CHAPTER 2

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From the second half of the Nineteenth century, political thinking in Egypt had developed on the socio-economic base outlined above. The national movement, born at the time of foreign penetration, therefore, had been searching for almost a century, for responses to three major interrelated questions:

1. How to put an end to the rule of colonisers and of their domestic proteges?
2. How to stop the decline of the Community (Umma, Arab World and Egypt) and how to eradicate its backwardness?
3. What kind of strategic alliance could lead to the fulfilment of these objectives? In other words, who shall lead the opposition?

As was shown in the previous chapter, the examined period, from historic and economic-historic points of view, can be divided into two sub-periods: 1882-1922 and 1923-1952. Development of political thought and action, by and large followed this periodization.

The main trend of the period was towards formation of the political ideology of the national movement and more emphasis on national element rather than on
religious element which was preponderant in the first sub-period (1882-1922).

1. The content and form of expression of responses to the above questions were determined in the first sub-period primarily by the colonial status and backward social structure. The small and weak national bourgeoisie then was not able to lead the movement. Only two interrelated strata, the new elite of landlords and top officials and high-ranking army-officers, reached the level of political articulation of their interests. In the absence of organized forces the leadership of the anti-British movement was taken over by the army led by Colonel Ahmed Orabi.

The country's involvement in world economy and in techno-cultural advancement took place under the influence of the West. This gave an impetus to capitalist development, causing enormous shocks to society, mainly its "traditional" segments. Within a few decades, communities disintegrated, "means of thinking, methods of action and life-rythms were disarranged". ¹ Sharia and Islamic

traditions ceased to be the only regulators of human relations. The centuries-old isolation came to an end and democratic ideas spread mainly through the medium of intellectuals who had been to the West. They were the first to study Western science and technology and to become sensitive to new and progressive ideas. They were among the first people to crack a rift in the wall of traditional religious thinking. The penetration of new ideas also divided the aristocracy ideologically and politically. The formation of political parties, however, took place at the turn of the century.

Ideas reflecting political awakening evolved mainly under the religious garb for the reasons given below:

a. Since the Arabization in the Tenth century, Islam had been the state religion of the country. More than 90 per cent of the population was Sunni Muslim. The largest non-Muslim community, the Copts, were approximately 8 per cent. On the basis of traditional economic relations of the "thousand years old hydro-state" a highly centralised theocratic superstructure was built. Here, the "dominance of superstructure" manifested chiefly in dominance of religion. "Tax can never be collected by

2. Ibid., p. 2.
mere force", states Amin, "for this a certain kind of social consent is always required". The main tool for reaching such a consent was Islam. The social role of Islam, however, was much broader than mere religious legitimation of the extraction of the surplus by the state. The political structure of Islam had offered for centuries the only efficient form of social cohesion. As Mahmoud-Hussein put it: "The universe cemented by Islam... was a homogeneous and secure spiritual space, where ephemeral and eternal, spiritual and material, political and moral, social and individual could be conceived in indissoluble unity, under absolute submission to one God". The Ottoman Empire maintained the ideological monopoly of religion. Within the Empire, Cairo had for centuries been one of the important cultural centres of the Muslim world.

These specific features, as objective circumstances of the Arab peoples' existence had and have up till now, to be taken into consideration by any force that intended to bring about changes in the Arab World and wished to gain massive support for achieving its objectives.

b. It is commonplace to mention "the secular par excellence" character of Islam, since its declared objective is the enforcement of divine law on Earth, in all fields of the economy and superstructure, especially in politics, law and public life, including the moral as well as the private sphere. Total dominance, immanent political content and the assimilative character of Islam had, for centuries, enabled it to resist alien, political influence. The first serious elements "alien to Islam" entered Egypt along with the Napoleon expedition. Political discontent was deflected by the ruling class into religious channels and social demands were transformed into religious reforms. Religious articulation provided a possibility to formulate the first buds of national thought. Therefore religion, serving as a garb for national ideas, played a progressive role.

c. The roots of Islam and its social acceptance are to be found in the concrete social conditions of the Arab World. Some scholars suggest that the period 1882-1952 in Egypt and the epoch of which Islam originated bear quite a few similarities. It is true that the commercial activities which played a role in the birth of Islam and the penetration of foreign capital in the last century in Egypt disrupted traditional relations over a fairly long transitional period.
This transition led in the first case to a specific type of Asiatic mode of production and to a backward capitalism in the second. Islam, in both cases, provided the strategy of self-stabilisation and self-preservation of free petty individuals condemned to massive perdition by the processes of disintegration. Ideologists like Rashid Rida and Hassan al-Banna expressed the feelings of peasants and petty bourgeoisie who lived in permanent natural and social dependence and were exposed to proletarization as well as their attraction to the old and supernatural.

