egypt. Any drop in this percentage would require extra imports of agricultural goods, exacerbating the foreign exchange problem. And it was quite a problem – the only way the plan closed the balance of payments gap was by assuming credits for industry from eastern-bloc countries equal to twice the loans for the High Dam. In short, the plan was not based on economic reality, but on the government's determination to increase the rate of industrial growth. The increased state intervention in the economy was primarily motivated by the widespread conviction in Egypt that private capital was unable, if not unwilling, to increase output rapidly.

State control was progressively extended after 1956, with a major leap in 1961, when extensive nationalisation consolidated control over production as well as investment. Already in 1956, the holdings of British and French capitalists had been nationalised without compensation; 31 firms with 12 per cent of total industrial output and 10 per cent of the industrial labour force were under the newly established Economic Organisation in 1958. Progressively greater restraints were placed upon Bank Misr, culminating in its nationalisation in 1960, at which time the bank controlled up to one fifth of all industrial output. The stage was set for the nationalisation of all the major industrial and financial institutions in July 1961, followed by the sequestration of the property of 167 wealthy Egyptians in October 1961. Over the next few years, these laws were progressively extended through additional nationalisation and sequestration, reduction in the compensation paid, increasing control over the few remaining private enterprises, etc.

By the late 1960s, the government effectively controlled Egyptian industry. Three-fourths of output and half of employment, including about four-fifths of employment in factories with over ten workers, was in public-sector firms. The private sector employment was in enterprises 'with generally much lower levels of technology and productivity,' especially areas with low capital requirements (pottery, shoemaking, handwoven textiles). Industry was an important part of the Egyptian scene, with over 12 per cent of total employment. Industrial employment in 1970/71 was 1,053 thousand out of a total reported (meaning male) employment of 8,506 thousand. In 1966/67, out of total civilian non-agricultural employment of 3,769 thousand, 1,035 (27 per cent) were in the public sector.²⁹ In short, the state

dominated the urban Egyptian economy, owning all the large-scale enterprises and banks and closely regulating the rest (imports, for instance, required a government license from 1964 on). Coupled with the information given above about the state's important role in agriculture, the evidence that the state controlled the economy is compelling.

To demonstrate that Egypt under Nasser was capitalist, we must set forth the features which distinguish capitalism from socialism. We will use the concept of socialism set forth by Marx in *Critique of the Gotha Programme* and by Lenin in *State and Revolution*, that is, workers' control over society, with increasing replacement of special state and bureaucratic organs by the organised people and replacement of markets and economic inequality by distribution based on need. The three fundamental features of capitalism are: first, production for a market by units which are forced through competition to maximise profits; second, a large group of people who are 'doubly free' in Marx's phrase: free to work where they wish and free of any other means of making a living; and third, control over the means of production by a small group of people.³⁰ All of these are compatible with state ownership of the means of production. Engels, in *Anti-Dühring*, expected state ownership to replace private capital:

'The official representative of capitalist society – the state – will ultimately have to undertake the direction of production... The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it proceeds to the taking over of the productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wage-workers – proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is rather brought to a head.'

In Nasser's Egypt, control over the means of production was centralised in the hands of a small group of state officials, fulfilling one of the three requirements for capitalism. This group was centred on the professionals – military officers, academics and technicians of the pre-1952 regime. The old bourgeoisie was largely destroyed by the nationalisation.

The direct producers had neither political power nor control over production. The sole legal party, the Arab Socialist Union (ASU), set up in 1962, was theoretically an organ for the workers and peasants. In fact, it was an elaborate mechanism for containing mass initiative, for checking up on local administrators, and for integrating the old power structure at the village level into the new society. For instance, in each factory there were workers' committees set up to replace unions. Not only were these committees dominated by the technical-managerial staff, but they had few powers and rarely functioned except in moments of tension. In spite of the law limiting the term of office to two years, union leadership did not change from 1964 to the early 1970s. 'It is no

wonder therefore that a number of these career unionists turned into bureaucratic leaders who overspent on offices, buildings and luxuries, while suppressing different opinions or initiatives from below.' The elite paid itself well: the bottom 43 per cent of public employees had salaries of £E84–300 per year, while the top 0.13 per cent (1,035 people) had £E1200–2000 and the next 1.1 per cent (8,889 people) had £E684–1,440. In addition, 'the net consumption of higher bureaucrats should not be measured simply by the purchasing power of their salaries and allowances . . . "managerial perquisites" may include items like cars, houses, social, sporting and holiday services and shopping facilities.'³¹

It is tempting to argue that the academic-intellectual-military petty bourgeoisie seized economic power because they wanted to enrich themselves as individuals. This is the core of Hussein's argument. In reference to the mid-1960s, he writes, 'They [the state-capitalist bourgeoisie] tried particularly to organise the country's economic life toward satisfying their thirst for the highest personal profits rather than promoting a much-needed last-ditch economic development effort.' If the petty bourgeoisie were motivated simply by personal greed, it is hard to see what would weld them together. Each individual would be more likely to seek alliances with some big bourgeois (as indeed they did throughout the 1930s and 1940s). The new petty bourgeoisie was transformed into a powerful political force by an ideology, an ideology that allowed them to gather the support of the proletariat and the proletarianised masses.

That ideology was nationalism of the modern sort, with its heavy emphasis on economic development. Nasser's 1953 *Philosophy of the Revolution* is animated principally by political nationalism, with emphasis on the removal of the last vestiges of British colonialism. The 1962 National Charter is primarily a document of economic nationalism, with many references to the 'battle for production': 'production is the criterion by which the dynamism of the Arab will be judged'. Private capitalism is seen as incapable of mobilising national resources; growth can be maximised only through 'people's control over all the tools of production and over directing the surplus according to a definite plan'. Nationalisation was seen by the petty bourgeoisie as a mechanism to increase the pace of development – thoughts of personal enrichment were not uppermost in their minds.

Once in power, however, many in the new elite decided that they wanted personal wealth, not the public good. The slow rate of economic growth after the mid-1960s partly reflected the increasing corruption and diminishing dedication to effective state planning. The zeal for doubling per capita income in twenty years was gone, replaced by the desire to carve out a comfortable niche. By 1970, the managers of state firms had turned to profiteering and to the black market in order to increase their incomes. 'Collusion between managers in the public sector – some of whom entered into disguised partnership with private

merchants or entrepreneurs – and their sub-contractors leads to significant losses of public money.³² The state bourgeoisie's efforts at personal aggrandisement were in inverse proportion to their commitment to the ideology of state capitalism. The Soviets, aware that their influence depended on the success of state capitalism, made a major effort to encourage the ASU. They saw the ASU as essential for the spreading of state-capitalist ideology, as well as checking the appropriation of wealth by individuals (party officials would enforce the discipline of accumulation for the state). The Soviet effort was unsuccessful: state capitalism never sank ideological roots in Egypt.

Control over the means of production by a new elite satisfied one of the three requirements for capitalism. A second requirement, the existence of a large group forced to work for wages, was provided by the developments in the countryside during the first half of this century, when millions of producers lost their land and were converted into wage-labourers of semi-wage-labourers. The land reform cemented this process; it did not create a new set of independent farmers: 342,000 families, representing at most 2 million out of a rural population of 18 million, received land by 1970.³³ In 1965, only 1.2 million landowners – roughly one-third of the rural population – held 5 or more acres, the minimum needed to sustain a family. As shown above, many of these titular landowners were in practice largely under the orders of the cooperative staff. The result was migration to the cities in search of employment. Among the 13 million urban dwellers in 1970, certainly under 2 million were in any way economically independent, including small peddlars and craftsmen. The vast majority of the Egyptian population had to work for wages. They had no share in the income of the state ownership of the factories.

The third aspect of capitalism is production for a market by competing units each of which maximises its profit. Egyptian production was clearly for markets rather than for direct use. Profit maximisation was to some extent imposed on each public sector firm. O'Brain argues that the public sector managers were evaluated on the basis of the profits produced by their enterprises and were frequently fired if their performance was deficient. The more significant force compelling profit maximisation was, however, the international market. The following section will demonstrate that Egypt's economy in the 1960s was seriously constrained by the shortage of foreign exchange. There were only two ways to earn foreign exchange, and both required profitable production. The first was to export, which could only be a benefit if Egypt's production costs were sufficiently low. The second was to receive foreign loans, which were only forthcoming if there was a guarantee of future repayment. Many of these loans were from foreign governments and were called 'aid'. The loans, including those from the eastern bloc, were not altruistic, however: they were generally to finance the import of machinery to produce outputs which could be exported to the lending country to repay the loan. Consider the Soviet

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loan for the first stage of the Aswan Dam. Nasser had made a grand political gesture by breaking off negotiations with the US, the UK and the World Bank and announcing acceptance of Soviet financing – but the Soviets kept Nasser hanging for 18 months before signing the loan agreement because, in Khrushchev's words, they wanted to be sure the Dam would allow production of sufficient cotton and rice to repay the loan. Foreign capital, including Soviet aid, was available only on condition of profitable production.

Since Egypt met all the conditions describing capitalism and since the state owned the principal means of production, the most useful description of Egypt under Nasser is as a state capitalist society.

Egyptian state capitalism and the world economy

The radical myth of 'socialist' development alleges that nationalist regimes such as Nasser's, and only such regimes, end dependence on the advanced capitalist countries and therefore achieve high rates of growth of GNP and of industry. This section will demonstrate that the myth is inaccurate in all its main aspects. Nationalist regimes do not necessarily achieve higher growth rates than pro-western regimes, nor do they always develop industry more rapidly. Industrialisation and economic growth are not necessarily retarded by ties to the world market. Finally, nationalist regimes do not always reduce dependence on the advanced economies.

