CHAPTER 3

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The Free Officers before 1952 lacked a consistent social concept and political programme. "What we all wanted", said Nasser in an interview in June 1953, "was to purge the army, rid the country of foreign occupation and establish a clean, fair government which would sincerely work for the good of the people. Once in power, we found ourselves faced with the difficult problem of establishing political, social and economic programme. It was necessary to improvise".¹

This "improvisation" has been depicted by almost every writer on Nasserism. Nasser himself wrote later: "We reached our ideology as a natural outcome of experiences... We do not set up theories for searching our lives, we rather devote our lives to finding the theories... Freedom of action preceded ideology so ideologies were products of nature. We drew our ideology from events thus preventing any ideology to force himself upon us".²

The first slogans of the officers were non-ideological. During the 1952-54 showdowns their most important objective was to remain in power, possibly on the basis of national unity, without class-antagonism, without alienating the politically significant forces, except the compradors, higher strata of landlords and the British. "There are people who find those slogans temporary improvisation", wrote Egyptian historian and philosopher Abbas Mahmoud al-Akkad, "in Egypt there is no exclusive ideology or series of principles that would contradict other ideas, neither is there any national interest that would conflict with that of other nations. These slogans constitute a unique Egyptian variant and not oppose anyone, do not call for organisation against anyone". 3

The six-point political programme of the Free Officers was no less general, but revealed more about their intentions. The six objectives were: (1) Liquidation of imperialism and its domestic agents. (2) Abolition of feudalism. (3) Elimination of monopolies and

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capital's power over the Government. (4) Setting up a strong, national army. (5) Setting up a system of social justice. (6) Establishing a solid, democratic system". 4 Ideas of national independence and democracy in the programme reflected the interest of Egyptian petty and middle strata but did not harm economic interests of the big capital as a whole and expressed the wishes of the broad masses. Nasserism as political thought and practice can be identified in its concrete reality as a process of implementation of the above objectives and of their continuous re-interpretation and further development, under the effect of practical experience.

The post-1952 history of Nasserism can be divided into two periods: 1952-61 and 1961-67. In the first period, the dominant factor was the formation of anti-imperialist nationalism and the emergence of a new international role. In the second period, the tasks of social transformation came to the front.

There are two basic documents belonging to the

two periods. The origins of the Nasserite political thinking can be identified in Nasser's booklet *The Philosophy of the Revolution*. In it, Nasser openly revealed those personal, and at the same time, national dilemmas which the officers had to face from the very first day in power.  

The most important political document of the second stage was *The Charter* published in 1961. This is a document through which one can get acquainted, in more or less systematic form, with the key principles of Arab Socialism propounded in the beginning of the 1960s.

From these two documents one can identify the evolution of Nasserite thought described by Heikal as follows:

Nasser, in his pragmatic way, through conclusions drawn from his own experiences, came to a series of perceptions which can be summarized as follows: there is no real political independence without economic independence and in our days and underdeveloped country can obtain means necessary for the

5. Gen. Mohammed Naguib, the first head of the Revolutionary Government labelled the booklet as "The Psychology of the Revolution". In Naguib's view the book hardly contains philosophical discussions; it is rather full of subjective notions and emotional overtones. Naguib, Ch. 2, n. 38, p. 10.
foundation of its economic development only from the Soviet Union and socialist countries. And with this set of perceptions were connected one internal and one external political lesson. The internal: rapid economic development requires state control of the main resources of the country, a firm restriction of the private sector, improvement in the situation of working masses. The external: since in the Middle East the main contradiction lies between imperialism and Arab national liberation movement, and since imperialism is the common enemy of the Soviet Union and of the Arab national liberation movement, only such an anti-imperialist struggle can be successful which is based upon collaboration of progressive Arab countries and their alliance with the Soviet Union.6

It is obvious from Heikal's summary that crucial issues of the Egyptian national movement, in their essence, could be formulated in the early postcolonial stage in the same way as in the period of semi-colonial dependence. The objectives of the afore-mentioned six-point programme are all concerning the same issues since the first point applies to anti-imperialist external policy, the rest cover the new socio-economic and political setup.

The evolution of Nasserism can be examined at the following three levels:

1. Idea of national independence: perception of the

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attitude of imperialism and of the possible international role of Egypt.

2. Social idea: perception of adequate requirements of eradication of backwardness and of modernization; the reflection of this perception in the concept of Arab Socialism.


