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Editorial

The Iran-Iraq war is the bloodiest and most brutal of all armed conflicts between minor powers since the second world war. But very little has been written about it by way of analysis, particularly on the left. Perhaps this is because this war also seems to be the most senseless in living memory.

A welcome initiative was taken by the Committee for the Defence of the Democratic Rights of the Iranian People (CDDRIP), who organized a day-long symposium on the war. We are grateful to the CDDRIP for allowing us to publish the proceedings of this symposium, held in New York on 8 September 1984, and we apologize to them, as well as to our readers, for the delay in publication.

The participants, most of them from the warring countries, assess various aspects of the war, its wider significance, and the lessons to be drawn from it. In a keynote talk, Muhammad Ja'far stresses the unique nature of this brutal and senseless war and of the sanguinary regimes locked in combat. Joe Stork examines the war from the viewpoint of its main material aspects – oil and arms. M. Arman mounts a critique of the Iranian leftist intellectuals whose old dogmas have been shattered by the war. Ali Ashtiani outlines the connections between the external armed conflict and the internal tensions within Iran's Islamic state machine. R. Keivan's talk concentrates on the wider international aspects of the war. Finally, Eqbal Ahmad returns to the keynote theme, and attempts to draw a few conclusions from the discussion.

Khamsin has refrained from imposing any kind of political or other selection on the material of the symposium. Except for minor stylistic emendations, the talks are printed here either as recorded during the symposium or, in some cases, as subsequently re-written by the authors. Ali Ashtiani's contribution was translated from Persian by Shireen.

Another major part of this issue is devoted to a wide-ranging essay by 'Adel Samara, an independent Palestinian Marxist and graduate student at Birkbeck College (London University), who has recently joined our Editorial Group. In this essay he examines the historical failure of bourgeois Arab nationalism, resulting in defeat – the case of Palestine is examined in some detail – as well as in economic and political fragmentation. He then goes on to outline how the uneven and divergent development of the Arab countries could create the conditions for its own supersession, and draws a possible scenario for a future economic convergence, which may lead to unification of the Arab homeland.

S Y M P O S I U M

THE GULF WAR

ORGANIZED BY

**The Committee for the
Defence of the Democratic Rights of
the Iranian People**

NEW YORK, 8 SEPTEMBER 1984

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

by the Committee for the Defence of the Democratic Rights of the Iranian People, organizers of the day-long symposium on the Iran-Iraq war held in New York on 8 September 1984

THE COMMITTEE for the Defence of the Democratic Rights of the Iranian People (CDDRIP) is pleased to have organized this first in-depth symposium on the Iran-Iraq war. It is a matter of the greatest regret that the various organizations opposed to the Khomeini regime have not considered this war beyond the level of rhetoric in their various publications. In the academic field, there have been a few books on the war, but as one of our participants noted, these have been more in the nature of historical and scholastic studies of treaties and geopolitical considerations; they have not dealt with the real roots and political nature of the elements that brought about the war and make its continuation possible.

It should be noted that our participants are from different backgrounds and of different nationalities: American, Pakistani, Iranian and Iraqi. This variety gives a special character and depth to the symposium. It is interesting to note also how all converged, from their different perspectives, in commenting on the wastage of human life and societal wealth that characterizes this war. Two countries are being ruined, and their destruction is being helped along by the superpowers and the indifference of other nations. This is an unprecedented war in the history of both Iran and Iraq, the region and in some ways the world.

The symposium was organized in two parts. The first attempted an in-depth analysis of various aspects of the war; the second, conducted in Persian, brought together in a panel format several different political points of view on the nature of the war. The presentation of each of the main speakers and the introductory remarks of each panel discussant have been transcribed, but unfortunately not the ensuing lively discussion with the floor. We end by expressing our appreciation to Dr Richard Falk of Princeton University for kindly providing the reader with some introductory remarks on the proceedings.

THE COMMITTEE for the Defence of the Democratic Rights of the Iranian People (CDDRIP) was set up in New York in 1982, along with sister committees in Washington and Los Angeles. Through its activities it aims to expose the undemocratic nature of the Khomeini regime in Iran. It also provides a unifying forum for individuals and other opposition groups. It believes in activities that bring people of different beliefs and ideas to share the same democratic goals.

CDDRIP organizes conferences, seminars and publications devoted to exposing the tyrannical nature of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It also promotes artistic groups and artistic expression for progressive purposes. The proceeds of these occasions have been donated to Kurdish freedom-fighters in Iran.

CDDRIP is independent of all political groups whether inside or outside Iran.

CDDRIP supports the true anti-imperialist and anti-reactionary movements in Iran. It supports all activities in defence of the democratic and human rights of the Iranian people. It defends the social and economic rights of women and deprived children.

CDDRIP supports the social, economic, cultural and political rights of the various Iranian ethnic groups and peoples. It supports the freedom of religious conscience and the separation of religion and government.

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Muhammad Ja'far

THE GULF WAR AS EXTINCTION OF POLITICS

I WANT to begin with some comparisons that highlight the fact that this war is special in many ways. One way that has not been given due attention is with regards to its size. By any standards, the scale of the war bears comparison only with the most momentous events of our times. At a conservative estimate, some 300,000 people have been killed on the battlefield so far; other estimates put the casualties as high as 6-700,000. That means more dead in four years of the Iran-Iraq war than in the sum of all Arab-Israeli wars over the last forty years, inclusive of all the casualties of nine years of civil strife in Lebanon. There have been more refugees created by this war than by the formation of the state of Israel, and of course the economic devastation of both Iraq and Iran is of an order of magnitude far greater than anything caused by the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Yet another way of comprehending the scale of this war is to compare it with a very different kind of epoch-making event – the Vietnamese war of national liberation, which, over some twenty years, resulted in over a million direct casualties.

These kinds of comparison draw our attention to two factors. First, there is the question of size, which is obviously coupled to that of the overall impact of the event on the populations of the two countries. The direct casualties of war are only the visible tip of a gigantic iceberg of pain and suffering which permeates not only the body politic, but every pore of a society's being. This is obvious. But I have felt it necessary to repeat the obvious because there is a tendency to view this war as a somewhat peripheral event and with a certain degree of complacency, as if once the killing stops, life will simply go on as usual. This is not that kind of war, and such complacency (which is normally linked to overly optimistic prognoses of how soon the slaughter will stop) is not only misleading, but fails to see the true dimensions of what is a momentous event in the future of both countries.

The second aspect I want to draw your attention to concerns the important sense in which this war differs from all those to which I have compared it thus far. The Iraq-Iran war is the first total war within the Third World. This is not a colonial war, not an imperialist extension of some great power's zone of influence; it is not an outcome of machinations by insidious outsiders, nor is it a proxy conflict. It is not, nor has it ever been, any of those things. This obvious fact by no means implies that other countries, whether from West or East, from this bloc or that, do not try cynically to take advantage of the fighting, or to find ways of profiting from the misery it has brought to the Iranian and Iraqi people. I take for granted that this is going on all the time in various forms. My point is that such moral cynicism, such international hypocrisy and double standards, are not intrinsic to the conflict, whether in its origins or in what has sustained it thus far at these levels of casualties.

The Iran-Iraq war is an event that Arabs and Iranians must come to terms with on the basis of the politics that they have created in the post-colonial age, and on the basis of their own histories and political traditions. We may not like the regimes that are leading us into this senseless slaughter, but they are the genuine, if unsavoury, offspring of our own societies. This places a new and different kind of responsibility on us, for this time at least we have no one to blame but ourselves.

So what kind of a war is this? What forces or laws sustain it in its murderous course? What is its essential nature? These are the questions that I will be dealing with.

Once again, however, let us start considering these difficult and painful questions by looking at what this war is not. This is not a war over possessions such as territory, or natural resources of wealth. It is not even a bid to gain influence over another society's independently constituted state. The Iraqi Ba'th, and the Arab regimes that support the regime, would like to make us think that issues of this nature lie at the roots of the war. The Ba'th in particular has gone to great lengths to dress up its original aggression in such clothing. Learned professors in the West, and even State Department analysts, have written whole books devoted to the history of a so-called 'territorial' dispute which, before 1975, hardly anyone inside Iraq knew existed.

It should not be necessary before an Iranian audience to have to refute in detail this line of argument. The very name of the war inside Iraq – *Qadisiyyat Saddam* – which is also the sense in which it is popularly conceived, points to the fact that territory is not, nor has it ever been, the main issue.* Furthermore, if chunks of territory were really at issue – as they have been in all Arab-Israeli wars – then the war would have ended long ago, and the levels of casualties would have been much lower. Khomeini, like the Ba'thist leadership, realize that this war is not about territory. At bottom that is why, so long as Khomeini is alive and determining policy, the so-called moderates amongst the clergy (who are receiving much attention in the press these days for their apparent willingness to compromise) will not prevail. This does not necessarily mean that the long-awaited 'final offensive' is going to materialize in the short

term; it simply means that the termination of the war requires far more than a simple papering over of a few formalities about borders and 'non-interference' in each other's affairs.

But then, we must ask, if not about territory, what is the killing all about? This question must be seen as made up of two separate parts. The first is: how did it start? The second stems from the realization that when an event of this magnitude is set in motion, for whatever reason, it takes on a life of its own, it begins to obey its own internally generated rules. It is not enough simply to identify what set the thing in motion, it is necessary to probe the logic of the event itself as it pursues its murderous course.

This rationale can derive from structures deep within a society's most cherished traditions. When whole populations gear themselves up for an engagement of such traumatic consequence, they reach out for anything and everything that has gone into their own formation; they reach out to these deeply felt structures as weapons with which to defend themselves and push forward for victory. In different ways we have already seen this happen to both the people of Iraq and Iran. Once it begins to happen, however, the reasons that originally set this momentous event in motion diminish in significance. Half a million dead later, who gives a damn whose flag is flying from the boats that use the Shatt!

To return to the first part of my question: how did the war start? There can be no doubt that Iraq was not only the first to engage in large-scale hostilities, but also the first to conceive of the idea of total war against Iran. Preparations and planning were probably underway from the spring of 1980, and it is not unreasonable to establish the early part of this year as the date in which the idea first occurred to the Ba'athist leadership.

Notwithstanding propagandistic hyperbole from the new Iranian regime regarding the Ba'ath, there can be no doubt that Iran was caught off guard when the invasion came on 22 September 1980. Whatever might be the long-term expansionist dynamic of Khomeinism, the regime was preoccupied at the time with the intense conflicts building up between the Islamic Republic Party and clerics on one side, and Bani Sadr and his supporters on the other. The hostage crisis was in full swing and internal tensions were escalating rapidly. Thus while both Iran and Iraq were certainly engaging in inflammatory accusations and border violations in the months preceding the invasion, the notion that these could be used as a pretext for broader aims was undoubtedly in its origins solely a Ba'athist one.

Why did the Ba'athist leadership, or more precisely such an absolute and ruthless leader as Saddam Hussein (in whose person an unprecedented degree of power has been concentrated since the purge of 1979), conceive of the idea of total war? Megalomania and regional ambition undoubtedly form part of the answer. Imagine the scene that might have been played in the summer of 1981 – date of the Non-Aligned Nations' Conference, scheduled to be held in Baghdad since 1977. Consider the implications of a victorious Saddam Hussein, only recently host of the anti-Camp David Arab Summit in Baghdad, now receiving the mantle of

Third World leadership from none other than Fidel Castro, and disposing of so-called Arab territory as the spoils from a fragmenting Iran. He would have been undisputed master of the Gulf, and the symbol of a new expanding regional power – a force to be reckoned with and feared from one end of the Arab world to the next. The only question would be: whom was he going to strike at next?

These are the dreams that we can reasonably imagine passing through his mind as he weighed up his options. A demonstrably successful projection of Ba'thist power, no matter how slight, would have catapulted Saddam personally, and the Ba'thist movement in general, far beyond even Nasser's regional status during the peak of his popularity in the wake of the 1956 tripartite aggression against Egypt. Here was a man out to make his own Suez, not by standing up to imperialist powers and Zionist aggression on Egyptian territory, but by himself taking the initiative to launch an aggression that would achieve all this and more, by breaking the spell of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The distance between 1956 and 1980 is the distance that separates one era's colonial and expansionist wars from this new phenomenon that Saddam inaugurated – the Third World's first truly indigenous great war. One must never forget to give even the devil his due. Moreover, Saddamism is as important a phenomenon to Iraqi politics, and Arab politics in general, as Khomeinism is to Iranian politics. It is a phenomenon rooted in violence, in the manipulation of the tools and means of violence to achieve expressly political ideals. Saddamism is not plain thuggery, as so many people mistakenly believe. This is not another Papa Doc or Idi Amin on the rampage. Saddamism represents something far more complex, and far more political.

To understand this phenomenon, one must go beyond the personal motivations of this individual, and delve into the broad societal pre-conditions that made such an unprecedented concentration of absolute power possible in Iraq. It is these pre-conditions that went into the formation of a man like Saddam Hussein, and that made it possible for him to act out his fantasies. Even more important, they are the very same pre-conditions that lie behind the answer to what is, for Iraqis at least; the single most important and agonizing question of the war: why has the Ba'thist regime not fallen, despite the great reversal of this war some three years ago? Why has Iraq's overwhelmingly shi'i soldiery not defected; and why are the Iraqi people still willing to fight? How is it possible for a regime that so miscalculated in its original aggression, and that has cost its population such misery and hardship, to continue to survive apparently as strong as ever? In Argentina, when the Galtieri military dictatorship went to war over a few islands, it was toppled after less than 1,000 Argentine soldiers had been killed? So how does the Ba'th survive in the wake of hundreds of thousands of dead, a devastated economy, and a four-year war it had originally assumed would end in less than two weeks? Even if the regime were to fall tomorrow, these questions would still be valid.

These are of course very difficult questions, and in the short time available to me, I can but suggest the direction I think our answers must take.

In the fifteen years of Ba'athist rule preceding the outbreak of total war against Iran, Iraqi society had been transformed. It is today virtually unrecognizable to those who knew it in the 1950s and 1960s. Leaving aside the sociology and economics of the matter, let us consider a few of the central political expressions of those changes. I shall conclude by suggesting the relationship of these to the questions I have put forward.

I would identify at least six characteristics of the new Ba'athist political structure that are relevant:

1 By 1980 there were one million organized members of the Ba'ath Party, in a country of twelve million people. The party had become the main vehicle of privilege and advancement in society.

2 A transformation in the structure of power had taken place, away from the army and into the institutions of the party. A country that had been governed by the military since the 1958 revolution was now ruled by one mammoth all-pervasive party. In effect, this meant an enormous expansion of various networks of the security services such that they now permeated, controlled and monitored every detail of the country's internal life.

3 There was a phenomenal and completely unprecedented expansion in the number of institutionally armed men. It has been estimated that by 1980 the total personnel in the security services, the army and the party militia amounted to a staggering 640,000, in a country of twelve to thirteen million people. This represents just under 20 per cent of the economically active urban labour force, and it far outstrips anything achieved even by the Shah.

4 All internal political opposition had been crushed. Even more important, the Iraqi Communist Party (for forty years the main opposition force in Iraqi politics) had not only had its membership steadily killed off, but had of its own accord conceded to the Ba'ath the space that the ICP had one occupied in Iraqi politics by entering into the Ba'athist government. All the traditional polarities and allegiances in Iraq's political arena have been shattered, and new ones have not yet taken their place.

5 Fear had become the only cement that held the body politic together. All other forms of organization not directly controlled by the party had been wiped out. The public was atomized and broken up as an entity independent of the Ba'ath. A society that had once revelled in politics and political discourse – it was a sort of hobby in every family – was not only subdued and silent, but had become profoundly and genuinely apolitical.

Fear was the agency of that transformation in Iraqi politics – the kind of fear that comes when not only are you afraid of what your neighbours might report about you to the local secret police, but also when you are careful of what you say in front of your own children, in case in their innocence they blurt out something that turns your whole family's life upside down for ever. This is a fear that penetrates the soul and distorts the mind. It cannot be bracketed off and set aside, because it has entered into the psychological constitution of each and every citizen. Iranians still do not know this kind of fear; Khomeinism is certainly capable of inducing

it, and perhaps the Iranians have already picked up some pointers from the Ba'thist experience. So far, however, they have not achieved the levels of internal organization that are required to create this awesome bond. The horrific genius of Ba'thism, the fundamental basis of its power, is that it has fashioned this fear out of the raw material that Iraqi society provided and placed it at the centre of the modern Iraqi condition. This it has done by changing the more commonly known kind of fear, which is essentially negative and withdrawn – a state of suspension in the otherwise active interaction of two intact agencies – into a new kind of positive, if fragile, bond between the regime and the Iraqi people.

6 Finally, and contrary to popular belief, the Ba'th has presided over a breakdown in purely local Iraqi nationalism, which in any case was never very strong. The Ba'th has replaced it with new bonds to its own party and regime, derived in the first place from the fear that it has succeeded in inculcating, and also from the fact that the regime has succeeded in compromising literally hundreds of thousands of people in its terror.

The Ba'th as a party is pan-Arabist, and this nationalism goes to the very core of its ideological formation. It is impossible to understand Ba'thism without recourse to pan-Arabism. The main implication of this is that, as a party, it finds the frontiers of the modern state of Iraq (as these emerged following the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire) to be too confining, and effectively nothing more than a temporary base from which to spring outwards and realize its true mission, the unification of the Arab world. The utopian and fictional character of such long-term goals does not for a moment prevent them from remaining at the heart of Ba'thism, both as a movement and as a party in power. Iranians, who are today experiencing a regime whose model of the perfect polity is the four years of 'Ali's caliphate thirteen centuries ago, will understand this all too well.

These, then, are the six pre-conditions for the emergence of a personality like Saddam Hussein bent on the pursuit of a war such as the one now tearing our societies apart. They are also the primary facts we need to work with, and whose interconnections we must understand, when we wish to answer the questions: why has the Ba'thist regime not yet fallen, and why has Iraq's shi'i soldiery not defected, or simply refused to fight?

The 1968 Ba'thist regime changed all the parameters affecting societal and state-organized violence in Iraq. This it did gradually and haltingly, but nevertheless inexorably. The expansion of the means of violence – army, police, security apparatuses, networks of informers, party militia, and the party and state bureaucracies – eventually underwent the classic inversion: from being a means to an end (the elimination of opponents) they became horrific ends in themselves, spilling mindlessly across the borders that had once contained them. The violence that had been buried in the subconscious culture of Iraq's mosaic of religious sects and ethnic groups now surfaced, as a new kind of fear drove through all political and private space that had once existed by virtue of the remoteness and feebleness of state institutions and concerns. At this point a true regime of

terror set in, one whose deepest roots lay in the growing fear people now had of each other.

In a very important sense war—any war, it hardly matters against whom—is an inevitable outcome of the unchecked growth of the means of violence, particularly when this growth is so structured as to compromise literally masses of people in its terror. It is these features of Iraqi society under the Ba'th that afford some insight into what is, after all, the final human catastrophe: a society held together because it cannot find light in the overthrow of those who plunged it into darkness. The Iraqi people's most basic instincts of self-preservation warn them that a defeat by the Iranian forces would still result in a measure of Ba'thist victory, a victory they would snatch from the jaws of their own deaths in the form of the emptiness they would leave behind. This emptiness would only give rise to more dead and more killing of Iraqis by Iraqis. There is simply no other explanation for the markedly improved performance of the Iraqi army once the tide of battle had turned decisively in favour of the shi'i clerics. The case simply cannot be sustained that the Ba'th's pan-Arabism has, despite itself, given rise to a genuine Iraqi nationalism, and it is this which has held the Iraqi army, polity and society together in spite of the great turn of this war.

One final observation needs to be made before I move on to the second part of my question relating to the nature of this war. It used to be the case that the Ba'thist regime had no analogue in the surrounding region. This is no longer true. Khomeinism has introduced into the politics of this part of the world an awesome capacity for this same kind of terror; one that comes on the back of a far-reaching revolution, and for this reason one that could eventually make even the worst excesses of the Ba'th look like adolescent fumbling. The Islamic regime in Iran today lacks the all-pervasive organization of society that the Ba'th Party has achieved inside Iraq over many years. It is therefore not quite there yet. But Iranians ought to feel deep inside themselves the need to understand the horror that Iraq has become under the Ba'th; they should feel this need because there are so many signs within Iranian politics under the mullahs that point in a similar direction. Needless to say, all the trappings would be different; but the structure of political life, the kind of fear I have been talking about, the atomization of a public, the eradication of all freedoms: the seeds of all this certainly exist under clericalism in Iran today. It is just possible therefore that Iranians may be looking at a pale reflection of their own future in the abomination that Ba'thism has created in Iraq. After all, it takes two kinds of madness to conduct a war with this degree of destructiveness: the first to start it and the second to keep it going.

I constantly find myself drawn to such symmetries, not only between the two regimes as independently constructed entities, but also and more obviously between the Iraqi and Iranian conduct of this war. It is in the nature of such a momentous head-on collision to highlight parallels of this kind, parallels that penetrate deeply into the heart of the question we started off with: what is the nature of this new kind of war of the Third World? Closely related to this, lurks another more paradoxical kind of

question: could there have been such loss of life, such destruction, such a devastating human price to this conflict, if such symmetries did not exist? I leave this thought with you as we turn now to the war as an event in its own right, putting aside the problem of why it started.

In military terms, the full extent of the Iraqi miscalculation was apparent by the end of the first week of the fighting. The rest of the course of the war can be broken down into the following phases: first, slower and more costly Iraqi advances culminating in the capture of Khorramshahr; second a stalemate lasting through the spring of 1981; third, an Iranian counter-offensive which eventually drove the Iraqis out of all Iranian territory; and finally, another stalemate lasting until today and marked by much higher levels of casualties.

Throughout these stages the fighting has been marked by one specific characteristic, which in my opinion is quite remarkable for the consistency with which it has appeared. Neither side in this war has been able to come even close to a reasonably accurate estimate of the other's strengths and weaknesses, or even to learn from its own or the other side's mistakes. At the start this was mostly a feature of Iraqi military thinking; later on, however, it became characteristic of Iranian behaviour on the battlefield. This could be illustrated by dozens of concrete examples from the initial Iraqi strategy: the use of the air force, the absence of a fall-back strategy, the mindless and counterproductive bombing of Dezful, and so on. In effect, this absence of strategy is the only consistent pattern in four years of warfare. Invariably it is expressed in the tendency of each side to up the ante and elevate the stakes, the moment the other shows signs of conciliation.

Failures of judgement and the overestimation of one's own capabilities occur in all wars; gross negligence and abject stupidity are also very common; utter disregard for even one's own soldiery not infrequent; but a consistent inability on both sides, and even at times unwillingness (particularly on the Iranian side) to judge the other realistically in order to map out an intelligible strategy for pursuing war aims that have as their final objective the more or less efficient overthrow of the adversary, this type of ingrained mental blockage is much less common.

A war in which only one side takes leave of its senses is very different from one in which both sides do. The differences reside in the number of casualties, the outcome of the fighting, the essential meaning of the killing, and, as a consequence, the positions that people feel morally obligated to assume as regards the conflict. Such a war also affects the judgement of those doing the dying, and their motivations for continuing to do so. With only one side pursuing a consistently irrational strategy, the tendency to be demoralized, uneasy and even rebellious, is reinforced; once it is established, however, that both sides are intent on such a course, and that for neither side has the war any tangible material goals, the soldiery's resolve and ideological commitment to its own side tend to stiffen. This is exactly what happened to the morale of the Iraqi army; it went in on a wave of xenophobia and anti-Iranian chauvinism, but flagged appreciably when nothing seemed to go according to plan and stiff resistance was being met in the towns and cities; it then improved greatly once the 'all or

nothing' human wave strategy lost its initial confounding novelty, and revealed itself as fundamentally ideological, and thus 'strange' to outsiders. The only way to understand Iraq's newfound position of strength today is by reference to the insanity – there simply is no more polite way of putting it – of Iranian military behaviour on the battlefield over the last three years.

Whenever Iranians have fought in defence of their homes and towns, and in effective isolation from the clerical leadership, they have by all accounts done well against vastly superior odds. Nothing shook the Iraqi army more than the tenacious defence put up in cities like Khorramshahr and Abadan. The character of such fighting is defensive and guerrilla-like, with snipers and entrenched scattered pockets putting up a sustained resistance to armoured and infantry advance. The nature of the combat was such as to place life at a premium, and so tactics evolved which tended jealously to guard it. When the clerics took over, the military conception changed dramatically. The idea became to use the occasion of the war to prove how good a Muslim one was; winning versus losing obviously took on an entirely new meaning.

It must be admitted that if a large enough number of people are prepared to commit suicide, then even in modern warfare almost any fixed position can be overrun. The problem is a simple matter of applied mathematics; it is an equation made up of numbers of people, the speed at which they can run, and the distance they have to cover on one side, versus the firepower and rate of delivery on the other. Using such 'tactics' in the Basra region in the summer of 1982, Iran lost in two attempts 100,000 men and boys. They failed to take the city or cut off the road to Baghdad. None the less, with time on their side, a respectable flow of oil revenues starting to come in, an initial series of victories to bolster morale, and tested formidable Iraqi fixed positions, the mullahs tried again and in the same location. In February and March 1984 some 500,000 Iranians were amassed for what was billed as the 'final offensive'. In the initial battles that ensued, the Ba'th used poison gas for the first time. Reporters who were allowed in have described scenes of carnage in language rarely found in modern journalism. 'Carpets of bodies' and 'hell on earth' are the sorts of phrases that cropped up to describe the fighting around al-Qurnah, and what became known as the battle of Gzaeil. One Iranian doctor on the front lines, who was sent to Europe to accompany gassed victims and was obviously shaken to his very depths, has told of what he saw: bodies left unburied, prisoners shot at point-blank range, the wounded left on the field to become carrion for desert jackals. Gone was the slightest implication of compassion, if it had ever existed before. 'I have seen young boys burned alive,' he said. 'I have seen Iranian and Iraqi boys tearing each other literally with their nails and teeth. It is raging hate against raging hate.'

To say that the Ba'th and the clerical leadership in Tehran 'took leave of their senses', and acted irrationally in pursuing even their own goals on the battlefield, presumes some kind of shared sensibility on their part – not wisdom, military experience or deep theoretical understanding, but

plain common sense. This faculty is not an inner quality of the individual mind, something concerned with abstract reasoning and the reckoning of consequences; it is the series of judgements and perceptions made by us, as human beings who share the same world and gauge its reality on that basis. It is therefore a profoundly political sensibility concerned with human behaviour and political affairs.

Both Saddam Hussein and Khomeini possess this sixth sense when dealing with their own self-made worlds. Both have assessed, for example, their own human raw material in a consistently shrewd and calculating manner, surprising the sceptics time and again. The two most important questions of this war originate in this fact. The first, which has already been discussed, concerns the Iraqi regime and why it did not fall long ago. The second and parallel question concerns the Iranian situation: why is it that Khomeini has continued to be successful in his mass recruiting drives despite unprecedented, and militarily meaningless, levels of casualties?

By the same token, when Khomeini and Saddam Hussein deal with each other, that very same strength which each has when firmly implanted in his own world turns into a colossal weakness. The commonality, to put it mildly, is lacking; consequently, the absence of simple common sense in Ba'hist Iraq and Islamic Iran is not a reflection on the sanity or otherwise of those who have made up these worlds, or those caught up in their vice-like grip. It is an outcome of the air of unreality that exists, not so much in people's daily routines, as in the fictitious goals that their lives are wound up with and to which they are being consecrated.