The Nasser period did not see particularly rapid economic growth. Growth rates differed little from those under previous regimes. There are no reliable data on GNP before the Nasser period, but there are various indicators of output. The growth rate of manufacturing is a useful proxy for growth in aggregate output. Mabro and Radwan calculated an index of manufacturing output according to which the average annual growth rate for 1945–1952 (before Nasser) was 8.1 per cent and for 1953–1969/70 (the years of Nasser's rule) was 7.2 per cent. Growth in the first decade of Nasser's rule (to 1963–4) was at a 10.3 per cent rate, but the rate fell in the last six years to 2.0 per cent. From 1945 to 1952, GNP at 1954 prices rose from £E732 million to £E1,007 million, or 4.66 per cent per annum. From 1952/3 to 1969/70, GNP at 1952/3 prices rose from £E806 million to £E1,700 million, or 4.36 per cent per annum. The most useful data for the pre-1939 period are Radwan's estimates of net fixed capital stock. Again, the Nasser years do not appear as a period of particularly rapid growth. The average annual growth rate from 1952 to 1967 was 3.44 per cent while from 1920 to 1951, the average was 3.33 per cent (excluding the war years, the average was 4.77 per cent.)

The growth of GNP and of industrial output under Nasser was only slightly higher than the average annual population growth rate of 2.4 per cent from 1947 to 1976. Official data, which understate inflation,

claim that per capita income rose 2.13 per cent per annum from 1952/3; Mabro estimates the true figure at 1.6 per cent. The increase was reflected more or less proportionately in each social class. Workers' relative income may have declined somewhat, contrary to the radical image of the Nasser regime. Roughly one fifth of the population were rural workers and their families, and their real wages in 1971 were almost exactly the same as in 1952 (having declined a little in the early 1950s, risen until the middle 1960s, and declined a little thereafter). Mabro estimates that manufacturing workers' income rose at about the same rate as for the general population; workers in the modern sector received almost all of the increase for the 1952–1970 period in the years 1962–1964. In sum, there is little evidence that the Egyptian working class did better economically under the radical nationalist regime than it had under the previous modified laissez-faire governments.

Nor is there any evidence that Egypt became more self-reliant under the Nasser regime. The regime spoke the rhetoric of ending dependence and breaking with neo-colonialism, but economic reality intervened. By 1940, Egypt had become self-sufficient in most consumer goods. Local industry provided all or nearly all of the consumption of sugar, alcohol, shoes, cement, soap, furniture, and so on. Advancement beyond these industries into more technologically advanced and capital-intensive lines of production occurred to a modest extent under Nasser, as in the expansion of the local chemical industry and the establishment of the Hilwan Steel complex. An extra 10.9 per cent of the labour-force in large-scale manufacturing was in the metals and chemical group in 1967 compared to 1952. This shift of under 60,000 workers out of a population of 30 million hardly constitutes a reorientation of the economy towards heavy industry.

The continued orientation of industry towards consumer goods was not the product of a conscious state policy. The government supported the development of heavy industry and machine goods, but these never became commercially successful in a large way. The competition from industry in the advanced countries was too severe. Egypt's industry was caught at the end of the product life-cycle, producing goods that had become standardised with production processes that were not experiencing rapid technological innovation. The advanced countries had the experienced work force, the scientific community, the venture capital, the industrial infrastructure to support industrial innovation. Egypt, in spite of strenuous efforts to catch up, was left with the crumbs: industries that had spread to many countries and so experienced sharp price competition, unlike the more concentrated technologically-advanced fields.

The product life-cycle process left Egypt dependent on imports to provide technologically advanced goods, including most capital goods. Dependence on imports – and therefore on foreign exchange earnings – was not the result of faulty government policy. The Nasser government encouraged local production by every means available to it.

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'Import-substituting' industrialisation – that is, the local production of industrial goods (usually consumer goods) previously imported – is actually quite import intensive. In order to produce manufactured goods with a value added of £E252.4 million in 1967, £E563.5 million in intermediate inputs were required – including £E188 million in imports (£E78.8 million in agricultural goods, £E31.2 million in chemicals and £E19.2 million in spare parts). Mabro and Radwan use the rudimentary inter-industry tables for 1954 and 1962 to calculate that the technology was slightly more import-intensive in the latter year. Using the 1954 technology to produce the 1962 output would have reduced imports by some 4 per cent.

Dependence on imported capital goods and industrial inputs meant that Egyptian growth was constrained by the scarcity of foreign exchange. Egypt had few exports that could compete on world markets besides cotton. Expanding cotton exports would have been difficult no matter what policy the government followed: world demand for cotton was not rising much, and shorter-fibre cottons were replacing the Egyptian long-fibre as the most popular. Furthermore, resources had to be shifted out of the cotton sector if industry were to develop. The result was stagnant export earnings at a time when demand for imports was rising.

Egypt had considerable foreign exchange reserves at the end of the Korean war: \$980 million in 1952.³⁴ The industrial expansion of the 1950s culminating in the rapid growth of the early 1960s (the period just after the extensive nationalisations) was largely financed by these foreign exchange reserves. From 1952 to 1958, Egypt ran a cumulative balance of trade deficit of \$560 million, financed primarily by drawing down reserves \$487 million. This deficit was about one quarter of gross domestic investment and over 150 per cent of machinery imports. The cushion of excess reserves disappeared in the early 1960s, forcing first a minor devaluation in 1962 before provoking a major crisis in 1965–66. The drying up of the reserves coincided with a sharp cutback in US aid, from \$175 million in 1964 to \$55 million in 1966 and zero thereafter until the middle 1970s. Short-term bank credits were used to meet the urgent bills, but this was hardly a viable solution for the long run.

The only solution to the balance of payments deficit was to slow down economic growth. Devaluation of the Egyptian pound, if it had any effect, may have actually worsened the balance of trade. The major variable determining changes in the balance of trade was the rate of growth; higher production required more imported capital goods and inputs without expanding exports (if anything, growth took resources away from the cotton sector and so reduced exports). Nasser bitterly resisted the necessity of cutting the growth rate. He wanted to maintain a high level of both investment and consumption. In the end, the cutbacks in public spending demanded by the IMF were largely implemented even though the IMF recommendations were formally rejected and no IMF funds were lent to Egypt.

Hansen and Nashashibi argue strenuously that the stagnation of the middle and late 1960s was not due to the foreign exchange problems alone. Certainly there were other contributing factors, such as the spreading production slowdowns caused by bureaucratic inefficiencies, but the fact remains that the crunch came when and only when Egypt ran out of foreign exchange. There is little basis for Ibrahim's statement that the 'origins' of the slowdown of the 1960s lay in the burdens created by the 1967 war. The slow-down began well before the war. The net burden of the war was also much smaller than the gross. Much of the increased military spending was met with Soviet aid, and the annual loss of \$300 million in Suez Canal revenue, \$50 million in oil revenue, and \$50 million in tourism was partially offset by \$250 million in aid from Arab states.³⁵ The economic slow-down was in no sense the product of restricted markets for Egyptian producers. The economic crisis came in spite of increasing living standards for the masses, increases which could be expected to raise demand for locally produced mass consumption goods at the expense of demand for imported consumption goods. The markets for Egyptian industry were expanding, so that local producers could realise economies of scale and reduce their production costs. There was, therefore, no shortage of investment opportunities. The stagnation of the 1960s was the product of a foreign-exchange shortage.

The expansion of Egyptian industry was limited by the availability of foreign exchange, to the point where many factories could only operate fitfully, when the needed imported inputs or parts were at hand. In spite of Nasser's hopes for increased economic independence, he was forced by the foreign-exchange shortage to rely on foreign loans to finance the imports necessary for growth. Growth required tying Egypt closer to the world economy and depending more on the advanced countries. The internationalisation of capital is not a policy option that a government can choose to accept or reject: it is a necessity for any developing country that does not follow a fully socialist path. Once Egypt had decided to industrialise with modern capitalist technology, then growth became constrained by foreign exchange. The next step was to seek foreign loans – \$1,725 million from 1959 to 1966 to cover a balance of payments deficit of \$1.6 billion. The loans came only on condition that Egyptian industry would produce profitably, the main guarantee of repayment being the expansion of output made possible by the loan. Egyptian industry therefore had to adopt profit maximisation. The end result of the ties to the world market was that nationalised industry had to run on essentially the same capitalist principles as the private industry it replaced.

In the late Nasser period, Egypt relied heavily on loans from the Soviet bloc. Eastern-bloc loans were over half of the \$1,628 million lent to Egypt from 1967 to 1972. These loans were important in meeting the foreign exchange deficit of \$3,746m (\$2,250m in balance of payments deficit and \$1,446m in amortisation), although not as important as the

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\$1,566m in grants from Arab states. The switch-over from western to eastern sources led to sub-optimal utilisation of many factories for which parts and inputs were not available from eastern sources. Due to these problems, the change to the eastern bloc was probably a net economic loss to Egypt for a number of years, belying Nasser's hope that large-scale, low-cost Soviet loans – especially for heavy industry and the public sector – would spur Egypt's growth. The switch in camps from West to East had, of course, powerful political and military motives independent of any hoped-for economic gain.

