CHAPTER 4

THE IDEA OF ARAB SOCIALISM
Eradication of backwardness occupied an important place in the ideas of the leaders of the revolution. The six-point programme emphasised the need for change in the socio-political and economic structures. In a more detailed version of the programme as presented by Nasser at the Bandung Conference in 1955, the first priority was given to "the raising of the living standard and of the material and spiritual status of the ordinary Egyptian"; the demand for the overthrow of the rule of the big capital was put as the: "Liberation of the national economy from monopolies which deprive the people of their freedom and the state of its sovereignty".  

In The Philosophy of the Revolution the question of how to eradicate backwardness hardly came up. The author only states that not long back, Egyptian society lived "in the environment of the Thirteenth century". Thus "it was behind the advancing caravan of humanity by five or even more centuries", and "the terrific rush"

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1. Nasser, Ch. 3, n. 8, p. 23.
which was started in the last century to reach the West, brought about a society which is "still in a state of ferment and agitation", which could not develop organically and follow the more developed nations. In Nasser's view, eradication of backwardness signified abolition of feudalism and one-sided trade so as to carry out industrialization. In Nasser's book, eradication of the backwardness of Egypt signified abolition of colonial dependence and feudalism so as to build up a strong liberated Egypt. 2

Following the Suez agression the question of eradication of backwardness became interrelated with the principles of foreign policy. "The distance between us and the countries ahead of us is growing day by day. If we do not make efforts we will become the victim of imperialism and of our own backwardness", declared Nasser in his speech of February 22, 1962. "Our backwardness guarantees Israel's lasting survival". 3 Thus the speedy modernization was necessitated not only by internal but also by international

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realities. This was realized in the economic and political practice and in the Nasserite version of Arab Socialism in the 1960s.

In The Philosophy of the Revolution no reference to "socialism" appears. Nasser used the term "socialism" as Tahtawi and Salaama Moussa used it before him, as a synonym for social justice. Later the term, in keeping with its Arabic equivalent, "ishterakiyya", was interpreted as a society based on collaboration or co-operation.

In his speeches Nasser suggested various definitions of socialism such as the following: "... in my perception, the simplest and clearest definition of socialism is that in socialism the national income is the result of common work of all citizens". 4 "Socialism means social justice, labour and its result". 5 Later he gave a more elaborate definition: "Socialism means the cessation of exploitation of man by man, creation of circumstances in which every human being can meet all his material and spiritual demands. It is an ongoing process because human needs grow by the development of the society". 6

4. Nasser, Ch. 3, n. 8, p. 73.
5. Ibid., p. 86.
6. Ibid., pp. 115-16.
In *The Charter* socialism means "the setting up of a society on the basis of sufficiency and justice, of work and equal opportunity for all, and of production and services". Here, "socialism is the way to social freedom", which was "a historical inevitability" because in history "the capitalist experiments to achieve progress correlated with imperialism" and imperialism come together with colonization. *The Charter* bases the need for socialist choice upon anti-colonialist nationalism. In the underdeveloped countries the proper road to progress is socialism, since the local capital is not competitive and can develop only by getting interwoven with international monopolies. This would make the country again dependent on imperialism. Egypt can meet the challenge of underdevelopment only if three conditions are there: "1. Accumulation of national savings. 2. Putting all the experiences of modern science at the disposal of the exploitation of national saving. 3. Drafting a complete plan for production". The implementation of these three conditions is the decisive element of modernization, which, along with a number of socio-political measures outlined in *The Charter*, would lead to the "socialist solution".