For Saddam Hussein, the world outside his grasp, the world he does not control and has not made, appears to him in a guise other than that which presents itself to our common sense. He did not need the Shah's ex-generals and Bakhtiar trotting in and out of Baghdad in the months before the war to tell him that the Iranian revolution was rotten right through, and that the masses were just waiting for his signal to rise up in revolt. He knew that already, from 'history', as his choice of the name al-Qadisiyyah expresses so aptly. For Saddam Hussein the appearance of the Iranian revolution – the millions who marched, fought and died for it, and the voluntary, near-unanimous lodging of all their hopes and aspirations in the person of Khomeini such as to render his and their will one and the same thing – all this was discounted at the outset. It was other than what it seemed on the surface. The Khuzistani Arabs would welcome his liberating army, rise up in arms, and perhaps even secede to Arabdom, their rightful inheritance, just as their ancestors had once done on the plains of Qadisiyyah at the expense of the mighty Sasanian empire. That they did not do so, and even fought him tenaciously in Ahwaz and Khuzistan, testified not to his error of judgement, but to their treachery.

Madness in this strictly political sense is expressed in the act of subordinating each particular incident, every development on the battlefield, each individual human life, and of course the sum of all lives, to such indefinite, distant and fictional goals as those held by the likes of

Khomeini and Saddam Hussein. Here are two warring world-views that cannot help themselves in their drive to take away from all of us that which we have in common. It is the complete absence of common ground that not only does away with common sense, but also in the end generates the madness of the killing in this war.

When Saddam Hussein tells the world that if it were within his power he would go so far as to start World War III before relinquishing office voluntarily, no one should doubt that he means exactly that. With people like this it is very hard to distinguish between a genuine intention and a propagandistic flourish. On the whole, such people tend to believe in their own utterances, and however monstrous a proposition might seem from the standpoint of our common sense, it is essential never to indulge in the all-too-common tendency to shy away from its insanity.

Politics is the domain of discourse and human interaction. Paradoxically, this very domain that is capable of causing such strife is itself extinguished once the killing begins. Politics ended between Iraq and Iran the moment the war began. It had ended much earlier in Iraq. As we have seen, this termination of politics in Iraq lay at the heart of the answer to the question: why did it start? Therefore, far from this being a conflict that 'continues politics by other means', as that great theoretician of warfare, Clausewitz, once wrote, it is the action of extending raw, unbridled and mindless violence into new and uncharted frontiers. This is the essential nature of the Iran-Iraq war; it is a nature that arises in the first place from the deep-seated hostility that two world-views have, not only towards each other (for then there would be hope; at least there may exist on this planet other world-views with which they are compatible) but also towards everything human that stands outside of them. The two perfect symbols that sum up the ultimate meaning of the Iran-Iraq war are the human wave strategy and poison gas, neither of which lends itself to a strategy in warfare designed around expressly political ends. Both are fixated on death as an obviously non-political end in itself, whether it be the purposeless slaughter of non-combatants, or the death of one's own soldiery.

On these grounds I would conclude by saying that the moral meaning of a war like this – something we have not directly addressed so far, and a meaning which it does not share with Arab-Israeli wars, or many other kinds of wars – resides in the simple truth that its mere occurrence has taken away from all of us one more chunk of an already battered humanity.

Note

* The battle of Qadisiyyah (AD 636) marks the fall of the pre-Islamic Sasanian empire, and the Arab conquest of Persia.

Joe Stork

OIL, ARMS & THE GULF WAR

WHEN THE conflict between Iran and Iraq erupted into all-out war in September 1980, experts and the public alike in the Western capitalist countries anticipated yet another 'oil-shock' – a large-scale interruption of exports from the Persian Gulf which would send oil prices soaring for the third time in less than a decade. The two warring countries produced one-sixth of OPEC's total output at the time, and many feared that the conflict would also affect the exports of Saudi Arabia and the smaller producers on the Arab side of the Gulf. Commentators recalled that the supply interruption accompanying the October war of 1973 sent OPEC prices from \$5.18 per barrel in the fourth quarter of 1973 to \$11.36 in the first quarter of 1974. The turmoil of the Iranian revolution doubled prices again, from \$12.91 per barrel at the end of 1978 to \$23.55 by the beginning of the new year, and further to \$31.74 in the second half of 1980.

The outbreak of the war forced Iraq to suspend all exports within a matter of days, and its production plummeted from 3.4 million barrels a day (mbd) to less than 500,000. Iran's production also contracted to a trickle, from 1.8 mbd to 350,000. Since both countries depend crucially on oil revenues to fuel their war economies, oil facilities have been key strategic targets – both actual and potential – from the first days of the war.

In fact, actual fire has been concentrated on export rather than production facilities. Refineries and loading facilities are inherently more vulnerable targets than oilfields, and it is the revenue-generating capacity which each side wants to inderdict. Thus in the first days and weeks of the war, Iran managed to shut down Iraq's main export facilities, near the port of Fao on the Gulf. Most of Iraq's oil-based industrialization projects – steel mills, refineries, petrochemical and fertilizer plants – were situated in the war zone, in the vicinity of Basra, and these were heavily damaged. On the other side, the huge export refinery complex at Abadan,

one of the largest in the world, came under heavy siege and was largely destroyed. Iran's main crude export facility at Kharg Island, with a capacity of 6 mbd, was a target for Iraqi warplanes and missiles from the beginning of the war, but the Iraqis were never able to inflict significant or lasting damage on it.

Both Iraqi and Iranian oil production recovered somewhat as the war settled into various phases of stalemate. Iran could still export through Kharg, and Iraq had pipelines to the Mediterranean through Syria and Turkey. The oil aspect of this war took another turn in April 1982, when Syria closed the pipeline through its territory as part of its overall alliance with Tehran (and in return for Iranian oil deliveries at concessionary prices). This limited Iraq's exports to just over 0.5 mbd through the Turkey pipeline (this has since been expanded to about 1 mbd) and shipment via tanker trucks overland to the Jordanian port of Aqaba. This occurred at the time when Iran had moved to the offensive on the battlefield, shifting the war to Iraqi territory, and when Iraq's foreign currency reserves had dwindled dangerously low.

But neither this nor subsequent actions aimed at the adversaries' oil exports have proved decisive in bringing either side to its knees, so to speak. Wealth has been squandered and lives destroyed, but the war machines churn on, albeit on a somewhat desultory fashion. The 'tanker war' which Iraq initiated in the spring of 1984, and which it revives periodically, is only the latest instance of this lesson. For one thing, neither side has done everything it might to exploit fully this vulnerability, perhaps because it is mutual. Iraq's attacks on the tankers loading at Kharg seem to have been calibrated to keep the industrial powers' attention rather than achieve victory. For its part, Iran has made little or no effort, either directly or through its Kurdish allies, to interrupt Iraq's remaining export pipeline that goes from Kirkuk through Turkey. This probably stems from Tehran's need to remain on good terms with the generals and politicians in Ankara. Turkey is a major trading partner and supply route for Iran in its wartime environment.

Impact on the oil markets

THE CONSEQUENCES of the war for oil prices have been surprisingly slight. A major factor in this has been the containment of the conflict to Iran and Iraq. Except for several Iranian attacks on Kuwaiti targets, and Saudi involvement in the 'tanker war' in the summer of 1984, the conflict has not spread. This remains a danger, to be sure, but so far it has not happened. In fact, Saudi Arabia expanded its production when the war broke out, to over 10 mbd, thus cushioning the immediate impact of the cutoff of Iraqi and Iranian supplies. Oil prices did rise by about \$3 per barrel, to \$34.84, in early 1981, but they began to decline from this peak as early as mid-1981. This price decline has continued ever since. In March 1983 OPEC formally lowered its price to \$28 per barrel, and has had great difficulty holding that price ever since. If anything, the reduction of oil exports from Iran and Iraq has been a boon to the world industry – oil

companies, other OPEC producers, all those interested in maintaining the price of crude – by removing millions of barrels of production from a world market brimming over with more oil than it can consume (at present prices). Indeed, the most fearsome prospect for the oil industry today is not the cutoff of exports but renewed production by Iran and Iraq and pressures from them to regain their pre-war shares of export markets.

What accounts for this paradoxical situation? The war, as it turned out, coincided with a marked shift in the world oil market. This shift began before the war itself, though its consequences were not immediately apparent. The volume of world oil production peaked in December 1979 – it averaged nearly 63 mbd for that year. In the first nine months of 1980, the months just preceding the escalation of the conflict to the battlefield, world oil production dropped by 3.6 mbd. The drop in OPEC production was even steeper, nearly 1 mbd. In other words, while OPEC production fell, production by non-OPEC states increased. By 1983 OPEC production had fallen to under 16 mbd, slightly more than half of what it had been four years earlier. For nearly two years now, OPEC production has remained at this level, 15 mbd less than at the end of 1979.

During this same period, by contrast, world oil production fell by only 10 mbd. Thus there has been a 5 mbd increase in non-OPEC production since 1979. Another expression of OPEC's changed relationship to the world oil market is that in 1979 the world oil industry was operating at approximately 91 per cent of production capacity. In 1984 it was operating at only 75 per cent of capacity. Most of this spare capacity is in the Gulf. This turnaround in the world oil market is related to a number of different factors. One is the reduction in energy consumption demand induced by the global recession affecting both industrialized and industrializing countries. Another factor is the impact of energy conservation measures and shifts to alternative fuels. A third is the stockpiling of oil supplies by both consuming and producing countries. For instance, the US strategic petroleum reserve now contains some 400 million barrels of crude, and in recent months Saudi Arabia has had between 25 and 60 million barrels of crude afloat on tankers outside the Gulf.

A fourth factor is the expansion of non-OPEC production. Of the 5 mbd increase since 1979, approximately half is accounted for by Mexico and by British and Norwegian production in the North Sea. New production in the US has enabled America to reverse the trend of several decades of steadily increasing imports.

Last but not least, the huge industrial development and import programme of the oil producing countries, OPEC and non-OPEC alike, have practically eliminated surplus revenues and turned even states like Saudi Arabia into 'high-absorption' producers. The absolute need of societies like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for imports and revenues may not be nearly as great as that of Nigeria and Algeria, but social and political pressures in the former countries are strong enough to erase this distinction. Thus Saudi production dropped from more than 10 mbd in early 1981 to less than 5 mbd by early 1983. Once the Saudis determined that

they could no longer absorb further production cutbacks, the official price cutting began.

An oil war?

THIS LAST feature – the pressure on the oil producers to produce and export even at the cost of driving prices down still further – brings us back to a consideration of the place of oil in this strange war. For the war itself has proved to be an insatiable absorbant of oil revenues, not just of the combatant states but of Iraq's official Arab patrons as well. If the war in the Gulf has not had the dire price consequences on the world oil market that were once feared, it is still a war whose uniqueness is intimately related to its proximity to and access to the fabulous oil reserves of the Gulf region.

There are several important respects in which this war revolves around oil. First and perhaps most obviously, oil production and revenues have fuelled the war. Iraq began its invasion only after it had escalated oil production and amassed foreign currency reserves that would sustain it for two years of war. (And indeed, it was only as the war neared the end of the second year with no resolution in sight that Iraq's financial problems became acute.) The war simply could not have continued at this level of carnage and destruction for this long without the oil revenues of the protagonists and Iraq's Arab neighbours. A war of this duration and relative intensity between, say, Ethiopia and Somalia is unimaginable. If estimates of military costs of \$1 billion per month for each combatant state are remotely accurate, this means that the war has cost nearly \$100 billion in the military realm alone, not counting damage to economic infrastructure, or the indirect costs to these societies in their allocation of labour and capital. Consider, for instance, Iraq's lavish compensation to the families of its many 'martyrs'. Of course, this has a political purpose, to forestall discontent and opposition stemming from this disaster.

But it is a political price that can only be sustained because of oil revenues, and because of the 'rentier state' character that both these regimes have inherited and encouraged. The ability of these regimes to sustain this war bears some relation to the absence of accountability to their subjects/citizens. Both are, as Eqbal Ahmad has remarked, 'unbridled', and one cannot help but suspect that this shared privilege accounts at least partially for the restraint each has shown towards the oil production (as opposed to export) facilities of the other. The rentier character of these societies, and the local bourgeoisie's emphasis on contracting and foreign trade contacts, is intensified by the war and at the same time supports it. In Eqbal Ahmad's words, 'There is too much money involved for some people not to get rich.'

This is also an 'oil war' in a derivative sense. The war was unlocked, one might say, by the Iranian revolution. This revolution was very much a product of the social, economic and political dynamics fostered by Iran's 'oil monoculture'. Furthermore, the intense hostilities between Tehran and Baghdad in the post World War II period – and to some extent

even before – were very much related to the manipulations of foreign powers, especially the United States and Britain. Washington and Whitehall and the 'Seven Sisters' used Iraq to combat Iranian nationalism (under Mossadeq), and the Shah to combat Iraqi nationalism (under Qassem, 'Aref and the Ba'th).

Finally, oil has sustained this war politically, too, in terms of the regional and international alignment behind Iraq. At one level, French and American support for Baghdad is motivated by the prospect of future Iraqi markets for exports and contracts. More generally, though, fear of Iranian political hegemony in the Gulf, which would enable Iran to determine future terms of access to oil from the Arab states there as well, accounts for this co-operative support for Iraq aimed at preventing an Iranian victory on the ground. At this point, the strategy seems to have succeeded in moving the war from a stage of attrition (at Iraq's expense) to one of stalemate (or mutual attrition). The major purpose of this Franco-American strategy seems to be to insure the Iraqi economy against collapse by encouraging renewed financial support from the other Arab oil states in the short run, and by increasing Iraqi export capabilities via new pipelines across Saudi Arabia and Jordan for the longer term. The new pipelines serve the larger purpose of increasing export facilities for the Gulf region as a whole, and replacing ARAMCO's aging TAPline system.

All of this is aimed at preventing an Iranian victory which could influence the terms of Western access to Gulf oil in a later era when the present oil glut is barely a memory. Stalemate in the war, according to the analysis of William Quandt and Thomas McNaugher of Washington's Brookings Institution, lends leverage to Saudi Arabia rather than Iran, and helps maintain OPEC weakness. Sharp competition for market shares would remain in place of a Tehran-Baghdad-Riyadh consensus.²

Oil and arms

ANOTHER IMPORTANT concern of the US and other industrialized countries is the continued recycling of capital in the form of purchases and payments for goods and services imported by the oil producing states. This process has accelerated in the military sector as a result of the war, primarily through Iraqi purchases. On the other hand, development expenditures in both countries have been cut back considerably in order to meet the extraordinary costs of financing the war.

This war has been one of the most protracted and most devastating conflicts since the end of World War II, in terms of casualties and economic damage. But it has not been a highly intense conflict in terms of arms consumption, particularly of technologically advanced weapons systems. For the most part, the war has been fought on the ground, with infantry, tanks and artillery, and has not involved significant air or naval battles. To some extent this has been dictated by the nature of the objectives of each side. It is no doubt also related to the fact that during the first two years of the war, both sides were cut off from their respective major suppliers – Iraq from

the Soviet Union, Iran from the United States. Purchases had to be made from or through third parties. Iran has remained under a fairly effective arms embargo, at least in terms of acquiring major new weapons systems. Iraq, for its part, has been able to acquire advanced weapons systems from France, Italy and (again) the Soviet Union, but has been extremely cautious in deploying or engaging them for fear of losses and casualties. This reflects Iraq's poor attack capabilities.

Iran had acquired an immense stock of highly sophisticated weaponry under the Shah, but the impact of the revolutionary upheaval combined with wartime deterioration has reduced the utility of this stock, especially air power. The present balance of forces represents Iraq's access to re-supply since early 1983, and Iran's continued attrition. Iran began the war with more than 350 combat aircraft but now has no more than 65. As of mid-1984 Iraq had more than 330 combat aircraft. In main battle tanks, Iran has 8-900 to Iraq's 2-3,000, despite the fact that Iraq lost some 2,500 tanks midway through the war. The ratio of armoured personnel carriers is similar: 7-800 for Iran, to 3,000 for Iraq.

Iraq's edge in weapons has been offset by its unwillingness to exploit that edge and by Iran's larger fighting population. The Iranian edge in manpower, however, is not significant in the immediate term. The total number of Iranian fighters is frequently estimated at 5-7,000. At the outbreak of the war, the regular army was down to about 160,000 men. It is difficult to know to what extent recruitment has been offset by casualties. One calculation is that Iranian regulars now number only about 100,000 – reflecting an estimated 200,000 killed and more than half a million seriously wounded over the last four years. Many of these were recently recruited 'irregulars' but regulars and seasoned officers have also been lost in significant numbers. Iraqi casualties are estimated at 60-80,000 killed and up to 200,000 wounded. Casualties apparently count for more in Iraq in terms of popular war-weariness and potential opposition to the regime. But Iraq's army of 200,000 plus another 100,000 irregulars means that Iranian numerical superiority is probably not the decisive factor at this point in time.³

Perhaps the most significant consequence of this war in terms of the international arms trade is the expansion and diversification of the ranks of major arm suppliers. Political constraints on the superpowers have meant many third-party sales, as Soviet arms have found their way to Iran through North Korea and Libya while US supplies have reached Tehran through Israel and South Korea. The war has been a boon for Third World arms producers such as Chile, Brazil and Egypt. Its impact on arms production within the combatant states is now known, although the embargo against Iran has surely made that country much more self-sufficient in terms of repair workshops and manufacturing of spare parts and small arms. And like the major industrial arms sellers, these newer merchants are using the war to improve their positions for other sales and contracts as well as arms. Data compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) indicate that the number of suppliers of major weapons to Iran has increased from five to fifteen

since the war began, while suppliers to Iraq have increased from three to nineteen.⁴

Both superpowers have supplied both belligerents in the course of this war, but both have done so largely through third parties. This has enabled them to maintain relatively low profiles in order to keep postwar military supply and political alliance options open in the region. France has been the major Western supplier to Iraq, providing an estimated \$5 billion worth of arms since the war began. Iraq has accounted for 40 per cent of French arms exports over this period. Paris claims, and Washington denies, that the US tacitly endorses the French-Iraqi military supply relationship. Much less ambiguous has been Washington's encouragement of its major allies in the Arab world – Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia – to transfer arms, finance military purchases and to provide critical maintenance and training personnel to Iraq.

When the war ends or winds down, both belligerents will doubtless engage in massive rearmament projects, especially expensive, high-technology weapons systems. Both the war itself and this prospective rearmament cycle have provided the motor force for major military acquisitions throughout the region, especially among the Gulf Co-operation Council countries.

The war ahead

THIS WAR may now be entering a phase of 'no war-no peace', reflecting the stalemate on the battlefield. Or it may erupt again with great intensity, and even lead to some truce or capitulation. Whatever the immediate results, however, the war will not end in practice. What we are seeing here is another hundred years' war. The blood, treasure and political capital invested by both sides make any pacific resolution almost inconceivable. How long will it be before one side or the other, under new 'revolutionary' leadership, makes a bid to 'recover the national honour' or 'patrimony' lost in this current round? This is a conflict rooted in nationalism, one which even the superpowers can merely exploit, not control. It has already suffered the political contours of the region, as Iraq has lost its bid for regional hegemony and instead become beholden to the conservative wealthy Arab states of the peninsula.

In the years immediately ahead, oil is likely to figure prominently once again in the political contests in the region, as both Iran and Iraq attempt to finance their reconstruction and rearmament by increasing their oil sales and revenues, more than likely at the expense of each other and their OPEC neighbours.

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M Arman

IRANIAN INTELLECTUALS & DEPENDENCY THEORY

THE IRANIAN revolution was a defeat of the dominant mode of thought of the Iranian left. Despite the sincerity of the left's struggle against the Pahlavi monarchy, its effective participation in the armed struggle of February 1979, and its organizing activities in the post-February period which resulted in the emergence of the left as a viable social force, none of these measures overcame the deep structural constraints which the left imposed on itself by its thought. There were two major consequences: first, the left's already limited energy was misplaced; and second, the left failed to gain an insight into the nature and goals of the dominant clerical force that emerged. Only after the decisive days of June 1981 (during which the clergy went on an all-out offensive) did some segments of the left start to re-evaluate their old ways and sterile concepts. This article is an attempt in the same direction.

There are good reasons for being critical of the left, since its previous project has practically and theoretically been defeated. A re-examination of the nature of that project is imperative today. Moreover, despite the multi-faceted consequences of defeat, the bulk of those organizations that should logically bear the main responsibility are still more or less attached to the 'old horizon'. There has been no re-evaluation of theories, or in particular of dogmas, and the defeat is invariably presented as if it can be reduced to the military might of the Islamic regime, or some avoidable 'mistakes'. Since the objective is to exit from this impasse, it is essential to transcend the old ways of formulating questions. I hope to move in this direction through a critique of some of the fundamental operative concepts of the traditional left in Iran.

Features of Iranian Marxism

MARXIST THOUGHT is interpreted in a variety of ways in different social formations. This or that aspect is emphasized, depending on class structure, general level of development, location, pre-existing (non-Marxist) schools of thought, and finally the particular emphases chosen by the Marxist intellectuals of the day.

In Iran, the dominant Marxist interpretation of the 1970s, and to some extent the post-revolutionary period, owes its origin to what is sometimes called 'Russian Marxism'. This is a deterministic and economistic interpretation which was originally made popular in Russia by Georgy Plekhanov, the so-called 'father' of Russian Marxism. After the final consolidation of the bureaucracy under Stalin, an even more rigid and now nationalistic version of this Marxism became the official ideology of 'Marxism-Leninism'. This was no longer a theory of action, but an ossified world-view which represented supposed 'eternal truths' about the world.

The nationalistic thesis of 'socialism in one country' laid the ground for a utilization of the communist parties all over the globe to serve the political interests of the Soviet Union. With the onslaught of the Cold War and the formation of the Cominform, the purpose became 'to force Washington to recognize the division into zones of influence within the framework of a world-wide compromise guaranteeing bipartite control of the world by the two superpowers'.¹ In 1947, at the founding meeting of the Cominform, Zhdanov, Stalin's spokesperson, divided the world into two camps: 'the imperialist and anti-democratic camp on the one hand and the anti-imperialist, democratic camp on the other'. Peripheral countries were included in the latter only if they were anti-American, or against one of America's major allies. The concepts 'national independence' and 'national-democratic revolution' have since been invoked by the communist parties in the peripheral countries to mobilize forces against the US. This rigid 'two worlds' theory has become the principal yardstick of the Soviet Union and the communist parties in their assessment of political forces.

In Iran, the influential Tudeh Party has, since its inception, been the major promoter of this politics. Various journals, social clubs and front organizations have been the vehicles.² During the 1940s the Tudeh was successful in attracting a considerable segment of the Iranian intelligentsia. Writers and poets such as B. Alavi, N. Yooshij, J. Al-e-Ahmad, S. Hedayat, A. Nooshin and M. Oskooii, were among those associated with the party, in one way or another. Many texts in political economy, philosophy, politics and literature—which were later picked up by a new generation of left activists—were either translated from Russian by Tudeh theoreticians or written up by them. In this way the major questions of the Iranian left were defined by the Tudeh Party's intellectual 'legacy' long after the organization itself had been discredited. The central conception which remained dominant was the Tudeh's definition of Iranian class politics in terms of the international rivalry between the two

camps.³ The 'anti-imperialist' struggle of the Iranian nation was viewed as a continuous drawn-out affair from the struggles against Britain in the Mosaddeq period (with Tudeh involvement) to the involvement of the US in the 1953 coup and the years that followed. The Tudeh leadership so discredited itself in the course of the coup and its aftermath that by 1956 its disintegration as a viable mass organization was complete.

With the direct help and supervision of the United States, the coercive apparatus of the Iranian state greatly expanded. In the aftermath of the coup, this American presence in Iran, alongside the dictatorship, reinforced the anti-American mood of both intellectuals and the general public over the coming years.

Another political force whose influence on the left should be taken into consideration is the National Front – a loose coalition of liberal bourgeois and Islamic nationalists led by Dr Muhammad Mosaddeq. In 1952 the National Front succeeded in mobilizing a populist base against Britain's plunder of Iranian oil through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

The struggle for the nationalization of Iranian oil was but one link in the chain of struggles in the Third World for national independence after World War II.⁴ The 1955 Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian nations marked the first collective appearance of the Third World on the international scene, with the objective of its participating more effectively in the decision-making process on global issues. One of the major demands of this conference was an increase in the price levels of raw materials and primary goods purchased by the West from the Third World.

The Cuban revolution of 1959 and its further radicalization after 1961 (which reflected itself in active political and military support for like-minded guerrilla movements in Latin America and elsewhere in the periphery) was a more far-reaching example of a national liberation movement. In the first half of the 1960s Cuba's foreign policy revolved around the notion of forming an 'anti-imperialist front' of radical countries. The impact of the Cuban revolution in particular on Iranian intellectuals in the 1960s was considerable. Its influence was also felt indirectly through the efforts of the Latin American 'dependency school' theorists, who emphasized the exploitation of the periphery by the advanced capitalist countries.

China during the 1950s and 1960s also based itself on the 'anti-imperialist struggle' thesis. After the 1966 split in the Tudeh Party (outside Iran), and the formation of the Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh, some of its activists went to the People's Republic and managed to broadcast regular political programmes in Persian through Radio Peking. Mao's thought was disseminated among the Iranian left in this and other ways. Maoist influence was pronounced in the promotion of populism on both the national level ('dictatorship of the people') and the international level ('anti-imperialist block of Third World countries'). It also fostered an aversion to theory in politics, and 'practice' was conceived in an extremely narrow and mechanistic manner.

The one common element among the Third World's communist parties, national liberation movements and guerrilla organizations in the

post-war period was a populist conception of revolution. This reduced the term to a struggle against foreign domination (particularly that of the United States). The Marxist conception of social revolution, which deals with the totality of social relations of production, was cast aside to be replaced by a narrow political concept which revolved around foreign domination. Revolution was defined as the overthrow of puppet regimes, or what James Petras called 'collaborator states'.

The ideals and aspirations of these struggles were reflected in the writings of intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Régis Debray, Paul Baran and Samir Amin. Their books and articles best exemplify the new 'Third Worldism' of the 1950s and 1960s. These were also the ideas and experiences that dominated Iranian Marxism in the 1960s and early 1970s. They can be summarized briefly as follows:

- 1 A strong radical nationalism.
- 2 Economism, which expressed itself in equating human history with the development of technology.
- 3 Populism and a 'rich versus poor' conception of politics (on both the national and the international level).
- 4 An orientation towards practice as against theory.
- 5 Scant attention paid to democracy or fighting for the extension of democratic rights to the popular masses.

The new Iranian left: the Feda'een

AN IMPORTANT feature of the generation that took a political lead in the 1960s and early 1970s was its earlier experience with the Youth Organization of the Tudeh Party, and its associations with the National Front and its student organizations of the early 1960s. The National Front was a coalition of anti-colonialist and anti-dictatorship forces which strongly believed in a parliamentary system. The expanding international horizons of the Iranian bourgeoisie in the 1950s, and the arrest of the more radical leaders of the National Front in its formative period, had contributed to a growing conservatism in the main party. None the less, in the absence of alternatives, the student organizations of the Front had become a centre for the progressive and radicalizing youth in the 1960s. These two poles drew further and further apart. The radical activists were impressed by the 'Third World Marxism' of the time, and in particular its celebration of armed struggle. Nor could this generation identify with the Tudeh Party, which by now had become extremely unpopular among intellectuals. The support given by the Tudeh leadership to arms purchases from the Soviet Union and to other policies of the Shah were among the reasons for this unpopularity.