Reliance on the Soviet bloc did little to change the foreign exchange constraint on Egyptian growth. Soviet loans – called 'aid' – were available on the same criteria as western loans, even if at somewhat lower interest rates. Those terms were that Egypt use the funds to expand output, particularly output of raw materials and foodstuffs for the Soviet market. The USSR lent funds for the Aswan Dam for more than political reasons: the cotton and rice shipped to the Soviet Union in repayment for the loan came at a cheaper price than a corresponding increase in output from Soviet Central Asia. The Soviet loan programme is no more altruistic than that of western investors: both demand that Egyptian production be sufficiently profitable to repay the loan. The fact that Soviet loans take a different institutional form from Western loans (government-to-government, not bank-to-firm) is of little economic relevance.

One factor behind the break with state capitalism under Sadat in the 1970s was certainly the malaise created by the failure of the Nasserist system to reach its goals. Other factors included the turn from the USSR to the West and the state elite's desire to enrich themselves by establishing private firms. The impact of the world economy should not be underestimated, however. The failure of Nasserism was in large part a consequence of the inability to obtain the foreign credit to finance import of technology and of capital goods. The lack of credit was not the product of an anti-Nasserist plot but the logical consequence of the poor productivity and worse profitability of Egyptian industry. Nasser was never able to organise the new economic system to operate effectively, and the result for the state-capitalist system was the equivalence of bankruptcy for an individual firm: a complete break with the past and a total reorganisation. The capitalist system forces all operating within it to pursue maximisation or pay the price: bankruptcy.

The Sadat regime has pinned much hope on persuading western firms to follow the path down which the Soviets began to travel. This is the road of internationalising production by integrating production facilities scattered far and wide into one global operation. The emerging era of world-wide production constitutes a new stage in the expansion of capitalism, going beyond the internationalisation of markets and of investment. Much as the growth of corporations meant that individual units of capital were now large enough to raise the finance and to take the risk to invest abroad, so now the growth of multinational

corporations and of state capitalist societies means that individual units of capital are sufficiently large to plan their operations on a world scale. Industrial production in backward countries like Egypt will no longer be limited to the local market: capitalists from the advanced countries will build factories designed for the world market. The role of backward countries will shift from sources of raw materials and sites for profitable investment to providers of low-cost unskilled labour for factories producing for the world markets. The Soviets had taken some steps in this direction in Egypt, with talks of plants producing simple manufactured goods for sale in the eastern bloc. In turning to the West, Sadat hoped that western firms would take advantage of Egypt's large labour force to set up factories producing for export – an unfulfilled dream so far.

Concluding comments

The history of Egypt over the last two centuries is the history of class struggle – primarily, the struggle of the international capitalist class to mould the Egyptian economy to their needs. While the Egyptian masses have resisted the bourgeoisie's encroachments, the capitalists have generally overcome this opposition. We should not be surprised that the *ruling* class has had the upper hand in the class struggle. The history of the resistance to capital's conquest is important for our understanding of Egyptian society – but we must realise that the resistance has been fundamentally unsuccessful, for capitalism rules Egypt still. The history of Egypt's economy is therefore primarily a history of capital's advances.

While the evolution of the Egyptian economy has had many unique features, an overall pattern emerges. This pattern is much the same as that to be seen in Latin America, Africa, or Asia: a stage of raw material exports coupled with manufactured goods imports during which non-industrial commodity production spreads, followed by a stage of import-substituting industrialisation assisted by foreign investment. The wide applicability of this overall pattern lends strength to my basic thesis: that the changes in the Egyptian economy have been the result of the internationalisation of capital, not of events particular to Egypt. We must therefore sketch out the outline of the industrialisation process before we can fill in the specific details of the Egyptian experience.

The internationalisation of capital has been a *process*, not an event. To focus on one moment – say, the creation of a world market – is to risk overlooking the dynamic movement towards an ever more closely knit world economy. The identification of stages in internationalisation was Lenin's fundamental contribution, which we must flesh out. In doing so, we, like Lenin, must be sensitive to the continuing changes in *both* advanced and less developed countries, if we are to produce an integrated analysis of accumulation on a world scale.

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- 1 A variant is Issawi's theory, detailed in *The Economic History of the Middle East*, that growing export markets were important for the Egyptian economy, but that Egyptian development depended on the ability of the local institutional structure to take advantage of the opportunities offered by international trade.
- 2 Raymond, *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIII^e siècle*, pp193–202.
- 3 Gran, *The Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1890*, Chapter 1, brings out the importance of the grain trade in the view of the French.
- 4 Owen, *Cotton in the Egyptian Economy 1820–1914*, is the classic. See also: Rivlin, *Agricultural Policy in Muhammed Ali's Egypt*; Issawi, *Economic History of the Middle East 1800–1914*; Landes, *Bankers and Pashas*; and, for a Marxist account, Castle, *Social Reproduction and the Egyptian Agrarian Transformation*.
- 5 Baer, *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt*, describes this period well.
- 6 Baer, *A History of Landownership in Modern Egypt 1800–1950*.
- 7 It is an error to speak of primitive accumulation in early 19th century Egypt, as does Alan Richards in *Accumulation, Distribution, and Technical Change in Egyptian Agriculture*. Richards appears to conceive of primitive accumulation as meaning simply the loss of rights in land. For Marx, the phrase meant the original accumulation of a proletariat and a bourgeoisie – a process which was *not* occurring in Egypt at this time. Egyptian society was being transformed into a commodity-producing society, but *not* a capitalist society. Richards appears to share some of the theoretical approach of A.G. Frank insofar as Richards tacitly identifies capitalism with production for the market.
- 8 Issawi, *Egypt in Revolution*, p25, cites Lord Dufferin for 1876 and 1883 and Crouchley for 1914. Owen, *Cotton*, pp271–3, gives similar data. Government data on mortgages show considerably lower figures, most likely because many small mortgages were never registered.
- 9 The landownership data from the *Annuaire Statistique* are biased towards small holdings in that it reports land tax returns which were collected by village. An individual who owned land in several villages would appear several times. An example of the bias: the 1939 Agricultural Census showed holdings under 5 acres with 19% of the area while the *Annuaire* showed 32.4%; the census recorded holdings over 50 acres as 45% of the area, while the *Annuaire* gave them as 37.3% (pointed out by Baer, *History*, pp71–3). Neither the *Annuaire* nor the Census gave data on farm size.
- 10 The 'izba system is well described in an excellent paper by Richards, 'The Political Economy of the Egyptian Izbah, 1880–1940'.
- 11 Data are from Crouchley, *The Investment of Foreign Capital in Egyptian Companies and Public Debt*.
- 12 Baer, *History*, pp68–9 and 120–31; Owen, *Cotton*, pp291–3.
- 13 A major theme of Cromer's reports is the sources of Egyptian prosperity contrasted to Indian poverty.
- 14 Crouchley, *The Economic Development of Modern Egypt*, pp115–8, lists the public works expenditures between 1850 and 1880, showing the close connection to the growth of the debt. Under Isma'il (1863–79), £E51 million was spent on public works, including £E13 million on railroads, £E12.6 million on canals, and £E12 million on the Suez Canal. Isma'il was trying to lessen dependence on Europe through economic diversification and expansion. He ended up only reinforcing the hold of the cotton economy.

15 Cromer's 'Annual Report for 1902' in Issawi, *History*. See also Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt*.

16 A fact Owen overlooked in 'Lord Cromer and the Development of Egyptian Industry, 1883–1907'. While an advocate of government-provided infrastructure for agriculture, Cromer opposed technical assistance (providing seeds, anti-worm campaigns) and loans (the Agricultural Credit Bank). His opposition was generally ineffective (an exception: he prevented any action to help those caught by the crash of 1907). Owen also makes no distinction between the nominal tariff barrier faced by textile imports (8%) and the effective tariff barriers (which could not have been more than 4%, given that an 8% tariff was paid on the imported machinery).

17 Lenin wrote in *Imperialism*, 'The export of capital greatly affects and accelerates the development of capitalism in those countries to which it is exported.' Marx and Engels, in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, wrote, 'The bourgeoisie . . . compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production: it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves.'

18 Crouchley, *The Investment of Foreign Capital*, p106.

19 Berque, *Imperialism and Revolution*, pp363ff. Tignor, 'The Egyptian Revolution of 1919', discusses three weekly economic journals founded by Europeans resident in Egypt – all of which called for local industry and freedom from cotton monoculture.

20 For an account of the nationalist agitation for local industry, see Berque, *Imperialism and Revolution*, Chapter 4 of Part 3. This is also the basic source on industry in the 1920s.

21 The role of Bank Misr in the inter-war Egyptian economy is described in Deeb, 'Bank Misr and the Emergence of the Local Bourgeoisie in Egypt', and Davis, 'Bank Misr and the Political Economy of Industrialization in Egypt'.

22 Hussein, *Class Conflicts in Egypt 1945–71*, Chapter 1, drew a distinction between two sections of the Egyptian ruling classes. He conflates the national/comprador distinction with the division between Egyptian and European-Levantine capital. Both Abdel-Malek and Amin attack this theory, but neither adequately analyse the actual splits in the ruling class.

23 Abdel Malek, Chapter 1, details the history of the nationalist movement, illustrating the role of extreme right-wing currents.

24 Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East*, pp2–13. Abdel Malek, pp62–68 and 80, quotes from contemporary US government documents about the desirability of land reform and the correctness of the reform decree.

