

Saddam Hussein, the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

Part One

A FIGHTER'S JOURNEY ON THE ROAD TO REVOLUTION

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Chapter 1

Humble Beginnings

There is something about the desert, which always leaves us with a feeling of contradiction. How quickly is this limitless expanse broken, however distant its horizons, where the sky meets the earth or the earth meets the sky. How soon does this clarity, bright as the blade of a sword, become shrouded in obscurity, like the cloak of a wandering Beduin. How readily is this gentle warmth, this cordial familiarity, this glowing intimacy replaced by a savage loneliness like the loneliness of a dying man and a cruelty as hard and rough as a grindstone and a sullen, dull, gloomy and cold indifference. That deep peace and all-pervading silence and tranquility is but the mark of eternity and has no permanence. For how easily is it thrown into confusion by winds and raging storms, as though by the Last Trump. The desert is the greatest hidden being, its outward appearance is not its inner reality and what shows on its surface is not necessarily what goes on in its depths.

It would perhaps not be fanciful to suggest that the desert poses all the universal questions, which have troubled the consciousness of man since he first appeared

on the earth. Nor would it be astonishing if all the great monotheistic religions had sprung from its seething heart. For here it was, surely, amid these sandy wastes that the first explanation of life was revealed to man, and here too that he formulated his final tentative theories about how the world might be changed. But this is no ordinary desert, for there lie stored in its memory, stretching back thousands of years, recollections of the most illustrious of ancient human civilizations, a civilization which used its discovery of writing to record, on tablets of clay, the sum of human experience in regulating the individual's relations with society in the laws of Hammurabi: the civilization of Summer, Assyria and Babylon.

Although the desert enfolded in its bosom all these civilizations and has kept them to itself for hundreds of years, years of intellectual and creative drought, this does not mean that the idea of civilization here is at an end. Far from it. It was rather as though it had withdrawn into a kind of mystical seclusion, where the hard road of suffering and endeavour will lead it, not to dissolution and decline, but towards a greater and more profound and complete union with struggling humanity, where man alone would ultimately achieve the highest goal.

And so it was that with the appearance of Islam bearing the torch of revelation this stretch of desert quickly came to life, witnessing the Abbasid era, the most brilliant period of Arab civilization. Indeed it became the center of Arab civilization at its zenith. And when, in due course, Baghdad became one of the most important and opulent centers of civilization in the whole world, this was only the logical expression of the laws of nature, society and man, which are manifest, in essence, in the forward march of progress..

But by this progress we do not mean an automatic and constant advance in a straight line. The road which history follows is full of twists and turns; and though progress may be the final destination there are bound to be many temporary setbacks on the way, long or short in their

duration, according to the many factors and circumstances involved. Thus, when Arab civilization had reached the peak of its perfection and the Arab nation, within its orbit, had achieved a greater degree of unity and integration than at any time in its history, Hulagu and the Tartars were at the gate. A raging human sandstorm, hostile to civilization, came to flatten, destroy and annihilate the most sublime and noble of man's works, and the desert, which had been hiding its face behind the rich cornfields and flower gardens of the Abbasids, returned to cover with its sand dunes the heaps of human skulls, and the Tigris, with which the Abbasids had managed to tame the desert, quenching its thirst with its waves, was now stained with blood and ink. For the recorded memories of the human race, stored in the libraries of Baghdad, had been tossed by the Tartars into the river, where they had been transformed into a black torrent and the two colours, red and black, at that fateful moment in human history, had acquired a profound and eternal significance for concord and unity between men.

A long period of darkness now ensued marked not only by a decline in material and cultural wealth and in the nation's level of civilization. For its dismal manifestations included not only a realignment of international trade routes so that they by-passed the formerly flourishing Arab cities, leaving them to atrophy, or the influx of the crusading hosts, the Tartars from the west into the heart of the Arab homeland. Worse than any of these was the break-up of the Arab nation itself. For although the Caliph an-Nasser, one of the last of the Abbasids, strove to restore some semblance of unity to the mutilated Arab state, the time for this was past, for history could no longer bring back what had been lost. It was to be several centuries before, out of the pain and suffering of a long and bitter struggle against the anfractuositities of history, a star appeared to herald a new time of travail. The moment of awakening had come.

It was at that very moment in Arab history that Saddam Hussein was born. It was perhaps more than pure chance, which ordained that his birth should coincide with that historic moment of awakening. For once the scene had been set and the leading role was waiting for a hero to fill it, Saddam Hussein was already standing in the wings ready, and worthy, to answer history's summons.

His birth in 1937 was not a joyful occasion, and no roses or aromatic plants bedecked his cradle. He was born an orphan, his father having died before he was born, and a poor boy of peasant stock. Like the great majority of true leaders in history, he was obliged, from the moment he first became aware of himself, to face the challenges of life and to fashion his own existence. It was in the spring, on the twenty-second of April 1937, that Mrs. Sabhah Talfah al-Musallat gave birth to her son in the house of her brother al-Haj Khairallah Talfah and it was his paternal uncle, Hassan al-Majid; who gave him the name of Saddam. The house is situated in the region known as "al-Harah", a place in which Saddam Hussein has many relatives. In that little town, lying on the right bank of the Tigris which derives its name, Tikrit, from its earlier Latin name Meonia Tigrides, meaning "fortress on the Tigris" and which is surrounded by an octagonal wall with four gates. The Department of Islamic Education says that this town was known in the old Syriac writings as "Tijrit" and Baladhuri mentions that it was liberated from the rule of Byzantium in the year 20 A.H. (644 A.D.) by the Arab general 'Uqba bin Farqad.

However, nobility of descent is not necessarily associated with wealth. Saddam Hussein, born in this house of mud resting like most of the houses in this little town on wooden piles hardly able to support its weight, the offspring of poor peasants, belongs in fact to one of the most illustrious families in Arab political and religious history. If Arab historians were interested in constructing family trees, a study of the family tree giving the descent of Saddam Hussein would show us that it goes right back to the noblest family of all, whose greatest scion was the Imam' Ali bin Abi Talib. He himself has never mentioned this fact in any of the

conversations, and meetings the author has had with him, possibly because he scorns to lay claim to religious and historic lineage in

the presence of those who can make no such claim, and is striving to give a secular and contemporary meaning to the traditional concepts of nobility and honour, viz. that a man's nobility stems from the nobility of the country whose citizen he is and that a fighter's honour derives from the honourable nature of the revolutionary struggle in which he is engaged. But at a moment of bitter and agonizing confrontation with those who had sought to betray him when he had become the foremost revolutionary leader in his country, he said in a speech, famous at the time (1): "We are the descendants of 'Ali."

And no doubt this expression had for him a personal significance, unsuspected by the thousands who heard him, just as great as its historical and political import.

Saddam Hussein's childhood was not easy. He was moved back and forth during the first ten years of his life between the house in which he had been born, which belonged to his maternal uncle, and the house of his paternal uncle, al-Haj Ibrahim, who had married Saddam Hussein's mother after the death of his father, as was the custom in such circumstances in that part of Iraq. He had, from his early childhood, to fend for himself. A sense of his own orphanhood might either have driven him to introversion and a melancholy self-sufficiency or led him to seek solace and compensation for his loneliness beyond himself in the company of others. Fortunately, and social and geographic environment doubtless played a part in this, Saddam Hussein refused to withdraw into his shell and chose to face up to life, hard and difficult though it was. For even at a tender age, his temperament was that of a man, and a fighter to boot. The difficulties of life, which surrounded him in his early environment, where a poor peasant's land withholds a crop as often as it yields one, taught him certain basic virtues, which were to remain with him throughout his life. Patience, endurance, tenacity, self-reliance, courage, the ability to face and overcome danger, grim determination, the ability to appraise accurately his own feelings, moral discipline, and above all, affection for the poor and sympathy with ordinary people.

Such inferences as can be drawn from studying his early childhood and listening to the testimony of those who were in daily contact with him at that period of his life, indicate that he possessed, even at that early age, the basic qualities, mental and moral, which go to make up the picture of an Arab paladin, preparing himself, or being prepared by Destiny, to play the role of leader of his country. As he himself once said: "No man's political doctrine can remain unaffected by his previous history, or by his birth, or by his life, or by the circumstances of his life."

One of those who were close to him in his early childhood, his elder brother, Adham (he was in fact the son of Ibrahim al-Hassan, his mother's husband, and his relationship with Saddam was that of a full brother because they lived as children in the same home) tells how he was always surrounded by a troop of children whose leader he was and to whom he was constantly attached and who were constantly attached to him, so that the neighbours, as well as members of his own family, would immediately say, when they heard the children shouting, "Here comes Saddam".

But he was never rough or domineering with his early "mass following". The local people thought that he was, on the contrary, a friendly, well-behaved boy. But to his young followers he was perhaps more than that-altruistic, often putting their interests before his own; and when he saw one of his playmates wearing a jacket which was worn or torn he would take off his own jacket and give it to him, and go home jacket-less; and when he was asked where it was he would simply say, as though he had only done his bounden duty: "I gave it to my friend because his jacket was no good." He would take no notice of any resultant scolding,

remembering, even at that early age, the words of Christ: "Whosoever hath two, let him give one of them to him who hath none."

But the small child who had so taken to heart the chivalrous ethic was a real horseman. Nothing delighted him more than to ride his horse. His horse was the living creature nearest to his heart. He would get on its back and gallop through the neighbouring countryside until it tired, for it was fond of him too. A relationship between man and animal can sometimes be more affectionate, intimate and unselfish, than a relationship between two human beings. But the young boy was to suffer a cruel blow, the first in his life. His horse died. He heard the news of its death when he was in the fifth class of the primary school and living with his uncle in Tikrit. His horse was at Qaryat al-' Aujah waiting for his return on Friday during the spring and summer holidays. For the first time he was unable to control his emotion. Man is always powerless in the face of death. It is a time of loneliness and a deep and pervasive sense of loss and deprivation. His hand suddenly became paralysed and remained so for more than ten days. His people treated him with folk-remedies until the circulation returned once again to his forearm. A dark cloud descended on his soul that day, suffusing his bright eyes with tears.

Chapter 2

From Country to City

Poor peasant families did not at that time usually send their children to school. A boy had to grow up in the village, learning just the rudiments of farming so as to help his family, and acquiring a trade by which to earn his living. Schools were not numerous or widespread in that agricultural region of Iraq. The thousands of children who had it in them to become scientists, philosophers, artists and political leaders were in those years transformed into mere pawns in the army of poor and illiterate peasants, always forgotten in the plans and schemes of the reactionary politicians in the distant capital.

Every circumstance and environmental factor bid fair to make Saddam Hussein, as an orphan perhaps more than others, just one more of this forgotten and lost generation, so that the thirsty earth and the fierce encompassing desert would have utterly swallowed him, snuffing out the flame of his intelligence, had not a capacity for resisting circumstances and for striving tirelessly to overcome them, been among his virtues.

In 1947, when he was ten and living with his uncle, al-Haj Ibrahim, in a village called ash-Shawish, they were visited by a child of the same age, a relation of his mother.

This visit, and its consequences, was an important landmark and watershed in his development.

In the open space in front of the mud house the two small children would sit chatting, and one day Saddam heard his friend say something, which he had never heard from his other friends. The boy told him that he was going to school every day, that he was in the second primary class, and that he could already read and write. He then proceeded, with his finger, to write his name in the dust. Then he looked at him and explained the letters of the alphabet, and then the numbers.

The young Saddam was entranced. A new, fascinating and astonishing world unfolded before his eyes in that instant. He too must go to school and learn to write his name and how to memorise the multiplication tables and learn the rudiments of arithmetic. His eyes took on a look of intense determination, which puzzled his companion.

The next day he decided to put the matter to his family. Of course the idea was turned down. Every day, which passed, seemed to him to be irreparably lost. The schools opened and pupils were being enrolled for the new school year. He could think of nothing but those school benches and the fortunate pupils sitting on them. He suggested that he should go to his uncle, al-Haj Khairallah, in Tikrit, but this idea too was brusquely rejected. But he was not to be deflected from his course. He resolved to break off negotiations with his family and to adopt other measures. When night came, the little ten-year-old boy slipped out of bed and, with his few belongings in a bundle on his back, set out, alone as always, to face his destiny. He made for a place called al-Fatha, where he knew he would find some of his cousins who worked as watchmen for a local company. He was sure that they would tell him the way to Tikrit. Al-Fatha was only two hours' walk from his village and he arrived before sunrise. His relations were surprised to see him at such an early hour. "What is it, Saddam, " they asked, "what has happened?"

He told them that he had decided to go to school, but that his people would not hear of it. So he was on his way to Tikrit where he would be able to do what he had set

his mind on. He reminded them that they themselves had been to school and that their people had forced them to leave. His relations raised no objection. Indeed they encouraged him. They took him to the taxi stop and put him in a taxi, which would take him as far as the crossroad: instructing the driver to put him in another taxi for Tikrit. The relatives did not forget to provide him with something with which to ensure his safety on the road-a revolver! It was the first revolver he had ever had in his life.

When he arrived at Tikrit he knew the way to his uncle's house, since he had helped them move from the old house to this one four years earlier, when he was six. So he was able to find his way to his uncle's house unaided. He found the door open and walked in. Once more his arrival caused surprise. In reply to their eager questioning he said, quietly but resolutely: "I want to go to school."

This time he met with no rebuff. On the contrary his decision met with general approval and encouragement, "Well done, Saddam", they said. "Your people are mistaken. Of course you must go to school. You must enroll tomorrow, and keep at it. " It was the first time he had heard this kind of talk. A new chapter in his life had begun. Indeed the impression he had made on his uncle was to play an important part in deciding his future. His uncle, who was the senior male member of his family, was, as luck would have it, an educated man. He had qualified as a teacher and then entered the Military Academy and passed out from the Officers College, although he had not remained long in the army. He had been arrested at the time of Rasheed ' Ali al-Kilani's rebellion and had spent five years in prison. For this reason, Saddam, like all the members of his family, held him in high regard, as an example to be followed, and he still mentions how, when he was living with his mother he would often ask: "Where is uncle? Why has he gone away?" And they would tell him where he had gone and why. In this way he learned his first lesson in patriotism and hatred for the reactionary rulers, the agents of imperialism and for British colonialism whose troops desecrated the soil of Iraq at that time. The lessons would often reach back further into history, when she would tell him how, in the agricultural region of Iraq, his ancestors had resisted the Turkish occupation and Ottoman oppression. His family had furnished a whole company of martyrs, among them his mother's grandfather and two of his great uncles, one of whom had been only fourteen years old and another sixteen, on the day when the Turks came across them and killed them all. Their struggle against the Turks never ceased, but after this it acquired a new meaning, namely that of revenge for the family and tribe. Later they killed a group of Turkish officers and soldiers; the leader in this encounter was his mother's father. Hordes of Turks fell upon them, burning all their houses, and they fled to the mountains in the north of Iraq, returning after a while to

continue the struggle. The stories told to him in childhood were stories of struggle and resistance, arrest and imprisonment, stories which were to crystallize in his awakening consciousness into basic concepts which would direct and guide him throughout his life: hatred of colonialism; hatred, no less bitter, of reactionary and oppressive authority; resistance in order to liberate the home-land; struggle in order to free his fellow-countrymen from poverty, degradation and dishonour.

He pursued his primary studies at Tikrit and when his uncle moved to Baghdad he remained alone in Tikrit in his uncle's house for two years to complete his studies there. Then, having completed the sixth year at the primary school and one year at the intermediate school, he also moved to Baghdad where he entered the Karkh secondary school. This school was a stronghold of nationalism and was always to be a human arsenal ready to explode in the face of the forces of occupation and their agents and lackeys. In its explosive atmosphere this young lad, whose fierce vibrant patriotism made him ready, at any time, to sacrifice his life for his country, found a fitting environment in which his political ideas and his latent qualities of leadership could develop to the full. On every level of national life the time was ripe for change as Saddam Hussein successfully pursued his studies in the fourth class of his secondary school.

With Baghdad poised on the rim of a volcano, another role awaited him.

Chapter 3

The Fourteenth of July.

A Gamble that Failed.

If anyone doubts the unity of this nation and of its destiny, he has only to recall the picture presented by the greater homeland in the fifties to be convinced that the strongest and deepest feeling among its masses, and the idea most firmly and widely held among its younger generation, are the feeling and idea of unity. So that when Gamal ' Abdul-Nasser, from Cairo, called upon Arabs to "rise up and free and unite our homeland", Arabs everywhere, from Iraq to Algeria, became as one man, with one voice and one goal.

In the mid-fifties, after Bandung, the Arab Liberation Movement gathered strength, and it was in Egypt that the decisive moment in the battle drew near. America refused to arm the nationalist regime in Egypt after it had intensified its campaign against the colonialist Baghdad Pact, and Dulles had withdrawn the offer to finance the High Dam, and Cairo revealed that it had breached the arms monopoly by concluding the famous arms deal for the first time with the Socialist Camp. Gamal ' Abdul- Nasser earned for himself the title of hero of Arab Nationalism by proclaiming, on Egyptian Revolution Day 1956, that revolutionary Egypt had, from that day, regained possession of the Suez Canal, thus taking completely by surprise not only the obsolete and crumbling colonialist world, but the whole world, and demonstrating that it had pushed wide open the door to the modern age and to a future worthy of their past.

An unimaginably deep sensation of victory took possession of Arabs everywhere at that moment. Political leaders in Europe and America have recorded in their diaries and memoirs how great and complete was the confusion, which prevailed at that time in the ranks of the old colonial powers, England and France. The Suez campaign, launched by the two colonial powers, abetted by their ally and factotum, "Israel", was but the futile and despairing gesture of powers whose knell had already been sounded by history, and for whom nothing remained at Suez but to collect their death certificates. Perhaps the reaction of the Arabs and of the

nascent third world at that time may be counted as one of the positive results of this sorry episode, if indeed anything positive for the peoples of the world can be found in the death-bed follies of a moribund colonialism. The prospects for the whole Arab world seemed at once to have been transformed and all its aims and aspirations to be capable of realization now that colonial imperialism had been shown, by the judgment of history itself, to be a paper tiger. It was in this heady atmosphere that Saddam Hussein, the revolutionary political leader, was born. News of the tripartite aggression against Egypt carried by the radio and the press had transformed Baghdad into a battlefield in which chanting crowds, shoulder to shoulder and with clenched fists, confronted with unexampled vehemence the forces of Nuri al-Sa'id's reactionary puppet regime, demanding that the Baghdad Pact and the regime which existed to further the schemes of the colonialists should be overthrown and that support and assistance should be given to Egypt in its hour of struggle. The consciousness of the youthful fighter had begun to take form, as little by little, with firm and confident steps, he approached the stage which awaited him and on which he was to play his historic role.

In not more than a few months Saddam Hussein was enrolled in the Arab Baath Socialist Party. At that time the whole of Iraq expected the explosion at any moment. In the inner councils of the political parties the outline of a united front had begun to take shape by February-March 1957. There were, at this time, five political parties in Iraq, viz. the Arab Baath Socialist Party, the Iraqi Communist Party, the Istiqlal Party, the Patriotic

Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Kurdistan. The "Front" was composed of those five parties.

What were the Front's aims? Its minimum aims, "unanimously accepted by all the patriotic forces and by the masses of the people, may be summarized as: Complete liberation from colonial influence and the construction of an independent, prosperous and progressive national economy; complete liquidation of feudalism; removal of the monopoly capitalism associated with colonialism from its dominant position so that it would no longer be able to oppress the working class and would be subjected to progressive national planning; creation of a democratic system of government suited to the nation's circumstances; strengthening of national unity between Arabs and Kurds on a firm democratic basis; creation of strong fighting forces and their preparation for the battle for Palestine and other usurped parts of the Arab homeland; effective contribution to the Arab struggle against colonialism, Zionism and reaction and the realization of a practical and effective form of unity with the liberated Arab countries (2)."

On 14th July 1958 the volcano erupted and the sound of its eruption was heard throughout the world. This historic Arab victory was achieved by a fighting union between the Iraqi people, through its political parties, and the national army. The reactionary puppet regime fell and the people sent its leaders to the gallows. One more citadel of colonialism in the Arab world had fallen and it seemed that all the main centres of the Arab east would soon be free. Gamal ' Abdul-Nasser, who was at the time on a visit to Yugoslavia, decided to return at once to Cairo. He had been profoundly moved by this historic event. The regime which had been his enemy and which had made its territory a base for attack on Egypt had been trampled under the feet of the Arab masses. But President Tito advised him not to return from Yugoslavia direct to Egypt via Hungary, as he had come. For colonialist fleets, provoked by the events, were on the move in the Mediterranean Sea. So from Brioni ' Abdul-Nasser went to Moscow and from Moscow to Cairo, and in the capital of the United Arab Republic its leader declared that "any aggression against the Republic of Iraq would be aggression against the United Arab Republic".

These were, for the Arabs, the most glorious moments in their contemporary history. After the union between Egypt and Syria in February 1958, another new and brilliant star seemed about

to be added to the new constellation. Unity seemed no longer unattainable by any country whose fighting forces decided to fight colonialism to the end. Unity was just another facet of liberation and the struggle for liberation involved essentially a struggle for unity.

At the time of the revolution of July 1958, its leadership largely reflected on the one hand the situation in which the Arab nationalist movement found itself, and, on the other hand, the particular form of the political national movement within Iraq. The nationalist stamp which characterized the revolution at its outset did not stem only from the strong national tendency in the militant political movement within Iraq, but drew its moral strength, its logic and its exuberance from the nationalist tide, which flowed strongly on every Arab, shore, making each country's individual struggle part of a general struggle for the whole Arab homeland.

The most prominent feature of the nationalist stamp which the revolution bore in its early days was its declared commitment to linking the future of the country with that of the Arab nation and its commitment also to the Arab nationalist aims of the people of Iraq. This was reflected by the markedly nationalist tendency discernible among the members of the first government formed after the revolution, whereas the Communist party depended for its representation on certain "democratic" elements affiliated to it (3). It is worth enquiring at this point: What were the ingredients of the various political parties which participated in the revolution as reflected in their attitudes and in their fighting record? After the revolution, five different attitudes reflected five different ingredients. The difference between them quickly turned to antagonism, then to conflict and finally to outright war, which became day-by-day more bloody.

The Iraqi leadership of the Arab Baath Socialist party regarded the revolution as having realized Arab nationalist aspirations so far as Iraq was concerned. Foremost among them at that time was the strengthening of relations with the youthful Arab United Republic and the achievement of a degree of unity with it. In this the party was true to its central ideological concept, viz. that the growth of a revolutionary Arab movement in any country could be realized, at the level aspired to, through the revolutionary Arab movement and that the federal state represented, at that period, one of its historical forms, since regional self-sufficiency would mean that the revolution would atrophy, wither and ultimately die because it would fall an easy prey to local reactionary forces, led by the bourgeoisie, which would see in unity a threat to its interests, and it would also be threatened by imperialism and its agents who would seek to confine, contain and strangle it.

A secret internal publication, put out by the Secretariat General of the Iraqi Leadership of the Arab Baath Socialist Party in March-May 1959, expressed the idea in this way: "Liberation from reactionary colonialism qualifies the Iraqi region to join the federal state (4)." It stated, "It is not only the differences created by regionalism which prevent this but the reactionary political and economic interests within the region and colonialism. It is these, which must be resolutely and intelligently resisted (5)... Unification is a revolutionary operation, which can only be accomplished by disregarding all local considerations and the interests associated with regionalism. (6)"

But these ideological assumptions did not prevent the party from viewing in a patriotic light the internal problems weighing on the masses of the people within the Iraqi region, such as the need for radical agrarian reform which had been one of the aims of the patriotic forces before the revolution and its concentration on the demand for political democracy, in addition of course to the other aims on which all the patriotic forces were agreed.

But the Iraqi Communist Party, whose assessment of the situation within the region proceeded from different ideological assumptions, held views on what was theoretically desirable and what was practically possible, which were completely at variance with those of the Arab

Baath Socialist Party. From the outset, the Iraqi Communist Party rejected the watchword of unity with the United Arab Republic which had overwhelming support in Iraq and wished to substitute for it the pallid slogan of "federal union" to which it did not forget to add "and friendship with the Soviet Union (7)". Then it proceeded to water down "federal union" into something even more anaemic, acceptable even to the reactionary states, viz. " Arab solidarity". By way of compensation it proposed a seemingly brilliant internal slogan: "Our duty is to guard the Republic and national independence (8)" as though Arab unity constituted a threat to the Republic or a diminution of national independence. The Communist Party regarded that slogan as the fundamental principle from which all other principles should be derived and from which all executive measures should proceed, even on the level of changing the internal social structure itself; Amer ' Abdullah, a member of the Political Bureau of the Iraqi Communist Party wrote, early in 1959: "No useful purpose is to be served at the present time by talking too much about a single Arab state, although it may be useful to talk about a liberated nation, able to defend its independence. To realize the Arab dream of a united Arab nation is no easy matter, neither is it within reach at present. . The Arab countries are not moving at a uniform pace either as regards their general development or as regards their progress towards unity. The facts show that the Arab countries will continue to follow their own numerous and diverse paths (9)." He then goes on to draw his own theoretical conclusions upon which were based all the attitudes subsequently taken up by the Communist party: "Fragmentation is a fact. Special circumstances cannot be ignored. The experiment in Syrian-Egyptian unity has given a negative result in halting Syrian rapid progress towards general development and has put her many steps back (10)." Indeed, in a statement issued on 3 September 1958, the Political Bureau of the Iraqi Communist Party said: "The masses of the people are alarmed at the thought of joining the United Arab Republic, because accession will not offer the Iraqi national economy and capital an adequate chance of prosperity and development and will not afford fair conditions for economic co-operation between Iraq and the United Arab Republic, in view of the disparity in their respective levels of development (11)."

It seems clear from the last two quotations that the Iraqi communists, as represented by their official party, regarded regionalism as an insuperable "fait accompli", and the mere thought of joining an already existing Arab union between two countries in differing stages of development was something calculated to alarm the masses of the people. But which masses did they mean? The masses which feared that unity would threaten their economic ambitions? The masses of national Iraqi capital? It is odd to find the Communist Party defending capitalist ambitions. And even odder to expect the " Arab bourgeoisies" to achieve their own development and prosperity in such a way that it would be possible to think of Arab unity in any form which could accommodate the earlier concept. No one can believe that the masses of the people are the capitalist or bourgeois masses, even if we were to add the epithet "national" .For the real masses of the people are the toiling masses who have nothing to lose now or in the future and thus have no cause to fear unity. It is futile to imagine that any popular Arab union could be based on a bourgeois Arab union in which the component parts were at an equal stage of development. At the best, it could be no more than a union of exploiters exploiting to the utmost "the masses of the people".

Although this concept of unity adopted by the Iraqi Communist Party is derived essentially from the Stalinist concept of nationalism and unity which regards nationalism as a manifestation of capitalism and unity as a bourgeois aim, in the manner of nineteenth century Europe, the Iraqi Communist Party in fact imagined that, by rejecting unity and supporting and encouraging the individualistic tendencies in' Abdul-Kareem Qasim, it would be able to get closer to the seat of power and to share or eventually monopolize it. Its rejection of the watchword "unity" found a soothing echo in the title of "Sole Leader" bestowed upon Qasim at that time, but more important it gave encouragement to and set a seal- of approval on those

who supported him. The leadership of the Communist Party at that time imagined that they could achieve their ends by linking their destiny with that of Abdul-Kareem Qasim and proceeding direct to socialism without passing through a bourgeois phase, a view which was in clear contradiction with their apparently basic concept which rejected a unity proceeding from a position of unequal development as between the Iraqi bourgeoisie and the other Arab bourgeoisies, invoking in support of this view, statements made at the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist Party of 1956, the validity of which there had, as yet, been no opportunity to test in practice, viz. "It is not necessary for backward countries to pass through a capitalist phase of development, which can be by-passed by the working class leadership and its Communist Party(12) ."

For this reason the communists neglected to seek the Support of the other patriotic parties within Iraq for their alliance, nor did they bother to re-affirm their adherence to the National United Front after the revolution had taken place. They were mainly concerned with what they called: "defending the Republic's national independence", so that in their reply to the demand of the patriotic parties for radical agrarian reform they said: "This essential demand must be subordinated to a greater and more important task, viz. the task of defending the independence of the Republic, and any measure in the field of agrarian reform shall be subordinate to this basic task (13)." In their reply to the patriotic parties' demand for. political democracy in order to achieve the people's social objectives for the sake of which the revolution had been brought about, they wrote: "These differences and conflicts of interests and ideas are definitely of secondary importance so far as the course of the revolution and the progress and independence of the country are concerned. Such disputes as may arise in the rural areas between peasants and landlords, and in the towns between employers and workers, will remain secondary and can be resolved within the framework of the common interest and in the interest of defending the security and stability of the Republic (14)."

The Communist Party was subsequently to acknowledge, once more, that it had "adopted isolated, leftist attitudes in handling the democratic situation in the country and had fallen into the error of over-estimating its own strength and under-estimating the role of authority and of the nationalist forces in defending the Republic since it had considered itself and' Abdul-Kareem Qasim as being alone, capable of defending the Republic. It had thereby excluded the patriotic forces from any effective role in influencing the course of event (15)". But this self-criticism, which the Communist Party leadership did not begin to take to heart until after it had been issued, had come too late. The rift was already all too apparent, the bridges were already down and the chapter of tragic disasters was already under way. Unfortunately, the leaders of the Iraqi Communist Party failed to realize at that time, mesmerized as they were by the prospect of power and intoxicated as they were by their fleeting and illusory authority over the mass political organs, how heavy the price would be, and that it would have to be paid, not by Iraq alone, but by nationalist and progressive forces throughout the Arab east.

As regards the Istiqlal Party, its intellectual sterility and ideological emptiness caused it to lose its balance and lapse into paralytic confusion under the pressure of events, so that it seemed that its role in history had ceased with the revolution, as what remained of its leadership rushed to join the Baath Party. For the Patriotic Democratic Party, the revolution had, for the time being, offered an opportunity for growth and relative expansion, representing as it did the capitalist middle-class. Although it saw, in the growth of the Communist Party, a strategic danger and a threat to what it imagined to be its class interests and ambitions, it regarded the call to Arab unity as a danger much more serious and imminent, so that its conflict with the Baath was pushed into the forefront while that with the communists was, for the time being, put into cold storage. But it lacked clear ideological cohesion and was not always able to present a unified political stance, even in its higher echelons.

Such then were, in general, the distinctive attitudes of the five parties, which were active in the political arena in Iraq after the July 1958 revolution. The sum of these attitudes was a rift in the Front leading to its dissolution.

An attempt was made in November 1958 by the nationalist forces to draw up a charter of joint action, which would ensure the continued operation of the Front. It enshrined the following political principles:

1. That Iraq is part of the Arab nation and that it should strive to establish the best possible links with the United Arab Republic in the future, with a view to comprehensive Arab unity.
2. That the Front should strive to apply the terms of the provisional constitution of 27 July 1958 relating to the national rights of the Kurdish people.
3. That the Government must pursue a patriotic policy and satisfy the people's demand for political and economic liberation from colonialism.
4. That support for the Republic and the revolution should be affirmed and that the need should be acknowledged for a sound democratic life, which would give the political parties the right to function openly (6).

Nevertheless, what was the practical result of this charter? The Arab Baath Socialist Party had advocated support for the common struggle and a closing of the ranks of all the parties, bodies, ethnic groups and creeds on the basis of the principles and aims of the revolution.

But the attitude of the Communist Party was negative. It received the charter coolly, clinging to its illusions which led it to believe that it could hold Abdul-Kareem Qasim in check and secure power for itself through an absolute personal dictatorship. For at that time no other political party, with the possible exception of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, could muster enough weight to turn the scales.

The gamble that failed had begun. Crazy mobs poured into the streets, like serpents crawling through jungles untrodden by human feet. The sun of revolution was setting. The hour of crucifixion had come. Iraq was to bleed to death.

Chapter 4

The Revolution's sinking sail

There have been many revolutions which have followed a violent course and which have involved the spilling of blood. But the violence has been directed against the revolution's enemies and the bloodshed has been, in a sense, necessary in order that the revolution should take root, grow and bear fruit.

But what happened in Iraq, during that tragic and melancholy period of its history, was more like some dreadful nightmare. It is impossible to imagine how men's mental processes can become so distorted and ossified and fall so completely under the sway of their own ready-made phrases that they are driven in their thousands into new forms of savagery and collective carnage.