8. Ibid., pp. 49-59.
In the following pages some elements of Nasserite Arab Socialism will be briefly surveyed, such as:

a) Anti-feudalism
b) Anti-capitalism
c) Social and cultural policy

a. Anti-feudalism is a recurrent theme in Nasserite thought. To get rid of the "feudals" was one of the most important social objectives. Nasser used the slogan of social justice mainly in the sense of the abolition of large estate ownership. He elaborated, "By freedom we mean the freedom of all classes from the tyranny of a certain class.... In Egypt the peasantry was subjugated to landlords. Hence the basic factor of assuring freedom was the abolition of feudal rule and giving liberty to the most numerous part of the people and the country, the peasantry".9 From The Philosophy of the Revolution and from other writings of Nasser it is clear that among "feudals" he counted only the owners of large estates of many thousand faddans and meant to solve the question of land-ownership with the least possible violence and sacrifice.10


Nasser focused on the importance of the eradication of feudalism and of the solution of the peasant-problem in Egypt. Following the enactment of land reform laws of 1952, 1961 and 1964, about 1 million faddans of land was distributed among 420 thousand peasant families. The reforms changed the land structures and the outlook of the villages to a great extent. The data of land property structure are shown in the Table 1.

From the figures it becomes clear that the classes favoured by the land-reforms were the petty peasantry belonging to the first group and the rich peasantry and landowners of small and medium estates holding 50-200 faddans.

As a consequence the majority of wealthy landlords and Pashas fled abroad, some of them returned after the announcement of the new economic policy in 1974. The "younger stratum" of landlords, numbering a few thousands, remained in the country preserving their wealth and influence. However, as a result of the slow implementation, the landlords could retain substantial wealth and estates even in the second half of the 1960s. While about 3 million peasants possessed
areas below 5 faddans and 74 per cent of rural population was landless, nearly one fifth of the total land area was occupied by 16 thousand persons holding 50-200 faddans each.11

The leaders of the revolution confessed after the land reform law of 1961 that although they succeeded in annihilating the "landlords as a class", "there are still feudals", therefore it was necessary to set up the "Committee for Liquidation of Feudalism" led by Marshall Abdel Hakim Amer. The Charter warned against permitting the families to unite individual land properties fixed at a maximum of 100 faddans per person, for this could restore feudalism. The Khamshish incident in 196612 signalled that the abolition of the ownership of large estate could only advance slowly and amidst sharp struggles.

The conditions after 1967 were not favourable for the implementation of the 1961 and 1964 land reform laws. By the end of the 1960s, the land property structure was concretized. Thus, almost one-third

12. In the spring of 1966, in the village of Khamshish of Upper Egypt, Salah Hussein, A.S.J. activist, who took a firm stand against landlords sabotaging agrarian reforms, was murdered.
of the cultivated area was owned by middle and rich peasantry holding 5-50 faddans. The rich peasantry became central feature of agriculture. Tenure of land expanded, rural bourgeoisie freely found cheap labour among agricultural workers. It played a decisive role in the governing bodies of cooperatives and the A.S.U. units. Through its familial links it became interwoven with the urban bourgeoisie, especially with its upper strata. Its prominent representatives, occupied influential position in central political institutions. The rural bourgeoisie became estranged from the government after 1964 when the law fixing the maximum of land property at 50 faddans per capita, was introduced.

The petty and poor peasantry, approximately 15 million, possessed more than 50 per cent of the land. In fact, both the peasants and their cooperatives were dependent on the capitalist sector, millions of them became pauperized. The equally numerous agrarian proletariat migrated to the cities in increasing number, doubling the population of Cairo, Alexandria and other cities. The Nasser era did not open a way out either for them, or for those who stayed in villages. The level of political consciousness and activity of both groups remained low.
In Nasser's view, agricultural land-reform cooperatives were meant to be one of the basic pillars of "socialism based on cooperation". The cooperative movement in Egypt dates back to the Nile-valley agriculture which always required collective efforts. Before the revolution there were already approximately 2000 agricultural cooperatives although they were basically credit-cooperatives and functioned under the leadership of landlords. The new cooperative system which was developed by the end of the 1960s, became a promising factor of agricultural production. Beside the 554 new cooperatives which were established mainly for common use of machinery and cropselling, new types of credit-cooperatives were also developed. In 1964 they granted production loans to 980 thousand members, 80 per cent of whom were petty and middle peasants. But the merit of the cooperative system was somewhat lowered by the fact that it covered only 10 per cent of the land and its development practically stopped after 1967 and that in its governing bodies the power belonged basically to landlords and rich peasants and the function-bearers were representatives of urban bureaucracy delegated from Cairo. 13

