

islam

AND

revolution



Edited by
ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

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revolution

मस्ति GHA नॉन-डोवर

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***This book is dedicated to my daughter Seema
who is dearest to me. I hope she would
understand the revolutionary significance of
Islam one day.***

PREFACE

In the last decade and half, Islam has played a very significant role in shaping the world event. However, there is great deal of misunderstanding about Islam and its role, especially in the context of South and West Asian countries. This book—an edited work—is an attempt to understand the role of Islam in shaping events in various Islamic countries. In the theoretical section an attempt has been made to explain the revolutionary potential of this great religion whereas in another section various Islamic countries have been dealt with to understand as to what role Islam has played in these countries.

I am grateful to all the contributors who were good enough to respond to my request for sending their valuable contributions for this volume. Needless to say, but for their ready response, it would not have been possible to bring out this volume. I am also grateful to Prof. Moin Shakir for having suggested to undertake this work. I should also thank Mr. S. Balwant to have made arrangements to publish this volume.

23-4-84

—Asghar Ali Engineer

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ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM AND THE MUSLIM WORLD

Asghar Ali Engineer

I

The recent upsurge in the Muslim World has thrown the question of Islamic fundamentalism in the bold relief. The Western media—and our major newspapers take cue from the Western news agencies or simply reproduce their stories—have shown great interest in the events, specially the developments in Iran. However, on close and careful scrutiny one will be greatly disappointed if he expects unbiased and objective reporting by these agencies. Edward W. Said, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University who is well-versed in the Middle-Eastern affairs, in his article on Iran¹ has given a provocative assessment of U.S. Coverage of the crisis in Iran. “Why was it that political events seemed reducible in so Pavlovian a way to the peculiarities of Islam?” asks Prof. Said and goes on to reply: Mainly because the news media, as well as governmental and academic experts, seemed to have agreed implicitly not to recognize political developments as political but to represent them as a cosmic drama pitting civilization as we like it against uncivilized and the barbaric. In such a way history could be simplified, along with social processes, everyday reality, and the humanity of other people whose interests did not happen to coincide with ours”.²

Before we get down to discuss the phenomenon of Islamic Fundamentalism, it is necessary to understand the role played by media as our conceptions about it (i.e. Islamic resurgence

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Before we get down to discuss the phenomenon of Islamic Fundamentalism, it is necessary to understand the role played by media as our conceptions about it (i.e. Islamic resurgence

or fundamentalism) owe their origin to their reports. We must, therefore, in the interest of an objective analysis, make ourselves fully aware of the subtleties or otherwise prejudices and distortions of the media. These Western newspapers have used screaming headlines such as "Militant Islam on the March" or "The Soldiers of Allah Advance" while describing the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence whereas they have scarcely mentioned the upsurge in Judaism and Egyptian or Lebanese Christianity. Thus referring to the subtle ways of the Western media, Edward Said says:

There were subtler ways to incriminate "Islam". One was to put an expert before the public and have him or her suggest that Khomeini was not really "representative of Islamic clergy" (this was L. Dean Brown, former U.S. Ambassador to Jordan and Special Envoy to Lebanon and now President of the Middle-East Institute, . . .) that the "ironclad" mullah was a throwback to an earlier (obviously Islamic) age, and that the mobs in Tehran were reminiscent of Nuremberg, just as the street demonstrations were signs of the "circus as principle entertainment" habitually provided by dictators.³

We have quoted from Edward Said at some length only to show that all is not well with the reporting about the Muslim World in the Western press which is often quoted in our own press. However, with equal emphasis, I wish to assert that it does not mean that everything is in order in the Muslim World and that the religious revivalism reflects the genuine aspirations of the peoples of the Muslim countries. The developments in the Muslim World are to be seen in the proper perspective; religious revivalism, or the emergence of fundamental Islam as it is often referred to, cannot be divorced from political motives. I wish to emphasise the fact that it is not religion—as often believed—in command but politics in command. It is not very difficult for a careful observer of the socio-political scene in the Muslim World to understand that it is not religion which inspires the politicians but politics of the ruling classes which determines the instrumentality of religion. Whether it is the Nizam-e-Mustafa of Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan or the fundamentalism of Khomeini in Iran, or the

unrelieved orthodoxy of the Saudi family, none has remained untainted by politics of the ruling classes in these countries.

Anwar Moazzam calls Islamic resurgence a 'Semi-political development'. He asks "can these semi-political developments be described as Islamic resurgence? What is Islamic resurgence? If by this term is meant the strengthening of Islamic fundamentalism, then it is not at all a new trend. What is new is the state sponsored Islamic revival as a political and social system through "partial implementation of Sharia".⁴ The words "partial implementation of Sharia" are quite significant. The ruling classes implement only those parts of Islamic Sharia which eminently suit their political purpose. Islam is sought to be used by them to preserve and strengthen the status quo. Everyone knows that the penal measures like cutting off a thief's hands or lashing a drunkard or stoning an adulterer to death are not the essence of Islam. In no religion, penal measures occupy central position. As a religious vision, Islam stressed the concepts of brotherhood and equality. However, while the penal measures which do not disturb the status quo are sought to be enforced by the rulers, these teachings of Islam stressing equality and brotherhood are hardly ever talked about as they tend to change the present repressive and exploitative social structure in the direction of more just and equitable one.

What is important to note in this connection is that in none of these countries "Islamisation" of the society has been the result of people's movement. There was no popular demand, neither in Pakistan nor in Iran much less in Saudi Arabia to enforce the Islamic Sharia. Even in Iran the popular upsurge began as a revolt against the Shah who came to be hated for his highly repressive rule. One only has to read the Iranian papers and other pamphlets to understand the depth of anti-Shah feelings among the people of Iran. He is invariably referred to as *Janaytkar Shah* i.e. criminal Shah. It was later that Ayatollah Khomeini gave it a religious turn. The popular upsurge against the Shah had dangerous implications for the upper classes as the militant groups like the Mujahedin-e-Khalqe Iran and Fidaiyane Khalqe Iran were quite influential among the people and they wanted to give a

decisive turn to the movement against the Shah in favour of social change. The ruling classes of Iran and the clergy led by Ayatollah Khomeini were fully aware of the revolutionary potential of the movement and so Khomeini's first task was to enforce medieval Islam. In my opinion it would be certainly wrong to view the ironclad mullah as merely a religious fanatic.

Fanatic he is; but there is a definite method in his fanaticism. Had he been inspired by pure love of Islam he would not have trained his guns against the militant Mujahedins. Mujahedins are committed to Islam—but radical Islam—as their literature convincingly shows. However, they reject medieval Islam and believe in its re-interpretation so as to establish a just society ending exploitation of man by man. Their official organ *Mojahed* carries as its motto "Onwards towards the annihilation of exploitation and oppression of every kind and the realization of the classless society in *Towhid* (Divine integration)".⁵ In an article "How to study the Quran," published in *Mojahed*, it is said: "The founders of the PMOI (People's Mojahedeen of Iran), in seeking an approach which would provide the best mode of assuming the function of a revolutionary Social school of thought and action, chose Islam. Thus, along with the organization's 'ideological approach', the effort was made to become as familiar as possible with the Towhidi World view of Islam and its systematic structuring."⁶

These pronouncements leave no one in doubt that the Mojahedeens are committed to Islam. But the Ayatollah comes down on them heavily precisely because they see Islam as a revolutionary force and not merely as a medieval ideology for preserving the status quo. Thus to Khomeini Islam is acceptable only if it maintains status quo. In other words it is the politics of the ruling classes which dominates Islam and not vice versa.

Recently, according to an A.P. report from Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini has said frequently that Iran's revolution was essentially for God's sake, not for the economy. "Our Muslim nation did not revolt for melon," said he some months ago.⁷ These and other statements of the Ayatollah and his trenchant

criticism of the organisations like that of Mojahedin which are committed to revolutionary change through radical re-interpretation of Islam, clearly show that the patriarch is determined to keep Islam medievalised in the interests of status quoists. He uses Islam as long as it serves his purpose through its medieval accretions. Also, Islam is being used by Mullahs like Khomeini and some other secular rulers like Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan and the ruling family of Saudi Kingship or Islam minus democracy notion of Khomeini on grounds of religion.⁸ It also must be noted that the politics of Islamic fundamentalism varies, according to the variegated political conditions from country to country. Thus the Saudi rulers—supposedly enthusiastic supporters of Islamic fundamentalism—were shaking with fear when Islamic fundamentalist revolution was sweeping through Iran. The Saudi rulers sympathised with the Shah despite the fact that he had done everything to revive Iran's pre-Islamic past and to put down not only the clergy but also other lay Islamic revolutionaries. Thus Peter Mansfield, an expert on West Asia points out:

Here, the Saudi leaders were outspoken in their support for the Shah until the moment he left his country, and they openly criticised the conduct of Khomeini and his followers.⁹

Further, explaining the reasons for the Saudi rulers' fear of the Islamic revolution of Iran, Mansfield says:

There is corruption (since there are over 400 royal princes, it would be surprising if there wasn't) and, while there is no urban or rural proletariat as in Iran, there are wide disparities of wealth. Then there is the question of consultation, or Shura—a very important principle adhered to by the Prophet himself and the first Caliphs. No majlis al Shura or consultative council, has been set up, although one has been promised on several occasions during the past 20 years.¹⁰

Thus crux of the matter is the political power, and not concern for religion. Religion is, to use a current journalistic term, mere cosmetics. Saudi Arabia is a known supporter of

America which is being strongly denounced by Khomeini. In every respect, thus, Iran and Saudi Arabia, are opposed to each other today although both swear by Islamic fundamentalism.

Saudi Arabia wants Muslims all over the world to believe in its 'faithful adherence' to Islam. It has been spending huge sums, out of oil money, to project this image and also to strengthen reactionary regimes in Muslim countries like that of Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan. Criticising those who hold Saudi Arabia as a model of Islamic fundamentalists, Prof. M.S. Agwani says, "In fact, Saudi Arabia was not the fundamentalists model even before the oil boom of the seventies when the variance between the Saudi rulers' Islamic pretensions and practices had not yet become so wide and conspicuous as it is today. And for this reason, Saudi Arabia has been, for quite some time, paying hush money to fundamentalists Muslim leaders and organisations abroad. In the process, it has transformed them into apologists of an anachronistic order patently incompatible with the fundamentalists' professed ideals."¹¹

It would also be equally wrong to believe that the Islamic cosmetics of the Saudi rulers has deceived their people. It is known in the knowledgeable circles that the stability of the regime is more apparent than real. A thorough investigative report "Countdown in the Desert" published in *Middle East Currency Reports*, a journal from London, is an eye-opener for those who believe in the myth of stability in Saudi Arabia.¹² Various methods have been used by the Saudi rulers to suppress the information about the disaffection among the people and, what is more serious, among the armed forces as well. Commenting on the methods of suppression the report says: "Methods employed range from payments to individual journalists and publications, to the sponsorship of specialist media and the provision of heavy advertising support for special supplements which are supposed to contain objective information—but which invariably include 'loaded' reports—not to mention other, more subtle methods of persuasion and even collusion."¹³

Major Hassan Hosni, a co-conspirator in a plot to

overthrow the Saudi rule, said, while being interrogated that it was high time for the country to be ruled by the young and educated, rather than by people who were 'old and illiterate', as he put it. The officers he claimed, objected to the blatant corruption in high places--and to the evident dissipation of members of the ruling family and its hangers on. He also severely objected to the extensive American presence in the armed forces, and in the country as a whole.¹⁴

II

So far we have been discussing Islamic fundamentalism of the ruling classes. Let us now take into account its appeal among the peoples of the Islamic countries. Whereas the rulers have used Islam as an instrument of legitimising power, the same cannot be said of the masses. Religion has undoubtedly, great appeal for them and that is why it enables the crafty rulers to exploit religious fundamentalism for their own ends. What is needed is the concrete analysis keeping the socio-economic realities of the region in view. Mere abstract view, however, laudable in itself, would not help much in obtaining clarity.

In third world countries, due to economic and technological backwardness, religion is a force to be reckoned with. The masses are steeped in ignorance and superstition. The scanty resources are monopolised by elites of the society, more often than not in collaboration with multinational companies and the entire education system is designed to serve the needs of these elite groups. Whatever economic development takes place widens the gap between the rich and the poor giving rise to acute social tensions. Various groups and communities who feel insecure (depending on their perception of the situation, the feeling of insecurity may be real or imaginary) seek refuge in religion or—and this is happening on increasing scale in Afro-Asian countries—religion is sought to be used as a militant weapon for fighting against privileged groups or also to defend certain privileges and thus religion becomes ally of left or right depending on whether it is fighting for or against the privileged groups. These roles can be reversed

also as it happened in Iran in an amazingly short period. Khomeini and his followers fought militantly, religion being their main weapon, against the exploitative regime of the Shah and his American ally but after the overthrow of the Shah, their role has been reversed and now religion is being used by them to reinforce the status quo.

Gunder Frank sees the whole thing as a consequence of the world economic crisis and its impact on the economies of backward countries. He says: "The apparently most widespread and powerful moving force in this development crisis and crisis (of) development is nationalism, sometimes combined with religion. Varieties of nationalist, ethnic, and religious interests and allegiance seem to define and move the superpowers, their challengers, and the other States in their mutual rivalries to participate in World development. Tensions and conflicts that often have their sources in the constraints and readjustments imposed by the world economic crisis find their politically most viable expression through combinations or coalitions of national, regional, ethnic and religious movements within 'nation' states and their zones of influence."¹⁵ He also points out "Nationalist, regional, ethnic and religious movements are also defining factors in Philippine Mindanao, Tamil Sri Lanka, in all three corners of India, through Pakistan and Afghanistan, and Iran thanks to the Baluchis and others, among Kurds and other minorities in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey (not to mention the Soviet Union again), and of course throughout the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict."¹⁶

Of course, of all these nationalist, ethnic and religious movements, Islamic fundamentalist movement is much more noticeable for two sets of reasons: One inner, integral i.e. the nature of religion and another extraneous i.e. political, having impact on world political scene. Islam, of all the world religions, is most totalitarian. "Indeed, in principle", says Rodinson, "it dominated every act and every thought of the faithful All actions, even those arising out of the most elementary biological needs, such as excretion and coition, were regulated by the ideological system."¹⁷ Thus any movement based on Islam seeks to encompass all

the areas of life—including the most trivial ones and zealots on the fringe stretch it to an extreme and thus tends to attract much wider publicity, specially in the Western media. It has certainly gone to its extreme in Iran today where the Islamic guards are indulging in vandalism inspired by the thoughts of Khomeini. The lumpen elements, uprooted from rural areas and doing odd jobs or remaining unemployed in Industrial towns, become vehicles of such fanaticism.

Also, a section of "Semi-intelligentsia" who can be more accurately called 'proletariod' (a term coined by Geiger to describe the social origins of the stormtroopers of the Nazi Party)¹⁸ too, comes handy for this purpose. According to Mr. Jethanandani, with the proletariat the "proletariod" stratum shares its condition of destitution but ideologically it identified itself with the patit-bourgeoisie. Poorly educated, capricious, volatile, this stratum is thoroughly unreliable.¹⁹ Under the ideological guidance of Iranian clergy, this section of the society is playing most abominable role in Iran, today. This is not to deny that a section of intelligentsia, specially university teachers and students, is also committed to Islamic revolution. Jamat-e-Islami in Pakistan and Ikhwan al-Muslimin in Egypt and some other Arab countries draw their cadre mainly from amongst the university teachers and students.

The second reason for Islamic fundamentalism attracting rather more attention is the strategic nature of the region. Because of its oil reserves, the western countries whose economies are largely dependent on oil, are very sensitive to any development there. Khomeini, whatever his attitude to internal change within Iran, continues to be militantly anti-America. Naturally, therefore, American press adopts, subtly or crudely, hostile attitude towards him. However, in contra-distinction to this, American papers' attitude towards Saudi Arabia, which is as much medievalistic in applying the injunctions of the Shari'a to its society, is entirely different as Saudi Arabia happens to be American ally.

Apart from political considerations, there are sociological and historical problems involved. The Arab society is partly tribal and pre-feudal. Any attempt to push into modern technological era throws up highly complex and challenging

problems. One has to take an integrated point of view. Many people who are still in primitive stage get uprooted by the technological changes and hence react adversely to these changes trying to rally round those forces which ensure the historical continuity of old social patterns. Also they strongly disapprove of reckless westernisation of the privileged classes which totally shatters the old morality. We must distinguish here between westernisation and modernisation. Westernisation is nothing but copying superficially the ways of western countries which in case of elite groups means drinking, gambling, indulging in extra marital sex and so on. This naturally causes deep revulsion among the masses and often takes the form of militant religious movement. The sense of deprivation (compare the stark misery of the masses and high luxurious ways of the rich) is as much a motivating force for such fundamentalist movements as religion itself. Modernisation on the other hand, is far more serious project and involves intellectual re-orientation, acceptance of rational and scientific way of thinking. These battles are fought on intellectual plane and hardly ever assumes the form of a militant movement. Islamic fundamentalism is bound to fail if it challenges modernisation but may continue to enamour the masses in its role as opponent of westernisation. These are but some of the aspects of this much debated phenomenon. All the aspects cannot be brought within the compass of an article like this.

The present book is an attempt to understand the implications of Islamic revolution and its ideological system in its concrete socio-political manifestations in various countries. The conditions in different Islamic countries situated in different linguistic-cum-cultural zones, vary so widely that despite theological assertion to the contrary, no uniform interpretation of Islam and its application is possible. Seyyed Hossein Nasr rightly points out:

“Different religions have been necessary in the long history of mankind because there have been different ‘humanities’ or human collectivities on earth. There have been different recipients of the Divine message,

there has been more than one echo of the Divine Word. God has said 'I' to each of these 'Humanities' or communities; hence the plurality of religions. Within each religion as well, especially within those that have been destined for many ethnic groups, different orthodox interpretations of the tradition, of the one heavenly message, have been necessary in order to guarantee the integration of the different psychological and ethnic groupings into a single spiritual perspective. It is difficult to imagine how the Far Eastern peoples could have become Buddhist without the Mahayana School, or some other Eastern peoples Muslim without Shi'ism. The presence of such divisions within the religious tradition in question does not contradict its inner unity and transcendence. Rather it has been the way of ensuring spiritual unity in a world of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds."

Various articles in the book encompassing different regions of Islamic peoples bring out the main features of socio-cultural and politico-economic realities, their different stages of development and how Islam plays its role in helping or obstructing the process of social transformation. Islamic fundamentalism as discussed above is seen in its concrete manifestation through the reality obtaining in different regions. I have also provided, in the beginning of the book, a revolutionary framework of Islamic theology which can enable a truly believing Muslim to fight the structures of injustices in the society. I have also included in the appendix, two comments on the report of an expert committee appointed by the Government of Pakistan to recommend measures for Islamization of economy. These comments would help the readers understand the theoretical role of Islam and the interests of a class-dominated regime.

I am also very much grateful to all the contributors who accepted my request to write for this volume.

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ON DEVELOPING LIBERATION THEOLOGY IN ISLAM

Asghar Ali Engineer

The current turmoil in the Islamic world, specially in Iran, has raised many questions about the theology of Islam. The '*ulama*' insist on retaining the theological dogmas evolved during the medieval ages lock, stock and barrel. The Mu'tazilah and the Isma'ilis had, during the Abbasid period, developed a rational theology and the Qaramitah—an offshoot of the Isma'ilis—even a revolutionary theology. The Kharijites too, although fiercely dogmatic in their approach, were anti-establishment and developed their theology accordingly. However, all these sects were considered heretic by the mainstream orthodox '*ulama*' and as such they could not penetrate the *body Islamic*.

It would be interesting to throw some light on these sects as their philosophy and theology have not only historical importance but can also be helpful in evolving a liberation theology in the modern context. The Abbasid period is of great significance in the history of Islam for more than one reason. Firstly, it came into being by challenging the oppressive regime of the Umayyads which had come to be hated by the people, specially of non-Arab origin, because of its exploitative and oppressive policies. Thus the Abbasids had aroused the aspirations of the oppressed peoples both of Arab and non-Arab origin. Secondly, the Abbasids had come to power with the help of the people of Persia who had a highly developed civilization and an inclination for higher learning. The *elite* of the Persian society was with

the Abbasids and other revolutionary forces fighting against the Umayyads.

Thus we see that the Abbasids, initially at least, had to adopt more liberal policies in matters of religion to suit the non-Arab genius as the non-Arab people formed the hard-core of their support. The leading Persian intellectuals came to occupy the most important administrative posts in the Abbasid regime. The Abbasids, under their influence, encouraged translation on a vast scale of the Greek and Indian classical works on philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and various other sciences. Thus W. Montgomery Watt says: "Greek ideas may be said to have entered the intellectual world of the Muslims in two waves. The first wave is linked with the first translations, and extends roughly over the first Abbasid century and perhaps a little way into second. The second wave is associated with the work of al-Ghazali round about 1100 A.D. It was particularly at these two periods that Greek ideas came into the main stream of Islamic thinking . . ."¹

The Greek thought had great influence on the leading thinkers of the Islamic world during that period. The Mu'tazilite and Isma'ili theologies, based on reason and philosophy, developed under the influence of the Greek thought. The Mu'tazilite and the Isma'ili theologies can thus be construed as rational theologies in Islam. It is precisely for this reason that these theologies attracted the *elite* of society rather than the masses. There is another reason also for these theologies not to have developed mass appeal. At one time or the other their propounders identified themselves with the oppressive regimes. The Mu'tazilites became part of the powerful Abbasid establishment and even became instrumental in persecuting their opponents. Earlier they were close to some of the Umayyad Caliphs too. For struggle for succession, the Mu'tazilites sided with Yazid bin Walid who, on becoming Caliph embraced *i'tizal* (i.e. religion of Mu'tazilah).²

The Mu'tazilah believed in the dogma of the createdness of the Qur'an and the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun embraced this belief. Under the influence of Mu'tazilites he demanded

of all his administrators and servants to declare their belief in this dogma to demonstrate their loyalty to the Caliph and those who refused were severely persecuted. Many of them resorted to hypocrisy and those who refused landed in his jail. The famous jurists Muhammad bin Nuh and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal met with the same fate.³ The dogma of the createdness of the Qur'an had clearly acquired political overtones and led to rise in power of the Mu'tazilites.

The Mu'tazilites, as pointed out earlier, were liberal and rational in their theology despite their identification with the powerful Abbasid establishment. Basra was their centre. It is interesting to note that Basra became the centre of liberal theology as it was a port town and a great centre of commerce where people from different countries, races and religions met and intermixed. As against this Kufa, another important town in Iraq, was known for its espousing the cause of traditional theology.⁴ The *Mu'tazilah*, says Muhammad 'Imarah, championed the cause of *hurriyah* i.e. freedom. They considered human being as free agent as against other orthodox schools who considered him as *majbur* i.e. determined in his actions and unable to exercise a free choice.⁵

During the Umayyad period there was a heated controversy among the theologians about free choice (*ikhtiyar*) and divine determination (i.e. *jabr*). According to al-Mughni the first person to advocate the cause of *jabr* (determination) was Amir Mu'awiyah, the first Umayyad Caliph who transformed the Islamic democracy into *mulukiyah* i.e. monarchy⁶. Thus we see that the conservative monarchy of the Umayyads supported the cause of determination as against those who held the concept of free choice in theology. Those who opposed monarchy and stood for progress and change advocated the cause of free will as against determination. Fierce controversy between *Jabriyyah* (supporters of determination) and *Qadriyyah* (supporters of free will) raged during the Umayyad period. Muhammad 'Imarah⁷ has dealt with this controversy in detail. Dr. T.J. De Boer says, "The first question, then, concerned man's conduct and destiny. The forerunners of the Mu'tazilites, who were called Qada-

rites, taught the Freedom of the human will; and the Mutazilites, even in later times, when their speculations were directed more to theologico-metaphysical problems, were first and foremost pointed to as the supporters of the doctrine of Divine Righteousness,—which gives rise to no evil, and rewards or punishes man according to his deserts—, and, in the second place, as the confessors, or avowed supporters of the Unity of God, i.e. the absence of properties from his Essence considered *per se* (or the predicateless character of the essential nature of God). The systematic statement of their doctrines must have been influenced by the Logicians. . . .”⁸

It is interesting to note that those who fought against the Umayyad monarchy advocated the doctrine of free will. All the Shi’ite sects inclined in their theology towards Mu’tazilism as they were fighting against the Umayyads. Zaid, the founder of the Zaidi sect who gave a call for armed insurrection against the Umayyads was the disciple of Wasil bin ‘Ata’ a prominent Mu’tazilite.⁹

The Isma’ilis who branched off from other *Shi’ah* sects assimilated the progressive thoughts of their day and developed one of the most progressive theologies in Islam. Depth of their learning in the Greek sciences can be gauged by studying their encyclopaedic epistles called *Ikhwan as Safa*. The Isma’ilis were locked in battle against the Abbasids who were out to decimate them by any means. Thus the Isma’ilis became the champions of freedom and progress and challenged the oppressive regime of the Abbasids. Abbasids in their fight against the Umayyads had forged a common front of all the Shi’ite sects but after capturing power turned against them so as to eliminate all the rivals. The Isma’ilis, in order to successfully challenge the Abbasids, evolved a well-knit underground organisation with a hierarchy of functionaries.¹⁰ They also evolved a creative synthesis of Islamic and Greek thought thus evolving a new progressive theology which could be construed as the liberation theology of that period. However, later on the Isma’ilis (calling themselves as Fatimids) established an empire of their own in north-west Africa and their revolutionary zeal slowly died down yielding to justification of

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and a healthy communistic set-up free of dirt and filth is established.¹³

Mansur al-Hallaj, the famous sufi saint, who was hanged by the Abbasids, also belonged to this revolutionary sect of Islam and was involved in a conspiracy to overthrow the Abbasid empire. He was carrying on correspondence secretly with the Qaramitah. These letters were produced in his trial in the Abbasid court.¹⁴ It is interesting to note that Hallaj, as his name indicates, belonged to the profession of carding and championed the cause of small artisans.

The Kharijites, spurned by all other Islamic sects—Sunnite as well as Shi'ite—, were another sect with the rudiments of liberation theology. They found their followers among non-urbanite Bedouins. The Bedouins, the 'internal proletariat' of Islam, to use Toynbee's term, led free life in the desert of Arabia and were not reconciled to the city-based government established by the caliphs—a government which assumed more and more repressive character as time went on and ultimately was turned into a monarchy and dynastic rule.¹⁵ They raised the slogan of *la hukumah illa lillah* (i.e. no government except that of God). The Kharijites could be described as the extremists who developed a distinct theology of their own according to which those Muslims who did not subscribe to their theology were *Kafirs* and condemned to be killed.

It would be wrong to think that the Kharijites were merely a religious sect. Mahmud Isma'il maintains that the emergence of *Khawarij* was a result of economic contradictions which followed the controversy centred around the problem of *Imamah* (leadership of the community of Muslims). These contradictions led to the emergence of the party of *Khawarij* which stressed the concept of collective justice as emphasised by Islam.¹⁶ The Kharijites, for their democratic and socialistic views, were, like the Qaramitahs later, very much misunderstood and maligned by their opponents. William Muir describes them as following the revolutionary, democratic and socialistic religion. And, according to Mahmud Isma'il the Kharijites derived their views on justice and equality from the

original socialistic inclination of Islam.¹⁷

The Kharijites did not spare any established government beginning with that of 'Ali, the Fourth Caliph. They repeatedly attacked two great cities of Kufa and Basra. They fought with equal ferocity against the Umayyad rulers. Al-Hajjaj, the great tyrant, gave them hot pursuit from town to town and succeeded in weakening their power. The Kharijites were divided into twenty different groups calling each other *kafirs*.¹⁸ It is worthy of note that by and large the Kharijites remained uncompromising in their attitude towards the established governments ferociously fighting against them. Despite their extremist stance and relentless bloodshed one must acknowledge their courage and love of freedom and deep hatred for the oppressive regimes. Jettisoning their theology of some dogmas, it can be made useful for developing a liberation theology in Islam.

II

Liberation theology is the need of the hour—a theology which puts great emphasis on freedom, equality and distributive justice and strongly condemns exploitation of man by man, oppression and persecution. Today there is an emerging trend among a section of the Christian priesthood for evolving a Third World theology or liberation theology. This trend is gathering support in Latin American countries which harbour Catholic population. There is acute poverty in South American countries and the North American imperialism maintains its stranglehold over them. The Conference of the Latin American Bishops in Puebla from January 27 to February 13, 1979 was quite significant in this direction. The documents of this Conference have now been published.¹⁹ There was an attempt to discuss the concrete problems of Latin American countries in the Conference.

Similarly the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians has been promoting the emergence of a relevant theology in the Third World through regional meetings, informs us M. Amaladoss, S.J.²⁰ To discuss the theological problems of the Third World countries two conferences were held in Africa (Accra, Ghana, December 17-23, 1977) and in

Asia (Wennappuwa, Sri Lanka, January 7-20, 1979), respectively. The Documents of these conferences have also been published.²¹ These conferences were convened to discuss the problems of the backward countries and in their light to evolve a relevant theology. According to M. Amaladoss there is a tension between two tendencies. One group would like to build up a united front of the Third World countries marching towards a theology of liberation under the banner of poverty. Another group, while aware of the need for liberation, is anxious to rediscover its roots and to build up its new-found identity as African or Asian, taking a more cultural perspective. If the experience of the indigenous African Christian Churches is any indication, cultural contextualization seems to be a need for many.²²

S. Torres proposes a theology for the poor, based on praxis, ecumenical, and committed to restructure the social order.²³ On sources of theology there are: the Bible re-interpreted in the light of African reality and tradition; the traditional religious experience of people; the experience of the independent Churches; and the culture of Africa as represented in various Arts. There were also papers on the liberation currents with special reference to the liberation of women and to the struggle of the people in South Africa. J.H. Cone pleads for collaboration between liberation (Black American and South African) and indigenization (African) trends. But he stresses liberation as the common thrust of Third World theology.²⁴ Religion, if it has to be meaningful in the present context, must come to terms with social conflicts and tensions in the present era. It must also resolve tension between bipolar aspects of human life i.e. spiritual and material.

Pieris, in his paper presented in the above mentioned conference, stresses strongly the need to take the religiosity of Asia seriously without ignoring the need for experience, commitment, praxis etc. Abesamis, on the other hand, proves to be an ardent, even a radical advocate for a liberation theology made for the poor, by the poor.²⁵ Thus, it would be seen that the main characteristic of the liberation theology is to grapple seriously with the problem of spiritual-material

bipolarity of human life by re-structuring the present social order in favour of a non-exploitative, just and egalitarian one. As pointed out in the context of Marxism by Roger Garaudy, religion, "instead of being a method of critical detachment from the given, an instrument to search out and create new possibilities, has become apologetics, an ideology of justification."²⁶

The theology of liberation has to encourage critical attitude towards the given and constantly strive to explore ever new possibilities. A rich spiritual life cannot be lived in a 'one dimensional' society which negates any effort to go beyond, to realise new possibilities thus adding new dimensions. A theology which evolved during the medieval period cannot serve an extremely complex industrial society. The industrial society, by its own impetus, leads to rapid changes in material conditions as well as in the sphere of knowledge. One of the world's most important specialists in educational television has written :

At the present rate at which knowledge is developing, the sum of human knowledge will be four times greater when a person leaves the university than it was when he was born. When he is fifty years old, 97 per cent of what he knows will have been discovered during his life time.²⁷

When knowledge is spreading so fast (it has been called by some as explosion of knowledge) and technological changes occurring at a breath-taking speed, how can a static theology which has lost its inner dynamism, serve human society? Theology can be useful in setting meaningful human goals only when it relates itself to human conditions. The divine project which theology aspires to achieve on earth embodies the highest ideals as conceived by and for human beings. A divine project expounded through theologians can achieve its purpose only by recreating reality in such a way as to defeat the evil which also assumes the form of powerful vested interests opposing any change for the betterment of humanity. Divine goals to crystallize through spacio-temporal conditions but cannot be confined to them. They go beyond

them and that is possible only by relating them creatively to changing conditions. Theology embodies potentialities which actualize themselves in situational context. Contextualisation of theology is, therefore, as important as its metaphysical aspect described as sublimity. Paul Tillich, in his *Systematic Theology*²⁸ uses an interesting term “driving toward the sublime” for self-transcendence of life in its search for actualising ever higher potentialities. He says:

For the way in which this elevation of life beyond itself becomes apparent, I suggest using the phrase ‘driving toward the sublime’. The words ‘sublime’, ‘sublimation’, ‘sublimity’, point to ‘going beyond limits’ toward the great, the solemn, the high.²⁹

He further points out:

Thus, within the process of actualization of the potential, which is called life, we distinguish the three functions of life: self-integration under the principle of centredness, self-creation under the principle of growth, and self-transcendence under the principle of sublimity. The basic structure of self-identity and self-alteration is effective in each, and each is dependent on the basic polarities of being: self-integration on the polarity of individualization and participation, self-creation on the polarity of dynamics and form, self-transcendence on the polarity of freedom and destiny.³⁰

The concept of freedom is a basic constituent of liberation theology. Freedom to choose and freedom to go beyond (self-transcendence) for betterment of life conditions and also to meaningfully relate oneself to changing conditions. The form is not as important as the goal and ultimate destiny which is to achieve the great, the solemn and the high. Liberation theology allows man this freedom to go beyond his present situation, to actualize new potentialities of life within the framework of history otherwise they would remain mere essences. Paul Tillich very significantly remarks:

History describes the sequence of such potentialities but with a decisive qualification: it describes them as they

appear under the conditions of existence and within the ambiguities of life. Without the revelation of human potentialities (generally speaking potentialities of life), historical accounts would not report significant events. Without the unique embodiment of these potentialities, they would not appear in history; they would remain pure essences. Yet they are both significant, because they are above history, and unique, because they are within history.³¹

Also, it must be borne in mind that the theology of liberation demands continuous struggle and striving for betterment of life and restructuring environment. Unlike the 'status quoist' theology its primary aim is not to provide solace and justification for suffering and misery treating them as inevitable conditions of life. Liberation theology is not theology of solace but that of struggle. The liberation theology, in other words, does not advocate the concept of the 'God of gaps' assigned to fill in the temporary lacunae of science and the temporary limitations of technology with metaphysical hypotheses.³² It also rejects the concept of 'God of alibis' charged with making up for man's active failures by 'supernatural interventions'. Liberation theology does not seek God in the limitations of man's powers or in his failures, but at the centre of man, in his creativity and maturity.³³ Liberation theology does not treat the institutions once evolved as sacred and unalterable. Values, and not institutions, should be treated as sacred. Institutions and instruments emerge as a result of historical process and stand in constant need of refabrication in order to come as near as historically possible to the divine goal. Liberation theology subordinates institutions evolved in the historical process to a lively sense of living, active God who inspires human beings for passionate but rational pursuit of social justice which is dominant note of faith.³⁴

III

In the light of the main characteristics of the liberation theology discussed above, I propose to throw light on deve-

loping liberation theology in Islam. If we do not treat the Islamic theology as developed by the '*ulama*' during the medieval ages to suit their time and conditions as sacrosanct, immutable and unalterable, as is often assumed, Islam, in my opinion, has great potential for lending itself to develop liberation theology. Liberation theology, it must be understood, is much more than rational theology. There have been attempts, in modern times, to develop rational theology in Islam. Jamaluddin Afghani, Muhammad 'Abduh, 'Abd ar-Rahman al-Kawakibi, Sir Sayyid Ahmad and others, under the influence of the West tried to develop rational theology in Islam.

Rational theology views the religious teachings and institutions in the light of reason and advocate freedom of re-interpretation of the scriptural text. It has great appeal for the modern elite as, more often than not, rational theology subserves the ends of this elite. However, this rational approach may not appeal to the masses as they hardly feel any need for rational theology. In the present social structure which imposes severe constraints on the economic as well as intellectual progress of the masses and compels them to remain backward, a rational or book view of religion with its transcendental complex does not enthuse them. In this state of backwardness what appeals to them is the folk religion with its attendant rituals. The religion, in this form, serves their psychological need to bear the hard conditions of life, miseries which would be difficult to bear without such a psychological prop.

However, liberation theology, does not confine itself to the arena of pure and speculative reasoning; it widens its scope to become a most powerful instrument for emancipating the masses from the clutches of their masters and exploiters and inspires them to act with revolutionary zeal to fight against tyranny, exploitation and persecution. Thus liberation theology enables them to change their condition for the better and transform the world rather than put up with it. From 'opiate' of the people liberation theology transforms religion into a powerful instrument of militant struggle and revolutionary change.

Islam as compared to other religions, as pointed out earlier, has much greater potential for developing a liberation theology. The historical genesis of Islam can help us understand its revolutionary potential. Mecca, the birth place of Islam, was a centre of international commerce at the time of its origin. There had emerged on the social scene of Mecca powerful merchants specialising in complex international financial operations and commercial transactions.³⁵ Due to these developments the institution of private property which was absent in the tribal society began to consolidate itself. The rich merchants who had formed inter-tribal corporations to carry on and monopolize trade with the regions of Byzantine empire and accumulated profits without distributing a part of it to the poor and needy of their tribes. This went against the tribal norms and caused social malaise in Mecca.

The Prophet felt the acute social tensions developing in the Meccan society due to the widening gap between the rich and poor and a violent conflict it could lead to if these tensions were not resolved. He addressed himself to the powerful merchants of Mecca and exhorted them not to hoard their wealth but to take care of the poor, orphans, and the needy. The Meccan verses revealed to the Prophet sharply condemn the practice of accumulation of wealth and warns the Meccan merchants of the dangerous consequence which will follow if they do not spend their wealth in the way of Allah. It is said in one of the Meccan verses:

(Woe unto) who has gathered wealth and sedulously hoards it, thinking that their riches will render them immortal!

By no means! They shall be flung to the Destroying Flame. Would that you knew what the Destroying Flame is like! It is Allah's own kindled fire, which will rise upto the hearts of men. It will close upon them from every side, in towering columns.³⁶

And again:

Wordly affluence has made you oblivious (of consequences) until you come to the graves.

But you shall know, you shall before long come to know. Indeed, if you knew the truth with certainty, you would see the fire of Hell: you would see it with your very eyes. Then, on that day, you shall be questioned about your joys.³⁷

Thus we see that in the verses quoted above hoarding of wealth and worldly affluence is condemned in no uncertain terms. Significantly, in the latter verse it is said that preoccupation with the piling up of wealth makes one oblivious of all the consequences until they meet their graves. It is further predicted that if they remain preoccupied with joys of life they would soon see hell fire (i.e. people's wrath who are deprived of their just and legitimate share) and they would certainly be confronted with this wrath and then they will be questioned about their joys!

It was primarily for this reason that the powerful merchants of Mecca opposed the Prophet and became his sworn enemies. These were the vested interests the Prophet had to fight against in Mecca. First, the Meccan rich offered inducements to the Prophet if only he stopped preaching his egalitarian doctrine. The Prophet refused to compromise with the rich and so they began to severely persecute him. The Meccan rich who also commanded the leadership of the society (there was no regular government or state machinery as such in Mecca at that time), like the rich in any other society, were not much perturbed with the religious doctrines preached by the Prophet. They were seriously concerned with the socio-economic consequences of his teachings and the attack he launched on their wealth and privileges.³⁸ The Qur'an attacked their power which was a result of concentration of wealth and monopoly of trade established by them.

Dr. Khalfallah³⁹ also maintains that the power of these Meccan leaders was based on their wealth and number of children they had.⁴⁰ The Qur'an, according to him, was revealed to break the power of these forces in the society. The Qur'an made it clear to the people that such a power is of no consequence unless it stands to benefit the society. The only power which does not oppress others is that of God;

any other power which opposes it (i.e. power of God) seeks to oppress and dominate others by acquiring all the sources of power (i.e. the material means). The goal of life should not be to acquire this power (by usurping the material means) but to render good deeds (*amal salih*) leading to creation of a healthy and just society and welfare of all. The worldly power does not last and it is no use boasting over it (an unjust society based on usurpation of power and sources of wealth is imbalanced one and generates revolutionary forces led by the oppressed masses and is thus destroyed). The Qur'an also says that (unjust) power and wealth and justice cannot go together.⁴¹

Those who joined the Prophet of Islam in the beginning of his struggle were, with certain exceptions, either the youth or the weaker sections of Meccan society. Like Bilal of Abyssinia, many slaves and other deprived sections of the Meccan society joined the Prophet's mission as they saw the possibility of their liberation through his mission. It would be interesting to recall here the speech of Raif Khoury, Christian Lebanese writer about the early mission of Islam:

How often we have heard the call of the *muezzin* from the minarets of this eternal Arab city: *Allaho Akbar! Allaho Akbar!* How often we have read or been told that Bilal, the Abyssinian, was the first to make the air of the Arabian Peninsula ring with this call, at the time when the Prophet's mission was in its infancy, when he was enduring the persecutions of the persecutors and the obloquy of stubborn conservatives. Bilal's call was a summons, a fanfare sounding the beginning of a struggle between an epoch which was drawing to an end and an age whose sun was just rising. But have you ever dwelt on what was linked to that call, on what it contained? Do you remember, each time you hear the echo of that pristine call, what *Allaho Akbar* means, in plain language: punish the greedy usurers! Tax those who accumulate profits! Confiscate the possessions of the thieving monopolists! Guarantee bread to the people! Open the road of education and progress to

women! Destroy all the vermin who spread ignorance and division amongst the community (omma)! Seek out science, even as far away as China (Today's China not just the China of the past). Let the stars of freedom, of free counsel (*shura*) and of true democracy shine forth.¹²

It can thus be seen that the Prophet initiated a process of profound change in the Arabian society which brought about the downfall of powerful vested interests which had emerged on the Meccan scene. The Prophet of Islam was seriously concerned with the fate of the downtrodden in Mecca and this concern burst forth in the verses revealed during this period. Some of the terms often used in the Qur'an will have to be redefined while developing liberation theology in the light of this consideration. Islam naturally began as a religious movement and these terms, therefore, have acquired deep religious connotations. However, Islam, as pointed out above, was not only concerned with spiritual but also equally with this worldly side of life. It took the project of establishing a just society here on earth quite seriously and repeatedly emphasised this approach.

The terms we are referring to will, therefore, have to be seen in a socio-economic perspective also. A liberation theology cannot confine these terms to their religious connotations only; they must be re-interpreted to bring out their socio-economic import. Islam gives a concept of society which is free of exploitation, oppression, domination and injustice in any form. Also, it emphasises progress and change in harmony with the laws of God Who is merciful and just. The God of the Qur'an, it must be remembered, is not only merciful but is also mighty and powerful.⁴³ He approves of those oppressed avenging themselves "... and vindicate themselves after they have been oppressed.⁴⁴ Those who do oppress (others) will come to know by what a (great) reverse they will be overturned.⁴⁵ The God of the Qur'an also declares His sympathy in no uncertain terms in favour of the oppressed and the weak: "And We desired to show favour unto those who were oppressed in the

earth, and to make them leaders of mankind and to make them the inheritors (of this earth)."⁴⁶

When the Qur'an categorically condemns oppression and injustice, its concern for the social health and egalitarian social structure cannot be denied and hence the Quranic terms would have, apart from religious import, socio-economic connotations also. Thus a condemnatory term like *Kafir* would not only connote religious disbelief as is the case in traditional theology but would also imply obstruction in the creation of a just and egalitarian society free of all forms of exploitation and oppression. Thus a *kafir* is one who does not believe in God and actively opposes with all his might an honest attempt to restructure a society in order to eliminate concentration of wealth, exploitation and other forms of injustice.

Kufr (disbelief) would not be determined, as far as liberation theology is concerned, by mere formal denial of faith in God; one who formally professes faith in God but indulges in accumulation of wealth by exploiting others and goes in for conspicuous consumption while others starve in the neighbourhood would also commit *kufr* and thus incur the displeasure of God. The Qur'an says in one of the Meccan *surahs*⁴⁷: "Have you observed him who belief religion? It is he who turns away the orphan and does not urge others to feed the poor. Woe to those who pray but are heedless in their prayer; who make a show of piety and obstruct the needy from necessities."⁴⁸

Thus it is clear that those who profess their faith in religion and make show of their piety but deprive the orphans and destitutes of their rights are not real believers. Thus to be a believer or a true Muslim one has to act in a way so as to create a just society that takes care of the orphans, the destitutes and the needy. The medieval theologians emphasised giving of alms but a liberation theologian in a modern industrial society would interpret it to mean creation of a socialistic structure with emphasis on equal distribution of all available resources.

The Qur'an makes interesting observations about almsgiving which must be borne in mind to understand its real

philosophy and sound approach. The Qur'an says: "Believers, do not mar your alms-giving by reproach and injury, like those who spend their wealth for the sake of ostentation and believe neither in Allah nor in the Last Day. Such a man is like a rock covered with earth; a shower falls upon it and leaves it hard and bare. They shall gain nothing from their works."⁴⁰

Thus the Qur'an recognises the human weakness that charity is often made for ostentation and the alms-giver often has a feeling of superiority which is manifested by reproach and injuring the feelings of those who approach him for alms. With the help of a beautiful simile the Qur'an makes it clear that such alms-giving defeats the very purpose and would not help create a stable society, a just system. Such a system would be wiped out with the first flush of anger of the masses. Such alms-giving would not at all benefit the alms-giver. As human experience shows most of the alms-giver fall into this category; alms-giving would not lead to creating a healthy social order. Mutual conflict and tension between the haves and have-nots would keep it unstable. The simile of rock used by the Qur'an makes it quite clear that such a society cannot develop firm roots.

The later verses also make it clear that such an alms-giving is not going to solve the problem. But giving away ones wealth to please Allah (i.e. agree to its just re-distribution) can only lead to better social relations and management of social tension. The Qur'an says: "But those that give away their wealth from a desire to please Allah and to reassure their own souls are like a garden on a hill-side: if a shower falls upon it, it yields up twice its normal crop; and if no rain falls upon it, it is watered by the dew. Allah takes cognizance of all your actions."⁵⁰ Thus this verse makes it clear that only when the wealthy give away their wealth to please Allah (i.e. to create proper social order by its redistribution) and not to give it by way of ostentation to the needy with a sense of obligation on him, can it lead to proper social order and increased production of wealth (twice its normal crop) as the needy and the poor, after their basic needs are satisfied, would work harder to multiply the social wealth.⁵¹

The true Quranic spirit would make it necessary to devise

new institutions other than mere alms-giving to ensure social justice in an industrial economy. Socialist concepts and institutions come much nearer to this Quranic spirit. In a socialist economy distributive justice is as much important as production of wealth. According to the Quranic concept of justice it is producers who have the right of ownership over the wealth produced by them. It is very clearly stated in the Qur'an that no one shall bear the burden of others⁵² (i.e. no one shall work for others' comforts and luxuries). It is clear denial of the right of extracting labour without fully compensating for it as is sanctioned by feudal or capitalist systems in one form or the other. The Qur'an also says that man shall get what he strives for.⁵³ Both the above Quranic verses put together are clear enunciation of the principle of ownership of wealth based on one's labour. In other words Islam does not recognise ownership based on exploitation of labour by way of appropriation of surplus labour or by way of speculation and future trading in commodities. It is in this spirit that speculation and future trading in commodities has been categorically banned in Islam.⁵⁴ The liberation theology, needless to say, would give great emphasis on the principle of ownership based on labour or work—a principle which has been neglected by the medieval theology.

This brings us to the most important question of right of private property in Islam. The traditional theologians consider the institution of property as sacred and inviolable. An Islamic conference held in Mecca in 1976 opposed the concept of nationalization as against the teachings of Islam. It emphasised man's trusteeship of natural resources and of social and economic institutions. State intervention in their view should not extend beyond supervising the economic growth for realization of ideological objectives.⁵⁵ However, taking the true spirit of Islam into account, '*ulama*' are not justified in treating private property *per se* as sacred and inviolable. A property acquired by exploitation, speculation or by any means other than by one's own labour cannot have any sanction in Islam.