As repression intensified following the bloody events of June 1963, the idea of guerrilla warfare to defeat the Shah's regime and imperialism looked more attractive, particularly since there was a growing number of such struggles going on around the world. A number of Iranian groups were the products of the new mood (for example, the Revolutionary

Movement of Iranian Muslims, the Organization for the Liberation of the Iranian Peoples, 'the Palestine Group' which later joined the Feda'een, the People's Mojahedeen, and the People's Feda'een). The Feda'een were formed from a merger of two smaller groups identified by the names of their principal leaders: Bizhan Jazani and Hassan Zarifi on the one hand, and Massoud Ahmad-Zadeh and Amir-Parviz Pouyan on the other hand. The former group had pro-Soviet leanings and three-quarters of its founding members had been involved with the National Front's student organization.⁵

According to 'A Short History of the Ahmad-Zadeh/Pouyan Group', up until 1966-67 both founders of this group had pro-Mossadeq and religious inclinations.⁶ All the groups were, to varying degrees, influenced by Latin American revolutionary literature, particularly on the Cuban experience, and to a lesser degree by Maoist teachings. It is beyond the scope of this article to analyse the structure of the Feda'een in more detail. Suffice it to say that all groups that went into its formation united basically on a common faith in guerrilla warfare as well as a shared attitude to the Shah's so-called 'White Revolution' reforms. They agreed on the nature of the socio-economic developments in Iran and the task of the 'anti-imperialist' struggle. The two groups united in 1971 to form the People's Feda'ee Guerrillas. A comparison of the theoretical writings of the Feda'een with other major guerrilla movements of the times indicates a common content: the further radicalization of a former purely nationalist movement. Régis Debray's depiction of the Tupamaros sums up the essential character of the Feda'een as an organizational type:

'Both by their links with the past and the nature of their historic enemies, the Tupamaros constitute one branch of a vast river that flows through Latin American history, whose source goes back very far indeed: revolutionary nationalism ...

'The MLN-Tupamaros is a *radical* movement, but not in the sense of the word used by the peripatetic and cosmopolitan 'New Left'. It is radical because, in its praxis and its ideology, it has unearthed the popular, federalist, agrarian, libertarian, nationalist, indeed indigenous, *roots* of Uruguayan society; and because it is itself rooted in a specific past and a collective unconscious previously repressed or merely glimpsed ... Outside the country they are often glorified for their 'internationalism', but this is usually based on a misunderstanding ...'⁷

Do not the ideals of Dr Mosaddeq reappear, however indirectly, in the young Iranian guerrilla movements of the 1960s and early 1970s (particularly the Feda'een)? The concept of 'dependent capitalism' best depicts the new and subtle form in which the old nationalism reappears. This hybrid term, which originates in the Latin American dependency school of thought, expresses a centrist stance between a full-fledged nationalism and revolutionary socialism. It therefore ends up pointing to some form of radical nationalism. It is anti-capitalist to the extent that the latter is 'dependent' and therefore 'unnatural' in some sense; and to the extent

that it places 'dependency' before capitalism (say in political action), it is *not* anti-capitalist. The term has occupied a central place in the theoretical armoury of the Iranian left, and in particular amongst the Feda'een. What Jazani once said about the radical Islamic Mojahedeen also applies to the Feda'een themselves: 'Following the defeat of the national bourgeoisie vanguard, the radical petty bourgeoisie develops its ideology, and with assistance from working-class ideology, rebuilds and gives it a revolutionary spirit.'⁸

An obsession with dependency can be seen in Jazani's works. For example, in his characterization of the Iranian social formation he states: 'The character of dependency which is inseparable from this system expresses foreign exploitation and imperialist domination in our society.'⁹ The next logical step is to lump together all strata and classes that in one way or another are in conflict with imperialism, under the catch-all term 'people', and attribute to them the 'historic mission' of 'anti-imperialist' revolution.

'Not only the toiling masses and those who are under the domination of foreign and internal exploitation, but the remainder of the national bourgeoisie . . . stands opposed to this foreign system and as a result constitutes part of the people.'¹⁰

A similar populist viewpoint – influenced by Maoism – can be seen in M. Ahmad-Zadeh, another Feda'een theoretician. He regards capitalist development in Iran as 'unnatural' and 'artificial', and hence evil:

'Relying on political and military force, imperialism . . . embarked on an assault on the East and . . . distorted the otherwise natural development of Eastern societies: compared to Western development, it gave rise to an artificial [result].'¹¹

Historically, this argument appeared in the writings of the early 'Utopian socialists'. Unable to explain the nascent capitalism of their times, they attributed social problems to 'unnatural' developments. The city, for example, was to be shunned. Similarly, the Russian populists viewed capitalism as a foreign import. They advocated 'going back to the people' in the countryside. The idea was to bypass capitalism, and preserve a 'natural' mode of social organization.

In Iran, during the 1960s, the migration to the cities from the rural areas was at its peak. 'Between 1966 and 1976 about 2,111,000 migrants left their villages for the cities.'¹² Also between 1960 and 1970 the percentage of the total population living in urban areas rose from 33.9 per cent to 43.1 per cent. Considering that all major Iranian political developments of this century have been urban in nature, it is not surprising that the radical Iranian intelligentsia was deeply affected by the sufferings of these 'urban villagers'. Many Iranian intellectuals of this period used to go to the public tea-houses to get acquainted with 'the people'. A. Bayat, in his remarkable study of Tehrani factory workers, states: 'Contrary to many

people's understanding, the existing tea-houses in Tehran are not places of gathering of the industrial workers. Only 2 out of every 120 workers asserted that they spend their leisure time in the tea-houses.¹³

Nevertheless, in the writings of the radical intellectuals of the 1960s and early 1970s, one can trace frequent references to 'the people', in the sense of the oppressed urban poor. All of these writings consider 'imperialism' or 'dependent capitalism' as responsible for the miserable situation of the masses. The Feda'een were convinced that the working class could not play an independent role because of the Shah's repression. Safa'i-Farahani, in 'What a Revolutionary Should Know', divides Iranian society into a 'deprived majority' and a 'consumer minority', and argues: 'The deprived majority is the natural heir of national culture. Lack of any relation with colonialist Western society has caused the national values, traditions and ethics to continue in this sector . . .'¹⁴ His main concern is reflected in the question: 'Can the present Iranian bourgeoisie attain the classic development of the Western bourgeoisie?' He responds in the negative. Elsewhere he says: 'This bourgeoisie cannot liberate the domestic market [of Iran] from the international monopolies.' But why is this so important for him? Jalal Al-e Ahmad, the well-known Iranian intellectual, in his important book *Gharb-Zadeqi* (Being Struck/Fascinated by the West) defines *gharb-zadeqi* as a 'disease', 'a complication originating from the outside'.¹⁵ He looked for a 'third way'.

My critique of all this Third Worldism is not aimed at denying the fact that Iranian peripheral capitalism has been dominated by the world capitalist system. Any revolutionary socialist movement in Iran must deal with the question of dependency as one of its many combined tasks. There are, however, other tasks, concerning women, the nationalities, religion, freedom of speech, control over production, and so on. By viewing 'dependency' as *the* fundamental question of the movement, a problematic is formed that conditions the final goal. The struggle against dependency becomes separate from the struggle for democracy and against capitalist relations of production, and gains an independent existence. Put differently, the struggle for socialism is postponed to the indefinite future under the guise of formulas such as the 'absence of objective and subjective conditions', and the primacy of national independence.¹⁶

The Iranian revolution and the left

THE UPHEAVALS of 1978-79 were the overdetermined product of various international and domestic forces whose final outcome and form were not clear until the final months of the process. Considering the Blanquist method of urban guerrilla warfare – which dominated the Iranian left up to 1976 – and the hegemony of the dependency perspective discussed above, and of course the repression of the Shah's regime, the left was in a weak position to start off with. Nevertheless, as the months before and after the uprising clearly showed, Iranian youth increasingly sided with the revolutionary left in general, and the Feda'een in particular. The heroic struggles of the latter in the 1970s, as well as their effective armed

participation in the three days of the February uprising, had attracted in addition some sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and to a lesser extent the workers. But neither before the revolution, nor after, did the left ever have a clear vision of the future. Disregard for theoretical work, and a one-sided emphasis on 'practice', prevented it from formulating a clear strategy whose minimum function might have been political independence from the Islamic movement. This did not happen. The left did not challenge the 'Independence, Freedom and Islamic Republic' slogan of the Islamic movement. Lacking the theoretical basis, the left was swept up by the anti-American and populist tone of the movement.

After the February revolution, the left enjoyed a unique opportunity to expand its activities, and it took advantage of this. The major left organizations penetrated the farthest corners of society (Kurdistan and Turkmen Sahra, for example). In Tehran, Abadan, Tabriz and other industrial centres, the left gained considerable influence. The urban youth and the intelligentsia generally sided with the left. Nevertheless, once again, by relying on formulas like 'anti-imperialist' struggle, the purposefulness of all of this support was lost. For two years after the revolution the clergy were still considered 'progressive', 'anti-imperialist' and hence a 'part of the people'. Consider this short summary of some of the positions of the major left organizations after the revolution:

The Tudeh Party believed that 'the dominant aspect of the national and democratic Iranian revolution is its independence – seeking and anti-imperialist aspect'.¹⁷

The Fedā'een (before the 1980 split into the Minority and Majority factions) were so preoccupied with 'anti-imperialist' struggle that in one of their 'directives' to the workers of a Tehran factory, they said: 'In unity with the workers and other urban and rural toiling masses, cut the hands of world imperialism from the factories.'¹⁸

The Fedā'een Minority (post-1980), in a resolution of their first congress, stated that it 'considers imperialist domination and dependent capitalism to be the primary obstacles on the road of development and evolution of society and the productive forces, and believes that any revolutionary transformation must eliminate them . . . as the first step'.¹⁹

The pro-Albanian Peykar organization, which at least made an effort to criticize the extreme versions of the dependency outlook, still could not break out of the same ideological constraints. In a congress resolution we read: 'Due to imperialist domination and the imposition of severe national oppression . . . the objective and subjective conditions for a socialist revolution are not present, and our revolution at the present stage has a directly democratic and anti-imperialist character.'²⁰

Finally the pro-Chinese Revolutionary Organization (later known as Ranj Baran), whose main slogan was 'Not America, not Russia, an independent and self-reliant Iran', defined the task of the Iranian left as follows: ' . . . the task of real communists and revolutionaries . . . is to emphasize the grand national alliance against American and Russian imperialism and their agents . . . '²¹

The list could continue almost indefinitely.

The tragic massacre of the left and the Islamic Mojahedeen, which became systematic after June 1981, was an enormous shock. As a result, many people among the left have in recent years started to question the old dogmas and theories. The 'dependency' problematic is increasingly losing its hold. The more enlightened elements of the left have realized the necessity of a new way of looking at things, away from such categories as 'national independence', 'people's democracy', 'dependent capitalism', the 'Third World', and so on.

In conclusion, it should be said that the experiences of the Iranian revolution have reaffirmed that political forces seeking autarky are not necessarily progressive. Opposition to the West may stem from insecurity in face of more developed societies, as in the case of the shi'i clergy. Moreover, as a result of the tragic acts of repression of recent years, the question of democracy has begun to find a place in the thought of the left. Social injustice and political democracy are increasingly viewed as inter-related aspects of the socialist programme. There is also growing recognition of the important social weight of the working class. The Iranian working class, which did not participate as a 'class for itself' in the 1978-79 revolution, is increasingly showing signs of independence. In the post-1981 period, it has been the only social group to engage in collective action against the regime, on some occasions putting it on the defensive. This is largely an outcome of the experiences of the workers themselves in recent years, and the agitation of the left in industrial centres. In short, the Iranian revolution is starting to exhibit signs that at least some lessons are being drawn from the mistakes of the past.

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Ali Ashtiani

THE WAR & THE ISLAMIC STATE APPARATUS IN IRAN

Today, the arms race between the Soviet Union and the USA has lost its initial meaning and become integrated into the state ideology of each country and now functions as an apparatus for the legitimization of the policies of these two countries.

E.P. Thompson

IN CONTRAST to the popular viewpoint which holds that the roots of the Iran-Iraq war are to be found in the past histories of these two countries and in the border conflicts and disputes between them, I maintain that the war represents, not such a historical continuity with the past, but rather a break. The causes of the war must be sought in the novelty of the Iranian revolution, and not in any other previous historical occurrence. Other elements, such as border and personality conflicts between Khomeini and Saddam Hussein, and international pressures, should be seen as secondary contributing factors to the war, important in their impact on the Iranian revolution and its dynamic.

A notable characteristic of the Iranian revolution was the diversity of the social forces participating in it. As a consequence, the government emerging from this revolution lacked all homogeneity, and the power of the state was not only populist in nature, but transitory and inherently unstable. The Islamic Republic of Iran may be classified as a transitional government on the basis of the following three factors:

First, there is the fact that the shi'i clergy, as an independent social force, share power within the regime. This makes it difficult to clarify the class nature of the Islamic Republic.

Second, comes the incompatibility of the various factions who were brought to power (the liberals, the Hojatie, and so on).

Finally, (and as a result of the above), there is the inability of the regime

to present any comprehensive economic and social programme for the country.

The basic factors holding together this heterogeneous system are: a certain limited commonality of interests between them; the fact that they all desire some kind of Islamic government (the ideological factor); and the decisive personal role of Khomeini himself as the main unifying factor for the transitional government.

A 'normal' regime emerging from a revolutionary process needs to present and implement programmes dealing with the society and the economy, to ensure stability and continuity. However, the Islamic Republic of Iran, an exceptional and unstable regime, has maintained itself by keeping Iranian society in a tense and excited state through manipulating the population for its own purposes. The regime's most significant characteristic is its surprising ability to make effective use of the state apparatus for its own ideological purposes. The populace has been kept mobilized and 'on the scene' through the artificial manipulation of real or imagined antagonists in situations such as the 'liberation of Palestine', the American hostages affair and the 'taking of Kerbala', all just such devices used by the regime to hold on to power.

In these conditions the state apparatus (both ideological and coercive) is crisis-forming in the sense that it exists and develops on the basis of real mobilizations that are organized around fabricated scenarios. Due to the new state's inability to answer the needs of the population, the diverting of attention towards real or artificial crises has become the best means of escape for the regime, and paradoxically a means of holding on to power. In such a situation the regime has only two alternatives in any particular course of action.

The first is to prolong the life of the transitional regime by using the threat of foreign enemies and the creation of these crisis-forming institutions. It is obviously impossible to keep up this approach indefinitely, but this does not preclude its being maintained for quite a long period of time.

The second alternative would be for one of the factions to consolidate power by eliminating all the others, and formulating specific social and economic reforms to return Iranian society to a more or less stable condition. These actions would dissolve what we have called the transitory nature of the existing government. In this way the state would take on a specific class nature. This alternative can occur only through the formation of a new government, by whatever means.

Until the second alternative is carried out, the regime is dependent on the first. In other words, its very existence depends on the maintenance of a highly chaotic and perpetually renewable succession of crises. The Iran-Iraq war is being used by the state apparatus in just such a way.

An important characteristic of the new regime in Iran is its integration of ideological and coercive elements within each new institution. For example, the new prison system has the dual purpose of punishing inmates and islamizing them. Similarly, the Iran-Iraq war has been used to transform virtually all the state's new institutions so that they feed on the continuation of the war. This functions in a number of ways:

First, the war is being used as a means of legitimization to substitute for the lack of organized programming and the absence of any degree of responsiveness to the social and economic needs of the populace.

Second, the war is more and more an ideological cover for the escalation of oppressive policies that might otherwise have been harder to carry out.

Third, the war serves as a platform for indoctrination and the dissemination of the official ideology. It has been used, for example, to justify the export of the Islamic revolution throughout many countries in the region.

War has been used in a similar way in at least two previous situations—slavery and fascism. During the slave mode of production, war was a means of obtaining more slaves. Under fascism, the new state arose from a situation of social crisis. It used war as a means of social and political reorganization, and as an answer to the otherwise insoluble (from its standpoint) social crisis from which it had arisen.

The Iranian utilization of the war for 'state-forming' purposes more closely resembles this second case, and it should not go unnoticed that there are other similarities between fascism and the absolutism of Islamic ideology, including the expansionist idea of exporting the Islamic revolution.

An interesting example of the use of the war as an instrument of internal coercion can also be seen in the case of the Tehran bus drivers' strike. Initially the strike was quite successful and the government was unable to break it. It came to an end, however, when the government brought in the bodies of dead soldiers, parading them across the picket lines and claiming that, 'While people are being killed at the front, you bus drivers are demanding increased wages and creating problems for the government.' The tactic was very effective. It stimulated a sense of guilt in the workers and cultivated their nationalistic and religious tendencies.

A consideration of the regime's internal divisions and their relation to the war makes our argument more specific. During the disputes between the two factions around Bani Sadr and the 'Imam's line', both sides made an effort to monopolize the issue of the war. At the height of the dispute, Bani Sadr, wearing combat uniform, went to the front saying that the issue of the war was absolutely central. He did his best to take control of the war-related institutions with the aim of consolidating the powers of his faction. His rivals, on the other hand, belittled his and the army's efforts, and built themselves up around the Revolutionary Guards.

The various factions within the regime have been aware of the vital role of the war as a means of consolidating the new state. For example, the fight between the Khomeini faction and Bani Sadr in the first year of the war was a direct expression of each party's desire to manipulate the war in order to consolidate its own position within the regime.

Even today, after four long years of warfare, the conflicts among the current factions of the regime can be seen in the approach of each towards the war. One approach is that of the Mousavi-Khamene'i faction, which

stresses the need for long-term economic programmes, and is in favour of more conciliatory measures in respect of the war. The other faction, that of Hashem Rafsanjani (the speaker of the parliament), is in favour of maintaining the transitional nature of the state and has no specific economic programmes. It views the war as a lifesaver for the regime, and believes that it can and should continue to play that role.

As the power of the Mousavi-Khamene'i faction increases, the other intensifies its pro-war rhetoric. This illustrates the importance of the war, its outcome and/or continuation, in the consolidation of power by either of these two main factions within the regime.

It is Khomeini's role today to keep these factions in balance and held together. This restricts the possibility of either side consolidating its power, and thereby indirectly ensures the continuation of the war.

As far as the future of the war is concerned, it seems that its course is dependent on further developments within the transitional regime. As long as the regime is able and willing to maintain its present transitional nature, the war will in all likelihood continue to be used to bolster its position. A change in the state of the war may emerge as a direct outcome of the internal conflicts between the regime's factions. Of course, one cannot ignore the fact that Khomeini's death will also play an important role in determining the future of the Iran-Iraq war.

R Keivan

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE WAR

MY TALK today will focus on the international dimensions of the Iran-Iraq war and particularly the posture that the West and the United States have taken towards this war. I will also remark on what I see as some of the most likely effects that the war will have on the social, economic and political development of both Iran and Iraq.

The importance of the Gulf

IN THE LAST four years, the American and European press have emphasized one issue in connection with the war in the Gulf: the imminent danger of the closing of the Strait of Hormuz and the 'devastating' repercussions of such a move for the Western countries. Interestingly enough, they basically agreed with the analysis presented by the ruling mullahs in Iran, who based their threats against the West on precisely this 'vulnerability'. Hojatt al-Islam Rafsanjani's melodramatic orations are a case in point, although he has recently backed off, perhaps from fear of provoking a real response! Nevertheless, throughout 1983, the American and European media played up the 'danger' of the closing of the Strait and gave full support to the Western military build-up in the Gulf area. The mullahs in turn fuelled the hysteria by continuing to threaten the West during their Friday sermons.

I would like to begin by pointing out the fallacy of such a threat. By promoting this illusion, the United States and Europe have sought to legitimize their massive military build-up in the area. I suggest that the significance of the Gulf for the West no longer lies in the Strait of Hormuz, *per se*, but rather in the geopolitical importance of the area in US long-term strategy.

Why has the Strait of Hormuz relinquished its importance? For the

West, the desire to keep the Strait open has always been rooted in the need to ensure the steady flow of oil from the Gulf. The economic reality of the world today, however, is such that Gulf oil itself, or at least that part which passes through the Strait, has lost its former value. In the world market, there is now clearly an over-production of oil. The factors behind this over-production, as well as a corresponding under-consumption, are many. The economic crisis of 1980-82 (the deepest crisis to have hit the capitalist world since World War II) is undoubtedly the main factor behind the recent decrease in Western oil consumption. This crisis has meant a decrease in energy consumption overall, and particularly in oil consumption. More long-term factors to be considered are the various energy conservation programmes of the West. Added to these is the increased use of Mexican, Alaskan and North Sea oil reserves. It is estimated that if the Strait of Hormuz were blocked today, the West would still have a supply of four to eight months of oil in reserve . . . four to eight months to function without any threat of paralysis.

And what about Iran, from whom the threat originates? Neither Iran nor any Gulf country can withstand the closing of the Strait for even a month. The Strait is not only one of the principal routes for these states' imports; without the export of oil, these countries would be helpless, particularly Iran, which has a chronic exchange problem and lacks international credit. Indeed, the cost of closing the Strait of Hormuz would fall most heavily on Rafsanjani's and his cohorts' own shoulders.

Any analysis of American policy in the Gulf must begin by looking at strategic concerns and not simply the question of the accessibility of oil. One of these many concerns, of course, is oil and the other natural resources of the region. The fact that *today*, due to the present economic situation, the West does not need to monopolize the Gulf's oil potential does not mean that these resources are not valuable. The West views oil, as well as other Gulf resources, as extremely important. From the US perspective, any Soviet access to these resources, even if the US does not need them for its own consumption, is still troubling. America actively strives to keep these resources, as well as the economic potential of the region and its market of seventy million people within its sphere of influence.

Added to all this is the role of the Gulf in overall US Middle East policy. The 1984 Israeli elections and the strengthening of ties between Israel and the US have paved the way for an Israeli-US 'peace plan' for the region that probably includes some compromise with Syria over Lebanon. All of these plans, however, could easily be sabotaged were the PLO able to establish a base in the Gulf. Indeed, the political importance of the Gulf for the entire area is much greater than simply that of the Strait of Hormuz. Were the Gulf to fall out of the US sphere of influence, it would mean a total disruption of the stability that the US has been trying to impose since the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

Turning to another dimension of the strategic importance of the Gulf, we must examine the military situation. The Western military presence here is intimately tied to the fact that developments in the area are totally unpredictable. Afghanistan is under Soviet control. Iran today is, in effect,

an independent political power. The state in Iran is reactionary, but it is not politically dependent. The present regime is the puppet of neither of the US nor of the Soviets. It moves according to what it perceives to be its day-to-day interests and thus its policies and actions may be in the interests of this or that world power. As a result, the Western nations, and particularly the US, have very limited means of controlling events in Iran. Nor is there any regional power that can determine Iran's movements. This, coupled with the fact that in terms of military, economic and human potential Iran is the most important country in the region, explains why there are American and European military vessels in the Gulf and why the West is extending massive aid to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq. In the case of Iraq, this aid has included international credit for the pipeline to Egypt.

It is against this background that the effects of the war on American policy can be assessed. Ultimately, I believe, there is no question that this war, and its long-term effects on both Iran and Iraq, will benefit the US. In the short term, Iranian behaviour, as for example in connection with the attacks against US personnel in Lebanon and elsewhere, is doubtless harmful to US interests. The long-term rewards that the war will bring for the US, however, will outweigh any short-term setbacks.

The war and Iraq

UNTIL 1975, Iraq was basically a Third World country with close economic, military and political ties to the Soviet Union. To a large extent, it moved within the Soviet sphere of influence. In 1975, after the signing of the Algiers Agreement, Iraq began to show signs of moving towards the West. These were primarily manifested in economic relations but there were political indicators as well. All this was not a complete surprise. There have been other countries like Iraq in which the petty bourgeoisie established its power, moved close to the Soviet and Eastern bloc and initially took on radical postures, but then slowly developed economic relations with the West and little by little was pulled into the Western sphere of influence. A coup d'état, war or other crisis usually marked the transfer of all power into the hands of overtly pro-Western capitalists. One example is Egypt, where Sadat was born from the womb of the Nasserist regime.

After 1975, and despite maintaining relations with the Soviets, Iraq moved closer to Europe, particularly France, and slowly took on more and more Western attitudes and values. The present war has intensified this trend. It has erased the possibility, at least in the near future, of Iraq returning to the Soviet sphere. In terms of Iraq's regional policies, the war has diminished the likelihood of any more radical gestures, for example towards Israel and the Palestinians. Finally, the \$16-20 billion worth of aid Iraq has received from the Saudis and the Kuwaitis to build a war economy has created certain inescapable consequences for Iraq's sixteen million people. What will these be?

First, the importance of the war for the present Iraqi regime and the

priority assumed by the war economy mean that the bureaucratic and bourgeois forces—relying on a vast financial power which is in turn directed towards imports from abroad—will consolidate their social power.

Second, this consolidation of political and organizational power will take shape in the context of increasing military and economic ties with the West. Naturally, this will bring in its wake increased political and economic dependency. The incredible amounts of Arab capital being poured into Iraq will make it one of the most important capitalist footholds in the Gulf region.

Finally, as mentioned before, Iraq's political stance will change dramatically. The economic, military and political co-operation now developing between Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt (countries which Iraq always referred to as rightist and conciliatory) will force Iraq to disengage from the radicalism which it found so useful in the past. The Iraq which was a mortal enemy of Egypt after Camp David and which led the Rejection Front is not only silent today on the question of Palestine and has established relations with the US, but has even received a promise from Israel that it will not attack Iraq's pipelines to Egypt and Jordan. This is, of course, a recognition—a friendly recognition—of Israel. My point is not that Iraq should or should not be Israel's friend, but simply that Iraq is no longer able or willing to maintain its radical image, and has in effect been 'tamed'. In short, as a result of this war, whether Saddam stays or goes, and whether there is a coup d'état or not, the conditions for Iraq's gradual and complete pacification and Westernization have been sown. Because of the war, the process which took more than twenty years in Egypt will take a much shorter time in Iraq.

The war and Iran

THE OTHER speakers have already stated why the war has brought temporary relief for the present regime in terms of its attempts to maintain stability and establish its dominance. I will not repeat. The mullahs have been able to mobilize the population and compensate for their own shortcomings by means of the war. The regime's continued stability is in itself beneficial to the US. This does not mean that the US sees Iran as a friend or an ally. As stated before, this kind of deductive reasoning is incorrect. Rather, the point is that, considering the vacuum created by the 1979 revolution and all the possible outcomes; considering the character and form of the present regime in Iran; and considering, most recently, the chilling of relations with the Soviets and the repression of the Tudeh, this regime is the best possible alternative for the US. If the US had an open hand, it would no doubt sponsor a regime similar to that of the Shah. Its hands are tied, however, and it simply cannot do so. Amongst all the possible alternatives, the present regime is undoubtedly the best. In a recent interview, William O. Sullivan correctly stated that US interests were not opposed to friendly relations with Iran in the long term. Indeed, the memory of the hostages and the bombings can be erased. One must also keep in mind that the strengthening of the present regime during the war

years has been accompanied by the smashing of the left and the Mojahedeen, in general, and the obliteration of the democratic gains eked out of the revolution. All this has been in the interests of the US. In political terms, society has become so passive that people from all classes infinitely prefer the past to the present. They associate the US with the past and thus welcome it. America, which was cursed after the revolution, is now looked on with a favourable eye by important segments of the population and thought to have been right all along.