The strange thing is that all this took place in the name of the finest and noblest concept to which man can aspire: socialism. All humanity, and most of all progressive humanity, will never forgive Stalin the crimes he committed in the name of democracy and freedom against those among the masses of his people whom he described as the enemies of socialist

development, notwithstanding all his achievements within his country and in the Second World War. The report delivered by Khrushchev at the secret session of the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist Party, in which he revealed for the first time the scale and magnitude of those crimes, fell like a thunderbolt on all those whose minds and hearts had been drawn to the socialist paradise over which Joseph Stalin had presided on behalf of the International. The breakdowns and schisms which ensued in many Communist parties all over the world were a tragic and vehement expression, both on the collective and "individual levels, of a keen awareness among socialists everywhere and of their sudden discovery that they had been worshipping a body without a soul and that man lives not by bread alone, but also by freedom and democracy.

Nevertheless all this had taken place within the framework of an historic experiment, which had challenged the servitude of man for the first time. And although this does not justify its denial of what was supposed to be its essence, it can at least be advanced as an explanation- and how many explanations have been advanced- of the abuse which has been leveled at that historic experiment. But what was it which drove the liberating Iraqi revolution, within a few months of its having been successfully accomplished, months of solidarity between the nationalist elements and cohesion between the parties, into morass? Why did it rush, or allow itself to be pushed, so quickly into that bloody quagmire? And how did all its noble aims and ideals of freedom, unity and socialism- all facets of the same jewel, lose themselves amid those endlessly rancorous and bitter struggles between armies defending the same positions and dreaming the same dreams?

It would take an accomplished writer of horror stories or a great historical tragedian to describe what happened in Mosul in March 1959 and again in Kerkuk in July 1959.

It was not feudalism, reaction or monopoly capitalism, nor even the colonialist oil companies, which were the victims of these blood baths. On the contrary it was the patriots and the nationalists who fell victim to the demented mobs and whose desecrated corpses lay about the streets, while the feudal landlords clung to their estates, and capital, monopoly and the colonialist oil companies continued to flourish unmolested.

The Communist Party tried to organize in Mosul a grand review of its forces under the title "Grand Festival of Peace", on the sixth of March 1959 and thousands of people flocked thither in a special free train which left the capital bearing a placard on which was written "Peace train to Mosul". It went on publishing in its newspapers inflammatory slogans like "Come to Mosul to take part in the Grand Festival of Peace", "To the heroic city, city of revolutionary glory", "Peace train leaves Baghdad this evening"(17). Of course, world peace was not at risk, nor was world war imminent.

The Festival was a manifestation of a bitter and unjustifiable struggle against other patriotic and nationalist forces. Naturally (for that indeed was its purpose), there were clashes between the communists and the nationalist forces in the city. The army officers subsequently met and instructed the officer commanding the fifteenth brigade, Staff-Colonel ' Abdul-Wahhab ash-Shawwaf, to go to Baghdad, see' Abdul-Kareem Qasim and give him a picture of the situation in Mosul, so that he might take prompt action to quell the disturbance before it got out of hand. But Qassam's mind was on other things. He was happy to see the patriotic forces exhausting themselves in a struggle against one another, in order that he might, as he imagined, strengthen his hold on the reins of government. He did nothing. Nor did he offer any solution to the tense situation, other than a few unhelpful platitudes. And, so the tension worsened.

Once more ash-Shawwaf went to Baghdad to see Qasim. But as before he returned without any decision which might have restored the situation, although he had, in his suitcase, a

picture of the "Sole Leader" on which the great man had written: "To my noble brother, Abdul-Wahhab ash-Shawwaf." Meanwhile Mosul was in turmoil and tremors had begun to be felt in Baghdad itself. Ministers were resigning; senior officers were asking to be placed on the retired list. The "Popular Resistance" was beginning to sharpen its swords on the people's necks. Colonel Fadhil ' Abbas al-Mahdawi, President of the Peoples Court, was turning his court-room into a theatre in which the drama of the struggle against the nationalists in Iraq and against the United Arab Republic was staged each night.

Ash-Shawwaf went to Baghdad for the third time. Again he met Qasim, who, brushing aside the urgent matters which ash-Shawwaf had come to see him about, whispered that he would tell him a secret, which he had never yet divulged to anyone. He then thrust into ash-Shawwaf's pocket a medal on which was inscribed the words "We will return." "Return?" asked ash-Shawwaf, "Return where?" "To Palestine, of course." "When will that be, Leader?" asked ash-Shawwaf. "I shall announce it at the proper time"(18), was the enigmatic reply.

This playful little scene was, in itself, an indication that the ship of state was without a captain and that Iraq was heading for, or was being propelled by unseen forces towards, an unknown destination.

In the streets of Mosul, the nation's forces were divided against themselves. One section had allowed itself, either by some spiritual affinity with the "Leader" or with his wickedness, to be persuaded that he was capable of crushing the others and of "eliminating" all those who stood in his way.

What happened subsequently was the natural result of its tragic prologue. The grand festival was held in that tense and critical climate. The Sole Leader's office sent

a telegram to ash-Shawwaf telling him to keep the army units in their barracks on the two days, 5th and 6th of March, while the "Festival" was being held. On the 7th of March a further telegram was sent asking the officer commanding the military region to continue to keep the army units in barracks.

After the Festival was over and the participants had dispersed, the nationalist forces attempted, in their turn, to organize some manifestation of their real presence in the city. The communists objected and asked that the military forces, which had had orders to remain in barracks during the Festival, should be called out to disperse the nationalist gathering. But the nationalist demonstration went ahead in the city, its numbers increasing. Then shots rained down on it and fires were started at bookshops, cafes and other premises owned by elements sympathetic to the nationalist movement. A counter-demonstration, led by the communists, tried to encircle the first demonstration. In a quarter of the city called Bab al Baidh, which was completely under nationalist control, the communist demonstrators began to get out of hand. Some of them started attacking houses, dragging out the occupants and subjecting them to all kinds of violence. The army had no alternative but to begin to do its duty. It came out on to the streets and imposed a curfew, but only after much burning, looting and bloodshed.

In a country without an effective government, the officers who had joined with ash-Shawwaf after the curfew decided upon an armed uprising, in the belief that they alone were capable of keeping the country on a proper course. On the 8th of March, ash-Shawwaf, at the head of his armed division, declared his first, and last, uprising.

This action had not been precisely planned, nor had it any organization to ensure that it would be supported by the military forces in other parts of the country. As ill luck would have it, the circumstances were not propitious. Qasim sent his air force to nip the rising in the bud and ash-Shawwaf was wounded in an air raid. He tried to reach the hospital to have his wound

dressed, but on the way he was shot at and killed, and his body was hung up for all to see, a melancholy witness to the tragic culmination of the bloody struggle between communists and nationalists.

The prompt suppression of ash-Shawwaf's rising was the signal for an indiscriminate campaign of terror to be unleashed against those suspected of having supported it. Doors were broken down, houses were wrecked, old men, women and children were strangled, bodies, among them the naked bodies of young girls, were hung from electricity pylons. Meanwhile, demonstrating mobs poured on to the streets of Baghdad, not satisfied with what had happened at Mosul, and chanting "Kill them, kill them". The newspaper "Ittihad ash-Sha'ab", the Iraqi Communist Party's mouthpiece, came out with the following item on its front page: "After the corpse of, Abdul-Wahhab ash-Shawwaf had been dragged through the streets of Mosul, on Tuesday night it was the turn of the others, when the indignant masses dragged their dead bodies through the streets as an example)." A short while after came a call from the trade union organizations affiliated to the Communist Party, saying: "We will turn the whole of Iraq upside down, so that every town and village, every inch of Iraqi soil, will teach anyone who dares to thwart our Republic a harder lesson than they learned at Mosul (20)." Then, two days later, "Ittihad ash-Sha'ab", assessing the "revolutionary" experiment conducted by the communists at Mosul, published a salute to the "fighter al-Barazani", the feudal Kurdish

Leader, in which it said: "The presence of the fighter, al-Barazani, in Kurdistan during the mutiny by al-Shawwaf's traitorous band had a great influence on the readiness of the Kurds to help in crushing the mutiny and in nipping ash-Shawwaf's conspiracy in the bud (21)."

After the festival of terror and murder in the streets and alleys, another festival began in al-Mahdawi's "court", where the proceedings, for all their intensely tragic character, at times degenerated into something bordering on farce. For in no criminal court in the world, not even in the trials of the second world war criminals at Nuremberg, have the crowds stood yelling as though crazed with fury: "Kill them! Kill them!" while a group

of nationalist officers who, whatever their offence in the eyes of the regime, were nevertheless out and out patriots, stood in the defendants' cage waiting while the president of the court heaped abuse on Arab nationalism and unity and on the United Arab Republic and Gamal ' Abdul-Nasser until, amid the cheers and acclamation, he pronounced sentence of death upon them.

In U mm at- Tubul Place, in the capital Baghdad, a gallows was erected to rip off the heads of the finest and noblest of those who had borne arms in the Iraqi army in defence of the honour of their country and the dignity of their fellow-countrymen.

What occurred after that in Basra was more than matched by what happened in Kerkuk. Both were tragedies after the Mosul pattern. Even Abdul-Kareem Qasim himself, at a meeting with a delegation from professional organizations and trade unions affiliated to the Communist Party, told its members, in disgust: "I will now hand round a few pictures to show you the chaos which has been created among our Turcoman brothers and fellow-citizens. Look and see whether any of you would permit himself to take the law unto himself and to attack his fellow countrymen and commit these atrocities against them. Those who stand for freedom and those who stand for democracy do not perpetrate these acts of savagery. The events of Kerkuk are a disgrace to Iraq. Did Hulagu, even, do anything like this? Is this the twentieth century? (22)"

Nevertheless, the "Ittihad ash-Sha'ab" could still write: "The show-down in Kerkuk is another splendid example of the only effective method of crushing the enemies of the republic (23)." And again: "The republican forces demonstrated their overwhelming strength and struck a

decisive blow in Kerkuk, by the same shrewd method that was used to crush ash-Shawwaf's conspiracy (24)."

Karl Marx, who said: "Man is the most valuable form of capital (25)", must have turned in his grave during those unhappy days, when so many crimes were being committed in his name. He no doubt repeated once more the famous phrase by which he used to disclaim association with those who sought to lay their crimes at his door. "If these are Marxists, then all I can say is that I am not a Marxist (26)."

Chapter 5

A Break in the Clouds

Who was the winner? Who had anything to gain from this bloody contest?

The nationalists were intended to be the sacrificial lambs, to be offered to' Abdul-Kareem Qasim on the altar of his personal dictatorship, so that the communists alone should be the keepers of the temple and its high priest. But it did not escape the "Sole Leader" who, at that stage, was an adept at the game of "divide and rule", that the communists imagined themselves capable of manipulating him just as he imagined himself capable of manipulating them. Although he had supported them in their attack on and their attempt to liquidate the Baathists, there was a limit beyond which he would not allow them to go, since he was determined to retain in his hands the balance of power. Despite all their efforts, the communists were unable to obtain a formal share of power. It is true that, but for them, the political arena was empty after the Patriotic Democratic Party had declared its political activity suspended in protest at their improper conduct. But this vacuum did not turn out to be in their interests, because it made them alone seem responsible for the state of political and economic collapse in the country.

This moment represented, for the nationalist forces, a political low water mark. They were to wait in vain a genuine turn of the tide. The peacock, inflated with his own conceit strutted alone on the summit of his power, while the masses of the people, at every level, continued to suffer their everlasting pains, rendered more acute by the anarchy prevailing throughout the land.

About this time, a man called Sa'dun an-Nasiri was killed in Tikrit. He was one of the most enthusiastic and devoted henchmen of' Abdul-Kareem Qasim, and the security organs could find no one on whom to pin the responsibility for his murder other than that quiet and level-headed young man who used to go back to his village at the end of term to share the life of a peasant with his relatives: Saddam Hussein. It was not that there was any real case against him, but merely. that he was a Baathist militant, well known in the neighbourhood.

He now entered prison for the first time in his life, the Sarai Prison, where he, as a young member of the Arab Baath Socialist Party, was to welcome successive batches of his comrades. The prison had become the only place in which militants were safe from random acts of murder and terrorism on the streets. The prisoners would even plead with the wardens to let their fellow militants come in with them behind bars. They would spend the day in safety and then creep off home under cover of darkness, until sunrise when they would again seek asylum behind bars.

One day he was told that his case had been transferred from the court martial to the revolutionary tribunal, i. e. al-Mahdawi's court. He was certain that they would execute him along with his relatives and friends who were accused with him. Saddam's first reaction was

to try to escape by force from the trap that had been set for him. He arranged with a man called' Awni Rifa'i to bring him revolvers while they were going for questioning. With the help of these they would try to escape before the trial began, and he, with his comrades became tasty fodder for al Mahdawi's guillotine. He explained to his fellow accused what he was planning. One was his mother's cousin and the other his own cousin, both young men like himself. He did not take into his confidence his two uncles, who were also accused. But, on consideration, he -postponed carrying out his plan, since he feared that the authorities would deal with his uncles separately and that they would be unable to get away. A short while after, when the nationalist tide had again begun to flow, the papers in the case were returned to the first court martial and he gave up his plan to escape trial by the use of force. He remained in prison for six months after which the court released him, having found him innocent of the charges made against him.

He went back to his village, and every evening he would go out and write Baathist slogans on the walls of houses and company buildings. Every morning people going from al' Aujah to Tikrit could read fresh slogans written by some unknown hand. Some of these graffiti are still to be seen on the walls of Tikrit.

One day a party comrade named' Ata Hussein as-Samarra'i, from' Aujah (where he still lives with his uncle and his mother) came to him and said: "The party wants you in Baghdad."

The next day he set out for Baghdad where he went to the house of his party superior, at that time' Abdul-Khaliq as-Samarra'i. But the latter had no clear idea of what the party wanted of him, nor of the task which it wished to entrust to him. As-Samarra'i told him: " Ahmad Taha al ' Azuz will call on you. All I know is that he will take you to the party organization, which has asked for you. They will tell you what you will have to do."

An hour later, Ahmad Taha al' Azuz knocked at his door and took him to see another man called Iyad Sa'id Thabit. Ayad looked at him intently and said in a quiet, serious, but clear voice: "Your task is to kill' Abdul-Kareem Qasim. Are you ready?" Saddam Hussein replied at once, a ring of gladness in his voice: "Of course I am ready."

He regarded it as an honour to be entrusted with this task. For such an important assignment, entrusted to so recent a recruit to the ranks of the party's militants, could only mean that he was held in especial esteem.

Abdul-Kareem Qasim was in the habit of passing along Rasheed Street on his way to and from his home in al Alawiya and his office in the Ministry of Defence. Therefore Rasheed Street had to be the scene of operations. The party hired an apartment in Rasheed Street in which it installed Saddam Hussein along with his comrades who were to help him in carrying out the plan.

Another man was to be stationed outside to watch the road and find out which route Qasim was to take. If he came from the direction of al-Bab ash-Shari the code word was "Shukri" and if from the Ministry of Defence it was to be "Mahmud". The difference between the two was the side of the road along which the "Sole Leader's" limousine would pass, in order to pass directly under the trajectory of the shots from the automatic rifles.

On the seventh of October 1959 a group of young men were standing on the pavement in Rasheed Street, along which traffic passes in the direction of al-Bab ash-Sharqi, their eyes fixed on the passing vehicles, their fingers on their triggers. Among them, one might have picked out a slender young man wearing a long jacket, which looked as though it did not belong to him (which indeed it did not). It was his uncle's jacket, which he had borrowed from his wardrobe without even knowing whether it would be long enough to conceal the sub-

machine gun he was carrying at his side. This young man's task was to give covering fire to his comrades who were to open fire on the "Leader's" car, and to cover their retreat after they had carried out their task. He himself would be the last to leave.

But when he found himself face to face with the dictator, he was unable to restrain himself. He forgot all his instructions and immediately opened fire. Bullets rained down on the car from the other sub-machine guns and automatic rifles. There were five of them. But two of the sub-machine guns jammed. The other three spewed out on to the "Sole Leader's" car all the venom stored up in the hearts of the masses. "This for the martyrs of Mosul! This for the martyrs of Basra! This for Kerkuk, this for Baghdad! This for the old men, women and children who died a gratuitous death, sacrifices to the lust for power! And this for the terror which stalks the land, making it unfit for human beings to live in! And this finally for the re-awakening of this nation, for its freedom, its unity, and for a better future, so that ordinary people may live lives unblighted by poverty, fear and humiliation!"

Did he die? He was riddled with bullets from the young men's machine guns so he must have met his end. The firing party got away, Saddam after them, pursued by shots. One of the traffic policemen guarding the car fired at them. He turned round, but before he had time to fire the policeman fired and hit him in the leg. But at the time he did not feel it. He was concerned only with ensuring the safe withdrawal of the group to the car, which awaited them in a side road, which cuts across Rasheed Street and al-Kifah Street. One member of the party had been hit and was bleeding from a wound in his chest and hardly able to walk.

When they reached the spot where the car was supposed to be waiting for them, they found the car but no driver. They waited a moment, which seemed like eternity, with them Sameer an-Najm, bleeding from the chest. Saddam Hussein looked at one of the group, Kareem Ash-Shaikhli, and said: "We can't wait any longer. We must take one of these cars. " So he pointed his sub-machine gun at one of the drivers who stopped, terrified. Just then their own driver, Ali Hassun, arrived. They quickly lifted Sameer an-Najm into the car. Kareem Ash-Shaikhli got into the front seat and Saddam Hussein took the seat behind the driver.

They did not know where to go. ' Ali Hassun knew a hideout where, according to instructions from the leadership, they would be able to hide. But Samir, who was in great pain, said, "I am dying. Take me to the hospital. " His companions seemed inclined to agree. The driver himself began to turn off the road as though he too agreed to make for the hospital. Suddenly Saddam realized what they were doing. "Where are you going?"

He asked. "To the hospital", said' Ali Hassun. Saddam struck him sharply on the back and said: "Drive straight to the hide-out or I'll shoot you in the back."

To have gone to the hospital would have been sheer madness. They would have been discovered immediately, which would have been a disaster not only for them, as individuals, but for the whole party organization. Even if death awaited them, or some of them, at the hideout, they would certainly all have died if they had gone to the hospital. For that reason Saddam decided to go straight to the hideout and to ignore his comrade's pain, lest the whole party should be endangered.

The car stopped in front of a house surrounded by a wall, number 721 al-Karradah ash-Sharqiyah in a suburb of Baghdad and its occupants got out. They entered the house, which was a two-storey building with four rooms on the ground floor and one room on the upper floor. On the left hand side of the house, where one entered the garden, there was a cellar in which weapons were hidden: a collection of machine guns, Thomson Weston and Stirling. As they entered the hall they found a member of the Arab Baath Socialist Party leadership, Khalid ' Ali Saleh, waiting for them. After a short while they were joined by two more who

had taken part in the operation with them, but had not come with them in the car, Hatim Hamdan al' Azzawi and Ahmad Taha al' Azuz.

Sameer an-Najm's condition had become worse. He was bleeding from the chest and the doctor who was supposed to join them had not yet arrived, and, in fact, never did. There was nothing for it but to face the situation bravely and, as it is sometimes necessary in such circumstances, with a granite-like hardness. This isolated house in a side street in this quiet district now held five young men who had faced death at the roadside. It had missed them but here it was again, pursuing them into every corner of this numbed city. What were they to do now? Supposing their operation had failed and not one out of all those bullets had delivered the fatal blow to the body of the "Sole Leader". The dark night would not be over and the first glimmers of dawn would still be far beyond the horizon. In an atmosphere of hysteria charged with anxiety the radio stations would announce that the "Leader" had escaped the attempt on his life. The Military Governor-General would impose an absolute curfew until further notice. The eyes of both the overt and secret police would probe every wall in every street, lane and alley, seeking the authors of the "great conspiracy" to assassinate the "beloved leader". And tomorrow all the Government papers would say: "The dastardly assassins' bullets aimed yesterday by traitorous conspirators, agents of colonialism, at the faithful son of the people, the leader Abdel-Kareem Qasim, were but a warning of the plot now being hatched against the Republic (27)." They would then add this advice: "The frontiers must be closed to the fleeing conspirators. The nationalist front is a gang of traitors in the service of the colonialists and the covetous, nationalists and enemies. The crime of the Baath Party and its conspiratorial plans. The Baath and the rulers in Cairo are tools in the hands of the conspirators..." etc., etc.

They would, of course, ignore the thousands of crimes committed against the masses of this people by its "faithful son" and those around him who nourished in him the lust for absolute and personal power; the gallows at Mosul; the victims at Basra; the martyrs of Kerkuk and Baghdad; the thousands tortured in prison; the arrests; the ugly scenes of gratuitous killing on the streets. Who now remembers the fires of hell by which the whole people warmed itself?

These young men, in the springtime of their lives, were they really reckless conspirators, set on a path of personal terrorism? Not one of them thought, or was capable of imagining for an instant, that he was wresting power from the hands of the dictator to bestow it on himself. They were deeply conscious of the enormity of the tyranny, which had overtaken them. They imagined only that they were creating a new dawn for their country. But above all, they were a disciplined band of comrades, committed to the party, the supreme leadership of which had given them its orders and they saw the order as being more important than the reality behind it.

Whenever al-Mahdawi's tribunal sat and the curtain went up on the tyrant's court poets, vying with each other in their panegyrics to their "sole" dictator and in hurling insults at his adversaries, the voice of the Baath would not hesitate to take responsibility for the operation, irrespective of the points of view of those who advocated something better.

"It is through the people's struggle that the party works, and this struggle may entail acts of revolutionary violence, even murder. This goes without saying. But naked murder, as in the case of a political assassination, is contrary to the beliefs of the party and threatens to divert it from its proper course. The party, whenever an assassination attempt miscarries, nevertheless expresses its appreciation of the heroism of the comrades who have courageously taken part in it, especially if their comportment during the trial does not prevent them from showing their tenacious adherence to the party's beliefs and their loyalty to its objectives (28)."

Nevertheless, and however one may assess that operation from the general political point of view or from the particular ideological standpoint of the Baath Party, there is one thing that

cannot be denied, namely that the attempt carried out so heroically by these young men shook to its foundations this dictatorial regime which had imposed its yoke on the necks of the people, and was to be the first nail in its coffin. It raised, once again, hopes long frustrated in the possibility of deliverance. It pulled the cork out of the bottle, releasing the demon imprisoned inside. It created, at the very least, a yawning fissure in the wall "of fear, allowing the first radiance of the coming day to filter through.

Chapter 6

Journey Of The Wounded Knight

Saddam Hussein was not able to sleep until morning. An hour before sunrise he suddenly jumped out of bed with a burning pain in his leg. It was a terrible pain, the like of which he had never felt before. He realized that it was the bullet in his leg, which was the cause. Where was the doctor? What doctor was likely to come here, or could he go to. There was no point in waiting. He must be his own doctor. With his iron will he at once decide to perform the operation himself.

His companions, who had gathered around him, when they heard his suppressed groans, were astonished at the thought of his removing the bullet himself. He told them in a quiet voice, punctuated by spasms of pain: "I am not waiting for any doctor." Then he looked at Ahmad Taha al' Azuz. "Will you do it or shall I do it myself? It would be best if I put my leg up here and let you do it. But if you can't, I'll do it myself." "But how can I do it?" protested Ahmad, "and with what?" Saddam looked at him with his steady gaze, as though talking about someone else. "Get a new razor blade and a pair of scissors. Start by making an incision in the shape of a cross in the flesh covering the shot. Then sterilize the scissors, put them in the wound and pull out the shot. That's all."

When Ahmad Taha al' Azuz had finished the operation his hand was shaking and he felt unable to look Saddam in the face. He poured some iodine on the wound, put a piece of cotton wool inside, wrapped it round with several layers of muslin, breathed a sigh and stood motionless. Saddam Hussein had fainted with the pain.

A few moments passed. It seemed like an age. His comrades watched him intently. But it was not long before he opened his eyes and said: "It's all right now."

After a short while he struggled to his feet and said to them: "I am not staying here any longer." He suggested that they should all leave the hide-out, except Sameer an-Najm, who was in no fit state to leave, and one man who should stay with him as a patrol, not necessarily in the hide-out, but perhaps keeping an eye on it indirectly, like sitting opposite the house, disguised as an itinerant vendor and looking in now and again to see if anything was wanted. In any case it was impossible to stay in this hideout because the chances were that it would be raided by the police. It would be better; indeed it was their duty, not to let themselves be caught easily since they might have to have another try.

He did not wait for them to overcome their hesitations, but said what he had to say and left. He went out into the road, walking normally and gritting his teeth, trying to ignore the acute pain in his leg. He made for his uncle, al Haj Khairallah Talfah's house. This was the first time he had slept away from the house and it was only natural that they should ask awkward questions. "Where have you been? Why are you late? Where did you sleep last night?" He replied quietly: "There was a curfew and I couldn't get back, so I slept in a hotel. " But they noticed that he was limping slightly. "I was running to get home in time and I fell down. But I didn't make it anyway.

It still hurts a bit, " he said, rather unconvincingly. He brushed aside their further questions and went up to his room on the first floor to sleep.

Suddenly, as he was trying to stretch himself out on the bed, the door opened and in walked his uncle, ' Abdullatif.

"Well," he said, "was he killed?"

"Who?"

"Abdul-Kareem Qasim, of course."

He was so taken aback that he could hardly speak. But he pulled himself together and said, as though the matter was no concern of his: "How should I know?"

"Saddam, don't try to lie to me. I saw you myself from Hazim al Bakri's balcony in Rasheed Street, wearing my jacket and firing at Qasim. Do you deny that?"

It was nothing but pure chance that had led his uncle to that spot to visit a friend just at that moment; he had seen everything with his own eyes; had seen his young nephew shoot the Prime Minister as he passed along the street. Saddam said: "Since you saw me I'd be glad if you would help me. I need an injection of an antibiotic for my wound. I'll tell the orderly that I've got tonsillitis. "He actually began to take the injection to relieve the pain.

He had to go back to school so as not to draw attention to himself by his absence. At least he went to begin with, and then asked to be allowed to go home because he felt unwell. He was then in the top form of the secondary school. He could not remain at his studies as usual for fear of having to answer awkward questions from his schoolfellows about the wound in his leg, which was still very painful.

He was just outside the school, carrying his books, when he ran into' Abdul-Khaliq, who said: "Do you know Iyad Sa'id Thabit?"

"No"

"Do you know Khalid ' Ali Saleh?"

"No"

"Do you know Sameer an-Najm?"

"N0".

"Good. I don't want to ask you now who you know or don't know. I just want to tell you that all these were in a hide-out in al-Karradak ash-Shurqiyah when it was raided by the police. They were all arrested. So if you have had anything to do with any of them, you had better watch out."

What had happened was that an hour after he had left the hideout, his companions, as might have been expected, had been picked up by the authorities'. What was to be done? He hurried home and went straight up to his room. He got out his photograph album, which contained many photographs of himself with his friends. Then he went into his cousin Adnan Abdullah's room and got out his album too, which also contained group photographs, and burnt the lot. Then he decided that he must leave the house at once. He left, and a quarter of an hour later a party 'of police raided the house.

He made for the Martyrs' Bridge with a view to hovering round the little hotel where' Abdul-Khaliq as-Samarra 'i, his party contact, lived, in order to enquire from him about the possibility of helping him to get away. On the way he bumped into a schoolmate who was standing on the platform of a bus. He jumped off the bus and came over and greeted him in a loud voice, instead of whispering, as he knew nothing of what was happening. At that moment some young man came running up out of breath and muttered something from which he concluded that the police had raided his uncle's house. After that there was nothing to hide. He gave, Abdul-Khaliq a general idea of what had happened and asked him to go to a house near his uncle's house and then to send a woman to the house to fetch his identity card, because the curfew which was still in force and the inspection posts, scattered about the streets, might mean that he would find himself in a police station. After calculating the distance and the time it would take, he said: "I'll see you at the cafe in forty minutes. If I'm not there before then, you won't find me."

These were the longest forty minutes in his life. It was daylight. Everyone was on the look out. Anything was possible. Forty minutes passed and he did not come.

He left the cafe and went his way.

He did not know where to go. Suddenly he remembered a distant relative who lived on the outskirts of Baghdad. He used to go there shooting with his uncle. Without further hesitation he made for that direction. His cousin's wife opened the door. His relative was not at home. He asked if he might wait. When the man came, he was surprised at first, but seemed pleased to see him. Saddam blurted out: "Look, uncle. You know that the situation is complicated. The innocent are mixed up with the guilty and people are being accused right and left. This means that I must get away from Baghdad.

I would like to get to Tikrit without anyone knowing. Will you let me sleep here tonight?"

Next morning he asked the man to lend him his oldest clothes. He took off his jacket and put on an old and worn dishdasha, which is a kind of long shirt worn by Iraqi peasants. On his head he put a no less threadbare headband and head-cloth. Over all this he threw a black cloak, full of holes. He plastered his shoes with mud to make them look old and, having borrowed a small knife saying that he might need it on the way, took his leave.

He stopped a taxi and told the driver to take him to as-Salikh, a place on the outskirts of Baghdad, on the road leading to Tikrit. The driver, who had been scrutinizing the reflection of Saddam's face in the driving mirror, asked him what he was doing in Baghdad. "I've been doing a labouring job there, " answered Saddam, in his country accent. A look of incredulity appeared on the man's face. "A labourer, eh! And riding about in taxis?"

"You're quite right," said Saddam, "but I've got some relations at as-Salikh and I'm not sure where it is, so I decided to take a taxi. " "All right, son, I'll take you to the place where the as-Salikh bus stops. That'll be best for you. "He paid his fare and got on the as-Salikh bus. When the bus reached as-Salikh he alighted and looked around him for the road to Tikrit.

It was winter and the fields at the side of the road looked dark green in the sunset. The cold night would soon descend. His wounded leg exuded pain at every step. Suddenly he heard a horse neighing not far off in an adjacent field. He went towards it. There seemed to be no one with it. He stood waiting for its owner to appear. After a while the peasant who owned the horse came along. He seemed taken aback when Saddam offered to buy the horse, but after some hesitation he agreed. Saddam paid him the seventeen dinars he asked, and mounted the horse. He followed the road, which runs parallel to the river Tigris, having first made sure that it would take him to Tikrit.

He bought himself some bread and dates and barley for the horse--rations for the journey. He rode from sunrise to sunset, stopping at nightfall. To have traveled by night might, have attracted the attention of the inspection posts along the road, and he had no identity card. The first night he knocked on the door of one of the Bedouin and said: "Brother, I'll be your guest tonight. " He slept deeply, better than he had slept for days. Early in the morning he brought out his horse and continued his journey. The second night he did not come across any Bedouin houses so he decided to sleep by the roadside. He took the horse's halter in his hand and stretched out on the ground, exhausted, until sunrise, when he rose from his resting place and continued his journey. The third night he had better luck. He stayed with a Bedouin in a tent of goat's hair in the hills overlooking Samarra. There had been a wedding feast and a sheep had been killed, so there was mutton for supper, very welcome after a few days on dry bread and dates. At dawn he threw on his tattered cloak, loosened the horse's bridle and entered the outskirts of Samarra. He had left the town before the sun had reached its zenith and found some peasants selling watermelons. He bought a few to slake his and the horse's thirst.

Just as the sun was about to set, he came to a valley south of ad-Dour, between Samarra and ad-Dour. He felt worn out and chilled to the marrow. Suddenly two cars drove up, blinding him with their headlights. He was unable to stop and went on riding as though ignoring them. Then he heard a voice: "Stop or I'll shoot you."

Then he realized that these were Government cars and that he would have to stop. Nevertheless he tried to turn his horse in the direction of the rough country in the surrounding hills, but it was tired out and did not respond. Soon the cars were hemming him in on both sides, and machine guns were being pointed at him.

"Even so, "he told himself, "perhaps they are not after me, and I must hold out until the end." He drew his cloak over his leg to hide the bandage and looked at them calmly and with complete composure without saying a word. The officer in the car shouted: "What are you running away for, boy?" He realized at once that they were not after him and said quickly: "Why have you stopped me?"

"We're on the look-out for smugglers," said the officer.