25 Saab, *The Egyptian Agrarian Reform 1953–1962*, is the basic source on the agrarian reform. The quote is from p48.

26 Radwan, *Agrarian Reform and Rural Poverty: Egypt 1952–75*, pp62–3.

27 Drawn from detailed government data. Cf. Clawson, *Internationalization of Capital*.

28 Mead, *Growth and Structural Change in the Egyptian Economy*, pp80–98, disputes Hansen's conclusion, in Hansen and Marzouk, *Developmental Economic Policy in the UAR (Egypt)*, that there is little disguised unemployment in Egyptian agriculture. Mead succeeds only in demonstrating that he is incapable of conceiving of any work pattern except 9-to-5, five days a week. Mead's 'proof' that there is disguised unemployment rests on the assumption that workers will work year-round at the same intensity they work during the harvest season. In many fields such regular work patterns are unusual – witness

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the US auto industry, with its cycles of heavy overtime and long layoffs.

29 Ibrahim, *Egypt*, p110; Mabro and Radwan, *The Industrialization of Egypt 1939–1973*, pp97–103. The quote is from Ikram, pp134–5; the data are from the *Statistical Abstract 1975*, p13, and Mabro, *The Egyptian Economy 1952–1972*, p210.

30 Market production distinguishes capitalism from feudalism, hunting and gathering societies, etc, while profit orientation separates capitalism from trading societies such as ancient Greece. Freedom to work where desired distinguishes capitalism from slavery or feudalism. ‘Freedom’ from any other source of production distinguishes capitalism from yeoman-style small producers and from kibbutz-style communes. Control over the means of production in the hands of a small group of people guarantees that most people must work for wages, because they cannot share in income from the means of production.

31 Ayubi, *Bureaucracy and Politics in Contemporary Egypt*, pp455–6 for the first quote, pp373 and 378 for the data (from 1970) and pp384 for the second quote. Mayfield, *Rural Politics in Nasser’s Egypt*, has a detailed description of the ASU. He concentrates on the complex paper structure of the ASU, but there emerges some sense of how it actually functioned.

32 Mabro and Radwan, p99. They cite the example of a contract by a public firm for earth removal at the rate of £E3.0 per cubic meter. The contract was sublet by the private contractor to the foremen at the rate of £E1.65 and the workers were paid £E0.04 per cubic meter (earth removal in Egypt is highly labour-intense and capital-scarce).

33 Data are from the *Statistical Yearbook 1975*. The figure of 2 million economically independent urban residents is a crude estimate from the employment data.

34 Ikram, pp340–345, gives World Bank estimates of resources, deficits, and deficit financing for 1952–72. This is the main source for data cited here.

35 Kanovsky, *The Economic Impact of the Six Day War*, pp270–291.

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Tragic heroes and victims in zionist ideology

Toine van Teeffelen

One of the most common images employed in interpreting the Middle East conflict views it in terms of a moral symmetry: both parties – Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab – are in the right. According to this image, both have a legitimate claim to the same country and are actually engaged in a painful, tragic struggle with each other for possession of the land. At first sight the problem seems unsolvable from a moral point of view. Only mutual recognition and a clear insight into each other's motives can clear the way to an ultimate reconciliation between the two peoples.

This morally ambiguous image receives much sympathetic attention from liberal intellectuals and politicians who claim to have a moderate and sophisticated position by bowing, so to speak, to both parties in the conflict. Indeed, in some political circles it is almost fashionable to speak of two truths with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The symmetric image has a long tradition, dating from the beginning of zionism. Much has already been written on the bad conscience of zionism, especially 'left' or 'ethical' zionism, when it discovered the presence of another people in Palestine. The story of Max Nordau, the early zionist leader, is well known. Once he came crashing in to see Herzl. 'I hear there are Arabs living in Palestine', he cried, 'which means we are not in the right!'. While one might reasonably question the supposed naiveté of the early zionists, the physical and social existence of the Palestinian Arabs posed, to those zionists who preached socialist or humanistic ideals, not only a political obstacle but also a problem of legitimation, if not a heavy burden on their conscience. How to reconcile the foundation of a Jewish state with the rights of the people who were living there?

During the British Mandate period, some intellectuals and groups chose for binationalism, as for example Martin Buber, who explained this as follows: 'It has always been a basic position of ours that we have here a confrontation between two vital claims, two claims different in their origin and nature, which cannot be weighed one against the other in a practical sense and there can be no decision between them in a theoretical way (. . .) But we are convinced that a compromise must be found between both claims; because we love this country and believe in its future, and because the other side shares this love and belief, it is inconceivable that we cannot join forces for the sake of joint service to this land. Where there are faith and love, even an apparently tragic

conflict can lead to a solution.’ (From an open letter to Mahatmah Gandhi, February 1939). His solution was two nations within one state.

The ideology of the binationalists and other ‘ethical’ zionists was, however, structurally deficient. It was based on a utopian ideal, not on the real situation in Palestine. From its origins, zionist colonialism did not seek Jewish – Palestinian Arab solidarity, because of its exclusivist and expansionist principles and policies. The calls for Jewish-Arab co-operation voiced by Buber, Kalvarisky, Magnes and others led to some contacts (which proved to be short-lived) with Palestinian-Arab leaders, but not to real forms of Arab-Jewish organisation, because this was outside the scope of the zionist enterprise. With some exceptions, they did not depart from the fundamental tenets of zionism and as they lacked a social base among both Jews and Arabs in Palestine, their criticism was impotent. Some left zionist groups, such as Hashomer-Hatza’ir stressed their commitment to binationalist or federative conceptions, supposedly based on Jewish-Arab equality, but worked in practice for the creation of an exclusively Jewish state, which they fully endorsed when it was ultimately established. Moreover, the built-in failure of these intellectuals and groups supported the strategy of mainstream zionism in those days; it was used to confirm the necessity or inevitability of a Jewish state. There was no Arab to talk to, mainstream zionism told the West, whose support it needed.

Even more than during the pre-state period, the right vs. right view of the conflict served after 1948 as a legitimisation of common zionist practice. Instead of providing a political perspective – however impotent and marginal – beyond the status quo, the symmetric model began to explain and justify the facts that were being created. In particular, when Israeli policy during and after the 1967 war came under attack from western left circles, and the growth of support for the Palestine Liberation Organisation became a challenge for zionist ideology, it functioned as a counter-model against the view of Israel as a colonialist state.

In this article I shall analyse the ideological background of this model. Its key idea is the concept of *tragedy*; study of this concept provides access to the cognitive and emotional layers on which the model is grounded.

Rationalisation of political choices

On first glimpse, the image of the Middle-East conflict as a tragedy seems to express a pessimistic or even catastrophic mood. The use of the model by a number of left zionist writers, however, transforms this mood to some extent. They use it to rationalise earlier political choices made by zionism, to give a diagnosis of the present-day situation and to outline a political prospect with regard to an eventual solution of the conflict.

As already mentioned, according to this model the repeatedly stated essence of the conflict is the juxtaposition of two equal rights. Amos Oz, an Israeli novelist, wrote shortly after the 1967 war:

'As I see it, the confrontation between the people that returns to Zion and the Arab inhabitants of the country is not like a Western film or saga, but like a *tragedy*. Tragedy is not a conflict between "light" and "darkness", between justice and crime. *It is a clash between total justice and total justice*, even though one should not seek the simplification of symmetry in it. And as in all tragedies, there is no hope of a jubilating conciliation based on a clever compromise formula. The choice is one between a blood-bath and a sad, disappointing compromise, more in the way of accepting the situation by force of necessity than of the sudden breakthrough of understanding [...] *The Arabs did not oppose zionism because they failed to understand zionism, but because they understood it only too well*. And that is the tragedy: the mutual understanding *does* exist. We want to exist as a nation, as a Jewish state. They do not want that state [...] Any search for a way out must start from the open-eyed realisation of the full extent of the dispute: a tragic conflict of tragic power.'¹

Avraham B. Yehoshua, another left zionist intellectual and writer, concludes that there are here two 'entirely different categories of rights':

'The Jews' only genuine right is the right of hardship: the right of the starving man to steal a slice of bread, the right of the person fleeing from a murderer or from a fire. Herein lies the tragedy of the Palestinian conflict. On the one hand there is a people whose country has been invaded by strangers (and it is irrelevant that the invasion was in its beginnings carried out in the most humane way possible, without violence, with due consideration for the inhabitants; that land was purchased, and social aid given) and on the other hand – a people hungry for a home, escaping the menace of the gallows and seeking to save its very existence [...] What we have here is not a clash between the rights of two peoples to Palestine, but a clash between two entirely different categories of rights. On the one side there is a political, geo-political right, the natural right of a people to full sovereignty in its land (the right of the Arabs) and on the other – the existential right, the right of no-alternative, which is also a natural right (the right of the Jews).'²

Yehoshua advises the Palestinians to reach 'a tragic reconciliation' with the State of Israel, after which 'new horizons' will open to them.