For the Free Officers, the obstacles to national independence in the beginning were "only" the British occupation and the Jewish state. Their anti-imperialism started as a "personified anti-colonialism". Among "the forces preparing a tightly woven conspiracy against the Arab nation" mentioned in The Philosophy of the Revolution "the main enemy was that great power laying round the whole region a siege". It was British imperialism that inspired the establishment of Middle-East Defence Organization (MEDO), of Fertile Crescent, Baghdad Pact and other colonialist pacts, striving to maintain their positions in West Asia. "Even Israel was nothing but a facet of this imperialism", since "had not Palestine fallen under the British Mandate, Zionism could have never found the support it needed
to realise the national home project".7

For Nasser, the idea of liberation in 1952-54 was synonymous with British withdrawal. He considered other Western powers as enemies in so far as they supported colonial policy of Great Britain.8 This explains the friendly gestures of the Free Officers to the United States and to a number of European countries to obtain their support. Their anti-British stand became less sharp after signing the evacuation treaty in 1954. In his speech at the singing ceremony Nasser declared:

"The ugly page of Anglo-Egyptian relations has been turned and another page is being written.... There is now no reason why Britain and Egypt should not work constructively together.9 In 1956, the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the tripartite aggression again made the anti-British, anti-colonialist element the focus of Egyptian foreign policy.

Anti-colonialist features broadened into anti-imperialist ones basically on account of the role of the

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USA in West Asia in the second half of the 1950s, and arose from the confrontation of US expansionist endeavours with the Nasserite foreign policy. In the first years after 1952, the Free Officers sympathised with the United States, with her increased prestige after the Second World War, with the American way of life and appreciated the American attitude during the Suez aggression which they labelled "constructively neutral". At the same time, they recognised that their newly gained independence was threatened no so much by England whose influence was on the decline but chiefly by certain endeavours incorporated in the Eisenhower-doctrine aiming to force Egypt and other


11. The Eisenhower-doctrine, in other words, the "vacuum-theory" was formulated in the American President's address of January 5, 1956. Its basic idea was the geographic extension of the Truman-principle, i.e., the vacuum left by the decreasing influence of the former colonizers should be filled up by the US in West Asia, involving the countries of the region in economic and military pacts which, in case of necessity, could contain the Communist threat with arms. For details, see Istvan Kende, Hot Peace and Cold War (in Hungarian), (Budapest, 1970), pp. 305-307.
liberated Arab countries in Anti-Soviet pacts. In Nasser's view the "vacuum" left behind by the British in West Asia ought to be filled not by American or any other imperialism but by the Arabs themselves. And Egypt could assure her independence only by forming her international image in accordance with basic principles adopted at the Bandung Conference as well as at a series of bilateral and multilateral fora held in the second half of the 1950s, i.e., in the spirit of "positive neutrality" and non-alignment.

Mohammed Hassanein Heikal analysed the evolution of the nationalist foreign policy in the Foreign Affairs. He noted three important developments in West Asia after the Second World War. (1) the increasing influence of the Soviet Union, (2) intensification of anti-colonial struggle, and (3) the formation of the State of Israel. A struggle between two political strategies, i.e., the "Middle East System" and the "Arab system" became dominant in the region in the 1950s. The "Middle-East


system", mobilised by the US and her NATO-allies, comprised partly non-Arab West Asian countries such as Turkey, Pakistan, Iran and Israel and partly, conservative Arab monarchies which were apprehensive of Nasser's pan-Arabist and modernist ideas. It was through the "Arab system" that Nasser was able to enlist the support of Syria, Algeria and Iraq. In international affairs the system looked to the Soviet Union and the nonaligned movement and followed the principle of Arab unity. The conflict between the two systems, wrote Heikal, appeared in those Arab countries which were part of the "Arab system" but were reluctant to accept Nasserism such as Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and Jordan. Nasser recognised that since the Arab world and the Soviet Union have no common borders, there was no direct Soviet threat whatsoever. Communist infiltration, therefore, has to be contained not by joining imperialist-backed alliances rather in the internal economic and social front and by consolidating the spirit of nationalism and independence.14

