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CLASS CONFLICT AND NATIONAL STRUGGLE: LABOR AND POLITICS IN EGYPT, 1936-1954. (VOLUMES I AND II)

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CLASS CONFLICT AND NATIONAL STRUGGLE: LABOR AND POLITICS IN EGYPT, 1936-1954

VOLUME I

by
Joel Beinin

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(History)
in The University of Michigan
1982

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Richard P. Mitchell, Chairman
Associate Professor Jerrold D. Green
Professor Ronald G. Suny
Professor Louise A. Tilly

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For Miriam

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I. Bibliographical Citations

ᶜAskari, U	-- Mahmud al-ᶜAskari, "Min tarikh al-harakah al-ᶜummaliyah al-Misriyah" memoirs serialized in the weekly al-ᶜUmmal published by the General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions.
FO	-- Great Britain. Foreign Office. Archives in the Public Records Office, London.
IM	-- al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, offical publication of the Society of Muslim Brothers. Frequency varies.
ᶜIzz al-Din I	-- Amin ᶜIzz al-Din, Tarikh al-tabaqah al-ᶜamilah al-Misriyah mundhu nash'atiha hatta thawrat 1919 (Cairo, 1967).
ᶜIzz al-Din II	-- Amin ᶜIzz al-Din, Tarikh al-tabaqah al-ᶜamilah al-Misriyah, 1919-1929 (Cairo, 1970).
ᶜIzz al-Din III	-- Amin ᶜIzz al-Din, Tarikh al-tabaqah al-ᶜamilah al-Misriyah, 1929-1939 (Cairo, 1972).
Mudarrik, TU	-- Muhammad Yusuf al-Mudarrik, "Safhah min harakat al-ᶜummal qabla al-thawrah," memoirs serialized in the monthly (sometimes semimonthly) al-Thaqafah al-ᶜummalyah published by the Workers' Education Association.
ᶜUthman, K	-- Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman, "Mudhakkirat wa-watha'iq min tarikh al-tabaqah al-ᶜamilah," memoirs and documents serialized in the monthly al-Katib.

II. Trade Union and Political Organizations

CETU -- Congress of Egyptian Trade Unions

COWM -- Commission to Organize the Workers' Movement

CPE -- Communist Party of Egypt

CPSTU -- Congress of Private Sector Trade Unions

CTUE -- Congress of Trade Unions in Egypt

DMNL -- Democratic Movement for National Liberation

EMNL -- Egyptian Movement for National Liberation

FCGFETU -- Founding Committee for a General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions

FETU -- Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions

GCMTWU -- Greater Cairo Mechanized Textile Workers' Union

GFTUEK -- General Federation of Trade Unions in the Egyptian Kingdom

GUMTPWGC -- General Union of Mechanized Textile and Preparatory Workers of Greater Cairo

GUMTWSKC -- General Union of Mechanized Textile Workers of Shubra al-Khaymah and Cairo

NCWS -- National Committee of Workers and Students

PCGFETU -- Preparatory Committee for a General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions

RCC -- Revolution Command Council

SKMTWU -- Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers' Union

TUCDL -- Trade Union Committee for the Defence of Liberties

WCNL -- Workers' Committee for National Liberation

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

I have adopted a modification of the system employed by the Library of Congress in transliteration. Proper nouns are capitalized while ^{c} is used to indicate an ^{c}ayn and ' for a hamzah. The diacritical marks indicating long vowels and emphatic consonants have not been included under the assumption that for those that know Arabic they are largely unnecessary and for those that do not, they are irrelevant. These marks are supplied in the Bibliography to facilitate the identification of the Arabic sources upon which this study is based.

INTRODUCTION

The lack of attention to the growth and development of an Egyptian working class which characterizes most European and North American historiography of modern Egypt is only a symptom of the more general underdevelopment of political economy studies of the Middle East.[1] This underdevelopment is all the more apparent when contrasted with the abundance of high quality literature on the political economy of other formerly colonized regions of the world.

Some significant progress is now being made in the direction of exploring the political economy of modern Egypt. Most of the best work to date has addressed questions of land tenure and the development of capitalist agriculture. This is quite natural given the centrality of agriculture, particularly cotton cultivation, to the Egyptian economy and its capitalist transformation.[2] More recently attention has been directed to the development of an Egyptian industrial bourgeoisie.[3] Western scholars have been less active in addressing the emergence of the Egyptian working class. There is still no monographic study of this subject in any western language. In 1964 the Egyptian economist Samir Amin complained,

"Rien de sérieux n'a été publié en étranger sur le syndicalisme égyptien."[4] Nearly twenty years later there has been only a modest improvement in this regard.[5] The primary objective of the present study is to focus attention on the role of the working class, its organizations and its political struggles during the period of the relatively rapid development of an industrial capitalist sector in the Egyptian economy.

Egyptian Integration into the World Capitalist Market

This study is based on the assumption that the central problematic of modern Egyptian history is the integration of Egypt into the world capitalist market and, consequently, the growth of the capitalist mode of production and class differentiation within Egypt. The integration of Egypt into the world capitalist market on a subordinate and dependent basis sets the parameters which define the context for the emergence of the Egyptian working class. The domination of Egypt by foreign capital and what Charles Issawi has termed the "asymmetrical development" of the Egyptian economy[6] shaped both the structural characteristics of the Egyptian working class and its collective consciousness.

The cultivation of cotton and its export to Europe form the basis for Egyptian integration into the world

capitalist market. Although the origins of this process may be traced back to the mideighteenth century, it advanced qualitatively during the reign of Muhammad ᶜAli (1805-48). The rapid expansion of cotton cultivation during the latter part of his reign provided the impetus for the full development of capitalist agriculture and the formation of an agrarian bourgeoisie which constituted the dominant class in Egypt from the midnineteenth century until the military coup of 1952. The expansion of cotton cultivation, because of its financial and technical requirements, resulted in the gradual recognition of the right of private property in agricultural land, the concentration of large parcels of land in the hands of a very small number of owners and the creation of a large number of landless or land poor cultivators who constituted a reserve army for rural and urban wage labor.[7] This was the primary prerequisite for the creation of an Egyptian working class.

The second prerequisite was the investment of capital. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the majority of the capital invested in Egypt was European. The flow of foreign capital into Egypt began in the 1840s after the country was opened to free trade and investment in accordance with the terms of the Anglo-Ottoman Trade Convention of 1838. Foreign capital investment increased dramatically during the cotton boom

of 1861-65, caused by the worldwide shortage of raw cotton during the American Civil War. Khedive Isma^{c}il (1863-79) promoted and encouraged this foreign investment but ultimately became its victim as the Egyptian state went bankrupt in 1876 and his reign was ended by the ensuing maneuvers of the European powers to ensure the preservation of their nationals' investments.[8]

The vast majority of European capital was concentrated, not in industry, but in loans to the state, financing cotton cultivation and the construction of a transportation network to facilitate the export of agricultural raw materials, principally cotton. This resulted in the intensive development of the agricultural and export sectors of the economy and their necessary infrastructure, while other sectors were largely neglected. Therefore, the earliest concentrations of urban wage labor in Egypt were in the transport and public utilities sectors of the economy--sectors which had been developed by European capital to facilitate the export of cotton and to provide amenities for urban residents mediating between European capital and the masses of Egyptians.

Virtually all of Egypt's modern urban public transportation network and public utilities were built and operated by foreign concessionaires. British firms built most of the railroads. The first rail link, between Kafr al-Zayyat and Alexandria, was built in 1853 to speed the

shipment of raw cotton from the Delta to the port. Shortly thereafter Cairo, Alexandria and the cities on the Suez Canal were joined by rail. The water and electricity systems of Cairo and Alexandria were built by British and French firms in the second half of the nineteenth century. The telephone system, first installed in 1883, was built and operated by an English firm. Belgian and British firms built the tramway systems of Cairo and Alexandria and their suburbs in the 1880s and 1890s. The Cairo-Heliopolis metro, or electrified railway, was built and operated by a Belgian firm. The crowning achievement of foreign capital in Egypt was the construction of the Suez Canal. A French dominated consortium received a concession to dig the canal in 1854, and it was completed in 1869.

A significant exception to this pattern of capital investment was the establishment of a large-scale cigarette industry based mainly on Greek capital and labor. In 1875 Nester Gianaclis moved his factory from Istanbul to Cairo after the Ottoman government established a state tobacco monopoly, excluding private firms from this industry. Other Greeks and Armenians subsequently followed his example and also moved their operations to Cairo. By 1906 there were fifty-five to sixty cigarette factories in Cairo, a few employing as many as 500 workers.[9]

The British occupation of Egypt in 1882 crystallized many of the economic trends which had been maturing since the era of Muhammad ᶜAli. The bankruptcy of the Egyptian state and the nationalist ᶜUrabi movement, which preceded the British military occupation, temporarily discouraged economic activity. Once the ᶜUrabi movement was suppressed and the national budget balanced, capital investment in Egypt grew rapidly. In 1883 the total paid up capital and debentures of companies operating in Egypt was LE 6,385,000. By 1914 this figure reached LE 100,152,000. As gross capital investment increased, so did the percentage of capital held by non-Egyptians residing outside Egypt. Between 1907 and 1914 this figure rose from 65 percent to 71 percent, while in 1914, 91 percent of the total capital invested in companies operating in Egypt was held by firms with some degree of foreign participation.[10] This represented the apogee of foreign investment in Egypt. These figures underestimate the extent of foreign capital in Egypt because they do not include the value of the Suez Canal Company shares or bank loans to the Egyptian government.

The pattern of capital investment during the period 1882-1914 continued and intensified Egypt's unbalanced and export-oriented economic development. Only 12 percent of the total capital invested in 1914 was in the industry and mining sectors of the economy while urban and

agricultural land and mortgages represented 73 percent of capital investment.[11] By 1910-13 cotton and cotton seed represented 90 percent of Egyptian exports, up from 79 percent in 1885-89.[12] Manufacturing continued to develop slowly, and on occasion, in the face of considerable opposition from the British.[13] In 1916 there were only fifteen modern European-style factories in Egypt employing a total of 30,000-35,000 workers.[14] Most of the major industrial enterprises were owned by foreigners--the Greek cigarette factories, the French Société Générale des Sucreries et de la Raffinerie d'Egypte, which operated a large refinery in Hawamdiyah near Cairo and several crushing mills in upper Egypt, and the Anglo-German Filature Nationale textile mill in Alexandria.

Under the religiously laissez-faire regime of Lord Cromer (1883-1907) British political power allowed foreign capital to develop without hindrance while changes were made in the Egyptian legal system to provide support for capitalist production relations. Labor conditions reflected the almost unlimited power of foreign capital over a small and unorganized work force. According to a study published in 1907, the purchasing power of wage earners in Cairo declined from 1800 to 1907; and a majority of industrial workers earned barely enough to survive.[15] A thirteen-hour work day was common. Wages in the cotton gins and sugar mills of the countryside were even lower

than in the cities and the seventeen-hour day was not unknown. The British also promoted legislation which furthered the dissolution of precapitalist production relations. The agricultural corvée was abolished in 1889, resulting in an expansion of opportunities for rural wage labor. The enactment of the Professional Permits Duty in 1890 abolished all remaining guild monopolies on urban trades, although some guilds continued in existence long after this time. Henceforth entry to any occupation was legally unrestricted, making it much easier to obtain wage-paying jobs in the cities.

In the early nineteenth century the transport and service sector guilds began to undergo a structural transformation. Because no long apprenticeship was required to learn the skills involved in working as door keepers, domestics, messengers, camel drivers, boatmen and water carriers, these guilds began to be composed predominantly of former peasants.[16] Recruitment of large numbers of peasants, especially Upper Egyptians, into these guilds increased the total number of guild members. At the same time these guilds lost their traditional mutual aid functions and tended to become administrative units of governmental control and, in some cases, organizations for the supply of day labor.

Many of the earliest Egyptian wage laborers were recruited by labor contractors. The contract labor system

was used for the construction of the Suez Canal and other large-scale construction projects, cotton gins, sugar mills, docks, coaling stations and agricultural tasks formerly accomplished by the corvée. The labor contractor was referred to as a khuli, a shaykh or a ra'is. Since the term shaykh was also used to designate the head of an urban guild, some confusion has arisen over whether contracted laborers in some occupations in the late nineteenth century actually constituted a guild, or whether the use of the term shaykh was the result of the application of older terminology to a new social function.[17] The first recorded strike in modern Egyptian history was the result of workers' grievances stemming from abuses in the contract labor system. In March 1882 Port Said coal heavers struck, demanding a raise and direct payment of their wages (rather than through the shaykh).[18] This struggle persisted for many years, and as late as 1919 the coal heavers of Port Said were being recruited and paid by shaykhs working for the coaling companies. There is no doubt that the Egyptian guild system underwent a process of transformation throughout the nineteenth century which resulted in its total collapse by the end of World War I. A few guilds survived even after this date. However, terminology and consciousness characteristic of guild organization persisted in many quarters long after the war.

The fate of traditional artisan guilds was more complex than that of guilds in the transportation and service sectors. In many of these guilds the entire membership was proletarianized as their products and methods of production were driven out of the market due to competition from Europe. Much of the new demand for European-style products was supplied by non-Egyptian workers: Greek and Armenian shoemakers, Greek grocers, Jewish, Syrian and European drapers and Jewish tailors.[19]

In his annual report for 1905 Lord Cromer observed:

> Quarters that were formerly hives of busy workmen--spinning, weaving, braiding, tassle making, dyeing, tent-making, embroidering, slipper making, gold and silver working, spice crushing, copper beating, water skin making, saddle making, sieve making, wooden bolt making, lock making, etc. have shrunk to attenuated proportions or have been entirely obliterated. Cafes and small stores retailing European wares are now to be found where productive workshops formerly existed.[20]

The dissolution of the Egyptian guild system proceeded on two distinct paths. Elements of the guild structure were sometimes transformed and used to supply labor for the capitalist sector of the economy. There the unskilled labor of Egyptians could be used in transport and services. Egyptian skilled craftsmen, on the other hand, played only a marginal role in the new economic system. While Egyptian small-scale commodity production was not eliminated to the extent which Lord Cromer's

observations suggest, craft skills were debased, and small-scale production tended to become restricted to the provision of goods to poorer Egyptians who remained incompletely integrated into the capitalist market. Although small-scale production survived, the artisan guilds were entirely eliminated, in most cases some years earlier than the service and transport guilds. In both cases the majority of former guild members eventually became candidates for recruitment into the working class.

The outline of Egyptian economic development which has been presented here suggests that Egypt represents a classic case of dependent or peripheral capitalist development in the terms of the dependency/world systems model of capitalist development advanced by Andre Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein and their followers. This model, although it usefully stresses the contextual conjuncture for class formation, is inadequate because it pays insufficient attention to internal class formation and class conflict in subordinate economies. It is static and ahistorical in its central assertion that imperialism blocks absolutely the growth of industrial capitalism in the peripheral countries. As James Petras has argued, imperialism, as an expression of international capitalism, ultimately results in the development of productive forces in the peripheral societies despite the "uneven, exploitative and contradictory" nature of this development.[21]

In the case of Egypt, Eric Davis, Patrick Clawson and Marius Deeb have all argued quite convincingly that the Egyptian economy began to undergo a significant industrial development after World War I in which foreign capital played a major role.[22] This process was greatly accelerated during the 1930s and especially during World War II. The general context for the growth and development of trade unionism and working class collective action and consciousness in Egypt is the steady expansion of industrial capitalism and, consequently, the growth in the size of the working class.

Because the capitalist transformation of Egypt was uneven, subordinate and incomplete during the period of this study (and some might argue it remains so today), the industrial bourgeoisie which developed under these conditions did not constitute a "national" bourgeoisie. Both Marxist Egyptian historians such as Shuhdi ʿAtiyah al-Shafiʿi and Fawzi Jirjis and non-Marxists including Muhammad Anis and ʿAbd al-ʿAzim Ramadan have argued that the local Egyptian ruling class can be divided into an antiindustrial, large landowning "comprador" section and an industrializing "national" section.[23] This division does not withstand closer analysis.

There is general agreement that the Egyptian Federation of Industries (EFI) founded in 1922 under the leadership of I. G. Levi and Ismaʿil Sidqi represents an

important center of foreign and semiforeign (mutamassir) capital in Egypt. Only three of the eleven directors of the EFI were Egyptians, and its general policy was clearly to encourage industrial development in cooperation with European capital. The demand for the development of Egyptian national industry can be traced back to the Egyptian Congress of 1910 organized by the Nationalist Party. The Congress passed a resolution urging the formation of a national bank. "Economic independence" became one of the principal demands of the Egyptian nationalist movement during the 1919 revolution. Tal^{c}at Harb's establishment of Bank Misr in 1920, in the midst of the nationalist uprising, symbolizes the organizational consolidation of an aspiring Egyptian industrial bourgeoisie. Bank Misr financed and directed the dominant share of all the major industrial enterprises in Egypt until its nationalization in 1960. The Wafd, which emerged at the head of a largely spontaneous mass nationalist movement, supported Bank Misr and called on Egyptians to deposit their money in Bank Misr while boycotting British banks and non-Egyptian products.

Although Bank Misr originally opposed collaboration with foreign capital, it was simply not strong enough to survive without it. In 1925 Bank Misr and its associated industrial enterprises affiliated with the EFI and Tal^{c}at Harb joined the EFI board of directors. In the 1930s

several joint enterprises with foreign capital were initiated. These represented the largest of Bank Misr's industrial projects in this decade. The most important of these joint ventures was the 50/50 collaboration between Bank Misr and the British Bradford Dyers Association in the establishment of the Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving Company in 1938. This enterprise, which was capitalized at LE 500,000, became the second largest industrial facility in Egypt. By the 1930s Bank Misr ceased to be "national" in character. Although there were differences between the EFI and the Misr industrial groups, especially in the 1920s, by the 1930s the issue of whether or not to cooperate with foreign capital was not one of them. There was no sharp division in the economic practice of a "comprador" and a "national" bourgeoisie, and these terms do not usefully describe the principal divisions within the Egyptian bourgeoisie. Those who have persisted in their search for an Egyptian "national" bourgeoisie, such as Mahmoud Hussein and Anouar Abdel-Malek,[24] have been forced to locate its urban component in the very small number of medium-sized manufacturers not linked to foreign capital. Not only was this element small and economically weak, but it is very doubtful if it would have been possible for it to realize its economic aspirations without cooperating with foreign capital, just as Bank Misr did.

There is also no sharp distinction between the agrarian and the industrial sections of the Egyptian bourgeoisie. The major shareholders and directors of the Misr group were large agricultural landowners and merchants. Six out of ten of the members of the bank's board of directors were large landowners. A section of the agrarian bourgeoisie actively participated in the development of industrial capitalism and became an important component of the industrial bourgeoisie. Not all large landowners participated in this process. There was a group, principally composed of those linked to the Royal Palace, which showed no interest in industrial development. This group was, by virtue of its Palace connections, a powerful force in the Egyptian state until 1952.

Thus, while we can identify an aspiring national industrial bourgeoisie as an important component part of the 1919 revolution, this bourgeoisie never fully materialized. The Wafd did not become the party of a national bourgeoisie. The class composition of the Wafd and its political practice were a consequence of the reconciliation between Egyptian and foreign capital and the incomplete formation of an industrial bourgeoisie distinct from an agricultural bourgeoisie. Large agricultural landowners constituted ten out of the fourteen original members of the Wafd's high command. This is

consonant with the dominance of landed agricultural interests in all sectors of Egyptian society and politics during the period 1914-52, as ᶜAsim al-Disuqi has demonstrated.[25] However, although its large landowning section exercised considerable power over the Wafd's political direction, particularly after Fu'ad Siraj al-Din's rise to prominence in the late 1930s, the Wafd was not a party of large landowning interests. These were represented by the Liberal-Constitutionalist Party, which originated as a splinter of the Wafd. Neither of the Wafd's principal popular leaders, Saᶜd Zaghlul and Mustafa al-Nahhas, were themselves large landowners. The Wafd's rural base was composed of owners of medium-sized plots of 10-200 feddans.[26]

The political activists of the Wafd were the urban effendiyah including secondary and university students, teachers, lawyers, journalists and other professionals and government officials, especially lower and middle level bureaucrats. This group was characterized by its western education and dress and its concentration in occupations requiring mental rather than manual labor. The core of the effendiyah thus constitutes a new (modern) petty bourgeoisie, as opposed to the traditional petty bourgeoisie composed mainly of small merchants and traders. It was not unusual, however, for successful artisans, merchants and skilled workers, especially if

they were literate, to be considered effendis. Therefore the effendiyah is best understood as a social status category rather than as a unified class. This diverse urban constituency comprised the activist core of the Wafd, as well as all the other Egyptian political movements during the period of this study.

The agrarian interests in the central leadership of the Wafd, its rural constituency of medium-sized landowners and a portion of its urban activists were united as much by their fear of the masses of workers and peasants as by their political aspirations for full Egyptian independence. Therefore, the Wafd leadership was usually unwilling to risk mobilizing the Egyptian masses against the British occupiers for fear that this would unleash forces that would turn against itself. It was inconsistent in the struggle for Egyptian independence, while its social policy was hostage to the interests of its most conservative landholding elements. After World War II these inconsistencies led to the formation of a left wing within the Wafd, the Wafdist Vanguard, under the leadership of urban intellectuals.

Perspectives on the Egyptian Working Class

During the so-called "socialist period" of the regime of Jamal ᶜAbd al-Nasir, use of the concept of class in

social analysis received limited official sanction. Consequently, the study of classes and class relations, which had previously been just as neglected by most Egyptians as by westerners, made rapid progress. Several historical studies of the Egyptian working class appeared.[27] These pioneering works constitute the basic secondary sources for Egyptian labor history and the most extensive synthesis available. Al-Nukhayli's work provides an extensive, but far from exhaustive, index to the coverage of trade union and labor questions by the Egyptian press. Ra'uf ᶜAbbas' Arabic translations of selected documents from the archives of the British Foreign Office covering the period 1924-37 indicated the potential of using these materials as a source for labor history.[28] ᶜAbbas and al-Ghazzali have preserved the only available versions of the texts of a number of Arabic documents in their works. Radi was the first to use oral history in her work and includes the full text of her original interviews with several trade union leaders now deceased. Amin ᶜIzz al-Din's trilogy, which is, in my opinion, the best of these works, provides a fairly complete (but unfortunately haphazardly documented) descriptive account of the Egyptian working class and its struggles up to 1939.

These pioneering Egyptian studies, as well as the contributions of Deeb and Couland which followed them, can be divided roughly into two basic analytical schools--

nationalist and Marxist. The nationalists, including ᶜAbbas, al-Nukhayli, Radi and Deeb, make some use of Marxist concepts of class; but their main emphasis is on the compatibility of the workers' movement and the Egyptian nationalist movement. This perspective corresponds to the political position of the regime of Jamal ᶜAbd al-Nasir, especially in the 1960s. The emphasis on the close link between the two movements is a valuable insight, and it is quite correct to stress it.[29] However, the changing character of the Egyptian workers' movement in the 1930s and especially after World War II creates serious difficulties for adherents of the nationalist school. They do not adequately address the development of class antagonism between the working class and the Egyptian bourgeoisie allied with foreign capital. Radi and Deeb in particular treat the workers' movement essentially as an auxiliary of the Wafd, ignoring the new alignment of class forces in the postwar nationalist movement and the significance of the emergence of a politically independent workers' movement.

On the other hand, the Marxists ᶜIzz al-Din, al-Ghazzali and Couland employ an economist and reductionist version of Marxism which seems to be premised on the assumption that the Egyptian working class was inexorably propelled forward by objective economic developments towards the realization of revolutionary class

consciousness. For al-Ghazzali this consciousness is most fully expressed by the communist organization of which he was a member, the Democratic Movement for National Liberation. Couland shares the same methodological assumption as al-Ghazzali. However, he shows a preference for the other principal postwar communist organization in Egypt, the New Dawn group. His choice, undoubtedly not accidental, coincides with the historic political sympathies of the Communist Party of France.

Both Couland and al-Ghazzali, by concluding their discussions with the military coup of 1952, avoid confronting a major deficiency in their analysis. If the working class developed revolutionary class consciousness, why was the military regime, with relative ease, able to suppress the independent left wing tendencies in the workers' movement and eventually to coopt the trade unions and integrate them into the government bureaucracy where they remain to this day? The Marxist school of Egyptian labor history has made a valuable contribution by emphasizing the reality and importance of internal class antagonisms in Egypt and the struggle between contending conceptions of goals and objectives within the workers' movement. It has not yet been able to offer an explanation which adequately accounts for the defeat of the Marxists and their allies within the movement.

One obvious reply to the economist Marxist argument is that it is simply exaggerated. A working class did not develop, or if it did, it was not as significant as suggested. Therefore, there is no difficulty in explaining its failure to assert itself politically against the military after 1952. The bulk of the empirical argument in this study is directed at refuting this assertion. I have argued that the emergence of a politically independent workers' movement and the repudiation of paternalism and leadership of the trade union movement by aristocratic or intellectual patrons is linked to the growth of mass production capitalist industry in Egypt, particularly the textile industry. As early as the first decade of the twentieth century a proletariat employed in manufacturing and modern transport is clearly recognizable, although certainly not yet self-conscious. Until World War II urban transport workers, particularly the tramway workers of Cairo and Alexandria, formed the center of gravity of the Egyptian working class--the most active and organized sector which set the tone for the economic struggles of the rest of the working class. With the growth of Egyptian industry in the late 1930s and during World War II, textile workers in large-scale enterprises became the leading element within the working class, and their struggles inspired other sectors of the working class. During the period 1945-52 mass upsurges in the

workers' movement were led by the most fully proletarian sectors of the working class with significant communist participation.

In recent years the economist view of the process of class formation and the development of class consciousness has been subjected to criticism by two mutually antagonistic currents of Marxist thought. The structuralist Marxism which emerged in France under the influence of Louis Althusser is often characterized by a viciously antihistorical thrust which tends to reduce real historical actors to mere bearers of social structures. The structuralists have, however, developed some useful concepts in their attempt to systematize and elaborate the theoretical components of Marx's political economy. One of the most important of these for our purposes is the concept of "overdetermination," which is based on the argument that classes are structurally determined at the political and ideological level as well as by economic relations.[30]

The structuralists' concern with the ideological and political components of class formation forms a point of contact with the approach of the culturalist school of British Marxism best exemplified by E. P. Thompson and his impressive historical study The Making of the English Working Class. Thompson's work, loosely interpreted, argues that while economic relations form the basis of

class formation, cultural and political factors can play a major role in the concrete historical formation of a class and its consciousness.[31] Thompson's own statement of his thesis makes the much bolder claim that the working class made itself through its own self activity as much as it was formed by objective economic conditions. This and other recent theoretical formulations have been convincingly criticized by Perry Anderson and others.[32]

Thompson's approach is particularly difficult to apply to the study of the working class in the third world. The kinds of materials upon which he relies in his study of the English working class are much rarer in the third world because of the lower rate of literacy among workers and the lack of preservation of diaries and other first-hand accounts by workers. This has led some advocates of Thompson's culturalism to assert its validity in third world settings without presenting adequate empirical data to support such assertions.[33] An even more imposing obstacle to the application of Thompson's perspective is the fact that there can be no denial that capitalism was imposed on the third world by European imperial expansion. Egyptian capitalism did not develop organically out of the precapitalist economy in the same way that English capitalism did. (We leave aside the question of whether capitalism could ultimately have emerged in Egypt without European intervention.) The

contrast between the role of Egyptian and English guilds during the transformation period is one clear example of the differences which result from the imposition of capitalism by an external force. In Egypt the capitalist economy was often perceived as a foreign intrusion. This meant that class consciousness was often expressed in the form of nationalism, even as the contradictions between the Egyptian bourgeoisie and Egyptian workers were becoming sharper.

In order to understand why the Egyptian working class did not assume the revolutionary vanguard role which Egyptian Marxists expected it to play, it is necessary to take into account the extent to which national consciousness and precapitalist values coexisted with an emergent class consciousness. I have therefore found it useful to borrow Thompson's emphasis on the long-term historical evolution of class formations. It is especially important to view the working class as being in a process of dynamic formation (which is perhaps still incomplete) in light of Egypt's uneven capitalist transformation during the period of this study.

The lack of a fully satisfactory formulation combining economic and noneconomic factors in a discussion of class formation and consciousness has led me to adopt a somewhat eclectic and imprecise approach to this question

while basing myself on the essentially structuralist premise that the character of the Egyptian working class was principally determined by the manner in which Egypt was integrated into the world capitalist market. For much of the twentieth century the popular conception of the basic division of labor in Egypt has been between those who work in agriculture and those who do not. The very wealthy who do no productive labor are, of course, excluded from this division. All nonagricultural laborers, except for self-employed merchants and intellectuals (usually determined by possession of at least a secondary school diploma) were collectively termed "the workers." This very crude, but nonetheless culturally real, conception of the social division of labor provides the starting point for the formation of the working class as a self-conscious entity. It includes self-employed craftsmen and producers in small workshops, artisans, service workers, domestics, dockers and coal loaders recruited by labor contractors, sellers of kerosene and newspapers paid on a commission basis and many others employed in a variety of working conditions and contractual arrangements who would be considered marginal to the working class in an advanced capitalist society. Those employed under these conditions make up the bulk of the urban labor force for most of the period of this study and

continue to constitute a significant element in Egypt today.[34]

In light of both deep-rooted cultural attitudes and Egypt's incomplete capitalist transformation during the period of this study, it is most useful to develop a concrete understanding of the composition of the working class as it was historically formed rather than to undertake a scholastic exercise designed to produce a rigid structural definition. The proletarian core of the working class consists of those who own no means of production and must sell their labor power in order to earn their livelihood. This includes both skilled and unskilled workers in industry, transport, services and agriculture. Because of the tremendous differences between the social and economic conditions of urban and rural proletarians, the agricultural proletariat is not treated here. We may add to these proletarians those who own means of production insufficient to enable them to become fully independent producers unsubordinated to capital. This group includes those working as subcontractors to large-scale capitalist enterprises and craftsmen working on their own or organized into factories by capitalists who provided raw materials, but who were required to supply their own tools. (This arrangement was typical of the leather shoe industry.)

Working foremen, low-level white-collar employees in the private sector and minor government bureaucrats occupy what Erik Olin Wright has termed a "contradictory class location"[35] between the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie. These strata identified themselves as workers, formed trade unions and, in some cases, played a leading role in the trade union movement. Their identity as workers was shaped and reinforced by their Egyptian national identity much more than by their objective relationship to the means of production and their role in the hierarchy of the production and social control systems. Even if they had wished to identify themselves with the interests of big capital this was virtually impossible because of its foreign and semiforeign character.

For the same reason, independent craftsmen and artisans and owner-operators of small service establishments such as barbers, launderers, cooks working from their own push carts and owner-operators of motor vehicles, who form the lowest stratum of the petty bourgeoisie by virtue of their ownership of their means of production, often perceived themselves and were perceived by others as workers. The economic and social status of the poorer elements of this stratum was nearly indistinguishable from that of skilled proletarians.

Very successful independent producers, on the other hand, tended to blend into the social status group of the effendiyah and thus distance themselves from proletarians, who were generally excluded from this category.

In the 1920s and 1930s these elements were a very important component of the trade union movement. They provided the most consistently receptive audience, along with government employees, for the corporatist ideology of the Wafd, Prince ᶜAbbas Halim and the Muslim Brothers, all of whom based their activity in the trade union movement on the principle that no antagonistic classes existed in Egypt. The low level of social differentiation between the lowest rungs of the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat was the real material basis which supported this ideology when it was the predominant one within the trade union movement.

Thus proletarians, relatively more autonomous wage earners and the lowest stratum of the petty bourgeoisie all participated in the workers' movement, saw themselves and were popularly perceived as comprising a single category--"the workers." Of course there were very significant contradictions and political struggles between white- and blue-collar workers, proletarians and independent producers, and private sector and government employees.

Thompson's insistence on the importance of perceived experience for the formation of class consciousness is a valuable insight which enables us to supercede the limitations of the economist Marxist analyses of this question. It is certainly no accident that major waves of strikes and other manifestations of workers' collective action overlap with periods of intensive nationalist mobilization: 1907-11, 1919-24, 1935-36, 1945-46, 1947-48 and 1951-52. Most Egyptian workers experienced capitalist exploitation as virtually identical to foreign economic and political domination. Even those who were not directly employed by foreign owned enterprises understood, especially after World War II, that Egypt's economy was dominated by foreign interests. This is the basis for the inextricable interlocking of class and national consciousness during the period of this study. Of all the contending forces for the political leadership of the Egyptian workers' movement, only the communists based their activity on the expectation that the growing industrial proletariat would become conscious of its distinctive class character and interests. This process, while it did occur to a certain extent, was concurrent with successive upsurges in the nationalist movement after World War II, so that even among the most fully class conscious sectors of the working class where communists

played an influential role, the concrete mass movement in which the working class engaged combined class and national demands in a manner which was perhaps intellectually separable for Marxist theoreticians, but practically indistinguishable for the masses of workers.

In light of the paucity of material on the Egyptian working class in western languages the historical introduction in Chapter I has been included to provide the necessary background to the period 1936-54, which, I have argued, is characterized by the emergence of a politically independent workers' movement, unbeholden to nonworker patrons. The weak and mainly unsuccessful attempts to break free from the patronage of the Wafd and its principal rival in the trade union movement during the 1930s, Prince ᶜAbbas Halim, during the last years before World War II are discussed in Chapter II. An important reason for the failure of these efforts is that they were undertaken mainly by nonproletarian elements whose organization and unity were not strong enough to enable them to sustain independent trade unions. Chapter III analyzes in greater detail some of the structural characteristics of the Egyptian working class, its social condition and the central importance of the growth of the textile industry to the formation of the

industrial proletariat. The last attempts of the Wafd to control the trade union movement and their failure are discussed in Chapter IV. The inability of the British to promote a nonpolitical bread-and-butter trade union movement is also treated here. The reemergence of a communist presence in the working class, after the repression of the first Communist Party of Egypt in 1924, is described in Chapter V. Chapter VI consists of a detailed study of the growth of class consciousness and communist leadership in the suburban Cairo textile center of Shubra al-Khaymah and the clash between the leadership of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers and the Society of Muslim Brothers. In Chapter VII the theory and practice of the Muslim Brothers in the trade union movement beyond Shubra al-Khaymah is examined. Chapter VIII describes the growing radicalization of the workers' movement and the growth of communist influence during the last years of the monarchy and especially during late 1951 and early 1952. Chapter IX discusses the relations between the trade union movement and the Free Officers during the first two years of the military regime. In this chapter and the Conclusion I have argued that the military regime was ultimately able to suppress and coopt the independent workers' movement which emerged in the period 1936-54 by promising to grant the nationalist component of the working class movement's demands and diffusing its most

immediate economic grievances while thwarting and subverting the independent class character of the movement itself. The failure of the workers' movement to withstand the efforts of the military regime to integrate it into the state apparatus is due to the weakness of the industrial proletarian sector of the working class and the lack of a sufficiently sharp distinction between class and national demands within the workers' movement.

Notes to Introduction

[1]A notable exception to this general trend is Jacques Berque's remarkable portrait Egypt: Imperialism and Revolution (London, 1972).

[2]For a comprehensive study of the role of cotton see Roger Owen, Cotton and the Egyptian Economy: 1820-1914 (Oxford, 1969). Alan Richards, "Primitive Accumulation in Egypt: 1789-1882," Review 1 (Fall 1977):3-49 provides an excellent and clearly stated analysis of the development of capitalist agriculture whose main line of argument I have accepted here. Kenneth Cuno is currently engaged in a major archival study of the origins of capitalist agriculture. Some of the issues he hopes to address are presented in "The Origins of Private Ownership of Land in Egypt: A Reappraisal," International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 12 (November 1980):245-75.

[3]Marius Deeb, "Bank Misr and the Emergence of the Local Bourgeoisie in Egypt," Middle Eastern Studies 12 (October 1976):69-86. A monographic study of Bank Misr by Eric Davis will soon be published by Princeton University Press. It is based on his Ph.D. thesis "Bank Misr and the Political Economy of Industrialization in Egypt: 1920-1941" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1977).

[4]Hassan Riad, L'Egypte nasserienne (Paris, 1964), p. 214. Hassan Riad is the pseudonym of Samir Amin.

[5]The available works on the history of the Egyptian working class in western languages include the first chapter of Fernand J. Tomiche, Syndicalisme et certains aspects du travail en Republique arabe unie (Egypte): 1900-1967 (Paris, 1974); Jacques Couland, "Regards sur l'histoire syndicale et ouvrière égyptienne (1899-1952)," in Mouvement ouvrier, communisme et nationalismes dans le monde Arabe, ed. René Gallissot (Paris, 1978), pp. 173-201; Zachary Lockman, "Notes on Egyptian Workers' History," International Labor and Working Class History, no. 18 (Fall 1980), pp. 1-12; Joel Beinin, "Emergence of the Egyptian Working Class," MERIP Reports, no. 94 (February 1981), pp. 13-23. Research for at least two Ph.D. dissertations is now in progress. Zachary Lockman, of the History Department of Harvard University, is preparing a study of the Egyptian trade union movement up to World War II with special reference to the transport sector. Ellis Goldberg, of the Political Science Department of the University of California at Berkeley, is researching the

trade union movement during the period 1919-52 and focusing his attention on the nonproletarian components of the movement, their mode of organization and their ideology.

[6]Charles Issawi, "Asymmetrical Development and Transport in Egypt: 1800-1914," in Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, eds. W. R. Polk and R. L. Chambers (Chicago, 1968), pp. 383-400.

[7]This argument is based on Richards, "Primitive Accumulation."

[8]For a discussion of this period see David Landes, Bankers and Pashas (London, 1958).

[9]Owen, Cotton, p. 298.

[10]A. E. Crouchley, The Investment of Foreign Capital in Egyptian Companies and Public Debt (New York, 1977), pp. 73, 93-94, 105, 155-56.

[11]Ibid., p. 105.

[12]Roger Owen, The Middle East and the World Economy (London, 1981), p. 241.

[13]For what may be an overly generous assessment of the extent to which the British obstructed the development of Egyptian industry before World War I see Roger Owen, "Lord Cromer and the Development of Egyptian Industry, 1883-1907," Middle Eastern Studies 2 (July 1966):282-301.

[14]"Report of the Commission on Commerce and Industry," in The Economic History of the Middle East: 1800-1914, ed. Charles Issawi (Chicago, 1966), p. 453.

[15]Yacoub Artin Pasha, Essai sur les causes du surencherissement de la vie materielle au Caire de 1800 a 1907 (Cairo, 1907) quoted in Jean Vallet, Contribution a l'etude de la condition des ouvriers de la grande industrie au Caire (Valence, 1911), p. 27.

[16]Gabriel Baer, Egyptian Guilds in Modern Times (Jerusalem, 1964), p. 58.

[17]Baer asserts that the coal heavers of Port Said, for example, constituted a guild, while Lockman, in his forthcoming dissertation, argues that despite the persistence of guild forms among these and other workers, the fact that this form of labor organization was oriented

towards the capitalist economy gives it a new social content, and that it is not useful to view this mode of organization as a "guild remnant."

[18]Baer, p. 99.

[19]Great Britain, House of Commons Sessional Papers, Vol. CXXXVII, 1906, "Report by H.M. Agent and Consul General on the Finances, Administration, and Condition of Egypt and the Sudan, 1905," p. 571.

[20]Ibid., p. 572.

[21]James Petras, Critical Perspectives on Imperialism and Social Class in the Third World (New York, 1978), p. 40. The posthumous study by Bill Warren, Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism (London, 1980), develops this argument more fully. I would not accept all of Warren's conclusions.

[22]Davis, "Bank Misr"; Deeb, "Bank Misr"; Patrick Clawson, "Egypt's Industrialization: A Critique of Dependency Theory," MERIP Reports, no. 72 (November 1978), pp. 17-23.

[23]Shuhdi ᶜAtiyah al-Shafiᶜi, Tatawwur al-harakah al-wataniyah al-Misriyah (Cairo, 1957); Fawzi Jirjis, Dirasat fi tarikh Misr al-siyasi mundhu al-ᶜasr al-Mamluki (Cairo, 1958); Muhammad Anis and ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzim Ramadan have developed this theme in several works, some of which are discussed in Peter Gran, "Modern Trends in Egyptian Historiography: A Review Article," International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 9 (August 1978):367-71.

[24]Mahmoud Hussein, Class Conflict in Egypt: 1945-1970 (New York, 1977); Anouar Abdel-Malek, Egypt: Military Society (New York, 1968).

[25]ᶜAsim al-Disuqi, Kibar mallak al-aradi al-ziraᶜiyah wa-dawruhum fi al-mujtamaᶜ al-Misri: 1914-1952 (Cairo, 1975).

[26]One feddan is equal to approximately one acre.

[27]Raʼuf ᶜAbbas, al-Harakah al-ᶜummaliyah fi Misr, 1899-1952 (Cairo, 1967) and al Harakah al-ᶜummaliyah al-Misriyah fi dawʼ al-wathaʼiq al-Baritaniyah, 1924-1937 (Cairo, 1975); Sulayman Muhammad al-Nukhayli, al-Harakah al-ᶜummaliyah fi Misr wa-mawqif al-sahafah wa-al-sultat al-Misriyah minha min sanat 1882 ila sanat 1952 (Cairo,

1967); Nawal ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz Radi, Adwa' jadidah ᶜala al-harakah al-ᶜummaliyah al-Misriyah, 1930-1945 (Cairo, 1975); ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim al-Ghazzali, Tarikh al-harakah al-niqabiyah al-Misriyah, 1899-1952 (Cairo, 1968); ᶜIzz al-Din I, II and III.

[28]While they still constitute a valuable source for the period of this study, these documents contain much more detailed information on the labor movement during the 1920s and 1930s. After 1936 the British became preoccupied with questions of global military strategy and paid less attention to observing the Egyptian labor movement.

[29]This argument was first made by al-Shafiᶜi, Tatawwur.

[30]For a relatively lucid elaboration of this argument see Nicos Poulantzas, Social Classes in Contemporary Capitalism (London, 1978), pp. 14 ff.

[31]Thompson would reject this loose interpretation of his work and any attempt tc find a common ground with the structuralists. For an argument upholding the legitimacy of this interpretation of Thompson see G. A. Cohen, Marx's Theory of History: A Defence (Princeton, 1978), pp. 73-77.

[32]This exchange is contained in E. P. Thompson, The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays (New York, 1978) and Perry Anderson, Arguments Within English Marxism (London, 1980). Some further comments and arguments in this debate are contained in Raphael Samuel, ed., People's History and Socialist Theory (London, 1981), pp. 376-408.

[33]For example, John Illife, "The Creation of Group Consciousness: A History of the Dockworkers of Dar es Salaam," in The Development of an African Working Class, eds. R. Sandbrook and R. Cohen (London, 1975), pp. 49-72.

[34]For a discussion of the "informal" sector of the urban economy see Mahmoud Abdel-Fadil, The Political Economy of Nasserism (Cambridge, U.K., 1980), pp. 15-26.

[35]Erik Olin Wright, Class, Crisis and the State (London, 1979), pp. 61 ff.

CHAPTER I

THE EMERGENCE OF THE EGYPTIAN WORKING CLASS

By the first decade of the twentieth century, an Egyptian working class composed of relatively permanent wage laborers in long distance and urban transport (ports, railways and urban tramways), industry (tobacco, cotton ginning and pressing and sugar refining) and public services (gas, electricity and water supply) was unmistakably present and growing. During the economic and nationalist political struggles in which this embryonic class engaged in the period 1899 to 1924, urban workers began to develop a set of shared experiences, political assumptions and a recognizable leadership. By the end of this period, significant concentrations of workers had established a tradition of trade union economic struggle closely linked to the demands and leadership of the Egyptian nationalist movement. The strong link between the workers' and the nationalist movements was a source of strength for the workers' movement in its early years. However, as the contradictory class interests within the nationalist movement began to assert themselves in the late 1920s and 1930s, some Egyptian workers began to feel

that the leadership upon which they relied was ineffective and no longer served the needs of their movement. After a series of failures and defeats in the period 1924 to 1936, demands for a workers' movement independent of existing political parties and personalities began to be raised.

This chapter consists of a brief outline of the development of the Egyptian workers' movement up to 1936. It is based mainly on the published works of the Egyptian labor historians previously mentioned. While I have not attempted to add substantially to the empirical data which they have amassed, I have tried to draw more sharply the analytical distinction between the workers' movement and the nationalist movement and their points of unity and contradiction.

Foreign Workers and Early Workers' Struggles

Because the Egyptian workers' movement has been so closely linked to the nationalist movement, some Egyptian historians have minimized the significance of the contribution of foreign workers to that movement. The role of foreign workers is complex and not entirely positive. Jacques Berque has suggested that some early strikes by foreigners may have been motivated by the hiring of Egyptians in enterprises where previously only non-Egyptians

had been employed.[1] Some foreigners also broke strikes initiated by Egyptian workers. A detailed examination of this issue is beyond the scope of this study. However, there can be no doubt that the earliest sustained struggles and organizations of workers in Egypt were led by foreign workers. Skilled foreigners had been employed as early as Muhammad ʿAli's time as foremen, repairmen or instructors in the factories. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many skilled workers came to Egypt to escape the impact of economic crises in Europe, especially the crash of 1907. Greeks, Armenians and Italians made up the largest communities of foreigners resident in Egypt, but there were also groups of French, British and Belgians. In 1911 there were an estimated 6,000 foreign industrial workers in Cairo.[2] Many of them had been exposed to trade unionism, syndicalism and socialism in Europe. Their influence was an important one in the first years of organized working class struggle in Egypt.

In the Greek-dominated cigarette industry the drive of the factory owners to mechanize the rolling process and eliminate the jobs of the hand rollers was a recurrent theme in the workers' struggle until mechanization was fully accomplished in the 1920s. For this reason the cigarette industry was one of the most volatile in the

early years of the twentieth century. From December 1899 to February 21, 1900, foreign and Egyptian cigarette rollers in Cairo struck for higher wages. The strike succeeded and resulted in the formation of the first workers' association in Egypt, the Cairo Cigarette Rollers' Association led by a Greek doctor named Kyriazi.[3] In March 1902 Greek and Egyptian cigarette rollers in Alexandria struck for higher wages and better working conditions. The workers were led by another Greek, Dr. Yudinus. During the strike the workers sent a petition to the Greek consulate asking for diplomatic intervention on their behalf.[4] In December 1903, Cairo cigarette rollers again went on a general strike for two months. The Association which they had established in 1900 had been dissolved, and a new association had to be formed to conduct the strike. The strike failed to attain its demands; but it did result in the formation of a more permanent union, the Mixed Association of Cigarette Workers, uniting foreign and Egyptian workers.[5]

Foreign workers also played a leading role in the Cairo tailors' strike of November 1901. According to a report in the daily newspaper al-Muqattam of November 5, 1901, the overwhelming majority of the workers were Greeks and Italians, and a smaller number were Jews and Armenians. The Greeks led the strike, and only a small

number of Egyptians participated. Representatives of the cigarette rollers and others attended a meeting of 1,500 workers at which the decision to strike was taken. Following the strike vote the workers organized a street demonstration attended by 3,000 people. Flags of the United Tailors' Association were unfurled with inscriptions in all the languages of the workers. The strikers demanded the establishment of a regular piece rate, reduction of hours, Sunday afternoons off and regular rest and meal periods.

Egyptian workers were not passive during the first wave of strike activity in the early years of the twentieth century. There were strikes at the port of Alexandria, the Filature Nationale in Alexandria and Kuredy Printing Co. of Cairo.[6] One of the most significant strikes of Egyptian workers in this period was the November 1900 Alexandria tramway strike. The workers demanded better promotion opportunities for Egyptians, an end to arbitrary determination of wages by management, replacement of one of the European supervisors, deposit of disciplinary fines into a workers' benefit fund, and a monthly rather than daily wage rate.[7]

Although this strike failed, the strikers' demands clearly demonstrate the close connection between the economic and national struggle for Egyptian workers even

at the earliest stages of working class collective action. Because national identity was such a prominent issue in Egypt during the British occupation, it is probable that the high degree of internationalist solidarity displayed during the Cairo tailors' strike was exceptional. Perhaps this was because there were few Egyptians involved in this strike, and the solidarity was mainly among various European nationalities. Employers took every opportunity to divide workers on national lines. Europeans received higher wages than Egyptians in enterprises where both were employed, and Europeans dominated the more skilled and higher paying job categories.[8] National solidarity between European workers and employers was generally stronger than class solidarity between European and Egyptian workers.[9] So in strikes involving a mixed work force, Europeans were sometimes induced to act as strikebreakers; and Egyptians also broke strikes called by European workers.

Thus the first wave of strikes in Egypt was generally led by foreigners--Greeks, Italians and Armenians. During the period 1899-1903 at least eight workers' associations were formed, mainly under their leadership.[10] But the steady expansion of capitalist relations of production in Egypt and the continuing British occupation provided the conditions which soon led

to the appearance of native Egyptian working class organization and leadership. The crash of 1907 began a period of intensified economic struggles. At the same time the Egyptian national movement began to assert itself as a significant new political force. The conjuncture of these factors was the basis for the beginnings of sustained struggle and organization of native Egyptian workers.

The Egyptian Working Class and the Egyptian National Movement

On December 27, 1907, the Nationalist Party (al-Hizb al-Watani) was formed around the anti-British newspaper, al-Liwa'. Its editor, Mustafa Kamil, had never shown any special concern with the working class or its problems; but he died soon after the party was formed. The new leader, Muhammad Farid, did have an interest in socialist ideas and developed relations with a number of figures in the Socialist International. Under his guidance the Nationalist Party and al-Liwa' began actively to support workers' causes as part of an effort to build a mass-based nationalist movement. The party established Peoples' Schools in working class sections of Cairo, Alexandria, Tanta and Mansurah where adults were taught reading and other basic subjects.[11] Party

intellectuals, especially lawyers, provided the leadership for the formation of the Manual Trades Workers' Union (Niqabat ʿUmmal al-Masaniʿ al-Yadawiyah) in 1909. The union grew from an initial membership of 979 to over 3,000 in 1912.[12]

Although some industrial workers joined this union, most of its members were skilled artisans whose status was being threatened by Egypt's economic transformation and the elimination of their trades. This would seem to indicate that the party's main concern was with those formerly independent craftsmen who were being forced into the ranks of the working class. The Nationalist Party also developed ties with workers in the railroads, tramways and public utilities where the largest number of native Egyptian workers was concentrated. In October 1908, following a rash of arbitrary firings, Cairo tramway drivers and ticket collectors conducted a militant strike raising demands for an eight-hour day, wage increases, paid vacations and sick leave, establishment of a grievance committee, free work uniforms, an accident compensation fund, no arbitary firings, no beating or insulting of workers by management, dismissal of some (European) supervisors and rehiring of workers recently fired. These demands were far in advance of the prevailing standard of working conditions. The

Nationalist Party played an important role in the strike by mobilizing public support and providing legal advice to the strikers. Workers and other inhabitants of Cairo responded to the appeals of the Nationalist Party by helping the workers to block the trams from moving out of the barns, contributing to the strike fund and helping to repel police attacks on the strikers. The demands were partially won. An even more important achievement of the strike was the establishment of a union led by Egyptians including intellectuals from the Nationalist Party--the Cairo Tramway Workers' Association.[13]

The existence of a strong union and a politically conscious leadership based in one of the largest concentrations of Egyptian workers made the Cairo tram workers one of the most militant and nationalistic sectors of the working class. The police repression during the 1908 strike did not deter the workers from calling a second strike from July 30 to August 6, 1911, around demands similar to those raised in 1908. But whereas in the first strike only the Egyptian drivers and ticket collectors presented demands, in 1911 demands were made on behalf of all the company's employees including a large number of Europeans who worked in the depots and repair shops.[14]

Nationalist Party members again provided legal support for the strike and helped to mobilize public

support. Residents of the Bulaq and ᶜAbbasiyah quarters joined the workers in fighting the police and burning the trams when the company tried to move the trams out of the depots under police escort.[15] Twenty-one workers and four policemen were injured in the fighting, and this incident became known as the "ᶜAbbasiyah massacre." The Nationalist Party leadership supported the strike as a vehicle for mobilizing popular sentiment against the Belgian-owned tram company and the British-dominated government. But as this excerpt from al-Liwa' shows, the party's propaganda line also encouraged the development of class consciousness and unity with European workers:

> Your cause is not only the cause of the tramway workers but the cause of all Egyptian workers. Your events coming after those of the railroad workshops is proof that a power has emerged in Egypt which cannot be ignored--the awakening power of the workers of the East and their realization of their interests and rights and desire to be men like other men. . . . Let the previous massacre of the train workshops and the ᶜAbbasiyah massacre be a lesson to you. [You should] unite and strengthen and increase your numbers by fraternizing and uniting with the European workers, your comrades, and [you should] form unions and provide them with strike funds and give them a large permanent supply of money which can be spent in time of need . . . .[16]

The largest employer in Egypt during this period was the Egyptian State Railways and Telegraphs with nearly 12,000 workers. The Nationalist Party began to organize these workers in 1909. As a result they were able to call

a strike on October 18, 1910 (referred to in the article from al-Liwa' quoted above). After a bloody clash with police the chief demands of the strike were met, including the transfer of an English engineer who abused the Egyptian workers.[17]

During the high tide of national and economic struggle of the years 1907-11, at least ten workers' associations or unions, in addition to the Manual Trades Workers' Union, were formed.[18] Not all of these organizations engaged in strikes. But most were led by Egyptian nationalist intellectuals who saw the urban working class as an important mass base for political organizing. Egyptian workers relied heavily on these intellectuals for leadership, although in some trades the role of European workers was still important. The distinction between national and class struggle was not very sharp at this time. Among the associations formed during this period were organizations of legal clerks and office workers. The social position of these semi-professionals was hardly comparable to the railway or tram workers. The fact that they organized themselves into unions and participated in the struggles of this period is an indication that lines of class demarcation were not yet clearly drawn.

British Repression and World War I

British repression temporarily halted both nationalist and working class struggle. Press censorship was imposed in March 1909, and in July 1909 a Law of Administrative Expulsion was enacted. When Lord Kitchener became British Agent in Egypt in 1912, the repression was intensified. The Nationalist Party was smashed and many of its leaders exiled. These measures crippled the party's ability to function. Although it continued in existence until 1953, it was never again a major political force. Workers who had been involved in nationalist politics fled to the countryside.

Following the outbreak of World War I, the British established even tighter control over Egypt. Press and foreign mail censorship were again imposed. Public gatherings of more than five persons were banned. The Legislative Assembly was dissolved. On November 2, 1914, martial law was instituted. Finally, on December 14, 1914, Great Britain declared a protectorate over Egypt. More members of the Nationalist Party were jailed or expelled from the country, including many who had played a leading role in the trade union movement, such as Ahmad Lutfi, a lawyer and honorary member of the Cairo Tramway Workers' Union, Ahmad Ramadan Zayan, head of the Alexandria branch of the Manual Trades Workers' Union, and

Muhammad ᶜAwad Jibril, secretary of the same union.[19] As a result of these measures, there was little trade union activity during most of the war.

The economic impact of the war on Egypt was severe. The cost of living rose steadily throughout and for several years after the war. Food and fuel were especially affected. One of the most severe effects of the war on Egypt was the recruitment of over one million Egyptians to serve in the Egyptian Labour Corps and the Camel Transport Corps--auxiliary units created to provide unskilled labor for the British army. Enlistment was theoretically voluntary. But village mudirs and ᶜumdahs conscripted whomever they chose when quotas could not be met.

While the Egyptian masses suffered greatly during the war, Egyptian capitalism grew rapidly as a result of the sharp reduction in imports of many consumer goods from Europe. Among those industries which expanded during the war were textiles, olive oil pressing, tanning, grain milling, food processing, furniture making and iron founding. As a result, the number of wage laborers in industry and transport increased by approximately one third from 1907 to 1917. (See Chapter III for more complete statistics on the growth of the Egyptian working class.) In 1916 the government formed the Commission of

Commerce and Industry to investigate policies to alleviate wartime shortages and to encourage the development of Egyptian capitalism. The formation of this body constitutes the first organizational expression of an Egyptian industrial bourgeoisie.

The Working Class and the 1919 Revolution

Despite the lack of workers' organization, the dispersal of their leadership and the continuing repression by the British, a strike wave began in August 1917 which continued up to and beyond the national uprising of March 1919. The Greek cigarette rollers began this movement. Due to a shortage of raw tobacco, many of the employers sought to break prewar labor agreements and fire or reduce the wages of their employees.[20] There were also strikes in enterprises employing mainly Egyptians--the Cairo tramway, the port of Alexandria and the Cairo Water Co.[21]

There were two distinct trends in this renewed trade union activity: (1) An attempt by remnants of the Nationalist Party to revive the Manual Trades Workers' Union and (2) the reestablishment and growth of unions of workers employed in a single enterprise. The Nationalist Party continued to advocate that all manual workers, self-employed and traditional craftsmen as well as

industrial workers, join one union. Since they were primarily concerned with the national struggle, their goal was to build the Manual Trades Workers' Union into a mass nationalist political organization. Despite the increasing urgency of the national question towards the end of World War I, the Manual Trades Workers' Union never regained the strength it had attained before the war. Part of the decline in the union's strength was due to the rise of the Wafd and the decline of the Nationalist Party. In addition, it was not a viable form of organization since it could not express the divergent needs of both self-employed craftsmen whose skills and trades were under attack and a growing proletariat at the same time. By 1919 and 1921 its membership dwindled to 1,213 and 1,043 respectively.[22] The formation of separate trade unions composed of all the workers in a single enterprise was the rising trend. This reflected the decline of traditional handicraft production and the expansion of capitalist relations of production. Although it was no longer the leading political force, the Nationalist Party's continuing presence in the labor movement provided a bridge to the prewar tradition of linking the national movement and the workers' movement.

Since late 1918 Sa^{c}d Saghlul and others had been attempting to persuade the British to permit an Egyptian

delegation (wafd) to attend the Paris Peace Conference to present Egypt's demand for independence. Zaghlul and his colleagues had, at this point, no organized mass base. On March 9, 1919, in an effort to crush the demand for Egyptian independence, the British arrested Zaghlul and two other Wafd leaders and deported them to Malta. Both the British and the Wafd leaders were surprised by the largely spontaneous nationwide mass uprising which these arrests provoked. Although the Wafd leaders had shown no previous interest in the Egyptian working class, workers responded to the arrests along with other Egyptians by intensifying their strike movement.

Cairo tramway workers struck from March 13 to April 15, 1919. The strike succeeded in winning some of the workers' economic demands and in reestablishing the Cairo Tramway Workers' Union.[23] On March 15, 4,000 railway depot workers struck. And on March 18 workers at the Royal Printing Press in Bulaq went out. These two groups of workers held a demonstration aimed at breaking down the blockade which the British had erected around the Bulaq and Sabtiyah quarters to prevent their mainly working class residents from joining demonstrators in downtown Cairo.[24] The railway workers initiated the tactic of cutting the railroad tracks, the most direct and serious challenge to British authority in this stage of

the nationalist uprising.[25] On March 16 Alexandria workers joined the strike movement. Railroad, port, lighthouse, post office and government workshop workers held large demonstrations resulting in clashes with the British army in which ten workers were killed.[26] On March 20 Alexandria Customs Authority workers struck, followed by tram workers on March 22.[27]

Through these strikes concentrated in the transport sector, the Egyptian working class made a significant contribution to the nationalist uprising, although the Wafd itself played no role in organizing or leading these strikes. The militant actions of the working class--cutting the railroad tracks, boycotting and blocking the movement of the Cairo trams, demonstrations by striking workers--were important factors in the British decision to allow Zaghlul to return from exile on Malta on April 7, 1919.

Zaghlul's return did not put an end to the strike wave. In the second half of 1919 strikes spread beyond the transport sector to almost every branch of the economy. There were strikes at the Cairo Gas Company (June), Alexandria barber shops (July 12), the Kom Ombo sugar refinery (July 16), International Cafe in Alexandria (July 28), the port of Alexandria (August 4), and once again the Cairo tramway (August 10).[28] The major

demands of this strike wave were for higher wages, an eight-hour day, severance pay, paid vacations and union recognition.

The momentum and magnitude of this strike movement forced the government to take notice of the working class. On August 18, 1919, it announced the formation of a Labor Conciliation Board which was intended to serve as a mediating body between workers and employers whenever grievances arose. Two of the five members were British, and the other three were government functionaries. Although a body so composed could not be expected to be overly sympathetic to labor, and it had no executive authority, its establishment was considered a workers' victory because it legitimized the principle that workers had the right to make demands on their employers and to negotiate for improved conditions of employment.

The formation of the Labor Conciliation Board was intended to put an end to the strikes. But it did not. From August 18 to November 30, 1919, there were twenty-four major strikes. The largest was a fifty-six day walkout of Cairo railway workers. Three other strikes lasted more than forty days. From December 1919 through the end of 1921 there were eighty-one strikes in all branches of the economy, including sixty-seven industry-wide general strikes.[29]

There were three contributing factors to this strike movement. First, because of the heavy British repression at the beginning of the war, workers' demands were deferred for several years and suddenly presented as the war drew to a close. Second, the general nationalist uprising provided a legitimate purpose for strike action and enabled workers to gain the support of other elements of the population. Finally, the soaring inflation during and immediately after the war provided a strong economic incentive for strike action. From 1913 to 1921 the cost-of-living index increased from 100 to 316.[30] The second report of the Labor Conciliation Board covering the period December 1919 to February 1920 recognized the severity of the inflation and recommended that employers grant "reasonable" wage increases.[31]

When appeasement and conciliation failed to stop the strikes, the government resorted to repression. On January 21, 1921, a law prohibiting the payment of wages directly to unions or cooperative associations of workers was enacted. (Many unions had formed themselves into cooperative associations in order to gain legal status.) This law was reinforced by a military order of General Allenby on February 3. Most unions ignored this attempt to throttle their activities. The strike wave led to the formation of new and more soundly organized unions. By

1919-20 there were forty-three functioning trade unions in Egypt: nineteen in Cairo, eighteen in Alexandria, and six in Port Said, Damietta, Damanhur and Mahallah al-Kubra.[32] Six of these unions had been established before the war. At least three had mixed foreign and Egyptian membership. In the Cairo Gas and Electric Company union internationalist solidarity was quite strong, and it successfully passed two trials of strength in bitter strikes during January-February and October 1920.[33] In the Cairo Mixed Printing Workers' Union, on the other hand, there was evidence of friction between Europeans and Egyptians. Most of the unions were limited to workers in a single work place. The leadership, although almost entirely Egyptian by this time, was largely in the hands of effendis, beys, lawyers and other intellectuals. ʿAbd al-Rahman Fahmi of the Wafd and Dr. Mahjub Thabit, a Nationalist Party sympathizer, were prominent among the nonworkers who played a major role in organizing and leading the workers' movement in the early years after the 1919 uprising.

The 1919 revolution was the basic formative experience for the Egyptian workers' movement. The fusion of the economic demands of the working class and Egyptian nationalist demands which characterized the struggles of this period shaped the historical development,

ideology and leadership of the workers' movement. Because the workers' movement viewed itself as part of the nationalist movement, there did not appear to be any reason why nationalist intellectuals should not play a leading role in the trade unions. They provided skills and political experience which workers generally lacked, and they played an important role in linking workers' economic demands to the nationalist movement. Some of the non-worker union leaders, such as ʿAbd al-Rahman Fahmi, who was a shareholder in Bank Misr, openly announced that they feared the potential danger of a workers' movement unrestrained by a moderate leadership.[34] They participated in the workers' movement in order to make certain that its demands and activities did not exceed the boundaries set by the Egyptian nationalist movement and its upper class leadership. Since the nationalist intellectuals did make a substantial contribution to the workers' movement and no contradiction between nationalist and trade union objectives was generally apparent, there was at this point very little challenge to the nationalist intellectuals' leadership of the trade unions. Once this leadership became entrenched, it was to prove extremely difficult to replace it, even after some workers did begin to see the need for a trade union and workers' movement independent of nationalist political parties and personalities.

The Origins of Egyptian Socialism

At the same time that the Egyptian workers' movement was reemerging after World War I the first seeds of socialist thought and action began to grow in Egypt.[35] In 1918-19 Dr. Mansur Fahmi and a group of Egyptian intellectuals planned to establish a socialist party. By the time their plans materialized they had become convinced that conditions in Egypt were not ripe for the propagation of socialism. Therefore the proposed name of the group was changed to the Democratic Party when it was actually formed in September 1919. At about the same time a group of foreigners in Alexandria led by a Jewish jeweler, Joseph Rosenthal, began to meet. Rosenthal had been active in trade union organizing among European printers, bakers and tailors in Cairo and Alexandria before the war. Rosenthal's group formed itself into a socialist party in 1920. A year later, in August 1921, Egyptian intellectuals led by Salamah Musa and others who had been active in the short-lived Democratic Party fused with Rosenthal's group to establish the Egyptian Socialist Party (ESP) with its headquarters in Cairo. The party was formed on the basis of an inherently unstable alliance between Salamah Musa's Fabianism and Rosenthal's anarcho-syndicalist tendencies. Rosenthal recognized that the ESP had to be Egyptianized in order to be effective, so he

did not play a public leading role in its activities. The Egyptian intellectuals--Salamah Musa, ᶜAli al-ᶜInani, Muhammad ᶜAbd Allah ᶜInan and Mahmud Husni al-ᶜUrabi--led the party's work. The party program clearly revealed the dominance of the Fabian elements. In an article he wrote in al-Ahram on August 31, 1921, justifying the establishment of the ESP, Salamah Musa clearly articulated his reformist and anti-Bolshevik views.

Even before the establishment of the ESP, the European socialists had been active in the strike movement of 1919-20 in Alexandria. Their work in the trade union led to the establishment of the first Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions (FETU--al-Ittihad al-Misri lil-Niqabat) in February 1921, several months before the formation of the ESP. The federation united unions with a combined membership of 3,000 workers, among them a relatively high proportion of Europeans.[36] After its establishment the ESP assumed the leadership of the FETU.

A new strike movement began in July 1921 and lasted until March 1922. During these nine months there were eighty-one strikes at fifty different enterprises, including a 113-day strike at the Suez oil refinery, a 102-day strike on the Cairo tramway, a 52-day strike at the Filature Nationale, and a 45-day strike at the Cairo Gas Company.[37] Many new unions were established during this

period bringing the total number to ninety-five: thirty-eight in Cairo, thirty-three in Alexandria, eighteen in the Suez Canal area, four in Tanta and one each in Damanhur and Zifti.[38]

The ESP and the FETU did not play a prominent role in this workers' upsurge. Some members of the Alexandria branch of the ESP did try to forge closer ties to the workers' movement during these months. But they felt that their efforts were being thwarted by the Cairo party membership, which included a large number of lawyers, merchants and even landowners.[39] The struggle between the two wings of the ESP was probably a major factor in its inability to participate actively in the ongoing economic struggle of the working class.

During this internal party debate the Alexandria branch developed a Bolshevik perspective. On July 30, 1922, the Marxists precipitated a split in the party and expelled the Fabian group. They then applied for membership in the Communist International. The Executive Committee of the Communist International stipulated four conditions for accepting the ESP's membership application: (1) convening a party congress; (2) changing the party's name; (3) formulation of a program for the peasantry; and (4) expulsion of Joseph Rosenthal (presumably for his anarchist views). In January 1923 the Communist Party of

Egypt (CPE) was officially established and recognized by the Communist International.

The new party devoted all its energies to organizing the urban working class. It revitalized the FETU and recruited a large number of Egyptian workers into the party's ranks and leadership. By March 1924, the CPE had 1,500 members, and FETU membership reached 15,000-20,000.[40] The CPE became an influential force in the Alexandria Gas and Electric Company strike of February 1923, organizing broad support among other workers. On March 18, 1923, the CPE organized a demonstration protesting the anti-worker bias of the Labor Conciliation Board. As a result of this action, two party leaders, Mahmud Husni al-ᶜUrabi and Antun Marun, and two workers were arrested, and the FETU headquarters was closed.[41]

In November 1923 the 1,200 workers at the Filature Nationale in Alexandria organized a slowdown because the company was attempting to reduce wages and fire workers in violation of an agreement which had been reached in December 1921. On February 24, 1924, the Filature Nationale workers occupied their mill protesting the management's refusal to implement the agreement which had ended the slowdown.