Some writers 'weigh' the legitimacy of both claims, and focus on the tragic *choice* that Israel had to make. Shlomo Avineri:

'[...] It is still possible to view zionism as justified *vis-à-vis* the Arab question in terms that are morally meaningful – not in black-and-white terms which would mean we have the country and they have no right at all, but in terms that are relevant to the nature of a moral alternative,

that is a choice between two alternatives neither of which entirely satisfies all the moral demands, but one of which is likely to be less morally damaging than the other. It seems to me that it may be said, at least since the Holocaust, that if the alternative is between (a) the Jews having their own roof overhead at the price of uprooting hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees from their land and resettling them in some other part of the *same* Palestine, and (b) the Arabs of Palestine continuing to live on the land while Holocaust refugees remain homeless – then the moral price of setting up the State is justified.’³

Amos Elon regards the continuing occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as resulting from a tragic choice:

‘As Thomas Jefferson once said of America, Israel holds the wolf by his ears, and can neither hold him down nor safely let him go. Grave moral and existential questions are left hanging. There are no clear answers, for this is no abstract dichotomy, equitable as in mathematics, but a conflict among humans, who in their fear and fury have irrevocably resorted to tragic choices. At the root is a disastrous struggle between two rights, a clash between two irresistible compulsions, the very essence of high tragedy. It is through tragedy that we recognise the glory and the degradation in human affairs, and sense the defects and excesses of some of our most cherished values. In the words of Reinhold Niebuhr, “Tragedy elicits admiration as well as pity, because it combines nobility with guilt”.’⁴

F. Zweig quotes the same passage from Niebuhr and adds in an almost triumphant voice:

‘One can regret the tragic choice, but one cannot help admiring the noble faith of Israeli youth which has moved mountains, and the extraordinary heroism of the Jewish fighters, the ready self-sacrifice of young life [...] in the defence of their land. And so there is nobility with guilt!’⁵

From these examples it is possible to formulate some interlocking assumptions and ideological implications of the model, as it is used by these writers:

1 The assumption that the essence of the conflict is a clash between rights or moral values, which are by definition opposed to each other. The idealist approach juxtaposes not the moral values or rights of classes, or of political leaderships, but of whole peoples or nations. Of course the abstract idea of a nation as a stable, homogeneous entity existing above human history has a central place within the idealist-romanticist tradition. The abstract idea of a Jewish nation is used to explain zionism not as a specific movement within a specific historical period, but as a timeless representative of (the needs of) the whole Jewish people. In this ideological framework it is not possible to put

this assumption to test: by definition a nation has common interests and a shared destiny.

Moreover, because the rights of the Jewish and the Palestinian peoples exclude each other, no theoretical compromise is possible. Morally Palestine is indivisible. There is no theoretical guide-line according to which part of Palestine belongs to the Jewish people and part of it to the Palestinian Arabs; both can claim the whole country on equally justified grounds.

2 Because of these conflicting claims, Israel has to cope with a tragic situation. Given the opposition of the Palestinians to the Jewish state, it has the choice between life and death – no other alternative exists. And of course this is in itself sufficient to understand and explain Israel's politics, if one shares the assumptions mentioned above. But those who apply the tragic model do not want to appear as one-sided partisans of zionism or Israel. They claim to take a detached neutral position in which they weigh the interests of both zionism and the Palestinians. Avineri, for one, applies the criterion of 'minimum harm for maximum return',⁶ that is to say: minimum harm to the Palestinians and maximum return to zionism. As a distanced, but apparently moved observer (a 'tragic' observer, indeed), Avineri puts both cases on the balance and judges that zionism was right after all. Given the practical situation – no alternative for the Jewish people, a not so pleasant but workable alternative for the Palestinians – the Jewish right had to prevail. In other words: a tragic choice for Israel had to lead to tragic consequences for the Palestinians. The injustice done to them can be understood as a form of necessary evil.

Of course much can be said about the way in which Avineri (or Oz and Yehoshua) presents and formulates both cases: after all he is not quite as unbiased as he claims. However, at least as important is the ideological background of his inclusion of certain options and exclusion of others. The tragic model portrays history as a narrative, with peoples or nations as personified actors who make decisive choices at crucial, dramatic moments. The dramatic metaphor suggests the possibility of a choice between two extreme, more or less well-circumscribed alternatives, which can be compared in a rational way by the intelligent actor. By personalising history in this manner, there are indeed only very limited choices at limited moments by limited actors. Moreover, the nation as an undivided actor excludes any alliances or options based on other than nationalist criteria. It is not only that they have failed to materialise; they just did not exist. They are not historical actors, so to speak.

3 The various applications of the tragic model include only one intelligent actor: Israel; and indeed left zionist writers do not hesitate to call this presumed fact the basic tragic aspect of the conflict.⁷ The Palestinians apparently had and have more options than zionism; that they

failed to choose the reasonable ones (e.g. acceptance of the Partition Plan in 1947, or – as one might sometimes hear – staying at home during the fighting in 1948) is the underlying reason for Israel's painful dilemma. However, some writers strictly follow the demands of their model, and stress that they still *do* understand 'the politics of refusal' on the part of the Arabs: both sides understand each other only too well, as Amos Oz stresses. But it is only an understanding at the moral level. From a moral point of view this Arab policy may be justifiable – so the argument runs; from a practical point of view it is just self-damaging and therefore irrational. And what is moral certainty unlinked to the demands of the practical situation? Nothing but sheer fanaticism. Of course this is the basic assumption that Amos Oz shares with others in his description of the Arabs' and Palestinians' strategy. As we will see later, it implies the right of the intelligent actor in the conflict (or his intellectual defenders) to interpret the position of the other side and regard it as fanatical (and so on and so forth – there is a vicious circle here). The apparent symmetry of the model exists only on a moral level, as Amos Oz hastens to say in the passage quoted above. In the quotations of Amos Elon and F. Zweig, Israel's insight into its own tragic situation even has a heroic tint: Israel deserves admiration and pity, because of its painful dilemma and moral courage to confront it. Both the pain and the praises are thus quite unevenly distributed.

4 What is the prospect of the conflict, according to this model? In line with their idealistic approach, Yehoshua and the rest emphasise the mutual act of recognition.⁸ In the case of Israel, recognition of it as it exists. Towards the Palestinians, recognition of their sovereignty *in the abstract*,⁹ as a moral point of reference.¹⁰ As above, there is no symmetry in the demands addressed to both parties. Amos Oz is quite clear: the Palestinians and the Arabs have to accept the *fact* of Israel; ultimately they must realise by hard experience that Israel faces only one choice. Yehoshua reaches the same conclusion. Only a change in the Arab mentality can provide a solution in a basically static situation. Criticism of Israel's policies is only directed at the level of stated intentions: Israel must declare its preparedness to face a future national identity of the Palestinians. According to writers such as Amos Oz, Avraham Yehoshua and Boaz Evron, Israel does not need to change its basic policies towards the Palestinians.¹¹

However, some writers apply an additional moral standard. Because Israel has won the struggle in which the Palestinians have become tragic victims, it has a moral responsibility to soften the sufferings of the refugees. Amos Elon quotes Albert Camus in this respect: instead of choosing the side of the 'whips', the strong and brutal, Israel must choose another way, that of compassion. Zweig says: 'By accepting his guilt he would satisfy his integrity, his sense of justice and his deeper moral self. This is what is actually required of Israel. She has to accept responsibility for the effects of her actions, for the displacement of

refugees, and for turning the Arab majority into a minority. She has to remedy what it is in her power to remedy, namely to solve the problem of the refugees and to redress genuine Arab grievances.’¹² Except that these proposals lack specificity; they do not transgress the boundaries of the status quo.

It is not accidental that those who use the tragic model as we have described it here do not specify concrete policies for Israel. It is actually less concerned with Israeli politics than with Israeli conscience. The model struggles with the basic contradiction of left zionist ideology: how to reconcile zionism with socialism or ‘universal human ethics’?¹³ How to reconcile the exclusivist, national principle with the inclusive, human principle?

The tragic view of the conflict gives an interesting, even ingenious answer to this dilemma. The ‘reconciliation’ is reached by *separating* morality from politics. The universalist statement that there are two conflicting absolute rights remains hollow on the practical level. The general moral principles demand only a *moral* act: a clear awareness of the tragic situation and a showing of good intentions. The model suggests that this act of moral self-understanding and insight into the enemies’ motives is enough to soften the inner conscience. So the idealist model provides an idealist, person-directed solution to the conflict. In numerous instances one can find an almost obsessive concern with cleansing the moral conscience. Here it is done in a highly paradoxical way: tragic (zionist) man says: ‘Look at me, I am not able to put my universalist principles into practice. I do not want to hide this – I feel terrible because of this. If I am able to confess this, then who can distrust my motives?’ Instead of distrust it deserves admiration: ‘[. . .] we cannot help feeling a deep respect for those figures in this tragedy of a peaceless generation who, in wrestling with the scruples of compassion and integrity, vindicate their own conscience as well as the conscience of their people.’¹⁴ Or Robert Alter, introducing Ehud Ben Ezer’s book *Unease in Zion*: ‘It is easy enough to survey from a distance the great dismaying panorama of mankind and identify with the suffering humanity of the Czechs, the Vietnamese, the Biafrans, the Arab refugees, but it is a far more demanding, and morally credible, business to confront from day to day people who are trying to destroy you, and still retain some operative awareness of their humanity.’¹⁵ The apparent paradox of emphasising a universalistic consciousness without ‘translating’ this into politics is overcome by a good deal of rhetoric. The model gives here priority to the conservation of a guilty conscience; this is the ultimate test of the viability and credibility of Israel’s policies.

The tragic myth

It would be too simple to say that the model is characterised by a good

deal of hypocrisy. Of course it is, but such a conclusion would divert attention away from the existence of a real tragic consciousness in zionist ideology and Israeli society. For most left zionists the model is probably true: it is built on a structure of sentiments that is widely held in Israel. These sentiments are articulated by the model in a controlled manner. Because they are shared by a large number of people, they give the model also a large measure of social credibility. An ideology can only function if it is rooted in social consciousness, and if it is able to translate this consciousness into articulated discourse. Without credibility, manipulation is not possible.