It seems that the propaganda campaigns, aggressions and blockades by the USA and her allies were directed not merely against the "Bandung foreign policy" but also to contain socio-political reforms initiated by the Egyptian revolution. In The Charter Nasser wrote: "Armed imperialism pounced upon the people of Egypt because they were trying to realise their independence and achieve progress by making use of one of their own national resources which had for long been exploited by imperialism. The same objectives are attributed to the 1967 aggression, when the enemy was not only Israel but also the United States, with her economic, political and military support "and American intrigue was aimed at the liquidation of all revolutionary governments which did not obey... which resisted becoming a part of the spheres of influence." Here the main enemy was the US-imperialism which, in the 1950s, rejected Egypt's demands for arms and refused to finance the Aswan High Dam, so as "to try to destroy the Egyptian economy as a result of which the people would lose their faith and

overthrow the revolutionary government".\textsuperscript{17} Imperialism has flexible fighting methods, allies with the internal reaction and "hides behind the back of the bourgeoisie in the palaces erected by the exploitation of the masses", therefore, "the social struggle for people's rights and the anti-imperialist political struggle for the independence of the country mean essentially the same".\textsuperscript{18}

Imperialism in the 1960s, in Nasser's eyes, was a constant threat to society, detrimental to Egypt's progressive policies and its image in the Arab World. "Our revolution has been facing a threat for the last 15 years", said Nasser in May 1967 addressing Cairo workers. "Who is the source of this threat? My answer is: imperialism. Although we expelled imperialism from our territory, our principles and slogans do not let it rest, because they threaten its position in every Arab country. We are enemies of imperialism and we support those who are fighting for its expulsion from their own countries. Imperialism will never forget that we resisted its blocs and alliances...

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Nasser, "Address to the people", in n.8, p. 72.
it will never forget that we called on the nations to gain social freedom". In this speech America is portrayed as "a huge world power which leads our enemies, but which used to be seen by us in times of Roosevelt as the promoter of the cause of peace.... with a certain sympathy, but later it strove for world power and is leading worldwide counter-revolution. This United States sets economic blockade around us, exerts pressure on us and carries out anti-Egypt propaganda in the Arab countries".

The other important perception is connected with the evaluation of the role of Israel and with the approach to the problematics of the Arab-Israeli crisis. Israel's role had been considered by Nasser as sub-imperialist from the very beginning, assigned to that country by her Western supporters. In the speeches of Egyptian leaders, Israel was described as "the agent of imperialism", "an American colony", "Middle East bridgehead of imperialism" and the struggle against Israel was accepted as an integral part of the national liberation struggle of the Arabs. But the attitude of the Free

19. Ibid., pp. 169-70.
20. Ibid., pp. 170-1.
Officers towards Israel was not limited to an anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist position. One can read in The Philosophy of the Revolution that Nasser, as a grammar school student-leader, organised a protest strike against the Balfour-declaration which favoured establishing a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, forcibly usurped from the rightful owners of the land".  

In his later speeches Nasser mentioned that he was against Zionist expansionism only, not against the Jewish people.  

Inspite of such declarations, there is a lurking doubt about legitimacy of the State of Israel in Nasser's view. Consequently, he saw no solution to the conflict but in the annihilation of the Jewish state. "We started a battle against imperialism, against its objectives and its agent Israel which it uses for suppressing the Arab spirit and for liquidating Arab states", said Nasser on the fourth


22. Nasser declared: "Jews are our relatives. Moses was born in Egypt. They say we are anti-Semitic which is nonsense. We are Semitic ourselves". C.L. Sulzberger's interview with Nasser, International Herald Tribune, Paris, March 3, 1969, p. 6.
anniversary of the revolution. "They want to do away with us... as they have done away with the Arabs of Palestine and to make us a people of refugees. It is not by chance that the Zionists declare Great-Israel from the Nile up to the Euphrate.... We feel the danger and will protect our nation. We will spare no effort to reestablish the Arab motherland from the Atlantic Ocean up to the Persian Gulf".  

The illegitimacy of the State of Israel along with her elimination as the only solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and of the Palestinian problem, recur in Nasser's speeches and his correspondence with foreign statesmen in the 1960s.  

In April 1964 for instance, he said: "The presence of a state in the Middle-East, which is based exclusively on Judaism is unacceptable. Not only because such a state constitutes a foreign body in the Arab world but mainly because it, in the interests of its own survival and development, is always ready to


serve as a channel for foreign influences". Taking these statements into consideration, one needs to attribute almost no significance to the periodically recurring discussions as to which side actually did start the war in June 1967 or was Nasser's incriminating sentence about "pushing the Jews into the sea" really uttered. From the point of view of this "critique of ideology" the really important aspect here is that Nasserite nationalism, in this crucial respect, gave a partly racist reply to the racist challenge of Zionism.

The lessons of three Arab-Israeli wars led Nasser and his colleagues to the conclusion that the State of Israel was one of the realities of the region and her annihilation was not possible because of the military power equations, different levels of development, the international situation and the internal conditions in the Arab World. This was reflected in the more realistic and flexible handling of the conflict by Egypt between 1967-70 including the acceptance of Israel's right to exist.