Economically, the war has brought devastation to Iran, particularly in the south. Added to this are the millions of dollars wasted on armaments. Today estimates of human losses are in the hundreds of thousands. Iranian society must carry this burden for many years to come. Another consequence of this war, stemming from the stability it has brought for the regime in the past five years, is the widespread chaos, waste and destruction, not necessarily even connected to the war but to the regime's policies. The list of economic and social disasters that this regime and its war policy has incurred is endless.

The important question, however, is what consequences these disasters hold for the future, and particularly for future regimes that might follow this one. Suppose that this regime were overthrown, or perhaps underwent fundamental change from within, and the war were to come to an end. Any government that came to power would be faced with the reconstruction of the devastated areas and would have to make economic revival its central political concern.

What would this reconstruction entail for a country like Iran, a country which has had an immense proportion of its productive capacity destroyed, a country which is, in terms of technology, backward and stagnant? Can it mean anything other than a turn to the West, particularly when this reconstruction must take place at a time when the oil market is a buyer's market?

Clearly, it has been possible to keep Iran alive by means of its oil income. It is possible today to exchange oil for arms and food and this is precisely what the economic policy of the mullahs has been. But if the goal be one of economic growth, this income will not suffice. Iran's income from oil today is approximately \$18 billion—somewhat less than the income of the years 1976-77. The only difference is that from 1977 to today, inflation in the world market has more than doubled the prices. Iran's oil income today cannot under any circumstances support economic growth.

Iran's future allies will naturally be found in the West and such allies will be desperately needed to supply technology, credit and aid. Along with this assistance will also come political and economic influence. Today Iran imports commodities from the West and generally pays for them in cash or short-term credit. Economic development, however, cannot be paid for in this manner. It will require long-term credit and political stability. There is no question that these will bring about the conditions for political dependency.

This is the legacy that the Iran-Iraq war will leave for the peoples of the

two countries. With it have come new realities and responsibilities that must be faced by the left and democratic forces in the area. The Iranian monarchists propagandize today that if they were to gain power, they would be able to reconstruct the country in a few years. In short, they paint a very rosy picture of the future. It is easy to dismiss the monarchists, but do we, on the left, have the courage to tell the truth? After this war, after passing through this present hell, the future – the reconstruction of Iran – will take a very long time and entail many difficulties. People's standard of living today will not be much better tomorrow, and this economic burden will naturally have to be shared if there is to be any social justice.

On Zionism and Jewish Identity

by Uri Davis

a review of

That's Funny, You Don't Look Anti-Semitic by Steve Cohen
(*Beyond the Pale Collective, Leeds 1984*)

and

The unjewish State: the Politics of Jewish Identity in Israel
by Akiva Orr (Ithaca Press 1983)

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Eqbal Ahmad

WAR OF THE RENTIER STATES

DURING ALL THE YEARS of war between Iran and Iraq, there has been one element of common ground between the combatants: in both countries there is a pretence that this is a war against imperialism and a war of imperialism. This is a lie. For whatever one may call the Iran-Iraq war, it stretches anti-imperialist reasoning to call it an imperialist war. It is evidently true that the US initially encouraged Iraq in its aggression. But encouragement should not be confused with involvement. None of the great powers – whether the Soviet Union, Britain, France or the US – appears to have had any role in initiating the war, or for that matter in conducting it. That the capitalist countries have profited from it and are continuing to profit from it does not make it an imperialist war.

There are several points which need to be made. First, this is a war of local ambitions: President Saddam Hussein's opportunism and regional reaction to Iran's revolutionary promise were responsible for Iraq's initial aggression in 1980. The primary responsibility for this war, then, must lie with at least two people and two governments. The horrors of the war and its losses must be attributed to two generalized forces and to two individuals. The two generalized forces are nationalism and the post-colonial state, which have more to do with the Iran-Iraq war than does imperialism. And the two individuals, namely Saddam Hussein and Ayatollah Khomeini, have a great deal to do with the war, one for starting the aggression and the other for prolonging the agony.

Second, the great powers have undoubtedly played a significant role in prolonging the war. While they did not initiate it, they have alternatively leaned towards each side as it appeared to be losing, in order to avoid an outright victory for either. That was true, for instance, of the US at the beginning of the war: sensing that Iran was in deep trouble, and that the Iraqi forces were pushing ahead, Washington looked the other way as US

operatives sold supplies to Iran, and in fact promoted and gave a certain monopoly to the Israelis in supplying spare parts and small arms to Iran, just enough to keep the war going and prevent Iran's defeat. When Iran made its rebound (which was by no means because of the support from Israel or the US, as the Iraqis would have us believe: the primary reason was that Iran had a well-mobilized and revolutionary mass, its territories were under attack and it fought back) and the tables were being turned, all the great powers – the Soviet Union, the US, France and everybody else – became very interested in helping Iran, so that Iraq would not be defeated. Thus it is clear that by merely trying to prevent the defeat of either side, the superpowers have helped to prolong the war. One could conclude from this, and also from the example of the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, that in the Third World imperialism does not like to see a winner.

Third, the logic of regional politics and geopolitical realities in the Middle East have severely limited, though not eliminated, the role of the great powers in the Iran-Iraq conflict. The United States, the most activist of the great powers, has refrained from intervening because it does not have a sure client in either Iran or Iraq; because its logistical lines would be dangerously extended in case of a substantive riposte from the USSR; and because American congressional and public support for such an intervention is lacking. The Soviet Union, still involved in Afghanistan, anxious over events in Poland and sceptical of the left forces in Iran, has been acting with its customary combination of opportunism and caution. Hence the basic logic of the war remains regional and local.

What, then, are some of the lessons of the war? One basic lesson to be drawn is that we, as Middle Eastern peoples, live in societies which suffer from a disastrous separation between political power and civil society. And when such a separation occurs, it produces societies which are not productive, creative, democratic or lively. Personalism has reached a hitherto unexperienced pinnacle in our countries, so that the war is not really a war between Iran and Iraq, it is a Saddam-Khomeini war. It is a person-to-person war in which entire nations, entire peoples, are being made to pay the price of the criminal ambitions of one minority government and crazy individual and the mindless stubbornness of another. That is the fact, but why are such individuals able to get away with it? They are able to get away with it because both men, for different reasons and in different ways, have been able to establish a total separation between their power and the civil society. Muhammad Ja'far was correct in saying that the two defining symbols of this war have been the human wave attacks by Iran, and the use of chemical weapons by Iraq. Both refer to one tragedy, and both define one attitude – the attitude of not caring about the cost of their ambitions, and their ideological arrogance as regards the common people, especially the young. Both indicate moreover a lack of thought; they cannot figure out a strategy, they cannot figure out diplomatic manipulations or intelligent manoeuvres, so they turn to brute attack: human waves and chemical weapons. Both reveal a certain callousness towards the mass of humanity with whose lives these men are playing – and I use the word men specifically.

Another noteworthy fact is that the Middle Eastern states have evinced deep, if unworthy, interest in the outcome of this war. From Morocco to Pakistan, Middle Eastern governments have shown greater interest in preserving the *status quo* than in defending national sovereignty and independence, or serving the common good. So Saudi Arabia has expended much greater sums of money in saving the precious skin of Saddam Hussein than it has been willing to do to save the lot of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Or to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of an Arab country called Lebanon. Or even to protect the sovereignty of Jerusalem and assure access for both Muslims and Christians to the sacred city. While it was Saddam's ambition that initiated the war, it is the Arab states, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Morocco, which have sustained him through these years of senseless conflict. Their solidarity betrays the simple fact that the fear of upsetting the *status quo* is much greater than the question of history, or of sovereignty, or the question of humanity and the costs to common people. It is clearly not their love for Saddam Hussein but their fear of change, their anxiety over the consequences of a ruler having to pay for his mistakes, that have kept the Iraqi president in power, thereby prolonging this personalized war.

We have also seen through this war the harmful effects of the emergence of rentier states in the Middle East and North Africa. By the rentier state, I mean the state that has become rich on the basis of one product; or rather, one source of profit, since in the Middle East only the peasants and some artisans produce anything. The elite profit a great deal without producing. They buy machines without technology. They have oil, gas and other minerals. Some foreign company comes and extracts it for them. It puts a rentier regime in power; that regime doesn't need its people. Its elite doesn't need to work even to exploit the people properly. Because it doesn't need a tax base. And when a regime doesn't need a tax base, it loses literally all organic links to the civil society. And it loses any reason for maintaining accountability to the people, to society, to history itself. A rentier state is an entity suspended in time, detached from politics, disengaged from history.

Fourth, I wish to underline that, with dramatic intensity and at the highest cost, this war has demonstrated the damage inflicted on the Third World by the merchants of death, namely the armaments industry of the First World. The Iran-Iraq war has yielded a sobering demonstration of the harm done to us by the arms trade. The arms trade in our time is the twentieth-century equivalent of the slave trade in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We have to find ways to stop this horror, to ban it. The arms trade and the arms habit of our leaders must be abolished. The two sides in this war have poured billions of dollars into killing each other; the same regimes dread the typewriter. It is not widely known that the possession of a typewriter in Iraq requires a special licence. In Iran, on the other hand, you cannot sing an ordinary song and even the words of Ferdowsi, for centuries the greatest of Persian poets, are banned and censored.

This takes me to the fifth point. There is a frightening absence on the

world scale of any mechanism to pursue or ensure peace in the world. This senseless war has been going on for ? years and the world has watched callously and with indifference. The United Nations, which pretends to be concerned (and probably is concerned), has been reduced to an expensive cipher. Because it lacks the support on this issue both of the superpowers and of the constituted governments that make up its membership, it is entirely dependent on the mutual interests of the Iranian and Iraqi governments. After countless trips, the UN delegation was finally able to get both sides to agree – which is a very great achievement under the circumstances – not to hit each other's civilians. At present the UN is sitting tight, hoping that it will be in the interest of both sides to reach at least those minor agreements that would give us a no-war, no-peace situation, a kind of institutionalized stalemate.

The world will not be safe to live in as long as, through the power of public opinion and the power of movements, we do not produce new institutions, and new ways of ensuring peace between madmen who drag in large numbers of decent people, because they are powerless.

What interests has the war served? First, the regime in Iran has profited. As of 1980, it had nothing to show for the great revolution that had occurred in Iran. The Nicaraguan revolution occurred at about the same time as the Iranian revolution – Somoza went to Florida at about the same time as the Shah left Iran. By 1980, that is, a year and a half to two years later, Nicaraguan revolutionaries were able to show UNESCO that the Nicaraguan literacy rate had risen from roughly 35 per cent to 85 per cent, a full-fledged land reform had been implemented a viable agrarian policy has been instituted. The Iranian revolution, in comparison with the Nicaraguan revolution, was richer and had a highly mobilized population; but its accomplishments did not compare either then or now with those of the Sandinista regime. Well-endowed Iran not only did not compare favourably with scarcity-ridden Nicaragua's accomplishments, but, worse, Iran had no programme. The Islamic Republic of Iran is still without a viable programme of social reconstruction. The Iraqi invasion helped Ayatollah Khomeini and his mullahs to mobilize popular support around nationalism: the regime can now claim that it has succeeded, at least temporarily, in consolidating power.

Second, the war has helped the elite in Iraq to profit from the war. The massive spending on war is going into buying arms, into infrastructure, into contracting and contacting – which is the business of Third World bourgeoisies. Businessmen on both sides of the war are getting rich. But the Iraqi elite has probably profited the most from subsidized war profiteering. The Arab world is paying the bill.

Third, great profit has accrued to Israeli contractors, acting on behalf of the Israeli government. The Israelis, very intelligently and with skilled American help, have cornered the market in spare parts and small arms to the Iranians. This is another irony of the Islamic Republic.

Fourth, the war has profited the superpowers and their multinational corporations, for obvious reasons. The losers are the two countries and their inhabitants. Their resources depleted, their cities destroyed and

their economies in ruins, Iran and Iraq are countries of orphans and widows, of sacrificed youths whom those in power have entitled martyrs.

How long is this killing to go on? What are the prospects, and what are our obligations? I think the present prospect is one of less-war, no-peace. Iran, in particular, would like to see a kind of stalemate that it could marginally institutionalize. Given Iran's population and resources, in the long run it stands a better chance to endure a stalemate. The Iraqis probably have no alternative to the stalemate either. Saddam Hussein's power is obviously more precious than Iraq's peace; and Ayatollah Khomeini won't grant peace unless President Hussein departs. What can we do? I think we ought to recognize several facts. One is that our responsibilities are greater than our capabilities. Our responsibility is great because the civil society in our part of the world has been suppressed. There used to be a saying in the old days of feudalism and the monarchies that there are two types of poet in the Muslim world, *sha'er al-imama* and *sha'er al-khelafa*: the poet of power and the poet of prophecy. In other words there was a literature of dissent and there was a literature of conformity to power – the poets who were located in the power establishment and those who belonged in the civil society. In a double entendre, the phrases also meant 'the poet behind' and 'the poet ahead'. The saying used to go further: that the *sha'er al-imama* will usually be found in the 'provinces'; he is not likely to be found in the *dar al-khelafa* (capital; literally, the seat of power).

Our problem is that they have now abolished the 'provinces'. Modern communications, the capitalist economy, modern management techniques, have all brought the 'provinces' within easy reach of the repressive state. Earlier, Muhammad Ja'far was saying that politics has been abolished in Iraq, and the Ba'thists presided over its abolition. To a large extent, Ayatollah Khomeini is doing the same in Iran. The 'provinces' are not there, and the actual and potential 'poets of the provinces' have gone into exile, mostly to the capitalist metropolis, or are in prison if they are spared execution, or have been forcibly silenced. Our responsibilities are therefore very great. We must analyse, innovate, dissent. We need courage, which we have, and patience, which we do not always have. We must work very hard to keep the civil society alive, and to make alternatives appear viable and necessary. This meeting is a beginning. If we can get together, we may keep pushing forward, critically and honestly.

'Adel Samara

**ARAB NATIONALISM, THE
PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE
& AN ECONOMIC SCENARIO
FOR A POTENTIAL
ARAB UNITY**

INTRODUCTION

IN THIS ESSAY, which covers an entire century, I shall deal with two groups of themes.

First, I shall discuss the failure of bourgeois Arab nationalism to achieve its avowed aims: economic independence and national victory, that is, the liberation of occupied Arab territory. Despite its failures, the Arab bourgeoisie still holds power throughout the Arab homeland, except in South Yemen. I shall also try to explain how and why the Arab bourgeoisie has intentionally amplified the unevenness of economic development between the Arab countries. I shall discuss Palestine as the obvious example for the national failure. And I shall use the Gulf Co-operation Council as an illustration of the policy of uneven development.

Second, I shall try to show that the nationalism of the bourgeoisie differs from and conflicts with the national consciousness of the masses – the working class, the peasantry and the rest of the poor. The material interest of the masses in Arab unity is also discussed.

I shall try to show that the continuation of the trend of uneven development will create the need for inter-Arab integration, contrary to the aims of the authors of the policy of unevenness. The latter will, in a sense, produce the conditions for their own destruction.

Stressing the objective necessity for integration, I shall outline an economic scenario for Arab unity. If such unity were to be realized, it would create the social and economic conditions for a common struggle for socialism. Indeed, I argue that Arab development requires Arab unity, and is hardly possible in a state of fragmentation.

Many points touched upon here are not sufficiently discussed and developed; it would be impossible to do so in one relatively brief essay.

However, my aim is to raise as many issues as possible, for the sake of the debate which I hope will follow, concerning the future of the Arab homeland.

1: BOURGEOIS ARAB NATIONALISM

BY VIRTUE of national affiliation and origin, the Arab world has been, and still is, the strategic rear base or hinterland of the Palestinian people's struggle against the Zionist state of Israel. Regardless of the actual role this strategic hinterland has played – be it helpful or obstructive – its existence is an issue that cannot be ignored among the Palestinians. In the last few years, various trends of Palestinian opinion have been rethinking and re-evaluating this issue.

One school of thought, conditioned by the bitterness of the Palestinian experience with the Arab regimes, even goes so far as to suggest that an Arab strategic hinterland no longer exists (if indeed it ever did) for the Palestinians, who should therefore be reconciled to doing without it.

A different approach to this issue is based on a class analysis. While calling for a critical re-examination of the role played by the Arab hinterland and the extent to which it has come up to expectations or fallen short of them, this approach stresses that the concept of an Arab hinterland is no mere abstraction, but corresponds to an objective reality. The actual position within this hinterland is not uniform, however, inasmuch as each of its parts is represented by its own ruling Arab bourgeoisie. This theme will govern the discussion in the present article.

To be more explicit, the view adopted here is that in reality there does exist an all-Arab nationality (*qaumiya*) but that it is regionally split up, each region (*iqlim*) possessing its own peculiarities, which have been greatly intensified over the last five decades – 'the decades of fragmentation'. Politically and ideologically, this contradictory reality has been represented by the contradictory political practice and ideology of current Arab nationalism, which is *bourgeois* Arab nationalism. Towards the end of this article we shall outline the characteristics and dimensions of another, latent, all-Arab national identity, which is essentially that of the working classes and other repressed classes in the Arab world.

The pioneers of Arab nationalism

THERE IS a consensus among Arab, and perhaps also non-Arab, writers on modern Arab history, that most of the early pioneers of Arab nationalism were Christian Arabs.

We mention this oft-repeated observation not in order to assess its historical accuracy, but rather to discuss the ideological use to which it has been put by Islamic fundamentalists and others who wish to discredit Arab nationalism and the idea of Arab national unification (as opposed,

for example, to pan-Islamism) as inauthentic foreign imports. It is sometimes alleged that the Christian pioneers of Arab nationalism, living under the Ottoman empire, were basically motivated by the wish to emancipate themselves from the rule of that Sunni Muslim caliphate-state. A somewhat more sophisticated version of the same thesis maintains that these early pioneers anticipated the impending and inevitable collapse of the Ottoman empire; but they were alarmed at the prospect of its being replaced by a Sunni-dominated Arab state (or states) in which Muslim Arabs would hold all positions of power and influence. In order to prevent themselves being thus marginalized, these Christians hatched and fostered secularist Arab nationalism.

There are several reasons for rejecting such attempts to invalidate the authenticity of Arab nationalism. First, let us note that from the end of the nineteenth century, with the increasing incorporation of the Arab homeland (then still under Ottoman rule) in the world system,¹ and with the growing number of Arab students—both Muslim and Christian—studying in Europe, a new environment was developing in the Arab world. Such an environment would have encouraged Muslim Arabs to adopt nationalist ideas whether or not Christians were the first to do so. Indeed, Muslim Arabs had adequate grounds for adopting such ideas, given their bitter experience under Ottoman rule (1516-1919) and the plausibility of the view that the only way to emancipation was through Arab nationalism.

Second, those who wish to deny the authenticity of Arab nationalism are displaying their own ideologically motivated bias by stressing exclusively the Christian background of pioneers of Arab nationalism such as Qustantin Zuraiq, while glibly ignoring the genuineness of their national aspirations.

Third, even if it were conceivable that the early pioneers—whose commitment to nationalism was expressed solely through the written word—were merely self-seeking opportunists using nationalism as a cloak, surely such an accusation cannot possibly apply to the second generation of militants, who personally led an organized struggle, as was the case with both the Ba'th Party and the Movement of Arab Nationalists (*Harakat Qaumiyyun al-'Arab*).

Fourth, if Arab nationalism was merely the invention of a few Christians, how can one account for the fact that the Muslim Arab multitudes responded so massively (albeit unevenly as between one Arab country and another) to its call and were mobilized in their millions for the national movement, despite having been influenced by Islam for fourteen centuries? Moreover, why has this massive acceptance of Arab nationalism continued until the early 1970s, for almost a whole century, 'the century of bourgeois Arab nationalism', despite the fact that the Arab national movement was not alone in the field and had several political and ideological competitors in the Arab homeland during this century?² Does not all this show that the slogans of nationalism and national unity corresponded to real popular aspirations?

The question that poses itself now is the following: who is to blame for the failure of the Arab nationalist movement to achieve development and all-Arab unification? Is it the fault of the early pioneers? Or of the militants of the second generation? Or perhaps the fault lies with the bourgeoisie of the various Arab regions (= Arab countries)—a bourgeoisie which is in fact almost exclusively Muslim?

The only Arab country to have been ruled to any extent by Christians is Lebanon. This small country, with its marginal development—distorted even when compared with the distorted development of the other Arab countries—has two special characteristics: on the one hand, it has experienced a semi-liberal bourgeois political system; on the other, it has spawned the fascist Phalange (*al-Kata'ib*). Thus the Lebanese state was but a reflection of the European political model, rather than the thing itself.

Two trajectories of uneven development

ARAB BOURGEOIS nationalism emerged in the period of tightening incorporation of the Arab homeland in the world market. Under such circumstances, an independent capitalist development became impossible. Moreover, unlike India, for example, which was incorporated into the world market as a unified entity, the Arab homeland underwent this process piecemeal; each Arab country was incorporated directly and separately, rather than as part of an all-Arab entity. As for the fragile political independence of the Arab countries, this too came separately to each individual country, under its own regional bourgeois leadership, which in most cases was the creature of the departing colonial powers.

The unevenness of development between the Arab countries goes back to the pre-colonial past, though it has been greatly amplified during the century of bourgeois Arab nationalism. One of the most important causes of this unevenness is the highly unequal distribution of natural agricultural resources. Some Arab regions—most notably the Nile Valley—are endowed with ample resources which have enabled them to sustain dense settlement and population growth. Other regions—such as most of the Arabian peninsula—are almost totally lacking in natural agricultural wealth, and have therefore been a perennial source of migration.

Nevertheless, the Arab homeland had to a large extent experienced a common history, even if not quite as unified as the pioneers of Arab nationalism imagined it to have been. This was manifested in the Umayyad and 'Abbasid states, and to some extent in the Fatimid state. Later, the Arabs shared a common history of submission under the Ottoman empire, which incorporated the Arab homeland into the Islamic caliphate but also hindered its socio-economic development.

What we are saying, then, is that the Arab proto-nation had existed as a visibly coherent entity prior to the century of bourgeois nationalism; and that the uneven economic development occurred within this one general national framework.

This unevenness between the Arab regions became an acute problem

only during the century of bourgeois Arab nationalism, when imperialism granted a separate political independence to each country, and pushed each regime to build a separate economy. We must now deal with the different paths of this development.

Development of Arab unevenness

Unevenness of development between the Arab regions existed, as already mentioned, before they fell under the sway of colonialism and were incorporated into the world market. Nor is such unevenness peculiar to the Arab homeland; it is a world-wide phenomenon. The south of the United States, for instance, is poorer than the north; and the same holds true for Italy. Likewise, not all the various regions of China are equally developed. An even clearer example is perhaps provided by India, although it is really more a multinational state than a nation. The decisive factor in all these countries, however, is that each constitutes one state; whereas the absence of this very factor is the key problem of the Arab world and the secret behind its weakness. The political fragmentation imposed on the Arab homeland by colonialism,³ and subsequently intensified by the regional Arab bourgeoisies, has provided an institutionalized basis for the development of unevenness between the Arab countries. The bourgeoisie of each country, separately and directly connected to the world market, has acquired a vested interest in maintaining the fragmentation. This process has continued throughout the last five decades. Even the seemingly genuine attempt at unification, that between Egypt and Syria in 1958, was implemented in the only way of which the Arab bourgeoisie is capable—by the ruling class of the stronger country trying to impose its hegemony over its weaker ‘partner’—and was bound to fail.

The bourgeoisie’s division of interest, and vested interest in division, does not extend to the Arab poor classes, notably the peasantry and proletariat. The Egyptian peasant, for example, stands to lose nothing and to gain much by having direct and unhampered access to the exportable surplus produced in Iraq. Indeed, the ruling Arab bourgeoisies have been aware of this fact, and have therefore paid lip-service to the masses’ aspirations by mouthing slogans about unity and all-Arab nationalism, while in practice pursuing a policy of division and fragmentation, especially through developing the unevenness. They probably hope that as the divergence between Arab countries proceeds, they will be exempted from giving up their regional interests; since growing unevenness would remove any real basis for unification, the popular feeling of a common all-Arab national identity would fade away.

However, as we shall argue later, the very fact of divergent and uneven development may, on the contrary, favour all-Arab national unification under the leadership of the working class.

The first trajectory of uneven development

Both before and after gaining political independence, the Arab bourgeoisies transformed uneven development from a ‘natural’ process

occurring within a state or a nation into an institutionalized unevenness between states. And because these bourgeoisies were backed and protected by colonialism, the uneven development over which they presided was born as, and still is, a dependent development.

The first trajectory of this development has been traversed by a group of countries that share certain particular structural characteristics, over and above the traits common to all Arab countries. These particular characteristics are basically economic, but have given rise to social and organizational characteristics as well.

In Egypt in particular, but also in Iraq and Syria, there is arable land capable of producing an agricultural surplus whose proceeds can be invested in industrial growth; and any industrial products can find a suitable local market, especially in Egypt with its large population of potential consumers. These economic capabilities have played a role in orientating the regimes of these countries towards trying to build an independent economy (be it capitalist or 'socialist') inasmuch as the regimes have dreamed of the possibility of severing the ties of dependence on the world market through the development of capitalism or self-styled 'socialism'. (It must be noted here, however, that there is a huge gulf between the availability of economic and human resources needed to constitute a state, and the possibility of achieving an actual capitalist economic independence under the auspices of imperialism.)

These very countries, due to their economic and social potential, have in general also been the breeding-ground of the bourgeois national movement throughout the century of Arab nationalism. This manifested itself in the Ba'th Party (born in Syria and Iraq and also in Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan), the Movement of Arab Nationalists (born in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq) and Nasserism (born in Egypt). All these countries have constituted the first wave along this first trajectory.

A second wave (also along the same trajectory) consisted of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, which gained their political independence during a later period. These countries of the Maghreb—somewhat similar in their economic and demographic structures to Egypt, Syria and Iraq—had been strongly influenced by the bourgeois Arab nationalism that prevailed in the Mashreq, especially Ba'thism and Nasserism. The two Yemens can perhaps also be included in this trajectory.

The second trajectory

A different path has been followed by countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the other Gulf states, as well as Libya, which lack agricultural resources and consequently have a sparse population. In these countries not only did the development of social classes occur later, but their political independence was also (in most cases) gained more recently. Moreover, their political struggle for independence was hampered by the higher degree of subordination of their ruling classes to the colonial powers.

However, a radical turning-point in the lives of these countries was the discovery of oil, which transformed them from poor and backward regions

into distortedly wealthy ones. This transformation enabled the Saudi ruling class to come forwards in the 1970s as the leader of those forces that were calling for closer dependence on imperialism, as opposed to the leadership of the countries of the first trajectory, whose declared aim was to sever this dependence. This was described at the time as an opposition between the reactionary and progressive Arab camps.

The inability of the countries of the first trajectory to break loose from that dependence (because their programme was in reality capitalist) enabled the rival camp—and Saudi Arabia specifically—to take the lead in Arab politics, thus superseding Egypt in this role. This is what has been happening in the 1970s and 1980s.

There are Arab countries which do not quite fit into the two-trajectory scheme we have just outlined. Sudan, for example, has economic resources somewhat similar to those of the countries of the first trajectory, but they have remained largely unexploited. Despite the backwardness of Sudan's economy, however, the political movement there was very active and relatively advanced.