There are clear traditions of the Prophet prohibiting share cropping or owning the land which is not cultivated by the

owner himself. All the standard works on *Hadith* (traditions) i.e. *Muwatta'* of Imam Malik, *Sahih Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim* etc. have included a number of traditions of the Prophet against giving the land on share cropping or on rent. These traditions have been narrated by six Companions of the Prophet who are considered highly reliable.⁵⁶ According to a tradition in *Sahih Muslim* narrated by Jabir bin 'Abdallah, "The Prophet said that one who possesses land should cultivate it himself and if he is unable to do so he should give (that portion of the land or whole piece of land which he cannot cultivate) to another Muslim (who wants to cultivate it) without taking any compensation."⁵⁷

Thus it would be seen that the right to property in Islam is certainly not absolute as is often believed. The right to property is subject to such conditions as would be amenable to the creation of a just social order. Bani Sadr, the exiled President of Iran, in his book *Iqtisad-i-Tawhidi*,⁵⁸ has divided property into three categories: *Malikiyat-i-Khususi*, *Malikiyat-i-Umumi* and *Malikiyat-i-zor* i.e. private property based on one's labour, general property (belonging to nation and he includes means of production and similar other categories of properties under this category) and property acquired by speculation, swindling, cheating etc.⁵⁹ Islam, Bani Sadr makes it repeatedly clear, does not approve of ownership based on force but permits, subject to certain conditions, ownership based on work. Bani Sadr holds that the ownership in a capitalist society is based on force and is, therefore, un-Islamic. He maintains that in such a society (i.e. capitalist society) there is nothing like *Malikiyat-i-Khususi* (i.e. property based on work) but, on the contrary, everyone holds property in direct proportion to the force exercised by him. If one loses this force, one loses one's property also.⁶⁰

It is also interesting to note that Bani Sadr interprets various verses of the Qur'an in a way which would strengthen his understanding of the Islamic teachings. According to him, *Kufr* (unbelief) means obstructing the creation of *Jami'i Tawhidi* (i.e. a just society) and anyone who seeks to dominate and oppress the weak (establishing a socio-economic system based on *malikiyat-i-zor*) is *kafir*, whatever his

verbal professions of faith. Bani Sadr also maintains that it is evident from certain Quranic verses that the earth belongs to man (God, in these verses, addresses mankind and not a particular religious or racial group) and how men could be God's vice-regents effectively if the earth does not belong to them collectively during all periods. If the earth has to remain permanently under the control of mankind collectively, how a few strong and powerful (*zormandan*) could be allowed to dominate it. Such an act is *kufr*. Beginning of *kufr*, Bani Sadr maintains, is beginning of domination by the strong of the weak.⁶¹ Such a formulation, in fact, should be treated as a central theme of liberation theology.⁶²

The other central concept of Islam is *tawhid* which, as far as traditional theology is concerned, means unity of Godhood. *Shirk* (i.e. associating others with Allah) has been strongly condemned by the Qur'an. The liberation theology, while accepting the concept of the unity of Godhood, strives to broaden the scope of *tawhid*. *Tawhid* in liberation theology, implies not only unity of God but also unity of mankind in all respect.⁶³ An Islamic society or *Jami'i Tawhid*, does not approve of any form of discrimination⁶⁴ whether based on race, religion, caste or class. A truly *tawhidi* society is one which ensures complete unity among mankind and for that it is necessary to create a classless society. Unity of Godhood must ensure complete unity of society and such a society cannot admit of any division, not even class division. There cannot be true solidarity of the faithfuls unless all racial, national and socio-economic divisions are done away with. Thus such a concept of *tawhid* acquires primary importance in developing liberation theology. Class divisions would imply domination of strong over the weak. Such a domination is the very denial of the creation of a just society.

These are some of the most important considerations in reinterpreting the holy Qur'an for developing a liberation theology of Islam. However, the '*ulama*', oblivious of the problems of the modern world, still keep on grappling with the Israeli mythology which had influenced the early commentators of the Qur'an.⁶⁵ The Israeli mythology, after the conquest of the Fertile Crescent, greatly influenced the

commentators of the Qur'an.⁶⁰ This influence proved to be abiding and pushed the revolutionary spirit of the Qur'an to the background. There were a few commentators in that period who were aware of this development. Ibn Miskwayah selected from the past, for his commentary, only those events which had some practical advantage for the future generations. He rejects all those myths and stories which are meant to "benumb" the people and make them "oblivious of their own problems". He, therefore, even ignores the prophetic miracles from which people can hardly derive any benefit for their practical life. Human efforts, according to Ibn Miskwayah, have nothing to do with these miracles.⁶⁷

The '*ulama*' had to face the powerful challenge of the mighty Umayyad and Abbasid empires which were determined to perpetuate *status quo*. Most of the '*ulama*' sought refuge in fascinating myths in writing their commentaries on the Qur'an. Such commentaries proved quite helpful to kill the revolutionary spirit and perpetuate *status quo*. The Qur'an, it is important to note, opposes in categorical terms all the oppressive establishments. Most of the prophets mentioned in it are from amongst the masses and fight against tyrants and oppressive rulers.⁶⁸ The prophets came from among the people, not from among the rulers or ruling establishments. The Qur'an declares: "It is He Who has sent forth *apostle from amongst the people* (emphasis added) to recite to them His revelations, to purify them, and to impart to them wisdom and knowledge of the scriptures...."⁶⁹ Thus it is made quite clear by the Qur'an that apostles are selected from amongst the people themselves and they impart wisdom to them and guide them to fight against oppression and exploitation. The Prophet Moses is projected by the Qur'an as a liberator of the Israelis who were being oppressed by the Pharaoh. The Israelis were the oppressed and weak (*mustad'ifun*) on earth. Moses was the man of the people who fights for their liberation from the oppressive establishment.

Another important concept in Islam is that of *jihad* which literally means struggle. This concept also needs to be re-interpreted in the context of liberation theology. A pro-

pounder of liberation theology has to emphasize (as the Qur'an does) to wage struggle (*jihad*) for eliminating exploitation, corruption and *zulm* (wrong-doing, tyranny) in all their varied forms and this struggle will continue until these corrupting influences are completely eliminated from the earth. The Qur'an declares unambiguously, "And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is all for Allah. But if they cease, then lo! Allah is Seer of what they do."⁷⁰ Thus it is very clear that Allah desires that the faithfuls fight until persecution ceases on earth. And seen in proper context the real import of "religion is all for Allah" is the creation of a society where there would no more be persecution and exploitation of man by man. It is the basic duty of every faithful to wage struggle until this divine objective is realized.

The Qur'an does not approve of people sitting idly by when others are being persecuted. It says: "Why should you not fight for the cause of Allah and of the weak among men and of the women and the children who are crying: 'Our Lord! Deliver us from this town of which the people are oppressors! Oh! give us from Thy presence some protecting friend! Oh, give us from Thy presence some defender!'"⁷¹ It is thus clear that the Qur'an wants the faithfuls to fight for the cause of the weak among men, women and children who pray to be delivered from the clutches of the oppressors. And, it must be noted that to fight for this cause is to fight for the cause of Allah. The Qur'an also makes it clear that an oppressor cannot be entrusted with the leadership of the people even if he belongs to the progeny of a prophet. When the Prophet Abraham is told that he would be appointed the leader of the people he inquires about the status of his offspring. He is told in no uncertain terms that this covenant does not include the wrong doers. "And of my offspring (will there be leaders)? He said: My covenant includes no oppressors."⁷²

Thus the whole emphasis of the Qur'an is on liberation of mankind from exploitation and oppression. The liberation theology in Islam derives its strength from such Quranic injunctions. Those who do not fight for the liberation of the

oppressed and the weak cannot claim to be real faithfuls by mere profession of faith verbally. The Qur'an says, "Do men imagine that they will be left because they say, 'we believe' and will not be tested (in action). Lo ! We tested those who were before you."⁷³ The Prophetic tradition also says that "the best form of *jihad* is telling the truth on the face of tyrants."⁷⁴ Today most of the Muslim countries happen to be in the Third World and are exploited by imperialist forces. Thus it would be their duty to wage struggle against the imperialist forces and it is in this light that the struggles of the peoples of Palestine, Iran and other countries should be seen. The liberation theology would urge upon every Muslim to fight against exploiters and oppressors within the country they belong to and outside the country by joining hands with all the anti-imperialist forces.

A perceptive observer of the social scene knows that there is always tension between the real and the possible. A traditional theology tries to resolve this tension by compromising with the real and coming to terms with it. As against this, liberation theology seeks to intensify tension between the real and the possible by putting greater emphasis on the possible and by waging struggle against that which exists today in order to bring it closer to the possible. The attainment of the possible, the liberation theology emphasizes, can be brought about by increasing degree of freedom both for individual and collectivity (a group, a community or a nation), reducing economic exploitation (by socializing instruments of production, prohibiting accumulation of wealth, severely penalizing practice of usury, creating appropriate institutions to ensure satisfaction of basic needs of all the people, etc.),⁷⁵ waging unceasing struggles against those who have vested interest in maintaining *status quo* and to interpret the Quranic injunctions in such a way as to ensure continuous progress of humanity. The liberation theology is, therefore, essentially the theology of the possible.

Liberation theology stands for unity of mankind and does not admit of any division based on caste, creed, class or race. It continuously strives to achieve this unity by eliminating all such differences. Even the differences based on religion are

more apparent than real. The Qur'an says, "For each We have appointed a divine law and a way (of worshipping). Had Allah willed He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He has given you. So vie with one another for good deeds."⁷⁶ Thus the real emphasis is on good deeds and on the ways of worshipping (which may differ from community to community).⁷⁷ The liberation theology also lays a good deal of emphasis on justice which is one of the most important Quranic doctrines. The Qur'an says addressing the believers, ". . . Be steadfast witnesses for Allah with justness, and let not hatred of any people seduce you that you deal not justly. Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty to Allah. Allah is informed of what you do."⁷⁸ More than that the Quran requires of its believers: "Be staunch in justice, witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or (your) parents or (your) kindred, whether (the case be of) a rich man or a poor man, for Allah is nearer unto both. So follow not passion lest you lapse (from truth). . ."⁷⁹

Thus justice is of primary importance for the liberation theology in Islam. One must be just even if it goes against one's own self or one's near and dear ones. One must not be carried by passions as it would lead to oppression (*zulm*) injuring the cause of justice which Islam upholds so dearly and, therefore, liberation theology also has to make it a matter of central concern. The traditional theologians have, more often than not, remained preoccupied with metaphysical questions and *ibadat* (prayers, fasting, etc.) relegating the question of social justice and this worldly existence to a secondary position. The liberation theology seeks to re-emphasize the central concern of Islam with social justice and its fundamental emphasis on liberating the weaker sections and the oppressed masses and radically restructuring the society to eliminate all the vested interests which would ultimately lead to the creation of classless society which is the real purpose of *tawhidi* society. It is needless to point out that the liberation theology is opposed to fundamentalist movement as it seeks to re-emphasize traditional issues and seeks to give new lease of life to traditional theology without

concerning itself with the problems of modern world, economic exploitation, social injustices and anti-imperialist struggles to liberate the Third World countries from the clutches of the imperialist forces.⁸⁰

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32. Roger Garudy, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
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34. Here I have paraphrased the words of W.C. Smith quoted by Ibrahim W. Ata in his article "Prospects and Retrospectives on the Role of Moslem Arab Women at Present: Trends and Tendencies", *Islamic Culture*, Vol. LV No. 4, October 1981, p. 259.
35. See for detailed treatment of this subject in *Origin and Development of Islam*, *op. cit.*
36. The Qur'an, CIV: 2-9.
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38. See for detailed analysis of this phenomenon Dr. Taha Husain's *Fitnat-ul-Kubra*, Vol. I ('Uthman), Urdu tr. by 'Abdul Hamid Nu'mani, Malegaon, n.d.
39. Dr. Muhammad Ahmad Khalfallah, *Muhammad wa al-Quwah, al-Mudaddah*, Egypt, 1973.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
42. Raif Khoury, *Ath-Thawrah al-Qawmi al'Arabi*, at-Tariq edition, Beirut (1942), p. 7: Cf. also an article by the same author published in 1946 in *at-Tariq*, vol. 5, No. 23-24, p. 3-4, summarised by M.S. Agwani, *Communism and the Arab East*, Asia Publishing House, London (1969), p. 52, and Maxime Rodinson, *Marxism and the Muslim World*, Delhi (1979), p. 51.
43. The Qur'an, XXVII: 9.

44. Pickthall translates the word *zulm* as wrong doing which is nearer the literal meaning of the Arabic word but, in my opinion, the correct contextual translation would be oppression.
45. The Qur'an, XXVI: 227.
46. The Qur'an, XXVII: 5.
47. The Qur'an, CVII.
47. The word *Ma'un* has many shades of meaning. The traditional theologians have often translated it as 'alms' or good deeds etc. *Ma'un* in Arabic also means small household articles or this can also mean elementary and basic necessities. From the point of view of liberation theology I have chosen the last meaning.
48. The Qur'an, II:264.
50. The Qur'an, II: 285.
51. The Qur'an basically uses symbolic language. The symbols can be interpreted according to the ethos and needs of the time. In an industrial economy the interpretation of various concepts and institutions evolved during medieval ages has to change.
52. The Qur'an, LIII: 38.
53. The Qur'an, LIII: 39.
54. There is complete unanimity among the '*ulama*' as regards the banning of speculation in Islam. There are numerous traditions ascribed to the Prophet about prohibiting speculation.
55. See *The Times of India*, Bombay, 15 March, 1976, M. Shamim, "Updating Islamic Economics".
56. See "Tehqiq-e-Riba", by Dr. Fazlur Rehman in *Fikro Nazar*, Vol. 1, Nov. 1963, Karachi, p. 72.
57. *Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Buyu*, Chapter 'Kira' al-Ard', Cf. Dr. Fazlur Rehman, *op. cit.* .
58. The book *Iqtisad-i-Tawhidi*, published from Iran does not mention the name of the publisher or the date of publication.
59. For detailed comments on Bani Sadr's book, please see Asghar Ali Engineer's "A Critical Appraisal of Bani Sadr's Theory of Islamic Economics" in Anwar Moazzam (ed.), *Islam and Contemporary Muslim World*, Delhi (1981), pp. 118-131.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

62. Bani Sadr's views have undergone changes since he came to power with the help of Imam Khomeini and again when he was unseated by him. But we are more concerned here with the treatment of this subject by him in his book referred to above and validity of his concepts as far as liberation theology is concerned.
63. The Mujahedin of Iran are engaged in a liberation struggle and they are giving new interpretations to the Quranic concepts like *Tawhid*, *Kufr*, etc.
64. The Qur'an, XLIX: 13.
65. See for discussion on this Dr. Jawwad 'Ali, *Tarikh-i-Tabari ke Maakhidh*, Urdu tr. by Nisar Ahmad Faruqi, Delhi (1980).
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.
67. Ibn Miskwayah, *Tajarib al-Umam*, Vol. 1, p. 2, Cf. Dr. Jawwad 'Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
68. See in this respect the interesting commentary of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on Dhu al-Qarnayn, *Tarjuman al-Qur'an*, Vol. 4, Delhi (1980), pp. 430-542.
69. The Qur'an, LXII: 2.
70. The Qur'an, VIII: 39.
71. The Qur'an, IV: 75.
72. The Qur'an, II: 124.
73. The Qur'an, XXIX: 2.
74. Quoted by Farzand Ali Khan in *Aj ke Masa'il aur Islam*, Delhi, n.d. p. 61.
75. All these measures have the Quranic sanction. There are number of verses in the Qur'an, which strongly condemn accumulation of wealth. Some of these verses have already been quoted above.
76. The Qur'an, V: 51.
77. See Maulana Azad's *Tarjuman al-Qur'an*, Vol. 1, *op. cit.*
78. The Qur'an, V: 9.
79. The Qur'an, IV: 135.
80. Khomeini's stance is more anti-American as America supported the Shah rather than anti-imperialist. He has hardly given any importance to the issue of distributive justice. Moreover, he is brutally suppressing all those forces which advocate radical re-structuring of social set-up.

BA'THIST REVOLUTION IN IRAQ: THE IDEOLOGICAL BASES

M.S. Agwani

Founded in 1947, the *Hizb-al-Ba'th al-Arabi al-Ishtiraki* (Arab Renaissance Socialist Party)¹ pioneered the ideas which have now become a driving force behind the Arab struggle to create a unified progressive national state that can hold its own among the nations of the world. It appeared on the scene when the older generation of leadership in the newly independent Arab states stood politically discredited and morally exhausted under the crushing weight of opportunistic alliances and unprincipled compromises with domestic and foreign vested interests which were soon to climax in the tragedy of Palestine. By rekindling the hope of unity and the vision of a meaningful national destiny the Ba'th promised to dispel the atmosphere of drift, disarray and despair which had disfigured the Arab bodies politic over the previous three decades.

The Constitution

The first authentic statement of the Ba'ths principles and programme is contained in the constitution² adopted by the founding congress of the party on 7 April 1947. The programme of the Ba'th rests on three principles: unity, freedom and socialism. Its concept of the Arab nation marked a shift in Arab nationalist thinking. It presented the vision of an Arab homeland "inhabited by the Arab nation, bounded by the Taurus and Pusht-i-Kuh Mountains, the Gulf of Basra, the Arabian Sea, the Ethiopian Mountains, the Sahara, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean

Sea". The Arab homeland being an indivisible political, economic and cultural unity "all existing differences among its sons are incidental and false, and will totally disappear with the awakening of Arab consciousness." This concept of nation and its homeland is "inspired by the will of the Arab people to unite, to be free, and to be given the opportunity to make a place for Arab personality in history and to co-operate with other nations in all matters that help in the steady advance of humanity towards welfare and progress."

Secondly, while unity is the essential pre-requisite of Arab national revival, its fulfilment calls for "the freedom of the individual". The party believes that "sovereignty belongs to the people which alone is the source of all authority and leadership, that the value of the State is measured by the support it receives from the masses, and that its sanctity is contingent upon the freedom they enjoy in the choice of their government." It is, moreover, committed to create objective conditions conducive to the exercise of full rights by the citizens in individual as well as national life. These include establishment of a constitutional representative system requiring the executive to be responsible to the legislature, independence of the judiciary, and a single code of laws for all citizens in harmony with the spirit of the present age.

The third cardinal principle of the Ba'th ideology is socialism which is defined as a necessary ingredient of Arab nationalism because "it is the ideal system which allows the Arab people to develop its potentialities and genius, enables the nation to increase its production, raises its morale, and strengthens the ties of brotherhood among its members". Specifically, the Ba'th stands for equitable distribution of wealth, national ownership of major industries, natural resources, and public utilities, limitation of private land ownership on the basis of ability of the proprietor to utilize his land fully 'without exploiting the labour of others; workers' participation in the management of factories and fixation of their share in the profits by the State; direct public control over internal and external trade; and

rapid industrialization of the Arab homeland. It also advocates fair wages, the rights of workers and peasants to form unions, progressive abolition of archaic tribal customs. Curiously, the constitution also recognized the rights of private property and of inheritance. The manifest incompatibility of this provision with the party's commitment to socialism aroused much controversy in later years.

To achieve its two-fold objective of comprehensive Arab unity and socialism, the Ba'th commends the course of revolution and struggle. The driving force behind this revolution is the concept of the "Arab mission" embodied in the Ba'th's battle-cry; one Arab nation with an immortal mission. The mission derives from the inherent capacity of the Arab nation for self-renewal through recurrent tides of national self-assertion. In plain terms, the Arabs have made singular contributions to world civilization at different stages of human history. The Arab homeland has been the cradle of three universal faiths: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And the Arab genius also created a dynamic civilization in the early centuries of their revival under Islam. In the context of the modern times, the Arabs can make their proper contribution to the world civilization only by waging a relentless war against foreign domination, social injustice, class exploitation, and suppression of the popular will, within the framework of Arab unity.

Evidently, the Ba'th did not, at this stage, subscribe to the concepts of "class struggle" and "proletarian revolution". But, as we shall presently see, its stand on these as well as other related issues underwent a sea-change in the course of its ensuing political struggle.

Founders and Builders

It is necessary at this point to make some reference to the principal *thinkers* and *doers* of the Ba'th who have carried forward its banner; the former by enunciating its theoretical formulations, the latter by applying these formulations to the practical task of nation-building.

For over thirty years, Michel Aflaq has been the theoretician *par excellence* of the Ba'th. Born in 1912, in a Damascus

Greek Orthodox Christian home, Aflaq received his higher education at Sorbonne where he also came under Marxian influence. But his favourites were the German thinkers of the Romantic and Idealist schools whose influence is reflected in his early conceptualization of Arab "personality" and "mission", and of "revolution" and "struggle". In later years, these concepts either came to be underplayed or were modified to accommodate the objective political and economic realities of Arab and international life. Aflaq has not been a prolific writer by any reckoning. But his speeches and articles—whether on theoretical issues or Arab and international developments—have commanded a wide and receptive audience. Throughout his eventful career he has shunned government office barring a brief spell as Syria's Minister of Education in 1949. But as Secretary-General of the Ba'th he has been helmsman of Arab resurgence all these years except for a brief period in the mid sixties when he had stepped down in favour of Munif Razzaz, a veteran Ba'thist from Jordan.

Salah al-Din Bitar shares with Aflaq the distinction of being a founding-father of the Ba'th. Born in a Sunni Muslim family of Damascus, Bitar is of the same age as Aflaq and was also his contemporary at Sorbonne. But unlike Aflaq, Bitar's talent lay in party organization and administration. He was Syria's Foreign Minister on the eve of that country's merger with Egypt. He was successively Minister of State and Minister of Culture in the United Arab Republic until 1959 when he resigned. In the post-secession era when the Ba'th came to power in March 1963, Bitar became Prime Minister of Syria which office he held until February 1966 when an extreme faction of the Ba'th split the party. He formally left the party in 1968 but continued to maintain a sympathetic interest in its cause.*

Unlike the co-founders, Munif Razzaz belongs to a comparatively younger generation of the Ba'this. Born in Syria in 1919, he was brought up in Amman and took his medical

* Bitar was assassinated in Paris on 21 July 1980 by an unknown assailant.

degree from the University of Cairo. Razzaz joined the Ba'th in 1949 and became a close disciple of Aflaq. The appearance of his widely read book *Ma'alim al-Hayat al-Arabiyya al-Jadidah* (Landmarks of the New Arab Life)³ established him as a gifted theoretician of the party. In 1965 he succeeded Aflaq as the party's Secretary-General, and held that office until April 1967.

Beside Bitar, the prominent figures among the *doers* are Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Husayn of Iraq. Al-Bakr was a professional soldier with years of clandestine association with the Ba'th prior to assuming office as President of Iraq. Al-Bakr was a member of the Free Officers' organization which toppled the pro-Western monarchy of Iraq in July 1958. About five years later, he played a prominent role in putting an end to the wayward regime of Abd al-Karim Kassem. He headed the first, though short-lived, Ba'thist Government of Iraq in 1963. Again, he was the chief architect of July 1968 Revolution which firmly established the Ba'thist rule in Iraq.

Saddam Husayn, on the other hand, is the youngest among the frontline Ba'thists. Born in 1937 he joined the party at the age of twenty. A year later, he plunged himself in the underground resistance to Kassem's regime. In 1959, he made a daring but unsuccessful attempt on Kassem's life. His proven talent for organization and leadership explains his rapid rise in the party hierarchy both at regional and national levels. In quick succession, he became member of the Regional Command for Iraq in 1963 and its Deputy Secretary-General two years later which coincided with his elevation to membership of the National Command. He played a crucial role in the July 1968 Revolution in Iraq and in consolidating it in the following years. In 1969, he was appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council—the top policy-making organ of the State. More importantly, it is to Saddam Husayn that the party owes its singular achievement of establishing the supremacy of the civilians over the military in the Iraqi power structure. He succeeded Hasan al-Bakr as President of Iraq in July 1979.

Evolution of Ideology

During the thirty odd years since the Ba'th's principles and programmes were first spelled out in its constitution, the party has been in the thick of political struggle—learning from its own experiences as well as from its interactions with other revolutionary movements in different parts of the Arab world and the continual testing of the party's doctrines on the touchstone of its ideology, strategy, and tactics. The chief landmarks of this process are recorded in the resolutions of the periodic party congresses and in the writings of the principal theoreticians.

In a conversation with the present writer at Beirut in 1960⁴ Michel Aflaq gave a retrospective overview of the Ba'th during the previous twenty years. The Ba'th had appeared on the Arab scene when the Arab nation was torn asunder by three heterogeneous pulls: the pro-Western, the pro-Nazi and the pro-Communist—all drawing inspiration from abroad. The first two looked up to Britain, France, Germany or Italy for support and guidance while the Communists identified Arab interests with those of the Soviet Union. The struggle for liberation had, therefore, lost direction and purpose. It was against this backdrop that the Ba'th set out to present an independent Arab approach to national and world problems based on Arab interests and aspirations. According to Aflaq, the first phase in the ideological development of the Ba'th was thus marked by an emphasis on *liberation* from foreign control and influence.

Then came the partition of Palestine when the idea of *unity* began to gain momentum. The failure of the Arab armies in Palestine and the alarming atmosphere of insecurity it created impressed upon the politically conscious Arabs the need for unity. Henceforth unity became an important plank of the Ba'thist platform.

The failure in Palestine also gave rise to a series of *coups d'état* in the neighbouring Arab states in which the army officers played the key role. Syria alone witnessed three *coups* in 1949, Lebanon and Egypt one each in 1952. Perturbed by the excesses of military despotism in Syria which

at one stage drove the Syrian Ba'ath leaders into exile, the party learned to appreciate the value of *democracy*. In Aflaq's view, this formed the third milestone in the evolution of the Ba'ath's ideology.

Finally, the Ba'ath's crusade for *socialism*. It started in real earnest in 1956, coinciding with the beginning of the final phase of political liberation of the Arab homeland. From now on, the conviction grew that "nationalism and Arab unity have no meaning if they are devoid of a socio-economic content which will ensure the progress of the Arab people." "Nationalism", said Aflaq, "is a negative doctrine if it is devoid of socialist content."

The articulation of Ba'ath's basic principles in stages has its counterpart in the process—which both before 1960 and since—has progressively imparted these principles the attributes of realism and depth.⁵

Unity: Concept and Modalities

In the early fifties Michel Aflaq wrote that "unity is not an automatic act which comes into being by itself as a consequence of circumstances and development". For circumstances might indeed run counter to it. Unity can therefore be achieved only through sustained struggle, through "going against the current" of present fragmentation. Unity is also the new ideal which should fuel and coordinate that struggle in different parts of the Arab world. In other words, "the Arab people will not realise the unity of struggle unless it practises the struggle for unity".

In the mid fifties, Ba'athist thinkers began to relate the ideal of unity to the realities of Arab life. It was argued that "the potentialities of the Arab nation are not the numerical sum of the potentialities of its parts when they are in the state of separation; they are greater in quantity and different in kind". A second related point is the actual and potential complementarities between the components of the Arab homeland: while some Arab countries have abundance of natural resources others have plentiful supply of manpower; similarly, there are some regions which are deficient in food production while others have the potential to feed the entire Arab homeland.

But in the absence of political unity each country tends to waste its potential on inefficient and costly economic ventures which generate neither self-reliance nor real material strength. Thirdly, an Arab homeland divided against itself could hardly measure up to the challenges posed by its adversaries. On the contrary, without unity "independence will remain in jeopardy and even laden with explosives which imperialism can set off at the time of its choosing"⁶. Finally, a fragmented nation cannot make any decisive contribution to the liberation struggle of these Arab lands which still remain under foreign domination.

The Ba'th's sixth national congress held in October 1963 went a step further and questioned the "idealistic" conception of Arab nationalism which was open to an interpretation at once unscientific and incompatible with the development of history.⁷ It was argued that "subjective and emotional factors are no longer capable of building a unity that can confront imperialism as a whole and at the same time confront those internal class enemies whom unity deprives of their privileged positions, their influences, and their supremacy". And in order to rectify this "subjectivity" the congress redefined Arab nationalism in terms of its social goals. In the new context, Arab nationalist struggle was to be directed towards emancipation from colonialism, feudalism, and the national *bourgeoisie*: the first because it created fragmentation and remains keen to perpetuate it as a means of sustaining its political and economic interests in the Arab world; the second because feudalism is "an obsolete mode of production . . . and the feudal class is the one that is directly and openly the agent of colonialism"; and the third because "the Arab national *bourgeoisie* . . . of each region had grown up independently of and in isolation from those of the other regions, and that each of the regional *bourgeoisie* had turned the contradictions between themselves into inter-regional contradictions". It followed from this that "Arab nationalism is the cause of the masses of workers and peasants, the petty *bourgeoisie* and the revolutionary intellectuals" because the interests of these classes were in full harmony with the goal of Arab unity. Concomitantly, Arab nationalism acquired a socialist context. From being a *preferred model* for Arab

social reconstruction, the conceptual framework of socialism became a *centre piece* of Arab national ideology.

The Ba'ath's views on the modalities of Arab unity have also undergone considerable revision. However, it has consistently rejected the framework prescribed by the Arab League Charter. In its first comment on the creation of the Arab League the party observed:

The co-operation conceived by the Arab League Charter was inadequate since this could be achieved even by states different from each other in language, history and race, and separated from each other in terms of regions and continents. On the whole, the Charter sanctifies the present fragmentation of the Arab world and puts a premium on the personal inclinations of rulers. It also signifies submission on the part of member-states to the politics of *fait accompli* which might moreover facilitate their retreat in the face of alien designs on certain parts of the Arab homeland. Such retreat has taken the form of [gratuitous] acknowledgement that Palestine has not reached the stage of political maturity, indifference to the fate of other Arab lands in North Africa and elsewhere, and reticence on the Zionist menace and the Turkish usurpation of Alexandretta.⁸

Three factors have mainly conditioned the Ba'ath's approach to the institutional framework of unity: the revolutionary connotation of unity; the Syro-Egyptian experiment of 1958-61; and the multiplicity and diversity of the revolutionary movements in different parts of the Arab world. The revolutionary attributes of unity have several dimensions. First, unity has been a pursuit of the Arab nation ever since its fragmentation. The Ba'ath did not invent the objective of unity; it only gave it "a new conception that makes it realizable". It transformed the traditional idea of unity, which simply meant "putting together and binding the parts of Arab homeland", into a revolutionary concept encompassing "creativity of thought and struggle" directed against political fragmentation and its entire legacy of negative attitudes, interests and orientations. Secondly, the Ba'ath grounded its

concept of unity on "a revolutionary visualization of the national heritage". As Aflaq puts it, this outlook on heritage is not "as such an interpretation of the past as a revolutionary stance of the present and a cultural vision of the future". And he elaborates:

This act of deriving inspiration from the immortal experiments in the life of the Arab nation is an act of deriving inspiration from the body of the profound humanistic and revolutionary values that do not confer upon the Arab nation so much of a privilege as of a major responsibility towards itself and towards humanity. This is an act of authenticating the thought of the party; it is not a retreat from the party's progressiveness or scientific line or from the policy it has been pursuing towards its progressive allies, both within and without.⁹

Thirdly, the Ba'th's concept of unity is embedded in the conviction that the goal of unity cannot be realized without "the instrumentality of the struggle of the broad masses". For no revolutionary transformation can be ordained from above. It must come from "the depths of the masses of the Arab people", from their "innermost needs", and from the "core" of their struggle for social emancipation. Conversely, though realization of unity will require relentless struggle over a period of time it should become the lodestar of Arab struggle from the very beginning. "We shall never find unity at the end of our path", writes Aflaq, "unless we put unity at its beginning".

The shortlived Syro-Egyptian union—the one and only experiment yet in complete merger of two Arab states—has naturally been the subject of animated, and at times acrimonious, debate in party forums and outside. Aflaq wrote in 1956 that Arab unity would not be reached in one stroke; it was natural and reasonable that it should be achieved in stages. To that end, he proposed that the Ba'th's efforts should concentrate on federation between two or three regions.¹⁰ This would facilitate progress towards a higher stage on the way to "larger and greater unification". But the union of Syria and Egypt, formed in February 1958, at

the Ba'th's own initiative, acquired a unitary structure. The Ba'th subsequently ascribed the failure of this experiment to hasty and premature advance towards a unitarian model. The issue was discussed threadbare at the sixth national congress. And the upshot of the debate was a frank admission by the national leadership that it had indeed neglected the task of formulating "theoretical guidelines showing the way to unity and indicating how it is to be achieved" and "what safeguards are necessary for its protection and development". Hence the faulty improvisation which eventually caused the breakdown of the union. As it happened, the union soon degenerated into Egyptian hegemony over Syria causing widespread resentment and disaffection among the Syrians. Besides, the Ba'th's acceptance of a preconceived framework of political organization derived from the experience of a single region (i.e. Egypt) pre-empted, for all practical purposes, the possibility of fusing the principal political parties of the two regions. In summing up the lessons of the experiment, the party declared that in the initial stage unity should take the form of a federal state reconciling the principle of oneness of the Arab people with the actual existence of the Arab regions. It also asserted that unity presupposed fusion of Arab revolutionary forces and that the latter could be achieved only through interaction, not compulsion, within a democratic framework.¹¹

This approach would also provide an answer to the diversity of Arab revolutionary experiences and organizations. The Ba'th's emergence as the single largest revolutionary movement in the Fertile Crescent coincided with the rise of Nasserism in Egypt, the FLN (National Liberation Front) in Algeria, the National Liberation Front in Southern Arabia, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf, and the Palestine Liberation Organization. These forces were the product of objective conditions prevailing in different parts of the Arab world. And despite their broad commitment to Arab unity each one of them had imbibed varying characteristics of social composition, ideological orientation, and regional particularism. Aflaq considers it "quite-natural" for the revolutionary experiments in Arab society "to multiply and diversify", particularly in the circumstances of existing

political divisions. At the same time, diverse experiments compliment rather than conflict with the Ba'th's experiment. Hence:

They ought to complement and interact with one another for bolstering *the unity of struggle and the struggle for unity*. Surely it is the height of anomaly if these experiments were to be mutually shut, neither influencing nor being influenced by one another . . . such forces should be spurred to work for co-ordination so as to repel the reactionary-imperialist onslaught that takes the form of 'counter-unity'. . . .¹²

Earlier, the sixth congress had laid down that partial unity would "not constitute a danger to comprehensive unity as long as it arises from certain objective conditions attendant on Arab struggle and is not an expression of semi-secessionist and semi-regionalist theories". Nor is it a substitute for comprehensive unity. On the contrary, by securing the fusion of revolutionary energies of two or more regions and by creating new conditions it would contribute to the achievement of further unionist steps. At the same time, the congress made it clear that comprehensive unity is not incompatible with regional autonomy. For "decentralization in regional and local affairs is a democratic necessity". Such decentralization need not necessarily be based on the present political map of the Arab homeland which divides it into artificial units. Any restructuring of the regional units should conform to the requirements of each region for social and economic development within the over-all pan-Arab context.

Freedom and Democracy

Evolution of the Ba'th's theory of freedom shows a tangible shift from individual freedom and parliamentary democracy to social and economic freedom and popular democracy. Broadly speaking, the constitution endorsed the principles of individual liberty, rule of law, parliamentary system of government, and independent judiciary. But the early writings of the chief theoreticians of the party show considerable diver-

gence on this subject. About two years before the framing of the constitution Michel Aflaq had written that "freedom is not articles in the constitution and text of the laws", that "in longing for freedom and in defending it we are not attached to something theoretical which has no connection with reality", and that freedom to be meaningful must have social and economic content. On the other hand, Munif Razzaz declared in 1953 that it was not possible for a nation to fully achieve a sense of community except through democratic government freely elected by all citizens regardless of wealth, race, or religion. In practice, local units of the Ba'ath in Syria and Jordan had participated in parliamentary elections until 1956. Disenchantment with the principles and procedures of classic Western democracy in latter years is accounted for mainly by two sets of factors. First, political conditions even in the independent Arab states were hardly conducive to democratic processes. While some of them paid lip-service to democratic forms which in practice masked oligarchic rule, others were despotic both in form and content. Secondly, some of the leading Ba'ath theoreticians, including Aflaq and Bitar, sincerely believed that the Western-style liberal democracy could not serve as an instrument of radical transformation of the Arab society envisaged by the party. Thus in an article written in 1950, Bitar drew a distinction between the circumstances that permitted the growth of democracy in the West and those that obtained under the Ottoman sultans, implying that classic Western democracy would be out of place in the successor states to the Ottoman Empire.¹³ Aflaq's writings of the mid fifties offer a more elaborate critique of the Western concepts of liberty and democracy. "It has been observed", he says, "that the conceptions of some members of liberty is still superficial to the extent that it is confused with that kind of sham liberty behind which the reactionaries together with the exploiters of the people and collaborators with imperialism hide". He characterized it as a "*bourgeois* and spineless understanding" of the concept of liberty which did not differentiate between the people and their enemies, between the citizens of the homeland and its colonizers, and between those who believe

in liberty and those who are its arch enemies. Likewise, Western democratic forms sit uncomfortably on societies dominated by a hodge-podge of feudal, tribal and *bourgeois* elements. However, Aflaq's rejection of the Western notions of liberty and democracy did not make him an admirer of dictatorship either. On the contrary, he declared that dictatorship—even if it worked in the interest of the people—was a precarious system incapable of ushering in enduring social transformation.

What, then, was the Ba'th's preferred system of government? The evidence shows that no serious attempt had been made by the party until the sixth national congress¹¹ to provide an answer to this question. The congress acknowledged that in the past the party did act in a way suggesting that it accepted *bourgeois* liberal democracy as "a permanent and adequate framework for struggle and political action". And this was the main reason for its failure to formulate a new theoretical basis for a clearly defined concept of freedom and democracy consistent with a socialist framework. The starting point of the quest for a new theoretical basis derived from the objective conditions of Arab life was a critical evaluation of the *bourgeois* concepts of freedom and parliamentary democracy. The congress maintained that freedom, in its political connotation, had "never been an abstract and absolute concept" even in the West European polities. At all times, it had "a clearly defined social content" and is "granted to one class and withheld, in one form or another, from other classes". When the *bourgeoisie* started its revolution against feudalism it championed the ideal of absolute freedom for the whole people. But when it came to power, the *bourgeoisie* turned the ideal of absolute freedom into a class interest.

Similarly, the Western model of parliamentary democracy was the product of the rise and growth of the *bourgeoisie*. At first, parliaments represented only the propertied classes; but with the emergence of the labour movement and as a result of its long political struggle suffrage was gradually extended to other classes until it became universal. But

the entry of the working class into the parliament of Europe did not lead to the overthrow of the power of

the *bourgeoisie*; it only obliged it to adopt new forms and methods that were more flexible and showed a greater understanding of the requirements of actual situation, so that certain labour demands were absorbed, the revolutionary struggle of the masses cooled off and the *bourgeoisie* remained in power.

It follows that the Western parliamentary system is the product of unique historical circumstances. Hence to transplant it into the Arab soil is "merely to import a Western facade cut off from its political and economic roots". No wonder, 'parliamentary system' practised by some Arab countries has been little more than a poor copy of the original model. And its failure to cope with the social and economic problems of the Arab countries accounts for the bizarre phenomena of recurrent military *coups d'état*.

The congress also did some plain speaking about the socialist and Nasserist experiments in democracy. In most of the socialist countries, development of an alternative model of democracy was impaired by the ascendancy of bureaucracy and the corrosion of socialist legality. And as a consequence of this "socialist democracy" degenerated into "autocratic tyranny". In the Arab world, Nasserism, notwithstanding its progressive outlook, failed to evolve a viable alternative to parliamentary democracy. The Ba'ath ascribed this failure mainly to reliance on "individual bureaucratic rule" in place of "full revolutionary mobilization of the energies of the masses" which alone could provide "a positive basis for establishing socialist transformation on democratic foundations".

It was in this context that the congress commended the alternative model of *popular democracy*. This was considered to be the most suitable system of government during the period of change-over from a feudal-capitalist order to a socialist order. The theory of popular democracy, which the Ba'athist Government of Iraq has translated into reality, rests on a series of interrelated postulates. In the first place, it implies transfer of power from the feudal-*bourgeois* classes to the toiling classes. In actual practice this would mean

restricted freedom for those classes which are hostile to the socialist transformation of society: it would also mean abandonment of the principle of 'class cooperation'. Secondly, mobilization of popular participation in the task of socialist transformation will be ensured by organized revolutionary vanguards consisting of elements that are active, dedicated and ideologically sound. The congress, however, hastened to add that the socialist concept of 'vanguard' is not to be confused with the Fascist concept of 'elite'. Whereas the latter regards the masses as a passive flock to be led to "happiness and justice" by the elite, the former regards the masses as the essence of revolution and of democracy. Again, in contrast to the Fascist elite which places itself above the people and exercises dictatorial control over them through terrorism of guile, the socialist vanguard establishes close links with the masses and seeks their cooperation through friendly mutual interaction.

Thirdly, the element of centralism inherent in the concept of revolutionary vanguard must not invalidate the principle of election on the organizational or governmental level. Hence popular councils must be constituted through direct and free elections on all levels from the nation down to the village. On the other hand, the democratic character of the government will be ensured by the free but indirect elections—the higher bodies being elected by the lower—and by collective leadership at the apex.

Fourthly, popular democracy stipulates *a principal party* at the head of *a front of political forces*. The congress reasoned that the hypothesis of 'principal party' "is dictated by the need, at the present stage, for an unflinching central authority to accelerate the process of socialist construction". At the same time, it prescribed two safeguards against possible abuse of the democratic principle: first, the principal party must have a wide enough popular base to qualify for the leadership role; and second, it must strictly observe the principle of inner party democracy. As for the equation between the principal party and other political forces the sixth congress offered no clear guidelines. The issue was raised again at the tenth national congress, held in 1970, when the leader-

ship admitted that the principal party formula had not been implemented, and that as a result of this the Ba'ath had failed to elicit the cooperation of other revolutionary elements. The congress, therefore, laid down the framework of a progressive national popular front applicable to both national and regional spheres. It also declared that endorsement of the concept of popular front signified the Ba'ath's desire to abandon its old attitudes of condescension towards and superiority over other revolutionary forces. The front envisaged establishment of *positive* relations between the Ba'ath, on the one hand, and the Communists, the Nasserists, the Algerian National Liberation Front and other like-minded organizations, on the other.¹⁵ In the regional context, it crystallized in the establishment of the Progressive Patriotic and National Front (PPNF) of Iraq in July 1973. The PPNF stipulates a long-term coalition between the Ba'ath and other revolutionary parties of Iraq on both popular and governmental levels.

Finally, popular democracy upholds the principle of democratic management of the means of production as an antidote to the pitfalls of state capitalism and the attendant dominance of bureaucracy. The congress declared that in many a socialist state, bureaucracy had become an obstacle to the development of democratic norms and socialist relations in society thanks to the system of state capitalism and the numerical and organizational weakness of the working class. The negative characteristics of this stage in the transition to socialism can be contained by democratic direction of the means of production and proper organization of the working class. To that end, the congress recommended that "workers' councils must assume a basic role in the direction of industrial and productive enterprises". Moreover, consistent with the requirements of socialist construction and the demands of technical development the management of industry "must be gradually transferred to the working classes until their control is effective enough for them to ensure labour control of productive processes".

Socialism

We have earlier noted a remark by Michel Aflaq that the intensity of Ba'ath's interest in socialism dates from the com-

mencement of the last phase of Arab political liberation in 1956. However, the ferment caused by the intensification of the liberation struggle, by the changing balance of social forces in the Arab world, and by the induction of a new generation of Arab youth into the ranks of the party itself did not crystallize into new theoretical perspectives on socialism until the early sixties.

In the pre-1947 writings of Michel Aflaq socialism signifies an ardent commitment to social justice unsupported by any serious comprehension of the socio-economic realities of Arab life or of the ways and means to achieve the socialist goal. "My concern is not", wrote Aflaq in 1936, "that people should be equal in the distribution of food but that every individual should be allowed to realize his gifts and potential. We are not concerned about alleviating misery [we are concerned about] increasing the wealth of life". In 1946, he equated socialism with nationalism, saying: "The Arab nationalists are socialists . . . there is neither incompatibility nor contradiction nor war between nationalists and socialists".

The Ba'ath constitution was a little more specific in that it incorporated a series of propositions prescribing national ownership of major natural resources and public utilities, ceiling on agricultural holdings, workers' participation in management and share in profits, and equitable distribution of wealth. But the overall pattern it envisaged was one of moderate socialism complete with class co-operation and protection of the rights of private property and of inheritance.

It was about a decade later that the issue of socialism and its place in the Ba'athist ideology was seriously raised by some younger members of the party leadership. Jamal Atasi wrote in 1956 that "socialism cannot realize its goals unless it starts from the [fact of] division, difference, and conflict among society's structures and classes". Munif Razzaz was equally forthright in his article entitled "Why Socialism Now?"

Socialism is a way of life, not just an economic order. It extends to all aspects of life—economics, politics, training,

education, social life, health, morals, literature, science, history and others, both great and small.

Digressing from the established practice of placing nationalism above everything else he sought to demonstrate that socialism, freedom and unity were interrelated and interdependent.¹⁶

About this time, a variety of internal and external factors began to influence the party's thinking on socialism. For one thing, there was a perceptible shift in the Ba'th's equation with the local Communists. The relations between the two had been frosty since 1936 when the Communist Party of France endorsed—with the post-haste concurrence of the Syrian Communists—the Blum Government's decision to prolong its mandatory rule in Syria. Besides, both Aflaq and Bitar believed that Marxism greatly exaggerated the importance of class struggle, ignoring the vital historical role of nationalism. And then came the Soviet support to the partition of Palestine which the Arab Communists readily approved. But despite their serious differences on policies and principles the Ba'thists and the Communists in Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq had been fighting common adversaries—the feudalists, the big merchants, and the reactionaries. By the mid fifties, the Baghdad Pact, the Czech arms deal, the Suez crisis, and, above all, the dynamics of domestic politics in Syria and Iraq found the Ba'thists and the Communists working together in united fronts.

Secondly, the Ba'th's exclusive preoccupation with the propagation of the gospel of rebirth of the Arab spirit had begun to yield diminishing returns. Its spirited advocacy of Arab unity had no doubt made a positive impact on young students and intellectuals in the Fertile Crescent region ; but the vast majority of the peasantry and the urban workers had remained uninfluenced by the Ba'th's ideology for the simple reason that the party had not paid serious attention to their problems. The cumulative effect of this neglect of the social and economic goals of the party was an acute feeling of dissatisfaction among its rank and file.

More importantly, during the late fifties the composition

of the party itself had begun to change. A large number of the new recruits to the party ranks came from secondary schools of the provincial towns and with urges and aspirations vastly different from those of the city-bred intellectuals of the first generation of leaders. They brought with them the attitudes and priorities of the countryside emphasizing the need for agrarian reform, rural uplift, mass education and organization of the landless peasantry. The party's trade unionists working in industrial centres, on the other hand, began to voice the concerns of the working class including the deepening contradictions between labour and capital.

Finally, with the Ba'th's rise to power in Iraq and Syria, in quick succession in the early months of 1963, the party had outgrown its agitational phase and was now face to face with the responsibility to redeem its pledges.

It was in this context that the sixth national congress reviewed the Ba'th's outlook on socialism focussing on its positive as well as negative aspects.¹⁷ While noting that in the early stage the Ba'th's concept of socialism was not "clear and well defined" it maintained that this deficiency was partly compensated by the party's revolutionary standpoint in struggle which indeed saved it from being submerged in *bourgeois* reformism. Moreover, the party's day-to-day struggle had enabled it to surpass "many of the socialist concepts which it had defined in its general principles and its programme when it first came into existence". But its adherence to "petty *bourgeois* concepts of socialism" in the formative years had also exercised a negative effect on the social composition as well as the socialist thinking of the party. A notable example of the latter was the concept of 'Arab socialism'. By emphasizing the 'Arab' character of Ba'th socialism the party had really meant to highlight the nationalist orientation of its ideology. But since this was not reinforced by a clear and carefully studied point of view comprehending the characteristics of Arab reality in all its positive as well as negative aspects, Ba'th socialism became increasingly divorced from its "social and class context" and the Ba'thist theoreticians' writings on the subject "degenerated into mere general slogans and emotional talk about the

'Arab characteristics' of socialism and the genuine merits of these characteristics". The other lapse was the recognition of private property and inheritance, however circumscribed in scope, as "natural rights". The congress was of the view that this approach, sanctified by the party constitution, ran contrary to the scientific socialist concept which "regards human labour as the only source of value", and that private property beyond the limits of personal use was bound to generate exploitation.

The class composition of the Ba'ath was to a great extent determined by its stand on the question of private property and by its diffuse thinking on social classes. These two factors account for the influx of petty *bourgeois* elements into the party and their ascendancy in the party hierarchy during the fifties. The congress held this phenomenon responsible for the erosion of the party's ideological perspective and for the overall decline in its efficacy as a revolutionary organization. By virtue of its individualist proclivities, the petty *bourgeoisie* undermined the organizational coherence of the party. It also blunted the revolutionary edge of the Ba'ath by having recourse to politics of compromise and to middle-of-the-road methods. The consequences of this backslide were most conspicuous in one of the regional branches¹⁸ where the leadership's enthusiasm for participation in government landed it into the mire of political opportunism.

The congress proclaimed that the object of Ba'ath socialism was to create a new social system that will liberate man from all kinds of exploitation and domination, eliminate his age-old backwardness, and enable him to catch up with the advanced industrial societies. Diagnosing the Arab social scene it pointed out that the feudal-*bourgeois* economic system that prevailed in the Arab world was the root cause of its unbalanced development and general backwardness. The incipient economic upsurge at the end of the Second World War had come to a grinding halt because of the strictly narrow interests of the Arab *bourgeoisie* which thrived on commerce, real estate, usury, and light consumer industry. The Arab *bourgeoisie* was thus incapable of creating the basic conditions for rapid industrial development

which include mobilization of under-employed labour force in rural areas, scientific organization of production and distribution, and optimum utilization of national resources. Moreover, the methods of capitalist economy, when applied to less developed societies, generate unwholesome conditions of continued subservience to developed capitalist economies. Hence "socialism is the only road that leads [the developing countries] to liberation from both backwardness and exploitation".