d. In the initial phase of capitalist development, a receptive minority of the Egyptian population was influenced by Islam on the one hand and by Western scientific and cultural current on the other. Of the two, religion held out as the stronger for a long time no less on account of the subjective reasons, emanating from the traditions of Islam. For instance education, generally meant religious education. The prestige of the Ulema was above criticism for they had been the leaders of the sporadic national movements in the Eighteenth century as well as of the resistance against the French occupation. Religious leaders constituted the only national stratum of ruling class. Through the WAKF incomes, they enjoyed an

almost total independence even economically and were, in terms of their qualifications and puritan lifestyle, able to gain the sympathy of the masses. All these factors explain why the ideologists and politicians of Nahda (renaissance) came, with a few exceptions, from the religious functionaries. However, these theoreticians paid less attention to the economic aspect of foreign penetration. They conceived colonization as a "New Crusade", as the enforcement of Western religious or politico-cultural models aimed at humiliating and annihilating Islam; they interpreted the tasks of anticolonialist struggle mainly in terms of the modernization of religion and strengthening Muslim solidarity.

The religious currents which started with Nahda are divided into "fundamentalist" and "reformist" ones. Such a division, though indicative of the existing trends in the Arab World, appear to be somewhat schematic, since it is very difficult to separate the given trends rigidly.6

6. For instance, the writings of Afghani and Abdu are labelled in the literature once as "Islamic fundamentalism" then as "Islamic reformism". On the other hand, reforms were not alien even to the thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood (al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun) generally described as "hard-core fundamentalist". see Anwar Abdel Malek, "La pensee Arabe Contemporaine", (in Hungarian) in Development Studies Eotvos L. University, vol. 3, (Budapest, 1981), pp. 416-19.
From the ideas of Rifa Badawi Rafi al-Tahtawi (1801-1873) both the "fundamentalist" and "reformist" trends could derive inspiration, since his ideas simultaneously reflected the impact of Western ideologies, mainly the Enlightenment and religious dogmas. This is why A. Hourani called Tahtawi a "conventional Islamic thinker". Tahtawi was aware of the changed character of certain legal, political and educational innovations. In his writings he made a distinction between brotherhood in belonging to a country (national element) and brotherhood manifested in belonging to religion (religious element). He considered the *Umma* as amalgam of separate peoples and countries and hence examined the history of Egypt in a different context.

The ideas of two influential ideologists of Islamic reformation, Jamaleddin al-Afghani (1839-1897) and Mohamed Abdu (1849-1905) were classified by A. Laroui under the term "traditionalist reformism". On the one hand they adhered to the fundamental tenets of Islam which they considered to be immutable, and on the other,

they proclaimed that for a successful struggle against foreign political, spiritual, and social penetration, one has to free Islam from the ballast of centuries and to return to the original religion and to re-interpret it freely under new conditions, to master the results of Western culture and technology thus adjusting faith and science without incorporating the decadent morals of Europe.

Afghani underscored the importance of struggle against religious dogmatism and advocated freedom to question, debate and research.\textsuperscript{10} Beside pointing out the necessity of limiting the power of the rulers, Abdu's chief principle was the lifting of Taklid by which he meant renewal of both religious laws and social practice. However, the fundamentalist approach was not alien to him. His endeavour was to teach the true faith and morals of Islam drawing from its genuine sources he wrote.\textsuperscript{11} In his essays and articles Abdu focused on the common good which he considered to be achievable by a just despot, limited by the people's will, by the parliamentary system and by judicial reforms especially in family law, language, education and book-publishing.

\textsuperscript{10} Jamal \textit{Ed-d}in al-Afghani, "On Religion", in Malek, n. 6, p. 49.