The CPE had previously announced the convening of a workers' conference in Alexandria on February 23 and 24,

1924. This was generally perceived as a challenge to Sa^{c}d Zaghlul's first Wafd government, which had just come to power in January. If the government permitted the conference to convene, it would imply legal recognition of the CPE's right to exist. Moreover, it would have helped to consolidate the party's influence among the Alexandria workers. In order to assert its ability to maintain "law and order" and to beat back any challenge to its claim to represent the entire Egyptian nation, the Wafd government announced that it would not permit the conference to be held.

By banning the conference, the government created a rallying point for the Alexandria workers. The start of the sit-down strike by the Filature Nationale workers on the second day on which the conference was to have convened was the catalyst to a workers' uprising which spread throughout the city. The next day the Egyptian Oil Industry Company workers occupied their plant. Their union of 700 members included many Russians and was one of the strongest unions led by the CPE.[42] Several other plants were occupied during the week of February 22-29.

Zaghlul's government took energetic steps to crush the Alexandria workers. All the leading communists and worker activists were arrested. The FETU was disbanded and its membership dispersed. On October 6, 1924, Husni

al-ʿUrabi, Antun Marun and four others were sentenced to jail for three years. Five other defendants received six-month sentences. Twenty foreign party members and workers were deported.[43]

The CPE never recovered from the blow it received in March 1924. Although several attempts were made to revive the party throughout the 1920s, the emissaries of the Comintern sent to carry out this task were never able to establish a mass base among Egyptian workers. The government periodically arrested or deported Russians, Palestinian Jews, Greeks and Italians who attempted to reestablish communist activity in Egypt. It was only during World War II that the communist movement succeeded in restoring its links with the Egyptian working class.

The rise and demise of the CPE is an issue which focuses attention in the relations between foreigners and native Egyptians in the Egyptian workers' movement. This question has much broader implications as well because in all the Arab countries where communist parties exist, the original leadership of these parties included a large proportion of foreigners and local non-Muslim minorities, particularly Jews. Walter Laqueur's sharply anticommunist and factually unreliable study minimizes the participation of Egyptians in the CPE and tends to portray the communist movement as an unnatural growth grafted on to the Egyptian

body politic by foreigners.[44] Suliman Bashear provides an account of the CPE which, while factually more accurate, avoids many of the difficult questions in the party's brief history, including this one.

While it seems clear that there was significant Egyptian participation in both the leadership and rank-and-file membership of the CPE (including a fair number of workers), the party's failure seems closely linked to errors which may very well have been due to the extensive foreign influence in the leadership and ideological formation of the party. The party misunderstood the importance of the national struggle in Egypt and its relationship to the class struggle. It called for an all-out attack on the Egyptian bourgeoisie and threw down the gauntlet before Sa^{c}d Zaghlul's popular nationalist government, while full Egyptian national independence was still unrealized, and British troops occupied Egypt, and long before the vacillation and conciliaton of the Wafd was apparent to the Egyptian masses. Perhaps because of the high proportion of foreigners in the original ideological leadership of the party, the CPE failed to understand the importance of the struggle for Egypt's independence in the eyes of the Egyptian people and objectively as part of the class struggle itself. The party also erred by devoting all its efforts to organizing

the urban working class, which was still a small minority of the population, less than 10 percent. Even though it had developed a program for peasants following the instructions of the Comintern, there is no evidence of party activity in rural areas. Thus despite an important base of strength among both native Egyptian and foreign workers in Alexandria, the party's overall influence among the Egyptian people was not broad enough to sustain and defend the aggressive actions it advocated in February-March 1924. The party was young and weak, while the new Wafd government was extremely popular after having led the nationalist uprising. The CPE had no chance to emerge victorious from a decisive confrontation in these circumstances.

Offensive of the Egyptian Bourgeoisie

Great Britain's unilateral recognition of a limited Egyptian independence in 1922, while continuing its military occupation and de facto rule, gave the Egyptian bourgeoisie a chance to consolidate itself as a new and rising social force. The founding of Bank Misr in 1920 and the Egyptian Federation of Industries in 1922 symbolized this development. Although the small Egyptian national bourgeoisie soon lost its independence and came under the domination of foreign capital, Bank Misr did

provide the financing for the establishment of several new industrial enterprises. Because capitulations restricting the right of the Egyptian government to enact protective tariffs were still in force, many Egyptian enterprises which had flourished during World War I in the absence of significant competition from European products were threatened by the resumption of trade after the war. In addition, the reduction in the size of the British occupation army diminished Egypt's internal market, while declining real wages reduced consumer purchasing power.

These unfavorable economic conditions and the relatively low level of capital accumulation and productive forces threatened the vitality of the Egyptian bourgeoisie. Its survival and prosperity depended on its ability to dominate decisively the Egyptian working class. The only competitive advantage of Egyptian industry was an abundant supply of cheap labor and the freedom to exploit it with only minimal legal restrictions. Using the argument that the national interest required the unfettered growth of Egyptian industry, the Egyptian bourgeoisie, although it never held uncontested control of the state, was able to convince every Egyptian government from 1924 to 1952 of the need to oppose or restrain the demands of the workers' movement. The

British officials responsible for monitoring trade union activity, especially those with a police mentality such as Keown Boyd, encouraged the repression of trade unions, fearing that an active workers' movement would become a political threat to their position in Egypt. As a result, the 1920s and most of the 1930s were a period of weakness and largely defensive struggles for the Egyptian workers' movement. Trade unions remained in a legal limbo, neither legal nor explicitly illegal. Until 1933 the only existing labor legislation consisted of poorly enforced health and safety and child labor laws enacted in 1904 and 1909.

In the mid-1920s many enterprises fired workers and attempted, with a high degree of success, to disregard or revise agreements reached with trade unions in the first years after the 1919 uprising. There was a series of strikes in 1927 in response to these actions--at the Alexandria Water Company, Alexandria Tramway Company, railway porters, silk weavers, Cairo cigarette workers and Suez Canal Company workers at Port Said. The governments of Ziwar Pasha (1924-26) and Muhammad Mahmud Pasha (1928-29) attacked the trade union movement, and by 1927 the number of trade unions had dropped to sixty-two with a total membership of 20,000-25,000.[45]

The decade following the installation of the first Wafd government in 1924 was characterized by a defensive

struggle of the working class to retain the gains won in the course of the trade union and national struggles of 1917-24. The progress of the workers' movement was halted, and in many cases reversed. The absence of a workers' party limited the potential for building a sustained political opposition to the offensive of the Egyptian bourgeoisie. But even if the CPE had not been destroyed, it is unlikely that this setback could have been avoided entirely. The coalition of nationalist intellectuals, traditional craftsmen, and new proletarians which built the trade union movement and gave it its political direction in the struggle against the British occupation and foreign capital reached the limit of its potential when an Egyptian bourgeoisie emerged alongside foreign capital as a formidable class in opposition to the Egyptian working class.

The early strength and success of the workers' movement were due in large measure to the significant role which it had played in the national struggle. When the nationalist intellectuals who led the movement proved unwilling or unable to persist in the struggle for workers' demands after nominal independence was achieved, the labor movement was disarmed and confused. Rank-and-file workers had not previously needed to develop themselves as leaders and did not yet see themselves as

capable of playing such a role. Without an independent leadership the trade unions became pawns in the struggle between the Wafd, the minority parties, the Palace and the British.

Political Parties in the Trade Union Movement

The continuing struggle against the British occupation and domination provided the Wafd with the opportunity to enter and in many cases lead the trade union movement. The Wafd was the only popularly supported nationalist party. However, it was inconsistent in the anti-British struggle and frightened of the popular forces it would have had to mobilize in order to expel the British. The first Wafd government, acting in this case in the interests of the young Egyptian bourgeoisie and the British overlords of Egypt, had no hesitation about suppressing the workers of Alexandria. After eliminating the CPE as a factor in the workers' movement in 1924, the Wafd set out to reorganize the movement under its own leadership. Immediately after the dissolution of the FETU, ᶜAbd al-Rahman Fahmi founded a trade union (al-Niqabah al-ᶜAmmah lil-ᶜUmmal), which developed into a new trade union federation (al-Ittihad al-ᶜAmm li-Niqabat al-ᶜUmmal bi-Wadi al-Nil) by July 1924. This organization collapsed by the end of the year, when the British forced

the Wafd out of power after the assassination of Sir Lee Stack.

During the Ziwar and Muhammad Mahmud Pasha regimes the Wafd represented the entire nation in opposition to these dictatorial and antinationalist governments installed by the British and the King. The Wafd gained influence among the workers because it played this role and succeeded in winning the leadership of several important trade unions.[46]

When the Wafd came to power briefly from March to June 1928, it tried to reestablish a trade union federation (al-Ittihad al-ᶜAmm li-Niqabat ᶜUmmal al-Qatr al-Misri). This attempt also collapsed as soon as the Wafd government fell. When the Wafd returned to power for the third time from January to June 1930, several Wafd lawyers--ᶜAziz Mirhum, Ahmad Muhammad and Husni al-Shintanawi--again formed a new trade union federation (al-Ittihad al-ᶜAmm lil-Niqabat). At the same time, Da'ud Ratib, who was associated with the Liberal Constitutionalist Party, established a competing General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions (GFETU--al-Ittihad al-ᶜAmm li-Niqabat ᶜUmmal al-Qatr al-Misri). British intelligence reported, probably correctly, that Ratib received LE 1,000 from agents of King Fu'ad in exchange for his effort to split the trade union movement.[47]

However, pro-Wafd elements from within Ratib's federation ousted him from leadership in December 1930 and installed Prince ᶜAbbas Halim, a renegade of the royal family, in his place.

For the next twenty years ᶜAbbas Halim played a strange and mercurial role in the Egyptian trade union movement. He was born into the royal family but lost his title of nabil because he had supported the Wafd against the dictatorial regime of Ismaᶜil Sidqi. He was a dilettante and an adventurer, who involved himself in a wide variety of sporting activities. His physical prowess and reputation for using it on recalcitrant employers attracted many workers to his banner. During World War I he had served in the German army as an aide de camp to Kaiser Wilhelm. The Prince's first involvement in the trade union movement was in 1922, when he became the patron of the Cairo Chauffeurs and Mechanics Union headed by Muhammad Ibrahim Zayn al-Din. In 1928 he resigned his position, but he returned to the trade union movement in December 1930. Thereafter he repeatedly appeared on the trade union scene to head various trade union federations. Although his enmity to King Fu'ad made him sympathetic to the Wafd, he never agreed to relinquish his personal political independence. This remained a point of contention between the Prince and the Wafd throughout the early and mid-1930s.

In early 1931 the Wafd's trade union federation united with ᶜAbbas Halim's federation under the Prince's leadership, and the two forces cooperated in trying to mobilize the trade unions against the dictatorial regime of Ismaᶜil Sidqi which came to power in June 1930. Sidqi anticipated worker resistance to his government by establishing a Labor Office in the Ministry of Interior on December 1, 1930. On March 15, 1931, the Sidqi government closed down the GFETU headquarters and confiscated its funds. Fifty-four unions whose offices were in the same building were paralyzed as a result of its sequestration. Many trade union leaders were arrested or fired from their jobs.[48]

ᶜAbbas Halim and the Wafd were unable to organize an effective response to this attack on the labor movement. The best protest that could be mounted was to dispatch a representative to the Congress of the International Federation of Trade Unions which met in Madrid in July 1931. Muhammad Ibrahim Zayn al-Din, who was still President of the Cairo Chauffeurs and Mechanics Union, presented the Egyptian trade union movement's case against the Sidqi government. The Congress adopted several resolutions supporting the Egyptian workers.

As a result of international criticism of Sidqi's repression, the Egyptian government was forced to invite

Harold Butler, a representative of the International Labour Office in Geneva, to Egypt to study the labor situation and make recommendations for reforms. Butler's proposals, which were quite minimal, were not adopted until several years later and then only piecemeal and gradually.

After the government's dissolution of the GFETU, ᶜAbbas Halim tried to rally his trade union supporters to continue their opposition to the Sidqi regime through the formation of a Labor Party. The Wafd opposed this initiative because it did not want a rival party in competition for the political loyalty of the working class.[49]

The Sidqi government fell in September 1933. This reopened the possibility of the resumption of trade union organizing. In March 1934 ᶜAbbas Halim reestablished the GFETU based inside his palace in Garden City. In response, the Ministry of Interior issued an order prohibiting workers from entering the palace. On June 21 a fight broke out between workers and police attempting to enforce this order. Ninety-five workers were arrested, seven wounded, and one, Ibrahim Muhammad Mahmud, Secretary of the Barbers' Union, died in the hospital following the clash. His funeral became a major political demonstration in which ᶜAbbas Halim and Wafd leaders participated. As

a result, ᶜAbbas Halim was arrested on June 29 and held for twenty-eight days.[50]

These events greatly increased ᶜAbbas Halim's personal popularity and injected new vitality into the GFETU. The Cairo Tramway and Thorneycroft Bus Company unions were among the more important unions won to ᶜAbbas Halim's banner as a result of these events.[51] The Prince's relationship with the Cairo transport workers was to last for many years.

Since ᶜAbbas Halim was at the head of a functioning trade union federation, the Wafd was satisfied to support this organization. By late 1934 it was becoming apparent that the Wafd would soon be recalled to power in order to negotiate a treaty with Great Britain. In preparation a National Congress was convened on January 9-10, 1935, the first and only time the Wafd attempted to mobilize mass support in this manner. ᶜAbbas Halim was invited by the Wafd to participate with it in the leadership of the workers' movement. The Prince agreed and joined the Supreme Council for Workers set up at the National Congress.

By April 1935 a split had taken place. The ostensible issue was the formal organizational relationship between the Supreme Council and the GFETU. But the real issue was the Prince's desire to retain his political

independence and refusal to be absorbed into the Wafd. According to British reports, the Wafd was the aggressor in precipitating the split. It had attempted to detach ᶜAbbas Halim from his base of support and dominate the trade union movement in preparation for new elections.[52]

Following this split, the Wafd transformed its Supreme Council into a rival trade union federation, the Supreme Council for a General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions (al-Majlis al-Aᶜla lil-Ittihad al-ᶜAmm li-Niqabat ᶜUmmal al-Qatr al-Misri). It is unclear who won the support of the majority of the trade unions in this split. British reports indicate that the Wafd held the allegiance of the majority.[53] But others claim that ᶜAbbas Halim emerged with more support.[54] Amin ᶜIzz al-Din gives the figure of 217 trade unions in ᶜAbbas Halim's federation at its meeting of May 26, 1935.[55] This would certainly have given the Prince the preponderance of forces. But ᶜIzz al-Din gives no source for this figure.

The split between ᶜAbbas Halim and the Wafd sapped the energy of the trade union movement. By the end of the year both trade union federations had been weakened.[56] The organizational confusion of the trade union movement was further intensified when agents of the Royal Palace entered the arena and formed a third trade union federation "under royal protection."[57] This organization never received significant popular support.

The struggle for organizational control of the trade unions which occupied the attention of the political parties, ᶜAbbas Halim and the Palace agents took place in an arena far removed from the day-to-day economic struggles of the working class itself during the 1930s. The Egyptian working class faced the depression disorganized and divided. Most of the strikes of the early 1930s failed to win their demands.

Workers overwhelmingly supported the Wafd in the struggle against the succession of antinationalist dictatorial regimes installed by the British and the Palace. In opposing these regimes the Wafd articulated the demands of the masses of the Egyptian people and easily won popular support. One of the fiercest strikes of the 1924-39 period was conducted by workers in the Bulaq railroad workshops on May 14, 1931, as a political protest against Sidqi's rigged elections. In this strike the workers responded directly to the Wafd's call for an election boycott. Bloody battles between police and strikers resulted in the deaths of sixteen workers, while 120 were wounded, 120 arrested, and 477 fired from their jobs. In order to prevent further public demonstrations at their funeral, the government refused to hand over the bodies of the slain workers to their families and had them buried secretly.[58] Throughout the 1930s the Wafd

supported the demands for rehiring the fired workers. Consequently the railway workers became a Wafd stronghold within the trade union movement.

However, the Wafd was primarily interested in the national question, not in trade union issues, which always received secondary priority whenever it came to power. For example, in July 1927 a parliamentary committee was formed to formulate proposals for labor legislation. The Wafd took no notice of this committee during its term of office in 1928, and the committee was able to delay issuing a report for several years. On May 3, 1930, representatives of fourteen trade unions held a meeting to urge the Wafd government to expedite the release of the report and to implement its proposals, which included limiting hours, establishing a minimum wage, regulating child and women's labor, setting health and safety standards, providing accident and illness compensation and establishing a Labor Office.[59] The government procrastinated on the matter until the Wafd's fall from power. In fact, it was not the Wafd, but the anti-labor Sidqi and Nasim regimes which were responsible for most of the labor legislation of the 1930s. These laws were, however, rarely enforced.

Neither the Wafd nor ᶜAbbas Halim played an active role in the wave of sit-down strikes which broke out

almost immediately after the installation of the Wafd government on May 10, 1936. There were sit-downs at the Alexandria Oil Company on June 13, the Kafr al-Zayyat Cotton Company mills in Alexandria on June 20, and the Filature Nationale in Alexandria on June 27. Alexandria tram workers also conducted a conventional strike July 6-16.

The most dramatic of the sit-down strikes occurred at the Hawamdiyah sugar refinery on July 13. A fired worker, Hamid Salim, entered the refinery with several other fired workers. Salim was armed with a pistol, and, brandishing his weapon, he organized a work stoppage, expelled the management from the plant, and led the workers in occupying it.[60] [c]Abbas Halim had previously intervened on behalf of the Hawamdiyah workers. Therefore it was natural that when he escaped from the refinery, Hamid Salim fled to the Prince's palace. But [c]Abbas Halim was in London. He did, however, issue a statement urging the workers to restrain themselves and trust in his intervention.[61]

The Wafd was openly critical of Hamid Salim. Zuhayr Sabri, the Wafd Representative for Bulaq, had a reputation as a prolabor radical and was often incorrectly characterized by the British as a communist. Sabri issued a statement sharply criticizing the Hawamdiyah workers for their actions.[62]

The failure of ᶜAbbas Halim and the Wafd to provide adequate leadership to the concrete economic struggles which workers faced in the 1930s and the destructive effects of their political rivalry were major contributing factors to the weakness of the Egyptian labor movement. This continuing weakness led some trade union leaders to search for a new kind of trade union organization, independent of political parties and personalities. This independence, they hoped, would enable the trade unions to be freer to pursue their goals and interests without interference from political forces whose priorities were not necessarily the same as theirs. The freeing of the workers' movement from control by nonworkers was phrased in terms of "independence" from political parties, because in the late 1930s, when this demand began to be raised, no working class party existed in Egypt. In fact, what occurred during the period 1936-54 was an intensification of struggle between diverse political tendencies for the leadership of the trade union movement. In addition to the Wafd and ᶜAbbas Halim, the Muslim Brothers and the renewed Egyptian communist movement entered the arena of competition.

Notes to Chapter I

[1]Jacques Berque, "The Establishment of the Colonial Economy," in Polk and Chambers, p. 241.

[2]Vallet, p. 34.

[3]ᶜIzz al-Din I, p. 56.

[4]Ibid., pp. 63-64.

[5]Ibid. The qualifier "mixed" or "international" was used in Egypt to indicate a trade union whose members were both Egyptians and non-Egyptians.

[6]al-Ghazzali, pp. 22-23.

[7]ᶜIzz al-Din I, pp. 60-61.

[8]Ibid., p. 55; Vallet, p. 26.

[9]Vallet, p. 38.

[10]al-Ghazzali, p. 26; ᶜIzz al-Din I, p. 69.

[11]al-Ghazzali, pp. 33-34.

[12]ᶜAbbas, al-Harakah al-ᶜummaliyah fi Misr, p. 62.

[13]ᶜIzz al-Din I, pp. 85-97; al-Ghazzali, pp. 31-32.

[14]ᶜIzz al-Din I, p. 99.

[15]Ibid., pp. 106-07; al-Ghazzali, pp. 41-44.

[16]Quoted in al-Ghazzali, p. 45.

[17]ᶜIzz al-Din I, pp. 115-17; al-Ghazzali, pp. 39-40.

[18]ᶜIzz al-Din I, pp. 118-23.

[19]Ibid., p. 136.

[20]Ibid., p. 161.

[21]ᶜIzz al-Din II, p. 8.

[22]ᶜAbbas, al-Harakah al-ᶜummaliyah fi Misr, p. 63.

[23]ᶜIzz al-Din II, pp. 27-28.

[24]Ibid., p. 17.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., p. 18.

[27]Ibid., p. 19.

[28]al-Ghazzali, pp. 75-78.

[29]Suliman Bashear, Communism in the Arab East, 1918-1928 (London, 1980), pp. 54-55.

[30]ᶜIzz al-Din II, p. 42.

[31]Ibid., p. 43.

[32]Ibid., pp. 94-103.

[33]Ibid., pp. 47-59.

[34]See the speech of ᶜAbd al-Rahman al-Fahmi given in Fayum on November 9, 1924, quoted in al-Ghazzali, p. 96.

[35]For a detailed account of the formation of the Communist Party of Egypt see Bashear, pp. 23 ff.

[36]Ibid., p. 58; ᶜIzz al-Din II, p. 127.

[37]ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzim Ramadan, Tatawwur al-harakah al-wataniyah fi Misr min sanat 1918 ila sanat 1936 (Cairo, 1967), p. 527.

[38]Ibid., p. 528.

[39]Ibid., p. 529; ᶜIzz al-Din II, p. 131.

[40]ᶜIzz al-Din II, pp. 134-35.

[41]Ramadan, p. 540; Bashear, p. 59.

[42]FO 141/583/9321/111.

[43]For details on the Alexandria workers' uprising and its aftermath see FO 141/583/9321/111 through 141/583/9321/123.

[44]Walter Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London, 1956).

[45]FO 141/583/9321/149.

[46]FO 141/583/9321/143; FO 141/649/268/4/30.

[47]FO 141/658/164/27/30.

[48]cIzz al-Din III, pp. 40-41.

[49]Ibid., p. 42.

[50]Ibid., p. 74.

[51]FO 141/713/259/1/35.

[52]FO 141/713/259/16/35.

[53]FO 141/713/259/20/35.

[54]Mudarrik, TU, September 15, 1967.

[55]cIzz al-Din III, p. 103.

[56]FO 141/713/259/23/35.

[57]al-Balagh, March 2, 1938; al-Ahram, May 1, 1938.

[58]al-Ghazzali, p. 167; al-Shafi[c]i, p. 74.

[59]cIzz al-Din III, p. 24; al-Ghazzali, p. 163.

[60]al-Ahram, July 14, 1936.

[61]al-Balagh, July 16, 1936.

[62]al-Jihad, July 14, 1936.

CHAPTER II

RENEWAL OF INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ORGANIZATION

The revival of trade union activity in 1934-36 and the strike wave of 1936 were, on the economic level, a response to the effects of the depression which had even further reduced the workers' standard of living after the bourgeois offensive of the late 1920s. The Nasim and Wafd governments, which were less repressive than the Sidqi and Yahya regimes, made it possible for trade unions to reorganize and wage economic struggle with some expectation of success. The intensification of the trade union struggle also coincided with the nationalist mobilization to return the Wafd to power during 1935. In addition to their prominent role in the National Congress, trade unions participated actively in demonstrations organized by the Wafd on November 13, 1935, to mark the National Day of Struggle. The sit-down strikes of 1936 were the first occasion since the Alexandria workers' uprising of 1924 that the workers' movement had come into sharp conflict with the requirements of the nationalist movement as the Wafd perceived them. The failure of both the Wafd and ᶜAbbas Halim to provide

adequate leadership for the economic struggles of the working class during this period led to growing dissatisfaction among some trade union leaders who began to believe that the trade union movement must be independent of both the Wafd and the Prince in order to realize its objectives.

The Limits of Corporatism and Patron-Client Trade Unionism

Despite their rivalry over control of the trade union bureaucracy, the Wafd and ᶜAbbas Halim shared the same fundamental conceptions of the role of workers in Egyptian society and politics. Both the Wafd and the Prince considered the workers' movement to be part of the Egyptian nationalist movement and subordinate to its overall goals. They insisted that the national struggle created a harmony of basic interests between Egyptian workers and Egyptian employers. Their interventions in the trade unions were based on a corporatist view of Egyptian society which denied the existence of antagonistic classes and, consequently, class struggle.

The British declaration of 1922, upon which Egypt's independence was based, had reserved four areas where Great Britain retained freedom of action in Egypt: (1) the Suez Canal and the security of British imperial communications; (2) protection of foreign interests and

minorities; (3) defense of Egypt against foreign aggression; and (4) administration of the Sudan. As long as these reservations were in effect, the Egyptian nationalist movement's basic goal of establishing complete national independence was unfulfilled. This indisputable reality provided the Wafd with a strong claim on the allegiance of the workers' movement and a plausible reason for insisting that it must remain within the framework of the national struggle. Mustafa al-Nahhas, who assumed the leadership of the Wafd after Sa^{c}d Zaghlul's death, stated unequivocally that the Wafd's support for the workers' movement was on condition

> that their movement always distance itself from harmful extremist ideas and that they establish it on the basis of firm cooperation between labor and capital and the encouragement of industries first and foremost and that the interest of all be realized and all efforts be closely linked with striving for the good of the country.[1]

The Wafd's resistance to Prince ^{c}Abbas Halim's attempt to assert his personal leadership over the trade union movement was more than simply an attempt to retain exclusive control over an important constituency. In the eyes of the Wafd leadership any attempt by workers, or any other social group for that matter, regardless of how defined, to establish a political and organizational framework for itself outside the umbrella of the Wafd was a betrayal of Egypt's national interests. The Wafd saw

itself, not only as a political party, but as the sole legitimate representative of the Egyptian people and their national demands. Therefore, it always rejected the proposal that workers should form a separate political party to advance their particular interests. The Wafd opposed ᶜAbbas Halim's first attempt to establish a Labor Party in July 1931, and it continued to resist the formation of such a party whenever it was discussed. ᶜAziz Mirhum reiterated the Wafd's position on this matter when he delivered the report of the Labor Committee to the Wafd's National Congress on January 9, 1935:

> As for Egypt, it is not natural that the workers form a political party while the entire nation is engaged in the struggle for freedom and independence, the demands for which unite all Egyptians, workers and nonworkers.[2]

At the same gathering Mustafa al-Nahhas had called on the workers to be "Wafdists before they are workers." He also asserted that workers denied that their special demands took precedence over those of the entire nation.[3] Responding to renewed proposals by ᶜAbbas Halim, al-Nahhas restated the Wafd's opposition to the formation of a labor party in a speech delivered before a demonstration of workers in Alexandria on October 3, 1937.[4]

The convening of the Wafd's National Congress in 1935 and the special attention given to workers and their problems on that occasion were part of the Wafd's campaign

to revive and mobilize its mass support in preparation for its drive to return to power. This was virtually assured on December 12, 1935, when Prime Minister Nasim reinstated the constitution of 1923, which had been abrogated by Isma^{c}il Sidqi. The British were anxious to see a Wafd government in Egypt at this time because they felt that the Wafd was the only acceptable interlocutor with whom a treaty defining and regulating Anglo-Egyptian relations could be negotiated. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 and the signs of an approaching major war made it imperative that such a treaty be concluded.

When the Wafd returned to power on May 10, 1936, it concentrated all its efforts on the treaty negotiations. It formed a national front including Muhammad Mahmud, head of the Liberal Constitutionalist Party and chief representative of the large landowning interests, and Isma^{c}il Sidqi, representing Egyptian industrialists. The formation of this national front required the Wafd to refrain from aggressive support of workers' demands during the strike wave of the summer of 1936. Any display of an overly sympathetic attitude might have threatened the stability of the national front and weakened the Wafd's negotiating position.[5]

The Wafd had begun to decrease its commitment and participation in the trade unions once it became clear

that it would form the next government. One indication of diminished concern with trade unions was the resignation of ᶜAziz Mirhum from the Supreme Council for the General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions, while its President, Hamdi Sayf al-Nasir, became inactive in its affairs.[6] The Supreme Council was further weakened after the Wafd assumed power because Hamdi Sayf al-Nasir left its activities entirely in order to assume the post of Minister of Agriculture. Once the Wafd government was installed, it did attempt to revive the Supreme Council by issuing calls to its constituent unions to resume their lapsed activities.[7] ᶜAziz Mirhum assumed the presidency of the Supreme Council. However, it was not very active or effective, and it ceased its activities some time in late 1937 or 1938.

There is no room for doubt that despite the Wafd's failure to support workers' struggles actively and consistently, the great majority of Egyptian workers sincerely welcomed the return of the Wafd to power and saw this as an opportunity to advance demands and reestablish trade union organization in a manner that had been impossible in the days of the Sidqi-Yahya dictatorship. It does not therefore seem reasonable that the sit-down strikes of the second half of 1936 represented a workers' rebellion against the Wafd as Amin ᶜIzz al-Din argues.[8]

It is much more likely that workers saw the return of the Wafd as an opportunity to act to win long-standing demands accumulated during the offensive of the Egyptian bourgeoisie in the late 1920s and the depression. The prolabor rhetoric of the Wafd offered some hope for successful trade union struggle whereas the explicitly anti-labor Sidqi and Yahya regimes promised only failure and repression. However, except for government employees, who do appear to have benefited substantially from the Wafd government, these hopes were disappointed.[9] The only major achievement for workers during the Wafd's term in office was the passage of a weak Accident Compensation Law.

The Wafd's prestige among workers, and among the Egyptian people generally, suffered a serious decline as a result of the outcome of the treaty negotiations with Great Britain. The treaty signed on August 26, 1936, did not address the four reserved points of the British declaration of 1922. It established an Anglo-Egyptian military alliance and allowed Great Britain to maintain a garrison of 10,000 troops in the Suez Canal zone. The treaty was widely perceived to fall short of achieving full Egyptian national independence. The Wafd's willingness to endorse the treaty's implied acceptance of the limitations on Egyptian sovereignty contained in the 1922

declaration left it open to charges that its nationalist role was finished and that new political forces must continue the struggle to achieve complete evacuation of British troops and full national independence. Not coincidentally, the most conservative social forces in the Wafd, led by Fu'ad Siraj al-Din, who was a large landowner, began to increase their influence in the years following the conclusion of the treaty. The inadequacy of the 1936 treaty and the resultant attacks on the Wafd's national leadership are part of the context for the re-emergence of independent trade union organization in 1936 and 1937.

Even before the signing of the treaty, some workers and trade union leaders looked to the leadership of ᶜAbbas Halim as a way of protecting the trade union movement from the Wafd's attempt to assert hegemony over it. ᶜAbbas Halim's patronage did occasionally provide this protection. But the trade unions under the Prince's patronage did not have any more real independence and ability to pursue their own interests as they saw them than those affiliated with the Wafd. The Prince saw workers as a conglomeration of the poor and the weak who required his protection and intercession in order to secure justice. He spoke frequently of his guardianship (ra<u>ᶜayah</u>) of the workers.[10] The title of "leader"

(za^{c}im), which he most often adopted in the trade union organizations he presided over reflects the traditional patron-client political pattern on which he based his activities. The use of such a title in the decade of rising fascism in Europe and the prominence of the terms duce and führer is not without significance. ^{c}Abbas Halim expected to play the role of paternalistic guardian of the workers' interests. His clients were expected to defer to his judgments and decisions without question. If they exceeded what he considered to be the boundaries of appropriate behavior, he felt obliged to restrain them.

This is what occurred in 1935, when workers began to strike more frequently and more aggressively in an attempt to combat the effects of the depression on their standard of living. R. M. Graves, who followed closely the affairs of the Egyptian trade unions in his capacity as Labor Advisor to the Egyptian government, reported in his "Note on Labour Developments in Egypt During 1935":

> During most of the current year there has been an abnormal amount of unrest among the workers of Egypt. . . . Abbas Halim was not directly responsible for all of these strikes and . . . in certain instances he used his influence to restrain the agitators. . . . The Federation has not proved itself half so dangerous as the police had indicated and the non-political character of the movement under Halim has been of real value.[11]

^{c}Abbas Halim shared the Wafd's corporatist view of Egyptian society and agreed that the workers' movement

was simply a part of the Egyptian nationalist movement. His belief in the essential harmony of interests between workers and their employers was clearly stated when he wrote:

> The Federation did not exist on the theory of fighting the employer . . . but as a means of affecting conciliation between workers and employers.[12]

Husni al-Shintanawi, a labor lawyer who served as one of ᶜAbbas Halim's chief operatives in the trade union movement until the Prince's split with the Wafd, argued quite explicitly for integration of the workers' movement within the framework of the nationalist movement in a response to industrialists' apprehensions that for a society as economically underdeveloped as Egypt a workers' movement was an expensive luxury that might block industrial development:

> As for the awakening of the workers in Egypt and their striving for development, this is, in fact, concomitant with our national movement and should be considered one of its branches. I am certain that the workers' movement in Egypt, if it is treated as one of our national revivals and not as a separate movement, will advance the individuals of this group without this advancement constituting any obstacle to the interests of the other classes.[13]

Al-Shintanawi confirmed ᶜAbbas Halim's acceptance of this framework for the workers' movement in his introduction to a special issue of the Journal of the College of

Law devoted to labor legislation:

> The labor movement in Egypt, from the time of my connection with it in the era of the late Ahmad Bey Lutfi in 1918 to this day, is a national revival like the other revivals whose spirit is circulating in the country. Prince ᶜAbbas Halim has affirmed to me many times this same point of view. Among his words on this subject are that "Our workers' movement must remain purely Egyptian, untarnished by copying or imitation."[14]

On April 28, 1936, ᶜAbbas Halim's foremost antagonist, King Fu'ad, died. This opened the possibility for a reconciliation with the Royal Palace and the restoration of the Prince's title of nabil. In fact, ᶜAbbas Halim did regain his title later in the year and in 1938 King Faruq granted the titles of nabil and nabilah to his son and daughter. From this point on, the Prince's involvement in the labor movement was tarnished with the suspicion of being supported by the Palace as a means to subvert the Wafd's influence over the trade unions. Shortly after the installation of the Wafd government, ᶜAbbas Halim left the labor movement entirely. This may have been due to his desire to permit the Wafd to conclude the treaty with Great Britain without distraction, as he later claimed.[15] Or he may simply have felt that as long as the Wafd held power he had no chance to compete for leadership of the trade union movement. For whatever reason, the Prince played no role in the trade union

movement during most of 1936 and 1937. The Prince's announcement of his intention to return to the trade union movement on August 11, 1936, shortly before the Wafd was removed from power, and his revival of the call to establish a Labor Party at this time (attacked in al-Nahhas' speech previously mentioned) suggest that some collusion with the Palace to weaken the Wafd may have been involved in these developments.

Disillusionment with the Wafd and the Prince

Muhammad Yusuf al-Mudarrik seems to have been the first trade unionist after the collapse of the communist-led FETU in 1924 to have come to the conclusion that trade unions must be independent of both the Wafd and ᶜAbbas Halim. Al-Mudarrik's first attempt to act on his beliefs was in 1935 when he refused to support either party in the split in the trade union movement. Instead he formed an independent Propaganda Committee (Lajnat al-Daᶜayah) which targeted the Wafd's Supreme Council as an attempt to dominate the trade union movement.[16] However, on this attempt al-Mudarrik was not entirely successful. When some of the members of the Propaganda Committee were arrested, he was forced to turn to ᶜAbbas Halim and his lawyers for help.[17]

The origins of al-Mudarrik's convictions about

independent trade unionism are obscure. He was not a typical worker. According to an obituary written by Mahmud al-ᶜAskari, he had an intermediate education certificate and knew English well.[18] He had been politically active in the 1919 revolution as a member of the Wafd Youth Committee in the Cairo district of Khalifah. He began his working life as a clerk in a bookstore. Later he was employed as a bookkeeper and eventually he owned his own bookstore. Although he was a member of the retail store clerks' union for many years and sometimes served as an elected officer, the real source of his influence and importance in the trade union movement was his participation in the central leading bodies of various trade union federations from the 1920s on. Al-Mudarrik was one of the few Egyptian trade unionists who maintained contact with socialists after the demise of the Communist Party and the FETU. He was in touch with a group of former members of the Egyptian Socialist Party.[19] He was also one of the first trade unionists to make contact with some of the Egyptian intellectuals who were just beginning to reorganize the Egyptian communist movement in the late 1930s.[20] The extent of al-Mudarrik's knowledge and commitment to socialism in the mid-1930s is, however, uncertain.

In the second half of 1936 al-Mudarrik and a number of Cairo trade union leaders began to meet regularly in a

café in Fajjalah to discuss the poor state of trade union affairs. They formed a Committee to Organize the Workers' Movement (Lajnat Tanzim al-Harakah al-ᶜUmmaliyah) based on a four-point program: (1) organize the unorganized; (2) support existing trade unions; (3) form a general federation of trade unions; (4) trade unions should distance themselves from political parties and personalities, although individuals might join any party they desired.[21]

The Committee's efforts resulted in the reorganization of many trade unions which had become idle--taxi drivers, printers, mechanized textile workers, hand loom weavers, retail store clerks, furniture makers, barbers, and several provincial motor transport unions.[22]

On September 12, 1937, the Committee was reorganized as the Commission to Organize the Worker's Movement (COWM--Hay'at Tanzim al-Harakah al-ᶜUmmaliyah) with Yusuf al-Mudarrik as President and Sayyid Qandil of the printers' union as Secretary.[23] Other trade unionists active in this effort were Muhammad Wasfi (commercial establishments), Labib Zaki (commercial establishments), Muhammad Salih (Cairo tram), ᶜAli Salih Darwish (taxi drivers), ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz Ibrahim (provincial drivers), ᶜAbbas Yusuf (furniture makers), ᶜAli Rihan (furniture makers), Labib Tadrus (tailors), ᶜAbd al-Wahhab Muhammad

(cigarette distributors), Muhammad ᶜAbd al-Wahhad (candy makers), Muhammad Hasan ᶜAmarah (barbers), ᶜAbd al-Hakim Adib (mechanized textiles), Mahmud al-ᶜAskari (mechanized textiles), ᶜAbd al-Maqsud Yusuf (manual weavers) and ᶜAbd al-Baqi Sayf (manual weavers).[24]

Although the COWM was established on the principle of trade union independence from political personalities and parties, the ideal proved very difficult to implement in practice. Prince ᶜAbbas Halim had taken no part in the formation of this group. In fact, he was on vacation in Europe in semiretirement from the labor movement when its existence was formally announced. But some of those who participated in the COWM, especially Sayyid Qandil and Muhammad Hasan ᶜAmarah, had been previously associated with ᶜAbbas Halim. They succeeded in having him named "leader" (za<u>ᶜim</u>) of the body when he returned from Europe on November 3, 1937.[25]

In March 1938 the COWM became the General Federation of Trade Unions in the Egyptian Kingdom (GFTUEK--<u>al-Ittihad al-ᶜAmm li-Niqabat ᶜUmmal al-Mamlakah al-Misriyah</u>) with thirty-two member unions. ᶜAbbas Halim became President of the Federation. Even though Yusuf al-Mudarrik had actively opposed allowing the Prince to play a leading role in the GFTUEK, ᶜAbbas Halim personally nominated him to be its Vice-President.[26]

One month later Ahmad Damirdash al-Shanadi became President of the GFTUEK and ᶜAbbas Halim assumed the title of "zaᶜim." Al-Shanadi had been an engineer at the Filature Nationale textile mill in Alexandria before winning election to parliament as Representative for the workers' district of Kirmuz. Despite his professional status and his foreign engineering degree, al-Shanadi said that he considered himself a worker. Muhammad Hasan ᶜAmarah, who represented the Cairo Barbers' Union on the Executive Board of the GFTUEK, saw al-Shanadi's election to the federation presidency as a victory for trade union independence from nonworker control because he saw al-Shanadi as a "skilled worker."[27] Sayyid Qandil also saw al-Shanadi as a worker.[28] But Mahmud al-ᶜAskari, who represented the Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers' Union on the GFTUEK Executive Board, saw al-Shanadi as an agent of the Sa'dist Party (which was generally considered to represent the interests of industrialists) and described his assumption of the presidency of the GFTUEK as a political maneuver accomplished without the agreement of the Executive Board.[29]

The conflict between these two assessments of al-Shanadi's role reflects two contradictory conceptions of the meaning of trade union independence, and ultimately

of the identity and goals of the working class in Egypt. For al-Mudarrik and al-ᶜAskari trade union independence meant independence from both the Wafd and ᶜAbbas Halim. However, they were at this time still willing to tolerate ᶜAbbas Halim's presence if no alternative was available and if he did not interfere heavily in the day-to-day operations of the trade unions. Others, including Hasan ᶜAmarah, Sayyid Qandil, Kamil ᶜIzz al-Din of the airline employees and Ahmad al-Misri of the barbers' union, saw ᶜAbbas Halim's presence as necessary in order to preserve the trade union movement from domination by the Wafd. ᶜAbbas Halim's patronage was, for them, an asset rather than an impediment. Although they sometimes joined independent-minded trade union formations, they maintained close ties with him throughout the Prince's checkered career as patron of the Egyptian labor movement.

The GFTUEK's first major activity was a demonstration on May 8, 1938, demanding: (1) government recognition of trade unions; (2) legislation on a minimum wage and maximum hours' (3) a solution to the problem of unemployment; (4) revision of the Accident Compensation Law; and (5) enforcement of the directives of the Labor Department.[30] According to Hasan ᶜAmarah, this demonstration was called in response to the government's failure to answer an interpellation posed by Damirdash

al-Shanadi on the question of legalization of trade unions and the date was fixed by ᶜAbbas Halim.[31] But Yusuf al-Mudarrik claims that the Prince did not participate in the planning or take an active role in the demonstration.[32]

Despite attempts by the political police to prevent the demonstration, thousands of workers (4,000 according to ᶜAmarah) marched on a route including government offices, ᶜAbdin Palace, foreign embassies and the newspaper offices. Press coverage of the march was good and generally favorable in both the Wafd and non-Wafd newspapers.[33]

The initiative inside the Executive Board of the GFTUEK was apparently, by this time, decisively in the hands of the group favoring unconditional trade union independence. According to al-ᶜAskari, ᶜAbbas Halim never had any real influence over the federation's activities.[34] It is very difficult to assess the accuracy of this assertion, since many trade union leaders who felt no particular attachment to ᶜAbbas Halim were content to use his name as a way of protecting their activities from government interference.

The second half of 1938 and the first half of 1939 saw a sharp upsurge in trade union activity, much of it reflecting the growth and broadening influence of the GFTUEK and the diminishing of Wafd influence in the trade

union movement. In July 1938 the GFTUEK attempted to unite with some elements of the now inactive Wafd-led Supreme Council on the basis of retaining ᶜAbbas Halim as za^cim and selecting one of the workers as president.[35] A meeting to discuss this possibility produced no results, and the Supreme Council dwindled into insignificance. Another smaller scale attempt at trade union unity took place in January 1939, when two printers' unions, one under ᶜAbbas Halim's patronage and one independent, opened discussions towards achieving unity.[36] These efforts also produced no results.

In early February, representatives of several Alexandria trade unions held new elections and established a central federation under ᶜAbbas Halim's patronage.[37] Several Cairo unions also held new elections and affiliated with the GFTUEK.[38] Unions that had lapsed into inactivity reorganized themselves, including the Cairo bus workers, the mechanized transport workers[39] and the Alexandria tram workers.[40] Damirdash al-Shanadi was reported to have been particularly active in helping to reactivate the Alexandria trade unions, and he was elected president of one of the trade union federations in the city.[41]

Despite this increase in trade union activity, the labor movement was unsuccessful in winning its key

legislative demand for the legal recognition of trade unions. On May 15, 1939, the GFTUEK Executive Board met under the chairmanship of Yusuf al-Mudarrik and decided to organize a hunger strike in support of their demand that the parliament enact legislation legalizing trade unions. Hasan ᶜAmarah's account of this meeting makes no mention of ᶜAbbas Halim's presence.[42] A second GFTUEK Executive Board meeting on May 25, 1939, chaired by al-Mudarrik confirmed this decision. The minutes of this meeting also make no reference to ᶜAbbas Halim.[43] This evidence seems to support the contention of al-Mudarrik and al-ᶜAskari that al-Mudarrik played the leading role in suggesting this course of action without the knowledge of either ᶜAbbas Halim or Damirdash al-Shanadi.[44]

On June 12, eight trade union leaders led by Yusuf al-Mudarrik, who acted as spokesman for the group, began their hunger strike. According to an interview granted by al-Mudarrik to al-Ahram, the strikers represented members of the GFTUEK, the Wafd-led federation and independents. They were demanding: (1) legal recognition of trade unions; (2) passage of an individual and collective contract law; (3) establishment of conciliation and arbitration procedures; (4) accident insurance; and (5) a maximum hours law.[45] All these measures were at some stage of parliamentary discussion,[46] and the strikers were hoping to speed up their enactment.

This hunger strike was the most dramatic working class initiative in many years. It represented a new point of departure for the Egyptian workers' movement. A significant group of trade union leaders had demonstrated that they were now committed to militant direct action, with or without the support of ᶜAbbas Halim or the Wafd, in order to achieve their objectives. They were supported by a broad range of elements in the trade union movement. Telegrams of encouragement for the strike arrived from the Cairo Arsenal workers, Heliopolis tram workers, Najᶜ Hammadi sugar mill workers, the Alexandria Mixed Printers' Union and both pro-Wafd and pro-ᶜAbbas Halim trade union leaders.[47]

All the political forces in the country took notice of the hunger strike. The Wafd issued statements of strong support for the strike. Since the Wafd was not in power at this time, this support cost it nothing and should be viewed simply as part of the general criticism against the current government. ᶜAbbas Halim visited the hunger strikers and, according to Mahmud al-ᶜAskari, urged the strikers to abandon their action.[48] After the strike was over, ᶜAbbas Halim issued a statement in which he said that

> There is not in Egypt what is called a class system and it does not occur to anyone . . . that there are classes which divide the citizens.[49]

He went on speaking explicitly as a member of the royal family and praising Faruq "the democratic king."[50] These statements indicate that ᶜAbbas Halim, having repaired his relations with the Palace, was now acting with much more concern for the interests of the monarchy within the trade union movement. They also tend to confirm that the Prince was not involved in the planning of the hunger strike and that this action was undertaken on the initiative of the trade union leaders alone. Ahmad Husayn, the leader of Young Egypt, also visited the hunger strikers and urged them to abandon their strike.[51]

Salih ᶜAshmawi of the Muslim Brothers sent a telegram to the hunger strikers urging them to halt the strike and "be content with informing the government of their just demands."[52] We should take special note of the attitude of the Muslim Brothers because it is typical of the stance they were to adopt on many other occasions in the future. On the one hand, the workers' grievances were acknowledged to be just. On the other hand, they ought not to take direct action to redress their grievances since this would disturb the social peace. The government should remedy the situation. But if it can not or will not, no alternative is proposed.

The trade unionists did abandon their hunger strike on June 15 in exchange for a promise by Mustafa al-ᶜAssal,

the Representative who had previously proposed various measures of labor legislation in the parliament, that these items would be placed on the parliamentary agenda immediately. This was done. But the parliament delayed and maneuvered, and soon the outbreak of World War II pushed trade union and labor questions to the bottom of the list of the government's priorities. None of the demands of the hunger strikers were to be achieved until 1942.

Before the outbreak of the war, however, the hunger strike did succeed in bringing labor questions to the center of national political attention. It also consolidated the development of a small cadre of trade union leaders who were irrevocably committed to trade union independence. Farid Sulayman, Secretary of the Filature Nationale Union, voiced the growing dissatisfaction of an increasing number of trade unionists with reliance on promises from the various political parties in a letter to al-Ahram in which he wrote:

> Since 1924 workers have heard many promises from every parliament and government. But until now we have not succeeded in realizing any of these promises. All we have won is that it is said that the current parliament has placed on its agenda discussion of a law recognizing trade unions. This talk raised some hopes in our hearts of obtaining our rights. But now, the parliamentary session is almost over and the proposal is still unreleased. Why the delay? Why don't Egyptian workers enjoy the rights which every worker in other countries enjoys?[53]

Those trade union leaders who had participated in the hunger strike began to meet regularly and to consider themselves a founding body for a new trade union federation. There is very little record of any of the activities of this federation. Mahmud al-ᶜAskari quotes from the minutes of July 8, 1939, of a body calling itself the Independent General Federation of Egyptian Workers (al-Ittihad al-ᶜAmm li-ᶜUmmal al-Mamlakah al-Misriyah al-Mustaqill).[54] The group stated clearly their intention to cut all ties with ᶜAbbas Halim and other politicians. They also adopted the principle that every constituent union was free to "adopt whatever methods of struggle appropriate to its conditions and the capacities of its masses and their level of consciousness"[55] in order to combat the wave of firings which began to sweep many industries dependent on foreign trade at the start of World War II.

These decisions, following the organizational attempts of 1937-39 to break free from the tutelage of the Wafd and ᶜAbbas Halim, are a clear indication that some trade unionists had made a definitive evaluation of their activity in the 1920s and 1930s and found it unsatisfactory. They were now committed to replace the patron-client relationships which had dominated this period with an independent trade union movement unbeholden

to any existing political party or personality. Not all of those participating in the independent trade union federation were able to remain consistent in their resolution. Sayyid Qandil and Hasan ᶜAmarah, for example, returned to ᶜAbbas Halim's patronage very shortly. But Yusuf al-Mudarrik and Mahmud al-ᶜAskari were able to create a new pole of attraction around which future independent trade union organization could take place. Individual activists around this pole might come and go according to their personal inclinations, the strength of their unions and changes in the global political situation. But from this point on, the concept of a workers' movement free of nonworker political leadership was always present within the Egyptian trade union movement.

The first issue which this new trade union federation attempted to confront was the wave of firings in the industries dependent on foreign trade which occurred at the outset of the war. The cutoff in supplies of raw materials created a severe unemployment problem. Because of the shortage of paper, printing was one of the hardest hit industries for most of the duration of the war.[56] Most industries suffered at least temporary acute unemployment until their supply lines could be readjusted to the exigencies of the war.

The Independent General Federation decided to issue a statement on the dangers of the mass firings. This statement was printed at the press of the Society of Muslim Brothers through the personal influence of Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman, President of the Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers Union and a close personal friend of the Brothers' General Guide, Hasan al-Banna.[57] In the course of distributing this statement many of the federation's leaders were arrested by the political police and held for two days. Prime Minister ^{c}Ali Mahir sent his personal representative to apologize to Yusuf al-Mudarrik for this incident and warned the police not to interfere with the federation's activities. This was, according to Mahmud al-^{c}Askari, an attempt to win mass support for ^{c}Ali Mahir's pro-German views.[58]

Despite ^{c}Ali Mahir's promises, trade unions had great difficulty in sustaining activity under wartime conditions. Martial law and press censorship were imposed on Egypt on September 1, 1939, and remained in force until October 7, 1945. On July 24, 1940, the government promulgated Military Order No. 75 prohibiting strikes in all institutions of "public benefit."

Despite these obstacles to the continuation of normal trade union functions, some of the trade union leaders who established the Independent General Federation apparently managed to maintain some form of regular

contact and activity. In May 1941 a group of them managed to gain control of the weekly newspaper, al-Nahar (The Day), which had been appearing as a journal published by al-Azhar students. From May to July 1941 al-Nahar functioned as a trade union newspaper. It is the only substantial contemporary written record of trade union and working class activity during the early part of World War II. Among those active in the Independent General Federation who wrote in its pages were Yusuf al-Mudarrik, Sayyid Qandil and ᶜAbbas Yusuf, president of the furniture makers' union. Al-Nahar also attracted many other trade unionists to its pages.

The first issue of al-Nahar in which trade union news appeared contained an article by "ᶜAntar" entitled "It is Better for Workers to Be for Themselves" calling for workers' self-reliance as the only means of attaining their demands.[59] This theme dominated the paper's contents during its short-lived existence as a trade union publication. The same issue reported that cigarette workers were engaged in discussions about the reformation of their union and that some of them wanted the union to be independent of political personalities and organizations because failure to maintain independence had resulted in thwarting the workers' movement. A minority claimed that it was necessary to link up with some

personality. Al-Nahar editorially supported the independent line.[60] Muhammad Hamdi, President of the Gharbiyah Committee to Defend Workers' Rights based in Tanta, also issued a call for workers' self-reliance as a key to success in the workers' movement.[61] However, Hamdi later became an important part of the Wafd trade union apparatus when the Wafd returned to power on February 4, 1942.

Yusuf al-Mudarrik called upon all trade unionists to put aside arguments over evaluating the past and to formulate a defensive program for the current situation. But the editors of al-Nahar disagreed, insisting that the best guarantee of future success is to examine the errors of the past so that they do not repeat themselves.[62]

Al-Nahar promoted its campaign for workers' self-reliance through a weekly column entitled "We Must Depend on Ourselves" in which several trade unionists published their opinions on this question. In one such opinion ᶜAbbas Yusuf wrote:

> The workers know well how to manage their movement by themselves far from all parties and organizations who exploit their troops without doing anything for them. In order that our movement succeed we must be independent and as distant as possible from the insinuators and ambitious.[63]

According to an article by Sayyid Qandil entitled "Great Hopes," there had been several important developments in the trade union movement during the recent

months. All unions were attempting to free themselves from the "parasites and political bodies who lived at our expense for years." Many trade unionists were now calling for unity and reunifying unions split as a result of the Wafd-ᶜAbbas Halim rivalry. Dormant unions were being revived and new ones formed. Internal organization more suitable to the tasks of trade unions was being adopted. According to Sayyid Qandil:

> The appearance of these three phenomena on the horizon is a sign of the growth of consciousness in our class. And once consciousness has penetrated an individual or a class they will inevitably reach the desired objective.[64]

Although both before and after his association with al-Nahar, Sayyid Qandil was a close follower of ᶜAbbas Halim, he was apparently swept up in the growing trend of trade union independence at this time. This may have been due to the particularly dire straits of his printers' union during the war and the fact that ᶜAbbas Halim was relatively inactive during this period. In any case, it appears that Sayyid Qandil considered himself a socialist at this time.[65] His articles in al-Nahar show evidence of familiarity with socialist political theory, and he strove to promote class consciousness through raising a wide range of social and political questions. His articles deal with many questions beyond the common range of trade union questions addressed at this time. One

example is his article on the impact of the Treaty of Versailles on workers' rights.[66] He was one of the first to raise the demand for comprehensive social insurance.[67] He also tried to promote literature with a socialist content by summarizing short stories of Tolstoy and Gorki.[68]

Among the unions in the orbit of al-Nahar were the printers (Sayyid Qandil's union), the furniture makers, the Gharbiyah Committee to Defend Workers' Interests, the Cairo Electric and Water Company, the tailors, store clerks, the Cairo Tramway Company and the Egyptian General Omnibus Company (Thorneycroft). Al-Nahar was especially concerned with the affairs of the Thorneycroft workers where the two existing unions were in the process of uniting.[69]

[c]Abbas Halim and the Cairo Transport General Strike

The Cairo transport workers' unions--the Tramway Company and Thorneycroft Bus Company--were the strongest active unions at this time. They took the lead in grappling with the most important current issue of concern to workers, the rapidly rising cost of living due to World War II. The Tramway Company union composed a memorandum to the company in which it demonstrated that according to the figures of the Ministry of Finance's

Census Administration the cost of living index had increased from 103 in September 1939 to 130 in April 1940. (See table 6 for complete figures on the increase in the cost of living during the war.) They concluded that, as a result, "the working class [tabaqat al-ʿummal] is oppressed." Therefore they asked for a 10 percent wage increase, since company profits had increased considerably in this period.[70]

This memorandum, which al-Nahar printed in full, is notable for its use of the term "working class" in opposition to the older term ta'ifah, meaning a guild. This is indicative of the growing popularity of that term. It may be seen as evidence that the development of class consciousness which Sayyid Qandil perceived was quite real among some sectors of the working class. (See Chapter III for further discussion of the implications of this linguistic issue.)

The Thorneycroft union executive board met on June 23, 1941, and decided to send a letter to the Labor Office demanding the full 30 percent increase in the cost of living since July-August 1939 as a raise.[71] The Heliopolis Tramway Company workshop workers also asked for a wage increase.[72] The Cairo tram, metro, and bus workers' unions then submitted a joint memorandum to the government asking that it intervene with their employers

so that they would be granted wage increases. In early September they took a decision to declare a strike if their demands were not met by September 15.[73]

Since all the transport companies were foreign concessionary monopolies, the government was not unwilling to make representations on behalf of the Egyptian workers. Prime Minister Husayn Sirri announced that the government was willing to try to reach an agreement with the companies to improve wages.[74] No agreement was reached before the announced deadline, so Cairo and Heliopolis transport workers struck on September 16. Taxis and horse-drawn carriages constituted the only form of public transportation available in greater Cairo that day.[75]

This strike provided ᶜAbbas Halim with the opportunity to make one more entry onto the trade union scene. It is not clear how or when he became active in this matter. Although the Cairo transport workers had historically been supporters of ᶜAbbas Halim, there is no mention of him in the pages of al-Nahar when the transport workers' wage demands were reported. Perhaps under the pressure of a looming confrontation with the companies and the government in which the transport unions were resolved to openly defy the military order banning strikes they turned to ᶜAbbas Halim, hoping that

his intercession would offer some protection. Another possibility is that the Thorneycroft management, which was friendly to ᶜAbbas Halim,[76] urged him to enter the dispute.

ᶜAbbas Halim did negotiate with the government both before and during the strike on the workers' behalf.[77] He succeeded in obtaining a promise from Prime Minister Sirri that within fifteen days a cost-of-living allowance would be granted. On the basis of this promise the transport workers agreed to end their strike.[78] ᶜAbbas Halim personally drove the first tram out of its depot on September 17. The strike had lasted a total of twenty-six hours.[79] On September 29 the government did announce a 10 percent cost-of-living allowance for all government employees earning less than LE 10 per month. Wage increases of ten millemes and five millemes per day for workers and apprentices respectively were also granted.[80] These measures fell far short of the transport workers' original demands, however, as they were only applied to government employees. The struggle to win these conditions from private employers had to be waged on a case-by-case basis and, in some cases, dragged on for several years.

Shortly after this strike ᶜAbbas Halim was interned. His pro-German sympathies were well known, as he had

attended the Nazi Nuremberg Congress in the summer of 1938. He had established a private militia in Egypt. The Prince's participation in the Cairo transport strike was also among the reasons which led the British to take this measure at this time.[81] However, the British appear to have been very confused about ᶜAbbas Halim's actual role in the trade union movement. The British Ambassador, Lord Killearn, felt that he was encouraging a second transport strike for October 2, while the workers themselves did not wish to strike.[82] Such an attitude would have been entirely out of character with ᶜAbbas Halim's traditional methods of dealing with labor disputes. In all likelihood Lord Killearn was more than a little apprehensive about ᶜAbbas Halim as a result of his pro-German sentiments and therefore imagined him to be plotting against the government by stirring up labor troubles. A much more comprehensive and better informed British assessment of ᶜAbbas Halim's role in the trade union movement written several years later concluded that "it appears that the Sirry government had some arrangement with him to keep the workmen quiet."[83] This is much more likely in view of ᶜAbbas Halim's sudden appearance on the scene before the transport general strike and his prominent role in bringing it to a quick conclusion before its demands were met.

This same report confirmed that the Cairo Tramway Company and Thorneycroft Bus Company unions were aligned with ᶜAbbas Halim at the time of his internment. This gave the Prince more strength in the trade union movement than the Wafd possessed at this time. Independent trade unions were stronger than the forces of both ᶜAbbas Halim and the Wafd.[84] ᶜAbbas Halim's relationship with the Palace seems to have been well established at this point. The King saw the Prince's presence in the trade union movement as a way of detaching workers from the Wafd. After his internment, the Palace continued to subsidize ᶜAbbas Halim's lieutenant, Muhammad Saᶜd Effendi, who directed the Prince's trade union affairs in his absence.[85]

ᶜAbbas Halim's activities during the years 1937-41 make it clear that although he still retained the support of some important trade unions, most notably the Cairo transport unions, and several influential trade union leaders, he was no longer marching in step with the most dynamic elements in the trade union movement. His failure to play an active role in the demonstration of May 8, 1938, the hunger strike of June 12-15, 1939, and his questionable role in the Cairo transport general strike all point to a growing distance between the Prince and the leading elements within the Egyptian workers' movement.

The fact that some of the Prince's closest trade

union associates like Sayyid Qandil and Muhammad Hasan ᶜAmarah were drawn into activity specifically based on rejection of the paternalistic role ᶜAbbas Halim had played in the trade union movement during the 1930s is evidence of the strength of the new independent trend in the trade union movement. Some prominent pro-Wafd trade union leaders like Muhammad Hamdi also participated in activities led by those favoring trade union independence. When the Wafd returned to power in 1942 and when ᶜAbbas Halim was released from internment in 1944, some of their former clients returned to the protection of their respective patronage. Some turned first to the Wafd and then to the Prince when the Wafd government was dismissed in 1944. In many cases this was not simply the result of personal opportunism on the part of these trade unionists. The trade union organizations they led were simply too weak to survive without the financial and organizational assistance which the Wafd and ᶜAbbas Halim could provide. Most of the trade union leaders who formed the COWM in 1937 represented small-scale production workers or independent owner-operators--carpenters, printers, barbers, taxi drivers, store clerks, etc. The only large-scale mass production industry workers who participated in this organization were mechanized silk and textile workers, represented most prominently by Mahmud al-ᶜAskari of the

Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers' Union. Of all the constituent unions in the COWM, only the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers proved fully able to implement and advance the ideals of trade union independence from nonworker political parties and personalities first advocated by the COWM. (See Chapter VI.) Although the goal of trade union independence was well articulated among leading trade unionists by the outbreak of World War II, it was only during the war that large-scale mass production industry grew to an extent sufficient to provide a stable base for trade union organization capable of supporting organization independent of nonworker patrons.

Notes to Chapter II

[1]Quoted in ᶜIzz al-Din III, p. 133.

[2]al-Ahram, January 10, 1935.

[3]Ibid.

[4]FO 407/221 part cxxii no. 37.

[5]This argument is advanced in both ᶜIzz al-Din III, pp. 133-34, and Radi, p. 91. It is to be expected from ᶜIzz al-Din, who is generally critical of the Wafd. Its use by Radi, who is strongly pro-Wafd, lends it added credibility.

[6]FO 141/713/259/23/35.

[7]Quoted in ᶜIzz al-Din III, p. 132.

[8]Ibid., p. 135.

[9]Radi, pp. 86-87, claims that the Wafd government sped up the resolution of workers' grievances. But almost all the examples she cites are for the various unions of government workers. See also FO 141/660/357/7/37 on the Wafd's strong ties with the government workers.

[10]For example, al-Ahram, July 10, 1936.

[11]FO 141/617/237/29/35.

[12]al-Misa', March 10, 1935, quoted in FO 141/617/237/11/35.

[13]al-Ahram, June 26, 1934.

[14]Majallat Kulliyat al-Huquq, January 15, 1935.

[15]Shubra, August 12, 1937.

[16]Mudarrik, TU, August 15, 1967.

[17]Ibid.

[18]ᶜAskari, U, August 27, 1977.

[19]Ibid., December 6, 1976. It is very likely that al-ᶜAskari intended to say remnants of the Communist

Party. But writing in the official weekly of the General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions, this was a phrase best avoided.

[20]Raymond Douek, personal interview, June 4, 1981.

[21]ᶜAskari, U, August 16, 1976.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Ibid.; Mudarrik, TU, September 15, 1967.

[24]ᶜAskari, U, August 16, 1976.

[25]Ibid., August 23, 1976; Mudarrik, TU, November, 1967.

[26]Mudarrik, TU, November, 1967.

[27]Muhammad Hasan ᶜAmarah, "Min mudhakkirat niqabi qadim," al-Thaqafah al-ᶜummaliyah, May 1976.

[28]Sayyid Qandil, Niqabiyati (Cairo, 1938), p. 37.

[29]ᶜAskari, U, September 21, 1976.

[30]Ibid., September 6, 1976; ᶜAmarah, "Min mudhakkirat."

[31]ᶜAmarah, "Min mudhakkirat."

[32]Mudarrik, TU, November, 1967.

[33]al-Balagh, May 9, 1938; al-Muqattam, May 9, 1938; al-Wafd al-Misri, May 8, 1938.

[34]ᶜAskari, U, September 21, 1976.

[35]al-Ahram, July 19, 1938.

[36]Ibid., January 18, 1939.

[37]Ibid., February 5, 1939.

[38]Ibid., February 22, 1939.

[39]Ibid., March 10, 1939.

[40]Ibid., March 11, 1939.

[41]Ibid.

[42]ᶜAmarah, "Min mudhakkirat."

[43]"Mahdar jalsat Majlis al-Ittihad al-ᶜAmm li-Niqabat ᶜUmmal al-Mamlakah al-Misriyah al-munᶜaqad fi 25 Mayu 1939," reprinted in ᶜAbbas, al-Harakah al-ᶜummaliyah fi Misr, p. 328.

[44]Mudarrik, TU, June, 1968; ᶜAskari, U, September 27, October 4, 1976.

[45]al-Ahram, June 14, 1939.

[46]Ibid., May 13, 1939.

[47]Ibid., June 16, 1939.

[48]ᶜAskari, U, October 4, 1976.

[49]al-Ahram, June 16, 1939.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid., July 10, 1939.

[54]ᶜAskari, U, October 25, 1976.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Radi, pp. 131-132; al-Nahar, May 31, June 7, 1941.

[57]ᶜAskari, U, November 8, 1976.

[58]Ibid., November 8, 1976.

[59]al-Nahar, May 31, 1941.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Ibid.

[63]Ibid., June 7, 1941.

[64]Ibid., June 14, 1941.

[65]cAskari, U, December 6, 1976.

[66]al-Nahar, June 7, 1941.

[67]Ibid., June 14, 1941.

[68]Ibid., July 1, July 16, 1941.

[69]Ibid., June 14, 1941.

[70]Ibid.

[71]Ibid., July 1, 1941.

[72]Ibid.

[73]al-Ahram, September 16, 1941.

[74]al-Misri, September 16, 1941.

[75]al-Ahram, September 17, 1941.

[76]FO 371/41380/J2671 (1944).

[77]al-Ahram, September 16, 17, 1941.

[78]Ibid., September 17, 1941.

[79]Ibid., September 18, 1941.

[80]Ibid., September 30, 1941.

[81]FO 371/27433/J3109 (1941).

[82]Ibid.

[83]FO 371/41380/J2671 (1944).

[84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid.

CHAPTER III

THE FORMATION OF AN INDUSTRIAL PROLETARIAT

Who Are "The Workers"?

During the 1920s and 1930s there was still a substantial material basis for rejecting the view that workers constituted a class characterized by an antagonistic relationship with their employers. There were relatively few workers employed in large-scale industrial or infrastructural enterprises owned by Egyptians. The boundaries of the category of "worker" were very vaguely defined in both the popular and official consciousness. In many trades, including carpentry, upholstering, barbering, hand weaving, motor transport, laundering and pressing clothes, and others, employers, self-employed owner-operators and wage workers were often members of the same organization calling itself a trade union. Husni al-Shintanawi used this fact to support his contention that Egyptian workers did not present any danger to Egyptian capital.[1] There is at least some truth in his argument. One importance source of the weakness of most of the trade union organizations before World War II was their indistinct class character. This rendered them

very receptive to the corporatist ideology promoted by the Wafd and Prince ᶜAbbas Halim. As long as workers accepted this ideology and kept their movement within the limits of the Egyptian nationalist struggle, it did not present a serious threat to Egyptian, as opposed to foreign, capital.