The socialist system, in turn, must be geared to the attainment of three objectives: abolition of material conditions of exploitation, consolidation of the democratic content of socialism, and socialist and scientific education of the citizen. In concrete terms, socialist transformation of society means, first of all, public ownership of important productive sectors, financial institutions, principal means of transportation, large-scale real estate, external trade, and the main branches of internal trade. Secondly, public ownership must go hand-in-hand with encouragement of public participation in the management of means of production. This is particularly important because in a backward country where there is no material base for socialism, the process of socialist transformation initially takes the form of state capitalism which possesses positive as well as negative potentialities. On the positive side, state capitalism "plays a progressive role in development, creates the objective conditions for the construction of socialism, and becomes an instrument of struggle against the old society". At the same time, it also tends to give rise to bureaucracy and bureaucratic tutelage over the productive forces and thus weakens the democratic and human content of socialism. These negative tendencies must, therefore, be contained through increasing participation by the workers and peasants in the management of public enterprises until they are entrusted with the whole responsibility for directing the economy. Thirdly, the socialist transformation of the rural areas must aim at agrarian *revolution* rather than agrarian *reform*. In the short run, this would mean restoration of land to its tillers; but the long-term goal of establishing socialist production relations in the

agrarian field shall be achieved within the framework of collective farms. Finally, the Congress declared that planning at Arab national and regional levels is "essential both for unity and for socialism". It is the most effective course for optimum utilization of national resources, for accelerating the pace of industrial development, and for co-ordinated development and economic integration of the constituent regions of the Arab homeland.

To round off the discussion on Ba'ath socialism reference must also be made to the party's new theoretical perspectives on class struggle, revolution, and Communism. We have earlier noted the evolution of the Ba'athist thought on social classes in the fifties. In 1960 Aflaq wrote that unity, freedom and socialism could be achieved only by the struggle of the "toiling, oppressed, and exploited" majority of the Arab people "not only because it is the majority but also because it has been suffering from injustice, exploitation and deprivation of freedom". Its characteristics and interests qualified it "to become the vanguard of the struggling nation". More specifically, the sixth congress underscored the conflict of interest between the feudal and *bourgeois* classes on the one hand, and the workers, the peasants, the rest of the toiling masses, and the revolutionary intellectuals on the other. The petty *bourgeoisie* was identified as the ally of the latter in the "present stage of the national struggle". However, the Ba'athist concept of class struggle is not a carbon copy of its Marxian counterpart. Whereas the latter is the product of the industrial revolution and the consequent acute division between the capitalists and the workers, the former is the result of two-pronged Arab battle against foreign imperialism and its domestic allies—the feudal, *bourgeois* and bureaucratic classes. Besides, according to the Ba'athist definition, all those who cling to and thrive on the existing fragmentation of the Arab homeland also constitute the class enemies of the toiling masses because of the indirect help they render to imperialism.

The concept of class struggle was further elaborated in the political report presented to the tenth national congress. It underlined two aspects of the Arab struggle during the

present century—the national-liberation aspect and the social-class aspect—which were described as two faces of the same reality. Thus the national uprisings in Egypt (1905 and 1919), Iraq (1920), Palestine (1930s), Morocco (1947) and Algeria (1954) were all backed by the peasantry. These movements also carried the seeds of class struggle inasmuch as they increasingly bracketed the feudalists with the imperialists. And with the rise of the working class in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Syria and Iraq “the hegemony of the *bourgeois* class and its attempts to appoint itself as the guardian of the national movement” was increasingly challenged”.¹⁹ The Ba'th's unique contribution to the liberation struggle lay in widening the scope of class struggle from regional to pan-Arab horizon.

Over the years, the Ba'thist conception of revolution also underwent corresponding change. In the mid-fifties Aflaq spoke of revolution as “the healing medicine for the diseases of our national existence and the only and correct way to release the healthy and creative powers of the Arab people”. It was, however, the sixth congress which linked the concept of *revolution* to that of *class struggle*. It declared that the inner contradictions of the national society or the struggle between the classes “will not be resolved spontaneously, nor will it be ended by the goodwill of a group of well-intentioned reformers, nor by . . . partial reforms within the framework of the present society against which we are struggling.” The underlying logic of the argument was that in the socially and economically backward societies radical change does not occur except through conscious revolutionary action and that reformism eventually leads to compromise with and capitulation to an unjust social order. Hence the change-over from one social system to another “must not be achieved gradually, but through a bold stroke which brings about a qualitative change in the state of affairs, destroying the outworn economic foundations of society and the political, legal, social and cultural structures”.

Aflaq's statements in recent years have further stressed the central role of working class in the Arab revolutionary struggle. The fundamental weakness, he wrote in 1969,

which prevented the Arab struggle from "coming to full fruition and attaining all its objectives and goals in the best and most complete way, and the essential reason for this failure, was the deficiency of its view of the people, a lack of appreciation of the role of the toiling class, the working class". And in the same vein, he declared that "socialist rule is that which is led by the working class".

Finally, the changing equation between Ba'ath socialism and Communism. In early years Ba'ath socialism had more in common with European social-democratic doctrines than with Marxian socialism. Indeed, the early writings of Aflaq and Bitar abound in critical references to Communism concentrating on the latter's "failure" to recognize the cardinal importance of nationalism. The Ba'athists regarded Communist internationalism as an antithesis of nationalism—the bedrock of Ba'ath socialism. Likewise, the Marxian concept of class struggle did not square with the Ba'ath's nationalist ideology. Added to this was the strong aversion of Arab Communists to pan-Arabism which often led them into head-on collision with the Ba'ath socialists. The conflict between the two assumed dreadful proportions in Iraq in the early years of Kassem's rule, and again in February 1963 when the Ba'athists overthrew his regime.

About this time, the Communists as well as the Ba'athists began to realize the futility of their ongoing feuds which had greatly drained the strength of the Arab Left. The sixth congress took serious note of this problem and laid down the theoretical framework for "constructive interaction" between the Ba'ath Socialists and the Communists, both on the Arab and international planes. While reaffirming the Ba'ath's original stand that it cannot accept laws formed in a particular time and social milieu as valid for all times and places and that socialism in the Third World cannot be divorced from nationalism because of the latter's crucial role in the liberation struggle against imperialism as well as internal reaction, the congress noted that "progressive thought in the world today has grasped these factors to the extent that they have become self-evident". It also spoke of Arab nationalism's "constant solidarity with liberation movements throughout the world".

Above all, the congress endorsed the concept of 'popular front of political forces' encompassing the Communists and other Left-wing parties.

The process of conciliation was initiated notwithstanding continuing differences on some essential points. Aflaq's speeches and writings provide insights into the manifold dimensions of this new equation. In 1966, he said:

Marxism is a socialist theory. It is the first and most important scientific theory . . . and it is not good to view Marxism with fanaticism. We must be open to it objectively, and in our differences with it we have to argue by giving evidence against evidence and proof against proof . . . Our stand today on Marxism and Communism is no longer negative. In the past we were not imitators and we are still not imitators, but we must take whatever is of benefit to us in our socialist struggle.

Aflaq also continues to differentiate between Marxism and Ba'th socialism in terms both of methodology and content. He argues that unlike the Marxists the Ba'th did not attempt "to produce a universal theory encompassing an interpretation of the whole body of human history and determining the future of humanity". "Had it done so", he goes on, "it would not have become what it is now—the party of the contemporary Arab revolution. More likely, it would have been reduced to a mere study group of abstract theoretical work". He also maintains that the Ba'th's contribution to socialist ideology is reflected in its emphasis on (i) the nationalist character of socialism and (ii) the humanist character of nationalism. The ideology of the party thus strikes a balance between the material urge for progress and the spiritual craving for freedom. Finally, Aflaq elucidates Ba'th's appreciation of the world revolutionary movements:

We are not so narrow-minded as to deny proper recognition and credit to those revolutions which, since the turn of the century, have battled against exploitation, oppression and backwardness, extended to wide-ranging territories, covered vast human masses and which occupy top place in terms of both material and moral

strength, wield great influence on international politics and stand by the side of the freedom and independence of peoples. *All there is to the matter is that we have chosen our course and have been borne out in this by the developments experienced by the world and by revolutions themselves.* The revolutions in question have, as it were, ended up recognising the multiplicity of roads to socialism. We do not equate friends with foes, reactionary with progressive elements, stooges with those who interpret things in good faith.²⁰

Secularism

The Ba'ath has consistently stood for secular values in politics and secularization of Arab society but without rejecting religion. The 1947 constitution includes "freedom of belief" among the basic principles of the party. At the same time, Article 15 lays down that "nationalism shall be the only tie in the Arab State which ensures harmony among the citizens and facilitates their integration in one Arab nation. It fights all religious, sectarian, tribal, racial and regional fanaticism". This concept of secular nationalism is reinforced by Article 18 which prescribes "a single code of laws" in harmony with "the spirit of the present age" and "the past experiences of the Arab nation". The Ba'ath's preference for secularism is also reflected in its cultural and educational policy. Article 41(a) states that "the party endeavours to develop a common culture for the Arab homeland—a culture that will be Arab, free, progressive, comprehensive, deep, and humanist in its aims". And Article 43 declares that the party's educational policy aims at creating "a new Arab generation believing in the unity and immortal mission of its nation, taking to scientific thinking, freed from the bonds of superstition and reactionary traditions . . . and serving the cause of human progress".²¹

The Ba'ath thus departed from the traditional Arab practice which recognised no clear-cut boundaries between the spiritual and the temporal. And yet Ba'ath secularism is not a mere duplication of its Western counterpart. What really distinguishes the one from the other is the Ba'ath's secular

vision of Islam. And this aspect of Ba'th's ideology has been eloquently expounded by Aflaq, starting with his oft-quoted speech at Damascus University on 5 April 1943 titled "In Memory of the Arab Prophet". In this initial statement Aflaq observes that the message of Islam is essentially the message of Arab humanism. To the Arabs, Islam is "not only a spiritual faith, nor is it merely a moral code, but it is also the clearest expression of their universal feeling and their view of life". It was revealed to them originally in their own language; and it expressed the need of their environment and was fused with their history. And the culture that the Arabs created in the past would not have been possible but for "the spiritual yeast" and "the psychological and moral fervour" generated by Islam. Hence the close linkage between Islam and Arabism which transcends the dichotomy between the Muslim and Christian Arabs. Aflaq, however, makes it clear that he is calling upon the Arabs not to go back to Islam but to move forward with their cultural heritage of which Islam in its widest sense is an integral part.²²

In his later writings Aflaq interprets the Arab cultural heritage in rationalist and nationalist terms. He begins by differentiating between religion as the fountainhead of spiritual and humanistic values, and religion as incorporated in a body of petrified dogmas, and goes on to say that any definition of spiritual values divorced from the realities of social and economic life would be "inadequate and false". Moreover, Aflaq commends separation of religion and State on the ground that this will liberate religion from "the exigencies and intricacies of politics [and] will allow it to soar freely in the life of individuals and society, instilling its profound and genuine spirit which is a pre-requisite for the revival of the nation". With that, the argument moves on to the bond between Arab nationalism and Islam. The Ba'th, he argues, is a nationalist movement which addresses itself to all Arabs of all religions and sects, sanctifies freedom of faith, and accords equal respect to all religions. At the same time, it sees in Islam a nationalist aspect of vital importance which has moulded Arab history and culture. And by acknowledging this, the Ba'th has guarded Arab nationalism against the

superficiality of abstract nationalism and the fanaticism of religious nationalism.

The issue of secularism was also discussed at the tenth national congress leading to the conclusion that Arab political ideologies fall into two broad categories on the basis of their stance toward the past. On the one hand, there are those who regard the Arab past as the bedrock of their political philosophies. To this category belong the conservative and Right-wing parties which adopt "a highly emotional but negative stance by embracing the past completely and manipulating it for narrow self-interest. The Arab Communists, on the other hand, stand for complete rejection of the past which again is an "emotional and subjective" attitude no less harmful than the one adopted by the conservative parties. As against these two extremes, the Ba'th projected a positive approach requiring neither blind submission to nor irrational rejection of the past but reaffirming the wholesome components of the Arab cultural heritage.²³

References

1. The antecedents of the party can be traced to 1940 when two pan-Arab groups were formed in Damascus: one started by Zaki Arsuzi and designated as *Al-Ba'th al-Arabi* (The Arab Renaissance); the other founded by Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din Bitar, and known as *Al-Ihya al-Arabi* (The Arab Revival). From 1943 on, the latter group also adopted the term *ba'th* in place of *ihya*. It started a daily newspaper, *Al-Ba'th*, in Damascus in July 1946 and organised branches of the group in all the major cities of Syria. The two groups were unified on the eve of the founding congress of April 1947 which established the Arab Renaissance Socialist Party. The 1947 constitution designated the party as *Hizb al-Ba'th al-Arabi* (The Arab Renaissance Party)—to which the term '*Ishtiraki*' (Socialist) was added retrospectively in 1953 when the Arab Socialist Party of Akram Hawrani was merged with the Ba'th.

2. Text of the Constitution is given in *Nidal al-Ba'th* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1976), vol. 4, 3rd ed., pp. 24-30.
3. First published in Cairo in 1953.
4. 28 May, 1960. See also the author's article titled "The Ba'th: A Study in Contemporary Arab Politics" in *International Studies* (New Delhi), vol. 3, July 1961, pp. 6-24.
5. The following discussion is largely based on Michel Aflaq's (i) *Ma'arakat al-Masir al-Wahid* (The Battle of the One Destiny), (Beirut, 1975), 7th edition; (ii) *Fi Sabil al-Ba'th* (Towards the Renaissance) (Beirut, 1975), 4th edition; (iii) *Nuqtat al-Badaya* (The Starting Point) (Beirut, 1975), 5th edition; (iv) *Choice of Texts from the Ba'th Party Founder's Thought*, printed in Italy, 1977; Munif Razzaz's (i) *Ma'alim al-Hayat al-Arabiyya al-Jadidah* (Landmarks of the New Arab Life) (Beirut, 1960), originally published in Cairo, 1953; (ii) *The Evolution of the Meaning of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1963); and Tariq Aziz's *The Revolution of the New Way*, printed in Italy, 1977.
6. From speech by Michel Aflaq, 6 April 1977; hereinafter cited as Speech by Michel Aflaq.
7. Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, *Some Theoretical Principles Approved by the Sixth National Congress, October, 1963*, (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1974), pp. 34-37; hereinafter cited as *Some Theoretical Principles*.
8. Text in *Nidal al-Ba'th* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1976), vol. 1, 4th edition, pp. 56-57. Alexandretta, a northwestern district of Syria, had been turned over by France, the then mandatory Power in Syria, to Turkey in 1938. The Franco-Turkish deal was manifestly inspired by the French desire to earn Turkish goodwill at Syria's expense.
9. Ibid.
10. In Ba'th's terminology the term "region" (*qutr* in Arabic) refers to an individual Arab country; the 'Arab homeland' (Al-Watan al-Arabi), on the other hand, encompasses all the Arab countries.
11. *Some Theoretical Principles*, n. 7, pp. 31-32 & 45-46.
12. Speech by Michel Aflaq, n. 6.

13. Salah al-Din Bitar quoted in John F. Devlin, *The Ba'th Party: A History from its Origins to 1966* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), p. 31.
14. See *Some Theoretical Principles*, n. 7, pp. 47-75.
15. See Arab Ba'th Socialist Party, *Political Report, Tenth National Congress* (n.p., n.d.), pp. 63-64 & 92.
16. Quoted in Devlin, n. 13, p. 36.
17. *Some Theoretical Principles*, n. 7, pp. 12-16, 3, 27 & 83-99.
18. This evidently referred to the Jordanian branch of the party but without naming it.
19. *Political Report: Tenth National Congress*, n. 15, pp. 19-22.
20. Speech by Michel Aflaq, n. 6. Emphasis added.
21. See text of the Constitution, n. 2.
22. Michel Aflaq, *Fi Sabil al-Ba'th* (Towards the Renaissance) (Beirut, 1975), 4th edition, pp. 122-34.
23. *Political Report: Tenth National Congress*, n. 15, pp. 18-19.

PDY: POLITICAL DYNAMICS IN A MARXIST STATE

*Gulshan Dhanani**

The history of Yemen is the oldest in the area. It can be traced back to the Minaean Civilization which flourished from the thirteenth to the seventh century B.C. The Yemeni land was fertile compared to the rest of the peninsula to its north and rightfully deserved the Roman epithet *Arabia Felix* (Prosperous Arabia) as contrasted to the terms like the *Arabia Deserta* (Desert Arabia) or *Arabia Petrea* (Stony Arabia) which the Romans reserved for the Sandy deserts. The ingenuity of the Yemeni people kept pace with the natural endowments; they were the earliest of the seafarers and controlled trade in incense and spices for centuries, the M'arib Dam which was built in queen Sheba's capital town of Marib to store the summer rainfall was the first ever dam in human history.

Colonization and National Liberation

The modern history of Yemen coincided with the increasing presence of the West in and around the Indian Ocean. In 1937, Britain sent a naval force from Bombay to occupy the Port of Aden, which continued to be ruled from India till 1937 when it was made a crown colony. The British acquisition of Aden was motivated by three distinct purposes; first, it was to serve as a major military base to safeguard

British interests, especially in containing the French influence; second, it was a part of the overall British policy of controlling the area around the Gulf and the Indian Ocean to protect the imperial communications with India; and third, the British were introducing the steamships in the Indian Ocean around that time and Aden was to serve as a coaling-station to them on their way to and from India and East Africa. After the opening of Suez Canal in 1869, the British hold over Aden became tighter as it was gradually converted from a coaling-station to an important oil-bunkering facility.

Eventually, the British control over the interior areas grew though it stopped short of outright colonization. After the First World War, the officials of the British Empire sorted out the boundary demarcation with the officials of the Ottoman Empire which till today divides the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen from the Yemen Arab Republic. By 1950s, the British hold was complete on its side of the demarcated area over a population of 1.5 million in the form of the Aden colony, the Eastern Protectorate and the Western Protectorate. The Protectorates were the conglomerations of the tribal-feudal statelets under local rulers but ultimately controlled by the British.

Yemen witnessed the nationalist stirrings in the early twenties. Aden and Hadramaut became two important centres of the nationalist activities. The early nationalists either grouped around the publications of newspapers with a radical political line or became active in the trade-union activities in numerous British concerns. It was a period when the entire Arab world was in the throes of struggle for independence. In 1948, George Habbash, Nayef Hawatmeh and other Palestinian exiles founded *Harakat al-Quamiyyun al-Arab* (Arab National Movement) in the aftermath of the first Arab-Israeli war. The ANM was committed to liberating Palestine and envisaged its liberation on the basis of and with the help of Arab unity. It soon established branches in Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Kuwait, Bahrain and Egypt during the 1950s. In Egypt, the ANM found a great ally in Gamal Abdel Nasser and pledged its support to his Arab policies.

Qahtan ash-Shaabi, the grand old man of the Yemeni

Liberation Movement and the first President of South Yemen, was one of the founder members of the *Quamiyyun* Cell in Cairo in 1955. Towards the end of 1961, he announced the formation of a Committee of North and South Yemeni delegates in Cairo in order to "strengthen the struggle" in those countries.¹ The introduction of the *Quamiyyun* ideas changed the character of the Yemeni nationalist activities. The pan-Arab political consciousness blended with the nationalist Yemeni feelings. Nasser's influence and ideas funnelled through the North Yemeni cells as the North Yemen had already become a Nasserite stronghold. After the Coup in North Yemen in which Imam Muhammad al-Badr was overthrown and Abdullah al-Sallal proclaimed the country a republic, the Sanaa regime provided a strategic territorial support to the *Quamiyyun* in the South. Aden and the rest of South Yemen witnessed spontaneous demonstrations in support of Sallal and in favour of Yemeni unification. In February 1963, Sanaa hosted an ANM conference attended by a thousand members which formally announced the creation of the National Liberation Front (NLF) for South Yemen.

By the mid-fifties, however, the ANM developed serious disagreements with Nasser. At various levels, a debate was raging among the ANM groups if Nasserism was capable of delivering goods either on the issue of Palestine or in Yemen. Consequently, the ANM itself started disintegrating. Habbash and Hawatmeh found different answers to the same problem and took different roads towards meeting it. What happened in the Palestinian section was repeated in the Peninsular section also, though with one major difference. Whereas the Palestinian leaders gradually radicalised and moulded their followers accordingly, the peninsular leadership lost ground to a second generation of young men. *Al-Qiyada al-Thaniyya* (the secondary leadership) that emerged to challenge the *al-Qiyada al-Amma* (the general leadership) was led by Salem Robaya Ali, a Hadramauti and a leader in the subsequent guerrilla warfare; Ali Antar, the Commander of the guerrilla uprising in the Radfan mountains; Abdul Fattah Ismail, a school teacher from North Yemen who had migrated to the South and others.

The second generation leadership was mainly characterized by its impatience with the NLF leaders. Ash-Shaabi, with all his radical ideas, a well-organized party-apparatus and a well-oiled connection with Nasser had achieved hardly anything tangible. At the same time, *al-Thaniyya* could see the leaders of its parent organization, the *Quamiyyun*, leave the path of Arab unity and take the Marxist route to their goal. Marxism not only provided a well-defined political outlook but offered a well worked-out revolutionary strategy. And it was the latter that made the Marxist ideas more appealing as they had an immediate relevance in the Yemeni context. The Hadramauti returnees from East Indies and Indonesia brought back distinct Maoist influence from those areas which mingled with the original scripts and the small Chinese community settled in Zanzibar near Aden contributed its own share in refining the Maoist concepts of the Third World Communism. At this stage, therefore, Marxism had a limited relevance and utility to the extent that its methods were adopted by the second generation leadership. Beyond this, Marxism, understood and applied by the revolutionaries was superimposed on many other influences and realities. In 1968, a Soviet journalist who was sent to the country found Yemeni Marxism containing elements of "scientific socialism" plus concepts of "revolutionary democracy" as well as "various religious, petty bourgeois and other ideas".²

On 14 October 1963, the guerrilla warfare was launched in a pre-planned attack in the Radfan mountains in the South of the Emirate of Dhala close to the Strategic road linking Aden with North Yemen. The warfare spread to other areas and was to continue for four years. With the guerrilla achievements in the background, *al-Qiyada al-Thaniyya* started voicing a demand for a full congress of the NLF which was held in June 1965 and which set a completely new trend in the NLF politics. In the meanwhile, Nasser himself was seen to be softening towards the Yemeni liberation, especially after his meeting with King Feisal of Saudi Arabia in August 1965. As the Young NLF became suspicious of Nasser, Nasser in turn started suspecting their ideas and opted for a more moderate group of nationalists, which he found in the Aden-centered

middle-class-based Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY).

Over the next two years, the NLF warfare was not only intensified but was fought on two fronts; the British and the FLOSY. By August 1967, it consolidated its position on vast stretches of land and formed popular committees to govern them. Thus when formal independence came in November, the NLF was not only well-prepared to take over the country and rule it, but had also initiated a process of popular participation in the governmental functioning. On 30 November 1969, People's Republic of South Yemen came into existence.

Consolidation of Independence

Unfortunately, independence did not automatically herald an era of progress and prosperity. The Suez Canal which was closed in the aftermath of the Six Day war deprived the country of two of its main sources of income and employment. Revenue from bunkering at Aden dropped by over half to around £800,000 a year as the number of ships using the port fell from an average of 6000 a year to 1300.³ The British evacuation of the Aden Port threw 20,000 Yemenis out of job. The British also reneged on their commitment of a £60 million aid and lowered it to only £3 million.

Qahtan ash-Shaabi became the President, Prime Minister, Supreme Commander of the armed forces. The trouble on the political front soon manifested itself when ash-Shaabi a hard-core Quamiyyun, set about pursuing his own policies of gradualism whereas the secondary leaders hip prodded on to accentuate the class-conflict and speed up the process of politicisation among the masses. In March 1968, the NLF congress at Zanzibar passed a number of radical measures inspite of ash-Shaabi's open opposition. It seemed likely by mid-year that he would be removed either by the militant youngmen or by a relatively conservative army. And when the army struck at ash-Shaabi's behest a virtual civil war ensued. The leftists retreated to the provinces, especially to Hadramaut where they set up a semi-independent administration with such Maoist institutions as the "popular councils" and the

"People's guards". According to one source, the Chinese arms and advisors were active in those parts.⁴ Radio Peace and Progress described the Chinese role in Hadramaut as one of creating "a small Biafra in order to undermine the People's Republic of South Yemen".⁵ The accusations between Aden and Hadramaut were hurled back and forth as the Adenis called the Hadramautis "the Pro-Chinese extremists and secessionists" and the latter retaliated with an allegation that the "US Imperialism has seized power in Aden".⁶

The power-balance remained precarious till mid-1969 when ash-Shaabi was replaced by the secondary leadership. In the meanwhile, he had taken a number of decisions which set the country in a specific direction. In foreign affairs, he entered into diplomatic relations with Britain immediately after independence, and acquired membership in the Arab League and the United Nations. China became the first country that entered into inter-governmental cooperation in the form of agreements on economic and technical cooperation and trade, and of "agreement in principle" to an interest-free long-term loan of five million pounds.⁷ In February 1969, he visited the Soviet Union during which agreements on economic and technical cooperation and air-communications were signed.⁸

In domestic affairs, ash-Shaabi did a number of things which became the precursors of more radical laws subsequently. Yemen had inherited a tribal social society in which the British had preserved the tribal mores intact. The incessant tribal feuds over water and grazing rights and family honour were taken care of by *Urf*, the traditional tribal law adjudicated and enforced by the tribal chiefs themselves. The government sought to erase the tribal hierarchy by superimposing a nation-wide structure in the form of six *mahafazat* (provinces). In January 1968, the government proclaimed a "General Truce Among the Tribes" under which revenge of all kinds was outlawed, all the pre-existing feuds were declared in suspense and the government undertook to punish anyone in the rural areas committing murder.⁹ In March 1968, the first land reform act was approved which permitted the government to confiscate without compensa-

tion all lands of Sultans, amirs and Sheikhs who had worked with the British. It also laid down land ceilings; the upper limit was twenty-five acres of irrigated land and fifty acres of unirrigated land per person.¹⁰ In urban areas, stringent economic measures were enforced to tide over the grim economic conditions. In February, the basic salaries of all government employees, civil and military, were cut by amounts ranging from 60 per cent for those earning £200 a month to 6 per cent for those earning between £23.5 and £25 a month. In June a comparable measure was applied to the private sector ranging from 47.5 per cent for those earning over £250 a month to 5 per cent for those earning £5 a month. In both the public and the private sectors, those earning under £23.5 were not affected.¹¹

Tasks of Nation-Building: Constitution, Government and Society

On 22 June 1969, *al-Thaniyya* repeated on the government-level what they had accomplished within the party-apparatus in mid-sixties. Qahtan ash-Shaabi was made to resign and a five-member presidential council replaced him. Salem Robaya Ali, who had been in semi-exile in the provinces returned to Aden and became the Chairman of the Council; Abdul Fattah Ismail, the General-Secretary of the NLF became one of its members. The inclusion of the General-Secretary of the Party into it was significant as it indicated a role for the Party in the actual governance of the country. The move presaged an expanding sphere of activities for the party, at times at the expense of the state machinery and eventually led to a direct clash between the two.

The first and an extremely important contribution of the new leadership was the constitution which was promulgated in November 1970 on the third anniversary of independence. The Constitution renamed the country from the People's Republic of South Yemen to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen; the omission of the word "South" conveying a claim to leadership in case of a merger with the North Yemen. The very first sentence of the constitution made it explicit; "Believing in the unity of the Yemen and the unity of the

destiny of the Yemeni people in the territory . . .”, it aspired to a “united democratic Yemen” which in turn is a step toward “democratic Arab unity”.¹²

On the political front, the constitution reflected an in-depth study of the Yemeni political realities and the ways of leading the country to an egalitarian society. Article 7 specified that the working class, the peasants, the intelligentsia and the petty bourgeois comprise the political basis of the national democratic revolution and Article 31 explicitly called on the state to “liberate society from backward tribalism”.¹³ The four revolutionary classes were to be the active participants in the national revolution and were assured complete freedom in that pursuit. The Constitution said, “The historical role of the working class moves upwards and [it] become(s) ultimately the leading class in society. Soldiers, women and students are regarded as part of the alliance by virtue of their membership in the production forces of the people”.¹⁴ The Party was put at the apex of such a movement and was given a mandate by the constitution itself. “The National Front Organization leads, on the basis of scientific socialism, the political activity among the masses and within mass organisation so as to develop society in such a way that national democratic Revolution, which is non-capitalist in approach, is achieved”.¹⁵

The Constitution also provided for a government machinery. The Supreme People’s Council (SPC) was stipulated to be a popularly elected parliament of 101 members. The number of members in the Presidential Council was brought down from 5 to 3 and was to compose of the President and two members elected by the Supreme People’s Council. The Presidential Council was given the initiative in making laws which were submitted to the SPC for approval, and determine the country’s policy in agreement with the Front’s Politbureau. In judicial sphere, a series of Magistrates’ Courts presided over by the Supreme Court were set up.¹⁶

The Government institutions were more or less static. The SPC members were nominated by the NLF and not elected as the Constitution provided. The political participation, thus, never reached the grass-roots but was strictly channelled

through the Party. More interestingly, the Party was given an open mandate to mould politics in the country according to its own strategy, whereas the governmental functions were strictly spelt out. Within the Government hierarchy itself, the power was concentrated at the top where the Presidential Council was to take initiative in law-making—although in consultation with the NLF leaders—and the SPC was reduced to a rubber-stamp.

The new leadership got busy in various facets of the national life apart from the mass-politicization and governance. The land reform act of 1968 was revoked and a new legislation was approved in its place in December 1970. It lowered the limits on land from fifty to forty acres for un-irrigated land and from twenty-five to twenty acres for irrigated land. This limit applied to families, whereas the previous law applied to individuals and thus effectively struck at the big family fortunes. The novel feature of this law, however, was not the lowering of the ceiling but its very method of implementation. By that time, *intifadat* or popular uprisings for land-grabbing had already started in the country-side. The law not only sanctified the *intifadat* but explicitly encouraged them.¹⁷ The peasants arrested the landlords, took over land and formed committees to distribute it and till it on a cooperative basis. The government stepped in only if the take-overs transgressed the law.

The earlier wage-cuts were further intensified extending to 15 per cent for those earning 300 to 500 dirhems (1 dirhem = roughly \$2.80) a month ; 30 per cent and 20 per cent for the unmarried and the married respectively in the 500 to 1000 wage bracket. For those getting 1000 to 1500 dirhems, the reductions were 60 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. In the case of those earning over 15,000 dirhems, there was a reduction of 80 per cent for unmarried and 60 per cent for the married. The wages of those earning under 300 dirhems per month were not lowered. Doctors, engineers, highly skilled workers and others in the professional category were initially left out from this directive but they started remonstrating against being left out and called on the government to cut their salary as well, which was

done.¹⁶

The new government launched a swift nationalization drive. In November 1969, "Economic organisation of a Public Sector and National Planning Act", popularly called Act 37, was announced with a particular aim of controlling the foreign capital which controlled 80 per cent of the service sector in Yemen, which in turn contributed 70 per cent of the Republic's entire national product.¹⁹ Eight banks, 12 insurance and 7 freight companies were nationalized. The petrol-pump and the ship refuelling facilities of shell, caltex and Mobil Oil were curtailed although the British Petroleum refinery at Aden was left untouched as it was running at a loss since 1967. Also, with no oil on its own territory Yemen would have found it extremely difficult to obtain oil for the refinery without relying on the BP network.

Islam in Nation Building

The Yemeni leadership showed a rare sagacity in dealing with Islam. Unlike Kamal Ataturk of Turkey, they did not shed off the Islamic burden in their hurried pace towards modernization or Marxism. The Constitution itself guaranteed a place of honour to Islam as it was declared to be the state religion and committed the state to the preservation of Arabic and Islamic culture. It was significant, however, that this lofty sentiment did not surface at the beginning of the Constitutional draft, but was carefully tucked inside so that it was barely noticeable. Articles 31 and 46 were devoted to Islam.²⁰

In judicial matters, although the state-run courts ran down all the way from the apex to the village-level, the parallel *qadi-courts* were tolerated and their judgements were never questioned. The most sensitive aspect of the Islamic legal-code is the personal law as it touches a Muslim directly and governs his social relationships at the most intimate level. It was only after four years in office that the NLF leadership plucked courage to take an initiative towards modernising that aspect of Islamic jurisprudence.

The Justice Ministry formed a committee to discuss a draft law on family with people throughout the country. It

included judges, ministry officials and, interestingly, an *imam* and a *mazoun*.* (learned man in Islam). The Committee, over a four-month period, visited all the six provinces, where local branches of women, youth, students, the trade unions, the popular militia, the people's committees etc. organized open meetings. It was as if the entire nation was deliberating on the merits of a new civil code.

Finally, a detailed 27-page draft was enacted on 5 January 1974 entitled : "Law No. 1 Concerning the Family". It described marriage as a contact "between men and women equal in rights and obligations, based on mutual understanding and respect" (Article 2) necessitating "the mutual consent of both parties" (Article 5). The parents were forbidden to approve a daughter's engagement without her consent (Article 3). Child-marriages were outlawed by setting the minimum marriage age at 18 for men and 16 for women (Article 7). Under the law, a husband as well as a wife could secure a divorce and both were required to pay an indemnity if found responsible for the troubles leading to divorce ; a husband to pay an amount not more than a year's maintenance for his ex-wife and a wife an amount not exceeding the bride-money she received from him at the time of the marriage (Article 30). The divorce was to be granted if a partner suffered from a medically certified incurable disease which prevented marital relations provided the other partner was unaware of it before marriage (Article 29A) ; or was absent for three consecutive years (Article 29B) ; or if a dependent spouse was refused maintenance by a partner able to provide it (Article 29C) or on grounds of cruelty or incompatibility (Article 29D). The Women's Union was given the power to adjudicate divorce proceedings and determine the custody of the children.

Since the Quran itself does not overtly prohibit polygamy, neither did the law No. 1. It did make the taking of a

*This term is used by Isma'ilis and means one who is permitted (to preach). Since Yemen at one time was an Isma'ili stronghold and still there are quite a few of them i.e. Dawoodi and Suleimani branches of Bohras, a religious official of this designation might be in existence there (editor).

second wife virtually impossible except in extreme circumstances (Article 11) and allowed the first wife an opportunity of divorce in that event (Article 29).²¹

The Party

Looming large over the Government and almost overshadowing it was the grand structure of the Party with a sweeping mandate from the Constitution. The period from 1970 onwards witnessed a quick evolution of the NLF from a liberation movement to the supreme guiding force in the country's life. Incidentally, it was the same period that witnessed a status quo in the Government machinery where even the elections could not be held for the SPC as was stipulated in the Constitution.

In April 1970, a top-level delegation from the NLF led by Abdul Fattah Ismail attended the Lenin Centenary Celebrations in Moscow. An Agreement was signed on the occasion providing for an NLF Party School to be established in Aden on the Soviet pattern with the Soviet lecturers. Ismail stated on returning home that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) had agreed to help build the NLF's party cadre and to provide special educational courses.²² The NLF delegations started visiting the Soviet Union on a regular basis after that.

At home the NLF reached out to the smallest and the most remote areas. The process was further strengthened by creating a vast network of unions in every field of activity attached to the Party. The General Union of the Yemeni workers was founded with branches all over the country. The Democratic Yemen Youth League, the Students' League, the People's Defence Committees, the Women's League were some of the other effective organisations affiliated to the NLF. Simultaneously, the army was purged of its pre-independent officers and men and it was involved into the development projects like construction of roads, building irrigation facilities and so on, which greatly changed its character and role in the country. After the fifth NLF Congress in March 1972, a People's militia was created. Unlike the army, the People's militia was directly under

the control of the Party and had no strict hierarchical order but was organised along a decentralised pattern. It increased manifold whereas the army remained more or less static. Thus by 1979, it was nearly 100,000 strong, five times as large as the army.²³ Peasants made up 60 per cent of the ranks of the militia and the workers 30 per cent ; which signified a distinct tilt in favour of maintaining a rural character. Like the army, the militia was also brought into the national development tasks and, additionally, was trained for the defence of the country. Thus, the militia participated directly in the socio-economic transformation of Yemen and emerged as a political force in its own right.

In 1975, Ismail launched a new move in the direction of building up a supreme political organization which the NLF had all along aspired to be but could not due to certain limitations. The NLF Congress approved a transitional plan of three years to transform the country from a national democracy to socialism. To that end, it was decided to merge the NLF with the two other political parties which were allowed to function: The People's Democratic Union (PDU) under the leadership of Abdullah Abdul Razzak Badhib was a pro-Soviet Communist group in existence since the late-fifties and had supported the NLF in its struggle against the FLOSY in the pre-independence period; and the Party of Peoples Vanguard (PPV) under the leadership of Aziz Hassan Yahya was a faction of the Baath Party. It is interesting to note that both the leaders were already functioning in the Government machinery; Badhib was the Minister of Education and later of Culture and Yahya was the Minister of Communications. The PDU and the PPV were also admitted into the trade unions, the women's League and other mass-organisations and their representatives became the members of the SPC when it was formed in April 1971. In 1973, the NLF, the PDU and the PPV had jointly founded the Democratic Yemen Youth League. With all that the two parties were kept out of the precincts of the NLF itself.

But under the new plan, the NLF invited the two to unite together to form a vanguard party under the slogan "To Fight for the Defence of the Yemeni Revolution, Implementation of

the Five Year Plan and Construction of the Vanguard Party". The Vanguard Party was named the National Front Political Organization (NFPO) and was formed with a specific understanding that it would function only for a period of three years at the end of which a single party would be established. The NFPO persevered in forging ever closer links with the CPSU at ideological, party and political levels.²⁴ The Soviet-assisted Higher School of Scientific Socialism at Aden and its branches in provinces held 29 full courses and graduated 1573 students and 4,522 people completed 73 short-term courses.²⁵ The total number of party members and probationary members went up to 25,683 out of which 1928 were women. Workers constituted 13.2 per cent and peasant 12.8 per cent of its membership.²⁶ By the end of the transition period, the proposed vanguard party had already taken shape and substance.

Foreign Policy : The Arab Option

In the wake of the "Corrective Movement", the Yemeni foreign policy took a sharp turn to the left. Diplomatic relations were established with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the South Vietnam, Cuba, Democratic Republic of North Korea and so on and Yemen stood boldly with the Communist world and away from its neighbours. In fact, the Yemeni posture towards its neighbours was sterner than that of the Soviets. It refused to recognize the lower Gulf states after the British withdrawal and went through great inconvenience and at times, discomfiture in showing its resentment at these countries. Thus when Oman applied for membership to the United Nations in 1971, PDRY was the only country to vote against it with Cuba merely abstaining in a bid to keep company to Yemen. It also rejected various UN resolutions on Palestine and vocally disapproved the political system in the countries like Egypt and Algeria which were supported by the Soviets.

Diplomatic relations with the US were cut off in October 1969—interestingly, not in 1967 when most of the Arab countries severed their diplomatic links with the US as the

circumstances in Yemen in that year were hardly propitious for any such initiative—in protest against the US law which allowed its citizens to serve in the Israeli army. In the initial years, the country steered clear of the Soviet-Chinese hostilities due to its own internal circumstances as Salem Robaya Ali was considered a pro-Peking ideologue, whereas Ismail was vociferously pro-Moscow.

At the popular level, as the Soviet instructors continued to conduct courses in Marxism for the party and the government officials, the foreign influence in any other form was carefully kept out. The citizens were forbidden from travelling abroad, except in special cases. Anyone wanting to leave the country for medical treatment was required to deposit a \$20,400 guarantee. A government order prohibited Yemenis from visiting foreign embassies. Foreign books and newspapers were banned, except for some Iraqi and Egyptian publications and Arabic translations of Russian works.²⁷

Even in these circumstances, unity of Yemen continued to remain an article of faith with the common masses which the Constitution itself had sanctified and called upon the state to bring about. The constantly disturbed borders between the two Yemens erupted in a full-scale war in September 1972. In a typically Yemeni development, the cease-fire that was signed on 8 October under the Arab League auspices was accompanied by an announcement that the two states were to merge together within a year. In November, Salem Robaya Ali and Abdul Rahman al-Iryani, the President of the Yemen Arab Republic, met in Tripoli in Libya and solemnized an agreement which said that the unified state was to be called the Yemen Republic; its capital was to be Sanaa; Islam was to be its religion, and the state was to aim “at achieving socialism which is inspired by the legacy of Arab Islam, its humanitarian values and the circumstances of Yemeni society”.²⁸ Committees were set up to bring it about and they continued to meet all through the 1973. Ministries of Unity Affairs were created in Aden and Sanaa to guide their deliberations. Unity was not achieved, although the motions at it contributed remarkably towards keeping the borders quiet and generating mutual goodwill among the people on both sides

coupled with a fresh awareness of each other's existence. The project was finally laid to rest when the two Presidents announced at the non-aligned summit at Algiers in September 1973 to postpone the formal unification. The domestic circumstances in both the countries were not suitable for a breakthrough of such a magnitude; what's significant, however, is the amicable agreement to go the different ways for a while.

During the 1973 Arab-Israel war, the PDRY contributed its mite to the Arab cause by closing the straits of Bab al-Mandab to the Israeli shipping. The gesture did not go unnoticed and acquired a special significance in the post-war Arab-strategy. Egypt was eager to have the Bab al-Mandab under an overall Arab control in the eventuality of the reopening of the Suez Canal. Saudi Arabia was equally eager to see the Soviet influence lessen around its border and also hoped to reduce the Iranian presence in Oman in case a rapprochement could be brought about between the PDRY and Oman. The result of all these calculations was to make a bid for Yemeni friendship.

On its part, the PDRY could justly claim to be rewarded for its war efforts. In the immediate aftermath of the war and the quadrupling in oil price, Yemen was severely hit and had to resort to the Arab-instituted IMF oil-facility to pay for its oil imports. Any relief from the Arabs in that regard would have been welcome. Even in the overall global context when the United States and China had patched up their differences and the Soviet Union itself was making serious bids for Arab friendship, the PDRY did not consider it wise to stick to its posture of a loner in the region.

In 1975, the government launched a diplomatic offensive to improve relations with the rich Gulf States. Robaya Ali himself made a number of visits to the Arab Gulf States. Mohammad Saleh Moulih, the Foreign Minister and a member of the Political Bureau paid a visit to Saudi Arabia in May 1976 resulting in diplomatic relations between the two countries. The relations with North Yemen continued to improve as both sides kept paying ritualistic obeisance to the supreme goal of Yemeni unity, and simultaneously agreeing on more relevant

matters like increase in trade, implementation of banking agreements and an exchange of delegations on a regular basis to promote understanding.²⁹ Aid from the Arab countries sharply increased after that. Kuwait agreed on a grant of \$5 million, the UAE agreed to finance a mineral survey, the Abu Dhabi Fund for Arab Economic Development granted aid for the fishing industry. In 1977, Kuwait agreed to provide a second grant of \$13.5 million for hospital building, the Saudi Fund for Development offered \$20 million equivalent for electricity projects and also agreed on assistance for a housing scheme in al-Mansoura in Aden.

On the 9th anniversary of the independence, Salem Robaya Ali, justified his policy-swing in a long speech. With the Arab States, he said, Yemen was following a policy of "settlement of the existing problems on the basis of non-interference in the internal affairs and respect of national sovereignty and national independence and also work to consolidate the principle of Arab solidarity". In a frank admission of Yemen's sources of aid, he said, "the Arab sister countries have contributed in financing some of the development projects in our republic and have had a prominent role in extending backing and assistance to Democratic Yemen. The cooperation between us and sister and friendly countries did not cover the economic fields only, but also covered technical fields. This includes the construction of schools and hospitals and the settlement of teachers, doctors, engineers, technicians from different countries". He brought in Saudi Arabia and Egypt for a special mention in the course of the lecture and ended on an optimistic note that inspite of "attempts that are being made by the saboteurs to sabotage the brotherly relations" and inspite of the "past misunderstanding", Yemen would exercise a "policy of pardon" with the Arab countries.³⁰

And then it was Yemen's turn to pay its side of the bargain. In December 1976, it agreed to release an Iranian pilot whose phantom F-4 plane was shot down over the Yemeni airspace, as a result of the Saudi mediation. In January 1977, it sent a contingent to Lebanon as a part of the combined Arab Deterrence Force. The same year, Yemen became a

member of the Organization of Islamic Conferences and Mohammad Saleh Moutih, represented it at the Foreign Ministers' Conference in Tripoli in May 1977. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO) guerillas were brought under a tight control and the insurgency across the PDRY-Oman border virtually subsided. In fact, there were reports that a lot of disillusioned Dhofari insurgents had surrendered to the "Omani authorities and a few senior PFLO officials were actually detained by the Yemeni government.³¹ When Fidel Castro, the ebullient Cuban President visited Yemen in March 1977, he was reportedly not allowed to meet any of the PFLO leaders or visit their camps.³²

On 15 February 1977, Robaya Ali met Ibrahim Mohammad al-Hamdi, the new North Yemeni President and they decided (1) to form a Council to consist of two Presidents, Ministers of Defence, Trade, Economics, Planning and Foreign Affairs. The Council was to meet every six months in Sanaa and Aden alternatively; (2) to form a sub-committee for Economic planning and trade to prepare a report on the matter for the consideration of the two presidents; and (3) to represent each other in a third country in case one of the two did not have an embassy. It was a plan for a de facto unification without mentioning the word.

As yet another proof of Yemen lining up with the conservative Arabs was its participation in the so-called Red Sea Summit. On 22 March 1977, Ibrahim al-Hamdi, the North Yemeni President, Jaafar al Numeiry, the Sudanese President, Mohammad Ziad Barre, the Somali President and Robaya Ali met at Taiz in North Yemen on the eve of the independence of Djibouti. They agreed upon the necessity of keeping the Red Sea "a zone of peace and harmony" and as the countries overlooking the Red Sea basin, accepted their responsibility of "realizing the objective in consultation and coordination with each other". Saudi Arabia and Egypt, both important Red Sea powers, were conspicuously absent from the Summit, but there was no doubt that the Summit was held at their behest and did their bidding.

From the beginning, the entire leadership was not in favour of Robaya's Arab policy. As the Yemeni involvement

with the conservative Arab regimes increased, the policy gradually lost support among more and more of the leaders and was eventually identified with Robaya, Moutih and a few others. Ismail who was leading a silent crusade against the meddling in the Arab world became more and more vocal with each new entanglement. Speaking at the third anniversary celebrations of the People's Militia, he warned that a right wing current was always fearing the birth of the People's Militia because "it will constitute a source of power to the people against its reactionary conspiracies and plots". He gradually began questioning and ridiculing the very concept of "Gulf Security" that Robaya had ardently taken up: "We ask in whose interest is the Gulf Security? Is it in the interest of the Arab peoples and guarantee of their independence and sovereignty over their territories or is it that the Gulf security will be in the interest of the foreign forces which threaten the Arabism of the Gulf".³³

More and more, Robaya and Ismail drifted apart in their policies and politics. As Robaya and Moutih departed on the well-publicised visits to the Arab capitals and received the Arab leaders in Aden, it was as if they were acting in their individual capacities as Ismail remained out of picture during such shows of brotherhood. For example, when Numeiry paid a three-day visit to Yemen in March 1977 Ismail did not see him even once. Similarly, as Ismail launched his vanguard party, it became obvious that it was done in spite of Robaya's attempts at scuttling it who would have been happier with a smaller party with a limited role to fit into the state structure rather than have a grand party breathing down his neck constantly. More and more frequently, Ismail shared platform with Ali Nasser Muhammad, the Defence Minister and a member of the Political Bureau, on occasions like the anniversaries of independence of the corrective movement, of the People's Militia, of the May Day, of the PFLO and so on; Ismail was less and less seen on such occasions.

During the 1975 Congress, Ismail finally lashed out against Robaya's Arab involvement. In a particularly vehement attack against Saudi Arabia, he said, "we have had to repulse attacks by imperialism and its agents, the Saudi reactionaries,

since the day we won independence. They have mounted military actions on our borders and acts of diversions inside the country. Dozens of camps of mercenaries line our frontiers with Saudi Arabia and Oman financed and equipped by Saudi Reaction".³⁴ Ismail never compromised on his policies of an aggressive revolution in relation to the North Yemen, the Dhofari rebellion and the Gulf regimes, and to a certain extent towards other moderate Arab states as well.