\textsuperscript{11} Ahmed, n. 8, pp. 15-17.
In his projects he paid equal attention to the traditions of Sharia and the new demands for reforms. 12

The essence of pan-Islamism, as conceived by Afghani and some of his successors is the unity of Muslim community over classes and nations, i.e., their political cohesion on the basis of Islam under the rule of the Caliph. In Afghani's view, the basis of the Islamic state was rooted in religious solidarity among Muslims and its decline was caused by the dilution of that solidarity. "Religion is the first effective mechanism of creating solidarity... the real Muslim solidarity is far more efficient than nationalist solidarity", he wrote. 13

Afghani's pan-Islamism, though it undoubtedly contributed to the development of anti-British opposition, constituted a theoretical step-back compared to the open community-concept of Tahtawi. Abdu did not endorse it and his disciples, who were organisers and leaders of political parties at the turn of the century, began outlining the national thought.

12. Mohamed Abdu, "Only a Just Despot Could Ensure the Renaissance of the Orient", in Malek, n. 6, pp. 61-63.
Abdallah an-Nadim (1844-1896) was the first to turn to Tahtawi's ideas. In his view, the Egyptians, over and above their religious identity, are bound together by national ties. He proclaimed, "Let us preserve Egypt for the Egyptians".  

Mustafa Kamel (1874-1908), leader of the youth wing of the National Party (Hizb al-Watani), and the watanists, rejected pan-Islamism. They believed that the Ottoman Sultan would not liberate them from the British. Kamel said in his speech on October 22, 1907, "We cannot win independence by help from others. We have to work for it ourselves. Life and individual a nation must be strong and well equipped to be able to defend its honour, life and property. Those who count on others to secure their independence are deluded". Lutfi as-Sayyid (1872-1953) another disciple of Abdu, founder of al-Jarida, the daily of Umma Party and a liberal nationalist rejected pan-Islamism, as an experiment which does not protect Egyptians against European hegemony on the contrary, it deprives them of their more than 6,000 year-old national identity. In his opinion, the criteria for a nation was not its religion but its territorial unity and a specific

14. Karpat, n. 7, p. 84.
15. Ahmed, n. 8, p. 77.
national character. His nationalism was based on theoretical acknowledgement of the mutual interest in social consensus. In his view nation is the bearer of sovereignty, its main pillars are civil and political freedom, constitutionalism and parliamentarism. Lutfi as-Sayyid and his party were supporters of a free and Western-oriented Egypt. This concept was also adopted by the Wafd Party.

Among Abdu's disciples it was only Rashid Rida (1865-1935) who accepted and further developed the pan-Islamic idea. He laid emphasis on the immutability of Islam's fundamental tenets and strongly criticised Muslims for not following the precepts of their religion. He wrote that the country where a Muslim is born, is only a part of his religious fatherland, millions of Muslims of the world are parts of a larger body and the Holy War (Jihad) "is the task of each of them when Muslims are attacked by the enemy or a part of their territory is occupied".

By the end of the 1910s, the Egyptian national movement distanced itself from pan-Islamism and a secular

17. Ibid., pp. 58-61.
18. Malek, n. 6, pp. 231-37 and Rodinson, Ch. 1, n. 31, pp. 149-50.
humanist national thought was formed, which equally rejected rigid adherence to the traditions and uncritical transfer of modern values and considered Egyptian national interest and progress as primordial.

For national progress, various parties worked out political programmes. The Umma Party declared cooperation with the British as possible and wished to achieve independence gradually by legal means. The party's ideas on domestic policy were aimed at adopting parliamentarism, with the leading role of the aristocracy, in accordance with the interests of the leaders of the party who were landlords. The Watanists, with their massive popular support, had a more progressive programme: they demanded an immediate and total autonomy including the protection of the country's economic interests and an independent system of people's deputies, stressing material and intellectual uplift of the masses along with their participation in political life. The third force, the Constitutional Reform Party of Ali Youssef, could not become an important political factor. Its demands did not go beyond the recognition of the Khedive and certain proposals for British withdrawal and for the "Egyptianization" of political life.
2. From the beginning of the 1920s, the changed situation also made its impact upon the national movement. After the end of the Ottoman Empire, the dependence meant only the British rule and as a result a number of pan-Islamic and Ottomanist slogans lost their relevance. The British, the Royal Court and the compradorial groups attempted to delay or stall structural changes. The new bourgeoisie and middle strata established their political movements aimed at independence and genuine national development.

Expanding relations with the capitalist West brought to the fore the question of foreign values and the dilemma of the impact of "two cultural circles" i.e., the contradiction between the old and new and national and Western. These contradictions sharpened during and after the Second World War and gave impetus to those ideas and movements which linked the question of independence with objectives of transformation of social relations.