25. Cited in Gilles Martinet, "Interview with Nasser" France Observateur, April 30, 1964, Paris (Hungarian translation) Articles from the International Press Budapest, MTI (Hungarian News Agency) 37/1964, p. 82.

26. This statement had been widely publicised in the press but has not been included in any of Nasser's speeches published so far.
Furthermore, Nasser maintained that since imperialism constituted a menace to the entire Arab world, the struggle against it should not be confined to narrow national but extended to an all-Arab level.

The concept of Arab unity, one of the basic principles of Nasserism, was formed gradually. In *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, Nasser did not use the term, however, "the Arab Circle" as an entity already figured in his thinking. "An event may happen in Cairo today", he wrote, "a similar event would happen in Damascus, Beirut, Amman, Baghdad or any other place". The same thought appeared in other form in his later writings: "The Arab nation is one body, every part of it has an impact on the others".

In his book Nasser suggested three circles of ties for Egypt.

We cannot... look at a map of the world not realising our place therein, and the role assigned to us by that position. Neither can we ignore that there is an Arab Circle surrounding us and that this Circle is as much a

part of us as we are a part of it; that our history has been merged with it and that its interests are linked with ours. These are actual facts and not mere words. Can we ignore that there is a continent of Africa in which fate has placed us and which is destined today to witness a terrible struggle for its future? This struggle affects us whether we want it or not.

Can we ignore that there is a Muslim World to which we are tied by bonds forged not only by religious faith but also by the fact of history? ... All these are fundamental facts, the roots of which lie deep in our life, whatever we do we cannot forget them or run away from them.29

For Nasser, "the Arab Circle" was foremost among the "three circles". "There is no doubt that the Arab Circle is the most important of all these circles and the circle most closely connected with us. Its history merges with ours. We suffered in common the same hardships, lived through the same crises and when we were trampled underfoot by the conquerors, it suffered with us the same fate. We are also bound by the ties of a common religion".30 The strength of the "Arab Circle" rests on three pillars: the "spiritual, material, religious bounds", "territorial and strategic unity" and the Arab oil production.31

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30. Ibid., p. 49.
31. Ibid., pp. 49-51.
Arab unity, as a category, was further elaborated in Nasser's speeches during 1954-55. In his address on the second anniversary of the revolution he said: "Egypt opened a new stage in her relations with Arab countries, the fraternal stage of tackling problems. The objective of the revolutionary government is to establish a united nation of the Arabs, working for the common cause. Their geographical position, their enormous contribution to civilization, their gigantic resources and relations with the Muslim Orient and with the Orient as a whole give them a strong position in the world".32 In the Preamble of the Constitution adopted on January 16, 1956 he confirmed that the Egyptian people "consciously accept their existence as part of the Arab entity and correctly acknowledges its responsibility and obligation in the common Arab struggle for the victory of Arab nation". Article No. 1 of the Constitution reads: "Egypt is a sovereign independent Arab state, a democratic republic, the Egyptian people is a part of the Arab nation".33

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The Nasserite interpretation of Arab unity is independent of and distinct from the "unity-projects" such as "Great-Syria", "Fertile Crescent", "MEDO" of the colonizers. Neither this can be considered a simple continuation of pan-Arabic thought between the two world wars. What is common in them is the idea of Arab connection: Nasser considered the borders dividing the Arab nation as artificial, temporary and maintained by the imperialists.\footnote{Nasser, n. 28, p. 19.}

The basic objective of Nasser's Arab nationalism is not only the restoration of the historic pan-Arab unity, but also the anti-imperialist commitment. In his speech, announcing the nationalization of the Suez Canal he said: "The imperialists want us to be their dependents and when they issue an order to respond to it.... We have pride in Arabism and our land cannot be sold for money."\footnote{Cited in Stephens, n. 1, p. 195.} In another place he said: "For Egypt, Arab unity is a source of permanent anxiety to the enemies of the Arab nation... a threat to all those who entertain ambitions in the Arab World. The implementation of total Arab unity includes the assurance of our freedom and independence, increases our strength.
and means also the removal of the expansionist dreams
of Israel". The joint communique of the Arab Socialist
Union of Egypt and the FLN of Algeria in 1965 stressed
that "Arab nationalism is the efficient weapon of the
Arab masses in the struggle for the consolidation of
their national independence and for social progress".