The same article by Husni al-Shintanawi also contains linguistic evidence indicating the indistinct character of the working class in the public consciousness. As a lawyer specializing in labor questions, al-Shintanawi might be expected to be more sensitive than most people to the shades of meaning of different terms used to describe workers. However, he uses two different words for class or economic stratum with diametrically opposed connotations: ta'ifah, the term traditionally used to denote a guild, and tabaqah, a newer usage which has now become the most common term in Egypt for class. The first term is rooted in precapitalist social relations, and its use reinforces the corporatist view of Egyptian society which al-Shintanawi's article advocates. The second term, although not necessarily denoting mutual antagonism, is associated with the development of capitalist social relations. This is the term which ᶜAbbas Halim used when arguing that there was not a "class system" in Egypt. Both Sayyid Qandil's discussion of the development

of working class consciousness and the petition of the Cairo Tramway Company workers referred to earlier employed this term.

This is not merely an arcane linguistic issue, but an indication of a very real struggle in the realm of cultural modes of expression over whether or not to recognize the existence of a working class in Egypt, with all the consequences for political and social life that such a recognition implied. Because Egyptians had the opportunity to witness the formation of trade unions and workers' political parties in Europe and the United States and their role in the class struggle, these implications were quite clear, especially for Egyptian industrialists, who were in the forefront of those resisting acceptance of the existence of a working class. Husni al-Shintanawi's difficulty in deciding on a consistent term to designate the working class was, therefore, not at all untypical of the period in which this article was written. Indeed, among the public at large, which was far less familiar with the issues involved in labor and trade union questions than he was, there was even greater confusion and unclarity about how to establish the boundaries and social characteristic of "the workers."

Official government statistical categories also reflect and simultaneously reinforce the persistence of

conceptualizations of the prevailing social division of labor based on precapitalist and simple commodity production relations and the low level of social differentiation between those occupying objectively distinct roles in the production process. The returns of the decennial censuses, for example, offer only the crudest measure of the growth of the Egyptian working class. The occupational categories in the census returns are based on the stated occupation of each respondent. Owner-operators, self-employed, white-collar workers, managerial employees, and skilled and unskilled proletarians are included in the same occupational category--industry, transport, services, etc. The enterprises included in the category of "industry" vary from a pushcart holding the tools and materials of a shoe repairman, knife sharpener, plumber or electrician to the large-scale mass production facilities of the textile or tobacco industry. Therefore, the figures in table 1 should be taken as an indication of general trends and approximate orders of magnitude.[2] They do, nonetheless, give a clear indication of the steady growth of industrial employment.

A much more restrictive indicator which gives some idea of the size of the industrial proletarian component of the working class is the Industrial and Commercial Census. This enumeration includes only industrial

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF THE LABOR FORCE BY SECTOR

Year	1907	1917	1927	1937	1947
Total[a]	9,510,920	10,964,064	12,147,169	13,813,120	16,381,950
No occupation	3,601,637	2,676,100	6,301,504	6,390,935	7,998,477
Agriculture	2,440,030	4,044,458[b]	3,526,036	4,308,201	4,244,951
Mining & extraction	4,112	2,693	9,741	10,828	12,965
Manufacturing	282,046	423,109	482,681	478,199	708,776
Construction	94,925	66,586	125,272	120,706	113,361
Transport & communication	101,136	150,633	130,935	138,911	203,335
Commerce	161,210	280,562	407,560	460,075	620,288
Personal service	2,358,506[b]	2,578,744[b]	284,076[c]	256,099	392,151
Liberal arts	164,051[d]	142,971[d]			
Public administration & social services	85,949	89,592	283,563	321,963	515,414
Nonproductive & ill-defined	217,948	508,616	595,801	1,327,203	1,572,232

SOURCE: Egypt, Ministry of Finance, Statistical Department, The Census of Egypt Taken in 1917 and Annuaire Statistique, 1951-1954.

[a] Does not include children under the age of five.

[b] Includes married women classified as unemployed in other years.

[c] Includes domestics in agricultural households classified in the category of Agriculture in 1937 and 1947.

[d] Most of those in this category are subsequently classified in Public Administration and Social Services.

enterprises with actual premises. Workers in oil fields, mines, transport and building construction are not included. Only waged workers are included in the category of employees, not the owners of the enterprises. But no distinction is made between managerial, clerical, technical or blue-collar workers.

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHMENTS AND EMPLOYEES

Year	Number of Establishments	Number of Employees
1937	92,021	273,467
1947	117,991	333,911

SOURCE: Egypt, Ministry of Finance, Statistical Department, Industrial and Commercial Census, 1937 and 1947.

The Census of Industrial Production, first taken in June 1945, is the first official statistical publication which attempts to make meaningful distinctions between those employed in large- and small-scale enterprises and between functions within an enterprise. A distinction is also made between factories engaged in production of new commodities and those engaged in repairing and servicing. Small shops with an indeterminate production are excluded from the census, although no precise criteria for

determining exclusion are indicated. Also excluded are the enterprises and workers of the allied forces in Egypt during the war. For the first time, the statistics do distinguish between proprietors, monthly paid, and daily or piece rate workers. This division is not entirely satisfactory for purposes of determining class position, since the division into daily and monthly paid workers did not always correspond to distinction of function within the enterprise. Although it is still not fully adequate for developing a precise figure for the size of the industrial proletariat in the postwar period, the attempt of the designers of the Census of Industrial Production to develop distinctions among those employed in industry is indicative that the existence of a working class was beginning to receive some official recognition.

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF FACTORIES AND EMPLOYEES, 1945-1951

Year	All Factories		Productive Factories	
	Factories	Employees	Factories	Employees
1945	129,231	457,954	22,220	316,144
1948	133,619	577,506	26,743	367,336
1951	124,551	474,832	19,527	307,443

SOURCE: Egypt, Ministry of Finance, Statistical Department, Census of Industrial Production, 1950.

In the mid-1930s disputes over who should be considered a worker began to become part of the struggle to determine the leadership and direction of the workers' movement. For example, Damirdash al-Shanadi, the foreign-educated engineer at the Filature Nationale, considered himself a worker. Sayyid Qandil and Muhammad Hasan ᶜAmarah also saw him as a worker and accepted his leadership of the GFTUEK with enthusiasm on that basis. In purely economic terms this may not have seemed unreasonable, as al-Shanadi was a waged employee. But Mahmud al-ᶜAskari ridiculed this notion in his memoirs and took particular pains to point out that, in his opinion, al-Shanadi was merely a tool of the Saᶜdist Party and not at all a true representative of the rank-and-file workers in the GFTUEK.[3] By implication, al-ᶜAskari's conception of the working class included not only al-Shanadi's ownership or lack of ownership of the means of production, but also relations of power and control in the work place, social status, political perspective and concrete role in the class struggle.

The appearance of such a dispute within the trade union movement is related to the growth of large-scale industry in Egypt. It is no accident that it was in the textile industry, which rapidly became Egypt's leading industrial sector, that this definitional dispute first

became a political issue. The relations of production in the mechanized textile industry were far more complex than precapitalist and small-scale capitalist production relations and challenged the limitations of definitions derived from those experiences.

Industrial Growth in the 1930s

The decade of the 1930s, especially its second half, when some recovery from the depression was underway, is characterized by a significant development of industry in Egypt. In 1930 a protective tariff for Egyptian manufactures was instituted, resulting in a sharp increase in the rate of growth of industrial enterprises. The figures in table 4, although they do clearly indicate this growth between 1927 and 1937, underestimate its extent. This is because the first years of this period were years of slow growth before the enactment of the tariff and while the effects of the depression were still strong. The extent of continued growth after 1937 is also understated, because towards the end of World War II a large number of establishments which were dependent on the wartime requirements of the allied armies in Egypt shut down entirely or significantly reduced their work force. Thus the net growth between 1937 and 1947 includes a significant number of factory closures in the last years of this

decade. Nonetheless, the extent of industrial growth in the 1930s and 1940s is apparent. Nearly 60 percent of all the industrial enterprises in Egypt in 1937 were established in the preceding ten years.

TABLE 4

AGGREGATE GROWTH OF INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES

Year Established	Number of Enterprises
No date known	10,159
Before 1918	9,862
1918-27	17,011
1928-37	54,989
1937-47	25,970
Total	117,991

SOURCE: Egypt, Ministry of Finance, Statistical Department, Industrial and Commercial Census, 1937 and 1947.

Foreign capital continued to play a dominant role in the development of capitalist industry in the 1930s. In 1934, the total paid up capital and debentures of companies operating in Egypt amounted to LE 99,317,000 (excluding the value of the Suez Canal Company shares). Slightly less than 50 percent was held by non-Egyptians residing abroad, but 86 percent of the capital invested

in Egypt still contained an element of foreign participation. Foreign participation in industrial development, although a minor share of total foreign investment, was considerable. Industrial, mining and commercial enterprises accounted for more than 25 percent of the capital, or LE 20,780,000 of the LE 81,365,000 invested in companies in which some or all of the share or debenture capital was subscribed abroad.[4] Following World War II foreign participation in capital invested in Egypt began to decline sharply, although it remained the dominant factor in the economy. A law enacted in 1947 required at least 51 percent of the capital of companies operating in Egypt to be owned by Egyptians. The law was not rigorously enforced. Out of the total capital of LE 117,935,000 invested in Egypt in 1948, 61 percent was controlled by companies with some degree of foreign participation.[5]

The Economic Impact of World War II

The main stimulus for the growth of large-scale mass production industry in Egypt was World War II. Import substitution industries flourished as a result of the sharp reduction in trade across the Mediterranean. In addition, the requirements of the war effort created a temporarily vastly expanded internal market with

sufficient cash to pay for Egyptian manufactures. Many new industries were established and older industries expanded dramatically. A well-informed estimate of the increase in the output of large-scale manufacturing enterprises between 1939 and 1945 puts the figure at 40 percent.[6] This figure is, of course, far less than the total increase in wartime production when smaller enterprises are added in. Food processing, chemicals, textiles, sisal, jute, metals, dry batteries, paper and cardboard were among the major growth industries during the war.[7] Industrial expansion during the war was aided by the Middle East Supply Center. This agency organized production and procurement of supplies for the Anglo-American troops. It established factories, imported capital equipment and provided technical training and assistance.

The allied war effort generated an enormous demand for new wage labor. At the high point of the military production effort in the Middle East in November 1943, the British forces, directly and through labor contractors, employed 263,080 Egyptians. This figure began to decline in 1944 and in May of that year had dropped to 243,496.[8] These figures are probably somewhat understated. They do not include Egyptians employed by civilian industry producing war-related goods or an estimated

25,000 Egyptians employed by the American armed forces in 1944.[9] Most of the workers employed by the allied armies were unskilled recent migrants from the countryside. Among the minority of skilled workers, a high proportion had been urban dwellers before the war.[10]

By early 1944 it was already apparent to British officials that the Egyptian economy would not be able to absorb this work force after the war. In order to address this problem, Robert Peers was appointed Labour Advisor to the Minister Resident in the Middle East, Lord Killearn. Peers was in close contact with Egyptian authorities and attempted to advise them on planning measures which might be taken in the postwar period. It is from his report on "Labour and Employment in the Middle East" that the employment figures just cited are taken. No concrete measures were adopted by either the British or Egyptian authorities to combat the high level of unemployment which Peers predicted. As a result, postwar unemployment was indeed very high. It was one of the principal factors in shaping the demands and the tone of the postwar workers' movement.

Official government unemployment statistics are ridiculously low and disguise the high level of postwar unemployment. In June 1946, for example, the Ministry of Social Affairs reported that the total number of those

registered in its Employment Bureaus was less than 10,000.[11] Several unofficial estimates concur that the number of workers unemployed as a result of the closure of the allied military production facilities and bases and the withdrawal of military orders from civilian-owned enterprises was about 250,000--a figure nearly equivalent to the total number employed by the allies.[12] Those unemployed as a result of the reopening of Egypt to foreign trade and the loss of the market demand created by the evacuation of most of the allied troops based in Egypt should be added to this figure.

As previously noted, the total number of factory employees enumerated in table 3 does not include those employed by the allied forces. Mahmoud Anis estimates that in 1945 there were 165,000 Egyptian industrial workers employed by the allied forces.[13] Other Egyptians were employed as drivers, cooks and waiters in mess halls and in other nonindustrial tasks. If we add this figure to the number of industrial employees in all factories during 1945 presented in table 3, the new total will be 623,000. Using this figure it becomes clear that the total number of industrial employees did not increase between 1945 and 1948 as table 3 indicates. Instead it fell by some 45,000. This may be considered a rough indication of the number of industrial workers who were

not integrated into the civilian economy after the war. Of course, this number would have been higher in 1945 and 1946 than in 1948, by which time some of those unemployed did find new jobs. Once those employed by the allies during the war are counted, it is apparent that there was a steady decline in the level of industrial employment between 1945 and 1951, despite the continuing growth of a small number of very large enterprises.

The reduced demand for war-related commodities was the immediate cause of the drop in industrial employment after 1944. This was only the beginning of a relatively long-term trend which was only conjuncturally related to the end of the war. As Egyptian industry expanded, economies of scale and increased per capita productivity (in the advanced capitalist sector) led to a decrease in the number of workers required to produce the same commodities, while the purchasing power of the internal market did not expand rapidly enough to absorb the new productive capacity. This development was, of course, not essentially different than the course of capitalist development anywhere else, including the advanced capitalist societies. It was, however, entirely contrary to the hopes and expectations of all the government officials, economists and specialists who promoted industrialization in Egypt with the expectation that it

would contribute substantially to a solution to the problem of overpopulation. Patrick O'Brien has observed that although the annual rate of increase of industrial output was 6 percent from 1945 to 1957 and the share of manufacturing in the national output rose from 7 percent to 10 percent during that period, aggregate industrial employment in manufacturing decreased 9 percent.[14] The drop was especially sharp in 1952-57, by which time the economy could have been expected to recover from the effects of the war. Thus the expansion of industrial production which occurred during this period was due primarily to increased capital, not labor. O'Brien concludes that capital-intensive development has actually been a contributing factor to increased unemployment in Egypt. The persistence of chronic unemployment and underemployment despite the continuing growth of large-scale industry is an important factor in explaining the continuing unrest and militancy of Egyptian workers in the postwar period.

Another major economic consequence of World War II was the rapid increase in the cost of living. During the late 1930s there was almost no fluctuation in the cost-of-living index. As soon as the war began, there was a protracted and dramatic increase. The Financial Counsellor of the British Embassy was of the opinion that

the official cost-of-living figures indicated in table 5 are below the actual market cost of commodities because these figures are based on the officially fixed legal prices rather than the prevailing free market cost of commodities.[15]

TABLE 5

COST-OF-LIVING INDEX, 1939-1954
June-August 1939=100

Year	Maximum for Year	Minimum For Year	Average For Year	Cost of Food Average For Year
1940	122	108	113	112
1941	156	123	138	141
1942	215	159	184	193
1943	257	222	242	263
1944	292	259	279	312
1945	298	290	293	325
1946	291	283	287	310
1947	285	276	279	298
1948	279	283	281	299
1949	273	281	278	302
1950	307	282	294	327
1951	328	312	319	355
1952	331	298	317	347
1953	299	296	296	324
1954	292	281	284	328

SOURCE: Egypt, Ministry of Finance, Statistical Department, Annuaire Statistique, 1951-1954.

NOTE: The cost of food represents 45 percent of the cost of living and includes fuel and soap.

Any attempt to develop a reliable comparison of wages with the cost of living meets with a morass of statistical confusion and contradictions. However, the overall conclusion that wages did not keep pace with prices during the period 1938 to 1945 is inescapable. As a starting point for a discussion of wages, it should be noted that there seems to be good reason to believe that, as a result of the antilabor offensive of Egyptian capital in the 1920s and wage cuts during the depression, real wages in industry in the early 1930s were actually lower than in 1914.[16] In the last half of the 1930s there was probably some recovery as a result of the increase in labor organization and militancy.

Conflicting estimates of wages and references to official government wage surveys which do not seem to have survived in any available archive have been made by Anis, El-Mallakh, Badaoui, El-Gritly and Radi.[17] Except for El-Gritly and Radi, whose figures are unexplicably lower than the others, there seems to be general agreement on a figure of about 7.7 piastres per day as the average industrial wage in the years 1936 to 1939. The best series of wages estimates during the war are provided by Anis and El-Mallakh, whose figures are compared in table 6. These figures show that daily wages increased some 113 percent during the war. The cost of

living, however, increased by 193 percent during the same period. Therefore, there was a substantial decline in real wages.

TABLE 6

DAILY INDUSTRIAL WAGE RATES, 1937-1945

Year	Daily Rates	
	El-Mallakh	Anis
1937-39	7.7 piastres	7.76 piastres
1940	9	9
1941	11	11
1942	13.3	13.6
1943	12.8	15
1944	16.4	16.43
1945	16.4	16.43

SOURCE: Ragaei El-Mallakh, "The Effects of the Second World War on the Economic Development of Egypt" (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1954), p. 180; Mahmoud Anis, "A Study of the National Income of Egypt," L'Egypte Contemporaine, no. 261-62 (November-December 1950), p. 805.

In July 1945 the government began publication of the semiannual Statistics of Wages and Working Hours. The wage rates in this series are based on projecting an average from a sample of one quarter of the industrial establishments covered by the survey. Since these

figures include the wages of highly paid foreigners and the proprietors of the enterprises, they are higher than the actual prevailing wages for Egyptian workers. According to these statistics, the average weekly wage for a fifty-one hour week in July 1945 was 115 piastres.[18] If we multiply the daily rates of Anis and El-Mallakh by six, their weekly rates will be approximately 98.6 piastres. However, even the higher official figure for wages shows clearly a significant drop in real wages during the war.

Real wages recovered their prewar levels very slowly. Official Egyptian government statistics give the index of real wages as 86 in January 1949 and 88 in January 1950 using a base of 1938=100.[19] According to a study done by the National Bank of Egypt, prewar wage levels were not yet regained by 1955. Charles Issawi disputes the conclusions of this study and argues that wages returned to their prewar level by 1951 or 1952.[20] Whichever year we accept, the failure of wages to keep pace with the rate of inflation during the war and the slow rate of postwar recovery in wage levels are apparent.

Contradictory and Uneven Development

Although the overall growth of Egyptian industry in the 1930s and 1940s is unmistakable, it is necessary to interrogate the official statistics much more closely in order to appreciate the contradictory nature of this development and its limits. Included in the total of 117,991 industrial enterprises enumerated in the Industrial and Commercial Census of 1947 are 14,841 hair dressing and beauty salons and 5,538 establishments engaged in building maintenance and cleaning. Only 1,613 enterprises employed twenty or more persons, while 57,487 employed no labor at all other than that of the proprietors and their unpaid families. The overwhelming majority of establishments, 71,187, operated on capital of less than LE 50, while only 3,905 could marshall capital of more than LE 1,000. A total of 19,129 establishments operated with no capital at all.[21]

These conditions, typical of a dependent capitalist social formation, must be recognized as the limiting factor which established the boundaries within which working class organization and consciousness developed. Until World War II, workers and independent owner-operators in small low-capital enterprises constituted the bulk of the membership of the Egyptian trade union movement. This was particularly true in the 1920s and

1930s when trade unionism expanded beyond the transport, public utilities and tobacco industries, where large numbers of workers and significant capital were concentrated. The weakness of the trade union movement during this period is, at least in part, attributable to the character of its membership, its limited capacity to organize and the diffuse class composition of many trade unions.

However, a contradictory tendency is also apparent in the growth of Egyptian industry in the 1930s and 1940s. While the overwhelming majority of industrial enterprises operated on little or no capital and employed few or no workers, industrial production was dominated by a small number of firms controlling vast amounts of capital (by Egyptian standards) and employing large concentrations of workers. These included both foreign and Egyptian firms, the latter mainly controlled by Bank Misr and its associated companies. The high concentration of the Egyptian industrial work force is clearly demonstrated in table 7, which is based solely on those employed in production of new commodities as defined by the Census of Industrial Production. In 1947, according to these figures, 58 percent of all industrial production workers were employed in only 583 enterprises, each employing at least fifty workers. These figures show clearly that

TABLE 7

CONCENTRATION OF THE EGYPTIAN INDUSTRIAL WORK FORCE

Number of Employees	Number of Enterprises		Number Employed	
	1944	1947	1944	1947
Under 10	18,874	23,362	79,000	96,000
10-49	2,778	2,798	58,000	58,000
50-499	523	519	77,000	76,000
500 and over	45	64	102,000	137,000
Total	22,220	26,743	316,000	367,000

SOURCE: Charles Issawi, Egypt at Mid-Century (London, 1954), p. 157.

NOTE: These figures are based on the Census of Industrial Production for 1945 and 1948. Since the census forms were distributed in 1944 and 1947 respectively, Issawi has given those years as the dates in the table. I have let the table stand as he has constructed it.

despite its overall underdeveloped and dependent character, the expansion of capitalism in Egypt, just as in the advanced capitalist countries, led to the creation of a highly concentrated industrial working class. The tendency towards concentration developed very rapidly as the 38 percent increase in the number of the largest firms (employing 500 and over) between 1944 and 1947 indicates. This is especially remarkable as this was a period of contraction in total industrial employment, as

has already been mentioned.

The Egyptian working class therefore includes, on one end of the spectrum, a large number of workers employed in very small enterprises producing in labor-intensive and capital-poor conditions where the distinction between employer and employee is often not very sharp. On the other end of the scale is also a large and, what is more important, growing number of workers in large-scale mass production industries. In addition to the industrial proletariat enumerated in tables 3 and 7, many workers in transport, communications, construction, mining and extraction, and some portion of the commercial workers also labored in enterprises with a high concentration of workers and capital. Although no figures are available, the pattern of dispersion and concentration in these economic sectors is similar to that of industrial manufacturing. The Cairo and Alexandria tramway and bus companies and the Egyptian State Railways, for example, together employed approximately 20,000 workers--by far the largest concentrations of transport workers, while the Shell and Socony Vacuum (Mobil) Oil companies dominated the oil industry employing several thousand workers each.

The coexistence and parallel growth of contradictory trends of concentration and dispersion of labor and capital in the development of Egyptian capitalism is a

consequence of the fact that the capitalist mode of production was introduced to Egypt by European colonialism and imperialism after it was already highly developed. In Europe, intensification of production based on pre-industrial techniques and social relations generally preceded the development of large-scale capitalist industry and helped to provide the necessary capital accumulation to finance it. But in Egypt, complete modern capitalist factories were imported from Europe imposing production techniques and relations which had not developed gradually and organically. This uneven development had a significant impact on the character of the Egyptian working class, which acquired a "split personality." Throughout this period, and indeed to this present day, a large number of those popularly conceived of as workers were not employed in large-scale capitalist enterprises. As a progressively greater proportion of Egyptian workers came to be so employed, the popularly prevailing precapitalist definition of "worker" merged with the new industrial proletarians created by the expansion of fully capitalist relations of production.

This development provides the potential for the growth of independent trade union organization and the formation of a politically independent workers' movement. The first attempt to build such a movement after the

demise of the Communist Party and the FETU in 1924 occurred in the late 1930s. Those who engaged in this effort were not yet sufficiently well rooted in stable industrial trade union organizations to succeed. In the late 1930s and 1940s workers in large-scale industry, particularly the textile industry, came to form the core of the Egyptian workers' movement. They were the bearers of militant and politically independent trade unionism which became an increasingly powerful force within the Egyptian workers' movement after the end of World War II.

There are, of course, a number of exceptions to this generalization. The most important is the case of the Cairo transport workers who, although they were among the most proletarianized workers in the entire Egyptian economy, retained a certain attachment to ᶜAbbas Halim until 1950 or 1951. There is considerable evidence that by the 1940s the transport workers were very adept at manipulating the Prince to achieve their aims, but this is nonetheless a very different style and political stand than that adopted by the Cairo area textile workers. The workers at the Eastern Tobacco Company in Giza and some of the large enterprises in the Suez Canal zone also constitute exceptions to this generalization, and more will be said about the particularities of their situation further on. Despite these exceptions, it remains true

that the struggle within the postwar trade union movement between advocates of trade union independence and those who sought to revive and perpetuate patron-client trade unionism roughly coincides with the division between workers in large-scale enterprises and those in small-scale enterprises. Nowhere is this more clear than in the textile industry.

Textiles: The Leading Industrial Sector

As in many peripheral capitalist economies, the textile industry emerged as the leading sector in the expansion of Egyptian industry in the 1930s and 1940s. According to the Census of Industrial Production of 1945, 117,272 of the 316,144 employees in manufacturing factories were textile workers and 9,425 of the 22,220 manufacturing factories were spinning and weaving mills, including thirteen of the forty-five enterprises employing over 500 workers. The highest concentrations of industrial workers in Egypt were located in the textile sector of the economy. The largest of these by far was the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in Mahallah al-Kubra, established in 1927. By the end of World War II, this mammoth industrial agglomeration employed well over 25,000 persons. The Filature Nationale, established in Alexandria in 1899 and reorganized in 1912, is Egypt's

oldest continually operating textile mill. Its work force grew from around 1,200 after World War I to 8,000-10,000 during and after World War II. In 1938 the Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving Company was established in Kafr al-Dawwar. By 1952 it employed some 9,000 workers. The Misr Bayda Dyers Company, also established in Kafr al-Dawwar in 1938, employed 2,000-3,000 workers in the postwar period. The Sibahi Spinning and Weaving Company, established in 1937, employed 5,500 workers in three mills in Alexandria and Shubra al-Khaymah. In 1947-48 these seven enterprises alone employed over 50,000, or somewhat less than half, of all the textile workers in Egypt. Many other textile firms in Alexandria, Shubra al-Khaymah and other Cairo suburbs employed 1,000-2,000 workers during and after the war. The only other industrial establishments of comparable size were the sugar refinery at Hawamdiyah south of Cairo, the Eastern Tobacco Company in Giza and the Shell refinery in Suez, each of which employed approximately 4,000 workers.

The precise number of workers in any textile mill fluctuated wildly with the ups and downs of the industry and the price of cotton. This was one of the major reasons for the high level of industrial conflict in this industry. Egyptian workers refused to accept the notion that profit and other market considerations were a

legitimate reason to dismiss an employee from a job. (See Chapter VII for a further discussion of this question.) The successive recessions in the textile industry in the postwar period led to extremely sharp struggles in which job security and stability of wages were the main issues. Of the 137 officially recorded strikes in 1947, eighty-eight, or 66 percent, occurred in the textile industry.[22] In 1950, 67 percent, or thirty-three, of the forty-nine officially recorded strikes were in the textile industry.[23] Official strike statistics for other years are not available. However, the absolute number of strikes as well as the proportion of strikes in the textile industry is probably higher in 1945 and 1946. In January to April 1945 there were over fifty strikes among the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers alone. (See Chapter VI.)

Textile workers comprised 39,500 of the officially recorded 149,500 union members in 1950, and 32 percent of the industry was unionized.[24] The figure for the number of union members is far too low because it includes only those whose dues were fully paid up and does not include the members of unions not officially recognized or dissolved by the government, such as the Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers Union. The only other sector of the economy where the number of

unionized workers even approached the size of the textile industry was the much smaller transport and communications sector, where 89 percent of the industry was unionized and 35,700 workers were union members.[25]

By the end of World War II, therefore, the textile industry had eclipsed transport and public utilities as the center of gravity of the Egyptian workers' movement. Transport workers remained a very important component of the movement, but they no longer provided the same overall leadership which characterized their role up to the time of the Cairo transport general strike of September 16, 1941. This role was assumed by the textile workers.

During the period of this study the textile industry work force was mainly recruited from former peasants. The Misr mills at Mahallah al-Kubra and Kafr al-Dawwar were established in medium-sized Delta towns rather than Cairo or Alexandria because the management consciously chose to hire inexperienced peasants who were politically weaker and less aware of trade unionism than veteran urban workers. Political and economic peace in the mills was considered more important than the greater efficiency and other benefits which would have been achieved by choosing a more central location and employing an experienced work force.[26]

Peasants uprooted from their former social milieu did prove to be relatively docile for many years. The former peasants were grateful for a steady cash income and were, at first, willing to accept the rigid and arbitrary discipline of the factory in exchange. Fikri al-Khuli, a son of a peasant family, who began work at Misr Spinning and Weaving in Mahallah al-Kubra in 1929 at the age of twelve, records the reactions of many of his fellow workers to the discipline of the factory in his autobiography:

> It is better here in spite of hard conditions, because one is sure of constant work and sure of earning a bit to give his mother and brothers. . . . It it weren't for the damned machines everything would be fine. When we were in the village we'd never have ten piastres in our hands all at once, or even five. It's true that we miss our home, but that is the way to make a living. Let's just pray that God keeps us all healthy and that everyone will get back safely to his family.[27]

On another accasion al-Khuli reports the response of his fellow workers to a new company regulation forbidding workers to raise their hands to the foremen. (Workers were regularly beaten by foremen.) Some argued that workers should strike back if they were struck. Another responded:

> Anyone who can't put up with things as they are had better go back to his village before he comes to a sticky end. We've only come here to support our mothers and families and we've got to be prepared to be walked over for their sakes.[28]

As long as those employed in the mills considered themselves to be only temporary workers who had accepted industrial employment only in order to earn a certain sum of money after which they intended to return to their villages, the formation of trade unions and the growth of class consciousness made slow progress. At Misr Spinning and Weaving there was a 100 percent turnover in the work force between 1927 and 1943, while absenteeism averaged 10 percent per day during this period.[29] These are indications that it took several years before a relatively stable work force that saw its future in industry was formed.

The steady influx of former peasants without industrial experience into the ranks of the textile work force weakened the solidarity and cohesion of the workers and their capacity to resist the factory management, at least temporarily. In many cases the new proletarians were easily manipulated and dominated by their employers until they gained enough experience to assert themselves and struggle for their interests. Village rivalries between workers from diverse and traditionally antagonistic localities were a common source of conflict among workers, dividing their ranks and inhibiting the growth of cohesive unity against the company.

At Misr Spinning and Weaving, peasants from outside

Mahallah al-Kubra, who were known as sharqawiyah, were ostracized and looked down upon by the local, or mahallawi, workers. Until the late 1940s the sharqawiyah-mahallawiyah rivalry among the workers was the dominant social conflict in the mill.[30]

Workers at the Misr mills faced an obstacle to the development of collective organization and action not shared by those employed by foreign firms. Bank Misr and its associated industrial enterprises were widely regarded as the outstanding symbol of Egyptian economic nationalism. Although Bank Misr had substantially lost its national character by the time Misr Spinning and Weaving was established, the extent of foreign participation in Bank Misr and its enterprises was unknown to the general public. Therefore, any disruption of production or other anticompany activity was unlikely to win the support of nationalist politicians or other nonworkers. The first major strike at Misr Spinning and Weaving occurred on July 18, 1938, when 1,500 weavers struck demanding an eight-hour day and a raise in piece rates so that eight hours' production would yield the same wage as twelve hours' production at the old rate.[31] A large number of strikers was arrested, and fifty-five were brought to trial and convicted. The court's decision included the following admonition:

> Les ouvriers devaient, devant cette situation, coopérer avec la société pour la production et sacrifier tout interêt personnel afin de servir leur patrie. . . . Quoiqu'il en soit des circonstances et des causes: la grève, la destruction n'ont rien à faire avec les Egyptiens; ces actes sont tout à fait indignes d'eux du fait de leur religion basée sur le pardon, le coopération, et la noblesse de caractère. . . . Par consequent le mouvement des ouvriers n'aurait aucune justification ou necessité. . . .[32]

The court's assessment of the character of the Egyptian worker was soon shown to be quite mistaken. Despite the internecine feuding among the workers, the harsh discipline of the companies and the appeals and threats in the name of Egyptian nationalism, textile workers did come to feel and act based on their common interests. By the end of World War II, not even a myopic provincial judge could ignore the development of strong feelings of class solidarity and a willingness to organize and act upon these feelings on the part of many textile workers. Even at Mahallah al-Kubra, where the pressures against the development of class-based organization and collective action were the strongest, the mahallawiyah-sharqawiyah conflict receded in importance by the late 1940s. By 1952 there was no doubt in the mind of one intimate observer that "Negative pressure has now created a feeling of solidarity and common cause in the labor force and antagonism toward the company."[33]

The textile industry was, of course, not the only industrial sector which recruited heavily from among former peasants. Unfortunately, it is the only one about which any detailed information on the process of peasant proletarianization is available. Almost every expanding industry in the 1930s and 1940s relied mainly on former peasants for labor power. We can safely assume that the responses of the peasants in other large industrial enterprises into which they were recruited to their new social and production environment were not radically different from what is known about the textile industry and Misr Spinning and Weaving in particular.

"The Labor Question"

Any realistic discussion of the social condition of Egyptian workers during the period of this study must be rooted firmly in a single powerful and all-pervasive fact--poverty. Egypt was and remains a very poor country where squalor, malnutrition, disease and illiteracy are part of the daily experience of the working class and exercise a strong influence on its ability to organize and struggle. The growth of a significant urban industrial working class and the undeniably poor conditions in which most workers lived and worked prompted the appearance of a public debate on "the labor question"

(mushkilat al-ᶜummal or mas'alat al-ᶜummal). Husni al-Shintanawi's 1934 article in al-Ahram, to which frequent reference has been made, was entitled "Is There a Problem of Labor and Workers in Egypt?" By World War II it was generally agreed that the answer was, "Yes."

Officials in the Ministry of Social Affairs, in which the Labor Department was located, wrote extensively on this issue. In 1942 Radi Abu Sayf Radi, the Director of the Labor Department, wrote on the workers' question in the journal of the Ministry of Social Affairs. He noted that while the average wage in establishments employing five or more persons was eight piastres per day in 1941 (significantly less than the figures given by Anis and El-Mallakh in table 6), a large number of workers received considerably less than that inadequate sum.[34] Silk and wool workers, brass workers, barrel and plate makers, furniture and upholstery workers, carpenters and wood turners, metal workers, fitters, smelters and tailors of ready-made clothing all earned between 3 and 4.71 piastres per day. Hand weavers of carpets and kilims earned only 1.63 piastres per day. Radi used these figures to support his arguments for further labor legislation and social welfare programs for workers. Such measures, he believed, would promote greater productivity.

Zaki Badaoui, who served as an Inspector in the Trade Union Section of the Labor Department, wrote

several sympathetic studies on the social conditions of Egyptian workers.[35] He described vividly the process of determining wage rates and the debilitating effects of low wage levels on Egyptian workers and their families:

> En realité les salaires en Egypte sont en quelque sorte un marchandage individuel entre le patron et l'ouvrier, qui aboutit toujours à une remunération modique. Le salaire qui resulte est alors insuffisant au travailleur pour vivre; néanamoins celui-ci est constraint, pour éviter de mourir de faim, de vendre son travail aux prix qui lui est imposé. De cet état de choses ont resulté les crises aiguës est continuelles qui ont dominé sa vie et celle de sa famille.[36]

One of the direct results of low wages was the malnutrition of Egyptian workers. According to the United Nations, the minimum desirable number of calories to be consumed by an industrial worker is 2,550-2,650 calories per day. Before World War II Egyptian industrial workers averaged only 2,199 calories per day. By 1949-50 this had risen to 2,300, still well below the minimum recommended level.[37]

In 1945 a small number of the largest industrial enterprises began to provide cafeterias for their workers. These facilities were generally unpopular with workers, either because the food was too expensive or of poor quality. At the Misr Dyeing Mill in Hilwan, south of Cairo, breakfast and lunch at the company-operated

cafeteria might cost as much as 30 percent of the daily wage. Khaireya Khairy, who visited the mill as part of her research for a study of nutritional standards of Egyptian workers, noted that on the day of her visit in 1945, lunch consisting of potatoes, rice and bread cost one piastre. Wages in the mill ranged from eight piastres per day for a minor under fifteen years of age to fourteen piastres per day for an adult.[38] At the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company, most workers did not use the company cafeteria, and Carson noted that, "It is apparent that a large number are not receiving proper diet because of low income and high number of dependents."[39]

Housing was another social benefit which some of the largest companies began to provide for workers during World War II. It was generally of very low quality, and those companies who built housing did not thereby win the gratitude of their workers. During the war the British built temporary shelters in Mahallah al-Kubra and Damanhur to house evacuees from bombing raids on Alexandria. These were subsequently turned over to the Misr Company for workers' housing. Later the Misr Company constructed additional units, motivated at least in part by the desire to avoid the excess profits tax. In Mahallah al-Kubra and elsewhere, ten or twenty workers per shift often

occupied the same room, renting it only for the period when they slept there.[40] The Misr company housing in Mahallah al-Kubra was described in a report cited by Zaki Badaoui as follows:

> La majorité de ces habitations, loin d'être habitable à l'homme, ne conviendraient pas pour abriter les animaux.[41]

Conditions were even worse where workers had to secure their own housing. According to El-Gritly:

> The situation with respect to housing in industrial areas is grim indeed. What are euphemistically termed houses are nothing but filthy hovels where masses of human beings are herded in utter disregard of hygiene or the dignity of man.[42]

These conditions attracted the attention of the British Embassy and prompted one of the more candid comments on labor matters to emanate from that source. In his "Report on Conditions of Labour and Trade Unions in Egypt," T. E. Evans offered the uncharacteristically blunt observation that, "The vast majority of Egyptian workmen live in conditions of degrading squalor."[43]

In addition to the disease generated by overcrowded and unhygienic housing, industrial working conditions were generally unhealthy and unsafe. The rate of industrial accidents doubled between 1933-34 and 1942, largely as a result of increased use of machinery.[44] Zaki Badaoui confirms the general prevalence of unsafe

and unhealthy conditions in Egyptian industry:

> Les industries en Egypte sont en majeure partie insalubres, dangereuses et incommodes . . . le travailleur qui accomplit sa tâche dans ces conditions est la future victime de nombreuses maladies.[45]

A report of a visit to the Misr Spinning and Weaving mill, where working conditions were among the most advanced in Egypt, noted that 90 percent of the 2,000 women employed there suffered from tuberculosis.[46] This is probably not untypical of the textile industry as a whole. Even the minimal health and safety regulations in effect in Egypt were poorly, if ever, enforced. Occupational diseases were also endemic in tanneries and cotton ginning mills.[47]

A low level of education is a frequent accompaniment of poverty, overcrowding and disease. This is also the case in Egypt. In 1937, 18.6 percent of Egyptians were literate, while in 1947 the figure rose to 22.8 percent.[48] In 1944 the government enacted a law requiring all enterprises employing more than thirty workers, of whom more than half were illiterate, to provide classes for their instruction. According to Zaki Badaoui, this law was enforced only in the Giza Governorate.[49] The workers at the Eastern Tobacco Company, which was located in Giza, did display a very high rate of literacy because their union established literacy classes. In 1950 there

were 1,234 illiterates out of a work force of 3,357, while by 1952 there were only 285 illiterates out of a total of 3,538 workers.[50] Badaoui insists that this is exceptional and estimates that only one in 120 industrial workers was literate.[51] Such a figure is not inconceivable in localities like Mahallah al-Kubra and Kafr al-Dawwar, but it seems too low for Cairo, Alexandria and their suburbs. There is no doubt, however, that literacy was uncommon, even in these areas, among industrial workers. Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman guessed that only 10 percent of the textile workers in Shubra al-Khaymah could read.[52]

While there is no way to measure it concretely, there can be no doubt that grinding poverty, malnutrition, poor living and working conditions, disease and a lack of education took an enormous amount of energy and vitality out of the Egyptian working class and considerably reduced its capacity to struggle in the trade union and political arena. In many cases the mere struggle for survival imposed the most narrow horizons on workers and occupied all of their energies. Although Egyptian workers never accepted the arguments of the industrialists that low wages and poor working conditions were necessary if Egyptian industry, with its relatively low level of productivity, was to compete successfully in the international market, such conditions were undoubtedly the norm during the period of this study.

Notes to Chapter III

[1]al-Ahram, June 26, 1934.

[2]The unreliability of Egyptian statistical data is notorious. The proliferation of available statistics should not mislead us into believing that they measure anything accurately. In addition to general lack of reliability, there is an additional complication posed by inconsistencies between various statistical measures and revisions and alterations of figures after they have been first reported.

[3]cAskari, U, November 21, 1976.

[4]Crouchley, pp. 93-94, 106. These figures understate the extent of foreign participation in the Egyptian economy because capital held by non-Egyptians residing in Egypt is counted as Egyptian.

[5]Abdel-Malek, pp. 13-14.

[6]Robert Mabro and Samir Radwan, The Industrialization of Egypt, 1939-1973: Policy and Performance (Oxford, 1976), p. 82.

[7]Great Britain, Department of Overseas Trade, Commercial Conditions in Egypt (May 1945), quoted in Mahmoud Anis, "A Study of the National Income of Egypt," L'Egypte Contemporaine, no. 261-62 (November-December 1950), pp. 778-82.

[8]FO 921/331 (1945).

[9]Anis, p. 775.

[10]FO 921/290/117(1)/44/5 (1944).

[11]al-Ahram, June 20, 1946. An official report issued to mark the occasion of the first ten years of the activity of the Labor Department indicates that the total number of those registered in the employment bureaus was 11,502 in 1945 and 12,039 in 1946. The bureaus were able to set up job interviews for 2,845 job seekers in 1945 and 1,392 in 1946. This less-than-impressive record may explain why so few unemployed workers bothered to register. See Egypt, Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour Department, The Labour Department (Cairo, 1951), p. 43.

[12]This is the figure given by Charles Issawi, Egypt at Mid-Century (London, 1954), p. 262. IM, May 10, 1946, reports that 206,233 workers formerly employed by the allies had requested unemployment assistance. Al-Wafd al-Misri, May 1, 1946, reports that nearly 250,000 workers were dismissed from employment by the allied armies.

[13]Anis, p. 786.

[14]Patrick O'Brien, "Industrial Development and the Employment Problem in Egypt, 1945-1965," Middle East Economic Papers (1962), pp. 97 ff.

[15]FO 141/1136/1039/1/46.

[16]Marcel Clerget, Le Caire, 2 vols. (Le Caire, 1934), 2:154-58.

[17]Anis, "National Income"; Ragaei El-Mallakh, "The Effects of the Second World War on the Economic Development of Egypt" (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1954), p. 180; Zaki Badaoui, Les problèmes du travail et les organisations ouvrières en Egypte (Alexandrie, 1948), p. 59; A. A. I. El-Gritly, "The Structure of Modern Industry in Egypt," L'Egypte Contemporaine, no. 241-42 (November-December 1947), p. 529; Radi Abu Sayf Radi, "Mushkilat al-ᶜamil," Majallat al-shu'un al-ijtimaᶜiyah 3 (March 1942):36.

[18]Egypt, Ministry of Finance, Statistical Department, Statistics of Wages and Working Hours (July 1945).

[19]The Labour Department, p. 45.

[20]Charles Issawi, Egypt in Revolution (London, 1963), p. 193.

[21]Egypt, Ministry of Finance, Statistical Department, Industrial and Commercial Census, 1947, pp. 310, 398.

[22]FO 371/80580/JE1735 (1950).

[23]The Labour Department, p. 29.

[24]Ibid., p. 36.

[25]Ibid.

[26]William Carson, "The Social History of an Egyptian

Factory," Middle East Journal 11 (1951):336; Frederick Harbison and Ibrahim Ibrahim, "Some Labor Problems of Industrialization in Egypt," Annals of the American Academy of Political Science 305 (May 1956):117.

[27]Sawsan el-Messiri, "Class and Community in an Egyptian Textile Town" (Ph.D. dissertation, Hull University, 1980), p. 287. Fikri al-Khuli's autobiography is contained in a lengthy appendix to this dissertation. It was written while al-Khuli was in jail as a result of his activity in the communist movement and translated into English by el-Messiri.

[28]Ibid., p. 391.

[29]Ikbal Bahtimy, "The Mehalla el-Kobra Cotton Industry" (B.A. thesis, American University of Cairo, 1952), p. 17.

[30]El-Messiri, p. 262.

[31]al-Ahram, July 19, 1938.

[32]Andre Eman, L'industrie du coton en Egypte (Le Caire, 1943), pp. 183-84.

[33]William Carson, The Mehalla Report (Badr es-Sheyn, 1953), p. 2.

[34]Radi, p. 36.

[35]Badaoui, Les problemes; and La question ouvriere (Alexandrie, 1954), for example.

[36]Badaoui, Les problemes, p. 58.

[37]El-Mallakh, pp. 36, 137.

[38]Kaireya Khairy, "The Nutritive Aspect of Egyptian Labor" (B.A. thesis, American University of Cairo, 1946), pp. 33-35.

[39]Carson, The Mehalla Report, p. 3.

[40]El-Gritly, p. 533.

[41]Abdel Wahed El Wekil Bey, "Report sur la situation des ouvriers de la Societe Misr Pour la Filature et le Tissage à Mehalla El-Kebir," quoted in Badaoui, Les problemes, p. 68.

[42]El-Gritly, p. 533.

[43]FO 371/41380/J2671 (1944).

[44]El-Gritly, p. 542.

[45]Badaoui, Les problemes, p. 73.

[46]Mustafa Kamil Munib, "Ahwal al-ᶜamilat fi al-Mahallah al-Kubra," al-Taliᶜah, March 15, 1946, p. 12.

[47]El-Gritly, pp. 544-45.

[48]El-Mallakh, p. 148.

[49]Badaoui, Les problemes, p. 84.

[50]Hussein Aly Orphy, "An Analysis of Welfare Programs in Egyptian Industries: A Tobacco Factory Case Study" (B.A. thesis, American University of Cairo, 1955), p. 21.

[51]Badaoui, Les problemes, p. 83.

[52]Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman, personal interview, October 28, 1980.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE TRADE UNIONS: THE WAFD, ʿABBAS HALIM, GREAT BRITAIN OR INDEPENDENCE

As the outlines of World War II began to emerge unmistakably on the horizon, Great Britain moved to safeguard exposed areas of its empire. The Middle East was a particularly vulnerable region. Militarily it was threatened by the Italian presence in Libya and Ethiopia. It was also politically insecure because the British had reneged on their promises of self-determination and independence made during and after World War I and imposed mandatory regimes sanctioned by the League of Nations in Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine, while Egypt exercised only a hollow and formalistic independence. (A similar independence was granted to Iraq in 1932.) France, Britain's closest ally, held Syria and Lebanon under mandate. This political situation provided fertile ground for pro-Axis propaganda in the Arab world, and political forces sympathetic to the Axis emerged in Iraq, Palestine and Egypt.

In Egypt, the treaty of 1936 was the cornerstone of British attempts to secure a stable internal situation.

The treaty was, however, almost universally viewed as unsatisfactory and falling short of achieving the full independence and national sovereignty of Egypt. There was a real threat that Egyptian nationalists might use the war as an occasion to press the demand for full Egyptian independence. The Wafd suffered a considerable loss in credibility as a result of its having negotiated and approved the 1936 treaty. Nonetheless, with Rommel's troops advancing across North Africa towards Egypt and King Faruq and his closest advisors harboring pro-German sentiments, the Wafd remained the only popular and reliably antifascist force with whom the British could cooperate to secure Egypt's internal front. Therefore, on February 4, 1942, British tanks surrounded the Royal Palace, while Lord Killearn delivered an ultimatum to King Faruq demanding that he dismiss the cabinet and ask Mustafa al-Nahhas to form a new Wafd government. Many Wafdists expected that in exchange for wartime cooperation with Great Britain, Egyptian demands for full independence would be given favorable consideration at the conclusion of the hostilities.[1]

The approach of World War II also occasioned a new development in British policy towards labor movements throughout the empire. As part of the effort to ensure internal security before the impending conflict, British

colonial policy makers began to explore the possibilities of directing and coopting labor movements rather than opposing and repressing them. In 1938 the Colonial Secretary appointed a permanent labor advisor, Granville St. John Orde-Browne. These measures were intensified by the entry of Labor Party ministers into the government. During the war the Trades Union Congress seconded British trade unionists to the colonial governments of Nigeria, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Trinidad, British Guiana and Palestine. These trade unionists served as labor advisors to the various governments. By the middle of the war labor departments were established in the governments of many colonies and dependencies. Official British colonial policy began to encourage the enactment of labor legislation, including the legalization of trade unions.

Since Egypt was not formally a British colony, such measures could not be unilaterally undertaken there. Although there is no direct evidence available indicating a preponderant British role in the formulation and development of the Egyptian government's labor policy during World War II, there can be no doubt that the Wafd's labor policy was substantively influenced by the new British attitude towards colonial labor movements.

Pro-Wafd writers tend to view the Wafd regime of 1942 to 1944 as the "real beginning" of the Egyptian trade

union movement, with all that preceded this period assuming the status of prehistory.[2] These authors see the trade union movement as a gift bestowed by the Wafd government upon the workers, who ought therefore to be cooperative and reasonable in return. This view is remarkably similar to the attitude of many British colonial officials towards trade unions in full-fledged colonies.[3]

Even the short summary of the history of the labor movement up to 1936 provided in Chapter I should raise serious questions about the validity of this interpretation of the relationship between the Wafd and the labor movement. The struggle for trade union independence from the Wafd (and ᶜAbbas Halim) in the late 1930s must give rise to even more fundamental doubts. In this chapter the actual impact of Wafd labor policy and the failure of its attempt to reimpose its tutelage over the labor movement is examined. The failures of Prince ᶜAbbas Halim and the British Embassy to guide and control the labor movement are also discussed. Although all three of these forces maintained some base in the labor movement during and after World War II, more and more trade unions began to opt for independence from nonworker political parties and figures. By the end of the war the independent trend was ascendant, although not entirely dominant, in the Egyptian trade union movement.

The Return of the Wafd and the Legalization of Trade Unions

When the Wafd returned to power on February 4, 1942, most of the trade union apparatus which it had built up and supported in the 1930s was no longer functioning. Nonetheless, a majority of Egyptian workers warmly supported the return of the Wafd. Muhammad Hafiz, President of the Executive Board of the Congress of Government Workers and a leader of the General Union of Royal Press Workers since its establishment in 1936, recalls in his memoirs:

> When the incident of February 4, 1942, occurred we didn't know that it was the English who returned al-Nahhas and we went out in demonstrations to support al-Nahhas Pasha. Afterwards we learned what happened was an act of aggression against us and the King. Not the corrupt King, the King simply as a symbol of Egypt.[4]

Support for the Wafd in its capacity as Egypt's only mass nationalist party was still very widespread among workers at this time. The most organized and most solid base of support was among the government employees. This was the result of the concessions which had been granted to these workers during the Wafd's previous tenure in office. Although Lord Killearn viewed the Wafd's efforts to increase its popularity among government workers in 1936 and 1937 as "pandering to labor in the hopes of gaining its political support,"[5] these tactics proved

quite successful for the Wafd. Government employees and others remembered its favors when it returned to power.

Government workers were in the forefront of the demonstrations which greeted the new government on February 6. Mustafa al-Nahhas and Makram ᶜUbayd, the Wafd's new Minister of Finance, addressed the crowd, acknowledged their support and urged them to return to work. Makram ᶜUbayd spoke directly to the Royal Press workers, reminding them that he was an old friend and asking them to form a delegation to bring their demands to his attention but to return directly to work as they had already demonstrated their feelings.[6] On February 18, workers in the government's Maintenance Department demonstrated congratulating the Wafd. They were later joined by workers in the repair shops of the Egyptian State Railways. Both groups of workers also presented demands to Makram ᶜUbayd.[7]

The Wafd moved quickly to consolidate its support among the working class, and particularly among the government workers. On February 24, a cost-of-living allowance increase was announced for all government employees. On March 24, following intense pressure from the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers (see Chapter VI), Conciliation and Arbitration Committees were reestablished to mediate labor disputes. The government allocated

LE 4,000 to compensate railway workers fired as a result of the anti-Sidqi demonstrations and strike of May 14, 1931. This measure represented the discharging of a long-standing political debt and was widely appreciated in nationalist workers' circles. It also agreed to grant Royal Press workers a one-time one month paid vacation in order to perform the pilgrimage.[8]

The Wafd's most important initiative in its effort to win the support of Egyptian workers was the passage of Law 85 of (September) 1942 granting explicit legal recognition to trade unions in Egypt for the first time. The extent of trade union organization and activity prior to this point ought to leave no doubt that recognition did not provide the primary impetus for the growth of trade union activity in Egypt. On the other hand, legal recognition had been a trade union demand for several years. The passage of this law was widely interpreted as a workers' victory, and it was taken as an indication that the "people's ministry," as the Wafd dubbed its regime, was encouraging the formation of trade unions and taking the side of the workers in disputes with their employers. This impression was strengthened with the passage of Law 86 of 1942 requiring large employers to provide accident insurance for their employees.

The prolabor measures adopted by the Wafd during its first months in office represented the first occasion on

which it actually implemented a large number of its often repeated promises to workers.

There were two reasons for this change in policy. First, because the Wafd was weakened and somewhat discredited as a result of the 1936 treaty, it needed more than ever before to secure active popular support in order to fend off attacks from the Royal Palace, the minority parties and other enemies. Trade unions represented an important urban constituency easily mobilized for demonstrations and other mass activities. The Wafd had always viewed trade unions as a strategic asset for this reason, and they became even more important for the party as its general popularity began to decline. Second, the British had been greatly alarmed by the Cairo transport general strike of September 16, 1941, and other manifestations of labor unrest in 1940 and 1941. In order to retain the confidence of the British, the Wafd had to placate the Egyptian labor movement and prevent disruptions of production and communications vital to the allied war effort. If it failed to achieve this objective, the Wafd risked being replaced by the British as abruptly as it had been installed.

The military orders and legislation enacted by the Wafd did succeed in winning for it the support of the Egyptian trade union movement with few exceptions.

However, the Wafd was still very careful to try to keep the initiative in labor matters in its own hands and to attempt to assert exclusive control over the labor movement. The announcement of the formation of the Conciliation and Arbitration Committees was accompanied by warnings that the government had noted that nonworker elements were infiltrating the workers' movement and inciting the workers to disturbances and violations of public order.[9] The Conciliation and Arbitration Committees were established explicitly in order to put an end to strikes and other labor disturbances, and the government firmly announced that workers now had no excuse to resort to strikes to obtain their demands. No complaints would be dealt with if they were not processed through the apparatus of the Committees. Strikes would be treated harshly and decisively.[10]

The legalization of trade unions was hedged with qualifications limiting their effectiveness. Workers in a single enterprise were given the right to form unions, but federations of unions including workers in more than one enterprise were expressly forbidden. This meant that most unions would remain fairly small and therefore organizationally and financially weak. The law also required that the police be notified of all meetings of union executive boards and all general assemblies of the

membership. Unions were prohibited from engaging in any political or religious activity. Agricultural workers, personal servants and government employees were not permitted to join unions at all. Law 85 was, therefore, a double-edged sword. It encouraged the formation of trade unions and permitted the trade union movement to expand into many previously nonunionized sectors of the economy. Simultaneously, it extended the government's direct control over the trade union movement.

Following the passage of Law 85, the trade union movement grew dramatically. By the end of 1943, there were 311 officially registered trade unions in Egypt. At the time of their original registration with the Ministry of Social Affairs, these unions reported a membership of 77,497. By the time of the last official government inspection before December 31, 1943, the total number of union members had increased to 111,545. Five months later, in May 1944, there were 350 registered trade unions with a total membership of approximately 120,000.[11] These figures tend to underestimate the size of the trade unions because they include only fully paid up members as reported to the government. Thus for example, the number of members attributed to the Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers' Union is 271, although newspaper reports indicate that 3,000 workers attended

the union's General Assembly of April 26, 1942, and 1,000 workers attended the April 1943 meeting.[12] These figures also do not include workers belonging to unions officially dissolved by the government. According to one report, eleven unions with a membership of 3,000 were dissolved between March 1, 1943, and September 5, 1945.[13] Despite these discrepancies, the general tendency indicated by the figures in table 8 is undoubtedly accurate. Most of the newly established unions were based in relatively small enterprises. The law required a minimum of only fifty members in order to form a union. Nearly one third of the unions in existence at the end of 1943 had less than 100 members.

TABLE 8

UNION MEMBERSHIP STRENGTH AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1943

Membership	Number of Unions	Membership	Number of Unions
Less than 100	96	600-699	3
100-199	87	700-799	4
200-299	48	800-899	7
300-399	19	900-999	4
400-499	14	Over 1,000	19
500-599	10	Total	311

SOURCE: FO 371/41380/J2671 (1944).

In many cases neither the leadership nor the membership of newly formed unions possessed any knowledge of trade union principles or practices. While the following newspaper account of the formation of the Munirah Cab Drivers' Union for drivers in one of the quarters of Cairo may be an extreme case, it is indicative of the weaknesses of some of the organizations calling themselves trade unions:

> The Cooperative Society of Munirah Cab Drivers
>
> The cooperative society of cab drivers met on the evening of October 5, 1942, at its headquarters . . . in Munirah . . . and decided at the end of the meeting that the society would form a union. And it was named the Cab Drivers' Union.[14]

No mention is made in this account of a discussion of the goals and functions of a trade union as opposed to a cooperative society. These drivers were probably owners of their own vehicles. The impression which the story conveys is that the drivers, having heard that trade unions were recently granted official recognition by the government, simply decided that their previously existing association ought to be called a trade union. Nothing of substance was changed.

The Wafd government was able to increase its influence over the unions of government workers simply by ignoring the legal prohibition on their existence. As a

formal device to circumvent the law, the organizations of government workers were called "clubs." The various clubs were headquartered in a building provided by the Wafd and united under the leadership of Muhammad Hasanayn, the Wafd Representative for Bulaq.[15] Government workers also established a general federation called the Congress of Government Workers, headed by Muhammad Hafiz, one of the most loyal and ardently pro-Wafd trade union leaders.

Law 85 also gave the state tremendous regulatory powers over the trade unions. All unions had to be registered and supervised through the Ministry of Social Affairs. This formal legal control was further expanded by the manner in which ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq used his power as Minister of Social Affairs. In September 1942 he established a fund to be used to aid workers and their families in the event of death or incapacity of a worker due to accidents, illness or old age.[16] In March 1944 the Ministry of Social Affairs began granting direct subsidies to trade unions which "qualified" according to its standards.[17] The Wafd's control of the government machinery overseeing trade unions and the ability to allocate the government's financial resources provided it with an unrivaled ability to dominate the small and inexperienced trade union organizations.

Even relatively large trade unions without the benefit of experience in trade union struggle could be

dominated by the government. The union of Khedivial Mail Line Company in Suez was one of the first to receive official recognition after the passage of Law 85. Shortly after its formation, the union president presented to the company a list of the union's demands including a cost-of-living allowance equivalent to 20 percent of base pay, overtime pay, a weekly holiday and no dismissals without serious cause. The union president was promptly fired by the company. In response over 1,000 workers struck for four days in early November 1942. The government moved quickly and arrested forty-two of the strike leaders. They were sentenced to two months to one year imprisonment.[18] No further mention of struggle of this magnitude at the Khedivial Mail Line Company is found in either British diplomatic reports or the Egyptian press.

Reassertion of Wafd Leadership Over the Trade Union Movement

In addition to its ability to deploy the state apparatus as a means of controlling trade unions, the Wafd was also able to offer organizational facilities which unions could not provide for themselves--an office, legal counsel, negotiating clout with employers and access to the state. One of the most important tools for

the Wafd in its attempt to reassert hegemony over the trade union movement was its sponsorship of a weekly workers' newspaper. The first such newspaper was al-Wajib (The Task), which appeared briefly in late 1941 and early 1942 as a cooperative effort of the Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers' Union and the Egyptian General Printers' Union, whose leadership was closely identified with the Wafd. The textile workers' union withdrew from this project in order to establish its own paper. (See Chapter VI.) On May 6, 1942, a new weekly newspaper, al-Yara^{c} (The Firefly) appeared to take the place of al-Wajib as the Wafd labor organ. Zaki Abu Khayr, Secretary of the Egyptian General Printers' Union, served as Managing Editor of al-Yara^{c}. The offices of al-Yara^{c} were located in a building rented by the Wafd to serve as a trade union center. In June 1942 the printers' union announced that it was moving its union office to the premises of al-Yara^{c} and that it was assuming responsibility for publishing the paper.[19]

At the same time al-Yara^{c} began increasingly more openly to identify with the Wafd. On June 15, ^{c}Abd al-Hamid ^{c}Abd al-Haqq's picture appeared on the front page for the first time. This became a regular feature of subsequent issues. In the same issue Ahmad Farhat, a leader of the printers' union and a regular contributor

to al-Yara^{c}, published an article entitled "The Workers' Nationalism" in which he declared that workers were firm supporters of the Wafd's principles. In a second article Farhat confirmed his identification with the Wafd's labor policies by denouncing the evildoers who asserted that strikes were a legitimate means of protest and winning workers' demands.[20]

It is reasonable to assume that those trade unions closest to the Wafd would be the ones whose activities were most frequently reported by al-Yara^{c}. This is the general pattern in all the labor and trade union newspapers, whatever their political orientation, which appeared in Egypt throughout the period of this study. Based on this assumption, the news coverage of al-Yara^{c} can serve as an indicator of the Wafd's trade union influence. Until the fall of 1942, there is almost no labor news of any substance in the pages of al-Yara^{c}. For the first several months of its publication the paper was more of a literary magazine for the various printers' unions than a trade union newspaper. This reflects the weakness of the Wafd's organizational influence in the trade union movement when it first returned to power. The announcement that al-Yara^{c} would become a general Wafd labor newspaper rather than an organ of the printers' union did little to broaden trade

union support. No trade unions except for several printers' unions participated regularly in al-Yara^{c} until after the enactment of Law 85, granting legal recognition to trade unions, in September 1942.

After the passage of Law 85, al-Yara^{c} embarked on an intensive campaign to win labor support for the Wafd. The full text of the law was printed in three successive editions in late September and early October together with articles expressing much more open and enthusiastic identification with the Wafd than ever before.[21] At this time regular news of trade unions other than the printers begins to appear in the paper, indicating that with the enactment of Law 85, union leaders were more willing to support and identify with the Wafd. In October, November and December 1942, al-Yara^{c}'s pages contain many reports of the organization of new unions, demands of various unions and their regular bureaucratic activities.

At the same time articles attacking "alien elements" in the workers' movement begin to appear with some regularity.[22] These articles are very veiled in their accusations, and it is difficult to decipher exactly whom they are directed against. Since ^{c}Abbas Halim was still under internment at this time, the most likely target of these articles' concern would appear to be the activities of the revived Egyptian communist movement, which was just beginning to become active in the workers' movement.

By February 1943, al-Yara^{c} was publishing a regular column on "Workers' Affairs" featuring shop reports and summaries of executive board meetings from a large number of trade unions. Activities of trade unions formerly associated with ^{c}Abbas Halim such as Muhammad Ibrahim Zayn al-Din's Chauffeurs' Union and Muhammad Hasan ^{c}Amarah's Cairo Barbers' Union began to appear.[23] There was broad support for the Wafd among the Alexandria trade unions. Sayyid Nada, President of the Filature Nationale union, which became the largest union in Alexandria after its reorganization in February 1943, expressed strong agreement with the Wafd's policy of no strikes for the duration of the war.[24] Government employees continued to support the Wafd firmly.

One of the strongest centers of Wafd strength in the trade union movement seems to have been in Gharbiyah Province and its capital of Tanta. For most of 1943 the preponderance of trade union news reported in al-Yara^{c} comes from this region. Muhammad Hamdi served as local correspondent and agent for al-Yara^{c} in Tanta and also as general supervisor of the activities and finances of the city's trade unions.[25] Most of the trade unions in Gharbiyah were made up of small numbers of workers in services or small-scale production: cooks, cafe waiters, shoemakers and tailors. The only trade union news from

large-scale enterprises is from the Kafr al-Zayyat Cotton Company and the Nayif ᶜImad Company. Activities of trade unions in Mahallah al-Kubra (also located in Gharbiyah Province) including the formation of a union at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company were also regularly reported.[26] However, there was little Wafd influence in the Misr Company union because it was tightly controlled by the management of the mill, and the union leadership did not exceed the political boundaries set by management.

During the latter part of 1943 and 1944 the Wafd continued to strengthen its organizational control over the growing Egyptian trade union movement through the creation of local trade union federations in a large number of provincial centers. The legal prohibition on establishing trade union federations was circumvented by calling these organizations "Workers' United Fronts." In any case the Wafd government was not about to enforce the law against organizations designed to enhance its political strength. The Wafd was able to dominate these Workers' United Fronts" by having the local Wafd parliamentary Representative or a prominent Wafdist lawyer elected president. Fu'ad Siraj al-Din, the new Minister of Social Affairs, was generally elected Honorary President of these federations "in his personal capacity." The first Workers' United Front was

established in Alexandria on November 28, 1943, under the presidency of ᶜAli al-Hilwani, a Wafd Representative.[27] Subsequently regional trade union federations were established in Mansurah, Daqahliyah, Damanhur, Sharqiyah, Port Said, Ismaᶜiliyah, Gharbiyah, Suez, Damietta and Asyut.[28]

Resistance to Wafd Domination

Despite the overall success of the Wafd in entrenching itself in the trade union movement following the passage of Law 85 of 1942, there were also signs of dissension from the Wafd and its leadership methods at the very moment of its greatest strength. These dissenting voices were a reaction to the Wafd's insistence that the trade union movement should be organizationally and politically subordinate to it. The working class was not to be allowed to develop any organizations independent of the Wafd's tutelage, and certainly not a political perspective outside the boundaries of the Wafd. The Wafd still retained its corporatist view of Egyptian society, rejecting the existence of contradictory class interests between workers and employees. Muhammad Hasanayn, in an article in al-Yaraᶜ, wrote, "I thank God, the Most High, for the existence of this harmony between employers and workers."[29] In view of this harmony and the fact that

the government had granted all of the workers' demands, Hasanayn now felt that it was the duty of the workers to "Direct your movement to the internal organization of your affairs and leave everything else to the people's ministry."[30]

The Wafd was so unable to tolerate the potential of an independent workers' movement that ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq was removed from his post as Minister of Social Affairs because al-Nahhas was suspicious that his popularity with workers could create a threat to his supremacy as leader of the Wafd. In June 1943 ᶜAbd al-Haqq was transferred to the Ministry of Pious Foundations, and Fu'ad Siraj al-Din assumed the post of Minister of Social Affairs. Trade unionists perceived this as an antiworker maneuver. Even al-Yaraᶜ, while welcoming Siraj al-Din in his new post, expressed regret at the removal of ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq.[31] Several months after Siraj al-Din's assumption of his new post, the issue of ᶜAbd al-Haqq's dismissal was still a matter of concern for trade unionists. When representatives of more than fifty Alexandria trade unions attended a reception in honor of al-Nahhas and Siraj al-Din on August 29, 1943, ᶜAbd al-Haqq, despite his recent demotion, was also present as a guest of honor. Al-Nahhas felt the necessity to address directly, in his remarks to the gathering, the

question of ᶜAbd al-Haqq's dismissal, assuring the union leaders of Siraj al-Din's qualifications for his new post.[32]

Another indication of a weakening of the Wafd's position in the trade union movement is the reappearance of articles in al-Yaraᶜ warning against the influence of "alien elements" in the workers' movement.[33] In an article by Zaki Abu Khayr, these "alien elements" are described as joining political parties and benevolent or cultural associations and attempting to speak in the name of workers on some occasions and intellectuals on others.[34] This accusation vaguely describes, although in a crude and distorted form, the activities of communist intellectuals at this time. It appears that the Wafd was feeling increasingly more threatened by these activities.

The Wafd suffered a serious defeat in the trade union movement when it attempted and failed to organize the workers at the Eastern Tobacco Company in Giza. Eastern Tobacco employed approximately 3,500 workers at this time and was the single largest industrial enterprise in the metropolitan Cairo area. The Wafd-led Cairo Tobacco and Cigarette Workers' Union established a branch in Giza in order to organize the Eastern workers.[35] But the pro-Wafd forces could not prevail. When the union was finally organized in October 1943, Fathi Kamil, a

strong opponent of Wafd domination of the trade union movement, was elected president.[36]

The Wafd was particularly weak among the greater Cairo area trade unions. In April 1943 al-Yara^{c} reported that thirty Cairo trade unions were headquartered in its offices,[37] a clear indication that these unions were in the Wafd's organizational orbit. By the latter part of 1943, Cairo area unions are rarely mentioned in al-Yara^{c}'s trade union news reports. None of the largest unions in the Cairo area, except for the associations of government employees, were organizationally linked to the Wafd. The unions of the Shubra al-Khaymah mechanized textile workers, Eastern Tobacco Company, the Cairo Tramway Company, the Egyptian General Omnibus Company (Thorneycroft) and the Société Générale des Sucréries et de la Raffinerie d'Egypte in Hawamdiyah all kept their organizational distance from the Wafd. None of them accepted the free office space which the Wafd provided on the premises of al-Yara^{c}. The constraints entailed in such an arrangement were apparently significant enough so that these larger unions with sufficient funds to support their own offices chose to avoid dependence on the Wafd.