The share of agriculture in the GNP was 31.5 per cent in 1959-60 and 18.6 per cent in 1969-70; its share in export fell from 70.6 per cent to 50 per cent. Within this the fallback of raw cotton was from 60 per cent to 40 per cent. Consequently the onesided, monocultural character of foreign trade considerably decreased.14

As a result of the construction of the Aswan high dam and various development projects, the cultivable area increased by approximately 1.5 million faddans, and the average yield of the plants improved. Egypt maintained her position in the world market as regards agriculture and horticulture. But the food production in certain areas such as dairy and meat production was not enough to keep up with the population growth which was 2.6 per cent. Egypt continued to be dependent on imports in agriculture.15

b. The backbone of economic policy of modernization was industrialization. As a result of intensive development programmes, the industrial production

14. Ibrahim, Ch. 1, n. 15, pp. 150, 199 and 258.
15. Kubi:-c, Ch. 1, n. 7, pp. 64-71.
tripled between 1950 and 1970 and Egypt became an agro-industrial country. In the framework of the first five-year and the first ten-year plans of development, 400 industrial establishments were set up, basically with the help of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Share of industry in the GDP reached 42.3 per cent, or 48.6 per cent including energy-production and construction in 1969-70. The earlier, distorted structure of industry became transformed, branches of heavy industry like machine and chemical industries dynamically developed. Nasser, who considered agriculture a matter of life and death, attributed similar significance to the industrialization of the country.

Industrialization in Egypt showed uneven results. The process was hindered by the limited domestic market, low quality export products, shortage of internal savings and dependence on foreign resources. Further, lack of consistency in the objectives and a swollen and corrupt bureaucracy contributed to the failure of the process.

16. Ibrahim, Ch. 1, n. 15, p. 199.
17. For details see, Ibrahim, Ch. 1, n. 15, pp. 101-61.
Sharp differences within the leadership surfaced in the 1960s over the meaning of concepts of economic development and assessment of the results of industrialization. The "left wing", often associated with Ali Sabri, considered industrialization and planning an organic and indispensable part of the policy and championed the cause of public sector. The position of the other group was in total contrast to the entire development concept. Its representatives such as Zakaria Mohieddin identified excessive growth and consumption as the main cause of economic difficulties and suggested to keep the investments back and to slow down private consumption through price raising. A group of technocrats led by Sidki Soliman, considered industrialization as baseless, the functioning of new industrial plants as failure and the development of heavy industry and the import of semi-processed goods as excessive. Nasser himself exposed the anomalies still maintaining the basic line of economic policy.

18. Laws Issued on July 19th and July 20th 1961 with Explanatory Statements by Dr Abdel Khader Hatem, Minister of State and El Sayed Ali Sabri, Minister for Presidential Affairs, Ministry of Information, Cairo, 1961, p. 16.

Evaluation of economic policy of the Nasser era by various writers is not free from exaggeration. However, it would be a mistake to deny the casual extremes and eclecicism of the economic policy of Nasser and also to ignore its achievements. It would be candid to share the views that in the case of developing countries like Egypt, industrialization and utilization of external resources was the only way to absorb agricultural overpopulation and curb one-sided foreign trade to promote the transformation of a backward economy.

The number of working class increased, as a consequence of industrialization, although large-scale industrial workers constituted only a minor part of it; the majority consisted of those employed at small workshops, in the transport or in other services. The majority were first generation workers, with low standard of professional qualifications.

class-consciousness and organization. The wages remained low even after the 1961 laws, and flourishing speculation and shortages afflicted the workers and employees. The labour policy of Nasser seems ambiguous. On the one hand it took measures to improve the lot of workers. On the other hand, it hindered the organization of workers as a class through various means, such as subjecting the trade unions to state control and persecuting the communists.