The anti-imperialist features of the foreign
policy based on the "three circles" are reflected in
Egypt's statements in Afro-Asian fora, in the conferences
of the non-aligned countries and in the UN, in her
militant stand in the Congo conflict, her active support
to national liberation movements of Algeria and Yemen,
and her rejection of the pan-Islamic pacts. These
efforts were basically inspired by the Egyptian revolu-
tion. In The Charter Nasser points out the dialec-
tical relations between the Egyptian and Arab revolution:
"The experiment of the Egyptian people had far-reaching
repercussions on the struggle of the Arab Nation. The
Revolution of the Egyptian people awakened the possibil-
ities of revolution in the entire Arab World. There
is no doubt that this awakening was one of the main


37. "Joint Communique of the ASU. C.C. and the delegation
of the F.L.N., Al Gumhuriya, April 12, 1965, Cairo,
p. 3. See in details: Tawfig V. Hasou, The Struggle
for the Arab World: Egypt's Nasser and the Arab League
factors in the success of the Revolution in Egypt". 38

In Nasserism, Egyptian nationalism and pan-Arabism were not strictly and mutually exclusive - the former also expressed Egypt's demand for a special role. Pan-Arab interests guided the establishment of the Egyptian-Syrian union in 1958. The struggle put up jointly by Egypt and Syria against the pacts accelerated the unification. Both countries believed that a united, strong state would be able to resist all external aggressions, hasten the process of democratization and make their model acceptable to the Arab World. The union soon disintegrated partly because of Saudi pressure, and partly as a consequence of the collision of expansionist interests of Egypt and Syria. Different historical and economic background also contributed to the disintegration. 39

There are three more aspects of Nasserite Arab nationalism in pre-1961 period. One is the consciousness of "Arab-superiority" reflected in Nasser's speeches in


the spring of 1960. He said, "The Arab people were born to lead and not to be led, you were born to lead the struggle on the path of freedom, national dignity and victory.... In you I see the invincible Arab nationalism which cannot be weakened or subjugated by any power". The second aspect is that Egypt ignored the sovereignty of other Arab states as shown in her intervention in the internal affairs of Yemen and her efforts to dominate the Arab League. The third aspect is that Nasser considered imperialism and communism equally as enemies of pan-Arab nationalism and Arab unity.

After the dissolution of the Egyptian-Syrian union, the Nasserite concept of Arab unity was re-formulated. Self-criticism and a certain introspection played a role in this process. Undoubtedly, the disintegration of the United Arab Republic made an impact on internal political conditions and contributed to the evolution of nationalism. In the new formulations, Arab unity was to be achieved gradually and subordinated

40. "Nasser's Speech in Homs", n. 28, p. 68.
41. For Egyptian predominance and manipulation of the League see Hasou, n. 37, pp. 17-47 and 160-68.
to the realization of social revolution through "union between the national, progressive, popular, movements in the Arab world". The Charter outlines the essence and prospects of the Arab unity as follows:

Arab unity is not a uniform constitutional form that must inevitably be applied. It is rather a long path with several stages leading to the ultimate aim. In the Arab World any nationalist government representing the will and struggle of the people within a framework of national independence is a step towards unity in the sense that it eliminates every contradiction between the government and the ultimate goal of unity. Any partial unity in the Arab World, expressing a popular will of two or more of the Arab peoples is an advanced step towards unity, drawing near the day of total unity, paving the way for it and extending its roots in the Arab soil. Such circumstances pave the way for total Arab unity.

In the 1960s, Nasser reiterated his concept of unity combining it with the notion of Arab Socialism. It would be interesting to cite his own words here: "In the past we thought that socialism was more difficult to gain than unity, but now we believe that to gain unity is more difficult than any other objectives of the Arab nation.... I used to be sure that the liberation of one Arab country would naturally bring about a closer relationship to and union with the other liberated

42. The Charter, p. 95.
43. Ibid., p. 93.
countries but now I know that the liberation is not yet the union. The union must be preceded by the liberation". 44

By the end of the decade, clearer and more realistic versions of this concept appeared. The recognition of the difficulties of the unity movement on one hand and of the multipolarity of the Arab World on the other was reflected in certain resolutions of the Third Congress of the Arab Socialist Union held on July 23, 1969, which declared that Egypt would not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of other Arab countries neither to force any single Arab state into such action for which it is not ready, nor to strive at "establishing such Arab axes that would turn against this or that Arab country". 45 This position constitutes a withdrawal from the earlier differentiation between "progressive and reactionary forces" of the Arab World and reflects certain compromises that Nasser had to make with the conservative oil-monarchies, chiefly with

44. Stenographic minutes of the talks between Nasser and Syrian and Iraqi leaders see Walid Khalidi and Yusuf Ibish, eds., Arab Political Documents (Beirut, 1963), and Karpat, Ch. 2, n. 7, pp. 275-94.