The Wafd's weakness in the Cairo area was not due to a lack of effort. As early as April 1943, Muhammad Hasanayn was engaged in activities designed to project

himself forward as the titular head of the Cairo trade union movement.[38] These efforts appear to have been unsuccessful.

One year later, on April 28, 1944, Yusuf al-Mudarrik led a delegation of trade union presidents to meet with Fu'ad Siraj al-Din in order to convince him to aid them in the formation of a Cairo Confederation of Trade Unions (Rabitat al-Niqabat). They suggested that he become the Honorary President of the Confederation and that a worker would be chosen President. This was al-Mudarrik's way of attempting to ensure worker control over the proposed Confederation while simultaneously ensuring the support and protection of the Wafd for an ostensibly illegal organization. At first Siraj al-Din accepted this proposal. Subsequently he changed his mind and insisted that Muhammad Hasanayn would have to be chosen President, "because the President of the Confederation would come into direct contact with government officials and a worker was not suitable for that."[39]

The news of the formation of the Confederation and Muhammad Hasanayn's selection as President were announced simultaneously.[40] Therefore, what had originally been an initiative led by al-Mudarrik, who certainly did not have in mind handing the leadership of the Cairo area trade unions over to the Wafd, was made to look like a Wafd-inspired proposal. However, opposition to Wafd domination

was too strong for this maneuver to succeed. Only four trade union leaders attended the May 14 meeting of the Confederation of Trade Unions. The meeting was packed by about 100 rank-and-file workers affiliated with the Wafd trade union center in the offices of al-Yara^{c}. No independent unions were represented, and several large unions were conspicuously absent.[41] At its July 16 meeting attended by representatives of ninety-eight unions, the Cairo Confederation adopted a constitution which represented a victory for independents favoring greater freedom from Wafd control.[42] At a subsequent meeting Wafd supporters had to resort to rigged elections in order to secure the victory of their candidates.[43] Reports from a wide variety of sources confirm the strong and widespread opposition among the Cairo trade unions to the Wafd's attempt to dominate the Confederation.

While many of the Cairo unions resisted the Wafd, al-Yara^{c} continued to support Muhammad Hasanayn as President of the Confederation and all that this entailed. Nonetheless, a more militant and assertive tone appears in some of the paper's articles around the time of the formation of the Confederation. A call to celebrate May Day was published.[44] The paper also announced its adoption of a new program and goals based on the principle that:

> The worker has a right in life which he must attain. The worker has a position in society which it is necessary that he reach.[45]

The decisive blow to Muhammad Hasanayn's attempt to control the Cairo area trade unions was the ouster of the Wafd from power on October 8, 1944. At this point, trade unions quickly abandoned the Wafd. Many unions and federations who had chosen Fu'ad Siraj al-Din as Honorary President installed King Faruq in his place.[46] In July 1944 T. E. Evans, an official in the British embassy in Cairo, had reported that according to a reliable source close to the trade union movement (probably Muhammad Ibrahim Zayn al-Din), the Wafd controlled trade unions with a membership of 47,000, while politically independent trade unions had a membership of another 47,000, and unions loyal to ᶜAbbas Halim had a combined membership of 3,750. Evans further estimated that 25 percent of those unions loyal to the Wafd would drop their allegiance when the Wafd left office.[47] This appears to be a conservative estimate of the extent to which the Wafd's support in the trade union movement depended on its control of the government.

Announcement of the Cadre for Government Workers[48]

Government employees, who comprised one of the Wafd's strongest bases of support, and whose leadership

was deeply and sincerely committed to the Wafd, quickly abandoned their open organizational affiliation to the Wafd and demonstrated their support for the new government. Muhammad Hafiz, speaking for the 4,000 workers represented by the Congress of Government Workers, expressed the problem in very clear and pragmatic terms:

> We had belonged to a federation headed by Muhammad Hasanayn Pasha, the Wafdist Representative for Bulaq. The meaning of this was that the federation would be attacked, as well as all the unions which belonged to it. And of course we would be attacked with it. So we went out congratulating the government of Ahmad Mahir. . . . In this way we made our [political] ideology one thing and our [economic] demands another.[49]

This assessment of the situation shows that Muhammad Hafiz remained loyal to the Wafd and that he retained his strong nationalist convictions. He was also aware that as a leader of a relatively large trade union federation he could wield significant bargaining power with the new government, which was in great need of popular support, as it was composed entirely of minority parties with no mass base of consequence.

Muhammad Hafiz's task was made easier because Makram ᶜUbayd had split with the Wafd to form a new party, the Wafdist Bloc. As Minister of Finance he had been responsible for dealing with the government employees and he had been one of the more popular Wafd leaders among

workers. ᶜUbayd retained the Ministry of Finance in the new government and was able to use his personal credit with the government employees to facilitate the forging of a new relationship between Ahmad Mahir's government and its employees.

The government workers, in exchange for their professions of loyalty, won significant improvements in their wages and working conditions. On November 23, 1944, the government announced the promulgation of a cadre for its workers, setting down for the first time anywhere in Egypt a clearly defined set of job descriptions, wage rates, promotion schedules and other benefits.

Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Minister of Social Affairs in the new government, abstained from the vote on the cadre in the cabinet, warning that its adoption would create great unrest among the workers in private enterprises, who would soon be striking and engaging in acts of incitement demanding their own cadre.[50] Haykal's prescient words of warning were overruled by the government's need to win popularity.

The government received, in exchange for the cadre, a tumultuous display of public support. On December 1, 1944, over 30,000 government workers led by Muhammad Hafiz demonstrated praising the King, Ahmad Mahir and Makram ᶜUbayd and celebrating the announcement of the

cadre.[51] To capitalize on its success in winning the support of its employees, the government followed the issuance of the cadre by granting an immediate increase in the minimum wage of government employees to thirty piastres per day, an increasing cost-of-living allowance, and other fringe benefits.[52] These measures were necessary because the cadre had only been approved in principle and was not immediately implemented.

The success of the government workers in using their organized strength to further their economic objectives represents a shift in the balance of power in the relationship between workers and prospective patrons. Before 1942 the Wafd was able to retain substantial strength in the trade union movement based mainly on promises of support for workers' economic demands. In 1942 it was compelled, for the first time, to make good its promises. By 1944, the government workers realized that their political support could be traded for material benefits. Since they were organized in a large and viable federation which would not collapse if the Wafd withdrew its support from them (as long as the new government also refrained from enforcing the law prohibiting their unionization), they were able to exchange their support for major economic gains. The government workers had learned to play the patron-client game to their own

advantage. This was the mildest form which trade union independence from nonworker political parties and figures assumed towards the end of World War II.

ᶜAbbas Halim Returns to the Trade Union Movement

When ᶜAbbas Halim attempted to renew his trade union activities, he also found that his relations with prospective clients would have to be based on a different balance of forces than the one which prevailed before the war. The Prince was released from internment in June 1944 on condition that he promise to have no contact with labor organizations.[53] However, the Cairo city police had already reported that in January 1944, when ᶜAbbas Halim had been permitted to visit Cairo in order to attend the funeral of a relative, he had met with representatives of the Egyptian General Omnibus Company union and told them that as soon as there was a change in government he would reorganize a Labor Party.[54] In an interview which the Egyptian historian Ra'uf ᶜAbbas conducted with ᶜAbbas Halim before his death, the Prince admitted that his efforts to reestablish a Labor Party in 1944 were directed by King Faruq with the express purpose of drawing the loyalty of the working class away from the Wafd.[55] As soon as the Wafd government fell, ᶜAbbas Halim announced the reformation of his Labor Party

and the resumption of its activities.

Some trade union leaders seized on the Prince's reappearance and quickly transferred their loyalties from the Wafd to him. The second issue of al-Yara^{c} which appeared after the dismissal of the Wafd government featured a lead article boldly proclaiming the political independence of the workers' movement. Another article in the same issue reported that workers had sent greetings to ^{c}Abbas Halim in the hospital wishing him a speedy recovery from his illness.[56] Salah Abu Khayr, the new editor of al-Yara^{c} and the brother of the former editor who remained loyal to the Wafd, announced his support for the Labor Party.[57] By the end of 1944, al-Yara^{c} had decisively switched its loyalties and was supporting ^{c}Abbas Halim wholeheartedly. However, this support was not as deferential as similar prewar expressions of loyalty had been. It is impossible to judge the degree of sincerity or the ultimate intention (which may have been simply anti-Wafd) of these words, but in calling on workers to nominate and support their own candidates for the forthcoming elections to the House of Representatives, Salah Abu Khayr was drawing the logical conclusion of the prewar struggles for independence of trade unions and urging workers to take one more step forward in defining and representing their own interests:

> Workers today do not need Representatives who are not workers. . . . The time has passed when workers were the donkeys carrying the candidate to the House of Representatives. This is your day. And this is your Parliament. Unite your ranks and agree on who among you will represent you and raise your heads and defend your interests. Rally round your candidates. . . . The workers must win. And the workers' voice must ring out in Parliament.[58]

ᶜAbbas Halim himself, however, did not envision quite so militant and activist a role for the Labor Party. In a featured interview on the front page of al-Yaraᶜ he stated:

> The Labor Party may resume its activity at an appropriate time. Its existence does not now aim at competing with other parties for seats in the government. Rather it is actually helping them to realize their social, cultural and economic goals.[59]

The Prince seems to have been completely out of touch with his Labor Party. This allowed the concept of such a party and the very minimal organizational apparatus it possessed to become matters of dispute between ᶜAbbas Halim's wealthy lieutenants and those trade union leaders who were attempting to use the Prince's protection in order to advance their own agenda. Although the Prince's interview in al-Yaraᶜ only suggested that the Labor Party might resume its activities, another article in the very same issue of the paper reported Mazhar Saᶜid, Director General of the Labor Party, announcing that the party had already resumed its activities some months

previously and that he was its candidate for Representative for the district of ᶜAyyat, an agricultural area south of Cairo. Mahmud Saᶜd, General Secretary of the Labor Party, was running for Representative for the district of Rud al-Faraj, a workers' district north of Cairo.[60] Mazhar Saᶜid and Mahmud Saᶜd were certainly not workers and had no credentials in the labor movement other than their personal association with ᶜAbbas Halim. Their enthusiasm for workers' representation in the Parliament seems to have been due to nothing more than the hope for personal gain. Neither one was elected to office.

On the other hand, some of the trade unionists who associated themselves with the Labor Party seem to have been trying to use the royal protection, which ᶜAbbas Halim's name offered, to shield activities and opinions which were quite different than those the Prince personally endorsed. Sayyid Qandil began to publish regular interviews with ᶜAbbas Halim in al-Yaraᶜ and to serve as his mouthpiece in the paper.[61] At the same time, he continued to advocate his social democratic political views. On one occasion he went so far as to announce, "We in Egypt, as Egyptian workers, believe in the call 'Workers of the world unite!'"[62] He went on to say that the great powers now supported this call for unity even

though Karl Marx had been persecuted in his lifetime. Sayyid Qandil made clear that his brand of socialism was gradualist and anticommunist.[63]

In addition to Sayyid Qandil, other trade union leaders who had a long history of relations with ᶜAbbas Halim, such as Muhammad Hasan ᶜAmarah, Kamil ᶜIzz al-Din and Labib Tadrus, continued to maintain a loose association with the Labor Party. ᶜAbd al-Hamid Sulayman, President of the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company union, announced his support for the Labor Party.[64] This cannot be taken as an indication of worker sentiment since he was widely viewed as a tool of the Misr Company management[65] and was wildly erratic in his political stands. Muhammad Hamdi, the former director of the Wafd's labor affairs in Tanta appears to have switched his loyalties to the Labor Party.[66] It is not clear to what extent the unions followed his lead. None of these figures played a major role in the postwar labor movement.

The Labor Party did not carry out regular activities, leaving the trade union leaders free to do as they pleased in any case. During the upsurge of the workers' movement in June 1946, it was apparently fairly easy for a number of communist and other left wing trade unionists to join the party with the intention of subverting it. With the support of these forces, Sayyid Qandil and Muhammad

Hasan ᶜAmarah led a revolt against the leadership of ᶜAbbas Halim and his lieutenants Mazhar Saᶜid and Mahmud Saᶜd.[67] The quick success of this revolt led to the establishment of a Socialist Labor Party. Although this party was short lived and never played a significant role in the labor movement, the willingness of most of the trade union leaders to break with ᶜAbbas Halim indicates the conditional character of their loyalties in the postwar period. Trade union leaders who had historically been connected to ᶜAbbas Halim were attempting to use him to protect their activities and achieve their demands in the same way that the government workers used their ability to shift political allegiance to obtain their cadre.

After the split, the Labor Party was reorganized on October 17, 1946, now openly announcing that its activities were in response to a royal appeal.[68] The major activity of the party after its reorganization was the dissemination of promonarchist and anticommunist sentiment. Fifteen issues of its official organ al-ᶜAmal (Labor) published irregularly between September 1946 and May 1947 show little evidence of involvement in working class activity of any significance. From this point on, ᶜAbbas Halim and his lieutenants had only a small, tentative and conditional base of support in the workers'

movement, and the Labor Party was "politically of minor importance."[69]

British Attempts to Coopt the Labor Movement

In the middle of World War II the British attempted, for the first time, to win Egyptian trade unions to their own conception of the appropriate goals and structure for a labor movement. In late 1943 or early 1944, the British Embassy in Cairo began to explore the possibility of using the Egyptian trade union movement as a way of spreading pro-British propaganda.[70] Money from the British Ministry of Information in London was funneled to Egyptian trade unions through the Publicity Section of the Cairo Embassy.[71] Robert Peers, who arrived in Cairo in early 1944 to serve as Labour Advisor to the Minister Resident in the Middle East, submitted a memorandum in which he expressed his concern about the possibility of the British Embassy being accused of "using bribes to influence the policy and attitudes of Egyptian trade unions."[72]

The conduit for British money and influence in the Egyptian trade union movement was Muhammad Ibrahim Zayn al-Din, who was reported by Lord Killearn to be "in close and friendly relations with the Publicity Section and with the Oriental Secretariat of this Embassy."[73] In December

1943 Zayn al-Din was contacted by Omer Bécu, the head of the Belgian seamen's union, with the objective of recruiting his Cairo Chauffeur's Union and other unions to membership in the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITWF). Bécu proposed that Zayn al-Din make a tour of Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Iran for the ITWF and that the International Federation of Trade unions headquartered in London would finance this trip. Bécu told the British Embassy in Cairo that the Ministry of Labour in London was interested in effecting the affiliation of Middle Eastern trade unions with these international organizations and that the Ministry of Labour "are in fact prepared to finance the activities of Mohamed Ibrahim Zein el-Din."[74]

It is unclear who ultimately financed Zayn al-Din's trip. From March 9 to April 7, 1944, he did visit Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq on behalf of the ITWF. In undertaking this trip Zayn al-Din acted as a direct agent of the British. Lord Killearn reported to London that:

> His Majesty's representatives in Baghdad and Beirut and the High Commissioner for Palestine were . . . informed confidentially that Zein el-Din was employed by this Embassy for propaganda among trade unions in Egypt and that he had been instructed to call on the British Public Relations Officers in these countries and to accept any local guidance.[75]

On his return to Cairo, Zayn al-Din submitted to the British Embassy a "Report on Trade Unionism in the Middle East"[76] which gave detailed descriptions of the trade union movement in the countries he had visited and in Egypt. In October 1945, Zayn al-Din attended the founding convention of the World Federation of Trade Unions in Paris. His expenses were paid by the British, and on his return he submitted a report to the Embassy in Cairo.[77] Zayn al-Din also supplied the British with information about the strikes and nationalist activities of trade unions during the upsurge in the workers' and nationalist movements of 1946.[78]

In June 1946, in the midst of a fierce strike of textile workers in Shubra al-Khaymah who were calling desperately for support from other unions, Zayn al-Din left Egypt at the head of a delegation of trade unionists who were travelling to Great Britain to study British trade union methods and principles. The proposal for this mission was developed by M. T. Audsley shortly after he assumed the post of Labour Counsellor in the British Embassy in Cairo in cooperation with Radi Abu Sayf Radi, Director of the Egyptian Labor Administration in the Ministry of Social Affairs.[79] Audsley saw this mission as part of his plan to promote a nonpolitical anticommunist trade union movement in Egypt similar to the British

Trades Union Congress. During the trip to Great Britain, Zayn al-Din received thirty clothing ration coupons as payment for his services.[80] On his return to Cairo, he submitted a confidential report on the results of the trip, the contents of which were withheld from the Egyptian government.[81]

Despite his close relationship with the British Embassy and his access to funds with which to buy the support of Egyptian trade unions, Zayn al-Din was never able to win the leadership of any significant sections of the Egyptian trade union movement. This was in some measure due to the Egyptian government's failure to give sufficient support to Audsley's proposals designed to promote a nonpolitical trade union movement. The wealthy landowners and industrialists who ran the governments of Egypt were too frightened of any form of working class organization to give the kind of encouragement which Audsley insisted was necessary for his vision to succeed. Audsley complained bitterly to London about the

> lack of vision on the part of the Egyptian government concerning the evolution of trade unionism in this country. . . . They do not want to face the demand for greater freedom of association.[82]

The Egyptian government refused to appoint Muhammad Ibrahim Zayn al-Din as an official delegate to the World Federation of Trade Unions Congress.[83] It only agreed

to allow Zayn al-Din and Fathi Kamil to attend the founding conference of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in London in 1949 after strong pressure from both the United States and Great Britain.[84]

It was not only lack of cooperation from the Egyptian government which prevented the realization of Audsley's program. Few industrial enterprises operating in Egypt were financially secure enough to enable them to reach agreements with trade unions and still remain profitable. Only relatively large and well-capitalized enterprises could afford to grant significant concessions to their workers. The majority of undercapitalized and internationally uncompetitive Egyptian industries simply could not afford to conciliate with trade unions. The nonpolitical bread-and-butter trade unionism which Audsley sought to promote through Zayn al-Din and through his influence with the Egyptian government flourished in only one trade union of importance in Egypt, the Eastern Tobacco Company union led by Fathi Kamil.[85]

Eastern Tobacco was created by the British American Tobacco Company, which bought up many of the smaller Greek and Armenian tobacco enterprises and consolidated them under its ownership in 1920. Joseph Matossian, the largest of the local producers, concluded an agreement with the British American Tobacco Company which made him

a partner in its operations. By 1936, Eastern controlled 75 percent of the Egyptian cigarette and tobacco market. Because its profits were secure by virtue of its dominant position in the Egyptian market as well as significant exports, Eastern was able to adopt a conciliatory and cooperative attitude towards its union, a very rare posture for any company in Egypt.

Because of the prior history of trade union struggles in the tobacco industry, there was a relatively high standard of working conditions at Eastern before the formation of Fathi Kamil's union. An eight-hour day had been in effect since the start of the company's operations. The original union of cigarette workers carried on only weak and sporadic activities in the years 1922 to 1927 before ceasing to exist entirely. In the 1930s there was some form of trade union organization in the Eastern plant. It appears that there were separate unions in several individual departments of the plant,[86] although it is unclear how many of the twenty-two departments of Eastern's operations were unionized.

When Fathi Kamil began to work at Eastern in 1939, he had already been involved in discussions about trade unionism with Hasan ᶜAmarah, Sayyid Qandil and others in their circle. He had a primary education certificate and some secondary education. Before coming to work at

Eastern he had been employed as a low-level bureaucrat in the Health Department, working in provincial posts in the years 1930 to 1938. His first job at Eastern was as a white-collar assistant clerk earning twenty-two piastres a day, a fairly high wage for that period.

Fathi Kamil, urged on by Isma^{c}il Sayyid Salamah, an assistant foreman at Eastern who had been a member of the first cigarette workers' union in Egypt, proposed to the Eastern management that all of the company's 3,500 workers at the Giza plant should be united into one union. This was accomplished in October 1943. The Eastern Tobacco Company Workers' Union was established, as previously mentioned, in opposition to the Wafd's attempts to absorb the Eastern workers into a previously existing Wafd-dominated union.

The company did not resist the formation of the union. On the contrary, shortly after its formation workers were granted a 20 percent wage increase. As a result, over 80 percent of the workers joined the union. Within a few years after the formation of the union, Eastern workers were enjoying some of the best working conditions available in Egypt. Annual vacations of fifteen to forty-five days per year (depending on seniority), free medical care for workers and their families, sports teams, a musical troupe and other

social benefits were provided by the company. In 1946 Eastern established a cafeteria for workers, offering lunches costing fifteen millimes for adults and ten millimes for minors. (Approximately 10 percent of the workers were under eighteen, a very low percentage compared to other industrial establishments.) Union dues of five piastres a month were collected by a checkoff system. The union used its funds to establish a consumer cooperative for its members and a free night school to teach literacy. As late as 1955, social benefits comparable to those provided to Eastern workers were available at only four other industrial enterprises in all of Egypt.[87] M. T. Audsley considered Eastern to be a model enterprise with an exemplary standard of industrial relations.[88]

Eastern's labor relations strategy was highly successful and resulted in nearly strike-free operations throughout the period 1943-54. There were two brief work stoppages in April and June 1948. These were not full-scale strikes. They were organized by a small faction of workers opposed to the union leadership. The union itself opposed the work stoppages. Following the second stoppage, the company screened all its workers before resuming operations. The union was also given added responsibilities in order to enhance its prestige, a clear indication

that the company had full confidence in the union leadership.[89]

Fathi Kamil, as a relatively well-educated white-collar employee, was an ideal partner for the Eastern Company's labor strategy. Kamil was strongly committed to nonpolitical trade unionism, a commitment which was only strengthened as Eastern granted additional fringe benefits to its workers. He also shared the corporatist view of social classes common to the Wafd and ᶜAbbas Halim and saw the trade union movement, as they did, as one of the manifestations of Egyptian national revival. In Kamil's view trade unions were:

> A tool of guidance and direction to ensure good relations between workers and employers and the advancement of industry and the increasing of production. . . . We believe that we are performing a duty based on the highest principles of nationalism and that is realizing the greatest solidarity between the various classes so that the nation and all its sons can achieve good fortune under the shadow of our great King Faruq I, may God protect him.[90]

Since he was the leader of the largest union in metropolitan Cairo, it is not surprising that Fathi Kamil was wooed by many of the contending political forces attempting to play a role in the Egyptian labor movement--the British, the Egyptian government and ᶜAbbas Halim. In 1946 Fathi Kamil was a member of the trade union delegation which visited England. While he was away,

ᶜAbbas Halim, probably as an attempt to reinforce his position within the Labor Party from which many of the trade union leaders had just split, announced that Kamil had joined his party. The Egyptian government sought to win Kamil's support by appointing him to membership in the largely symbolic Supreme Advisory Council for Labor. It appears that Fathi Kamil, while flirting with all these forces, was able to maintain his independence from them all. This was possible because the Eastern union was a large, well organized, financially independent organization which was not dependent on any outside factor for its ability to secure benefits for its members. Despite Fathi Kamil's affinity with the corporatist view of trade unionism shared by the Wafd and ᶜAbbas Halim, he was able to keep his union relatively independent from domination by outside forces.

When the Wafd returned to power on February 4, 1942, its prospects for reasserting control over the Egyptian workers' movement appeared extremely good. Between September 1942 and October 1944 the Wafd succeeded in extending its influence over much of the Egyptian trade union movement. As unions gained strength and experience, they became increasingly more resistant to Wafd domination, although workers generally continued to support the

Wafd as Egypt's nationalist party. Many trade unionists were aware of the dangers of allowing their unions to be dominated by the Wafd, although in practice most unions were not strong enough to maintain their independence when the Wafd commanded the apparatus of the state in addition to its party machinery. Only the Cairo trade unions had enough strength to resist Wafd attempts to dominate them. The rapid shift in the loyalties of many trade unionists away from the Wafd after it was removed from power is an indication that these trade unionists were now using the Wafd to attain their own objectives rather than being used by the Wafd. After October 1944, the Wafd was never again able to play a major organizational role in the Egyptian trade union movement. Even when it returned to power for the last time in 1950, the Wafd was unable to restore the relationship to the trade union movement which it established during 1942-44.[91]

Prince ᶜAbbas Halim also lost most of his influence in the trade union movement at the end of the war. Although some trade unionists continued to attempt to use him to protect their activities, the Prince and his Labor Party were widely viewed as agents of an increasingly unpopular King.

The British attempts to promote a nonpolitical bread-and-butter trade union movement after World War II

were stillborn. The succession of minority governments from 1944 to 1950 refused to accept Audsley's arguments that his suggestions for organizing the Egyptian labor movement would lead to greater political and economic stability. Only a small number of firms were willing and able to institutionalize relations with their unions and provide the wages and benefits which Audsley's vision required for its success. Among trade union leaders and rank-and-file workers, open cooperation with Great Britain was nearly unanimously rejected. The upsurge of the Egyptian national movement in the postwar period made such cooperation, regardless of its potential benefits, nearly impossible. Muhammad Ibrahim Zayn al-Din had very little personal influence in the postwar workers' movement. Only the Eastern Tobacco Company union consciously adopted the British model of trade unionism.

The weakening of the influence of the Wafd and ᶜAbbas Halim and the failure of the British model of trade unionism are all negative phenomena indicating that the Egyptian workers' movement was passing beyond the stage of patron-client trade unionism, which had been the dominant mode of association in the prewar period. The dramatic increase in the number of unions, the growth in the size of the working class, the upsurge in the nationalist movement in the postwar years and the

conscious assimilation of the accumulated political lessons of the prewar years by trade union leaders all contributed to the emergence of a much stronger and politically independent trade union movement after World War II.

Notes to Chapter IV

[1]The extent to which the Wafd leadership was aware of the terms of the British ultimatum to King Faruq is a topic of fierce debate within the Egyptian historical community. It is difficult to imagine that the Wafd leadership was not fairly well informed of the circumstances in which they were returned to power. For an account of this incident favorable to the Wafd see Muhammad Anis, *Arbaᶜah Fibrayir 1942 fi tarikh Misr al-siyasi* (Beirut, 1972).

[2]Radi, *Adwa' jadidah*, is the strongest proponent of this perspective. It is also implied more subtly in Abdel Raouf Abou Alam, *The Labor Movement in Egypt* (Washington, D.C., 1955). The author served as Labor and Social Attaché in the Egyptian Embassy in Washington and is a member of a prominent Wafdist family.

[3]A good example of this view is the report of the Fitzgerald Commission, which was formed to investigate labor disturbances in Nigerian coal mines in 1949. The Commission's report contains the following remarkable summary of the origins of the Nigerian trade union movement:

> "Unlike the case in Britain, Trade Unionism in Nigeria was not of native growth. It was deliberately planted on the people by the British administration as part of the industrial system. . . . Most of the things which are now regarded as the inalienable rights of workers have only been gained after a century of struggle by their fellow workers in the United Kingdom. The Nigerian worker should therefore consider himself fortunate that he is not faced with a similar struggle and that those hard won rights are available to him today if he chooses to act with reason" (Great Britain, Colonial Office, "Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Disorders in the Eastern Provinces of Nigeria, November 1949" [Colonial No. 256, 1950], p. 13).

[4]"Mudhakkirat al-Hajj Muhammad Hafiz, zaᶜim ᶜummal al-hukumah," quoted in Radi, p. 271.

[5]FO 141/660/357/7/37.

[6]*al-Balagh*, February 7, 1942.

[7]Ibid., February 18, 1942.

[8]Radi, p. 110.

[9]al-Ahram, March 24, 1942; al-Muqattam, March 27, 1942; al-Balagh, March 24, 1942.

[10]Ibid.

[11]FO 371/41380/J2671 (1944).

[12]Shubra, April 30, 1942; al-Yara^{c}, April 24, 1943.

[13]"Bref apercu sur la situation syndicale égyptienne" (TUC Archives, London).

[14]al-Yara^{c}, October 22, 1942.

[15]Radi, p. 108.

[16]al-Yara^{c}, February 4, 1943.

[17]FO 371/41379/J1562 (1944).

[18]FO 371/41380/J2671 (1944).

[19]al-Yara^{c}, June 22, 1942.

[20]Ibid., August 3, 1942.

[21]Ibid., September 21, 28, October 1, 1942.

[22]Ibid., November 19, December 12, 1942; January 21, 1943.

[23]Ibid., February 4, 1943.

[24]Ibid., March 11, 1943.

[25]Ibid., April 10, 17, 1943.

[26]Ibid., May 2, 1943.

[27]Ibid., December 6, 1943.

[28]Ibid., December 19, 1943; March 2, 9, June 10, 19, 26, July 10, 31, August 21, September 25, 1944.

[29]Ibid., July 3, 1944.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., June 10, 1943.

[32]Ibid., September 7, 1943.

[33]Ibid., September 7, 13, 1943.

[34]Ibid., September 13, 1943.

[35]Ibid., August 23, 1943.

[36]Fathi Kamil's views on the importance of maintaining the political independence of trade unions were stated to me several times in a series of personal interviews. The results of the first union elections at Eastern Tobacco are given in the union's publication Niqabatuka fi ᶜashar sanawat (Cairo, 1953), p. 5.

[37]al-Yaraᶜ, April 24, 1943.

[38]al-Mugattam, April 12, 1943.

[39]Mudarrik, TU, March 15, 1969.

[40]al-Yaraᶜ, May 6, 1944.

[41]FO 371/41319/J3702 (1944).

[42]FO 371/41318/J2666 (1944).

[43]FO 371/41318/J3024; FO 371/41318/J3099 (1944).

[44]al-Yaraᶜ, May 13, 1944.

[45]Ibid., May 20, 1944.

[46]FO 371/41319/J3702 (1944).

[47]FO 371/41380/J2671 (1944).

[48]The Arabicized word kadir refers to a standardized schedule of job descriptions, pay scales, promotion schedules and benefits. Following the practice of British companies operating in Egypt, I have rendered this into English as cadre.

[49]"Mudhakkirat al-Hajj Muhammad Hafiz . . . ," quoted in Radi, p. 277.

[50]Muhammad Husayn Haykal, Mudhakkirat fi al-siyasah al-Misriyah, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1951), 2:297.

[51]al-Muqattam, December 2, 1944.

[52]Radi, pp. 166-69.

[53]FO 371/41317/J2215 (1944).

[54]FO 371/41316/J588 (1944).

[55]ᶜAbbas, p. 214.

[56]al-Yaraᶜ, October 23, 1944.

[57]Ibid., December 18, 1944.

[58]Ibid., December 11, 1944.

[59]Ibid., December 18, 1944.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Ibid., January 8, 16, 1945.

[62]Ibid., September 23, 1945.

[63]Ibid., July 9, 1945.

[64]Ibid., December 11, 1944.

[65]FO 371/41380/J2671 (1944).

[66]al-Yaraᶜ, March 16, 1945.

[67]"ᶜAridah marfuᶜah min zuᶜama' al-ᶜummal al-aᶜda' bi-Hizb al-ᶜUmmal al-Misri ila ᶜAbbas Halim," reprinted in ᶜAbbas, pp. 331-34.

[68]al-ᶜAmal, November 7, 1946.

[69]FO 371/63046/J645 (1946).

[70]FO 371/41379/J1695 (1944).

[71]FO 371/41379/J790 (1944).

[72]Ibid.

[73]FO 371/41379/J369 (1944).

[74]Ibid.

[75]FO 371/41379/J1704 (1944).

[76]FO 371/41380/J2454 (1944).

[77]FO 371/53368/J146 (1946).

[78]FO 371/53327/J340; FO 371/53283/J613; FO 371/53368/J1447 (1946).

[79]FO 141/1067/1357/3/45. Audsley had been on the staff of the Ministry of Labour and National Service for thirty years prior to his arrival in Cairo and was strongly committed to British-style liberal trade unionism.

[80]FO 371/53368/J3391 (1946).

[81]FO 371/53368/J4992 (1946).

[82]FO 371/80606/JE2181/1 (1950).

[83]FO 371/45978/J3264 (1945).

[84]FO 371/80606/JE2181/2 (1950).

[85]The following biographical information about Fathi Kamil and the Eastern Tobacco Company is based mainly on personal interviews with Fathi Kamil on November 29, December 3, 1979; October 13, 28, December 20, 1980; and February 14, 21, 1981 unless otherwise noted.

[86]Their existence is noted in al-Jihad, May 1, 1935.

[87]Orphy, p. 11.

[88]FO 371/73474/J3567 (1949).

[89]Ibid.

[90]Mu'tamar al-Niqabiyin, June 3-10, 1950.

[91]FO 371/80606/JE2181/5 (1950).

CLASS CONFLICT AND NATIONAL STRUGGLE: LABOR AND POLITICS IN EGYPT, 1936-1954

VOLUME II

by
Joel Beinin

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CHAPTER V

COMMUNISM AND THE EGYPTIAN WORKERS' MOVEMENT

The resurgence of the Egyptian communist movement during and after World War II and its contribution to the Egyptian labor movement should be situated in the context of broad international trends in order to be correctly assessed. The postwar period was one of widespread nationalist, labor and socialist mobilization. In the third world, these elements often combined, despite the ideological unclarity which frequently resulted. The Nigerian general strike of 1945, the Dakar-Niger railway strike of 1947-48 and the Sudanese railway strike of 1947 are only a few of the more notable instances of this phenomenon in close geographical proximity to Egypt.

Just as after World War I, there was a feeling that the end of the war provided an opportunity to present accumulated demands and the possibility of a new international alignment of political forces. The strength of socialism in the third world in general and in Egypt in particular was in no small measure due to the impressive display of the military capacity and heroism of the Soviet Union during the war. Many Egyptians also felt a

strong affinity for the Chinese revolutionary movement because they saw China as a country with very similar problems as Egypt--a semicolonial, mainly peasant land struggling for national liberation and economic and social progress.

British Colonial and Foreign Office officials, proponents of the modernization theory perspective, and right wing or centrist nationalist elements in the underdeveloped countries all tend to understate the role of communists or communist-influenced elements in the labor movements of the third world during this period. Alternatively, they argue that the presence of communists is an unnatural and parasitical phenomenon which is mainly the result of "agitators" stirring up otherwise passive workers and exploiting the situation. I argue, in contrast, that the growth of the communist movement in Egypt is the result of both the political failure of the Wafd, whose central leadership became increasingly more conservative after the war, to lead the struggle for full Egyptian national independence and the growth of an industrial proletariat, particularly in the textile industry, which was receptive to communist ideas and methods of struggle because they best represented the aspirations and needs of these workers. The failure of the Wafd to maintain hegemony over the Egyptian labor

movement is comparable to developments in many third world countries where similar forces were at work in the postwar period.

Reestablishment of the Egyptian Communist Movement[1]

Rif^{c}at al-Sa^{c}id has argued that there is a historical continuity between the first Communist Party of Egypt and the resurgence of the communist movement during World War II.[2] This argument can only be sustained on the basis of the activities of relatively isolated individuals and repeated abortive attempts to reorganize a communist party. For all practical purposes, communism was temporarily eliminated as a political force in Egypt following the defeat of the Alexandria workers' uprising in 1924. There was no communist presence in the Egyptian workers' movement during the late 1920s and 1930s except for some personal contacts with former party members maintained by Yusuf al-Mudarrik and Sayyid Qandil.

In the mid 1930s the Egyptian petty bourgeoisie became politically radicalized as a result of Egypt's inability to free itself from British domination, disillusionment with the Wafd, and especially the unsatisfactory treaty of 1936 which it had negotiated with Great Britain, and disappointment with the total failure of the formal structures of liberal democracy in Egypt to

achieve anything substantive. In the decade of rising fascism and German military power, young anti-British Egyptians were attracted to openly fascist or fascist-influenced political movements. Young Egypt, the Wafd's Blue Shirts and the Society of Muslim Brothers, all of which employed fascist-style organizational methods and elements of fascist ideology, flourished in the late 1930s. Pro-German sentiment, if only as an expression of hatred for Great Britain, was widespread. Radicalization towards the left also occurred during this period, leading to the revival of the communist movement in Egypt. For Egyptian Jews, any association with pro-German, fascist-influenced or Islamic revivalist political currents was out of the question. Consequently, they played a disproportionately large role in the revival of the Egyptian communist movement.[3] The first steps in the reorganization of the Egyptian communist movement were taken by foreigners residing in Egypt, especially anti-fascist Italians and Greeks. Egyptian Jews were a key force in Egyptianizing this movement and in linking communist intellectuals with the Egyptian workers' movement.

In 1934 or 1935 a group of mainly foreign intellectuals led by a Swiss, Paul Jacot des Combes, established the Federation of Peace Partisans (Ittihad Ansar al-Salam),

an antifascist democratic organization.[4] Among the members of this organization were three Egyptian Jews, Ahmad Sadiq Sa^{c}d, Raymond Douek and Yusuf Darwish.[5] Darwish was a lawyer who had been educated in France in the early 1930s where he first came into contact with Marxism. Douek and Sa^{c}d were then students at Cairo University. Following the outbreak of World War II, the Federation of Peace Partisans was dissolved. A new organization, whose membership was also largely foreign, La groupe d'études (Jama^{c}at al-Buhuth), took its place.[6] In the course of their studies and discussions as members of this organization, Sa^{c}d, Douek and Darwish resolved to find a way to link themselves to the struggles of the Egyptian masses.[7]

In 1940 they met a group of secondary school students who were conducting literacy classes in the Sabtiyah quarter of Cairo. Following their example the three established the Youth Association for Popular Culture (Jama^{c}at al-Shabab lil-Thaqafah al-Sha^{c}biyah).[9] This Association established two schools in the Bulaq quarter of Cairo (where Yusuf Darwish lived) and a school in Mit ^{c}Uqbah near Imbabah. Yusuf Darwish served as the director of these schools, each of which had over 100 pupils. The Association also made contact with similar schools in Tanta, Abu Sir and al-Malaq near Bani Suwayf.[10]

During this period the trio made their first contact with Egyptian workers. Yusuf al-Mudarrik kept the books for a blacksmith's shop owned by Douek's brother. Douek met al-Mudarrik through his brother in 1939 or 1940 and then introduced him to Darwish.[11] By this time Yusuf Darwish was beginning to assume primary responsibility for organizing among workers. Douek and Sa^{c}d concentrated their political activity among intellectuals.

Through al-Mudarrik, Darwish met Mahmud al-^{c}Askari and the leadership of the Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers' Union. In 1942 he became the union's lawyer.[12] By the end of the war, Darwish was serving as legal counsel for over twenty trade unions.[13] He also aided in the formation of several new unions including the Shubra al-Khaymah Steamboat Workers' Union and the Cairo Pharmaceutical Warehouse Workers' Union.[14] As a result of his legal activities, Darwish became widely known to the leadership of the Cairo trade union movement. A memorandum which he submitted to the government concerning the Law of Individual Contracts (Law 41 of 1944) was endorsed by over sixty unions.[15] His pamphlet on work accidents explaining the 1936 accident compensation law was popular among trade unionists.[16] In February 1945 Darwish spoke at a conference of cafe, restaurant and sweetshop workers which was convened to discuss the

recent firings of large numbers of workers. As the lawyer for one of the unions participating in this conference (it is not clear which one), Darwish explained the laws relevant to the problem. Yusuf al-Mudarrik also addressed the conference, and his speech was well received. Rif'at Hasib, President of the Public Establishments Workers' Union was the initiator of this conference, which was held in his union's headquarters.[17]

Early in 1945, Darwish, Sa^{c}d and Douek established a secret Marxist cell. They were joined by another Egyptian intellectual, Ahmad Rushdi Salih, who was active with them in the Committee for the Dissemination of Modern Culture (Lajnat Nashr al-Thaqafah al-Hadithah), and by Yusuf al-Mudarrik and Mahmud al-^{c}Askari, who assumed responsibility for conducting political activities among workers.[18] This group had no name at this time. Soon it became known as New Dawn (al-Fajr al-Jadid) after the name of the semimonthly (later weekly) magazine which the intellectuals' section began to publish on May 16, 1945. The workers' section of the group signed its leaflets "Workers' Vanguard" (Tali^{c}at al-^{c}Ummal). New Dawn did not formally constitute itself as a preparty communist formation until September 1946, when it recruited additional members and adopted the name the Popular Vanguard for Liberation (al-Tali^{c}ah al-Sha^{c}biyah lil-Tahrir).

The second major tendency in the Egyptian communist movement has its origins in the Democratic Federation (al-Ittihad al-Dimuqrati), an association of intellectuals established in late 1938 or early 1939. Some of its leaders had been members of the Federation of Peace Partisans but decided to establish a new organization committed to establishing more contact with Egyptians.[19] The most prominent leaders of the Democratic Federation were three Egyptian Jews, Henri Curiel, Hillel Schwartz and Marcel Israel. Between 1940 and 1942, the Democratic Federation split into what eventually became three rival communist organizations: People's Liberation (Tahrir al-Sha^{c}b) led by Marcel Israel, Iskra led by Hillel Schwartz and the Egyptian Movement for National Liberation (EMNL--al-Harakah al-Misriyah lil-Tahrir al-Watani) led by Henri Curiel.[20] People's Liberation and Iskra were composed almost exclusively of intellectuals. Only the EMNL succeeded in establishing contact with and recruiting workers. In 1945 and 1946 Iskra and the EMNL often co-operated in working class organizing, a practice which laid the basis for their eventual fusion in 1947 into the Democratic Movement for National Liberation (DMNL--al-Harakah al-Dimuqratiyah lil-Tahrir al-Watani).

In early 1942, before the actual formation of the EMNL, Henri Curiel began to publish a weekly magazine,

Hurriyat al-Shu^{c}ub (Peoples' Freedom). By April the paper featured a regular "Workers' Affairs" page. This was expanded to two pages in May. The appearance of this feature shows the intention to become involved in the workers' movement, but the reports on trade union activity which it contained reflect an even greater distance from the day-to-day struggles than is apparent in the Wafd's al-Yara^{c} of the same period. Many of the articles were theoretical or exhortatory in character. There are some exceptions to this general characterization. Sayyid Qandil wrote regularly in Hurriyat al-Shu^{c}ub in 1942, and the magazine mentions the activities of a Federation of Company (i.e., private sector as opposed to government) Workers' Unions led by Hafiz ^{c}Abd Rabuh.[21] However, there is nothing in the magazine which gives the impression that Curiel or others around the paper were in regular contact with a particular group of workers or trade unions at this time.

In January 1943 the EMNL was formally established after the conclusion of a cadres' school held on the agricultural estate of Henri Curiel's father. Among the twenty-five students were three or four air force mechanics including Sayyid Sulayman Rifa^{c}i, who later became one of the leaders of the EMNL's workers' section.[22] These were the first worker recruits to the EMNL.

Effects of the Split in the Communist Movement

The factional contention between the EMNL (and later the DMNL) and New Dawn dominates the entire history of the postwar communist movement in Egypt. Other smaller organizations also participated in the sectarian disputes of this period, but none of them played a significant role within the workers' movement. The struggle between the EMNL and New Dawn, on the other hand, had significant repercussions within the workers' movement as early as 1944.[23]

Trade union leaders associated with both the future New Dawn group as well as those linked to the EMNL were active in the formation of the Congress of Private Sector Trade Unions (CPSTU--Mu'tamar Niqabat al-Sharikat wa-al-Mu'assasat al-Ahliyah). The CPSTU was established in the course of meetings convened on December 9 and 16, 1944, shortly after the announcement that a cadre for government workers was to be promulgated. Its central demand was the application of the government workers' cadre to employees of companies in the private sector.[24] Muhammad ʿAbd al-Halim, President of the Misr Press Workers' Union, was the primary initiator of the CPSTU, and he was chosen as its President. Other trade unions in the original initiating group were the Heliopolis Tramway Company union (President, Husayn Ibrahim), the Cairo

Water Company union (President, Sayyid Yasin), and the Cairo Electric Light Company union (President, Hafiz ᶜAbd al-Rabuh).[25] These unions were joined by three others where a considerable Marxist presence was already well established at the leadership level: the Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers' Union (represented by its General Secretary Mahmud al-ᶜAskari and Sergeant-at-Arms Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman), the Cinema House Workers' Union (represented by Murad al-Qalyubi) and the International Union of Commercial Establishment Employees (represented by Da'ud Nahum).[26] Mahmud al-ᶜAskari was soon to join the New Dawn group. Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman was a close sympathizer but did not become a formal member of this group until September 1946. Murad al-Qalyubi and Da'ud Nahum were members of the EMNL.

In 1944 neither of the two emergent communist tendencies had yet developed a broad base of support within the Egyptian working class. It was already clear that there was a significant difference in both political style and perspective between the two organizations. This difference is related to the differences between the sectors of the working class where each organization made its original ties. The New Dawn group and its successors focused their activities on building an organizationally and politically independent workers' movement. This

movement was intended to be led by workers themselves and not by intellectuals no matter how sympathetic, although in practice it was Yusuf Darwish who provided the leadership for the workers grouped around New Dawn. Spreading explicitly Marxist ideas among workers was of secondary importance. New Dawn was linked, through Yusuf al-Mudarrik and the leadership of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers, to the most militant sectors of the trade union movement who had played an important role in advocating trade union independence from nonworker patrons in the late 1930s, before any communist intellectuals began to play a role in the workers' movement. The independent trend in the Egyptian trade union movement was the product of the experiences and struggles of the trade union leaders themselves, an expression of the "self-directed bursting forth" (al-inbithaq al-dhati) of the working class, as one author has termed it.[27]

The first contacts of the EMNL, on the other hand, were with relatively privileged workers. The EMNL paid more attention than New Dawn to the dissemination of Marxist ideology and actively recruited members from all classes of Egyptian society. Because of the higher priority which the EMNL placed on the assimilation of Marxism, the first workers who joined were more educated and more influenced by European political ideas than the

workers in the New Dawn orbit. Da'ud Nahum, for example, was a member of one of the last unions in Egypt to include a large proportion of foreign workers. It was based on the clerks of the large and fashionable department stores in the European section of Cairo--Cicurel, Shimla, Sidnawi, ᶜAdas and Benzion.[28] Nahum himself was Jewish and had personal and family ties with the French left.[29] Murad al-Qalyubi's Cinema House Workers Union was a small union of white-collar workers. The view of the EMNL was that the immediate task of communists in Egypt was to organize a broad national front in which workers would participate along with the other "patriotic classes" (including the "national bourgeoisie"). This formulation, although it retained the concept of the leading role of workers in this national front, tended, in practice, to place less emphasis on the development of a politically and organizationally independent workers' movement than New Dawn gave to this question. As the EMNL grew and became the stronger organization, the difference in the social base of the two organizations within the working class diminished, but in the very early stages of their development this was an important factor exacerbating the factional conflict.

The CPSTU was based among unions of workers employed by large and profitable monopoly or semimonopoly corporations, mainly owned by foreigners.[30] The members of

these unions already enjoyed better wages and working conditions than most Egyptian workers. Mahmud al-ᶜAskari saw the demand for the application of the government cadre as a narrow demand which could not possibly be won by the majority of Egyptian workers employed by less prosperous enterprises. He therefore urged the CPSTU to broaden its focus, expand its ranks and include other unions who were not in a position to realistically advance this demand.[31] Yusuf al-Mudarrik urged the CPSTU to delay pressing for this demand, at least until the government cadre was irrevocably in place, fearing that private sector enterprises would press the government to rescind the cadre before it was implemented.[32]

Al-ᶜAskari continued to attend meetings of the CPSTU until at least the second half of February 1945. After three months of negotiations, he could not convince the CPSTU to broaden its ranks.[33] Failing to win this point, al-ᶜAskari and others sharing his perspective left the CPSTU. The trade unionists linked to the EMNL remained within the federation. Da'ud Nahum's Commercial Establishment Employees Union issued a pamphlet on May 1, 1946, claiming that during 1945, twenty-five Cairo area unions with a total membership of 15,000 were members of the CPSTU and seventy provincial unions were supporters of the federation.[34]

At its first meetings the CPSTU had raised the demand that an Egyptian worker be permitted to travel to London to attend the preparatory conference for the World Federation of Unions (WFTU) which was to be held on February 6, 1945.[35] Muhammad ᶜAbd al-Halim led a delegation to the Ministry of Social Affairs with a petition endorsed by sixty trade unions asking that a workers' representative be permitted to attend this meeting. The government rejected the unions' petition, replying that the Egyptian Ambassador in London could represent them.[36] Consequently, no Egyptian worker delegate attended the London Conference.

No other Arab representatives were present at the London conference. As a result, Walter Laqueur, who attended the meeting as the representative of the General Federation of Jewish Workers in Palestine (Histadrut), was named Middle East Representative on the WFTU Executive Committee.[37] The Palestinian Arab trade union leaders, Bulus Farah and Mukhlis ᶜAmr, had been in contact with Yusuf al-Mudarrik before the London meeting and urged the attendance of an Egyptian delegation precisely in order to avoid this development.[38] After the selection of Laqueur as Middle East Representative, al-Mudarrik and his colleagues felt a greater urgency than before to attend the founding Congress of the WFTU which was to be

held in Paris on September 25, 1945.[39]

Following the split in the CPSTU, al-Mudarrik, al-ᶜAskari and a number of other veteran trade union leaders with whom they shared a common history of struggle for trade union independence redirected their efforts towards sending a workers' representative to the Paris WFTU Congress. These efforts resulted in the establishment of the Preparatory Committee for an Egyptian Trade Union Representative to the WFTU Congress in early August 1945. Yusuf al-Mudarrik was the leading personality in this committee. Among the other prominent members of the Preparatory Committee were Mahmud al-ᶜAskari and Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman of the Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers' Union, Rif'at Hasib, President of the Public Establishment Workers' Union, ᶜAbd al-Raziq ᶜAbd al-Rahman, President of the Cairo Pharmaceutical Warehouse Workers' Union, and Muhammad Madbuli Sulayman, President of the Shubra al-Khaymah Steamboat Workers' Union.[40] All of these trade union leaders had been in close contact with Yusuf Darwish. Other trade union leaders also participated in this committee.

On August 29, 1945, Yusuf al-Mudarrik convened a meeting of the Preparatory Committee attended by twelve Cairo area trade union leaders. They resolved to call a general conference of Cairo area unions the next day in

order to choose a representative to the WFTU Congress. The Preparatory Committee also drafted a program for its work which included the following points:[41] (1) extension of labor legislation to include legalization of trade union federations, a forty-hour week, a minimum wage, a weekly day off, comprehensive social insurance, jobs for those fired by the Anglo-American armed forces, defense of trade union freedoms and an end to intervention in trade union activities by the government, recognition of the right to strike, establishment of popular committees to provide food, clothing and shelter to the needy and to supervise agricultural and industrial production; (2) extension of the right to unionize to agricultural laborers and their inclusion in the scope of existing labor legislation; (3) recognition of the right to work, education and medical care for all; (4) combating monopolization of the economy and transfer of heavy industry to state ownership; (5) evacuation of imperialist armies of occupation from all countries; (6) abolition of the remnants of reaction and fascism and establishment of true internal democracy in Egypt; (7) aiding Arab Palestine in its struggle against Zionism and imperialism; (8) obligation of all national sections to uphold and carry out decisions of the WFTU; (9) representation of the WFTU at the Paris Peace Conference; (10) acceptance of Arabic as an official WFTU language.

The preponderance of national-political as opposed to purely trade union demands in this program is an indication that the Preparatory Committee was, in fact, fulfilling two functions. In the course of organizing representation to the WFTU Congress it was also serving as a forum where trade union leaders were being organized around the broader political program of the New Dawn group. There is no record of those who participated in the Preparatory Committee's activities objecting to the inclusion of these national-political demands in the program of a trade union committee. If there were objectors, perhaps they refrained from making an issue of their opinion because they felt these issues would receive secondary emphasis in any case. What is more likely, however, is that in the context of the massive political mobilization on an international scale which occurred after World War II, such demands did not seem out of place. They are the first clear expression of the close link between the workers' movement and the postwar upsurge in the Egyptian nationalist movement. This parallel mobilization of the national and workers' movements followed the pattern established in the years 1907-12, 1919-24 and 1935-36. The difference on this occasion was that now a strategically located sector of the working class was organizing independently of the

national movement and its leadership, although not in opposition to it.

On August 30, responding to the call of the Preparatory Committee, representatives of over fifty Cairo unions met to elect a representative to the WFTU Congress.[42] The meeting was attended by trade unionists representing a broad spectrum of political views. Some opposed sending a delegate since no formal invitation had been received. The majority agreed on the importance of participating in the WFTU Congress. The newspaper sellers' union wanted to let ᶜAbbas Halim's Labor Party select the representative. Hasan al-Sisi, president of the painters' union and a well-known Wafdist, supported sending a delegation to be chosen by the assembled trade union leaders. Da'ud Nahum and other representatives of unions affiliated with the CPSTU attended the meeting and supported the proposal to choose a delegate.[43]

The two nominees for delegate were al-Mudarrik and Nahum. Nahum's candidacy was supported by the CPSTU unions. Al-Mudarrik had a much broader base of support as a result of his long personal history of trade union struggle. Al-Mudarrik won the election, and Nahum and his supporters apparently accepted the results of the vote at this time because Nahum agreed to serve on the propaganda committee chosen to publicize the WFTU Congress

and win additional trade union support for dispatching a delegate. The August 30 meeting also endorsed the program prepared by the Preparatory Committee.

The Preparatory Committee called a second meeting on September 5 at which representatives of twenty-nine additional unions, including provincial unions, gave their endorsement to Mudarrik's election. Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman and Muhammad Madbuli Sulayman then travelled to the provinces to gather additional political and financial support for al-Mudarrik's trip. In most quarters they were warmly received. At the end of the campaign to win support for al-Mudarrik's trip, his election was endorsed by 102 unions with a total membership of 80,000 workers.

Sometime after al-Mudarrik's election as delegate, Da'ud Nahum and his supporters reconsidered their original acceptance of the results of the August 30 election and began a campaign to win counter-endorsements for Nahum, Murad al-Qalyubi and Muhammad ^{c}Abd al-Halim as delegates. They succeeded in gaining the endorsement of sixty-two unions with a membership of 60,000 workers.

Most trade unionists were completely unaware of the existence, let alone the political content, of the sectarian contention between New Dawn and the EMNL. It does not seem that the rival campaigns for trade union endorsements even broached the issue of a competing

delegate unless it was forced upon them. Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman reports raising this issue only with ^{c}Abd al-Hamid Sulayman, President of the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company union, because representatives of Da'ud Nahum's faction had already visited Mahallah al-Kubra and attempted to gain the Misr Company union's support.[44]

When the rival delegations arrived in Paris, matters were further complicated by the presence of Muhammad Ibrahim Zayn al-Din and Ahmad al-Misri, who also claimed to represent the Egyptian trade union movement. Neither of them had been present at the meetings in which al-Mudarrik was elected delegate.[45] Zayn al-Din, as has already been shown, was a paid British agent whose trip was financed by the British embassy in Cairo. He had no base of popular support in the trade union movement, and he represented no one but himself. Ahmad al-Misri attended the Congress as a representative of the Labor Party. He apparently had some standing among the Alexandria trade unions who contributed LE 170 towards his trip. ^{c}Abbas Halim personally bore the larger burden of his expenses and paid LE 400 to finance the trip.[46] Only Nahum was present in Paris in time for the opening of the Congress. Mudarrik was the second to arrive a few days later. Under pressure from the Credentials Committee of the WFTU and the other Arab delegates, they

agreed to form a united delegation with al-Mudarrik as delegate (on the strength of his endorsement by a larger number of unions) and Nahum as deputy-delegate.[47] Zayn al-Din and al-Misri arrived in Paris after al-Mudarrik and refused to endorse the agreement which had been negotiated by al-Mudarrik and Nahum.[48]

When the delegates returned from Paris, each claimed to have been the true representative. The official record of the Congress indicates that there was a great deal of confusion about the status of the Egyptians. Only al-Mudarrik was named as a member of the General Council of the WFTU, an indication that his status as a full delegate was most generally recognized.[49]

None of the Egyptians made a major contribution to the deliberations of the Congress. The proceedings and decisions taken in Paris do not seem to have had any direct influence over the development of the Egyptian workers' movement. The most important aspect of the Congress for the Egyptian workers' movement was that a very large number of trade union leaders and many rank-and-file workers wanted to participate in the Congress and actively identified with it as an expression of an international movement with which they wished to affiliate. Sayyid Qandil expressed this sentiment most clearly in an article entitled "We Are Not Alone," in which he said

that as a result of Egyptian representation at the WFTU Congress, Egyptian workers had become "part of the world workers' milieu and that whoever attacks us attacks them."[50] It is important to remember that Sayyid Qandil, although he considered himself a socialist, was openly anticommunist. His support for Egyptian representation at the WFTU Congress and the importance he attached to it are representative of the views of a large number of Egyptian trade unionists who, although they were not communists, saw affiliation with the WFTU as a way of building their movement and defending it against attacks from the Egyptian government and the capitalists. One indication of the extent to which the masses of trade union members actively supported these views is that Yusuf al-Mudarrik's trip to Paris was financed largely by small contributions from workers. When he arrived in Paris he carried with him a satchel full of receipts for contributions, some as small as three or five piastres.[51]

When Yusuf al-Mudarrik returned from Paris in late October, the Ford Workers' and Employees' Union, which was at this time one of the leading forces in the Alexandria trade union movement, hosted a reception honoring al-Mudarrik and the Syrian and Lebanese WFTU delegations who were stopping in Alexandria on their way home.[52] A second reception for Cairo trade unions was

held at the Casino Lilas in Rud al-Faraj on October 29. Trade union representatives from all over Egypt attended the reception and addressed the gathering. According to al-Mudarrik, nearly 4,000 workers were present.[53] At this reception it was decided to transform the Preparatory Committee for an Egyptian Trade Union Representative to the WFTU Congress into the Preparatory Committee for an Egyptian Trade Union Congress (al-Lajnah al-Tahdiriyah li-Mu'tamar Niqabat ᶜUmmal Misr).[54] The strategy of the New Dawn group was to use the successful organization of al-Mudarrik's trip to Paris as a springboard for a wider campaign to unite the Egyptian trade union movement under al-Mudarrik's leadership.

Murad al-Qalyubi, Muhammad ᶜAbd al-Halim and Da'ud Nahum did not attend the reception at the Casino Lilas. They were honored at a second reception on November 28 given by the CPSTU and attended by nearly 300 trade unionists from Cairo and the provinces.[55] The superficial unity which had been imposed on the Egyptian trade union movement in Paris dissolved as soon as the delegates returned to Egypt. Each of the rival communist tendencies continued their separate and competing trade union organizing activities.

The Workers' Committee for National Liberation

Trade unionists close to the New Dawn group had begun discussions on the establishment of a workers' political organization some time before the initiation of activities connected with the election of a delegate to the WFTU Congress. This group decided on the formation of a public organization which was to be known as the Workers' Committee for National Liberation--the Political Organization of the Working Class (WCNL--Lajnat al-ᶜUmmal lil-Tahrir al-Qawmi, al-Hay'ah al-Siyasiyah lil-Tabaqah al-ᶜAmilah). The program of the WCNL was finalized in mid-September 1945 during a marathon three-day meeting at the home of Yusuf Darwish. The participants, in addition to Darwish, were Yusuf al-Mudarrik, Mahmud al-ᶜAskari, Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman, Mahmud Qutb (a member of the Stewards' Committee of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers), Mahmud Hamzah (a leader of the Cairo Shoe Workers' Union), Muhammad Madbuli Sulayman and Muhammad Wahid al-Din (a teacher). Since Darwish and Wahid al-Din were not workers, they did not sign the WCNL program along with the other six members of the group.[56] This small detail was an expression of New Dawn's intention to build the WCNL as a purely workers' political organization which could be the vehicle for exercising working class leadership of the Egyptian national movement. Since the WCNL was to be a

public and legal organization, it was decided that it should have a regular organ of expression. Mahmud al-ᶜAskari arranged to rent the license to publish an already existing weekly newspaper, al-Damir (The Conscience), for the WCNL, and he became its editor. Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman became Secretary of the Editorial Board.[57]

The program of the WCNL was dated October 8, 1945, the first day after the lifting of martial law in Egypt. Prior to that date al-Mudarrik had carried English and French translations of the program to Paris and circulated them widely among the delegates to the WFTU Congress. In Egypt, 15,000 copies of the program and 25,000 copies of an accompanying explanatory statement were distributed through the network of trade union leaders and through the mail.[58] The introduction to the program explicitly declared the political tasks and perspective of the working class as the WCNL saw them:

> Citizens:
> The Workers' Committee for National Liberation believes that it is the duty of the working class, whose characteristics are in the process of maturing, to present to you a nationalist program which aims for the liberation of the popular classes, who are the great majority of Egypt's inhabitants, from the yoke of imperialism and the oppression of internal exploitation.[59]

The program goes on to present a comprehensive and detailed list of political demands. First and foremost

is for Egypt's total liberation from the British occupation. Among the other issues addressed are Egypt's foreign relations, ending foreign domination of the economy, land redistribution and other measures to improve the lot of the peasants, health and educational reforms, nationalization of all monopolies and development of the national economy, internal political reforms including extending to women the right to vote, abolition of the King's power to dissolve parliament, abolition of the political police and expansion of political liberties.

In this program the class demands of the working class and its allies in the national united front--land reform, nationalization of basic industry, ending foreign domination of the economy, extension of political and trade union freedoms--are presented as Egyptian national demands. No political distinction is made between class demands and national demands. The interests and objectives of the working class and its allies are defined as being identical with the full achievement of Egypt's national goals. The working class has the right and the duty to lead the nation in the struggle for these national goals because of the consistent record of failure of all the existing political parties and organizations since the 1919 revolution.

The appearance of the program of the WCNL marks the beginning of a new stage in the Egyptian national movement,

a stage in which the implicitly anticapitalist but not fully socialist demands articulated in the program of the WCNL became widely accepted as legitimate nationalist demands. The political tone of the WCNL program seems strongly influenced by the theory of "new democracy," which was being developed by Mao Tse Tung and the Chinese Communist Party at this time. Many of the WCNL demands were also being raised by the student movement and by the emerging left wing of the Wafd, the Wafdist Vanguard (al-Tali^{c}ah al-Wafdiyah). Members of New Dawn, the EMNL and Iskra were active in and around the Wafdist Vanguard and had a great influence on its political development. The daily newspaper of the Wafdist Vanguard, al-Wafd al-Misri, disseminated a left wing nationalist perspective on the Egyptian national movement and its tasks to a broad national audience.

The emergence of the WCNL, the growing militance of the student movement and the progressive radicalization of the Wafdist Vanguard were the product of the tremendous upsurge in the Egyptian national movement in late 1945 and 1946. For the first time since 1919 the old guard leadership of the Wafd was not at the head of the movement. The Wafd was weakened and discredited because of the 1936 treaty, the events of February 4, 1942 (which were now becoming widely known), and other attacks on its

integrity contained in the Black Book published by Makram ᶜUbayd. New political forces--the WCNL, the National Students' Committee, the Wafdist Vanguard and the young communist organizations--provided the political and organizational leadership for the nationalist movement in this period.

In the context of the rising tide of the nationalist movement, the WCNL's program was favorably received by many trade union activists. However, despite their decision to form a public organization, the founding members of the WCNL never recruited additional members. Active supporters who generally agreed with the WCNL and distributed its literature were not invited to join. Rif'at Hasib and Hasan al-Sisi criticized the founding group for failing to include them in its activities. Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman accepted this criticism in his memoirs explaining that the WCNL had a "snail's view" of the political movement and inappropriately employed methods designed to protect a secret organization in a body which was intended to be public.[60] This organizational conservatism, which is characteristic of the political style of the New Dawn group, was one of the major causes of its failure to maintain the leadership positions within the workers' movement which it won in the last half of 1945. Despite its failure to recruit new members, the

WCNL and its weekly al-Damir played an important role in spreading militant antiimperialist and class consciousness among Egyptian workers, particularly among the textile workers of Shubra al-Khaymah.

The convergence of the workers' and nationalist movements alarmed the Egyptian government, and it took quick notice of the WCNL and al-Damir. On October 21, 1945, Prime Minister al-Nuqrashi called the members of the WCNL to his office for an interview and offered them government financial support for the publication of al-Damir if they would agree to accept his nominee as editor. The WCNL members declined this offer and embarrassed the Prime Minister by disclosing this conversation in the following issue of al-Damir.[61]

When cooptation failed to halt the activities of the WCNL, repression followed. In November Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman was fired from his job at the Sibahi mill in Shubra al-Khaymah. Blacklisted by the mill owners, he could no longer find work in the Cairo area and had to take a job as a teacher in a primary school for girls in Fayum.[62] Then on January 2, 1946, after the outbreak of a large strike of Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers, Yusuf al-Mudarrik, Mahmud al-^{c}Askari and Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman were arrested. The WCNL was viewed by officials as being responsible for inciting this strike.[63] The

government was particularly fearful of Mahmud al-ᶜAskari's growing prestige among textile workers beyond the metropolitan Cairo area.[64] The trio of WCNL leaders was held in jail until May 30, 1946.

A joint statement of the CPSTU and the Preparatory Committee denounced these arrests and detailed many other cases of repression of the trade union movement in the latter part of 1945 and early 1946.[65] Among the attacks and abuses listed were the following: The Cairo Water Company fired the president and members of the executive board of its union charging them with incitement to strike. The Egyptian General Omnibus Company fired sixty-eight workers including the president and secretary of its union. The Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers' Union was dissolved by government order. Trade union meetings had been proscribed in Fayum, Port Said, Kafr al-Shaykh and Damanhur. Meetings of the CPSTU and the Preparatory Committee had been banned. The annual meeting of the Egyptian General Omnibus Company Workers' Union had been prohibited. The Ford union in Alexandria was threatened with dissolution as a result of its leading role in the Alexandria trade union movement. A military occupation of Shubra al-Khaymah had been in effect since December 1945. Muhammad ᶜAbd al-Halim had been fired from his job at the Misr Press for attending the WFTU

Congress. Hundreds of workers' homes had been searched, and tens of workers arrested. During a strike at the Cairo Water Company, strikers' wives were arrested and held captive in the company offices in order to force an end to the strike.

The arrest of the trio of WCNL leaders crippled the activity of the WCNL and the New Dawn group within the workers' movement. This might not necessarily have occurred if sympathetic workers had been recruited to the WCNL and given adequate political training. But since al-Mudarrik and al-ᶜAskari were the only worker members of New Dawn, the group's influence in the working class was heavily dependent on their personal roles. Following the arrests, al-Damir was forced to suspend publication.[66] From January 1946, the EMNL began to gain more strength in the workers' movement, and it soon became the more influential communist organization in the working class.

The National Committee of Workers and Students

Shortly before the outbreak of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile strike, on December 20, 1945, the Egyptian government had sent a memorandum to Great Britain suggesting that the 1936 treaty be renegotiated on the basis of maintaining the alliance between Egypt and Great Britain. When the contents of this memorandum and the British reply

became known to the public, the response was mass outrage at the very willingness of the Egyptian government to negotiate with Great Britain while British troops still occupied Egypt. Public confidence in the government's ability to win Egypt's national demands, principally the total evacuation of British troops, evaporated. The outbreak of the strike in Shubra al-Khaymah contributed to the intensification of the atmosphere of political confrontation. The strike was strongly supported by the Wafdist Vanguard's daily, al-Wafd al-Misri.[67] Even though al-Wafd al-Misri saw the strikers' demands as "far from the political arena,"[68] the alignment of political forces was clear. The nationalist movement led by left wing political forces was supporting both workers' economic demands and nationalist political demands opposed by the Egyptian government, its land owning and industrialist supporters, the Palace and Great Britain. The atmosphere of confrontation and struggle grew throughout January and February and was brought to a head by developments in the student movement.