"They've sent you to watch the road for them." "You have no right to stop me. I'm not a criminal, "he said more confidently. "If you have any doubts about me you'd better take me to the police station for the night. Then I'll show you where my people live." "All right," said the officer, "show me your identity card." "Come off it," he said, "we're Bedouin around here, we don't carry identity cards. I'm not going to the city so why should I carry an identity card?" The officer's features relaxed.

"All right, I understand now, "he said. But Saddam stuck to his assumed role and said, with a touch of derision in his voice: "Understand what? You take me to the station and you'll soon find out. "But one of the men came up to him and said: "Look, son, get going. But promise that if you meet anyone on the road you won't tell them you've seen a patrol. " With that they got into their cars and drove away.

He mounted his horse and rode off, without looking behind him, making for the little town of ad-Dour, which lies on the river opposite al-'Uwainat, only a few miles from his village of al-Aujah where his family lived.

It was eleven o'clock at night when he entered the town, which he had not seen for four years, and he immediately found himself face to face with the policeman standing in front of the police station. For a moment he was seized with apprehension. He could not, as he well knew,

turn round and go back the way he had come. So what could he do? He decided to deal with the situation as he always did, by attack. He urged on his horse until he was opposite the guards. He greeted them and they, in their astonishment, returned his greeting. He continued as far as the riverbank, where he found a cafe in which there were still a few late-night customers.. He dismounted and asked one of them where the ferry was. The man pointed to another of the customers who, it appeared, was the ferryman. Saddam explained that he wanted to cross over with his horse and gave the ferryman half a dinar. The fare was only 50 mils. The man looked up and replied, rather grumpily. "I can't. It's not allowed at night.

Haven't you heard about the curfew?"

"Look, friend, here's a dinar."

"NO."

"A dinar and a half, then."

"NO".

The man was adamant. Saddam was reluctant to offer him more for fear of arousing suspicion. He went to the riverbank alone and stood for a moment, thinking. It would take three strong men to work the ferry. What was to be done? He had to be in his village before dawn in order to arrange to get across the frontier before it became too dangerous and escape became impossible. He looked again at his horse, and then at the distant bank of the river, still shrouded in darkness, except here and there, where the stars were reflected in the water. At all costs he must be over there within a few hours at the latest. He let the horse's bridle fall from his hand, stroked its head, and left it to go where its fate might lead it. He had decided that he, too, would trust to his fate. No ordinary man could hope to swim across the river on such a cold night and with a painful wound in the leg.

But he had no choice. He stripped off all his clothes, gathered them up into his cloak, rolled them into a ball above his head and fastened them round his neck with cord. Then, placing his little knife between his teeth, he dropped into the river. Only God knows who gave him his superhuman strength in those critical hours as he struggled against the waves with the pain in his leg and the bundle of clothes, heavy with water above his head, threatening all the time to thrust his weary body into the depths. But he struggled on, stubbornly, resisting the waves, defying them to do their worst, doggedly clinging to life, by sheer force of will. How much farther to go? How heavily this darkness weighs upon body and soul! Little by little his strength ebbs, as he drags his wounded leg behind him. But he will not give up. He refuses to die. This rope around his neck, securing the bundle of tattered clothing, which has concealed his body, and his identity, all the way from Baghdad, why not cut it and rest from the burden! Is there no end to this river? This is not the Tigris, which he knows so well, but some desert of ice. But even so, he must hold out and overcome the powers of death.

He was just about to take the knife from between his teeth and cut the cord from round his neck when his feet touched something hard and he realised that the river was getting shallower and that his tenacious will to live had triumphed. The shore, which had seemed so far away, as far as the distance between life and death, was now within reach.

He raised his head above the water and filled his tired lungs with the cold night air. He heard the barking of dogs in the nearby fields and soon his naked body was trembling with the cold as he trod once again on dry land.

He threw himself down on the muddy bank of the river to recover his breath. Then he remembered that he could not walk along the bank naked as he was and he proceeded to put

on his wet clothes. A little further he came upon a small mud hut. He knocked on the door and entered without waiting for permission, as is the custom with country people in these parts. A dumpy woman of about fifty, wearing a black dress and with green tattoo marks on her face, appeared. Finding herself face to face with a young man in dripping wet clothes, obviously shivering with cold, his teeth audibly chattering, at this late hour, her instinctive reaction was to shout: "Thieves, thieves, kill them!" Then from the interior of the hut rushed a man brandishing a thick stick which he was about to bring down on Saddam's head when Saddam, forgetting in that instant the cold and hunger and fatigue, and gathering his wits, shouted: "Here, what's all this about? What sort of a man are you? Aren't you an Arab? You see a man in this state and you start shouting "thieves! thieves!" He turned, as if to go, but the man, who by this time had grasped the situation, refused to let him go and insisted on his remaining.

They lit a fire and he took off his outer garments and dried them. His underclothes looked clean and out of keeping with his old and shabby outer garments. The woman spotted this strange contrast and began to eye him with suspicion. But with instinctive cunning she remarked, commenting on his appearance: "Everything comes from God, my boy. It is He who raises up and He who brings down. "He answered her in the same vein:

"Everything is from God, Auntie."

The blood had returned to his veins and he was feeling himself again. He thought he had better put on his dry clothes and leave. He noticed that the bandage round his leg had slipped. The man saw the wound in his leg and then looked at the woman. Then she looked at him, as though they both understood how things were. They asked him where he was going. He said he was going to his family. They said: "So you didn't hurt yourself jumping off the water sheel, like you said just now. You swam across the river. You're running away from some great calamity. We won't let you go until morning so that we can find out the truth about you. "Surely, he thought, he had not come through all this so that this old woman and her man should hand him over, an easy prey, to the police. Concealing his exasperation, he said in a quiet voice: "Well, supposing what you say is true and that I have committed serious crimes against some tribe or other and they are after me and may catch me here at daybreak and kill me. Would you, who have no connection with me or them, want to take the responsibility?" "No, son," they said, in unison, "No, by God. Go now and God's peace be with you."

He left before dawn, continuing on his lonely way towards the primary school at al-Uwainat where he had heard, when living in Baghdad that his brother Adham now worked as caretaker. He did not know the way, but he must go on until he found it. Suddenly he saw the school name-board. He knocked at the door and from inside came the sound of his brother's voice:

"Who's there?"

"It's me, Saddam."

Adham, recognizing his brother's voice behind the door, opened it, and seeing Saddam, embraced him with tears in his eyes. "Come on now, " said Saddam, "this is no time for tears. We are going back home. I'll go one way and you'll go the other. Look and see how the land lies. You know everything, of course. It's possible that the police will have raided the house. I'll see you in the woods near the house. If the police are about, I'll go and hide somewhere else."

Adham had no precise idea of what had happened. All he knew was that there had been an attempt on Qasim's life and that the police had come and searched the house and had not

found whoever it was they were looking for. All Saddam told him was that he had taken part in the operation. No more.

Adham went to the house of his father, al-Haj Ibrahim, Saddam's uncle and his mother's husband, and astonished his father with the news of Saddam's arrival, and of what he had told him. "Where is he?" his father asked.

"Waiting in the wood to see whether the house is surrounded." "There's no one about," said his father, "call him."

When Saddam entered, his mother embraced him, trying to keep back her tears. But al-Haj Ibrahim kept his feelings well under control. Strong and grave, trying to master the anxiety, which they all felt, he knew that this was no time for displays of emotion. "Have something to eat and drink," he said, "and at four o'clock, just before sunrise, go to Turks Redoubt (a military strong point built by the Turks during the Ottoman occupation) and wait there until seven o'clock this evening. Then don't come straight here. Wait in the corn field until I come and bring you to the house after I've made sure that the coast is clear."

Saddam agreed to his uncle's plan, but before he left at four o'clock he said to Adham: "When it's light, go to Samarra and look for a man called 'Ata Hussein as-Sammara'i or 'Ali an-Naqeeb; if you find either of them, say that Saddam is here."

At day-break, Adham unscrewed a piece of a water pump which they owned and took it with him, as though he were going to Samarra to get it repaired, in case anyone should ask him. He went to 'Ata as-Sammara'i's house, but he was not there. He would be back at five o'clock, his wife said. He waited. When 'Ata came, he whispered his news. "We've been looking for him for days", he said. "You can relax now. You've done your job."

At seven o'clock a military jeep arrived, driven by 'Ata Hussein as-Sammara'i, accompanied by three other men, Abdul-Khaliq as-Sammara'i, Hamud al-Awadi and Hussein Jasim. It stopped some distance away on the edge of the village. They sent his brother to Saddam to bring him to them.

His uncle came and said goodbye. His mother embraced him and invoked God's blessing on him. As he was leaving the house he glanced at the mulberry tree, which he had sown nearby, and the date palm he had planted had begun to put out its green fronds.

His companions told him that there was another comrade who would go with them to the Syrian frontier, because he too was wanted by the police. His name was Fatik as-Safi.

They did not take the road to Syria at once, but remained in hiding for a few days. They had to find a guide to show them the way. There was a man in the neighbourhood called Muhammad Sultan who lived in hiding under an assumed name in the village because the police wanted him on a murder charge. For this reason he was known only to a few close associates by his real name. The local people knew him as 'Abdullah Abu Najm. Since the Syrian frontier was not far away, Muhammad Sultan knew the way and used frequently to cross it in both directions on his motorcycle.

On this occasion he went to Syria to see whether the road was clear, but on the way he was stopped by the police. He told them that he had been to recover sheep, which had strayed over the frontier. They knew that people sometimes employed guides to take them across the frontier, so they let him go. "See that this time you go alone and come back alone," they warned him.

He repeated the exercise. But the police were still spread out along the road. He advised them to let him take Saddam on the back of his motor cycle to the Tharthar area, which is also close to the Syrian frontier, but in another direction, and from there the guide would take him to the frontier on horse-back because it would take six days on foot.

Abdullah mounted his motorcycle, with Saddam, Hussein and Faik as-Safi behind him and they set off for al Tharthar where they found the guide who had agreed to take them to the Syrian frontier. His name was Daham ash-Shamran, and Abdullah an-Najm had arranged everything with him. He paid him forty-five dinars and bought two horses, one large and one small. He also provided them with bread and dates and wished them good luck. The little convoy set out for the Syrian frontier, following an unfrequented route across the desert, known only to guides such as these.

They traveled at night, steering by the stars. If you keep Capricorn over your left shoulder, you will be on course for the Syrian frontier. They did not move by day for fear of running into police patrols. This time the night was the safest traveling companion.

They were seven days and nights in the desert. Daham rode the big horse and Saddam and Fatik the small one. Sometimes one of them would dismount and go on foot. They had many alarms. The lights of police cars would pierce the darkness, which concealed them. Daham himself, who was unaware of their identity, would often expose them to risk when he caught the whiff of fresh bread or the aroma of coffee coming from a Bedouin tent.

For seven days and nights they endured the chill of the desert and meager rations. The Syrian frontier seemed like a distant shore on which they longed to cast their anchor. On the seventh night, Adham, from his lofty perch on his big horse's back, suddenly said: "Give me a handful of earth. Let me see what it's like." Faik said:

"It's got gravel in it and..." Daham did not wait for him to finish. "We're over the frontier," he announced.

He was right. They were there at last. They made for the nearby Bedouin tents. They were Syrian Bedouins and they spent the night as their guests. The next morning, traveling by daylight for the first time, they made for Albukmal, the first center of habitation on the Syrian side of the frontier. From there they went to Deir ez-Zor where they contacted Amin al-Hafiz, who was the military commander of the eastern region. He received them immediately for he had been notified of their impending arrival. Daham was able to eat fresh bread and drink Arab coffee, but not this time in a Bedouin tent.

Saddam Hussein stayed three months in Damascus. On the twenty first of February 1960, he left Syria and stepped out of the aeroplane, which had brought him to the capital of the United Arab Republic, on to the tarmac of Cairo International Airport.

Chapter 7

Hope revived

Cairo was then, as it has always been, a capital for all Arabs, wherever they came from, opening its arms to them, embracing their cause and sympathizing with their hopes for an end to coercion, exploitation and subservience to foreigners in their own countries and for the establishment of a great new democratic and socialist Arab state, stretching from the Atlantic to the Gulf, and nursing within its ample bosom one people, free and happy.

Most of them have passed this way and have known and been known in its cafes, clubs, hotels, squares, thoroughfares and delectable purlieus and have made friends among its warm hearted people. Former and future leaders, military commanders, statesmen, thinkers, writers, poets and artists have all tasted the generous hospitality of this venerable city and, in their turn, have been unstinting in its praise. And when they have returned to their own countries they have cherished fond and enduring memories of days spent on the banks of the Nile.

Saddam Hussein spent more than three years of his life in Cairo. He traveled the length and breadth of Egypt from north to south, from Alexandria to Luxor and Aswan. He was now twenty-two, a tall, slim, good-looking young man, smartly dressed, with dark, piercing eyes, sparkling with intelligence and alertness. Circumstances in Iraq had not allowed him to complete his secondary education. He therefore entered the special Qasr an-Nil school in the fifth class in order to obtain his matriculation. He lived with a number of his Iraqi comrades, fugitives, like himself, from sentence of death, in a house which they had rented in the ad-Duqqi quarter. Thus began a new chapter in his life.

Unlike some of his contemporaries, he did not allow himself to be distracted by the manifold pleasures and opportunities for enjoyment offered by a great city. He was mostly serious to the point of severity, immersed in an almost melancholy preoccupation, at times with his studies and at other times with the shifts and turns of politics, so much so that he would go alone to the Qasr an-Nil Casino where he would sit and contemplate the fuscous waters of the river as they flowed inexorably by. Or he would make his way to a park and spend perhaps an hour or two strolling in the shade of the trees, before returning home to resume the regular tenor of his life, like the hands of a clock. The only relaxation he really enjoyed, apart from reading, strolling in the parks and visiting the places associated with Egypt's ancient past, was playing chess. It is hardly strange that he was a skilful player, since the history of this game is full of the names of leaders in the East and West (among them Gamal Abdul-Nasser) who have excelled at moving their "forces" on these little squares as though practicing to move them later on real battlefields and in real theatres of war. This apart, Saddam would sometimes sit alone writing the occasional letter, to be taken by some trusted traveler to Iraq, to his uncle, al-Haj Ibrahim and his mother or to his uncle al-Haj Khuirallah Talfah, or to one or other of his brothers.

A few months after his arrival in Cairo he sent a message to his uncle saying that he wanted to get married, and that his choice had alighted upon his cousin, Sajidah Khairallah Talfah. When al-Haj Ibrahim got the letter and he learned its purport, he said: "God has put the idea into the boy's mind. " For in all traditionally minded families in our country, marriage, especially early marriage, is regarded as a protection against the evils of temptation.

Al-Haj. Ibrahim thrust the letter into his pocket and, putting his trust in God, made his way to al-Haj Khairallah's house and asked for the hand of his daughter. Al-Haj Khairallah at once gave his consent. "They shall, be married, God willing, when he returns to Iraq, he said. For the time being, she is his betrothed." Al-Haj Ibrahim felt relieved. At least he had not refused him, and he hurried to tell Saddam's mother the news. As for Sajidah, she was filled with a deep joy. Two tears rolled down her cheek, but she wiped them away so that nobody should see them. Saddam had been her childhood companion ever since the day when he left his uncle's house in the village and came knocking at their door, eagerly asking to be allowed to go to school. He was then nearly ten and he had never left their house except to return to it. She had grown up with him, and had moved with him, or he with her, from Tikrit to Baghdad, and had seen him grow to maturity and had watched his struggle as he developed in awareness, and had long cherished for him a deep feeling of respect and admiration, even if, as is the custom with girls in old-fashioned families, she seldom expressed them openly. When she had learnt, after a few months, that he had managed to cross the frontier safely after

the attempt on Qasim and that he was out of danger, she experienced a deep sense of relief and looked forward to his triumphant homecoming. And now she was his betrothed, waiting only for his return.

The exile did not have many years to wait. Just beyond the horizon a beacon was soon to appear, guiding the traveler to a safe anchorage. He himself had an intuitive feeling that the day was not far distant. For he trusted his people and had complete faith in his party and he realized, above all, that this was the will of history.

However, a true fighter never ceases to struggle, in whatever place he may be compelled to pass certain years of his life. So it was with Saddam Hussein. As soon as he set foot on Egyptian soil he placed himself at the disposal of the party organization in Egypt. The higher he rose in its ranks, the greater became his devotion to its cause, until he became a member of its committee of leadership, which supervised not only the organization in Egypt, but also the other organizations scattered about Arab North Africa, the Gaza strip, the Sudan and the Arabian Peninsula.

It was inevitable that his activities, and those of the cells and groups which he organized, should attract the attention of the Egyptian security apparatus. Unfortunately at that time this apparatus was spreading with cancer-like rapidity and seeking, by virtue of its expansion, to exert its influence and authority, sometimes quite independently of the central control exercised by the State, by means of coercive measures directed at Arab militants who had sought refuge in Egypt from the oppressive acts of tyrants in their own countries. Although these oppressive measures affected also the Egyptians themselves, their character and the way in which they were applied to Arab militants were especially repugnant and distasteful.

From time to time, Saddam would return to his house to find that it had been thoroughly searched and his papers read and perhaps copied. Now and again one of his companions would be summoned to the hated secret police headquarters in the Ministry of the Interior and interrogated, threatened with incarceration or expulsion, until Cairo seemed to them to be on the point of becoming just another prison. An end had to be put to all the stupidities perpetuated by the public security apparatus. Five of those condemned to execution in Iraq decided to approach the Office of the President of the Republic and tell them what was happening. They drafted a letter, couched in unmistakably threatening terms, saying that if the police persisted in their incomprehensible campaign of harassment, they would hand themselves over to the Iraqi authorities to carry out the death sentence. The letter was signed by Saddam Hussein, Kareem ash-Shaikhli, Hatim al-' Azzawi, Taha Yasin al-' Ali and Midhat Ibrahim Jum'ah. Shortly afterwards Kareem ash-Shaikhli, representing his companions, was received by a representative of the President's Office who said what is usually said on these occasions, viz. "Of course, we know nothing about it. It's all a mistake on the part of the police. They are acting without instructions.

Certainly you are at liberty to come and go freely in your own homeland, etc. " The important thing was that after that, the trouble became less oppressive. At least it was more civilized or more discreet than it had been before (29).

Not long after that, Saddam Hussein was returning from a trip with his Faculty, the Faculty of Law, to Luxor and Aswan. He went into the bathroom and had just turned on the shower when the telephone rang. Then Kareem ash-Shaikhli knocked at the door, shouting:

"Saddam, Saddam." He opened the door a few inches and peeped out. Kareem was holding the receiver and shouting at the top of his voice: "Saddam, there has been a revolution in Iraq! A revolution in Iraq! Can you hear me?"

Chapter 8

Wanted: A Wise Leader

When discontent had begun to show itself in certain army units with the arbitrary and dictatorial rule of Abdul-Kareem Qasim, it had encountered no military opposition. For Qasim had retreated, with a handful of officers who were loyal to him, to the Ministry of Defence where a limited action (the only one) had been fought between his supporters in the Ministry and the entire military and civilian forces, which had risen against him.

His regime had collapsed under the weight of its internal contradictions. None of the glorious aims of the revolution had been realized, except for an insignificant fraction, and even the insignificant fraction was threatened, balanced precariously on the edge of a precipice. Of the patriotic forces within the country, none remained but the Iraqi Communist Party, or rather its leadership, the patron of Qasim's rule and his only supporter, mistakenly believing that it could hold him in check and then steer the regime from the side-lines and render the pressure of fear, away from the control of the nationalist forces, and more particularly of the Arab Baath Socialist Party, in the event of the collapse of his rule and the settlement of accounts which would inevitably follow.

When that moment seemed imminent and it became clear that Qasim's regime was poised to fall about his ears at one blow from the Baath forces alone, the communist leadership, perceiving the danger of their situation, committed a fatal error. It was an error of such magnitude that its effects were to be felt for many years to come until, long afterwards, the Communist Party corrected its ideological viewpoint.

The Communist Party leadership put out its famous ukase in which it stated:

"Fellow countrymen! To arms to crush the reactionary colonialist conspiracy, Masses of our mighty people fighting for freedom! Workers, peasants and intellectuals and all patriotic and democratic forces, An insignificant clique of reactionary officers and conspirators has made a desperate bid to seize power in preparation for handing our country back into the clutches of colonialists and reactionaries, They have gained control of the broadcasting stations at Abu Ghraib and are trying to incite a massacre among the men of our heroic army to further their base aims.

To the streets, proud masses of our fighting people! Let us sweep our country clean of renegades and traitors.

To arms, in defence of our national independence and of everything our people have won, Form committees to defend our national independence. Forward! The people, under the leadership of the democratic forces, will inflict an ignominious defeat on this base conspiracy; we call upon the Government to arm us. Forward! On to the streets to crush the conspiracy and the conspirators. "(30)-(31)

Certain' communist formations did in fact respond to these frantic appeals. Some of them managed to get hold of light arms and directed their fire at army detachments loyal to the incipient revolution in order to give a measure of encouragement and support to the resistance. But these were merely random and suicidal undertakings, unjustifiable by any standards, for to defend the Republic and national independence was by no means the same as to defend Qasim and his personal dictatorship. And, what was more important, national independence was not at risk and the Republic was not, at that time, in danger of collapse, It

was only 'Abdul-Kareem' Qasim who was in danger and only his arbitrary reign of terror which was about to collapse, to be followed by a counting of heads.

What was the meaning of that desperate throw on the part of the communist, doomed as it was in advance to failure? What was to benefit? Qasim himself was trying, from behind the scenes, to manipulate the forces on the political stage as a puppet-master manipulates his puppets. He was intent only on remaining in power and staying on his throne. The proof of this is that he tried more than once, and by a variety of methods, to strike a blow at the communists themselves. But they, deluded as they were, and confident as they were of the strength which they did not possess, went on playing his game, lost in the desert of his despotic power, chasing mirages which vanished at their approach. The result of all this was an orgy of collective self-destruction.

How do the great tragedies of history come about? Is there any virtue, when all is done and a tragedy has occurred, in finding out its causes, its origins and the motives of those who played a part in it? Could one thereby prevent its recurrence? Perhaps. But what was the crime of the victims who fell in the hundreds and thousands on the sidewalk of history with no witness even to point out their graves? Who can now tell the names of those who fell at Mosul and Kirkuk, Baghdad and Basra, in bloody uncalled for combat between citizens of one homeland? Who will make up to the country for its lost sons, however much it may repent, regret or atone for the handful of misguided and perverted creatures who were forced into the abyss by their errors, perversion or even their crimes?

Nevertheless history, lavish in its contrasts, seems sometimes to behave in a way, which is almost frivolous. Those into whose hands were thrust the Communist Party's recklessly inflammatory pamphlets on the morning of the 8th of February 1969, telling of conspiracy, treason and colonialist intrigues and calling on their members to take up arms against them and crush them, were themselves ten years later to invite the leaders of the

Iraqi Communist Party to sit down with them and conclude with them in July 1973 the Charter of the National Patriotic and Progressive Front. It is inconceivable that, the "conspirators", "traitors" and "agents of colonialism had in those ten years so repented of their sins as to eschew their conspiracies, renounce their treason and repudiate their colonialist connections, in order that the leaders of the Communist Party might consent to join them in the "patriotic", "national" and "progressive" front. Indeed, the Charter stated that it was under their leadership, i.e. the leadership of the Arab Baath Socialist Party.

History is, as Hegel said, essentially tragic. Even so, how exorbitant is the price, which the peoples, the masses of ordinary people, are always called upon to pay.

Michel 'Aflaq, Secretary-General of the Arab Baath Socialist Party, once defined (on 20.2.63) the attitude of the Baath towards communism:

"Our attitude towards communism as a creed and as an international movement is not a negative one and our view of Marxism is one of appreciation, for we, as socialists, have borrowed a great deal from Marxism. But co-existence with communist parties in Arab countries is quite another matter, for these parties have proved, on many occasions, that they do not understand the Arab Nationalist Movement and have many times stood in the way of this popular movement. The truth is that these parties, in relation to the movement for liberation and socialist unity, cannot be classed as belonging to the Left; indeed they belong to the Right, because they obstruct the liberation and progress of the masses.

"The communists have been openly hostile to unity, which is what the masses demand, and have used barbarous and savage methods to arrest this current. I therefore say most

emphatically that the party, the Arab Baath Socialist Party, must be very wary of sliding into a position of hostility towards communism because this is the best way of letting in colonialism and reaction to exploit the situation (32).”

As for Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, who was Prime Minister on 8.2.1963, he announced that "the stand of the Revolution takes vis-a-vis those who opposed it by Force, does not mean that the Revolution is fighting communism as a creed". He went on to say:

"Once the Revolution broke out, the Iraqi Communist Party issued a statement calling on its members and supporters to carry arms against the Revolution, and inciting them to kill and annihilate. The response of the Revolution was one of self-defence. We had either to stand firm against apostasy, or to give up all our values and principles because the communists had resisted the Revolution. We chose the first stand because it was the logical and sensible solution."

"We are not fighting communism as a creed. We only take precautionary measures against a specific political organization in a specific country which experience has shown to be against the Arab revolution and Arab unity.

"As Arab leftists, we fight against colonialism. We do not forget the friendly attitude taken by the Soviet Union to certain Arab questions, especially in the latest stages of our national history, but we insist on setting up our own socialist experiment (33).”

However that may be, the revolution, in its short life, has gone on trying to cut a road for itself among the rocks, to fight on more than one front and to realize the objectives for which it was made.

"It had stressed the importance of going forward along the path of transforming society along socialist lines on a basis of democracy and mass participation, and it had regarded the workers, peasants and intellectuals, revolutionary soldiers and civilians and the petty bourgeoisie as the forces in alliance with which the socialist revolution in its early stages will be created.

"It had also stressed the importance of democratic control by the workers of the means of production and have considered the agrarian revolution to be an indispensable step, in order that the economy shall grow rapidly. I have been aware that the admission of the peasants as participants in carrying out the agrarian revolution is an essential condition of its success.

"It had also stressed the importance of freedom for popular organizations-of workers, peasants, professional people and women, and of their independence of government control as a necessary condition for the protection of such groups and classes.

"Furthermore, the few months which have elapsed since the Revolution have been crowded with achievements in the fields of agrarian reform, industrialization and planning and also with many projects carried out by the people themselves with the help of workers, peasants, the armed forces and the revolutionary intellectuals. The Revolution has been anxious to promote the interest of the toiling masses, and more particularly of the working class, by means of progressive legislation and by protecting these classes from exploitation and the arbitrary use of power (34)."

But despite this, the revolution was unable to continue. It had not gone more than a few paces before it stumbled and fell. It tried to walk on a tight rope strung across a yawning chasm: economic blockade and misrepresentation. For the information media in socialist Europe, overt as well as clandestine, under the weight of information supplied to them by the Iraqi communists and the influence of the struggle being waged between the communists and the

nascent revolution, did not cease to attack the regime, which was still in its infancy, to say nothing of course of the attack launched against it by the forces of colonialism and reaction. Little by little the revolution found itself hemmed in between its frontiers, the walls around it getting higher day by day. On the other hand, the new government, in which the Arab Baath Socialist Party assumed control for the first time, trying to apply its ideas and to set up an experiment in the political and ideological sense of the word, was day by day losing its unity of leadership and becoming a prey to the creeping evils of disintegration, sectarianism and schism. It lacked a wise leader and, perhaps at the same time, a resolute leader. So it began to slide down the steep and slippery slope and over into the abyss. This was on the eighteenth of November, when ' Abdulsalam ' Arif turned against the Baathists and seized power for himself, riding roughshod over those who had raised him up, trampling on those who, nine months earlier, had confirmed upon him the high office of President of the Republic.

Once more, history had revealed itself as essentially tragic.

Chapter 9

A Non-binding Decision

When Saddam Hussein landed at Baghdad after the revolution, the party made him a member of the Central Peasants' Bureau, where he continued to work until, Abdulsalam ' Arif coup on 18 November 1963.

In the last few months of the short-lived revolution he was able, by virtue of his intelligence or of his acute sense of history, to pick out phenomena floating on the surface of political life, which struck him as odd. Then it would not be long before what had seemed odd began to appear suspicious and his suspicion would deepen to a profound conviction that the revolution was set on a course, which could only lead to disaster.

He was greatly alarmed by the lack of a wise and resolute leader and was troubled by a feeling that the revolution was rushing headlong towards an unknown but preordained fate. These feelings were strengthened by the character of the discussions at the Baath Party's fifth regional conference, which was held at Baghdad at about that time. It was apparent to him that the leadership was divided. Worse, the division was not on matters of principle or ideology. The magnitude of the Impending disaster was revealed to him when the conference failed to resolve the feud brewing in its midst, notwithstanding the presence of its sessions of representatives of the national leadership. It was not a conference capable of decision. The national leadership also was clearly irresolute. Indeed the two protagonists obtained an equal number of votes in the election at the end of the conference. The only meaning to be inferred was that the revolution was in the grip of two equal and opposing forces and there was no leader capable of decision or of throwing his weight into one scale or the other or to decide which side adhered the more closely to party's principles and traditions, and that a split down middle was now inevitable.

He could do nothing but remain silent. He was an ordinary party member with no hand in the ship. But at least he had courage and ability and impartiality, which enabled him to rise above squabbles. Nevertheless his words began to ring strangely in his listeners' ears. Who was this man who come to such a conference armed only with his principles and attack sectarianism, factiousness, personal and spite, and speak in this objective tone of party as if he were an evangelist, come to call an erring to prayer.

He assumed this role at all the party conferences attended until he reached the regional conference, but spite of the circumstances surrounding the conference he managed to secure

election to the conference. In this he was helped by that very game in which the others had immersed themselves also by the votes of conservative members who at critical and bewildering time were beginning to feel and alienated by the irrelevant feuding which was on around them. When he appeared at the conference in Damascus, he found that the diagnosis the situation, which he had made at Baghdad, was valid. He let fly at the person whom he responsible for driving the revolution on to the rocks, Saleh as-Sa' adi, the regional secretary. Saleh as became obvious to him in the conference hall, was a childishly impetuous and irresponsible individual, master of idle revolutionary claptrap, with an especial fondness for that most overworked specimen of revolutionary claptrap, "the spirit of the revolution".

One day, Saddam Hussein stood up in front of the national conference and uttered these prophetic words:

I do not believe that when the next conference is held, will any longer be a revolution in the Iraqi region. "Not more than a month and a half were to elapse before Abdulsalam ' Arif struck his treacherous blow and the gates of the. prisons and concentration camps opened to receive the Baathists and Arif set about in a frenzy of enthusiasm to liquidate the Baath and possess himself, by means of his coup, of the keys to power.

The few days preceding the coup were full of omens of what was about to happen to him. Four days before the coup, he was sitting in the Peasants' Bureau with a few colleagues, among them Ahmad al-' Azuz, Muhsin Sha'lan and Sayid Hussein Jabr when two men walked in and trained their sub-machine guns on them. They put up their hands and surrendered. Then, with the speed of lightning, Saddam drew his revolver, which he always carried, and pointed it at them. What was it all about?

No one answered. It was obvious that any exchange of fire at that short range would have fatal consequences for all concerned. The intruders could do nothing but run for it, firing as they went. They hit a peasant called Yasin Kamal, a member of the Baghdad Peasants' Federation. When the story was published it was falsified to make it appear that it was Saddam who had fired on the National Guards, wounding one and killing another.

Two days later he was riding in his Volkswagen going in the direction of the Peasant Bureau's headquarters in al Karkh, on the other side of the river, with Ahmad Taha al-' Azuz sitting beside him, when a National Guard stopped the car and once more pointed a sub-machine gun at him. "Stop!" When he had stopped, Latif ad Dulaimi came up to him (it was the first time they had met) and spoke to him. Then Dulaimi noticed that he had someone with him in the car. He told the National Guards who were standing around not to say anything abusive. Latif got into the car with them and took them to General Staff Headquarters without giving them reasons for the order to arrest Saddam Hussein and Ahmad al-' Azuz. But there was no one there. He stayed there, sitting in his seat with his companion without Ahmad saying a word. Then a comrade, Hatim al-Azzawi, who had taken part with him in the assassination attempt on Abdul-Kareem Qasim, came into the Headquarters dressed in National Guard uniform and carrying a pistol. He said: "I want someone to tell me what Saddam has done." Nobody answered. He then said:

"I take it then that there is no problem about him. " Again nobody answered. He looked at Saddam and said to him:

"Come with me then. "They went out into the road and he became more certain than ever that this terror-charged atmosphere must presage some outrageous act. Only two days later, Abdulsalam Arif's guns were trained on the party's heart.