It was evident that the country was heading towards a crisis, but when it did come it was more dramatic and more violent than anyone had expected it in the worst-case scenario. On 24 June 1978, Robaya sent an envoy to Sanaa carrying a personal message for President Ahmed al-Ghashmi. As the emissary opened the brief case containing the letter, it exploded killing the bearer as well as the addressee. Two days later, Ismail summoned an extraordinary meeting of the Central Committee of the NFPO to discuss the development. According to the PDRY sources released later, Robaya Ali declined to attend the meeting and sent in his resignation instead. As the Central Committee was resolving to accept his resignation and remove him from all party and official positions, Robaya started straggling the place of the meeting. He was overpowered and the Central Committee passed a resolution to execute him which was carried out the same day.³⁵ The unofficial reports on the happening said that the whole incident was carefully planned and executed by Robaya's rivals to implicate him on a serious charge and get rid of him.

The three-year transitional period was coming to an end and the vanguard party that was due to emerge could not have permitted two rival centres of power at the top. It also needs to be noted that on that day itself, President Jimmy Carter's special envoy, Congressman Paul Findlay was in Aden to hold discussions with Robaya Ali on the "possibility of improving US-South Yemen relations", and the US administration had planned to send a delegation to Aden to follow up Findlay's talks on improving ties between the two countries.³⁶ These domestic and foreign policy factors seemed to have converged on that day to bring about the inevitable.

During the struggle for power in Aden, the operation was probably not as smooth as it was made out to be by the official statements. There were violent clashes between the army and the People's Militia and since it was the side supported by the People's Militia that won, it was accorded an ever enhanced status in the power hierarchy. The army, on the other hand, came in for widespread purges at all levels. Purges were carried out even in the Party apparatus and the governmental administration.

Across the border, the two Yemens started accusing each other of sabotage. The tensions escalated and a short border conflict took place. Saudi Arabia grabbed the opportunity and convened a special session of the Arab League in July at which for the first time in its history the League approved diplomatic and economic sanctions against one of its members. It was possible to do such a thing because of a special circumstance, completely unrelated to the situation in Yemen. The Steadfastness and Confrontation Front states had cut off diplomatic relations with and stopped attending sessions in Egypt and therefore, there was no state to defend South Yemen in the Arab League at that time. It was clear that the conservative Arabs had mounted a concerted pressure on the Ismail regime.

The Yemeni Socialist Party

Ismail remained firmly in the saddle in the face of opposition from domestic dissidents and foreign regimes. In October, he triumphantly announced the creation of the Yemeni Socialist Party as promised three years ago. The first Congress of the YSP met in Aden from 11 to 13 October with a lot of fan-fare and the occasion was accorded the honour of a rare historical happening. Ismail launched the YSP as "the vanguard of the Yemeni Working class in alliance with the peasantry, revolutionary intelligentsia and other strata of the country's working people" with a mandate of transforming "society along revolutionary lines to complete the tasks of the national-democratic revolution and make transition to the building of socialism".³⁷ On this occasion, Ismail presented a 146-page political report on behalf of the Central Committee

which dealt with a wide gamut of issues at a great length; the international situation, the Yemeni unification, economic policy and development, social and political situation, the state-power, the role of the party and so on.

In the field of foreign policy, five guidelines were laid down, the first two of which swung the pendulum to the left in its external orientation:

1. Support for and development of relations with vanguard parties, national-patriotic and progressive forces and consolidating the militant friendship linking the Arab national liberation movement with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries.
2. The broadening and strengthening of diverse relations with the countries of the socialist system, the working-class parties in the capitalist countries, the national liberation movement, and progressive and democratic regimes in the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The third, fourth and fifth guidelines extended support to non-alignment, the United Nations and disarmament respectively.³⁸ In the subsequent discussion on the Yemeni foreign policy, the report extended support to the PLO, the POLISARIO of the Arab Saharawi Republic Movement, the PFLO, the MPLA—Workers' Party of Angola, Frelimo of Mozambique, the Congolese Party of Labour, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, People's Republic of Korea, Workers' Party of Korea in South Korea, People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan etc. The Soviet Union came in for repeated mention; as a natural ally in the fight against Imperialism, Zionism and Reaction and also as a contributor to the country's defence capacity, technical aid and other assistance.

On the internal affairs, the report squarely put the blame for all the ills on the "left-opportunist adventuristic deviation"³⁹ which it said had functioned "under the influence of bourgeois and reactionary propaganda or under that of left opportunists".⁴⁰ The report was hard put to explain substantial achievements like an increasing state control over production, service and trade sector of the economy and an impressive expansion of the cooperatives in agricultural and

consumer sections inspite of Robaya's deviating methods. In the governance of the country, the report similarly blamed the left adventurists for interfering with the work of the Council of Ministers, but claimed that inspite of that it had "carried out the decisions of the Central Committee and the Political Bureau, and monitored the fulfilment of tasks that strengthened the pillars of power".⁴¹

The report suggested a few amendments in the 1970 Constitution. The Presidential Council was proposed to be abolished and replaced by a Presidium of the SPC consisting of the Chairmen of the standing committees of the SPC and heads of public organizations as ex-officio members along with others. In practical term, it meant not only a collective leadership at the top, but collective leadership shared by a large number of people drawn from various fields. Also it would amount to a close coordination between the government and the party at various levels so that the two would not remain parallel power centres but would gradually come close together. The status of the Council of Ministers was proposed to be drastically reduced leaving it with only "administrative and executive power".

The government structure which was frozen for nearly a decade was sought to be revitalized. In December 1978, nation-wide direct elections were held to an 111-member SPC which held its first session in the same month and appointed an 11-member Presidium with Ismail as its Chairman and a 19-member Council of Ministers in which Ali Nasser Mohammad retained Prime Ministership and took over an additional charge of Finance and Moutih retained Foreign Ministership.⁴²

Ismail took special interest and pride in restoring Yemen to the Socialist Countries, the revolutionary parties in the non-socialist countries and the liberation movements which he considered as forming one single factor in the global power-configuration. In October 1979, Yemen became the second Arab country, after Iraq, to sign a Friendship and Cooperation Pact with the Soviet Union. The operative part of the Pact contained a promise by both sides to "strengthen the unbreakable friendship" between Moscow and Aden. It said that the two would "continue to develop cooperation in the

military field on the basis of appropriate agreements concluded between them and in the interests of strengthening their defence ability."¹³ It also became an observer member of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), thus binding the country close to the Soviet Union and its allies.

With the Arab governments, on the other hand, the Yemeni relations touched an all-time low. In February 1979, Yemen fought a short war with North Yemen. It was one of the fiercest conflict between the two countries and went so noticeably in favour of the PDRY that the regional balance was seen to be threatened by its consequences. Saudi Arabia was compelled to recall the contingent from the Arab Deterrence Force in Lebanon and deploy it along its border with PDRY. The US despatched arms worth \$140 million to North Yemen in response to desperate Saudi calls. The end of the war was accompanied by the usual Arab mediation efforts and the calls for Yemeni unity. Ismail himself agreed to meet Ali Abdullah Saleh, the North Yemeni President at Kuwait in presence of Kuwaiti ruler and to the proposal of Yemeni unity. The unity was clearly spelt out to be on the PDRY terms and Ismail announced that his offer was "a gesture of goodwill designed to remove fears and suspicions on the part of the North Yemenis". Saleh accepted the offer purely as a move to bide time and both sides were aware that the project was the least feasible at that particular juncture.

A few months later, Yemen got caught in a worse situation with another of the Arab neighbours. In May, the Iraqi embassy officials in Aden shot dead Tawfik Rushdi, an Iraqi lecturer at the Aden Higher College of Education. It was a spill-over of the Baath-Communist flashes in Iraq as Rushdi himself was a convinced Marxist and a vocal critic of Iraqi regime. The South Yemeni government demanded that the culprits be handed over to it for trial, surrounded the Iraqi embassy and after a few days' futile wait, stormed and ransacked it. The Iraqi retaliation was instant. The bad blood between the two continued for months thereafter and resulted in a friction within the YSP between a few of the original Baath partymen and others. In April 1980 a few Baath members were even convicted for spying for Iraq to which

Iraq reacted by expelling the Yemeni students.

Ismail resigned, ostensibly on health grounds, on 20 April 1980—less than two years after coming to power.

Ali Nasser Mohammad

Ali Nasser Mohammad replaced Ismail. He was helped in the power struggle by the “Troika” consisting of Mohammad Saleh Moutih, the Foreign Minister closely associated with Robaya’s Arab policy and having good connections with Saudi Arabia; Ali Antar, a close associate of Robaya during the days of the uprisings in the Radfan mountains, and Salem al-Bayd, a Hadramauti. The change could be interpreted in two ways; one, that it was a reassertion of the moderate view in the country; and two, it was a revolt of the genuine South Yemenis against Ismail who had migrated from the North.

The first interpretation seemed to have been substantiated when Ali Nasser Mohammad sent Ali Abdul Razzak Badhib (a brother of Abdellah Abdul Razzak Badhib, the founder of the PDU in ‘fifties) with a personal message to the Kremlin leaders on the change in Yemen only a few days later. Neither Brezhnev nor Gromyko received him and he had to leave the message with a member of the Soviet politbureau.⁴⁴ Ali Nasser himself visited Moscow in the end of May, probably for the same purpose.

In his first interview after the change, given to *al-watan*, a Kuwaiti newspaper, Ali Nasser denied any “power rivalry” between Ismail and himself, calling it “nothing more than a revision in the framework of the state and the party”. He stated that it would have no effect on the “political line to which we all adhere and we will continue to pursue the domestic and foreign policies decided by the Socialist Party”. Touching upon the Soviet-Yemeni relations, he said “We are determined to strengthen our relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist states.”⁴⁵

Unlike any of his predecessors Ali Nasser has taken over all the three important offices; he is the President, the Prime Minister and the Secretary-General of the Yemeni Socialist Party. Having centralised all power in his hands, he was

succeeded in getting rid of all his three former associates in various stages spread over more than a year. In October 1980, at an extraordinary Congress of the YSP, it was decided to reduce the membership of the Central Committee from seven to five. Except for Ali Nasser and Ali Antar, all the rest of the incumbents were dropped which included al-Bayd and Badhib.⁴⁶ In February Moutih was arrested and detained on charges of collaboration with foreign states with the purpose of changing the domestic and foreign policies of the country. No country was mentioned but it was clear that Saudi Arabia was the country in question. Moutih was put on trial and executed—reportedly against the wishes of many of the top leaders including Ali Antar. Shortly thereafter, Salem al-Bayd was stripped of all his party and political functions and prerogatives on charge of having violated the law by marrying a second wife. It is to be recalled that the “Law No. 1 Concerning the Family” does not completely rule out polygamy. In fact, it legalises it under special circumstances.

The next move was the dismissal of about fifty army officers, which weakened Ali Antar’s wing within the armed forces. Thereupon, Ali Antar travelled to India for health reasons but the true reason of his trip was said to be his dissatisfaction and lack of conviction with the officers’ dismissal, and his disapproval of Mohammad Saleh Moutih’s execution.⁴⁷ Upon his return from India, he was transferred from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of Local Administration. He was also appointed the Deputy Prime Minister, a place vacated by al-Bayd. Both these positions are more or less sinecures, and carry hardly any real power or influence.

Ali Nasser’s foreign policy has been equally erratic. In less than a fortnight after he took over, the North Yemeni Prime Minister Abdel Aziz Abdul Ghani arrived in Aden for a visit aimed at speeding up talks on unifying the two countries; he being the highest ranking North Yemeni official to visit Aden since independence. Towards the end of June, Ali Nasser himself set out on a tour to the Arab capitals; he visited Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and on his way home paid an unannounced visit to Sanaa. In

August, the Central Committee of the YSP approved his efforts at accelerating the process of Yemeni unity. The efforts brought noticeable returns almost instantly; the \$28 million Wadi Hadramaut electricity scheme for which bids were invited in 1978-79, was revived with Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya and the World Bank agreeing to jointly finance it. Algeria and Abu Dhabi agreed to finance the al-Mansoura power station project to be completed by 1983 and Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and the OPEC Fund for International Development remitted \$10.5 million for road building. The Islamic Development Bank loaned \$5.5 million for Aden water supply.⁴⁸ During this period, there was a perceptible cooling off in the Yemeni-Soviet relationship. When asked whether some tensions had developed between the two, Ali Nasser denied it but made a curious statement after that. "The latest Steadfastness and Confrontation Front summit had decided to bolster relations with the Soviet Union and had entrusted Libyan Colonel Mohammad Qadhafi with the mission of undertaking moves to improve these relations and deepen them", he said.⁴⁹ Were the Soviet-Yemeni coordination at the Party, ideological, economic and political levels to be downgraded to a point when Yemen would be one of the members of the Pro-Soviet Steadfastness and Confrontation Front?

In August 1981, the Yemeni foreign policy took a new turn when Muammar Qadhafi, the President of Libya, Mengistu Haile Mariam, the President of Ethiopia and Ali Nasser met in Aden and entered into a tripartite Friendship and Cooperation Treaty.⁵⁰ It envisages a Supreme Council composed of the three leaders, and a Ministerial Committee charged with the implementation of the Treaty. Under the treaty, an aggression against any one of the three would be considered as a direct aggression against the other two and all means would be used to protect the aggrieved nation. The treaty called for developing cooperation in military and security fields so as to consolidate their defence forces to safeguard the independence, sovereignty and revolutionary character of their countries. The treaty was a response to the US President's call for a strategic consensus with the

conservative states around the Indian Ocean.

The efforts at Yemeni Unity, however continued. Ali Nasser paid a second visit to North Yemen in November and by December, the Unification Draft was ready for approval.⁵¹ It was based on the earlier draft of 1977 agreed to by Robaya and Hamdi. It provided for the creation of a Higher Council, composed of the two Presidents, a Ministerial Committee grouping the foreign, interior, planning and education ministers of the two countries and a joint military command. The draft gave prominence to Islam as the state religion. Ali Nasser made a special reference to it saying, "There is a great difference between those who allege concern for religion and use it as a cover for their lackeyism, their political purposes and their personal interests and the poor masses that find in religion, freedom, justice and equality". On the place of Islam in his own country, he said, "We in the southern part understand religion as serving man, liberating him from all forms of injustice, exploitation and backwardness".⁵²

By the beginning of this year, the circumstances had changed once again. The unity talks and the draft constitution were pushed into the background and the border-clashes between the two Yemens took their place.

One of the reasons of this *volte-face* was said to be the opposition within the Yemeni politics. Three important leaders of the National Democratic Front (NDF) — the North Yemeni Liberation Movement based in PDRY—were appointed to influential positions in the YSP as a result and that in turn led to a renewed tension on the border.⁵³ By February, widespread arrests were made in connection with a sabotage-plot. *As-Safir*, a usually well-informed Kuwaiti daily reported that the PDRY government had unearthed a plan of invasion on its territory which included A : Omani invasion on Mahra, Hadramaut and the adjacent areas ; B : Saudi forces closing down on Sharwa, Wadia and the areas in the vicinity ; and C : North Yemen attempting a breakthrough at Beida, Qaataba and the areas around that region. The daily reported that the plan was put together during the visit of the US Defence Secretary Casper Weinberger to the area and it envisaged a role for the air-

force which would bombard the targets in the depths of the Yemeni territory.⁵⁴

The NLF attacks on the North Yemeni territory intensified after that. They were successful in holding on to a few areas after sporadic incursions. The Gulf cooperation Council and the Arab states in general reactivated their mediation efforts. Kuwait and the PLO representatives visited the countries and offered peace proposal which included:

1. On military level, formation of joint military committees where the government and the NDF would be represented. These Committees, each headed by a Palestinian Officer would supervise the cease-fire. It would be followed by disengagement of forces. The army would pull back from its advanced position and the NDF would eliminate military manifestation. Then, the North Yemeni official administration would be restored in the region and the control of the NDF in collaboration with it.

2. On political level, political dialogue would begin between the two sides under sponsorship from the PLO and South Yemen. The purpose would be to have the NDF take part in power and decision-making in such a way as not to antagonise sides opposed to the NDF as Saudi Arabia and the Muslim Brotherhood.⁵⁵

The Plan sought to introduce the NDF in to the North Yemeni power-centre. It also put South Yemen, a patron of NDF in a position of mediation between the NDF and the North Yemeni government. The Presidents of two Yemen met in a hurriedly planned summit in Taiz in May. The summit has not achieved anything substantial, though it has again provided material for speculation on the Yemeni unity.

The Yemeni unity is today in a state of suspended animation till it is suddenly revived and displayed in a show case on a special occasion to be put back on the back-burner once again.

Conclusion

The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen is a closed society shunning every attempt at observation and study.

No authentic account of its social structure, political pulls and pressures or economic facts and figures is available to date, barring a volume on the first Congress of the Yemeni Socialist Party, which is published, interestingly, by the Progress Publishers, Moscow. The Government itself does precious little, either directly or through its foreign missions, to encourage any genuine curiosity or academic investigations.

The PDRY remains one of the most important countries that needs to be studied for understanding a tribal society's march towards Marxism, the compatibility and conflict between Marxism and nationalism, the unique experiment at an egalitarian society next door to the religious, military and tribal dictatorships, in the context of the situation in the Gulf, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean etc.

Domestically, the PDRY politics has remained a one-man show at a time followed by convulsions and a seeming change but invariably resulting in the next spell of the same situation. All attempts at installing the collective leadership at the top—either in the form of the Presidential Council or the Presidium of the SPC—have failed; so have the attempts at institutionalising the exercise of power through coordination between the Government and the State. In such circumstances, the personal factors, and probably the tribal identities remain the binding force. Aden and Hadramaut rivalry had manifested itself even before the independence and has continued till today. Then, there is a rivalry between the original South Yemenis and the migrants from North Yemen. The Quamiyyun cells in the two countries had operated jointly for many years during the liberation struggle, resulting in the key leaders opting for any of the two arenas of battle that suited them. Such leaders who have migrated from the North to the South, have played a crucial role in the struggle and as such their *bona-fides* are not in question. What it has meant in the practical terms is that the migrants from the North have forged close links with the NDF and provided them every support at crucial moments. They have also been dead-set against Yemeni unity, except on the NDF terms.

At popular level, the PDRY politics has contributed substantially towards modernizing the society, encouraging a "disciplined" and "well-directed" participation in the political processes and emancipating the lot of the women. The PDRY women are the most privileged women in the entire area. Islam and Arabism, however, remain deeply embedded on the national value, system. Unlike Kamal Atatürk who in a race towards modernization sought to shed off the Islamic burden or Anwar Sadat who in an attempt to disentangle his country from the Arab-Israel problem sought to erase its Arabism, the PDRY leaders have consistently stood by the twin values of Arab nationalism and Islam. The unity of two Yemens is seen as a goal in itself, but also as a step towards Arab unity. The Yemeni unity would have to be on their terms only, so would the "democratic Arab unity". Even on their terms, i.e. on the socialistic pattern, unity may not really be welcomed by the PDRY leaders. What is significant is that they recognise that the sentiment has a mass-appeal and should therefore be repeated in public addresses and documents rather than try to scuttle it.

Islam as a national value demands something more than mere lip-service. The opening sentence in every draft resolution on unity with the North Yemen speaks of "Unity based on Islamic Principles" and is accorded the place of state religion in the PDRY Constitution itself. The *al-Thaniyya* leadership, in their rush towards accentuating the class-struggle and radicalising the masses, must have had to come up against the religious hierarchy on numerous occasions. The *intifadat*, or the land-grabbing, which was encouraged among the rural masses, failed to pick up momentum initially as the Sheikhs and *Sadas* (religious leaders) were the biggest landowners and the people refused to grab their lands or harm them. The Sharia courts were allowed to operate for a long time so that the religious legitimacy of the regime was not unnecessarily undermined: "The Law No. 1 Concerning the Family" is the best example of the conciliatory attitude adopted by the regime towards a sensitive aspect of the Islamic jurisprudence.

A Committee that consisted of not only the justice department officials, but also two learned men in Islamic scripts were sent to visit every single village to acquaint itself of the public opinion, discuss the draft bill, seek amendments and give assurances. The Committee took full four months to accomplish the task so that when the law was finally promulgated there was no outright rejection of it. And even after that the polygamy was not touched as it has been permitted by Quran itself; although it was put under a lot of chains.

Since the PDRY is on the very periphery of the Arab world, the pull to Arabism is relatively weak and so is the commitment to the Arab cause, i.e. the Arab-Israel conflict *per se*. The PDRY reading of the issue is very different from the rest of the Arab countries. Zionism, in itself is seen as an evil, and inevitably bracketed with Imperialism and Reaction ; all three of which would have to be fought as enemies of the Revolution. Similarly, the support to the PLO is not towards regaining Arab land or Arab honour. It is support to a liberation struggle which is seen to be a progressive force along with the socialist countries, the working-class parties in the non-socialist countries and the progressive non-socialist countries in a world-wide power-configuration. PLO therefore is invariably mentioned along-with the PFLO, NDF and various other liberation movements across the world.

The theoretical niceties, however, do not work too close at home. Whereas the PLO has consistently been supported and acclaimed, the same has not been true of the NDF and the PFLO. The PDRY borders have been constantly disturbed as there are hostile forces all along; Saudi Arabia, North Yemen and Oman. There are roughly one million Yemenis working in Saudi Arabia, which contributes indirectly to more or less quiet border. But the NDF forays into North Yemen and the PFLO incursions into Oman have led the PDRY itself into conflict with both these neighbours. At times, the government has used the liberation struggles to serve its own calculations, at others they have been put under a right leash

so that they do not interfere with its drive towards good-neighbourliness.

More often, the PDRY has been at the receiving end of the regional and global developments. In the political context, it is the only Marxist state which has refused to fall into line with its Peninsular leaders and is a target of their concerted attention. They have offered financial incentives when possible, they have put overt pressures through the South Yemeni dissidents who have sought shelter on their territories when needed; they have resorted to armed clashes when nothing else worked. The South Yemen experiment is a challenge to their own political legitimacy and a threat to their very survival. As such, the strife will have to go on till the situation changes radically in either Yemen or in the rest of the Peninsula. In the strategic context, Yemen is equally important. It has a long sea-line in the north of the Indian Ocean, its Socotra Island is located just off the Peninsula and the Africa Horn and it sits on one side of the narrow mouth of the Red Sea at *Bab al-Mandab*. Any development on the Arab-Israel conflict, or the strife on the African Horn or the Super Power rivalry in the Indian Ocean would invariably and immediately affect the PDRY.

For more reasons than one, therefore, the PDRY would remain a very important country for a long time to come.

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ISLAM AND REVOLUTION IN LIBYA

Zaheer Masood Quraishi

The Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, comprising 1,775,500 sq. kms. is the fourth largest African country. With 1900 kms. of Mediterranean coastline, it occupies bulk of the central Mediterranean coast of North Africa. Its three regions, Western (Tripolitania), Eastern (Cyrenaica) and Southern (Fezzan), combine to give out a mosaic pattern of dotted settlements among the vast expanses of arid and semi-arid land. Physically, it resembles Egypt without the Nile and Algeria without mounds. Its present scanty population (2,939,200) which tends to concentrate in urban conglomerations like Tripoli (31.4%), Benghazi (14.5%) and Zawia (11%) reflects the state of its demographic history since time immemorial.¹

Due to its peculiar ecological condition and geo-political location, it alternately performed the function of a gulf which separates and a bridge which conjoins east and west, and north and south. It has for long attracted the attention of foreign expansionists and readily imbibed best in their culture. But subsequently it has always withdrawn into hibernation with a view to assimilating foreign influences and producing a novel synthesis of its own.² Herodotus paid tribute to this characteristic of Libyan culture in his famous dictum: "From Libya always comes something new".³ The current political experiment in the Jamahiriya closely follows its traditional role in human civilization. It makes a bold push in employing Islamic Fundamentalism for bringing about a technological revolution so that it could serve as model for rest of the developing world.

Political experiment in Libya is, indeed, a grand enterprise ; its grandeur resides in the fact that it employs Islamic Fundamentalism for revolutionary objectives. This certainly seems to be novel in view of a general impression that the doctrine of Fundamentalism is a handmade of conservative regimes which invented it with a view to preserving their oligarchic hegemony.

It is true that Libyans, like Muslims elsewhere, hold Islam as the Perfect Religion and regard its tenets valid and relevant everywhere and at all times. But since human society is in a state of flux, Islam is conceived as a guide to action in the whole course of changing milieu. It regulates human affairs in all sorts of social formation. With major or revolutionary transformations in society, Islam as a religion should be torn from its acquired social moorings so that it is adjusted to the new social order to resume its guiding role without any social inconvenience and distortion or setback to its spiritual values.⁴

Thus conceived, Islamic Fundamentalism is an instrument of social change. It is a movement which invokes basic principles of Islam in a bid to solving contemporary problems, political and others, facing Muslim community at local, regional or global levels. Libya's revolutionary exercise offers an instance of Islamic potential; Islamic tenets are required to be isolated from its semi-feudal, semi-capitalist social involvement in order to be transplanted in a new socialist set-up.

Islam arrived in Libya with the Arab armies, led by 'Umar b. al-'As, who conquered Cyrenaica in 642 (only ten years after the death of the Prophet) and Tripolitania and Fezzan two years later. It did not take more than a decade for Arabs to consolidate Islamic power over all of Libya, with a very brief Byzantine interlude in 670. Even the Berber threat to Arab-Islamic rule in 740 was a short-lived one. As a result of a double process of Arabization and Islamization the entire region of north Africa was brought under complete sway of Islam by the eleventh century.

Libyans overwhelmingly constitute a community of Sunnis of Maliki school, which admits only the Quran and the

Prophetic Traditions (*Hadith*) to the exclusion of consensus and analogy as sources of faith.⁵ The faith is so pervasive over Libyan society that it is difficult to conceive of a sector of society which eludes its steering control. In a community so totally committed to Islamic faith, no revolutionary tendency can establish its *bona fides* unless it strongly subscribes to Islam. In fact, Islam is a revolutionary movement that transformed the Arabian Peninsula from a venue of internecine tribal warfare to a community of articulate individuals bound with a bond of purposive partnership in this world and for the other. While there is nothing in it to undermine social ownership principle, there are sentiments of liberty, equality and fraternity which encourage revolutionary development in Muslim community.

During the middle of nineteenth century, a revolutionary movement emerged in Libya under the inspiration of Wahabi Fundamentalism of the Arabian Peninsula in the form of Sanyusi sufi order. Founded by Muhammad b. 'Ali, the brotherhood invoked the purity of Islamic doctrine as a necessary strategy to combat laxity which had gripped the community.⁶ Organised in revolutionary calls, the fraternity was able to infiltrate in all sections of society, imparting education in informal manner as well as through a network of schools. This is how it was able to carve a nation out of the people living in the territories of Libya so that, during Italian occupation, it was able to provide a formidable base for organised resistance to the occupying authority. It lost its revolutionary clamour under the shadow of political power (its leader assumed Kingship), which sought to preserve itself against challenges of the era of the mass unrest.

The Libyan Fateh Revolution, which took place on September 1, 1969 heralded an era of plebeian democracy (Jamahiriya)⁷ inspired by the humanistic content of Islam. Its leader, Col. Mu 'ammar al-Qadhafi regards Islam as synonymous with human struggle for justice and condemns those who employ Islamic doctrine to cover their impiety and pursuit of self-interest. As a living doctrine, Islam presumes the community of nation-states as a fact of current global

scenario. Its universalism cannot be at the cost of nationalism because that amounts to destruction of the global community. As a progressive faith, 'Islam helps move man'⁸ to a just society where all are free irrespective of caste, colour or creed and live in a fraternity on the basis of equality. Islam upholds the rights of oppressed and prompts all and sundry to relentlessly strive for the downtrodden. Thus, nationalism in the Islamic framework encourages socialism, anti-colonialism and democracy and does not undermine universal humanism without which a community of nations cannot attain peace and justice. 'Islam is not the religion of those...who do nothing but pray. It is a religion of labour and struggle.' Universal humanism of Islam, therefore, obligates upon a Muslim living in the framework of nation-state to support, work and fight for oppressed people everywhere.

The revolutionary authority of Libya disapproved of secret organisations like Muslim Brotherhood as completely at variance with the spirit of Islam.⁹ In a Muslim country, all the faithfuls are members of the community and secret organisations can at best carry on subversive activities undermining social solidarity. After the Libyan Revolution, the Sanyusi fraternity was not only irrelevant but also discredited for providing protecting umbrella to the outmoded monarchy. In October 1969, the Revolutionary Command Council appointed a supervisor for whatever was left of the Sanyusi property mainly in the form of educational institutions and merged the Sanyusi-sponsored Islamic University with the University of Libya in November, 1970. In November, 1973 a code of law designed after Sharia was published and the judicial system was reorganised to suit it.

For the sake of promoting revolutionary teachings of Islam, Libyan Jamahiriya established *al-Da'wa al-Islamiya* (the Islamic Call)¹⁰ under the learned leadership of Shaykh Subhi, its Secretary-General. The Society does not only undertake the universal call to Islam and its revolutionary message but actively supports as well the oppressed Muslim communities in their revolutionary struggle for civil

rights and independence. As a guide to action, the Quran is not to be read alone. It should be thoroughly understood as well. Hence, Libya undertakes to translate the Book in as many languages as possible so that its message is accessible to non-Arabs.

This revolutionary understanding of Islam prompts the Libyan leader to propound his Third Universal Theory as a counter to the liberal and Marxist theories of State. *The Green Book*¹¹ which articulates the theory, expresses its suspicion of the term "Power". The Power, the central notion of the contemporary liberal theory, is regarded as an expression of unequal relationship between individuals and groups and, therefore, cannot be expected to form the basis of a democratic system. Authority, on the other hand, acknowledged as a legitimate source of decision-making, is acceptable to all participating members of the community.¹² Qadhafi expressed his distrust for electoral system, party competition and rule of the elite as means of allocation of values from the vantage point of power. He insists that the appropriate function of Authority does not only presume equalitarian society but it can also be made instrumental to ending exploitation of man by man, so that a total social concord is achieved. This is how, the institutions of direct democracy, that have often polluted the peaceful life of villages in India or instilled conservatism in Switzerland can be employed for a revolutionary purpose. Thus, it is possible to achieve the General Will in a modern nation-state also.

This anthropocentric world view relies on nature (or law of nature) for its overall operation. Two parallel hierarchies, one for legislative or decision-making purpose and the other for their implementation, involve all the citizens at two different levels of the political system so that "society is its own supervisor".¹³ In every political system, there is an economic surplus to be appropriated by its ruling elite. Qadhafi's Third Universal Theory ensures that the surplus is made available to the society as a whole. This is his concept of socialism and prepares ground for freedom.

Freedom emanates from the satisfaction of needs¹⁴ and, therefore, everyone has a natural right to a house and an

income so that no one deprives him of his freedom by controlling his needs. Workers' participation in production ensures a wageless productive process in which technological revolution can simply replace workers by technical personnel.

Such a social order grants happiness to the families, solidarity for the nation, equal status for women without ignoring special facilities for them and solves the problem of minorities. All the citizens are free to procure for them education that suits their ability and desire and culture and sports are accessible to the entire citizenry. *The Green Book* is the first systematic effort to demonstrate relevance of Islam in building up technological culture and to state principles of socialism and political participation for a modern Muslim community with a clear perspective that the principles can be operationalized in non-Muslim societies as well.

In pursuance of these ideas, the People's Authority was established on March 2, 1977 and the Libyan political system was reorganized to cater to the needs of participatory plebeian democracy.¹⁵ Political authority, national wealth and armed might was transferred to the entire community. Basic Popular Congresses were established everywhere, political parties were disallowed and electoral system was cancelled. Discussion and expression of the opinion resulting from the meetings of the basic units would be referred to the General People's Congress for further discussion and decision and enactment. As the Supreme popular authority of the hierarchy, it formulates the policies of the *Jamahiriyah*, prepares general plans, and budget and controls the executive authority, which is a kind of collegial body at the top of another hierarchy of similar collegial bodies upto the level of actual implementation. The same citizenry constitutes the two hierarchies on varying principles. As a result, the two exercise check on each other and the role of top leadership is greatly confined to channellization.

The committee system is working so effectively that even most of the shop-keepers gradually abandoned their private business to join the government-run systems of departmental stores.

Although, in keeping with the Islamic principle, right to

own property is not withdrawn, yet the total economic system is so firmly grounded in the committee system that neither the margin of profit can really be comfortable for traders nor ownership of private property is attractive. The national resources are in the hands of the people in the sense that all economic processes are governed by the managing committees of which all workers are members. When a residential accommodation is ensured to everyone, who is going to invest huge amount in building up residential accommodation for oneself? The coexistence of public and private sectors, thus, ensures the expansion of the former at the cost of the latter.

“The Declaration of the Power of the People” lays down the guidelines for the military organization: “The defence of the country is a responsibility which must be discharged by every citizen, whether man or woman.”¹⁶ The training and equipment of the people is carried out by means of a general military training programme to mobilize the entire population in war and peace. Students and teachers in schools and universities, workers in fields and factories and producers and consumers are trained to handle the most modern weapons from personal small arms to anti-aircraft and anti-tank weaponry. Thus, the system of professional army has completely been superseded by the people in arms.

Within the contours of the Jamahiriya political system, a very ambitious plan has been undertaken to transform this ancient land into a formidable modern socialist nation. A huge allocation was made to the agricultural sector for mechanization of agriculture, for four irrigation schemes at Jafra, Jabal al-Akhdar, Fezzan and Kufra to reclaim 303,709 hectares for vegetables and fruit, 654,620 hectares for pastures and forests and 45,030 hectares for cereals, so that a green revolution is obtained.¹⁷ A corresponding progress is earmarked for animal husbandry and poultry. The strategy of industrial development is designed to achieve national self-sufficiency as soon as possible. Fourteen factories of food processing have been completed. Chemical industries, manufacture of construction materials and petroleum refining had been receiving high priority. Petrochemical industries have

been expanded several times of their capacity obtaining in 1969. Construction of the first phase of the steel complex at Mistrata and completion of the casting and wrought iron works with an annual capacity of 52,500 tons, construction of an aluminium complex at Zuara and establishment of a factory to provide an additional capacity of 100,000 tons, of welded tubes for assembly work indicate significant progress in the metallurgical industries. Projects have also been undertaken to produce lorries, buses and truck-trailers to meet the needs of the country.

In order to provide house to everyone, large scale construction work has already been undertaken and during 1981-85, as many as 59,952 urban units will be completed in addition to 146,200 set out for meeting the growing need during the period. Keeping in view the policy of "education for all", large schemes have been planned for expansion for education. The following table makes clear the dimension of transformation taking place in Libya in the field of education:

Level	1968-69	1972-73	1975-76	1980-81
Primary	270.617	458.288	534.209	577.654
Elementary	29.181	56.679	116.630	190.905
Secondary	7.181	10.902	16.839	65.709
University	2.601	5.967	9.145	13.470
Humanities				
Science	.859	2.253	4.372	12.000
Total	3.460	8.220	13.517	25.470

Needless to add that the quality of education has improved at all levels. Growth of medical facilities is by no means meagre.

Libya has ushered itself into an era of multifarious development and progress. Socialism has brought it in the midst of a technological revolution. But in this process it has not abandoned its spiritual values, religious traditions and firm faith in the perfection of Islam. The success of the Jamahiriya

experiment will go a long way to demonstrate that Islam as a religion does not barricade the progress of its adherents. The need is to imbibe its revolutionary message and to raise the torch of knowledge it lit so that the community is able to meet the challenges of the era of nuclear technology.

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THE NATURE OF "THEOCRATIC SOCIALISM" IN IRAN: SOME OBSERVATIONS

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After the victory of the Revolution of the Iranian people in overthrowing the Shah, the new Jacks-in-office, the mullahs, called their theocratic regime 'the State of Mostazafin' (deprived people) and introduced some sweeping measures like nationalization of banks, industries, foreign trade and finally, the abolition of money interest for the loans taken from the banks. These measures led many social thinkers in Iran and elsewhere to believe that the present clerical regime of Iran is really the champion for the cause of the poor strata of the society. In this article an attempt would be made to examine the socio-economic and the political conditions that impelled the introduction and implementation of the above "revolutionary measures". It is the contention of this paper that the economic measures in question had to be taken because of stark economic realities and necessities of the Iranian society. Especially, the programme of nationalization in Iran will be examined in this perspective and it will be shown that the defence of 'Mostazafin' was more a catchy slogan for Ayatollah Khomeini and his supporters than seriously intended measure.

The sweeping economic reform of the nature hinted at before is intended for the following purposes:

- (a) Creation of a necessary condition in the economy so that increase in efficiency, economic growth and development are ensured;

- (b) introduction and implementation of well-defined welfare measures for the under-privileged section of the population.

It will become quite evident to the reader in course of the discussion that neither of these goals is likely to be achieved in Iran in the present state of affairs.

One of the main features of Iranian economy after the revolution has been the nationalization of private properties and the over-expansion of the state sector. Just after the revolution, dozens of factories, firms, properties of the Shah and of the royal family were confiscated by the people. The new Islamic government immediately intervened and took over almost all of these assets. The government transferred all the assets to form two new foundations; *Bonyad-e-Mostazafin* (The Foundation for Deprived People) and *Bonyad e-Alawi* (Alawi Foundation).

When the revolution triumphed, Iranian society had already seen six months of economic struggle by the working class. The society had also suffered from one and a half years of economic crisis.

The revolution inherited an economy of acute disorder and stagnation from the previous regime. The socialist remedy for recovering and running this already bankrupt economy was mobilization of the masses and their elected councils for this task. But the mullahs were unwilling and unable to recognize this alternative. They, instead, decided to restore economic order through the only centralized power—the State. The state with its income from oil decided to revive the economic system which was already stagnant due to the lack of stimulus of the private businessman for new investment.

At present, all the key sectors of the economy have been brought directly under the control of state and Iran has been converted into a “heavily nationalized society”.¹ Banks, insurance companies, major industries, many smaller industrial units and even foreign trade have been nationalized. Privately-owned undeveloped urban properties of more than 1000 square metres have been taken over by the state as well. Many big companies, particularly construction and consulting firms handling large government contracts are being

supervised by the government-appointed financial manager.

In Iran, to-day there is state control over the means of production, credit, and resource allocation and foreign trade.

Shortages of raw materials and spare-parts and other such problems continue to invite further state intervention either to "discipline" managers or to prevent closing down of factories and redundancies.

To understand the true nature of nationalization and state intervention, one should take into account the background and the later development of the nationalizational programmes of banks, industries, and foreign trade.

Nationalization of the Banks

Banks were the main targets of people's wrath during the Iranian revolution. The people's enmity towards the banks was not without context. They regarded this institution as typically bourgeois and as one of the sources of their exploitation on the one hand and a symbol of ostensible Western imperialism on the other. During their spontaneous revolts, the people attacked, destroyed, and set fire to about 400 banks in Tehran alone.

As the struggle continued the clients started withdrawing their deposits from the banks. Many of the borrowers refused to repay their loans. When the people's struggle reached its revolutionary climax, the owners of the private banks transferred their money to the Western capitalist countries and soon afterwards they, themselves, fled abroad. The banks suffered another blow by strikes of the working class which swept the country all over. The strikes paralysed the production and the trade and thereby the commercial activities of the banks.

The figures of 1978 show that the average current assets of all private banks had only been 7.9 per cent of their current liabilities (while in a normal capitalist economy this figure should exceed 30 per cent). For some major banks the above share of bank's liquidity was lower than the average: Bank of Shahrivar 2.9 per cent, International Bank of Iran 1.9 per cent, the Iranian Bank 3 per cent. During the period between February 1978 and April 1979, the banks received 19

billion Rials (about \$270 million) credit from the Central Bank of Iran.²

The condition of private banks was so critical at that time that some foreign banks cancelled their loans to them due to their financial difficulties and a loss of confidence in Iran's economic stability. In September 1978, for instance, a \$80 million loan by a consortium of European banks for the Agricultural Development Bank of Iran was revoked and in early November of that year other international banks had decided to suspend their lending until stability was restored.³

On May 22, 1979 the total debts of private banks to the government had exceeded 184 billion Rials⁴ (about \$2.3 billion). To sum up, all the private banks were in the state of bankruptcy. This bankruptcy, in itself, could wreck the whole system of private property.

In February 1979 when the Islamic regime came into power, the state, by such measures as the injection of money into the banking system, granting credit to the private banks, and purchasing bank's debentures, tried to thwart the critical condition of the banking system. But all these measures to save the wrecked ship of the banking business proved to be ill-fated.

At this juncture the bank employees had come together and established their own councils to run the affairs of the banks and to fill the vacuum caused by the fleeing of most of the former managers to the Western countries. The Islamic government tried to overthrow these councils and crush the resistance of the banks' employees against this attitude. But this was very difficult for a state who pretended to be the representative of Mostazafin (deprived people) as long as the banks were continuing to remain in private hands. Therefore in line with its 'ideology', the government "nationalized" the banks and declared them Beit-al-Mal* in order to consecrate the system of private property and to crush the real organs of people's power by the most brutal means in the name of God and Mostazafin.

*An Islamic neology, i.e. term coming from the past which means public property of Moslem people.

It was, therefore, with this as a background, that on June 7, 1979, Mr. Mehdi Bazargan, the then Prime Minister appointed by Ayatollah Khomeini, announced the Declaration of the Nationalization of Banks as follows: "Dear Countrymen: As the private banks were in an unsuitable and unprofitable condition, the state found it necessary to take over the management of all private banks in order to protect the national rights and capitals, and to guarantee the savings of the people, and to prevent misuse of deposits. . ."⁵

Then the law of nationalization of banks came as follows:

"By the name of Almighty

Dated: 17 Khordad 1358* (June 7, 1979)

The Law of Nationalization of Banks

Article 1— In order to protect the national rights and capitals, and to put into motion the productive wheels of the country, and to guarantee the people's deposits and savings in the banks, with due acknowledgement to the principle of legitimate and conditional ownership, and having taken into consideration,

- (1) the manner of acquisition of earnings by banks and the illegitimate** transfer of capitals abroad,
- (2) the fundamental role of banks in the country's economy and the natural relationship between the economy of the nation and the banking institution,
- (3) the indebtedness of the banks to the state and their need for protection by the state,
- (4) the necessity of coordination between the activities of the banks and the country's other organizations, and
- (5) the need for directing banking activities towards Islamic administration and profitability,

*Islamic Solar Calendar which is convertible to Christian calendar system by adding 21-2-621 to the day, month and year respectively.

**According to the Islamic Law the word 'illegitimate' has the same meaning as 'illegal'.

from the date of the approval of this law, all the banks are proclaimed nationalized and the state is duty-bound to appoint the banks' managers immediately".⁶

As can be seen from the above "law" of the nationalization of the banks, the whole programme can neither be regarded as the confiscation of banking properties for the benefit of the masses, nor a radical attempt to smash the bourgeois content of these banks. It is rather a measure taken with due acknowledgement to the principle of legitimate and conditional ownership which is, in fact, the Islamic interpretation for the private ownership of means of production. It should also be borne in mind that nationalization as such is a part of Islamic doctrinaire way of approach to the management of the economy. The Holy Qoran deplores usury and accumulation of wealth, while, at the same time, recognizes the private property and the business activities of 'just' merchants.⁷

To assess the outcome of nationalization of the banks in Iran, one should not forget that in the circumstances the nationalization was quite inevitable because of the banks' "indebtedness to the state" and "their need for protection by" it. As Mr. Ali Afghani, the newly-appointed managing director of Bank-e-Saderat Iran said: "The law of nationalization of the banks was inevitable. Otherwise the private banks were not able to continue their activities. . . ."⁸

It is interesting to know that immediately after nationalization, the government re-appointed the same people as managers of banks who had the same positions during the time of the Shah.⁹ This led some observers to comment as follows:

The managers of nationalized banks should accept the lion's share of responsibility in transforming the country's banking system. But (here), they are almost composed of the cliques and managers of the former compradore system, to the extent that one can see that no change—even a slight and superficial one—has taken place. In most of the nationalized banks, the former members of the managing board have been re-appointed and their

capitals have remained intact. Some of the executive directors of the banks are shareholders or members of the board of management in other banks. These are all happening while the working people are forced to pay the banks the instalments of their debts which sometimes amount to 4 times their original loan.¹⁰

It was almost two weeks after the nationalization of banks (in the last week of June 1979) that the Governor of Central Bank of Iran assured the local as well as the foreign shareholders of compensation:

“About compensating the foreign shareholders, . . . we will never discriminate between foreign and domestic holdings. We shall try to protect the legitimate rights of foreign investments according to the country’s legal procedures and as per the provisions of the Law of Attraction and Protection of Foreign Investment . . . Foreign shareholders are hereby given assurance that as a result of nationalization, the foreign debentures of the banks will remain secured and will be redeemed by the government . . .”¹¹

In September 1979 (about 3 months after the proclamation of the above declaration), an economic conference was held by the government. The conference decided to pay 34,600 million Rials (about \$500 million) to the foreign shareholders of the nationalized banks.¹²

Now the nationalization of the banks has almost been completed. According to Mr. Bani Sadr, the rights of the small shareholders would be guaranteed. They would be compensated according to the “real value” of their capital. His further plan is to merge all the private banks into six major banks as follows: Bank of Provinces (which will remain active at the level of provinces), Bank of Commerce, Bank of Nation, Bank of Industry and Mines, Bank of Housing and Agricultural Bank.¹³

The outcome of the above plan will, of course, reveal itself in the future. In view of the above facts and figures, one can easily judge that a highly centralized banking system

coupled with the religious fanaticism and bureaucratic tendency can hardly be either a panacea for an industrialized economy in crisis or a tranquilizer for the backbreaking toiling masses of Iranian society.

Nationalization of Industries

The imperialist dominated mode of industrialization in Iran under the Shah was carried out in a very artificial way. The Iranian peripheral industries mainly produced import-substitutional products for the benefit of the centre. The industries could survive only through the generous assistance by the government either in the form of grant, loan, credit, etc., or in the shape of guaranteeing markets for them, forcing public organizations to purchase their products.

When the revolution came, most owners of the private enterprises fled abroad, taking with them not only their own capital, but money borrowed from banks. The factories they left behind were in debt up to their necks mostly to the state. Therefore the enterprises of private sector that used to turn out 70 per cent of the country's industrial production had already been paralysed and there was practically no option for the government but to place them under its control.

Following the nationalization of banks and other financial organizations, the new Islamic regime decreed "The Law of Protection and Expansion of Iranian Industries" in July 1979. Most of the Iranian industries were nationalized according to this law. Mr. Bazargan, the then Prime Minister, who announced the programme of nationalization, classified Iranian industries into 4 categories.

1. Key industries which included steel, copper, aluminium aircraft, shipbuilding, mining, automobiles, etc. According to the "Law", the government would completely take over these industries. This measure is not as sweeping as it is claimed to be. Because, on the one hand, aircraft and shipbuilding industries did not exist at all. On the other hand it should be noted that even during the Shah's rule such industries as oil, gas, petrochemical, steel, copper, aluminium were wholly owned by the state. And it is not surprising at all because in many advanced as well as peripheral capitalist

states the key industries are owned by the government. It goes to the extent that some authors discuss about the development of capitalism into state monopoly capitalism whose main feature is the fusion and interlinking of the state apparatus with the interest of the monopolies. In fact without the state, capitalism cannot guarantee today the process of expanded production i.e. accumulation in such a situation.

Foreign companies affected by the nationalization programme were mostly government's partners in big projects and heavy industries. They included lubricating oil refineries (partly owned by Exxon and Shell), American Reynolds International (along with Government of Pakistan as a partner in the Iralco aluminium smelter at Arak), General Motors and France's Renault (partners in the local car assembly plants). Other companies which were supposed to be covered by the nationalization policies included:

- Italy's IRI, a partner in a factory at Saveh, making aluminium sheets and foils.
- American John Deere, involved in tractor assembly operations.
- British Leyland's truck and bus plants.
- Two diesel engine plants in which Britain's GEC and Humber-Siddeley are partners.
- West Germany's Bosch and Mahle.
- Britain's Lucas.
- Sweden's SKF.¹⁴

It should be noted here that Bandar Shahpur Petro-chemical Plants (a \$3.2 billion project in which the Japanese are partners) was excluded from the nationalization programme.

2. Companies owned by the Iranian comprador bourgeois elements or what Mr. Bazargan called "the big business magnates who had sucked the life blood of the nation". A total of 51 companies, most of whose owners had gone safely abroad were officially classified in this category. They included the owners of controlling shares of some of the very big industrial groups which were all, without exception, the partners or, frankly speaking, the agents of the big transnational corporations located in imperialist nations.

To have a rough idea of the nature of Iranian Industrial

and financial tycoons let us explain in brief the names and activities of some of these.