The most outstanding exceptional case is of course Palestine, which was taken over by the British (according to an imperialist agreement following the First World War) in order to displace its people and set up a Zionist state that would serve imperialist interests in the area. As a result of these special circumstances, the emergence of a bourgeois nationalist movement here was hampered and delayed, especially when compared with the Arab countries of the first trajectory.

The inexorable decline of bourgeois Arab nationalism

We have already noted that the countries that followed the first trajectory of evolution were those in which capitalist economies had developed earlier, giving rise to greater unevenness of development. Thus, when the bourgeois national movement achieved power in these countries (Egypt, Syria and Iraq), it was faced with a contradiction that proved difficult to resolve: a contradiction between its ideological nationalist aspirations for all-Arab unity, and the clear and confined regional (i.e. local) interests of the bourgeoisie of each country.

Economically, these regions have been handicapped in various ways:

- 1 Weakness in the structure of production and low productivity, resulting in an unfavourable ratio between the exportable surplus and the import requirement.
- 2 Low technical standard of production, resulting in sub-standard products that cannot compete in foreign markets.
- 3 The neighbouring countries, which could have provided a natural market, are directly linked to the world market.
- 4 The economy of these regions themselves has not dismantled its dependence on the international capitalist system.

In a nutshell, the first failure of this group of countries was the failure of their regional bourgeoisie to achieve economic independence and development. Consequently, the bourgeoisie of each region turned inwards, clinging to its local interests.

The period from 1950 to 1970 can be seen as one in which an attempt was made to build an independent economy and unify the Arab nation—the twin aims of the Arab national bourgeoisie. But attempts at unification ‘from below’ never amounted to much, and the dividing boundaries remained intact. Nor was any single country able to develop its own economy sufficiently and impose unification ‘from above’ (as Prussia had been able to unify Germany).

Although the development plans of the period were draped in ‘socialist’ rhetoric, they were in reality grounded on capitalist relations. Externally too these countries remained dependent on the world market, despite their economic and political relationship with the Soviet camp.

In its relations with Third World countries, the Soviet Union was guided by the theory that these countries could evolve towards socialism under the leadership of their nationalist bourgeoisie. In reality, however, the Arab regimes—based on capitalist structures and on class alliances between the bourgeoisie and the lower middle class, under the political leadership of officer juntas that came to power through coups d’état—produced a type of bureaucratic capitalism.

Trade with the Soviet Union, and the economic aid received from it, were in reality based on the norms of international commercial exchange, which can in no way be regarded as a socialist mode of relations. (Incidentally, even had the Soviet Union granted non-profitable aid to these non-socialist regimes, such aid could only derive from the exploitation of the Soviet working class.) The result was that the Soviet Union contributed to the maturation of the economy of these peripheral capitalist states ruled by bureaucratic bourgeoisies, thus facilitating their integration into the world market through a process that can be called ‘the new dependence’, which has evolved after a volte-face that has occurred over a period of two decades.

The second failure of this group of countries was manifested in their defeat in the struggle against the occupation of Palestine, especially after 1967. This was defeat in the external national battle, as distinct from the internal national struggle for achieving unification and economic independence.

The Arab bourgeois national movement confronted socially and technologically advanced imperialism and Zionism with Arab backwardness and deformed economic development, a development of unevenness rather than of all-Arab convergence. It confronted the cohesive alliance of Israel and imperialism with internal Arab fragmentation and the exclusion of the Arab masses from the struggle; and its own fragile alliance with the Soviet Union could not save it from a shattering defeat.

This defeat has enabled the countries of the second trajectory, particularly Saudi Arabia, to achieve ascendancy and lead the Arab homeland

towards complete dependence and incorporation into the world market system. The slogan of Arab unity has been replaced by that of solidarity between the ruling classes. The newly dominant policies are designed to perpetuate the fragmentation of the Arab homeland, to recognize and accept the Zionist state, and to downgrade the Palestinian question to a problem of refugees dependent on the Arab regimes.

The Arab regimes and Palestine

THE FOREGOING discussion can serve as an introduction to the next section of this article, which focuses on the Palestinian issue. Let us start by outlining the manner in which the Arab regimes (and bourgeois all-Arab nationalism) have reacted to the struggle of the Palestinian people against the Zionist appropriation of Palestine.

As we have already pointed out, most of the regimes that have presided over the Arab homeland since the eve of independence were the creation of British and French colonialism, which was also responsible for the balkanization of that homeland. In other words, these regimes did not achieve power through a radical struggle leading to the expulsion of colonialism, but through compromise and accommodation. The Arab homeland has thus never severed the umbilical cord of dependence.

Palestinian opposition to Zionist immigration and colonization began shortly after the promulgation of the Balfour Declaration (November 1917), which sanctioned the creation of a Jewish 'national home' in Palestine. This opposition had a local Palestinian as opposed to all-Arab character.

With the rise of Zionist influence in Palestine, the Palestinians' struggle also escalated, most notably in the 1930s. The armed resistance led by Shaikh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam in 1935 was a prelude to a general uprising, which culminated in the famous six-month general strike of 1936.⁴ After this event, Arab volunteers from the neighbouring countries began to join the struggle of the Palestinians, who were desperately short of the basic requirements of guerrilla warfare, especially weapons.

But while these volunteers were coming to the Palestinians' aid, the Arab regimes were bowing to the desire of Britain (and, by implication, of the Zionist movement) by helping to paralyse the struggle. On Britain's behalf, the regimes of Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Trans-Jordan did their best to induce the Palestinians to call off their general strike.⁵ They exerted their pressure mainly through Hajj Amin al-Husaini, the traditionalist Palestinian leader who belonged to one of the country's top land-owning families. He believed that the emancipation of Palestine could be achieved through a deal with Britain, and was generally restricted to the political, intellectual and ideological horizon of the Arab regimes.

We must emphasize here the decisive difference between the two Arab responses to the Palestinian issue: at the grass-roots level Arab volunteers joined the armed struggle; while at the governmental level the Arab ruling classes were behaving in a manner which, in effect, smoothed the path of colonialism and Zionism.

Through an agreement between Britain's prime minister Winston Churchill and the Egyptian government, the idea of creating the League of Arab States was proposed in 1944 and promulgated in the Alexandria Protocol.⁶ The significance of the Arab League was that it institutionalized the regional borders dividing the Arab homeland and excluded the latter's organic unification. The League was conceived and set up as a political alliance between countries that—despite their cultural and historical affinities—were strictly separate 'nation-states'. In joining this organization, the Arab regimes in effect renounced the aim of unifying the balkanized nation.

The declaration of the Jewish state in 1948 came as a serious political embarrassment to the Arab regimes, some of which declared war against Israel. The war itself was conducted on the Arab side as a political charade. The two main Arab armies in Palestine were the Trans-Jordanian and the Egyptian. The former was commanded by British officers, led by Brigadier Sir John Bagot Glubb; the outcome of the war on this front was largely fixed in advance through secret negotiations between Jordan's Amir 'Abdallah and the Zionist leaders (including Moshe Dayan, Golda Meir and others). The Egyptian army was disastrously badly armed and under-equipped; indeed, the scandalous way in which it conducted the war discredited the Egyptian regime and led directly to its downfall in 1952. These two Arab armies, far from collaborating or even co-ordinating with each other, were in fact gleefully looking forward to each other's defeat. Syria's role in the war was strictly limited; and the Iraqi forces, which initially penetrated Palestine in two sectors of the eastern front, were soon withdrawn.

Even more important: the Palestinians, on whose behalf the war was ostensibly being fought, were after May 1948 prevented from actively participating in it; they were relegated by the Arab regimes to the role of mere spectators in their own calamity.

Here, in 1948, we can already discern the Arab regimes' policy of suppressing the Palestinian identity and trying to eliminate it altogether. This was the best gift that these regimes could offer to the nascent Zionist state. Soon the Arab governments were to be involved in armistice negotiations with Israel, ostensibly on behalf of the Palestinians, but in fact only to carve up between them what remained of Palestine, in accordance with an implicit agreement they had reached with Britain after 1937. Thus Trans-Jordan swallowed the West Bank (and accordingly renamed itself 'Jordan'), Egypt grabbed the Gaza Strip, and Syria kept a small pocket of land around al-Hammah. During the following two years, the so-called General Government of Palestine, located in Gaza, was eliminated and the Strip came under Egyptian military administration, although it would have been possible to keep Gaza as the germ of a Palestinian state.

Clearly, what the UN partition resolution of 1947 had offered the Palestinians—the creation of a Palestinian state comprising about half of Palestine's territory—was preferable to what the Palestinians actually got from the Arab regimes, which did their best to prevent the creation of such a state.

Leaving aside the Suez war of 1956, the next round in the war over the Palestinian question between the Arab regimes and Israel was the war of June 1967, which was started by Israel. The Arab side in this war was led by countries which were following what we have called the first trajectory of development, and their defeat sounded the death-knell of the Arab bourgeois national movement, with its ambition for unification.

Whereas in 1948 the Arab regimes had entered the war under the umbrella of the Arab League, in 1967 they joined the struggle under the umbrella of the Arab Summit, one of the new political forms of the Arab League.

The next war, that of October 1973, was started by Egypt and Syria, whose main aim was to regain their own territories (occupied by Israel since 1967) rather than the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This war was to lead to a political accommodation with the Zionist state rather than a radical struggle against it.

Following the 1973 war, the Arab Summit produced a slogan which was even more feeble than the Summit itself: the slogan of 'Arab solidarity', which marked the new hegemony of the Arab countries of the second trajectory, especially Saudi Arabia, over the bourgeois national regimes in the Arab homeland.

In all these wars, the Arab masses were not allowed to participate or even to criticize, and their voice remained unheard. The only exception was the clandestine infiltration of some Arab militants, who managed to cross the barriers erected by the Arab regimes and joined the Palestinians after 1967.

To conclude this part of our discussion, let us emphasize once more that the Arab masses have been denied participation in the Palestinian struggle, and their national position towards Palestine has always been submerged. Their position is not represented by that of their rulers. To confuse these two positions is, at best, an error; at worst, it is a mark of dubious intent.

2: THE PALESTINIAN IDENTITY – BETWEEN DISSIPATION, RECONSTRUCTION AND NEGLECT

THE CATASTROPHIC outcome of the 1948 war disrupted the development of a Palestinian identity and Palestinian social formation, as compared to the rest of the Arabs. Not only was the country carved up between Israel and the neighbouring Arab states, but the majority of the Palestinians of all social classes were uprooted and dispersed. Through this double fragmentation – territorial and human – the Palestinian people lost the natural basis required for the existence and development of any normal human society.

Those who remained in Israel were officially defined as 'Israeli Arabs'

and their Palestinian identity was suppressed. Those who came under Jordanian rule were forced to assume Jordanian nationality; those crowded into the Gaza Strip had to carry identity papers that were accepted only in Egypt; and the situation of the Palestinians displaced into Syria and Lebanon was similar.

As a result of the geographic, human and social dispersion of the Palestinians, their political struggle was likewise fragmented: the Palestinian militants were distributed among the various Arab movements and trends, each according to his or her ideological affiliation.

The bourgeoisie and the remnants of the aristocratic land-owning families not only joined the Jordanian ruling apparatus, but offered the West Bank as a present to King 'Abdallah at the stage-managed Jericho Conference (May 1949), where the main protagonist was Shaikh al-Ja'bari.⁷ This section of the Palestinian bourgeoisie has continued up to the present time to collaborate with the Hashemite regime, against the Arab revolutionary movement and the interest of the Palestinian people. Suffice it to say that during the massacre of September 1970 (Black September), the head of the military authorities in Amman was Colonel Mahmoud Daoud, a Palestinian.

In the post-1948 period, the Arab nationalist and communist movements also fell into the trap of suppressing the Palestinian identity. The Palestinian Communist Party (then called 'The League for National Liberation') demanded in 1949 that both Israel and the Arab states withdraw from the area allotted to the Palestinians in the 1947 UN resolution, and that a democratic independent Palestinian state be established there. By 1951, however, the party had accepted the new carve-up of Palestine: the Palestinian communists remaining in Israel helped to form the Israeli CP, while those in the West Bank formed the Jordanian CP. Thus the communists, instead of trying to preserve the Palestinian national identity (*wataniya*), submitted to its dissipation by the regimes of the area. The Jordanian CP continued to adhere to the same line even after 1967, until an acute conflict broke out among its leaders and intellectuals in 1972-75, which brought it close to fragmentation, to the point where it was named the Palestinian Communist Organization for almost one year, until renamed the Palestinian Communist Party. Without any doubt, the Palestinian communists' distorted understanding of the national question had been a major cause of that crisis.

After 1948 those Palestinians who had Arab nationalist aspirations distributed themselves among the Ba'th Parties, the Movement of Arab Nationalists and the Nassarist movement. However, these also failed to appreciate the necessity of maintaining a Palestinian national identity. Like the communists, they too felt in a rather confused way that to uphold such an identity would be inconsistent with their belief that Palestine could only be liberated through a united Arab struggle. They failed to realize that the existence of a Palestinian national identity is quite compatible with a united Arab struggle; indeed, the former may reinforce the latter and enable the Palestinians to pressure the rest of the Arabs into a more radical position on the Palestinian issue. What attracted those

Palestinians to the Arab nationalist parties and movements was the latter's commitment to Arab unification. The defect lay in their inability to realize that Zionism, imperialism and the reactionary Arab regimes were all intent on eliminating the Palestinian identity. Thus, adherence to this identity would have been consonant with a radical position, rather than with a regional fragmentary tendency opposed to Arab unification.

The Palestinian movement, 1967-1970

THE TREND of Palestinian incorporation into Arab political movements and regimes was dominant in the period from 1948 to 1965. After that period, there emerged new Palestinian movements that advocated very clearly the need for Palestinian action within a framework of autonomous organizations, independent of the Arab parties and regimes. The first group to urge such a course was Fatah.

Before going any further, it is essential to note that the new Palestinian national movement, with its new structure, that emerged in the mid-1960s – and was, in effect, the Palestinian version of the bourgeois Arab nationalist movement – came into the world belatedly, a decade or so after what would have been its 'natural' time. Instead of coinciding with the revival and high tide of nationalism in the Arab homeland, the new Palestinian national movement emerged when its Arab counterpart had already been ebbing away. This late arrival of the Palestinian movement (compared to its Arab sisters) is due to the destruction of the Palestinian social structure.

The leadership of the Palestinian national movement had to develop outside Palestine, for two main reasons. First, the Palestinians belonging to the largest and most central concentration – on the west and east banks of Jordan – were officially regarded as 'Jordanians', and were prevented from showing any sign of Palestinian affiliation and identity. Second, the Palestinian bourgeoisie in Jordan had incorporated itself into the Jordanian regime and lost all national or political aspirations to go beyond that regime's framework. The West Bank had also been economically integrated into the Jordanian economy.

In the surrounding Arab countries, on the contrary, the Palestinians were not given citizenship but were more or less segregated. As a result, the bourgeois Palestinian political movement in these countries, though initially still linked with Arab political groups, found an adequate environment for its own political crystallization; it therefore developed politically before the propertied bourgeoisie inside Palestine.

The Palestinian subjective factor – the politically oriented national petty bourgeoisie – was thus able to develop in advance of the objective conditions such as the economy and the general material life of the Palestinians, scattered in several states. As a result, it is the petty bourgeoisie that has led the Palestinian resistance movement, especially after 1967, with the radical turn in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The early 1960s saw the beginnings of the new orientation of the Palestinian struggle, largely independent of the Arab regimes and to some

extent also independent of Arab political forces. This drove the Arab regimes to reinforce their policy of containing the Palestinian struggle. Thus in 1964 Nasser established the old PLO – an institutional apparatus rather than a mass movement. The man appointed to lead it was Ahmad Shuqairi, a traditional Palestinian politician who had spent many years in the service of various Arab regimes, and would ensure that the politics of the organization would not go beyond the confines of the Arab political establishments.

The development of the Palestinian armed struggle organizations (in particular Fatah) started in 1965 outside Shuqairi's PLO. The decisive turning-point came in 1967, with the defeat of the Arab regimes and, more generally, of the Arab national bourgeoisie. This led to the discrediting and demise of Shuqairi's apparatus. The armed organizations – mainly Fatah, but also other groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) – had little difficulty in ousting the Shuqairi leadership, thanks to a clear programme of armed struggle which had already been put into practice.

The Palestinian organizations' engagement in armed struggle won them huge mass support, especially against the background of the defeat of the Arab regimes with their regular armies. This support was given a further boost by the battle of al-Karameh (March 1968), in which the Israelis were surprised by the hitherto unfamiliar guerrilla tactics of their antagonist.

However, the Palestinian organizations' opportunity for developing their activity, based in Jordan, proved to be short-lived. It was made possible by the Hashemite regime's weakness and the disintegration of its institutions following the 1967 war, which created a space for the development of a situation of dual power. But the Jordanian regime was trying hard to consolidate its power and reconstruct its institutions, while the Palestinian organizations were unable to overcome the fragmentation that has always been their bane. Moreover, they did not succeed in attracting the Jordanian masses and in consolidating an alliance with the Jordanian national movement. The showdown came in Black September, 1970, when Palestinians living in Jordan were massacred and their armed organizations were evicted from the country.

It should be noted here that most of the Arab regimes gave their blessing to the massacre, and merely offered to 'mediate' in order to reach a unanimous resolution that the Palestinian organizations should evacuate Jordan. A notable – but short-lived – exception was the Syrian regime, still dominated by the left wing of the Ba'th Party, which offered the Palestinian resistance some help against the Jordanian regime. A 'slow-motion' military coup was already well on its way in Syria, however, and Hafez al-Assad – no friend of an independent Palestinian movement – soon assumed full power.

The Palestinian organizations were not allowed to use Egyptian or Syrian territory as a base for military operations against Israel, and after 1970 they were excluded from Jordan as well; so they moved their main forces into Lebanon. But for geographical and demographic reasons, Lebanon

could never be a substitute for Jordan as a natural base for the struggle against Israeli occupation. Besides, it was only a question of time before one or more of the rival Lebanese power mafias would acquire – or be given – the capability and the opportunity to perpetrate another massacre of the Palestinians.

In retrospect it is clear that the PLO's eviction from Jordan signalled the end of its claim to be the vanguard of the Arab revolution.⁸

U-turns of the PLO

AFTER SEPTEMBER 1970, the Palestinian right reached a conclusion that has affected its conduct ever since: that the way to achieve a solution was through a diplomatic settlement. However, the Palestinian right realized the need to play this card cautiously and to be wary of the reaction of other wings of the movement. This conclusion led to theorizing about a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This may be regarded as the PLO's first U-turn, which brought the organization into line with the positions taken by the Arab regimes since 1967, in confining their demands to the territories occupied in the June war of that year. Moreover, it should be noted that the left has followed the right in this U-turn, albeit using a different rhetoric. The Popular-Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP), for instance, has joined in the theorizing process for a programme of a 'national authority' and later for a 'Palestinian state'. By 1974 the PDFLP had changed its political and ideological platform from a call for action against the Arab regimes to a stance of reconciliation; from a call for struggle led by an all-Arab communist movement to advocating an exclusively Palestinian struggle; and from a call for critical alliance with the 'socialist camp' to an uncritical acceptance of the positions and analyses of the Soviet Union.

The October 1973 war accelerated the shift of the PLO towards a diplomatic settlement. Following the war there was much talk of convening a top-level Middle East conference in Geneva, to be chaired jointly by the US and the USSR; and it was widely believed that this would lead to a Palestinian state. But the real outcome of the war was the PLO's total exclusion from any position of influence on Arab policy-making, which was now completely subordinated to the interests of the Egyptian and Syrian regimes.

Despite the friendly attitude of the Soviet Union towards the PLO, the latter's leadership gradually came to realize that a diplomatic settlement in the Middle East in the foreseeable future would only be possible if it were imposed by the US, as a *Pax Americana*. This gave the PLO's leadership all the more reason to fall in with the political outlook and methods of the Arab regimes, which had meanwhile come under the leadership of America's staunchest Arab ally, the Saudi regime.

The 'American' trend within the PLO, encouraged in the post-1973 atmosphere, was apparent in the activity of persons such as Sartawi and Dajani. Sartawi, for example, forged links on the PLO's behalf with middle-of-the-road Israelis (who would never go beyond agreed American

policy in the area) but neglected or excluded Israeli leftist and communist forces.

The PLO leadership's orientation towards an American diplomatic settlement had a detrimental effect on its conduct in the Lebanese civil war, which broke out in 1975 and in which the Palestinians were embroiled from the start. The PLO leadership refused to put into practice the socially radical programme for the establishment of a non-sectarian 'democratic Lebanon', and became involved in confessional alliances. This offered the Syrian regime the chance to prop up the sectarian set-up in Lebanon, and in so doing, it found it expedient to conduct a massacre against the Palestinians. Thus the PLO lost its second historical opportunity to establish a base for its struggle.

Then came Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977 and his recognition of Israel. This made it patently clear not only that any diplomatic settlement in the area would be an American-Israeli one, but also that the Arab regimes would be assigned the task of imposing it on the Palestinians. As recent years have proved, the Arab governments' boycott of Egypt was merely a charade; in fact, the Egyptian regime has only done what the others had always been willing to do.

The American-mediated 1981 truce between the PLO leadership and Israel, and the consequent halting of operations from southern Lebanon against northern Israeli settlements, marked the second U-turn of the PLO leadership, bringing it into line with the Arab regimes. This was, in effect, a step towards recognizing Israel. Although some people alleged that the truce also implied recognition of the PLO by Israel, this is not the case: Israel made no real concession but merely bided its time, preparing and awaiting a pretext for a major war against the Palestinians. This is exactly what took place in June 1982.

The evacuation of the PLO from Lebanon in 1982 paved the way for the organization's third and most recent U-turn towards acquiescence and submission to the Arab regimes. In this respect, Arafat's visit to Egypt was not as dangerous as his reconciliation with Jordan and the revival of the Jordanian parliament, including appointed 'representatives of the occupied territories'. Indeed, Arafat's visit to Cairo was perhaps no more than an attempt to divert attention from his blossoming relations with Jordan, which were condemned by most Palestinian forces. One of the first results of Arafat's rapprochement with Jordan – surely, second only to Israel in its hostility to a Palestinian identity – was a joint acceptance by Arafat and Hussein of UN Security Council Resolution 242 as a basis for proposed negotiations with Israel. Hitherto, Resolution 242 had always been rejected by the whole Palestinian movement, mainly because it refers to the Palestinians merely as 'refugees' rather than as a national entity, as object rather than subject.

Thus in making this third U-turn, the PLO leadership has delivered itself as hostage into the hands of the Arab regimes.

The West Bank is the object

THE WEST BANK has the largest concentration of Palestinians within their homeland, and is therefore the focus where several issues intersect: the Palestinian struggle; the PLO's aim of establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza; Israel's drive to annex these territories for good; Jordan's wish to regain its domination over the Palestinian population and, if possible, over the West Bank itself; and the Arab regimes' interest in seeing the territory revert to Jordan, thus freeing themselves of the burden of the Palestinians. The US too has an interest in these territories, which it hopes to use as a counter in an American-backed settlement designed to satisfy the ambitions of Israel and the interests of some Arab regimes. As for the Palestinians, they are assigned the passive role of mere props on the stage where the action takes place.

From dependence to atrophy

In the present section I shall discuss the occupation regime in the West Bank, concentrating on its economic aspects.

The West Bank did not have an independent economy when it was under Jordanian rule. Following the 1948 defeat, the territory's population, economy and land were simply incorporated into Jordan, whose development efforts were deliberately concentrated on the East Bank. The economic neglect of the West Bank fitted in with Jordan's policy of suppressing the Palestinians and obliterating their identity.

Thus in 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank, it found a weak and ramshackle economic structure, no match for Israel's capitalist and relatively developed economy, which was incorporated into the world system. Whether or not Israel had prior designs to subordinate the West Bank's economy to its own needs, such a policy has certainly evolved during the years of occupation, as a corollary of Israel's political ambitions over what it regards as 'liberated' territory. Both major parties in Israel, the Likud and Labour, insist on retaining Israeli domination over most, if not all, of the territory's lands, and are at best ready to negotiate with Jordan over the status of the Palestinian inhabitants, as is clear from the Camp David accords.

From the early days of occupation, Israel has decreed a large number of military orders and regulations, governing all aspects of life. (Among the first was an order according to which the Palestinian inhabitants were issued with identity cards for personal identification, but not as proof of nationality or national identity.) In particular, the military governor promulgated various economic regulations, such as the imposition of Israeli currency and a ban on exports and imports except through Israel; this latter ban does not, however, apply to a limited number of products that could compete with Israel's own products, and which are therefore still exported across the 'open bridges' into Jordan.

The West Bank soon became economically dependent on Israel. The local merchant was forced to import from the Israeli market. Similarly, Israel was the only source of raw materials and other inputs for manufacture, and the same was true of certain inputs for agriculture. Thus the

various social classes were linked to the Israeli economy for the operation of the processes of production in the West Bank.

In addition, workers became dependent on employment in the Israeli economy. A surplus labour force had existed in the West Bank even before the 1967 war. Despite a wave of emigration on the eve of the war, and mass expulsions immediately after it, the size of this surplus actually increased. The reason for this was a sharp decline in demand for labour in the West Bank: the effects of the war paralysed various spheres of manufacture and agriculture. Moreover, the public services sector, which had been a major employer under Jordan, was cut down to a minimum by the Israeli occupation authorities; besides, Palestinian workers are not attracted by this new employer. As a result, many Palestinian workers were faced with the choice between emigration and seeking work inside Israel. This large supply of new Palestinian labour coincided with an increased demand for labour in the Israeli economy, which revived from its pre-1967 recession and, due to foreign investments, boomed for the following six years. At the same time, the expanding Israeli military-industrial complex, closed to Arabs, absorbed a growing proportion of Israelis, thus creating a need for Palestinian workers in other sectors of the economy. These Palestinian workers came not only from the cities and refugee camps, but also from rural areas; even before the large-scale expropriation of lands, the capitalization of the relations of production forced the peasant family to increase its cash income by sending some of its members to seek hired employment.

The economic structure that took shape in the occupied territories during the first ten years of occupation can be described as *colonial*. Israel harnessed the territories' economy to its own; the various sectors of the local economy were prevented from fitting in with each other, but were instead made to fit into the capitalist Israeli economy. This was an instance of what Chattapodaya has called 'reservation/disintegration'.⁹ Thus local agriculture was directed towards producing for the needs of the Israeli economy, and local manufacture was fitted into slots in Israel's industrial production.

However, the term 'colonial' is no longer adequate for describing the pattern that began to emerge after the first ten years. Through massive expropriation of lands, Israel had by 1984 seized about half of the West Bank's area. Taxes were imposed on local industries, leading to their eventual bankruptcy or at best halting their development. Economic hardship (exacerbated by a spiralling inflation imported from Israel) and political repression led to increased emigration. Israeli settlements, rapidly growing in number, also changed their character: they became overtly civilian (rather than military outposts) and spread into the heartland of the occupied territories, invading even the cities. All these processes go beyond the colonial aim of merely harnessing the local economy to Israeli needs; rather, they tend to destroy the very structure of production.

It is becoming clear that Israel's aim is not merely to subjugate the Palestinian inhabitants and concentrate them in reserve areas, but to displace them altogether, to be replaced by Israelis. Unlike the South African

settler-colonial policy of herding the indigenous people into segregated, purely black reserve areas, the Israeli colonization policy is to set up settlements inside densely populated Palestinian areas, in order to achieve an Israeli demographic majority and disperse the Palestinian society, as a step towards its ultimate expulsion across the Jordan. This clearly goes beyond the formation of a settler-colonial mode of production; it is an ideologically and politically motivated programme of complete destruction of the structure of production, of uprooting the Palestinians from the soil, preventing them from owning industrial and technical means of production and, finally, encouraging or forcing the largest possible number to emigrate.