On 19 November a flying column of the tank squadron known as the 14th Ramadan took up a position at the crossing between the Republican Palace and the Broadcasting Headquarters. One of its officers was Adnan Khairallah, son of al-Haj Khairallah Talfah, Saddam's uncle and father-in-Law. Adnan was a second brother to Saddam having been brought up with him in the same house and having lived with him most of their lives, in Tikrit or in Baghdad. Before the coup Saddam used often to visit him at the squadron's headquarters, he got to know a number of his brother officers. It was only natural that he should turn to them as they were guarding the important road between these two points, on the day following the coup. He explained the situation to them frankly. "This is not a corrective exercise as you are trying to make out. Correction is a matter for the Party itself. Whatever the errors of the leadership, it is up to the Party to keep going and try to correct its errors from within. This is clearly a conspiracy against the Party." They were all convinced. "We are ready," they said. "All we want is a decisive stand." But he was not in a leading position such as would have enabled him to make that decisive stand.

The next day he was able to meet "Abu Haitham" (Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr). He explained the feelings of the officers and their readiness to protect the party and strike against the conspiracy. Later he met Hardan Tikriti and told him: "They have used you today. Tomorrow they will have no further use for you." He wanted them to break with Abdulsalam Arif, Tahir Yahya and Rasheed Musallah. After a discussion lasting two hours, Hardan was convinced. He went to the conference of officers held in the Military Intelligence Directorate and entered into an altercation with Arif.

Hardan said: "This is an internal matter for the Party. The Baath Party will remain." Arif rounded on him with the words: "This is a people's revolution. The Baath Party is finished."

After this Saddam, in collaboration with Abu Haitham, steered Hardan directly towards rallying the members of the Party with a view to having it restored to legality. But they were overtaken by events. It was decided to transfer the first tank squadron to Basra. They thus lost the only force, which might have sustained their hopes of doing anything useful. **(There is a main link in the revolutionary struggle, which has not hitherto been known. When comrade Naji Majid was aide to Tahir Yahya and the people in power, including President Abdulsalam Arif and members of the Council of Ministers, were holding some meetings in the National Assembly, a plan was drawn up for Saddam Hussein to lead a commando group of Party members. Naji Majid was to facilitate their safe entry into the National Assembly through the outer gate. When they stormed the debating chamber and opened fire on those present, the Party was to declare the revolution throughout the country. But this plan was not carried out because First Lieutenant Naji Majid was transferred from the Prime Minister, Thir Yahya's office.)**

But hope is never totally extinguished in the hearts of true revolutionaries. On the contrary, the challenge kindled a fire in the heart of Saddam Hussein. He went on in the dark, groping for a way to give new substance to his hopes. He approached a number of his comrades urging them to join and stay together to rebuild the party. Among these were Faik as-Safi, Abdullah Sallum and Hatim al-'Azzawi. He had got together a group of fifteen comrades, as the time approached for holding the seventh national conference in Damascus, and they decided to attend the conference clandestinely, slipping across the Iraqi-Syrian frontier. This was to be the beginning of a new underground phase of his life, but this time within the frontiers of his own homeland.

In Damascus he met the founder of the Party, Michel Aflaq, and talked with him about the situation in Iraq and what had happened to the Party there. Ali Saleh as-Sa'adi was also there. It looked as though the conference was going to get bogged down in sterile debate between diversant and indeed conflicting points of view. It seemed unlikely that the conference would

be able to arrive at a decision, which would ensure the continuance of the Party in the Iraqi region. Saddam suggested that the Iraqis should not attend the conference in force. Michel Aflaq, convinced that this was the proper course, readily agreed.

Saddam Hussein had a further meeting with the founder and told him that he would go back to Iraq and continue his work. He would take with him the necessary printing equipment to enable the struggle to be carried on underground, and would try to form provisional leadership nuclei until the national leadership had decided what kind of leadership was needed to direct operations within Iraq. He suggested that he should not be a member of such leadership, for those who had split the party would concentrate all their attacks on him and he did not want even a single supporter to be lost for the sake of Saddam Hussein. But he assured Aflaq that his services would always be at the disposal of that leadership if required.

He slipped back over the frontier to Baghdad, where he began to establish secret contacts with Abu Haitham and threw himself enthusiastically into the work of reforming the party organization. When a decision of the national leadership failed to reach him he issued a statement in the name of the "Provisional Regional Leadership", announcing the dismissal of Ali Saleh as-a'adi and Hazim Jawad and laying down directives for the next stage. It soon looked as though the tide of dissention was on the ebb and that things were moving rapidly in the right direction. Then an order came from the national leadership appointing a new regional leadership, to consist of Abdul Kareem ash-Shaikhli, as secretary, and Saddam Hussein, Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, Muhammad Sabri al-Hadithi and Hassan al- Amiri. The leadership was thus complete. ' Abdul Kareem ash-Shai-khli had it one time been Assistant Military Attache in the Iraqi Embassy in Lebanon. When' Arif's coup took place he left his post and went to Syria whence he crossed over into Iraq and took over his position in the new party leadership.

Particular responsibilities were allotted to each member of the new leadership. Ash-Shaikli was Secretary. He had no other responsibilities. Abu Haitham, as former Prime Minister was under close surveillance and this meant that his movements were restricted. Muhammad Sabri al-Hadithi took over responsibility for the Labour Bureaus and foreign contacts. Hassan al-Amiri was made responsible for the Baghdad branch. Saddam Hussein's responsibilities were many and various: the Peasants' Bureau, the Central Military Bureau, the Baghdad Military Branch, and External Liaison with Military Organizations outside Baghdad. In other words all military organizations in addition to the Peasants' Bureau. A bureau was later set up for party members and supporters in the Officers' Reserve.

They set to work. Once again the regional leadership's statements were being published and statements by the national leadership were being reprinted in Baghdad.

With the financial support given by the national leadership and from their own financial resources within the region, they began to buy arms and acquired two "centres", one for the storage of arms in the house of Hussein Mahmud and the other for purposes of concealment in Talal al-Faisal's house, where Abdullah Khalil was living.

Hope of revolutionary action against the regime of Abdulsalam Arif revived with the rapid growth of organizational capability and the leadership met to study their plans and to assess the situation.

They asked for arms from the national leadership and began to manufacture homemade hand grenades out of some TNT, which they had managed to get hold of.

Saddam Hussein and Abdul Karim ash-Shaikli made them with their own hands out of materials collected by a comrade named Ghalib Mahmud, a fisherman and a brother-in-law of Saddam Hussein. His younger half-brother, Barzan, helped in this operation.

The plan called for an attack on the Republican Palace. Control was to be obtained of the guard units who were then to be used to encircle the Palace itself. They had party members inside the Republican Guard. Saddam went with a comrade named Abdul Kareem Mustafa Nasrat and confided the plan to a party member who was an officer in the tank squadron of the Guard. He agreed. His task was to make it possible for Saddam's group to enter the guard, and then it would be up to them. Zero hour for the operation was fixed. A shipment of was supposed to be arriving from Syria just before, i.e. before the 5th of September 1964.

Suddenly the plot was discovered. A lightning was made on the members of the Party themselves on the fourth of September, i.e. one day before the date. The shipment of arms did not arrive until the sixth when it was intercepted. The authorities were themselves with rage for they realized that the Guard had been penetrated. A savage campaign launched to arrest the leadership; some of those arrested having informed on it under the threat of torture. The party organization broke up as a result of this sudden blow and had to be built up anew.

One evening Saddam Hussein was sitting with Abdul Kareem Shaikhli studying the situation and reconsidering their strategy. It was just one o'clock in the morning Saddam got up and was about to leave. "Where are going?"

"To sleep in the hide-out where the arms are hidden.

"The police patrols are very active these days," said Abdul Kareem. "Better spend the rest of the night here." That very night there was a raid on the arms cache. Saddam Hussein had been saved by pure chance. But neither Saddam nor Kareem knew that the hideout had been raided and the arms seized.

The next day Saddam went himself to the hideout. It was the main hideout containing the printing center and Abdul-Kareem ash-Shaikhli's secret headquarters.

With him in the car were Abdul-Kareem ash-Shaikhli himself and Talal al-Feisal. He got out of the car, went to the door and rang the bell. Suddenly a sub machine gun was pointed at him, and behind the door a voice shouted, "Stop". "Don't move." Thus did this valuable prey fall, an easy victim, into the hands of his enemies? But Saddam, who had strong nerves and a cool head, asked, as if nothing had happened: "Isn't this Muhammad's house?" Once more the voice shouted from inside:

"I tell you, don't talk. Put up your hands." With the same icy self-control and in a voice devoid of emotion Saddam replied: "My dear fellow, what's all this about? Machine guns? Is there no government? Has the world stopped turning?" At the same time he quickly put his hand on the revolver he was carrying. He placed his finger on the trigger and shouted at the policeman to drop the gun. The policeman was taken by surprise and jumped out of the way. But no shot came. He aimed again, but again there was no shot. When the policeman realized that the revolver had let him down, he returned to the charge, certain that he had him beaten. But in his astonishment he had forgotten to draw his sub machine gun; Saddam began to retreat in the direction of the car in which Kareem and Talal were still sitting. No sooner did they see him in this predicament than, in their astonishment they began to move the car away from the house. Talal jumped out of the car carrying a pistol, which he had forgotten to load. Saddam fired a third time at the policeman, who was pursuing him, but again there was no shot. He began to run with the revolver in his hand until he was some distance away from the policeman, and drew a fourth time; but instead of aiming at him, he decided that he would not

hit him as he was now out of range. So he fired above his head, the policeman running back towards the shelter of the house. Saddam jumped into the car and drove off with his companions.

The government now took stern measures against such members of the Baath Party as they could lay their hands on. One by one the leadership were arrested: Abu Haitham, Abdul-Kareem ash-Shaikhli, Hassan al-' Amiri, and with them most of the party's foremost cadres and enormous numbers of members and supporters. All this placed a great strain on Saddam Hussein, but he never lost his determination or his daring or his hope. He would start work at dawn and go out on to the road with the workers on their way to their factories until just before eight o'clock in the morning. At night, when it was dark, he would be out until just before midnight. At that hour security patrols were less conspicuous and it was easier to move about quickly. He was in any case adept at disguising himself, so that even some of his close associates were unable to recognize him until he revealed himself. He brought some old cars and changed their number plates, using them in rotation.

Once when he was crossing Republic Bridge on his way to al Bab ash Sharqi in a black Ford Zodiac he encountered a police car carrying an officer of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, who looked at him intently and then spoke on his radio transmitter. Immediately all Saddam's instinctive alertness and vigilance came into play. He always carried with him in the car a sub machine gun, and two hand grenades as well as his revolver, from which he never allowed himself to be parted. He said to his comrade, Ghalib Mahmud who was with him: "Look out! Get the gun ready and open the window a little. But don't fire until I tell you. " The car proceeded on its way and, parallel to it, the police car. When they reached a pedestrian crossing the officer shouted at a traffic policeman to stop Saddam's car, but the policeman went up to the officer and saluted him. In an instant, Saddam's car shot forward, accelerating rapidly and, vanished in the crowded street, leaving the unfortunate policeman to face the oburgating of his irate superior.

Tension increased and the security forces stepped up their attacks on houses where they thought he might be. He for his part kept moving from one hideout to another, but his sang-froid, confidence and hope never deserted him for one moment. About that time a message arrived from the national leadership telling him to leave Baghdad and go to Damascus as not to fall into the hands of the regime's secret police and be put in prison. This was an order.

Saddam looked at the national leadership's emissary and said: " All my life I have been in the habit of obeying orders, but this is an order which I do not feel myself to be bound by. To do so would be to harm those party members who remain and damage their morale, at a time when they are more than ever in need of someone to support and encourage them and keep the flame of hope burning in their hearts. That is my reply, comrade, and give my regards to the national leadership.

But the national leadership, in the face of this unyielding attitude, proposed to him that he should record a message in his own voice to be broadcast from Damascus radio as though he were speaking from there. The idea appealed to him, but instead of saying that he was in Damascus he said that he was in Baghdad and that the recording was being broadcast from Damascus. It was heard by the Baathists under arrest and helped to raise their morale in their prisons and concentration camps.

The siege was intensified and the security forces set about their search for him with a new frenzy. They searched every corner of the country, leaving no stone unturned. Armoured cars, equipped with radio, were stationed at street corners and in squares. Everyone was suspect. Hundreds and thousands of people were interrogated, cajoled and terrorized. At last one of them, unable to withstand this inhuman treatment, revealed that Saddam Hussein was in the

house of one Tariq Jihad, where he soon found himself surrounded on all sides. Had the moment at last arrived for him to fall into the enemy's snare? Was everything over and was there nothing for it but to throw up his hands and let them put the handcuffs on him?

He knew he ought to resist. But was there any point in resisting? Wishing to test the strength of the forces surrounding him, he fired a few shots from his revolver, which were answered from every direction by a hail of machine-gun bullets. No. Resistance was useless this time. It would only lead to innocent policemen being killed in addition to the punishment, which would be unleashed on the owners of the house who were sheltering them. In a loud ringing voice he called out: "Down with Abdulsalam Arif and long live the Arab Baath Socialist

Party," and surrendered.

When the soldiers reached the upper floor where he was standing, some of the officers began to display their lack of breeding by using insulting language to a fifteen-year-old girl and her mother, the sister and mother of his comrade Tariq Jihad. He shook like one possessed, and picking up a hand grenade which had been placed unnoticed in a paper bag on a nearby table, he shouted at the officer: "If you repeat that insolent expression, you see this grenade, I'll kill all of you-and myself, " The officer in charge of the raid, realizing the seriousness of the situation, ordered his subordinate to desist from his obscene language.

Saddam went into his room, dressed, got out two packets of Rothman cigarettes which he had by him and gave them to one of the police, "No," he said, with a deprecatory gesture, "you will need them yourself, "

"I don't think' so," he replied, "there'll be no more smoking for me.

Chapter 10

Until all the bars are broken

In the Public Security building, the Director General, Rasheed Muhsin, walked up and down in his room, rubbing his hands with glee, for the last victim had just dropped into his net. When Saddam was brought in he tried to compose himself, to appear calm and perhaps even nonchalant. "Saddam, " he said, "why did you give the policeman your cigarettes?"

"So that you should not push a cigarette under the door for me."

"Well now, Saddam, everything is over. Your fellow leaders in the party have been talking quite frankly to me.

I don't think we need to hear what you have to say. Nonetheless, Saddam, I think you should explain to me how all this happened. Eh?"

"If you know everything, Rasheed, how will anything I say help you? I will tell you something for which I don't think you will now care. You may think it's impossible, but you will understand later what I mean. It's a little story I heard when I was small. I have never forgotten are you listening? In Ottoman times a man was accused of killing a favourite of the Ruler. They seized him and took him for interrogation. They used every method of torture that they knew. They even flayed him alive and pulled out his finger and toenails, but they couldn't make him talk. They took him to court and the court set him free. The man was from Mosul and when he came out of prison he went to the public baths at Mosul for a bath. There was another man having a wash who said to him: "Would you like some jilani?" (A kind of red clay, which was used instead of soap.)

"Yes, please," he said, and he took a piece. Then the man said: "Would you like me to help you wash your back?"

"Yes, please," he said. So the man washed his back. While he was doing so the man asked: "What's this? Why is your back like this?" (It bore clear traces of torture.) "Oh, aren't you so-and-so?" "Yes," he replied. Then the man asked him: " And won't you tell me how you killed that fellow?" The former prisoner turned and gave him a slap on the face. The other people who were bathing with them shouted: "Here, what sort of a fellow are you? This man helps you and you slap his face?" The man looked at them and said: "You haven't heard the story. Why did I strike him? This man wants me to tell him what the government was unable to find out from me after torturing me for a whole year!"

"Now, do you understand, Rasheed? I have told you this story, and now you must try and see what you can do. But if you use those methods with me and you then ask me my name, I shall not tell you. I shall not even tell you my name."

"No, no. You must have heard some exaggerated stories. We're not like that at all. Your fellow leaders confessed without any pressure or compulsion. You shall see Kareem ash-Shaikhli for yourself. He will tell you that everything was quite normal."

Kareem ash-Shaikhli had been subjected to cruel torture and had broken down under interrogation. They imagined that if he spoke to Saddam this would persuade him not to stand up to them and submit himself to torture. Indeed, even Kareem himself imagined that he would be able to spare his comrade the cruelty of torture and persuade him not to stand up to them. They did actually arrange a meeting between them, but Saddam wanted to meet Kareem for a quite different reason, namely to find out from him what had happened, and how much the comrades inside the prison knew about what was going on outside and to raise his morale which had suffered during his interrogation. After the meeting, Saddam was led once more to Rasheed Muhsin's room.

"Ah, Saddam."

"I still stick to what I told you last time. Do you remember the story I told you?"

"Saddam, look, Tahir Yahya wants to see you."

"Tahir Yahya?" Tahir Yahya was the Prime Minister.

"Of course you can take me to him by force. I mean, put the handcuffs on me and take me to his office. But I tell you that I have no wish at all to see Tahir Yahya. I regard them all as traitors, Tahir Yahya, Abdulsalam Arif. Look, I once took a sub-machine gun and fired at Abdul-Kareem Qasim and hit him in Rasheed Street. I didn't hate him. I have never hated anyone in my life. But tell ' Abdulsalam Arif that I do hate him, because he smashed in the skulls of those who raised him up. He is a person without morals or principles."

"As you please, Saddam."

Here the dialogue ended. The policeman conducted him to the bottom of the Public Security building where he was placed in solitary confinement, seated on a small chair, his hands tied behind him with an iron chain, one end of which was tied to the bars of an upper window for seven whole days.

Seven whole days in that condition he did not say a word. They found that it was no use going on so they took him to at- Taji prison where the usual interrogation began.

During the interrogation he won over the interrogators. When the interrogator' Abdulqadir al-Janabi asked him: "Were you preparing a revolution?" He said: "Yes, but the responsibility for that was mine alone. Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr had nothing whatever to do with it. Indeed, we regarded him as a friend of' Abdulsalam Arif, and so we didn't trust him with secrets. If you have heard otherwise you are certainly mistaken. " He wanted, so to speak, to free that man whom he loved and respected of any suspicion and to take upon himself any accusation which might have been made against him. All serious charges he took upon himself, accepting the sole responsibility.

Prison is a human melting pot. Any precious or base metal in a man is quickly revealed behind its bars and locked doors. It is seldom that a militant enters prison, if he is of sterling quality, without his virtues being confirmed. Indeed his hardness and brilliance may show more than hitherto when he is alone and under siege.

When Saddam entered prison it was as though it was already familiar to him and that there was nothing repellent to him about its grim, gray walls, its dismal black bars and its narrow windows set high up in the wall and out of reach. It was here that his paternal instincts came fully into play. He was not the oldest among his comrades in years; indeed he was one of the youngest. But he began to think of them and to treat them as though he were a father, bound to his sons by bonds of affection, guiding, instructing and sometimes chiding them.

When he entered his cell for the first time and he heard the melancholy sound of the heavy bolts clanking behind him, a strange vague feeling came over him, an intuitive conviction that he was not going to die. The idea of death had never entered his mind. Even when the possibility of his being sentenced to death had occurred to him, he had always comforted himself with the thought that unless they executed him quickly, he would escape.

But when his friends abroad sent him messages saying that they might be able to engineer his escape and that they would help him to get away he refused, saying that if he were to escape he would not do so alone and leave his comrades in prison and that they would do better to bide their time. His plan (he always had a plan) centered on freeing the Military Bureau, the Baghdad Military Bureau. The plan was actually prepared and the members of the Baghdad Military Bureau escaped. After they had escaped it was decided to transfer all the remaining prisoners (a number of them had already been released) to prison Number 1.

There were seven prisoners left. As is the custom with political prisoners all over the world, they began staging a hunger strike to obtain better conditions and to be allowed newspapers, books and visits. The regime, which was on the point of collapse due to internal pressures, acceded to most of their demands. The long days behind bars began gradually to shorten, by way of intellectual journeys through the masterpieces of world literature. Saddam's days were passed in reading-novels and books on philosophy and art.

But his mind was still occupied with thoughts of escape. He immediately set about reconstructing the organization within the prison and building up morale, and confronting authority's representative within the prison, the prison governor Ali ash-Shaqr, with a wall of granite. The leadership within the prison, headed by Saddam, issued an order that the comrades should not respond to' Ali ash-Shaqr's sly questions when he asked them whether they had any problems. This is a method used in prisons, everywhere, to break the spirit of prisoners and then to single out the vulnerable ones until, by degrees, they become dependent on the authorities.

Suddenly the governor found himself dealing with one man who spoke with one voice. Saddam Hussein, the prisoner in Number 1 prison, told him: "' Ali ash-Shaqr, you must understand that even in here we are a party. We have our organization, our tradition, our

orders and our discipline. From now on, none of the comrades will answer your questions, so you may save yourself the trouble." From that day on, Ali ash-Shaqr sensed that something had happened to these prisoners.

Then it was decided to put into effect the plan for escape. They had been able to win over the prison guards, so that they allowed them to have the inner doors, i.e. the doors to the cells, open all night. So the comrades were able to meet at night to discuss and make their arrangements. A message was sent to comrades outside to have saws for sawing through the iron bars brought in by the women when they came on visits. Actually a woman named Umm Muhammad Isma'il, sister of the late General Hammad Shihab, brought the saws. Then the bars began to fall.

The sound of the radio was used to drown the noise of the bars being sawn through, especially at times when there was heavy rain and a howling wind outside. It was done secretly so that even some of the comrades knew nothing about it. When a bar was removed it would be left in position until the other bars had been removed. The plan was that after the sawing was finished, two of the strongest comrades should jump on the guard standing beside the window, take away his rifle, and drag him inside. Then the rest, one by one, would cross the courtyard, jump on to the roof of the second block and lower themselves on to the other side. They were to take a mattress with them to throw over the barbed wire and then scramble over. It was decided that they should in order of seniority in the party: the leadership first, members of the special organization, then the officers, and so on.

Everything would have gone almost according to plan, but for a spate of amnesties, including the detained officers, following a vigorous campaign for the release of the prisoners, which had been mounted, from abroad and a growing sense of discontent and resentment in the army.

They decided to defer execution of the plan until the rest of the officers and others who might be included in the amnesties had been released, so that only seven of the seventy detainees would remain. **(Seventy lawyers had volunteered to defend them and actually attended the first few sessions of the Court.)**

The Authorities decided to transfer them to another block and it became clear that their escape plan would no longer be feasible.

They began to work out a new plan, relying this time on getting round the guards who would accompany them on the way to the court. By this time the organization had begun, to some extent, to resume its activity outside so that there were at least a few comrades there who could help in arranging the escape. Fortunately also, the prisoners were now entitled to more frequent visits from relatives. These were now allowed every fortnight, later every week.

Sajidah did not come alone to visit Saddam, Udai came with her, although he was only a few months old and did not know that every time he came to visit his father he was performing a service for the Party. Abu Haitham, who was now outside, would put a message for Saddam in the little child's clothes and when Saddam took the baby in his arms he would quickly extract the message and, without any of the guards noticing, would replace it with another message. In this way communication was maintained, via little Udai who could not talk yet, between the party inside and the party outside.

By means of this exchange of messages a new escape operation was organized, this time with Sa'dun Shakir. Saddam wrote to him saying: "After continuous and arduous brainwashing we have managed to get round the guards. On the way to the court we shall present them with a fait accompli. You must wait for us at the designated time and place." That day they were on

the way to the court, Saddam Hussein, Kareem ash-Shaikhli and Hassan al-' Amiri. They had managed to persuade the soldiers to go to al-Jundul restaurant in Abu Nuwas Street for lunch. They agreed with Sa'dun Shakir to wait for them with his car outside the door at the side of the washroom, which opens directly on to the street. The doors of the car were to be open, and if the soldiers offered resistance at the last moment their guns were to be taken from them by force. Then they were to make their get-away.

The three had agreed that only two of them should escape to begin with. The third should stay behind with the soldiers and try to persuade them to disappear also, with a promise that if they consented they would be suitably rewarded after a successful revolution. If they do not consent, he would go back with them to the prison. Hassan al- Amiri was chosen as the third man. When the back door of the restaurant, the washroom door, was opened, Sa'dun Shakir's car was standing there with the doors open. Saddam Hussein and Kareem ash-Shaikhli quickly got in, the engine started and off they went. The third, Hasan al- Amiri's guard, had emphatically rejected the idea of escape and insisted on taking him back to the prison.

In the crowded streets of Baghdad in the rush hour, nobody noticed a yellow Opel car with a black top, carrying three young men, two under sentence of death, as it traveled at break-neck speed towards an isolated house in the Yarmuk quarter. There it halted briefly and one of them, Kareem ash-Shaikhli, got out. It then moved off again, equally quickly, after Saddam had refused to take refuge in the new hideout with his friend, calculating that it had been marked by the police. Soon the car stopped and the man who thought he could fend for himself this time, leapt out.

But how? Where should he go? He must find a police known to nobody. Suddenly a picture of Sajidah and Udai flashed through his mind. But where could they be? The last time she had visited him behind bars he asked her how things were with her but she would not tell him. When he insisted she told him that the landlord of the house she had rented to live in with the child put her furniture out on the street when they learned that an order was out for her husband's arrest, and had told her that they did not want to have the family of a political outcast living in their house for fear of what the authorities might do. The furniture had stayed out in the street all day and they would not let her bring it into the house again. In the end she had taken her things and gone to live with her child in her father's house, until her, husband should return. Although he felt intensely what she too had suffered, he could not now go to see her and the baby. True, he was free, but it was the freedom of a fugitive. His freedom was a burden, which he had to bear alone as he roamed the streets of this great prison. It was a freedom deferred, in pawn until all the bars were broken. and all the walls pulled down; until the whole society recovered the liberty, which had been taken from it by force. His freedom was not something, which could be separated from the freedom of society. His freedom was the freedom of the people as a whole.

He awoke from his meditations to find himself near the house of an old friend of the Party, who had remained true to that friendship without ever becoming a member.

Perhaps his house would offer safety during these critical hours. It was late afternoon on the 23rd of July 1966 when he knocked at the door of Faruq Abdsa'id as-Samarra'i.

He had broken his own fetters and was now preparing to break the nation's fetters. At this moment was to begin another epic chapter in his epic life, in which he was to rebuild the party organization and purge the party doctrine after a new storm, blowing this time from

Damascus had shaken it violently and almost torn it up by the roots.

Chapter 11

When dawn approached

In the political report issued by the eighth regional conference of the Arab Baath Socialist Party we find the following passage:

"In order to assess objectively the nature and scope of the Party's political activity before and after it assumed authority on 17 July 1968, it is necessary to look again at the state of the Party in the Iraqi Region and in the Arab homeland in the period 18 November 1963 and 17 July 1968.

The Arab Baath Socialist Party, on both regional and national levels, suffered bitterly during the period referred to, from dissention and from the effects of the failure of the Party's attempts to wield political power in Iraq and Syria, in addition to carrying out its permanent tasks, viz. the struggle against the forces of colonialism, Zionism and the forces of reaction and dictatorship and the forms of persecution to which it has as a result subjected in all parts of the homeland.

On 18 November 1963 the Party's experiment in the Iraqi Region, on which the Party and the masses in the Region and in the Arab homeland had pinned their hopes, collapsed. This tragic collapse was a severe psychological shock both to the Party and the masses, as was also the loss of the revolution's not insubstantial gains and of many of the party militants who lost their lives heroically resisting reaction.

On 23 February 1966, a little more than sixteen months after the first set-back in the Iraqi Region, the Party suffered a second severe shock when the February clique in the Syrian Region dared to arrange a military coup against the Party, representing itself as the national leadership. With the defection of 23 February there arose for the first time an extremely serious and complex emergency. This was that the government, foisted upon the Party by armed force and by trickery, deception and falsification, claimed at the same time, noisily and with much ado, to represent the Party and to embody its declared principles in the realms of organization, ideology and politics.

These two setbacks were followed, on 18 November and 23 February, by a serious vertical and horizontal split which spread to the whole party, provoking in its ranks acute struggles over matters of organization and theory and dangerous confusion. The organizational, political and psychological effects of these dissensions on the branch of the party in the Iraqi Region were particularly grave and dangerous (35)."

It was in this unpromising atmosphere that Saddam first breathed the air of freedom after his escape from prison. It is strange that when he was still behind prison walls he foresaw the action of 23 February 1966 in Syria. Indeed at that time he called for a delegate from the regional leadership and was visited by Shafiq al-Kamali, to whom he said: "There will be a coup against the national leadership. It will be led by Salah Jadid and his military group." This was a clever deduction based on his analysis of information appearing in the Beirut press at that time and on his assessment of certain "technical errors" or technical cover-up information given to them by the national leadership on the measures which it proposed to take, which included the formation of an administration to be headed in due course by Salah al-Bitar. When this administration was formed it was absolutely certain that a coup was inevitable.

What was now very clear to him was that the party in Iraq was rent asunder organizationally and psychologically and was living through an acute ideological convulsion and was divided against itself from within, even though the division was concealed from the outside observer by a transparent veil of unity. The majority, as he perceived at the leadership and grass roots

levels, would follow in the wake of the 23 February group. The Leadership itself was not sufficiently united to steer a straight course in the required direction. The leadership was, at the time, known as the "Committee of Organizational Abdul-Khaliq Leadership" and included among its members as-Samarra'i, Hassan adh-Dhahab, Hussein as-Samarra'i, Sameer an-Najm and Ja'afar Qasim Hamudi. There had formerly been two other leaderships. One consisted of the Secretary, Tariq Aziz. It had lasted only a few weeks. The other had consisted of Abdul Khaliq as-Samarra'i, Shafiq al-Kamali, Faik as-Safi and Shukri al-Hadithi. The Committee of Organizational Leadership was supposed to be under the supervision of Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein in their capacities as members of the national leadership. Saddam had been elected a member of the national leadership while he was in prison. One day he received a letter from Tariq Aziz, who was then Regional Secretary, telling him that he had been nominated for the national leadership. He replied saying that the question of the leadership was not a question of prestige or show: "I can do nothing for you at the moment as a free comrade would do. I am in prison. And even if they don't execute me it is probable that I shall not be out for a long time. In these circumstances I cannot be of any use to you, somebody who can do some actual work for you. His excuse was not accepted. His name was put up at the conference and he was made a member of the National leadership while still behind prison bars.

Taking as he did such a pessimistic view of the state of the party, he could not do anything but work with tireless determination and unflagging zeal, as was his wont. He at once got together with Abdul Khaliq as-Samarra'i and Kareem ash-Shaikhli and they came to the conclusion that it was necessary to dissolve the Committee of Organizational Leadership and announce the formation of a "regional leadership" without reference to the national leadership which at that time was "invisible" or non-existent after the coup of 23 February. This was their duty. Moreover two members of the national leadership were in Iraq and capable of representing it until such time as it was again fully effective. The new regional leadership consisted of the three members above-mentioned plus Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr that had often been unable to attend organizational meetings because of strict police surveillance.

The new leadership soon faced a large-scale campaign on the part of the authors of the Syrian coup to split the unity of the party after their failure to secure full control of it. The leadership immediately proposed that an extra-ordinary national conference should be held to be attended by all the contending parties, to give its views about the measures to be taken by the national leadership before 23 February and also to give its views on the coup of 23 February itself, and to determine the future of all the factions.

The regional leadership knew very well that this "basic logic" would not be accepted by those who had seized power in Syria. But the document expressing this viewpoint, which was circulated within the party secured the approval of the great majority of the party cadres. However, the Syrians took no notice and began to send their delegates to Iraq on the assumption that they themselves were still the legitimate national leadership and demanding to be treated as such. The situation was indeed critical. The party organization in Iraq was on the point of closing its torn and strife-ridden ranks and moving rapidly in the direction of organizational and ideological concord. The effective rulers of the country, the Arif clan, were waging war against it with every means which their security forces could bring to bear.