In the beginning, Nasser sought for the financial resources for economic development in the West. Having failed to obtain it, he turned to the landlords and national capitalists. But he was disappointed for the old and new ruling classes invested their wealth into non-productive sectors for quick returns. When the interests of big capital came into conflict with national development, its strategic alliance with the political leadership ended. Nasser did not take into account certain "genetic characteristics" of the Egyptian capitalist class, described by Mahmoud-Hussein as follows:

21. The number of unemployed and other marginal groups without regular income was estimated in millions. Between 1963 and 1969, while the average annual growth of industrial production was 11.2 per cent, the increase in industrial employment was only 0.7 per cent. See H.P. Todar, Economics for a Developing World (London, 1977), p. 205.
"Egyptian capitalists are not entrepreneurs, they have not mastered the ideology of risk nor the rules of market. They are conservative office-bearers who fully respect the wishes of the colonizers, have an aversion to any innovation and use their profits either for luxury expenditures or for safe investments in the dependent economy. Thus the new class of the privileged is not up to try the venture of long-term productive investments".\textsuperscript{22} This parasitic tendency of private capital could not be changed, even by the measures of the fifties directed at economic re-organization and re-orientation of the capital.

The number of national bourgeoisie of the Nasser era was estimated one million. One of its important features was that its majority busied itself with commerce, banking and the services, or real estates, speculation and usury. A few thousands great capitalists withdrew their investments and transferred them abroad in treasure form or put safely in the country waiting for a favourable political turn.

In industry a great part of private sector

\textsuperscript{22} Mahmoud-Hussein, Ch. 2, n. 1, p. 19.
consisted of small and medium-scale plants. The small and medium capital in general, bore the brunt but survived the Nasser era. Having secured concessions, better credit conditions, and supply of raw materials, its upper stratum, mainly in non-productive branches, increased its capital stocks after 1967. The small and medium entrepreneurs were interested in removing administrative restrictions from the path of free capitalist development although they benefited from the public sector.

Craftsmen, shopkeepers, intellectuals along with low-ranking officers and bureaucrats constituted an important part of the social base of the revolution. The number of these middle strata was two-three million. The 150 thousand crafts workshops employed a few workers or family members each. For the petty bourgeoisie, material and social rise remained unreachable. Most of them did manual work in traditional conditions. The Bazar preserved its traditional role and remained interested in uninterrupted course of business, and in the liberalization of the turnover of goods and currencies.
The economic modernization and development on the one hand and the negative and speculative attitude of the big capital on the other, made it necessary to direct the means of accumulation to a national level. The comprehensive and relatively radical nationalization introduced in 1961, basically liquidated the property of great and upper-middle capitalists. By the end of the 1960s, more than 90 per cent of industrial means of production belonged to the public sector and this sector had a 70 per cent share in national income. The dominance of the public sector and industrialization went hand in hand with the introduction of planning, adoption of comprehensive medium and long term plans, development programmes and projects.

The dominance of the private sector limited the expansion of private entrepreneurs and provided favourable conditions for the formation of a new bureaucratic bourgeoisie. This stratum, mainly its upper layers, drew profit from the corruption and, as capitalist entrepreneur, invested a part of the huge amounts of money earned by misusing its public positions. Quite a few of them realized especially high incomes by opportunely buying up the shares of nationalized foreign companies or shares above the permitted
10,000 LE of domestic companies. The bureaucratic bourgeoisie tried to prevent any initiative that could have endangered its privileges and suggested measures which could guarantee the profitability of its private investments. Their number was several hundred thousand including senior officers of the army and their incomes were in many cases more than 50 times higher than the average salaries of the workers. This stratum, with its origins, background and relationships, was more tightly connected with the "genuine" middle and big capitalists, than with the government establishment and policy which brought it into being. The bureaucratic bourgeoisie in post-colonial Egypt preserved the worst hereditary traditions of the State of the precolonial and colonial epochs, the hypertrophy of administration, the bureaucratic impotence, corruption, protection and nepotism. Consequently, the public sector elite was neither capable of nor prepared to direct a modern capitalist economy either on national or on company-level, let alone to efficiently unite the masses or first generation labour with imported techniques. Through its cliques and pressure groups it was able to exert influence in its own interest thus contributing to the failure of the Nasserite experiment and similarly hindered the open-door policy introduced by Sadat in the 1970s.
The changes outlined above were a reflection of certain principles of Nasser's socialism and were realised in interaction with them.