Mr. Habib Sabet, for example, owned 41 companies with a turnover in happier times, of over \$400 million a year, plus a Pepsi Cola franchise and television and radio factories linked with Philips; the Rezai family was the owner of Shahr-yar Group including a number of minor iron and steel works; the Khayami brothers who owned Iran National, the Chrysler assembly car firm which is Iran's biggest industrial company employing 20,000 people, plus Kouroush departmental store chain; Mr. Mohammad Irvani who is the owner of Melli Shoe—one of Iran's few successful exporters of manufactured goods—and firms in 11 other industries; the Lajevardi family which is the owner of 47 companies of Behshahr Group; and Mr. Mohammad Taghi Barkhordar who is the owner of electrical, metal working, cement, battery, carpet, refrigerator component manufacturing enterprises and others.¹⁶

Apart from this group, the smaller groups of business empires also lost their ownership or semi-ownership of factories making carpets, shoes, cement, glass, fibre, textile, sugar, and so on.

3. Those companies which were "bankrupt and crippled"—where debts to banks or government exceeded their assets. Mr. Bazargan announced that the government would "become their partners". He seemed to mean that their debts would be converted into government's holdings.

4. The industries with "innocent owners" of non-strategic products and healthy balance. It was announced that these industries would be left intact.

Referring to the last two groups, Mr. Ahmadzadeh, the Minister of Industries and Mines, said: "Government policy is based on protecting the industries and productive corporations which continued their activities in the past on a sound basis, which are not indebted to the banks and are continuing their activities at present. The state will give all kinds of help and assistance to the owners of these industries and productive corporations. But those companies which, because of the influences of and mishandlings by their managers and owners, are showing losses rather than profits, will come

under the ownership of the state".¹⁶

There are many similarities between the nationalization of banks and industries. As in the case of banks, the government announced for the industries as well that it would compensate the foreign partners of the government for nationalization. The foreign partners of the "blood suckers" (compradore bourgeoisie) were also given promise that their "rights would be safeguarded". Therefore, in the second half of July 1979 some \$250 million of compensation was announced by the Islamic government.¹⁷

As it was the case after the nationalization of the banks, in most nationalized industries as well, the former managers were re-appointed by the government. It is, at the same time, interesting to note that after the "revolution", in 40 per cent of Iranian industries, the factories are run by the former managers (managers before the revolution). In the remaining 60 per cent the managers were either newly appointed by the Islamic authorities or in rare cases elected by the workers' councils. In such industries as textile, 60 per cent of the former managers (who had cooperated with the previous regime and in most cases were shareholders of the company concerned) have been re-appointed.¹⁸ This is being done while hundreds of intellectuals, engineers, and administrators who fought against Shah and suffered in his hands are unemployed due to the government's suspicion about them as being Leftists and anti-Islamic.

The state ownership of the industries has been ever-expanding since the announcement of the programme of nationalization. During a very short period (July 1-22, 1979) some 100 industrial units were taken over by the state.¹⁹ According to an interview given by Ayatollah Akbar Rafsanjani (acting Minister of Home Affairs) to Pars News Agency, by the end of 1979 nearly 70 per cent of Iran's private industry, all basic industries, had come under government's control. This percentage has increased to 80 now.

Judging by the overall efforts of the state patronized *Bonyade Mostazafin* to intervene in daily functioning of the remaining industries in order to place them under Govern-

ment's control, one can anticipate that the state control of the industries will go still further.

Nationalization of Foreign Trade

Nationalization of industries was followed by nationalization of foreign trade. It was announced that decision had been taken for the nationalization "with the aim of preventing the escalation of the prices, and a careful supervision of the transfer of hard currencies" to the foreign countries.²⁰

There is an element of truth in the above statement if we remember that after the "revolution" the businessmen—motivated by their short-run profits—did not find any interest in importing goods and services needed by a crisis-torn society. Instead they started using their import "activities" as a camouflage for transferring considerable amount of their capital to the Western countries. Some of them even made a substantial amount of profit by misusing their import permits by transferring abroad money belonging to other capitalists. Due to the internal economic crisis, the importers stopped importing capital goods. The import of consumer goods also faced many difficulties because of the stagnation of import facilities—including that of ports, docks, railways, etc.

It was much easier and more profitable for the businessmen to engage themselves in smuggling foreign exchange and going through all kinds of transactions injurious to the economy rather than bothering themselves about real import. At the same time the export of non-oil goods almost completely stopped due to the stagnation of the internal production. This was the background which led the government to nationalize the foreign trade and stop the activities of the trading companies.

Soon after the nationalization of foreign trade, Dr. Ebrahim Zadeh, the Deputy Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, assessed the policy as follows:

"The implementation of this project is not without difficulty . . . the state will be obliged to use enormous amount of credit in the public sector for imports. It necessitates the establishment of more public organization . . . import and distribution. The (national) budget

will be burdened with heavy expenditures because of establishment of these organizations. Because of the limitation of credits for import, there will be restrictions on the diversity and supply of goods. To prevent the increase of arbitrary consumption, a kind of quota would be fixed This restriction on supply of goods will probably be followed by the increment of prices."²¹

Government's control of foreign trade is not without precedence in Iranian economic history. Long back in 1932, the feudal-bourgeois government of Reza Shah passed a law and placed foreign trade under government's monopoly. The purpose of this policy was mainly to foil the devastating effects of Great Depression of 1929-33. But the ill-equipped bureaucratic machinery could not cope with the plan. Therefore the government was forced to abandon the monopoly on foreign trade and transfer its "legal rights" to the private merchants and receive a special tax in return. The tax could be directly transferred to the consumers and serve to increase the level of the prices.

On many other occasions, the previous governmental apparatus proved to be inefficient and uneconomical in the sphere of foreign trade. It was perhaps in connection with those bitter experiences that the Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs alerted his colleagues with the following words:

"The governments in the past did not prove to be good merchants at all. Their trade activities have always resulted in losses. Therefore, in implementing the programme of nationalized trade, serious attempts should be made not to repeat the harmful experience of the past."²²

The above statement will be found very much true if one takes into consideration the fact that due to the government's failure in controlling completely the foreign trade even today a part nationalized foreign trade is being conducted by the private businessmen. In this connection Mr. Bani Sadr (the new President and the then Minister of Economic Affairs) commented as follows:

“... The present condition of foreign trade is just a temporary phenomenon. The domestic trade has not been nationalized and the businessmen can take the (government) imported goods at their disposal and sell them with a just profit.”²³

Now more than a year has passed since the beginning of nationalization programme. The bureaucratic apparatus has completely failed to cope with the responsibility associated with the nationalization of banks, industries and foreign trade. This fact was quite obvious even at the time of nationalization. Mr. Bazargan who announced the programme of nationalization, himself admitted that “The government has already broken its back under the heavy burden of its present duties, and it cannot accept any additional burden.”²⁴

In the months after the government's take-over of major industries, few orders were placed abroad either for spare parts or raw materials. It is a well-known fact that since the state's take-over of the economy, the rate of poverty, unemployment, and inflation have drastically increased. Therefore, one can easily judge that the nationalization has failed to solve the burning problems of Iranian society. It has, instead, put an extra burden on the shoulders of tormented masses.

In assessing the overall impacts of nationalization programme in the economic development of Iran, one should not forget that the public ownership of means of production will be futile as long as the social relations of production remain intact. This is a matter of classical debate, which was put forth by Karl Marx against the draft programme of United Workers Party of Germany in 1875:

“Instead of arising from the revolutionary process of transformation of society, the “socialist organization of total labour” “arises” from the “state aid”, that the state gives to the producers' cooperative societies and which the state not the worker, “calls into being”. It is worthy that . . . with state loans one can build a new society just as well as a new railway.”²⁵

State ownership of means of production will definitely help in the fulfilment of the great task of social reconstruction when it is considered as an integral part of an overall plan for the socio-economic transformation of the society. The precondition for this transformation is the establishment of a centrally planned economy with a scientific approach towards social and economic development. Here, the recognition of the role of direct producers—the working people in running the economy and in overall life of the society is the first and foremost necessity.

In assessing any socio-economic measure implemented by the state, the class nature of the latter should be taken into consideration. Therefore as Marx mentioned, it is ridiculous to expect a state not represented by the working people to fulfil the above-mentioned historical tasks which can be done only through the joint struggle of the masses:

“... One should not have resorted, either, to the subterfuge, neither “honest” nor decent, of demanding things which have meaning only in a democratic republic from a state which is nothing but a police-guarded military despotism, embellished with parliamentary forms alloyed with a feudal admixture, already influenced by the bourgeoisie and bureaucratically carpentered.”²⁶

Under the present socio-economic framework of Iranian society, where the workers are alienated from the process of production and the country is still dependent on imperialist markets for raw materials and spare parts, public ownership of means of production remains at the most a mechanical measure without producing much effect on national economy.

It is a well-known fact that even in the heart of bourgeois world, in Great Britain, the labour party nationalizes the key economic sectors when it is in power. But as the nationalization is being done within an institutional framework where private property is the dominating force and is as well as accompanied with payment of compensation to the “expropriated” owners, the measure never narrows down the gap between the rich and the poor, and when the Conserva-

shall take benefit of the instruments which have come from Islamic doctrines. . . ."³⁵

By "the instruments which have come from Islamic doctrines", Mr. Bani Sadr means the abolition of money interest. As it was stated earlier, in the system of Islamic practice, usury is strictly prohibited.³⁶

Judging by the above fact, one can clearly identify the shallowness of the whole programme and its ineffectiveness to solve the problems of "Mostazafin". Religious authorities have become more concerned with the crude adoption of their dogmas to justify their actions and less with tackling the real economic plight of the masses. Many still remember the first months after Revolution when there was a bitter campaign against the usurers. To implement Islamic laws, the "Revolutionary Committees" in every town forced the usurers to "compensate" their debtors with the amount of interest which the former had taken from them before the Revolution. It was really a comic opera. The customers of the usurer were rich farmers, industrialists, and merchants who needed money to run their business in order to make money. They were "compensated" by the amount of interest they had paid before and this made them still richer. Here again the conscious workers and peasants could see the essence of "Islamic Revolution", i.e. transfer of money from one section of the rich stratum to the other.

Abolition of money interest will definitely lead to the intensification of state interference in everyday economic life of the society. This, accompanied with the public ownership of the key economic sectors and mixed with religious fanaticism and rhetorics about the poor³ will make the theocratic system of Iranian economy a unique system of its kind. The stupidity of such an impracticable system may be reminiscent of what had come from the founders of scientific communism as "primitive communism". This concept, as Engels put it, is nothing but a camouflage for a new form of enslavement and exploitation of the masses.

"... it would be a good thing if somebody took the trouble to explain state socialism . . . here it will be

seen how on the basis of the old community communism (They) organized production under state control and secured for the people what they considered a quite comfortable existence. The result: the people are kept at the stage of primitive stupidity Incidentally this demonstrates that today primitive communism furnishes the finest and broadest basis of exploitation and despotism . . . it turns out to be a crying anachronism...’’³⁷

It is quite clear that money interest is not the only source of exploitation in a class society. The propertied classes can exploit the masses through the appropriation of surplus value via profit, rent, interest, etc. Even the banks exploit in Iran the people through such means as interest, ‘commission’, ‘fee,’ profit, direct investment, and so on. Among these means it is the interest which is clearly known to masses and has revealed its anti-human face to them. Now the Islamic economic system intends to abolish this “devilish” face of the capital but at the same time wants to keep other pernicious aspects intact.

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(It may be noted that interpretation and translation of religious texts and materials in Persian language have been done by the second named author alone. The overall structure, interpretation and presentation have been the contribution of both the authors).

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6. *Ibid.*, p. 2[†]
7. About Qoran’s contempt for accumulation of the wealth see *Qoran*, Surreh (Section) Toubbeh: Ayyeh (Prose) No. 34—also Hommazeh: 2-4, Hashr: 7. There are quite

a few clauses against usury like Baghareh : 295-279. Nessa: 161, Room: 39, All-e-Emran: 13, etc. In Baghareh: 279, Qoran stipulates that if you renounce usury "the original property is yours"; in Nessa: 29 trade by 'just' merchants has been allowed; Baghareh: 275 says "... God has allowed business, but not usury...". It should be noted that Qoran preaches the poor people to be satisfied with their lot in this transient world and not challenge the rich for redistribution of the wealth. See, for instance Taha: 131, Nessa: 32, Hood; 118, Osara: 21, Zokhrof: 32, etc.

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22. *Ibid.*
23. *Etela'at*, No. 16034, Monday 3 Day 1358 (September 24, 1979), p. 2.
24. *The Economist*, Vol. 272, No. 7089, July 14, 1979, p. 77.
25. Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx Engels Selected Works (in one volume), Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 326.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 328.
27. Iranian Todeh Party (Traditional Communist Party) and a Marxist group called Ranjbaran (Toiler's Party) have repeatedly argued that there is not much difference between Islamic and scientific socialism. To understand their reasoning, one can consult various issues of *Mardom* (The People) and *Ranjbar* (Toiler), the official organs of these two organizations.
28. From a letter by Engels to Edward Bernstein in Zurich, written from London on March 12, 1881. See *Marx Engels Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, p. 320.
29. *Kayhan*, No. 10888, Monday 3 Daymah 1358 (December 24, 1979).
30. *Ibid.*
31. "Economic Programme of Bani Sadr in order to Save Compradore Bourgeoisie," *Rah-e-Kargar* (Workers' Path), No. 6, 17 Daymah 1358 (January 7, 1980), pp. 4 and 10.
32. *Etela'at*, 17 Azar 1358 (December 8, 1979).
33. In connection with the abolition of money interest Mr. Bani Sadr emphasized that "The new system will not be successful unless it is accompanied by increase in production. . . . This . . . is dependent on the growth of production." (The exact translation has been given but as will be clear to any reader, the second part should

read as 'Growth of Productivity' and not of 'production'. But this is not surprising because Mr. Bani Sadr is not even clear of elementary concepts in economics although he is supposed to have a doctorate in economics from Sorbonne). See *Eta'at*, No. 16034, Monday, 3 Daymah 1358 (December 24, 1979), p. 2.

34. An excerpt from Mr. Bani Sadr's speech quoted in *Rah-e-Kargar*, No. 6, January 7, 1980, p. 10.
35. *Ibid.*
36. See footnote No. 7.
37. *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p. 347.

THE AFGHANISTAN CRISIS AND THE ROLE OF THE MUSLIM COUNTRIES

Ramji Lal

Background in Brief*

Before the Monarchy was over-thrown by a military coup led by former Prime Minister, Daoud in 1973, Afghanistan was under dynastic rule. Some five years later, in April 1978, the radical section of the army with the popular support organised another coup. It is popularly known as Saur (April) revolution. It was led by Khalq-Parcham alliance. The Khalq was headed by Noor Mohammad Taraki and the Parcham was headed by Babrak Karmal. The Saur Revolution was a result of a spontaneous out burst followed by the assassination of Mir Akbar Khyber—a well known leftist on 17 April 1978. The burial procession on 19 April 1978, was joined by several thousand persons who shouted anti-U.S. slogans. It was a big surprise. Though it was followed by the repressive and suppressive measures including the arrests of leading leftists yet the Khalq-Parcham alliance was successful in establishing close contact with the military and managed a coup against Daoud.¹

The Khalq-Parcham revolutionary regime moved quickly towards establishing close contacts with the USSR which agreed to give economic assistance. As a result, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union tended to have friendly relation. In

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fact, as stated by N. Singh, the new regime did not lose any time to bring "Soviet theoretical experts to impart ideological training to the Afghan party cadres" or to extend "open support to the Soviet sponsored Asian collective security system the only country to have done so".² Moreover, Taraki's regime demonstrated by expelling South Korean representative and by inviting diplomatic representatives from East Germany and Cuba, as the closest friend of the Soviets.

Every revolutionary regime faces internal as well as external opposition. The same happened with the new regime headed by Noor Mohammad Taraki. Since its very inception the revolutionary regime had to face internal as well as external forces hostile to it. The conservative elements, including the absentee land-lords, money-lenders, orthodox Mullahs and other reactionaries realized that their dominance had been seriously challenged by the radical regime and its radical reforms. Moreover, their property was distributed among the poor peasants. The conservative elements began to organise themselves and resist the Taraki's regime and its radical measures. They sought foreign help in terms of money, material, arms and other necessary equipments. Thousands of insurgents were given training in sanctuaries in Pakistan and were sent into Afghanistan territory.³

Noor Mohammad Taraki was an astute politician and he never wanted to offend the religious sentiments of his people. Religion was the most difficult problem for him and he had to adopt a non-Marxist attitude towards it by showing a deep sense of respect towards Islam and Mullahs. According to J.D. Singh, a special correspondent of the *Times of India*, "He avoided using terms like Marxism and Communism so as not to infame orthodox religious opinion".⁴ He made it clear in a broadcast that the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was not a Marxist-Leninist party; it was a party of workers and peasants and, of course, had close ties with other working class parties in the world. He further stated that the PDPA and the Afghan government were free from external and foreign control and pressure whatsoever.

A revolution remains unaccomplished in the absence of socio-economic reforms. The bulk of the population in

Afghanistan remained exploited, oppressed and suppressed by the feudal lords and other reactionary elements and traditions for centuries.

Therefore, the socio-economic reforms were the major attraction for Taraki's regime and the Saur Revolution started a process of transformation from pre-feudal state to a modern state.⁵ Accordingly the Revolutionary Council issued three decrees to implement the socio-economic reforms. Decree No. 6 (Issued on 12 July 1978) abolished the debts including the interest on debts of the workers and peasants to the moneylenders and other exploiters. As a result, 80 per cent of the rural peasants and workers were relieved from the indebtedness of 33,000 million Afghanis. Co-operative system was introduced to look after the needs of the working class. Decree No. 7 (Issued on 17 October 1978) was a milestone in the direction of social revolution and emancipation of women from "social fetters which had virtually made them domestic slaves, as commodities to be bought and sold".⁶ This decree abolished the payment of bride-money and women enjoyed equal rights in all walks of life in Afghanistan. Decree No. 8 aimed at land reforms and abolition of feudalism. Ceiling on land was fixed at 30 jeribs and surplus land was distributed among the landless and 40,000 landlords having 70 per cent of the land were deprived of their surplus land.⁷ While commenting upon the agrarian reforms N. Singh remarked:⁸

The major success of the Taraki government has been land reforms. Already 2,00,000 hectares of land have been distributed to landless peasants that means one third of the land earmarked for distribution. This should be a lesson to any developing country.

These measures had serious repercussions inside as well as outside Afghanistan. Inside the country, a majority of the people supported these radical reforms while a minority consisting of aristocracy, the landlords, the moneylenders and other Muslim orthodox elements, opposed these reforms. These elements used "Mullahs" against the Taraki's government and branded it, "Communist" and "anti-Islamic".⁹

As a matter of fact, two factors added to the strength of the rebels: external factor—imperialist intervention and undeclared war in the form of assisting and helping the rebels in guerrilla warfares; the repressive and oppressive role played by Amin, was the internal factor.

The radical reforms adopted by the Revolutionary Council in Afghanistan had their impact and a counter reaction in the neighbourhood, including Pakistan, Iran and China, of course, in different ways. The land reforms could have their impact on Pakistan as President Zia-ul-Haq feared that these reforms could give handle to the Communists to ignite and organise a revolutionary upsurge in Pakistan. The religious fundamentalists in Pakistan were also not ready to tolerate the Communist regime. It can be argued:¹⁰

An unconceited Communist regime in Kabul is not something that Pakistan would welcome. Religious fellow feeling with Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan would understandably cause deep concern in Islamabad, not only because of the danger of an indigestible ideology in the immediate neighbourhood but also because a pro-Soviet Afghanistan would greatly upset China.

The influx of the refugees consisting of conservative elements including landlords, moneylenders, Orthodox Mullahs and others from Afghanistan led the Pakistan authorities to organise 'refugee camps' in almost all the important cities of Pakistan near the Afghan border. Though the Pakistan authorities have claimed that these camps were purely humanitarian in character, yet the different sources indicate that these camps were also helping and imparting training to the rebels in their guerrilla warfares.¹¹

The Chinese and Pakistani experts and instructors imparted training to these rebels and arms and money were supplied by the U.S.A., China and some other countries including Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran and the like. The main objective of the Washington-Islamabad-Beijing alliance, according to Brezhnev, was to kill the Afghan revolution and destroy the very existence of Afghanistan.

It is this outside intervention which prompted the Soviet

forces to march into Afghan territory. According to Brezhnev:¹²

To act otherwise would have meant to watch passively the origination of southern border of a seat of serious danger to the security of the Soviet State.

The conspiracy forged by the imperialists and their accomplices would not have materialized without internal hostility. The progressive and radical reforms were opposed by the effected landlords and moneylenders with the help of 'Mullahs' and other reactionary, traditional, orthodox, conservative and obscurantist elements. Taraki was a gradualist and did not want to adopt such reforms and policies as could lead to the alienation of masses. But this gradual approach was not liked by some persons in his own team including Amin, who himself was not liked by the party comrades as before and after the revolution he played the most treacherous role and suppressed his opponents in a ruthless and brutal manner. During one year following the revolution, Amin consolidated his position in the Army and Party. He even played a very significant role as a symbol of revolution and used Taraki's personality cult to advance his own personality. He called Taraki as the "great leader" bearing "the torch of revolution" and "the wise teacher".¹³ On March 28, 1979, Amin became the Prime Minister of Afghanistan. At the same time, Amin followed ruthless and brutal policy to crush his opponents. As a result, some of the Parchamite ministers were eased out of the cabinet. Some of the opponents were charged with alleged high treason.¹⁴ According to Masood Ali Khan:¹⁵

By his brutal actions Amin was inevitably isolating himself more and more in the party, in the army and state apparatus. No one could trust him.

The militant section in the party began to unite against him. They considered that Amin was destroying the revolution as well as Afghanistan. Two plans were made to overthrow him, first in April 1979 and second in September 1979. These were followed by repression. It further isolated Amin from the people.

While realising that Amin was isolating himself from the people. Taraki met Babrak Karmal—a Parchamite leader in exile, on his way back from Havana non-aligned conference in September 1979. As a matter of fact, Taraki wanted to have a broad base to overcome the resistance.¹⁶ However, Amin did not like a patch up with Karmal and to save himself he decided to liquidate Taraki. In a cross fire Amin arrested Taraki and brutally killed him after three weeks. Amin was successful in engineering the sudden coup and toppled his mentor—Taraki.¹⁷ He became the President of Afghanistan on 14 September 1979.

The regime headed by Amin further led to chaotic conditions. He suppressed and oppressed ruthlessly and cruelly the party and militant cadres, intelligentsia and the Muslim clergy the backbone of Saur revolution. In waves of purges ordered by Amin key targets were leftists and Parchamites.¹⁸

Repression had become the “official tool” during Taraki’s time. It became ‘more-brutal’ during Amin’s regime. Referring to the characteristics of the official repressive measures during the regime of Amin J.D. Singh has pointed out:¹⁹

Like Stalin in early days of his rule, Mr. Amin purged the government, the party, the army and the administration in general of his rivals and sought to cow down the people into submission through a reign of terror. There is not a single household in Afghanistan . . . that escaped the brutal repression.

During the short period of Amin’s regime about 8000 to 12000 opponents were killed. Amin had created, in Karmal’s words:²⁰

An atmosphere of terror, fear, uncertainty, doubt, disbelief and had turned the whole country into a big slaughter house.

The repressive policy followed by Amin helped the imperialists and their accomplices and alienated and isolated him from the people. The masses overthrew him under the leadership of Babrak Karmal. The coup was well planned. It took place on the night of 27 December 1979. Three thou-

sand well trained Parchamites, who were supplied arms by an army unit, managed the coup.²¹ This was the third coup in the short span of 20 months and each coup was hailed and claimed to be a Marxist-Leninist and revolutionary in character.²²

Factors and Forces—A study in Divergent Views

Apart from the above factors and background, the following factors and forces are also responsible for the Soviet intervention in Kabul. These theories and views are propounded by Journalists and statesmen from India, Pakistan, America and other western countries. First, the western and the Yugoslav commentators are of the opinion that the turmoil and the development in Iran over the issue of hostages led the Soviets to “derive the optimum advantage”. After consolidating their position in Afghanistan, it would not be difficult for the Soviets to influence the development in Iran in terms of the 1921 treaty.²³

Second, Brezhnev was having a trouble because hawks in Kremlin were pressurizing for more active response to the Sino-US interests in the world. The situation in South Asia gave them a handle to confront the USA and China. The hawks have been put on the defensive by the antagonistic policy adopted by him.²⁴ Third, the adverse effect of the rising Islamic fundamentalism on the Soviet Muslim population seems to be one of the important factors. The aggressive Islamic fundamentalism is spreading in almost all the Muslim countries. The militant conservative Islamic regime in Afghanistan was considered to be dangerous for Moscow because it could effect the 50 million Muslim living in the Soviet Central Asia,²⁵ who already resent the white Russian presence in their territory.

Sultan Shahin has argued:²⁶

Islam is strongest in four southern areas of Soviet Central Asia—Kirghizia, Tajikistan, Turkmeniya and Uzbekistan . . . these predominantly Muslim areas have close tribal, cultural and of course, religious ties with the Soviet's southern neighbours Iran, Afghanistan and to a less extent Pakistan.

The Muslims in Soviet Central Asia have closer affinities and links—ethnic, religious and cultural with Islam outside the USSR.

Pran Chopra has stated that these affinities could be exploited by anti-Marxist and Communist forces to disintegrate the Soviet Union and Moscow could not ignore this dangerous trend.²⁷ It can be further stated that:²⁸

Kremlin's minimum aim was to install a pliable leadership in Afghanistan and prevent the country from falling under the control of anti-communist Muslim fanatical forces with support from Pakistan, China and U.S.A. with a common 1600 km. frontier with Afghanistan and 40 million Muslims living just across it in the Soviet Central Asian Republics it could not afford an inimical or hostile government in Kabul.

The Tribune, in an editorial captioned "Troubled Neighbourhood" also supported the above stated view:²⁹

It can be argued that the Soviet Union has some reason for wishing to consolidate its position in Afghanistan. Apparently the extending activities of the Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan were seen as a bad influence on the Soviet Muslim population across the frontier. For that reason the government of the Soviet Union was anxious for the guerrilla movement to be handled more competently than Mr. Hafizullah Amim was either willing or prepared to do.

However, Girilal Jain, the editor of *Times of India*, does not agree with the above views because:³⁰

For one thing, the guerrillas badly divided along tribal lines could not have produced viable government in Kabul. For another, if the Soviet leadership could live with Ayatollah Khomeini in Tehran, it could equally easily do the same with Mullahs in power in Kabul. Their victory would have meant some loss of face for it. But the Kremlin has coped with similar setbacks in Egypt, Sudan, Somalia and a number of other countries.

Therefore, it is surprising and difficult to believe that the Soviets have been motivated “by the desire to curb growing Islamic fundamentalism on its border”.³¹

It is argued by the western commentators especially Americans, that the Soviets did not move into Afghanistan to curb Islamic fundamentalism and thus incur high costs, including sanctions on food grains, postponement if not cancellation of the ratification of the SALT for which the Soviets had worked very hard; boycott of the olympic games in Moscow almost by 60 pro-US countries; cancellation of the import of sophisticated technology from the U.S.A. and almost a world wide condemnation. Therefore, in the western eyes it seems to be a “great game” instead of fanatical politicking of Islamic fundamentalism. As a matter of fact, it is the traditional ambition of the Soviets to extend their influence into the warm waters of the South and the Arabian Sea. It seems that Moscow wants to control strait of Hormuz—the gateway to the oil rich Persian gulf. These stakes might have led the Soviets to involve high costs of their action in Afghanistan.³²

Fourth, Amin, a marxist as well as an opportunist, came into power against the wisdom of the USSR. During Taraki’s regime the Soviets wanted to cut Amin to size and advised Taraki to have a broad base for his regime by making a compromise with Parchmite leader Babrak Karmal. Amin came to know about the intention of Taraki and to secure his position a managed coup as already staged. The Soviet had no alternative but to support Amin as he too posed as a Marxist.

Due to his unpopular measures, Amin was becoming a liability on the Soviet backers and he too began to disregard and set aside the advice given by the Soviet theoreticians and advisers. He expelled Soviet Ambassador Puzanov³³ and Amin himself killed Victor Papulin, a high security official, in December 1979 and “opened the door to all that followed”.³⁴ Amin was also planning to expel more Russians and wanted to be another Tito or Sadat by expelling Russians. He began to hob-nob with the counter-revolutionaries inside and outside the country including the U.S.A., Pakistan and China,

“to get out of the Soviet influence” in the same way as was done by Daoud in April 1978.³⁵

Fifth, it is held that international situation motivated the Soviets in the affairs of Afghanistan. A.L. Bery, defence correspondent of *The Tribune* argues that the Russian intervention has been well-timed because:³⁶

The USA is heavily engaged with presidential election and the fate of its 50 hostages in Iran. The regimes of Ayatollah Khomeini and President Zia-ul-Haque do not inspire much confidence in their stability or sense of direction. Our own foreign and defence policies stand clearly unrelated to the national needs.

A similar thesis has been propounded in an editorial captioned “One more coup in Kabul” by *The Tribune* as:³⁷

The conflicts between different groups and political functions in Iran which have reduced that country to a state of anarchy have presented Soviet Union with a unique opportunity. The concentration of attention on U.S. hostages in Tehran permitted the Soviet Union a certain freedom of action in Afghanistan which it has exploited to the full.

Rajendra Sareen, while supporting the above hypothesis, says:³⁸

Taking advantage of the U.S. involvement in Iran, potentially explosive political situation in Pakistan, the state of confusion in Iran and election eve uncertainty in India, the Soviet Union decided to act in a bid to snuff out the possibility of a strong communist neighbour emerging in Afghanistan. This view proceeds on the argument that even more than with its western rivals, the Soviet Union has had troubles with the Communist neighbours, particularly where any of them have refused to knuckle under the big brother pressure and tended to strike an independent posture. In this connection, the experience of China, Yugoslavia and Albania is recalled. Czechoslovakia and Hungary are cited as early precedents for Afghanistan.

Therefore, geo-political situation suited the Soviets to intervene in Kabul.

Sixth, The west has propounded another theory stating that the Soviet intervention in Kabul is the application of 'Brezhnev Doctrine'. It means that Kremlin considers its right to protect "Socialism" in any country of the world against 'indigenous' or 'foreign' "reactionaries and imperialists". It is altogether a different thing whether Kremlin has been invited to defend the existing regime or not.³⁹

As a matter of fact, Bernard Gwertzman argues, the main consideration is, "not to permit a pro-Soviet Marxist republic to be toppled by insurrection and chaos".⁴⁰ It was the application of this very doctrine which led to the military intervention in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Berlin in the past.

Seventh, in 1970, the USSR gained military parity with the USA and thus gained a new confidence to influence international affairs in an aggressive and offensive manner. Therefore, it seems to be an aggressive and offensive and not a defensive turn in the Soviet policy (as observed by the West) since 1975—Angolan crisis.

The Yugoslavs feel that the aggressive turn in the Soviet policy becomes evident in 1976—since the Berlin conference of the Communist parties of the world.⁴¹ Therefore, the Soviet move into Kabul is an offensive measure and not a defensive policy. While elaborating this aggressiveness in the Soviet policy, Wariavwalla has remarked:⁴²

The American see the action in Kabul as one more proof of Soviet assertiveness that was first expressed in Angola in 1975, then in Ethiopia a year later and in South Yemen in 1978. Since, 1975, seven Communist takeovers have taken place in Asia and Africa.

Eight, the West European commentators are of the opinion that it is a right of a "superpower to intervene in a state falling under its tacitly agreed sphere of influence".⁴³ This dictum has been practised by the superpowers since World War II and it is the application of this principle which has localised the wars. Afghanistan is considered by the Soviet as an area of their influence.⁴⁴

Ninth, another factor that explains the aggressiveness and assertiveness in the Soviet policy is their historic sense of insecurity and the fear of encirclement by anti-Soviet and hostile forces.⁴⁵

Mikhail Suslov, who played an important role in the decision to send the Soviet army to Afghanistan, explains this fear as:⁴⁶

The aggression of China against Vietnam; the NATO decision aimed at a new round in the arms race; the positioning of powerful American armed forces around Iran; the training and infiltration of armed rebel groups into democratic Afghanistan, forcing the government of that country to ask the Soviet Union for help—all these are not isolated occurrences but links of one chain.

The last factor, which prompted the Soviet Union to march into Afghanistan, according to western observers, is a calculated step to move into oil-rich Persian Gulf.⁴⁷ The President of USA pledged to protect the Persian countries. However, George F. Kennan, a well known Kremlinologist, does not agree with this view because:⁴⁸

If the Kremlin really wanted to have its writ run in the Gulf region, it would have been infinitely easier for Soviet forces to cut across unsettled Iran, rather than to risk a long-drawn-out war of attrition with the Afghan guerrillas in the inhospitable heights of the Hindu Kush.

From the above discourse two main views emerge. First, the Soviet view and second, the Western view including Indian bourgeoisie's view. From Soviet point of view, three factors are responsible for intervention viz., foreign assistance to the rebels, the repressive and unpopular measures followed by Amin and a threat to the Soviet security. The western view can be summarised as: the instability at the Soviet frontiers; unrest in Iran; involvement of the USA in elections; the fear of effect of Islamic fundamentalism on 50 million Soviet Central Asian Muslim population; Soviet eye on Persian Gulf; assertiveness in Soviet foreign policy; Soviet belief that

Afghanistan is in its sphere of influence; the application of "Brezhnev Doctrine"—to defend the Marxist regime is an obligatory duty of the Soviet Union anywhere in the world, whether invited or not; the fear of encirclement etc. are considered to be the main factors for the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

The Role of the Muslim Countries

As a matter of fact, the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan is not an unusual phenomenon or event in contemporary international politics, especially after World War II. The following are the most important instances of military intervention in the affairs of small or weak states, whether adjacent to the superpowers or not.⁴⁹ The armed intervention in Vietnam is the most important. These armed interventions, according to K.D. Malaviya, were sometimes without any pretext.⁵⁰ The direct military intervention, hitherto was regarded as the monopoly of the western powers including the U.S. and her allies. The Soviet interventions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia were regarded within her area of interest and influence. Therefore, none of the interventions has invited a world wide criticism to such an extent as has happened in case of the armed intervention in Afghanistan.

It would not be out of place to point out that the armed intervention in Afghanistan is regarded first of its own kind.⁵¹ It is first direct military intervention by the USSR outside eastern Europe. Afghanistan is the first non-aligned, first adjacent country to the USSR, first Asian state, first Muslim state having a Marxist regime in whose affairs the Soviet troops intervened and above all, the armed intervention in Afghanistan is the only crisis (except Vietnam crisis) since the World War II, which has been condemned directly or indirectly, publicly or privately by the friends and foes of the Soviets alike, of course, in a varying degree and tone, from one corner of the world to another. The most important and significant repercussions about the Afghanistan crisis include the role and attitude of the Muslim countries and organisations more especially Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Organisation of the Islamic Countries (OIC).

Role of Pakistan

Pakistan is the next door neighbour of Afghanistan. Therefore, what happens in Afghanistan must have its repercussions in Pakistan. The Pakistan rulers did not want the revolutionary regime headed by Noor Mohammad Taraki to be strengthened because the reforms carried out by it, would give handle to the Communists and other progressive forces in Pakistan.⁵² The regime in Pakistan was not prepared to tolerate the pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan and it always exploited the religious sentiments of the Afghans and allowed the Afghan rebels to cross into Pakistan. The Pak authorities organised the "refugee camps" on the so called "humanitarian" ground. As a matter of fact, the camps were organised to impart training in guerrilla warfares as is evident from different sources.⁵³

Pakistan is under the military rule led by General Zia-ul-Haq. It is facing internal problems including the socio-economic and political ones. It has tensions between Shias and Sunnis and those of regionalism. The political parties are placed under ban. The press is heavily censored. Moreover, the ghost of late Z.A. Bhutto still haunts the minds of rulers. Therefore, Pakistan rulers want to exploit the Afghanistan issue for prolonging their regime. The official and non-official reactions to the Afghan event are as under:

The Muslim—a non-official leading daily in an editorial stated that the foreign intervention in Afghanistan, "will be tantamount to destabilising the entire region" and condemned the Soviet involvement in Kabul. *Pakistan Times*—the official newspaper in an editorial stated that the foreign intervention in Afghanistan posed a serious threat "to regional peace and security". *The Eilan*—a leading daily condemned the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and cautioned the Pak rulers against the U.S. administration which forgets its allies and leave them in lurch. *The Sadaqat*—another daily warned the rulers of Pakistan and further stated that they should "not act on U.S. prompting".⁵⁴

The Pakistan ruling Junta criticised and denounced the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Mr. Niaz Naik—Pakistan's

representative in the U.N. demanded: First, immediate withdrawal of the Soviet troops; second, freedom to the Afghans to decide about their internal affairs without outside interference; third, noninterference in the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of Afghanistan;⁵⁵ and lastly, the Pak rulers want the creation of such conditions which can be conducive to the return of Afghan rebels to their homeland.⁵⁶

It is pertinent to point out that the Afghanistan crisis has provided to Pak rulers a golden opportunity to strengthen their position inside and outside Pakistan. Immediately after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the U.S. administration announced that Pak would be given \$ 400 million aid—half of which would be military hardwares and the other half economic aid. The U.S. administration also proposed the consortium scheme to help Pakistan. The U.S. administration announced \$ 100 million worth sale of arms to Pakistan immediately.⁵⁷ The U.S. offer was rejected by General Zia as “peanuts” and “terribly disappointing”.⁵⁸ One may raise a pertinent question, why did Pakistan reject such an alluring offer? The following theories are propounded by different commentators: First the Pakistan authorities wanted the revision of 1959 defence agreement into a treaty—like Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty 1971—guaranteeing territorial integrity and freedom of Pakistan.⁵⁹ As a matter of fact, Pakistan authorities wanted a massive aid running into billions for which perhaps the U.S. administration was not prepared⁶⁰. Therefore, according to this version, the Pak authorities were not against the arms supply in principle. The difference was on ‘terms’ and ‘conditions’.⁶¹

Second it is argued that by accepting the U.S. offer, the Pak authorities did not want to antagonise the USSR.⁶² Therefore, it seems that by rejecting the U.S. offer, the Pak authorities tried to appease the Soviets. General Zia made it clear that the military hardwares supplied by the U.S. “won’t buy Pakistan’s security but greater animosity from the Soviet”.⁶³ He further added⁶⁴:

I did not expect that the United States will send troops to Pakistan. It would be foolish on my part to expect

that Americans and Chinese would come in to fight for the freedom of Pakistan. Pakistan will have to fight for its own freedom.

Therefore, according to the daily—*The Sadaqat* the Pak authorities were not prepared “to be harassed or huddled into a situation by any superpower” and regarded the resumption of arms supply to Pakistan as belated.⁶⁵ The national interest of Pakistan, according to General Zia, demanded “greater harmony and understanding” with the Soviets.⁶⁶

Third, the President of Pakistan, General Zia further stated that by accepting the U.S. offer at the time of such a crisis he did not want to increase the fear of the next door neighbour—India. The Pakistan rulers did not want confrontation on two fronts—one with Afghanistan backed by the USSR and another with India. Girilal Jain has aptly remarked that Pakistan did not wish to ‘alienate India too much’. He further stated:⁶⁷

Nor did it wish to provoke New Delhi into moving closer to Moscow and face the unpleasant, even if distant, prospect of being caught in a pincer, the Soviet forces in Afghanistan being one arm of the pincer and the Indian armed forces being the other.

Fourth, it is also believed that the Pak rulers did not want to hurt the feelings of the anti-U.S. Muslim countries more especially Iran.

And above all, by rejecting the U.S. offer as ‘peanuts’, Pakistan has lost nothing because it can secure the help from the oil-rich Islamic countries under the proposed consortium scheme by the U.S.A. Moreover, China also promised to supply the armaments to Pakistan. However, the negotiations with the USA also continued and ultimately Pakistan succeeded in its game.

Therefore, Pakistan authorities have exploited the Afghan crisis to seize the leadership of Islamic countries by hosting the conferences of the OIC and tried to strengthen themselves internally as well as externally.

The Role of Islam

Iran—another next door neighbour of both—the USSR and Afghanistan—is led by Ayatollah Khomeini—whose main aim is to establish a “theocratic Muslim State”.⁶⁸ The religious fundamentalism advocated by Khomeini cannot solve the socio-economic and political problems of Iran which are going from bad to worse day by day.⁶⁹ The Khomeini revolution has reversed the process of modernisation started by the late Shah of Iran.⁷⁰ Due to the clash of modernising forces led by Bani-Sadr—a secular leader and elected Head of the state and the religious fundamentalists—led by Khomeini, the Supraconstitutional leader backed by the Muslim clergy—Iran still remains under chaotic conditions, turmoil and confusion.⁷¹ Not only this, the Iran-Iraq war has further weakened the position of Iran.

Internally Iran has two more potential dangers—the Tudeh Party (The Iranian Communist Party)—which can foment industrial unrest⁷² and the Kurds—who are demanding Kurdistan—a separate homeland.

Though Iran has nothing in common with the U.S.A. and China who are helping the Afghan ‘rebels’ yet, Khomeini is not prepared to tolerate the Marxist regime in Kabul. Therefore, he stands for “unconditional support to the Afghan rebels”.⁷³ The foreign minister of Iran, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh suggested on 27 March 1980, to call a regional conference to solve the crisis in Afghanistan. He further stated:⁷⁴

The aims of such discussions would be the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and the respect and guarantee of territorial integrity and neutrality and obviously non-interference from outside and the right of the Afghans to decide what kind of government they want.

Though the Soviets regarded that these terms were pro-West yet the Iranjans did not have any thing in common with the U.S.—the enemy No. 1. Khomeini condemned the Soviets openly but he has not taken even a single step to help Afghanistan to come out of the crisis. As a matter of fact, Iran does not want to invite the Soviet wrath with whom it shares

a long border and entangle itself in the superpower hostility at such a time when it is facing internal crisis and external foes including the USA and Iraq. Thus, Iran is not in a position to help the Afghan 'rebels' except expressing lip sympathy which costs nothing.

The Role of Iraq

Iraq is one of the stable, strong and powerful countries because of its economic power of nationalized oil resources and significant diplomatic force.⁷⁵ The Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party (ABSP) was successful in bringing the revolution in Iraq on 17 July 1968. Since that day, Iraq is moving towards unity, freedom, socialism, non-alignment and anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism.⁷⁶

Saddam Hussein became President of Iraq on 17 July 1979. After the assumption of office he started a tirade against the Communists and they were deprived of two portfolios in the government. It was further followed by ruthless suppression and more than one hundred political rivals and opponents are being executed every year.⁷⁷

Iraq has condemned the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and favoured immediate withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Iraq also played a very significant role in the Islamic conferences as well as in the U.N. on this issue. Though Iraq is very critical of the role of the Soviets as well as the USA, yet it desires to maintain independence from the superpowers. Iraq may not like hostility with the Soviets on this issue because of the following consideration:

First, though the friendship treaty (1972) between the two countries is still effective, yet the relations between the two are not the same what they used to in the seventies.⁷⁸ Despite the deterioration in their relationship, Iraq still depends upon the Soviet military weapons for its defence.⁷⁹

Secondly, the Kurd-Shia problem is still the most destabilizing force in Iraq.

Lastly, Iraq faces two main enemies at international level—Iran and Israel. The Iran-Iraq war and bombing of the Atomic reactor of Iraq by Israel prove this hypothesis. If Iraq wants to be stable and secure it will not like to endanger

its territorial integrity and freedom. Therefore, it can be concluded that Iraq also is not in a position to take up arms against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

The Role of Egypt

Egypt had very close relationship with the USSR and it was dependent upon the Soviets in economic, technical and defence fields.⁸⁰ It was in the month of July 1972, that Sadat expelled 17000 Soviet military experts from Egypt and gave a new turn to the foreign policy of his country. Sadat regards that the Arabs had to suffer defeat and humiliation in the Arab-Israel conflict due to the Soviet 'betrayal'.⁸¹ Therefore, he moved towards the United States of America for defence, economic and other requirements of his country. The USA re-established its diplomatic relationship with Egypt in February 1974. The USA earmarked \$ 5.3 billion economic assistance for Egypt—largest amount ever given to any country after the World War II. The Egyptian defence forces were re-organised on western lines. The Soviet military experts and technicians were replaced by the Western-U.S. experts.⁸² Moreover, Sadat signed the Camp David Accord—a friendship treaty between Egypt and Israel on 26 March 1979. It is stated that the Camp David is the brain child of the former President of the USA—Mr. Carter. Most of the Arab countries regard Israel as the common enemy. Egypt therefore, is regarded as 'Pariah' by the Arab World. Egypt was suspended from the OIC. Moreover, some of the Arab countries including Algeria, Libya, Syria, Democratic Republic of Yemen and the organisations like the PLO broke their diplomatic ties with Egypt even prior to the Camp David Accord.⁸³

The above stated background makes it crystal clear that Egypt is opposed to the Soviets. Sadat has deadily opposed the march of the Soviet troops into Afghanistan territory and supports the Afghan rebels. Sadat has pursued "anti-Soviet policy" and has given a sharper rebuff to Moscow by ordering drastic reduction in Soviet Embassy staff in Cairo.⁸⁴ He further stated that there would be no normal relationship with the USSR as long as the Soviet troops stay in Kabul.⁸⁵

He further urged upon the U.S. to supply Egypt with warplanes and military experts to face any crisis in future.

The Role of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a leading country in the Arab World. It has 9000,000 Sq. mile area—about four-fifths of the total area of Arab. It is a leading oil producing nation. Saudi Arabia is the birth place of Islam and its two holy cities—Mecca and Medina—are visited by lacs of Muslims from all over the World. Therefore, Saudi Arabia is often regarded a leader of the Muslims in the traditional sense.⁸⁶

Saudi Arabia is a Monarchy and the administration is run on the basis of Koran—the holy book of the Muslims. The administration of Saudi Arabia is facing internal hostilities and troubles which mar its chance of being powerful leader of the Arab countries. The internal threats include rivalry within the royal family, unrest in the military, opposition from the religious extremists and the revolt by Shias. The seizure of the Ka'aba Mosque posed a serious threat. It further encouraged the Shias against being treated as second rate citizens. The Shias regard Khomeini as their spiritual and religious leader. This has posed the most serious threat to the Saudi Arab ruler and their traditional spiritual leadership.⁸⁷

Since the success of the Khomeini revolution in Iran and the exit of the late Shah of Iran, the rulers of Saudi Arabia doubt if they can depend upon the U.S. in case of any eventuality.⁸⁸ This doubt has further increased due to the Camp David Accord—a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel blessed by the USA. Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries in the Arabian Peninsula consider the Camp David Accord as the 'betrayal'. Despite all this, Saudi Arabia is pro-West in its foreign policy and is opposed and hostile to the Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan. Prince Saud-Al-Faisal, the Foreign minister of Saudi Arabia appealed to the Islamic nations to resist the Russians in Kabul. He stated:⁸⁹

The Islamic countries should take a clear position to face the blatant Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and to prevent the serious communist aggression from achieving its goals there.

Saudi Arabia has played a significant role in the Islamic conference. In the Baghdad conference of the OIC on 3 June 1981, the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia appealed to the World of Islam to resist the Russian aggression by supporting the Afghan rebels openly.⁹⁰

It is pertinent to point out that in April 1981, Saudi Arabia decided to break with Kabul. Two important considerations prevailed upon the Saudi Arabian authorities when they decided to sever diplomatic relationship with Kabul.

First, it was perhaps to please the USA because the decision was taken just before the arrival of the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Alexander Haig and show to the USA that the USSR was causing threat to the World of Islam.⁹¹

Second, perhaps by having a break with Kabul, Saudi Arabia desired to retain the traditional leadership of the Islamic countries because rest of the members of the OIC adopted "business as usual attitude".⁹² Thus it was an expression of resentment on behalf of the Muslim countries.

It may be further pointed out that the gulf countries including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrein, Oman and the UAE formulated a joint defence plan to repel any Soviet aggression.⁹³ Therefore, from the above analysis, one may conclude that though Saudi Arabia may suspect the U.S., yet at the same time in case of conflict between the two super-powers, it may stand against the USSR on western bandwagon.