The official government of Syria, which claimed to be the sole legitimate representative of the national leadership, was co-coordinating with Arif's authorities plans for combating it, as well as spending state funds and all the resources of its organs of information on a psychological campaign of intimidation, accusing it of the crime of traditionalism, an accusation always leveled by rightist and reactionary subversives against their adversaries.

To begin with, the regional leadership employed a large measure of flexibility in its efforts to bring about conciliation between the contending factions within the party organization and to restore to it some semblance of ideological unity. The violent attack launched by the Syrians, which led rapidly to open confrontation with them, meant that the split within the organization was accelerated. Such a situation is a gamble. One can establish the principle, but lose the case.

It was not long before pressure from Syria increased and their delegates began to arrive in Iraq one after the other bearing the slogan: "Elections within the organization in

Iraq." Saddam Hussein had expected the Syrians to come out with this slogan and had discussed the matter with his colleagues in the leadership, ' Abdul Kareem ash-Shaikhli and Abdul Khaliq as-Samarra'i but a meeting with Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr was difficult for special security reasons. It was only fifty-four days since they had left prison.

Many members of the party were opposed to the idea of an election, but Saddam Hussein told them clearly:

"Anyone who opposes this slogan now will be, and all those who share our point of view will be with him. Some want the election in good faith, they want to have a clear and definite idea of what political and organizational line is. Others of course want it as a cover for sabotage. But in any case the will depend on how active the leadership and its supporters are. " Finally it was decided to summon the regional leadership, the popular leaderships and the main leaderships and advanced cadres in general and put a picture before them, clearly and frankly. It was to form a committee, from the ranks, to supervise elections, so that no elections could take place without its knowledge or be regarded as valid without its approval.

Anything done otherwise would be regarded as nugatory, and in that case the regional leadership would be regarded as dissolved until the election had been held.

Although this leadership included two members who were also members of the national leadership they not allowed, under the rules of the party, to step down and offer themselves for re-election within the Iraqi region. Saddam Hussein insisted that the situation now no longer warranted strict adherence to organizational and legal niceties and that what was at stake was the existence of the Party itself in Iraq.

After that, no meeting, council or conference of members of the party was held anywhere during the preparations for the election, at which Saddam Hussein did not appear, notwithstanding all the provocations and attacks to which he was subjected by the Syrian delegates and their Iraqi allies and their shameless attempts to overcome his determined stand. He bore it all with a marvelous forbearance and imperturbability and a will fortified by his confidence in final victory. At that time he was not enjoying perfect or even normal health. He once attended a meeting during the election period, suffering so severely from gastroenteritis that he imagined he had cholera, which was prevalent at that time in Iraq. He insisted on being carried to the car and taken to the house of Salah 'Omar al- Ali where the meeting was to be held, and remained stretched out on a couch, saying that if he felt strong enough to speak, he would do so, but otherwise he could at least listen. But when he arrived he found himself in the midst of an animated discussion. From somewhere within him he found a remarkable strength and went on speaking until the meeting ended, having achieved the desired result.

The elections had reached a decisive point: the Baghdad branch. The result was quite contrary to what the Syrian delegates had wanted. A list was elected which professed allegiance to the tendency represented by Saddam Hussein. The Syrian delegate left in a state of alarm. But he

could not help saying to Saddam: "By God, you're a hard lot. " Saddam replied, without the least sign of malice: "Abu Riadh" (that was his name) "we are hard on the side of the Party, not against it."

It was now necessary to hold a regional conference to elect the new regional leadership. This was held at night in the house of Abdurrahman Suhail at Abu Ghaib, under the chairmanship of Saddam Hussein. At the conference was a group of members who had been influenced by the leaders of the Syrian coup and approved of their line.

There had not yet been any official split between the organization in Iraq and its counterpart in Syria. There was a wide-ranging discussion about whether or not to attend the "national conference" which the Syrians now wanted to hold and it was agreed that Iraqi delegates should go and put forward their views about holding an extra-ordinary national conference, to be attended by all the contending factions, where each of them could say what it had to say about everything. In fact, the tendency represented by Saddam Hussein which, as a result of the election, had become predominant, wanted to take advantage of this proposal, but only for a while. For he was convinced that the election which had taken place would not satisfy the Syrians and that the two leaderships which had been elected would not meet with their approval, and the likelihood was that the Syrian leadership, which claimed to represent legitimately the national leadership, would find it impossible to do anything other than to dissolve these elected leaderships and appoint others more acceptable to it.

This is exactly what subsequently happened. A new regional leadership was elected that night consisting of: Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, Saddam Hussein, Kareem ash-Shaikhli, Saleh Mahdi Amash, Taha al-Jazrawi, Abdul Khaliq as-Samarra'i, Salah Omar al-Ali, Izzat Mustafa and Abdullah Sallum.

Since Saddam Hussein was under no illusions that night as to the effect, which these results might have on the Syrians, he put a resolution to the conference in the following terms:

"If the regional and national leaderships differ, and if that difference leads to the national leadership ordering the dissolution of the regional leadership, this leadership in the Iraqi region shall not be regarded as dissolved, except in the eyes of its own conference. On this basis it shall call an extra-ordinary regional conference and ask it to elect a new leadership."

It is interesting to note that the whole conference, including those who had been in favour of the line taken by the Syrian leadership, approved this resolution. The practical outcome was that the self-styled national leadership no longer had any authority over the party organization in Iraq.

Only six weeks after the end of the conference the members of the newly elected regional leadership heard the news of their "dismissal" from radio Damascus. Striking while the iron was hot they held, as had been agreed at the previous conference, an extra-ordinary conference, which re-elected the same leadership.

The new leadership henceforth declared, its open and official hostility towards Damascus and its government, and the split in the party also became official. Campaigns were begun to enlighten and educate members of the organization in the new doctrine.

The distribution of functions among members of the leadership at that time was: Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, Secretary. Saddam Hussein, Deputy Secretary, responsible also for the Baghdad branch and the women and peasants' organizations. The military organization included Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, Saleh Mahdi ' Ammash and Taha al-Jazrawi. Salah 'Omar al- Ali took the Labour Bureau and' Abdul Khaliq as-Samarra'i became responsible for the External Liaison Bureau, Izzat Mustafa for the Professions Bureau. But responsibility for the

Special Organization, later to be known under the name of "Hanin", was constituted differently as a "shock troop" consisting of civilians who would play a specific role, in carrying out the revolution. It was headed by Saddam Hussein himself.

The party now went forward on a new path, preparing for the approaching revolution in Iraq, relying on its own strength and on carefully chosen alliances and on insinuating itself into the mass organizations and institutions foremost among which were the armed forces of the state, and above all upon its principles and clearly defined Ideology. Gradually the countdown began and zero hour approached.

Chapter 12

The seventeenth of July and the Trojan Horse

All revolutionaries seek power. But for a true revolutionary, power is not an end in itself. Power is always a mean, a necessary precondition, and an instrument, which enables revolutionaries possessed of a comprehensive and integrated vision, to change society in a comprehensive and integral way. Every road which leads to power is, in this sense, legitimate and justified, so long as it can help in the end to realize the principles and give concrete form to the dream.

In all the revolutions which have happened up to now, be they bourgeois or socialist, it has never been 'the masses marching alone which have overturned the old order and erected a new order on its ruins. There has always been, in successful revolutions at least, an avant-garde leadership, which, in the moment of revolution has borne the biggest and heaviest burden. The masses without leaders are like a body without a head. And just as no head can function without a body, so no body can function without a head. A revolution's vitality, like that of the human body, depends on an organic unity between its summit and its base and is in direct proportion to the depth of the fighting commitment between the controlling center and the responding extremities.

The party leadership in Iraq, in those crowded days of 1968, was fully convinced, on the basis of scientific analysis of mass opinion, that the existing regime was about to collapse from within as a result of its sharp internal contradictions and that the revolutionary movement within the country was now able, by its own exertions, to shoulder the burden of political and social transformation. All that was now needed was a wise and resolute leadership to plan, take decisions, enter into temporary or lasting alliances and bring about the revolutionary solution of those glaring contradictions. But its wisdom must not consist only in a profound theoretical understanding of the contradictions existing at the moment of the revolution, but what is no less important, in the ability to master the art of revolutionary methodology itself, i. e. how to make a revolution in practice.

The method chosen was to bring down the regime from the inside, from quarters in whose loyalty it trusted and from the quarter, which trusted it. Therefore temporary "allies" were sought among the very pillars of the regime, who would help in the task of transformation, while at the same time concentrating on building and sustaining the organs of the party.

At about this time Hardan al- Tikriti arrived in Baghdad from Europe, where he had been living since' Abdulsalam Arif expelled him. It was agreed that Hardan should be the mediator between the party and Ibrahim ad-Dawud who was the commander of the Republican Guard which, according to the leadership plan, was to be the focus of revolutionary infection within the regime itself. The choice of Hardan, who had no formal connection with the party, was reassuring to such temporary allies, who in their other roles, i. e. as pillars of existing

authority, are governed by the nature of the personal interests which they serve and the private goals to which they aspire.

At the same time important and parallel operations were carried out. The leadership finished putting together the "Special Organization" composed of well-trying and personally known party activists. Arms were collected. Slowly and patiently the military clothing was purchased, to be worn by members of the leadership and of the Special Organization when the Republican Palace was stormed. It was all hidden away in secret hiding places in the houses of Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein.

As a necessary smokescreen and in order that the attention of the regime should not be attracted by any unusual activity on the part of the Party, the plan provided for most of the members of the Party organization to be engrossed in arranging meetings at which questions would be discussed of the kind which were being bandied about in Iraqi political circles at that time, such as: "Should we participate in government or not? For and against." Various members of the leadership would attend these meetings in order to direct the debate in the direction of non-participation in government.

At this time another exercise was mounted with great speed and in great secrecy. A certain number of comrades were gathered together in three specific places, viz. the houses of Adib al-Mafni, Kareem an-Nada and Sa'ad ar-Rawi, to be ready to go into action when the signal would be given to start. The Special Organization decided that its members should foregather at the "Casino" in Karkh on 14 July. But this timing was cancelled, as was also that part of the plan relating to the holding of meetings and discussions, and a new zero hour was fixed.

On the 16th July 1968, the members of the leadership were sitting in Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr's house studying carefully together the final draft of their plan, twenty-four hours before putting it into effect. It was exactly eleven o'clock in the morning. While they were discussing, one of them said: "Let us leave the execution of the plan to the military members. They are better able to handle it." Saddam Hussein objected: "No", he said, "the plan was drawn up by the leadership as such and it bears the responsibility, whatever happens. I say this, not because I lack confidence in the military members, but because it is the leadership organization's job to plan everything and to take the responsibility for everything." And this in fact is what happened.

But another very important subject was raised, this time by Saddam Hussein himself. This was the need for the leadership to be, not only a planning body, but also an executive body, that is that all its members should share in carrying out the revolution from the time it began until power had actually been seized. He was strengthened in this conviction by two considerations. Firstly, the need to stimulate the greatest possible enthusiasm among the rank and file, and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, to prevent the revolution, if it succeeded, from becoming as it were the personal property of a small number of army officers, for them to boast about to others. For the echo of questions raised after the revolution of Ramadan 1963, in the unhealthy atmosphere which then prevailed, still rang in his ears: "Where were you at the time of the revolution?" "And where was this or that member of the party?" Questions like these, which members of the leadership were throwing at one another at that time, must not be asked this time or be raised again. Therefore all the members of the leadership were to be in the front line. They themselves must be instrumental in carrying it out. Its fate was to rest in their hands, and they would face its consequences.

Notwithstanding certain trivial objections raised by certain members to what they called "the leadership's gamble" on the failure of the revolution, he adhered to his point of view, which was then accepted and cast in a form which made it incontrovertible. The elements of the plan were then quickly reviewed: A number of designated comrades were to foregather at four

assembly points, while the members of the special organization were to meet in the garden of the Casino in Karkh on 14 July. At zero hour the comrades at every assembly point were to receive their orders and the leadership, in full strength, was to head the operations. They should all proceed in the direction of the Republican Palace. At the gate a squadron of tanks belonging to the Republican Guard would be waiting for them. Sa' adun Ghaidan would be the officer of the guard on that day and would make it easy for them to open the gates and storm the Palace. Thus the tanks, which they were to take over in order to train their guns on the Palace, would not have moved and Abdurrahman ' Arif would be forced to surrender to the revolutionary forces.

But should' Arif be killed or not? That question should be decided between Saddam Hussein and the late General Hamad Shihab. Hamad Shihab was the General Officer commanding the tenth armoured brigade, which was regarded as a trump card in the hands of the Iraqi army. Among the officials of that brigade the Baath Party had a number of members and friends. The commanding officer himself, Hamad Shihab, had close personal relations with some of the party's leaders, notably with Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein. But when he was approached on the subject of the revolution, he displayed great hesitancy. He had moral scruples, which he placed above all other considerations. He had given his undertaking to Abdurrahman Arif that he stand by him in the event of any move against him. Every time Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr had raised with him the question of his participation in a revolution, he had the same reply. But Saddam asked al Bakr's to discuss it with him himself. He went to him and put the matter to him in such a way as to try and free him from his moral dilemma. He said: " Abu Ra'ad, I wonder you won't agree to take part. You told him it's Abdurrahman Arif. I agree. But why not side with the Iraqi people who have been slighted, torn asunder and subjected daily to all kinds of humiliations. Surely the dignity of this people, its history and its future as a revolutionary force in the service of the Arab nation, after the shameful defeat it suffered on the fifth of June, has the right to ask that you should free yourself from your obligation to a man who has already renounced it himself. Surely there is a difference between one obligation and another especially when the other party renounces an obligation for the sake of the highest values and the noblest ideals. What obligation does Abdurrahman Arif acknowledge towards these values and ideals? Anyway, for the sake of the promise you made to him, we shall spare his life and do him no harm. It is enough for us that he should be prevented from doing further evil and that he should be stripped of his power so that things may take their natural course and the revolution may go its way. What do you feel about that, Abu Ra'ad?"

Hamad Shihab looked at him and said: "Will you give me a definite promise that you won't kill Abdurrahman Arif?" "On my honour," replied Saddam Hussein, and went back to tell al-Bakr that Hamad Shihab had agreed, that the tenth armoured brigade would take its part in the planned revolution when the time came and that the promise to spare Abdurrahman Arif's life must be honoured. The participation of this brigade in the execution of the plan was to be a decisive factor in its success. The brigade was stationed at a place called al Warar, a long way from Baghdad. It was agreed that, on being informed of the date fixed for the revolution, the brigade should move towards the capital and surround it.

But Saddam Hussein, in one of his moments of clairvoyance, foresaw the possibility of some of the revolution's temporary allies trying to move this brigade away from Baghdad under the pretext that the revolution had succeeded and that it should return to its original position when it was no longer needed. That could then be the signal for a counter-stroke on their part aimed at taking over the revolution. So he told al-Bakr, in confidence, to impress upon the tenth armoured brigade the necessity to continue to advance on Baghdad even if someone or other were to tell it that the revolution had succeeded and that it should return to its former position.

There was perhaps an element of inspiration in this foreknowledge of what might happen, because the prophecy was to be fulfilled a day later, just as he had surmised.

Everything was now complete and the plan ready to be put into effect. The comrades were prepared. Zero hour had been fixed. In a few hours' time the order to begin would be given. But then the doorbell rang. Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr went to see whom it was ringing the doorbell at that critical moment. He came back after a short while with a look of desperate anxiety and intense fatigue on his face, threw down in front of the assembled Leadership a letter and said: "Just read this letter which Ahmad Mukhlis, an officer in military intelligence has brought. " It said:

"Dear Abu Haitham, I have been informed that you are to mount a revolution in a few hours' time. I wish you every success. I would also like to take part." The letter was signed by Abdulrazzaq an-Nayif, Director of Military Intelligence!

They stood aghast. Their heads swam. The ground shook under their feet, as though they had been struck by a thunderbolt. It seemed that everything had been in vain. All their high hopes were dashed in an instant. All the planning and scheming and the long struggle were as chaff in the wind. Indeed, the more they thought about it, the more disastrous the situation came to appear. The whole party was now threatened with utter extinction, quite apart of course from the fate of those sitting there, who would very soon face the death penalty.

Some of them got up and began to walk up and down the room, as though in a cage. One of them, seeing before him, as clearly as the few peremptory lines contained in that letter, the terrible end that awaited him, launched into a vehement condemnation of those alliances of which he had approved a moment before, but which had led to this ruinous consummation. It was ad-Dawud, Commander of the Republican Guard, who divulged the secret and brought about this catastrophe.

But what was to be done now? This was no time for regret and apportionment of blame. Impotence, after all does not beseem men about to embark on a revolution.

There must be a way out, but who was to find it?

Then Saddam Hussein spoke. Putting a stop to the discussion which was degenerating into an orgy of penitence and mutual recrimination he said, with decisiveness which was required but which had been lacking: "I propose that we accept his participation."

They all looked at him, tongue-tied. But he continued, as though announcing decisions already taken: "I propose that comrade Ahmad Hassan should go to him with Hardan at-Tikriti or Saleh Mahdi Ammash, or both, and say to him-'We accept, God bless you. If only we had known before that you wanted to join us.' Then offer him any position he likes after the revolution-except President of the Republic. But there is one condition? That is that he should be liquidated immediately during, or after, entry into the tank squadron. When I suggest this I realize that we would not be able to do it if the man had worked with us in a progressive way and if we had been convinced of his patriotism and that he wanted to help in saving the people. But he was imposed on us and he wanted to stab the Party in the back in the service of some interest or other, as Abdulsalam Arif had done. It was therefore legitimate and a moral necessity that the Party should not be betrayed a second time, and that it should be protected from harm whether he accepted or refused.

I am diffident about putting myself forward at any time for any particular task, but this is a task about which I feel no diffidence. I propose to you that comrade Saddam

Hussein is nominated to carry out this task without further discussion, and let him choose the opportune moment, either during or just after the entry of the tank squadron, to liquidate him, and by any means, which he thinks fit. This decision is final and will not be open to discussion in the future."

When he had finished speaking, those present got up as though he had just saved them from drowning, and raised their hands in unanimous approval of his decision.

The meeting was adjourned-until the revolution-an hour later.

Chapter 13

The Revolution reigns but does not rule

During those early hours of the 17th of July 1968, Saddam Hussein opened up the secret hiding place in his house and began to bring out the military clothing and arms and hand grenades. Sajida stood beside him, helping. Even little Udai was wide-awake. This time he had no messages concealed in his clothes, but ran around picking up the hand grenades which were rolling all over the place and bringing them to his father, thinking they were toys.

The comrades designated by the leadership were at their allotted assembly points, awaiting the order to start. The members of the leadership itself had joined those in Kareem an-Nada's house whence the first attacking party were to leave, in a few minutes, for the Republican Palace. They were all dressed in military uniforms, real or faked, and among them was "Lieutenant" Saddam Hussein and just behind him "Lieutenant" Barzan, his eighteen-year-old brother, who had insisted on accompanying him. At 2:45 a white Mercedes car driven by its owner, Hardan at-Tikriti, with Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr beside him and Saleh Mahdi Ammash behind, moved off from in front of an-Nada's house. Immediately behind was a military lorry carrying Saddam Hussein and the other members of the leadership as well as a small group of other party members, including Barzan, Ja'afar al-Ja'afari, Dhiyab al- Alkawi and Izzat ad-Duri, who had claimed to be an expert tank driver in order not to miss taking part in the attack on the Palace. Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr led the attack and was at the head of the convoy.

As soon as the convoy approached the gate of the tank squadron Sa'dun Ghaidan could be seen standing there waiting for them. Suddenly he called to the guard on the gate: "Stop. This is our party. Open the gate and let them through. " The gate was opened. They were inside. They went towards the tanks, which were in their shade. The comrades began to start them up and hand them on to others, and return quickly to start up some more. When they heard the sound of the tanks, the officers and soldiers in the neighbouring hall got up and came running out. Suddenly Saddam Hussein, with Barzan behind him, called out: "Form them up and march them back to the hall." Then they returned quickly and got on to the back of a tank along with Dhiyab al- Alkawi. Suddenly Barzan spotted a soldier carrying a Kalashnikov rifle. He knocked him to the ground and wrenched it from him. Saddam saw him and said: "Give the revolver to Abu Khalil. Abu Khalil is on our side. You really are with us, eh my boy? Lieutenant Barzan didn't know that you were on our side. Barzan pulled out his revolver and gave it to the soldier whose gun he had taken. The soldier did not seem in the least perturbed and they discovered, as luck would have it, that he knew how to drive a tank.

He drove the tank for them. On the road between the squadron's gate and the gate to the palace there was a tank. It began to fire and Saddam Hussein then learned how to fire the guns of a tank. The soldier, whose rifle had been taken from him so unceremoniously, taught him. Saddam said to him: "You see, I'm just an infantry officer, I don't know how to use a tank. Tell me, how do you fire the gun?" "You just pull it out like this, Sir", said the soldier. "Then

you press it. That's the way it is usually. " But the soldier who had no idea of what was happening asked again: "Sir, what's going on?" Saddam said: "Tahir Yahya (the Prime Minister) is staging a coup against Abdurrahman 'Arif, against the President, and we're going to raise the siege." "God bless you," said the soldier.

When the tank got near to the gate of the Palace it began to fire at the Palace building. At the same time Hardan al- Tikriti was talking on the telephone to Abdurrahman Arif, calling upon him to surrender. After a short while, Abdurrahman came out and surrendered. In keeping with the promise that his life would be spared, the firing ceased. At dawn the Iraqi Republic radio announced to the Iraqi people and the Arab nation and to the whole world the news of the glorious revolution of 17th July in the Iraqi Region in the first statement signed by the revolutionary leadership council, and "President" Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr moved to his office in the Republican Palace.

The new cabinet was formed in accordance with the plan worked out beforehand. Abdurrazaq an-Nayif assumed the office of Prime Minister, Ibrahim ad-Dawud Minister of Defence, Hardan at- Tikriti, Chief of General Staff, and Saleh Mahdi Ammash Minister of the Interior.

Saddam Hussein took off his lieutenant's uniform and put on an ordinary civilian suit, and exchanged his submachine gun for an ordinary 13-caliber revolver.

The moment was not opportune for liquidating Abdurrazaq an-Nayif. Reactionary officers held most of the positions in the Palace. While the tenth armoured brigade was encamped at Abu Ghraib on the outskirts of Baghdad, having refused to obey Abdurrazaq an-Nayif's order to return to its former position as Saddam Hussein had accurately foreseen, Hardan at- Tikriti began, in his capacity as Chief of Staff to make various changes in military appointments. Dependable non-commissioned officers were transferred from the provinces to Baghdad where they were joined a little later by another batch of non-commissioned officers in new posts in the capital, which improved the situation to some extent.

During these days Saddam was more anxious and worried than he had been at any time in his life. He met with members of the Baghdad branch and impressed upon them the need for party unity. He pointed out that the party was not the only element in the revolution and that there was one element, which was at odds with the party. He did not explain what that element was, in order not to give rise to arbitrary speculations.

But Hammad Shihab was also worried. For although he commanded the tenth armoured brigade he was not a member of the Revolutionary Leadership Council. Saddam noticed his state of mind during the early days of the revolution as they were sitting in the Palace. They went out into the outer vestibule where they walked up and down. Saddam asked him: "Why aren't you a member of the Revolutionary Leadership Council?"

"They are having a meeting just now. Go in and tell them that either you must be a member of the Council or you'll raise hell. If they agree, all well and good. If they refuse, no matter. " Hammad went into the Council room immediately and came out a member of the Council.

Nevertheless the worries remained, and fear for the future of the revolution never left him. True his friend Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr was President of the Republic, but those who insinuate themselves into a revolution in a latter-day Trojan horse, openly on this occasion, represent new risks for the revolution and, at the same time, a real threat. They strengthen their foothold with every minute that passes. Every moment they are there is a moment less in the life of the revolution. Moreover, their dubious record casts a shadow across the revolution and transforms it in the mind of the public, which does not know what has happened or what is going to happen, into just another military coup. Furthermore, and even more undesirable,

their continued presence may well mean simply that the revolution is rendered barren, its growth stunted. Indeed it may be pushed into reverse. For Abdurrazaq an-Nayif was now demanding openly in the Council of Ministers that the National Petroleum Company, founded in the days of Abdul Kareem Qasim, should be dissolved.

What would remain of the revolution after that? And how many of the goals for the sake of which it was made, would it be able to realize? One does not attain power for the sake of power itself. How could the party in which Saddam Hussein had struggled for decades, sacrificing the lives of hundreds and thousands of its members in that struggle, in which he had studied, planned, made decisions, led and shared in the leadership, how could it remain the captive of a few intruders and interlopers, parasites, not on the revolution alone, but on the Iraqi people itself with its despised and humiliated masses, looking to the revolution for their final deliverance?

Anxiety mounted within him day by day. Every hour, every minute, new misgivings regarding the revolution and its future presented themselves to his prescient imagination. His wife, amazed, would look at him and say: "The revolution has succeeded, but you do not look like a man who has won. What is the matter?" But he would not reply. Then he would go out and a neighbour would come up to him and say: "This Abdurrazaq an-Nayif is up to something, isn't he?" He would brush the question aside, without answering.

But how long could this go on? And what guarantee was there that these "others", the intruders, the interlopers and their camp followers, were not even now hatching their schemes to get rid of the real authors of the revolution. Time is on the side of him who acts first. If the revolution did not strike, their enemies certainly would. But then, who can wash his hands of blood and who can pluck from his heart the thorn of remorse? Is there no mercy for those who stand face to face with history?

Chapter 14

The Revolution restored to the People

For a fortnight he slept only uneasily and intermittently. He soon awoke and opened his eyes in the darkness and it was as though he were trying to banish a nightmare that had troubled his sleep. Those were the cruelest days of his life.

No. There was no point in waiting any longer. Patience was at an end.

He left the house early in the morning and called a quick meeting of the regional leadership. After a short while all the members of the leadership were sitting in their places except the President, Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, whose new office prevented him from leaving the Palace at that time, and Izzat Mustafa and Abdullah Sallum who had gone to Cairo before the revolution and when they knew about its timing, each of them having pleaded urgent business there which could not be postponed.

The meeting was short, only a few peremptory words being exchanged. Saddam Hussein said: "I have not called you together, comrades, to discuss again the decision we made on the day before the revolution concerning the liquidation of Abdurrazaq an-Nayif. That decision is not open to discussion. I just wanted to tell you that the time has come. The question is the technical one of how to do it quickly. " They were in complete agreement and told him to choose a time which he thought suitable. "Tomorrow", he said, and the meeting broke up.

After the meeting he contacted a group of party members whom he trusted personally and told them to be at the Republican Palace on the following day before noon. They included Barzan, Ja'afar al-Ja'afari, Sa'dun Shakir, Salah Saleh, Kamil Yasin and Ajjaj al-Ahmad al-Hazza'. Then he contacted the guards on the outer gate of the Palace and asked them to allow them in at the appointed time. The night passed slowly. The sun had hardly risen on the thirtieth of July when Saddam set off for the Palace. He went at once to the office of the President of the Republic, Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, and told him what had passed at the meeting of the leadership on the day before. Saddam explained to him in outline what was to happen after lunch that day.

There was stuffed venison for lunch that day, shot by Hamad Shihab. He brought it to the Palace, but when they went into lunch Saddam Hussein stayed behind for a moment with Hamad Shihab, and drawing him aside said to him: "Abu Ra'ad, this is to be the day. Today I am going to get rid of this lot." Abu Ra'ad said, with a laugh: "Have you fixed everything?" Saddam replied that everything was indeed fixed. Then he looked at him straight in the eyes and said, quickly and resolutely: "When we come out of the dining room and you see me going into the President's Office, don't come in. There's no need. Go at once to the tenth armoured brigade and surround the Palace. Bring a squadron of tanks inside the perimeter fence of the Palace, because' Abdurrazaq an-Nayif must not get away. If he tries to escape, I will kill him. There may be complications, so that we shall be killed here. He is surrounded by Palace units who are all loyal to him including the guards inside the Palace, as well as his personal bodyguard of twelve men armed with sub-machine guns. If these complications arise we shall be killed here. In that case you can take over the Government with what is left of the Party. God be with you."

They sat down to lunch, President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, flanked by Abdurrazaq an-Nayif and Hardan at-Tikriti, then Saddam Hussein, Hammad Shihab, Sa'dun Ghaidan and Saleh Mahdi Ammash. Said Hammad Shihab, with a laugh: "There's a whole deer for launch".

Lunch was over. They came quickly out of the dining room. Hardan at-Tikriti walked to one side. He did not know. Saddam Hussein looked at him and said: "Abu Sa'ad, today the matter will be concluded." Hardan said: "Today?" Then he said: "Abu Udai we understand each other." They went up the stairs leading to his office and sat for a while. Saddam looked at him straight in the eyes and said: "Abu Sa'ad: the matter doesn't call for any understanding." Hardan said: "Good." But he was not expecting it to be done today. Nevertheless he went on:

"Abu Udai, you want to do it today. Brother you will kill us. How can it be done this afternoon?" Saddam said: "Everything's been arranged."

He left him sitting in his office thinking that he had persuaded him to put off the operation until some other time, and went quickly down the stairs. Turning neither to right nor left he entered the aides' room. He looked at the comrades whom he had told to be there. Without looking in their faces, he told them to follow him. He walked rapidly through the secretary's room. Sa'dun Ghaidan was standing next to the secretary. He went straight into the President's office. Al-Bakr was sitting at his desk with Saleh Mahdi Ammash sitting in front of him Abdurrazaq an-Nayif was sitting with his back to the outer door of the room.

Saddam drew his revolver and, facing Abdurrazaq an-Nayif he said: "Put your hands up." An-Nayif turned to him and said: "Why?" When he saw the revolver pointed at him he put his hands over his eyes and said: "I have four children." Saddam said: "Don't be afraid. Nothing will happen to your children if you behave sensibly. Abdurrazaq, you know you forced your way into the revolution and that you are a stumbling block in the way of the Party. We have paid for this revolution with our blood, and now it has come about. The decision of the Party is that you should be put out of the way."

He took his revolver from his side and heard his comrades' revolvers being loaded. Saleh Mahdi Ammash, wishing to relieve the tension, rose from his seat and said: "Let us see if we can come to some understanding", but Salah Omar al-Ali motioned to him to sit down. He did so, and made no further attempt to intervene.

After a few seconds' Abdurrazaq an-Nayif said: "what do you want of me?" Saddam took him by the arm and drew him into the adjoining room, and said: "Abdurrazaq, we are not going to kill you. This is what you must do. You must not try to do anything that would force us to kill you. You must leave Iraq. So where do you want to go? To which Embassy?"

An-Nayif said: "I'll go to Lebanon."

"No", said Saddam.

"Well," said an-Nayif, "to Algeria."

"No," said Saddam.

"Then to Morocco."

"Agreed", said Saddam.

Saddam picked up the telephone. "Yes, sir," answered the operator. He immediately put down the receiver and looked at Barzan and Ja'afar al-Ja'afari saying: "You stand here beside him and do not move on any account. If he tries to get up or if you hear the sound of firing outside or resistance, shoot him at once.

Do you hear, Abdurrazaq

"Yes I hear".

He left the room, locking the door behind him, and went to the President's room. He took Saleh Mahdi Ammash by the arm and took him out of the office into the secretary's room. His eyes met those of Sa'dun Ghaidan. Saddam rushed towards him and embraced him. "Abu Udai," said Sa'dun, "what has happened?"

Saddam said: "We've finished with Abdurrazaq an-Nayif, as we agreed. Abu Samra, go with Saleh Mahdi Ammash to the tank squadron and stay there." They left. Taha al-Jazrawi had gone to the Ministry of Defence since he had been informed by Saddam Hussein that his duty would be in the Ministry of Defence building, while General Hammad Shihab was encircling the outer perimeter of the Palace with the tanks of the tenth armoured brigade.

Everything was going smoothly, quietly and rapidly, like a scene in a film. Saddam hurried to his comrades.

Abdurrazaq an-Nayif's bodyguard was still in the Palace courtyard and Saddam had instructed the comrades to arrest and disarm them. In no time all of them had been thrown to the ground with their hands tied and their weapons taken away.

All that had been done, but Hardan at- Tikriti did not know that everything was over. Saddam saw him coming hurriedly down the stairs from the upper floor and called to him: "Hardan, where are you off to?"

I thought you had gone to Air Force headquarters.