The assumptions of the model are clearly linked to some deeply felt anxieties within Israeli society, and to a number of reactions which try to cope with these anxieties. The basic polarity is between 'us' and 'them', reflecting the continuing state of war. The polarity implies, as mentioned above, the feeling of a common destiny: one future for one people. Contradictions within one's own society are present, but they do not seem decisive as far as the future of the whole is concerned.

The other assumption – we have no options other than life or death – is a very basic feeling among many Israelis and has been restated again and again: the Arabs only have to win one war; Israel's victories are ultimately useless if they do not result in Arab acceptance of the right of Israel to exist; till that moment, Israel is forced to live in a state of siege. This sad 'knowledge', which is presented as realistic thinking, is to some extent a heritage of an enduring war experience, but ideologically rooted in the schematic dichotomies of zionism. The Jewish people is set against the rest of the world. In principle the *goyim* are hostile to the existence of the Jewish people, and will try to discriminate or destroy them, when they have the chance – and they do have that chance wherever the Jews are a minority. Only a Jewish majority – which implies a Jewish state – can resist the attacks of the outside world and force it to accept the Jewish existence. The terrible history of centuries, and its 20th century climax, can only be experienced in this way. So the choices are limited. 'It is better to live thirty, fifty, even one hundred years like this, on a constant war footing, than to live five years in a concentration camp or ten years in an Eastern European ghetto or fifty years in an antisemitic US small town . . .', as one Israeli said recently.¹⁶ If the choice is not between life and death, then at least it is between freedom and bondage. Resignation implies bondage; struggle implies liberty. So the struggle for survival ensures one's dignity.

The Massada story is highly pertinent here. Massada was the last stronghold of the Jewish revolt against the Romans; it fell in AD 73. According to this story, before it fell the leaders of its defenders, the Zealots, convinced their warriors to slay their families and, after that, themselves. In this way 960 defenders allegedly committed suicide instead of being captured by the Romans. Today the story, and indeed the physical remains of the stronghold, are regarded as part of Israel's cultural heritage. The choice that the warriors had to confront was

ultimately one between dignity and surrender, and they chose dignity. While the applicability of the Massada metaphor has been hotly debated in Israel, there is no doubt that it is part of the zionist structure of sentiments: Israel in the role of a tragic hero. Of course this 'heroism' – when explicitly stated and defended in this way – has little credibility and political relevance, and this is precisely one of the reasons for the controversy. But this does not deny its widely felt influence on Israeli public opinion and policy.

There are other myths of this kind. A biblical one is the story of Samson. When Samson was captured by the Philistines, his eyes were torn out and he was publicly displayed and mocked. Finally he avenged himself by breaking the pillars of Dagon's temple, bringing it down upon himself as well as his enemies. This 'let my soul die with the Philistines' psychology,¹⁷ together with other biblical and post-biblical suicide stories, expresses anxieties about defeat and suggests emotional reactions for coping with it. And of course in the nuclear age the Samson story is politically quite relevant and dangerous.

Destruction is a persistent theme in modern *Israeli literature*. While pre-war zionist literature is pervaded by a mood of romantic optimism – as if the conflict was a western, in the words of Amos Oz – modern Israeli literature is existentially inspired, full of uncertainties and mixed feelings.

The fortress mentality has been expressed time and again. For example in the novel by S. Yizhar, *The Days of Tziklag* (1958), in which he describes seven days in the life of a zionist fighting unit in the 1948 war: 'Kill them off nicely, quickly, lots of them, make it snappy, you know how – two with one bullet, three if you can. There is no other way. But I hate it. Yet, what is the point of hating where there is no other way? And I hate having to make my way across the dead bodies. You hate fighting – but you do it. That's how we have been told, all of us – there it is. I belong to a generation that has no other choice. That's why I am here and hate it, putting up with the war as a conquered city puts up with its tyrannical conqueror. A tangle of fear and madness.'

In Leon Yudkin's treatment of modern Israeli literature – significantly entitled *Escape into Siege* – this story of Yizhar is judged in terms in which one can easily recognise the left zionist's impotent and uneasy conscience: 'This situation is the struggle of the man of tender conscience, who seems to be ill at ease in society, or rather, in a given society. Yizhar's hero, when it comes to it, does not in fact behave exceptionally, nor does he persist in his stubborn course, but he does undergo agonies of hesitation and indecision before he commits himself to the common line.'¹⁸ In some novels the prospect of an eventual destruction looms large. The recent books of Amos Kenan (*Holocaust II*) and Itzhak Ben Ner (*Après la Pluie*) give an image of Tel Aviv after its destruction in the imagination of the author. To experience the destruction in the context of a novel is one way of coping with the fear that one

day it may actually happen. In a cruel sense the imagined certainty of defeat and destruction may be more bearable than the anxiety itself.

As we have seen, the tragic model is ultimately based on the (theoretical) recognition of the enemies' rights, even if this runs against one's own wishes and instincts. 'Arafat is a murderer. I hate the Palestinians and everything they're doing, but their cause is just' – as a young Israeli woman on military service confessed.¹⁹ Morally, two legitimate rights clash; and to explain the actual suppression of the other's rights is not only a burden on one's conscience, but, on the emotional level, a clash between contrary feelings. There are various ways to reconcile the conflict between feelings of loyalty to one's own group and feelings of understanding for the enemies' case. The view of the tragedy of the Palestinian people as a mirror image of the tragedy of the Jews is relevant here. This view says that it is possible to understand the suffering other just *because* one shares the heritage of a people that has always been victimised. *The Seventh Day* – a book in which kibbutz soldiers talk about their 1967 war experiences – provides many examples. A soldier speaks about his perplexity on meeting a stream of refugees on his way back from war. He says that he completely identified with them: when he looked at the children being carried by their parents, he saw himself in the arms of his father during the second world war. He concludes by saying that his identification with the other people, his own enemies, was perhaps the most persistent tragic experience.²⁰

The identification theme is widespread in modern Israeli literature, especially in the works of Amos Oz and Avraham Yehoshua. In the same way as Kenan and Ben Ner picture a future destruction, the heroes of Oz and Yehoshua identify not only with their enemies' feelings and plight, but in some cases even with their acts of resistance. In an interview Yehoshua explains this apparent form of self-castigation:

'We have in our lives some extremely serious repressions regarding the Israeli-Arab problem, the entire problem of our existence here. Literature has a social-psychological function to perform, a cathartic one which lies first and foremost in the release of our repressions. This is what happens in my story [*Facing the Forests*]; I considered this story one of the ways of resolving an existential problem that was oppressing me, of releasing the repression, seeing reality with an open eye and freeing myself from the nightmare.'²¹

Facing the Forests is about a student studying the Crusades, who seeks solitude as a watchman in a forest of the Jewish National Fund planted on the site of a destroyed Arab village. The hero meets an old, mute inhabitant of the former village with whom he develops a strange love-hate relationship. The student identifies with the old man to such an extent that he helps him to set the forest on fire. At first this does not succeed; later the Arab does it all by himself and the feelings of the hero are released: a catharsis is reached.

All these feelings – the fear of destruction, the uneasy conscience, the unwilling identification with the enemy, the feeling of having no alternative – are part of a structure of emotions which is nourished by zionism, both in theory and practice, but which has acquired a power of its own. Its ideological force results from its capacity to produce all sorts of myths – where ‘myth’ has to be understood in the broadest sense of the term, including not only biblical stories or novel narratives, but also the images and tales through which Israeli people represent themselves and their society.

Conversely, these images and stories structure their experiences and interpret what is happening in the world. More often than not they are rooted in the subconscious layers of the mind; for this reason they are able to hold people in their grasp for a long time, as long as circumstances do not make them inapplicable or irrelevant.

These representations or myth, can obviously have a cathartic function, the release of repressed feelings. And so they help people to cope with the status quo, paradoxically by imagining the ultimate failure of the status quo. The dream is a nightmare, but at least it *is* a dream, just a dream.

Myths express existential and social contradictions and dichotomies; myths that support the status quo, such as the tragic myths, express them in a static way. They ‘freeze’ them, so to speak; the contradictory ideas or feelings are juxtaposed, not related or developed in a dialectical manner. Moreover, by freezing the contradictions and polarities, the tragic myth naturalises them and lends them an air of self-evidence. History seems to repeat its essentials, which are represented by tragic myths within the context of particular histories. As Arthur Koestler says: ‘History cannot be judged by the application of any rigid code of ethics; it can only be represented in the manner of the Greek tragedy, where the antagonists are both right in their own terms of reference and in their own universe of discourse. In the tragedy of Jews and Arabs in Palestine both were in the right, and the spectator could do no more than extend his sympathies to one part or the other, according to his subjective values and emotional bias.’²²

Because of their elegance, simplicity, and general applicability, tragic images can be found in all sorts of discourses: from news to fiction. Because they resemble each other in structure and reasoning, they feed and support each other and evoke innumerable emotive and cognitive associations, especially between the fate of the Jews in Europe and that in the Middle East, or, conversely, when the Palestinian fate is compared with the Jewish fate. Many examples can be given. It is easy to recognise in many Israeli stories the resemblance between the adventures of the hero and the fate of Israel at large. So these representations signify, and support, other representations in an almost endless chain of associations.