There are some Arabian countries like Syria, Algeria, Libya, Democratic Republic of Yemen and the organisation like the PLO who support the Soviet-Afghan proposals for the settlement of Afghan Crisis.⁹⁴

As a result, the second conference of the OIC held at Islamabad on 19 June 1980, had to change its earlier stand by setting up a three member committee to have dialogue with Kabul and Moscow and to find out 'ways and means' for the settlement of the Afghan crisis.⁹⁵

The Role of the Organisation of the Islamic Countries (OIC)

On the basis of the above analysis, it is necessary to see

the reaction of the OIC having 40 members (Egypt and Afghanistan stand suspended) towards the Afghanistan crisis. The government of Bangladesh urged upon the Islamic countries in the first week of January 1980, to call an emergency meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the OIC to "discuss the situation in Afghanistan and also developments in the region, which are closely interlinked with the situation in Afghanistan".⁹⁶

The Foreign Ministers' Conference of the OIC was held in January 1980, in Islamabad. The conference urged upon the members to withhold recognition of the illegal regime in Kabul and provide assistance to the Afghan rebels.⁹⁷ It is pertinent to point out that none of the Islamic countries except Saudi Arabia broke with Kabul. Instead, Syria, South Yemen, Libya, Algeria and the PLO extended full diplomatic recognition to the Kabul regime.⁹⁸ This indicates the cleavage among the members of the OIC. The cleavage among the Islamic countries is due to geo-political, socio-economic, national interests and their relationship with the superpowers. It is evident from the proceedings of the emergency conference of the OIC. Whereas Pakistan and Jordan were moderate; Iran, Iraq, Algeria and Libya were opposed to naming the USSR and they agreed to condemn the USSR only when the western powers were also warned against interference in the Islamic countries.⁹⁹ The conference did not agree to the Saudi Arabian proposal to cut off oil supply to the USSR. Therefore, the conference has belied the hope of the western powers to rally the Islamic countries in a form of "Jihad" against the "anti-God Moscow".¹⁰⁰

The cleavage led to a more conciliatory and constructive approach and a changed stand in quite an opposite direction. In the second conference held in May 1980, it was decided to set up a three-member committee including Pakistan, Iran and Secretary General of the OIC. The Committee was further expanded and membership was given to Guinea and Tunisia. The conference stated the purpose of the committee to find "ways and means" for the solution of the Afghanistan crisis.¹⁰¹ The summit of the Islamic states in Taif, also expressed its resentment over the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

The OIC failed to take a strong and rigid stand and work as a bloc due to the following reasons:

First, Islam is divided into two different sects—Shias and Sunnis—the followers of these sects clash everywhere. Since the success of the Khomeini revolution in Iran, the Shias have become more assertive and violent in their outlook. The Shias regard Khomeini as the “Saviour of Islam” whereas President Sadat of Egypt regards him as “Lunatic”.¹⁰² It has encouraged the clash between religious fundamentalists and the secular and Liberal minded Muslims.

Second, the followers of Islam are divided into various categories—orthodox fundamentalists, conservatives, liberal and modern.¹⁰³ As a result, the Muslim nations are also divided.

Third, due to their geographical and national interests and their relationship with superpowers, the Islamic nations move and lean in opposite directions. Countries like Pakistan, Egypt, Oman, Somalia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrein, Qatar and the UAE lean towards the West, whereas countries like Syria, Algeria, Libya, South Yemen and the PLO are pro-Soviet.¹⁰⁴ It can be further pointed out that at the Taif Summit conference as many as 13 countries preferred non-alignment as a policy.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, some of the Islamic countries of the African Continent have no interest in what is happening in Kabul.

Fourth, the relationship among the Arab-States are deteriorating. The relationship between Iran and Iraq, Syria and Jordan, Syria and Iraq, Iraq and Oman, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Libya and Iraq, Morocco and Algeria are unfriendly and hostile.¹⁰⁶ The clash between the bodyguards of President Saddam Hussein (Iraq) and President Assad (Syria) at the Taif Conference further indicates the hostility between Syria and Iraq.¹⁰⁷

The World of Islam having about 750 million Muslim population living in 43 countries, is a divided house and the religion does not seem to be a binding cement.¹⁰⁸

To conclude, it can be stated that:¹⁰⁹

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan has undoubtedly

resulted in strong disapproval in a large part of the world, but Islamic countries have not really succeeded in turning it into a matter of special concern for them. Besides, the Soviet military presence is being increasingly accepted as a fact from which there is no escape.

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ISLAM AND THE SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

Asghar Ali Engineer

Communism is supposedly an atheistic philosophy. It is not, therefore, surprising that the doctrinaire religions like Islam based on the clear concept of God (in fact the unity of God is the most fundamental doctrine of Islam) come in conflict with it. The orthodox and the traditionalists have never viewed communistic doctrines with equanimity for this reason. It has been and continues to be their *bete noire*. Is it invariably so? It appears to be so but is not in fact the case. Reality has many complex strands and needs to be explored in all its complexity.

There is no doubt that the communist orthodoxy did uphold the doctrine of atheism and held matter as primary as well as eternal. It is because of this that the right of preaching atheism has been made fundamental right in the socialist countries like the Soviet Union. The Article 52 of the new Constitution of the USSR lays down: "Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is the right to profess or not to profess any religion, and to conduct religious worship or *atheistic propaganda*. Incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds is prohibited." (emphasis supplied).¹

However, those who have carefully studied Marx would note that as a sociologist as well as an historian of social struggles he grapples with social reality in all its complexity and richness and refrains from adopting simplistic positions, whatever his philosophical view point as regards primacy of matter. Marx is equally concerned with religion as a sociological phenomenon. In his famous passage which ends with

'religion is the opium of the people' he is dealing with religion as a factor in social struggles. The passage is as under:

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people. . . . The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of mankind is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the demand to give up a situation which needs illusions."²

Marx's approach to religion in this passage is sociological rather than philosophical and as such has great significance. In a class-ridden society religion is used, by the exploiting classes, as an illusory happiness to deprive them of real happiness by changing the social conditions and hence it becomes the 'sigh of the oppressed creature' and 'the spirit of a spiritless situation'. Marx's contention that 'the demand to give up the illusion about its condition is the demand to give up a situation which needs illusions' assumes significance in this sociological perspective. It is in the situational context of a class-ridden society that religion lends itself to such an illusory role and Marx disapproves of this illusory role rather than religion *per se*. If re-interpreted, religion can also be used as a powerful force to change the situation which needs illusion. History does provide us with such instances as well.

Martin Luther, in a way, revolutionised Christianity. Thus Engels says of him, "Luther had put a powerful weapon into the hands of the plebeian movement by translating the Bible. Through the Bible he contrasted the feudalized Christianity of his day with the unassuming Christianity of the first century, and the decaying feudal society with a picture of a society that knew nothing of the complex and artificial feudal hierarchy. The peasants had made extensive use of this instrument against the princes, the nobility, and the clergy."³

However, Luther, true to his class background, soon turned to the princes and left the peasantry to fend for itself. But Thomas Munzer, Luther's fellow priest, turned out to be a revolutionary theologian. Writing about him Engels says,

"Munzer was as yet a theologian before everything else. He still directed his attacks almost exclusively against the priests. He did not, however, preach quiet debate and peaceful progress, as Luther was already then doing, but continued Luther's violent sermons, calling upon the princes of Saxony and the people to rise in arms against the Roman priests."⁴

Of this revolutionary theologian of Germany, Engels further says, "Munzer's political doctrine followed his revolutionary religious conceptions very closely, and just as his theology overstepped the current conceptions of his time, so his political doctrine went beyond the directly prevailing social and political conditions. Just as Munzer's religious philosophy approached atheism, so his political programme approached communism, and even on the eve of the February revolution, there was more than one modern communist sect that had not such a well-stocked theoretical arsenal as was Munzer's in the sixteenth century."⁵

Thus we see that there have been instances of religion made to play a revolutionary role to bring about social transformation and for changing the situation which needs illusion. Even the history of Islam provides us with many such instances. The Kharijites, the Qaramita and some other sects of Islam played a revolutionary role and never came to terms with the powerful establishment of the Umayyad or Abbasid caliphs. The Qaramitas even established a commune wherein no private property except personal weapons was permitted.⁶ It is worth quoting here the description of life in the Qaramita commune: "A da'i (missionary, summoner to the faith) was appointed to collect the earnings of the villagers. He was asked to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and help the weak and the afflicted out of that fund. The whole scheme was implemented with such thoroughness that no needy person or beggar was left. All the citizens started discharging their duties promptly and steadfastly and lived their life satisfactorily. So much so that poor women used to deposit their income earned by spinning in the da'i's treasury and small children too did the same with their income earned by looking after the birds."⁷

It is certainly true that such instances are far and few in

between. Theologians and priests have, more often than not, identified themselves with the status quoist forces. However, what is more important to note is that given the will and commitment, religion can also play a revolutionary and unifying role for the masses who struggle for changing their condition. Islam has played progressive role in the colonial countries of the Islamic world by challenging the colonial powers in the nineteenth century. Its role was no less revolutionary in Iran in the late seventies in overthrowing the hated regime of the Shah who was a powerful instrument of American imperialism. (Khomeini's regime turned out to be equally tyrant but it is another story we do not propose to deal with here.). Religion has to be therefore understood in socio-political context and not merely in philosophical context to understand its role in the overall perspective.

II

There are a large number of Muslims in Soviet Union. Their number is estimated at 45 million and constitute the second largest community in Russia after the Orthodox Christians.⁸ It has often been argued that the Soviet communism is in direct conflict with Islam and that in religious sense Muslims are a persecuted minority. The Muslims' inner urge to practice their religion and maintain their identity, it is argued, is put down with a heavy hand. Dr. Shamsuddin maintains:

“Despite the decade long resistance by the Muslims the Bolsheviks were successful in consolidating their rule. Having done that the Communists launched a frontal attack on Islamic institutions. During the period 1927 to 1938 almost all the mosques and madrasahs were closed. A large number of devout Muslims including the Muslim Communist party leaders were executed. Transmission of religious education for young children by their parents too could not escape the notice of the firebrand members of the society of Militant Atheists. Publication of religious books and imports of any literature from the Muslim countries were banned. Restrictions were also imposed on the observance of prayers, fasts

and other Islamic rituals. The Muslim women were forced to abandon the traditional veil."⁹

A very long list of serious allegations indeed. But for a serious student of social science it would not do to arrive at conclusions on simplistic assumptions. A social phenomenon of this nature cannot be understood merely on the grounds of religious hostility displayed by 'militant atheists'. Socio-political factors and practical and strategic considerations often play more decisive role than mere ideological considerations on either side of the divide. A proper analysis of the whole complex situation is called for. To accept or deny the charges would amount to be swayed by simplistic political propaganda.

A revolutionary situation is always highly complex one. Sudden political overthrow of a status quoist regime forces it to perpetuate its struggle for restoration through psychological and other means as well. Ideological weapons also prove to be equally potent. Force used against the defenders of the old order is often projected by well designed propaganda campaigns as the force used against the particular religious or regional community as a whole to which the old regime happens to belong. This confusion induces many innocent followers of that religion to fight in 'defence' of their religion and become victims of revolutionary violence. We are witnessing the same phenomenon in Afghanistan today. The defenders of tribal order are waging 'jihad' for the 'defence' of Islam which is sought to be projected as in 'grave danger'. The innocent followers of these tribal chiefs are getting killed sincerely convinced that they are fighting in defence of Islam. Similarly persecution of the Bahais by the Khomeini regime in Iran cannot be ascribed to its religious fanaticism only; many of the Bahais held influential positions during the Shah's hated regime and even acted as informers. This, however, does not mean that all the Bahais killed or being killed are guilty.

It is equally important to note that in a complex revolutionary situation excesses cannot be ruled out. More often quite innocent people become suspect and become victims of persecution. Also, revolution is a heady wine and throws

up its own zealots. They throw all caution to the wind and indulge in militant attacks on religion or religious ideologies thus arousing strong hostility among their followers who are not necessarily defenders of old order. Even Lenin had to caution the members of the communist party in the Central Asian region not to attack the religion of the Moslems.

Immediately after the October Revolution, on November 20, 1917 to be precise, the first Soviet government, headed by Lenin, published a special appeal "To All the Working Muslims of Russia and the East". Addressing the Muslim working people "whose mosques and prayer-houses were destroyed, their beliefs, and customs trampled underfoot", the Soviet government solemnly declared:

"Henceforth your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions are declared free and inviolable. Arrange your national life freely and without any hindrance. You have a right to that."¹⁰

Communism, in a philosophical sense, is an atheistic ideology and Islam is a strongly God-centred religion. Even in a normal situation accommodation between the two would not be free of felt tensions. No amount of rationalizations or apologetics can bring perfect harmony between the two. The zealots on either side, can dangerously lower the threshold of violence. In its emotional appeal, militant atheism is as potent as religious fanaticism. Again, this should be viewed in the background of the fact that the Soviet Constitution guarantees freedom both for profession and practice of religion as well as that of atheism. Atheism, considered as an official point of view, is likely to enjoy greater advantages. Anticipating this, the Soviet Constitution has made certain penal provisions for discrimination between followers of atheism and religion.

"It is regarded as a criminal offence", say Ziyauddin Khan, "for any official to refuse to accept a person for work or in an educational establishment or to dismiss a person from work or from an educational establishment because of his or her religious views. The same applies to an official who deprives a believer of any privilege or advantage provided for by law, or in any other way substantially restricts citizens'

rights because of their attitude to religion. The law punishes such actions with up to one year's correctional labour or a fine up to fifty roubles. And if such acts are accompanied for such actions or is guilty of organised activity aimed at restricting citizens' rights because of their attitude to religion) the sentence can be increased to three years' imprisonment."¹¹

It is also important to note that atheism, in integral conjunction with positive humanistic values accompanied by a strong sense of collective social responsibility may not be as repugnant to a truly religious soul as it is usually thought to be. Both tend to strengthen the forces beneficial to mankind. It was in this sense that the Ahrars in pre-independent India who were militant Muslims preferred Bolshevik atheism to the Muslim Leaguers' feudal and capitalistic proclivities which were positively harmful for the Muslim masses. Chaudhry Afzal Haq, the Ahrar leader says that "an atheist is better than a polytheist (*munkir mushrik se behtar hai*) and that a new path-finder's first stage is negation (*nafi*). Just think of *la ilaha* (there is no god) of the holy Islamic formula *la ilaha illal lah* (there is no god but God). A *sufi* repeats *la ilaha* (there is no god) for ages then he comes to *illal lah* (except one God).¹²

Thus we see that for a religious revolutionary, who is totally opposed to status quo, even atheism, if it is wedded to healthy social change in favour of the weaker and exploited sections, is not very repugnant. Such an atheism, in a religious sense, leads to affirmation of Allah.

Islam, during the Prophet's life time and until little later, was a force challenging status quo everywhere. The early Muslims also believed in exporting revolution to the most powerful empires of the day i.e. Byzantine and Sassanid. Both the empires were destabilised and a new social order set up. However, due to the constraints of the given historical situation the new set-up did not last very long and the Umayyads converted it into an oppressive and exploitative dynastic rule. It is important to note here that the Islamic orthodoxy began to take shape after the establishment of Umayyad empire. It evolved and crystallised over a period of few centuries which were full of convulsions and tumultuous

events. The Shi'i revolts also cast their shadow on the process of evolution. These revolts pushed the Sunni 'ulama closer to the view-point of powerful caliphal establishment. Thus the Islamic orthodoxy, having evolved in response to the complex challenges of its time, became defender of status quo and in it, the caliphs and other Muslim rulers, found a strong ally. This by itself is a fascinating study.

The modern era dominated by capitalism and western imperialism has posed different challenges and Islam has to respond to them in a creative way, if it has to prove its relevance and guide the destiny of the masses of Muslims. The socialist revolution, deeply concerned with the well-being of the oppressed and weaker sections of the society with whom the holy Quran also expresses great sympathy (it repeatedly condemns *zulm*, oppression, wrong-doing against the weak i.e. *mustad'ifin*).¹³ There is no doubt Islam so interpreted still arouses wrath of the traditionalists and hence cautious approach is very necessary.

Such a caution and tact has been shown while interpreting Islam even in Soviet Union. Thus interpreting Islam Ziyauddin Khan says, "The more far-sighted Muslim figures in our country saw a good deal of similarity between the social principles of Islam and of socialism long before the Great October Socialist Revolution. On June 1, 1906, in an article entitled "Islam and Socialism", the Muslim newspaper *Vakyt*, published in Orenburg, said: "We Muslims, who adhere to our faith, know very well that equality, brotherhood, honesty and mercy, which are the bases of Islam, are also part of socialism—so the bases of Islam coincide with those of socialism."¹⁴

Babakhan also says, "Islam teaches that there are close social links in society, that people depend on one another. The work of each man is a contribution to the good of society, i.e. society as a whole benefits by the results of the work done by each member of society. Hence it is the duty of every citizen to work conscientiously, aiming at the highest possible quality. The Prophet Muhammad—peace be upon Him!—said in this connection: 'The best of men is he who is of the greatest use to people'."¹⁵

It would be seen that it is very cautious interpretation of Islam which would, in no way, offend even the most orthodox of Muslims. Those outside the Soviet Union has attempted much more radical reinterpretation of Islam. Maulana Ubeidullah Sindhi, Maulana Hasrat Mohani and Dr. Iqbal from India were much more radical in their approach to Islam.¹⁶ Many left oriented intellectuals are attempting revolutionary interpretation of Islam in Egypt, Iran, India and several other countries.¹⁷

As regards private property, the approach in Soviet Islam is no less cautious. Babakhan says:

“It is on the teaching of the Holy Koran and the precepts of the Prophet—peace be upon Him!—that the other rulings of the *Shariat* concerning social ownership are based. For example, there was a time when it was a rule that the big publicly owned rivers, which often became silted up, were to be cleared either at the expense of the public treasury or by public work, which was compulsory for all the able-bodied.”

He then goes on to say:

“As time went on and the productive forces of society developed, more and more new objects came to be included among the chief means ensuring the existence and development of society: big works and factories, huge electric power-stations which, together with the land and the irrigation systems, became the basis of the economy in the Muslim countries. It is not surprising that some of the biggest Muslim theologians and jurists came to be of the opinion that, according to the *shariat*, society had the natural and inalienable right of ownership of these objects too. The correctness of this view is confirmed not only by the enormous role of these objects in the life of society, but also by the fact that, as a rule, they are produced by the efforts of the whole or nearly the whole of society. And society can nationalise any objects if such a measure protects the interests of society, prevents damage to them, or leads to the successful solution of the problems facing society.”¹⁸

It is to be noted that what has been enunciated above is in keeping with the most orthodox position in Islam. Imam Shatibi has clearly laid down that the social interests are above the individual interests.¹⁹ Nationalisation is generally guided by the principle of social interests and hence is perfectly justified as otherwise, in the modern industrial era, powerful monopolies, cartels and pools can be most detrimental to the common social interests. Thus the interpretation of Islam in the Soviet Union cannot be said to be deviant or heterodox in form and content.

Even in practice in the Central Asian part of the Soviet Union, the traditions, Islamic or otherwise, have been slow to change. According to David K. Shipler of *New York Times News Service*, "Throughout Soviet Central Asia, traditional male-female roles remain largely intact in many families, with the man at work and the woman at home with several children. The trends of women moving into higher education and professional fields produce a volatile mixture with the old patterns resulting in tensions between generations and marital discord."²⁰

However, it does not mean there is very little change. The pace of change is not forced one. Before the revolution there was only one woman who was literate in Turkmenia. Now women make up nearly half of the student population in higher education. Also, they constitute 30 per cent of the Communist Party's Central Committee in Turkmenia, 40 per cent of the republic's Supreme Soviet and 38 per cent of the chairmen or deputy chairmen of local governments in Turkmenia's cities and towns. Bibi Palvanova, who has dissertation on the liberation of women in Soviet Central Asia to her credit and has been minister of public education for more than 18 years observes, still, "there are vestiges of the past. We don't hide them. There are still cases of parents not wanting daughters to receive higher education. There are still isolated cases of selling brides and people are prosecuted for it."²¹

III

Another important socialist country is China. It is very

difficult to have accurate estimate of the number of Muslims in the Chinese Socialist Republic. *Workers Daily* (11-1-80) suggested that there are now 6.4 million Hui and 5.4 million Uighur Muslims. Adding few more belonging to other minority sects there may not be more than 12-13 million Muslims. Other non-official estimates have suggested that the figure is more like 18-20 million.²² However, even these figures may not be any reliable guide. There is great deal of confusion. M. de Thiersant estimated Muslim population as 20 million in 1878. Around this time two Chinese visitors to Cairo, Syed Sulaiman and Abdur Rahman, the Chinese Muslim population was 70 million and 34 million respectively. In 1910, the *Statesman Year Book* gave the total Chinese population as 350,000,000.²³ According to *Times International* of April 16, 1979 the Muslim population in China is 115,000,000 which works out to nearly 12 per cent of total Chinese population.²⁴

There is substantial Muslim population in Sinkiang mainly Uighur (Turkic origin). There are Kazakhs or Kirghiz classified as Han (racially Chinese). The Muslims in this group were known as Hun Huis (Muslims of Chinese origin) or Kan Huis (Muslims from Kansu province) who were considered racially as part of Chinese. According to Syed Khalil Chisti, "The relationship of the Sinkiang Muslim population is of special significance as it has often been used to form a false impression with regard to the total number of Muslims in China. The impression has been given by many writers that Sinkiang is the only area in China where the Muslims predominate and hence are of any significance."

"In a sense this has been true. Up to 1949 the Sinkiang population consisted of at least 90 per cent Muslims, the Uighurs being in a majority (80 per cent); the remaining being Kazakhs, Tatars, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Han Huis and Kan Huis. Only 10 per cent of the population were Han Chinese out of which a good number were Han Huis or Han Muslims."²⁵

Now about Islam and Muslims in China, Kashi (Kashgar) in the far west of China's Xinjiang (Sinkiang) province bordering the Soviet Union, is inhabited by people identical in race, language, and Islamic faith to the Soviet Central Asians.

It is still closer to medieval than modern times. Kashi's population is 175,000 (mainly Uighurs). Beijing has done a great deal to develop this city by building hospitals, schools, parks, stores and light industry to help develop the Muslim minority. Workers at the state carpet mill can earn higher-than-average wages for their exacting skills. A nearby cotton-textile mill employs 3,000.²⁶ Uighurs, however, carry their religion with ease with little of the fervor of other Islamic countries. The Beijing Government allows religion to be practised in Central mosques, it discourages worship in small mosques built by *akhun*, local religious leaders "Still", says Ned Gillette, "we saw several of these being constructed with great care. Many had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960's."²⁷

There was established a Chinese Islamic Association in 1953 by three prominent Moslems: Burhan Shahidi, a Uighur progressive, Muhammad Dapusheng and Muhammad Makien, a famed Islamic scholar at Beijing university and translator of the first modern edition of the Koran. This association was able to hold two Congresses (in 1956 and 1963) before the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution brought all open religious activity to an end for the next ten years. The Fourth Congress was not held until April 1980 but Muslim activities were reviving in many localities prior to this. According to Bob Whyte in Beijing the Hui neighbourhood in and around Niujie or Ox Street was allowed to restore its Hui middle-school and hospital during 1978-79 and on 20 October 1980 the great Niujie Mosque reopened on the feast of 'Id al-Qabir, the commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice, after extensive repairs paid for by the State (amounting to 40,000 yuan). A second mosque, the Dongsu, had reopened during 1979. Reports from other cities throughout China indicate that a similar revival of cultural and religious life is going on amongst the Hui communities. Local Islamic congresses have been reported in Beijing, Shandong, Jiangsu, Helongjiang and Xinjiang.²⁸

It is certain that during the Cultural Revolution religious freedom was severely restricted and now more liberal attitude is being adopted. According to *China Pictorial* 1900 mos-

ques were opened by January 1980. Similarly for the first time since liberation Muslims in China were given the day off on Bairam (Id al-Fitr). Also, according to Fox Butterfield of *The New York Times News Service*, "After three decades of Chinese Communist rule, the largely Turkish-speaking Muslim peoples who make up the majority of the population in Xinjiang, China's vast north-western province, have prospered economically and gained a measure of toleration for their religious practices.

"Here in Turpan, an oasis city on the old silk route between the West and China, some families of Uighur nationality earn as much as \$ 900 a year, more than four times the average income of peasant families in the rest of China."²⁹

Like the Soviet Union, the freedom to believe in religion and practice it has also been recognised in China. Thus while the communists are dutybound to propagate materialism and atheism, "they must understand that citizens enjoy both freedom to believe in religion and to propagate atheism. If a handful of people with ulterior motives try to make use of religious and superstitious activities to disturb public order, hamper production, swindle money and injure people, they will be punished according to law".³⁰

IV

A perceptive student of social science has to grapple with social and not with philosophical reality. Speaking of social reality, one has to admit that a socialist revolution cannot wish away deep rooted religious influences among the people. In a complex social structure with its uneven development not all can be expected to subscribe to dialectical materialism in a philosophical sense. Greater the degree of unevenness, more sharper would be the social contradiction. Louis Althusser expresses it schematically thus:

"The specific difference of Marxist contradiction is its 'unevenness', or 'overdetermination', which reflects in its conditions of existence, that is the specific structure of unevenness (in dominance) of the ever-pre-given complex whole which is its existence. Thus understood, contradiction is the motor of all development. Displace-

ment and condensation, with their basis in its over determination, explain by their dominance the phases (non-antagonistic, antagonistic and explosive) which constitute the existence of the complex process, that is, 'of the development of things'.³¹

Revolutionary change, specially in a backward society, sharpens, due to unevenness of development, certain socio-religious contradictions which, at certain points of displacement or condensation, might assume explosive form. No social phenomenon—and religion also, in a sense, is a social phenomenon—can ever be free of 'pre-given-complex' religious traditions too reappear, in a newly developed situation as a 'pre-given-complex' and thus keeps on perpetrating itself for quite a long time. Greater the unevenness of development, more prolonged would be reappearance of this pre-given-complex.

Also, one must distinguish between socio-religious tradition and a transcendent religious truth. While, with accelerated pace of change, the former might give way to new one (in an antagonistic or explosive way), the latter might continue to exist, with other 'scientific or rational' belief systems, as a non-antagonistic transcendental truth. The socio-religious traditions might, under the compelling logic of development, yield themselves to a degree of emergent uniformity but, and it is important to note, transcendent religious truth will have to be tolerantly accommodated by dialectical materialism, i.e. the official philosophy of the socialist countries. Thus Islam, as a transcendent religious truth, has much longer prospects of surviving as a vital metaphysical force both in Russia and China. Moreover, it would continue to shape religio-cultural identity of the minority in both these countries.

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12. Chaudhari Afzal Haq, *Abe Rafta* (Lahore, 1960), pp. 28-29.
13. There are numerous verses in the Quran to this effect. See for example 59:75, 9:34, 4:75, 46:39, 26:227, 22:45, 6:45, etc.
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POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE STATE OF PAKISTAN

Framework of Inquiry: Political Economy of an
Ex-colonial State in the Developing Societies

Pandav Nayak

The world of social sciences is undergoing an ever-deepening crisis—a crisis that holds almost a 'mirror image' to that of the world capitalism. Political Science, indisputably more ideologically suffused than most other social sciences, is undergoing rapid transformations under the impact of this crisis. As a result, some fundamental questions have cropped up demanding urgent answers while some of the received answers are being increasingly questioned. In this vortex of transformations overtaking Political Science, the predominant issue relates to its very basic datum viz., the central unit of inquiry.

The academic history of the State being the central unit of political inquiry closely resembles the nature and the content of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions which have overtaken them. Thus, in the developed west, classical bourgeois-democratic alliances led to the overthrow of the feudal aristocracy—a phenomenon which largely characterizes state-centred political research even till date. This however was not to be the case with the Anglo-Saxon world, neither was it to be the case with their ex-colonies who, after their national liberation, found themselves in neo-colonial traps owing to the native bourgeois-landlord alliances which dominated such liberation movements. For the developing world of the ex-colonies, as for their former colonial masters or the present neo-colonial superpowers, the political role

of the State became manifestly too much interventionist and aggressive to permit active political inquiry into State-initiated political inquiry. The intellectual tradition in the Anglo-Saxon world, accounts largely for the academic colonialism in the developing countries. Where the scholars are busy pursuing aca-colonial models for inquiry into the native realities which have been historically disformed through colonial interventions in the past.

Today, however, with conditions and demands of imperial capital accumulation passing from one set of crisis situations to another more complex set, political realities have forced fresh academic efforts for alternative modes of political inquiry. It is our argument that the perspective of Political Economy of State represents such an alternative mode of political inquiry particularly for the acutely class-ridden societies in the developing world of the ex-colonies. This perspective is based on two central assumptions viz., state is essentially a human artefact or more correctly, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development of class conflict and having arisen out of society, it seeks to place itself above it, alienating more and more from it. Thus, state is not an inherent anthropological necessity. The second assumption relates to the mode of inquiry itself; following Marx, we may state in his own words: "... my investigation led to the result that legal relations as well as forms of State are to be grasped neither from themselves nor from the so-called general development of human mind, but rather have their roots in the material conditions of life, the sum total of which Hegel combines under the name of 'civil society'; that, however, the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy".

Most of the prevailing modes of political inquiry whether of the functionalist systemic models of the Anglo-Saxon world or the juridico-constitutional models of the classical continent have failed to grapple with this ever-present historical fact of continuous dialectical tension between the State and the civil society. State, at the central unit of political inquiry was not only considered in isolation but precisely through such an apologetic academic exercise sought to be justified in all its actions. This epistemological dimension

has a long history which is not possible to trace within the brief compass of this article.

After the Zia regime, in order to retain its hold over power, began to seek legitimation in the process of Islamisation, prevailing modes of political inquiry got further confused. Much is sought to be explained in the Islamic world today in terms of the so-called wave of fundamentalism supposedly sweeping through it. Zia, a shrewd military general-cum-politician, who began with the doctrine of 'accountability' after capturing power through a military coup, soon threw this doctrine overboard and adopted another far more potent strategy of Islamisation. Much less, however, can be explained, in terms of 'Islamisation', what had been or has been happening in Pakistan since its formation. It would be far more fruitful, in order to understand the complex reality of Pakistani society, to seek explanations through other political paradigms based on objective reality, rather than any abstract belief-system.

A correct grasp of State behaviour in the developing societies like Pakistan should take into account the State structure in its various determinations and examine its role in the context of dependent capitalism which, broadly speaking, is the dominant socio-economic order of these societies. A politico-economic approach to the study of State structures in dependent capitalism takes its central theme from the central character of the State viz., its ever-expanding role to intervene in the national economy. The latter is directed towards extracting surplus from the economy and allocating them for different uses. The dependency character of these state structures often compels such allocations to be directed on such uses like heavily foreign-financed capital formations, exported profits, elite consumption etc., as are conducive to imperial capital accumulation. The limits of this dependency are usually defined by the strength and the breadth of class struggle within the given political area of the state structure. Thus, the starting point for analysis in the perspective of political economy of state must be the antagonistic relations between capital and labour in the process of capital accumulation.

But an investigation into the antagonistic relations bet-

ween the capital and labour provides no more than a correct starting point for political inquiry. More important than this is to inquire and this is the essence of the perspective, as to what is it in the economic basis which account for authoritarian forms into which most of the ex-colonial states have degenerated within a short span of their independent national history. A correct understanding of these authoritarian political forms of the new states calls for a critical examination of their material basis which had determined their historical continuity into the present forms. This material basis of the ex-colonies is qualitatively different from that of the classical bourgeois states in whose societies capitalism grew and flourished predominantly through a historical process of internal resolution of their class contradictions. With the ex-colonies, this process of historical growth of capitalism was subverted by the colonial empire which used the native states under their political subjugation to hasten 'hot-house fashion' the undermining and subordination of the formerly dominant relations of production which were feudal. In the process, the feudal relations of production could not be destroyed while a capitalist mode of production covering a small fraction of socio-economic space (i.e. those who had the assets and resources to invest and purchase) was foisted through the State intervention. This is a crucial dynamics in the historical development of these ex-colonies into their present phase of political independence and which accounts for their dependent capitalism as well as a heightened role of State.

Thus, the Perspective of Political Economy of the ex-colonial State has to have its own concepts and conceptualizations so as to prove a meaningful mode of political inquiry into the behaviour of these ex-colonial states of the developing world.

II

The perspective of political economy of developing states is predicated upon the premises of Historical Materialism. As such, it is based on a critique of prevailing modes of inquiry including their radical versions. Space does not

permit such a critique of the idealist and the speculative modes of inquiry, or even the empirical categories. The millennium of the Nizam-e-Mustafa is ever-evading, though the officially cultivated dogma of Islam is producing no less number of politically resourceful ulama. Similarly, most of the liberal and conservative scholarship which had colonized the academy in the developing societies discovered to their dismay that socio-economic inequalities deliberately fostered do not lead to national development (Papanek) or 'affirmative actions' on the part of a 'modernizing' military regime do not necessarily lead to political order (Huntington) or, for that matter, much acclaimed two-Nation Theory which was invalidated by more than half of its Muslims opting for sucession and separate nationhood.

Among the radical versions, a good deal of research on Pakistan centred on and around various development strategies that the state initiated and implemented. Emphasis on rural-urban inequality, East-West differences and discriminations in trade and development, favourable terms of trade enjoyed by industry at the expense of agriculture etc., failed to take into account the politico-economic dimension pertaining to the production relations and the emerging correlation of class forces. Such an orientation in research obscured the real problems facing the society. Bhutto tried an alternative to Ayub's growth-oriented strategy and fared worse even when he gave to the workers and peasants more than any ruler in Pakistan ever did. Or, how is it that the students spearheaded every anti-establishment movement in Pakistan including the Bhutto phase. Political parties, trade unions and popular movements have so often been banned; the ban on the Communist Party of Pakistan is almost as old as the State itself. Why are the rich in Pakistan becoming richer? Is it because as the song goes, the poor beget more children or the rich are being *sinned* by the richer patrons?

These are among some of the fundamental questions which have been raised and answered within the politico-economic perspective by Hamza Alavi. The peculiar power structure obtaining in Pakistan led Alavi to emphasize the

role of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy which, according to him, represent and is a product of an "overdeveloped State". According to him, "the state in a post-colonial society is not the instrument of a single class. It is relatively autonomous and it mediates between the competing interests of the three propertied classes, namely, the metropolitan bourgeoisie, the indigenous bourgeoisie and the landed class, while at the same time acting on behalf of them all to preserve the social order in which their interests are embedded, namely, the institution of private property and the capitalist mode as the dominant mode of production". For Alavi, state, for all practical purposes, means the military-bureaucratic oligarchy.

There is little to dispute about the heightened role of State in Asiatic societies, unlike in countries of classical bourgeoisie of the comparable time-frame. This has been well recognised by classical marxism whose tenets Alavi disapprovingly sets aside for a new formulation. But the basic deficiency in this new formulation is not only that it suffers from a heavier dose of staticity in so far as it takes state as the first instance in its structuralist analysis. More importantly, his concept of classes does not emerge from an analysis of social relations of production; they are used as apparent categories. This steak of empiricism can also be had from his arguments about the autonomous role of the state, i.e. the military-bureaucratic oligarchy. His analysis takes care of the operating costs of the state at its face value which represent only a small ratio of the national income and jumps at the conclusion about the autonomy of state. But what happens to a predominantly large measure of social surplus which does not get mobilised into bureaucratic channels? Alavi's thesis of the autonomy of a developed state fails therefore to take into account various class-dynamics—shifting collusions, antagonisms, parasitical co-existence of dominant classes, nation-class dialectics etc.—which underly expropriation of this vast reservoir of social surplus which apparently have not been colonized by the bureaucracy. And, above all, bureaucrats themselves represent a certain amount of vested interests and to that extent, are interlocked with other ruling classes of the society. Thus,

a more scientific analysis of State structure should emerge out of an examination of the social relations of production since, as Marx had correctly diagnosed, such an exercise can alone reveal "the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure and with it . . . the specific form of the state".

What follows is an examination of the State behaviour of Pakistan from a scientific perspective, namely political Economy of state. The analysis is confined to the first 30 years of Pakistan i.e. upto the overthrow of the popularly elected government led by Mr. Bhutto.

III

Like Islam which forms the religious foundation of the State of Pakistan, private enterprise declaredly is the economic foundation of this state. But there is one essential difference viz., as a faith, Islam is native and imbibed by its people but as an economic philosophy, capitalism has been imposed, on what is essentially a semicolonial, feudal society. But private enterprise as the economic foundation of the State was the declared goal till Mr. Bhutto appears on the scene and seeks to reverse the trend. Mr. Bhutto's emphasis on nationalisation of industries and an increased role for the state in the industrial investment moved little further from his electoral pledges. In his characteristic style of 'on again, off again' declaration of such measures, he succeeded only in scaring away the private investment while he himself had little of the plans and needed alternative machinery to generate resources at home. As an immediate consequence, he dragged the state into abject dependence on foreign assistance, making matters worse through inviting the cost-problems of a crisis-ridden capitalism in the developed countries of the west. Thus, he only succeeded in distorting the system as it came to him but could not do anything substantial to change the structure on which the system was embedded. We shall return to this point later.

In spite of the apparent antagonism between Islam and the Establishment (led by M.A. Jinnah), their economic programmes and ideologies converge on the acceptance of capi-

talism in Pakistan. According to Hafeez Malik, "on economic front there exists a tacit alliance between the two". We have also come to a similar conclusion on the basis of a trend study of the opinions of different socio-economic groups in Pakistan. Thus, there is a national trend of Islam cushioning up private enterprise in Pakistan.

Official pronouncements of different regimes reveal a distinct trend towards openly advocating a case for free enterprise. Jinnah declared, "the keen desire of the government of Pakistan to associate individual initiative and private enterprise at every state of industrialisation." Ghulam Muhammad, the first Finance Minister and later to become the Governor-General was "a conservative financier and a strong believer in free enterprise". Chaudhari Muhammad Ali, one of the former Prime Ministers of Pakistan thought "the correct place for our men of genius is in private enterprise. . . ." President Ayub Khan openly adopted the slogan of "incentive to private initiative". In the foreword to the *Third Five Year Plan*, he wrote:

"Our approach to economic planning has been pragmatic all along. . . . In fact, the government has gradually removed most of the administrative and bureaucratic controls which hampered progress of the private sector. The result of this approach has been the rapid growth of private capitalism in Pakistan. It is not surprising therefore when businessmen in Pakistan also entertain the same philosophy and harbour not the slightest doubt. In my mind Jinnah and the Muslim League were in favour of private enterprise; there was no question at the time of any other system".

Mr. Bhutto does not appear to be quite clear-headed about primary economic objective of his government. If for example, he would punish the private capitalist at home, he would also permit unrestricted foreign private investment. According to a disclosure made by Meraj Mohammad Khan, a rebel PPP leader (as he then was), while "his group wanted to place primary emphasis on the liquidation of feudalism, Bhutto was opposed to this and wanted primary emphasis (to be) placed on controlling or fighting capitalism because

imperialism depended upon capitalism and not feudalism''.

Bhutto's apparent opposition to feudal lords can only be explained in the light of the state's traditions of favouring rich farmers through consistently increasing allocation of resources for provision of facilities like irrigation and power. As was shown earlier though the terms of trade have moved against agriculture, it was only at the expense of the poor peasants and the landless labourers in Pakistan as a whole and East Pakistan in particular. The rich farmers never suffered, if at all, they gained through capitalist measures like mechanisation of agriculture. Even in West Pakistan the prosperity of the Punjab stands in clear contrast to the poverty of Baluchistan and NWFP. The Indus plain (Punjab and Sind) where Bhutto blazed his victorious electoral trail accounts today for no less than 92 per cent of the wheat production, the entire cotton production and over 98 per cent of the rice production of the country with only 76 per cent of the total rural population. In view of this support base, it should not be surprising why Bhutto was for the feudal lords.

But the state tradition of protecting and promoting the interest of the rural rich farmers has all along been there in the history of Pakistan. This also derives from the very political composition of the ruling elites who appeared through different periods. The composition of All India Muslim League Council and the membership of various National Assemblies of Pakistan points to the overwhelming domination of the landed aristocracy of Pakistan. Out of 503 members of the Council, over half belonged to the landed interests, 145 were lawyers and the remaining members were from the educated and business classes. The Constituent Assembly membership in July 1947 from West Pakistan was 14 landlords out of 25. In the 1952 Constituent Assembly landlords occupied 17 of the 35 seats. In the wake of Pakistan becoming a republic in 1956, these landlords showed even aggressive gesture for their political domination. But they primarily remained linked with the merchant traders whose exploitation of small farmers in the East Pakistan was not to be grudged by them. It was only when Ayub came into saddle, the capitalists tried to score points over the

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the facilities of state-run-irrigation, power-supply and communication networks for the marketable surplus. Besides, the state has guaranteed through all the regimes, subsidies in various forms at all the levels—inputs, processing and outputs.

But if the volume of state-manipulated, undeservedly earned benefits to the rural rich has not been proportionate to their legislative strength, it has been principally because of a political factor. The internal manifestation of this political factor lay in the emergence of militarism; first as a guarantor of the civilian regimes and subsequently as the ruler of the nation, which was determined by an external demand that stable political order need be created to facilitate adoption of capitalist growth strategies to ensure and promote imperialist accumulation. The demands of the latter not only forced the military state to raise a breed of capitalists who lived off a captive surplus from agriculture (in a predominantly agricultural country which has to start from a scratch in the sphere of industrialization) but also for reasons of civilian legitimation, it forged a front of landlord-dominated legislatures. In this arrangement, the faction-ridden landlords (divided along the *biradari* lines) had to reconcile themselves to a secondary position in the exploitative structure along with these capitalists except for a brief period (Parliamentary government of 1956 constitution till the military takeover in 1958) when the landlord politicians sought to tax the private corporate sector without disturbing the latter's channels of extraction of agricultural surplus from East Pakistan. This arrangement was, again to continue upto late sixties when, in keeping with the demands of the capitalist growth strategies, Green Revolution was ushered in which pumped more money into the pockets of the landlords while, again, without disturbing the steady inflow of the financial benefits of these capitalists in spite of a severe squeeze at the major source of their capital viz., foreign aid. According to a study done by Rashid Amjad, during the fifties, the major source of capital was reinvested in industrial earnings which accounted for almost 50 per cent of the total assets while commercial banks contributed only 10 per cent. In the sixties, the situation

radically changed due to large inflow of foreign aid which was channelised through the PICIC and IDHP—the state agencies and also due to expansion of banking in the country. During the third plan, institutional finance contributed about 50 per cent of the total industrial investment while internal savings provided only 23 per cent.

Thus besides these greedy, irresponsible businessmen who by now were known for their unwillingness and incapacity to take risks was another group of the rural rich. This exploitative structure which they together forged was actually exposed by inflation which hit hard the national economy leading to mass upsurges and the inevitable fall of the regime. This led to decisive class war and to ever more increase in the total area of private control and in the intensity of concentration of the private economic power over the nation's economy on the part of these irresponsible rich—both urban and rural.

Mr. Bhutto's choice to hit hard on these profiteering private investors was governed positively by the support he mobilised among the students, small and progressive farmers as well as the workers, and negatively by a consideration of making political use of the discredited "22 families" for populist slogans of Islamic Socialism. Most of his plans for reform, not surprisingly, therefore proved abortive and reflected naively of an economic philosophy which sought to scare the private investment away while leaving 80 per cent of the total investment in the organised sector in the private hands. As we mentioned earlier, the waves of nationalisation measures applied only to the management and not to ownership of the industries. The post-nationalisation impact on the economy as a whole diffused little of the concentrated private control. Similarly, his land reform measures were motivated more by political considerations (influential landlords of the PPP escaped the ceilings) than by a genuine need to restructure the land relations. The 1972 land reforms even compare poorly with the 1959 reforms which were judged as inadequate and far below the requirement level by a capitalist publication. According to the present military government's estimate, the area resumed under the earlier reforms

was double than that resumed under the 1972 reforms while area redistributed to tenants under the 1972 reforms was half the area given under the 1959 reforms. While the legal ceiling on ownership had always been high in Pakistan as compared to other South Asian states, Bhutto's reforms sought further to give tractor-tubewell ceiling bonus. Illegal ejection of the tenants in all the four provinces has increased making the land reforms more phoney than the introduction of the reforms would suggest as first. He never wanted to prepare the peasants and the landless labourers for a political fight against their exploiters but he spared no efforts also to put up pretensions of being a patron of theirs as can be seen from his Government-sponsored labour-weeks, peasant-weeks etc.

Equally phoney were his reforms in the field of industrial relations. Though there was no shortage of radical slogans, there are no shortage of instances of police-firing of the workers also. He changed a stagnant bank-rate of 5 per cent to 10 per cent but injected heavy doses of money supply. As a result of this the profiteering private investors withdrew their finances from productive investment areas to real estate and forgot balancing and modernization necessary to compete effectively in the world market. Similarly, two series of labour reforms passed in 1972 and 1973 sought to give to the workers certain reliefs. The reforms sought to give to the workers their fundamental rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining. They also provided for greater security of service including representation in management. The labour reforms also conferred number of financial benefits such as worker's share in profits which was increased from 2.5 per cent to 5 per cent and the 2 per cent deduction from the wages of the workers under the social security scheme was transferred to the employers etc. Workers were given the right of participation in the management at the factory level. The National Industrial Relations Commission was empowered to deal with cases of unfair labour practices. All these measures no doubt relieved a great deal of distress which was the lot of the workers in the military state but the crucial weakness of these reforms lay in the fact that the

weaker sections of the society were more patronized and in return for these relief measures, the government co-opted them into the power-structure. Such an attitude not only broke the backbone of the Trade Unions who never received a better deal earlier and precisely for these reasons also pushed labour costs of the production in an economy where more benefits to the workers were not followed up by corresponding increases in productivity. Thus though the total membership of the trade unions in 1976 doubled over the 1951 level, the number of trade unions by count went up by 23 times over this period (implying a massive sabotage of the political organisation of the Unions). Not surprisingly therefore, when the workers joined together across their organisations and stopped the working of the economy, Mr. Bhutto preferred to consult the orthodox Islamic leader Maulana Maudoodi and brought in the Martial Law on April 16, 1977 rather than concede the demands of the agitating workers. Bhutto's pretensions for the workers only added to the operating costs of the economy which rose by 73.62 per cent between 1973 and 1977. Setting up of dummy radical fronts did not spare the poor peasants in the Punjab, Frontier and Baluchistan. Such patronizing incentives on the part of the Government were good sops of radicalism but expectedly was not to work. Neither fixing of minimum prices for cotton crop nor stable and guaranteed return to the growers produced desired results.

When he failed in government-sponsored radicalisation, Mr. Bhutto returned to the ever-persisting thesis of encouraging private investors whose stronghold on the economy through various regimes presented the principal contradiction of state-building to all the rulers in Pakistan.

From the point of view of the growth strategies, there are two principal variants within the same capitalist growth model: the technocratic and the reformist. The technocratic approach emphasizes on the technological modernization leading 'to increase in the growth in GNP. This approach, as a part of the demands of the imperialist accumulation, ruled most of the Third World countries and stands discredited today after the bitter experience of 'growth

at all costs'. This was the central philosophy of first Development Decade of the UN of the sixties and Pakistan which was hailed as the "success model" of this growth strategy ended up in its own disintegration with the passage of the decade. This discredited growth strategy came to be replaced by the reformist alternative which believed that the system can still be made to work if equitable distribution is built into an essentially growth model. In Pakistan, if Ayub succeeded in adopting the technocratic approach, at the gravest cost of the nation, Mr. Bhutto only confirmed that a reformist alternative is not possible. In a predominantly acquisitive model, Mr. Bhutto tried to place equity before growth, and could have neither. With the increasing cost-push inflation hitting hard on the consumers who increasingly became restive and rose in revolt against a repressive regime, he perforce returned to those whom Ayub and his predecessors crowned with a vast panoply of facilities from the State. Between them Ayub and Bhutto underlined the central contradiction of supporting a corporate state and reforming its (through legislation) agents, between the essence of corporatism and the pretensions of populism. Needless to say, they serve a signal lesson to the rulers in the most of the Third World countries who do not have the classical conditions of capitalist accumulation (such as fragility, innovativeness, access to home market etc.), while under the pressure of neo-colonialism find no other alternative but to shuttle between one alternative or another within the same central paradigm of the capitalist growth strategy.

The essence of the political economy of the state of Pakistan therefore lay in the state's role in providing profit-making facilities to the private investors whether in industry or in agriculture at the cost of either the tax-payer's money or the foreign finance which has made this state its most dependable client. While the middle classes are soft-cushioned in Pakistan which has one of the lowest tax-levying records in the world, the most commonly expressed slogans like 'self-reliant growth', 'self-sufficiency in food', etc., are even uncommon in the plan documents of the State of Pakistan. Such policies have given rise to a breed of pampered "com-

prador" capitalists who are not only irresponsible in generation of national wealth but have developed political links and cultivated forces among the military to sustain themselves. That is how 0.5 per cent of the people, the immigrant Muslim minorities from all sects of Islam have come to acquire more than 50 per cent of the country's total industrial assets. The phobia of Indian attack immensely enhanced the importance of army in Pakistan so much so that after Nazimuddin's dismissal (April 1953), the final word in matters of every governmental decision lay with those who had the indirect or direct support of the army. Bhutto who owed his office to the people, tried to disturb this combination of industrialists and civil and military bureaucracy but he soon came to grief. Though ridden with internal contradictions, the collusion among the private appropriators in agriculture and industry continued to claim larger chunks of the national cake. Bhutto who never had it on the agenda to disturb well-entrenched structures only succeeded in distorting the system and committed large financial allocations to services sector, thus benefiting the middle class professionals who in any case were never so heavily taxed before. Thus, while the rich trader merchant groups, rich farmers and the middle class professionals benefited from the dispensations of the state during 1947-77, they had it at the expense of the poor both rural and urban. As can be seen from the following table, even the state's responsibility to meet the welfare demands of the people has not changed much over the years:

*Percentage of Public Expenditure
(allocations only)*

Sectors	I Plan	II Plan	III Plan	IV Plan ¹
Production Programmes ²	28.8	19.9	22.0	24.0
Physical Infrastructure ³	53.5	59.0	57.0	49.0
Social Services ⁴	17.7	21.0	21.0	27.0

1. 4th Plan (1970-75) was finally shelved.