Saudi Arabia, after his massive involvement in the Yemen war. 46

Inconsistencies regarding the anti-imperialist element in Nasserite nationalism appeared not only in the political ideology but also in the practice of foreign and economic policies. During the first years in power, the Free Officers did not restrict the inflow of foreign capital, rather they encouraged it. The Law No. 120 of 1952 reduced the minimum compulsory Egyptian share in companies from 51 per cent, fixed in 1947, to 49 per cent. In 1952 a series of laws were adopted offering favourable conditions for investment, taxation and repatriation of foreign capital. 47

Expectations of the inflow of foreign capital could not be realized mainly for three reasons: (1) the narrow profit-making concerns of foreign private capital, (2) the political conditions of state capital-import, threatening the national sovereignty, and (3) the alienating effects of Nasser's foreign policy. Moreover,


47. Ibrahim, Ch. 1, n. 15, pp. 41-43 and Kubik, Ch. 1, n. 7, pp. 42-46.
Egypt had to face heavy economic sanctions for her anti-imperialist line. 48

The perception that there is no political sovereignty without economic independence, made it necessary to adopt measures against foreign capital in the second half of the 1950s: the government nationalised or "Egyptianized" all important foreign property. Unilateral dependence on the West decreased, a system of economic technical, scientific and cultural relations with the socialist countries was formed and cooperation with the Third World expanded. Nevertheless, all this did not mean cutting off ties with the West. There is plenty of data as regards the volume and directions of cooperation between Egypt and the West surviving in the Nasser era. For example, by 1958-59, Britain, France and the USA released the Egyptian credits of hundreds of million dollars frozen after the Suez-agression. France accepted Egyptian cotton-deliveries, while Britain took part in the American aid-programme. Between 1958-66 the United States, in the framework of her programme entitled "Food for Peace", delivered wheat and other agricultural products to Egypt valued at 1 billion dollars, meeting one fourth of Egypt's needs. In the estimates published

48. Ibid.
by Heikal in 1971, the amount of US aid to Egypt, in terms of wheat, long-term grants and credits, reached 1.5 billion dollars in the same period.\footnote{Heikal, n. 6, p. 21. Besides the USA, Germany, Japan, Belgium and other Western countries also participated in economic cooperation with Egypt. For instance, between 1964 and 1969, the USA and Western Europe had a leading share in Egypt's exports with 62.9 per cent and 46.6 per cent respectively. Their share in Egypt's imports was declining but still considerable with 30.1 per cent and 20.3 per cent. In the same period, Egypt's share in the total aid granted by Western industrialized countries was the second biggest after Israel, amounting to almost the double of what Turkey, Taiwan or Pakistan received. Ibrahim, Ch. 1, n. 15, p. 269.}

The ideology of openness is present in a number of declarations of Nasser and his colleagues. This is also discernible in The Charter. There it is stated that "foreign capital is regarded with dark doubts in under-developed countries", but if, "the sovereignty of the people over their land... allow them to set the conditions under which foreign capital may be invested in the country... all foreign aid with no strings attached, is accepted to help attain the national objective". Equally acceptable are "all unconditional loans... provided they could be refunded without difficulty or strain".\footnote{The Charter, p. 72.} These formulas may be
problematic because they are too elastic or obscure. On the other hand, the text does not differentiate between foreign capital-exporters states saying that "the aid is accepted with sincere gratitude for those who offer it regardless of the colour of their flags". 51

Egypt's technical and cultural dependence on the Western countries survived even in the period of deteriorating political relations. A considerable and influential section of the Egyptian intelligentsia continued to obtain their education in the West. Western orientation remained dominant in book-publishing, film-distribution and in other spheres of culture despite growing cultural exchange with the Soviet Union. This leads us to one of the most difficult aspects of Nasserism: the question of ideological and political relations with the Soviet Union.

Relations with the Soviet Union essentially include two elements: opposition to imperialism and aversion to communist ideas and practice. Under the impact of these elements the relations with the Soviet Union were characterized from the very beginning by

51. Ibid.
peculiar ambiguities. The Arab nationalist leaders of the 1950s including Nasser, who rejected the West-Asian plans of the USA, needed allies not to be found in the West. Therefore, they turned to the Soviet Union.