Under such conditions, secularization of social thought continued to take place. Secular nationalism became the dominant trend of the epoch. Nationalism in the Arab World emerged with different contents in different countries and in different historical stages, i.e., under changing conditions of power relations between
social forces on the one hand and between the colonizers and the national movement on the other.

Egyptian nationalism between the two world wars has been described by Mahmoud-Hussein as follows: "Refusing the double temptation of integratory traditionalism which dreamt about a clean form of theocratic state on the one hand and of modernism, which openly surrendered to the West on the other; the nationalist current very truly expressed the sounding search by the mixed stratum for a pragmatic synthesis of a certain fidelity to the ancestors and of apprenticeship to Western capitalists." This "sounding search", from Tahtawi to the Watanists and Lutfi as-Sayyid, had been enriched with new features from the 1920s, and manifested itself basically in two trends, the local national thought and pan-Arab ideas. Particular nationalism by itself covers many trends. Some intellectuals while searching for the roots of the Egyptian nation, discovered a specific, non-Muslim and non-Arab element in their history. The representatives of Pharaonism, Mustafa al-Manfaluti, Ahmed Shawky, Tawfik al-Hakim and others view the Egyptians of today as direct descendants of the ancient Egyptians and heirs

to the Pharaonic civilization. Some of them such as Hussein Heikal, believed that the prosperity of the country lay in professing continuity and by reconstructing the Pharaonic statehood. Others like Taha Hussein suggested that the ancient Egyptian culture could be considered as a part of the Mediterranean civilisation. The Young Egypt (MISR AL-FATAT) founded by Ahmed Hussain in 1933 affirmed Egypt as warden and preserver of each and every culture. The spokesmen of a third variety of local nationalism (Lutfi as-Sayyid, Salama Mussa), recommended total "Egyptianzation" (TAMSIR) of language and culture as a means of focusing national identity.

The predominance of particular nationalism had been relevant in Egypt up till the 1952 revolution however, from the 1930s, especially under the impact of the Palestinian revolt, the influence of pan-Arabist ideas intensified. Pan-Arabism does not recognise borders, which could maintain the separation of the Asian-Arab provinces of the former Ottoman Empire.

Sati al-Husri, a theoretician of pan-Arab thought, who was of Syrian origin and had lived in Egypt for a long time wrote: "The existing Arab states were formed not in accordance with the will of their citizens but as a result of bargains and manipulations of the imperialist
powers. Differences and deviations which we can observe now between Arab states regarding their legislation, administration, economic institutions or political tendencies, are all inherited from the age of imperialist occupation.\textsuperscript{20}

Egyptian ideologists of pan-Arabism viewed nationalism as an ideology that divided the Arabs. Some of them visualised Arab unity in the framework of total integration or in the form of loose, confederative relations, where Egypt would keep her autonomy. Others devoted their attention to the history of the Arab Caliphate and foresaw the future of Arab unity in the reconstruction of the institutions of the Caliphate. Some influential ideologists of the Wafd rejected revitalisation of the Caliphate and instead favoured a new, modern political setup.\textsuperscript{21}

Egyptian theoreticians of Arab unity paid great attention to certain factors such as the language, ethnic features and community of culture and interests. They

\textsuperscript{20} Sati al-Husri, "The Primacy of Arabism", in Malek, n. 6, pp. 147-54.

\textsuperscript{21} For the views of various pan-Arabist writers see Z.I. Levin, RazvitiyeArabskogo obschestvennogo Soznaniya (The Development of Arab Social Consciousness), (Moscow, 1979), pp. 42-57.
did not consider religion as an exclusive criterion for belonging to the Arab nation but only as one of the elements of common culture. They all agreed however that Egypt was a part of the family of Arab peoples. This was formulated by one of the main theoreticians of the Wafd Party, Makram Ebeid in 1935 as follows: "Egyptians are Arabs... Arab unity is a factual reality... Our future will rally us around one common ideal, which will unite us, keep us in one mass, create one union from our countries, i.e., one great fatherland that may divide into more different fatherlands but being unified and bound to the great fatherland by their general national characteristics". 22

Another common feature of pan-Arabist ideologies is that they underestimate the factors separating Arab countries with different levels of socio-economic development and different stages of maturity of the national movement. The only exception is the left wing of the national movement which, as pointed out by A.A. Malek: "... stresses cultural unity and anti-imperialist struggle and favours a more elastic Arab unity of federative-confederative type which would appreciate national character and experiences of every people of the Arab World". 23