Everything is over now. Go and send off your aircraft."

Abu Sa'ad hurried to the aides' room and telephoned Air Force headquarters and a few minutes later the aircraft of the Air Force were in the air over Baghdad.

Up to this moment everything had gone like clockwork. But how were they to move Abdurrazaq an-Nayif from the Palace? How could that be done without alerting the Republican Guards, who were loyal to him, or any of the soldiers in the tank squadron, that something out of the ordinary was happening to him, at least until that night when he would be safely out of Iraq?

Saddam Hussein turned to Hardan at- Tikriti and said: "Get an aircraft ready for us at Mu'askar ar-Rasheed to take our new ambassador, Abdurrazaq an-Nayif, to Morocco." Then he went to the room where an-Nayif was sitting and said: " Abdurrazaq, you and I are now going to leave the Palace, and remember that my revolver is under my jacket. We shall pass the guard on the way out. They will salute you and you will return their salute in the usual way. We shall then go to your official car carrying your personal flag. We shall get in, you first and I beside you. You know of course that any movement or word from you in the car will mean that you will be a dead man. Agreed?"

"Agreed," said an-Nayif.

Abdurrazaq an-Nayif and Saddam Hussein walked out of the room quietly, side by side. The guards saluted the Prime Minister and he returned their salute with military punctilio. They did not know that this was the last time in his life that he would receive such a salute. At the outer door, the doors of the car stood open. He entered first and Saddam Hussein took his seat beside him. In the front seat, beside the driver, sat Salah Omar al-Ali. Meanwhile a group of comrades had gone to Mu'askar ar-Rasheed to accompany his Excellency the Ambassador to his new post in Morocco.

At Mu'askar ar-Rasheed the aircraft's engines had already started. By the steps stood Barzan, Sa'dun Shakir, Ja'afar al-Ja'afari and Adnan Sharif, awaiting the traveler who was never again to return to Baghdad.

Abdurrazaq an-Nayif mounted the steps and entered the aircraft. The comrades took their seats around him. Before Saddam left the aircraft he took Abdurrazaq an-Nayif's revolver out, which he had taken away from him, and handed it to him, saying: "Here is your revolver. Sa'dun Shakir will give you the rounds when you get there."

As the aircraft rose into the Baghdad sky, Saddam Hussein took out his handkerchief and wiped away some tears. The nightmare had gone, far away, up into the clouds, and on earth the Revolution had regained its soul.

The car took him back to the Republican Palace. He looked at it and said: "There is still Ibrahim ad-Dawud. " Ad-Dawud was not in Iraq at the time. He was in Jordan inspecting units of the Iraqi Army, which had been there since 1967. Hardan at- Tikriti contacted a former Baathist officer, Hassan an-Naqib, and told him to arrest Ibrahim ad-Dawud. But an-Naqib, who knew nothing of what had taken place, pretended not to hear. Saddam at once decided to send an aircraft with a number of comrades, led by Salah Saleh, to arrest him.

Then he sat down in his chair in front of the President's desk quietly took out of his pocket and placed in front of Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr a piece of paper. It contained the declaration of 30th July, which he had prepared in advance.

The President took the piece of paper and read it, and began to write out the declaration again in his own handwriting. But he noticed that the signature was " Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr,

President of the Republic and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, " and he asked: "What does this expression mean?"

Saddam said: "I was not under the impression that either Hardan at- Tikriti or Saleh Mahdi ' Ammash was Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. " Al-Bakr went on writing the declaration. Then both men rose and walked out of the room and went together to the broadcasting station. Then, at seven o'clock precisely in the evening of 30 July 1968, the masses of the Iraqi people, the Arab nation and the whole world heard that the Revolution of 17 July had been purged and that the Arab Baath Socialist Party in Iraq had restored the Revolution to the people.

Notes of part one

1) Saddam Hussein's speech, 8-8-1979.

2) Tariq , Aziz, Thawrat at- Tariq al-Jadid (The Revolution of the New Way), Baghdad, Oar al-Thawra, 1974, p. 94.

3) Abdul-Amir Ma'ala, Harakat as-Siyasa wal-Mujtama'a fil-Iraq Wa Dawr Hizb al-Baath al-Arabi al-Ishtiraki Khilalaha (The Movement of Politics and Society in Iraq and the Role of the Arab Baath Socialist Party), unpublished, Vol. 1: 1'hawrat 14 Tammuz: Mu him mat uha wa Tatbiqat uha (The July 14th Revolution: Its Tasks and Application), p. 21.

4) Ibid, referring to Nidhal Hizb al-Baath al-Arabi al-Ishtiraki abr Bayanat Qiyadat ihi al-Qawmiyya 1955-1962 (The Struggle of the Arab Baath Socialist Party through the ommuniques of its Leadership (1955-1962), Beirut, Oar at-Tali'a, p. 55.

5) Ibid.

6) Ibid.

1) Samir Abdul-Kareem, Adhwa' ala al-Haraka ash-Shuyu'iyya fil-Iraq (Light on the Communist Movement in Iraq), Beirut, Oar al-Mirsad, second edition, p. 55.

8) Itihad ash-Sha'ab newspaper (mouthpiece of the Iraqi Communist Party at that time), 3-3-1960.

9) Amir Abdullah, from a lecture given in The Iraqi Party Members' Club and published in Itihad ash-Sha'ab, 16-2-1959.

10) Ibid.

11) From a communique issued by The Iraqi Communist Politburo, 2-9-1958.

12) Itihad ash-Sha'ab, 26-1-1960.

13) Ibid. 2-2-1960.

14) Ibid. 2-12-1959.

15) Resolution of the extended meeting of The Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party held in July, 1959 (see Itihad ash-Sha'ab, 23-8-1959).

16) See Adhwa' ala al-Haraka ash-Shuyu'iyya fil-Iraq, p. 18, referring to an internal publication of the Arab Baath Socialist Party entitled Hawla al-Mithaq al-Jadid li-Jabhat al-Itihad al-Watani (On the New Charter of the National Union Front, dated 20-11-1959).

- 11) Itihad ash-Sha'ab, 2-3-1959.
- 18) See Adhwa' ala al-Haraka al-Sbuyu'iyya, p. 66.
- 19) Op. cit., 11-3-1959.
- 20) Ibid., 13-3-1959.
- 21) Ibid., 17-3-1959.
- 22) Ibid., 5-8-1959.
- 23) Ibid., 20-7-1959.
- 24) Ibid., 22-7-1959.
- 25) This was not only said by Marx, but also by most Marxists throughout the world. Some, however, contradict it.
- 26) The Chosen Works of Marx and Engels, Moscow (French version), Oar at-Taqaddum, Vol. 3, p. 506.
- 21) Itihad ash-Sha'ab, 8-10-1959.
- 28) Nidhal al-Ba'ath (The Struggle of the Baath), Vol. 7, p. 135.
- 29) Some of those who were close to the republican leadership in Cairo at the time confirm that these harassments were carried out by the Egyptian General Intelligence Organization without the knowledge of those in power. Some add that Fuad al-Rakkabi, who split from the Arab Baath Socialist Party, played a major part in inciting The Organization against his former colleagues.
- 30) From the Iraqi Communist Party's communique issued in Baghdad on 8-2-1963.
- 31) From another communique also issued by The Iraqi Communist Party on 8-2-1963.
- 32) The Iraqi newspaper, al-Jamahir, 20-2-1963.
- 33) Ibid., 14-4-1963.
- 34) Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, in his speech on the anniversary of the 8th February, 1963 Revolution, published in ath- Thawra newspaper , Baghdad 9-2-1970.
- 35) at- Taqrir as-Siyasi lil-Mu'tamar al-Qutri ath- Thamin Am 1974 (The Political Resolution of the Eighth Regional Conference 1974), Baghdad, Dar al-Thawra, 1974, pp. 19-20.

Saddam Hussein, the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

Part II

REVOLUTION IN THOUGHT AND THOUGHT IN REVOLUTION

By Amir Eskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

Chapter 1

A. SADDAM HUSSEIN AND THE DIALECTIC OF THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

The lesser struggle is over and the greater struggle has begun!

Power is not the ultimate goal of the revolutionary. It is the beginning, or rather, a new beginning in a different struggle that is both hard and bitter and is the struggle to implement the Revolution's aims, programmes and ideals.

Iraq appeared on the morning of the 30th July to be an awesome mountain of problems and difficulties that were both practical and theoretical. It is true that the Arab Baath Socialist Party, which now holds power, has its own solutions to put forward but no matter how deep the thought behind them may be, the Party cannot move on its own. It is unable to bring about a transformation, which would be vibrant with life and rich in accomplishments without intelligent political leadership and the scorching heat that emanates from the hearts of the masses. Without these, its solutions can never be more than fanciful dreams, permanently devoid of social reality in all times and places.

Saddam Hussein is aware of this at the deepest possible level. He knows that all his skills, abilities and gifts are not confined to passive resistance or clandestine reorganization. He knows that they are also of use--and possibly at their most useful--in the open, under the ever-shining sun of Iraq, in the continuing debate with the masses, in the harsh struggle between dream and reality, and in reconstruction. It is hardly surprising that a representative of the engineers in his country should call him "the Engineer of the Revolution", an epithet which carries all the connotations of a man with a grand design and a will capable of bringing the revolutionary programme to fruition with talent and creativity.

We must pause for a long while now to consider his mature intellectual programme, which embraces his short and long term objectives equally. Even if we cannot consider all its details or the numerous ways in which it may be implemented, the political bases and the essentials of this integrated revolutionary programme enable us to present a picture of it which, while not containing the whole, shows both its near and far horizons.

What we shall try to depict in this part of the book is Saddam Hussein 's revolutionary thought as he himself has presented it in its organic unity of word and deed. This unity has represented and will continue to represent the essential nature of Saddam Hussein's intellectual and pugnacious personality in all stages of his life and in the lesser and the greater struggle.

CHAPTER 1

History and the renaissance of the nation

Historical leaders of peoples and nations have generally had an extreme and deep-seated sense of history, whether or not they were aware of it. This sense has almost as much influence on them as their own nature, and is usually what represents the impulse for their actions.

Naturally the form this sense takes varies from leader to leader and from age to age in accordance with an individual's character, his role, and his psychological, social and ideological make-up, varying with the circumstances of the land and the age in which he lived. In every earlier age they built pyramids, temples and mausolea, and described their victories and achievements on the walls so that those who came after them would be aware of them. They thought that they would preserve their glory and distinction for generation after generation and century after century. This was what the rulers of Egypt,

Babylon and Assyria did in the earliest historical times. The rulers of Greece and Rome did the same with their temples, statues, columns, tombs and triumphal arches. They had a sense of history-of immortality. It was not merely a longing for eternity. Sometimes-as in the case of Gilgamesh-it was a desire for physical survival.

In modern times-as a result of social and cultural development-great temples and other types of gigantic architecture are no longer built. Peoples are not ruled by God-kings or Sun-kings. The historical sense shines forth in a different way in modern leaders. They have a tremendous concern with the writing of history itself, even if it is not a history of individuals and heroes but the history of peoples, parties and social, political and ideological movements. It is hard today to find a contemporary society-especially one in the Third World, which naturally includes our Arab societies- where recurring attempts are not made to write about history, particularly the great turning-points of history.

It should not surprise us to witness such attempts in the Socialist societies themselves, where the rulers, writers and historians profess a single view of the analysis of history and a single way of writing the history of any particular epoch. The Soviet Union was in turn under Lenin, Stalin and the twentieth congress, and on each occasion history was rewritten. It is not the only example: Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia are other examples, and even China in the post-Mao era has followed the same path.

Is this rewriting of history valid or is it a mistake? We should ask first whether historical truth is so relative that it can be remolded and redrawn to accommodate different points of view and even different aims.

But then, what is historical truth itself? This seems to be an easy question to answer but in fact it is one of the hardest for the historian or the intellectual to answer.

Most people would say at once that the cornerstone of any "history" is the totality of the basic facts upon which historians agree, whatever their individual schools of thought and social philosophies. We might say for example that a Revolution took place in Egypt in 1952 and in Iraq in 1968, but such obvious and important truths are the nearest the historian can come to the builder with his raw materials for buildings, or to the painter with his colors. A builder will not start work on a building without one of his raw materials and a painter will not start a picture without one of his paints, but the building and the painting will consist of more than the materials.

The historical facts that are generally accepted are the historian's raw materials, which he moulds in accordance with his particular intellectual point of view and social background to

make a history composed of a series of propositions which are acceptable to a certain number of people. The further back in the past that these raw materials are to be found, the more susceptible history is to interpretation in accordance with the views of different historians and thinkers, who all follow their own standpoints and social backgrounds.

What do we really know about ancient Greece? We know what the Athenian historians tell us in the age of Athens' glory in the fifth century B.C. But how would ancient Greece appear from the angle of Sparta, Corinth or Thebes? How would it appear in the eyes of the Persians, the slaves or the foreigners resident in Athens who were not "citizens"? Do we not really know only very little?

This applies to all ancient civilizations-Egypt, India, China, Mesopotamia and others. It is even the same with mediaeval Europe. One of the outstanding historians of our day has written: "All we know as historical truth in the Middle Ages has been selected for us by generations of historians who saw everything from a religious angle and only noted what appeared important from that angle, and disregarded events which might be important from other angles. The image of the pious Russian peasant was shattered by the Revolution of 1917, whereas the image of the pious man in the Middle Ages-whether it was true or false-cannot be demolished since virtually all we know about the Middle Ages has been selected for us by people who believed in this image and wanted others to believe in it too. When we find a number of historical facts from other sources we may be able to demolish this image, but in the meanwhile the hands of generations of dead historians have silenced the past without allowing us any possibility of uncovering the whole truth (1)".

But do we not sometimes find a text, which enables us to alter our view? In the last century, for example, positivist philosophers tried to make history an empirical science in which the "text" underwent a kind of sanctification. A fact was "true" because it occurred in the "text", which amounted to a decisive proof analogous to the proof afforded to the senses by a scientific experiment, which could not be refuted. The text became the Holy

Communion of which the historian partook in order to reach the Celestial Realm of History. Yet there was to come a time, after the nineteenth century had pulled in its sails, when outstanding historians of the twentieth century would ask hesitantly, "What do the texts-the official chronicles, histories, diaries and letters-tell us if we investigate them thorough. Why? No text can tell us more than its author wanted it to tell us: those things which he believed to have happened, or which he believed must happen or would happen. Perhaps, too, he did not want other people to think what he really thought-or perhaps he did not even want himself to think what he thought! (2)" Then they would say, "Facts, whether or not they occur in the texts, must be reconstructed by the historian. The profit that can be extracted from the texts is this reconstruction (3)".

Once again we ask-Is historical truth relative to such an extent? The answer is no-and yes: no, because the historical, the raw material of history, is ultimately an objective event, in the sense that it has an independent reality in a particular time and place; yes, because the event is interpreted by each historian and thinker in accordance with his own political, social and ideological standpoint.

If what Hegel said (" All history is philosophy and all philosophy is history") is true, then we can never read truly objective history. We only read "the philosophy of history".

It makes no difference that the numerous treatments of an historical event are all made from angles which, whether we like it or not, emanate from equally numerous philosophies. Whether or not we accept the different treatments depends on whether we accept these philosophies as part of our own particular "philosophy" .In practice, historical research

becomes philosophical research and historical writing turns into the refutation of what is essentially an historical interpretation. And the laws, which we infer from written history, are philosophical laws.

Yet it would be a false objectivity and brazen fabrication that gave equal validity to different interpretations of history and different philosophies. If this were done it would lead to social and historical nihilism, and would ultimately only help the reactionaries in every society and age. How can two interpretations of history be considered equally valid when the one considers history to be a record of the deeds of kings, princes and priests who built their pyramids on the backs of their peoples and raised their columns and triumphal arches over human skulls, and the other considers history to be an account of the interaction between peoples and their leaders in a given environment? How can two philosophies of history be put on the same level when the one considers history to be the manifestation of unknown forces, and the other views it as the interaction of the bitter struggles of men to control their own destiny? And what of those who consider history to be the history of "great individuals" and those who consider it to be the history of the deaf masses? Yet a third group views history as the product of the dialectical and historical relation between the fighting masses and undaunted elites. How can progress-the common hope of all humanity-be achieved if history is, at the end of the day, only the manifestation of individual genius or the haphazard movement of groups surrounded in mist?

It is here that selectivity begins and the nature of choice is defined, as the essence of the individual researcher, historian, philosopher or political leader becomes clear.

This is the starting-point for different analyses of history, and where philosophical interpretations are formulated and ambiguities arise.

Saddam Hussein faces the question from the angle of Arab history and the Renaissance of the Arab Community. His interpretation is to be found in three monographs.

The first has the title 'How is History written?' The second is 'We must not give a Picture of History which separates it from Time and the Interaction of Events'.

The third is 'On Writing History'.

In the first monograph he approaches the subject from his own general philosophical position. "For whom is history written? How is it written? Is it written for the living or the dead and the martyrs? Why do we insist that history should be written in a way that gives individuals their due without doing justice to the claims of society? (4)"

His reply to the first question is that history is, of course, written for the living members of society and that histories of heroes are not merely a testimony to those who sacrificed themselves for their country. They are, perhaps at the most basic level, a lesson to those who will fight after them, providing an ideal for them to follow. History is not written for the dead in their chill, marble mausolea. Christ said, "Let the dead bury their dead", meaning that life is the first concern of the living. If we are unable to talk to the living and direct ourselves towards them, how can we address those who have become merely a treasured memory? If history is not directed at the living it loses its effectiveness and its positiveness, and perhaps also its point.

But if this stalemate seems like the logical entrance to ambiguity, the matter at the heart of the ambiguity itself is the dichotomy of the individual and society, and the historical relationship between the two. Despite mountains of books and streams of logical philosophies that have dealt with the matter, especially since historical method had its first victories in eighteenth century Europe, the problem remains open, and conflicting solutions have been suggested by

intellectuals. A.J.P. Taylor wrote after World War II, "It would be possible to write the history of modern Europe in the language of the three giants: Napoleon, Bismarck and Lenin (5)", whereas Tolstoy wrote earlier, in an attempt to lessen the stature of the great men of history, "They are no more than the designations which are given to things as names (6)". Hegel developed an unprecedented philosophy of history and perhaps, in a sense, one that has not been surpassed. He wrote, "The great man in any age is he who can utter the will of that age and point out and elucidate this will for his contemporaries. He acts as the heart and soul of his age and brings it into being (7)".

Saddam Hussein makes his own position clear. He says, "Can we envisage a day when life and society, or any aspect of them, will advance towards their given History and the renaissance of the nation objectives without a leader or leaders? It is impossible for them to do so. There are no historical precedents to be followed (8)". He then pinpoints the reply to the question. "A leader is the son and the father of his society at the same time. He is the son of his society as it was originally constituted, and its father in its journey in which he plays the role of leader. His fatherhood does not mean that he is a backward tribal patriarch in the sense that he is its guardian. His fatherhood must be seen in the context of the link with revolutionary democracy ' and all the mutual interaction that is thereby entailed (9)."

What do these expressions mean? They are a denial of the views that make history an emanation from the genius of great individuals, or the purely mechanical progress of the masses as groupings, tossed hither and thither by the waves. On the one side there is society, on the other there is the leader. The bond between them is unbroken and dynamic: it involves interaction, give and take. The well-known fable of Robinson Crusoe epitomized the independence of the individual in the story of a man who took refuge on a desert island in order to build his isolated, individual kingdom on it. This myth has been shattered even in Western thought which originally conceived it in one of the many stages of European development. It was written at a time when the bourgeoisie was the rising social class, and sought to sanctify the individual. The Europeans discovered later, however, that Robinson Crusoe was not an isolated individual even on the personal level: he was an Englishman from York who carried his Bible with him and prayed to his God. Moreover, he immediately constructed a new society despite, and in contradiction to his isolation. -

As for those who consider history to be merely a record of the movements of the masses, like a scientific record of movements of the earth's crust, they embrace Marxism and turn it into "a limited number of fixed tenets: the Three Principles of Materialism, the Four Laws of Dialectic, and the Five Historical Stages of Societies (10)".

Perhaps they are the intellectual descendants of those of whom Marx himself said, "If this were Marxism, I should know that I am no Marxist (11)". This is because, as he put it, "History makes nothing. It does not cause awesome revolutions or terrible struggles. It is man, the living man, who does everything. The revolution is his. It is he who fights (12)".

These people are faulted in their dialectic. Saddam Hussein, who struggled to give the question a firm dialectical basis and to bring it to the minds of his audience by comparisons with the relationship between father and son, did not stop at this point. He also affirmed the greatness of individuals and their heroism, which is the daughter of society. "We must not forget either that heroism is the daughter of society, which has provided its foundations. For, if a given society were not heroic in its readiness for sacrifice, it would not give birth to a hero. We must bind this foundation firmly to the role of the individual, his initiatives and his sacrifices. We must not talk of the role of the people in society while neglecting or annihilating that of the individual, or vice-versa, for both attitudes are wrong. It is essential for us to talk about both society and the individual, in a complementary and total interaction (13)."

Nevertheless, we might remember that there are two types of great men: those who continually represent the existing power and wield it, and those who struggle to create such power in order to challenge the existing authority.

It seems to us that a great historian's words hit the mark exactly: "That which, in my estimation, is essential is that we should find in a great man an outstanding individual who is a product and implementer of historical forces. He represents the forces in society and their creator: forces, which shape the face of the earth and the thoughts of men (14)."

But Saddam Hussein was not only a speculative thinker in his treatment of the matter. He was also a political leader. He did not forget that he is more than a "son" of his society, or that he has become its father, so to speak, through his heroic struggle. Thus, in his second monograph, in which he deals once again with the ambiguities of "history" and which was originally a lecture he gave in answer to a report presented by the National and Popular Association for the Improvement of Education, he speaks as a teacher and a father.

He said, "When we talk of the greatness of a man or of a task, it is not sufficient for us to talk of that greatness in terms which have no relevance to time and its different stages, and to the interaction of events. We must connect it with the entire constituent factors related to the period, its potentialities and the surrounding circumstances. Then greatness will shine forth in its true field (15)."

The question of the link between historical fact and the circumstances of time and place is not new to historical thought generally. The link between the historical hero and the surrounding circumstances is a recurring theme even in some of the enlightened bourgeois historians themselves. Gibbon, the author of 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire', observed, "It is indeed a self-evident truth that the prevailing conditions must fit with exceptional personalities. It is possible that the genius of

Cromwell would today fade away in obscurity (16)". Other historians have wondered whether Bismarck, for instance, would have united Germany if he had been born in the eighteenth century—though this is academic, for then he could not have been Bismarck. He might not have been able to become great, and the same goes for Napoleon, Lincoln, Lenin and others.

But Saddam Hussein is not upholding this position, which is close to the theory of "isolation from time", or at least, this is not the sole position he is maintaining. He does not intend to isolate historical facts and heroes just from their surrounding circumstances. The isolation is just as much from the environment of the past and also from that which might possibly come to be in the future. For him history, which is the product of interaction, inevitably rebels against movement. And what does movement mean but perpetual change, continuation and individuation?

This is the starting-point of his criticism of some misleading descriptions which are sometimes applied to History and the renaissance of the nation—the Revolution, such as the statement that it is the "progressive Revolution of the 17th July" or "the Revolution's progressiveness is its ultimate characteristic". He asserts, by way of contrast, that "The Revolution is essentially popular and socialist; to describe it as progressive necessarily detracts from its value and its essence as a continuous Revolution in the achievement of its strategic goals (17)". His historic decree to nationalize petroleum in Iraq is a case in point. "When we talk about the decree of nationalization now, we mean by it one of those great achievements of which we are proud. But in ten years' time it will not have the same importance for us; you will not see it in the same circumstances as we do today, for we shall have isolated it from its surrounding circumstances and weakened its connection with our lives—or removed it from the course of the Revolution, its temporal context, and from the

social, economic and political factors present in the decree (18)." In these two examples he speaks about the future after the event-about the necessity of keeping the future in mind.

In many other examples he talked about the past before the event; about considering the example in isolation from its past, "The story of the Revolution and of the Arab Baath Socialist Party does not have its full historical and objective dimension unless we talk about the black picture that preceded it in the social, political, economic, cultural and military spheres, and how it was completely changed by the national sovereignty and struggle and the vitality of the masses (19),"

The historical event and the emergence of the historical hero cannot be understood by placing them in parentheses. The artificial barriers in front of historical development must be opened, though we must not be captivated by the past or future so that we lose our feet. The present must occupy our urgent attention unless the past is to lose its meaning and the future its justification. It might be said that Saddam Hussein is one of the few leaders of whom it might be observed that they have a true sense of psychological distance from the present moment.

Consider his words: "There are two sorts of things that captivate men: those which he cannot see but can only believe in, and those tangible things which he himself can directly apprehend within the boundaries of his knowledge. When we talk of something visible, not supernatural but not tangible either, we inevitably disparage the tangible. It is as though we talked of something abstract, an unrealized goal. Such a thing does not inspire enthusiasm, as much as the tangible, but at the same time it is not a spiritual matter with which we are united. In such circumstances, we may have made a miscalculation. (20)

This psychological remoteness becomes plain when an Iraqi citizen considers "Iraq", since the Arab Baath Socialist Party is a nationalist party that struggles to realize Arab unity and the establishment of an Arab nationalism in a single Arab State, and since it believes that Iraq is part of the Arab nation and a dimension within the Arab Nation. To a large extent, the "Iraqi" attribute consequently looks backward and fades before the more general and total attribute which is that of Arabism, the Arab Nation and the Arab Community.

But Saddam Hussein has a fine appraisal of psychology, and therefore declares: "We must not leave out of our calculations the fact that the Iraqi means by "Iraq" the piece of earth on which he lives, which is constitutionally his homeland, and which he is prepared to defend with his life because it is the homeland which he can see, and with which he is closely in contact every day, whereas his contact with the Arab homeland is only in a general and abstract sense. This means that we must not be submerged in abstract nationalism and abandon our immediate homeland, just as we must not be submerged in our immediate homeland so that we abandon our nationalist conceptions and the struggle to achieve them (21)."

The political leader is thus not overwhelmed by his speculative thought, just as he realizes from the depths of his being that the ship which he navigates would be wrecked without his compass, and would be torn apart by the waves before it ever reached the distant shore or the promised horizon.

Both as a speculative thinker and as a political leader, Saddam Hussein has devoted much attention to the problem of writing Arab history, impelled by his ambition to awaken the Arab Community, press it to occupy its place in the world and fulfill its mission to humanity.

He is well aware of the import of Schopenhauer's words, "Only in history can a nation come to a complete awareness of itself(22)".

This is because there can be no nation without personality, no personality without heritage, and no heritage without history. Individual personality is one of the most important concepts

in social science, since it contains all the corporeal, existential, intellectual and ethical attributes, which interact with and complement each other in a given individual living in a given social environment. There is no doubt, then, that the personality of a nation must be stronger, as it embodies all its material, spiritual, geographic, historical, economic and cultural aspects-not only in their interaction with each other, but also in its growth and development. The maturity of a nation is the stage at which it becomes aware of its personality: the stage of consciousness of its self, its integration, individuation, and its distinguishing characteristics.

Individuation and integration cannot be complete in the feelings of an individual without a memory which links the different stages of his development, collects its living experiences, and provides a faculty which will be an anchor to his other faculties, which are always changing. It is the same with nations. They need memories to store their experiences, to protect their heritages, link the different stages of their development, and enable them to pick out their individual characteristics.

The memory of a nation is called history. History does not mean in this context the annals of kings, empires and dynasties, or the records of conquests and battles. It means the history of man, in a particular land: his struggles, victories, need and culture. It is the share of a particular people in human civilization.

Goethe said, "History must be periodically rewritten. This is not just because new facts are uncovered but because new events occur and an individual who observes the unfolding of his age, reaches positions from which he may survey the past and consider it in a new way (23),'

Unfortunately, the history of the Arab Nation has not yet been written from a critical and scientific viewpoint. Some historians have written it starting from the appearance of Islam, as though the Arabs had not existed before Islam, whilst other historians have written from an orthodox Stalinist viewpoint and have therefore refused to acknowledge the existence of nation and nationalism, enlightened socialist nationalists have hitherto only written isolated monographs about particular periods of Arab history. We still await someone who will write a comprehensive history of the Arabs.

But how should this be done? Saddam Hussein, in his third monograph 'On the Writing of History', suggests a programme and outlines a new way of looking at Arab history and at writing it. He starts from the general outlook of the Arab Baath Socialist Party, and rejects the two existing views of Arab history, the "Religious View" and the "Marxist View", "because the historians who take the religious view leave aside all nationalist, social and economic factors when evaluating history, and consider the spiritual factor to be the only factor in the rise and fall of nations, whereas the Marxists rely solely on a materialist interpretation of history and reject all spiritual conceptions as having no effect on the life of nations(24)".

Does the search seek a third way? No. It is a search to connect and integrate all the operative factors without placing too much stress on one to the exclusion of others.

It tries to make history a weapon in the cause of the renaissance of modern Arabism and a step towards the unity, freedom and social prosperity of the nation.

Saddam Hussein's first proposition for his method of writing history is that "the history of the Arab nation stretches back to the distant past. All the basic civilizations, which have appeared in the Arab homeland, are expressions of the personality of the sons of the nation who have sprung from one source. If these civilizations have local specificities, these form a part of the national stamp of the whole Community (25)".

Clearly this is in contradiction with the proposition that the preaching of Islam was the beginning of the Arab nation, just as it contradicts the Stalinist proposition concerning the

birth of nationalism and the emergence of nations. He goes on to criticize the traditional view of pre-Islamic history as empty and ignominious, just as he criticizes the Marxist view that reduces history to the naked struggle between the classes, for both views ignore the realities of history. "When a traditionalist gives vent to the old Islamic view that considers the Arabs to be a licentious community, he imagines that he will strengthen the case of Islam and provide a firm basis for the acceptance of its religious law: This is a great mistake. We can see that it has influenced many Arab and non-Arab books and films which consider the Arabs to have been so licentious that God chose them for his revelation so that it would descend on the most licentious and sinful nation on earth and improve them. Logic and historical fact tell us that it was a nation that faced many difficulties and unusual constraints. Before it will have a revolution and receive a revelation and a universal human role, it must have many inner characteristics that make it able to bear the revelation and to fulfill its role (26)."

Saddam Hussein returns to this theme more than once. He argues that Islam is a revolution-in fact a great revolution. It is impossible for revolutions to occur in stagnant societies and in degenerate nations ruled by corruption and disintegration. It is thus impossible for us to say, "A revolution could occur in such communities, if only from a practical point of view, or that a revelation of human and revolutionary content could be

given to them (27)". This is because "only men worthy of such a revelation may bear it, but nevertheless they must be at a critical point in history with regard to all aspects of life, so that the necessary renewal may take place and the revolution may be forged with regard to entirety of life (28)".

The second proposition is that history is the end product of the decisions of the collective will of the nation-that is, of all the men living on a particular area of the earth who decide that they shall constitute a nation. This means that a nation has come into existence, for it is fundamentally her own will that she should be a nation or not. And it immediately makes use of all the other phenomena and factors of life present in that history to strengthen or weaken this will.

"We Arabs, then, are one nation. The geographical extent of our land is the entire Arab homeland. This is the definitive result to which we must give our attention, and must therefore read history in such a way as to serve this truth (29)." Saddam Hussein calls for history to be written-in accordance with this viewpoint-so as to affirm the historical facts which corroborate this method, "because most great struggles and events in the annals of history becomes in relation to a man a metaphor for that which he wishes to take from history so as to ennoble the programme in which he believes. Arab history is no exception to this (30)". We are not forced to accept from this the view of Collingwood when he said, "St. Augustine looked at history from the viewpoint of the early Christian, Tallemant looked at it as a Frenchman living in the seventeenth century; Gibbon as an Englishman living in the eighteenth century. Each viewpoint represents a view, possible for the man who held it, but there is no one free of his own particular viewpoint (31)".

Collingwood wrote this to refute those who considered history merely as a collection of facts which could be written in any way, and that its events were like the letters in a game of scrabble that can be rearranged in order to support a particular view. Saddam Hussein makes it clear that he holds a contrary view: "We do not need to forge history so as to read it from a Baathist angle. We only need to understand it from a purely Baathist angle

and bring out those truths which were hidden (32)." He does not want to make up ancient or modern history or fabricate facts, events or truths-only "to swim in the stream of history and not to consider it from the outside (33)".