The tragic myth holds an unstable balance between extreme

pessimism and extreme optimism. Pessimism reigns as far as the (in)stability of the status quo is concerned; moreover, the prospects implicit in the status quo itself are mortally perilous. After making the decisive choice, tragic man is doomed to follow the chosen path, whatever the consequences. However, extreme pessimism is matched by extreme optimism. In his loneliness, tragic man is still able to stand against the world and to force his will upon his enemies, at least for a time. He is able to defend his besieged stronghold; and if he loses, he loses with dignity. The line between pessimism and optimism is a thin one: optimism can easily collapse into pessimism, while deep-felt pessimism can be controlled by an unsteady optimism. The model's hovering between extremes reflects the idealist dichotomies of zionist ideology which were mentioned above. Sometimes these are evoked with all their store of extreme consequences and emotions. Thus Uri Avneri:

'Nuclear weapons, missiles of all types, are nearing the Semitic scene. Their advent is inevitable. If the vicious circle is not broken, and broken soon, it will lead with the pre-ordained certainty of a Greek tragedy toward a holocaust that will bury Tel Aviv and Cairo, Damascus and Jerusalem.'²³

Here the traumatic perspective is not sketched in order to induce a catharsis, as in some Israeli works of literature, but to formulate against this spectre a new, utopian alternative. In most left zionist writings however the tragic model is reasonably optimistic: in its formulations and nuances it opts for gradual progress by mutual recognition and acceptance. It freezes the extreme tragic feelings (which are definitely present) by articulating them in a controlled, even manipulative manner. The concept of tragedy itself makes this possible: in its 'rational' use it takes the stance of the detached observer who can reconcile the conflicting feelings, or choose between them.

Persuading the West

The tragic feeling is both an existential agony and an ideology; indeed, it could not function as an ideology if it were not rooted in and shaped by this real consciousness. It stands in a dialectical relationship with it: it structures and feeds this consciousness and it uses it for its own political ends.

As ideology, the tragic model is part of a larger network of communication, with its own audiences, codes and messages. This network is embedded in a larger power structure in which the relation between the West and the Arab world is decisive. The historical development of this relation has been unequal to such an extent that one can say that the Arab world has been shaped by the West in accordance with the West's needs, and that the Arab world, or the Orient, actually exists as an entity because of its unequal relation with the West.²⁴ On the

communicative level, the image of the Arab world has been formed not by the Arabs themselves, but by Western interpreters, who pictured them as completely different from Western Man (and so constituted them as separate people with their own 'mind', 'mentality', and so forth), and as unable to interpret themselves. The power structure validated this assumption by placing, by and large, the Arabs outside the communicative process with the West. So the Arab did not become a concrete actuality, that spoke for himself to a Western audience, but an abstract idea, static and ahistorical, that had to be continually interpreted in all its mystic forms by Western communication 'brokers': scientists, traders, missionaries, or diplomats and military men.

This communication structure reached its ideal form during the 19th and the beginnings of the 20th century, at a moment when the political future of the Arab people was debated by the competing colonial powers of the day. In that context the zionist movement succeeded in filling a particular niche within the power and communication structure, by offering its services to England as a potential client state which could monitor nationalist developments in the Middle East and intervene whenever things went wrong from the viewpoint of the colonial powers. And so the zionist movement was in a position to interpret the Arab world and more specifically the developments in Palestine to the West. It took over the broker's role from the earlier Orientalists; and it did this in a highly organised, political way. The somewhat mystic and romantic image of the Orient of the 19th century was abruptly replaced by an equally generalised, but much more politically hostile image, in which the reasonable and cultivated West was threatened by barbarous, even murderous Arabs. At the frontier, the zionist movement could guard Western civilisation against attacks from outside. While this image did not always achieve its aim because of the political complexities in Palestine and the short term considerations of the colonial power, the basic dichotomy remained in force.

The Palestinians were Arabs, and even more 'Arab' than other Arabs. In the communicative process with the West the Arabs of Palestine were wholly represented by the zionist movement, to such an extent that their image was the antithesis of the ideal image of the zionists themselves. Where values such as organisation, productivity, imagination, pioneering activism, or generally progress and success were stressed within zionist ideology, Arab-Palestinian society was seen as all the more stagnant, passive, or – of course – terroristic and fanatical. And so the story of the Middle Eastern conflict became the story of the 'good' and the 'bad' guys, wherein it was easy for the Western audience to choose sides – if not always politically, then at least emotionally. This story had great credibility in the West, as long as one could afford to leave the Arab society aside. It reached its political climax during the 1967 war which satisfied all the requirements of the heroic fairy-tale.

Since then, the story and the implied images have lost some of their

credibility and political effectiveness. A critical left audience has not accepted the continuing occupation of Palestinian territories conquered during the war, and has shown some sympathy with the demands of the Palestinians. And later the established Western powers could not swallow Israeli annexation policies and were more prepared to integrate the Arab states in the Western economic system. New attempts were made to convince the Western audience of Israel's case, taking into account the changed realities in the Middle East.

The tragic model or ideology is one of these attempts, perhaps the most effective for some time. It is based on, and validates, the existence of the lopsided communication structure between the West, Israel and the Arabs or Palestinians.²⁵ The tragic model places Israel in the centre of the problematic, which is *about* the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict and *explained* to a Western (liberal) audience. It attempts to lock the audience in a sort of complicity with the speaker (Israel, or its left defenders), which from the very start excludes the third party – the party that does not speak but is only spoken about. Look, it says, we behave so-and-so and that is quite reasonable; the other party does not behave in this way and can therefore be legitimately excluded from the communication process.

This means, first of all, that the tragic model does not function as a dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians – quite the contrary. Despite all the apparent understanding of the Palestinians' case and the acknowledgement of injustice done to them, it excludes them as a living people which can speak for itself. According to the model, the Palestinian people does not struggle for its rights; these are *assigned* to it by a generous adversary, so to speak. A tragic victim needs help from others, he cannot help himself. Which also means: he cannot speak for himself, he is not a political subject. The model offers the Palestinians nothing but a subservient role from which there is no escape. Their living voice is annexed; the tragic model suggests that Israel can represent them, *because* she is so universalistic that she understands the claims of the adversary.

Like the other, 'epic', model the tragic model presents two opposing images of Israel and the Palestinians. However, instead of giving clear-cut representations (the good vs. the bad guys), it gives a difficult, 'sober' image of the conflict. The model shifts the discussion from the level of deeds to the mental level, the level of intentions. And here the mentality of Israel is good, reasonable and morally sympathetic, while the mentality at the other side is fanatic, blind and immoral. This is, for example, the message of Shlomo Avineri:

'The tragic nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict is recognised by most Israeli writers on the subject, a recognition that gives their own nationalism a peculiarly introspective and liberal edge: they perceive the point of view of the other side, even if they do not accept it. Among Arab intellectuals, however, very few perceive the conflict as tragic or see it as a conflict between two claims.'²⁶

Avineri's remark is in accordance with the rest of his argument. He explains that Jewish and Arab nationalism share a number of characteristics (a relatively late origin, each supported by imperialist powers, each with its own historical traumas, and both in search of their identity). However, there is one fundamental difference: zionism succeeded in combining a social and national revolution, while Arab nationalism remained exclusively political: 'The successful synthesis of the social and political realms gave zionism its peculiar dynamism and strength, whereas the purely political nature of Arab nationalism, in Palestine as well as elsewhere, is at the root of its present tragic dilemma.'²⁷ And so one cannot escape the conclusion that the lack of a tragic consciousness among Arab intellectuals is apparently an expression of the failure of a social revolution in the Arab world. Ralph Coury interprets Avineri's message in the following way:

'We (i.e. zionist intellectuals) are sensitive and aware. We belong to a tradition that is self-critical, that does not accept violence as right as long as it is successful. We belong to a culture and a religious heritage that can sympathise with the underdog, that has a sense of the tragic dimensions of human life and conflict.' But there is more: 'Since you are not as sensitive as we are, since you do not possess the sense of tragedy which we possess, you are the bearers of a lesser humanity. As the bearers of a lesser humanity, your claims are in fact not as valid as ours, and we can feel less guilty for what we have done to you.'²⁸

Moreover, Avineri draws a boundary between the Arab and Western intellectual traditions. Israeli writers on the subject clearly belong to the latter tradition and so speak a common language with the West. The tragic consciousness is part of this common experience and language, and since Arab intellectuals do not share this consciousness, they can be excluded from the communication process.