A number of Western states, whom Nasser approached for arms, rejected his requests. But the Soviet Union aided and supported Egypt in the establishment of the country's defence, in the construction of the Aswan High Dam, in setting up hundreds of new industrial units and, after the June 1967 defeat, in the restoration of defence system. Between 1956-64, the socialist countries granted 1.1 billion LE to Egypt, out of which the share of the Soviet Union was 900 million LE, excluding military credits. 20 per cent of all credits offered by the Soviet Union to the developing countries in 1952-70 went to Egypt. 52

In the years 1955-70 the Egyptian leaders warmly welcomed the Soviet assistance, stressing its favourable terms and lack of political strings.

However, their appreciation of the Soviet aid was always correct and never inclined them to side with socialist countries. The most important document of the revolution contains only one positive sentence about the socialist bloc: "The communist camp developed into an enormous power, permanently increasing its material and moral weight against the capitalist camp". The recognition of the international role of the Soviet Union and the intentions to build closer contacts with her can be found in the March 1968 Declaration and in the last of Nasser's speeches. In these sources the Soviet Union appears as a "true supporter of the national liberation movements", who gives selfless and manyfold assistance to the struggle of the Arab peoples, who keeps her promises and is, in principle, a supporter of the peaceful settlement of the crisis. The Soviet people appear as "simple people" who are enemies of imperialism, with whom the Egyptian people "are bound by strong ties" and the system of relations between a great power and a developing country".

More favourable comments on the socialist countries are found in the declarations of the Arab Socialist Union. For example, the joint communique of the ASU and the French Communist Party of December 14, 1970, declares that "the basic community of the world wide anti-imperialist struggle consists of the working class of the capitalist countries, peoples fighting for their national independence and the countries of socialism". The ASU and the FCP declared that "the friendship which binds and unites them with the peoples of socialist countries, especially with the Soviet people... is an excellent illustration of the solidarity within the forces of the international revolutionary movement".55

The memoirs of Sadat and Heikal reveal that the Egyptian ruling elite, from a very special "consumer's viewpoint", evaluated Soviet-Egyptian relations in terms of the volume, quality and speed of delivery of military and economic items. Nasser and his colleagues had very general and superficial ideas about

the ideology and practice of the existing socialism:
their image of the Soviets was a mixture of realistic
elements and exaggerated stereotypes of popular Western
political science and journalism. "In Russia", men-
tioned Nasser in one of his speeches in 1965, "party-
members monopolize politics... deviators get sentenced
to death... and masses are not allowed to participate
in political life".56 Heikal criticised the Soviet
party because it was built on strictly stratified
patterns of Tsarist Russia and the Orthodox
Church, Party members enjoy privileges unreachable for the
population".57 Sadat goes further by characterising
the work of Soviet propaganda centres as spreading
remours directed from above and by suggesting that in
socialist countries only the children of party members
have the right to further studies.58

Nasser and his colleagues expected an understand-
ing of their national interests and identity from
the Soviets. At the same time, they simplistically put

56. "President Nasser's Speech before the Parliamentary
Group of the A.S.U.", The Egyptian Gazette, May 20-21,
1965, Cairo, pp. 1-4.
57. Mohammed Heikal, The Sphynx and the Commissar: The
Rise and Fall of Soviet Influence in the Arab World,
58. Sadat, n. 10, pp. 222-3.
on par the two superpowers equally interested in West Asia, who "equally want to draw profit from the course of events and go as far as they can without bewildering the other". 59

Further examples of this simplistic approach can be observed in Heikal's books and articles. Analyzing the Soviet foreign policy he pointed out that the Soviet Union, in every aspect, wished parity with the United States in order to take the place of the Western countries in West Asia. Their second main objective is to communize the area and the third one is to make available to themselves the Middle East's resources" and access to the world's sea-routes. 60 The chief political ideologue of Nasserism analysed the confrontation between the superpowers, stating that the Soviets "intended to step up their competition with America in every field and in every area, but at the same time, they wanted this competition to be controlled by political realities." 61 In Heikal's view this was the main source of the internal contradictions.

60. Heikal, n. 57, pp. 276-7.
61. Ibid., p. 277.
in Soviet foreign policy which revealed another contradiction, namely, that the Soviet Union "as a superpower, had to think in global terms and these sometimes came into conflict with its role as helper and protector of countries like Egypt which were going through their own revolutionary experience". It was on account of this ambiguous character of the Soviet Union that she was unable to clearly understand the significance of the Arab nationalism and the class-content of revolutionary regimes and this was the reason for her failure.