The present economic situation in the occupied territories is that of transition from a settler-colonial mode of production to economic atrophy, partly masked by a sizeable inflow of political funds – mainly through Jordan, with Israel's acquiescence – on which a growing number of Palestinian inhabitants have become dependent. True, the local bourgeoisie and land-owners are trying to protect their interests by clinging to their role of subservience to the Israeli economy, thus tending to preserve the colonial mode of production. However, Israel's ideological and political plans spell the doom of this attempt, and will finally lead to the dissolution of the local social and economic fabric.¹⁰ The Palestinian population of the occupied territories already produces less than it consumes; and the disruptive economic situation has led to confusion and unease in daily life.¹¹

Aspects of deformation

In 1970 about 20,600 workers from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, comprising 13.5 per cent of the total number of workers in these territories, were employed in Israel; in 1975 the number was 66,300 (about 47.8 per cent); and by 1985 the number had reached 85,000, of which 47,000 come from the West Bank and the rest from Gaza. Together with some 50,000 who work in Israel illegally,¹² this adds up to well over half the total number of wage workers in these occupied territories (estimated at slightly less than 250,000). Despite this, unemployment in the territories ranges from 16 to 20 per cent, due to the economic crisis in Israel, which has led to the replacement of Palestinian workers by Israelis. The situation is exacerbated by the policy of Jordan, which prevents Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank from staying in Jordan for an extended period or migrating elsewhere. This policy – aimed not so much as entrenching the Palestinians in their territories as at maintaining their dependence on the Jordanian authorities – adds to the pressure of unemployment.

The grossly deformed character of the economy of the occupied territories is revealed by the fact that well over half of their workers are employed outside, in Israel, which retains all the surplus produced by these workers. The picture becomes even worse when we remember that a major part of the wages brought in by these workers, as well as incomes generated within the occupied territories and private remittances and political funds that flow in across the Jordan bridges, are used to pay for

consumer goods imported from Israel, and are thus drained away into the Israeli economy.

The situation of the peasants, however, is more complicated. In the early years of the occupation, the Israeli authorities directed local agriculture into producing crops that were needed by the Israeli economy, whether for its domestic consumption or to fill gaps in Israel's exports. Israel granted incentives for growing such crops, and guaranteed their sale. But once local agricultural production had been completely reoriented to serve Israel's needs, the Israelis stopped offering incentives and the produce became subject to market fluctuations. Moreover, while the flow of Israeli products into the occupied territories is unrestricted, a permit from the military governor is required for exporting Palestinian products to Israel or to foreign markets where they might compete with Israeli products.

All these pressures, as well as the continual decline in the number of people engaged in agriculture, created a highly unstable economic situation during the early years of occupation.

Since 1973 matters have been getting steadily worse, due to the proliferation of Israeli settlements and massive expropriations of lands. Land seizures, at first gradual and piecemeal, have assumed vast proportions, especially since 1980; it is estimated that by the end of 1984 about 2.5mn (million) dunums, constituting about half of the total area of the West Bank, had been seized.¹³ The number of Israeli settlements is estimated at about 165. (The exact number is difficult to determine, because the Israeli authorities take new decisions almost daily; this also applies to the exact area occupied by each settlement.)

The number of Israeli settlers in the West Bank was 20,000 in 1973, and grew rather slowly until 1982, when it reached about 22,000. But in recent years the numbers have escalated rapidly, reaching about 43,000 in early 1985. To this should be added 78,000 settlers in the areas surrounding East Jerusalem, which have been officially annexed to Israel, making about 121,000 settlers altogether, or approximately 11 per cent of the entire population of the West Bank.

A recent significant trend has been the industrialization of Israeli settlements. In 1982 Israeli settlements already employed about 3,000 industrial workers (out of a total of 18,300 in the whole West Bank). But in that year the Israeli authorities decided to build 79 new factories (over the next two years) in existing or projected Israeli settlements. The effect of this trend is to cut the cost of transporting Palestinian workers employed in Israeli industry, as well as the cost of transporting Israeli industrial produce into the West Bank. This gives Israeli industry additional advantages in its competition with local industry over labour and markets, leading to the virtual extinction of Palestinian industry. Thus the Israeli settlement policy not only results in uprooting the Palestinian farmers and peasants, leading to their proletarianization, but also undermines and destroys the other productive sectors.

This amounts to a deliberate strategy of annexing the occupied territories from within, by settling large numbers of Israelis in them and

fragmenting their weak indigenous socio-economic structure. Thus the process of external Israeli annexation of these territories, through military occupation, is being complemented internally by their complete economic dissolution into the economy of the occupier.

Balance of trade

The data on the occupied territories' imports and exports for the years 1981-83 are summarized in Table 1. It is clear from these data that the territories' trade deficit derives for the most part from their exchange with the Israeli economy. The trade deficit is covered by a unilateral inflow of funds: Arab aid, assistance from the Joint Palestinian-Jordanian Committee, and the remittances of migrant workers in Israel, Jordan and elsewhere.

**Table 1. External trade of the occupied territories, 1981-83
in millions of Israeli shekels¹⁴**

	<i>West Bank</i>			<i>Gaza Strip</i>		
	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1983</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1983</i>
Imports from						
Israel	4,409.5	9,254.6	23,372.2	3,259.1	6,891.1	17,009.6
Jordan	85.2	223.5	378.2	—	—	—
other	485.8	1,066.9	2,244.9	317.1	689.7	1,513.9
Exports to						
Israel	1,496.8	2,726.0	7,300.1	1,790.3	3,609.9	8,125.9
Jordan	880.6	2,319.5	4,266.9	292.7	694.1	977.7
other	17.1	21.2	62.0	79.6	127.0	369.6
Trade deficit with						
Israel	2,912.7	6,528.6	16,072.1	1,468.8	3,282.1	8,883.7
Jordan	-795.4	-2,096.0	-3,888.7	-292.7	-694.1	-977.7
other	468.7	1,045.7	2,182.1	237.5	536.7	1,144.3
<i>Total deficit</i>	<i>2,586.0</i>	<i>5,478.3</i>	<i>14,365.5</i>	<i>1,413.6</i>	<i>3,124.7</i>	<i>9,050.3</i>

The occupied territories are thus net exporters of labour-power and net importers of goods. This reflects the structural weakness of their economy, and its dependence on the economies of Jordan and other Arab countries, and to an even greater extent on that of Israel. Moreover, the occupied territories are peripheral to these other economies, while the whole region is peripheral to the world economic system.

In addition to exploiting the labour-power of the occupied territories and using them as a market, Israel derives another economic benefit from the occupation: a significant quantity of Israeli goods are re-exported from these territories into the Arab countries, under local or foreign labels. It seems almost as though this is a sort of pilot project, in preparation for much larger and overt Israeli economic penetration of the Arab markets, as part of an American-sponsored settlement.

Finally, let us point out that the bourgeoisie of the occupied territories

exports its capital to Jordan, Egypt and other Arab countries, although much of this capital originates from the 'steadfastness' funds donated by the Arab world; thus these donations are recycled back to the Arab countries, but in the process they serve to subsidize the Palestinian bourgeoisie and secure its political allegiance.

The traditional local bourgeoisie

In the foregoing discussion we have tried to describe and analyse the deformations of the socio-economic structure of the occupied territories. We pointed out that the peasantry is shrinking, due to the loss of lands through Israeli colonization. At the same time, the working class has become an object of double exploitation, through the export of its labour-power, and as consumers of Israeli goods. The deformation of the peasantry and working class goes hand in hand with the deformation of the bourgeoisie of the occupied territories. This latter class is mainly made up of mercantile and comprador elements, as well as landlords of estates, and to a lesser extent of owners of small-scale industries. The productivity of the local economy is very low compared to consumption, about half of which is covered by remittances of migrant workers and political subsidies from the Arab world.

The Palestinians of the occupied territories cannot, of course, be considered as an entity separate from the Palestinian people as a whole. For one thing, many workers from these territories are employed in Israel and the surrounding Arab countries, where they mingle with other sections of the Palestinian people.

In addition to the demographic, economic and cultural interdependence between the Palestinians in the occupied territories and those outside, there is the Palestinian struggle, in which the Palestinians of the diaspora still play a pioneering and leading role. The PLO was formed in the diaspora, and its leadership, as well as its main forces, are still outside the occupied territories.

The PLO is the only organization that can claim to represent the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and it has firm links with all the social classes there. It still enjoys the virtually undivided loyalty of the masses. The only social class whose allegiance to the PLO is less than solid is the bourgeoisie, which is more inclined to be loyal to the Jordanian regime.

It is clear that in the last few years the local traditional bourgeoisie has exerted pressure on the PLO leadership in favour of delegating to Jordan the role of representing the Palestinians. This is because, if Jordan were to be accorded this role, it would in turn use local bourgeois elements as spokesmen for the Palestinians, thus bypassing the PLO.

Two factors have contributed to turning the local bourgeoisie away from the PLO. First, the Camp David accords, which were designed (among other things) to exclude the PLO from the political process, were welcomed by this bourgeoisie. The second factor is the Joint Palestinian-Jordanian Committee, which has facilitated Jordanian interference in local Palestinian affairs through pro-Hashemite loyalists inside the occupied territories.

In addition to maintaining relations simultaneously with the PLO and Jordan, the traditional bourgeoisie also flirts with Israel and the US. These latter contacts have resulted in a plan to set up inside the occupied territories a 'development project' which is to be financed mainly by American capital, under Israeli-American supervision. This will no doubt deepen the dependence of the occupied territories and reinforce their role as a link between the economies of Israel and the Arab countries.

To justify its flirtations with the US and Israel, the traditional bourgeoisie argues that the Palestinians of the occupied territories have been abandoned by all the Arabs, and they must therefore look after themselves as best they can; if that means making a deal with the US, and even with Israel, then so be it.

In this argument, the traditional bourgeoisie misleadingly glosses over the fact that the politics and positions of the Arab regimes do not truly represent the aspirations of the Arab masses.

It is important to point out that the defeatism of the traditional bourgeoisie has been fostered by the weakening of the PLO and its growing dependence on the Arab regimes, as well as by the apparent inability of the left of the PLO to offer the Palestinian masses a credible alternative strategy.

The recent policy of the PLO leadership – signalled most clearly by its acceptance of Security Council Resolution 242 – has resulted in strengthening the position and role of the traditional bourgeoisie. In turning back to the circle of the Arab regimes, that leadership has lost its revolutionary principles, and with them its very *raison d'être*.

3: CRISIS, INDUSTRIALIZATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUBMERGED ALL-ARAB IDENTITY

IN PART 1 of this essay we discussed the incorporation of the Arab economies into the world capitalist market and the new Arab dependence on the imperialist centre. We also explained how the uneven development between Arab countries became, for economic and political reasons, an aim in itself. Through uneven development, the direct interrelations between the Arab countries have been attenuated and have given way to the separate attachment of individual Arab countries to the world system and, more recently, to relations between some Arab countries and the Zionist regime, which partly mediates between them and the world system.

Since the first boom in oil prices (1973), the oil-exporting Arab countries have become increasingly incorporated into the world economic system. They have acquired huge liquid reserves, which they have used, in part, to enlarge their exchange with the outside world. This has still left them with surplus funds for investment in the region itself – and hence

they have acquired an increased stake in the region's political stability. At the same time, the Arab bourgeois ruling classes have reached a certain ideological maturity, mobilizing into their ranks a host of writers and academics who advocate capitalist development through 'open door' relations with the world system in general, and with the US in particular. These theoreticians argue against the ideas of Arab nation, all-Arab national identity and unification of the Arab world.

These developments prepared the ground for Sadat's visit to Israel, where he declared that there would be 'no more wars in the Middle East'. In this he was representing the beliefs not only of Egypt's ruling class but also those of other Arab countries, mainly Saudi Arabia and Morocco. Projecting this analysis forwards, we can detect the beginning of a new front in the area, with the Israeli regime and the Arab ruling classes as the local junior partners, and the US as the dominant senior partner.

All this constitutes a total U-turn by bourgeois Arab nationalists, away from their erstwhile preaching of 'Arab unity and the liberation of Palestine'.

In this third part of our essay, we shall outline a hypothetical economic scenario for the development of the Arab homeland. If this scenario is indeed realized, its outcome will supersede all the present centrifugal deviations of the Arab bourgeoisies and bring the region to the threshold of a new era.

The present economic scene

AS AN introduction to our scenario for the economic future, we must first discuss the present economic situation in the Arab world. We shall concentrate mainly on Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as being the most important representatives of their respective types.

Despite a long series of pan-Arab economic and trade agreements, the Arab ruling classes have continued the process of divergent development, using these agreements merely to cover up their real policies.

The majority of industrial workers in the Arab countries are concentrated in simple and craft industries, mostly in plants employing no more than 100 workers. The proportion of industrial workers in the total employed labour force is still only 20 or 21 per cent¹⁵—a clear symptom of under-development. (In the developed countries of both West and East the figure is around 40 per cent; in countries whose *per capita* income is near the world average it is around 28 per cent.)

However, the share of industry in total employment varies considerably from one Arab country to another. The same holds true for the share of industry in the gross domestic product (GDP): it is 48 per cent in Algeria, 25 per cent in Egypt, 24 per cent in Syria and 20 per cent in Lebanon.¹⁶ In the least industrially developed Arab countries, such as Sudan, Jordan and Yemen, the proportion is even lower.

In most Arab countries, the growth of industry's share in the GDP has gone hand in hand with a decline in the share of agriculture. At the same time, the public and private service sector has grown continually at the expense of the first two sectors. This tertiary sector absorbs 71 per cent

of the workforce in Lebanon, 68 per cent in Jordan and 58 per cent in Syria. This reflects the large size of the bureaucratic apparatus in the Arab countries.

Despite the mainly agricultural character of the Arab economies, productivity in this sector has declined during the 1970s and 1980s. During the 1970s the Arab world doubled its agricultural imports and is now, in relative terms, the greatest importer of food products in the Third World.

Between the 1950s and 1960s agriculture's share in the GDP declined from 33 to 16 per cent in Algeria, and from 33 to 18 per cent in Syria. In most Arab countries, agriculture absorbs over half the workforce, in some cases as much as 70 per cent; but its share in the GDP is only around 20 per cent, and in South Yemen and Sudan it is as low as 9 and 4 per cent respectively. At the same time there are huge tracts of untilled arable land (100,000 hectares in Morocco, 126,000 in Egypt, 427,000 in Libya, 1.3 million in Algeria, 2.5 million in Syria, 12.6 million in Sudan) and a high rate of unemployment, particularly disguised unemployment in rural areas, in all Arab countries (11.5 per cent in Libya, 15.6 in Jordan, 25.7 in Iraq, 66 in North Yemen and as much as 73 per cent in Somalia).¹⁷

Migration of labour

Chronic unemployment persists in most Arab countries, despite the sizeable migration of workers to non-Arab countries as well as between Arab countries. According to a French survey, France has 754,000 migrant workers from Algeria, 400,000 from Morocco and 134,000 from Tunisia. There are also smaller, but significant, numbers from Syria and Libya.¹⁸

As for migration of Arab workers to oil countries, Table 2 shows the number of such migrants from six labour-exporting countries, as well as the percentage of the total labour force in the country of origin represented by these workers.

Table 2. Migrant labour force in oil-producing countries¹⁹

<i>Country of origin</i>	<i>Number of workers</i>	<i>% of total workforce</i>
Egypt	397,000	3.7
North Yemen	290,000	27.1
Jordan	150,000	28.1
Syria	70,000	3.8
Sudan	45,000	1.2
Oman	38,000	27.7

Most of these workers are employed in construction and in government jobs; a minority are employed as skilled workers.

In the labour-importing oil countries, Arab migrant workers are increasingly outnumbered by non-Arab ones. Table 3 contains data on the total workforce employed in the major oil-exporting Arab countries,

as well as the number of expatriate workers (including migrants from Arab and other countries). As the table shows, the proportion of migrant workers has been increasing rapidly. At the same time, it is known that the share of Arabs in this expatriate workforce has declined.

Table 3. Total and expatriate labour force in major Arab oil-exporting countries; selected years²⁰

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total number employed</i>	<i>Expatriates employed</i>	<i>Expatriates %</i>
1975	6,210,900	1,661,200	27.7
1980	8,252,000	2,658,000	32.2
1985	10,306,400	3,616,100	35.1

These trends reflect a deliberate policy on the part of the governments concerned: migrant workers are preferred because they accept lower wages; and non-Arab migrant workers can more easily be kept 'out of politics'. In the last few years, however, the governments are becoming increasingly concerned that this policy is leading to the creation of national minorities.

The remittances of migrant Arab workers form an important part of the national income of their countries of origin and help to offset their trade deficit. Syria receives some \$50 mn each year from Syrian workers employed in other Arab countries; the corresponding figure for Egypt is at least ten times as high. And the remittances of Jordanian migrant workers make up about 40 per cent of Jordan's GDP.

Inter-Arab trade

Under Ottoman rule, the Arab countries formed a common market, and the exchange of commodities between them was free. In the years just before the First World War, a quarter of all Syrian exports went to Egypt alone, and another quarter to the rest of the Ottoman empire. In 1910 one-fifth of all Egypt's imports came from Arab countries, excluding Sudan; by 1929 this proportion had dwindled to 3 per cent. Trade between the Arab countries declined drastically during the 1930s: from 1928 to 1938 the share of Syrian exports going to Egypt fell from 17 to only 5 per cent, and Syria's share in Egypt's exports was halved.²¹

The decline in inter-Arab trade was due to the balkanization of the Arab homeland following the war, and the fragmentation of the interests of the ruling classes. At the same time, trade between Arab countries and the rest of the world increased, as each Arab country conducted its exchange separately.

There have been many attempts to tighten economic relations between the Arab countries and to re-create an Arab common market. Thus in 1953 several Arab countries agreed to lower duties on trade and transportation between them. In 1957 members of the Arab League signed an

agreement for complete economic unity; in 1964 they agreed to form an 'Arab Common Market' and in 1965 they undertook to set up a Council for Arab Economic Unity. Some time after that, they established the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC). The 1970s were likewise punctuated by similar bilateral agreements; the decade also saw the creation of Arab committees for industry and for joint arms production, and so on.

The results of all these agreements fell far short of expectations: rather than becoming mutually interdependent, the Arab countries deepened their separate dependence on the world market. Those countries which followed the first trajectory of development, such as Egypt, failed to develop an independent industrial base; and when oil prices boomed, Saudi Arabia and other countries of the second trajectory used their new financial strength to become even more integrated into the world capitalist system.

Briefly, the 1970s were a period of 'recompradorization' (to use a term coined by S. Amin) of the Arab countries, especially Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Algeria.

Trade between the countries of the so-called Arab Common Market remained weak; it represented 6 per cent of their total foreign trade in 1970, and declined even further in 1973 and 1976. At the same time imports from the West went up. From 1972 to 1976 the share of the US in Algeria's imports increased from 6.6 to 8.9 per cent; the corresponding figures for Iraq are from 3.2 to 9.5; and for Syria, from 3.7 to 14.4 per cent. The rise in Egypt's imports from the US was particularly steep: from 7.8 to 27 per cent.²² The former French possessions in North Africa conduct much of their trade with the EEC; for example, 63 per cent of Tunisia's total foreign trade was with the EEC.

In 1983 inter-Arab trade was worth just under 10 per cent of total Arab exports and imports. While this is still a very modest figure, it is three times as high as a decade before; it seems to indicate a new development in inter-Arab exchange and economic relations, and a growing tendency in some Arab countries to become involved in their neighbours' markets.

Egypt

A modest industrial development began in Egypt in the 1920s. The pace of industrialization quickened in the 1940s, largely due to the presence of a very sizeable British garrison during the war. The British forces in Egypt and the Western Desert had to rely to a considerable extent on local supplies and presented Egyptian industry with a lucrative market. A large and ambitious programme of industrialization began to be implemented under Nasser's regime, which stressed the need to create an infrastructure for traditional industries, such as steel. Stagnation set in at the end of the Nasser era, and was exacerbated under Sadat's regime, which adopted an 'open door' policy, exposing local industry to the competition of technologically superior and cheaper foreign goods and diverting the purchasing power of the affluent strata to imported luxuries. The annual economic growth rate, which averaged 7.1 per cent over the years 1945-

65, fell in the 1970s to 3 per cent, which is about equal to the population's growth rate.

Egypt's foreign trade makes up only 0.25 per cent of total world trade; the corresponding figure for Israel – whose population is less than one-tenth of Egypt's – is 3.3 per cent. In the financial year 1982/83, the Egyptian budget deficit exceeded E£4.8 bn; the government offset this deficit by issuing banknotes, thus stoking inflation.²³ As a direct consequence, the Egyptian pound had to be devalued: its value dropped to \$1.43 in 1983, compared to \$2.56 in the early 1970s. By the end of 1983 Egypt's debts amounted to over half its gross national product (GNP).

Alongside the deep and widespread poverty – over 27 per cent of the population live below the officially defined poverty line – there are enormous riches. Egypt has 250,000 millionaires, 150,000 large building landlords, 7,500 owners of export-import firms, 15,000 owners of transportation fleets and 4,000 persons owning more than 50 acres of land.

Other Arab countries which have followed the first trajectory of development also face grave economic difficulties. Let us take Syria as an example. The agricultural sector employs almost half of Syria's labour force, but produces less than one-fifth of the GNP. In 1963 Syria's exports covered 80.4 per cent of its imports; but by 1974 Syrian exports (\$778 mn) covered a mere 22.5 per cent of imports.

The oil era

OIL IS, in more than one sense, liquid wealth; it is not a true indication of real economic development. The 1974-80 boom in the price of this exceptional commodity sharply increased its exceptional role in the Arab economies. In that period, the oil revenues of the Arab states jumped from \$53.1 bn to \$213.8 bn. But at the time of writing it is expected that in 1985 these revenues will not exceed \$75 bn,²⁴ which in real terms (taking into consideration the rate of inflation and the dollar's rate of exchange) is *less* than the 1975 level.

Total Arab exports in 1970 were estimated at \$11.9 bn. By 1974 they had gone up six-fold, and by 1981 they amounted to eighteen times the 1970 figure. Most of this increase is due to oil. Indeed, the share of oil in total Arab exports had risen from 74.5 per cent in 1971 to 93.3 per cent in 1981.

The bonanza in oil revenues actually had a harmful effect on the Arab economies, turning them into economies of revenue distribution rather than developing productivity. In the period 1971-81, when exports multiplied eighteen-fold, imports also increased by the same factor,²⁵ and consisted largely of consumer goods. The Arab homeland became one of the world's regions which suffer most from a shortage of locally grown foodstuffs.

Despite the growth in Arab agricultural development in the early 1960s, a serious shortfall arose during the 1970s: food consumption was increasing by 6 per cent annually, which is double the rate of population growth. Food importation shot up at an alarming rate: from \$1 bn in 1970 to \$53 bn in 1982.²⁶

Perhaps one of the best proofs of the mal-investment of Arab oil revenues is the Arab world's large foreign debt, totalling some \$105 bn; the biggest debtors are Iraq (32 bn), Egypt (21 bn), Morocco (12.5 bn) and Sudan (8 bn).

The huge surplus oil revenues have been used in several ways, most of them non-productive. Large sums are kept as reserves in Western banks, and used by the banks to acquire high profits; another major part of the surplus is spent on luxury consumption by the ruling classes – while the Arab homeland still has one of the world's highest rates of infant mortality²⁷ – or on buying real estate and investment shares in the West. Another part is lent by the Arab oil states to Third World countries. Arab non-oil countries in particular receive substantial loans and even free gifts; but much of this is in turn spent non-productively.

Some of the oil revenues have nevertheless been used for industrial investment within the Arab world, particularly in constructing a petrochemical industry in member countries of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) as well as in Algeria, Iraq and Libya.

Algeria was the first Arab country to invest in this field, in the mid-1960s. However, despite the Algerian government's heavy concentration in this sector, the share of industrial production did not exceed 12 or 13 per cent of the total domestic product. There were several reasons for this: lack of skilled labour, maladministration, the backwardness of the industrial infrastructure, and international competition.

Following Algeria, the GCC embarked on large-scale development in the petrochemical industry. This was motivated by the availability of the necessary raw materials, cheap energy and ready finance. The multinational corporations were involved in this development; they contributed investment capital as well as technology and expert personnel. Indeed, the whole programme was based on advice from foreign sources and was in essence externally oriented, irrespective of the potential harm that might be caused to the local economies. In other words, the project is merely a branch of the multinational petrochemical industry that – for reasons of convenience and low costs – happens to be located in the Gulf countries.

The member governments of the GCC are fully aware that the age of oil cannot last for ever and that substitute resources should therefore be developed well in advance, before the oil reserves begin to dwindle. But in practice the GCC petrochemical industry was based on a short-sighted policy which was externally oriented and neglected the need for balanced industrialization. Moreover, the GCC remains an exclusive club that does not admit new members. This reveals the orientation of the GCC towards the development of unequal development between Arab countries.²⁸

The profits which the multinational corporations are syphoning off and the shares that they hold are not the only losses of the GCC. One of the GCC petrochemical industry's major weaknesses lies at the level of marketing. Despite the fact that the GCC petrochemical companies are merely branches of the multinationals, the latter have joined Western

officials, businessmen and 'opinion-makers' in demanding high tariffs on the importation of GCC petrochemicals into Western markets.²⁹ Their argument is that the Arab oil countries are rich enough not to be treated as underdeveloped countries in need of preferential treatment. Thus, for example, in July 1985 the EEC decided to impose a 13.5 per cent duty on imports of methanol from Saudi Arabia, rather than offering the facilities accorded to products of underdeveloped countries.³⁰

At the same time, Western companies continue to push the GCC to invest even more in the same field, and their advice is being accepted.³¹

Wrong-headed policies of the GCC

It is obvious that the GCC industrialization policy is a continuation of the policy of uneven development between Arab countries. The petrochemicals produced in the GCC plants are basic products which serve as inputs for manufacturing in the West. This new role of the GCC economy is an example of international re-specialization.

Besides its technological dependence (on imperialist countries), the GCC also suffers from its dependence on a foreign workforce. The reason for this dependence is the sparsity of the indigenous population – a mere twelve million,³² spread over a very large area. As we have already noted, however, this creates a dilemma for the GCC governments. The presence of a large number of non-Arab workers may eventually lead to the creation of a national minority which, given the small size of the indigenous population, would threaten the Arab character of the host country. On the other hand, foreign Arab workers do not regard themselves as really foreign; following a time-honoured tradition, they feel it is their right as Arabs to play a part in the politics of their Arab host country.

Possibly the gravest problem for the GCC industrial policy lies in the sphere of marketing. Because of the nature of the GCC's main industrial products, their principal markets are in the industrialized countries. If these markets refuse to absorb all of the output, the GCC cannot switch over to production for the Arab market, because the latter has little demand for these products.

Another aspect of the GCC's economic dependence, often reflected in speeches made by leaders of its member governments, is the GCC's great concern about the international economic order, in other words, the stability of the capitalist West. This concern is, alas, rather one-sided; the major capitalist powers have been busily engaged in plans and policies designed to break the bones of OPEC, with the result that the latter has now become immersed in a real crisis. It is clear that the West would like to compel OPEC to push oil prices down, and keep them down, to the pre-1974 level.