During the years of illusions about the role of the national bourgeoisie in financing economic development, the leaders of the revolution refrained from criticising that class, they rather promised to limit monopoly capital. They did not use anti-capitalist slogans till the end of the 1950s, on the contrary, they undertook the representation of the national capital. "Whose government are we?" - Nasser put the question in 1954. He himself answered that it was the government of workers, peasants, white-collar functionaries, students, intellectuals and national bourgeoisie. "If you call it the government of businessmen you are right. The agrarian reform which serves the farmer, has done a great service also to the Egyptian capital which had previously been buried under the earth. The government opened a number of new areas for business... it guarantees profits and offers facilities to capitalists who fund new industries". 23

After the expectations had not come true and alliance with the great bourgeoisie broke off, theoretical statements advocating the limitation of capital began to appear.

The Charter goes to emphasize that utilization of national resources "cannot be left to the haphazard ways of the exploiting private capital with its unruly tendencies". Therefore "the conclusion is the necessity for people's control over all the tools of production and over directing the surplus according to a definite plan". It further stresses that "efficient socialist planning... must be a scientifically organised creative process" for it is guarantee for the sound exploitation of actually existing resources and therefore the extention of production and services must be based upon "a strong public sector owned by the people as a whole". The public sector should cover the banking system, insurance, transport, "the majority of heavy, medium and mining industries" "Foreign trade must be under the people's full control" and "the public sector must have a role in internal trade", controlling at least one quarter of it to prevent monopoly. In agriculture The Charter does not prescribe the size of public and cooperative sector, moreover, it does not even contain any concrete provisions for setting up
such forms of ownership. Thus, The Charter lays base that the principles regarding the forms of ownership and the size of public sector are not rigid but flexible.

There are direct hints in The Charter that nationalization cannot be considered as sanctions against capital and shall not cover the entire private sector. "Nationalisation is but the transfer of one of the means of production from the sphere of private ownership to that of public ownership.... The private sector has its effective role in the development plan. It must be protected to fulfil that part". In the provisions of The Charter, people's (state) control has to prevail in all sectors of national economy but possibilities for functioning have to be provided to the private sector in a series of branches. Thus public sector's share has to be maintained in heavy industry and its role can also be dominant in the light industry since there the formation of monopolies should never be permitted. Private sector can take part in home trade and export and can play a decisive

role in agriculture also in future. 26

The concessions to capital got ideological legitimacy in The Charter by the introduction of the term "non-exploiting capital". Nasser and his colleagues did not elaborate on this term either in The Charter or in other documents. In all probability, they counted the national petty capital and a part of medium size capital in this category.

The tone of The Charter is also general as regards national capital. "The role of capital is nationalist and it should not be left to speculation and adventure... Rational profits should not reach in any circumstances the limits of exploitation". 27 Ali Sabri in his introductory address to the 1961 July laws stressed the chances for individual private initiatives on non-exploiting basis. 28 Nasser counted with the survival of "non-exploiting capital". For a long time, no measure was adopted or even visualised for its abolition or further restriction. In the Nasserite

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26. As a result of these concessions, in 1970, private small and medium holders owned 90.5 per cent of furniture industry, 80.5 per cent of housing construction, 28 per cent of food industry. Private capital's share in agriculture was 90 per cent and its role was also dominant in small trade. Kubik, Ch. 1, n. 7, p. 99.
28. Quoted in Ibrahim, Ch. 1, n. 15, pp. 13-14.
thought, this kind of capital, in contrast to the big capital can play an important role in national economy and its representatives, the national capitalists, are thought to be partners in the alliance of productive forces. The March 1968 declaration spoke of the role of national capital, which is working within the framework of The Charter and general laws and has to be respected as one of those forces which are in alliance with the working forces of the people. "We have to encourage national capital and to provide it with the possibility of fulfilling its role in the society." 29