The common language urges the West to interpret the Israeli position in the Middle-East conflict in terms of Western experiences, and so it is not accidental that many comparisons are made between the tragic experiences of the Jews in the West and the Israeli tragic dilemma in the Middle East. As noted above, the tragic model is open to many associations in this respect.²⁹

The tragic approach creates two opposing images of Israel and the Palestinians or Arabs by *indirect* means. It is not clearly stated that the one party is 'black' and the other 'white'. Both are 'grey', so to speak, at least theoretically. But beneath the surface it is clear that the images are polarised. The model calls attention to and identification with the Israeli position, by emphasising the mental struggles in which (left) Israelis and their supporters are involved and, as Coury concludes, the basic message seems to be that the one party is human ('only too human', in its tragic situation), and the other one is not. Avineri differs from others by explicitly stating these implications; hereby he deviates

from a sort of common line, indeed from the code of the model, which is based on the rhetoric of understatement – wholly in accordance with Western (academic) tradition. By saying things indirectly, by implication, the argument takes a subtle colour, and this of course makes criticism of it more difficult, because the basic points are not explicit – they have to be translated or decoded. Its apparent sobriety and appeal to intellectual rationality are the more effective, because they hide the structure of sentiments on which the assumptions, and indeed the ‘rationality’, of the model are based. The rhetoric of the model is not only destined to convince people of the justness of the cause, but also to make it immune against criticism of its emotional and ideological grounds. The model commands its audience to agree with its rationality, with the rationality of those who apply it; that is, with the rational *intentions* of its supporters. This is a fundamental assumption of the model: intentions can be separated from deeds, values from facts, and theory from practice. Moreover, intentions are more *important* than deeds. This assumption fits in with a deep-rooted tradition of liberal intellectualism. It challenges the Western audience by calling not for a simple, blind solidarity, but for a difficult, even ‘painful’ view of the conflict, which does not imply any specific practical steps. In fact, it asks for sympathy, or compassion and pity, with the tragic hero. It does *not* demand identification with the tragic victim – that would be too ‘easy’, as for example Robert Alter explicitly states. Not the actual situation in which both parties find themselves, but their mental state is important. And this mental state, the moral struggling, is exhibited time and again, so as to provide a picture that contrasts with the implied insensitivity of the Palestinians or Arabs, and to defocus attention away from Israeli practice, especially the acts of repression.³⁰

Concluding remarks

The tragic model became highly actual after the 1967 war, because of the legitimization crisis in which left zionism came to be involved. Recently left zionism has had to cope with a *second* legitimization crisis, after the arrival of the Likud government, and its all too clear annexation policies after the Israeli-Egyptian treaty. The ideological cornerstone of the tragic model – Israel has only limited options because of its security situation – has become much less credible than before. The security concept of the Likud government is not as ‘sober’ as that of the earlier Labour governments, who wanted to impress the Western audience that they were strictly led by military considerations. It is by now quite clear that, while the Likud government and Gush Emunim apply old zionist practices and ideologies such as pioneerism and annexation by ‘accomplished facts’, they differ in their religious zeal from the secular forms of legitimization which were used by Labour zionism. They do not appeal to Western rationality, and so they make it much more difficult to present a tragic image of Israel as a whole.

Still the model as I have described it here continues to function. This is, first of all, because it is ultimately immune to criticism; it cannot be refuted on rational grounds. The model claims a *potential* danger for Israel (or, in zionist terms, an always existing danger of antisemitism), and one can disagree about the probability of this danger but not about its existence – this is an assumption which cannot be disproved, in the same way as zionism cannot be ‘disproved’. Secondly, the model presents itself as an *alternative* to Gush Emunim zionism. It suggests that there is ‘another’ zionism, or another Israel. And so it attempts to restore the weakened relationship between Israel and the West, by asserting a ‘new’ alternative discourse, which may convince the liberal Western audience as it appeals to a shared rationality. Therefore it is much too early to say that the model has lost its persuasive power and effectiveness. It is probably not accidental that ‘ethical’ zionism (sometimes presented as a search for the ‘real’ roots of zionism) is receiving increased attention from some progressive circles in the West.

Any criticism of the model has to take into account that it is *not* a well-rounded, rational argument, which can be criticised on its own merits. This would neglect the ideological roots of the model. Ideology does not only imply a rational argument, but also a shared consciousness and feeling, and even an inter-personal identity. For example the model appears to say that progressive people do not need to feel ashamed to declare that they are zionist – in this sense the ideology gives them an identity.³¹ So the model must not only be criticised on its rational arguments, or on its pretended rationality, but in the first place on its position in a specific unequal communication structure. And therefore one has to look at the ways in which the model is *used*. While superficially the model gives an image of symmetry, it is used to imply that the one right is somewhat more understandable, sympathetic and moral than the other. These images are created by the social and linguistic contexts in which the model is used, and by the tacit assumptions which the model shares with its audience.

Conversely, this means that a different social and linguistic context can give a wholly different content to the model. The symmetric view (right vs. right), by its sheer banality, can be used for almost any end. It can invite people to consider the ‘other side’ of the matter – without any pressure to give up old ideas. It can have a mediating function, when people intend ‘to bring the parties closer together’. Or it can have a prophetic function, when it is used to warn people that one cannot safely suppress the legitimate rights of the other party for such a long time. And so on and so on. (Ironically, today left zionism is sometimes confronted by a use of the model which is far from its own political intentions, for example when the Palestinians are regarded as ‘the Jews of the Middle East’ – or similar metaphors).

The approach to the problem of ideology which has been chosen here implies a criticism of the model as part of left zionist consciousness

and politics, and ultimately as part of the larger zionist ideology, with which it is inextricably linked.

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- 1 Amos Oz, 'Meaning of Homeland', *New Outlook*, vol 10, no 9, December 1967, pp15–17; emphasis in text. Hana Wirth-Nesher, in her article 'Tragedy and the Arab-Israel Conflict: Dangerous Misnomer', *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, no 9, Fall 1978, mentions some other examples of the tragic metaphor, almost all within a left zionist context. I shall deal with her criticism of the metaphor below.
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- 3 Sholomo Avineri, 'Subjugation of the Means to the State's Ends?', in Ben Ezer (ed), *Unease in Zion*, Jerusalem Academic Press, 1974, p183; emphasis in text.
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- 9 Boaz Evron, 'The Israeli-Arab Impasse: Reflections on a Constructive Alternative', in *Who is Left...*, *op cit*, p138.
- 10 Daniel Amit, quoted by Noam Chomsky, *Peace in the Middle East*, Pantheon Books, 1974, p91.
- 11 At least at the time when they wrote these articles.
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- 13 'Zionism and Universal Ethics' in Arie Bober (ed), *The Other Israel*, Doubleday, New York, 1972.
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- 19 Quoted in Jameson, *op cit*.
- 20 Quoted in Saul Friedländer, *Réflexions sur l'Avenir d'Israel*, Editions du Seuil, 1969, p179ff. He says about the book: 'Les pages de *Siah Lohamim* ne reflètent certes pas l'attitude de tous les soldats israéliens pendant la guerre ou après, mais n'est-il pas significatif que ce livre soit devenu, pour l'élite de la population, l'image que celle-ci veut avoir d'elle-même?' (p181, emphasis in text).
- 21 Avraham B. Yehoshua, 'Let Us not Betray Zionism', in Ben Ezer (ed), *op cit*, p328.

- 22 Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfillment: Palestine 1917–1949*, Macmillan, London, 1949, pp23–4.
- 23 Uri Avnery, *Israel without Zionists*, Macmillan, 1968.
- 24 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.
- 25 This communication structure, 'the broken triangle', has been noticed in an article by Erskine B. Childers, 'Palestine: the Broken Triangle', *Journal of International Affairs*, vol XIX, no 1, 1965.
- 26 Shlomo Avineri, 'The Palestinians and Israel' in Avineri (ed), *op cit*.
- 27 *Ibid*. For a similar line of reasoning, see Boaz Evron in *Who is Left . . .*, *op cit*, pp136–7.
- 28 Ralph Coury, 'Why Can't They Be Like Us?', *Review of Middle East Studies*, 1975, p130. His criticisms can also be applied to the following statement of Hana Wirth-Nesher: 'Without the recognition of two rights, there would be no hope at all, and it is regrettable that most Arab statements have not yet acknowledged the right of Israel to exist. A mature adult may be one who, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's terms, has the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind simultaneously, and still continue to function'. Wirth-Nesher's problems with the tragic model do not transgress the ideological boundaries of left zionism. She criticises the model on two points mainly: its detachment and paralysing effect on the observer, and its simple symmetries. In themselves these criticisms are valid; but she analyses the tragic metaphor as just a literary label, a 'misnomer', *not* as an ideology. Moreover, it seems that she does agree with most applications of the model, provided that they go *further* and see the basic asymmetries between Israel and the Arabs on the practical level. So she emphasises a point which is in fact part of the model; she apparently wants a left zionist use of it.
- 29 In this double way the tragic metaphor is used in the writings of Nahum Goldman, especially: *Israel Muss Umdenken!*, Fisher Bücher, 1976.
- 30 One well-known example is the so-called 'Tear Gas Monologue' (*New Outlook*, vol 21, no 6, October 1978, pp52–3) of an Israeli soldier who reflects on a brutal act in the occupied territories (throwing tear gas into classrooms at Beit Jala, summer 1978): 'My personal problem as a man who received a certain education, and has nothing against the Arabs, is, how did I reach the point where I threw the grenade'. The monologue gives a picture of a morally struggling man, a man with a 'tender conscience'. Boaz Evron comments: 'It's not the victims that interest him but his own "scruples", his own moral situation, what happened to him. Any sensitive listener will notice here the unconscious note of admiration of his own sensitivity, of his own "scruples".' (Yedioth Ahronot, Dec 8, 1978 – translation by Israel Shahak). Like Hana Wirth-Nesher, Boaz Evron directs his criticism at a particular use of the model. He seems to be saying to the soldier: 'You are responsible for your acts, you must know that there are things which, once done, cannot be undone and you have to pay for them. This means to be *mature*, to understand that life as a whole is tragic, to be complex and maybe even to despair.' So Evron asks the Israeli public to be a *real* tragic hero – with all the implied dignity.
- 31 More specifically, the tragic hero provides a model for identification. In Holland, the left zionist *Werkgroep Israel* (Israel Workgroup) distributes a film called *De Gekortwiekte Duif* (the dove without wings) in which the audience is invited to identify with a kibbutznik of Maki orientation (communist-zionist), who complains that because of the war and the guerilla actions he is not able to put his left ideology into practice.

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