The GCC's concern for the economic stability of the West has several material explanations, not least of which is the fact that GCC governments, as well as individuals, have invested heavily in the West. This policy of investing abroad was pioneered by Kuwait and Abu Dhabi in the 1960s, with the aim of offsetting their non-oil foreign trade deficit. Despite this laudable aim, the policy in fact enhances dependence. The

investment – even where it is in industrial shares rather than real estate – is unproductive from the point of view of the Arab homeland, because it does nothing to develop production there. Moreover, Western governments may one day nationalize these assets, or block remittances from their profits. Needless to say, Western experts and advisers are very enthusiastic about this investment policy and do much to encourage it.³³

GCC aid to other Arab countries is also largely oriented towards non-productive projects. Most of this aid is spent simply on offsetting the current trade deficit of the recipient states; very little is invested productively. Thus in 1976 the Kuwaiti government paid out \$170 mn earmarked for Arab development projects, through the Kuwaiti Development Fund; but in the same year the government paid out \$1 bn in direct aid to the Arab regimes. Similarly, the Saudi Development Fund paid out some \$100 mn in that year for investment throughout the Arab world, but the Saudi government spent directly \$2 bn in backing various Arab regimes.³⁴

Significantly, inter-Arab exchange underwent a relative decline during the era of oil price boom, and now stands at a mere 4 per cent of total Arab foreign trade.

What is the alternative?

IT IS OBVIOUS that a small country cannot compete in this age of regional or continental blocs. The only apparent exceptions are small countries such as Kuwait, which are endowed with great natural wealth. But even there this advantage cannot last in the long run, and Kuwait is, despite all its wealth and development, a dependent economy. Indeed, liquid assets and current surpluses alone do not suffice to overcome economic dependence; they may merely mask it.

In a world of huge blocs, the only way for the Arab countries to develop is by initiating common Arab policies, programmes and projects. The present dominant theories of Arab economic integration, indicative planning and free trade still harmonize with the trend of growing uneven development; and they are centred on exchange rather than production, which must be the point of departure for any genuine development.

The productive programme could proceed in two stages. The first step is to set up joint classical industrial projects between the GCC, which would contribute the capital, and Egypt, which would be the source of abundant cheap labour power. Such joint projects could solve at least the problems of dependence on foreign labour, the GCC's dependence on insecure foreign markets, and Egyptian unemployment. Concurrently, joint agricultural projects could be started along similar lines between the GCC and Sudan, with GCC capital and Sudanese (as well as Egyptian) land and labour power.

The second stage would be to involve other Arab countries, which would initially at least subscribe financially to the projects. Eventually, the bilateral projects would be transformed into common all-Arab national ones. This two-stage programme should not ignore the existing

petrochemical plants, but rather rationalize this sector and subject it to the priorities of balanced development.

The common projects and the overall programme encompassing them would offer several important advantages: the creation of a common productive basis, enjoying the use of mutually complementary resources of different Arab countries; the employment of millions of workers; a saving of surpluses which are at present squandered on imports; and the creation of a regional market which would automatically give priority to the products of the joint enterprises. The Arab countries would be obliged to buy from these enterprises, in which they themselves had invested, or in which their own workers were employed. Moreover, aid from the richer Arab countries could be made conditional on giving preferential treatment to these products. The joint enterprises would also be able to sell their products relatively cheaply on Arab markets because the transportation costs would be small, and the oil-exporting countries could offer their aid in the form of price subsidies.

Because of these and other advantages, and due to the objective economic pressures of the world market, it is quite possible that the capitalist ruling classes of the Arab countries will be impelled to pursue such a course of development, despite the fact that it would imply a certain degree of de-linking from the world capitalist system.

Indeed, the creation of joint Arab productive projects would reduce Arab dependence and harm imperialist interests in the region. From the point of view of the imperialist countries, the main loss would be that of the large Arab market for consumer goods. This in itself would create a real contradiction between the Arab bourgeoisie and the imperialist centres, whether or not the Arab ruling classes intended it.

What would be the political consequences of such an economic scenario, if it were to be implemented? As far as the Arab homeland itself is concerned, the development of economic interdependence and a regional market would no doubt play an essential role in encouraging Arab political unity.

At the same time, it would provoke economic conflict not only with the imperialist countries but also with Israel. At present, one of the main incentives that may induce Israel to accept some kind of American-imposed political settlement is the prospect of being able to break into the large Arab markets. However, the creation of joint Arab development and an Arab common market might raise the spectre of a boycott, or at least of rigid tariff barriers against the penetration of Israeli goods. Moreover, any move towards Arab unification is anathema to Israel's strategy, which aims at maximal fragmentation of the Arab world. It is no secret that Israel would like to see the Arab countries break up into three or four times their present number. Therefore, the probable Israeli reaction would be to use military force in order to try to prevent a 'dangerous' convergence between its Arab neighbours.

In this new environment, however, the Arab regimes would have a real stake in struggling against Israel (and indirectly against imperialism) in

order to defend their own interests. This struggle would, in turn, create two new variables: first, a new chance for the Palestinians to intensify their struggle for a genuine solution to the Palestinian question; and second, a new motive for the internal revolutionary forces inside Israel to fight against its aggressive regime and to achieve a real solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which can only be a socialist solution through a regional socialist state.

This line of analysis points to the probable conclusion that the present policies of uneven development – which have oriented the Arab regimes against unity and in favour of the recognition of Israel – may create the conditions for their own negation, in other words, the necessity for Arab unity on the one hand and a new wave of struggle against Israel and imperialism on the other.

If the Arab regimes were to adopt the scenario outlined above, they might well succeed in offsetting the Arab social crisis in the short run. However, it is a moot question as to whether this scenario can actually achieve an articulated development along a capitalist route. Can an Arab common market and political convergence be created while internal social differences become crucial?

Be that as it may, the working-class movement in the whole region will continue its struggle for a socialist solution to the social, economic and political questions. This movement also includes those Israeli revolutionaries who are struggling against the capitalist Zionist regime; in their joint struggle with Palestinian and Arab revolutionaries, they will help to build a socialist Palestine as part of the Arab socialist homeland.

The struggle of the working class, jointly with other oppressed classes, for socialism and unity implies the rise of the submerged feeling of all-Arab identity, which is even now the aspiration and an expression of the aims of the Arab socialist nation.

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Azar Tabari

IRAN'S INCOMPREHENSIBLE REVOLUTION

THE DATE 9-10 February 1985 marked the sixth anniversary of the Iranian revolution. The 'aging' of the revolution was reflected, among other things, in the types of books on Iran published in 1984. In contrast to the more journalistic accounts of earlier years, the latest books deal more substantively with the colossal changes that the new regime has brought about in society. Among these are: Shaul Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Republic* (Basic Books, New York, 1984, 276 pages, hc, \$18.95), and Cheryl Benard and Zalmay Khalilzad, *The Government of God: Iran's Islamic Republic* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1984, 240 pages, hc, no price indicated).

1 The first book is notable for its wealth of information and detail. It is the only systematic presentation of the events of the first five years of the revolution. It is extremely accurate and objective, avoiding selectivity aimed at confirming pre-conceived notions. It is particularly invaluable to readers not familiar with Persian sources, as the author uses a wide range of original Persian sources, books, biographies, declarations and periodicals. This alone makes the book indispensable for any student of the Iranian revolution. Chapter 2, 'Khomeini: the "Idol Smasher"', for instance, provides the essential background to an understanding of the consolidation of Khomeini's leadership and hegemony over the movement. It surveys the changes in the political thinking of theological circles in the 1960s, and traces to this period of reorganization and turmoil in Islamic circles the emergence of whole layers of politically militant clerics, later to become the new leaders of Islamic Iran. As the biographical information (provided on various personalities in office in post-revolutionary Iran) builds up throughout the book, it becomes evident that this turmoil was not limited to the clerical hierarchy. A whole layer

of young activists, from traditional middle- and lower middle-class backgrounds, were becoming politicized and enmeshed in a growing network of Islamic associations.

There was much overlap amongst the various factions that later became such bitter enemies. The Mojahedeen-e Khalq and what are now referred to as the Islamic fundamentalists both recruited from the same milieu; they used the same front covers (high schools owned and run by sympathetic Islamic supporters, charity organizations, and so on) in order to keep in touch, to recruit and to organize. The same individuals passed through different organizations and worked with many of them simultaneously. This is one reason why the Islamic regime's later crack-down on the Mojahedeen was so effective: the people now on opposite sides had worked together and had known each other intimately for many years. Sometimes they were members of the same family. This also explains how the Mojahedeen had so successfully 'infiltrated' high levels of government and the Islamic Republican Party (IRP). The person said to have planted the bomb in the IRP headquarters that killed Beheshti and other prominent IRP leaders was part of the special security team for the building.

The information provided by Bakhash thoroughly debunks the myth that the Islamic leadership 'imposed' itself on the movement, or at some late stage 'hijacked' the revolution. Almost two decades of systematic political work had gone into the building of an Islamic movement. By the mid-1970s the signs of its growth were becoming evident in society at large: in the numerous Islamic schools set up, in the Quran-reading circles, in young women turning to Islamic codes of dress, in the proliferation of Islamic literature, in the increased frequency of mosque sermons with a political theme, and so on.

Chapters 3-6 cover the period of Bazargan's premiership and Bani Sadr's presidency. The powerlessness of both men confirms the same point in a different way: that the organized base of mass support belonged to Khomeini. Under such circumstances, it is legitimate to ask why Khomeini appointed Bazargan as the provisional premier, or gave his support to Bani Sadr's candidacy, vetoing Beheshti's attempt to stand as the IRP candidate.

It is tempting to read into these events a grand design of manipulation: that Khomeini used various lay and semi-lay politicians to smooth the transition from the Pahlavi state to a full-fledged clerical state. This type of argument may very well constitute one element of an explanation. But from all accounts and observations of that transition period a more important explanation emerges: the Islamic movement and Khomeini were themselves caught off guard. Three developments took them by surprise, just as they surprised almost everyone else.

First came the rapid collapse of the Pahlavi state. Although Khomeini and his supporters had succeeded in organizing a powerful mass movement, they did not expect, nor were they prepared, to take over the state so soon and be in charge of running the country. Once in power, they found themselves, despite their doctrine, forced to depend not only on

the old government bureaucracy, but on people like Bazargan and the whole layer of technocrats and functionaries that such a man could attract to the service of the new state. In later years, Khomeini, Rafsanjani and other Islamic leaders have repeatedly said that in the early period they simply did not have the personnel to put in charge. They had to depend on people who were not as ideologically committed as they were.

A second factor was their own strength relative to that of other oppositional forces. Although they were aware of the depths of their support, given the long decades of political repression, they were not sure how much support other forces (such as Bazargan's Freedom Movement, the National Front, the Mojahedeen, the Feda'een, and so on) could muster. They needed time and a gradual testing of relative strengths to be convinced of the feebleness of their rivals.

The third element that came as a surprise to Khomeini and his followers was the complete lack of any substantial and material American intervention against the revolution, despite years of solid support for the Shah. The new regime expected at least heavy US material support for the royalist forces, if not US direct intervention. For this reason, the rapid consolidation of the new power was of paramount concern to Khomeini and his supporters, even if it meant making temporary marginal concessions to Bazargan or other more secular forces. The incident surrounding the passing of the new constitution – related by Bani Sadr in his book *Khianat be Omid* (Hope Betrayed) and referred to in Bakhash's book – is indicative of this concern. The original new constitution, drafted by the provisional government, made no reference to *velayat-e faqih*. Despite numerous references to Islam, it did not invest the clergy with any special powers. Even the Council of Guardians, envisaged as composed of five clerics, three professors of law, and three judges of the supreme court (all to be elected by the Majlis), did not have the automatic power to veto all legislation. Only if the council was asked by one of the established Mujtahids, the president, or the head of the supreme court to look into some new legislation, and if it found the said legislation to be against the shari'a or unconstitutional, would it have the right to investigate the matter and return it to the Majlis. As Bakhash notes, the draft 'hardly bore out the worst expectations of the secular parties'. Khomeini made 'only two small changes', barring women from the presidency and the judiciary, and to expedite matters he proposed bypassing a constituent assembly and putting the document directly to a referendum. Bazargan and Bani Sadr both objected. So did other political parties, with the exception of the IRP. A compromise was finally arrived at: the setting up of an elected assembly of experts, composed of seventy-five delegates, rather than the constituent assembly of several hundred demanded by the secular parties. In the discussions in the Revolutionary Council around this issue, Bani Sadr reports a prophetic retort made to him by Rafsanjani (who was later to be the president of the Majlis): 'Who do you think will be elected to a constituent assembly? A fistful of ignorant and fanatic fundamentalists who will do such damage that you will regret even having convened them.'

The affair not only shows the concern to gain time that overrode all other considerations in Khomeini's mind; it also provided him with a unique opportunity to test the relative strength of the various forces as reflected through the debates on the constitution and the subsequent election of the assembly of experts. The IRP alone won over fifty seats, with several other delegates tending to vote with it on all controversial issues. Once the balance of forces was out in the open for all to see, the theocratization of the state rolled on at full steam: *velayat-e faqih* was introduced into the constitution, and the Islamic Council of Guardians was given full vetoing power over all legislation. All clauses in the draft that referred to popular sovereignty were eliminated. The new constitution specifically spelled out that the basis of the Islamic Republic was faith in various Shi'i dogmas and that the power of legislation belonged to God. Attacks against the provisional government were stepped up, eventually forcing Bazargan's resignation in the aftermath of the hostage-taking at the American embassy in November 1979.

There was yet a fourth consideration on Khomeini's mind that explains his initial support for Bani Sadr's candidacy in the presidential elections. In this Khomeini was more astute than even his keenest follower and disciple, Beheshti. Although Khomeini argued for, and was assured of, complete control of the government by the clergy, he still preferred to fill the formal positions of the state—such as the presidency, premiership, ministries, and so on—with loyal lay politicians. This reflects his deep existential concern for the clergy as a caste. He was fully aware that he had inherited a crisis-ridden society, with high expectations for improvement on the part of a volatile population. He was deeply concerned that a certain formal distance should be preserved between the clergy and official posts, so that failure would not reflect directly on the clergy. As he later stated, when addressing the Council of Guardians on 11 December 1983:

'Before the revolution, I used to think that once the revolution was victorious, there would be virtuous individuals who would run our affairs according to Islam. Therefore, I repeatedly said that the clergy would attend to their own affairs. But later I realized that in their majority they [the available people] were not virtuous. I saw that I had been wrong.'

He continues to voice concern over this intimate involvement of the clergy in the day-to-day running of the country, repeatedly warning the clergy that if they should fail in their current mission, Islam will be lost for ever.

Bakhash's book provides enormously rich material for a discussion and analysis of these and many other crucial issues. His own presentation, however, is for the most part descriptive. There are numerous insightful textual analyses of various political declarations and texts, the positions of various political groups and leaders, and so on, but the author fails to provide any overall analysis of the Iranian revolution.

2 In the second book, *The Government of God*, the authors devote much attention to analysis, not an analysis of the Iranian revolution, but an analysis of various theoretical and analytical models. The first chapter, aptly entitled 'Crisis in Iran, Crisis in Development Theory', reviews the shortcomings of what it refers to as the two main trends of academic thinking about the Third World. The first, the 'mainstream version', is exemplified by the writings of such figures as Samuel Huntington. The second trend is that of the dependency school of development theory (of Gundar Frank and many Latin American theorists). The authors sharply criticize both versions, concluding that:

'Given their theoretical framework, the emergence of an Islamic Republic in Iran was "unthinkable" for most modernization theorists. Popular uprisings, virulent anti-Western sentiments and the ascent of the clergy, the ousting of the Shah, these were developments not at all in line with either orthodox or neo-Marxist theory; for if there was ever a country that apparently conformed to the expected orthodox course of modernization, it was Iran, and if there was ever a country whose proletariat and peasantry were bound to be politicized by the left against all the traditional forms of oppression (by king, landowners, imperialists, and clergy), surely it was Iran.' (p12)

The authors substantiate their point by ample reference to the writings of both trends. Their own alternative argument, however, is unsatisfactory, to say the least. Put simply, they argue that the mainstream theory was 'too universalist', that is, it had generalized the applicability of the West European model of modernization to the Third World, without taking into account the historical and cultural particularities of these countries. The dependency school, on the other hand, by focusing on the relation between the metropolis and the periphery, could have corrected this bias, had the ideological controversy between the two schools not precluded a constructive dialogue between them. (pp22-3) They consider some 'middle road' between the two as a desirable compromise.

As an example of such mistaken generalizations, the authors refer to the role of religion. Although their conclusion is not definitive, they seem to argue that religious culture and elites should have been integrated into the modernization process:

'In Europe, the religious values and elites were among those traditional forces blocking the way of new forces; the conflict therefore ultimately involved what we term secularization. Religion as traditionally practiced is also a blocking factor in Islamic societies... However, in Iran there were critical differences from Western revolutionary societies. Religion was part of the beleaguered national culture... In the European revolutionary context, to be oppositional meant to oppose the established institutions and to rebel against one's own solidified culture, including the church. In an anti-colonial context where "the church" was under attack by domestic power-holders with strong ties to a foreign power, religion

could play a part in nationalism. To modernize while at the same time rebelling against a dominant Western modernity involves a new set of complexities. It also offers possible affiliations, coalitions, and settings that did not exist for European actors during their own period of modernization.' (pp23-4)

But what exactly are these possibilities? The authors refer to 'processes crucial to modernization', giving as an example 'the integration of the population through such socializing institutions as schools and the military, efforts to impose a common language and to control other socially authoritative institutions, including religious institutions'. (p22) But this was precisely what the Pahlavis had set themselves to achieve. So, from the authors' viewpoint, the question remains unanswered: what was wrong with 'the mainstream model'? How would a 'middle road' have been different? Would it have made more concessions to the clergy? Would it have attempted to integrate the clergy into the new 'state-building' process? One could argue the opposite just as strongly: that the inadequacies of the modernization process, the shallow nature of its secularization, its failure to cultivate thoroughly a secular politics and culture, were responsible for the revival of religion in politics.

Similar weaknesses overshadow many of the other chapters. Chapter 2, 'Why Islam?', reviews the various 'responses to domination', ranging from secularist Westernizers (in which category the authors include statist leaders such as Atatürk and Reza Shah; nationalists, socialists and communists of various tendencies); Islamic modernists (such as Shari'ati and the Mojahedeen-e Khalq); Islamic traditionalists (in Iran represented by a figure such as Shari'atmadari, in Pakistan by Maulana Maududi); and Islamic fundamentalists, represented by Khomeini in Iran.

The authors note that Khomeini held traditional views in his early writings, and only by the 1970s had become a genuine fundamentalist. This transformation, they argue, can be explained:

'as a radicalization of tradition resulting from the combustible joining of new social forces with foreign interference (material and ideological) and the stress of multiplied domestic and international conflicts. All led some sections of the traditionalists, including Khomeini, to the conclusion that the traditional balance was too threatening to be salvageable by the customary means, and that to fight only for restoration of their traditional position in the old Iranian pattern this time would mean eventual defeat. The dynamics of the situation would in time sweep them away unless they took over control and radically transformed the system.' (p37)

This assertion is followed by a review of the positions of both Khomeini and Shari'ati.

But surprisingly, for a chapter entitled 'Why Islam?', the question is not posed, much less answered, of 'why Islam for the Iranian masses?' After all, without millions of Iranians' turning to Islamic politics in general, and their support for Khomeini in particular, it is difficult to see how

the question 'why Islam?' would even have been posed for political scientists. Moreover, it is this latter question that remains at the heart of the complexities of Iranian events. Unless one subscribes to some notion of 'mobs being manipulated by leaders' – which still does not answer the question 'why Khomeini and not some other leader?' – we must seek answers for this profound transformation in the Iranian mass consciousness. Superficially, Iranians had often been thought of (and thought of themselves) as the most secular Muslim society, since they possessed a pre-Islamic/non-Islamic national identity, in contrast to the strong affinity between Islam and Arab nationalism. Why did Iran, then, among all Muslim societies, produce such a strong mass Islamic movement over the 1960s and 1970s?

The third chapter of the book, 'Iran – What Happened?', reviews various theories of revolution from Huntington to Brinton and Moore, in each case making a comparison with what happened in Iran, in an attempt to answer the question, 'Is what happened in Iran a revolution?' The chapter also discusses 'millennialist movements' and arrives at the rather strange conclusion that:

'our final definition will have to be postponed; [because] just as a revolution is contingent on its success, a millennial movement is characterized by its failure, as it gives way to the rise to dominance of elements within its membership or to the reassertion of part of the former ruling government'. (p65)

This is a peculiar definition of a revolution. First, it excludes the very notion of a defeated revolution. Why should one's definition of revolution be contingent upon its success? There have been periods of colossal mass movements and social upheavals that have generally gone down in history as revolutions without having been successful, such as the 1905 revolution in Russia. Second, it makes the definition dependent on a long-term political transformation (whether 'it gives way to the rise to dominance of elements within its membership or to the reassertion of part of the former ruling government'). A similar debate exists on the left as to whether the Iranian revolution should be characterized as a political or a social revolution. If one restricts the definition of social revolution to a change in the 'mode of production', again, one would have to 'suspend final definition' to future years to wait and see what sort of economy emerges from the current ruins. Or else one could postulate that the current mode is the same mode of production as under the Shah and conclude that therefore what happened was a political revolution. The problem with such semantic disputes is that their analytical relevance is far from clear. Iranian society today looks very different, to say the least, in every important social and political sense from the society prior to 1979. If such a transformation does not qualify for the term 'revolution' – in contrast to 'millennial movements' – or for 'social revolution', then it may well be appropriate to rethink our definitions.

Chapter 4 is a brief and insightful one on 'Prejudice as a Cultural

Weapon'. The rest of the book, however, becomes progressively descriptive. In this, it cannot compete with Bakhash's book, which is more thorough and systematic. The book concludes by discussing possible future scenarios: 'the consolidation of fundamentalist republicanism', 'another overthrow' and 'intervention of the military'. The authors, unconvincingly, argue that all are possible trends.

Both books, despite shortcomings, make important contributions in different ways to discussions surrounding an understanding of the Iranian revolution – something that still eludes us all.

Azar Tabari

A HISTORY OF MODERN IRAN

AMONGST THE myriad of books about Iran which have appeared over the past few years, one work stands out as a unique contribution to modern Iranian history: Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran: Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton University Press, 1982, 562 pages, cloth £31.80, paper £10.30). Although it covers a long period—from the late nineteenth century and the constitutional revolution (1906-11) to the late 1970s and the Islamic revolution (hence the title of the book)—it is unique in its detailed and in-depth coverage of a very important period of modern Iranian politics: 1941-53. No other book covers this period of social upheaval and political struggles at the same length and based to the same extent on original documentation. This is significant, because the politics of that period have left their deep imprint on the subsequent period down to the present day.

The book is organized in three parts. Part I, 'Historical Background', is subdivided into three chapters. The material here is on the whole not new to the reader familiar with Iranian history, although substantial new documentation is introduced. The first chapter covers nineteenth-century Iran from a new angle: that of investigating the various ethnic, national and religious divisions that made up the mosaic of the Iranian social formation. Abrahamian argues that this very diversity lay at the root of the failure to construct a modern, reform-orientated polity:

'The communal ties—especially those based on tribal lineages, religious sects, regional organizations, and paternalistic sentiments—cut through the horizontal classes, strengthened the vertical communal bonds, and thereby prevented latent economic interests from developing into manifest political forces. Insofar as numerous individuals in early nineteenth-century Iran shared similar ways of life, similar positions in

the mode of production, and similar relations to the means of administration, they constituted socioeconomic classes. But insofar as these individuals were bound by communal ties, failed to overcome local barriers, and articulated no state-wide interests, they did not constitute sociopolitical classes. This absence of viable classes had far-reaching political consequences; for, as long as the central government was not confronted by statewide forces, the Qajar dynasty was able to dominate society in the typical manner of, to borrow a nineteenth-century term, oriental despots.' (p36)

The argument is novel and brings to the fore a frequently ignored aspect of the sociopolitical structure of nineteenth-century Iran. (The work of the prolific twentieth-century Iranian historian and author Ahmad Kasravi is a notable exception.) None the less, presented as *the central obstacle* to the emergence of a bourgeois political order in Iran, the argument is unsatisfactory. Many of the present-day nation-states also grew out of a heterogeneity of ethnic and national groups. Some are still substantially segmented along such lines. Amongst the more recently established states, India is a striking example of a divided 'nation' and yet, compared to many other post-colonial states, it has a much more cohesive bourgeois political system. In Iran itself, despite all the tribal, ethnic and religious divisions, a movement developed towards the establishment of a modern parliamentary system, with political and intellectual leaders sharing a vision of replacing the Qajar autocracy with a strong reformist central authority based on a secular constitution. The constitutional revolution – against the combined forces of the Qajars, some of the tribes, an important sector of the clergy and even the help of Tsarist Cossacks – succeeded in establishing a constitutional regime. And yet it failed to bear the promised fruits of 'civilization and modernization'. It began to collapse almost as soon as it had declared itself. Was this because the multiplicity and depth of tribal/ethnic/religious divisions had prevented the shaping of a cohesive class with a developed sense of purpose and social outlook? Abrahamian's third chapter on the background to the emergence of Reza Shah (1909-21, The Period of Disintegration) sheds more light on this issue.

The debates and divisions in the second Majlis (parliament) were not along ethnic and religious lines, but over political and ideological issues: over what reforms were necessary in governmental structure, laws, education, economic policies, land titles, banking, commercial and industrial policies, and so on. The problem was that the Iranian middle class, unlike its European counterpart from whom it had taken its political ideas, did not have the social and political base that would embolden it to carry out the necessary reforms to do away with an archaic system. It was tied to the clergy, so it could not be secular enough. It was a landed class – since the commercial interests had been buying state lands over a long period – so it could not be socially radical enough. It was deeply interconnected with European industrial and commercial concerns, so it could not be nationalist enough. This was another aspect of the Iranian middle class's dilemma:

many of the economic and political measures that it needed to carry out in order to remove some of the obstacles it had faced during the Qajar period would bring it up against the European powers, particularly Britain and Tsarist Russia. But it owed its own growth and prosperity – not to mention its political ideas – to Europe. All these problems more than explain the indecisiveness and oscillations of the political leaders of this class. Even Reza Shah, with his brute military ‘decisiveness’, could not get very far in tackling these problems. His secular reforms, for example, and those followed up by his son Muhammad Reza Shah barely scratched the surface. It was possible, within the short space of three years and without meeting much popular resistance, for the Islamic regime to undo all the secular institutions built up over some sixty years.