The Nasserite concept of revolution and class-struggle is determined by its relations to the national capital. In The Philosophy of the Revolution, Nasser propounded his famous notion of the "two [national and social] revolutions". It would perhaps be an exaggeration to consider this idea as "Marxist-rooted". 30 The concept itself is realistic and correct, since not only in Egypt but in countries

30. As was put by Maxime Rodinson, Marxism and the Muslim World (London, 1979), p. 154.
liberated from colonial or semi-colonial rule in general, the "two revolutions" are put on the agenda together and their simultaneous presence is a source of real socio-political shocks. Nasser however, true to his nationalist outlook, considered only the national momentum as natural and immanent, for him the division of society into classes and the class-struggle were destructive and negative. He wrote in *The Philosophy of the Revolution* "The disintegration of values, disruption of principles, disension and discord among both class and individuals and the domination of corruption, suspicion, perversion or egoism, form the foundation of a social upheaval.... And between these millstones we find ourselves today destined to go through two revolutions - one calling for unity, solidarity, self-sacrifice and devotion to the sacred duty, while the other imposes upon us, against our will, disunity, disension and nothing but envy, hatred, vindictiveness and egoism".31 He bitterly recalled that in the beginning he had pretended that the whole nation would have followed the Army unanimously, but he was disappointed on realising the divisiveness, dissent and hatred among the masses which

constituted the revolutionary basis. In Nasser's view, both the 1919 revolution and the resistance against Fouad and Farouk failed between these "two millstones" and this led to the appearance of the Army which, being separated from the struggles of the classes, proved to be the only force capable of carrying out rapid and definite actions. 32

Statements by Nasser and his colleagues in the 1950s are unanimous in denying or in trying to abolish class-struggle. According to them everything has to be subordinated to the national unity since the country's fight against imperialist infiltration can be successful only through unity. Therefore any attempt at class-dictatorship has to be strongly opposed.

After the prohibition of political parties in 1952-53 the demands of the masses could not find institutional ways of expression: the regime cruelly destroyed all alternative political forces organised on class-basis. The internal political struggles in the 1950s, the international confrontations, the attitude of the former ruling classes and last but not the least

32. Ibid., pp. 25-26.
the failure of the union with Syria made Nasser's concept of class-struggle more realistic. In The Charter, class struggle got new connotations. The Charter reads: "The inevitable and natural class struggles cannot be ignored or denied..." The cause of the class struggle is that "reaction does not wish to give up its monopolies or its privileged position..."33

Nasser provided some clues to the evolution of his political thought in 1961: "We fell victim to a dangerous illusion.... We committed the mistake of making social peace with the internal reaction. Practical experience proved how erroneous this idea was. While we believed in the chance for the peaceful abolition of class contradictions, the reaction proceeded in the opposite direction".34 Nasser believed that it was characteristic of reaction that if it was deprived of political power it turned to the power of capital and if this was also taken from it, it turned to imperialism. The revolution is, therefore, compelled

33. The Charter, p. 42. The term "reaction" is not defined precisely by Nasser but seemingly covers the aristocracy and wealthy capitalists who wanted to evade the land reform and nationalization laws.

"to bring the reaction down, to deprive it of all its weapons, to prevent it from coming back to power and rendering the state machinery in the service of its own objectives."35 This almost remained a pious wish as the leadership failed to identify the "forces of reaction" and to work out the ways to fight them. In the absence of principled foundations the fight against reaction mainly took the form of campaigns, police actions and very often subjective, ad hoc measures.