The third proposition is that a historian must always consider the important question, "Those facts which are written down are not all the ultimate facts, even if all 'historians and analysts have come across them, since in all stages of history there are those things which get buried and are never mentioned. This internment is a major matter socially, politically and economically (34)".

This proposition has a great importance both as regards former times, when "fabrication of information" was not as widespread as today, and as regards modern times, when this terrible art has found its way into the hands of organizations that implement the goals of the ruling powers in various societies, especially undemocratic ones. Yet the events that have taken place in many modern revolutions in the Third World, particularly in some parts of the Arab World are virtually unknown and remain buried in the hearts of their leaders. While they are still alive they may write down-or cause to be written-some or all of these events, but otherwise the story of these events departs this world with them and is buried in their tombs, or they are turned into anecdotes and stories which are written down by those who were near to them. Nasser is a tragic example of this. As soon

as he died we read dozens of "judgments" on the Egyptian Revolution and the roles played by some of the principal and secondary actors in that drama, which possibly could, not come to light while the principal witness of those events was still alive.

But the story of the Revolution of the 17th-30th July in Iraq is the story of the thirteen days during which the Revolution's gates were open to the Trojan horse containing Abdurrazzaq an-Nayif and Ibrahim ad-Dawud. It took Saddam Hussein's courage, perceptiveness and ability to implement the detail of plans that saved it. Who could have known this? What if they had succeeded, and the Revolution had been waylaid and overcome, and its true adherents purged? What would history say now?

Such are the three basic propositions that Saddam Hussein lays down for those who embark on the rewriting of Arab history. They represent the principles of the new method propounded by a philosophy that has a comprehensive view of the Arab nation, Arab nationalism, and the Arab homeland. He considers this method to be the best able to express the particular Baathist view of their past, present and future alike.

Part two

Chapter 1

1) Edward Car, *Ma Huwa at- Tarikh?* (What is History?), translation by Mahir Kayyali and Bayyar Biyar ' Aql, Beirut, al-Mu'assasa al-Arabiyya lid-Dirasat wan-Nashr, 1976, p. 12.

2) *Ibid.*, p. 14.

3) *Ibid.*

4) Saddam Hussein, *Hawla Kitabat at-Tarikh* (On writing History), Baghdad, Ministry of Culture and Information, 1979, p. 7.

5) Car, *op. cit.*, p. 47, referring to A.J.P. Taylor, *From Napoleon to Stalin*, 1950, p. 74.

6) *Ibid.*, p. 47.

7) *Ibid.*, p. 48.

8) Saddam Hussein, *loc. cit.*

9) Ibid.

10) Roger Garaudy, *Fi Sabil Namuthaj Watani lil-Ishtirakiyya (Towards a National Model of Socialism)*, Arabic translation by Fuad Ayyub, Damascus, Dar Dimashq, p. 40.

11) *The Chosen Works of Marx and Engels*, Vol. 3, p. 506.

12) Ibid., p. 625.

13) Saddam Hussein, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

14) Edward Car, *loc. cit.*

15) Saddam Hussein, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

16) Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter 19 (see Edward Car, *op. cit.*, p. 47).

17) Saddam Hussein, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

18) Ibid., p. 14.

19) Ibid., p. 15.

20) Ibid., pp. 15-16.

21) Ibid., p. 16.

22) Schopenhauer, *The World as a Will and Idea*, London, 1886 (English translation by R.B. Haldov), Vol. 3, p. 228.

23) See Amir Iskander, *Matha Ya'ani An Nu'id Kitabat at- Tarikh? (What does rewriting History mean?)*, Cairo, *al-Jumhuriyya* newspaper, 9-1-1968.

24) Saddam Hussein, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

25) Saddam Hussein, address in the extended meeting of the Information Bureau on 19-9-1977, published by Dar ath-Thawra, Baghdad, under 402 the tide of *Hawla Kitabat at- Tarikh (On writing History)*, 1978, p. 16.

26) Saddam Hussein, *Hawla Kitabat at- Tarikh (On writing History)*, Baghdad, Ministry of Information and Culture, 1979, pp. 23-24.

27) Saddam Hussein, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

28) Ibid.

29) Ibid., p. 13.

30) Ibid., p. 8.

31) R. Colingood, *The Notion of History*, 1946, p. 12 (see Edward Car, *op. cit.*, p. 24).

32) Saddam Hussein, *Hawla Kitabat al- Tarikh*, p. 23.

33) Ibid.

34) Saddam Hussein, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Saddam Hussein, the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

Part II

Religion and heritage - Revolutionary reflections

By Amir Eskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

Chapter 2

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, there has followed, in the wake of the sharp shock of colonialist penetration of the Arab World, an ambivalent attitude towards its heritage.

This is because this attitude was forced to pause and consider the "other", and therefore tried to define its own self. In this attempt it was forced to answer the questions, which it posed itself: What was its past? In what way was it connected to it? In what sense was it possible that its essence should be part of historical continuity that began at a point in the distant past? In what sense could it cut itself off from that continuity, and be cut off from it? Is the present a continuation of the past, or does history refuse to repeat itself?

There is no doubt but that the attempt to answer such questions does not, and has not hitherto, preoccupied more than a few of the traditional scholars and religious lawyers, yet it has begun to attract, particularly in the years following the Second World War, a continually increasing number of researchers and intellectuals of differing intellectual viewpoints. But perhaps it is difficult even today to find a political party that has a serious programme concerning the matter of religion and heritage either as regards the Arab identity as a whole or that of a particular area. Generally speaking, the two most important events to occur in recent years may be said to be the defeat of the Arabs in the June 1967 war and the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

After the Arab humiliation of 1967, some intellectuals claimed that salvation for Arab society lay only in a return to the pristine springs of Islam, after its deviation from the upright path for the sake of materialist values" It had estranged itself from the values of its religion and its heritage, and this was the cause of its defeat.

In 1972, for instance, Shaikh Abd al-Halim Mahmud, the grand Imam of al-Azhar, wrote a series of articles, which he published in the Egyptian newspaper al-Ahram. He claimed in these articles that the root of the affliction was Greek philosophy, particularly Aristotle, European philosophy in general, particularly Descartes, and the Arab philosophers headed by Averroes (Abul Walid Mahommed Ibn Ahmed, Ibn Mahommed Ibn Roshd). In his opinion, all these caused the decay of the Islamic heritage, which God had sent al-Ghazali to defend. The solution proposed by the Imam of al-Azhar was a return to the Islamic spring that cannot run dry; whose constitution is the Koran. "Its message is eternal. It is the straight path, the everlasting guidance (1)."

To turn to the view put forward by Hussein Shafi'i who was Deputy Prime Minister of Egypt: "The only society that can challenge Israel is the society of 'There is no God but God' (2)." In the same month a high-ranking official in the Arab Socialist Union, Muhammad Othman Isma'il, said in a leading Cairo newspaper: "We preoccupy ourselves with Sinai, but not with our religion (3)."

We need not be indebted to those who put forward such views, or even to the views themselves. Their intellectual viewpoint towards the heritage is limited by their perception of it. It must be made clear that they do not search for the heritage for its own sake. They do not defend it because of God, their country or history: it is an ideological weapon used by this group of intellectuals and politicians for reactionary political ends.

At the other extreme we meet a group of intellectuals who reject the religious heritage. We hear Sadiq Jallal al-Azam, an Arab thinker from Lebanon, writing in his book 'A Critique of Religious Thought', "Islam has become the official ideology of the reactionary forces in the Arab homeland and outside it, connected with the new Imperialism led by America. In the same way, religion has become the principal source of justification for rule by kings, as Islamic jurisconsults have declared that the right of kings comes from Heaven and not from the earth. It has also become the chief ally today of bourgeois capitalism so that it, together with the institutions it has created, has become a bastion of right-wing and reactionary thought (4)." He goes on to say, "Religion, when it enters the depths of our lives and influences our intellectual and psychological composition, contradicts science and empirical knowledge through and through...(5)".

Let us read Adonis, another writer: "Inasmuch as Arabic Culture, in its prevailing inherited form, has a religious foundation which is a social formulation, it rejects innovation. This culture changes in its prevailing inherited form without making any real advance (6)." He goes on to say, attempting to lay bare the courses of reactionary thought in Arab society, criticizing al-Ghazali: "Al-Ghazali's thought is that which governs the beliefs and aims of Arab society today. Therefore, the prevailing ideology in schools, universities, television, broadcasting and books is a force for retreat into the past and the preservation of the inherited status quo. (7)"

When the Iranian Revolution took place under the banner of religion and in the religious robes of its leadership, it showed the lack of firm conviction in some of its intellectual leaders and their representatives who left one intellectual position for its antithesis. A number of Arab writers with Marxist principles formed a chorus singing night and day the praises of the Iranian Revolution and its religious leadership. It was not the fall of the Shah and his reactionary State that surprised them but the sudden discovery that religion, because of the nature of the new Iranian leadership, was the cause of the Revolution. This led Adonis to say, "Something which some of us had thought was outside history, suddenly seemed to enter its wide gate and become its prime mover. What some of us had thought was moribund, now appears as though it alone is enduring, revolutionary and modern)".

Adonis of course, was not alone. The long line contained some of those whom the present Arab state of affairs, and the quiescent picture it gave, led to see salvation in the robes of a man of religion cursing America and imperialism. It also contained traditionalists who wished to return to the Caliphate system, which breathed its last gasp with the "sick man of Europe" in 1924. Yet this time it had a new name: the Imam, the Ruhullah, or the Ayatollah. A third group in this line wished to fight Arab nationalism under the banner of the Islamic community, Islamic unity and Islamic ideology. The attempt made now by the imperialist states to enflame religious strife in some of our Arab countries is not without significance in this regard. The belated discovery by the imperialist states, especially the U.S.A., of the importance of "Islamic" civilization, and the string of conferences in American universities and Western research centres on Islamic civilization, is the most recent sign of the age-old imperialist exploitation of religion and its attempt to strengthen its existing positions and to gain new ones under its cloak. There is no doubt that this attempt at exploitation goes back more than a century, both directly and indirectly. This takes the form of a naked attack on Islam by a small-or large-handful of orientalists, missionaries and university professors, or of

an attempt to stir up strife between the members of different religions and of different sects of one religion inside the Arab homeland. We cannot forget that Napoleon proclaimed himself a Muslim in Cairo during the French attack on Egypt, how Great Britain caused discord between Muslims and Copts during the occupation of the Nile valley, how France acted as an imperialist in order to tear Lebanon from Syria, especially in the crisis of 1860, and how the two old imperialist powers tried to inflame religious minorities in Iraq, the Arabian Gulf, and all North Africa. One of the uncommon achievements of imperialism was that great orientalists such as Massignon could write a book on 'The Arabic Dialects of Baghdad'; in which he speaks of the differences in the "languages" of the Sunni, Shiite and Christian inhabitants of Baghdad.

Saddam Hussein's article 'On Religion and Heritage' assumes great importance for all these questions. This is not only because it is a far-reaching attempt to put our heads back on our shoulders, but because it is an important intellectual and political addition to the national Arab heritage in the modern age, and to the intellectual and political heritage of the Arab Baath Socialist Party itself.

It is the contribution of a man who is not only an intellectual and political leader but also a statesman with his hands on the reins of power in one of the most important parts of the Arab homeland.

We must say first that the Arab Baath Socialist Party is a party that has a secular philosophy and a nationalist nature, and that the Baathist State in Iraq is a secular and nationalist state both in theory and practice. But this nationalist nature and secular inclination have not cut it off from religion and heritage. On the contrary, but for its nationalist essence and secular inclination it might not have been possible for it to adopt its position of link between the present and the past of the nation.

The founder of the Baath, Michel Aflaq, and states: "Our Party has from the very beginning sought inspiration in our Arab heritage our spiritual heritage. This is abundantly clear in all the writings and slogans of the Party, especially in the slogan 'Our nation is one with an eternal message' (9)." The lecture which he at Damascus University early in his career in 1943 which he published under the title ' In Commemoration of the Arab Prophet' is an example of how Baathist thought from the very beginning sought revolutionary inspiration from the heritage. In his lecture he analyzed the essence of Islam and the essence of the personality of the Prophet as an exceptional leader and great revolutionary. He strove to establish a strong link between them and us and to show the eternal heroism and humanity, which are of relevance for us today and guide us on the right path. He saw in the life of Muhammad greatness able to embrace the life of all the Arabs: "Muhammad was all the Arabs. Let all Arabs today be Muhammad. (10)

He also said, "Satisfaction with our national heritage does not mean unqualified worship of the past and traditions, or a languidness in the spirit of creativity (11)".

This was because "to seek to understand the eternal experiment in the life of the Arab nation means an attempt to understand the unique achievement and the human impulses and values that are revolutionary, but which do not bestow upon the nation rights and distinctions to the extent of the great responsibility borne by the modern revolution (12)". This was a sentiment which all intellectual and political leaders of the Baath were to affirm at all times, and to which Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr gave an inspired and concise expression: "Be modern so long as you remain rooted. Modernism does not imply the severance of roots (13)."

The past does not become an idol, or the heritage a cold, dead corpse to whom those who worship the dead prostrate themselves. Rather, "the present is not the mere continuation of the

past. The result of any situation is an eternal moment (14)". As Elias Farah, one of the Baathist thinkers, put it "The revivification of the heritage does not imply a return to the past. It implies an understanding of the heritage in a scientific, revolutionary way in the light of the requirements of the struggle of the Arab nation in its present stage of history (15)."

Michel 'Aflaq returns to this theme more than once in his writings. "We do not turn to the heritage as do the traditionalists for sake of repetition and tradition-the repetition of Words and unprofitable tradition. We look at the heritage from our age and its civilization, and then we look at its problems and its backwardness. But our eyes are new; we do not demand from the heritage that it should be a substitute for the struggle, which we must begin. We have lived through the modern Revolution with all its demands, and we have found beyond it our heritage, which gives us roots. No revolution or contemporary philosophy can replace them. It is this understanding of the heritage that enables the Party to derive a spiritual and moral strength from it, on which other governments cannot rely (6)." He affirmed later the Importance for the Revolution of attachment to the heritage and of the dialectic between the present and the past: "We can only understand the heritage when we struggle (17)"

This, then, is the nature of the inner link-in Baathists thought-between the present and the past, modernity and the heritage. It is not a case of retreat under the illusion of salvation in the past alone. On the other hand it is not a flight from the past in its totality in order to cling to an imaginary future cut off from roots, or a selective fabrication of history. It is the full revolutionary possession of the heritage, which can only be achieved by revolutionary activity that liberates both the masses, and the heritage at the same time.

Saddam Hussein affirms at the beginning of his lecture that "our creed is not a union of all that the past and religion involve; it is a comprehensive and developed view of life and a comprehensive solution to constrictions and tenets. It pushes life forward on the road of revolutionary evolution (18)". "It is a reflection of the present of our nation, but is anterior to it at the same time (19)."

If the past still exists in the present and influences it, the question of "values" must become irrelevant. How can the values that existed in the past influence the present in the same way and through the same perspective? In other words, can values change their form and content according to time and place and the evolution of societies? To put it in a nutshell: are social values absolute or relative?

Saddam Hussein replies clearly that social values are "sophisticated, objective standards (20)", but absolute and relative at the same time. They are "absolute in respect of the shaping of development in the successive stages of human existence (21)", but relative "in an estimation of a comprehensive view of life in its general movement in isolation of the particularities of time and place and other limiting factors (22)".

Nevertheless, there are of course those who will call the relative absolute and clothe the temporal with the garments of eternity. This is a result of the state of a backward society and its long subservience to forces of colonialism and reaction. Consciously or not, they eventually solidify whatever is sterile in the present and deprive it of its dynamism and power to grow and develop. Sometimes they do this in the name of the heritage of the past and its traditions. At other times they do it in the name of religion. Saddam Hussein tells them with a biting clarity, "Our Party is not neutral between atheism and faith. It is always on the side of faith, but it is not a religious Party and there is no reason why it should be (23)".

But the rejectionists who seek salvation only through the past under the illusion that it can be repeated go to the lengths of blind, hateful partisanship. They make themselves guardians of society and its present in the name of its past. This had happened in the West as well as in our

Arab societies, only centuries ago. The imaginary tale told by Dostoevsky in 'The Brothers Karamazov' is a good example. Dostoevsky wanted to show how the "Creed" could be turned into a dreadful idol, as it was by the cardinals and priests of the Spanish Inquisition that tortured hundreds to death in Seville. The courts of the Inquisition were headed by a Cardinal whose name was dreaded because of his power to execute any man on the grounds that he was a heretic—a heretic as understood by the Cardinal, of course. One day the people of the city were surprised to find that Christ had appeared on earth a second time. They knew that this was in fact Christ because of his halo and the miracles that he worked in front of the people. They would bring him a sick child, he would touch it and say, and "Rise up", and it would rise up at once. The fearful Cardinal came, and all hearts were hushed. He saw with his own eyes the Christ surrounded by people at prayer. The mantle of religion fell from his brow and his bloodstained face became apparent. Christ approached the Cardinal, and religion faced the man of religion in front of the people. Christ gazed on the man who had killed in the name of Christianity, and the Cardinal knew that Christ pronounced him guilty. So the Cardinal had him imprisoned: the "Christian" Cardinal put Christ himself behind bars, then preached on how Christianity was persecuted on the pain borne by Cardinals in order to prevent it. He visited Christ in order to explain to him how Christianity itself had changed, and how its new characteristics were known to the minds of men. Eventually he came to the purpose of his visit: to tell him how the presence of Christ in the city involved a great danger for Christianity; how Christ had himself become a threat to Christianity. In other words, Christ was no longer The Christ. The high point of the comedy was that he asked Christ to leave the city at once, as an alternative to standing trial for heresy. The Cardinal himself unlocked his fetters. Alyosha, Dostoevsky's hero in his "Sad Dream", saw him leave, weighed down by indescribable grief, banished from the city, his city.

How should this bigotry, this oppression of religion, be faced?

There are two ways, both tactical and short-term. The first is "generalization and obscurantism" for the consumption of the majority. It has to be directed towards the short-term and can only be used for a short period in order to get through a temporary predicament. Saddam Hussein has publicly repudiated this: "We do not want to use [such methods] to achieve any short-term goal. Such are the tactics of the reactionaries and the oppressive classes in their relations with the masses. All that we want is that the majority of the people should be on our side at all times. The deep-rooted and essential treatment for the problems of the people and their basic social and economic environment is to keep well-away from generalization and obscurantism and to be concerned with specific goals and the active forces that are on the side of the Revolution at the moment in the struggle when the enemies of the Revolution and their allies are identified (24)."

The other way is to do battle with the enemy and to have a temporary meeting with him on his own territory in the hope of influencing him and leading him on the right path. Saddam Hussein rejects this tactical approach as well, since "you must always be clearly distinguished from the enemy when you face him and hope to vanquish him in those situations when you are leading the people.

There must be open ground between you and him so that you do not enter his trenches, and sufficient distance for you to get him in your gun-sights when you fire your gun. But you should not use cold steel or unarmed combat in your struggle (25)".

What, then, is necessary to repel religious and sectarian fanaticism in our day? The two ways that have already been discussed are wrong. Clarity and pointedness are very necessary "so that we become deep-rooted and make the role of our Party that of leader in moving and changing society (26) ".

To blur men's understanding and to enter the enemy trenches would "lose us the battle and inflict on us a defeat that would leave us open to an intellectual crisis at a time when we were the losers politically, so that we would lose twice: the political ground where we are grouped, and our intellectual integrity. We would lose our struggle (27)".

But is the repudiation of religion the necessary solution to the dilemma? No. (28).

Saddam Hussein courageously puts the ideal solution, the true strategic and revolutionary solution, forward: "What we must do is to oppose the institutionalization of religion in the state and in society-and also to oppose letting the Revolution intrude into religion. Let us return to the roots of our religion, glory in them-but not bring it into politics (29)."

The conclusion to be drawn is that we should hold fast to the ideal of a popular, secular state, raised above sectarian differences. All citizens of whatever creed are equal in the eyes of the state. One citizen can only have merit superior to another because of his attachment to the country and the Revolution, and his effort in the building of a new society. Let each citizen believe what he likes of the Books of Heaven, and belong to whatever earthly creed he chooses.

We must remember that the solution Saddam Hussein proposes is the implementation of one of the basic principles in all declarations of the rights of man for which humanity has long striven and paid the price of the deaths of millions of martyrs. For that principle to be implemented here in Iraq, where there are a number of religious minorities and groupings, assumes a special significance as Iraq is on the point of being one of the few Third World and Arab countries that meet the problem of religions and other minorities in this way.

The state that engages in a political struggle disguised as religious, or in a religious struggle disguised as political, will eventually lose the unity of its people. No matter which side wins in such a religious struggle, it becomes the state of only a portion of its citizens, a minority state. It is bad for a state and its institutions to be embroiled in a struggle that appears to be between the proponents and opponents of religion. The modern state is not an apparatus for guiding and preaching to the people; its leaders are not new cardinals distributing indulgences or withholding them. These battles in Third

World and Arab countries and societies are a wide gate for Imperialism and foreign influence to enter the country. It is rare to find one of these societies in which the leaders engage in such religious struggles without finding that the hand of Imperialism has been pouring oil and kindling the fire.

Saddam Hussein has said, "Political entry into religious matters leads to a division of the people--not only into those who are religious and those who are not, but into the different adherents of different religions, distinguished from each other by their religious life and practice (30)".

It must not escape us that one of the main causes of the enfeeblement and then the dismemberment of the great undivided Arab State that existed in early Islam was the division between its inhabitants and the rift in its unity caused by the different religious groupings that numbered more than twenty: Sunnis, Shiites, Alawis, Zaidis,

Shafi'is, Druses, Ibadis, Isma'ilis and the rest, including the early Murji'is, Mu'tazilis, Kharijis and Batinis. In those days human differences were expressed in religious terms. Despite the greatness of some of the leaders, their flowing robes covered political and social struggles. As one of the modern Arab writers who preach "One Islam " has put it, all the events that led to the appearance of these groupings "were human events and differences. A few of them were religious, but the majority political and social. Even the religious ones were really political

and social differences masquerading as religious (31)". He continues, "We cannot transform the battlefields of a thousand years ago into Islamic constitutions that discriminate in favour of one particular sect, or distinguish between the followers of different sects by writing each man's sect on his identity card. Islam is one and has no sects (32)".

Even when you are unable to unite a society you should not have recourse to apostasy or feigned conversion.

Saddam Hussein is well aware of this and says, "Giving way for religious reasons to reactionary calls involves giving up your role as leader of society, embodied in a revolutionary movement that is creating a new present and looks towards the future in clear and unambiguous ways. To renounce it and stand in the ranks of a reactionary movement that only looks to the past means that you must begin again from the bottom of the ladder (33)".

It is unwise to follow a reactionary movement in the hope of subverting it and freeing it of its poison, as "the religious reactionaries will be the leaders, not you. Every pathway has its leaders, and therefore it will not be you that leads the masses along this path, so you will not be able to divert them in the direction you want (34)".

We should add that when Saddam Hussein emphasized that the state should not force a religion or a sect on its subjects, he persistently refused any accommodation of a temporary or technical nature with the reactionaries, and rejected equally the opposite extreme, which is to proclaim or encourage agnosticism. He always affirmed that the state must have a firm and principle attitude to this sensitive matter that is liable to flare up quickly in any society. He was very conscious of two important things: firstly, that generally speaking the reactionaries are the side to start these battles--some would say that they always are--and secondly, that if the state is neutral and abandons religious struggles to the protagonists, Imperialism will always be lying in wait behind the gates, and the state may be unable to provide leadership on the right path.

As regards the first, Saddam Hussein says: "Let us tell everyone to practice his own religion, and not interfere with it. But the condition for this is that no one should quarrel on religious grounds with the policies of the Arab Baath Socialist Party. They must not cloak politics with the veil of religion or with anything else that conflicts with the Revolution and its goals: for that could only help the new imperialism (35)." As regards the second matter, Saddam Hussein affirms the necessity for education, training and culture. Here the factors of the particular age are important, on condition that they are not used for neutral gradualism but methodical gradualism. "With his conscious will, man plays a central role in it (36)." He says, "You must accept the guardianship of the factors of the particular age. But take care that the reins do not slip from your hand, and do not let the factors of the age be exploited by others--for then your role will become secondary, and you will lose the leadership (37)".

When the main keys that will guarantee the movement of destiny in its true path have all been gathered, and we are able to use the factors of our age with perspicacity, caution and responsibility in the dynamic construction of a new society for all the people and by all the people, "then there will be no fear of the external enemy waiting behind the fence (38)".

It is taking pride in religion without being embroiled in the politics of religion, having faith while playing no part in sectarian struggles, and holding fast to the spiritual kernel that consists of the fight for goodness, justice, sacrifice and progress and is central to the Islamic message "in a new framework designed for new development and progress (39)".

Saddam Hussein sees quite rightly that the problems of the modern society in which we live are fundamentally different, as are the solutions, from those which society faced at the dawn

of Islam, when the Religious Law of Islam was formulated. The progress of modern life involves a reversal of some old laws that caused splits to appear in the Muslim community and enable imperialism to divide the Arabs and to turn the goals of the Revolution and the nationhood of the Arabs into a mirage (40).

Let us cite a recent example of how reactionaries attempt to subvert social progress by appealing to these old laws. On the 25th March 1974, the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs published a proposal to amend the law of individual rights. It asked intellectuals, lawyers and men of opinion to consider the proposals, stating that it intended to put them before the People's Assembly for debate and enactment as law. What happened? On the

30th of March-after only four days-a Congress of Religious Doctors at al-Azhar University rejected the proposals on the grounds that "legislation in matters of individual rights is properly a concern of al-Azhar, not of the Ministry of Social Affairs or the People's Assembly (41)".

The proposals concerned the rights of women, but the members of the Congress demonstrated afterwards so that their anger at the undermining of the right to legislate in religious law should be made known.

The European reader will be amazed to see that in the late twentieth century we still discuss and demonstrate--both reactionaries and progressives--on matters that were largely settled in Europe by the "Bourgeois Revolution" that began with the French Revolution. But he might remember that such reactionary positions and demonstrations are part of the backwardness in which European Imperialism has kept us. To plunder our mineral wealth and turn our lands into mere providers of raw materials and markets for its industrial goods are not its only aims. The sowing of religious dissension is one of the methods by which it turns the people of the area against each other and then plunders the raw materials and human resources with ease. The plundering of the Arab people, and the sterilization of their potentialities and prevention of them taking their rightful place in humanity are also fundamental aims, as is the quick and permanent suppression of any national revolution. These are the Arab people who produced a great and human civilization at a time when Europe was in darkness and its priests and cardinals were concerned solely with selling Paradise to those who could pay the most money. It was necessary for that Europe to die so that the modern Western and European civilization could flourish and the people of Europe enjoy material refinement.

But the Arab people, with all their immense potentialities and their intimate connection with their faith and heritage, are rising up once again, despite the yoke of Imperialism and reactionary suppression.

They are struggling now to discard the burden of their "Middle Ages" and to build a new civilization that will be both Arab and humanist.

Notes

- 1) See al-Ahram (Cairo newspaper), a series of articles entitled Sarab wa Ma' (Mirage and Water), 20-10-1972.
- 2) See al-Jumhuriyya (Iraqi newspaper), 22-11-1972.
- 3) Announced in a council meeting of The Arab Socialist Union, 1972.
- 4) Sadiq Jalal al-Azm, Naqd al-Fjkr ad-Djnj (The Criticism of Religious Thought), Beirut, Dar al-Tali'a, 1969, p. 24.

- 5) Ibid., p. 21.
- 6) Adonis, ath-Thabjt wat-Mutahawwil (The Fixed and the Changing), Dar al-Awda, 1974, pp. 27-34.
- 7) Adonis, Khawatjr Hawla Madhahjr at- Takhalluf al-Fjkri fil-Mujtama'a al-Arabi (Thoughts on the Aspects of Intellectual Backwardness in Arab Society), paper given in the Kuwait Council meeting in 1974 on The Crisis of Arab Cultural Development, and published by al-Adab magazine, Beirut, May 1974, p. 27.
- 8) Adonis, al-Nahar al-Arabi Wad-duwalli (newspaper), Paris, 22-1-1979.
- 9) Michel Aflaq, al-Ba'ath wat-Turath (The Baath and Heritage), Baghdad, Dar al-Huriyya, 1977, p. 10.
- 10) Michel ' Aflaq, FjiSabil al-Baath (Thjkra ar-Rasul al-Arabi), Towards the Baath (In Memory of The Arab Prophet), Beirut, Dar al-Tali'a, 1976, p. 126.
- 11) Ibid., p. 79.
- 12) Michel ' Aflaq, al-Baath wa Tahaddiyat al-Mustaqbal (The Baath and the Challenges of the Future), Baghdad, Dar al-Huriyya, 1977, p. 10.
- 13) Ahmad Hassan Bakr, al-Mawrid (Iraqi Magazine), dedication to the magazine.
- 14) Elias Farah, al-Fikr al-Arabi ath-Thawri Amam Tahadiyyat al-Marhala (Revolutionary Arab Thought and The Challenges of The Stage), Beirut, al-Mu'assasa al-Arabiyya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr, p. 34.
- 15) Elias Farah, Muhawjr Ra'isiyya fit-Turath (Major Central Issues in the Heritage), an interview with ath-Thawra newspaper, 11-7-1976.
- 16) Michel Aflaq, al-Baath wat-Turath, p. 14.
- 17) Ibid., p. 87.
- 18) Saddam Hussein, Nadhra fid-Djn wat-Turath (A Look at Religion and Heritage), Dar al-Huriyya (Revolution publications), 1978, p. 3.
- 19) Ibid.
- 20) Ibid., p. 4.
- 21) Ibid., pp. 4-5.
- ٢٢) Ibid., p. 5.
- 23) Ibid.
- 24) Ibid., p. 6.
- 25) Ibid., p. 7.
- 26) Ibid., p. 8.
- 27) Ibid., p. 9.
- 28) Ibid., p. 10.

29) Ibid., pp. 12-13.

30) Ibid., p. 26.

31) Ahmad Baha' ad-Din, ad-Da'wa ila Islam Wahid (The Call for one Islam), al-Mustaqbal magazine, Paris, 22-12-1979.

32) Ibid.

33) Saddam Hussein, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

34) Ibid., p. 19.

35) Ibid., p. 22.

36) Ibid., p. 28.

37) Ibid., p. 29.

38) Ibid., p. 27.

39) Ibid., p. 17.

40) Ibid., p. 15.

41) See Muhammad al-Nuwayhi, ad-Din wa Azmat at-Tattawur al-Hadhari (Religion and The Crisis of The Development of Civilisation), al-Adab magazine, Beirut, May 1974, p. 79.

Saddam Hussein, the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

Part II

Chapter 3

SADDAM HUSSEIN AND THE SPECIFICITY OF THE SOCIALIST EXPERIMENT

Socialism is not merely a dream in the hearts of prophets, the minds of philosophers and the imaginations of poets; it has become a tangible reality in societies with millions of inhabitants that make up more than a third of the population of the earth.

The first visions of socialism occurred in the revealed religions, then appeared in the innovations of great thinkers: in John Hus in Bohemia, Thomas Moore in England, and others. Then it became clearer in the works of Owen and St. Simon. Today it is, in its most common form, an expression of the power of man to turn the possible into actual fact.

Its different forms have proliferated in different times and places, and in the same way, the differing images of socialism have proliferated-and it is right that this should be so. The essence of the old human dream is always the same: freedom from class oppression and from social and political domination, and the unfettering of man's potential. Of course the forms that this has taken vary: it is right that this should be so, for societies all over the world are different. If you take a fish out of the sea it will die.

It will also die if you put it in fresh water. The flowers of the valley do not bloom on mountaintops, nor do those of the mountains bloom in the valleys, except for a short while in greenhouses.

It is to be expected that different brands of socialism will proliferate, just as national characteristics proliferate in every society. Only people, who have not yet heard that the earth spins on its axis, will be surprised at this.

But when the sleepers in the cave awaken they will find that a new world has been born outside their cave, and that it grows and flourishes.