2. Includes agriculture, industry, fuels and minerals.

3. Includes water, power, transport and communications.

4. Includes education, health, housing, rural development, social welfare, family planning and man-power.

A general profile that emerges from the above table indicates loss of commitment on the part of the state to production activities and more to building infra-structure. The social welfare facilities continue to be almost stagnant upto Third plan and with Mr. Bhutto's approach of placing 'equity' over 'growth', it acquires greater commitment from the state. But given the trend of state provision of social welfare facilities in the Third World countries, a very substantial part of this allocation is sunk into urban areas implying little contribution to the predominant majority living in the country-side. But in doing that also, social welfare facilities have not committed the state to radically ameliorate to distress conditions which the ever-growing people of Pakistan suffered from.

If the state has not taken on itself the responsibility of building a heavy industrial base (as a matter of fact the PIDC which was created in 1950, by the government to develop heavy industries in the country and sold industrial enterprises worth \$ 170 million of capital investment to the private capitalists in 1960), it has done so under a positive bias to promote private enterprise—persistence of this trend did not spare Bhutto also.

A study of various tax concessions given to private investment shows a particular helplessness on the part of the state to withdraw these benefits even for best of economic reasons. During the pre-Plan period such concessions were granted by exempting from taxation, upto 5 per cent of the capital employed even while the sterling devaluation had already made it less expensive to set up an industry. The other important concessions included exemption from income tax in respect of amounts invested in heavy private industrial undertakings. During the first Plan period, the landlord-politicians sought to tax the corporate sector but massive tax evasion resulted. One year after the overthrow of the civilian government, in 1959, Ayub granted Tax Holiday in order to encourage, industrial investment in the backward areas. Demands of the coming Presidential Elections forced the pragmatist Ayub to favour the landlords and generate resources at home for which he changed the Government's fiscal policy. On the

recommendations of the Taxation Enquiry Commission he made the following changes in 1963: Capital Gains Tax was revived; wealth and gift tax was levied.

But the government soon realised the importance of these industrialists as the stock market fell sharply and therefore the government sanctioned the following concessions in 1965 in the beginning of the third plan and after the Presidential elections were over: compulsory distribution of dividends by private companies was held in abeyance, wealth tax on shares of companies was withdrawn till commercial production begins, etc. etc.

But after Ayub, there followed a series of corrective remedial steps to bring these profiteering industrialists in line. The prospective budget introduced in 1968 was done away with and in 1971, retrospective budgeting was introduced resulting in heavy tax liabilities on the corporate sector. To balance the budget the Tax Holiday Companies were asked to pay tax on their exempted profits realised earlier. By the Finance Ordinance of 1972, the levy of inter-corporate tax which was introduced in 1959 and which also encouraged formation of various investment and finance companies was done away with. The levy of heavy corporate tax along with individual tax hit these private industrialists very hard. But soon Bhutto also realised the insurmountable difficulty inherent in such measures. So, as the days passed, Bhutto also started giving concessions to the capitalists from 1974 onwards. Thus the starting point for the highest marginal rate of income tax was raised from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1,00,000. Those very measures during the Ayub rule which Bhutto scorned were again revived: these included revival of Tax Holidays, abolition of Capital Gains Tax etc.

Even while introducing anti-corporate measures, Mr. Bhutto did not choose to disturb the burden of the direct taxes on these profiteers. Thus, starting from 1972-73 till 1976-77, one finds the percentage share of Direct Taxes in the Total Taxes continuously on decline from 18.5 per cent to 13.3 per cent. By implication, this meant wider tax burden on the common man. Even the operating companies did not believe in a fair return to their shareholders. It has been seen that

there is a rising tendency for poor profit distribution—companies declaring nothing or upto 5 per cent dividends increased from 46 per cent in 1973 to 60 per cent in 1977. Thus even after the relief in the (direct) tax burden, he found himself up against these private industrialists who created conditions for the loss of confidence in the corporate structure. While trying to reform private enterprise, he helped shatter the confidence in the corporate structure. This he did without preparing the toiling masses who were no less aggrieved. Mr. Bhutto through his various state policies succeeded only in splitting his own support-constituencies, i.e. the workers, the peasants and the students without raising any alternative. Waves of political repressions that the 'People's Government' unleashed would have been certainly welcome even to the by-now reformed private capitalists but the latter, in fact, threw their full weight behind the PNA agitation to dislodge him. In a desperate bid to forge an autonomous area of sustained political rule, Mr. Bhutto forgot the bitter past of a politically active military and forfeited the initiative which Pakistan's national history offered him in the wake of a near-total rout of the military domination in 1971 Bangladesh War. It was neither a freak nor just a fit of forgetfulness on the part of the People's Government. Early during his regime, Mr. Bhutto did not hesitate to order into action the trigger-happy armed forces who drove the rebel Baluchis and the Pathans into the mountains in 1979 when they rightfully fought against Mr. Bhutto's arbitrary dismissal of their popularly elected governments in both the provinces. Therein lay the central contradiction of state building in Pakistan for the ruling classes who through different regimes have succeeded in keeping the vast majority of the people away from the benefits of national growth.

IV

But it would not be just to conclude that the big capitalists, the landlords, and the middle class professionals were interlocked in an unhindered collusion among themselves to exploit the vast masses. What could have possibly flowered into fascism was rendered ineffective by the inner contradic-

tions of these ruling classes as well as intra-contradictions of particular classes in the league. This has been possible for two inter-related reasons: (1) Except for the landlords, the other two classes never developed their "legs of mass base", howsoever spurious, while the landlords could seldom claim the dividends due to them as the very same class contradictions rendered general elections a near impossible thing in Pakistan. In other words, the landlords were also no less opposed to mass participation in the national decision-making. (2) Consequently, particular interests are realised and accommodated less and less within the social process and are mediated more and more by the state. In such a situation, the state (and not the civil society) which actually becomes the forum of class struggle and class relations. Some of the important indicators of the political behaviour of this state can briefly be re-capitulated:

- (1) The State of Pakistan was created more through subjective mediation of the colonialists than through objective realisation of the masses.
- (2) The 'vice-regal disdain' of the founding-father of Pakistan who was also the first administrative head is clearly reflected in his frequent dismissals of provincial chief ministers and ministers.
- (3) Rash bureaucratic behaviour of subsequent governor-generals who not only dissolved the Constituent Assembly but the central cabinet twice (Nazimuddin and Suhrawardy) not to speak of their irresponsible conduct to the elected ministries.
- (4) While a much-awaited opportunity of civilian politics was presented by the 1956 Constitution, the party floated by the last Governor-General (Mirza) chose to destabilise both the coalition governments of which it was a partner, till it became the dominant partner in the third and the last civilian government which was overthrown by Gen. Ayub. It is a characteristic reflection of ongoing statist authoritarianism that this Prime Minister, Mr. Feroze Khan Noon openly declared his government as one of landlords and not of the city-dwellers.

- (5) Military directly captured state power in 1958, ever since Nazimuddin's dismissal from the Centre (1953), the army was always taken into consultation on every civil affair, this process culminating in induction of two army officers (Ayub and Mirza) into the second cabinet of Mohammad Ali (Bogra) who not only 'recommended' dissolution of the Constituent Assembly but came to form the ministry immediately thereafter.
- (6) Above all, there were seven prime ministers who changed power during the first decade of civilian statist rule, the last three during the last two years of constitutional operation. Political opposition to the ruling Muslim League was declared a 'treason'. Like well-oiled machines, cabinets changed through self-nomination of the powerful i.e. those who had the nearest access to the highest authorities and were therefore never responsible to the legislature. From Liaquat's PRODA through Ayub's EBDO to Zia's Disqualification Tribunals is a continuous chain of authoritarian links which never permitted any political opposition to emerge in any form whatsoever. In sum, the State of Pakistan was so towering in its dealings with the citizens that problems of survival and betterment on the part of the latter centrally focussed on the state activities and its political behaviour.

Reverting back to the main theme of our discussion, it can now be pointed out that the pre-eminence of these assertive trends of statist authoritarianism presented state, a secondary contradiction, as the central contradiction of the Pakistani society. Thus, class contradiction came to be warped by the national contradiction and correspondingly, the objective opposites of such statist authoritarianism were also governed by such objectivities which are yet to sublimate into class categories. In other words, national political opposition in Pakistan is being conducted at different levels by regional, national, linguistic, ethnic, student and women

groups. It is only logical to argue at this level of analysis that the working-class though without the needed dynamics of material progress are historically playing their vanguard role in guiding these rebel groups. It also explains why the communist movement has all along been so backward and also why the Communist Party in Pakistan was banned for full 20 years of its total 30 years of national existence. Also, no political party in Pakistan can claim the credit of ever having a nation-wide base. This formidable democratic instrument of political mobilisation has been decimated or dis-oriented. Political parties in Pakistan are either banned or splintered—a phenomenon which the ruling classes in Pakistan without having any alliance whatsoever with the common people, have deliberately encouraged. It also points to an important aspect of the socio-political reality in Pakistan viz., the political suffering and organised resistance have been pitched at the level of the nation.

This is where some credit is due to Mr. Bhutto's People's Government. From the point of view of class analysis, PPP's laudable task lay in its various efforts to push the realisation of the central contradiction of Pakistan to where it ought to have been realised, viz., in the realms of the civil society. "All powers to the People" was one of the official slogans of his regime. He was under the imperative need of this field of class struggle and class relations particularly because he came to power against a traumatic background of the nation's disintegration. He understood the problem correctly but devised inadequate methods which were soon overtaken by the same problems with added distortions and dangers to the people of Pakistan. While the manifesto of the PPP was revolutionary in its promises and programmes the government wedded to it turned out reformist at best and repressive at the worst.

Both these facets of the PPP regime are rather complementary; they represented the dialectics of reform versus repression which characterise such governments of social democracy. The inadequacy of his methods lay in the excessive use of state power which was confused for People's power. Thus, while the ranks of the poor were swelling as

usual due to massive inflation and the associated problems, Bhutto's state policies were only directed towards reforming the upper strata of the society—a point of view born out of a conception of reforming the state apparatuses and the embodied class relations, so as to consolidate and check from further disintegration whatever remained of Pakistan.

Such efforts at structural modification backfired at Bhutto principally for two reasons: (1) the conditions and the predicates of the state structure within which he was operating was too heavy to permit any modification at its own level, however sincere the intentions behind such modification might appear; and (2) as argued above, organised people's power which ought to have been accorded topmost priority for the programmes he envisaged in the Manifesto, was relegated, of necessity, to the background. Thus the state power which was used to disorient articulation of class interests was also put into excessive misuse to contain dissidence. In the process, the worst casualty was suffered by a party which shared the same radical posture but not willing to compromise: the National Awami Party which was banned by Bhutto in 1975 and its entire leadership thrown behind bars.

Riding on crest of mass militancy, Mr. Bhutto came to power but did little to correctly direct it towards social fulfilment. On the contrary, the militant workers and students were visited with bullets and bayonets under a new fangled perception of the problem of Pakistan viz., time has come to turn the table against the entrenched authority structures who received a raw deal during Bangladesh war. For this, he introduced state repression to silence the voice of militancy and dissidence and also to create new power blocs to replace the discredited ones in order to enhance the relative autonomy of state and create and fortify his own apparatus of continued political stay. Thus, statism came to stay but now in a different form. Owing to nationalization measures, the pattern of capital formation in the industrial sector radically changed in favour of the public sector, which indicates that the private industrialists were put under shackles. Vigorous measures for modernization of agriculture were introduced to attack the semi-feudal (absentee) landlords (though not

true for all of them) and create a powerful bloc of agricultural capitalists. During his period, loans from banks for tractors, tubewells and other inputs have registered a rise of 4 to 6 times of the 1970-71 level. Thus, while all of Pakistan had a total of 16,500 tractors in 1968, West Pakistan alone was importing 17,000 tractors in 1976-77. Similar developments in mechanisation of agriculture can also be seen in other areas of agricultural activities.

Mr. Bhutto also sought to radicalise and thus divide the petit-bourgeois strata through taking away much of the communal string from Islam. Under Islamic socialism, the purpose of Islam was served through fanning it out to foreign connections (e.g. West Asia) and provision of legislative sanctions (e.g., Islam is declared the state religion) or casual and desultory battles for sheer political gains (e.g. declaring Ahmadiyyas a non-Muslim minority sect). Otherwise, the general thrust of Islamic socialism lay in making it a sublime faith than a creed of life, as the fanatic orthodoxy have all along been insisted upon. Thus he created a support base of new agricultural capitalists and a radical stratum of petit-bourgeoisie while alienating the semi-feudal landlords and the religious fanatics. Through various state measures, he reformed in many ways both the military and civil bureaucracy. It is the logic of such structural reforms that Mr. Bhutto became a party to creation of a band of 'over zealous bureaucrats' (whom he accused afterwards for rigging the 1977 elections) and disaffected soldiers, one of whom he raised to the supreme office only to be overthrown by him. These are not wrong decisions of an individual or a group of them; they are inevitably the product of a system of decision-making which was not based on any form of collective organisation—whether of the party i.e. the PPP or the people in general. This made statist repression an imperative necessity for such a scheme of statist reforms. The ruling classes which were in disarray and which therefore became vulnerable for attack from the people's government of Mr. Bhutto finally ganged up together against the latter who had a fundamental distrust of the people. To repeat that illustrative point, during the PNA agitation when the workers stopped the economy to a grinding halt,

Mr. Bhutto chose to consult the leader of Islamic Orthodoxy and bring the Martial Rule rather than concede to the demands of the agitating workers. That is how authoritarian statism has come 'full circle', and there began another highly repressive regime of Gen. Zia seeking legitimacy through ritual oriented Islam. Zia's Islam is far more restorative and regressive than Bhutto's in the last phase of his rule. Thus Islam too came full circle from 'revolution' to restoration.

IMPACT OF MARXIST THOUGHT ON INDIAN MUSLIMS

M. Farooqi

I

Some reactionary groups among Indian Muslims, Jamaat-i-Islami being foremost among them, assert that in contemporary world politics Islam and Communism (Marxism) are in a state of permanent confrontation and that therefore the two cannot co-exist. The logic is stretched to the ridiculous extent of declaring that a Marxist cannot be a Muslim and vice-versa. They even use a religious terminology, *Ihad*, to denounce Marxism and Marxists. If they had their way they would excommunicate the Muslim Marxists in the manner of the clergy of the medieval Europe, to be consigned to hell!

However, the issue is not religious, it is essentially political. Reactionary groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami are in fact conducting their political battle against Communism (Marxism) wearing a religious mask. The attempt on their part is to draw the Indian Muslims away from the secular, democratic and progressive movements of this country as well as similar movements in other parts of the world, in order to defend the status quo of an immoral society based on naked exploitation of the vast majority of our people (including of course the Muslims) by a small minority of capitalists and landlords, and to immobilise the Indian Muslims in the world-wide struggle against the dark forces of imperialism, headed by the U.S.

The myth of so-called confrontation between Islam and Marxism is being exploded in actual life, in the course of

sharpening of socio-economic and political struggle in our country as in other parts of the world. It was Communistled government (Kerala, 1957-1959) that restored the grants to Arabic-teaching Islamic *madarsas*, earlier withdrawn by a Congress government. Again it was the united front government of Kerala led by a Communist which fixed a quota in jobs for Muslims in the State government services. And Muslim organisations feel quite happy to work with Communists in the united front government of that State. They have discovered no threat to Islam by working with Communists in the same government.

While the so-called champions of Islam and Muslims, the Jamaat-i-Islami, hobnob with the vicious RSS which advocates *Hindu rashtra* as its ideological foundation, and foments communal riots against Muslims, it is the Communists with their ideology of Marxism-Leninism who make no compromise with the RSS, expose and fight its disruptive theories and activities and defend the Muslim minority against its depredations.

In the large Islamic world those who are actively engaged in the struggle for independence, or to preserve it, find no confrontation with Marxism or with the first country of victorious Marxism, i.e. Soviet Union, but only with the U.S. imperialism. At present the most crucial struggle in the Islamic world is ragging around the issue of Palestine, including Islam's holy city of Jerusalem. The head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Yasser Arafat, repeatedly declares that the Soviet Union is the most consistent and genuine friend of the Palestinian people's struggle for their independent national state. The Islamic leadership of the Iranian revolution stress that the U.S. imperialism is the great satan. It is the Soviet arms that help Gaddafi defend his Islamic socialist revolution against the U.S. designs to destroy it. The Democratic Yemen is reconstructing a new society free from capitalist and feudal exploitation, inspired by the Marxist thought. The theory of Scientific Socialism is their guide.

There are of course some regimes in the Islamic world that seek to perpetuate cruel socio-economic inequalities existing

in their countries, despite the well established principle of equality (*musawat*) in Islam. But they do not represent the future in the Islamic world but a past which is foredoomed to failure and extinction.

One cannot but mention the fact that there are large Muslim populations in the Soviet Union whose lives have been completely transformed during the last more than 60 years of the Socialist Revolution. The Muslims of Soviet Central Asia have made a truly historical jump from feudalism (with all its miseries and backwardness) to socialism, by-passing capitalism. They have built modern industries and modern technical and educational institutions. There are jobs for all, free education and free medical services. No body sleeps on the pavement and there are no beggars (unlike in our own country) to disturb worshippers and scholars going to mosques and *madarsas*.

The Islamic principle of *musawat* (equality) has become a reality in the lives of Muslim populations of the Soviet Union who rightly believe that without socialism such a transformation could not have been possible. They have found no confrontation between Islam, which is their religious belief, and Marxism-Leninism, which is the ideology of their state.

II

It needs to be stressed that the preachings of the reactionary Muslim groups to which we have referred above do not at all reflect the rich traditions inherited from the national movement for independence in which the Indian Muslims themselves participated. On the contrary, the Jamaat's ideology is the complete negation of that past. Many of those who had actively participated in India's independence struggle were profoundly influenced by Marxian Socialism and the Soviet revolution. This applies equally to Muslims. In fact in a way and in a particular period the influence of this ideology on the thinking sections of Indian Muslims was deeper than on other strata of Indian society.

While discussing the question of impact of Marxist thought on Indian Muslims we have to fix up a time-frame. We have

naturally to begin with the great October Socialist Revolution of Russia (1917), which changed the entire course of human history and for the first time gave birth to a society free from exploitation of man by man. Marx and after him Lenin (who creatively developed the Marxist thought in the period of imperialism) were the torch-bearers of this great revolution.

Among the first policy declarations made by the Soviet government was one addressed to the "Muslim toilers of Russia and the East" and signed by Lenin himself, in December, 1917. The declaration assured the Muslims of full freedom of religious belief and worship and the right to manage their national affairs unhindered.

It stated:

"Comrades! Brothers!

"Great events are occurring in Russia. The bloody war which was launched for the purpose of dividing up foreign countries is drawing to a close. The rule of the pirates who have enslaved the peoples of the world is tottering. Under the hammer blows of the Russian revolution, the ancient edifice of bondage and slavery is being shattered. The world of tyranny and oppression is living its last days. A new world is being born, a world of the working people and of those who are being emancipated. At the head of this revolution marches the workers' and peasants' government of Russia, the Council of People's Commissars

"The reign of capitalist plunder and violence is crumbling. The soil is burning under the feet of the imperialist robbers.

"In the midst of these great events we address ourselves to you, toiling and dispossessed Mohammedans of Russia and the East.

"Mohammedans of Russia, Tatars of the Volga and the Crimea, Kirghiz and Sarts of Siberia and Turkestan, Turks and Tatars of Transcaucasia, Chechens and Gortsi of the Caucasus, all those whose mosques and prayer-houses were destroyed and whose religion and customs were trampled upon by the Russian Tsars and tyrants!

Henceforth, your faith and customs, your national and cultural institutions, are proclaimed free and inviolable. Build

up your national life freely and unhindered. This is your right. Be it known to you that your rights, like the rights of all the nationalities of Russia, are protected by the full might of the Revolution and of its organs, the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.

“Support this Revolution and its authorised Government”.

The British imperialist rulers of India were greatly alarmed about the likely impact of Lenin's Declaration on the minds of Indian Muslims. In a telegram to the Viceroy, on December 7, 1917, the British Secretary of State for India said: “We have held up highly inflammatory proclamation by Bolsheviki addressed to all labouring classes of Muslims of Russia and the East transmitted by Russian government wireless. It should be suppressed for as long as possible”.

The Soviet government also annulled the unequal treaties with Turkey and Iran that had been imposed by the Czarist government. Lenin's declaration and the Soviet government's steps regarding unequal treaties had wide repercussions all over the Muslim world.

How did the Indian Muslims and the politically active among them react to this great event in history, the Socialist Revolution of 1917?

The period immediately following the end of the First World War (1914-1918) is characterised by great anti-imperialist ferment in the Islamic world, particularly affecting Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Egypt and some other Arab countries. The Indian Muslims were particularly agitated over the seizure of Muslim lands by the British and other imperialists. The British and other imperialists took full advantage of the defeat in the war of the Turkish Sultan (who was also the Khalifa) to dismember the Ottoman empire and redivide it among themselves. Palestine and Syria came under the British and French domination, under the so-called mandate.

The Khilafat agitation in India, though outwardly religious (i.e. for the preservation of the *Khilafat*), developed into a mighty mass upsurge of the Indian Muslims against British imperialism and subsequently merged with the great civil-disobedience movement launched by Gandhiji to win Swaraj (1919-1922). That period indeed was the high watermark

of Hindu-Muslim unity in our country.

It is in such times, in times of great mass stirrings, that people begin to search for new ideas to realise their aims and to attain victory in their struggle. The Indian Muslims who had been swept into mass action in a big way (over the Khilafat issue to start with) were also drawn in such a thought process and many of their representatives were gradually attracted to the ideas of the October Socialist Revolution and to the Soviet Union. And this process was not short-lived.

In the course of the mass anti-imperialist upsurge to which we have referred to above, some time in the second quarter of 1920, thousands of Indian Muslims (36,000 according to some authorities and 20,000 according to British records) migrated from India to Afghanistan to collect arms and prepare for a holy war (*jihad*) against British imperialism. This is the famous *hijrat* movement of those days, which was organised by a militant group of Muslims that came up during the Khilafat agitation. Even some Hindu youths joined the migration with the idea of crossing into the Soviet Union via Afghanistan.

It seems King Amanullah (of Afghanistan) had held out promise to help the *muhajareen* (migrants) with arms for carrying out the *jihad* against the British. This however did not materialise. Therefore, many among the *muhajareen* decided to proceed to the Soviet Union about whose revolution they had already heard so much. But the Afghan authorities would not permit them to go. Ultimately, about 80 people managed to cross into the Soviet Union to see and to participate in the revolution that was then on in Bokhara against the Amir. During their stay in the Soviet Union these Muslim revolutionary groups acquired Marxist education. Subsequently, they returned to India with new revolutionary ideas participated in the freedom struggle and imparted a new, revolutionary orientation to it.

On their return to India most of them were arrested by the British and implicated in conspiracy cases and tried in Peshawar (now in Pakistan), in what are known as the Peshawar Conspiracy Cases, between 1922-24. (The British called them

Moscow and Tashkent Conspiracy Cases). In the first case the main accused was Akbar Khan and in the subsequent case Abdulmajid, Ferozuddin Mansoor, Habib Ahmad, Rafiq Ahmad, Sultan Khan, Gohar Rahman Khan and Mian Akbar Shah Khattak. They were of course sentenced to long terms of rigorous imprisonment.

Another well known returnee was Shaukat Usmani who was later implicated in the Kanpur Communist Conspiracy Case (1924) as well as in the Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929).

It may be mentioned that Ferozuddin Mansoor became an important leader of the CPI in the pre-partition Punjab and after partition (1947) of the Communist Party of Pakistan. He conducted intense ideological battle against the politics of Jamaat-i-Islami and its patriarch, Moulana Abul Ala Moudoodi and wrote a number of books and pamphlets exposing the Jamaat's reactionary policies. He died in early fifties.

III

We need to mention here about three remarkable Muslim personalities of Indian politics who started their political career as anti-imperialist fighters, but in the subsequent phase of their lives were attracted to the Soviet Union and to the ideas of the October Socialist Revolution in which they found fulfilment of their dreams. These are: Moulvi Barkatullah Bhopali, Moulana Obaidullah Sindhi and Moulana Hasrat Mohani. Incidentally all three were great scholars and deeply religious. Hasrat was, besides, a great Urdu poet.

Barkatullah Bhopali (1859-1927) who had left India at the end of the last century wandered from country to country (U.S.A., England, Japan, Germany, Turkey, etc.) in search of support from outside for the independence of his country. Barkatullah knew several languages—English, German, Japanese, Arabic, Persian, etc. besides his mother-tongue, Urdu. He finally arrived in Kabul and in 1915 alongwith Raja Mahendra Pratap set up the first provisional government of India with himself as the Prime Minister (and Raja Mahendra Pratap as its President).

In 1919 he visited V.I. Lenin in Moscow as a represen-

tative of Amir Amanullah Khan, King of Afghanistan, to seek assistance in the struggle of the Afghans against British imperialism.

Barkatullah was highly impressed by Lenin and his ideas, and how the October Revolution of Russia had emancipated man from exploitation. During his stay in the Soviet Union he travelled to a number of places to see things for himself. He gave several interviews to Soviet newspapers on his impressions.

On 24 May 1919, he told the *Izvestia*: "The well known appeal of Russia's Soviet government to all nations to fight against capitalism . . . made a huge impact. We were even more impressed by Russia's annulment of all secret treaties foisted upon the country by the imperialist governments and by the proclamation of the free self-determination of peoples regardless of their size".

Earlier talking to another Soviet Newspaper he had said: "The Bolshevik ideas have already taken root among the Indian masses, and a tiny spark of active propaganda will be sufficient to kindle a vast revolutionary conflagration throughout Central Asia".

In another interview he said: "The October Revolution in Russia in 1917 put Comrade Lenin in the centre of the world arena, and he more than played his role".

Further, "It is possible to eliminate injustice, poverty and war from the world only by basically changing the foundations of the society itself. As the sun, the air and the rain are the common possession of living beings, the other things of necessity and luxury should be the collective property of the whole people.

"And under the present conditions this objective can be achieved only through the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin and his comrades . . . established in Russia a government of those who create and protect all the national wealth. In the face of such formidable problems all the old prescriptions to lessen human sufferings and to remove social evils have failed. The people fighting for their freedom will hardly find a better road to achieve their aim . . . Lenin is the man by whose name our time will be known and who is

head and shoulders above the heroes of the past”.

Subsequently, in 1919, while in Tashkent he wrote a book called *Bolshevism and Islamic Body Politic* in which he made a passionate appeal to the Muslims to follow “brother Lenin”. Originally written in English, the book was translated into several languages, including Arabic, Persian and Urdu and became well-known in several Asian countries.

In his book Barkatullah pointed out that the hopes of ancient philosophers for a just society were “introduced into the field of reality by Lenin . . . administration of the extensive territories of Russia and Turkestan has been placed in the hands of labourers, cultivators and soldiers. Distinction of race, religion and class has disappeared . . .”.

He appealed (in the book) to the Muslims and others: “. . . Time has come for the Mohammedans of the world and the Asiatic nations to understand the noble principles of Russian socialism . . . in defence of the true freedom they should join the Bolshevik troops in repulsing attacks of usurpers and despots, the British. O, Mohammedans! . . . respond to this call of liberty, equality of brotherhood, which brother Lenin and the Soviet government of Russia are offering to you”.

The book reached India despite British attempts to prevent its entry. The British imperialist administration in India was quite worried over it. A. Cater, Deputy Secretary, government of India wrote in a note that “*Bolshevism and Islamic Body Politic* is a pamphlet of a very dangerous nature. I am to request you that special precautions may be taken to intercept and prevent copies of it finding their way into India via Chaman or Duzdup”. (Quoted by Dr. L.V. Mitrokhin in his book *Lenin in India*, 1981).

Moulvi Barkatullah died in the U.S.A. in 1927.

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The other personality, Moulana Obaidullah Sindhi, was a disciple of the great Muslim theologian and freedom fighter, Sheikh Ul Hind Moulana Mahmudul Hassan. Obaidullah had graduated from the famous Arabic University of Deoband (U.P.). During the First World War he escaped to Kabul to organise the fight against British Imperialism.

In 1915, as stated earlier, a provisional government of India had been set up in Kabul. Moulana Obaidullah Sindhi was its Home Minister. The Great October Revolution aroused his keen interest and in 1922 he went to Tashkent, along with a group of his fellow freedom fighters, and later to Moscow. From there he proceeded to Turkey where a revolution had taken place under Kemal Pasha.

Inspired by the Soviet Constitution which guaranteed complete equality for all its nationalities, Moulana Obaidullah, while in Stambul (Turkey) published his famous pamphlet in English, *The Constitution of the Federated Republic of India* (1926). In his pamphlet the Moulana worked out a solution appropriate to the multi-national character of our country and formulated his ideas of independent India's constitution based on it. Jawahar Lal Nehru in his *Autobiography* has commented that Obaidullah's concept of independent India's Constitution was an attempt to solve the communal problem.

What is significant about the solution is that the Moulana is not satisfied with formal democracy; he wants to impart to democracy a real content. He emphasises:

“We shall, after rooting out capitalist exploitation from the soil of India, establish in our country an order in which the interests of the toiling classes of society, that is the majority of our people, are properly safeguarded and which order is controlled by those classes”.

Obviously, Obaidullah Sindhi was greatly influenced by the Soviet experiment of toilers' democracy. He mentions in his pamphlet that while in Moscow he and his group of 9 (which he calls his Committee) had opportunities to study the Russian language and the Soviet experiment.

Later, in an interview the Moulana said:

“We received opportunities of meeting big Russian leaders. Some members of our Committee went to other countries of Europe to study the impact of the Russian Revolution on those countries. India did not take lessons from the French Revolution and thus failed to comprehend its significance. We do not want that our country remains blind any more to the international significance of this happening, that is the Russian Revolution, and thereby sign her own

death warrant”.

Obaidullah returned to India on March 9, 1939, after 24 years of exile, and settled down in Karachi. He died on August 20, 1944. He has published several books in Urdu, on the philosophy and political ideas of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and on revolution.

* * *

Moulana Hasrat Mohani was a foremost leader of our freedom struggle and a great Urdu poet. He was attracted to the anti-imperialist movement in his early days as a student in Aligarh Muslim University and remained a consistent anti-imperialist until the end of his life. (He died on May 13, 1951.)

The ideas of the Socialist Revolution of 1917 profoundly influenced him. He was attracted to socialist ideology. In 1925, when the Communist Party of India was founded (foundation conference took place in Kanpur), Moulana Hasrat was the chairman of its reception committee.

Earlier, in 1922, at the Ahmedabad session of the Indian National Congress, he had moved a resolution demanding complete independence as the goal of the Congress, something which the dominant leadership of the Congress under Gandhiji was not prepared to accept till then. (It is at the Lahore session of the Congress in 1929, presided over by Jawahar Lal Nehru, that the Congress ultimately accepted this goal. Although, in 1927 the Madras session of the Congress had also adopted a resolution to that effect, but it was kept in abeyance.)

The Communist groups that were being formed in some parts of the country in the early years of the twenties were influencing the thinking of some sections of the freedom-fighters, Moulana Hasrat being one of them. The Communists were the first to demand complete independence as the goal of the Congress. Moulana Hasrat moved his resolution in the Ahmedabad session of the Congress (mentioned above) under the impact of the Marxist influence on his political thinking.

In his address as Chairman of the reception committee (of the foundation Conference of the CPI) Moulana Hasrat

explained that the programme of the Party is to establish complete independence or Swaraj and "after the establishment of the Swaraj to see that it takes the form of the Soviet Republic on which all principles of communism will come into force. Before the establishment of Swaraj . . . to arrange for the propagation of the principles of communism and create popular opinion in their favour, so that they may be acted upon the moment Swaraj is established".

In another part of his address, dispelling doubts about Communism he said:

"Some evilly-disposed persons incriminate communism as necessarily an anti-religious movement. The fact however is that in matters of religion we allow the largest possible latitude and toleration. Whoever accepts our principles will be accepted in our party, whether he is a Mohammedan, a Hindu, a Christian, a Buddhist or anybody with or without any religion. In other words we recognise the existence of all religions and consider no-religion also as a religion. Some of our Muslim leaders baselessly represent communism as against Islam. The fact however is quite different."

Then he talks of Islam's strong opposition to capitalism and why usury is against principles of Islam as well of communism because, as he puts it, ". . . the usurer profits by his capital alone without doing any actual work". (Indian Annual Register, 1925, Vol. 2, pp. 367-71)

In later years the Moulana had joined the Muslim League, in the hope of converting the Muslim leaguers to his point of view, i.e. to socialism. After the partition in 1947 he stayed back in India and participated in the work of the Indian Constituent Assembly. He pleaded there that in drawing up of free India's Constitution, the Soviet model should be kept in mind. His idea was that our country's Constitution should be directed against capitalism and take into account the multi-national character of our country. In fact he proposed an amendment that India should be a Socialist Republic.

As mentioned earlier the Moulana was also a renowned Urdu poet. The theme of his poetry was not only love. He also composed poetry on the achievements of Soviet society.

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Barkatullah, Obaidullah and Hasrat Mohani were great scholars, firm anti-imperialists and deeply religious. But it is in the ideas of the Socialist Revolution that they found fulfilment of their dreams of a society free from exploitation. They firmly believed that the Soviet experiment was the way to translate Islam's principles of *musawat* (equality) and *akhawat* (fraternity).

It needs to be noted that these personalities did influence large sections of Muslims in the freedom struggle in the sense that they adopted a friendly attitude to the Soviet Union and the concept of socialism.

IV

Another group of people among the Muslims who were influenced in varying degrees by the Russian revolution, by the ideas of Marx and Lenin and the ideas of socialism were the poets, including the greatest among them like Iqbal, Qazi Nazrul Islam, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Josh Malihabadi and of course Hasrat Mohani.

Iqbal hailed the October Revolution as the rise of the New Sun (Aftab-e-Taza Paida Batn-e-Geti Se Hua, Asman Tooto Huay Taron Ka Matam Kab Talak : From the womb of the Earth a new sun is born ; How long will the sky bemoan the fallen stars?) He declared in another poem that the era of capitalism was doomed. He wrote almost affectionately and in reverence about Marx and Lenin. In a Persian couplet about Marx, Iqbal refers to Moses and Jesus and then talks of Marx: "He is not a prophet, but he carries the Book under his armpit". Here Iqbal's reference is to *Das Kapital*. As is known great prophets are men who brought the Book.

Iqbal composed his poem "Lenin Khuda ke Hazoor Men" (Lenin in the presence of God) and made a scathing indictment of the capitalist system of exploitation, of the misery of man under it, and how Lenin represented the revolt against this system and attempted to create a new society to emancipate man from his miserable condition of life.

It is not the contention of this writer that Iqbal accepted Marxism. The essential point is that he adopts a positive approach to the great event in history (i.e. the October

Socialist Revolution) and to the men who inspired it. And that is important.

The great Bengali poet, Qazi Nazrul Islam, was of course much more deeply moved by the socialist revolution. In one of his poems that he composed in December 1925, and published in LANGAL (in Bengali) he sings the praises of communism:

I sing the song of communism,
 For me there is nothing greater,
 Nothing nobler than man,
 Good days are coming
 Debts have piled up,
 And now it has to be repaid.

One of the comparatively less known Urdu poet of the time, but one who did exercise a certain influence on his generation of poets, was Aziz Lucknawi (Mirza Mohammad Hadi Aziz), who wrote a poem on the Russian revolution about two months after the event. He perhaps was the first among the Urdu poets to react to it. He wrote:

“Russia’s winds bear a message of awakening;
 If all parts unite the inner pain will be cured . . .
 Let us now see when we help Hindustan to be
 The courage and unity of the Russians is ample proof
 That if we too dare we too can achieve identity.
 If the soul has sensivity, O Aziz this phase of slavery
 will pass;
 There will be smoke only when the heart itself is burning”.

About Hasrat we have mentioned already. In his poems on the Russian revolution he would equate “Soviet” with “musawat” (The Islamic concept of equality).

The thirties was a period in which the anti-imperialist freedom movement of our country acquired new dimensions. The left wing with markedly socialist orientation, inspired by the achievements of socialism in the USSR, became a most powerful factor in this period. This is also the period of a new upsurge in Urdu poetry as well as in prose, progressive and markedly socialist. The formation of the Progressive

Writers' Association (PWA) with Sajjad Zaheer (a committed Marxist-Leninist) as its General Secretary gave a new push to this upsurge and channelled it into a movement of deep ideological commitment, commitment for the people and their just causes and for scientific socialism. The process continued into the forties and made a notable contribution to the onward development of our anti-imperialist freedom struggle.

In Urdu poetry as well as in prose this period of nearly two decades is dominated by Marxists and others friendly to the cause of socialism. The period produced a host of Muslim Marxist and pro-Communist poets and prose writers, including such well known poets as Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Josh Malihabadi, Makhdoom Mohiuddin, Majaz, Ali Sardar Jafri, Kaifi Azmi, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Sahir Ludhianvi, Ghulam Rabbani Toban, Niaz Haider, Jan Nisar Akhtar, Akhtar-ul-Iman, Wamiq Jaunpuri and many others.

This applies equally to prose writers, like Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, Ismet Chughtai, Dr. Rashid Jahan (Mrs.) and Razia Sajjad Zaheer among them.

Their style and content (i.e. socialist content) was followed by the overwhelming majority of Urdu poets and prose writers among the Muslims, a process that largely continues even today. And Urdu poetry particularly has had an all-India impact. Thus through the medium of poetry and prose large masses of Muslims were being drawn into a kind of anti-capitalist and some kind of socialist thinking.

Urdu journalism could not remain unaffected by the Marxist trend of Muslim poets and prose writers of the period. Many of them carried poems and writings by these progressive and Marxist writers.

The phenomenon of many Muslim writers getting attracted to Marxism was not confined to Urdu language alone. In Bengal where the impact of the Communist movement was considerable, a number of Muslim writers were being drawn into the Marxist stream. Ghulam Quddus, a Bengali novelist and poet, was the Secretary of the Bengal Progressive Writers' Association. He was at the same time an active Communist.

V

It is also characteristic of this period (i.e. of thirties and forties) that many members of educated Muslim middle class were attracted to Marxism and quite a number of them became active in the Communist movement. The organised students' movement, in the form of all-India Students' Federation attracted a large number of Muslim students who later became active in the Communist movement. Many of the poets and writers mentioned above were at the same time active workers in the Communist Party. Sajjad Zaheer who pioneered the progressive writers' movement was at the same time a well-known Communist leader. So was Makhdoom Mohiuddin who gave up a lecturer's job in a Hyderabad College to become active in the Communist movement. He even participated in the Telengana armed struggle against the Nizam's autocracy. Thus Makhdoom fought against oppression with pen as well as with sword—thus a combination of poet and soldier in him.

Particular mention should also be made of a renowned Marxist historian, Dr. K.M. Ashraf. He had done his doctorate in history in England and was attracted to Marxism. On his return to India he took up a job in Aligarh Muslim University, but gave it up later to become active in the freedom and Communist movements. Dr. Ashraf became a well-known name throughout the country. He was a great mass orator. Jawahar Lal Nehru drafted him into his Secretariat on becoming President of the Indian National Congress and made him in-charge of the Muslim mass contact knowing fully well that Ashraf was a confirmed communist. (In those days Communists were working in the Congress also.)

Dr. Z.A. Ahmed (now President of the All-India Kisan Sabha and a member of the leadership of the CPI) is another name in the same category. After his doctorate from the London School of Economics he returned to India to work in the freedom movement as a Communist. He also worked with Jawahar Lal Nehru in the Congress Secretariat.

It is of special interest to note that the Marxist thought and the Soviet experiment exercised considerable influence

on the course of development of the Kashmiri people's movement against feudal autocracy. A considerable section of the Kashmir National Conference leadership, G.M. Sadiq being foremost among them (he was later to become Chief Minister of the State of Jammu and Kashmir), turned Marxist, and deeply influenced the framing of the "Naya Kashmir" programme—including abolition of landlordism without compensation, free education for all, building of heavy industries in public sector, recognition of the role of the working class, etc.

After independence Jammu and Kashmir became the only state in the country to have abolished landlordism without compensation. It also made provision for free education. (Unfortunately, however, in subsequent years the "Naya Kashmir" programme got completely distorted.)

One of the strongholds of the Communist movement in India is Bengal. Among those who pioneered this movement in Bengal (in the twenties) were Muzaffar Ahmed, Abdul Halim and Abdul Razak Khan.

Similarly, in a number of provinces (called States after independence), including in the provinces now in Pakistan, many Muslim political workers who were active in the anti-imperialist freedom struggle were attracted to Marxism and some of them even to the Communist Party. Mirza Mohammad Ibrahim, an active Communist, became the legendary leader of the N.W. Railway workers. (The N.W.R. is now mostly in Pakistan—Punjab, Sindh and NWFP. Mirza Ibrahim continues in the Railway workers' movement of Pakistan as its pre-eminent leader, despite severe repression of the Zia military regime and old age. He is also in the top leadership of Kisan-Mazdoor Party of Pakistan, a Marxist-oriented political organisation.)

The peasant movements in Sindh and N.W.F.P. also had leaders who were Marxist-oriented or active Communists. Jalaluddin Bukhari was a famous Communist leader in the Hari (peasant) movement of Sindh.

Even a Congress stalwart like Mian Iftikharuddin (then a member of the Congress High Command and President of the

Congress in undivided Punjab) was a Marxist. Examples can be multiplied, but space does not permit.

* * *

In the forties, however, a new complication arose in the political life of the country which led to certain disorientation in the anti-Imperialist freedom movement. The Muslim League led movement for the formation of Pakistan gripped the minds of the Muslim masses. Large sections of the educated middle class among the Muslims were attracted to the concept of Pakistan. The political representatives of the rising Muslim bourgeoisie* and the Muslim landlords took hold of the leadership of the Muslim League and of the Pakistan movement.

This is not the place to elaborate on the reasons that led to the emergence of this phenomenon among large sections of the Muslims of undivided India. Suffice it to say that the failure of the dominant leadership of the national freedom movement (Gandhi and others) to project a radical socio-economic programme as the basis of unity of Hindu and Muslim masses was fully exploited by the British imperialist rulers of the country for accentuating Hindu-Muslim conflict. As the question of transfer of power came to the fore the problem became more acute.

The Communist Party did make an attempt to offer a Marxist-Leninist solution for maintaining the unity of India on the basis of recognition of the multi-national character of the country. It is not that the Communist proposals to this effect went unnoticed. In fact they began to be seriously discussed, even in the Muslim League circles. But it was already too late to prevent the partition of the country. It was a case of missed opportunities in our freedom movement.

However, when the Muslim masses were on the move on

*It is difficult to agree with the author about the leadership of the Muslim League being in the hands of rising bourgeoisie. The leadership was completely dominated by the feudal class. There was no industrial bourgeoisie among the Muslims then and the mercantile bourgeoisie was too weak to assert.—(editor)

a massive scale with their own particular idea of independence from imperialism through the establishment of Pakistan, it could not be that they had no thought of the economic content of their concept. Anti-capitalism was a powerful strand in their way of thinking, although they wrongly equated capitalism with the Hindu.

In the course of decades of political struggle for freedom so many Muslim thinkers and political workers (and leaders) had been attracted to Marxism and been influenced by it to a lesser or greater degree. In the thinking of the Muslims some kind of reconciliation was taking place between the Islamic concepts of *musawat* (equality) and *akhuwat* (fraternity) and real socialism that was being built in the Soviet Union and about which they were getting some information despite imperialist blockade. It would not be off the mark if one were to suggest that in the process the Indian Muslim mind was becoming anti-capitalist. (It needs to be remembered that most of the Muslims were a pauperised lot.)

The partition of the country in 1947 along communal lines was no doubt a great setback to the thought processes on both sides of the divided borders. Communal massacres on both sides and the movement of millions of refugees between India and Pakistan naturally distorted many positive developments that were taking place in the life of the two peoples.

But it would be wrong to assume that every good thing was lost for ever. The anti-capitalist heritage of undivided India did not become extinct in the mind of the Pakistani Muslim either. On the contrary, otherwise, how does one explain that Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party won the first ever general election in the history of that country (in 1969) on the slogan of "Roti, Kapra aur Makan"—Bread, Cloth and dwelling. And Bhutto called it socialism.

VI

As for the Indian Muslims after the partition, one of their main concerns during all these years has been how to protect themselves against the attacks of the organised forces of communalism spearheaded by the R.S.S. which advocates

the vicious concept of *Hindu rashtra* (i.e. India for Hindus, while Muslims and other minorities should be downgraded to the status of second class citizenship).

In the early years after partition the Muslims were dubbed by the communalists of the RSS type as “agents of Pakistan”, not loyal to the country and therefore not to be trusted in government jobs. This propaganda line, though not given up altogether, is not being pursued now with the virulence of the early years.

Though we have a secular constitution and all citizens under it are equal, in so far as their rights are concerned, it is a fact of life that *in practice* Muslims suffer from a certain discrimination in the matter of securing jobs, including in government and public sector services. Besides, members of the Muslim minority are frequently victims of communal violence in one place or the other.

All this has inevitably generated a minority complex in the Muslim community, even though in numbers it accounts for nearly 12 per cent of India’s nearly 680 million people. (More Muslims live in India than in Pakistan). The fear or minority complex is fully exploited by reactionary Muslim organisations, the Jamaat-e-Islami in the first place, to deflect attention of the Muslim from progressive movements of all kinds—left, democratic and secular.

In this situation the main task of the Communists has been to mobilise secular and democratic forces in various political parties for protection of the Muslim minority and of their rights and defence of the secular-democratic set up of the country. Creating a secular-democratic atmosphere in the country has become essential pre-condition for the Muslims to get out of their present complex and to think of many other things.

It needs to be emphasised that despite their virulent propaganda against communists and Marxism, the Jamaat-e-Islami has not succeeded in making the Muslims hostile to Communist ideas. In fact there is lot of goodwill for Communists among the Muslims because of the struggle that they carry on for their rights. This also accounts for the virulence of the Jamaat-e-Islami which is seriously worried

by the growing attraction of the idea of socialism among the masses, Muslims included.

The Muslim masses have also found that the Communist led governments are different in their behaviour towards them than the other governments, congress and others. The growing intensity of the struggle in the Muslim countries against U.S. imperialism and the support that this struggle is getting from the Soviet Union is another important factor influencing new thought processes among the Indian Muslims, in a positive direction.

Moreover, the anti-capitalist heritage of the period of the anti-imperialist freedom struggle has not become extinct among the Muslims. In fact the average Indian Muslim would say that he has no quarrel with communism. He only wants to be assured about his religion. This, because of a misconception created in his mind by false propaganda that religious freedom does not exist in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The Indian Marxists, including active political workers and intellectuals, will have to attend to this problem in order to remove the effect of ill-motivated and mischievous propaganda.

We have many Muslim intellectuals in Indian universities, particularly in the disciplines of history and political science. Quite a number of them have accepted the Marxist approach to history and advocate it in their teaching and writings. However, what is most needed, on their part, is a mass approach to Muslims. This is a task that has to be undertaken to transform the broad anti-capitalist sentiments among the Muslim masses into a better defined outlook and trend.

The rich heritage of the past years can be utilised with great effect in this direction.

ISLAM AND RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN MALAYSIA

Ratna Naidu

Until recently, the mantle of Islam was spread lightly over the body-politic of the Malaysian Peninsula, although its message was accepted by the Malays as early as in the 15th century. Malays accepted Islam easily, gently. There is no record of blood spread and conquest through violence associated with the coming of Islam in Malaysia. It came through trade routes and *via* the Indian sub-continent to a polytheistic people who had accepted earlier Hinduism and Buddhism sent over the same trade routes. Islam was embraced by the local Rajas (first by the ruler of Malacca) and then spread by example to all the Kingdoms in the Peninsula. For centuries in Malaysia one confronted a Islam which was embedded comfortably in the matrix of *adat* (Malay customary laws). Practises and customs repugnant to monotheistic Islam, continued as part and parcel of Malay folk-life. We are told that "magic proper with at most only a superficial veneer of Islam, was the province of the *pawang*, who performed the seasonal rituals necessary to placate the forces of nature, to ensure good crops or catches, or to cleanse a village of accumulated malignant spirits. . . ."¹

There exists quite a bit of scholarly evidence to suggest that Malayized Islam was not as fussy and self-consciously Arabic in culture content as it is threatening to become today. The groundswell of fundamentalist movements seem to have gathered momentum in less than a decade. During my visit to Malaysia in 1971, the fundamentalist viewpoint was mainly articulated by one political party (the PMIP, about which more in a little while). But even the PMIP at that time

was mainly concerned with political calculus. When I went back to Malaysia last year, I found that several new fundamentalist Malay-Muslim organizations had sprouted. These "back to the Koran" movements are not merely political but are the vanguards of a new cultural syndrome.