23. Ibid., p. 429.
The position taken up here is that particular and pan-Arab kinds of nationalism cannot be strictly separated from each other because both form the two sides of the same historic momentum, viz., the efforts by the ruling classes to realise their interests. Pan-Arabism had progressive features in Egypt also in as much as it represented national struggle of Arab peoples against imperialism. However, under specific conditions of Egypt, it had expressed from the very beginning the hegemonic ambitions of the ruling classes on the one hand, and the aspirations of the rising national bourgeoisie for gaining new markets in the region. It was not by chance that the British were not strictly against pan-Arabist activities; they only tried to lead them in a particular direction, conducive to their political objectives.

Similarly, it is difficult to draw a line between the ideas of Arab and Muslim unity, though there are exclusive elements in them. A striking example is the coeval appearance of the two in the works of Rashid Rida and Sati al-Husri, or the combination of three "levels" of nationalism viz., national unity, pan-Arab unity and pan-Islamic unity in the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The most organised political force in the
period between the two world wars was the Wafd Party. Sohdi Attia as-Shafi, analysing the party's history, came to the conclusion that it was a history of ambiguities, emanating from the mixed class basis of the party. The aristocratic wing of the party advocated "mutual contacts with the British in the frame of the Protectorate", while the capitalist group of the party headed by Saad Zaghloul stood for complete independence. After the most conservative landlords had quit the Wafd and founded new parties, the Wafd became somewhat radicalised, grew into a huge party and won each and every election. The party stood on the nationalist currents and parliamentarism of the age. As the leading force of the national movement, its tactics were to compromise with the British and local monarchist parties. It had a role in achieving formal independence and the constitution and during its decade in power it executed a few progressive measures such as trade union laws or protection of labourers. However, its leaders were reluctant to carry out land reforms or the reorganisation of armed forces. The party did not generally represent the interest of the masses and banned the Communist Party and trade unions time and again.

Finally, by the beginning of the 1950s, it had lost its

24. as-Shafi, Ch. I, n. 42, p. 69.
popular basis and become unable to lead the national movement.

The attainment of formal independence and the first constitution had a "narcotic impact" in the beginning, blurring the consciousness as regards dependence. But later it became obvious that foreign rule had placed national development within narrow confines, that the political structure of the monarchy was unable to integrate the interests of the bourgeoisie and other new classes and that the constitution and the parliament by themselves did not offer guarantees for the realisation of democracy. Discontent generated by deterioration in the economic situation, along with political turbulence, spread among large sections of the population and further intensified by the impact of such global events as the rise of Fascism. This discontent manifested itself against the ideas and political structures adopted from the West which were unable to provide radical and constructive responses to the challenges. Youth, students and the middle classes turned their back on Wafd and on other traditional parties and joined new organisations.

The movement of Muslim Brotherhood founded in 1928-29, tried to articulate the aspirations of the masses through integration of existing nationalist and
religious-fundamentalist currents and deepening their radicalism. The objectives of the organisation as outlined by its founder Hassan al-Banna, were the struggle against foreign rule and Westernization, return to the religious precepts and traditions, foundation of Muslim State and total Islamization of societies.  

In Hassan al-Banna's view, the main cause of social problems lay in the deviation from the teaching of the Prophet, in the adoption of Western life style. "The historic process of the decline of Islam" can be stopped by rejecting "Western materialism and status patterns" and by return to the "noble and honourable moral" of Islam. The main tool for achieving this is the creation of a State built on the political and legal ideas of Islam. This will ensure class-cooperation and unity on the national level upon which Arab unity and Islamic unity will then be built.  

The Muslim Brotherhood stood for the independence of Egypt, unity of the Nile Valley, re-establishment of the Caliphate, abolition of the party system and prohibition. The Brotherhood declared Islam to be "the general law of Heaven and Earth" enjoining upon its members

26. Ibid.
to abandon alien habits to boycott non-Muslim educational institutions, books and publications, to purchase domestic goods and products made in Muslim countries and to devote themselves to the cause of religion and to the Brotherhood.