On February 9, 1946, several thousand students held a conference at Cairo University in Giza.[69] Resolutions were adopted demanding cutting off negotiations with Great Britain, abrogation of the 1936 treaty and the 1899 agreement on the Sudan, and immediate evacuation of British

troops from Egypt and the Sudan. The students then decided to march to ᶜAbdin Palace to inform the King of their resolutions. As the demonstration was crossing the ᶜAbbas Bridge, the Egyptian police and army opened the bridge and attacked the marchers, causing several deaths and wounding hundreds. This incident was met by a wave of popular anger throughout Egypt. From February 10 to March 4 the tempo of nationalist agitation and demonstrations mounted continually.

The high point of the nationalist agitation and the clearest expression of its new class content and political direction was the formation of the National Committee of Workers and Students (NCWS-al-Lajnah al-Wataniyah lil-ᶜUmmal wa-al-Talabah). The NCWS was formed on February 18 and 19 after a series of meetings and consultations in which representatives of the General Nationalist Committee of Shubra al-Khaymah Workers, Cairo tram workers, printers, the CPSTU, the Preparatory Committee and the Association of Egyptian Working Women (Rabitat al-ᶜAmilat al-Misriyah) participated.[70] Among the prominent worker members of the NCWS were Sayyid ᶜAli, Secretary of the Misr Press Workers' Union; Murad al-Qalyubi and Husayn Kazim of the Cinema House Workers' Union; Najib Sus, Secretary of the Cairo Tramway Workers' Union; Husayn Nassar, Secretary of the Egyptian General

Omnibus Company Workers' Union; Mahmud al-Dumrani and Sayyid Khudayr, members of the Shubra al-Khaymah Stewards' Committee; and Kamil al-Najjari, a waiter.[71] This constellation of trade union figures represented most of the important sectors of the working class in the greater Cairo area. The textile workers of Shubra al-Khaymah were especially prominent in the working class component of the NCWS.

The NCWS called for a general strike on February 21, which was designated "Evacuation Day." In Cairo the general strike was an overwhelming success. On February 21 a crowd variously estimated at between 40,000 and 100,000, including a contingent of 15,000 workers from Shubra al-Khaymah, demonstrated in downtown Cairo.[72] A rally at Queen Faridah (now Opera) Square endorsed the demands adopted by the student conference of February 9. Following the rally, demonstrations proceeded towards the Qasr al-Nil barracks of the British army. Four British armored vehicles turning onto the street from the barracks waded into the crowd, killing and wounding the demonstrators. In response, the crowd attacked the vehicles and set them on fire. By the end of the day there were twenty-three demonstrators dead and 121 wounded. There were also general strikes and demonstrations in a dozen cities outside of Cairo on February 21,

a level of militant nationalist mobilization which had not been witnessed in Egypt since the 1919 revolution.

The NCWS called for a second general strike and demonstration on March 4, which was designated "Martyrs' Day." The demonstration in Cairo was small on March 4. But in Alexandria a large crowd clashed with British troops, resulting in the death of twenty-eight demonstrators and the wounding of 342. Newspapers, factories, stores and schools were closed throughout the country. Among the striking workers on March 4 were the 25,000 textile workers at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company mill in Mahallah al-Kubra.[73]

Communists and leftists were, of course, not the only new political forces to participate in the postwar nationalist upsurge in Egypt. The fascist-influenced Young Egypt, the Muslim revivalist Society of Muslim Brothers and others projected an alternative nationalist-religious vision for Egypt which might best be described as romantic-reactionary. These elements joined together in opposition to the communists and the Wafdist Vanguard and were, therefore, frequently excoriated by the left wing of the nationalist movement as antinationalist and fascist.

The Muslim Brothers participated in the general strike and demonstrations of February 21. Soon afterwards they split from the NCWS and formed a rival National

Committee (al-Lajnah al-Qawmiyah). This was a conscious attempt to combat the growing influence of the communist/left Wafd leadership within the national movement. The National Committee included, in addition to the Brothers, Young Egypt, the Nationalist Party and other anti-Wafd anticommunist elements. The Brothers also warmly welcomed the government of Isma^{c}il Sidqi,[74] which was brought to office on February 17 in an effort to stem the tide of the nationalist upsurge. Sidqi was particularly unpopular among workers who recalled his harsh repression of the trade union movement during his previous term in office. The National Committee was supported by the Sidqi government, which used the Brothers against the communist/left Wafd coalition. As part of the bargain, the Brothers were granted a license to publish a daily newspaper.[75] These developments crystallized the rift between the Brothers and the communist/left Wafd wing of the national movement.

The CPSTU issued a declaration condemning the Brothers' attempt to split the national movement by forming the National Committee:

> Since the dawn of the current national renaissance the Society of Muslim Brothers has persisted in spreading intrigues and planning plots aimed in their totality at thwarting the nationalist movement or diverting it from its objectives in a manner which serves nothing but imperialism. The NCWS is the legitimate committee representing students and workers and [white-collar] employees,

> elected in free and democratic elections, and the organizer of the struggle of [all] sections of the people for the abolition of imperialism. But they have formed an imaginary committee for workers and students issuing statements against the legitimate NCWS. They have also formed a National Committee which is not supported by a popular base and therefore died the day it was born.
>
> Today the naked intentions of this Society have been exposed to the people: from calling for [religious] sectarianism aimed at causing a split in the ranks of the people for the benefit of imperialism to fighting the General Students' Executive Committee with fascist terrorist methods using their sticks. They used the same methods against the workers of Shubra al-Khaymah.
>
> In light of this, the CPSTU announces its denunciation of these abominable aggressions against sincere student and worker nationalists. The CPSTU also announces that it and other workers' organizations including workers throughout the country support only the NCWS and warn worker colleagues against joining any committee formed by the Muslim Brothers. A worker who joins any of their committees represents no one but himself.
>
> Long live the NCWS
> Down with fascism
> Down with imperialism[76]

In What Is to Be Done? Lenin counterposes the spontaneous character of economic and political mass movements to the theoretically informed consciousness which should characterize the leadership of such movements. In this sense the formation of the NCWS was a spontaneous phenomenon, the product of an upsurge of popular participation and militancy in the nationalist movement unparalleled since 1919. The pace of the development of the mass movement in early 1946 far outstripped the capacity of

any existing or potential leadership to guide and direct it and provide it with a stable organizational form. The existence of the NCWS was the result of the desire for unity among the leadership of the left wing of the nationalist movement based among the radicalized intelligentsia and workers. However, this leadership was unable to overcome its internal division sufficiently to carry out the tasks it faced. Shuhdi ᶜAtliyah al-Shafiᶜi, who participated in the NCWS as a student activist and member of Iskra, specifically mentions the divisions among its leadership as one of the factors which weakened the NCWS and diminished its effectiveness.[77]

A second weakness mentioned by al-Shafiᶜi is the undemocratic structure of the NCWS. Because it was formed hastily and without advance preparation in the midst of a mass movement in rapid motion, the NCWS leadership did not have the opportunity to establish organized procedures for consultation with the mass organizations they were ostensibly representing. This tended to isolate the committee members from their constituencies and weaken the representative character of the NCWS. The NCWS did not establish local branches in neighborhoods, factories or schools reflecting the unity reached at the level of national leadership.[78]

The New Dawn group, and especially its worker organizations, the WCNL and the Preparatory Committee,

were less active in the NCWS than the EMNL, the CPSTU and Iskra. This was due to the fact that the three most prominent worker-leaders of the WCNL were in jail during most of the period that the NCWS was in existence and to the failure of New Dawn and the WCNL to recruit new members during this period of mass radicalization. Because of their weaker position within the NCWS, the New Dawn people were somewhat more sensitive to the weaknesses in its internal democracy and, in particular, to the domination of the NCWS by the student element.

The Preparatory Committee sent a letter to the NCWS[79] charging that workers were not fairly represented on the committee because the number of student and worker representatives was equal while the students had a majority of votes in the Secretariat and Financial Committee. As a corrective measure, the Preparatory Committee suggested that no decisions be adopted without the agreement of at least half of the worker members of the NCWS. The proposed political program of the NCWS was criticized for failing to indicate sufficient confidence in the struggle of the Egyptian working class. According to the Preparatory Committee, the role of students in this period was not to lead the national movement, but to help the working class express its goals and demands. The Preparatory Committee also wanted the NCWS to become

a purely representative body whose members were bound by the decisions of their constituent organizations. This, it was argued, would improve both the mass mobilization capacity and the level of internal democracy within the NCWS. The Preparatory Committee was especially insistent that the organizational and political independence of workers' organizations not be subordinated to nonworkers.

The Preparatory Committee's letter of criticism identified substantive weaknesses. Though its criticisms reflect the line of the New Dawn group and its insistence on the importance of building the organizational and political independence of the working class, they should not be seen as merely sectarian carping. The Preparatory Committee's letter, although it is more detailed and much more sensitive to the question of the relationship between the class forces within the NCWS, identifies the same basic weakness as al-Shafi^{c}i's summation of the activity of the NCWS written from the opposing political perspective. The NCWS was not politically united enough or rooted deeply enough among the Egyptian people to carry out the tasks it faced. The political and organizational immaturity of the leadership of the NCWS stood in sharp contrast to the enormous political opportunity before them. Jean-Pierre Thieck has characterized this problem in the following manner:

> Les organisations marxistes sont placées en 1946 devant la double tâche simultanée et brutale d'orienter l'ensemble d'un mouvement national en ébullition dans un sens nouveau, en donnant au mécontentement de toutes les couches nationales, c'est-à-dire anti-monopolistes, son contenu politique; et d'organiser la classe ouvrière sur des bases independantes à partir de rien ou presque. Et l'absence d'un parti politique de la classe ouvrière prive celle-ci du role dirigeant dans la situation nouvelle dont elle est le moteur.[80]

Attempt to Establish Trade Union Unity

The success of the mass mobilizations of February 21 and March 4, the continuing attacks on the trade union movement and especially the closing of plants and the steady increase in the unemployment rate and the arrest of al-Mudarrik, al-ᶜAskari and ᶜUthman created the conditions for establishing greater unity in the Egyptian workers' movement. The first step towards achieving this unity was the publication of the Joint Declaration by the CPSTU and the Preparatory Committee protesting the arrests of January 1, 1946, and other antiworker actions by the Egyptian government. After these arrests the CPSTU became the more active organization. Since most rank-and-file trade unionists were unaware of the ideological dispute which underlay the division between the CPSTU and the Preparatory Committee, it was not difficult for the CPSTU to step into the vacuum left by the arrest of the

Preparatory Committee's leadership. The clearest indication that most workers did not distinguish between the two rival communist trends was the election of Muhammad Shatta, a member of the EMNL, as Chairman of the Shubra al-Khaymah Textile Workers' Stewards' Committee.[81] This had formerly been the main base of support for the WCNL.

In the absence of significant competition from the Preparatory Committee, the CPSTU became the center of leadership for the entire trade union movement. On May 1, 1946, it changed its name to the Congress of Egyptian Trade Unions (CETU--Mu'tamar Niqabat ʿUmmal Misr),[82] indicating the intention to expand its ranks beyond its original narrow constituency. Husayn Kazim, President of the Cinema House Workers' Union and a member of the EMNL, was elected General Secretary of the CETU. Among its constituent unions was the Association of Egyptian Working Women, the first organization of women workers in Egypt. This Association was led by Hikmat al-Ghazzali, a textile worker in Shubra al-Khaymah and a member of the EMNL.

On May 15 Muhammad Madbuli Sulayman, acting in his capacity as Secretary of the Preparatory Committee, sent a letter to Murad al-Qalyubi offering to unite the two trade union federations in view of the continuing attacks on the trade union movement.[83] In all likelihood it was

the outbreak of a major strike of Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers on May 12 and the stiff opposition it met from the mill owners and their allies that provided a major impetus for trade union unity. The offer of unity was accepted immediately. The May 18 issue of al-Mu'tamar (The Congress), an irregular newspaper published by the CPSTU and then the CETU, carried a new name on its masthead--the Congress of Trade Unions of Egypt (CTUE--Mu'tamar Niqabat ᶜUmmal al-Qatr al-Misri).[84] This was to be the name of the unified trade union federation. Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman argues, however, that full organizational unity of the two trade union factions was not achieved until June 16.[85]

On May 30 a mass meeting was held in Cairo to endorse the decision to unify the two trade union factions. Yusuf al-Mudarrik, Mahmud al-ᶜAskari and Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman attended this meeting several hours after their release from jail. There was so much dissension at this meeting that Sayyid ᶜAli, Secretary of the Misr Press Workers' Union, ripped up the minutes which Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman had taken, declaring that they revealed too much disunity. The majority of those attending the meeting strongly supported this action.[86] When the meeting resumed, the decision to confirm the unity of the two factions was taken without extensive discussion "in the

face of pressure from the rank-and-file workers and trade union leaders, particularly from the provinces."[87] The leadership of the united trade union federation was to include representatives of both factions. However, most of the active figures in the leadership of the CTUE were members or supporters of the EMNL.

The May 30 meeting also endorsed the basic program of demands which had been adopted by the CETU on May 1:[88] (1) immediate and total political, military and economic evacuation of British forces from the Nile Valley; (2) application of the government workers' cadre to all workers; (3) combating unemployment by government takeover of all plants which threatened to close; (4) return unemployed workers to their jobs; (5) free all workers jailed for trade union activities; (6) halt the firings and banishment of Shubra al-Khaymah workers; (7) a forty-hour week; (8) recognize May Day as an official holiday. A deadline of June 10 was set for the government to reply favorably to these demands. If this was not done, the CTUE threatened a general strike.

The prominence of the demand for British evacuation at the head of a list of trade union demands indicates the extent to which the events of early 1946 fused, in the minds of Egyptian worker leaders, the connection between their economic struggle and the national political

struggle. Perhaps because of this, the CTUE leadership had an exaggerated sense of its own strength. Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman's attempt to warn the May 30 meeting that it was unrealistic to expect to achieve British evacuation in ten days and that the CTUE was not strong enough to lead the proposed general strike were dismissed as defeatism and an expression of his own fear of returning to jail.[89]

The CTUE's decision to call for a general strike was not based entirely on an overoptimistic evaluation of its capacities. There was an unmistakable popular upsurge affecting many sectors of the working class during May and June 1946. This upsurge was linked to the continuing high level of nationalist mobilization, but it was also rooted in the independent class demands of the working class. The most important of these, and this is clearly indicated in the program of the CTUE, was the demand to reduce the level of unemployment. This demand was consistently supported by the Wafdist Vanguard and al-Wafd al-Misri, which tied the question of unemployment back to the national question, declaring that, "It is clear that unemployment is a national disaster which now confronts the life of the Egyptian working class."[90]

The impending unification of the Egyptian trade union movement and the outbreak of the strike in Shubra al-Khaymah sparked a wave of strikes, political protests and

declarations of support for the CTUE. Trade unions in Alexandria, Banha, Mahallah al-Kubra, Damietta, Port Said, Damanhur, Mansurah, Zaqaziq, Manfalut and Shubra al-Khaymah affiliated to the CTUE in addition to the Cairo affiliates.[91] The issue of mass unemployment, particularly in the textile industry, which the Shubra al-Khaymah strike highlighted, was taken up by workers in other textile centers. On May 23 several workers attempted to commit suicide in the Alexandria Labor Office as a protest against unemployment.[92] On May 26 unemployed workers held a conference in the Nubar Gardens of Alexandria. Police surrounded the meeting and arrested 400 workers.[93] There were two strikes during the month of June at the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in Mahallah al-Kubra. Secret workers' committees organized these strikes in opposition to the recognized union.[94] The workers' demands focused on the question of firings and layoffs.[95] Members of the WCNL and other independent-minded trade unionists infiltrated ᶜAbbas Halim's barely functioning Labor Party and appear to have been among the forces instigating a split in the party. The trade union leaders who had been affiliated with the party denounced the leadership of ᶜAbbas Halim's lieutenants and demanded that the party become a popular democratic front which would not cooperate with reactionary capitalist or landholding

interests.[96] Among the specific complaints of the trade unionists was ᶜAbbas Halim's failure to support the Shubra al-Khaymah strike.[97]

All of these developments, occurring within a very short period of time, may have convinced the CTUE leadership that there was sufficient mass sentiment to support a successful general strike. After postponing the original strike date of June 10 due to lack of preparation, a firm date of June 25 was set for the strike.

The Sidqi government and its allies were not inactive in the face of the upsurge in working class militancy. The Cairo Tramway Workers' Union, headed by Shaykh ᶜAbd al-Zahir al-Shahid, a sympathizer of the Muslim Brothers, was persuaded to withdraw its support from the CTUE and the general strike.[98] The inability to halt mass transport in Cairo sharply diminished the potential impact of the threatened strike. On June 21 the delegation of Egyptian trade unionists led by Ibrahim Zayn al-Din and Fathi Kamil left for London, removing another sector of the trade union leadership from the impending confrontation. The government, in conjunction with the Muslim Brothers and the mill owners, unleashed a campaign of repression and intimidation against the Shubra al-Khaymah textile strike, which was

the symbol and the stronghold of the workers' movement. (See Chapter VI for further details.)

The internal disunity of the CTUE and its organizational weakness as a result of its recent formation combined with the government's efforts to weaken the threatened general strike left the CTUE unable to implement its threat. On June 25 there was a partial strike of Suez Canal workers in Port Said and a full strike at the Filature Nationale in Alexandria,[99] in addition to the continuing, but weakened strike of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers. The general strike was a failure. In the days following June 25, many of the CTUE leaders were arrested for inciting to strike. Among those jailed were the two CTUE Secretaries, Husayn Kazim and Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman; two of the leaders of the Shubra al-Khaymah Stewards' Committee, Sayyid Khudayr and Mahmud al-Dumrani; Ibrahim ^{c}Abd al-Salim, Secretary of the Alexandria Shoemakers' Union; Yusuf al-Mudarrik, Mahmud al-^{c}Askari and Murad al-Qalyubi.[100]

After the failure of the general strike and the arrest of the CTUE leaders, the government launched a comprehensive attack on the Egyptian communist movement and all the political forces which had been cooperating with the communists since the beginning of the nationalist upsurge. On July 11 all of the leftist and labor newspapers, magazines and clubs in Egypt were closed. A

large number of intellectuals and workers were arrested and charged with spreading communism. The CTUE was officially dissolved. A new anticommunist law was submitted to the parliament for consideration.

The memorandum of explanation accompanying the proposed anticommunist law noted that among the factors necessitating the enactment of this measure was the rapid growth of communism in Egypt, "especially among our quiet and gentle working classes."[101] Although the government, in one breath, admitted that communism had become a factor of importance in the Egyptian working class, there was considerable reluctance to accept the full implications of this development. The prevailing political theory of those figures representing landholding and industrial interests still did not imagine that Egyptian workers saw themselves as a class in opposition to the Egyptian ruling classes and their British allies. In an interview with al-Ahram, Hamid al-ᶜAbd, the Director of the Labor Administration, asserted that Egyptian workers were immune to communism because communist ideology was contradictory to their religion. Furthermore, Egyptian workers, he said, were not prone to violence.[102]

Despite Hamid al-ᶜAbd's denial of what other government sources openly admitted about the extent of the radicalization of the Egyptian working class, the government was sensitive enough to the reality of this

radicalization to attempt to placate worker militancy. In early July 1946, a ministerial committee was formed to investigate workers' demands. The only worker representatives on the committee who had participated actively in the CTUE were Muhammad ᶜAbd al-Halim, one of the few leading figures who was not arrested, and Shaykh ᶜAbd al-Zahir al-Shahid, who had shown his pliability by removing his Cairo Tramway Workers' Union from the general strike. The committee held several meetings throughout the summer of 1946, but nothing ever came of its discussions or decisions. The minutes of the discussions did, however, reveal that low wages, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions and insecurity of employment were characteristic features of Egyptian industry, particularly in the textile sector.

ᶜAbd al-Fattah Husayn, President of the Textile Foremen and Assistant Foremen's Union, was the representative of the textile workers on the ministerial committee. He secretly gave Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman copies of the minutes. ᶜUthman then published them so that this officially sanctioned description of wages and working conditions and the suggested improvements raised in the committee meetings could be used to support workers' demands.[103]

The publication of the minutes of the ministerial committee was only one of the forms of resistance to the

Sidqi repression. On July 26 the WCNL distributed nationalist leaflets widely in Cairo, Alexandria and the Canal zone.[104] Trade union leaders who were not in jail continued to meet, and conferences were held in an attempt to consolidate trade union unity.[105] Although workers' organizations were not stamped out by the Sidqi repression, the organizational link between the broader left wing national movement and the workers' movement was temporarily cut by the arrest of the individual leaders who by their political activities personally connected the two movements. The number of strikes and other worker protests dropped sharply as the working class took time to recover from the repression. The tide of the national movement also began to recede as a result of the repression and the renewal of negotiations with Great Britain over a revision of the 1936 treaty. In this atmosphere the forces of the Muslim Brothers and Prince ᶜAbbas Halim were able, with the encouragement of the government, to assert their presence in the workers' movement. The second half of 1946 and the first half of 1947 was a period of low activity, regroupment and reorganization for the left wing of the workers' movement.

Notes to Chapter V

[1]My discussion of the Egyptian communist movement treats only its relationship to the workers' movement. Selma Botman of the Department of History of Harvard University is currently working on a Ph.D. thesis which will provide a comprehensive treatment of the history of the second Egyptian communist movement.

[2]Rif^{c}at al-Sa^{c}id, al-Yasar al-Misri, 1925-1940 (Beirut, 1972).

[3]This argument is based on many hours of discussion with Muhammad Sid Ahmed.

[4]Marcel Israel, "Report to the Leadership of the Communist Party of Italy," translated into Arabic from the original Italian and reproduced in Sa^{c}id, al-Yasar al-Misri, 1925-1940, p. 263.

[5]Yusuf Darwish, "Letter to Jamal ^{c}Abd al-Nasir," December 3, 1956 (Yusuf Darwish papers, Cairo); Ahmad Sadiq Sa^{c}d, Safahat min al-yasar al-Misri (Cairo, 1976), pp. 38-39.

[6]Sa^{c}d, p. 42; Rif^{c}at al-Sa^{c}id, Tarikh al-munazzamat al-yasariyah fi Misr, 1940-1950 (Cairo, 1976), p. 170.

[7]Sa^{c}d, p. 43.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.; Darwish, "Letter . . . ," says that the organization was called the Committee for the Dissemination of Popular Culture (Lajnat Nashr al-Thaqafah al-Sha^{c}biyah).

[10]Sa^{c}d, pp. 43-44; Darwish, "Letter . . ."

[11]Raymond Douek, personal interview, June 4, 1981.

[12]Darwish, "Letter . . ."

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Yusuf Darwish, Sharh qanun isabat al-ᶜamal (Cairo, 1944).

[17]al-Jabhah, February 15, 1945.

[18]Saᶜd, p. 48.

[19]Marcel Israel, "Report . . . ," in Saᶜid, al-Yasar al-Misri, 1925-1940, p. 266; "Mahdar niqash maᶜa Hinri Kuriyal," in Saᶜid, al-Yasar al-Misri, 1925-1940, p. 278.

[20]Saᶜid, Tarikh al-munazzamat, p. 180.

[21]Hurriyat al-Shuᶜub, May 16, 1942.

[22]"Mahdar niqash maᶜa Hinri Kuriyal," in Saᶜid, al-Yasar al-Misri, 1925-1940, pp. 280, 285, 289.

[23]The written and oral memoirs of the events of this period by political and trade union activists are the primary source for the reconstruction of this history. All these memoirs reflect, to one degree or another, the factional loyalties which prevailed at this time, although both organizations have long since been dissolved. Many former participants in communist-led trade union activists are reluctant to discuss their experiences with complete candor because they fear political reprisals by the Egyptian government. Egyptian police records, which might shed light on communist activity in the workers' movement from a perspective impartial to either faction, but hardly "unbiased," are currently unavailable. British diplomatic reports of communist activity are characterized by an astonishing lack of understanding. These conditions make it very difficult to reconstruct an accurate account of the relationship between the communist and workers' movements.

[24]ᶜUthman, K, April, 1972, p. 141.

[25]Askari, U, January 9, 1978; ᶜAbbas, al-Harakah al-ᶜummaliyah fi Misr, pp. 119-20.

[26]ᶜAskari, U, January 9, 1978; ᶜUthman, K, April, 1972, p. 141.

[27]ᶜAbd al-Samad Jad al-Mawla, Qadaya al-jabhah al-wataniyah al-taqaddumiyah fi Misr (Beirut, 1979), p. 51.

[28]ᶜAskari, U, January 9, 1978.

[29]FO 371/53368/J146 (1946).

[30]See the list of member unions reported in al-Jabhah, January 25, 1945, and also those listed by ᶜAbbas, al-Harakah al-ᶜummaliyah fi Misr, p. 120.

[31]ᶜAskari, U, January 30, 1978.

[32]Mudarrik, TU, May, 1968. The cadre of government workers was not fully implemented until February 11, 1946.

[33]For reports of al-ᶜAskari's presence at meetings see al-Yaraᶜ, February 26, 1945, and al-Jabhah, February 22, 1945. See also ᶜAskari, U, January 30, 1978.

[34]Quoted in ᶜAbbas, al-Harakah al-ᶜummaliyah fi Misr, p. 120. Note that "international" has now dropped from the union's name, an indication that the participation of foreign workers had ceased or become negligible.

[35]ᶜUthman, K, April, 1972, p. 141.

[36]Ibid., September, 1971, pp. 172, 174; al-Jabhah, January 25, 1945.

[37]Mudarrik, TU, May, 1968.

[38]Ibid., June, 1968; ᶜAskari, U, February 6, 1978.

[39]Mudarrik, TU, May, 1968.

[40]ᶜUthman, K, September, 1971, p. 175.

[41]Ibid., p. 180; Mudarrik, TU, July, 1968; al-Fajr al-Jadid, September 16, 1945.

[42]The main features of the account of al-Mudarrik's election are based on ᶜUthman, K, September, 1971, pp. 175 ff. ᶜUthman served as Recording Secretary of the Preparatory Committee and includes excerpts from his minutes in his memoirs.

[43]al-Yaraᶜ, September 6, 1945.

[44]ᶜUthman, K, September, 1971, p. 189.

[45]ᶜAskari, U, March 27, 1978.

[46]FO 371/53368/J146 (1946).

[47]cUthman, K, November, 1971, pp. 114-15; Mudarrik, TU, June, 1968.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Fédération syndicale mondiale, Rapport de la conférence-congres syndicale mondiale 25 Septembre-8 Octobre 1945.

[50]al-Yaraᶜ, September 23, 1945.

[51]Raymond Douek, personal interview, June 4, 1981.

[52]al-Damir, November 7, 1945.

[53]Ibid.; Mudarrik, TU, September, 1968.

[54]cUthman, K, November, 1971, p. 125.

[55]al-Damir, December 5, 1945.

[56]cUthman, K, July, 1971, pp. 176-77.

[57]Rifᶜat al-Saᶜid, al-Sahafah al-yasariyah fi Misr, 1925-1948 (Cairo, 1977), p. 152, calculates that the date of the first issue of al-Damir published by the WCNL must have been September 26, 1945. But the earliest issue which either of us have been able to locate is dated October 17, 1945.

[58]cUthman, K, August, 1971, p. 180.

[59]Barnamaj Lajnat al-ᶜUmmal lil-Tahrir al-Qawmi (Cairo, 1945), p. 4.

[60]cUthman, K, August, 1971, p. 181.

[61]Ibid., p. 186; ᶜAskari, U, July 31, 1978; al-Damir, October 24, 1945.

[62]cUthman, K, January, 1972, p. 138.

[63]FO 371/53327/J1565 (1946).

[64]Ibid.

[65]Bayan mushtarak min al-Lajnah al-Tahdiriyah wa-Mu'tamar Niqabat al-Sharikat wa-al-Mu'assasat al-Ahliyah

(Yusuf al-Mudarrik papers, Cairo).

[66]The first issue of al-Damir published after the arrest of the trio which I have been able to locate is dated June 24, 1946. It bears the numbering Volume 8, No. 9, so it is possible that eight earlier issues were published in 1946. Even if this were the case, publication would have been very sporadic.

[67]al-Wafd al-Misri, January 2, 1946.

[68]Ibid., January 4, 1946.

[69]For a full description and analysis of the events of January-February 1946 see Jean-Pierre Thieck, "La journée du 21 Février 1946 dans l'histoire du mouvement national égyptien" (unpublished Mémoire de D.E.S., Université de Paris, VII, 1973).

[70]ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim al-Ghazzali, "Mawqiᶜ 21 Fibrayir 1946 min al-tarikh," al-Taliᶜah 2 (February 1966):54.

[71]FO 371/53368/J1447 (1946).

[72]al-Ahram, February 22, 1946.

[73]al-Wafd al-Misri, March 5, 1946.

[74]IM, February 26, 1946.

[75]FO 371/53330/J1184 (1946).

[76]Quoted in al-Ghazzali, "Mawqiᶜ 21 Fibrayir . . . ," p. 59.

[77]Shudi ᶜAtiyah al-Shafiᶜi, Tatawwur al-harakah al-wataniyah al-Misriyah, 1882-1956 (Jerusalem, 1979?), pp. 108-09.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Quoted in ᶜUthman, K, May, 1972, pp. 153 ff.

[80]Thieck, p. 253.

[81]Saᶜid, Tarikh al-munazzamat, p. 247, says that Shatta was elected in December 1945. The first time that Shatta's name appears at the head of a list of stewards' signatures is in al-Ahram, January 7, 1945.

[82]This date is written in by hand on a copy of Mashruc la'ihat al-nizam al-asasi li-Mu'tamar Niqabat cUmmal Misr (Yusuf al-Mudarrik papers, Cairo).

[83]Quoted in cUthman, K, March, 1972, p. 145.

[84]cUthman, K, April, 1972, p. 142. I have not been able to locate any copies of this publication.

[85]Ibid., July, 1972, p. 159. This is the date when cUthman, who represented the former Preparatory Committee faction on the CTUE Secretariat, received from Hikmat al-Ghazzali the records and documents of the former CETU which he was to preserve. This was done without the knowledge of Husayn Kazim, the representative of the former CETU faction on the CTUE Secretariat, an indication of the persistence of factional contention and distrust.

[86]Ibid., pp. 148-49.

[87]Ibid., p. 149.

[88]Sacid, Tarikh al-munazzamat, p. 255; al-Wafd al-Misri, May 5, 1946.

[89]cUthman, K, July, 1972, p. 151.

[90]al-Wafd al-Misri, April 17, 1946.

[91]Ibid., May 5, 1946.

[92]Ibid., May 24, 1946.

[93]Ibid., May 27, 1946.

[94]al-Ghazzali, Tarikh al-harakah al-niqabiyah al-Misriyah, 1899-1952, p. 220.

[95]al-Wafd al-Misri, June 12, 1946.

[96]cAbbas, al-Harakah al-cummaliyah fi Misr, pp. 331-34.

[97]al-Wafd al-Misri, June 9, 1946.

[98]cUthman, K, July, 1972, p. 157.

[99]al-Wafd al-Misri, June 26, 1946.

[100]Ibid., June 29, 1946; FO 371/53327/J3793 (1946).

[101] al-Ahram, July 10, 1946.

[102] Ibid., July 23, 1946.

[103] Mahadir wa-taqarir al-lajnah al-wizariyah al-ᶜulya al-mukawwanah fi Yulyu 1947 [i.e. 1946] li-bahth matalib al-ᶜummal (Cairo, 1946). The story of the publication of this pamphlet was told to me by Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman in a discussion on January 22, 1981.

[104] FO 371/53327/J4464 (1946).

[105] Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

NATIONALISM, ISLAM AND COMMUNISM AND THE SHUBRA AL-KHAYMAH TEXTILE WORKERS

Shubra al-Khaymah and its textile industry represented, for Egypt in the 1930s and 1940s, the quintessence of modern industrial capitalism with all its attendant opportunities and problems. There is no doubt that in some important respects Shubra al-Khaymah and its workers were exceptional in Egypt. Nowhere else was the working class so concentrated, so militant and so politically visible.[1] No other group of workers in Egypt developed the same high level of sustained independent organization. Nowhere else was the struggle between competing ideological trends inside the Egyptian labor movement so sharp and so fully documented. In all these respects there is a remarkable similarity between the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers and the metal workers of prerevolutionary Petrograd; and Egyptian communists had in mind the same revolutionary vanguard role for them as the metal workers of Petrograd played in the Bolshevik revolution.

Shubra al-Khaymah's proximity to Cairo and the persistently high level of labor-capital struggles there

projected it into the national consciousness as the major arena exemplifying the contradictions created by the expansion of industrial capitalism in Egypt. Therefore, a detailed study of the development of the working class movement in and around Shubra al-Khaymah is valuable not only because of the intrinsic importance of the region, but perhaps even more so because it brings into focus issues less sharply defined, but nonetheless present, elsewhere.

This chapter thus represents a shift in perspective to which it is necessary to call the reader's attention. Because it consists essentially of a detailed local history, its content and method bear some similarity to studies of working class communities done by the "new social history" school.[2] Although oral and written recollections of participants and the local weekly newspaper Shubra constitute the bulk of the sources of the narrative, it is not quite a local history of this sort. This is because the perceptions and recollections of the most important figures in this story are far from innocent or unselfconscious, and they do not represent the consciousness of the average worker. They are informed by a Marxist theoretical perspective which they embraced after some of the events related occurred. Their memory and their view of what is significant is firmly shaped by

this perspective. For them, what happened in Shubra al-Khaymah is significant not only for its own sake, but because of its broader historical and theoretical importance; and this is why they bothered to remember and reconstruct it.

This study of Shubra al-Khaymah cannot be considered a case study in the sense that it illuminates, by focusing on a particular example, trends and social phenomena which are present to the same degree and extent in the broader society of which it is a part. It is rather an attempt to highlight what is analytically important about the process of capitalist development and working class formation by focusing on a relatively advanced example. In this sense Shubra al-Khaymah can be viewed as a vanguard region where contradictions very much present, but for various reasons less fully developed, received their fullest expression.

In order to maintain the coherence of the narrative in this chapter, I have found it necessary to repeat some material mentioned elsewhere. The change of perspective in this chapter will hopefully add a new dimension to this material and justify this burden on the reader.

Development of the Mechanized Textile Industry in Shubra al-Khaymah

The region along the road leading north from Cairo to Benha first became a textile center in the days of Muhammad ᶜAli. As late as 1939, according to the report of a government inspector sent to investigate conditions in the area,[3] there were still 11,000 handicraft weavers in Qalyubiyah Province. They labored in unclean and unhealthy conditions, working long hours, sometimes past midnight, using weak gas lamps which caused them to develop impaired vision. Many suffered from tuberculosis. Several strikes for higher wages took place in the 1930s in response to wage cuts which the loom owners had instituted in order to keep their product affordable for the upper Egyptian peasants, the major consumers of cheap handwoven cloth.

Most of the weavers were recruited from former peasants. As price competition intensified, some loom owners moved their operations out of the provincial capital of Qalyub into the countryside where inexperienced workers could be hired for lower wages. This method of keeping wages down became common in the mechanized textile industry. The rural low-wage character of Shubra al-Khaymah in the early 1930s was, at first, a major incentive for the location of industry there.

By the mid-1930s, Shubra al-Khaymah was rapidly becoming a predominantly industrial area with a high concentration of textile mills. In 1937 there were ten factories, mainly textile mills, in the town of Shubra al-Khaymah.[4] At this time the population of Shubra al-Khaymah was approximately 250,000. It began to suffer from a housing shortage and overcrowding due to the rapid expansion in the size of its work force.[5]

From the late 1930s on, Shubra al-Khaymah is clearly identified as a "social problem" whose origins are rooted in the industrial character of the area. In 1937 a reporter for al-Balagh filed an investigative report on labor conditions in Shubra al-Khaymah which previews several of the issues which arose in future labor-management struggles.[6] According to this reporter, factory owners located in Shubra al-Khaymah in order to avoid complying with the minimal labor legislation then in force regulating the employment of minors and women. Since Shubra al-Khaymah was still fairly remote from Cairo, they hoped that government labor inspectors would be less likely to travel there to examine conditions. The Labor Administration was already aware of the poor conditions and had organized several police raids on the mills. Nonetheless, employers continually disregarded the labor laws with little or no consequences. One plant,

for example, employed nearly 100 minors out of a total work force of 230. Several plants employed minors at night.

In Shubra al-Khaymah most of the textile mills were medium-sized low-capital enterprises. A large proportion of the owners was non-Egyptian, either European or Levantine. Labor struggles against foreigners, or those tinged with a semiforeign identity (such as Levantines or Egyptian Jews) tended to assume the character of national struggles, and thus had a much greater chance of winning popular, and occasionally governmental, support than similar confrontations with the Misr Company, which was perceived as a national institution. The nationalist character of workers' economic struggles in Shubra al-Khaymah enhanced their national political impact.

The working class character of the Shubra area received an early expression in the weekly newspaper Shubra, which first appeared on March 25, 1937. The paper was established to further the interests and development of Shubra al-Khaymah.[7] Among the early members of the Executive Board was ᶜAziz Mirhum, the prominent Wafdist labor lawyer who had been a central figure in pro-Wafd trade union organizations in the early and mid-1930s. The newspaper was written and managed by political figures and did not, during its early years, express the views of

any significant organized segment of the area's workers. Nonetheless, from its first issue, the contents of Shubra indicated that the paper's editors and contributors showed an awareness of the growing importance of industrial workers in the area. They attempted to appeal to them by writing about their complaints and grievances and, at least on the formal level, defending their interests. Despite the fact that Shubra was written by nonworkers, including political figures of various stripes who sought to use the workers to further their personal careers, the paper's contents reflect the existence of a clearly identifiable worker constituency in Shubra al-Khaymah with a distinct identity and interests.

The early issues of Shubra were greatly influenced by the ideas of ᶜIsam al-Din Hifni Nasif, an intellectual who grew up in Shubra al-Khaymah, became a socialist and wrote frequently in Shubra and other journals promoting socialist ideas and a politically independent workers' movement.[8] Nasif promoted the establishment of a Labor Party and wrote many articles explaining the meaning of socialism in Shubra. Salamah Musa, the Fabian socialist intellectual, contributed several articles in the early issues of Shubra dealing with the correct tactics to use in strikes, the establishment of a Labor Party and defending higher wages and shorter hours in modern industrial establishments.[9] Shubra published news about

trade union affairs and strikes, particularly of the tram workers.[10] It also called on the government to officially recognize trade unions.[11]

Shubra's owner, ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd Allah, had been Prince ᶜAbbas Halim's private secretary in the early 1930s.[12] By July 1937, the paper became involved in promoting the Prince's attempts to reestablish his position as the leader (zaᶜim) of the Egyptian workers. It continued to publish articles of concern to workers throughout 1937 and 1938 and to promote the establishment of a Labor Party, now under the banner of ᶜAbbas Halim and with a less radical program than the one formulated by Hifni Nasif. However, Shubra's major concern became the promotion of ᶜAbbas Halim until June 1938, when it broke with him and began to attack his role in the labor movement.[13] As the paper became more absorbed with political intrigues, its contents reflected less and less the concerns and interests of local workers.

Although this earliest attempt to create a vehicle of expression for Shubra al-Khaymah workers (at least this was Hifni Nasif's intention) degenerated into political opportunism, Shubra al-Khaymah very soon became one of the most important centers of independent working class economic and political organization and struggle in Egypt. This activity was centered among the mechanized textile

workers who, because of their absolute numbers, physical concentration, location in a large and strategically important industry for Egypt's industrial development and militance, became one of the most influential sectors of the entire Egyptian labor movement.

Formation of a Textile Workers' Union

The first union of mechanized textile workers in the Shubra area was established in the early 1930s at the Weaving and Knitting Company of Shubra Misr.[14] This union was apparently dissolved within a short time. From this experience, activists realized that if a union was based on more than one mill and its leadership dispersed in more than one work place, it would be more difficult to prevent the union from functioning by firing its key leaders.[15] This was the beginning of the regional form of trade union organization that was to characterize the textile industry of suburban Cairo. The first recorded mention of a regional trade union among Shubra textile workers is in November 1937, when the Commission to Organize the Workers' Movement (COWM) granted recognition to the Shubra al-Khaymah Mechanized Textile Workers' Union (SKMTWU).[16]

Although the COWM was nominally under the presidency of ʿAbbas Halim, the driving force in this organization

was Muhammad Yusuf al-Mudarrik, the veteran trade union organizer committed to the concept of the independence of the trade union movement from all nonworker elements. Mahmud al-ᶜAskari, the General Secretary of the SKMTWU at this time, and its representative to the COWM Executive Board, was a supporter of al-Mudarrik within the organization. Thus from the very earliest period of its formation, the SKMTWU was closely associated with the left wing of the workers' movement.

In the same period Shubra reported that a "group of educated workers" met in the headquarters of the Society of Muslim Brothers and decided to hold a workers' conference on August 22, 1938, to discuss the poor condition of the workers' movement and the possible formation of a workers' party.[17] Such a party apparently was formed, although it appears to have been a very insignificant and short-lived body inspired by the Palace and other anti-Wafd elements with no prominent trade unionists among its leadership.[18] The party's offices were located in the headquarters of the Muslim Brothers.[19] This is the earliest mention of the Brothers' association with labor-organizing activity in the Cairo metropolitan area. According to Muhammad Sharif, former head of the Workers' Section of the Muslim Brothers, the society formed a workers' committee in Shubra al-Khaymah in the late

1930s.[20] This appears to be the activity he was referring to.

An even more important source of Muslim Brothers influence among the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers in this period was Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman, who became one of the principal leaders of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers. Because his career is typical of many textile union activists, and particularly of those who became leftists or Marxists in the 1940s, it is worth giving a short biographical sketch.[21]

Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman was born in 1916 in the village of Kum al-Ahmar three kilometers from Bani Suwayf. His father was an illiterate landless peasant who had once owned one or one-and-a-half feddans. He was educated first in the village kuttab and later in a primary school in Bani Suwayf. Since his parents could not afford to pay for his education, he went to a free technical secondary school. There he learned the skills involved in the textile manufacturing process. His first job was as a foreman in a textile mill in Bani Suwayf.

At this time all of the supervisors in the textile mills of Shubra al-Khaymah were foreigners. The Egyptian government issued instructions to these mills to begin to employ Egyptians in their places; and the Ministry of Finance nominated five technical school graduates,

including Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman, as the first Egyptians in this program. In January 1938, ^{c}Uthman and his colleagues began work as foremen at the Henri Pierre mill (Masna^{c} Nasij al-Aqmishah al-Hadithah) in Shubra al-Khaymah. All the skilled workers in the mill, except for the five Egyptians, and the entire management were foreigners. The mill was a medium-sized one by Shubra al-Khaymah standards of that period. It had seventy-six looms and worked two shifts. One weaver operated two looms.

When ^{c}Uthman began to work at Henri Pierre, the SKMTWU was already in existence. Mahmud al-^{c}Askari and several other union leaders were also employed at Henri Pierre. When Taha Sa^{c}d first heard about the union from al-^{c}Askari, he was not interested. Soon a personal struggle with the management of Henri Pierre changed his mind. Henri Pierre had promised to give the skilled Egyptians raises after six months of employment. This promise was not honored. Al-^{c}Askari told Taha Sa^{c}d that if the five Egyptian foremen struck, the workers would support them. The foremen did threaten to strike and were supported by the workers. As a result, they received their wage increases and became supporters of the union. In late 1938, ^{c}Uthman became President of the SKMTWU, a post he held until 1943. From 1943 to 1944 he was Treasurer of the union. In 1944 and 1945 he served as Sergeant-at-Arms.[22]

The presence of educated skilled workers like Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman and the other technical school graduates made a great contribution to the development of the textile workers' unions, not only in Shubra al-Khaymah but throughout the textile industry. Many leading members of the textile unions had received some basic education but could not finish it because their families were not able to bear the expense. Some went to free technical schools and entered the mills as skilled workers or foremen. Others were chosen for advanced training after employment because of their basic literacy. These skilled workers and foremen formed the backbone of the independent trend within the trade union movement. The relatively large number of educated workers in the textile industry was an important factor in building the leadership of the textile workers in the entire trade union movement.

From 1935 to 1938 Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman was a member of the Society of Muslim Brothers. He was a prominent and capable organizer for the Society and a close personal friend of its founder, Hasan al-Banna. When Taha Sa^{c}d became active in the trade union movement, Hasan al-Banna released him from his organizational responsibilities to the Brothers in order to free him to carry out his trade union duties.[23] But Taha Sa^{c}d maintained his close personal ties to the Brothers until 1946. According to

Mahmud al-ᶜAskari:

> This good relationship helped us to build a firm bridge between ourselves and the Society of Muslim Brothers represented in the person of its great leader. He [viz. Hasan al-Banna] had become completely convinced that trade union organization is a humanitarian organization first and foremost which defends the subjugated wretched of the earth without regard to their religion.[24]

It is difficult to imagine how al-ᶜAskari, writing these memoirs in 1976, could retain so generous an assessment of the Muslim Brothers in view of the subsequent violent antipathy between the SKMTWU leadership (including himself) and the Society. Nonetheless, this account, as well as the reports in Shubra cited earlier, make it clear that both independent-minded trade union radicals and Muslim Brothers were among the forces active in the formation of the SKMTWU. There is no evidence of any friction between these two tendencies at this time.

After the start of World War II there was a big wave of firings in the textile mills because of a shortage of raw materials. At Henri Pierre, where several of the union leaders including Mahmud al-ᶜAskari and Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman were employed, an entire shift, including the union leaders, was fired.[25] In response the SKMTWU Executive Board decided to call a hunger strike.

This was a very popular tactic among Egyptian trade unionists at this time and seems to be due to the influence

of the thought and action of Mahatma Gandhi. Only a few months earlier Yusuf al-Mudarrik had led a hunger strike of eight trade union leaders in support of the demand for legal recognition of trade unions. These hunger strikers are referred to by al-ᶜAskari as "the followers of Gandhi in Egypt."[26]

The first contingent of hunger strikers, led personally by al-ᶜAskari, installed themselves in the union's headquarters. Outside, other workers held demonstrations supporting the strikers. After four days, despite earlier government threats to shut down the union because its activities were allegedly disturbing the peace and general security, Prime Minister ᶜAli Mahir issued a military order prohibiting mass firings without prior government consent. Those fired from the Shubra al-Khaymah textile mills, including Henri Pierre, were returned to work.[27]

This successful struggle led to a rapid growth of the SKMTWU. Prior to this incident, only a small number of textile workers had been union members. After this victory the union gained many new adherents.[28] However, this victory was not a permanent one. In June 1940 a large number of textile workers, including Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman and thirteen other members of the union Executive Board, were fired with government approval.[29] The second

half of 1940 and the first half of 1941 seem to have been a period of inactivity for the union due to the dispersal of its leadership and the general weakness of the Egyptian trade union movement at this time.[30]

When the union resumed its activity in late 1941 many of the basic economic and political concepts which were to guide its activities were already firmly established. A number of the organizational weaknesses which had led to the union's inactivity were corrected. The major innovation was the decentralization of leadership through the establishment of a Stewards' Committee (lajnat al-mandubin) with representatives for each mill in which the union was present.[31]

The union's first constitution was adopted by the Executive Board at its meetings of October 13 and 20, 1939. The original version of this document has not survived. The earliest organizational document available to us is an amended version of this constitution which was adopted by the union's General Assembly on April 26, 1942.[32]

The constitution stipulated that all mechanized textile workers regardless of their educational or practical qualifications were eligible for union membership. The union would refrain from political activity and be independent from all political bodies. It would strive

to create a "workers' bloc" (kutlah ᶜummaliyah) to achieve social benefits for workers and would work to educate workers and eliminate illiteracy. It would press the government to enact labor legislation and defend the rights of the union and its members by all legal means. The constitution also established an initiation fee, monthly dues, an oath of loyalty, procedures for accepting and expelling members, a welfare fund to provide financial aid to laid-off or disabled members, and benefits payable upon the death of a family member or in case a worker was fired as a result of actions authorized by the Executive Board. Regular meetings of the union General Assembly were established at twice yearly intervals with two-thirds of all the paid up members constituting a quorum. The union's Executive Board was to be composed of one representative for each plant. It was to meet once a week. Two constitutional provisions gave expression to the nationalist sentiments of the union. Its funds were to be deposited in Bank Misr, and a quota was set for the percentage of foreigners who were permitted to become members. In fact, however, no foreigners ever joined the union.[33]

The union's constitution represents a highly developed organizational concept of the nature and purpose of trade unionism. Many of these ideas were consciously

based on what was known about the practices of European trade unions, which were generally assumed by the SKMTWU leadership and many other Egyptian trade unionists at this time to represent a correct model for trade union organization whose general applicability to Egypt was not questioned. This is clearly indicated in Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman's speech to the 3,000 union members who attended the April 26, 1942, General Assembly in which he explained to the membership the basic functions and objectives of the union.[34] This level of organizational sophistication is all the more notable since as a matter of stated principle the union had no formal ties to either ^{c}Abbas Halim or the Wafd, the major sources of organizational support for trade union activity prior to this time.

However impressive the union's formal organizational structure may be, this could not have been the main source of its real strength and popularity among the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers. One important informal mechanism for reinforcing bonds of solidarity seems to have been the close personal relationships between the members of the union Executive Board. Every Sunday, before the regular meetings, all the members of the Executive Board would eat dinner at the home of one of their number.[35] This gathering functioned as a pre-meeting during which the major issues to be resolved were discussed and decisions

reached before moving on to the formal meeting in the union's headquarters. The practice of meeting in homes made the union a part of the family life of its leadership, and thus extended its influence beyond its membership into the community.[36] These meetings also served as an informal forum where the union leadership came into contact with a variety of political personalities. It was at one of these meetings in 1939 or 1940 that the union leadership first met a member of the Free Officers, although this contact was not maintained or developed.[37]

Egyptian national feeling also played an important role in consolidating the strength of the union, particularly among the skilled workers and foremen. Many foreign foremen left the textile mills after the start of World War II. At Henri Pierre, the five Egyptian foremen were left alone to direct the first line operations of the mill. Despite management's doubts about their ability to keep the mill running, they did so successfully.[38] But regardless of their skill and level of technical education, Egyptian skilled workers and foremen were never accorded the status that Europeans in the same position were given. They were considered "workers," both by management and by many wealthy Egyptians who made no distinctions among those engaged in physical labor.

Anger and resentment against the companies for failing to accord them the respect they felt they deserved was, therefore, a major motivation for the high rate of union activity of this group. As a result of the national discrimination against them by their employers and the low social status accorded to them by aristocratic minded Egyptians, foremen, who in Europe or North America might not have been considered part of the working class, often thought of themselves as "workers" and were accepted as such by other workers in Egypt. This is one of the important ways in which Egyptian national feeling and hatred of foreign domination became an inextricable part of working class consciousness.

Not all the textile foremen continued to identify themselves with the other workers. In 1942 some of them split from the SKMTWU and formed a separate union for mechanized textile foremen and assistant foremen. Despite the split, relations between the two unions remained close, and they cooperated in many activities. The formation of a separate union for foremen and assistant foremen can be taken as an indication of ambivalent feelings about class identity on the part of at least some of the foremen. On the one hand, they no longer considered themselves the same as ordinary workers. On the other hand, the formation of a union is an indication that they still considered

that their interests were antagonistic to those of the management. The inability to identify with management is at least partly the result of the non-Egyptian character of management. However, a large number of foremen remained with the original union. Many of the leaders of the SKMTWU were foremen, including a disproportionately high percentage of those who eventually became communists.

The Union and the Wafd

Despite the strong nationalist sentiment in the union and the generally pro-Wafd feelings of the vast majority of the members, the union avoided any organizational links with the Wafd. Nonetheless, the return of the Wafd to power on February 4, 1942, greatly contributed to the development of the SKMTWU. The fact that the Wafd depended on a popular majority for its strength and always received it in any reasonably free election made it more susceptible to mass pressure. This could make a concrete difference in the outcome of many labor struggles. The SKMTWU was particularly adept at using the Wafd's popular character to obtain its own demands. This was made possible because of the strength and independence of its own organization, which allowed it to determine its own priorities rather than depend on the initiatives of

the Wafd leadership.

The struggle for a 10 percent cost-of-living allowance (COLA) which was waged in late 1941 and early 1942 provides a good illustration of the relationship of unity and struggle between the SKMTWU and the Wafd. In September 1941, following the general strike of the Cairo transport workers, the government issued a military order granting its employees a 10 percent COLA. Since no employers except the government were legally required to pay the COLA, there was a struggle at each individual enterprise over this issue. The large monopoly corporations followed the government's lead. But medium- and small-sized firms, both foreign and Egyptian, delayed and tried to avoid granting the COLA by confusing it with annual raises or combining it with other fringe benefits.[39]

Most of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile mills did not pay the COLA. The most vehement in its refusal was Beso (Masna^{c} Nasij al-Qahirah), a Greek-owned mill employing nearly 500 workers.[40] The Beso workers presented the management with a memorandum detailing their demands, including the 10 percent COLA, and announced a fifteen-day deadline after which they would resort to "all methods of struggle."[41] In response, Beso locked out the workers on January 1, 1942.

The SKMTWU presence at Beso was probably not very strong at this time since a union steward was not elected

at the mill until April 1942.[42] Nonetheless, Mahmud al-ᶜAskari and seven Beso workers installed themselves in the union's headquarters and proclaimed a hunger strike, threatening to use any means necessary to win their demands.[43] The police chief of Shubra al-Khaymah ejected the hunger strikers from the union office, sealed its doors with wax, removed its sign and placed a guard in front of the building.[44] The hunger strikers then moved to the home of one of their number. The police did not disturb them in this location because the local branch of the Muslim Brothers was housed in the same building, and the police thought that it was there that the strikers had gone.[45]

During the hunger strike the Wafd was returned to power, an event warmly greeted by the Shubra al-Khaymah workers.[46] When ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq, the new Wafd Minister for Social Affairs, heard about the hunger strike, he quickly intervened on the side of the workers. He ordered the police to reopen the union headquarters, restore their sign and to refrain from interfering in the union's activities or the strike.[47] Then he met with the hunger strikers and promised to protect their interests.

Although the workers were very favorably impressed with ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq and had great praise for him, they did not leave matters in his hands. They continued the hunger strike and continued to organize to

achieve their objectives. A list of ten demands to be applied not only to Beso, but to all the Shubra area textile mills was formulated. The demands were:[48] (1) 10 percent COLA to be paid based on the prevailing wage at the time the military order was issued; (2) equal treatment and privileges for Egyptian and foreign workers, foremen, and white-collar employees; (3) equal pay for equal production for Egyptians and foreigners; (4) paid sick leave; (5) paid annual vacation; (6) replacement of foreign advisors with Egyptians by nonrenewal of foreigners' contracts when qualified Egyptians were available; (7) a lunch room and dressing room for workers similar to facilities provided to foremen; (8) company provision of transportation to the mills in Shubra al-Khaymah; (9) no firing of any worker or white-collar employee before the case is submitted to a committee including representatives of management, workers, and the government; (10) establishment of a prayer facility in each mill.

This represents the first available set of comprehensive demands made by the SKMTWU, and they are a good reflection of the political consciousness of the union leadership at this time. Four of the points (2, 3, 6, 10) contain obvious nationalist content. It is clear from these demands that the issue of discrimination against Egyptians in favor of foreigners was a major issue

at all levels of employment. This was the reason why the union felt justified in raising demands for blue-collar workers, foremen and supervisors alike (2, 6, 9), considering them all to be, in light of the discrimination against all Egyptians, workers in some vague sense. Because of the prevalence of this national discrimination, it was generally believed that an Egyptian worker and an Egyptian foreman shared more in common than that which divided them. Finally, the union expected that the government, as a matter of normal procedure, would play a major role in settling labor disputes (9) and, particularly when the Wafd was in power, trusted that this would result in decisions in their favor.

In order to ensure compliance with and further publicize their demands, the Shubra al-Khaymah workers prepared a large march to the Wafd headquarters, the Sa^{c}dist Club, in Garden City.[49] On February 11, 1942, workers from Shubra al-Khaymah, Imbabah, Zaytun, Matariyah, ^{c}Ayn Shams and other suburban Cairo textile centers participated in a demonstration organized by the "Committee of Hunger Strikers." Anwar Fu'ad, a worker at Henri Pierre, as marshal of the parade, was charged with persuading the police along the route that the workers were simply marching to ^{c}Abdin Palace to greet King Faruq on his birthday.

When the march reached the Sa^{c}dist Club the hunger striking workers, clearly identifying themselves as supporters of the Wafd, occupied the meeting room of the Wafd executive committee and demanded to meet with the new Prime Minister, Mustafa al-Nahhas.[50] The workers also dispatched a delegation to meet with ^{c}Abd al-Hamid ^{c}Abd al-Haqq, who again agreed to support their demands. Al-Nahhas refused to meet with the workers, claiming that he could not discuss matters with Mahmud al-^{c}Askari amidst thousands of workers. So he sent as his surrogate ^{c}Abd al-Fattah al-Shalaqani, who was to become the Representative for Shubra al-Khaymah in the parliament which convened on March 30, 1942. Al-Shalaqani brought with him the draft text of a military order establishing the Conciliation and Arbitration Committees (Military Order No. 239 of 1942) which the government proposed as the vehicle for resolving the workers' grievances.[51]

On the basis of commitments made by the Wafd leadership, the hunger strikers left the Sa^{c}dist Club giving the government forty-eight hours to fulfill its promises.[52] Al-Nahhas issued an order reopening the Beso Mill and all the workers jailed in the course of this struggle were released. All the workers returned to their jobs and received forty-five days back pay for the time of the lockout, and the 10 percent COLA was implemented.[53]

This impressive victory enabled the SKMTWU to expand its activities and membership. A regional branch of 150 members was set up in the town of Mit Halfa, and the number of mills with elected stewards grew to at least sixteen.[54] This growth was reflected in the change of the name of the union to the General Union of Mechanized Textile Workers in Shubra al-Khaymah and Cairo (GUMTWSKC).

Although the Conciliation and Arbitration Committees often ruled against the interests of the workers, in Qalyubiyah Province the head of the Committee was Fu'ad Shirin, a nationalist. Under his administration, many of the ten demands the textile workers had raised were won through decisions of the Conciliation and Arbitration Committee.[55]

Another example of the union's independence of the Wafd is its decision to publish a regular newspaper of its own. In late 1941 and early 1942 the SKMTWU was in close contact with pro-Wafd trade union circles as a result of its cooperation with the Egyptian General Printers' Union in the publication of the weekly newspaper, al-Wajib. The printers' union and its President, Zaki Abu Khayr, were identified with the Wafd, and al-Wajib was owned by a Wafdist. Through this experience Mahmud al-ᶜAskari and the GUMTWSKC leadership became

convinced of the value of a regular organ of expression. Instead of continuing to cooperate with the Wafd's efforts to publish a labor newspaper, the GUMTWSKC leadership decided to publish their own newspaper. In April 1942, they arranged to rent the license to publish Shubra, which was still owned by ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd Allah, who is described by Mahmud al-ᶜAskari as having Wafdist and Fabian socialist views at this time.[56] The GUMTWSKC took over the publication of Shubra with the issue of April 30, 1942. Mahmud al-ᶜAskari became the Managing Editor and Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman became Secretary of the Editorial Board.

This development laid the basis for a new stage of organizational and political development for the union. Shubra provided a stable legal means of expression for the union and served not only as an organizational tool for the union's internal affairs, but also as a means to broaden its political vision and extend its influence to other sectors of the working class. This new perspective was indicated on the masthead of Shubra which, after May 7, 1942, carried the subtitle "a weekly workers' political newspaper." The control of an independent newspaper enabled the union to express not only its general support for the Wafd, but also its reservations, which would not have been possible to declare openly in the pages of al-Wajib or its successor, al-Yaraᶜ.

Shubra dubbed ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq "the workers' minister" and announced that he would meet with delegations of workers every Sunday evening because the "People's Ministry" (i.e., the Wafd) was concerned with workers' issues.[57] ᶜAbd al-Haqq's efforts on behalf of the workers were reported in detail and his activities and statements were given generous and positive coverage. However, ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq did not diverge from the traditional Wafd view of the appropriate relationship between workers and their employers, a corporatism based on denying the existence of class conflict. In May 1942, during a visit to the GUMTWSKC headquarters he advised the workers:

> You must . . . have relations of mutual love and sincerity with the employers and mutual understanding and harmony between yourselves and them should replace anger and antipathy.[58]

ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq fully supported the Wafd's position that there should be no strikes for the duration of the war. In Alexandria he warned striking textile workers that striking is a crime against the nation and that if they did not return to work and rely on the Conciliation and Arbitration Committees to resolve their grievances, the full force of the laws and military orders regarding strikes would be applied against them.[59]

It was precisely on this vital trade union issue of the right to strike that the GUMTWSKC did not hesitate

to voice opinions at variance with those of ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq and the Wafd. Shubra published a "warning" for workers to beware of being misled by those who said that the strike weapon should not be employed as long as al-Nahhas was Prime Minister and ᶜAbd al-Haqq Minister of Social Affairs.[60] The willingness to openly publish such a statement which stood in sharp contradiction with official Wafd policy is a clear indication that the union leadership was using its relationship with the Wafd in order to attain its own ends defined in light of its own experience. The Wafd did not have the power to determine union policy in the same way that it had been able to manipulate the various trade union federations of the 1930s. In June 1943, the GUMTWSKC went so far as to openly challenge the Wafd by calling a national one-day strike of textile workers to protest the removal of ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq as Minister of Social Affairs and his replacement by Fu'ad Siraj al-Din.[61]

Shubra: A Vehicle for Working Class Consciousness

The militancy of the GUMTWSKC and its outstanding success in winning its demands enabled it to assume a leading role among Egypt's textile workers and throughout the entire Egyptian trade union movement. After the victory at Beso in the struggle for the 10 percent COLA,

delegations representing textile unions in Alexandria, Kafr al-Dawwar, Mahallah al-Kubra, Bani Suwayf, Damietta, Imbabah and upper Egypt came to Shubra al-Khaymah to consult with the leadership of the GUMTWSKC.[62] The union's leading role among Egypt's textile workers was further strengthened because it possessed in Shubra an organizing tool unmatched by any other trade union in Egypt at this time.

The union used its local strength and its newspaper to aid other workers in the course of their struggles. Shubra encouraged the formation of new unions among many previously unorganized workers--pharmaceutical warehouse workers in Shubra al-Khaymah, linen weavers in Abu al-Ghayt, mechanized textile workers in Zaytun and rubber shoe workers.[63] The union also consulted with the hand weavers' union whose members were under great economic pressure as the rapid development of the mechanized industry drove them out of work.[64]

Shubra served not only as an organizational tool but also as a vehicle for cultural expression. As such it is a good indicator of the ideas current among at least the literate minority of textile workers. Perhaps the most important concept which Shubra promoted was a positive and militant self-image for workers. An article by ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd Allah in the first issue of Shubra

after the union took over its direction entitled simply "The Workers" is a panegyric to the positive characteristics of the working class. The workers are called "strength," "the source of life," "humanity," "nationalists," and "the nerves of the state."[65] Many other articles in a similar vein appeared in Shubra.

Shubra also provided a platform for the intellectual development and self-expression of workers. Many worker-intellectuals gained experience and confidence by writing in the pages of Shubra. Mahmud al-ᶜAskari and Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman are the most important figures in this group. There were also others, whose long-term influence may have been less, but who are nonetheless representative of the political ferment among Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers at this time.

One of the most prominent voices of working class cultural expression was Fathi al-Maghribi. He began his career working at the Misr Spinning and Weaving mill in Mahallah al-Kubra. By 1942 he was well established as a literary figure. He wrote for al-Wajib and was a member of the editorial board of Shubra from the first issue published by the GUMTWSKC. He also wrote for the Wafd labor weekly al-Yaraᶜ.

Fathi al-Maghribi wrote news items, short stories and literary essays. However, his most frequent vehicle of expression was zajal, a popular form of colloquial

poetry. Many of his poems were printed in the pages of Shubra, and he recited his zajal at many GUMTWSKC meetings. Often his zajal commemorated struggles in which the union was engaged. For example, he composed a poem to mark the enactment of Law 85 of 1942 granting legal recognition to trade unions,[66] and another satirizing the perennial antagonist of the Egyptian workers' movement, the Egyptian Federation of Industries.[67]

Al-Maghribi was keen to promote awareness of the historical tradition of popular culture in Egypt. He greatly admired Bayram al-Tunisi, the poet of the 1919 revolution, on whom he conferred the title, "the dean of popular culture in Egypt."[68] Shubra reprinted several examples of al-Tunisi's zajal, including a very popular poem entitled "The Egyptian Worker."[69]

In 1946, a collection of Fathi al-Maghribi's zajal entitled I the Worker was published with an introduction by Yusuf al-Mudarrik.[70] The title work of the volume was first recited at the April 26, 1942, General Assembly of the GUMTWSKC. Also included were poems protesting the Zionist presence in Palestine, a poem composed to greet al-Mudarrik's return from the Paris meeting of the World Federation of Trade Unions in 1945 and several others which clearly indicate that al-Maghribi was associated with the left wing of the workers' movement.

One of the best examples of the emerging working class pride and self-consciousness which al-Maghribi's poems both reflected and helped to form is a zajal entitled "In All Pride We Are the Workers."[71] The following are translated excerpts (with apologies for my deficient translation and lack of poetic sensibility).

In All Pride We Are the Workers

We are the Egyptian workers, we are the brave
A thousand salutes oh Egypt, mother of countries . . .

The secret of cities' beauty is the workers
The arts of manufacture are the secrets of heroes

We are the builders of your pyramids, oh sphinx
Workers, all of us your servants, this is not unknown

We are the ones who built the fleets of Pharonic times
As well as anything beautiful in this world . . .

The poem concludes with a formalistic salute to King Faruq, which it is probably safe to ignore since it bears no relationship to what precedes it. This zajal is a vivid expression of working class national feeling and pride in the realization that it is the workers who are the creators of Egypt's national heritage. Pride in the role of the labor of the masses as the creator of civilizations seems to be a component of working class

consciousness regardless of the cultural context. The theme of this poem is remarkably similar to a roughly contemporary one by Berthold Brecht entitled "A Worker Reads History."

Another of the worker-intellectuals who made an important contribution to shaping and expressing the consciousness of Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers was Iskandar Sulayman Salib, the Social Affairs Editor of Shubra. His articles on economic and social affairs show some familiarity with general Marxist concepts and a pronounced socialist tendency. For example, in an article entitled "Egyptian Industry After the War" Salib demanded that the Egyptian government develop industry, not for private gain but for the benefit of the general public. Public ownership of industry was clearly implied in this article, but this was posed as a nationalist demand, not as a call for socialism. "Egypt demands nationalism in the economic and social arena," he wrote.[72] This is an early example of the manner in which class demands became identified as, and indistinct from, national demands.

Other regular contributors to Shubra include Muhammad Fawdah, who wrote several articles on women's liberation and other social issues such as the problem of workers spending too much time sitting in cafes. Two

other frequent contributors on social affairs are identified only by their pseudonyms "al-Jundi al-Mazlum" and "ᶜAbd al-Hamid."

By July 1942, Shubra was involved in an attempt to create federations of trade unions in various industries.[73] This activity was illegal according to the terms of Law 85, which recognized trade unions but explicitly banned any form of trade union federation. Perhaps as a result of these activities, Shubra failed to appear after the issue of August 6, 1942, until November 19, 1942. The textile workers' union, however, did not suffer organizationally during this period. On the contrary, it grew and expanded its activities and moved into a new and better headquarters.[74]

When publication resumed, the political tone of Shubra seems to become more moderate and cautious. Mahmud al-ᶜAskari, who was ordinarily quite bold and aggressive, contributed an article urging continued support for the Wafd government and a careful attitude towards political action:

> The workers' movement is now in a period of transition from one period to another and its circumstances demand calm and tranquility and avoiding impetuous action so that its stability and permanence may be assured.[75]

In a second article al-ᶜAskari commented favorably on al-Nahhas' speech opening parliament on November 19,

1942. According to al-ᶜAskari, since this speech indicated that the Wafd government was honoring its promises to the workers, the workers must now obey the government.[76] This was a clear change from the union's policy of six months earlier, which combined general support for the government with the willingness to oppose it whenever the union's interests required this.