Nasser accepted the justification of class struggle against the reaction only in the post-1967 period. An inevitable soul-searching after the 1967 debacle led Nasser to a new stage in his thinking, nearer to "scientific socialism". He came to appreciate labour as a main force, to identify counter-revolutionary elements, to re-define the interrelation between the leaders and the masses. But the terminology to denote classes and class struggle remained vague. Nasser reaffirmed his approval of alliance with national capital: "There can be natural contradictions between people's working forces, between agriculturists and workers, workers and intellectuals or with national

35. The Charter, p. 49.
capitalists but there must never be clashes between those forces..."36 In the post-1967 situation Nasserite pragmatism once again gave priority to national unity and solidarity against social change. However, a new and more precise definition of peasant emerged. A peasant was defined as "one who does not possess more than 10 faddans, has agriculture as the sole source of his existence and lives in the village". But the confusion about the term "worker" persisted. A worker was defined as "one who does physical or intellectual labour and lives on the income of that labour or is a member of industrial, agricultural or civil service syndicate".37 This theoretical confusion made it possible to interpret liberally the laws on workers' representation, namely to allow the reduction in the quota of workers in the boards of directors of companies from 50 to 20-30 per cent without formally violating the provisions of the law.

It can be said, therefore that the Nasserite concept of class and class-struggle, remained farther from the Marxist "scientific socialism" even in the last phase of its evolution.

36. Ibid., p. 54.
37. Nasser, n. 29, p. 4.
c. One of the important elements of Nasserite thought was the idea of social justice and equality. Nasser's efforts were directed at improving the economic and cultural condition of the masses.

The ideas of social justice and equality occupy a significant place in The Charter. "Justice which is the sacred right of every individual", the document reads, "should never be an expensive commodity beyond the reach of the citizen. Justice should be accessible to every individual without material obstacles or administrative complication". The pre-condition of this is that the citizens have to be free from any form of exploitation and should have equal share in the national income and security. The Charter treats social justice and equality as a political question related to the democratisation of political structure. It also stresses the importance of economic momentum, stating that national resources, means of production as well as the product have to be put under people's control and the surplus has to be distributed among the people on the basis of equal chances of accessibility.

38. The Charter, p. 46.
Methods of providing "equal chances" are not elaborated either in *The Charter* or in other documents. Two means are only mentioned: participation in the administration and share in the revenue, both in the non-agricultural sectors. In agriculture, almost 100 per cent of private ownership of the means of production notwithstanding, there was no possibility of introducing a new, more equitable distribution system. Here the steps towards social justice were restricted to measures for protecting the peasantry.

The government tried to improve the lot of the masses by a series of measures. The laws passed in July 1961 on the distribution of profits of companies, on maximisation of revenues and the progressive income-tax can be mentioned first, followed by steps in the direction of fixing minimum wages, reducing worktime, developing social and health services. But these measures were, to say the least, ambiguous. For instance, the 1961 decree, regulating the distribution of one quarter of companies' profits, offered a real share to the workers, but only up to 5 per cent of the profits went to the workers actually, the remaining 20 per cent got distributed among leading bureaucrats constituting the majority in the boards of directors and was turned to various development and welfare purposes and so the redistribution could not be genuine.
Without underestimating the effects of Nasser's equalising measures, it has to be stated that inequalities in distribution persisted. According to a survey made in 1970 by the Ministry of Planning of the U.A.R., 10 per cent of the Egyptian population had a 45 per cent share in total national consumption and within this group only 2.5 per cent got 23 per cent of the total consumption. Differences between the wages of workers and directing staff in the public sector remained very substantial. This was not seen by Nasser as contradictory. He even found formulas in which the categories of state bureaucracy and intelligentsia merged in one another. In one of his speeches in 1965, reacting to critical remarks on inequalities in distribution, he said: "In my view one should not say that it is not socialism to give a minimal 25 Piasters a day to the workers, and to give 3-4000 LE annual salary (i.e. 50 times more) to the chairmen of the boards of directors or to technical cadre. Without technicians, workers would never be given jobs".  