The activities of the organisation covered a large area of religious and secular duties. In Hassan al-Banna's definition the Brotherhood is "A Salafi reform-movement, a Sunnite orthodoxy, a theory of the Sufi mystics, a political organisation, a sporting club, a cultural and scientific society, an economic enterprise and social thought." Therefore, some Western writers describe the Brotherhood as total, even totalitarian movement. From the 1930s, its activities also included mosque-building, organisation of religious education, literary courses, an establishment of industrial and commercial firms, lectures, seminars, propaganda-fora and publishing. At the end of the 1940s they started a struggle for massive political support and power. The various components of their tactics were: avoiding disputes with other streams of thought, principle of gradualism, flexible propaganda tailored to the characteristics of each social group, high secrecy.

27. Hassan al-Banna, "Credo des Freres Musulmans", in Malek, n. 6, pp. 69-73.
cooperation with other underground movements like the "Free Officers", and belligerent attitude towards all internal or external forces which were critical of return to Islam. Their activities, especially the terrorists methods caused concern to the government which ultimately banned the organization.

The estimated number of members of the Muslim Brotherhood was 1.5 to 2 million by the end of the 1940s. Their influence was especially significant among the middle classes, the students and intellectuals and clerks but Workers and peasants were also influenced by the Brotherhood. The anti-foreign stance and solidarity with the Palestinian cause helped the Brotherhood to extend its influence to many Arab countries. Puritan life style of the leaders of the Brotherhood which was in sharp contrast to that of the ruling elite, contributed to its mass support. The organization was able to strike root through its simple slogans, discipline and conspiration.

However, the theoretical weaknesses of the Brotherhood soon became apparent. Hassan al-Banna and his supporters were not able to re-formulate the classical Muslim state theory nor the legal and ethical principles in conformity with the age. Their understanding of world affairs did not reflect a synthesis. Their outlook
combined in itself the pan-Islamic and nationalist trends.

The Muslim Brotherhood adequately expressed the discontent of traditional sectors badly hit by colonialism but were unable to survive as a significant political factor primarily because they referred to very old and abstract sources which could not meet the needs of modernization of Egypt in the mid-Twentieth century. Thus it could capture only the emotions and not the deeper interests of the masses while its programme was only a manifestation of conservative reformism of the Arab middle class. 29

Marxist ideas came to Egypt mainly in their Western reformist form. Salama Moussa (1887-1959), a political writer of repute made a great contribution in this regard. He condemned colonialism and imperialism but pleaded for Western civilisation and Egyptianization of culture. He believed that backwardness could be checked through socialism and removal of dependence. He laid great emphasis on the modernization of education and the reform of language. He maintained that Arabic has to be a rich and fertile language capable of creating

words necessary for civilized men and absorbing new terms to meet the needs of modern life. He criticised blind adherence to linguistic traditions and pleaded for the adoption of Latin letters. He admitted the difference between the levels of development in his country and the West. He stood for the development of national market and industry and for betterment of the situation of the fellahs. He regarded himself as part of Islamic tradition although he was a Copt. "Islam is the religion of my fatherland and it is my duty to protect it" - he wrote. His hypothesis with regard to the kinship with European peoples seems ambiguous and unmatured.

The first communist groups in Egypt were formed in 1918, in Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said by Antun Marun, Josef Rosenthal and Hosni al-Arabi. The Communist Party of Egypt was founded in 1922-23. The main objectives of the Party's 1923 programme were: abolition of the absolutist monarchy, democratisation of political life, improvement in the condition of workers, recognition of women's rights and compulsory and free education. The Party stood for total independence of Egypt, and

unity of Egypt and the Sudan. It was the first to demand the nationalisation of Suez Canal and called for recognition of Soviet-Russia.\textsuperscript{32}

The Party, although small, organised strikes and other trade union activities. But it had to suspend its activities for about two decades after the government issued repressive laws in 1924. The party begun to reorganize itself in the Second World War. The various communist groups formed the Democratic Movement for National Liberation (HADITU) after the war. HADITU played an important role in the formation of the National Popular Front in August 1947, which also included the Wafd, some smaller socialist groups, progressive students and women's organizations.

The main points of the Front's programme were:

"(i) Military, political and economic struggle for liberation. (ii) Struggle against the USA, British and other imperialist pressure. (iii) Unity of the Nile Valley. (iv) Talks for independence. (v) Struggle for political democracy, freedom and independence of all peoples. (vi) Promoting social justice and better living conditions".\textsuperscript{33} The Front played an important

\textsuperscript{32} See the text of the programme in as-Shafi, Ch. 1, no. 42, pp. 66-68.