These efforts to moderate Shubra's political line failed to avert the closure of the paper as a trade union publication. The textile mill owners pressured ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd Allah not to renew the union's lease on his license to publish because they feared the results of Shubra's contacts with textile workers in other areas and with workers in other sectors of the economy.[77] The last issue of Shubra to be published by the GUMTWSKC appeared on January 21, 1943.

The mill owners were, from the point of view of their own interests, entirely correct to oppose the union's publication of Shubra. The organizational and political experience which the GUMTWSKC leadership gained through publishing the paper provided invaluable lessons for future struggle. No other sector of the working class possessed such an instrument of self-expression and organization. The practical requirements of publishing a newspaper gave its editors the opportunity to come

into contact with new and broader political ideas. And the existence of the newspaper helped to bring the union and its activities to the attention of nonworkers who supported their cause.

Growth of Communist Activity in the Union

No one seems to remember clearly (and police and other intelligence records which no doubt discuss the matter are not available to us) exactly when the first contact between the GUMTWSKC and communist intellectual circles was made. In one sense, the exact details of the first encounter are unimportant. It is clear from the activities of the union from 1937 to 1942 and from some of the articles in Shubra, particularly those of Iskandar Sulayman Salib, that the union leadership was developing its own brand of working class radicalism without the benefit of any clearly articulated ideological system to support it. This radicalism was the product of its own experiences in waging and winning struggles for improved working conditions. These experiences led to the conclusion that with good organization, militant direct action, and a sophisticated use of political contacts and alliances they could achieve at least a good part of their immediate goals. What the communist intellectuals who joined and supported the

workers' struggle offered was a systematic world view which illuminated the structural connections between the union leaders' experiences and the broader framework of Egyptian politics. The communists also offered intellectual and organizational links to nonworkers which could prove important in mobilizing public support for workers' struggles. This was, in my judgment, the basis for the original acceptance of these intellectuals into the confidence of the union leadership.

All recollections agree that the first systematic contact between the GUMTWSKC and the revived Egyptian communist movement occurred when Yusuf Darwish became the union's lawyer in 1942. Darwish was licensed to practice in the mixed courts, which was a great asset to the union, since a large percentage of the textile mill owners were foreigners.[78] With his help, the union set up a school in 1942 and 1943. Darwish himself taught English and French. Other subjects, including general social studies, were also taught, sometimes by leftist intellectual friends of Darwish.[79] Eventually secret Marxist study sessions were organized in which Mahmud al-ᶜAskari, Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman, and others participated.[80]

The arrest and detention of Mahmud al-ᶜAskari was another opportunity for systematic contact with radical political ideas. After the general strike which the

union called protesting the dismissal of ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq and his replacement by Fu'ad Siraj al-Din, al-ᶜAskari and Iskandar Sulayman Salib were arrested and interrogated by Siraj al-Din personally about the union's relations with his political rivals, ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq, Ahmad Mahir, and Makram ᶜUbayd. They were released after a short while and returned to Shubra al-Khaymah.[81] Soon afterwards al-ᶜAskari was rearrested and imprisoned in Zaytun from October 1943 to May 1944.[82]

In prison al-ᶜAskari met a broad spectrum of dissident political elements including Anwar Kamil, a former editor of the short-lived socialist review al-Tatawwur, a large number of Greek communists, members of Young Egypt and the Wafdist Bloc and several Free Officers including Anwar Sadat.[83] He was especially influenced by ᶜAbd al-Mughni Saᶜid, who was then a functionary in the Labor Administration. At that time Saᶜid held vaguely socialist ideas. Al-ᶜAskari and Saᶜid read and discussed a great deal together.[84] This prison experience was a time of intense political development for al-ᶜAskari. As he wrote in his memoirs:

> I emerged with the conclusion that the coming days carry the embryo of a new society . . . which will herald a deep radical change in Egyptian society that will be achieved as a result of the aspirations of these youth who are activated and impelled towards achieving what the revolution of 1919 did not achieve.[85]

By this time al-ᶜAskari almost certainly thought of himself as a socialist. His reference to the 1919 revolution and its unachieved goals is a further illustration of the strong nationalist component in working class political consciousness and its indistinguishability from class and social demands.

On October 8, 1944, King Faruq dismissed the Wafd government, and Egypt began another period of rule by minority parties and personalities with little popular support. Shortly after the ouster of the Wafd, the GUMTWSKC Executive Board adopted the following statement:

> From its establishment in 1937 until now it [the Union] has been as distant as possible from all non-worker organizations and personalities. And it will remain independent according to its principles [and] in accordance with the spirit of trade unionism respecting the stipulations of the legislation which His Highness King Faruq I, "the first worker," may God protect him, has signed.
>
> The Secretary General
> [i.e. Mahmud al-ᶜAskari][86]

This statement was primarily a defensive action designed to fend off retribution from the textile workers now that the Wafd was ousted from power. However, it is also an accurate characterization of the actual views and practice of the GUMTWSKC. Although the union had benefited greatly from the Wafd government and generally supported it with some reservations, it had always assumed an independent political stand. Now that the

Wafd was out of power it had all the more reason to continue in this manner, especially since the Wafd decided to boycott the new elections called for January 1945 and there was, therefore, no hope of returning the Wafd to power. The implication that the union, in accordance with the law, had been apolitical was, however, only formally correct in the sense that it was not officially linked to any party. Under the slogan of "independence from nonworker organizations and personalities" the GUMTWSKC had become the most politically conscious sector of the Egyptian working class.

This was clearly manifested in the union's decision to nominate a worker to run for the office of Representative of Shubra al-Khaymah in the January 1945 parliamentary elections. This represents the first conscious and organized attempt by Egyptian workers to compete for a share of state power, and it is an important new departure in the development of worker radicalism in Shubra al-Khaymah.

Three textile unions formed an electoral committee composed of ten members from each union to choose a nominee. The participating unions were the GUMTWSKC, the Greater Cairo Textile Foremen and Assistant Foremen's Union and the Greater Cairo Silk Weavers' Union.[87]

Mahmud al-ᶜAskari won the nomination of the committee. Some members of the foremen's union objected

to him, probably because he was too radical and lacked a formal education. He therefore relinquished his nomination in favor of Faddali ᶜAbd al-Jayyid ᶜAbd al-Jawwad, a foreman at the Sibahi mill in Shubra al-Khaymah and a graduate of a technical school. He had been the personal instructor of a large number of the foremen in the area and was therefore well known and liked. He was also one of the many foremen who did not split from the original union to form a separate foremen's union in 1942. Since January 1944, he had served as President of the GUMTWSKC. Since Faddali was more acceptable to the foremen's union, he received the nomination.[88]

As soon as it became apparent that Faddali had a good chance of winning the election, he was approached by representatives of the Saᶜdist Party to stand as their candidate. But Faddali himself and thirty of the thirty-one members of the election committee which was responsible for conducting the campaign rejected the proposal.[89] Faddali ran as an independent with a program based on the following points:[90]

I. Foreign Policy

1) Completion of the establishment of Egyptian sovereignty by ending the British occupation
2) Evacuation of all foreign armed forces at the end of the war
3) Firm cooperation with all democratic peoples

4) Realization of the unity of the Arab nation on a popular basis

5) Unity of the Nile Valley with equal political rights for the Sudanese people

II. Internal Policy

1) Expansion of democracy throughout Egypt

2) Realization of the principles of liberty, fraternity, and equality

3) Freeing Egypt from foreign influence by nationalizing monopolies and Egyptianization of large economic and cultural institutions

4) Raising the cultural, economic, and health level of workers, peasants, and low-level white-collar workers and small urban producers and merchants through

   a) National direction of education

   b) Free compulsory primary education

   c) Opening university education to all classes

   d) Encouraging the revival of Egypt's national culture

   e) Amending existing labor legislation to cover minimum wages, maximum hours, collective contracts, social insurance, and legislation for agricultural laborers

5) Reclamation of wasteland and redistribution to peasants in five feddan plots

6) Tax waivers for small land owners and abolition of the maximum limit on land taxes. Lower taxes for small urban producers. Raise minimum wages for low-level white-collar employees

7) Medical insurance for all. Extension of medical clinics to all villages and cities

8) Extension of running water to all rural areas

9) Expansion of popular sports facilities throughout the country

10) Widespread rural construction policies in place of the model village program

This program reflects the emergence of a broad political vision among the textile workers' leadership. Its concerns clearly extend far beyond the local arena of Shubra al-Khaymah and even beyond the boundaries of the industrial working class. National political and economic questions as well as rural issues are treated in a manner which indicates a high degree of sophistication among those who adopted the platform. There is no doubt that Yusuf Darwish and other communist intellectuals played a major role in the formulation of this program since it corresponds, in its broad outlines, to the immediate communist program for this period. Although it contains no explicit call for socialism, many of the planks lean in that direction. The most prominent elements of the program are its national demands for the establishment of full independence for Egypt. It is also important to point out, in anticipation of the reemergence of the Muslim Brothers onto the scene, that there is nothing in it which is in the least bit critical of religion nor is there anything which devout Muslims, as a matter of principle, could not support.

Although Faddali ᶜAbd al-Jayyid did not win the election, this cannot be taken as an accurate measure of popular sentiment in Shubra al-Khaymah at this time.

These elections were among the least honest ever conducted in Egypt under the constitution of 1923. Their results were fixed beforehand by negotiations between the political parties (except the Wafd).[91]

In some respects the outcome of the election was less important than the campaign attempt. The decision to enter a candidate was the clearest possible statement that the leadership of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers was embracing the strategy of independent political action to further the interests of the working class as it understood them. The union continued to maintain a high level of political activity despite the electoral defeat. Marxist study activity became more intense, and the left tendency began to grow bolder and more active.[92] The expansion of the union's activity is reflected in another change in its official name which now became the General Union of Mechanized Textile and Preparatory Workers in Greater Cairo (GUMTPWGC). The British embassy considered the GUMTPWGC to be one of the six most important unions in the Cairo area at this time.[93]

The period January to April 1945 was marked by an extraordinarily high number of strikes, none of which was reported in the daily press. The probable reason for this high rate of strike activity is the slowdown in industrial activity, especially in the textile industry, brought about by the end of World War II. Many mills

either closed down entirely or sharply reduced their work force. Workers faced with losing their jobs resorted to frequent strikes in an effort to save them.

It was during this period of intense strike activity by the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers that the New Dawn communist group was formed by Yusuf Darwish, Ahmad Sadiq Sa^{c}d and Raymond Douek. Mahmud al-^{c}Askari and Yusuf al-Mudarrik joined this group and assumed responsibility for working class organizing. They began to issue leaflets to workers under the signature "Workers' Vanguard" (Tali^{c}at al-^{c}Ummal). Workers' Vanguard actively supported the textile workers' strike movement. A leaflet signed Workers' Vanguard and dated March 28, 1945, urges striking workers to form strike committees and establish strike funds.[94] The agitation of the New Dawn group among the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers also went beyond the boundaries of trade union questions. "Workers' Vanguard" issued a leaflet calling for the celebration of May Day 1945.[95] This leaflet contains sharp political attacks on ^{c}Abbas Halim, ^{c}Abd al-Hamid ^{c}Abd al-Haqq and Fu'ad Siraj al-Din. It also warned against those advocating the immediate formation of a communist party, a move which was regarded as premature.

Because of its strike activity, the Egyptian government issued an order dissolving the GUMTEWGC as of

April 28, 1945. The official reasons given for this action were the incitement and participation in over fifty strikes from January to April, 1945, and attempting to organize a textile union federation.[96] In all probability the strong influence of communists in the union was a contributing factor to the government's decision.

Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman and three other union leaders were arrested briefly at the time of the union's dissolution,[97] but its organizational functioning was not seriously impeded. The General Stewards' Committee and its Leading Committee continued to meet regularly, although secretly, and conduct the union's activities.[98]

Following the dissolution of the GUMTPWGC, its leadership became more involved in political activity led by the New Dawn group. Mahmud al-^{c}Askari and Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman were key figures in the establishment of the Workers' Committee for National Liberation and its weekly newspaper al-Damir. The Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers along with the pharmaceutical warehouse workers, steamboat workers and rubber shoe workers whose unions had been formed with the help of the GUMPTWGC and Yusuf Darwish provided the main base of support for the WCNL.

The Muslim Brothers' Counteroffensive

The increased activity of communist elements among the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers provoked a sharp response from the Society of Muslim Brothers. According to Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman, in late 1944 and early 1945 the Brothers began to emerge as a distinct political tendency within the union.[99] He attributes this to the changes in the social composition of the Society which occurred after Hasan al-Banna broke with the Wafd and was arrested in 1943. In the General Assembly of January 2, 1944, at least two clearly identified members of the Society won seats on the union Executive Board, ^{c}Abd al-Mun^{c}im ^{c}Isawi and Muhammad Abu Talib.[100] Judging from ^{c}Isawi's memoirs, he was particularly hostile to Yusuf Darwish and jealous of his influence over some members of the Executive Board.[101] Despite this increase in Muslim Brothers presence, there was as yet no serious factional activity. The January 1945 General Assembly was held without any evidence of a political schism. This only began after the dissolution of the union.[102]

We have already noted that there was a Muslim Brothers presence among the textile workers of Shubra al-Khaymah from the earliest days of the union's existence. In the late 1930s and early 1940s their activity appears to have been confined to providing a social solidarity

framework and financial mutual aid. The very first issue of the Society's magazine, al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, reported the establishment of a Social Affairs Section within the Society.[103] Several articles on the subject of "social reform" appeared in the magazine from 1942 until it temporarily suspended publication in January 1944. None of these articles mention labor questions explicitly, and they are generally abstract and theoretical discussions of the Islamic view of social issues. At this time the Brothers had no distinctive views on specific issues of trade union tactics and strategy. However, when the magazine resumed publication in December 1944 its articles were written in a more popular language with an openly political tone. According to Muhammad Sharif, the Workers' Section of the Muslim Brothers was established in 1944.[104] Late 1944 therefore appears to be a turning point in the political development of the Brothers, confirming Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman's perception of when the Muslim Brothers became a distinctive political force in the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers' union.

The first article reporting directly on labor affairs appeared in al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun on January 16, 1945. Coverage of labor questions did not become a regular feature until the establishment of a "workers' page" with

the issue of June 28, 1945. Hasan al-Banna himself inaugurated this page with an excerpt from his memoirs in which he recalled that the Brothers had always been involved with workers since the very first members of the first branch of the Society in Isma^{c}iliyah were workers. The same article confirms the existence of a Workers' Section in the Cairo General Headquarters of the Society and asserts that

> The purpose for its creation is not interference in the workers' trade union affairs nor competition with workers' organizations. . . . All that is intended by this section is to bring the good news [da ^{c}wat al-khayr] to these noble souls.[105]

This modest characterization of the objectives of the Muslim Brothers' Workers' Section should be read as an indication that their position in the working class was not yet well established. Another indication of organizational weakness among workers at this time is the very mild and veiled anticommunism of this article compared to the virulent tirades which were to become the Brothers' stock in trade less than a year later.

> The Brothers' advice to workers is that they be constantly on their guard and that they not accept any call until they weight it with a precise scale. And they should always make the scale in their hand the directives of true Islam [al-Islam al-hanif]. They should accept what is in accordance with it and reject what contravenes it.[106]

The break between the Brothers and the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers' union leadership was still not decisive at this point because when Faddali ᶜAbd al-Jayyid died, al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun reported very favorably on his funeral:

> The Shubra al-Khaymah workers commemorated the death of brother Faddali ᶜAbd al-Jayyid whose passing is mourned by the workers. The fighting colleague [al-zamil al-mujahid] Taha ᶜUthman eulogized the deceased and printed, at the Publishing House of the Muslim Brothers, a memorial [pamphlet] in appreciation of this noble man.[107]

This obituary notice is a clear indication that however strained they may have become by this time, relations between the Brothers and the union leadership were not entirely antagonistic as late as August 1945. Moreover, Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman still retained his personal ties to the Brothers, which enabled him to arrange for the publication of the memorial pamphlet at the Brothers' publishing house in order to circumvent the censors.

However, this same issue of al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun also contained the Brothers' first open attack on socialism:

> Those who speak about the workers with these beautiful words [i.e., who use the phrases socialism and social justice] and who call for socialism are the wealthy of the country and its rulers. They are the leaders of opinion and possessors of influence. And what have they done for the workers?[108]

The article goes on to say that the workers should not agree to let themselves be exploited by existing political parties who will only use them to achieve power and then abandon them.

This article can be considered the opening shot in the struggle of the Muslim Brothers against the influence of communism in the working class. Since the center of communist influence in the working class at this time was the leadership of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers' union, this also marked the beginning of the open struggle against the union leadership.

According to Muhammad Sharif, anticommunism was one of the two principal motivations behind the organizing activities of the Muslim Brothers in the working class. The other was, of course, spreading the call of Islam.[109] The Brothers made Shubra al-Khaymah a center of their interest precisely because communist influence was strongest there.

The first post-World War II report of an attempt to organize workers under the banner of the Brothers is a meeting of 350 workers in December 1945, which was convened in the headquarters of the ᶜAbdin branch of the Society.[110] The meeting was attended by a large number of workers from Shubra al-Khaymah, but workers from other locales and industries also attended. The meeting adopted

a comprehensive resolution on the Egyptian national question which called for: (1) immediate evacuation of the Nile Valley; (2) annexation of the Sudan to Egypt; (3) Egyptian sovereignty over the Suez Canal; (4) payment of British wartime debts to Egypt; (5) evacuation of British establishments in Egypt; (6) importation of producer goods rather than consumer goods; (7) Great Britain to relinquish its shares in the Suez Canal; (8) release of the Mufti of Jerusalem and affirmation of the Arab character of Palestine; (9) independence for Indonesia and Morocco; (10) implementation of the Atlantic Pact by the powers. The meeting also called on the Egyptian government to increase its concern for the Egyptian workers and to improve their conditions by: (1) establishing night schools; (2) reconsidering a zakat program; (3) raising duties on imported goods if locally manufactured equivalents existed; (4) establishing health centers; (5) limiting hours of work; (6) establishing uniform clothing for each trade; (7) establishing sports clubs; (8) building workers' housing; (9) prompt payment of compensation to those fired from military production establishments; (10) enactment of a five-year plan.

The arrest of Yusuf al-Mudarrik, Mahmud al-ᶜAskari, and Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman on January 2, 1946, marked an important turning point in the relationship between the

Muslim Brothers and the textile workers' leadership. The three were charged with inciting the strike of 15,000-20,000 Shubra al-Khaymah workers which had begun on January 1 in reaction to the closing of many of the plants in the area. The workers demanded: (1) opening of all the plants in the area; (2) rehiring of fired workers; (3) withdrawal of the police and army.[111] Shubra al-Khaymah had been under virtual military occupation since mid-December 1945 and this continued through June 1946.[112]

The Muslim Brothers' response to the arrest of the three worker leaders was to point out that they belonged to communist cells headed by Jews.[113] The Society did not disagree in principle with the arrest of communists, but pointed out that the tactics of the government for fighting communism were defective.

> We believe that communism can be combatted with a return to the values of true Islam which alone can guarantee social justice and rapprochement between classes. . . . If the government had done this it would find itself without need of the police for surveillance, the prosecution for investigation and judges to try cases.[114]

Work resumed in Shubra al-Khaymah on January 9.[115] The three arrested leaders remained in jail until the end of May 1946. Six hundred other workers arrested by the police in the course of the strike were released on January 18.[116]

Towards the Great Confrontation

The Muslim Brothers' response to the arrest of al-ᶜAskari, al-Muddarik and ᶜUthman and the January 1946 strike greatly intensified the antagonism between the Brothers and the textile workers' leadership. This is one of the reasons that ᶜUthman gave for cutting his ties with the Brothers.[117] Even more important was the Brothers' stand against the communist/Wafdist Vanguard coalition which led the upsurge in the Egyptian nationalist movement in late 1945 and the first half of 1946. The Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers participated actively in this upsurge through the formation of the General Nationalist Committee of Shubra al-Khaymah which was represented on the National Committee of Workers and Students. On February 21, 1946, 15,000 Shubra al-Khaymah workers attended the demonstration in Cairo called by the NCWS. The Brothers' attempt to split the NCWS by the formation of a rival National Committee created an irreparable schism between the Society and the textile workers' leadership.

The arrest of al-ᶜAskari, al-Mudarrik and ᶜUthman also marked the high point of the influence of the New Dawn group among the textile workers. While the three were in jail many of the members of the Stewards' Committee became supporters or members of the EMNL.

This trend was crystallized by the election of EMNL member Muhammad Shatta as Chairman of the Stewards' Committee.

After splitting with the Wafdist Vanguard/communist leadership of the nationalist movement, the Brothers began a full scale organizing campaign to attempt to supplant the left as the leading force among the workers of Shubra al-Khaymah. In March the Society announced the formation of committees in each of the Shubra factories and mills as well as a Higher Committee of Factory Representatives.[118] This organization was exactly parallel to the structure of the Stewards' Committee and was therefore a direct challenge to its leadership. In response to the announcement of the formation of the Brothers' committees the Stewards' Committee issued a sharply worded statement. Many of the signers of this statement were supporters or members of the EMNL.

> The magazine The Muslim Brothers has published [an account] that it has formed a committee in each of the plants in Shubra al-Khaymah and that a Higher Committee of these committees of Muslim Brothers has been formed. The truth is that committees were not formed despite the strong efforts of this Society. We, the representatives of the workers of Shubra al-Khaymah, went to the headquarters of the Muslim Brothers in order to learn the reason for these attempts despite the existence of trade unions among the workers. But we did not succeed in obtaining a satisfactory response. Instead we found them speaking in the language of the imperialists and the bosses. Therefore we informed them that we do not agree to the

> operation of any [of their] committees whatsoever. We announce this truth to the public. [signed] ᶜAbd al-ᶜAlim ᶜAmarah, Muhammad Shatta, Mahmud al-Dumrani, Mustafa Muhammad, Shakir Shalabi, ᶜAbd al-Maqsud Abu Zayd, Hanafi ᶜAwad, ᶜAwad al-Baz, Fu'ad Hamdi, Muhammad Sharaf, Zaki al-Jazzar, Shibli Husayn and others.[119]

The confrontation between the Muslim Brothers and the textile workers' leadership took place against the background of the strengthening of the left wing of the trade union movement through the tentative unification of the New Dawn and EMNL-led trade union federations, the continuing mass mobilization of the national movement and the active participation of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers in both arenas. Throughout the spring of 1946 the Brothers pressed forward with their campaign to recruit workers in Shubra al-Khaymah. In one incident a foreman at the Nile Company who was a member of the Society tried to recruit Ahmad al-Shinawi, a member of the Stewards' Committee. When al-Shinawi refused to join, he was fired. Subsequently workers occupied the mill demanding that he be rehired. The local police chief and the Director of the Labor Administration, Hamid al-ᶜAbd, promised that he would be rehired. Sixty days after this incident al-Shinawi was still out of work. There were also clashes between supporters of the Brothers and other workers (probably Wafdists) at the Royal Press in Bulaq.[120]

In May 1946 a large strike broke out in Shubra al-Khaymah which eventually idled all the plants in the area. Shortly after the strike began, the government imposed censorship on press coverage,[121] so it is difficult to reconstruct events precisely. The strike appears to have begun in mid-May over the refusal of the Nasr Textile Company to pay workers their wages and the management's threat to close the plant. Workers occupied the mill, refusing to leave until management and the government assured them that the two Nasr plants in Shubra al-Khaymah would not be closed.[122] The strike spread quickly and at least nineteen mills eventually went out on strike.[123] The major issue, as it had been for over a year in most of the labor struggles in the area, was the threat of closure of the mills and subsequent unemployment.

The government saw the strike as a communist-led conspiracy, and Hamid al-ᶜAbd got in touch with Muhammad Sharif to enlist the aid of the Muslim Brothers in combatting the communists and ending the strike. Muhammad Sharif personally attempted to mediate the dispute.[124] However, it seems clear that rather than mediation, what the Brothers set out to do was break the strike and its leadership entirely. According to al-Wafd al-Misri and the personal accounts of several participants, the

Brothers informed the police of the names and addresses of members of the strike committee. Over one hundred workers were arrested as a result of Muslim Brothers' activity.[125] The Brothers also urged the workers to return to work immediately and to sign a no-strike pledge which the owners and the Labor Administration were demanding. The Society expressed the hope that after the return to work the government would act to resolve the problem.[126]

As the strike progressed, al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun and al-Wafd al-Misri found themselves in a daily exchange of charges and countercharges about the strike. Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun published a report that a delegation of workers had come to them and announced their intention to return to work. Al-Wafd al-Misri replied by printing a statement of stewards denying this. The stewards denounced the role of the Society in the strike and reiterated the accusation that they were spying for the police. A list of workers' demands was also issued: (1) free all those arrested; (2) open all plants; (3) halt arbitrary acts of repression by the government; (4) resolve all outstanding disputes, which were the result of a 50 percent wage cut, massive firings, no holidays, excessive overtime and high disciplinary fines.[127]

The Brothers defended themselves against the charges of the stewards and denied the accusation that they were agents of capitalism. They pointed out their long-standing ties with workers who were among the founders of the Society. They called those who slandered the role of the Society in Shubra al-Khaymah "professional agitators."[128]

In the middle of the strike the left published a book-length attack on the Muslim Brothers entitled The Muslim Brothers in the Balance, which characterized the Society as a fascist organization. The section entitled "The Brothers and the Workers" contains the following:

> As for the workers, the Brothers have attempted and continue to attempt to trick them and induce them to join their society. One of them went to Shubra al-Khaymah to convince the workers not to strike on the grounds that religion prohibits striking because it entails a loss to the factory owners! Oh, what fascist logic![129]

This argument, as well as the rest of the book, shows very little sophistication and understanding of why the Brothers were able to exert any influence at all among workers. It is nonetheless indicative of the prevailing level of political debate and analysis. The book reviewer of al-Wafd al-Misri warmly greeted the publication of this tract.[130]

As the strike wore on and most of the workers continued to refuse to sign the no-strike pledges, the

conflict between the Brothers and the strikers intensified. Members of the Society attacked a group of workers with sticks in an attempt to force them to return to work and accept the no-strike pledge.[131]

The strike continued throughout the month of June. By the middle of the month, Mahmud al-Dumrani and Sayyid Khudayr, stewards who represented the textile workers in the leadership councils of the Congress of Trade Unions of Egypt (CTUE), were arguing that the strike should be ended because most of the workers had given up hope of winning. The leadership of the CTUE urged the continuation of the strike. There was still a great deal of suspicion and distrust between the two factions of the CTUE. New Dawn supporters accused EMNL supporters of sabotaging the workers by prolonging the strike beyond the point where it could be won.[132] The inability of the two factions to work together and discuss their assessments of the strike without recrimination weakened the ability of the workers themselves to persevere in the strike.

The CTUE's call for a national general strike on June 25 was partially an effort to rally national support for the Shubra al-Khaymah strike. The mill owners responded by issuing an ultimatum that all those who failed to sign the no-strike pledges by June 22 would be

fired.[133] The failure of the general strike and the arrest of many of the textile worker leaders further weakened and discouraged the textile strikers. In the face of concerted opposition from the mill owners, the government and the Muslim Brothers, they began to return to work. By the beginning of July, 75 percent of them had signed no-strike pledges.[134]

The Brothers in Shubra al-Khaymah: 1946-1948

The failure of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile strike, in combination with the defeat of the CTUE's call for a national general strike and the Sidqi government's campaign of repression against the left dealt a severe blow to the communists' position of leadership in Shubra al-Khaymah. The Muslim Brothers, continuing their conscious effort to supplant this communist leadership, announced the formation of a new Shubra al-Khaymah Textile Workers' Union.[135] Legal appeals against the government's dissolution of the GUMTPWGC were still in the courts. The New Dawn group persistently opposed the establishment of a new union in order not to allow the court an excuse to avoid dealing with the suit against the dissolution of the former union. They feared that the existence of a new union would allow the court to declare the case a moot question. The Brothers'

establishment of a union was therefore a direct attack on the former union and its leadership.

According to the Brothers' own daily newspaper, the only concrete activity in which the Brothers' sponsored union was reported to have engaged was to send a telegram of protest to the Minister of Social Affairs, the Prime Minister and the President of the Royal Council protesting a particularly sharp increase in the rate of unemployment due to seasonal pressures in the textile industry during early 1947.[136] The telegram was signed by representatives of nine Shubra al-Khaymah mills including the Secretary of the union, ᶜAli Ibrahim Pasha. His title of Pasha is a sure indication that he was neither a worker or a foreman. None of the nine representatives had ever been mentioned previously in any context as having participated actively in the struggles in the textile industry. According to DMNL sources, this union had a membership of only 200 workers.[137] One indication of the union's lack of influence over the Shubra al-Khaymah workers was its warning to the Director of the Labor Administration that if the government did not resolve the unemployment problem, the union could not take responsibility for the workers' actions.[138] This might be interpreted as a veiled threat, but the union failed to issue a strike warning over this issue.

Therefore, it appears that its leadership did not want to be put in the position of accepting responsibility for illegal or potentially violent actions, although it was not sure it could restrain workers from engaging in them.

The most important activity of the Brothers in Shubra al-Khaymah during this period was the establishment of a textile mill, the Muslim Brothers Spinning and Weaving Company. The decision to establish the mill was taken in May 1946 by the Brothers' Shubra branch in order "to protect its members from unemployment."[139] (My emphasis.) It was capitalized by selling 1,950 shares with a total value of LE 6,000. The mill began operations in December 1947 under the management of Muhammad Sharif, head of the Workers' Section of the Society. Less than sixty workers were employed, operating fourteen looms.[140] This was, therefore, one of the smaller mills in the area.

Its operations were based on: (1) application of Islamic principles; (2) advancing popular technical education; (3) distributing profits to the largest number of Egyptians; (4) encouraging the habit of saving (so that workers in the mill could buy shares); (5) promoting industrial cooperation among workers; and (6) encouraging Egyptians to buy locally manufactured products. All workers in the mill were required to buy at least one share. This was intended to eliminate the

conflict between labor and management, since all parties would have a stake in the success of the enterprise. This was the way the Brothers implemented their theory that there was no conflict of classes in a justly ordered Islamic society.

Despite the mill's small size, it proved extremely profitable, returning 15 percent on investment by July 1948.[141] However, it certainly did not constitute a major contribution to reducing unemployment among textile workers because the size of its work force was simply too small to make an impact given the large numbers of unemployed. Moreover, it is very unlikely that many unemployed workers could afford the approximately LE 3 required to purchase even one share in the company.

The Muslim Brothers' mill ceased operations early in 1949 when the government sequestered the assets of the Society following its official dissolution. Despite the small size and short term of operation of this enterprise, Muhammad Sharif considered it an unqualified success. He felt that this experience adequately demonstrated the viability of an enterprise run according to what he considered Islamic principles. He was impervious to the suggestion that such a limited experiment might require further testing before drawing any conclusions.[142]

The defeat and repression of the left and the alliance of the Muslim Brothers with the Sidqi government enabled the Brothers to gain influence in Shubra al-Khaymah in 1946-48. They were also aided by the mill owners' active efforts to eliminate communist influence. During this period all of the elected stewards who had continued the activity of the GUMTPWGC in late 1945 and 1946 were fired. Many of them were banished to their villages.[143] Shubra al-Khaymah itself declined somewhat in importance as a textile center after the strike of 1946. Some of the mills were moved to other suburban Cairo locations, or even as far away as Alexandria in order to avoid the high level of industrial struggle which characterized Shubra al-Khaymah.

Although the Muslim Brothers do not appear to have been able to gain as great a following in Shubra al-Khaymah in 1946-48 as the communists had earlier established, their presence there was an effective obstacle to the reestablishment of a communist center in the area until after the conclusion of the Palestine War. During this period the communist movement was in decline throughout the country, not only in Shubra al-Khaymah, although there is no doubt that the defeat of the strike in Shubra al-Khaymah in June 1946 was an important factor in this decline. The Brothers, of course, had played a

major role in the defeat of the strike and had cooperated with the Sidqi government's repression of the communist movement and were able to profit substantially from these defeats for the left. Continuing factional contention and disunity also severely impeded efforts to rebuild a communist presence.

The confrontation between the communists and the Muslim Brothers in Shubra al-Khaymah was exceptionally sharp and bitter because of the great practical and symbolic importance of the area. As the liberal political principles of the Wafd were proving less and less able to achieve Egypt's national objectives the Muslim Brothers and the communists posed two diametrically opposed alternative visions for Egypt. Shubra al-Khaymah was a key battleground between these alternatives, and the course of the struggle there had a major effect on the relations between the left and the Muslim Brothers throughout the postwar period. Because of the unique character of Shubra al-Khaymah the struggle there received more attention than similar confrontations elsewhere. However, struggle between the Brothers and the communists appeared in a variety of forms in many other textile centers where there was a communist presence in the postwar period.

Notes to Chapter VI

[1]The Misr Spinning and Weaving complex at Mahallah al-Kubra employed more workers than all of the mills of Shubra al-Khaymah combined. However, its work force was largely quiescent until the massive uprising of September 1947. (See Chapter VIII.) Until that struggle, which was of major national importance, Mahallah al-Kubra's distance from Cairo diminished the impact of developments there.

[2]For a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of this kind of study see William H. Sewell, Jr., Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848 (Cambridge, U.K., 1980), p. 5 ff.

[3]Ahmad Hilmi Amin, "Taqrir Maslahat al-ᶜAmal, 11 Yunyu 1939," reprinted in al-Thaqafah al-ᶜummaliyah, June 1967, p. 9.

[4]al-Balagh, March 2, 1937.

[5]Shubra, May 5, 1938.

[6]al-Balagh, March 2, 1937.

[7]Shubra, March 25, 1937.

[8]For a biography of ᶜIsam al-Din Hifni Nasif see Rifᶜat al-Saᶜid, ᶜIsam al-Din Hifni Nasif (Cairo, 1970).

[9]Shubra, April 8, 22, 1937.

[10]Ibid., May 13, June 3, 1937.

[11]Ibid., June 17, 1937.

[12]ᶜAskari, U, October 10, 1975.

[13]Shubra, June 23, 1938.

[14]Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman, Nidal ᶜummal al-nasij al-mikaniki bi-al-Qahirah (Cairo, 1946), p. 6.

[15]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[16]FO 141/660/357/8/37.

[17]Shubra, August 18, 1938.

[18]Ibid., August 25, 1938.

[19]Ibid., September 15, 1938.

[20]Muhammad Sharif, personal interview, October 28, 1980.

[21]Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman's biography, unless otherwise indicated, is based on personal interviews of October 28, November 5, and December 15, 1980.

[22]^{c}Uthman, K, July, 1971, p. 170.

[23]^{c}Askari, U, November 8, 1976.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Ibid., November 1, 1976; al-Ahram, September 17, 1939.

[26]^{c}Askari, U, November 1, 1976.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman, personal interview, October 28, 1980.

[29]Ibid.

[30]^{c}Uthman, Nidal, pp. 10-11.

[31]Ibid., p. 13.

[32]For the full text of this version see Shubra, May 21, 1942.

[33]Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman, personal interview, October 28, 1980.

[34]Shubra, April 30, 1942.

[35]^{c}Askari, U, November 29, 1976.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman, personal interview, October 28, 1980.

[39]cAskari, U, June 27, 1977.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Ibid., July 4, 1977.

[42]al-Wajib, April 13, 1942.

[43]cAskari, U, July 18, 1977.

[44]Ibid., July 25, 1977.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid., July 18, 1977.

[47]Ibid., July 25, 1977.

[48]Ibid., July 4, 1977.

[49]Ibid., August 1, 1977.

[50]Ibid., August 8, 1977.

[51]Ibid., August 15, 1977.

[52]Ibid., August 29, 1977.

[53]Ibid., September 5, 1977.

[54]al-Wajib, April 6, 13, 20, 1942.

[55]cAskari, U, September 5, 1976.

[56]Ibid., December 27, 1976.

[57]Shubra, June 18, 1942.

[58]Ibid., June 4, 1942.

[59]Ibid., July 9, 1942.

[60]Ibid., June 25, 1942.

[61]cAskari, U, October 3, 1977.

[62]Ibid., September 5, 1977.

[63]Shubra, May 14, 25, June 18, July 2, 23, 1942.

[64]Ibid., June 18, 1942.

[65]Ibid., April 30, 1942.

[66]Ibid., November 19, 1942.

[67]Ibid., July 22, 1942.

[68]Ibid., June 4, 1942.

[69]Ibid., June 11, 1942.

[70]Fathi al-Maghribi, Ana al-ᶜamil (Cairo, 1946).

[71]al-Yaraᶜ, October 1, 1942.

[72]Shubra, May 14, 1942.

[73]For a report of this activity see ibid., July 30, 1942.

[74]al-Yaraᶜ, October 1, 1942.

[75]Shubra, November 19, 1942.

[76]Ibid., December 2, 1942.

[77]Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman, personal interview, October 28, 1980.

[78]Until 1948 legal cases involving Egyptians and foreigners were tried in special courts known as mixed courts, where principles of both Islamic and European legislation were used.

[79]Taha Saᶜd ᶜUthman, personal interview, October 28, 1980.

[80]ᶜUthman, K, July, 1971, p. 175.

[81]ᶜAskari, U, December 12, 19, 1977.

[82]al-Yaraᶜ, U, December 26, 1977.

[83]ᶜAskari, U, December 26, 1977.

[84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid.

[86]al-Yara[c], October 28, 1944.

[87][c]Askari, U, November 28, 1977.

[88]Ibid.

[89]Ibid., November 28, December 5, 1977.

[90]December 5, 1977.

[91]FO 371/41319/J4548 (1944); FO 371/41319/J4615 (1944).

[92][c]Uthman, K, July, 1971, p. 175; personal interview, December 2, 1980.

[93]FO 371/45978/J1301 (1945).

[94]FO 371/45978/J1791 (1945).

[95]FO 371/45978/J2001 (1945).

[96]al-Waqa'i[c] al-Misriyah, May 21, 1945, p. 6.

[97]al-Jabhah, August 22, 1945.

[98]Taha Sa[c]d [c]Uthman, personal interview, October 28, 1980.

[99]Ibid., December 2, 1980.

[100]al-Yara[c], January 13, 1944.

[101][c]Abd al-Mun[c]im [c]Isawi, "Safhah mutawwalah min tarikh niqabat [c]ummal al-nasij," al-Thaqafah al-[c]ummaliyah, May 1, 1969, p. 12.

[102]Taha Sa[c]d [c]Uthman, personal interview, October 28, 1980.

[103]IM, August 29, 1942.

[104]Muhammad Sharif, personal interview, December 3, 1980.

[105]IM, June 28, 1945.

[106]Ibid.

[107]Ibid., August 30, 1945.

[108]Ibid.

[109]Muhammad Sharif, personal interview, October 28, December 3, 1980.

[110]IM, December 22, 1945.

[111]al-Wafd al-Misri, January 2, 4, 1946.

[112]Ibid., January 2, May 31, 1946.

[113]IM, January 5, 1946.

[114]Ibid.

[115]al-Ahram, January 7, 1946; FO 371/53327/J340 (1946).

[116]al-Ahram, January 19, 1946.

[117]Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman, personal interview, December 15, 1980. The other major reason was the Brothers' role in the strike of May-June 1946, which is discussed below.

[118]IM, March 19, 1946.

[119]This leaflet is reprinted as an Appendix to Muhammad Hasan Ahmad, al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun fi al-mizan (Cairo, 1946), pp. 93-99. Muhammad Hasan Ahmad is the pseudonym for a group of EMNL members.

[120]al-Wafd al-Misri, May 21, 29, 1946.

[121]Ibid., May 28, 1946.

[122]Ibid., May 12, 1946.

[123]IM, June 2, 1946.

[124]Muhammad Sharif, personal interviews, October 28, December 3, 1980.

[125]al-Wafd al-Misri, May 31, 1946.

[126]IM, June 2, 1946.

[127]al-Wafd al-Misri, June 3, 1946.

[128]IM, June 3, 1946.

[129]Ahmad, pp. 91-92.

[130]al-Wafd al-Misri, June 10, 1946.

[131]Ibid., June 16, 1946.

[132]cUthman, K, July, 1972, pp. 157-58.

[133]al-Wafd al-Misri, June 25, 1946.

[134]Ibid., July 1, 1946.

[135]IM, July 5, 1946.

[136]Ibid., April 28, 1947.

[137]al-Jamahir, May 5, 1947.

[138]IM, April 28, 1947.

[139]Ibid., May 13, 1946.

[140]Ibid., September 5, 1948.

[141]Ibid.

[142]Muhammad Sharif, personal interview, October 28, 1980.

[143]Murad al-Qalyubi, Mashruc qanun bi-sha'n al-tawfiq wa-al-tahkim fi munazacat al-camal (Cairo, 1948), p. 33.

CHAPTER VII

THE MUSLIM BROTHERS AND THE EGYPTIAN WORKERS' MOVEMENT

The Muslim Brothers' activities in Shubra al-Khaymah were shaped by the fact that Shubra al-Khaymah was the organizational stronghold of the communist movement within the Egyptian working class. The Brothers considered the communists to be "a group of traitors who have betrayed God and his Prophet."[1] Therefore no activities in which communists were involved could have any legitimate purpose or outcome. They did not see the communists as part of the Egyptian nationalist movement and could conceive of no basis on which to cooperate with them. For the Brothers the communist movement was "neither Egyptian nor nationalist, but entirely Russian."[2] The confrontation between the Brothers and the communists in Shubra al-Khaymah was an organizational contest of strength whose outcome had a major impact on the direction of the entire postwar Egyptian nationalist movement. But the antiworker actions of the Brothers in this confrontation, while they do accurately reflect the Society's absolute aversion to engaging in or supporting workers' actions which would exacerbate class tensions between

Egyptians, do not constitute a full picture of the role of the Muslim Brothers in the workers' movement. Certainly they do not explain why the Brothers were able to attract a significant number of workers to their banner in the postwar period.

The Muslim Brothers' Vision of a "Moral Economy"

In opposition to the communists' theory which divided society into contending classes with mutually contradictory interests, the Muslim Brothers counterposed the ideal of an organically interdependent social unity. Relations between various social strata (functionally differentiated groups as opposed to classes) were to be governed by the principle of "mutual social responsibility" (takaful ijtima^{c}i). The application of this principle to relations between employers and employees has been succinctly summarized by Richard Mitchell in his path-breaking study of the Muslim Brothers as follows:

> Islam has established certain rights and duties for the worker. His relationship with his employer is governed by the principle governing all human relations--"a mutuality of duties and rights" based on mutual "respect and sympathy" and ordered by the "spirit of brotherhood." He has the right to a healthy and clean home, wages adequate to provide the needs of life and "punctually" paid, and limited hours of work. The worker is forbidden to "allocate any part of his wages" to his leaders. In return for these rights he shall "perform his work faithfully," thus respecting the rights of management and fulfilling his own responsibilities.[3]

The Brothers also insisted that society must provide each of its members with a certain degree of social security. A properly functioning Islamic state should achieve this by organizing mutual social responsibility so that the needs of all are provided for. The principal method of providing for the poor and needy was to be the traditional Islamic practice of giving alms (zakat) regulated and directed by the state, which could tax the wealthy to support the poor when necessary. Particularly important in the context of massive postwar unemployment was the Society's view that an individual's right to work must be guaranteed by the state. If work was unavailable or wages insufficient to support a worker and his family, the state must supplement incomes through alms.[4] The Society was very sensitive to the general economic crisis of postwar Egyptian society and the insecurities it created. It was especially concerned with the issue of unemployment, and articles on the "problem of the unemployed" and a variety of proposed solutions appeared regularly in the pages of al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun.

The concept of mutual social responsibility stands in stark contradiction to the capitalist notion that workers could be hired and fired according to the fluctuating requirements of production and profitability.

The Brothers rejected the notion that no one was responsible for workers after they were dismissed. Most often the Brothers appealed to the Egyptian state to remedy the unemployment problem. They considered that the government was morally bound to find work for the unemployed because it had taken them from their villages to work in the war industries.[5]

Although the Society upheld an individual's right to hold private property as a basic human impulse, it opposed the materialist values and greed which, they argued, capitalism promoted. Foreign-owned enterprises bore the brunt of the Brothers' attacks on capitalism. They saw them as imperialist companies exercising an economic occupation of Egypt "exploiting its national wealth, humiliating its labor force . . . and the spirit of its people."[6] In the period 1944-48 Egyptian-owned capitalist enterprises were very rarely criticized. M. T. Audsley noted that "Hasan al-Banna was willing to support workers against foreign employers, but not against Moslem ones."[7] The restriction of the Society's criticism of capitalism to foreign-owned enterprises in the period 1944-48 allowed this criticism to merge easily with the general upsurge in the postwar nationalist movement, just as the workers' struggles against the mainly foreign textile mill owners in Shubra al-Khaymah

did. Among the most frequent criticisms which the Society raised against foreign-owned companies were firing Egyptian workers and replacing them with foreigners and paying foreign workers higher wages than Egyptians performing the same work.[8] These issues were especially sharp at the Suez Canal Company and the Shell Oil Company and its subsidiary Anglo-Egyptian Oil Fields. It is therefore no accident that the unions in these enterprises, and throughout the Suez Canal zone generally, were the strongest centers of Muslim Brothers' strength in the Egyptian workers' movement.

The Muslim Brothers' attack on foreign capitalists and their vision of an economic and social order governed by principles of Islamic brotherhood and mutual responsibility corresponded with a widely shared, if imprecisely articulated, popular and traditional definition of social justice in Egypt. A large number of Egyptians identified with the Islamic idiom of the Brothers (despite the novelty of many of their interpretations of Islam) much more easily than with the theoretical concepts and style of the communists or the Wafdist Vanguard. The Brothers' criticism of foreign economic domination of Egypt and the impersonal and materialistic values and practices of the large foreign monopoly corporations, particularly the firing of workers during periods of recession,

resonated with many workers' sense of what was wrong with the postwar Egyptian society and economy. In this sense the Brothers' vision of a just Islamic society bears a great similarity to the concept of a "moral economy" which E. P. Thompson has used to describe the social consciousness of the eighteenth century English crowd.[9] This vision held a strong attraction for many workers recently arrived in Cairo, the canal zone or other urban centers, wrenched from their rural and pre-industrial social solidarity networks and confronted with the harsh regime of industrial discipline dominated by what appeared to be specifically European rather than simply capitalist values and norms. This vision also appealed to small independent artisans and craftsmen whose markets and very livelihood were under constant attack from commodities produced by large-scale capitalist methods.

The organizational framework of the Muslim Brothers helped workers to overcome their social isolation and alienation by establishing a familiar and congenial basis for association. The Society also provided a degree of economic security for its worker members through the establishment of a form of unemployment insurance. The Workers' Committee of the Brothers' Shubra al-Khaymah branch paid full salaries to members of the Society who

were fired from their jobs.[10] Membership in the Society also provided access to political protection. Muhammad Mitwalli al-Shaᶜarawi, a trade union militant at the Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving Company in Kafr al-Dawwar recalls that in 1948, when his union activities brought him into conflict with the company, he joined the Society of Muslim Brothers and paid dues for two months in order to obtain legal aid and protection from the company.[11]

In opposition to the impersonal character of factory life, the Brothers upheld the importance of personal relations and individual conduct. The key element of the Brothers' message to the workers was: "Fulfill your obligation as a worker. Be a moral example and an exemplary worker."[12] The importance of individual personal action to remedy injustice was emphasized. Personal charity represented an important form of social melioration for the Muslim Brothers. Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun reported at great length and with approval the story of a worker who was fired from one of the Shubra al-Khaymah mills without being paid his severance compensation. He received a loan of five pounds from a member of the Society. This gesture was lavishly praised as an illustration of exemplary Islamic interpersonal responsibility and brotherhood.[13]

Methods of Trade Union Struggle

The Society's relationship with Egyptian workers was characterized by the same patron-client pattern which governed the relations of the Wafd and Prince ᶜAbbas Halim and their trade union supporters. In one of their explanations of their role in the Shubra al-Khaymah strike, the Brothers stated that they had established a "committee to oversee [raᶜayah] the affairs of the workers of this area."[14] The term raᶜayah, with its paternalistic connotation of guardianship, stands in direct opposition to the theory and practice of independent trade unionism which had characterized the development of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers' union from its origins. Neither Muhammad Sharif nor any of the other leading figures of the Society's Workers' Sections were, in fact, workers; and there is no evidence that the Society made any effort to promote workers to positions of responsibility within the Workers' Section. The Society's efforts on behalf of workers followed a traditional pattern of intercession of social betters pleading for social justice for their social inferiors. The Society consciously saw its task as conveying workers' demands to the authorities rather than organizing struggle to achieve these demands.[15]

The characteristic mode of the Society's activity on behalf of workers was for al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun to

print an expose of the poor working conditions in a particular enterprise along with a list of demands by the workers. The paper would either explicitly indicate its editorial support for these demands or imply it by the manner in which the article reporting them was constructed. Then the article would urge the company and the government to look into these demands at the same time that it urged the workers not to strike, or to return to work if a strike had broken out. The Muslim Brothers never explicitly supported a strike by workers during the period 1944-48, although in some cases they gave veiled or implicit support to strikes against foreign-owned enterprises.

This was the stance of the Brothers regarding the strike of the Cairo tramway workers which began on October 5, 1946. While the strike was in progress al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun editorialized:

> We continue to appeal to the authorities to reinvestigate the workers' affairs and to treat them decisively and justly so that there will be no room for concern by the workers . . . and they will agree to work in a quiet and orderly manner. . . . We continue to urge that the government invite representatives of the union and come to an amicable understanding with them . . . which will result in equity [insaf].[16]

In the course of this strike the government had arrested the union president, Shaykh ᶜAbd al-Zahir al-Shahid, twelve members of the union executive board and

over sixty other workers.[17] Houses of union members and the union headquarters itself were searched by the police, and union papers were confiscated. The Brothers reported that the unions of the Hawamdiyah sugar refinery, the Alexandria tramway and the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers, all unions in which they had considerable influence, supported the demands of the Cairo tramway workers and protested the arrests. They also reported that the workers had asked Prince ᶜAbbas Halim to intercede and negotiate for them. Although the Prince was, by this time, discredited among most trade unionists, the Brothers offered no criticism of his participation in this dispute. In fact, it appears that there was considerable cooperation between the Brothers and the Prince in labor matters at this time.[18] ᶜAbbas Halim personally brought an end to the strike by driving the first tram out of its depot, just as he had done in the Cairo transport general strike of 1941.

The Brothers' attitude towards the strike was ambiguous. In an unsigned article entitled "The Brothers and the Workers' Strike" al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun argued that the workers' demands were just and that the company and the government should not deal with the workers in a harsh and repressive manner. But they refrained from explicitly endorsing the strike despite the fact that its

leadership was sympathetic to the Society. The article concludes:

> There is no path but justice and equity and giving each his due. And the sooner the government and the companies respond to these just demands the more this will aid in establishing security and order and production and stability.[19]

The strike was ended by ᶜAbbas Halim's intervention before its demands were met. After the strike the Prince and the Society continued to press the workers' demands to the government and the company. These demands were partially satisfied by the implementation of a cadre for all of Cairo's transport workers on January 1, 1947. The decision of the new government headed by Mahmud al-Nuqrashi to impose this cadre on the foreign-owned bus and tramway companies must be considered in the context of the failure of the Sidqi-Bevin negotiations to reach a mutually acceptable formula governing Anglo-Egyptian relations. The Sidqi government had been forced to resign over the failure of these negotiations, and the imposition of the transport workers' cadre by the new government shortly after it took office was a popular nationalist act designed to win public support.

Towards the end of 1946, the Muslim Brothers' original warm endorsement of the government of Ismaᶜil Sidqi was giving way to increasingly sharp criticism motivated mainly by reports of the unsatisfactory content and

progress of the Sidqi-Bevin negotiations. Two days after Sidqi returned to Egypt with a draft of the treaty, the Workers' Section of the Muslim Brothers in Port Said organized a conference attended by over 1,000 workers. The resolutions adopted at this meeting constitute a sharp repudiation of Sidqi's conduct in the negotiations. The conference demanded: (1) complete British evacuation of the Nile Valley (i.e., Egypt and Sudan); (2) a declaration that the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty was null and void; (3) no alliance with Great Britain until after military evacuation; (4) full English payment of wartime debts to Egypt; (5) recognition of the unity of the Nile Valley.[20] The Brothers' ability to conduct such a large meeting of workers in Port Said opposing the government's policy on the most critical issue of the day in Egypt is an indication of substantial strength among the workers of the Suez Canal zone. However, it should also be noted that similar meetings of workers in other regions were not reported to have been held.

After breaking with Sidqi, the Brothers began to criticize the government much more openly and sharply on questions of labor policy. Only a month after the government of al-Nuqrashi took office the Society launched a comprehensive attack on the Ministry of Social Affairs and its Employment Bureau for failing to resolve the

unemployment crisis. The Brothers correctly pointed out that most existing labor legislation was poorly enforced and that the bureaucracy charged with supervising labor affairs was ineffective and understaffed.[21] The Society also charged that the Shubra al-Khaymah Labor Office was operating in complicity with the mill owners and failing to enforce the law permitting factories to fire no more than 10 percent of their workers within a six-month period.[22]

Despite the Brothers' increasingly oppositional stance in regard to the government, they did not change their fundamental approach to achieving workers' demands. While they continued to report mass firings at several of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile mills, they did not call on workers to take direct action to defend their jobs but instead implored the Ministry of Social Affairs to think of a solution to the problem.[23] The Society had offered numerous proposals to the government to resolve the unemployment problem. But if the government failed to act on the Society's proposals, it was not prepared to organize workers to fight for them. Throughout the period 1944-48 the Muslim Brothers, as a matter of principle, were unwilling to organize workers for direct action to win their demands, arguing that to do so would exacerbate social conflicts and disturb social peace.

Even during the most active period of the Workers' Section in the years 1944-48, labor organization, as opposed to propaganda and agitation, was a weak point of the Society of Muslim Brothers.[24] Its newspaper, al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, was a much more active force among workers than the Society as an organization. The paper reported on many labor struggles where the Brothers had no organizational presence. The Society consciously defined the main goals of its activity among workers as conducting education and propaganda (i.e., spreading the call of Islam and anticommunism) rather than building a stable organization and conducting struggle. However, because the Muslim Brothers promoted a popularly shared vision of social justice articulated in an Islamic idiom with unassailable legitimacy for most Egyptians, many trade unionists who were not actual members of the Society identified with it in a general sense. It is therefore possible to speak of an Islamic trend within the trade union movement which looked to the Society and its charismatic General Guide Hasan al-Banna for leadership, but was not organizationally tied to the Society and under the discipline of its central leading bodies.

Shaykh ᶜAbd al-Zahir al-Shahid, the President of the Cairo Tramway Workers' Union, although he was sympathetic to the Muslim Brothers, was never a member of the

Society.[25] The Brothers did have considerable influence among the Cairo transport workers because the Workers' Section had organized an association of workers, inspectors and white-collar employees under its direction.[26] This was an unusual step for the Society, but none of the members of this association was ever subsequently reported as playing a leading role in union activity. Shaykh Muhammad ᶜAbd al-Salam, president of the Hawamdiyah sugar refinery workers' union, was also sympathetic to the Muslim Brothers, but not an actual member. He belonged instead to the Shariᶜah Cooperative Society, which cooperated with the Muslim Brothers.[27] The Muslim Brothers' presence at the Filature Nationale textile mill in Alexandria was also organizationally diffuse. Although ᶜAbbas Zaki Muhammad, a member of the union executive board, was a supporter of the Society, the actual organization of the Society in the mill was weak and not always clearly identified as such.[28]

Local Strength in the Canal Zone

There were two major exceptions to this pattern of organizational weakness. The textile workers' union organized by the Brothers in Shubra al-Khaymah was, as has been previously noted, the product of a sustained organizational effort in opposition to the communist and

Wafdist Vanguard stronghold there. Although it was the only union in the area for several years after the suppression of the communist-led union, it was constantly under attack. After the Palestine War the communists began to rebuild their strength; and by 1950 the Brothers-led union had become inactive. In the Suez Canal zone, however, the Brothers were able to maintain a long-term and well-organized presence and direct organizational control over at least one of the most important unions in the area, the Shell and Anglo-Egyptian Oil Fields Employees' and Workers' Union.

The canal zone was the birthplace of the Society of Muslim Brothers. Its first members were six workers at the British base in Isma^{c}iliyah who came to Hasan al-Banna in March 1928 and pledged their loyalty to him.[29] Hasan al-Banna's preaching was strongly influenced by the alien character of Isma^{c}iliyah, which was dominated by foreign enterprises such as the Suez Canal Company and the shipping and warehousing firms servicing the canal traffic.[30] These conditions contributed to the rapid growth of the Society. The Suez Canal region was particularly receptive to Hasan al-Banna's message because of its blatantly European atmosphere.

The popular support which the Society commanded in the canal zone was transformed into a solid base of

organizational strength in the area's trade unions during the course of two major labor struggles at the Suez Canal Company and Shell which received widespread national attention in late 1947 and early 1948. The key demands of the Egyptian workers at both companies were for equal wages, promotion opportunities and job security for Egyptian and foreign workers and for increasing the percentage of Egyptian workers and white-collar employees. The demands of Egyptian white-collar employees, who suffered national discrimination at the hands of foreign management, were an important element in these struggles, just as the demands of foremen played a large role in the struggles of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers.

The Egyptian government fully supported the demands of the Egyptian workers and employees against both British-dominated companies. On June 5, 1947, the Port Said Labor Conciliation Board issued a decision affirming the Suez Canal Company's obligation to grant equal rights and obligations (including wages) to foreign and Egyptian employees. The company refused to implement this decision, and it went through a lengthy process of appeal. There were several two-hour warning strikes and strike threats during the year in which this dispute dragged on. As in the case of the Cairo tramway workers' strike, the Muslim Brothers fully supported the workers'

demands, but did not openly encourage or support their strikes. After all appeals were exhausted on March 27, 1948, the Labor Conciliation Board awarded the workers' demands in full. This decision was ratified by the Ministry of Social Affairs. As a result the Suez Canal Company was required to pay wages amounting to nearly four times the prevailing rate in the canal zone.[31]

At Shell the struggle took a very similar course. A five-day strike of 4,000 workers at the Suez refinery in late September 1947 resulted in the formation of a union. The workers' demands advanced at that time were supported by the Labor Administration, and in November the Ministry of Social Affairs ratified the decision of the Labor Conciliation Board granting the main workers' demands.[32] Once again the final resolution was delayed by an extended appeal process. On April 20, 1948, the Labor Conciliation Board finally required the company to grant most of the workers' demands.[33] During the period when this dispute was under adjudication al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun published numerous articles attacking Shell as an exploitative imperialist company and highlighting its discrimination against Egyptian workers. The final wage settlement with Shell was not as punitive as the settlement with the Suez Canal Company, partly because the management had taken a less arrogant tone with the

Egyptian government. But Shell was still required to pay wages up to double the prevailing level.[34] In addition, some of the higher grade Egyptian supervisors and skilled workers were immediately transferred from daily paid to monthly paid status, giving them much greater job security. All other Egyptians were to be transferred to monthly paid status after five years of service. Restrictions on the firing of workers and the use of contract labor were imposed. Shell was also required to submit to the Governor of Suez a statement of its intention to provide promotion opportunities for Egyptian workers. These demands are an excellent illustration of the main themes of the postwar workers' movement--the demand for job security and for an end to discrimination against Egyptian workers. The Muslim Brothers' strong support for these demands enabled it to play an important role in these struggles and to gain prestige and support among the workers involved.

Several days after the announcement of the Labor Conciliation Board's decision, the Shell union held its general assembly. Anwar Salamah, an ardent member of the Muslim Brothers, was elected to the presidency of the union. Several other Brothers were chosen for seats on the executive board. There appears to have been a political coup involved here because all of the members of the

former executive board were denounced by the general assembly, and none were reelected.[35] This victory entrenched the Muslim Brothers in the leadership of the Shell union. Several union leaders belonging to the Society were arrested when the government dissolved the Society in December 1948,[36] but Anwar Salamah retained his position as president of the union and enhanced his prestige by negotiating a series of labor agreements which gave the workers and employees of Shell and its subsidiaries extraordinarily good wages and labor conditions by Egyptian standards.[37]

The decisions of the Labor Conciliation Board in the Suez Canal Company and Shell cases set the standard for labor settlements at several other European-owned shipping and warehousing companies for the remainder of 1948 and 1949.[38] There is no direct evidence of Muslim Brothers' involvement in these cases, but it is reasonable to assume that since the Society had been a prominent force in supporting the original demands at the Suez Canal Company and Shell, it was able to increase its strength among the workers who benefited from the improved wages and working conditions which were first won at those firms and then spread throughout the canal zone.

The British Embassy in Cairo was outraged at the decisions of the Labor Conciliation Boards in the canal

zone. Embassy officials claimed that these judgements were punitive and discriminatory measures directed against large and prosperous foreign-owned firms. The board's decisions were said to reflect the government's policy that such firms were expected to pay higher wages. The local governors who headed the boards in each area allowed the cases to be decided against foreign companies in order to maintain social peace and enhance their own popularity.[39] These charges are substantially correct, although there is more than a little hypocrisy involved in British complaints about discrimination.

The Muslim Brothers' successful participation in the campaign against the Suez Canal Company and Shell represented the high point of the Society's activity in the labor movement. After the outbreak of the Palestine War, the declaration of martial law and the official entry of Egyptian troops into Palestine on May 15, 1948, the Muslim Brothers' interest in labor affairs declined sharply as they bent all their efforts to mobilizing popular support and material aid for the Palestinian cause. The Brothers did try to mobilize workers to support Palestine by collecting contributions at various factories. The Eastern Tobacco Company was bitterly denounced for failing to cooperate with the Society's efforts to solicit contributions from its workers.[40]

After June 1948 the "workers' news" section of al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun was dropped, and there are only scattered reports of trade union and labor activity in the second half of 1948. By the end of the year M. T. Audsley judged that "the Brotherhood . . . had little influence in labour matters."[41]

Dissolution, Reformation and Radicalization

During 1948 the Muslim Brothers committed a series of terrorist acts against the Jewish community of Cairo. Several of its arms caches were discovered by the government, and the Society was implicated in assassination attempts on the lives of several political figures. A large collection of documents accidentally captured by the Cairo police disclosed the existence of a "secret apparatus" within the Society.[42] The government concluded that the Muslim Brothers were planning a revolution, and on December 8, 1948, it dissolved the Society. In retaliation, on December 28, 1948, Brothers assassinated Prime Minister al-Nuqrashi. Hasan al-Banna was in turn assassinated on February 12, 1949, by police acting on behalf of the new Prime Minister, Ibrahim ᶜAbd al-Hadi.

These events marked the conclusion of an entire period in the Society's development. The Brothers continued their activities on a reduced level as an

illegal organization until the Wafd returned to power for the last time in January 1950. At this point the Society began to reemerge cautiously, until it was officially reestablished on May 1, 1951. The death of Hasan al-Banna led to sharp factional disputes among the remaining leaders of the Society, and its organizational coherence was seriously impaired. Previously disputes had been decided by the fiat of the General Guide. Now no decisive and final authority was universally recognized by the membership. One consequence of Hasan al-Banna's death was that many of the potentially radical and even revolutionary tendencies in the Brothers' world view began to develop and become explicitly articulated.

The Muslim Brothers' world view was articulated in conservative and fundamentalist Islamic terms which called for the restoration of an ideal society of the distant past. Yet this conservatively couched appeal had a profoundly radical effect, since it denied the moral legitimacy of both British imperial domination of Egypt and the secular nationalist movement which arose to challenge that domination. Some of the leaders of the Muslim Brothers were interested only in the conservative aspect of the Society's message. However, many of the Society's rank-and-file members who had been attracted by the Brothers' social solidarity and mutual aid, their

nationalism and their vision of a "moral economy" were quite open to the radical interpretations of the Society's doctrine, which began to gain influence and widespread attention even outside the ranks of the Muslim Brothers. Some Brothers were propelled by their radicalism into the ranks of the communist movement, retracing the ideological journey of Taha Sa^{c}d ^{c}Uthman. In early 1949 Prime Minister ^{c}Abd al-Hadi was reported to have said that half of the Brothers who had been sent by the Society's leadership to spy on the communist organizations had been recruited to membership in those organizations.[43] When the Society was dissolved, many Brothers were rounded up and placed in detention camps together with communists, many of whom had been interned since the declaration of martial law. This experience, too, seems to have had a radicalizing effect on many of the Brothers. A number of communist veterans of these detention camps recall that some of the Brothers were deeply impressed by the egalitarian social relations among the communist prisoners.

The radical tendency within the Society of Muslim Brothers is best articulated in the writings of Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad al-Ghazzali, al-Bahi al-Khuli and some of the articles in the "workers' page" of al-Da^{c}wah (The Call), the weekly magazine of what may loosely be termed

the left wing of the Society during the period 1951-54.[44] Al-Bahi al-Khuli's book, al-Islam . . . la shuyu^{c}iyah wa-la ra'smaliyah (Islam . . . Not Communism and Not Capitalism), was an official publication of the Workers' Section, which was reestablished when the Society was reconstituted in 1951. As such it represents the fullest official theoretical exposition of the Brothers' views on labor, its role in society, and the rights and obligations of workers.

The bulk of the book reiterates and amplifies the basic views of the Muslim Brothers on mutual social responsibility explicated earlier and repeats criticisms of the Egyptian government's labor policy. Both communism and capitalism are attacked as materialistic ideologies emanating from the west in opposition to which it is necessary to uphold and affirm the Islamic heritage. The novel and revolutionary implications of al-Khuli's exposition are contained in the final sections of the book. He relates an oral tradition attributed to the Caliph ^{c}Umar according to which an employer complained to ^{c}Umar that his workers stole from him. ^{c}Umar replied that if the workers repeated this offense the employer's hands would be cut off. ^{c}Umar reasoned that the workers had stolen because the employer's wages were insufficient. He therefore bore the responsibility for their act and

should receive its appropriate punishment.[45] Al-Khuli goes on to argue that those who do not work have no right to a share of the wealth of society. But in contemporary Egypt the rich and idle are systematically oppressing those who work. Exploitative monopoly companies and big landowners are held responsible for this situation.[46] Both foreign and Egyptian companies are attacked for their treatment of workers.[47] The conclusion of the section of the book devoted to urban labor contains an appeal to improve workers' conditions based on the concepts of "human rights" and "natural rights." Al-Khuli warns that if these rights are not secured, the result will be a violent and destructive social upheaval. This is not the outcome which he desires. Therefore he urges workers to retain their self-control and rally round Islam.[48] This call seems to rescind the directives implied in the oral tradition attributed to ᶜUmar, and it may have been inserted in order to satisfy more conservative members of the Society's leadership or the requirements of government censorship. It is also possible that at the very last moment al-Khuli was unable to embrace the ultimate conclusions of his own argument or to break completely with the Brothers' long-standing aversion to exacerbating social tensions.

Expressions of militant anticapitalist sentiment in

the pages of al-Daᶜwah were less ambiguous. Muhammad al-Fuli, a labor lawyer who served as counsellor for several unions in the Alexandria area, contributed a regular column offering legal advice to workers and expounding the Islamic point of view on labor questions. His opposition to capitalism was unequivocal, and rather than calling on workers to restrain themselves, he urged them to unite and struggle against the capitalists, not only around day-to-day economic issues in the factories, but for a workers' ideology (fikrah ᶜummaliyah).[49] He warned the capitalists against the righteous wrath of the workers:

> Oh tyrannical capitalists . . . the sword of justice is unsheathed against you. Either you grant the workers their rights or justice will conquer. And the day that it will triumph you will have neither existence nor power.[50]

The radicalization of a section of the Muslim Brothers made possible the establishment of a limited, sporadic and unstable national united front including some elements of the Society and the largest of the communist organizations, the DMNL. This united front functioned briefly in the second half of 1951 in opposition to the increasingly discredited Wafd regime and again in 1953 after the Wafd, the DMNL and some of the Brothers turned against the military regime of the Free Officers.