Nasser also appears critical of Soviet commitment to Egypt. He reverted, "During the tripartite aggression we had to defend ourselves without relying on external support". Heikal wrote that Nasser, who repeatedly accused the Soviets of not informing him about their international negotiations on various issues, himself did not warn the Soviets about the nationalization of the Suez Canal, but tried to calculate their possible reaction. He failed to inform his Soviet ally about his steps before the 1967 war as well, but later sought to account for the defeat on grounds


64. "Interview with President Nasser", Le Bourse Egyptienne, March 23, 1959, Cairo, p. 2.
of insufficient information received from the Soviet intelligence. 65

The Soviet attitude as demonstrated in the Arab Israeli crisis and in bilateral relations, was often evaluated by the leaders of Egypt as bureaucratically ponderous and Stalinist. In Heikal’s characterization the "extreme rigidity" of Soviet institutions, the "frozen immobility" of state administration appear as obstacles in the way of development of the relations, compared with the positive alternative of Western parliamentarism, with its promising variety. 66 He sharply albeit ironically criticises the mechanism of Soviet decision-making, the everyday practice of democratic centralism, the organisational discipline and the hierarchy of socialist state structure. But there are also elements of anachronism and exaggeration in the "instruction manual" attributed by him to Nasser, in which the Egyptian supremo would summarize the "dos and don'ts" for Third World leaders about to negotiate with Soviets, on the basis of his long experience. In this self-styled political etiquette, there is an oversimplification of the priorities and methods of Soviet

foreign policy and a presentation of a primitive, inflexible, vain and aggressive Soviet negotiator.\textsuperscript{67}

Indications of the anti-Soviet attitude, which became one of the basic features of the foreign policy of Sadat in the 1970s, already were apparent in the Nasser era. Alliance with socialist countries could not become an organic part of Nasserism. Even during the highly pro-socialist periods of the 1960s, there were strong groups which wanted to loosen the ties with the socialist countries. Mohamed Salamoui, Egyptian journalist, leader of "young Nasserites" wrote in 1981: "For Arabs, Nasserism is a third road between the West and Communism.... From a certain viewpoint it is a kind of Gaulleism at least as far as keeping equal distance from the two superpowers is concerned.... The favours offered by Moscow to Nasser were results of the 1967 tragedy.... The first Rais acted in a manner calculated to drive the Russians away as soon as possible like Sadat did later... with no resistance by Moscow, since it was tacitly accepted that the positions of the Russians were temporary here...

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., pp. 27-34.
Russian presence was a part of our tactics not of our strategy". 68

Striking a balance between the two world systems was also a part of this policy. In the beginning, Nasser approached the West for arms and finances and he often hinted at "a possible Soviet solution" to back up his demands. It is also well-known that during the post-1967 negotiations with the Soviets for arms, he was not hesitant to play "the American card" to influence the partner. 69 For influential groups of Egyptian public opinion the Western option remained to be relevant for the case the Soviet Union cuts all the aid. 70

The contradictions in foreign policy cannot be entirely attributed to the "dual character" of the Egyptian policy. It would also be incorrect to identify subjective factors in the evolution of relations as was done by Heikal and Sadat who accused the Soviet leadership of rigidity and tactlessness with Egypt. Minor or even major mistakes may naturally occur during

69. Sadat, n. 10, p. 128.
70. Mahmoud Rida, "What Would We Do if the Soviets Stopped Economic Aid", Le Bourse Egyptienne, Cairo, March 23, 1959, p. 2.
a quarter of a century of relationship and many examples can be cited from history which go against Lenin’s principles as regards the treatment nationalism of the suppressed nations. But the main causes of these anomalies lie in the political pragmatism of the Egyptian leadership. "Our foreign policy is serving our internal policy", said Nasser in 1969 "We are benefitting from the cooperation with other countries but we are also of use to others".\[71\] The same idea is even more overtly formulated by Heikal: "Egypt's external policy brings dividends; it is not a burden on her.... For Egypt, foreign policy is a great investment".\[72\] The other reason is even deeper. On the basis of the given class and power relations, the changes in priorities introduced after the revolution could not become irreversible: the pro-US stand in the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the alienation from the socialist countries were always one possible alternative broadly discussed in the public and the press. The ruling classes, which benefited from the truncated social reforms adopted a strategy to foster close cooperation with the West. Soviet friendship was alien and therefore temporary for them.

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71. Cited in Malcolm Kerr, The Arab Cold War (London, 1971), p. 120.
72. Ibid., 124.