The "back to the Koran" movement in Malaysia, as perhaps elsewhere, is rooted in deep frustrations in the body-politic. In Malaysia these frustrations are nurtured in a socio-political system which is caught in the relentless grip of an intractable communal situation. The "back to the Koran" movement is the Malay reaction to this typically Malaysian dilemma. In this paper it is possible to give only a brief outline of this dilemma. . . .²

The Malaysian dilemma is the dilemma of communities divided by language, religion, culture and economic disparities having to share a common homeland, without the possibility of each community participating in autonomously governable regions. The social, political and cultural ambitions of the communities are aborted by discontinuities in their demographic spread over territories and in particular economically viable, autonomously governable territories. In Malaysia, the Chinese are to be found in the large west-coast towns whereas the Malays are almost entirely in the rural areas and the Indians live in the rubber and oil-palm estates. The organic inter-dependence of town and country preclude regional and/or irredentist movements and condemn the communities in tension with each other to mutual dependence and governance under one political authority.

In Malaysia the Malays are 47 per cent, the Chinese 34 per cent and the Indians 9 per cent of the population. The communal conflict in Malaysia is mainly between the Malay-Muslims who dominate politics and government and the Chinese who control the economic levers of the country. The selective effect of migration seems to have enabled the Chinese by dint of sheer hard work and efficiency to stake bigger claims on the Malaysian economy. A number of surveys on Malaysia make the general point that the income of the average Chinese household has consistently been a little more than twice that of the average Malay house-

hold. . . .³

But Malaysia is the homeland of the Malays in a manner in which it could never be to the immigrant communities. The Malays are the original inhabitants of Malaysia. The Malay stake on their inheritance is ensured by a constitution which allows only Malays to hold the highest political offices in the nation, and a political system which recognizes only Malays "specially privileged" by law. The special privileges include a quota system giving preference to Malays in government service, admission in educational institutions, distribution of licences and permits for business and industries and so on. . . .⁴

Sponsored development of one community *vis-a-vis* another run into several different kinds of constraints. One of the crucial problems is the limited spread-effect of community based economic programmes because of the peculiar inter-relationship between class and communal factors in delayed industrialization. The modern system of economics and industry is based on a store of technical and scientific knowledge which is many decades old. The backward community is required to make a leap into this system of knowledge and mental attitudes which would normally take a generation to bridge. The mass of the community are unable to make this leap. Moreover the demographic spread of the backward community overwhelmingly in rural areas, militates against any easy transition to urbanism which is usually associated with modernity.

The feeling of inferiority and humiliation generated not only by economic backwardness, but the lack of absorptive capacity to take advantage of the protection guaranteed by his political dominance, must surely do some damage to Malay self-confidence. In fact as opportunities have increased, the Malays have been attracted out of their traditional and rural habitat, and they are seen increasingly in the west-coast towns, in the Universities, in industry and in lucrative government jobs. Thus broken out of their isolation, and confronted with the demonstration effect of Chinese wealth and ability, the Malay is disturbed. His frustration is directed not merely against "outsiders" who according to him enjoy

the choicest fruits of his homeland, but against the Westernized English-educated Malay elite, the tiny upper class, who shares the fruits with the "outsiders", and who are at the helm of the affairs of the Nation. The popularity of the fundamentalist and "back to the Koran" movements have to be understood in these contexts.

For a long time the spokesmen for extreme Malay communalism and Malay poverty has been the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP), now more often known by the Malay acronym, PI. The PI articulates the interests of the relatively backward east-coast states. These states are populated by Malay peasants who are devout Muslims and have little modern education. Party campaign reach them through the *Kampung* (village) schools and religious teachers. They promise them an exclusively Malay dominated Islamic state, to ease rural poverty and to clip the wings of Chinese trading activities. The English-educated, Westernized leadership who form the United Malay National Organization (UMNO) answer the PI challenge by a greatly accelerated rural development programme and more recently by the declaration of the New Economic Policy. The New Economic Policy objectives have been given precise and statistical definition that by 1990, 30 per cent of Malaysian wealth should belong to the Malays. . . .⁵

However, as I have indicated already, the problem with sponsored development is that the spread-effect is thin; the benefits of the development funding do not reach the mass of the Malay peasantry to the extent expected and desirable since they lack the technical knowhow—the "human capital" which is so essential for the quick absorption of development schemes. The educated upper class Malays with their greater modernizing capacities profit disproportionately from the sponsored development schemes relative to the already deprived classes. Intra-community class cleavages therefore increase and the cleavage in the culture of these classes also increase. Thus it is that modernity and tradition do not blend but tradition turns inwards and takes the form of fundamentalism. Furthermore, the spokesmen for extreme Malay communalism and Malay poverty, carry on a relentless cam-

paign against the moderate UMNO leaders in suggesting that development programmes benefit Chinese contractors, Chinese traders and Chinese and Indian labourers. The animosities nurtured by these inter and intra community cleavages feed the fundamentalist movements which have continued to gather momentum.⁶ These fundamentalist movements are known as the *dakwah* movements.

The political goal of the *dakwah* (an Arabic word meaning missionary) movement is the Islamic State. The *dakwah* movement involves many trends, groups and organizations operating both at the local and the national levels. The most important national level *dakwah* organizations are Darul Arqam which draws its inspiration from Arabic customs, 'The Jema' at Tabligh which is an Indian inspired movement, and the ABIM (acronym for Malay Youth Movement) which became famous because of the demonstrations which it led on behalf of peasants in Baling in 1974. Since the Government's response to these revivalist movements has been to counter Islam with Islam, the National Islamic Dakwah Foundation was created in 1974 directly out of the Prime Minister's office under the leadership of the Deputy Head of the National Assembly.

The concerns of the *dakwah* movements are social and political issues such as liquor, corruption and decadence in public life, and the return to the purity of Islamic ideals. The social background of the adherents of the *dakwah* movements are the Malay youth who moved from the *Kampong* (village) to the urban based centres of education. Many of them are beneficiaries of the educational strategies under the New Economic Policy. They had been sent abroad for higher education and met there students from other Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and so on. They have been exposed to the world-wide renaissance of Islamic ideals. Thus it is that a number of Malay doctors, University teachers and other professionals give support to the fundamentalist movements which basically reject the western social, cultural and educational experience. They plead for more simple and traditional style of living, and strengthening of indigenous cultural traditions. At the same time there is the con-

frontation between Islamic *dakwah* and Malay *adat*. They take their most acute form on questions of rituals during marriage ceremonies (which are Hinduised according to tradition), on questions of folk-cures and so on. These confrontations inevitably also involve conflict between the generations.

However, as is often the case in such movements, the selection and rejection of modernity and tradition becomes irrational and even pathologic. The women belonging to the *dakwah* movement, for instance, has adopted the *burqa* which was never a feature of the Malay scene. Likewise, many men have taken to Arabic style green or white flowing robes.

I recall that when I was at the University of Malaya in 1971, I was most impressed by the lack of inhibition between the sexes at the University campus. The hostels for the students are designed so that dining and recreation rooms are common to both men and women, and indeed they shared the same buildings for living quarters, only separation being the separate allotment of the different floors to the men and women. However, when I visited Malaysia in 1977, I heard discussions regarding the possibility of the promulgation of such codes of conduct as the "close proximity" law which penalises "undue intimacy" between unmarried Malay men and women. Nagata writes that very often today intermediaries are used or faces averted in communicating with the opposite sex, a situation which is dramatically different from the simple Malay folk culture of earlier times.⁷ A *Far Eastern Economic Review* reporter writes:

"What is most extraordinary in the 'Back to the Koran' movements in Malaysia is that several University teachers, doctors and professionals and Malay youth are converting to abstemious ways of living, throwing away their television sets and transistors, radios and even giving up the use of chairs and other furniture as 'un-Islamic' and self-indulgent luxuries.

The women, some of them university girls, cover themselves from their eyes to toes with the *burqa*

(the black opaque veil). One of them gave up her medical career, saying that as the Koran orders that a woman should not touch a man she could not use a male cadaver for dissection. . . ."⁸

It would seem to me that the "back to the Koran" movements in Malaysia could have had all the elements of a creative revolution. By drawing on the social and economic aspects of Islamic ideology (for example, the obligations of the individual in relation to his community) to redress his economic disadvantages and by turning to values of simple and cultural traditions to soothe his emotional confusion, the Malay tries to draw sustenance from his roots. But, as elsewhere there is danger of the likelihood that the fundamentalist movements may be twisted to pathological ends, in so far as these basically camouflage anti-minority thrusts for political and economic gains. For, of course, there is an element of vested interest in perpetuating fundamentalist identity symbols—these enable the process of mobilization of group identities by the deliberate forging of myths and symbol systems for rationalisation of disagreements on vital issues affecting intercommunity relations.

Elsewhere I have written at length on the electoral arrangements which has been necessitated by both intercommunity tension in Malaysia as also perhaps in order that class lines may be fudged.⁹ The electoral strategy of the ruling elite has consistently involved the co-option of the leaders of fundamentalist groups and the spokesmen of the Malay poor. In 1972 Prime-Minister Tun Abdul Razak negotiated with the extreme theocentric party, the PMIP to forge alliances both at the state and central levels. The President of the party Dato Haji Mohammed Asri gave up his demand for an Islamic state and consented to represent his party in the Central Cabinet. The most recent and dramatic gain of the ruling elite has been to co-opt Anwar Ibrahim, the charismatic leader of the 40,000 strong Malaysian Muslim Youth Movement (ABIM) into the central cabinet as Deputy Minister. The net result of these electoral arrangements and blunting the opposition has not necessarily been a substantial

gain for the poor. As explained already community based programmes more often add affluence to the affluent in the community without substantive gains to the poor in the community because of their inability to absorb development funds.

At the same time the profile of the ruling elite has undergone a sea-change since the days of the urban cosmopolitan Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first Prime-Minister of Malaysia. The present Prime-Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohammed's views on the communal problem are well known and articulated in his book, *The Malaysian Dilemma* (Singapore, Donald Moore, 1970). The book was banned by Tunku Abdul Rahman in 1969 and the ban remained under two successive ministries. The ban was lifted last year after Dato Mahathir Mohammed became Prime Minister. The book urges strong government aid to the *bhumiputras* (sons-of-the-soil)—the Malays and other indigenous races. The book makes the point that the racial conflict in Malaysia is due to Chinese economic dominance and their cultural differences from the Malays. The views of Dr. Mahathir Mohammed and his present colleagues in the cabinet were frowned upon as reactionary in late 1960 and even until the middle of the decade of the 70's. The fact that these same views now edge policy in Malaysia certainly imply the waning of the secular ideology of the political elite of the genre of Tunku Abdul Rahman.

However, one may take another view of trends in Islam and its impact on social change in Malaysia. As mentioned already, for centuries Islam in Malaysia had remained static and inhibitive of social change. The Malay adherents of Islam were protected and insulated from the winds of economic change which began to sweep the Peninsula under British rule. The tin mining and plantation economies were fueled by the labour and skill of the immigrant communities under the management and leadership of the European communities. These European communities, mostly British in Malaysia were instrumental in creating an appreciation of the technical and professional skills as channels for mobility and a better quality of life among the immigrant communities. The Chinese and

the Indians quickly learned the skills of survival in urban, industrial, professional milieus and further sent their children to Christian missionary schools to learn the language and values of the culture emanating from industrialized West. The Malays psychologically secure in their rural patches of land or as among the upper classes in their inherited positions of administrative and political power, could afford to shun the modern educational institutions carrying the stigma of Christian identifications. Malay Islam was stirred out of this ease of custom when the Malays perceived the far-reaching implications of the loss of leadership in affairs of the economy.

The direct outcome of this perception was the deliberate forging of closer association of Islam with the politics and policies of the Malay ruling elite. Departments of Religious Affairs in all the States expanded, creating more jobs for religious functionaries who took the responsibility for new social services, education, implementing Islamic codes of conduct, and so on. The government controlled by the Malays allotted more funds for strengthening the Islamic ideology and image in Malaysia. Thus thousands of mosques and prayer homes have been constructed in recent times including the more than 10 million dollar (Malaysian) National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur. Pan-Islamic conferences have been hosted. These large Government investments in Islamic events inevitably gives the Government greater say in matters religious. Thus has opened the possibility of a continuous dialogue between the orthodox ulema and the Malay political elite who push above all for the modernization of the Malays so that they may have greater access to commercial, professional and technical occupations and attempt to wrest the economy both from the immigrant communities and foreign interests and investments.

In conclusion it may be pointed out that it is Malay ethnic identity and not Islam *per se* which gives special constitutional status to Malays. The constitutional definition of "Malay" ethnic identity links place of birth, language, race and religion as follows:

"Malay" means a person who professes the Muslim reli-

gion, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom and (a) was before *Merdeka* (Independence) Day born in the Federation or born of parents one of whom was born in the Federation, or is on that day domiciled in the Federation or (b) is the issue of such a person. . . ."¹⁰

Thus, as above, a Muslim who is not a Malay by birth, language and race is not eligible for the constitutionally defined special privileges. By the same token a Malay who would renounce Islam would also lose his status as a Malay. Thus the issue of Islam is not central to the war between the communities in Malaysia, and yet the symbolism and imagery of Islam certainly offers a much more potent and acceptable rallying point for political calculus than the slogans on the theme of the sons-of-the-soil. But symbolism, imagery, or style has its own momentum which ignores after a point its original purpose. The *dakwah* syndrome in Malaysia seems now not merely a strategy *vis-a-vis* the immigrant communities but a palpable cultural revolution, at one with the Islamic renaissance which is sweeping the world today.

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3. A summary of all these surveys is available in D.R. Snodgrass, "Trends and Patterns in Malaysian Income Distribution 1957-70" in David Lim (ed.), *Readings in Malaysian Economic Development*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1975. See also, *Inequality and Economic Development in Malaysia*, by Ronald R. Snodgrass, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 1980.
4. For a more detailed account, see, Gordon P. Means "Public Policy toward Religion in Malaysia" in *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 3, Fall, 1978.
5. In Malaysia more than 70 per cent of the economy is in the corporate sector. In 1970 Malays owned less than 2 per cent of this corporate cake. See, *Mid-Term Review*

- of the Second Malaysian Plan, 1971-75, Kuala Lumpur, Government Press, 1973, p. 83.*
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 9. See, Naidu, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-90. Also, Ratna Naidu, "Electoral Arrangements to Fudge Class Lines" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. IX, Nos. 45 and 46, Nov. 9, 1974, pp. 1895-96.
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ISLAM IN THAILAND—RESURGENCE OR CONSOLIDATION?

Asghar Ali Engineer

Thailand in Thai language means a free country. The Thais are proud that they have always been free and never came to be ruled by any foreign power. The Thai race emerged from the hinterland of south China and descended upon the upper reaches of the Indo-Chinese rivers from an early period. In the Menam valley they came into contact in the 12th century with the Mon state of Dvaravati, the latter being cultural descendants of the Telengana of the upper west coast of the Bay of Bengal who had crossed the Bay to settle down on this side of it, possessed a high culture based upon the Hinayana school of Buddhism. It was this culture which exerted the most lasting influence upon the Thai of the Menam valley, in other words the Siamese. It was for this reason that the *Thammasat* (from the Pali *Dhammasattha*) served for a long time as the Siamese Constitution.

Buddhism continues to be the State religion in Thailand. Formerly known as Siam and since 1939 called Thailand, it has a population of around 48 million. According to the statistics released by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 1979 Buddhists are 95.24% in Thailand followed by Muslims who constitute 4.02% (1.85 million) and third in order are Christians who make 0.6% of population. These figures published by the ministry, however, do not go unchallenged. The Muslim leaders as well as members of the intelligentsia claim that the Muslim population in Thailand is upward of 7 million which works out to 14% of the total population. An important official connected with Chula Rajhmontri (Sheikhul Islam)'s office told me that the Government figures in respect of Muslim population are not reliable. The Muslim population in the four districts of South Thailand alone is more than what the government figures show as the total Muslim population of Thailand. However, the Muslim sources could not

give any basis for claiming much higher figure. A systematic mosquewise survey, these sources told me, is now being carried out to ascertain the population of Muslims in Thailand. According to a pamphlet published by *Jamiat as-Shaban al-Muslimin* (The Young Muslim Association of Thailand) the Muslim population is about 4 million. Whatever the truth one thing is certain that the Muslims constitute the second largest religious group in Thailand.

Islam in Thailand came around the beginning of the 13th century via two channels:

(1) through propagation by the Arab, Persian and Indian merchants who set up their business in that country.

(2) through border contacts with neighbouring Malays in the south. Muslims in Thailand are largely found in North East, Central Thailand and in the South of Thailand. The largest concentration of Muslims is in the southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathivat and Satul making up around 80% of the total Muslim population. In each of these provinces Muslim population is more than 80% and most of the Muslims in these provinces speak Malay language, a dialect of the language spoken by the Muslims in Malaysia. In the southern provinces a section of the Muslims is demanding a separate state and has taken to arms. More of it later, in the North East in Chiangmai, the second largest town in Thailand, there are large number of Muslims of Chinese origin who had fled the Mainland China after the revolution. We will have more to say about the Chinese Muslims later in the article.

On the whole Muslims are well integrated with the Thai society. Most of the Muslims are of Thai origin (due largely to local conversions) and dress like others (including women) and speak Thai language. The entire literature on Islam including the holy Quran has been rendered in Thai. The Quran, it is interesting to note, has been translated into Thai by a Pathan of North West Frontier Province Haji Ibrahim Qureshi who has settled in Thailand. The Muslim masses in Thailand do not know any language other than Thai. There is complete cultural assimilation so much so that it is required by law for every Thai national, of whatever religious persua-

sion he or she may be, to have a Thai name.

Most of the Muslims have, therefore, two names: one Thai for official purposes and one Muslim name to be used at home or among intimate friends. This is perhaps a unique feature of the Thai Muslim society. For example Mr. Chad Chestwatana's Muslim name is Abdul Ghaneer Karim. Mr. Chestwatana is a president of The Muslim Welfare Organization of Thailand. Similarly Yong Foonant, President, Islamic Association of Chiangmai, has an Islamic name Haji Abdur Rahman Ishaq Al-Sweni. The elected chief of Muslims is officially known as Chula Rajhmontri although his Islamic designation happens to be Sheikhul Islam. The Sheikhul Islam is elected by the chairmen of 26 provincial committees set up under the law and is appointed by the King, now the constitutional head and who is also the patron of religions.

In all the parts of Thailand except the four southern provinces the Government has enforced common civil code. The Sheikhul Islam informs me that in the four southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathivat and Satul which have more than 80% Muslim population, there is separate Muslim personal law in force. The Muslims in these provinces are allowed to take more than one wife and are also allowed to divorce at will. However, in central and north eastern parts of Thailand there is common law for all. But in case of violations the officials prefer to look the other way. It is obvious that the separate Muslim personal law has been allowed in the four southern provinces in view of a state of insurgency and a demand for a separate state by a militant section of the Muslims.

The armed rebellion in south is, needless to say, a highly controversial issue. I try to engage the Muslim leadership in Bangkok into a discussion on armed insurrection in south. However, they refuse to be drawn into discussion. The reason is obvious. The fear of consequences. After all, the military rule makes its presence felt. The pamphlet above referred to declares that "Fortunately there is no minority problem. . . Constitutionally all Thais enjoy full freedom of faith". However, privately, the Muslim intelligentsia expresses different feelings. I discuss the Muslim problem with some Muslim

university teachers and other professionals. They feel that the Muslims are discriminated against. They do not get, one of them tells me, adequate share in the government services. Often they find doors closed to higher promotions. According to a university professor, many Muslim officers change their religion to get higher promotions.

What about the demand for a separate state in the south? I ask them. The answer is initially rather ambiguous but more probing questions make it clear that the young Muslim intellectuals and students are sympathetic with the rebels in the southern provinces. One of them says discretely "My sympathies are on the side of justice". "The demand for a separate state", another teacher says, "is ruled out but that for autonomy is not unreasonable". Yet another one bemoans the poverty and backwardness among the Muslims of south.

The official media depicts the separatists as "anti-social elements", "robbers and brigands" cashing on Islamic sentiments. In reply to a question Sheikhul Islam tells me that the armed rebels in the south have achieved a measure of success on account of a widely prevalent misunderstanding that the Muslims are not free to practice their religion in Thailand. The authorities had summoned the Sheikh to reassure the Muslims in the south that they were free to practice their religion unhindered. The Sheikh had to face a highly agitated mob during the Friday prayer. However, the Chula Rajhmontri who seems to enjoy a great prestige among the Muslims in Thailand in view of his selfless services for the cause of Islam, succeeded in pacifying the agitated crowd by conveying to them that they could practice their religion freely.

Sheikhul Islam admits that "the so-called separatists were receiving aid from some Muslim countries of the West Asia. But now they know that a few "anti-social elements" were using the cover of Islam for their own ends and, therefore, they have stopped providing them any aid. These "anti-social elements" have been completely isolated. The Government has also reassured them that the Muslims can practice their personal law". The Sheikhul Islam also tells me that in neighbouring Malaysia polygamy is not allowed though it is a

Muslim country. Many Muslims from Malaysia therefore cross the border into Thailand in order to take a second wife.

However, the problem in South is far from solved. Tony Davis maintains in the *Bangkok Post* (dated 13 June, 1982) "Across Thailand's volatile southern border provinces fundamentalist Islam is on the move. And if indications to date are anything to go by, the faithful are heeding the call". The separatist movement is led by two organizations usually described as "secessionist bandit gangs". These organizations are known as the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (National Revolutionary Front, BRN) and the Pattani United Liberation Organisation (PULO). The strength of these two groups is anybody's guess. Also, there is great deal of confusion as regards the activities of some *Dakwah* (Arabic *D'awah*) organisations. Chief among these *dakwah* groups is the Tablighi Jamat, an organisation of Indian origin. Known as the Jamat Tabligh in Thailand, it holds large rallies which unnerve the authorities. Quite a few volunteers of this Jamat from India visit southern provinces of Thailand and indulge in missionary activities. Such activities were often construed as supporting the armed separatist groups.

But it was pointed out to the authorities that the Jamat-i-Tabligh is known for its apolitical character and passive approach. Non-confrontation and non-involvement in politics is stressed by the Jamat. It is just calling on the people to be good Muslims. According to Tony Davis in *Bangkok Post*, "Over recent months, however, southern officialdom has been coming to terms with 'dakwah' as a religious rather than potentially para-military phenomenon". Recently a huge rally was organised in the Royal Thai Army camp under the watchful eyes of the Por-Tor-Thor (Civilian Police-Military) authorities. The rally was attended by as many as 82,000 faithfuls, most of them from Yala, Pattani and Narathivat provinces. However, there were some Muslims from other parts of Thailand, as well as Malaysia, Singapore, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and the Gulf region. The rally went off peacefully although there were apprehensions of bombing and shooting by the Separatist groups.

The authorities, however, are taking no chances. They

want to keep the 'dakwah' movement under official control. It has been proposed to constitute a committee to ponder over the question comprising the Chula Rajhmontri Prasert Muhammad, Islam's official head in Thailand, provincial Islamic council representatives, 'dakwah' representatives and Por-Tor-Thor and Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) officials. The Government of Thailand is also anxious to explain its policy of allowing full freedom to practice ones religion. At the instance of military authorities a rally of Muslim village officials from the four southern provinces was also held at Bangkok on 7th June in a school run by a prominent Muslim lady Khunying Sandao Siamwalla. The rally was attended by a large number of village officials. Lady Siamwalla was at pains to explain the Government's policy of tolerance and freedom to practice ones religion. The village officials were in turn asked to explain this policy to the Muslims of southern provinces.

The separatists are, however, sore at such an attitude adopted by the dakwah representatives. They disapprove of their avowedly apolitical creed. A source close to the BRN (Barisan Revolusi Nasional) commented, "This movement is about getting people back to the mosque for prayers. This is all very well, but we are worried the movement will be used by the (government) authorities as part of their 'apparatus' ". The dakwah movement, no doubt, has drawn many Muslims away from the militant armed struggle being waged by the separatists. A "quietist spiritual revolution", according to one religious scholar, is finding more and more support in the south.

The Thai Government is also demonstrating its support to the cause of 'quietist spiritual Islam' in many other ways. An ambitious project for constructing a central mosque in Bangkok has received generous aid from the Government. The mosque with unusual architecture is being built under the auspices of The Islamic Centre of Thailand at the cost of 31.2 million Baht (approx. Rs. 16 million) of which the Thai Government has contributed, upto 1982 Baht 23 million (Rs. 11.5 million). The mosque will be a great centre of Islamic activities in Thailand. The Thai Government also allows a radio channel for an hour every day and from 5 P.M. to

5 A.M. in the month of Ramadan for religious propaganda. Transmission of this programme is under the supervision of the Islamic chief Chula Rajhmontri. The programme is recorded and broadcast from his office.

What about the relations between Muslims and Buddhists in Thailand? They seem to be quite accommodative with each other. William L. Bradley, an American scholar observes about the Thais: "I do not believe it accidental that Buddhist countries demonstrate a greater sensitivity in human relations than do nations under Christian influence. The delicate way with which Thais approach one another, the circumspection they observe lest they cause a person to lose face, the care they show in avoiding controversies that could give rise to anger: these may seem curious at first to the strangers, but he learns in time that beneath the seeming withdrawal from conflict lies respect for the other person."

The observation seems to be quite true. The Buddhists are not swayed by rigid prejudices and avoid religious conflict. There is no record of religious or communal riots between Muslims and Buddhists in Thailand. Even the armed struggle in the south has not degenerated into communal clashes. But the absence of intercommunal clashes cannot be wholly explained merely by Buddhist tolerance of other religious minorities. There are other crucial factors. The Muslims in Thailand, specially those from central and north-eastern parts maintain a low political profile. There are very few Muslims in the four main political parties in the country. There is none in the cabinet. Even the Sheikhu Islam—Chula Rajhmontri—does not enjoy the status of a minister. During my stay in Thailand I heard of no politically important Muslim leader save of Ahmad Khamthesthong who was contesting for presidentship of Labour Congress of Thailand (LCT). There are in all four Muslim members in the Central legislature, all from South and none from other parts of Thailand. Thus it can be seen that the Thai Muslims do not assert themselves politically nor do they demand any share in power or reservation in jobs. Muslims have never thought of forming any separate political party, not even in south where they have considerable majority. This, to a considerable extent,

explains absence of any communal conflict.

Muslims are generally poor and backward. Percentage of education is very low. More money is spent on building mosques, *madrasas* and religious centres than on establishing centres or institutions of modern education. At one time some Muslims owned very valuable land around Bangkok. When due to urban expansion the prices of land skyrocketed, most of them sold off their land and money spent on conspicuous consumption rather than productively invested. The Muslims in south are mostly workers employed on rubber plantations owned by Chinese. These Muslims belong to some of the poorest districts with less than Baht 5000 income per annum. The Muslims in south prefer to send their children to religious schools called Ponnok (pronounced as Ponna meaning hut). But in the last decade, I am told, there has been a change in the attitude of Muslims due to pioneering work in education done by Dr. Mohammad Abdul Kadir and more and more Muslims are sending their children to modern schools. There are quite a few university teachers today among the Muslims. A Muslim lady Acharya Pranee Lapanich teaches Sanskrit in Chulalongkorn University. However the trend for religious education is still far more extensively prevalent than modern education. More Muslim students go for higher education to Islamic centres of learning outside Thailand than to modern institutions of learning. Poverty and absence of higher education also explains absence of political ambitions among the Muslims in Thailand.

Muslims, as pointed out earlier, are culturally and linguistically, highly assimilated group. There is no concept of purdah among the Thai Muslim women. They dress like any other Thai women and work freely without any inhibition for their living. Many Muslim women can be seen running small business establishments and restaurants to supplement their family incomes. Only recently some Muslim women, after resurgence of Islam in Iran, have taken to wearing *chador*. But their number is minimal. Safia (Thai name Lawan Liangphai), a young lady who runs a small eating establishment in Chiangmai to supplement her husband's income who

is a coach driver, tells me that purdah is not necessary in Islam. Women have been granted freedom to work and earn. A Pakistani woman who observes strict purdah is taken as an object of fun by Thai Muslim ladies. Safia calls herself a devout Muslim. She goes to the mosque for prayer and observes fast during Ramadan.

It is interesting to note that unlike in India the Muslim ladies in Thailand are allowed to pray in the mosques along with men although they cannot stand in the same line with them and a curtain in between separates the two sexes (among the Chinese Muslims in Chiangmai there is no curtain in between and the women stand behind men during prayer). While praying the women cover themselves from head to feet in white *chador*. Polygamy though not absent, is not widely prevalent either. Safia informs me that Thai Muslim women generally do not allow their husbands to take second wife. It is also interesting to note that intercommunal marriages are not generally treated as a social stigma although such marriages are often accompanied by change of religion by one of the conjugal partners—more often on the part of women.

In Chiangmai in the north-east of Thailand there are a large number of Muslims of Chinese origin. Most of them had fled Mainland China after the revolution and allowed to settle in Thailand. In and around Chiangmai there are 20,000 Muslims 60% of whom are of Chinese origin. Out of 12 mosques in Chiangmai 5 are of Chinese Muslims (in Thailand there are in all 2285 registered mosques). The local Muslim chief Yong Foonant (Abdur Rahman Ishaq Al-Sweni) is of Chinese origin and left China in 1948. His several children are still in China. He is very bitter about the persecution of Muslims after the revolution in China and narrates several stories to me. In reply to my other questions too he keeps on coming to his pet theme of persecution of Muslims in China. I have to question him incessantly to eke out other information. The Chinese Muslims most of whom have settled in Fang and Mai districts in north-east are poor peasants or work in orchards. Those in the town are little better off. Yong Foonant himself deals in motor-cycles. Though the Chinese dominate trade and industry in Thailand,

the Chinese Muslims are poor and backward. About 30% of these Muslims are very poor and *zakat* fund is distributed among them.

Chinese Muslims, compared to other Thai Muslims, are far more rigid in religious observances. Yong Fooanant struggled very hard to build a mosque (*Masjid-at-Taqwa*) and a *madrasa* attached to it. There are 750 children studying in the *madrasa* many of whom later would go to the centres of Islamic learning for higher education. An Arab teacher has come all the way from Cairo's al-Azhar to teach here.

Another young Chinese Muslim Mr. Manus Manaboon Foomada informs me that there are many Muslims of Chinese origin living on the border of Thailand and Burma. Formerly when opium business was thriving in the Golden Triangle (Thailand, Burma and Laos) they dealt in opium and were quite rich. However, when opium business stopped due to international campaign, their financial condition worsened. Now they have taken to cultivation. Many of the Chinese in the border area are Muslims in name. They married local tribal women and adopted their rituals. Their only sign of being Muslim now is that they do not eat pork. Generally they are very poor.

The Thai Muslims, despite their cultural assimilation, it must be said, are very proud of their being Muslims. The number of mosques and the religious activities around them are clear indication of this. University students and intellectuals are increasingly becoming aware of their Muslim identity and some of them have come under the influence of political Islam of Khomeini although they are far from being assertive. It is difficult to say whether these young intellectuals are fully aware of all the implications of Khomeini's militant Islam, its anti-imperialist thrust on the one hand, and, its restorative regressive and oppressive character, on the other. My discussion with them shows that they are more concerned with its symbolic and ritual aspects rather than understanding its deeper implications. The ulama and the Muslim masses on the other hand hardly feel concerned with what is happening in Iran. They are more concerned with traditions of Thai Islam and summoning people to the mosques for ritual prayers.

APPENDIX I

A COMMENT ON THE "AGENDA FOR ISLAMIC ECONOMIC REFORM IN PAKISTAN"

Prof. Mohammad Shaghil

(This note sets down briefly the main findings and recommendations of the Committee on Islamization appointed by the Finance Minister, Government of Pakistan in April 1980. The Committee consisted of the Finance Secretary and three eminent academicians.)

The Committee has categorically stated that no blue-print of an Islamic economic model existed; nor did it attempt to provide one. However, they did endeavour to delineate what appeared to them to be some of the basic features of an Islamic economic system, if it was to be established.

According to the members of the Committee the Quranic exhortation to individuals and societies to exercise '*al Adl* (Justice) *wal Ahsan* (kindness) constituted the conceptual basis for the formulation of an Islamic economic system. Other directives and commandments in the Quran also urge the establishment of a just egalitarian social order.

They have also emphasised, at the very outset, that Islamization of the Pakistan economy (i.e. the attainment of the Islamic ideal of '*al Adl wal Ahsan*') could be carried out only in stages, singling out those elements which contributed most in achieving the basic objective of an Islamic economy, beginning with the existing (non-Islamic) economic system as the natural starting point from where to move towards the Islamic ideal.

Based on the Islamic ideal of '*al Adl wal Ahsan*' and other kindred directives in the Holy Quran Islamic economic policy would have to be so formulated in Pakistan, according to the authors of the Report on Islamization, as to achieve the following objectives:

1. Social justice
2. Universal education
3. Economic growth
4. Maximum employment generation, and
5. Improving the quality of living.

The Committee does not share the general belief that the abolition of *riba* and enforcement of *zakat* are sufficient policy instruments for ushering in an Islamic economic order. Evidence of countries where *riba* does not exist and *zakat* is the only form of taxation shows that nevertheless gross social injustice prevails in them.

The Committee is of the view that the basic characteristic of an Islamic system is its attitude towards private property. In the Islamic perspective all wealth (i.e. natural resources in the heavens and on earth) belongs to Allah. Accordingly, man is only a trustee of whatever he has and is not its owner. Because of the concept of trusteeship, the right to private property gets severely diluted in Islam.

The Committee has challenged the stand of those who assert that the Law of Inheritance pre-empts the State from imposing death duties or taking any part of inherited property as being inconsistent with the spirit of '*al Adl wal Ahsan*' and other Quranic directives. The members of the Committee further remind that we are living in a non-Islamic economic system marked by gross inequalities in ownership of wealth, of which land was a very substantial element. To maintain that nothing can be done, in view of the Law of Inheritance, and that such property should continue to be locked within certain families would tantamount to taking the absurd stand that existing distribution of wealth is in accordance with Islamic precepts. It is further stated that elements of Islamic reform, such as, land reforms, nationalization, etc. should not be rejected simply because they bear some resemblance to other economic systems.

The Committee is of the view that to introduce Islamic reforms in a society like Pakistan, the structure of which has been raised on capitalistic principles, it is essential for the State to assume increasing responsibilities to ensure that a society's basic needs, such as health, education and housing, etc. are adequately met. This would make it encumbent to contain consumer sovereignty, without however eliminating it, so that enough resources are released for financing an elaborate public sector programme to fight poverty, hunger and widespread economic deprivation.

The economic decision-making process has thus necessarily to be shifted in an Islamic economy. While the private sector will have its due place, the public sector will be called upon to play a dominant role in determining the pattern of allocation of resources between diverse uses and in particular diverting real resources to the production of the basic necessities of life and away from non-essential and luxury production. It will be the responsibility of the state to determine the very composition of 'the consumer goods basket'. The Committee asserts that the matter is too important to be left to the 'invisible hand' of the market forces.

A point repeatedly underscored is that the pace of Islami-zation must be slow enough to allow the existing economic system to change on a broad front in keeping with the flow of knowledge about how the Islamic system operates in practice. This pragmatic approach in implementing Islamic ideals is amply reflected in the set of policy recommendations made by the Pakistan Committee on Islamization. The main recommendations of the Committee are as under:

(A)

1. The Government should take immediate steps to curtail substantially the private ownership of property with a view to promoting a wider distribution of income and wealth outside the closed circle of individual families. In this connection, it is absolutely essential that the Islamic law of inheritance be implemented in its full multi-dimensionality, particularly in respect of the aspect of it which emphasizes the share of the non-family members of society in national

wealth. A registration fee, upto a maximum of 30 per cent of the total value of the wealth inherited by each heir, is recommended to prevent intergenerational snowballing of wealth within few families. Furthermore, land reforms should be carried out on the basis of the size of the land held by the family and not by individuals. Corresponding steps must also be taken to regularize the size of urban property. Furthermore, all lands that have remained uncultivated for three consecutive years should be taken over by the state without paying any compensation to their owners. Also, grazing lands, mines, natural forests, springs and lands reclaimed through State financed irrigation should all be owned by the State and cultivated on its behalf.

2. The Government should actively promote free and universal education, particularly at the primary level.

3. The role and form of economic growth as well as the strategy of growth must be carefully reviewed to reflect Islamic economic philosophy. The rate of growth must be consistent with the requirements of intergenerational equity. The role of public sector in promoting capital accumulation and producing wage goods must also increase as a part of the Islamic reform. Heavy reliance on the private corporate sector to generate investible surplus must be discarded as a policy instrument.

4. The Government should take steps to promote the growth of an economically efficient labour intensive technology in order to increase the employment generating content of the development programme. In this connection, emphasis should be given to the promotion of technical education.

5. An elaborate social security and anti-poverty programmes should be mounted to ensure a minimum consumption standard to the poor and subsidize the process of skill formation among those living below the poverty line. The Government should also take steps to supply medical care, including rehabilitative medicine to the poor, particularly those residing in rural areas and urban slums.

(B)

1. The proposal to substitute profit sharing within the

economic system for the interest-based system should be rejected. Any such attempt, besides being incompatible with the basic conception of a Capitalistic economy like Pakistan's, will make it impossible for the State Bank to conduct monetary policy in the traditional sense.

2. No attempt should be made to replace interest-bearing government securities by equities. For such a step would: (a) deprive the Government of any means for inflationary, or, non-inflationary borrowing; (b) knock out the secondary reserves of the commercial banks, thereby putting severe constraints on monetary creation and, (c) make the money market ineffective in its main task of risk minimization.

3. On the limited plane of the commercial banking operations, interest-bearing deposits and advances to the private sector be indexed to the changes in the price-level. The indexing percentages will be announced at the end of each year by the State Bank as a certain multiple of the rate of change of the price level.

4. Long-run loan financing by the financial institutions may be done through a system of investment auction.

5. Interest free loans may be given as a subsidy to small scale industries, modest construction activity, etc.

6. As one of the options for profitable investment, it is being proposed to establish investment companies which invest on behalf of the commercial banks on the basis of profit sharing. These companies will not share any losses but will work for a commission. The profits and losses will be passed on to the banks, which will distribute them among those who deposit their money in a special interest free bank account.

7. However, in the long run, *riba* can be wholly abolished only if the economy is completely restructured in a way that renders the institute of interest redundant. This will involve a complete dovetailing of the process of money creation and the productive activity in the 'real' sector of the economy. The process of money creation, instead of being conducted indirectly through the money market, will have to be limited directly to the 'real' sector.

APPENDIX II

ISLAMISATION OF ECONOMY IN PAKISTAN— SOME COMMENTS

Asghar Ali Engineer

President Zia-ul-Haq had declared Pakistan to be an Islamic state and, in order to convince the people of Pakistan of his intention of Islamisation, he began to enforce the criminal code of Islam as if the essence of Islam lay in enforcing its criminal code. For a ruler who wants to preserve the existing social structure and also, in view of the threat from people's opposition, wants to make political use of Islam, there is no other way but to emphasise either ritualistic aspects of Islam or those which are least likely to threaten the status quo. Precisely for this reason Zia-ul-Haq enforced public flogging, amputation of hands, stoning to death etc. as punishment for different crimes and completely ignored the socio-economic doctrines of Islam which put emphasis on just and equitable distribution of material wealth and egalitarianism. He saw in Islamic teachings what he desperately needed to reinforce his sagging authority. The Ulama never tire of telling us—and rightly so—that Islam respects, within the limits set by the divine law (*hudud-Allah*), human dignity and human rights. But today, as the Amnesty International report shows, there is most flagrant violation of human rights in Pakistan. But how many 'Ulama are protesting against it? Well, in their eyes, disturbing status quo is greater sin than flagrant violation of human rights.

Islam, as even a cursory glance at the Koran shows, has great potential for social justice as it repeatedly condemns

oppression and injustice (*zulm*) on one hand, and, accumulation of wealth, on the other. It would not be wrong to insist that these are the cardinal principles of Islam's social philosophy. But the record of those who breathe political Islam is worst on both these scores. The 'Ulama, who claim to be conscience keepers of Islam, have proved no better, if we go by the recorded history of Islam. Throughout the Islamic world even today the Ulama would be found in the forefront of those who preach the sanctity of status quo in the name of Islam. I admit there must be some exceptions to the rule.

Zia-ul-Haq's quest for legitimacy increases in direct proportion to the mounting pressure of public opinion against his oppressive regime. The initial euphoria generated by the enforcement of Islamic criminal code soon began to wear thin. Fresh grounds of legitimation then had to be sought. The telling inequalities which get further sharpened with ever mounting rate of inflation exposed the Islamic rhetoric being employed by the Zia regime. Zia was thus compelled, in his search for legitimation, to appoint a committee of experts to prepare a report for Islamisation of economy. This committee on Islamisation was appointed by Mr. Ghulam Ishaq Khan, Federal Minister for Finance, Planning, Commerce, Economic Affairs and Coordination, Government of Pakistan, in April, 1980 "to spell out an Agenda for Islamic Reform for the guidance of the government". The Committee, headed by Prof. Syed Nawab Haider Naqvi and consisting of three more members one drawn from the Ministry of Finance and two others from Punjab and Peshawar Universities, held six sessions in all, and submitted its report in May, 1980.

A mimeographed copy of the outline of the report was available to the present writer through a reliable source. It makes an extremely interesting reading and needs to be commented upon. The recommendations of the Committee were reportedly suppressed as it put the Zia regime in an embarrassing situation. We shall throw some light on the report (authenticity of which there is no reason to doubt) along with our comments.

As the members of the Committee are expert economists, they know the immensity of the task in transforming the exist-

ting economic system. Thus striking a realistic note, they point out in the foreword to the report “. . . this does not mean that there is no other way to Islamize the economy than to introduce the Islamic economic system *in toto*. That would be a meaningless statement because no blueprint exists—and we have not attempted to provide one—of the total Islamic economic system.” Listing down the shortcomings of the Pakistani economy today the Committee points out: “. . . a highly slowed distribution of income and wealth, high levels of open unemployment and disguised unemployment, socially unacceptable levels of literacy rates, allocative inefficiency, low level of business and public morality, etc. are the major ‘pollutants’ of the economic environment in developing countries like Pakistan.”

The Islamization process must, therefore, seek to gradually, if not in one stroke, to eliminate these evils. The Committee rightly points out that the key concept of economic philosophy in Islam is *al-'adl wal-ahsan* i.e. justice and kindness and therefore, to make a decisive move towards the Islamic ideal it is essential that, to begin with, the total private property in the community, both rural and urban, is redistributed in a more just fashion. It is really unfortunate that most of the *'Ulama* take a rigid position on the question of property and treat it as sacrosanct which is against the spirit of the Quran. The Quran unequivocally condemns accumulation of wealth. It says, “Those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of God, warn them of painful punishment.”

The Committee, therefore, clearly points out that “. . . the right to private property in Islam gets vastly qualified, limiting severely the sphere of ownership itself. There is a complete unanimity among Muslim scholars that such things as grazing lands, natural forests and water resources, mines, roads, graveyards and places of congregational prayers cannot be privately owned. As for the land ownership rights are liable to be lost if such land lies unclaimed or not used for three consecutive years.” Land, natural forests, mines, water resources, etc. were the only instruments of production in those days, and its ownership having been prohibited by Islam, it is obvious that it stands for social ownership of all

means of production which is a modern socialist concept.

As according to the Committee, the economic structure of Pakistan is "feudalistic-capitalistic" it being based on exploitation, measures will have to be taken to change the present economic relationship. Also, according to it, it is not sufficient to argue, as is often done, that the law of inheritance given by the Quran, would bring about redistribution of wealth in the society. The report of the Committee points out the fallacy of this argument. It would not be out of place to quote from the report at length:

"The actual issue to decide in this context is the extent to which the Islamic Law of Inheritance allows a wider distribution of landed property outside the small circle of legal heirs to prevent intergenerational snowballing of wealth—i.e. each generation adding to the inherited wealth which keeps on growing within the same family? Wide wealth cum political power, privileges and social influence and it should clearly be the concern of the state to prevent and to destroy if it is already in place, the system of family oligarchy which tends to be the strongest anti-reform, reactionary force in the society. Hence for anyone to take the extreme position that the Islamic Law of Inheritance effectively pre-empts any redistributive initiative of the State is really to condone a highly exploitative economic system. Such a position, whatever the cover of legality it may claim from the Law of Inheritance, is clearly against the spirit of *al-Adl wal-Ahsan*. Indeed, it is also against the spirit of the Islamic Law of Inheritance."

The Committee, therefore, unequivocally pleads for land reforms to end feudalistic exploitation on the one hand, and, advocates increased role of public sector in meeting the basic needs of common people and to generate greater employment potential. In respect of the former it also says, "Steps should be taken to promote the Islamic system of partnership tenancy in place of the widespread practice of hiring out bare land for fixed rent which according to some *Fuqaha* (juriconsults), is formally equivalent to *riba* (interest). Furthermore, there

is the explicit Islamic position that land not cultivated for three consecutive years should be taken away by the State, *without paying any compensation to their owners*, and given to those who can cultivate it (emphasis supplied).

The Committee further recommends that:

“To ensure rural-urban equity in line with the Islamic commitment to *al-Adl*, it will be essential to take similar steps to regulate the size of urban landholdings and other properties. And in line with clear Islamic injunctions, all grazing lands, mines, natural springs and forests must be owned by the State.”

The Committee is no less categorical as regards the role of the public sector in Islamic economics. In a conference held in Saudi Arabia in 1977 the *'ulama* had categorically rejected the concept of public sector or nationalization as “un-Islamic” as it deprives Muslims of their “Islamic right” to hold property. But the Pakistan Committee under reference holds just the opposite view. It feels that in mixed economy like that of Pakistan economic growth has often been promoted by encouraging considerable investment through the private sector. This had very undesirable effect as it leads to growing differential in income distribution. The committee, therefore, says that “It should be clear that a strategy which uses widening income differentials to finance high growth rates must be rejected as contrary to the Islamic commitment *al-Adl wal-Ahsan*. It also follows that the role of the public sector must increase in an Islamic economy to promote capital accumulation. Not only that: the public sector must also be called upon to produce, through State enterprises wage goods consumed by the poorer sections of the society.”

The concept of *riba* (interest) is much discussed about these days in the Islamic world. Confining its meaning to ‘interest’ and ‘usury’, it is condemned as exploitative practice and efforts are being made to create interest-free banks. Thus by putting entire emphasis on interest all other exploitative practices of capitalist system are ignored and even legitimised. The Committee, however, does not take such a narrow view of *riba*. After pointing out the complications

involved in abolishing interest in a capitalist economy it goes on to say:

“The Islamic injunction against *riba* constitutes a rejection of the entire capitalist system. It is, in fact, a signal for a complete restructuring of the entire economic system along Islamic lines: the Islamic principle of *al-Adl wal-Ahsan* must be reflected in the basic consumption, production and distribution relationships. . . . To think of abolishing *riba* without reference to the ‘totality’ of the Islamic economic system is to put cart before the horse.”

Then the Committee goes on to point out very significantly that: “In fact there is a real danger that the abolition of *riba* and its replacement by the profit-sharing system will increase the level of economic exploitation of the poor by the rich, thereby negating the basic Islamic principle of *al-Adl wal-Ahsan*.”

It is entirely wrong to maintain that interest is the source of all evil in an economic system. The Committee is fully aware of this and says that it is profit that is by far the most important source of economic exploitation in a capitalistic society. Thus abolishing interest while retaining profit would lead to increased exploitation thus negating the very ideal of just and benevolent economic system propounded by Islam.

The Committee’s views are quite radical looking to the highly conservative economic views prevalent throughout the Islamic world today (excepting those countries which have chosen the socialist path) led by the Saudi monarchy. In view of this the views expressed by the Committee are quite refreshing and so must be welcomed.

One may object that there were no ‘ulama’ on the committee and the modernists or mere economic experts have no right to talk about the Islamic economic system. Nothing could be more misleading than this. ‘Ulama’ are no less ignorant of modern economics. They have no right to talk about it. Many modern Muslim economists are taking the pains to study Islam so as to understand their social milieu and people’s Islamic ethos better and to advocate suitable policies

to end miseries of poverty. It would be very difficult for the 'ulama' to find fault with the views expressed by the members of this Committee and its recommendations. The Koran's central emphasis is on social justice and it repeatedly condemns *zulm* and urges Muslims to fight against it. *Zulm* is not only oppression but also includes exploitation. And since the capitalist class rule is based on both one cannot establish a truly Islamic society while retaining capitalist system.

It was not for nothing that Zia rejected the report and assigned it to the waste-paper basket.