The chapter on Reza Shah is very well argued and documented. Unlike the usual ‘conspiracy’ theories prevalent on the Iranian left about Reza Shah’s rise to power, Abrahamian describes the internal political and social setting that led to the emergence of a military figure as the chief architect of some of the projects that the constitutionalists had fought for:

‘Although Reza Khan based his power predominantly on the military, his rise to the throne would not have been so peaceful and constitutional without significant support from the civilian population. Without such civilian support, he might have been able to carry out another military coup d’etat, but not a lawful change of dynasty; he might have seized the capital, but not the whole country with an army of a mere 40,000 men; and he might have rigged enough elections to provide himself an obedient party, but not enough to enjoy a genuine parliamentary majority. Reza Khan’s path to the throne, in short, was paved not simply by violence, armed force, terror, and military conspiracies, but by open alliances with diverse groups inside and outside the Fourth and Fifth National Assemblies.’ (p120)

In fact, one could argue that the parliamentary leaders of the constitutional revolution, having felt their own impotence in dealing with the country’s problems, sought in Reza Shah a ‘superman saviour’ who would achieve through force what they had failed to do through parliamentary experiments. Many of them complained about his dictatorial methods, but they generally gave him their support and often participated in his administrations. The popularity later enjoyed by Hitler amongst certain layers of Iranian nationalists was not simply an ideological/mythical return to Iran’s past ‘Aryan’ glories (which was admittedly a strong element in the anti-Arab consciousness of Iranian nationalists); it was also based on the belief in the necessity of a strong military figure to head ‘national progress’ and overcome backwardness.

The richest and most important part of Abrahamian’s book is Part II, ‘Politics of Social Conflict’. It covers the period 1941–53 in much greater detail than any previous work. Compared to Part I it is more descriptive than analytical, but this is partly because the absence of any comparable history necessitates such minute descriptions of events.

The bulk of Part II consists of a study of the Tudeh Party; as Abrahamian explains in the Preface, the book itself 'began in 1964 as a study on the social bases of the Tudeh Party'. It is all the more surprising that there is no satisfactory explanation for the failure of this party, despite its growth and increasing popularity over a prolonged period of political activism (1941-53). The picture presented is of a party of immense industrial muscle, having succeeded in unionizing the modern working class as well as sectors of traditional craftsmen and state employees; a party with almost total hegemony amongst intellectuals and political writers; a party with vast mass influence throughout society, including the government apparatus and the army.

The party was founded immediately after Reza Shah's abdication and the release of political prisoners in September 1941. Already by mid-1943:

'In the provinces north of Tehran, [the Tudeh] had branches in all the twenty-one cities with a population of over twenty thousand, and in nine of the seventeen towns with a population of between ten thousand and twenty thousand. In the provinces south of Tehran, it had opened branches and secret cells in six of the twenty-three cities with populations of over twenty thousand.' (p291)

It published three major newspapers in Tehran and three in the provinces. In the elections for the Fourteenth Majlis (1943) the party's 'twenty-three candidates obtained over 70 percent of the votes cast in their constituencies, over thirteen percent of those cast in the whole country, and over twice as many as any other political party'. (p292) It successfully merged various unions into a single Central Council of Federated Trade Unions of Iranian Workers and Toilers in 1944. By 1946 it had successfully expanded in the southern provinces, publishing another six provincial newspapers, and holding larger and larger mass demonstrations on various occasions. The Tudeh held three cabinet posts in Qavam's administration in 1946. In January 1946 the British Military Attaché reported to the Foreign Office:

'In the Caspian provinces all Persian officials from the Governor downward are under Tudeh supervision. No government official is allowed to send telegraphic messages in code. No movement of gendarmerie can take place without prior permission of the Tudeh. The railway administration is completely under Tudeh control. In fact, the Tudeh can take over whenever it wished to do so.' (Quoted by Abrahamian, p304.)

Similar reports were produced for other provinces, industries and government departments. Despite a period of repression and partial setback (October 1946-February 1950), the Tudeh revived rapidly as the government began to relax censorship and allow political activities. This picture of growth continues up to the 1953 coup:

'The Tudeh continued to gain strength in 1952. In the dramatic events of the July uprising, the participation of the pro-Tudeh unions made the general strike a success throughout the country... The Tudeh gained even more strength in 1953... on the anniversary of the July uprising, the Tudeh called for a mass meeting outside parliament, ... mobilized nearly 100,000 outnumbering the National Front ten to one... By the last days of Mossadeq's administration, observers were reporting that the Tudeh had over 25,000 members, some 300,000 sympathizers, and, despite police restrictions, the most effective organization in the country. One foreign correspondent warned that the Tudeh was gaining so many adherents that it would "sooner or later take over the country without even the need to use violence".' (pp320-1)

And yet, not only did the Tudeh Party not take over the country, it failed to act against the 1953 coup; it did not even put up any defence of its own organization. The 1953 coup succeeded with relative ease and comparatively few executions and arrests. Between 1953 and 1958 forty Tudeh leaders were executed, fourteen were tortured to death, over two hundred were given life sentences, and many rank-and-file members were released after signing public recantations. By 1959 the party had lost its effective organization. (p325)

It is surprising that Abrahamian offers no explanation for this paradox. There are references to government repression in the period 1946-50, with Qavam moving to the right, expelling the Tudeh ministers from his cabinet, and the attacks against the Azarbaijan autonomous government and the Kurdish Republic; there are references to various political errors that cost the Tudeh some popularity, as in the case of its support for the Soviet Union's demand for an oil concession in the north. But clearly, from Abrahamian's account, none of these were of any long-lasting significance: down to the time of the coup, Tudeh could have taken over the government, or at least foiled the coup through a general strike, as in July 1952. It had an impressive underground officers' movement in the army that informed the party of the coup ahead of time. It is even implied that the party's failure to act against the coup was a reaction to Mossadeq's rejection of an alliance with the Tudeh. (p325) Least plausible of all is Abrahamian's attempt to attribute the failure to the Tudeh's lack of roots amongst the rural masses: (pp375-82)

'The inability of the Tudeh to find roots elsewhere proved in the final analysis to be disastrous. Without rural support in a society in which villagers and tribesmen formed over half the population, the Tudeh, however successful in the cities, remained an oasis in a desert of peasant conservatism. As the Tudeh leaders admitted in analyzing the defeat of August 1953, the royalist officers could not have carried out their coup d'état if their peasant rank and file had mutinied or the rural masses had risen up in revolt. Had the countryside rebelled or the army troops refused to obey orders, the Tudeh party, with its effective urban network, would *undoubtedly* have tried to lead a Bolshevik-style revolution.

Without a peasant uprising, the Tudeh failure was sociologically pre-determined.' (p382, my emphasis)

Coming from a historian of Iran's two revolutions, this sociological pre-determination is somewhat surprising: after all, both the constitutional revolution and the Islamic revolution were urban revolutions with no peasant uprisings involved. The constitutional revolution was confined to a few major cities; to the extent that some tribes were also involved, they constituted military units, some fighting for and some against the constitutionalists. The Islamic revolution was much more national; it involved all the major cities and towns, but still there were no peasant uprisings. To the extent that there was any 'rural component', it was in the participation of migrants to the cities, rather than any rural upheavals as such. All peasant activities effectively started after the old regime had collapsed, rather than causing its collapse. None the less, both revolutions succeeded in taking power and neither was sociologically doomed to failure from the outset. Moreover, to expect the army rank-and-file to revolt *before* any uprising amongst the civilian population is to expect the impossible. In no revolution in the past, anywhere in the world and with no matter how much rural involvement, has the army rank-and-file refused orders unless the strength of the revolution has already demonstrated the possibility of a victory. To do otherwise is plainly suicidal.

Even more astonishing is the certainty with which Abrahamian asserts that with a rural rebellion (or an army revolt) the Tudeh would have tried to make a revolution. There is no evidence for this assertion. On the contrary, from his own presentation of Tudeh literature and internal discussions throughout this whole period, it is quite clear that the party never saw itself as a party of a Bolshevik-style revolution. Its initial positions had specifically excluded the possibility and necessity of a revolution in Iran, had considered the country 'premature' for revolution, and had set the party the task of uniting all progressive forces to weaken the ruling class and to strengthen the forces of democracy. (p285) Although over the subsequent few years the Tudeh, both in theory and in practice, put much greater emphasis on the working class, small producers (craftsmen), state employees and intellectuals, none of its work was directed towards the aim of making a revolution, much less a Bolshevik-style one. It continued to view itself as a *party of opposition* rather than as a party of government. It continued to emphasize its task as that of helping 'the national and democratic forces' against 'reactionary oligarchies'. Despite its industrial muscle and organizational strength, it remained politically weak. In fact, because it saw its role as an 'auxiliary' one, it made crucial concessions in important political and industrial clashes whenever it was faced with a decision to challenge decisively the government of the day (for example, in the important industrial disputes of Isfahan and Abadan, and the party's failure to mobilize nation-wide support for the struggles in Azarbaijan and Kurdistan). These successive concessions paved the way for further clamp-downs on the party resulting in irreversible losses

for the Tudeh. Even its short-lived left zig-zag (in 1951-53) was directed not at leading the working class to power, but simply at attacking Mossadeq, much in the same manner as it had opposed the Shah and some of the previous prime ministers. It opposed Mossadeq *without projecting and building any positive governmental alternative*.

Abrahamian's view of the Tudeh's failures as being 'sociologically pre-determined' is also reflected in later sections of the book. For instance, in analyzing the Tudeh's failure to recover politically after the 1953 coup, everyone is blamed and accounted for except the previous policies and record of the party itself. Mention is made of police repression; the regime's psychological war against the Tudeh; the rapid industrialization that brought some four million peasants into the urban labour force (this is surprising, since for the previous period Abrahamian notes the successful impact of the Tudeh's propaganda and organization on a previous first generation of semi-literate workers – see Chapter 6); and the weakening of the leadership by death, infirmities of old age and defections (pp451-5). This approach is all the more astonishing if we remember that in introducing the book, Abrahamian has argued that:

'The Tudeh success [in the period 1941-53] could not be fully assessed without constant reference to the failures, on the one hand, of its many contemporary nationalistic parties; and on the other hand, of its ideological predecessors, especially the Social Democrats of 1909-1919, the Socialists of the 1920s, and the Communists of the 1930s.' (pxi)

It is not clear why the same approach could not be followed in evaluating the failures of the Tudeh and, by contrast, the success of the present-day Islamic political currents (from Khomeini to the Mojahedeen). In discussing the recent events in Iran, the issue of the past record of the Tudeh (and of the National Front, for that matter) is not even raised.

In general, Part III, 'Contemporary Iran', and the Conclusion are rather disappointing. Unlike the other two Parts, the subject is treated in a rather superficial and journalistically descriptive manner. At times, it is factually sloppy. The Tudeh's strength in the latter days of the Shah and after the 1979 revolution is wildly exaggerated without substantiating evidence being provided (p457). Moreover, in discussing Khomeini's immense popularity, Abrahamian says that in his fifteen years of exile Khomeini 'carefully avoided making public pronouncements, especially written ones, on issues that would alienate segments of the opposition'. He gives the issues of clerical power and sexual equality as two examples. This is simply not true, however. In the 1960s Khomeini made numerous pronouncements, including written ones, opposing the vote for women, the reform of the family laws, the right of women to join the judiciary, and so on. His views on clerical power were published in 1971 and have never been retracted. Most surprising of all, and contrary to Abrahamian's objectivist treatment of the Tudeh, he attributes the decisive element in the success of Islamic politics to the person of Khomeini. (See Conclusion.)

None of these weaknesses, however, undermines the value of the book as a history of the period for which it was initially projected (1941-53). On that level alone, Abrahamian's work remains a unique contribution.

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Moshé Machover

FOOTNOTE TO THE DEBATE ON JEWISH RACISM

IN HIS MAJOR essay 'The Jewish religion and its attitude to non-Jews' (*Khamsin 8 and 9*), Israel Shahak exposed and demonstrated in great detail the virulent racist strand in the *Halakha* (the corpus of Jewish religious law evolved over the last two millenia) and showed how this racist body of thought, far from being a dead letter or a mere museum piece, actually serves to encourage and justify the racist practices of Zionism and the State of Israel.

Roberto Sussman, in his 'Reply to Shahak' (*Khamsin 10*), comes very close to conceding this point, although he shies away from using the correct term, 'racism', and prefers to speak of 'chauvinism' (a trace of apologetics here, perhaps? . . .). Besides, this thesis of Shahak is irrefutable, and has been amply corroborated by events and developments in Israel since the publication of his essay.

But Sussman attacks Shahak's view of Jewish history, as well as his general 'moralistic' attitude.

As for the Shahak-Sussman debate on various aspects and events in medieval and early-modern Jewish history, I do not feel competent to enter into it. In any case, I consider it to be largely a diversion, since—in my view—Shahak's excursions into history, though interesting and thought-provoking, are merely ancillary to the main theme, which I have outlined above. Let me simply comment that if Sussman chides Shahak for being too damning towards historical Jewish actions and attitudes, he himself seems occasionally to incline to the opposite vice of over-indulgence.

Pure historical 'objectivity', free of all moral judgement and unaffected by present-day concerns, is neither possible nor desirable. Perhaps the difference in approach between Shahak and Sussman is to be explained by the fact that the former is conditioned by the present Israeli reality of Jews as the 'master race', whereas the latter's more defensive attitude is a

hangover from the days when Jews were much more to be found among the victims of persecution than among its authors.

Here I come to my main criticism of Sussman's position. He fails seriously to come to grips with Shahak's justified, if painful, challenge directed at Jewish socialists: they have been remiss in remaining largely silent about Jewish racism and utterly failing to combat it.

Let me make it quite clear that by 'Jewish socialists' I do not mean here those socialists who merely happen to be of Jewish origin but have opted for assimilation in their host societies (a choice, by the way, which Sussman, with perhaps a touch of chauvinism, condemns as 'miserable'). Such socialists may reasonably claim that they have no specific interest in Jewish affairs, and hence no *particular* responsibility to combat Jewish racism (as distinct from other reactionary phenomena).

Rather, I have in mind those socialists who devote at least part of their activity to specific Jewish issues. If in the past their silence on the question of Jewish racism could be partly excused – though never condoned! – on the grounds that the defence of Jews against anti-Semitism was a more urgent task, this excuse is utterly unacceptable today.

Here – contrary to what Sussman seems to believe – the task of developing a scientific materialist analysis of the socio-historical roots of racism, however desirable and important such a theoretical enterprise may be, is less urgent than the political imperative of exposing racism and combatting its every manifestation. After all, as Sussman himself concedes, 'Marxist research . . . has not yet produced a satisfactory account of racism in its most virulent forms'. Should we then wait for the elaboration of such an account before exposing racism and fighting against it?

As far as Jewish racism is concerned, it is not merely, or even mainly, a question of 'the Jew [having to] confront his/her past', which would involve 'a thorough and open critique of the Jewish religion as an important ideological source in Jewish history', as Sussman puts it. Again, here he puts too much stress on the purely theoretical task of historical analysis, rather than on the duty to bring out into the open the facts and texts of Jewish racism and to point out their present political role.

Of course, Shahak too goes at length into historical analysis and interpretation; but he does this in addition to, not in place of, engaging in the present fight against racism. His historical analysis and interpretations may be flawed, too moralistic, too bound by the old-fashioned idealism of the Enlightenment; but Sussman's critique of these flaws would be infinitely more convincing if he could point at an alternative, materialist and scientific analysis wedded to a Jewish-socialist *practice* of exposing Jewish racism and combatting it.

'Adel Samara

TRADE UNIONS UNDER OCCUPATION

SIMON TAGGART's little book *Workers in Struggle – Palestinian Trade Unions in the occupied West Bank* (Editpride, London, 1985; £3.00) deserves notice as perhaps the first book dealing with the trade-union movement in the West Bank. Despite its small size (a mere 79 pages), *Workers in Struggle* manages to cover its subject in some detail.

The author begins with a brief historical outline, starting from the period of British colonial rule in Palestine (1917-48), then – after devoting a few words to the period 1948-67 – he gets to his main subject: the trade-union struggle under the Israeli occupation since 1967.

Repression began at once, with a ban on all trade unions imposed by Israel's military rule. It is worth pointing out here that the Israeli military apparatus ruling the West Bank, although theoretically subject to Israeli parliamentary control, has in practice virtually a free hand in ordering the life of the Palestinian population under its rule. Later, some unions were allowed to re-open, but many remain permanently banned.

The author refers to Section 83 in the Jordanian trade-union law, which prohibited the election of convicted felons to a union's executive committee. Israel's military rule has amended this law to include those convicted of political 'crimes'. All political strikes are forbidden, trade-union activists are often arrested and the leaders are deported; some have even been shot and killed. Union offices are raided, and landlords who lease their premises to unions are subjected to heavy pressure by the military government. Jewish workers are incited to attack Palestinian migrant workers.

The author describes the harsh conditions to which Palestinian workers employed in Israel are subjected. 'Many earn as little as one third of that of comparable Jewish workers'. Although taxes and social security payments are deducted from their wages, these migrant Palestinian workers

receive none of the fringe benefits enjoyed by their Israeli counterparts. As for unemployment, official Israeli sources estimate it at 1.5 per cent in the West Bank, but Palestinian trade-unionists put the figure at around 20 per cent. The author notes that unemployment is very noticeable in the streets. He also describes the labour markets where Palestinian workers gather early in the morning, waiting for the Israeli employer or the local broker who come to choose the fittest young workers to do a day's labouring without any contract and for low wages. In many cases these workers are beaten and kicked and sent home at the day's end without being paid at all.

In addition to its first major theme – the trade unions' struggle against the occupation's repression and discrimination, on both national and class level – the book also discusses a second theme: the internal political and ideological disputes within the movement.

In discussing the political rivalry among West-Bank unions, the author distinguishes two political currents: the nationalists and the socialists. Competition between them led to a split of the trade-union movement into two groupings. The nationalist grouping preaches a position of national unity and discourages internal Palestinian class conflict. This is used as justification for neglecting the struggle against Palestinian employers, for better wages inside the West Bank. The general secretary of this grouping is also quoted as saying that 'workers are less interested in politics than in which union helps them feed their families.' (p68)

The socialist current points out that workers and their dependents constitute 65 per cent of the Palestinian inhabitants of the occupied territories. 'Who are the Palestinians? The working class is the Palestinian people.' (p25) For this reason, the socialist unions regard the struggle for improving local wages as a patriotic duty. They criticize the Joint Palestinian-Jordanian Committee for the way in which it distributes its financial assistance to the occupied territories: the funds are used to line the pockets of the bourgeoisie instead of being channelled to the working class and the various popular voluntary working committees.

The author predicts that the differences between the two currents will narrow in the coming period. 'Israeli bosses already employ more Palestinians from the occupied territories than do the Palestinian agricultural and industrial sectors combined. As Israel increasingly undermines, manipulates and dominates the economy of the occupied territories, so the socialist and nationalist characteristics of the trade-union movement will merge as class and racial oppression become synonymous.' (p26)

I would like to comment here on a few points raised in Simon Taggart's book, which require some clarification.

1 Although the author's historical outline goes back to the very beginnings of the Palestinian working class, the peasant origin of this class is not sufficiently stressed. This peasant origin is of course by no means unique to the Palestinian proletariat. What is unique, however, is the continual expropriation of the peasants' land for the sake of Jewish colonization. Thus the growth of the Palestinian working class was not mainly a result of a gradual organic internal capitalist development.

2 The author does not clarify the attitude of the West-Bank working class towards the PLO. In fact, this class has given its undivided support to the PLO – in contrast with the bourgeoisie, whose loyalties are divided between the PLO, the Jordanian regime and the Israeli occupation.

3 The reasons for the split in the trade-union movement require some clarification. In fact, the split was created by Chairman 'Arafat's loyal supporters. The PLO's chairman believed – and apparently still believes – in the imminent likelihood of his gaining a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. With this in mind, he wishes to dominate all Palestinian institutions in these territories. However, the trade unions were dominated by the Communist Party, and for that reason he decided to split them.

4 As for the demand, raised by one of the leaders of the socialist current, that the Joint Committee's funds should be channelled to the trade unions, I believe that he missed the main point here. The Committee itself is bourgeois in its class nature and composition, and its finances are supplied by the Arab ruling classes. The idea that such a body could use its funds in any other way is therefore quite illusory. Rather, the socialist leader quoted by the author should have criticized the very principle of the creation of this kind of committee, which has used its bribes to create a parasitic and corrupt political elite in the occupied territories.

5 It should be pointed out that the harshest repressions are directed against the socialist trade unions, precisely because that part of the movement was created by the Communist Party and serves as its broadest base. From the occupiers' point of view, the purely nationalist wing of the Palestinian movement can be destroyed by smashing the military organizations; but in order to destroy the CP, its trade-union base must be smashed directly. By this two-pronged approach, the occupiers believe that they can destroy the whole Palestinian national movement.

Despite its shortcomings, and its necessarily limited scope, this book should be welcomed as a useful contribution to the study of the Palestinian working class.

Haim Bresheeth

THE TORTURED DILEMMA

THE HISTORY of the conflict in Palestine is thick with sub-plots and minor contradictions, all adding to its complexity. One of these is the history of left-Zionism and its internal contradictions. This tendency within Zionism was, after all, toying with internationalism, anti-imperialism and class struggle as if they were meaningful terms. This was of course purely in the realm of debates and publications, while on the daily level of material reality, they took part in reinforcing the domination over the Palestinians. Nowhere did this internal conflict show more clearly than in the two main areas of control, the economic and the military. While the first aspect has already attracted some body of writing and research, the second aspect has been so neglected, that the few exceptions have become quite well-known. One such example is *Siah Lohamim* (Warriors' Chat) – a collection of interviews with left-Zionists about their experiences in the 1967 war, about the sobering and anti-humanistic aspects of war. That today this book appears as an extremely gentle reader for children, in the context of the war in Lebanon, must be evidence to the degree of dehumanization that the Israeli society has undergone in recent years. At the time the book was seen by the right and militarist wing as an attack on Zionism, as questioning some basic tenets of the faith. On the other hand, the writers and many left-Zionists did not conceive of it as a critique of Zionism, but rather as an essential part of it, of the 'humanist' set of values supposedly inherent within the movement and its history.

While an objective analysis may fail to detect much evidence of the 'humanist' principles and activities within Zionism's history, there is no doubt that a large part of the Israeli left is projecting this self-image and, incredibly, believe in its accuracy. This is worthy of a proper study elsewhere, as it seems to be based, at least partially, on a racist interpretation of the conflict, and on a set of ideas about the Israeli perspective as part of

a European, humanist-liberal tradition as opposed to the 'Oriental' Levantine tradition. In this ideological battle-of-shadows between stereotypes of 'progress' (Europe/civilisation/liberalism/humanism/socialism/science) and 'reaction' (Levant/despotism/backwardness/oligarchy/traditionalism/religion) the Israeli Zionist left is clearly placing itself on the side of the angels.

Hence, taking Palestine over from the indigenous population is seen as the importation of progress into the Levant, some kind of socialist missionary work in the desert of barbarism. This type of description is used for the introduction of a modern banking system, intensive agriculture and industry, or the kibbutz and a national health system, depending on the political perspective from which it is perceived. Subsequent occupations have also been described in this light, including the 1982 war in Lebanon. Dov Yermiya's *My War Diary* (Pluto Press, London 1985) is not so much an analysis of the left-Zionist position towards the Lebanon war, but rather an accurate description of the contradictions exposed in that position during the war. Yermiya is a typical veteran activist; his biography ranges from the establishment of a kibbutz in the Gallilee, to becoming a full colonel in the Israel Defence Force and fighting in all Israel's wars since 1948. He has been the ideological father and initiator of the Civil Guard, an urban civil defence militia, armed and supplied by the IDF.

Yermiya goes to this war with mixed feelings, as he tells us in his book. His wife seems to be much more far-sighted, urging him not to go, not to take part in this ritual murder that has become habitual. He chooses to ignore her advice; he has to join his unit; he cannot stay behind. His argument is that he will minimize the damage by being at the front line.

This initial conflict, outlined at the beginning of the book, seems to sum up the contradictory nature of his venture. His inability to stay behind and fight against the war from outside is turned into a stance of internal opposition within the army machine. Typically, he ends up in a unit specially constructed to liaise with and help the civilian population in Lebanon. (It seems that the war machine has been tuned so well that it uses even its internal opposition to attain its goals...) By definition the 'civilian population' does not include any Palestinian able-bodied males, who are automatically deemed to belong to another group, one beyond the pale of humanity; in his words – The Terrorists. The book is a diary of his successes and failures, a Quixotic battle against the IDF windmills in Lebanon and Israel.

That the army was not bent on assisting civilians in Lebanon should surprise no-one, at least no-one who watched the newscasts on television, which showed the effects of the brutal bombings and shelling on the cities of Sidon, Tyre and Beirut. No army of occupation is interested in assisting 'enemy' civilians, but least of all an army choosing the cities as its main battlefield. Fighting the PLO in Lebanon was not, as most Israelis were willingly led to believe, fighting a small

heavily-armed 'terrorist' organisation. The battle was waged against the full machinery of the PLO state-in-exile – defence, health, housing, welfare and education systems set up and controlled by the PLO in the camps.

More surprising, then, is Yermiya's surprise and shock at what ensued in front of his eyes. If his shock was genuine, and one is inclined to believe that it was, it serves as evidence of personal and political naivety. This naivety, typical of some left-Zionists, functions as a shield against hard-to-digest facts. Some pointers here may illustrate his predicament. His chosen terms of reference, like the word 'terrorist'; his refusal to fight against the war and outside of it; his self-perception as a 'humane saviour' – all this points to his acceptance of IDF normative descriptions as fact, rather than propaganda. He is bitter about the facts that some soldiers 'are giving a good army a bad name', to coin a phrase. The good name of the army, *his* army, is very crucial throughout, and may even provide the main rationale for his writing. This concern about the positive image of the IDF he probably shares with most Israelis, who use terms such as 'purity of arms', an incredible misnomer denoting the noble nature of the IDF soldier, as opposed to 'other' soldiers.

These and other numerous indications, clarify for us Yermiya's position on the Palestine question, and he appears as the disturbed humanist of the colonial variety – his actions somewhat stilted, Hamlet-fashion (on a smaller budget). What emerges is, indeed, a disaster – not just for the Lebanese and Palestinians, but also for the self-image of the Israeli soldier and civilian. Probably Yermiya believes this is so; however, a presentation which appears to equate the Lebanon invasion with the erosion of the Israeli self-image presents an unpalatable and problematic set of values on the part of the author.

A quite disappointing facet of the book is its combination of raw writing of poor quality, understandable under the circumstances, with a post-mortem editorial rewrite, rationalizing that which is not rational. One would not necessarily be seeking literary gifts in the barracks, but the book suffers from not being so much a diary, as a personal diatribe against the authorities, without a political dimension. Its personal and self-congratulatory style, the many compliments to the writer (carefully catalogued by him), make it difficult reading for the wrong reasons. His characterization of secondary figures, such as the Lebanese officials with whom he worked, however sympathetic, is never totally devoid of a 'man friday' touch – all dependent, forever thankful and efficiently obedient. When this pattern is broken here and there the description gains in credibility.

Many claims were made, in Israel and abroad, as to the book's value as a 'historical document'. Indeed, such a document it is, but its value seems to be in unveiling some of the elusive features of left-Zionism. This is a naïve and depoliticized tendency, based on a 'humanist' racism, attuned to seeing Palestinians and other Arabs as victims. Whether this is 'better' than dominant, militant Zionism, is probably a question of taste, rather than a political one.

Nevertheless, the fact that this might be an impoverished example of a

literary genre, of political importance in Israel at the present juncture, should be noted. Books of this nature, hopefully with a political perspective that time and commitment may provide, will one day be important in dismantling the ideological and material mechanisms of oppression. One wonders about the memories and nightmares that might fuel such writings, the suffering that may one day reach the public through literary or other representational discourses. The redressing of the balance is likely to come from the Palestinians and Lebanese, who have survived their many local and daily holocausts. Whatever merits or drawbacks to the book, Dov Yermiya has won a place in this future, by actively assisting the survival of thousands of human beings. This, of course, is more than can be achieved by books.

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