The cultural uplift of the masses was considered by the leadership as an important task from the very beginning. As The Charter stated, every citizen has the right "to receive education which suits his abilities and talents.... The objective of education is no more to form government employees. Curricula have to be evaluated and their target should be to enable the individual to transform his life". Furthermore: "Science is the true weapon of revolutionary will" which has to serve the society. The task of the new culture is "to awaken creative human energies and to get it reflected in the practice of democracy". 41

Basic objectives of cultural policy were formulated in this spirit. Such objectives were to strengthen the consciousness of the legacy of Egyptian culture, to recognise the humanistic values of other cultures, to equalize the cultural standards of urban and rural population and to enable every citizen to participate in the cultural life of the country. The cultural policy also aimed to establish a new cultural value-system and to provide opportunities to intellectuals and artists for creative activity and to foster

41. The Charter, pp. 73-74, 88-89.
an organic interrelation between cultural and socio-economic development. The policy presents a secular concept of culture: in it religion appears as a background or complementary factor. Finally, cultural policy distinguishes itself from the cultural policy of the socialist countries and shuns state-financing and control over culture and arts.42

Though the results fell short of the objectives in the cultural field as well, the government did a remarkable job in creating the political, organisational and personal conditions for education, mass culture and scientific research. Elementary education became homogenised, compulsory and free, school-network was enlarged. The government succeeded in reducing illiteracy and in advancing agricultural and industrial vocational education. According to widely published figures the number of students increased five times and the number of physicians and engineers reached half a million. By the middle of the 1970s, agricultural and technical faculties and research institutes had been established in major cities. Mass culture and arts also developed. In literature, the traditional

dominance of translations and adaptations was broken with new, socially-oriented, realistic tendencies. In visual arts also fresh trends appeared, breaking with the conservatism of the period between the two world wars.

The cultural life went through modernization and democratization but shortcomings remained serious. Nationalised institutions of education were overcrowded and beset with low standards. Private and foreign schools remained inaccessible to the lower classes, illiteracy was still around 60 per cent at the end of the 1960s.

The number of intellectuals grew enormously but a large number of them were employed in jobs requiring lower qualifications. Each year tens of thousands of new graduates who could not get employment in the country found their way to foreign countries or to government bureaucracy. The executive or decision-making posts in civil service and industry continued to be available to the influential and well-to-do families, mainly through connections. Consequently equal opportunities eluded tens of thousands of people of lower origin although they possessed higher degrees.
In the foreign cultural relations, the role of the socialist countries increased mainly due to their contribution to the formation of technical cadres, through scientific cooperation and cultural exchange. On the other hand, the proportion of those who obtained their degrees in the West remained high. The cultural presence of the USA and other Western countries in Egypt did not cease even in the 1960s; traditional forms of cooperation like academic exchangees, language-training, import of films and books were kept up during the stagnation of diplomatic relations.
TABLE 1  LAND PROPERTY STRUCTURE IN THE NASSER ERA

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<th>1952 Number of owners</th>
<th>1952 Area 1000</th>
<th>1952 % faddans</th>
<th>1961 Number of owners</th>
<th>1961 Area 1000</th>
<th>1961 % faddans</th>
<th>1966 Number of owners</th>
<th>1966 Area 1000</th>
<th>1966 % faddans</th>
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<tr>
<td>Below 5 faddans</td>
<td>2642 94.3</td>
<td>2122 35.8</td>
<td>2870 94.6</td>
<td>2660 44.4</td>
<td>2920 94.6</td>
<td>3040 50.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-10 faddans</td>
<td>79 2.8</td>
<td>526 8.8</td>
<td>79 2.6</td>
<td>530 8.8</td>
<td>79 2.6</td>
<td>530 8.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-50 faddans</td>
<td>69 2.4</td>
<td>1281 21.8</td>
<td>69 2.2</td>
<td>1300 21.6</td>
<td>69 2.2</td>
<td>1300 21.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-100 faddans</td>
<td>6 0.2</td>
<td>429 7.2</td>
<td>11 0.3</td>
<td>630 15.0</td>
<td>11 0.3</td>
<td>630 10.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>100-200 faddans</td>
<td>3 0.1</td>
<td>437 7.3</td>
<td>3 0.09</td>
<td>450 7.5</td>
<td>5 0.1</td>
<td>500 8.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 200 faddans</td>
<td>2 0.06</td>
<td>1177 18.8</td>
<td>2 0.06</td>
<td>430 7.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2801 100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>5972 100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>3034 100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>6000 100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>3084 100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>6000 100.0</strong></td>
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CHAPTER 5

THE IDEA OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND POLITICAL POWER