In some localities and some industries this national

front extended into the trade union movement. At the Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving Company in Kafr al-Dawwar a coalition led by communists but embracing adherents of all the political tendencies within the workers' movement successfully removed the company-dominated union and replaced it with a union freely chosen by the workers. When this victory was finally achieved in March 1953, after several years of struggle, Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha^{c}arawi, a member of the DMNL, was elected president of the union, and Muhammad al-Fuli was chosen as its legal counsel. This alliance was exceptionally stable due to the fact that neither the Brothers nor the communists had a strong base among the workers. Moreover, Muhammad al-Fuli had been employed at the mill as a white-collar clerk before obtaining his law degree. His personal commitment and involvement in this struggle were therefore especially strong. Even at Kafr al-Dawwar there was a certain amount of contention within the framework of a de facto alliance. Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha^{c}arawi's opponent in the union presidential election was a member of the Muslim Brothers.[51]

During the period of the 1953 united front an important change took place in the attitude of some elements of the Society towards strikes. Jamal al-Banna, who became Labor Editor of al-Da^{c}wah in late 1953, gave

his partial endorsement to a set of trade union rights to be demanded from the government which had been formulated by the DMNL. He tentatively advanced a "Labor Compact" which included a demand that the government permit peaceful strikes.[52] Several months later al-Da^{c}wah editorially endorsed this demand.[53]

Despite the fact that some sections of the Muslim Brothers adopted a much more radical proworker stance in both theory and practice during the period 1951-54 than the Society as a whole had officially embraced in 1944-48, the Brothers' organizational links with the workers' movement were weaker in the 1950s than they had been in the 1940s.[54] Muhammad Sharif did not resume his position as head of the Workers' Section when it was reformed in 1951. He cited the diminished effectiveness of the Workers' Section as his reason for abandoning his position.[55] It seems that his opposition to the new radical direction of some elements in the Workers' Section may also have played a role in this decision. If this is so, then the factional contention within the section may have been one of the factors contributing to its weakness.

The respected Egyptian judge and historian Tariq al-Bishri has argued that in all fields of its activity, the organizational effectiveness of the Society was far less

than its mass support:

> It appears that the large size of the Society was a heavy hindrance more than an impelling force. Whatever the political stance of the Society was--whether it worked in the national and popular interest or stood against it--the positive effects of its activity in the events of the era were not consistent with its large size. There were other organizations and parties of much smaller size which were much more effective, such as the communist organizations and Young Egypt.[56]

In the workers' movement the organizational weakness of the Society was the mirror image of the broad popularity of its appeal for a moral economy. This moral appeal was not consistently developed into a concrete program for workers' political action. Too often the Society simply propagandized for its vision and called on the state to correct its errant ways. When this failed to achieve the desired results, the Society could only resort to a campaign of terror (as in 1948) or continued propagandizing to attain its aims. Most of the Society's theoretical writings on labor affairs suffer from ambiguity, inconsistency and programmatic unclarity.

The ambiguity of its position enabled a large number of workers and others to identify with the Society. But it also made it difficult to galvanize its supporters for a prolonged campaign of political action. Its rapidly shifting political alliances, for and against Sidqi, the Wafd and the national fronts of 1951 and 1953 made the

Society an unreliable leader of trade union struggles where consistency, programmatic clarity and building long-term stable alliances are the keys to success. Because the Brothers' actions were guided by criteria external to the labor movement, it was not easy to predict their stands on vital trade union matters. For example, in 1948 when Fathi Kamil, who as a secularist was not sympathetic to the Muslim Brothers, was president of the Eastern Tobacco Company union, the Society sharply criticized the union for being subservient to the company management.[57] The very same week the Brothers had nothing but praise for the management of the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company, which was notorious for handpicking the leadership of its union.[58] But in 1952, after the Brothers had gained considerable influence within the Eastern Company union, they were very supportive of both the company management and the union.[59]

Pro-Wafd or procommunist workers were unlikely to forget or forgive the Society's actions in Shubra al-Khaymah in 1946. The Brothers' withdrawal from the NCWS and their strikebreaking could only have been overcome by a long period of consistently unimpeachable trade union and national political activity. The sporadic and uncertain participation of the Society in the national united fronts of 1951 and 1953 and its vacillating

positions in several key labor struggles reinforced the Brothers' image as an unreliable political ally easily given to sudden reversals in policy.

The Muslim Brothers were undoubtedly the largest mass movement in Egypt, with the exception of the Wafd, in the postwar period. The sincerity and militance of its members and supporters posed a fundamental ideological challenge to British hegemony and secular nationalism in Egypt. However, a moral denunciation of British imperialism, no matter how popular and potentially radical it may have been, was not the same as, and was perhaps even in contradiction to, becoming an effectively organized political force within the Egyptian workers' movement and, ultimately, within the broader nationalist political movement.

Notes to Chapter VII

[1]IM, August 10, 1946.

[2]Ibid., February 25, 1948.

[3]Richard P. Mitchell, The Society of Muslim Brothers (London, 1969), p. 253.

[4]Ibid., p. 274.

[5]IM, May 7, 1946.

[6]Ibid., December 6, 1948.

[7]FO 371/73474/J3567 (1949).

[8]IM, June 17, August 15, December 13, 1946; August 12, 1947.

[9]E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," Past and Present, no. 50 (1971), pp. 76-136.

[10]IM, May 13, 1946.

[11]Muhammad Mitwalli al-Shaᶜarawi, personal interview, April 3, 1981. The instrumental nature of this affiliation is highlighted by the fact that al-Shaᶜarawi was already on his way to becoming one of the leading communists in Kafr al-Dawwar.

[12]Muhammad Sharif, personal interview, October 28, 1980.

[13]IM, August 23, 1945. At the same time this article makes no comment on the injustice of the firing or the lack of severance compensation.

[14]IBid., June 18, 1946.

[15]Muhammad Sharif, personal interview, December 3, 1980. See also the article by Muhammad Sharif containing an exposé of workers' poor conditions and suffering addressed explicitly "ila awla al-amr ᶜamatan wa-Maslahat al-ᶜAmal khassatan," in IM, April 29, 1947.

[16]IM, October 8, 1946.

[17]For details of this strike see ibid., October 6-9, 1946.

[18]This can be inferred from the frequent favorable reports of ᶜAbbas Halim's activities in the pages of IM during 1946 and 1947.

[19]IM, October 6, 1946.

[20]Ibid., October 27, 1946.

[21]Ibid., January 14, 1947.

[22]Ibid., February 25, 1947.

[23]Ibid., March 5, 1947.

[24]This point was stressed repeatedly by Jamal al-Banna, the brother of the Society's founder and leader, Labor Editor of al-Daᶜwah and a prominent authority on Egyptian labor questions, in several personal interviews, especially on December 22, 1980, and January 3, 1981.

[25]Ibid., January 3, 1981.

[26]IM, June 19, 1946.

[27]Jamal al-Banna, personal interview, December 22, 1981. Ellis Goldberg is currently preparing a study of the emergence of an Islamic leadership in this sugar refinery. It will be published in a forthcoming volume on Islam and politics edited by Ira Lapidus and Edmund Burke, III.

[28]Ibid., February 21, 1981.

[29]For a dramatized account of this incident see Hasan al-Banna, Mudhakkirat al-daᶜwah wa-al-daᶜiyah (Cairo, 1978?), p. 72.

[30]Ibid., p. 71.

[31]FO 371/69181/J4474 (1948).

[32]al-Ahram, September 30, 1947; IM, November 12, 1947.

[33]The text of this decision is one of the few remnants of the archives of the Labor Administration. These are currently located in the Ministry of Labor Power and

Training. Maslahat al-ᶜAmal. Qalam al-Mahfuzat. Dossier 11/4/5/5.

[34]FO 371/69181/J4474 (1948).

[35]IM, April 25, 1948.

[36]FO 371/73474/J3567 (1949).

[37]For texts of several Shell contracts see Maslahat al-ᶜAmal. Idarat al-Buhuth al-Fanniyah wa-al-Ihsa'. Qism al-Tasjil. Dossier 11/4/3/5 pt 1.

[38]Maslahat al-ᶜAmal. Qalam al-Mahfuzat. Dossier 11/4/6/3 pt 1, "Agreements facilitated by the Port Said Labor Office."

[39]FO 371/69181/J4474 (1948).

[40]IM, April 28, 1948.

[41]FO 371/73474/J3567 (1949).

[42]For a discussion of these events and their aftermath see Mitchell, pp. 58 ff.

[43]FO 371/73476/J1937; FO 371/73476/J3502 (1949).

[44]For example: Sayyid Qutb, al-ᶜAdalah al-ijtimaᶜiyah fi al-Islam (Cairo, 1980) and Maᶜarakat al-Islam wa-al-ra'smaliyah (Cairo, 1951). Adnan Musallam of the University of Michigan Department of Near Eastern Studies is currently preparing a Ph.D. thesis on the thought of Sayyid Qutb. Muhammad al-Ghazzali, al-Islam wa-al-manahij al-ishtirakiyah (Cairo, 195_?). Neither Qutb nor al-Ghazzali were official spokesmen for the Muslim Brothers at the time these works were published. al-Bahi al-Khuli, al-Islam . . . la shuyuᶜiyah wa-la ra'smaliyah (Cairo, 1951).

[45]al-Khuli, p. 106.

[46]Ibid., pp. 107-8.

[47]Ibid., pp. 110-11 ff.

[48]Ibid., pp. 117-18.

[49]al-Daᶜwah, October 2, 1951.

[50]Ibid., August 21, 1951.

[51]Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha^{c}arawi, personal interview, April 3, 1981; al-Da^{c}wah, April 14, 1953.

[52]al-Da^{c}wah, January 13, 1953.

[53]Ibid., April 14, 1953.

[54]Jamal al-Banna, personal interview, December 22, 1980.

[55]Muhammad Sharif, personal interview, December 3, 1980.

[56]Tariq al-Bishri, al-Harakah al-siyasiyah fi Misr, 1945-1952 (Cairo, 1972), p. 74.

[57]IM, April 22, 1948.

[58]Ibid., April 20, 1948.

[59]al-Da^{c}wah, February 26, November 25, 1952.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT IN THE LAST YEARS OF THE OLD REGIME, 1947-1952

The mutually reinforcing relationship between the workers' and the Egyptian nationalist movements and the new social content this imparted to the nationalist movement were not destroyed by the Sidqi repression. On the contrary, the pattern of parallel ebbs and flows between the two movements became more pronounced and it persisted throughout the postwar period until the military coup of July 23, 1952. During this period progressively larger sections of the trade union movement embraced the concept of trade union independence from nonworker leadership. The Wafd and Prince ᶜAbbas Halim, although they still played a role in some trade unions, no longer represented the most viable poles of leadership for the workers' movement. The Muslim Brothers did, at first, offer to provide such a pole of leadership, but especially after the dissolution of the Society in 1948, they were generally unable to organize adequately the working class support they could command. In late 1951 and early 1952, despite frequent persecutions by the

government and factionalization within its own ranks, the DMNL became, for a short period, the dominant factor in the Egyptian trade union movement, uniting a broad spectrum of forces under its leadership.

The year following the Sidqi repression was characterized by a slowdown in both working class and nationalist political activity. The failure of the Sidqi-Bevin negotiations for a new Anglo-Egyptian treaty produced a nationalist reaction. But this was contained by the government's initiative to submit the case for complete Egyptian independence to the U.N. Security Council. By the late summer of 1947 it became apparent that the Security Council would not reach a satisfactory resolution of the Egyptian question. This realization sparked a renewal of nationalist activity which was accompanied by a strike wave lasting from September 1947 to April 1948.

According to Walter Laqueur, the Wafdist Vanguard and the smaller communist groups suffered most heavily from the Sidqi repression.[1] This assessment may not be strictly correct. The number of EMNL cadres in Shubra al-Khaymah fell from 120 to 20 during the repression,[2] a fairly heavy loss. But what does seem clear is that the New Dawn/Popular Vanguard for Liberation/Workers' Vanguard organization never fully recovered from this blow despite the fact that its membership increased. It

grew even more security conscious and wary of open communist political activity than it had been before. The organization became closed in upon itself, and most of its activities after 1946 were carried out inside the framework of the Wafdist Vanguard. Its working class section, already damaged by the black listing and arrest of its leading working class cadres, was further weakened by the lengthy imprisonment of Yusuf Darwish. Darwish was in jail from November 1948 to December 1949 and again from November 1950 to April 1953.[3] When Darwish was arrested in November 1950, several other members of his organization including a key textile worker activist, Fu'ad ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim, were arrested along with him.[4] These arrests severely hampered this organization.

The full extent of the organizational damage suffered by the EMNL and Iskra is uncertain. It seems clear that whatever the initial impact of the repression, these organizations quickly managed to reestablish themselves. In June 1947 they merged and established the Democratic Movement for National Liberation. When the DMNL was formed it had 1,600 members including a majority of intellectuals and a large number of foreigners.[5] The workers' section of the organization was composed almost entirely of former EMNL members.[6] The unity of Iskra and the EMNL was achieved without a full discussion and

agreement of the cadres of each organization. Consequently, the DMNL began to fracture in late 1947 and early 1948. By July 1948 several splits had occurred, resulting in the formation of a number of smaller groups. Recriminations against the heavily Jewish leadership of the DMNL for having endorsed the partition of Palestine and the establishment of a Jewish state played an important part in the breakup of the DMNL. Despite these splits, the DMNL continued to be the largest and most influential communist organization and the only one with substantial working class support. As Tariq al-Bishri suggested, the influence and importance of the organization in both the working class and the broader Egyptian political movement far exceeded its relatively small membership.

The early success of the DMNL was in large measure due to the quality of its weekly newspaper, al-Jamahir (The Masses). Al-Jamahir was first issued by Iskra on April 7, 1947, but it became the organ of the DMNL after the formation of the united organization. The circulation of al-Jamahir is variously estimated at 8,000-12,000.[7] Even the smaller figure would represent a significant circulation for a weekly newspaper in a country the overwhelming majority of whose inhabitants were illiterate. Al-Jamahir was particularly important for

the working class organizing of the DMNL because in 1947 there were no large trade unions under communist leadership and communist activity in the working class had to be carried out outside and even in opposition to the trade unions in the large industrial enterprises.[8] While the Muslim Brothers used their daily newspaper principally as a propaganda organ, the DMNL was able to employ al-Jamahir as an organizing tool. Copies of al-Jamahir were distributed free of charge to workers in large industrial enterprises. In order to make contacts in these work places, al-Jamahir regularly devoted its centerfold to "factory exposures" of the kind described by Lenin in What Is to Be Done. Detailed articles and photographs displaying a high journalistic standard were published on the Shubra al-Khaymah textile industry, the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in Mahallah al-Kubra, the Filature Nationale in Alexandria, the Hawamdiyah sugar refinery, Eastern Tobacco Company, the Cairo Tramway Company, the Suez Canal Company, the textile industry of the Zaytun and Matariyah suburbs of Cairo and many other large enterprises. Each article provided a history of the enterprise or group of enterprises and the labor struggles that had occurred there. Current conditions were summarized and a program of demands for the workers was suggested. Using this method the DMNL

was able to penetrate many of these enterprises during late 1947 and early 1948.

Strike at Misr Spinning and Weaving Company

Al-Jamahir seems to have played a key role in bringing the DMNL into contact with workers at the Misr Spinning and Weaving mill. The centerfold of the June 2, 1947, issue contained an exposé on the mill including the history of the 1938 strike, the links of the Misr Company to the Egyptian government and a call to reform the union and oust its procompany leadership. The next issue of the paper announced that "a group of Mahallah workers" had made a financial contribution to support al-Jamahir. According to British diplomatic reports, twelve DMNL members came to Mahallah al-Kubra from Cairo and hired on at the Misr mill in the summer of 1947, using false names.[9] A DMNL branch was established in the city led by the textile worker Muhammad Hamzah. All indications point to him as the leader of the secret strike committees which organized the massive workers' uprising which broke out in the mill in September 1947.[10]

Tension had been building up among the workers in the mill for nearly a year. There had been a short work stoppage in January 1947 prompted by rumors that 3,000 (according to some reports 8,000) workers and 250 clerical

employees were to be dismissed as a result of the introduction of new machinery.[11] A large number of workers had been arbitrarily fired during the summer, leading workers to the conclusion that the company was attempting to fire veteran workers and replace them with new hires at lower wages.[12] On September 2 the Misr management posted a new schedule of disciplinary regulations with accompanying fines for violators in the mill. Complaints against the harsh and arbitrary disciplinary methods of the Misr management had long been a major grievance of the workers. The posting of new regulations and fines, though insignificant in itself, unleashed years of pent up hatred and frustration. Some recently fired workers read the regulations aloud to a large crowd of workers about to begin a new shift, provoking a spontaneous demonstration against the new measures. When company security officials arrived on the scene, one of them fired his weapon, instigating a violent riot.[13] Workers set fire to the cafeteria and damaged some of the workers' housing built by the company, and some LE 20,000 worth of company property was destroyed. Four workers were killed, nineteen wounded, and fifty-seven arrested as a result of the riot.

The destruction of the cafeteria and the housing, which the Misr Company proudly proclaimed as evidence of

its deep concern for the welfare of its workers, suggests that the workers' rebellion was motivated to a significant degree by rejection of the company's paternalism and its attempt to create a totally controlled environment where no aspect of the workers' life could be free of company influence. The company provided a cafeteria, housing, recreational facilities, clubs, a store, a clinic and many other facilities for its workers. But all of these were scorned and rejected as inadequate, self-serving or otherwise faulty by the majority of the workers.[14]

As punishment for the riot, the company closed the mill until September 10. The locked-out workers issued a list of demands: (1) dissolve the current union since it is dominated by company agents; (2) elect a new union leadership; (3) abolish the fine schedule; (4) stop the firing of workers.[15] The prominence of the demands for a new union free of company domination is a further indication that the workers' desire for some area of autonomy in their lives free from control of the company may have been the underlying cause of this rebellion and the reason for its exceptional violence.

On September 16, after the mill was reopened, some 1,000 workers declared a strike demanding payment of their wages for the time of the lockout. The next day the strike spread to all the mill's 26,000 workers.[16]

The government dispatched troops to Mahallah al-Kubra, and workers sitting in at the mill were expelled by force. Fifty white-collar employees and a large number of workers were fired for instigating the strike.[17] The mill reopened on October 4 after the Labor Administration agreed to hold elections for a new union. The workers' other demands were not met.

The lockout and strike at Misr Spinning and Weaving had a tremendous impact on the Egyptian workers' movement. Expressions of solidarity and support for the Misr workers poured in from a large number of other workers. On September 5 there were solidarity strikes at a number of mills in Shubra al-Khaymah, and textile workers from Matariyah and Zaytun sent letters protesting the Misr Company's actions. Merchant seamen based in Port Said, the Filature Nationale union, Cairo taxi drivers, hotel workers and oil company mechanics also announced their support.[18]

The strike received widespread political support beyond the communist and labor movements. A delegation of lawyers from Cairo travelled to Tanta to provide legal aid to the arrested Misr workers. Many of the merchants of Mahallah al-Kubra supported the workers.[19] Sawt al-Ummah, the left Wafd daily that took the place of al-Wafd al-Misri after it was closed down by the Sidqi repression,

supported the strike and opened its pages to statements by the workers. The Labor Party and the Socialist Labor Party both issued statements of support.[20] But Salah Harb, President of ᶜAbbas Halim's Labor Party, although he agreed that the union was unrepresentative, tried to end the strike and attacked its leadership for extremism.[21]

The Muslim Brothers, while they refrained from openly supporting the strike, also announced their support of the workers' demands for payment of wages during the lockout and election of a new union.[22] They reported that the fine schedule, which had precipitated the workers' demonstration of September 2, was "prejudicial to their rights, violating their honor and threatening to their future," but the workers were identified as initiating the violence.[23] Towards the end of the strike Sawt al-Ummah published two statements by a group of Misr workers accusing the Muslim Brothers of reporting to management the names of fifty white-collar workers who had been fired for instigating the second work stoppage. The statements charged the Brothers with breaking the unity of the workers' ranks and recalled their strike-breaking activity in Shubra al-Khaymah.[24] One possible explanation for the apparently contradictory behavior of the Muslim Brothers in this situation is that the majority of the following of the Muslim Brothers in the Misr mill

was drawn from the ranks of management and the white-collar employees rather than from the blue-collar workers.[25] It is quite possible that there was a split among white-collar employees over support for the strike. This supposition is supported by the fact that it is the names of white-collar employees which the Brothers were accused of reporting to management. Since most of the Brothers themselves were white-collar employees, it is reasonable that they would be most likely to know other white-collar employees and to inform on them rather than unknown blue-collar workers for supporting the strike. The fact that al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun adopted a position of support for the workers' demands while local Brothers were accused of informing on strike leaders is characteristic of the Brothers' general lack of consistency regarding labor matters; and while this example is particularly blatant, there were numerous other occasions on which different elements within the Society adopted opposing positions in labor disputes. What is unusual in this incident is that it was the central leadership of the Brothers whose position appeared to be more favorable to the workers than the local leadership. This can be explained by the very close links between the local leadership and the Misr Company management. Both the director of the Personnel Department and the assistant

director of the Weaving Department were on different occasions identified as leading members of the Society of Muslim Brothers in Mahallah al-Kubra.[26]

The strike at the Misr Company was the first in the strike wave of September 1947 to April 1948. According to the British diplomatic reports, the most important of the strikes which followed the one in Mahallah al-Kubra was a seventeen-day strike from September 26 to October 13 at the Filature Nationale and its subsidiary Egyptian Textile Company in Alexandria.[27] The key demand of the strike was for an eight-hour day with eleven hours' pay. These enterprises employed nearly 10,000 workers in two buildings. Conditions in the mill were very poor. According to the Egyptian Labor Administration, health, safety and welfare arrangements had not improved significantly since the formation of the company in 1912.[28] In 1919 an agreement was signed between the company and the union in which the company had agreed to reduce the length of the working day from eleven hours to eight with no cut in pay. However, in the 1920s the union lost strength, and the company stopped abiding by this agreement and reimposed an eleven-hour day. In September 1947 the Labor Administration began to enforce the law limiting the working day to nine hours. In response, the company reinstituted the eight-hour day but it also cut wages.

At the conclusion of the strike the Labor Department directed the company to implement the 1919 agreement until the final report of the ministerial committee charged with recommending a wage scale for the textile industry was released. The company did not comply with this directive, and the issue was not fully resolved until a collective bargaining agreement was signed with the union on February 2, 1949.[29] Textile workers in Imbabah, ᶜAbbasiyah and Shubra al-Khaymah held one-hour solidarity strikes in support of both the Filature Nationale and Misr strikes on September 30.[30]

On September 22, 8,000 hand weavers in Qalyub struck, demanding higher wages.[31] There were also strikes at the Nile Textile Company, Egyptian Oil and Cake Mills and Bata Shoes in Alexandria in the first week of October and a strike of telegraph operators later in the month.[32] As previously mentioned, there were also strikes at the Shell refinery in Suez and the Suez Canal Company.

The DMNL was able to extend its influence significantly, particularly in the textile industry, as a result of the Misr strike and the subsequent strike wave. In late September textile union representatives from Shubra al-Khaymah, Mahallah al-Kubra, Cairo, Alexandria and Damietta met and resolved to form a national federation of textile workers.[33] The list of those endorsing the

call to form this federation includes both DMNL members and others, an indication that the DMNL was now able to overcome its isolation from the trade union leadership and to unite with noncommunist trade union leaders around a concrete program to defend workers' rights. The federation did not, however, come into existence at this time. Another development suggesting increased DMNL influence within the trade unions is the marked increase in both the volume and range of labor news in al-Jamahir after September 1947.

Following the Misr strike Yusuf al-Mudarrik wrote a pamphlet explaining the causes of the strike and defending the workers' actions.[34] The pamphlet is largely devoted to an exposé of working conditions at the Misr mill. Wage cuts, speed ups, mandatory fees for work clothes and identity cards, overcharging by the company store, crowded conditions in company housing, excessive and arbitrary fines, harsh disciplinary measures for lateness and arbitrary firing of workers are among the workers' grievances cited by al-Mudarrik. According to al-Mudarrik, the main achievement of the strike was the Misr Company's loss of influence over the union executive board where its supporters functioned as a fifth column. In addition, the workers had learned that they needed an organization rather than a spontaneous uprising to

achieve their objectives and that promanagement white-collar workers could not be allowed to lead the union.[35] Al-Mudarrik's evaluation of the strike proved, however, to be premature and overoptimistic.

After the strike there was a sharp struggle between the company and advocates of a union free from company domination. Al-Mudarrik's pamphlet was distributed widely among the Misr workers as a weapon in this struggle. The procompany union executive board, which was permitted to remain in office until the new elections, mounted its own propaganda campaign including the publication of an irregular magazine, ʿAmil al-Mahallah (The Mahallah Worker). This publication combined a vicious anticommunism (with heavily anti-Semitic overtones) with enthusiastic support for the Misr Company, the Egyptian government and King Faruq. Several articles attacked al-Mudarrik's pamphlet explicitly and offered refutations of his charges against the company.[36] The magazine's editor, ʿAbd al-ʿAlim al-Mahdi, was not a worker at all. He had formerly served as editor of the short-lived organ of ʿAbbas Halim's Labor Party, al-ʿAmal (Labor), and appears to have retained his affiliation with the Labor Party while orchestrating the propaganda for the Misr Company's anticommunist campaign. On January 20, 1948, just before the new union elections were to be held, over

eighty Misr Spinning and Weaving Company workers were arrested and charged with possession of illegal literature.[37] Over 200 workers were interrogated and searched in their homes.[38] Those arrested were released from jail too late to file nominating petitions for the union election.[39] M. T. Audsley, the British Labor Attaché, approvingly noted that the Misr Company "neatly timed the introduction of the improved wage scales to coincide with a ruthless police clean-up of the communist elements."[40] As a result of these measures, the company was able to maintain control of the union executive board.

Despite the ultimate defeat of the strike and the workers' inability to establish a truly representative union, the struggle at Misr Spinning and Weaving was a major turning point in the development of the postwar workers' movement. The Misr workers had dared to challenge the power of the strongest industrial company in Egypt, and having done so were supported by a broad campaign including workers and other sympathetic Egyptians. The Misr Company's image as a nationalist institution was severely damaged, and the formerly widespread assumption that workers should not strike against Egyptian-owned enterprises was successfully challenged. These events had a radicalizing effect on the entire

workers' movement, which experienced a new "openness of thought" (al-tafattuh al-fikri) as Yusuf al-Mudarrik described it.[41] British reports concurred that the strike created a favorable atmosphere for the spread of communist ideas among the workers.[42]

The Strike Wave Continues

The strike wave ebbed in November and December 1947, but it resumed once again following the announcement of the government's proposed wage scale for the textile industry in January 1948. This wage scale was merely a recommendation and not obligatory. Nontheless, it had an important impact. Minimum wages, an eight-hour day and a six-day week were proposed.[43] The wage scale, as it was reported in the daily press, appeared to be fairly high because it included all of the cost-of-living allowances which had been granted during World War II, a 20 percent increment for dangerous work, and a 20 percent increment for social services in the mills of Shubra al-Khaymah, Kafr al-Zayyat and Alexandria, which did not provide housing, food and recreation facilities for workers as the Misr Company did at Mahallah al-Kubra and Kafr al-Dawwar. According to al-Jamahir, the recommended minimum wages were half of the prevailing average wage.[44] A British evaluation of the

new wage scale notes obliquely that the introduction of eight-hour shifts and a "revised wage structure" resulted in labor disputes in the textile industry, especially at the Filature Nationale and Sibahi mills in Alexandria.[45]

Sibahi employed approximately 5,500 workers in three mills, one in Alexandria and two in Shubra al-Khaymah. A long strike and lockout began at the Alexandria mill on February 16, prompted by a 50 percent wage cut related to the introduction of the eight-hour day. Fifty workers were arrested, and police surrounded the mill. The workers demanded: (1) an eight-hour day with no cut in pay; (2) no arbitrary firings; (3) cancellations of the disciplinary fine schedule; (4) free medical care; (5) release of the arrested workers; and (6) a freely elected union.[46] The strike was halted in late February but resumed again on March 1. After the resumption of the strike, police fired on the workers, killing three and wounding twenty-seven. This prompted memorial marches of solidarity and protests at the two Sibahi mills in Shubra al-Khaymah, the Filature Nationale and the Wahbah Shusha mill in the Wayli district of Cairo.[47] There had previously been a short strike at Sibahi No. 2 in Shubra al-Khaymah over the company's attempt to hire new workers at reduced wages, and a solidarity strike at

Sibahi No. 1.[48] Following the deaths of the workers in Alexandria the Shubra al-Khaymah mills struck again. These strikes continued sporadically throughout March, and it is unclear whether any of the demands were won.[49]

The company's failure to grant an eight-hour day with eleven hours' pay resulted in renewed strikes at the Filature Nationale. The strike of March 19 to 26 was marked by the explosion of a bomb near the home of the owner of the mill. When the strike ended, it was announced that a new union was to be formed.[50] A second strike broke out on March 31 and lasted until April 9.[51]

The recurrent strike activity at the Filature Nationale was accompanied by a struggle between communists (of uncertain affiliation but probably members of the DMNL) and the Muslim Brothers in the mill. On two occasions during the week of February 21, 1948, communists had distributed leaflets to the workers urging them to commemorate the general strike of February 21, 1946.[52] Egyptian communists generally attempted to memorialize this day because it symbolized for them the leadership of the working class in the nationalist movement. The DMNL, for example, issued a statement for this occasion with the slogan "Long live February 21, the day of the workers' leadership."[53] The Muslim Brothers cooperated with the police in an attempt to capture those distributing

leaflets to the Filature Nationale workers and al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun denounced the communists as Russian agents.[54]

There were numerous other work stoppages and protests, mainly in the textile industry, during early 1948. The 800 workers of La Bonneterie knitting mill in Alexandria were locked out for twenty days in February when the management refused their request for advance payment of wages six days before the Muslim feast of ʿId al-Kabir.[55] (Advance payment of wages before a holiday is still a very common practice in Egypt.) Several workers of the Shusha mill in Wayli went on a two-week hunger strike after they were fired for presenting demands to the management. On March 13 all of the 200 workers in the mill struck, demanding that the hunger strikers be rehired and that wages not be cut.[56] Workers at the Wool Spinning and Weaving Company in Shubra al-Khaymah held a sitdown strike in early March over the issue of speedup.[57]

Workers outside the textile industry also participated in the strike movement. Engineers in the Irrigation Department of the Ministry of Agriculture struck on January 1, 1948.[58] Petroleum distributors in Cairo struck on February 12, closing all the gas stations in the city.[59] There was a two-hour warning strike of Suez Canal Company workers on March 22 in support of

their case, which was under adjudication by the Labor Conciliation Board.[60] (See Chapter VII.) As previously mentioned, there were strikes at the Eastern Tobacco Company in April and June. (See Chapter IV.)

In early April the strike movement reached a crescendo and threatened a complete breakdown of public order. The authority of the government was openly challenged in illegal strikes by the police on April 5 and 6 and by 1,500 male nurses in the Qasr al-ᶜAyni Hospital in Cairo on April 7.[61] The nurses' strike was especially violent. Police had attempted to break up the strike and were met with a barrage of oxygen cylinders, steel and tree stumps. Over 400 nurses were arrested and charged with illegal assembly and inciting an illegal strike.[62] The striking nurses demanded higher pay and shorter hours. A British assessment of the nurses' wage rates offers the uncharacteristically blunt judgement that "their rates of pay are disgraceful (270 PT/month)."[63] This strike was organized by communists.[64]

A further disruption of public order was threatened on April 7 when the 7,000 workers of Cairo's public transportation network (buses, trams and metro) announced that they would strike on April 25 unless they received their share of the one milleme fare increase which had been instituted specifically to fund higher wages.[65]

ᶜAbbas Halim was still negotiating with the government for the Cairo transport workers, but this was the only significant group of workers among whom he retained any influence. The reasons for the persistence of this influence long beyond the time when other unions had broken their ties with the Prince are not clear. It may simply have been a survival of the close relations which had been built up in the 1930s. It may also have been affected by ᶜAbbas Halim's good relations with the management of the public transport companies. This link between the Prince and the Cairo transport workers persisted until approximately 1950-51.

The strike wave of late 1947 and early 1948 was marked by increasingly sharp challenges to the authority of the state. The violent incidents at Mahallah al-Kubra, the Filature Nationale and Sibahi mills in Alexandria and during the Cairo nurses' strike brought workers into repeated confrontations with the police. Civil servants struck frequently during this period, demonstrating the inability of the government to control its own bureaucracy. The police strike showed that the government was losing its authority even among those who were directly charged with enforcing it. There was a rapidly accelerating radicalization within the ranks of the trade union movement during this period. The Assistant Labor Attaché in the

British Embassy desperately reported an all-around deterioration in labor relations.[66] The intensity of the strike wave was only one of many indications that the Egyptian government was entering a crisis period in which its fundamental legitimacy was gradually but unmistakably undermined by its double failure to achieve full Egyptian national independence and to improve the progressively deteriorating economic conditions of the vast majority of the Egyptian people. Before the regime entered its final death throes, it was granted a temporary remission by the outbreak of the Palestine War.

The official entry of Egyptian troops into Palestine on May 15, 1948, abruptly interrupted the strike wave and the radicalization of the trade union movement. Although the Palace attempted to manipulate the war for its own benefit, the Palestine cause was genuinely popular in Egypt; and this tended to increase feelings of national cohesion and moderate class antagonisms. However, a much more effective method for breaking the strike wave was the declaration of martial law on May 13 and the harsh repression of virtually all political activity. Some 3,000 communists, Wafdists, Muslim Brothers and other political activists were rounded up and held in detention camps.

The communist movement suffered from both repression

and a loss of political credibility. Attacks on the communist movement had begun to intensify even before the official start of the Palestine War. A large number of Trotskyists were arrested in February 1948.[67] In March al-Jamahir was closed down. Arrests of communists continued to be reported throughout 1949.[68] The DMNL in particular, and the communist movement in general, suffered a serious erosion of its influence because it followed the lead of the Soviet Union and endorsed the partition of Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel.

Political and trade union activity began to revive slowly at the end of 1949 and the beginning of 1950 as prisoners began to be released from the detention camps. Both the communists and the Muslim Brothers supported the Wafd in the elections of January 1950, hoping that a Wafd victory would result in the lifting of martial law and the resumption of normal political activity.

The Labor Movement under the Final Wafd Regime

The Wafd returned to power with its popular support and nationalist image severely eroded. Still, there was no other political force in Egypt which could claim as much popular legitimacy. The high percentage of abstention in the elections revealed widespread public cynicism

about the Wafd and the entire Egyptian political system. Only 2,859,741 out of a total of 4,105,186 eligible voters cast their ballots. The Wafd received only 40 percent of the popular vote, the lowest percentage ever in a reasonably free election. The most conservative elements of the Wafd, led by Minister of Interior Fu'ad Siraj al-Din, dominated the government. None of the younger figures associated with the Wafdist Vanguard were given cabinet posts. The Wafd government of January 1950 to January 1952 displayed more respect and acceptance of the monarchy than any previous Wafd administration. The Wafd understood that the regime was now in deep crisis, and it wished to preserve it. But the Wafd's inability to overcome the conservative tendencies of its central leadership and its failure to implement a clear program of political and economic reforms ensured that it would ultimately fall with the monarchy.[69]

King Faruq had become increasingly unpopular since his capitulation to the British ultimatum of February 4, 1942. The defeat of the Egyptian army in Palestine was a severe blow to the prestige of the monarchy because it was so closely associated with the army. Perhaps more than anything else, Faruq's ostentatious display of corruption and debauchery rendered him an object of public mockery and scorn.[70] The legitimacy of the Wafd

was compromised by its conciliating attitude towards the King. It did nothing to protest or restrain his offensive public profligacy. Moreover, Siraj al-Din defended the Palace when the magazine Ruz al-Yusuf published a series of articles charging many figures in the King's retinue with responsibility for supplying faulty weapons to the Egyptian army during the Palestine War. The exposure of this scandal destroyed the legitimacy of the monarchy in the eyes of the Egyptian people and resulted in widespread disaffection in the ranks of the army.

Faced with a fundamental crisis of the entire political system which it could not resolve, the Wafd oscillated between the radical tendencies of its left wing and the deeply conservative character of its leadership. The Wafd did allow greater political freedom and tolerated activities of both the communists and the Muslim Brothers. But it was inconsistent in this regard. In May 1950 it attempted to enact a law restricting the activity of "politically suspicious" persons; and in August 1951 it attempted to legislate press censorship. Both measures were defeated by mass campaigns of public pressure, revealing that the Wafd was still somewhat responsive to its mass base. Henri Curiel, the principal leader of the DMNL, was deported to Italy (despite the fact that he was an Egyptian and not an Italian citizen) in August 1950.

The weekly newspaper al-Bashir (The Herald), which began the year as a left Wafd journal supporting the government and gradually became an unofficial organ of the DMNL, was banned in December 1950. A second unofficial DMNL weekly, al-Malayin (The Millions), began publication in May 1951. It too was closed down by the government in December 1951.

The Wafd's desperation and its lack of a clear political direction was reflected in its labor policy. The Wafd did not try to organize a trade union federation. This was the first time it assumed control of the government and failed to do so. Had this been attempted it is unlikely that the Wafd would have been able to retain control over such an organization. Too many trade unions had adopted a stance of political nonalignment, and a trade union federation would have quickly become independent of any Wafd attempts to direct it. On the other hand, labor legislation improving the standards of occupational health and safety and authorizing unions to sign collective agreements for their members was enacted. The most important labor initiative of the Wafd government was the proclamation of Military Order No. 99 of February 20, 1950, which established a daily minimum wage of 12.5 PT for adult workers and, what is more important, required employers to follow the government's lead in increasing by 50 percent the cost-of-living allowance which had been added on to basic wages since 1944. This

measure was an attempt to alleviate the persistent gap between wage levels and the continually rising cost of living.

However, after announcing this measure, the government failed to enforce it consistently. Sharp industrial struggles broke out over how to apply the military order. Many employers made no distinction between the base wage and the cost-of-living increment. Therefore it was often unclear what proportion of the wage was to be increased by 50 percent. Smaller enterprises, which could not afford the higher wage bill, resorted to a variety of evasive tactics, such as firing veteran workers and rehiring new workers at lower rates of pay, in order to avoid compliance with the regulation. Even some larger firms cut annual bonuses and fringe benefits in order to reduce their wage costs.[71]

There were strikes and protests in all sectors of the economy over the cost-of-living allowance. In March the Cairo tramway workers protested by working without collecting fares. In April there were three-day strikes of dockers in Alexandria and Port Said.[72] One of the largest strikes was at the Hawamdiyah sugar refinery, now owned by the Egyptian magnate Ahmad ᶜAbbud. ᶜAbbud resisted paying the cost-of-living increase throughout 1950. Finally, the 4,000 workers struck from December 18,

1950, to January 6, 1951. A campaign of support for the strike was orchestrated by the pro-Palace newspaper al-Zaman, which used the strike to attempt to discredit and embarrass the Wafd and enhance Faruq's public image.[73] A large number of trade unions and prominent individuals did support the sugar workers, but the Palace gained nothing from al-Zaman's efforts. The broad labor solidarity displayed on this occasion did, however, encourage other sectors of the working class to press their demands with greater intensity.

Textile workers continued to play a central role in the trade union movement, and the struggle around the implementation of Military Order No. 99 was very sharp in the textile industry. In Shubra al-Khaymah only three of the smallest textile mills employing a total of only 310 workers granted the cost-of-living allowance, while 150 workers from various mills were fired for demanding the implementation of Military Order No. 199.[74] Throughout 1950 there are repeated reports of firings, wage cuts and maneuvers by several textile mills in Shubra al-Khaymah and the other suburban Cairo textile centers in order to avoid payment of the increased cost-of-living allowance.[75] The union established by the Muslim Brothers in Shubra al-Khaymah was no longer active, and no new union had been organized to take its place.[76] As

a result, the Shubra al-Khaymah workers were unable to offer effective resistance to the tactics of the employers. At the end of the year eight textile workers in Rud al-Faraj, a district adjacent to Shubra al-Khaymah, went on a hunger strike protesting their employers' failure to pay the increased cost-of-living allowance.[77] Al-Bashir continually urged the Shubra al-Khaymah workers to unite their ranks and reorganize themselves.[78] Despite the persistent efforts of Muhammad Shatta and other DMNL organizers, it proved impossible to gather enough momentum to reorganize a union of Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers until 1951.

However, a strong textile workers' union was established under the leadership of the DMNL in the neighboring Cairo suburb of Zaytun where several thousand workers were employed in approximately fifteen textile mills. This Greater Cairo Mechanized Textile Workers' Union (GCMTWU) became the first important center of DMNL strength in the trade union movement after the revival of communist activity in 1950. The union had been organized in 1946 by Muhammad ᶜAli ᶜAmir, who considered himself a left Wafdist at that time.[79] ᶜAmir and his union had been active in the events of February 21, 1946, and in supporting the Misr Spinning and Weaving Company strike in September 1947. In 1947 and 1948 ᶜAmir was

associated with a Trotskyist group, and he was arrested with many of its members in February 1948. After he was released from jail he joined the DMNL.

ᶜAmir was not only the dominant figure in the GCMTWU, he was also a popular political leader in Zaytun and Matariyah with deep roots in the local community. He had a reputation as a "tough character" and commanded respect for his physical strength and oratorical ability. ᶜAmir had been a political and trade union activist in this community since the 1930s, first as a partisan of ᶜAbbas Halim and later as a Wafd militant.[80] He was an organizer of the Wafd Blue Shirts (a paramilitary formation) in the late 1930s. By the end of World War II he was the head of all of the Wafd Youth Committees in the area. After joining the DMNL, in addition to his trade union activity, ᶜAmir played a leading role in the Egyptian branch of the Partisans of Peace organization and its campaign to obtain signatures on a petition for world peace. This was one of the DMNL's most important efforts in its attempt to form a broad national united front in 1951.

The establishment of a center of DMNL strength among the Zaytun and Matariyah textile workers precipitated a confrontation with the Muslim Brothers, just as it had in Shubra al-Khaymah. However, on this occasion Muhammad ᶜAli ᶜAmir's personal popularity and authority, in addition

to the Brothers' questionable record in trade union struggles, enabled the DMNL forces to prevail easily.[81] In 1950 Jamal al-Banna was invited by the owner of a small textile mill in Cairo to advise and instruct his workers on how to manage their union. The mill owner was a member of the society of the Muslim Brothers, and his workers' union was affiliated to the GCMTWU. Because of his involvement with the workers at this mill, al-Banna became known to the leadership of the GCMTWU. Although he was not a worker, he was invited to join the executive board of the union because he was proficient in accounting techniques and could manage the union's finances. Muhammad ᶜAli ᶜAmir, as President of the GCMTWU, approved this arrangement without knowing of al-Banna's connection to the Muslim Brothers. (At that time al-Banna used the name Ahmad Jamal al-Din, enabling him to conceal his relationship to Hasan al-Banna.) The union executive board elections of June 18, 1950, resulted in the victory of two DMNL members, Muhammad ᶜAli ᶜAmir and Fikri al-Khuli (whose autobiographical accounts of his early experiences at Mahallah al-Kubra are cited in Chapter III), and two supporters of the Muslim Brothers, Jamal al-Banna and ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim ᶜIsawi. (ᶜIsawi had formerly served on the executive board of the Shubra al-Khaymah textile workers' union.) Shortly after gaining his seat on the

union executive board, Jamal al-Banna made preparations to publish a new magazine, independently of the union, which was to be called al-Niqabah (The Union). Muhammad ᶜAli ᶜAmir perceived this as an attempt to undermine his leadership of the GCMTWU and to establish a competing center of Muslim Brothers' power within the union. Very shortly thereafter Jamal al-Banna was ousted from the union executive board, and the GCMTWU remained solidly under the leadership of the DMNL for the next several years.

The Sibahi mill in Alexandria was the scene of exceptionally sharp struggle during 1950. There were strikes in February, June and August over implementation of the increased cost-of-living allownace, late payment of wages and other minor issues.[82] The June strike was especially violent, and it was marked by the deaths of four workers who drowned in the Mahmudiyah Canal which ran by the mill. Although management was widely believed to be responsible for these deaths, no charges were ever brought to court. The Sibahi mills were notorious for their poor treatment of workers. Both al-Bashir and British diplomatic reports concur that the Sibahi management was one of the worst in Egypt.[83] Following these strikes the Sibahi management, with cooperation from prominent Alexandria Wafdists, carried out a campaign of

firings designed to weed out all the trade union militants in the mill. Over 1,000 workers were fired, and a black list was compiled to prevent the fired workers from being employed elsewhere.[84]

The Cairo transport workers also played a key role in the revival of trade union activity in 1950-51. During this period ᶜAbbas Halim finally disappeared from the scene, and members and supporters of the DMNL began to play an increasingly more active role in the Cairo transport unions. The principal DMNL leaders among the transport workers were two Cairo taxi drivers, Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman and Sayyid Khalil Turk.

Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman had been a member of a Cairo taxi drivers' union since 1942.[85] There was a split in the union in 1947 or 1948, and he formed a separate union and became its president. About the same time he joined ᶜAbbas Halim's Labor Party. In late 1950 or early 1951 he joined the DMNL. In late 1950 ᶜAbd al-Rahman began to campaign for the unification of the four existing unions of Cairo taxi drivers.[86] This unity was achieved in January 1951, and Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman was elected President of the 5,000-member Cairo United Drivers' Union.[87]

Continuing and broadening his efforts to unite transport workers, ᶜAbd al-Rahman called for a national conference of transport workers. Representatives of

thirty-four transport workers' unions met in Cairo on January 17-19, 1951, and adopted a list of demands covering all sectors of the transport industry--taxis, trucks, buses and tramways. Among the main demands were upgrading the pay and working conditions of Cairo bus and tramway workers to bring them up to the standard achieved by the Alexandria Joint Transport workers and a 40 percent increase in taxi fares.[88] Alexandria taxi drivers had already announed that they would strike on February 5 protesting the government's refusal to approve the requested fare increase.[89] The Cairo conference endorsed this strike deadline and thereby threatened a national transport general strike. However, on February 1 some of the more conservative union leaders, especially those of the Cairo bus and tramway unions, called off the strike, claiming that the government was about to grant the transport workers' demands.[90]

These demands were not met and consequently Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman convened a second meeting of representatives of the transport unions. The Congress of Egyptian Joint Transport Drivers' and Workers' Unions met on June 2, 1951. Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman was elected its President and Sayyid Khalil Turk as its General Secretary. Other members of the executive committee represented transport workers from Alexandria, Port Said, Ismaᶜiliyah, Damietta

and Upper Egypt. Demands for a 40 percent taxi fare increase for tramway and bus drivers, application of labor legislation to all drivers and a requirement that vehicle owners purchase insurance for the drivers and passengers were adopted. The leadership of the Cairo tramway and bus unions was denounced, and Ibrahim Zayn al-Din was specifically attacked as a British agent and identified as having opposed the call for a general strike.[91] Subsequently the Federation of Cairo Joint Transport Workers' Unions issued a statement saying that Zayn al-Din alone had been responsible for sabotaging the strike of February 5.[92] Since Zayn al-Din personally commanded the loyalty of very few workers at this time, it is unlikely that this was entirely true. But scape-goating Zayn al-Din permitted the reestablishment of a reasonable degree of unity among the Cairo transport workers' leadership. In accordance with its objective of establishing a national united front, the DMNL was striving to establish the broadest possible unity within the trade union movement. By agreeing to unite with the Cairo bus and tramway union leaders after they denounced Zayn al-Din, the DMNL was able to increase its influence among the transport workers. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz Mustafa, the President of the Cairo Tramway Workers' Union, was especially friendly and cooperative with the DMNL in late

1951 and 1952, although he never joined the organization.[93]

The continuing and intensifying political crisis of the Egyptian regime provided fertile ground for the rapid growth of the communist movement during 1951. According to Walter Laqueur, the DMNL had only 100-200 members in February 1950, but by the end of 1952 its ranks numbered 2,000-3,000.[94] Tariq al-Bishri accepts these figures and supplements them with the estimate, supplied by former DMNL leader Zaki Murad, that in November 1951 the number of workers who were members, candidates or close supporters of the organization was nearly 1,500.[95] DMNL supporters and members were elected to union offices in a number of unions during 1951. Among the most prominent union officials who were also DMNL members (in addition to those already mentioned) were Ahmad Taha, Secretary of the Marconi Wireless Company union, Anwar Maqqar, Secretary of the Cairo Restaurant and Hotel Workers' Union, and ᶜAtiyah al-Sirafi, President of the Zifti and Mit Ghamr Bus Workers' Union. DMNL influence was also strong in the Alexandria Joint Transport Workers' Union, the Coca Cola Company union and the Alexandria seamen's union.

Even more significant than the increase in the number of workers and trade union officials affiliated

with the DMNL, is the growing trend towards unity within the trade union movement. The DMNL, by encouraging this unity trend, was able to assume the leadership of a large section of the trade union movement by late 1951. The rapid emergence of communist leadership in the trade union movement in late 1951 took place in the context of a massive mobilization of the Egyptian nationalist movement. Just as in February 1946, there was a convergence of the national and the workers' movements that allowed the communists to come to a position of prominence in both movements and exert an influence far stronger than their limited numbers would have suggested was possible. However, although the DMNL was unquestionably the leading force in the trade union movement in late 1951, the influence of the communists in the nationalist movement was not as significant as it was in 1946. Other forces, including the Muslim Brothers, the Socialist Party (formerly Young Egypt) and ultimately the army, played a much more decisive role in that arena.

The Wafd had been negotiating with Great Britain over revision of the 1936 treaty since March 1950. But the British now offered less favorable terms to the Wafd than they had proposed to Sidqi in 1946. Public pressure for suspending the treaty talks and unilateral abrogation of the treaty mounted throughout 1951. The trade union

movement played an active role in the nationalist mobilization, just as it had in 1946, and nationalist demands began to be raised frequently by trade unions. For example, on August 26, 1951, thousands of workers, including the traditionally pro-Wafd Royal Press, railroad and Abu Za^{c}bal government workshop workers, demonstrated denouncing the 1936 treaty.[96] The Federation of Cairo Joint Transport Workers' Union began a campaign for the nationalization of Cairo's public transport system, which was still owned and operated by foreign concessionaires.[97]

Faced with growing popular pressure and his own declining popularity, Mustafa al-Nahhas made one last attempt to restore the prestige of the Wafd and the viability of the regime by announcing, on October 8, 1951, Egypt's unilateral abrogation of both the 1936 treaty and the 1899 Anglo-Egyptian Condominium Agreement which regulated the administration of the Sudan. This proclamation unleashed a storm of popular nationalist fervor whose most dramatic expression was the organization of guerrilla operations directed against British military and economic installations in the Suez Canal region.

In the labor movement al-Nahhas' declaration was enthusiastically welcomed. Textile workers in Zaytun and Matariyah joined by members of the Partisans of Peace

demonstrated and rallied for two days in support of the cancellation of the treaties. Slogans were raised calling for the extension of democratic liberties in Egypt, abolition of the political police and signing a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union.[98] There were also workers' demonstrations in Shubra al-Khaymah. Approximately 60,000 workers employed by British economic and military facilities in the Suez Canal zone responded to calls from the Muslim Brothers, the Socialist Party and the communists to leave their jobs.

Within a week of al-Nahhas' cancellation of the treaties, the DMNL initiated the formation of the Preparatory Committee for a General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions (PCGFETU--al-Lajnah al-Tahdiriyah lil-Ittihad al-ᶜAmm li-Niqabat ᶜUmmal Misr). Ahmad Taha was chosen as its General Secretary and Muhammad ᶜAli ᶜAmir, Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman and ᶜAtiyah al-Sirafi occupied positions on its executive committee. The formation of the PCGFETU was made possible by the increased activity and influence of the DMNL in the trade union movement throughout 1950 and 1951. But because it appeared at this particular moment of high intensity in the nationalist struggle, it assumed the dual character of a workers' economic association and an expression of working class nationalism. The contradiction between

these two functions was not necessarily antagonistic, and combining them in one organization undoubtedly contributed to the rapid growth of the PCGFETU. But it is apparent that there was some confusion, even within the ranks of the DMNL leadership, about which role was primary. Ahmad Taha, representing the view that the trade union function of the PCGFETU was primary, declared in an interview with al-Malayin, "The political struggle should be carried out by political parties and not the trade union movement."[99] The very next week an article celebrating the formation of the PCGFETU and discussing its importance argued that:

> . . . it is considered the basic organizer of the Egyptian working class, and indeed the entire people in its role as the back bone of the organization of all the various sectors of the popular nationalist forces.[100]

By serving as the organizer of working class nationalist expression, the PCGFETU was able to attract trade union leaders who never before had been willing to unite with communists on any basis whatsoever. One of the most important of these figures was Fathi Kamil. He had always been considered a leader of the right wing in the trade union movement by the DMNL, and he was frequently denounced in the pages of al-Jamahir and al-Bashir for his flirtations with ᶜAbbas Halim and the British and for adopting a conciliatory attitude in his relations

with the management of the Eastern Tobacco Company. Since late 1949 Kamil had been President of the Congress of Trade Unionists (Mu'tamar al-Niqabiyin).[101] This organization maintained a friendly relationship with ᶜAbbas Halim, but, according to Fathi Kamil, he played no real role in its affairs.[102] Many of the trade unionists associated with the organization had been affiliated with ᶜAbbas Halim in the past, including Sayyid Qandil and Kamil ᶜIzz al-Din. ᶜAbd al-Hamid ᶜAbd al-Haqq served as its legal counsel. Scattered issues of an irregular publication of the Congress of Trade Unionists indicate that it embraced a mild social democracy combined with loyalty to the monarchy and a corporatist view of the functions of trade unions.[103] In late 1950 and 1951 some of the members of the Congress of Trade Unionists began to cooperate with trade union activities led by the DMNL. Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman, ᶜAtiyah al-Sirafi and possibly other DMNL members belonged to both organizations and played a role in radicalizing some of its members.[104]

In the atmosphere of political crisis which deepened during 1951, organizational affiliations tended to become blurred as there emerged within the trade union movement a vaguely defined "revolutionary current" drawing its identity principally from its position in regard to the

nationalist movement. That is, it demanded immediate and unconditional British evacuation of Egypt and the Sudan and was prepared to take up arms to win this demand. By initiating the formation of the PCGFETU, the DMNL was able to place itself at the head of this trend within the trade union movement and to unite a very large portion of the movement under its leadership. Fathi Kamil's willingness to join the PCGFETU and to serve on its executive committee is the clearest indication of this development. By December 1951, 104 unions with a membership of nearly 65,000 workers were affiliated with the PCGFETU.[105] This number continued to increase in late December and early January 1952.

In preparation for the formal establishment of a general trade union federation efforts were made to strengthen trade union organizations, establish industry-wide federations and expand the membership of the PCGFETU. The Founding Committee for a Union of Mechanized Textile and Preparatory Workers of Shubra al-Khaymah and its Suburbs, which had been acting as a union executive committee all during 1951 while the political police prevented it from calling a general assembly to formally reconstitute the union, made one more effort to officially organize a union.[106] A Congress of Egyptian Textile Workers was established under the leadership of Muhammad

ᶜAli ᶜAmir, and it convened a national conference of textile workers in Cairo on January 5, 1952.[107] The Congress of Egyptian Joint Transport Drivers' and Workers' Unions also scheduled a national conference in Cairo on January 5, but it was prevented from meeting by the political police. Each week additional trade unions announced their affiliation with the PCGFETU. The culmination of all these organizational efforts was the announcement that a founding congress for a General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions would be held in Cairo on January 27, 1952.

The congress was never held. On January 26 the city of Cairo went up in flames. The question of who bears responsibility for setting the Cairo fire still arouses fierce debate in Egypt today, and no fully satisfactory answer has been definitively accepted.[108] The government accused the communists of responsibility and even tried to implicate the PCGFETU directly. Ahmad Taha, on the other hand, along with many others, has suggested that agents of the Palace and British intelligence set the fire and that one of their motives for doing so was to prevent the founding of a national trade union federation.[109] Although this was one of its effects, there is insufficient evidence to sustain this accusation.

It is much more likely that if the British and the Palace were responsible, and this is one of the more reasonable hypotheses, that they had a much broader objective in mind: to end the popular upsurge of the nationalist movement. No matter by whose agency, this was precisely the effect of the fire. That night martial law was proclaimed. A large number of communists, including many of the PCGFETU leaders, were arrested. The next day the Wafd government was dismissed. All popular political activity was stopped, and the new government of ᶜAli Mahir put an end to the guerrilla movement in the canal zone.

These repressive measures effectively halted the nationalist mass movement. It is legitimate to wonder why a mass movement with such a broad popular base could be blocked so abruptly by an unpopular king backed only by the force of British arms. The answer to this question is one of the keys to understanding Egyptian political life in the twentieth century. Popular political upsurges have been repeatedly blocked and even reversed in a similar manner on a number of critical occasions--1919, 1946, 1952, 1967 (after the defeat in the war) and most recently after the food riots of January 18-19, 1977. The common thread linking all these movements is their spontaneous or nearly spontaneous character and weak

organization and leadership. In the movement of 1951-52 none of the active political forces--the Muslim Brothers, the Socialist Party, the left wing of the Wafd or the communists--commanded large enough or sufficiently well-organized forces to enable them to effectively challenge the regime on their own. Had they been able to unite, as the DMNL urged them to do, they might have been able to do so. Because the sharp divisions between these forces prevented their unity, the field of political action was left open to the one force in Egyptian society which was sufficiently well organized and united to undertake the task of ending the old regime--the army. Meanwhile, the fire gave the monarchy a six-month period of grace before the military coup of July 23, 1952, ended the old regime and with it the era of colonialism in Egypt.

Notes to Chapter VIII

[1]Laqueur, p. 44.

[2]Sa^{c}id, Tarikh al-munazzamat, p. 411.

[3]Yusuf Darwish, "Letter."

[4]al-Ahram, November 3, 1950.

[5]Sa^{c}id, Tarikh al-Munazzamat, p. 389.

[6]Ibid.; FO 371/69250/J1890 (1948).

[7]FO 371/69250/J1890 (1948); Sa^{c}id, al-Sahafah, pp. 177-78.

[8]FO 371/63046/J645 (1947).

[9]FO 371/69250/J1890 (1948).

[10]Sa^{c}id, Tarikh al-munazzamat, p. 404; Sa^{c}id, al-Sahafah, p. 205; Hamzah's name also appears as one of the signatories to the list of workers' demands published in al-Jamahir, September 6, 1947.

[11]Mudarrik, TU, May 15, 1969; al-Ahram, January 14, 1947; al-Misri, September 6, 1947.

[12]Sawt al-Ummah, September 5, 1947.

[13]Mudarrik, TU, May 15, 1969, insists that the discharge of the weapon preceded the riot.

[14]This is the overwhelming impression of the results of the survey research conducted by William Carson in 1952, and there is no reason to believe that conditions or attitudes were substantially any different five years earlier. See Carson, The Mehalla Report.

[15]al-Jamahir, September 6, 1947.

[16]Sawt al-Ummah, September 17, 18, 1947.

[17]Ibid., September 26, 1947.

[18]Ibid., September 6-8, 1947.

[19]Mudarrik, TU, July 15, 1969.

[20]al-Ahram, September 22, 1947; Sawt al-Ummah, September 8, 1947.

[21]Salah Harb's speech to the workers is quoted in Berque, Egypt, pp. 625-26, with no mention of the original source. Berque's description of these events differs sharply from the one offered here because, by his own admission, he relies principally on the reports of al-Ahram, which was generally unfavorable to the labor movement.

[22]IM, September 19, 1947.

[23]Ibid., September 4, 1947.

[24]Sawt al-Ummah, September 28, October 1, 1947.

[25]Carson, "The Social History of an Egyptian Factory," p. 369.

[26]al-ᶜAmal, October 24, 1946, contains a letter from the clerks of the Personnel Department complaining that their director was attempting to recruit them into the Society by giving preferential treatment to those who joined. Al-Tahrir, November 30, 1954, "exposing" the existence of a strong center of Muslim Brothers' activity in Mahallah al-Kubra after the attempted assassination of Jamal ᶜAbd al-Nasir, identifies the assistant director of the Weaving Department as the head of the Society in the city and notes other close connections to the Misr management.

[27]FO 371/62994/J5855 (1947).

[28]Ibid.

[29]This history is related in the preamble to the contract: Sharikat al-Ghazl al-Ahliyah al-Misriyah wa-al-Sharikah al-Misriyah li-Sinaᶜat al-Mansujat, ᶜAqd al-ᶜamal al-mushtarik wa-qararat al-lajnah al-ᶜulya li-tawhid shurut al-ᶜamal wa-al-ujur bi-masaniᶜ al-nasij (s.l., February, 1949). See also IM, January 1, 1948.

[30]Sawt al-Ummah, October 1, 1947.

[31]Ibid., September 23, 1947.

[32]FO 371/62994/J5855 (1947).

[33]al-Jamahir, September 28, 1947.

[34]Yusuf al-Mudarrik, Hawla mushkilat ʿummal al-Mahallah (Cairo, 1947).

[35]Ibid., pp. 29-30.

[36]ʿAmil al-Mahallah, December 13, 1947.

[37]IM, January 23, February 6, 1948; al-Balagh, February 18, 1948. According to al-Jamahir, January 25, 1948, the total number arrested was 300.

[38]al-Balagh, February 22, 1948.

[39]al-Jamahir, February 8, 1948.

[40]FO 371/73474/J3567 (1949).

[41]Mudarrik, TU, August 1, 1969.

[42]FO 371/69282B/J5425 (1948).

[43]al-Asas, January 9, 1948.

[44]al-Jamahir, February 8, 1948.

[45]FO 371/73474/J3567 (1949).

[46]al-Jamahir, February 22, 1948. A more extensive set of demands was published in al-Jamahir, February 29, 1948.

[47]Ibid., March 7, 1948.

[48]Ibid., February 22, 1948.

[49]IM, March 17, 18, 1948.

[50]al-Ahram, March 19, 26, 1948.

[51]Ibid., April 1, 9, 1948.

[52]IM, February 25, 1948.

[53]al-Jamahir, February 22, 1948.

[54]IM, February 25, 1948.

[55]al-Jamahir, February 8, 1948.

[56]Ibid., March 21, 28, 1948; al-Ahram, March 16, 1948.

[57]al-Ahram, March 7, 1948.

[58]IM, January 1, 1948.

[59]Ibid., February 13, 1948.

[60]al-Ahram, March 23, 1948.

[61]Ibid., April 6-8, 1948.

[62]IM, April 18, 1948.

[63]FO 371/69210/J2724 (1948).

[64]FO 371/69210/J2537 (1948).

[65]Ibid.; IM, April 8, 1948.

[66]FO 371/69210/J2765 (1948).

[67]FO 371/69250/J1435 (1948).

[68]For example, al-Asas, April 29, June 24, 1949 (reporting the arrest of the DMNL cell in Mahallah al-Kubra); Akhbar al-Yawm, April 2, September 24, 1949 (reporting the arrest of the DMNL Central Committee).

[69]For a perceptive discussion of the Wafd's relationship with the Palace in this period see al-Bishri, pp. 302 ff.

[70]For an evocative account of Faruq's personal degradation see Berque, Egypt, pp. 660-61.

[71]FO 371/80606/JE2181/5 (1950).

[72]Ibid.

[73]al-Zaman, December 18, 1950, to January 8, 1951.

[74]al-Bashir, May 2, 9, 1950.

[75]Ibid., July 8, 15, August 5, September 2, 16, October 21, November 11, 18, 1950.

[76]Ibid., July 8, 1950.

[77]al-Ahram, December 18, 1950.

[78]al-Bashir, August 5, September 16, 30, November 18, 1950.

[79]Details of the biography of Muhammad ᶜAli ᶜAmir, unless otherwise noted, are based on personal interviews of November 27, December 5, 9, 1980.

[80]al-Jihad, April 30, 1936, reports that Muhammad ᶜAmir, nicknamed "al-Nims" (the weasel--a moniker denoting physical prowess), supported the Wafd, as opposed to ᶜAbbas Halim, in the split that occurred in the trade union movement that year.

[81]This incident is obliquely referred to in al-Bashir, October 7, 14, 1950. I have supplemented this account with personal interviews with Jamal al-Banna, October 5, 1980, and Muhammad ᶜAli ᶜAmir, December 5, 1980, and fragments of the union's papers made available to me by Jamal al-Banna. Jamal al-Banna asserts that he was not formally a member of the Society of Muslim Brothers at this time.

[82]FO 371/80606/JE2181/5 (1950); al-Ahram, June 24, 25, August 18, 1950; al-Bashir, September 30, 1950.

[83]al-Bashir, July 1, 1950; FO 371/80606/JE2181/5 (1950).

[84]al-Bashir, November 11, 25, 1950.

[85]Details of Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman's biography, unless otherwise noted, are based on a personal interview of December 7, 1980.

[86]al-Muqattam, October 21, 1950.

[87]Ibid., January 6, 20, 1951. There are, however, persistent subsequent reports of efforts by Ibrahim Zayn al-Din to continue the existence of his chauffeur's union. Although this union was very weak and inactive at this time, financial support from the British enabled Zayn al-Din to maintain a presence among the transport union leaders.

[88]Ibid., January 20, 1951; al-Misri, January 20, 1951. Taxi drivers who did not own their own vehicles were paid 25 percent of total receipts.

[89]al-Muqattam, January 13, 1951.

[90]Ibid., February 3, 1951.

[91]al-Malayin, May 27, June 3, 1951.

[92]Ibid., June 17, 1951.

[93]Ahmad Taha, personal interview, December 2, 1979.

[94]Laqueur, p. 46.

[95]al-Bishri, p. 422.

[96]al-Ahram, August 27, 1951.

[97]al-Malayin, August 19, 1951.

[98]Ibid., October 21, 1951.

[99]Ibid., October 14, 1951.

[100]Ibid., October 21, 1951.

[101]See FO 371/73466/J9007 (1949) for a report on the formation of this organization.

[102]Fathi Kamil, personal interview, December 20, 1980.

[103]Mu'tamar al-Niqabiyin, June 24, September 7, 23, October 20, 1950.

[104]Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman, personal interview, December 7, 1980; ᶜAtiyah al-Sirafi, personal interview, December 29, 1980.

[105]Laqueur, p. 53. These figures are based on an article by Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman which appeared in a Russian periodical.

[106]al-Malayin, October 28, 1951; al-Nas, October 31, 1951, reports that this attempt to convene a general assembly of members was also thwarted by the police.

[107]al-Malayin, December 26, 1951.

[108]For a detailed study of this issue see Jamal al-Sharqawi, Hariq al-Qahirah (Cairo, 1976).

[109]Ahmad Taha, interview in ibid., pp. 866-69.

CHAPTER IX

THE FREE OFFICERS AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT[1]

After the Cairo fire the PCGFETU adopted a semi-underground mode of operation. Some of its leading figures who escaped arrest, including its General Secretary, Ahmad Taha, met on January 27 as scheduled and changed the name of the body to the Founding Committee for a General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions (FCGFETU--al-Lajnah al-Ta'sisiyah lil-Ittihad al-ᶜAmm li-Niqabat ᶜUmmal Misr).[2] Many of those arrested, including Muhammad ᶜAli ᶜAmir and Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman, remained in jail until after the military coup, when all political prisoners arrested by the old regime, except for seventeen communists, were released. The legal status of the FCGFETU during the last months of the old regime was ambiguous.

The government attempted to split the noncommunist trade union leaders in the FCGFETU away from their coalition with the DMNL by creating an alternative center of trade union leadership. The Supreme Advisory Council for Labor (al-Majlis al-Istishari al-ᶜUlya lil-ᶜAmal), which had not met for two years, was reactivated, and

Fathi Kamil and ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz Mustafa, two of the most prominent non-DMNL members on the executive committee of the FCGFETU, were appointed to this body along with four other more conservative trade union officials and six representatives of management.[3] There seem to have been some tactical differences between the communist and non-communist trade union leaders about how to ensure the survival of the GCGFETU under martial law. Fathi Kamil and ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz Mustafa announced the actual formation of a general federation of trade unions without receiving legal authorization from the government. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz Mustafa was named President of the Temporary Executive Committee.[4] Perhaps the noncommunists thought that the government would allow the federation to function if communists were eliminated from leading positions. The government was unable to exploit the tactical differences that might have existed among the trade union leaders to gain any real advantage. When the Supreme Advisory Council for Labor convened its first meeting after its reorganization, Fathi Kamil requested that it authorize the formation of a general federation of trade unions. But Radi Abu Sayf Radi, the Minister of Social Affairs, refused to consider the request, arguing that it was not on the agenda of the body.[5] Thus the government lost what appears to have been an opportunity to isolate the communists from other trade union leaders.