\textsuperscript{33} Leftist Organizations in Egypt (1940-1950), HADITU Publications (Cairo, 1955), p. 277.
role in the mass movement in the 1940s.

The political objectives of the HADITU exceeded the above programme. Its 1951 Manifesto declared itself as the organization of the Egyptian working class and the representative of patriotic forces. It was based on the Marxist-Leninist theory of class-struggle and its main objective, socialist construction. The programme stood for the liquidation of the positions of foreign monopolies, nationalization of big capital, protection of small and middle capital and formation of democratic people's front government. It called for separation of religion and state, free education, social and health services. 34

However, the Egyptian communist movement could not become an effective political factor. The impact of organizational weakness was the main cause of the drawbacks along with the composition of the movement. The majority of the cadres of the rival communist groups consisted of intellectuals and students of bourgeois origin, only one-tenth were workers and peasants. 35 It was due to this that land reforms and the peasant question

34. For the resume of the declaration, see Belyaev-Primakov, Ch. 1, n. 43, p. 57.

35. Ibid., p. 56.
were neglected. The Commintern debates especially between the two world wars, reflecting uncertainties in the interpretation of proletarian dictatorship, of alliances, sectarian separatism and ambiguous relation to the bourgeoisie made also their weakening impact on the Egyptian communist movement.

The Organization of Free Officers was an illegal movement which had been in more or less advanced form since 1939. Free Officers could enter the Military Academy in larger numbers in the second half of the 1930s, to meet the increasing demand for new officers for the army. The recruitment to the army, after the British-Egyptian Treaty was signed in 1936, did not depend any longer on the unwritten condition of belonging to the ruling elite.

With this was connected the view (widely spread, most probably on the basis of P. Vatikiotis's and A.A. Malek's remarks) - that the leaders of the organization, with very few exceptions, came from urban and rural petty bourgeoisie. It is true that the Free Officers did not generally come from great families of landlords or the

financial aristocracy which ensured the replace of high officers and generals. On the basis of published biographical data, it can be stated that the members of the inner circle of the movement had quite a few bourgeois ties: they belonged neither to the "upper hundreds" nor to the working people nor to petty bourgeoisie. There were members of petty bourgeois origin among them, especially in the second lines, but the majority belonged the middle strata of the bourgeoisie.37

The young officers lacked a systematic social theory; even their political programme evolved gradually, after the revolution. The movement's objectives could not be publicised in written form because of its secret character; they became public only in 1950-51. Facts on the evolution of the theoretical outlook of the movement can be gathered from the biographies and memoirs published subsequently.38 Now it is well known that the

37. Eliezer Be'eri in his book proved with biographical data that for instance Mohammed Naquib, Sarwat Okasha and the Sabri brothers came from the aristocracy, other members of the Revolutionary Command Council like Zakharia and Khaled Mohieddin, A.L. al-Boghldi, Abdel Hakim Amer were sons of landlords. There was in the families of Nasser and Sadat a number of well-to-do entrepreneurs and government functionaries. Eliezer Be'eri, Army Officers in Arab Politics and Society (New York, 1970), pp. 483-96.

Free Officer's thought developed under the impact of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, German and Italian national movements of the Nineteenth century, ideas of Gandhi, Kamal Ataturk and, from among Egyptian reformers, Mohammed Abdu and Mustafa Kamel. Among the favourite books of young Nasser were biographies of Alexander the Great, Ceasar, Napoleon and Nelson, writings of Bismarck, Garibaldi, Foch and Churchill, works of Voltaire, Dickens, Ahmed Shawki, Ali al-Ghayyati and Tawfik al-Hakim. The young officers were impressed by Mohamed Ali's experiment, the Orabi-revolt and the 1919 revolution. A few of them recognised social dependence and backwardness as early as in their school-years, along with the necessity to fight the corrupt monarchy.

Their first personal political experiences came from the activities of students in the 1930s: they took part in protests and anti-British demonstrations. Nasser was elected president of the Students Union of Egypt and he got slightly wounded in a demonstration in 1935. At the age of 17, he came up with the idea of putting an end to imperialism, monarchy and feudalism. In a letter to one of his schoolmates he wrote: "We have to prepare for the battle.... The situation today is critical... in Egypt, the country is in a state of despair. Government is corrupt. Who is able to change this?... Where is the nationalism of 1919? Where are those who are ready
to devote their lives to the independence of their country." 39

New graduate officers were easily convinced in their very first postings about the submission of the army to the British and about the incompetence of their commanders. This experience added to their discontent with the social conditions which, during the Second World War and the first Palestinian war, deepened into conviction. Free officers, then almost ranking captains or majors, were sent to the frontlines ill-trained and poorly equipped. So they soon came to the conclusion that the failures of the army were rooted in the untenable social and administrative conditions. "What is happening to us here [in Palestine] is happening there [in Egypt] only on a greater scale..." wrote Nasser later in The Philosophy of the Revolution. 40

Colonel Ahmed Abdel Aziz, one of the commanders and idol of the young officers said before his death to Nasser: "Listen, Gamal, the supreme struggle is in Egypt." 41


40. Ibid., p. 13.

41. Ibid., p. 12.
At this stage, the basic elements of their political programme were formulated. In 1950, in a publication, "Voice of Free Officers", these elements were summarised as under:

"1. Abolition of the rule of foreign imperialists and their domestic supporters.
2. Setting up a strong national army.
3. Creation of a healthy and constitutional form of power".  

Nasser and his group at that time were not able to go beyond these general formulas. However, the above points were supplemented by three more: abolition of feudalism, liquidation of the dominance of capital over government and establishment of social justice.

The Organisation soon recognised the necessity for action. It took only a short time for Nasser to drop the tactics based on individual terror. However, some of his friends-in-arms, notably, Anwar al-Sadat

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preferred that tactics. By the beginning of the 1950s, secret cells consisting of five-members, infiltrated almost the whole army.

In 1950, the Standing Committee of the organisation was set up. Conspiratorial activities within the army were directed by Nasser, external relations by Sadat. The Free Officers built active contacts with almost all political groups. For a long time they supported Wafd's objectives and anti-British measures of its government.

The officers extended only nominal help to anti-British guerrilla-war. "We agreed with their objectives but did not trust the intentions of the participants" wrote General Mohamed Naguib.43 With brief interruptions they also cooperated with Muslim Brotherhood.

The question of the Free Officers' cooperation with the German secret service and with certain domestic pro-Fascist organizations during the war deserves special attention, since many authors are inclined to attribute these ties to the attraction of some members of the movement to Nazism. To get rid of the British rule by any

43. Naguib, n. 38, p. 94.
means, including support even to Rommel, was a common, jointly accepted purpose of Free Officers.\textsuperscript{44} Their sympathy for the Germans during the war had quite a different connotation in Egypt under an effective British rule. However, it would be erroneous to ignore the pro-Nazi attitude of a few members of the movement.\textsuperscript{45}

Nasser and his associates strove to gain political allies. However, by the beginning of the 1950s, it became clear to them that from among the organised forces of society it was only the army which would bring about the desired changes. Their belief was based on a profound knowledge of the realities of Egyptian situation. By that time, the Wafd had proved incapable of leading the masses; other parties offered no political alternative either. The Muslim Brotherhood was banned and the divided and weak left was hit by arrests. To cite Khaled Mohieddin, "The Army emerged the only national

\textsuperscript{44} A sign of this was the "German-Egyptian Treaty" drafted by Cairo residents of the movement led by Sadat in the beginning of 1942. The draft document offered, in exchange for the total independence in internal and external policies the services of the movement to the German Army. For more details, see Andras Kereszty, \textit{A Pharaoh in the Twentieth Century} (in Hungarian), (Budapest, 1982), pp. 51-52.

\textsuperscript{45} Kereszty cites an editorial by Sadat in an 1953 issue of Al-Ghumhuriyya, glorifying Hitler. Ibid., p. 58.
force which had not been hit". 46

Here, it would be necessary to refer back to the earlier observation that in 1952, it was not the whole national bourgeoisie but only its upper elite and its political organisations, which failed to meet the challenge. The Organization of Free Officers could become a force capable of filling the political vacuum within the class-structure, not only because of its disciplined, mobilised cadre, arms and good tactics but also because its demands, being typically democratic and national, were in full accord with the aspirations of the rising class. This is the reason why the shift of power was swift and bloodless. Neither the Wafd nor the other forces had any difficulty in tolerating the views of the Officers and consequently, none of them took any step to reveal the conspiracy till the last moment. Moreover, they expected the officers, now in power, with whom they had good relations, to implement their own political programme.