The only continuation of the high level of activity and organization which characterized the trade union movement before the fire was the convening of a conference of representatives of 20,000 workers employed by twenty-five provincial bus companies on July 13, 1952, to demand that they be granted the same conditions and wages accorded to the Cairo and Alexandria transport workers. The central issue in the regional transport industry was the inability of workers to preserve rights and conditions won from former employers as smaller companies were gradually bought out by larger ones who disregarded existing labor agreements or traditionally established practices. The conference also demanded that Cairo transport workers be given their share of the one-milleme fare increase that had been in effect during 1944-45 and that Cairo tramway workers be granted the same cadre which governed Cairo and Alexandria bus workers. These demands broadened the base of the conference and won it support from Cairo and Alexandria unions, which endorsed the call for a transport general strike on July 27 if these demands were not met.[6] The military coup took place before the strike deadline and therefore the strike threat was not implemented.

The Revolution Command Council (RCC--Majlis Qiyadat al-Thawrah) which took power on July 23 announced a six-

point program which promised to purify political life, establish democracy, establish social justice, abolish the remnants of feudalism, create a strong national army, and establish full Egyptian national independence and sovereignty. The young junior officers of the Free Officers' Organization who had planned and executed the coup presented General Muhammad Najib, who played no role in the actual coup, as the leader of "the revolution." Najib was well liked and respected by the public, and his senior rank gave the new regime added authority. The Free Officers and their real leader, Jamal ᶜAbd al-Nasir, had neither a well-developed tactical political plan for managing the government after the coup nor a clearly articulated ideological platform other than militant Egyptian nationalism with only the vaguest "anti-feudal" social content. Nonetheless, the coup received enthusiastic support from nearly all quarters.

The broad spectrum of political views represented among the leading Free Officers made it possible for both the DMNL and the Muslim Brothers to claim the movement as "their own." Both organizations were seriously mistaken in their judgement, although the Brothers had perhaps somewhat more justification for their claim. The RCC included members and supporters of the DMNL and the Muslim Brothers in its ranks. Yusuf Sadiq was a full

member of the DMNL, and Khalid Muhi al-Din, who had been a member of Iskra in 1947, was a sympathizer. Free Officers Ahmad Hamrush and Ahmad Fu'ad were also DMNL members. The Free Officers' leaflets had been printed on the DMNL printing press since the Cairo fire, and its leadership knew of the coup the night before it occurred and distributed leaflets supporting it the next morning.[7] ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim ᶜAbd al-Ra'uf was the principal supporter of the Muslim Brothers within the ranks of the Free Officers, and RCC members Kamal al-Din Husayn and Husayn al-Shafiᶜi were also members of the Society. RCC member Anwar Sadat was a sympathizer of the Muslim Brothers and had acted as a liaison between discontented army officers and the Brothers in 1940-42. The Brothers had also received advance notice of the coup and played a key role in organizing mass support during the first few days of the new regime.[8] Jamal ᶜAbd al-Nasir was in touch with both the DMNL and the Muslim Brothers, and undoubtedly other political currents as well. But his ultimate loyalty was only to his own Free Officers' Organization, which he refused to link with any civilian-dominated political force.

The Free Officers projected an image of offering something for everyone, and workers were quick to express confidence in the new regime on the basis of its

nationalist appeal, its attacks on the privilege and corruption of the old regime, and perhaps above all, its promise to establish social justice. As an act of confidence in the new regime the transport workers called off their threatened general strike.[9] On July 31, 1952, the FCGFETU met and issued a statement supporting the army movement as an expression of the people's hopes and as a means to realize social justice.[10] The statement also indicated the trade unionists' apprehensions about military rule by urging the army to defend the constitution, restore parliamentary life as soon as possible, repeal all repressive legislation, repeal martial law, and abolish the political police. Thus the FCGFETU combined overall support for the military while also demanding the rapid restoration and extension of democratic liberties. However, these two positions were soon to become antagonistic. A survey of the executive committee members signing this statement indicates that the coalition between the DMNL and the noncommunist trade union leaders was still in effect and had, in fact, broadened to include several figures who had not previously been identified with the FCGFETU.

Kafr al-Dawwar: A Turning Point

Less than a month after the Free Officers came to power their relations with the Egyptian trade union movement were seriously strained by a violent strike and demonstration at Kafr al-Dawwar, a textile center fifteen miles south of Alexandria. There were three large mills in Kafr al-Dawwar, all owned by the Misr Company. At the largest, Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving, where over 9,000 workers were employed, a company-dominated union had been in existence since 1943.[11] The general conditions of employment, the Misr Company's paternalism, and its disciplinary and social welfare policies were similar to those in effect at Mahallah al-Kubra. Since 1948 a group of workers, including partisans of all the political currents present in the workers' movement, had periodically attempted to gain election to the union executive board and turn out the procompany elements. Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha^{c}arawi and Ahmad al-Yabani, who became members of the DMNL, were among the leaders of the union reform movement. But the DMNL presence at Kafr al-Dawwar was not very strong. Despite the nationwide growth of militance and independent organization in the trade union movement in 1951, the union reform efforts at Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving floundered. The reform movement was so weak that it did not contest the union elections that year.

At the Bayda Dyers Company (a joint enterprise of the Misr Company and the British Bradford Dyers Association as was Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving) the 3,000 workers were not represented by any union whatsoever. On August 9 the Bayda workers went on strike, declaring their support for Muhammad Najib and the new regime and demanding to be represented by a union. The workers' demands were met quickly and the strike did not last long. On August 11, four workers at the third Misr establishment in Kafr al-Dawwar, the Misr Rayon Company, which also did not have a union, were arrested for inciting to strike, probably in order to demand union recognition.

These worker actions at the two nonunionized mills in Kafr al-Dawwar undoubtedly made the authorities in the area anxious about the possible direction that an outbreak of strike activity and other workers' collective action might take. They also encouraged the union reform forces at Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving to renew their activity. The leadership of the group, which still included representatives of the entire spectrum of political tendencies, met and formulated a program of demands which were to be sent to Muhammad Najib and other government officials. The possibility of a strike was discussed, but it was decided to wait fifteen days to see how the government responded to the demands.

On the night of August 12, some 500 workers began a sitdown strike and locked themselves inside the doors of the Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving mill. Shortly thereafter fires were set to some of the auxiliary buildings inside the walls of the complex. The strike was spontaneous and not organized by the union reform group, which, as has been noted, had decided to delay any possible strike. Both Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha^{c}arawi and Ahmad al-Yabani were meeting with a company official on their own time when the sitdown and the fire began. At 3:00 A.M. on August 13 troops arrived from Alexandria. They were met by two demonstrations, one outside the walls of the mill on the road to Alexandria and one inside the walls near the workers' housing. The demonstrators shouted their support for the revolution and for Najib and raised demands calling for: (1) the removal of several company officials who were considered particularly abusive and oppressive; (2) a freely elected union; (3) moving the union offices out of company-owned premises; (4) equal bonuses for clerical and blue-collar workers; (5) wage increases; (6) amnesty for the strikers.

Shots were fired in the vicinity of the demonstration outside the walls of the mill, and then the army opened fire. In the exchange two soldiers, one policeman and

four workers were killed and many others wounded. The military authorities quickly moved to contain the events at Kafr al-Dawwar and arrested 545 workers, charging twenty-nine with a series of offenses including premeditated murder, arson, destruction of property, theft of police weapons and resistance to officers performing their duty. A military tribunal was convened and held its first session on the evening of August 15. The three principal defendants were Mustafa Khamis and Muhammad al-Baqari, who were rumored to be members of an illegal communist organization, and Muhammad Shihab, a Muslim Brother.

The trial began so quickly that Khamis, who was tried first, did not have time to engage a lawyer. The court refused to allow him to defend himself and appointed Musa Sabri, a journalist covering the trial for the notoriously right wing daily al-Akhbar, as Khamis' lawyer on the strength of the fact that Sabri had a law degree. By August 16 Khamis was found guilty and on August 18 he was sentenced to death by hanging. Shortly thereafter al-Baqari was also sentenced to death. Muhammad Shihab was sentenced to thirteen years' hard labor, but the sentence was reduced by General Najib to nine years. Ten other workers received jail sentences. On September 7 Khamis and al-Baqari were executed. Khamis' last words were, "I am wronged. I want a retrial."

Many of the basic facts of this case remain seriously in dispute, and it will not be my purpose here to construct a complete defense brief for the workers.[12] Only the barest outlines of such a defense are presented here. It is clear that significant exculpating evidence was presented to the military tribunal and ignored. Musa Sabri's summation statement in defense of Khamis pointed out that: (1) Khamis was a participant in the demonstration inside the walls of the plant, while the shots were fired in the other demonstration; (2) according to most of the witnesses Khamis was arrested before the shots were fired; and (3) the demonstrators were shouting "Long live Muhammad Najib," according to all but one of the witnesses.[13]

Twenty-nine years after the trial Musa Sabri insisted that the primary consideration in determining the guilt of Khamis and al-Baqari in the court's eyes was their alleged membership in illegal communist organizations.[14] No evidence was presented at the trial proving that they were members of such organizations. According to Ahmad Sadiq Sa^{c}d, Khamis had been a member of Workers' Vanguard some time before the military coup, but had lost contact with the organization before the strike at Kafr al-Dawwar.[15] Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha^{c}arawi asserts that neither Khamis nor al-Baqari were members of the DMNL.

He characterized Khamis as a "class conscious worker" and claimed that al-Baqari had no well-developed political views whatsoever and was arrested and drawn into the case as a result of his assault on a company security official with whom he had a long-standing personal dispute.[16]

Other facts peripheral to the case also raise doubts about whether the accused were guilty as charged. Amin Hafiz ᶜAfifi, the son of one of the most prominent members of the Board of Directors of the Misr Company and an employee of the Fine Spinning and Weaving Company, and the commander of the local police were arrested at the time of the violence but released without being charged. The DMNL accused them of responsibility for setting the fires and pointedly inquired why the police did not intervene when the incident began on the night of August 12, but waited until the army arrived the next morning before acting. The DMNL suggested that Amin Hafiz ᶜAfifi and the local police commander were acting on behalf of elements who wished to see a clash between the workers and the army in order to strengthen the hand of the civilian Prime Minister ᶜAli Mahir and weaken popular support for the military.[17]

The composition of the military tribunal which tried the case and its extraordinary zeal for bringing the proceedings to a rapid conclusion leave room to doubt the

purity of the motives of the judges. ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim Amin volunteered to serve as presiding judge of the tribunal. He was one of the most pro-American of all the Free Officers and was in close contact with Jefferson Caffrey, the American Ambassador in Cairo. After the trial Amin assumed responsibility for labor affairs in the Ministry of Social Affairs. In this capacity he presented proposals to the RCC urging that strikes be outlawed and that employers be given full freedom to fire workers. These measures were necessary, Amin argued, in order to attract foreign capital to invest in Egyptian industry. When these proposals were presented to the RCC, they were partially blocked only by Khalid Muhi al-Din's threat to resign if they were implemented.[18]

All of these considerations combined engender more than a reasonable doubt about the guilt of Khamis and al-Baqari and the other principal defendants in the case. The RCC certified the tribunal's sentence of execution for Khamis and al-Baqari and in doing so adopted a course which made workers the first victims of the new regime. This decision was taken because the majority of the RCC perceived the events at Kafr al-Dawwar as a communist-inspired political challenge to the military. According to Khalid Muhi al-Din, this was a political decision not motivated by the facts of the case.[19] Muhammad Najib

also confirmed that the "reports which informed us of the dangers of workers' movements" were among the principal reasons that he voted to sustain the sentence of the court.[20] But Najib was obviously not totally convinced by the facts of the case, because after the RCC had already voted to certify Khamis' sentence he agreed to interview him in order to determine if there were any grounds for clemency. In the interview Najib pressed Khamis to confess that he was a member of a communist organization and to reveal the names of those who had encouraged him to undertake his actions. But Khamis admitted nothing. Najib therefore agreed to the execution "while in my mind there was the possibility of the spread of these strikes and Mustafa Khamis' refusal to declare anything that would justify lightening his sentence."[21]

The widespread, although entirely unproven, assumption that communists were responsible for inciting the workers of Kafr al-Dawwar to rebellion against the new regime strengthened the hand of the already considerable anticommunist elements among the Free Officers. After Kafr al-Dawwar, the RCC began to take measures directed at isolating the communists in its own ranks and removing them from all positions of power. In late September Ahmad Hamrush, who had been appointed editor of a new proregime

magazine, al-Tahrir (Liberation), was removed from his position and arrested. A number of other DMNL members and sympathizers on the magazine's staff were also removed.[22] On October 16 a decree was announced granting amnesty to all those accused of political offenses from the date of the signing of the treaty with Great Britain on August 26, 1936, until July 23, 1952. Communists, however, were excluded from the amnesty.[23]

The Muslim Brothers, who were still on very friendly terms with the new regime, participated in the anti-communist campaign being promoted by the preponderant forces in the RCC. Al-Da^{c}wah held up the events of Kafr al-Dawwar as an illustration of the manner in which the revolution had created an opening for the spread of communist propaganda. In a remarkably violent article on its workers' page al-Da^{c}wah called on workers to take vigilante action to eliminate communist propaganda from their midst. "We must strike these communists who want to use this opportunity with an iron hand so that they are driven to their dens," wrote al-Da^{c}wah.[24] It should be recalled that the third defendant in the Kafr al-Dawwar trial was himself a Muslim Brother and that Brothers had cooperated with DMNL members and others in the union reform movement. This glaring inconsistency is an indication of the widely divergent range of views

among the membership of the Muslim Brothers on practical questions of labor policy and, in particular, the permissibility of joint action with communists.

Trade Unions and the Military Regime after Kafr al-Dawwar

Despite the manner in which the RCC responded to the events at Kafr al-Dawwar, the DMNL and the FCGFETU continued to support the military regime. The FCGFETU issued a statement denouncing the violence at Kafr al-Dawwar as motivated by proimperialist interests.[25] On August 18, after Khamis' sentence was announced, the FCGFETU held a meeting in Alexandria attended by representatives of ninety-five unions.[26] It was still possible for the FCGFETU to meet in Alexandria because Ahmad Hamrush was stationed there and the military commander of the city was a DMNL sympathizer. Following this meeting members of the FCGFETU and the DMNL-led Preparatory Committee for an Egyptian Student Federation mounted loudspeakers on vehicles provided by the army and circulated in working class neighborhoods in Alexandria and Kafr al-Dawwar, urging workers to remain calm and not to riot in response to Khamis' sentence. The future labor historian ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Ghazzali was among the DMNL cadres who organized this activity.[27] His formulation of the DMNL's position in regard to Kafr al-Dawwar

is that the demands raised by the workers were legitimate and just, but the use of the strike weapon at this time benefited only reactionaries.[28] According to DMNL leader Zaki Murad, the execution of Khamis and al-Baqari strained the relations between the DMNL and the RCC, but the DMNL continued to support the regime because it felt that announcing its opposition would have aided ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim Amin and others who wished to see a schism between the army and the working class.[29]

Its continued expressions of support for the regime made it possible for the FCGFETU to take over the weekly newspaper al-Wajib on September 10, 1952. Under the editorial direction of Ahmad Taha al-Wajib attempted to advance the FCGFETU's organizing activity and the preparations for the official establishment of a national trade union federation. A meeting to establish such a federation was scheduled for mid-September. The Ministry of Social Affairs convinced the FCGFETU to postpone this meeting, while promising that a congress of trade unions would be permitted to convene within three months.[30]

However, by the end of October al-Wajib reported that the Ministry of Interior had banned meetings of the FCGFETU and was carrying out a campaign to have communists expelled from trade union leadership positions.[31] During this period communists were ousted from their positions

of influence among the Cairo transport workers. Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman's United Taxi Drivers' Union was infiltrated by the political police, and opponents of the new executive board, including ᶜAbd al-Rahman himself, were fired from their jobs. The executive board refused to call new elections despite appeals from over 300 union members.[32] In the Cairo Tramway Workers' Union ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz Mustafa and Mahmud al-Farghali had cooperated with the DMNL until sometime after the military coup. By the end of 1952 they had abandoned their cooperation with the left.[33] The Cairo Printers' Union was also infiltrated by the political police.[34] Muhammad Nuh, a DMNL sympathizer and head of the Alexandria Merchant Seamen's Union, Muhammad ᶜAli ᶜAmir and other leading textile workers were arrested.[35] Fathi Kamil was forced out of his position as President of the Eastern Tobacco Company union when Muslim Brothers won a majority of the seats on the executive board. Kamil's replacement was also a Muslim Brother.[36]

The regime continued to make clear its absolute opposition to strikes by workers regardless of their motivation. Twenty-five workers charged with inciting to strike at the Filature Nationale and Sibahi textile mills were tried by a military tribunal in Alexandria.[37] A Cairo military court sentenced two workers to six months

in jail for leading a work stoppage at the Marconi Wireless Company on December 4, 1952.[38] This strike had been motivated by the company's delay in the payment of a semiannual bonus and only lasted four hours. Moreover, the Marconi workers had actively supported the nationalist upsurge of late 1951 by refusing to relay telegrams to the British forces on the Suez Canal. The workers argued that Marconi was an imperialist company because it was foreign owned, and therefore exempt from the laws prohibiting strikes against public utilities. The court rejected the workers' nationalist defense and did not take into account the patriotic activity of the Marconi workers in assessing their guilt. The court's unwillingness to show leniency may have been influenced by the fact that Ahmad Taha was the head of the Marconi union, although he had long since been fired by the company.

When the FCGFETU was banned its place was immediately taken by the Trade Union Committee for the Defense of Liberties (TUCDL--al-Lajnah al-Niqabiyah lil-Difa^{c} ^{c}an al-Hurriyat), which continued to press the RCC to adopt a more friendly and supportive attitude towards the trade union movement and proposed a trade union covenant which included both national political and trade union demands. The covenant called for: (1) complete evacuation of British troops from Egypt and the Sudan; (2) speedy elections for a new parliament; (3) abolition of martial

law; (4) self-determination for the Sudan after British evacuation; (5) limiting the access of foreign capital to Egypt in order to protect Egyptian industry; (6) a minimum wage law; (7) comprehensive unemployment, accident, health and retirement insurance; (8) cancellation of the ban on the FCGFETU and permission to convene a trade union congress; (9) revision of all labor laws in consultation with trade union leaders; (10) extension of democratic rights and especially the abolition of all limitations on the right to strike.[39]

This covenant was intended to demonstrate that in the view of the TUCDL (and the DMNL) there was no antagonism between the general demands of the Egyptian nationalist movement and the particular demands of the working class. It also indicated the TUCDL's belief that it was still possible for the regime to evolve in a progressive, democratic and prolabor direction. Soon after this covenant was formulated it became apparent (if indeed more proof was necessary) that the RCC was adopting decidedly undemocratic policies, including the assertion of state control over all trade union activity and the close supervision of the trade union movement. During the last month of its publication al-Wajib appealed desperately to the Free Officers to permit freedom of trade union organization and activity. In a

heavily censored call "From the Working Class to the Free Officers and Soldiers" Ahmad Taha recalled and reaffirmed that the FCGFETU supported the program of the Free Officers and that the working class stood with the army on July 23. In a very vaguely worded passage he strongly implied that the workers of Kafr al-Dawwar had been activated by imperialist agents without offering any specific criticism of the role of ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim Amin (who was still a member of the RCC) or the decision to execute Khamis and al-Baqari.[40] These omissions, which are particularly glaring in light of the fact that this is the only reference to Kafr al-Dawwar in al-Wajib during the entire time of its publication under FCGFETU/TUCDL auspices, show how far the TUCDL and the DMNL were willing to bend in order to find a basis for conciliation and cooperation with the RCC, even as their own freedom of political expression was becoming sharply restricted.

Despite the fact that the Free Officers permitted the publication of al-Wajib during the last four months of 1952, it is evident that the DMNL and its supporters and allies in the trade unions were engaged in a rear-guard action throughout this period. The DMNL kept relying on its friends among the Free Officers to effect a change in the regime's labor policy. Hoping that

through internal maneuvering among the Free Officers they could isolate those elements most antagonistic to the left, the DMNL restrained its public criticism of the regime and did not organize any mass actions to protest the executions of Khamis and al-Baqari, the arrests of the trade union leaders or the progressive restriction of freedom of trade union activity.

In retrospect it is easy to judge that this policy seemed doomed to failure. But in the context of the political realities of postcoup Egypt there were few realistic alternatives. The trade union movement, even if it had remained solidly under the leadership of the DMNL, which of course it did not, could not possibly have challenged the political power of the army on its own. The Wafd and the Muslim Brothers still commanded far more mass support than all the factions of the communist movement combined. Therefore, to challenge the army would inevitably have meant increasing the RCC's reliance on the Muslim Brothers as an organized source of popular support, as well as strengthening the hand of the Wafd, promonarchists and other antinationalist civilian political forces. Since they could not challenge the regime on their own and did not wish to risk increasing the influence of more reactionary elements, the TUCDL and DMNL had little choice but to conduct a defensive

holding operation in the hope that in a still far from stabilized political situation the balance of forces might shift in their favor.

Despite the political shifting that did occur within the RCC, the majority of the body never wavered from the stand it established towards the workers' movement by approving the executions of Khamis and al-Baqari. The efforts of Khalid Muhi al-Din, Yusuf Sadiq, Ahmad Hamrush and others sympathetic to the DMNL who argued for permitting freedom of trade union action and upholding the right to strike were not given serious consideration by the majority of the Free Officers. The official slogan of the new regime, "Unity, Order and Labor," succinctly expressed its vision of the role of workers in the new order. Such a vision left no room for initiatives from popular forces outside the control of the regime. The RCC's response to the events of Kafr al-Dawwar clearly indicated most of the officers' absolute hostility towards independent action by the working class, even action taken in the name of support for the army. The RCC adopted the corporatist conception of Egyptian society common to all of the political forces which had played a role in the postwar political arena except the communists and the Wafdist Vanguard. Such a view was a logical accompaniment to the vague nationalism and

social vision which constituted the Free Officers' basis of unity. This was easily combined with a paternalistic view towards the working class, which had been the common outlook of most of the political currents which had played a role in the Egyptian workers' movement since its origins. By choosing to isolate and then eliminate the communists, who were the most significant dissidents from the corporatism and paternalism which formed the basis of the RCC's relationship with the working class, the majority of the RCC was affirming and embracing the dominant social attitudes of Egyptian political culture as it had developed since the early part of the century.

A successful implementation of this corporatism and paternalism required not only that the RCC eliminate the communists, who were its most articulate and best organized opponents, but also that it establish a significant base of active support for the regime within the trade union movement. The RCC's first initiative in this direction was to implement a thorough revision of all existing labor legislation.

On December 7, 1952, without prior consultation with representatives of trade unions or any other workers' organizations, the government enacted comprehensive new labor legislation contained in three separate acts.[41]

The new Law of Individual Contracts granted workers significantly improved material benefits including increased severance compensation, longer annual vacations, free transportation to factories located in remote areas, and free medical care. The most important provision of this law was the establishment of prohibitively high levels of compensation to be paid by employers to fired workers. This provision was further strengthened by Decree 165, issued in March 1953, making it a very expensive undertaking to fire a worker without cause. In enacting this measure the regime granted the single most important economic demand of the postwar Egyptian workers' movement--job security. By doing so the army won the support of a large number of workers and trade union leaders who saw this measure as a significant concrete demonstration of the army's promise to establish social justice.

Workers had to pay a high price for this victory, however. A military order issued concurrently with the new legislation banned all strikes. Moreover, provisions of the other two laws reduced significantly the scope of permissible trade union action. The Law of Arbitration and Conciliation in Labor Disputes imposed compulsory arbitration on all labor disputes. The new Law of Trade Unions formally gave unions much more freedom to

organize their affairs and allowed agricultural workers to join trade unions for the first time. But a petition of the Cairo Printers' Union objecting to several provisions of this law indicates that in the opinion of some articulate and aware trade unionists, many of its provisions weakened rather than strengthened trade unions.[42] The law entrenched the practice of establishing separate trade unions in each individual enterprise rather than on an industrywide basis. It also made membership in unions mandatory if three-fifths of the workers in an enterprise were union members. It therefore allowed an employer to establish a union and require his recalcitrant employees to join it once three-fifths of them had agreed to do so. The law permitted the establishment of separate unions for blue-collar and white-collar workers in a single enterprise, dividing the membership base of unions and making it more difficult to unite the workers in a given enterprise. The right of unions to initiate litigation against employers on behalf of their members was weakened. Despite these negative aspects of the new legislation and the accompanying military decree outlawing strikes, a large sector of the trade union movement embraced the government's labor program.

The enactment of the land reform legislation on

September 9 and the labor legislation on December 8 secured substantial popular support from peasants and workers for the new regime. With its flanks protected by this popular support, the army was now able to move against all potential sources of political opposition. On January 17, 1953, all political parties were dissolved. This measure was accompanied by the arrest of 101 political figures. As usual, the communists suffered the brunt of the political repression. Forty-eight of those arrested were communists. All of the left press, including al-Wajib, was closed. Yusuf Sadiq resigned from the RCC in protest, but his departure was not lamented by most of the remaining members.[43]

It was only at this point, after it had already lost most of its positions of political strength, that the DMNL adopted a position of opposition to the regime. Despite the fact that the Muslim Brothers were the only political organization excluded from the January 17 measures, the DMNL endeavored to include them, along with the Wafd, elements of the Socialist Party and some army officers in a National Democratic Front of opposition to the regime. The Wafd and the DMNL were the only parties to reach a formal agreement on the formation of the front. Those elements of the Socialist Party and the Muslim Brothers who participated did so on an informal and individual basis.

The trade union movement was one of the arenas in which the National Democratic Front attempted to organize. Guaranteeing freedom of trade union organization was one of its principles of unity.[44] We have already mentioned the cooperation between Muhammad Mitwalli al-Shaᶜarawi and Muhammad al-Fuli in providing leadership for the Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving Company union after March 1953 and the endorsement of the right to strike by al-Daᶜwah as the most significant manifestations of the cooperation between some elements of the Muslim Brothers and the DMNL in the labor movement during this period. (See Chapter VII.) There also seems to have been some cooperation, and perhaps also some contention, in the textile workers' union which was established in the Cairo suburb of Imbabah in October 1952. The Brothers were apparently the preponderant force in this union. In the summer of 1953 the National Democratic Front organized a strike at the Shurbaji textile mill, whose workers were members of the Imbabah union.[45]

The exact extent of cooperation between the Muslim Brothers and the DMNL in the trade union movement during this period is impossible to determine based on the currently available sources of information. But whatever it may have been, one indisputable fact is that al-Daᶜwah was the single most important and virtually only regular

source of labor news during the latter part of 1953. On November 3, 1953, Muhammad Shatta, Ahmad Taha and all of the other leaders of the National Democratic Front were arrested. It is probably not a coincidence that the only labor news to appear in al-Daʿwah after this point until its closure in March 1954 consists of relatively harmless legal advice explaining the details of the new labor laws and their practical application.

By January 1953 most of the forces favoring a trade movement independent of domination by the regime had been stripped of their positions in the unions. By the end of the year virtually all of the most important communist labor leaders were in jail. The FCGFETU and TUCDL had been completely suppressed. The labor legislation of December 8, 1952, had established a substantial base of popular support for the RCC among trade union members and leaders. It remained only for the army to organize this support in a stable organization. The vehicle chosen for this task was the Liberation Rally (Hay'at al-Tahrir), which was established as the political organization of the RCC, and more particularly of its effective leader Jamal ʿAbd al-Nasir, after the abolition of political parties was decreed.

ʿAbd al-Nasir assumed the position of General Secretary of the Liberation Rally. The day-to-day organizational and political direction of the organization was

carried out by its Vice-Secretary, Major Ibrahim al-Tahawi, and its Trade Union Director, Major Ahmad ᶜAbd Allah Tuᶜaymah. Because it was an organization imposed from above that permitted no room for political initiative by its rank-and-file members, the Liberation Rally never fully succeeded in accomplishing its mission of mobilizing popular political support for the regime. However, the Liberation Rally was able to establish close links with a number of trade union leaders. Trade unions were a special object of the attention of Majors al-Tahawi and Tuᶜaymah for the same reason that the Wafd had sought to organize trade unions in the 1920s and 1930s. Workers constituted a relatively easily mobilizable and highly concentrated mass located in politically strategic urban areas. The Liberation Rally was most successful in building a close relationship with the leadership of one of the most strategically placed groups of Egyptian workers, the Cairo transport workers.

One of the Liberation Rally's first public activities was to organize a meeting attended by several hundred trade union leaders in Cairo. Al-Sawi Ahmad al-Sawi, who had recently been elected President of the Cairo Federation of Joint Transport Workers' Unions, was one of the principal speakers at this meeting.[46] Al-Sawi had never before played a leading role in the Cairo transport

workers' unions. His name is not mentioned in any of the newspaper reports of the activities of the transport workers until his election as president of the Cairo federation in November 1952.[47] Al-Sawi's rapid rise to prominence and his close association with the Liberation Rally suggest that he owed his position in the trade union movement to his willingness to cooperate with the regime. This impression is further reinforced if we recall that the regime began its campaign against the left in the trade union movement just prior to al-Sawi's election and that there had been a substantial left presence among the Cairo transport workers prior to that time.

The RCC made other efforts to ingratiate itself with noncommunist trade union leaders during 1953 in which it was less successful. Fathi Kamil was appointed as labor representative to the Labor and Workers' Committee of the body selected to draw up a five-year plan for economic development and singled out for praise by Muhammad Najib as "the best trade unionist who represents all sectors of the workers."[48] Kamil was also sent to the International Labor Organization's conference in Geneva on June 4, 1953, as the only worker representative in the Egyptian delegation.[49] However, these efforts by the regime did not succeed in convincing Fathi Kamil to

support its labor policies. On his return from Europe the Cairo Tramway Workers' Union, which was the only one of the Cairo transport unions whose leadership did not fully support the regime, gave a reception in his honor.[50] A large number of trade unionists from all over Egypt attended this gathering. Fathi Kamil's obliquely worded address to the assembled suggests that the very fact of convening such a group of trade union leaders constituted an act of opposition to the regime's policy of throttling the independence of the trade unions. In the absence of communist trade union figures, Fathi Kamil became the leading proponent of the demand for trade union freedom of action. However, Kamil kept his opposition within boundaries acceptable to the regime, and he never took the step of actively organizing against the RCC, hoping that he could use his official positions to further his trade union objectives.

While it made an effort to coopt trade union leaders like Fathi Kamil, the RCC continued to reject any attempts to organize workers which it did not itself initiate. In the summer of 1953 Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha^{c}arawi and several other textile union leaders from Alexandria and Cairo attempted to establish a national federation of textile workers' unions. The regime persistently blocked these efforts despite the fact that they were carried out

in accordance with existing legislation.[51] A national organization of textile workers represented too great a potential for explosive political and economic struggle which might threaten the relationship which the RCC was seeking to establish with the trade union movement.

The Crisis of March 1954

Because the Free Officers were not a united political organization and did not have a well-developed political program, the stability of the military regime was dependent on maintaining a delicate balance among its own internally contradictory elements. By early 1954 it was becoming impossible to contain the contradictions within the regime, and there developed a broad-based popular challenge to the legitimacy of military rule and the suspension of parliamentary democracy.

The Muslim Brothers, who were the largest mass membership organization in Egypt at this time (as opposed to the Wafd, most of whose supporters were never active members), were at the center of the events that led to the crisis of March 1954. On the formal level the Brothers had maintained cordial relations with the RCC throughout 1953, and in return they had been granted a privileged political position in the new regime. This formal cordiality masked sharp divisions within the

Society over the issue of continued support for the regime.[52] In late 1953 and early 1954 General Guide Hasan Hudaybi and General Muhammad Najib had discussed the possibility of overthrowing ᶜAbd al-Nasir and placing real power in Najib's hands.[53] On January 12, 1954, the Brothers led a memorial rally at Cairo University honoring students who had fallen in the guerrilla fighting on the Suez Canal in 1951-52. Some speakers at the rally denounced ᶜAbd al-Nasir as a pro-American dictator, and the demonstration clashed violently with supporters of the Liberation Rally.[54] The RCC, probably acting on the basis of knowledge of the Najib-Hudaybi contacts, responded rapidly and declared the Brothers a political party and therefore dissolved in accordance with the decrees of January 1953. The RCC thus lost all semblance of support from the last popular political organization which remained from the precoup period. Every political tendency with a popular base of significance, except for the Liberation Rally, was now opposed to the regime.

The RCC's attack on the Muslim Brothers provoked an internal political crisis pitting Najib against ᶜAbd al-Nasir. Najib demanded effective powers commensurate with his formal offices of Chairman of the RCC, Prime Minister and President.[55] Since Najib was never a member of the Free Officers, he served as a focal point for all of the

political forces opposed to the military dictatorship. The RCC's attack on the Brothers was seen by Najib as a blow against his own base of support and a strengthening of the dictatorship in the face of popular demands for the restoration of parliamentary democracy and the return of the army to its barracks. On February 24 Najib resigned from all of his posts and thereby brought the crisis within the RCC to the public's attention. ᶜAbd al-Nasir asssumed both the premiership and the presidency. Mass demonstrations of support for Najib and democracy erupted with the participation of Muslim Brothers, Socialists, Wafdists and communists. A section of the army, including cavalry officers led by Khalid Muhi al-Din, threatened to rebel. In the face of this massive display of support for Najib, the RCC was obliged to reinstate Najib as President of the Republic while ᶜAbd al-Nasir remained Prime Minister. On March 4 and 5 the RCC voted to convene a Constituent Assembly by July, to life martial law by June and to rescind press censorship immediately. On March 9 Najib once again assumed the posts of Prime Minister and Chairman of the RCC. Despite the apparent victory for the forces of democracy, repression against the regime's opponents continued. On March 2, 118 political opponents were arrested, including forty-five Muslim Brothers, twenty Socialists, five

Wafdists, four communists, fifteen workers and twenty-seven of unidentified affiliation.[56]

Najib's ostensible return to power and the lifting of press censorship resulted in the unleashing of a torrent of criticisms and protests against the regime from every quarter. Among those who raised their voices were workers and trade union leaders. Labor news had all but disappeared from the press since the closure of al-Wajib, except for al-Da^{c}wah's workers' page previously mentioned. After the lifting of press censorship, the Wafdist daily al-Misri (The Egyptian) began a weekly page featuring workers' news including demands from a large number of trade unions and groups of workers.[57] Grievances of the Turah Cement Company workers, the General Union of Greater Cairo Spinning, Weaving, Knitting, Dyeing and Associated Workers, the Greater Cairo Grocery Store Workers' Union, the Lake Maryut Fishermen's Union, the Printers' Union, the Maqqar Bus Company Workers' Union, the Royal Press workers, Mansurah store clerks, Suez Canal area workers, railroad workers and many others were reported. Mursi al-Shafi^{c}i, who was apparently one of the leaders of the Shurbaji strike in Imbabah in the summer of 1953, contributed a weekly column entitled "The Worker." He had been jailed since August 1953 and pointed out that a large number of those detained on

political charges were workers who ought to be released. However, al-Shafi^{c}i and the other worker detainees remained incarcerated throughout the month of March. The high point of this short-lived revival of the workers' movement was the convening of a meeting of twenty-one trade union leaders to discuss the nomination of workers' candidates for the forthcoming elections for a Constituent Assembly.[58] This meeting was initiated by Mahmud Ibrahim al-^{c}Ajami, president of the union of the government Road Department workers. Fathi Kamil was now serving as counsellor of this union. A preparatory committee for a general nominating convention was chosen. No communists attended this meeting because almost all the prominent communist trade union leaders were still in jail.

On March 25 the RCC adopted resolutions permitting the establishment of political parties and declared that it would disband itself without forming a political party on July 24, 1954, the date of the convening of the Constituent Assembly. ^{c}Abd al-Nasir himself was the initiator of these resolutions, and it is entirely possible that he fully intended to instigate the chaotic situation which their announcement created. Elements of the army protested the RCC's decisions and demanded that it remain in power. The Muslim Brothers, who had supported Najib against ^{c}Abd al-Nasir, withdrew their support for the

democratic movement because they opposed the formation of political parties and the decisions of March 25 made it plain that the Wafd was most likely to be returned to power on July 24, 1954.

On March 26 massive pro-Najib demonstrations supporting a return to democracy took place all over Cairo. In Shubra al-Khaymah and Hilwan (an industrial suburb south of Cairo) demonstrators took complete control of the streets for most of the day.[59] According to Ahmad Sadiq Sa^{c}d, activists of Workers' Vanguard played an active role in these demonstrations.[60]

When the pro-^{c}Abd al-Nasir forces began to organize their efforts to counter the massive popular expressions of support for Najib and a return to parliamentary democracy, the trade union connections established through the efforts of the Liberation Rally played a critical role in enabling the army to mobilize its own mass support. The Cairo transport workers' general strike of March 27-28 was a major contribution to the RCC's ability to turn back the tide of popular opinion, consolidate the power of ^{c}Abd al-Nasir and confirm the continuation of the military dictatorship. The only currently available evidence relating to how this was accomplished consists of contradictory personal memoir accounts by the leading participants in these events.

It is therefore impossible to reconstruct an accurate picture of the developments with complete certainty. The version which I offer here must be subject to revision, although I believe it is the most consistent with what has already been said about the nature of the Free Officers' relationship to the labor movement.

According to al-Sawi Ahmad al-Sawi, Yusuf Sadiq approached him on March 10 and again on March 17 with the suggestion of organizing a strike in support of Najib in order to force the RCC to relinquish power even before July 24. Al-Sawi further asserts that Sadiq offered to pay LE 10,000 in compensation for the material losses which the workers would suffer as a result of the strike. Sadiq had also made contacts to coordinate the workers' strike with actions by university students.[61] Yusuf Sadiq vehemently denied this account before his death and claimed that he had never even met al-Sawi.[62] But he offered nothing but his own recollections to support his denials. Al-Sawi's story, on the other hand, is corroborated by Majors al-Tahawi and Tu^{c}aymah who claim that al-Sawi reported Sadiq's offer to them.[63] According to al-Tahawi, his conversation with al-Sawi occurred on March 21, i.e., before the RCC's decision to permit the establishment of parties and liquidate itself was taken. On that day al-Tahawi and al-Sawi decided to organize a

transport general strike in support of ᶜAbd al-Nasir and the RCC. This suggests that ᶜAbd al-Nasir may well have known in advance that he could command the streets after the RCC's decisions of March 25 were announced. However, al-Tahawi asserts that ᶜAbd al-Nasir, when he was informed of the planned transport general strike, refused to sanction it.[64] On the other hand, Khalid Muhi al-Din recalls that ᶜAbd al-Nasir personally told him that the total cost of the demonstrations and general strike of March 27-28 was no more than LE 5,000, most of which was paid personally to al-Sawi.[65] This suggests that ᶜAbd al-Nasir may have been more than simply an innocent beneficiary of the events.

A second version of the origins of the general strike is given by Kamil al-ᶜUqayli, President of the Cairo Federation of Taxi Drivers, and supported by Muhammad Nuh, President of the Cairo Tramway Clerical Employees' Union.[66] They assert that a number of trade unionists including themselves and Zaki Mukhaymar, President of the Cairo Tramway Workers' Union, and Sayyid Khallaf, President of the Cairo Store Clerks' Federation, were called to the offices of Major Tuᶜaymah at the Liberation Rally on March 26 and informed of the RCC's decisions of the previous day. In response to these decisions, al-ᶜUqayli suggested the organization of a general strike

in support of continuing the revolution. Al-Sawi was then chosen, in absentia, to lead the strike because it had been rumored that the Cairo transport workers were going to participate in demonstrations supporting Najib which the Bar Association had called for March 28. Moreover, al-Sawi's leadership would provide the strike with the broadest base of support among strategically placed workers.

These two versions of the origins of the strike can be reconciled by presuming that al-Sawi, al-Tahawi and Tu^{c}aymah had, in fact, agreed before March 26 that a strike should be organized but had not announced their intentions because they were uncertain what the response and the most appropriate moment might be. Al-^{c}Uqayli need not necessarily have been apprised of this decision when he made his suggestion. The idea of a general strike was in wide circulation on both sides of the political divide. Al-^{c}Uqayli himself claims that he had no prior discussions or agreement with Tu^{c}aymah regarding the strike.

On the evening of March 26 the Cairo transport union leaders gathered in the offices of the Federation of Joint Transport Workers' Unions and called for a workers' general strike while they themselves proclaimed a hunger strike. Their demands were broadcast on the radio before

any workers began to participate in the strike. They urged: (1) no legalization of political parties; (2) maintaining the RCC in power until complete evacuation of British troops from Egypt was achieved; (3) formation of a National Assembly including representatives of all trade unions and other public associations to serve as a consultative body for the decisions and measures the RCC wished to implement; (4) no elections.[67] According to the radio these demands were endorsed by the Cairo Federation of Joint Transport Workers' Unions, the Federation of Store Clerks and Workers, the Cairo General Union of Taxi Drivers, the Federation of Agricultural Workers, the Cairo Printers' Union and unnamed textile workers' unions.

The response to the call for a general strike was mixed. The Cairo bus, taxi and metro workers participated fully and on March 27 public transportation in Cairo was paralyzed. The Cairo tramway workers, however, did not participate in the strike despite the fact that the presidents of the unions of blue-collar and clerical employees were among the hunger strikers in the headquarters of the Cairo Federation of Joint Transport Workers' Unions. According to ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzim Ramadan, Mahmud al-Farghali led the tramway workers' resistance to the call for a general strike and did so because he was a Marxist

who viewed the regime as a fascist dictatorship. Al-Farghali was assaulted by workers and police who then forced some of the trams to stop running.[68] The Cairo Printers' Union announced that it did not, in fact, endorse the demands broadcast on the radio and that its name had been incorrectly used.[69] The strongest trade union resistance to the call for a general strike was in Alexandria, where leaders of a large number of unions convened and issued a statement calling for: (1) abolition of martial law; (2) dissolution of the RCC; (3) guaranteeing of democratic liberties; (4) freedom for all jailed workers and reconstitution of all unions that had been administratively dissolved; (5) establishment of a general federation of trade unions; (6) denunciation of all attempts to split the ranks of the workers. These demands were endorsed by members of the executive boards of the unions of the Alexandria Joint Transport workers, Kabu Enterprises, the National Blanket and Wool Company, Modern Textiles Company, Manfis Company, National Paper Company, merchant seamen, cinema workers, Tawil Textile Company and City Textile Company.[70] A number of Cairo unions issued a "Patriotic Statement" supporting the RCC's decisions of March 25 and raising the same demands as the Alexandria unions. Among the endorsing unions were the General Union of Spinning, Weaving, Knitting, Dyeing

and Associated Workers of Greater Cairo, the Cairo Shoe Workers' Union and the unions of candy makers, newspaper distributors, tailors, elevator operators, iron and building ornamentation workers and carpenters. The national federations of shoe workers and building trades workers also endorsed this statement.[71] In Kafr al-Dawwar, the Misr Fine Spinning and Weaving Company union adopted a resolution supporting the restoration of democracy and rejecting the call for a general strike. Army units entered the mill and shut down the machinery, while Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha^{c}arawi and others attempted to keep it running.[72] A similar confrontation apparently occurred at the Filature Nationale and its subsidiary Egyptian Textile Company in Alexandria since both a strike and union resolutions supporting the RCC decisions of March 25 were reported.[73]

On March 27 and 28 the ranks of the trade unions were clearly divided: for and against Najib, for and against the restoration of democracy. But by March 29 a large number of trade unions had been either forced or persuaded to join the general strike. On that day the streets of Cairo were filled with demonstrators shouting "No parties, no democracy." In the meanwhile, ^{c}Abd al-Nasir had organized his supporters among the junior army officers while Najib vacillated and failed to mobilize

his own forces. On the evening of March 29, the RCC met and announced that it would delay implementing its decisions of March 5 and March 25 until January 1956. Although Najib was not finally removed from the scene until November 1954, it was clear within a few weeks of March 29 that ᶜAbd al-Nasir and the RCC had decisively triumphed. The army was to remain in power. Directly after the announcement of the RCC's decisions ᶜAbd al-Nasir and RCC members Salah Salim and Kamal al-Din Husayn visited the headquarters of the Cairo Federation of Joint Transport Workers' Unions where al-Sawi and other executive board members were addressing a crowd.[74] This visit symbolized the forging of the alliance between a section of the trade union leadership and the army. Al-Sawi and the Cairo transport workers had played a critical role in preserving the regime of the RCC and establishing ᶜAbd al-Nasir as the unchallenged ruler of Egypt.

Notes to Chapter IX

[1]The currently available sources for the events discussed in this chapter present a special problem to the historian. No unpublished Egyptian or British government documents have as yet been made accessible for research. The press, which is an excellent source for most of modern Egyptian history, is less useful for the 1952-54 period because of the heavy censorship which was in effect, except for the month of March 1954. Two Egyptians have written extensively on this period. Ahmad Hamrush, who was himself a member of the Free Officers and the DMNL, has written a combination memoir-history in five volumes, Qissat Thawrat 23 Yulyu (Cairo, Beirut, 1977-81). ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzim Ramadan, who is perhaps the leading Egyptian modern historian of Egypt, has contributed al-Siraᶜ al-ijtimaᶜi wa-al-siyasi fi Misr mundhu qiyam thawrat 23 Yulyu 1952 ili nihayat azmat Maris 1954 (Cairo, 1975) and ᶜAbd al-Nasir wa-azmat Maris (Cairo, 1976). Fortunately, both authors have reproduced the extensive oral interviews with a broad range of political actors in this period which constituted their main source of information--Hamrush in volume four of his work, and Ramadan as appendices to both of his studies. While differing with both of them in my interpretation of these events, I have relied heavily on their interviews, which are among the most valuable sources available for this period, citing them in the following manner: Interviewee, interview in Hamrush, 4:___; Interviewee, interview in Ramadan, al-Siraᶜ, p. __ or Ramadan, ᶜAbd al-Nasir, p. __.

[2]Ahmad Taha, interview in al-Sharqawi, p. 868.

[3]al-Ahram, February 24, 1952. Anwar Salamah, who never joined the FCGFETU, was another one of the trade union leaders appointed.

[4]Ibid., February 13, 1952. The formation of a general federation was still illegal under the provisions of Law 85 of 1942.

[5]Ibid., April 10, 1952.

[6]al-Misri, July 14, 17, 1952.

[7]Hamrush, 1:287-88. Hamrush claims that Khalid Muhi al-Din was also a DMNL member. Muhi al-Din's interview in 4:145 refutes this assertion, and I have accepted his

account because Hamrush is inclined to overestimate the influence of the left among the Free Officers. The two other major communist organizations, the Communist Party of Egypt and Workers' Vanguard (formerly New Dawn), did not share DMNL's assessment of the new regime. The Communist Party declared it to be a pro-American fascist military dictatorship and Workers' Vanguard was critical and then quickly became antagonistic after the events of Kafr al-Dawwar. (See below.)

[8]Mitchell, pp. 96-98 ff.

[9]al-Misri, August 8, 1952.

[10]al-Ahram, August 2, 1952.

[11]The procompany character of this union is confirmed by Harbison and Ibrahim, p. 120. For my account of the events of Kafr al-Dawwar I have relied on the reports in al-Misri, August 14-19 and September 7-8, 1952, which reproduced extensive excerpts from the trial testimony, and personal interviews with Muhammad Mitwalli al-Shaʿarawi, January 7 and April 3, 1981, except where otherwise indicated.

[12]A young Egyptian lawyer, Ahmad Sharaf al-Din, has been researching this case and is preparing a book in which he presents a comprehensive argument for the defendants' innocence.

[13]Parts of Sabri's plea are contained in a badly bowdlerized transcript of the trial which was published to justify the regime's actions, Muhakamat Kafr al-Dawwar (Cairo, n.d.), pp. 51-55.

[14]Musa Sabri, personal interview, April 11, 1981.

[15]Ahmad Sadiq Saʿd, interview in Ramadan, ʿAbd al-Nasir, p. 299.

[16]Muhammad Mitwalli al-Shaʿarawi, personal interview, January 7, 1981.

[17]Bulletin d'études et d'information sur l'Egypte et le Soudan, no. 17 (August 1952). This is an official DMNL publication issued in Paris under the direction of Henri Curiel reprinted in Marie-Dominique Gresh, "Le P.C.F. et l'Egypte, 1950-1956" (Memoire de maitrise, Université de Paris I, 1976-77), Annexes, pp. 22-24.

[18]Khalid Muhi al-Din, interview in Hamrush, 4:151; ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim Amin, interview in Hamrush, 4:252.

[19]Khalid Muhi al-Din, personal interview, May 19, 1981. Muhi al-Din, Yusuf Sadiq and ᶜAbd al-Nasir were the only members of the RCC who voted against sustaining the sentence.

[20]Muhammad Najib, interview in Hamrush, 4:436.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Hamrush, 1:291.

[23]Ibid., p. 292.

[24]al-Daᶜwah, August 15, 1952.

[25]al-Ahram, August 15, 1952.

[26]al-Misri, August 19, 1952.

[27]Ibid.

[28]ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim al-Ghazzali, interview in Ramadan, ᶜAbd al-Nasir, p. 347.

[29]Zaki Murad, interview in Ramadan, ᶜAbd al-Nasir, p. 337.

[30]al-Ahram, September 17, 1952.

[31]al-Wajib, October 29, 1952.

[32]al-Muᶜaradah, October 16, 1952.

[33]This conclusion is based on several unpublished DMNL leaflets made available to me by Dr. Rifᶜat al-Saᶜid and Dr. Ra'uf ᶜAbbas.

[34]al-Wajib, October 29, 1952; al-Muᶜaradah, October 30, 1952.

[35]al-Wajib, November 12, December 18, 1952.

[36]al-Daᶜwah, November 25, 1952.

[37]al-Misri, September 25, 1952.

[38]al-Akhbar, February 5, 6, 12, 1953.

[39]al-Misri, November 16, 1952.

[40]al-Wajib, December 10, 1952.

[41]For a detailed description of all the provisions of Laws 317, 318 and 319 of 1952 see ᶜIsmat al-Hawari, "al-Tatawwur al-tarihi li-tashriᶜat al-ᶜamal fi al-Jumhuriyah al-ᶜArabiyah al-Muttahidah," Kitab al-ᶜAmal, no. 35 (January 1967), pp. 25-27.

[42]Niqabat ᶜUmmal al-Matabiᶜ bi-al-Qahirah, Mudhakkirah bi-talab taᶜdil qanun al-niqabat (Cairo, n.d.).

[43]Hamrush, 1:293; al-Misri, January 20, 1953.

[44]Zaki Murad, interview in Ramadan, ᶜAbd al-Nasir, p. 340.

[45]Ibid., p. 341. See al-Daᶜwah, January 6, May 12, August 11, 1953, for reports on the Imbabah union and the dispute at Shurbaji. No strike is mentioned, probably because of censorship.

[46]al-Misri, January 19, 1953.

[47]Ibid., November 25, 1952.

[48]al-Ahram, March 1, 1953.

[49]al-Akhbar, May 26, 1953.

[50]al-Ahram, September 5, 1953; al-Zaman, September 9, 1953.

[51]Muhammad Mitwalli al-Shaᶜarawi, personal interview, January 7, 1981.

[52]See Mitchell, pp. 105 ff.

[53]Ramadan, ᶜAbd al-Nasir, pp. 142-44.

[54]Mitchell, p. 126n, argues that the government provoked this incident, while Jean and Simonne Lacouture, Egypt in Transition (New York, 1958), p. 181, suggest that the Brothers were the aggressors.

[55]The monarchy had been formally abolished in June 1953.

[56]al-Misri, March 3, 1954.

[57]This feature appeared on March 10, 17 and 24, 1954.

[58]Ibid., March 24, 1954.

[59]Ibid., March 27, 1954.

[60]Ahmad Sadiq Sa^{c}d, interview in Ramadan, ^{c}Abd al-Nasir, p. 301. Workers' Vanguard was the only functioning communist group during the March crisis. In late February the leadership of the DMNL had released a statement from the military prison where it was held tentatively offering to support the military regime in light of its recent neutralist and anti-American foreign policy initiatives. The cadres of the organization outside of jail repudiated this statement and the organization was paralyzed as a result of this conflict. See Ramadan, ^{c}Abd al-Nasir, pp. 95-99. A large number of members and leaders of the Communist Party of Egypt had been arrested in early March, crippling its effectiveness. It was not a significant factor in the March 1954 crisis because it supported neither Najib nor ^{c}Abd al-Nasir in this struggle.

[61]al-Sawi Ahmad al-Sawi, interview in Ramadan, al-Sira^{c}, p. 118.

[62]Ahmad Hamrush, "Yusuf Sadiq al-muftara ^{c}alayh," Ruz al-Yusuf, March 24, 1975, p. 68.

[63]Ahmad ^{c}Abd Allah al-Tu^{c}aymah, interview in Ramadan, ^{c}Abd al-Nasir, p. 304; Ibrahim al-Tahawi, interview in Ramadan, ^{c}Abd al-Nasir, p. 292; Ibrahim al-Tahawi, interview in Hamrush, 4:17.

[64]Ibrahim al-Tahawi, interview in Hamrush, 4:17.

[65]Khalid Muhi al-Din, interview in Hamrush, 4:159. In Ramadan, ^{c}Abd al-Nasir, p. 323, Muhi al-Din gives the figure of LE 4,000.

[66]Kamil al-^{c}Uqayli, interview in Ramadan, al-Sira^{c}, p. 120; Muhammad Nuh, interview in Ramadan, al-Sira^{c}, p. 119.

[67]al-Misri, March 28, 1954.

[68]Ibid.; Ramadan, al-Sira^{c}, p. 113; Ramadan, ^{c}Abd al-Nasir, pp. 206-7.

[69]al-Misri, March 28, 1954.

[70]Ibid.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Muhammad Mitwalli al-Sha^{c}arawi, personal interview, January 7, 1981.

[73]al-Misri, March 28, 1954.

[74]Hamrush, 1:348-49.

CONCLUSION

March 1954: An Assessment

Was March 1954 a victory for the working class, the beginning of a new "revolution of workers and peasants," as ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzim Ramadan suggests?[1] It is certainly true that the Free Officers broke both the economic and political hegemony of the large agricultural landowners who had dominated Egypt since the era of Muhammad ᶜAli. This was accomplished by the land reform measure of September 9, 1952, the dissolution of the political parties of the old regime, and the RCC's decision of April 15, 1954, stripping the leaders of the Wafd, the Constitutional Liberal and Saᶜdist parties of all political rights for ten years. But did the working class, by virtue of the fact that a number of important trade union leaders had supported "continuing the revolution," come any closer to achieving political power? The answer is, most definitely, no. The working class provided a significant proportion of the shock troops in the battle to eliminate the political power of the old ruling class, but it did not thereby inherit it.

The trade union leaders who cast their lot with ᶜAbd

al-Nasir made a bargain, the terms of which, even though they may not have been explicit, were unmistakably clear. They agreed to support a military dictatorship which had repeatedly demonstrated its unalterable opposition to a free trade union movement, the right to strike and any form of independent initiative and action by workers. In exchange, the regime confirmed them in their positions of trade union leadership and agreed to preserve and extend the economic gains which had already been achieved, including the all-important right to job security. This bargain was sustained by a significant section of the working masses because of the economic gains achieved under the rule of the RCC and because the RCC represented the only viable vehicle to achieve the demands of the Egyptian nationalist movement. The Wafd, and certainly all the other political parties, had repeatedly proved incapable of forcing a total evacuation of British troops from Egypt, whereas the RCC was on the verge of accomplishing this objective.

The motives of al-Sawi and al-ᶜUqayli, the principal candidates for the title of "initiator of the general strike," may be discerned by recalling their personal histories. Al-Sawi, as has been mentioned, was not a leading figure in the trade union movement until after the military coup. Al-ᶜUqayli had been president of one

of the four rival Cairo taxi drivers' unions before Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman's campaign to unify the unions. He had been among those responsible for calling off the transport general strike announced for February 5, 1951, and his leadership was consequently repudiated when Hasan ᶜAbd al-Rahman and Sayyid Khalil Turk assumed the leadership of the Cairo Federation of Joint Transport Workers' Unions in June 1951. Both al-Sawi and al-ᶜUqayli therefore owed their positions of prominence to the fact that the regime had jailed or otherwise repressed their predecessors and rivals.

The President of the Cairo Tramway Workers' Union, Zaki Mukhaymar, although he had been an officer of the union since 1939, had not played a major role in the precoup trade union movement. On the other hand, the tramway union leaders ᶜAbd al-ᶜAziz Mustafa and Mahmud al-Farghali, who had actively participated in the PCGFETU and the conferences of transport workers in 1952, opposed the call for a general strike.

Ramadan has attempted to establish an economic motive for the failure of the Cairo tramway workers to support the call for a general strike, arguing that they were more privileged than other transport workers.[2] This assertion is contradicted by the fact that at the transport workers' conference of July 13, 1952, the Cairo

tramway workers advanced the demand to be granted the same cadre governing Cairo and Alexandria bus workers. Moreover, Alexandria transport workers, who strongly opposed the general strike, were generally thought to enjoy better conditions than their Cairo counterparts.

It is much more likely that political leadership played the decisive role in determining workers' responses to the general strike call, although in a much more subtle manner than Ramadan suggests by his somewhat sinister reference to al-Farghali's Marxist views as the determinant of his personal position of opposition to the strike. The assertion that al-Farghali was a Marxist is questionable, while it is certain that Mustafa was not. In any case, it has already been mentioned that the cooperative relations between these two tramway union leaders and the DMNL were disrupted in late 1952 when they both came under attack in DMNL leaflets distributed to tramway workers. It is probable that cooperation was restored as a result of the crisis of March 1954. But this would have been on a voluntary basis rather than because al-Farghali was blindly loyal to any particular party line.

It is true that unions with a significant communist presence in their leadership generally opposed the strike. Ramadan himself points out that many of the leaders of

the Cairo tramway union, not only Mustafa and al-Farghali, were either Wafdists or communists.[3] This was also the case in the textile industry, where sentiment was strongly against the strike. Other unions where communists or other proponents of an independent trade union movement had played a leading role, such as the Alexandria Merchant Seamen's Union and the Cairo Shoe Workers' Union, also opposed the strike.

Although the slogan of "trade union independence from political parties" was in wide circulation by 1954, it is doubtful whether many trade unionists fully grasped the meaning of this slogan. Supporters of the Wafd and Prince ᶜAbbas Halim had long used it to mean independence from their rivals. Communists and other progressives were also, to a certain extent, responsible for this slogan's lack of clarity because while they campaigned for independence from the Wafd, ᶜAbbas Halim, the Palace and the reactionary parties, they were sometimes sectarian and undemocratic in their dealings with each other and with those who advocated independence from the various communist political organizations as well, such as Fathi Kamil. Although Kamil's admiration for British Labor Party style social democracy brought him precariously close to collaboration with the occupation in 1946, he strongly opposed the general strike of March 1954 on the

grounds that a trade union movement could not flourish without democracy. Very few Egyptian trade unionists were so strongly committed to this principle.

It is undeniable that the military regime provided some significant economic gains for workers. Therefore the question of whether to continue supporting the regime in light of its increasingly undemocratic character was a political issue to be decided on the basis of the trade union leadership's vision of the role and ultimate objectives of the movement. Those trade union leaders who had actively participated in efforts to establish an independent trade union movement tended to support a return to democracy. Those who had not, tended to favor continuation of the rule of the RCC. In most cases it appears that the rank-and-file members of the unions followed the decisions of their leaders on this question.

The considerable self interest which al-Sawi and al-ʿUqayli had in maintaining the RCC in power does not necessarily detract from the sincerity of their convictions that continued rule by the RCC provided the best guarantee of maintaining and advancing the economic position of their constituency. The restriction of employers' right to fire workers without cause was widely hailed as a major workers' victory. Al-Tahawi mentions that preservation of this gain was al-Sawi's main concern

when he came to him to report Yusuf Sadiq's overtures.[4] It was not, as has already been mentioned, a victory without a certain price. This may explain why a large number of textile workers' unions, who were the most advanced in their commitment to an independent trade union movement, refused to support the general strike despite the fact that their members were among the most prominent beneficiaries of the restrictions on firing workers enacted by the RCC. Those trade union leaders and workers who supported the RCC were willing to pay the price: a trade union movement dominated by the government, shorn of the right to strike, and a political system which stripped workers of their right to organize independently of supervision by the government. This price was, in essence, a refurbished version of the patron-client model of trade union organization with the government as patron and an institutionalization of the corporate conception of Egyptian society by absorption of the trade unions into the apparatus of the government bureaucy.

This was not fully achieved until 1957, when Anwar Salamah became both Minister of Labor and the first President of the General Federation of Egyptian Trade Unions. The emergence of Anwar Salamah as the government's chosen leader of the working class provides a striking symbol of the kind of trade union movement which could

flourish under the new regime. As a former Muslim Brother, Salamah did not advocate militant direct action and class struggle as the principal method of achieving workers' demands. Nonetheless, he had an excellent record of obtaining economic gains for his own Shell workers' and employees' union. Their successful struggles against this British-owned firm were entirely within the legitimate boundaries of the Egyptian nationalist movement and received widespread public acclaim.

Class and Nation: Final Comments

The willingness of a significant section of both the trade union leadership and the masses of workers to accept absorption of the trade union movement into the government bureaucracy represented a decisive defeat for the forces of independent trade unionism which had been growing since the 1930s, a defeat which has still not been reversed. These forces had grown in close association with the Egyptian nationalist movement and had achieved their greatest strength during the high points of the postwar nationalist mobilizations of January to June 1946 and October 1951 to January 1952. This had been possible because, despite the steady growth of an Egyptian industrial bourgeoisie, the popular image of Egyptian industry was that it was foreign owned. Though the percentage of

foreign control declined steadily in the postwar period, it nonetheless remained substantial.

The class consciousness of the Egyptian workers' movement was, under these conditions, almost always combined with, and hence subordinated to, national consciousness. The extraordinary violence of the strikes against the Misr Company in Mahallah al-Kubra in 1947 and in Kafr al-Dawwar in 1952 is a clear indication that Misr Company workers rejected the argument that their employer was a beneficent guardian whose enterprises were beneficial to all Egyptians and therefore immune from strikes or other collective action. This same point was made in the 1950 strike of the Hawamdiyah sugar refinery workers employed by the Egyptian entrepreneur Ahmad ʿAbbud. The widespread support which the Mahallah and Hawamdiyah strikers received demonstrates that many other workers also rejected the notion that Egyptian national capitalism was to be supported in the national interest. The economic struggles of the Egyptian workers' movement demonstrated a concrete rejection of the argument that national unity of Egyptian capitalists and workers was required so long as full Egyptian independence was not established. But this concrete practice was not successfully transformed into unequivocally clear mass class consciousness.

Even the political practice of the communists, who were the most consistent in insisting on the importance of asserting the independent class interests of the working class, combined the advancement of these interests with active participation in a broad national front including bourgeois forces. The one communist organization which did not do so, the Communist Party of Egypt, was a marginal force led by brilliant theoreticians with little practical political strength. The DMNL consistently argued that Egypt was not ripe for proletarian revolution and that a national democratic revolution similar to the one advocated by Mao Tse-tung in China was the next item on Egypt's political agenda. The DMNL's reaction to the events of Kafr al-Dawwar and its continuing attempts to find a modus vivendi with the RCC can be explained to a great extent by this theoretical commitment.

The nationalist movement and nationalist consciousness played a contradictory role in the Egyptian working class. On the one hand it helped to shape the demands and consciousness of the working class and provided it with a vehicle to enter the nationalist political arena. The experience of the period of the 1919 national uprising was the crucible in which the political movement of the working class was first formed, and all subsequent

activity was, in some manner, connected to this experience. Working class participation in the nationalist movement was an important way of gaining broader support for workers' particular class demands. On the other hand, the framing of class demands in nationalist terms and the integration of the workers' movement into the nationalist movement at certain key junctures weakened working class consciousness and contributed to obscuring the distinction between class and national demands.

Since 1954, Egyptian workers, despite occasional upsurges of militant protest, have been generally quiescent. Nothing comparable to the mass mobilizations of 1946 and 1951 has been achieved. Egypt's leading role in the pan-Arab nationalist movement during the 1950s and 1960s was an important factor which kept the workers' movement within the boundaries of the nationalist movement during this period. In 1956 many communists and other former advocates of trade union independence, such as Fathi Kamil, actively participated in the formation of the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions.[5] This body played an important role in the promotion of Arab nationalist, as opposed to class, consciousness among Egyptian and other Arab workers. During the tripartite aggression of 1956, a trade union section of

the Committee of Popular Resistance was formed to support the guerrilla resistance to the siege of Port Said. Yusuf Darwish and other communists were active in this effort, and it was widely supported in Shubra al-Khaymah.[6] Although the regime perceived such organizations as a threat and moved rapidly to repress and jail communists in late 1956 and 1957, there is little to suggest that communist activity went beyond militant nationalism and antiimperialism. The dissolution of the Communist Party of Egypt in 1965 and the fusion of its cadres into the Nasserist Arab Socialist Union represented the ultimate conciliation with nationalism on the part of the Egyptian communist movement. Very few Egyptian communists, and no significant working class leaders, opposed this action.

Mahmoud Hussein, among others, has suggested that the failure of the Egyptian working class to assume the revolutionary vanguard role which the communists expected it to play is mainly due to the betrayal of the leadership of the communist movement. He cites the fact that this leadership was composed mainly of petty bourgeois intellectuals as a principal reason for this betrayal.[7] There is no doubt that the enormous chasm between the social status, perhaps even more than the difference in class position, of much of the communist leadership and the

working class was an obstacle to striking deep roots among the masses. In the most proletarianized sectors of the economy, particularly in the textile industry, this obstacle was not insurmountable. However, the communists did not even attempt to establish their influence among the small-scale producers, service workers and casual laborers who comprised the bulk of the urban working class throughout the period of this study. It is doubtful if they could have been very successful if they had attempted to do so. An even more critical source of weakness was the fact that the Egyptian communists, unlike the Chinese, had only a small presence among the peasantry.

Mahmoud Hussein's romantic notion that what he terms Egypt's "disinherited masses," an unstable and virtually unorganizable lumpen proletariat, formed "the only effective popular foundation for a radical revolutionary movement"[8] is more an admission of the weakness of the Egyptian industrial proletariat than a practical political strategy and a reasonable basis for criticism of the Egyptian communist movement. The communist movement can hardly be held responsible for the fact that the subordinate integration of Egypt into the world capitalist economy has produced a weak working class which may not for a long time, or perhaps ever, assume many of the characteristics of the European proletariat. While there

is much to criticize in communist tactics and strategy, the communist movement cannot be held accountable for the fact that class struggle in Egypt in the twentieth century has so far been conducted under the shadow of the national struggle.

Notes to Conclusion

[1]Ramadan, ᶜAbd al-Nasir, p. 220.

[2]Ibid., pp. 186-87.

[3]Ibid., p. 187.

[4]Ibrahim al-Tahawi, interview in Hamrush, 4:17.

[5]ᶜAbd al-Munᶜim al-Ghazzali, 25 ᶜAmman min hayat Ittihad al-ᶜUmmal al-ᶜArab (Beirut, 1981), pp. 5 ff.

[6]"Lajnat al-Muqawamah al-Shaᶜbiyah. al-Lajnah al-Niqabiyah" and "Asma' al-munazzamin fi al-Muqawamah al-Shaᶜbiyah- Shubra al-Khaymah" (Yusuf Darwish papers, Cairo).

[7]Hussein, pp. 87-92.

[8]Ibid., p. 41.

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