It is true that in the Third World, particularly in the Arab World, there are those who claim to be bringing about the socialist dream and who wear false socialist masks, carrying banners that they have stolen. But there is no point in them infiltrating the procession. Their peoples will drag them from behind and cut off their heads. How shall houses built on sand withstand the wind and waves of the raging tempest? Only what is true will endure, and only the best will survive. Only what is of use to the people will remain on earth.

Saddam Hussein is one of the most brilliant leaders in the Third World who lead their peoples amidst the howling gale towards the haven of socialism. The first glimmerings of socialism took the form of justice, equality, and brotherhood among men. He dreamt of these as a boy. He was born in a poor peasant house in the countryside, but as a boy he often returned home without his jacket because he had given it to some playmate that he noticed was ashamed of his own ragged clothes.

But when he reached the age of first responsibilities he realized that millions of children in his country were ashamed of their ragged clothes that could not keep out the cold. He knew that he could not now take off his jacket and give it to them all. But he realized that salvation for all the poor in the villages and towns was possible through socialism: and through socialism alone.

What, then, are the basic hallmarks of socialism, both theoretical and practical, in the eyes of Saddam Hussein?

What are its content and its form? And how could he overcome the problems he faced so as to build storey on top of storey?

We shall let him speak himself through his books. His words are clear, precise and profound. Saddam Hussein says:

"I would like to start by saying that, as revolutionaries in this part of the globe, we must study all revolutionary experiments. It is not a question of study in the way one acquires knowledge

of technology; it is a mutual interaction of give and take. We have the power to give; we should also have the courage and the concern to take.

In this spirit, our interaction must be with the experiments of the whole world; we must not feel that any experiment is greater than our own, or that our experiment alone is greater than all the experiments. We must be humble but not weak, strong but not deceitful. We must interact with the world without looking down our noses at it.

We must interact with them without letting any person or organization whatsoever be considered superior to us. In this spirit, we can interact with other experiments, and can thus have no alternative but to say-with self-esteem but without fanaticism, that whatever the experiments of both the Third World and the world as a whole, we shall not find one that parallels the experiment in which we are engaged.

"Why should we make such a judgment? Let us say simply: events cause principles to ripen. Events move every event interacts with the economic, political and psychological factors in a society, and ideas gush forth. These ideas may contradict the facts; they may be to the effect that events should evolve with revolutionary vigor, or that they should evolve slowly. But in general there can be no new ideas without a pattern of events that change and unfold in accordance with the factors, which we have indicated.

"A man who is the philosopher of his people, then, imposes his ideal upon them. He must be one of them.

He must start from the reality in which he finds them in order to change them. This is a revolutionary reality, not merely a reality of existing circumstances. He takes what is already there so that he may surpass it; he takes the people, the classes, the economic potentialities, and the contradictions within the society in general, and in the light of these, he moulds his ideology. It is absolutely Impossible for any ideologist to go beyond the situation of his society so as to formulate an ideology for the whole world. Even though many ideologists have helped the whole world, that is very different from creating an ideology that will suit the whole world absolutely.

"Let us take as an example of a particular reality the experiment of the Soviet Union fifty-eight years ago [This speech was given in 1976].the U.S.S.R. implemented Marxism but did not halt at that point. They said they were Marxist-Leninists-that is, their Marxism was that of Lenin, the Soviet Russian. It was not purely the Marxism of Marx. Marx lived in a Western society. Why did the U.S.S.R. say that they were Marxist Leninists, and not just Marxists? They said this to affirm that, no matter how helpful the thought of Marx was to the revolutionaries-especially to those in the Supreme Soviet-they could not construct a revolutionary framework for the whole of Soviet society through Marx alone. It was Lenin who constructed such a framework based on the thought of Marx. Why? Because Lenin lived in Russian society and realized it's economic, social and political problems, and the nature of its class struggle. It was he who mobilized the masses and envisaged the form the future would take. He was consequently able to mould an ideology and put it into practice in that particular part of the world. But when we talk of implementing socialism in the Iraqi arena, we must consider socialism from the angle of our society and view it from our own perspective.

A literal transmission of any experiment will harm it, and a literal transmission of socialism will damage our society, for we try to apply Western liberal conceptions to our development as an alternative to the revolutionary path, but we have borrowed them from Western society (1)."

This clear, concise passage pinpoints a matter that is very important-particularly for the non-European reader. This is the question of the transmission and creation of Arab socialist thought. The European reader lives in an intellectual environment where for many years the problem of the intellectual dependence of the first socialist experiments in the world, headed by that of the Soviet Union, has been recognized. Even "euro-communism" in Italy, France and Spain is a new attempt at the betrayed experiment of Dubcek in Czechoslovakia to

renew socialism. At the same time there has been a proliferation of Marxist schools in the West, whose teachings are susceptible to acceptance and refutation. This is not merely because of developments caused by the experiments in China, Vietnam, Albania and Czechoslovakia, and before them in Yugoslavia and Cuba, but because thought itself does not stop evolving and innovating in accordance with the circumstances of each particular area and the changes of every age. Otherwise, humanity would not advance and dialectic would be no more than dead leaves on the grave of thought.

But it is not like this with the orthodox Marxist institutions in the Arab World. The invisible cord that binds them to Soviet ideology has forced them to enter-whether voluntarily or not-the sphere of strategic influence of the Soviet State itself. Their haste to applaud the actions of the Soviets is not the only, or even the most important, sign of this. Their neglect of the nature of the Arab reality itself, their frequent inability to analyze, face or lead it, and their adherence to the ideology of the dialecticians of the Soviet State which ignores some of the most crucial characteristics of the Arab nationalism and Arab unity-are other signs (2).

Saddam Hussein is perhaps quite right when he declares that the continued evolution of dialectic is a necessary condition for progress and development, and describes the mechanical transmitters as having "a reactionary position vis-a-vis practical thought, will, and the general development of human thought, no matter what ambiguities they may use in an attempt to hide their nakedness (3)".

Saddam Hussein is not a petit bourgeois "do-gooder" with a highly selective philosophy, as some adherents of the orthodox 'Marxist establishment have tried to dub the Baathists. They have even taken the concepts of "Petit-Bourgeois" and "selective philosophy" from Western thought without any real attempt to analyze and adapt them to our Arab society. To what extent can the social stratification of a Western capitalist society be applied to our Arab social structures? What are the points of congruity in the two societies? To what extent do the lower and upper classes in each society resemble their counterparts in the other? In what part of the Arab World was there feudalism similar to Western feudalism that was able to provide a womb for capitalism? Can it be said that Arab capitalism will give rise-even supposing that it should so desire--to imperialism on European lines along which that of Europe developed? A deeper analysis of the Arab situation-in its various regional variations-would not only show up the falsity of the analysis of most orthodox Marxist groupings and organizations, but also would show the superficiality of their criteria when applied to Arab society.

The attitude towards private property is one of the basic gauges for measuring the genuineness of an attempt at Socialism. Saddam Hussein says, "We consider one of the fundamental principles of our Party to be the struggle against exploitation and the refutation of those who make property and free enterprise a value that is distinct from the values of Socialism and a truth that cannot be questioned for any reason. This principle is integral to all stages of Socialism (4)." He says elsewhere in the same text, which is entitled 'Private Property and the Responsibility of the State': "Hesitation in the implementation of socialism and in the treatment of private property and free enterprise in a revolutionary way will lead first to submission and then to revisionism (5)".

What, then, is his attitude to private property? And what attitude should be adopted towards it in building socialism as conceived by him? Saddam Hussein says, "One of the most necessary ingredients for building socialism is control of the means of production and their nationalization, so that the material resources may be harnessed for the benefit of socialism, and the right balance may be struck between it and the contribution which free enterprise and private property make to socialism, subject to all the prevailing circumstances and the level of development (6)".

We ask now, what is meant by the contribution made to socialism by free enterprise? Before we reply to this question from his writings, we would like to recall that in some countries of Europe belonging to the Communist Block-Poland and Hungary, but especially Poland-private property plays a vital part in their socialist development, particularly as regards the

private ownership of agriculture, even after the thirty-five years of building a socialist society since the adoption of the communist system at the end of the Second World War.

If it is replied that in these instances private enterprise has been decreed as part of a central plan for socialization, this can easily be refuted when the thirty-five years are considered as a whole. This is what Saddam Hussein says himself: "Free enterprise and private ownership play a limited and central role. The basis for their toleration is not just that they do not conflict with socialism and the building of a new socialist society. They must also serve that goal and co-operate with it in achieving the goals envisaged in a particular stage of change and development. What are needed are not just the regulation of non-exploitative free enterprise by legislation and the general objectives of socialism. It must also be subordinated to the short-term dictates of politics (7)."

It is not a question here of preserving private property or an eventual abolition of it-the latter has only occurred in this form in the U.S.S.R.-it is a question of the size, extent and proper role of private property in the process of socialist transformation. It must not be seen solely in relation to the demands of that transformation in its successive stages, but also to the power of the state organizations to uproot and redirect every facet of economic activity, and of course-what must never be underestimated-the development of the conditions for economic, cultural and psychological maturity in the individuals who make up society.

It is the consideration of gradual development and its future horizons that led Saddam Hussein to say: "To permit free enterprise and private ownership of property within the limits allowed by the implementation of Baathist socialism at the same time as rejecting exploitation, necessitates a continual rethinking of the extent and type of private ownership in accordance with the canons acceptable to socialism at the different stages of development. The Revolution assumes the heavy burden of guaranteeing a permanent balance between the requirements of socialist change and the requirements of preventing a particular segment from going beyond their prescribed limits (8)."

The state cannot be neutral if it is dedicated to the socialist process, in contrast to the capitalist state, which is always in the absolute service of the capitalists and plays no part in bettering the conditions of the majority when this conflicts with the interests of the oppressive classes.

"When the struggle is over and the socialist structure has been completed, it becomes the state of all the people (9)".

Yet there remains another question of great importance. This is not concerned with the nature of socialism in general, as the Arab Baath Socialist Party led by Saddam Hussein is struggling to build it, or with the nature of a party founded to achieve Arab unity. It is concerned with the practical conditions and the possibilities which must be provided to build Arab socialism in the light of the present fragmentation of the Arab World and its human and economic resources, and the proliferation of competing centres in different Arab lands, while Arab wealth is split among markets that are closed.

The question is, what is the relation between the practicalities of socialist change in Iraq and the practicalities of building Arab unity? Is it possible to achieve the essentials of socialism-at least, as the Baath Party understands it-without achieving unity? Put more bluntly-can socialism be built in one part of the Arab World-Iraq?

Saddam Hussein has considered this essential question and devoted himself to it, 'On Establishing Socialism in One Arab Area', which is an original contribution to Baathist thought. How did he answer it?

"The position of the Party on this question is that Socialism should spread to its full extent, and its powerful potential should be realized in the face of world developments. In the same way it should provide the material and spiritual possibilities for development at the behest of the leadership of the Arab Revolution. The struggle to achieve unity must accompany the struggle to build socialism. But is it possible at this stage to implement Socialism in any Arab country we choose, merely by providing the political will to achieve socialism? The answer

is, socialism in its broad sense cannot be implemented in any single Arab country. It can only be implemented in the context of the national struggle (10)."

But could socialism be built inside Iraq while continuing the struggle for Arab unity at the same time? The answer: "Yes. Socialism can be established in the Iraq area by the leadership of the Arab Baath Socialist Party while keeping the national struggle firmly in view. In this way the implementation of socialism becomes one of the central features in strengthening the factors that aid the national struggle for unity in two ways:

1) By preparing human and material resources to strengthen the effective forces for the struggle on the one hand.

2) By creating the necessary programme to reverse our centralist ideology so that it can be at the disposal of the leaders of liberation and socialism in the Arab struggle on the other hand (11)."

All the same, is it possible to realize all our goals within a limited geographical area, or only those parts of them that are possible? What is the extent of the "possible"?

The answer: "The establishment of socialism within Iraq is possible and necessary. But it is not adequate to give a model of the goal we desire in the whole Arab homeland. And it cannot cover all the material possibilities for true independence in a world of large international blocks. Our answer must be a repudiation of whatever goes beyond our conception of, and our programme for implementing, socialism and building a strong Arab state free of oppression and class structure. Our centralist politics exist to seize total independence and reject submission to the political and economic policies of foreign powers (12)."

Saddam Hussein's intellectual standpoint on these questions is absolutely clear. It consists of the realization of the possible within the present state of affairs. Its starting point is the contradiction of the present from a revolutionary perspective that struggles to overcome these contradictions and provide a revolutionary solution to them. He is striving now to realize his "programme" within the confines of his geographical area, which he hopes will provide an advance over experiments in other Third World countries and the Arab homeland. Even though he is causing Iraq to move economically and socially, he is well aware that the developments within Iraq are not the ultimate goal; but they are necessary in order to achieve a united, democratic and socialist Arab society.

There is no doubt that building socialism within one area of the Arab World does not imply an abandonment of the struggle for unity, just as the achievement of unity would not imply the abandonment of the struggle for socialism. Rather, the building of socialism is the building of one of the theoretical and practical foundations for unity in its deepest sense.

"The poets, writers and broadcasters have made no real progress in achieving Arab unity, so the courses of action that are effective have become particularly important.

For this reason the plans we have made for our dealings with the younger Arab countries must be seen with particular attention, and require a special sort of sacrifice, for they can polarize the vast Arab masses in circumstances such as the present when the pulpits spread falsehood and deception. It is true to say that we come closer to the unity of the whole Arab nation by increasing our sacrifices and support for the national struggle. The success of our democratic and socialist experiment is an expression of our Party's philosophy (13)."

Such, then, is Saddam Hussein's conception of socialism and Arab unity, which he has expressed with clarity and revolutionary sincerity. He has gone on to raise the pillars of its house on strong foundations. Socialism is not merely a beautiful dream. It is study, hard work, sweat and struggle. The path in front of it is not strewn with roses. The Iraq which was handed over to him was backward and belonged to that sleeping world which lived for long under foreign domination while the imperialists plundered its wealth and transported it to the West to make luxury goods for Western society. Consumption in America and Europe depends on continued production, but only leaves very little behind it in the Third World, where most of the people are poor and degraded. After hunger, ignorance, toil, disease and political and social repression they will have Paradise after death. But they do not have

dominion over the earth. How can socialism be built and achieve its full flower without wealth? How can there be a raising of living standards in building the new social economy without a raising of the average social wage? This is because "if the basic question in industrial countries is the problem of distribution of wealth, that in the sleeping countries is the problem of the creation of wealth (14)".

It is true that among Arab countries Iraq is not poor in raw materials. It swims over a gigantic lake of petrol, which is now the most important form of wealth in our modern world. But it did not own this wealth, which belonged to foreigners. It was as though Iraq was about to die of thirst while lying beside a spring, because it was unable to stretch out its hands to the water. And its hands were fettered by colonialism.

Saddam Hussein had to act with courage to free the wealth of his country. He cut its bonds so that it could quench its thirst from the spring.

Notes

- 1) Saddam Hussein, Nahnu Mutawadhi'un bi-duni Dha'f wa Aqwiya' bi-duni Churnr (We are modest without weakness and strong without vanity), Baghdad, Dar al-Huriyya, 1976, pp. 9-12.
- 2) Qadhaya al-Khilaf fil-Hizb ash-Shuyu'i as-Suri (The Issues of Controversy in The Syrian Communist Party), a collection of documents, Beirut, 1972, Dar Ibn Khaldun, p. 97.
- 3) Saddam Hussein, al-Melkiyya al-Khassa wa Masuliyat ad-Dawla (Private Ownership and The Responsibility of the State), Baghdad, Dar al-Thawra, 1978, p. 10.
- 4) Ibid. p. 15.
- 5) Ibid. pp. 10-11.
- 6) Ibid. p. 14.
- 7) Ibid. p. 15.
- 8) Ibid. pp. 17-18.
- 9) Ibid. p. 23.
- 10) Saddam Hussein, Hawla Iqamat al-Ishtirakiyya fi Qutr Arabi Wahid (On establishing Socialism in one Arab Country), address in The Information Bureau published by the magazine, Afaq Arabiyya, Baghdad.
- 11) Ibid.
- 12) Ibid.
- 13) Ibid.
- 14) Ibid.

Saddam Hussein, the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

Part II

Chapter 4

Petrol-Cutting the dependence on imperialism

The connection between petrol and some parts of the Arab World began when petrol was discovered for the first time in Iraq in 1927. Great discoveries followed after the Second World War in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Algeria, Libya and the United Arab Emirates.

The activities of exploration and production were carried out at first by foreign organizations that were not connected with the economic and social activity that went on in the countries where petrol was found. The connection with petrol was therefore limited both geographically and as regards the political arrangements, which were made both before and after the War by those countries who were victorious in it. "These countries considered the petrol to be their property and to belong to their companies. The share of the Arab countries whose land produced it was only four shillings a ton, paid to the local ruler to spend on his personal needs (1)."

There was then a great increase in the size of petrol revenues for the producer countries after the "Mosaddaq" crisis with the British Petroleum Company in 1950. The Arab side came to have an equal share in the revenue based on a price for petrol fixed by the foreign companies. The great discoveries of petrol in the Arab World, during the '50s and '60s, coupled with many Arab countries gaining their independence, increased the importance of petrol in the Arab lands. Between 1950 and 1970 the number of producers rose from five to twelve.

Petrol production increased. After this great increase in production, the Arab producers' share of world production rose to approximately one-third, providing some 60% of the petrol sold worldwide. This was despite a wide variation between the different Arab producers. Bahrain only produced 60,000 barrels a day, while Saudi Arabia produced 9,000,000 barrels a day. A mere three countries in the Gulf region-Iraq among them-accounted for 70% of all Arab production (2).

Petrol is divided, from a geographical angle, chiefly among five Arab countries: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya and the U.A.E. If we add Algeria and Qatar, we find that approximately 94% of Arab production is limited to these countries.

From the demographic angle, petrol is found in the countries of not more than 18% of the Arab population, if we exclude Algeria, or 27.8% if we include it.

What was the direct result of this great economic gift lying beneath the soil of the Arab homeland, taken as a whole? An economic researcher states, "The period since the beginning of the '60s of this century [the period of great petroleum discoveries] has witnessed the division of the Arab states into two distinct groups as regards the average personal income. A group of states with low populations has achieved an average income equal to that in the most advanced states, or even higher, while the greater part of the Arab homeland, which contains the majority of the population, suffers from a depressed average income and severe crises in budgetary expenditure and other economic matters (3)." He comments, "In 1972 the highest average income achieved in the Arab World was in Kuwait, and this was approximately 50 times the average income in Somalia. The gap was tripled after the rises in oil prices after the October War in 1973, so that the average income in Kuwait exceeded 150 times that in Somalia, and 48 times that in Egypt.

This gap was maintained in the following years (4)". There must be a note of caution when regarding statistics concerning those Arab states whose wealth has reached astronomic proportions: the average personal income calculated on the basis of the national income is often deceptive, despite its importance in any comparative economic survey. This is because when you divide the national income among the number of inhabitants in the country, you assume that it is equally distributed among the population. This can never happen in any society, especially those ruled by families, which receive the greater part of the national income. Naturally, matters are different in other oil-producing Arab societies, which devote

part or all of their revenues to development, and whose political and economic lives are governed by different systems and philosophies. Consider the following carefully:

"In recent years the growth of Arab financial institutions has taken a form contradictory to the real needs for the growth of the Arab region. There appears to be one cause for this development that can be clearly seen: this is the flight of capital from the region to the industrial capitalist countries. This is a result of the attempt to finance consumer imports and construction projects with gigantic revenues. The development of financial institutions-which are basically banking institutions-has remained a constriction on the producers. Their main purpose is to stabilize the price of crude oil after the October War. The institutions are nothing more than outposts for the great Western financial centres. This has been confirmed by the setting-up of banking unions, which direct towards the Western capital markets a proportion of Arab financial resources. If we add that the management of the great Arab financial houses in Kuwait, Bahrain, the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia is directly controlled by the great Western banks, you can gauge the extent of their ability to transmit Arab financial resources outside the region. We can say without exaggeration that all the financial institutions in the oil-producing countries are foreign institutions, since they participate directly in the markets of the big international financial centres, which consider these institutions to be one of their tools (5)."

This leads us to a number of basic conclusions. First, the greater part of the oil revenues of some Arab states brings no benefit to the Arab World, and even the people of these states do not profit from it, since they are not used to develop the region or even for any real development in these states. They return once again to the coffers of the consumer states: the great capitalist states headed by the U. S. A. and some of the Western European countries. Secondly, the increase in oil revenues in these states is not directed at any real economic independence, which is the essence of political independence. Sometimes they have the opposite effect, and increase dependence on world imperialist institutions. Thirdly, the vast gulf between their national income from oil revenues and the national income of some other parts of the Arab World, both as regards the average personal income and the total national income of different countries, leads to a deepening of the divisions between them and to the growth of economic and psychological envy among the members of the one Arab Community in their different lands. This is manifested in a weakening of nationalist ideology by these differences and its replacement by an ideology similar to foreign liberalism, which can only lead to a greater economic and political dependence on the imperialist West.

It is in this context that the thought of Saddam Hussein assumes a profound significance, both as regards Iraq itself and the Arab homeland as a whole. It must be pointed out that Iraq has only been an oil state for eight-or perhaps only six-years in the true economic meaning of the concept, even though it was the first Arab land where oil was discovered.

Saddam Hussein remembers very clearly that when the Revolution of July 1968 took power, it did not find the coffers of the treasury full. Even in the following year, 1969, all the revenues came from petrol. These represented the basic national income in an economy without diversification, and did not exceed 169,730,000,000 dinars. For this reason, "Iraq must not be compared with the Arab oil-countries, particularly those of the Gulf, Algeria and Libya, for those countries had had large deposits in banks for many years (6)". It would be scarcely an exaggeration to say that Iraq has only been an oil producer since 1974, by contrast to the other Arab oil states. This is because "Iraq, who achieved her political independence from imperialism in the Revolution of 1958-as was acknowledged in the political communiqué issued by the Eighth Regional Congress of the Arab Socialist Baath Party in January 1974-remained until the Revolution of the 17th July 1968 subject to neo-colonialist economic domination, most notably through the control and monopoly which the companies had over its greatest wealth and most important source of national income--oil". It follows that "the battle to achieve economic independence in the Iraqi area, and to secure political independence and make the national will free of all shackles, is the battle to liberate the oil

wealth from the imperialist companies and to achieve complete domination of it as regards planning, production and marketing.

Without victory in this battle, Iraq would remain subject to imperialist economic domination, and any progress achieved in other areas would be of little avail (7).

But what of Law Eighty—the Law of National Exploitation of Oil that was issued in 1961; and gave the Government power over all the areas that were not exploited by the foreign companies? The political communiqué declared that this law remained "ink on paper" until the Revolution of the 17th July and caused "desperate attempts by the companies to circumvent it and to deprive it of its national import. In 1965 the Government of Tahir Yahya almost signed an agreement with the companies placing all the territories covered by Law Eighty in the hands of the companies under the pretence that they would be exploited jointly with the Government through joint ventures. The Party took a firm stand against this proposal, and defeated it by mobilizing public opinion against it (8)".

The first slogan of the July Revolution in Iraq, "Arab oil is for the Arab people", was never even implemented during that period to the extent of "Iraq's oil is Iraq's".

In 1969, a year after the Revolution, Iraq began to take the first steps to achieve the idea behind the slogan by making a co-operation agreement with the U.S.S.R. for the direct exploitation of oil in the Rumaila fields. The foreign companies considered this to be a threat to their future in Iraq and tried in every way until 1972 to stop it. But the agreement was successful because of national alertness and will. The mere signing of the agreement "in this strategic area which touches the heart of imperialist interests in the region" was a great act of courage by the young Revolution, which had found the country almost bankrupt. "If comparisons may be made", says Tariq, Aziz in his book 'The revolution of the New Way', "the agreement with the U.S.S.R. to exploit the oil of Rumaila has comparable historical importance to the steps taken by Egypt in 1955 to buy arms from socialist countries. It may be even more important (9)".

There is a Chinese fable—and some old, popular fables do not lose their meaning with the passage of time—that one-day a tiger appeared on the bridge of Ti-sin-yan. The people were divided as to what they should do. Some said, "We must not provoke it, or it will kill us". Others said, "How can we even stand in front of it without provoking it?"

Au-sen, the hero of the fable, thought, however, that the tiger that was crossing the bridge of Ti-sin-yan would kill the people whether or not they provoked it. It is the same for us: either we kill the tiger, or it kills us.

It seems that the Iraqi Revolution agrees with Au-sen. At the end of 1971 its Government entered into negotiations with the oil companies after resolving that they would have to be decisive, after previous negotiations in 1970 had broken down after an unspecified period. It resolved to follow Saddam's path and face the tiger so as to save the people from it. The companies thought that the Revolution would only skirmish with them, for how could it provoke them or even conceive of freeing itself from them? They therefore protracted the negotiations and after a short while, when they considered they were being "provoked", they decided to act before the Revolution acted. They proposed to make a big reduction in oil production so as to paralyze the Revolution by emptying its treasury.

But the Revolution was not only thinking of provocation. It had prepared its ground well in order to finish the matter once and for all. On the 17th May 1972 it issued the famous ultimatum to the effect that, if all its demands were not met within two weeks, something would happen to the companies which they were still not able to envisage clearly: complete nationalization.

We should mention that a number of friends of the Revolution, both inside and outside Iraq, were unsure that it would carry out the threat in its ultimatum and issue the decree of nationalization. In the interests of historical accuracy we would point out that the Iraqi Communist Party, which at that time had two ministers in the Government, advised the

Revolution to be cautious in adopting the resolution, lest the country should suffer armed imperialist intervention similar to that in Egypt after the nationalization of the Suez Canal.

In the meeting between Saddam Hussein and Castro in Havana on the 15th of January 1978, Saddam Hussein said to Castro: "The Soviet Charge d'affaires met Tariq, Aziz and said to him, 'Nationalizing the oil would be dangerous!' Tariq, Aziz said, 'The Charge d'affaires is warning us against nationalization' (10)."

The principal slogan in those days was originally only for internal consumption aimed at the Baath Party in its struggle with the companies. It later became a popular song. It was "Don't let up! Forward!"

Saddam Hussein said in the same meeting with Castro: "We had no information about the oil market. We asked financial and economic specialists, who thought we should act in the old way and told us, 'you don't have the skill and the financial resources. How can you nationalize?' We considered the masses to be our hard currency, so we could not act in the old way (11)."

The struggle for a settlement was intensifying every day, when the Revolution published the complete text of the negotiations with the companies. An observer who knew something of the nature of the leadership and the "political brain" that was leading it, was certain that this intensification and the public revelation of what had been going on behind closed doors would not have been made by any "sane" leadership-as Saddam Hussein himself put it, "unless it had already made up its mind". Yet the companies "continued to refuse to imagine that the Revolution would nationalize (12).

Saddam Hussein recalls that at the time there were French sources who did not agree with the calculations made by the companies, and that the Iraqi Government might take a unilateral decision to legislate. "Yet even the most astute of the companies' sources did not imagine that the decision would be the nationalization of the companies. But on the basis of their calculations they tried to persuade the other sections of the companies to moderate their stance. The French Ambassador telephoned the General Secretary of the Monitoring Committee, asking for a delay in unilateral action in the hope that this would enable him to persuade the representative of the Companies Stoke Wil of the necessity of acceding to the Government demands. Shortly before eleven o'clock on the 1st June 1972, before the expiry of the ultimatum, the Ambassador telephoned the General Secretary of the Monitoring Committee to tell him that, after much effort, he was still unable to persuade Stoke Wil (13)."

At eleven o'clock on the morning of the 1st June, the ultimatum expired. The telephone rang in the office of the General Secretary of the Monitoring Committee.

The caller was Stoke Wil, requesting an extension of time and a further opportunity to negotiate.

But at the same time, while the masses held their breath waiting to see what would happen, the Iraqi Radio and Television Services were ready to broadcast an important speech to the Community. President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr was waiting to announce the historic decision of the Revolution: the nationalization of the oil companies holding a monopoly in Iraq.

The imperialist tiger had been dealt a fatal blow. Nevertheless, the battle was not easily won. As Tariq Aziz puts it in his book 'The Revolution of the New Way':

"It did not end with a single blow, after the manner of fables. There was a hard battle, and a long struggle at close quarters (14)."

In the decree of nationalization issued on that day, the state obtained control of 65% of the area producing oil, which area was the only area under foreign control. This raised the oil-producing area controlled by the Government to 99.75%. This was because the decree issued on that day did not include the Basra Petroleum Company.

"The decision of the leadership not to include the Basra Petroleum Company in the decree of nationalization of the 1st June 1972 was important in two respects. In the first place, it provided the state with resources of hard currency during a difficult period that followed, enabling it to face up to the monopolies, while at the same time it provided the Revolution

with a new opportunity of enlightening the companies of its intention of forcing them to comply with the decree of nationalizing the Iraq Petroleum Company, and to acknowledge Law Eighty in its entirety. In the same way, the decision of the leadership to give France a special place in the nationalization had a far-reaching importance, just as the attitude of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries towards the nationalization was important politically and economically (15).”

Was the nationalization of Iraqi oil a revolution? The banner of nationalization ranged far and wide, but Mosaddaq had raised it and tried to implement it in Iran in 1950. Yet despite this, Saddam Hussein himself said, "The 1st June was not a revolution in itself. It was part of a revolution, an act flowing from its conceptions and connected with its course. It was one of the essentials for its course (16)". The question here is not connected with the conception of nationalization in itself, or with the slogan for liberating the oil wealth as a mere slogan. It is in the first place connected with the nature of "the political brain" and "the political path" which lay behind the conception of nationalization, its implementation, and its ultimate successful conclusion. It is here that the fundamental difference lies between this act of nationalization and previous attempts at it, which were stillborn or died while still in the cradle. Perhaps there was another difference of great importance: this instance of nationalization was carried out according to a preconceived plan for which the political and economic preparations had been made years in advance. Although it entailed a positive revolutionary response to the imperialist attitude towards the Revolution, this was not its end in itself. In this respect, too, it was different from some previous cases of nationalization that did not concern oil. There is no doubt that nationalization in itself, particularly in the field of oil, had a great significance not only for the struggle against imperialism but as a display of the extent of the revolutionary courage and worldly experience that were characteristic of this Iraqi Revolution when it was picking up the reins of power. "It knew little about oil", says Saddam Hussein. "It is certain that if the nationalization had not been carried out successfully, a financial disaster would have occurred such as that which befell earlier experiments at nationalization. And the story people told about the nationalization would be very different (17).”

Both before and after nationalization, the "political brain's" judgments met the mark. They showed no weakness or hesitation. Both in its judgment and in its action it was in complete control of the steps that it took. Tariq, Aziz explained this in the work that we have already mentioned: "The revolutionary leadership realized the importance of the elements of national unity and the unity of the progressive factions in the battle for liberation and construction. It knew how to mobilize them both before and after the nationalization. It also saw the importance of popular participation in any national battle, so that the masses took responsibility for it both beforehand and afterwards. It did not limit the struggle to a regional confrontation but turned it into a national one, and saw the need to be allied with the forces of the world Revolution, headed by the military might of International Socialism. It sealed this alliance, while considering the contradiction and competition between the Western interests and learning how to pit these interests against each other. It thus made use of its alliance with cunning and discretion, but did not deviate from its revolutionary line and principles. Similarly, it grasped the importance of good management, resolution, and the other factors needed to win such a fight (18).”

The socialist countries, with the U.S.S.R. at the fore, supported the decree of nationalization once it had been issued. In fact, the U.S.S.R. was the first country to buy nationalized oil from Iraq. France, Spain, Turkey, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Egypt, Morocco and the independent Western companies followed. In the nine months that followed the nationalization, before the companies eventually submitted on the 1st March 1973-and these were very difficult months-the decree was not only fully implemented, but the Iraqi leadership underwent a severe testing. The "political brain" did not lose sight of the battle for a single moment. The leaders

in the Party never left their place in the operations room with the technician Cadres, who were naturally essential. The result was that those who had had absolutely no knowledge of oil matters were able by the beginning of March 1973 to sell 48 million tonnes of nationalized oil out of the 57 million tonnes that were the productive capacity of the Kerkuk fields. This figure exceeded by 20 million tonnes the figure claimed by the nationalized companies before nationalization as the maximum that could be marketed.

At the end of the nine months the independent Iraqi economy was born and saw the light of day for the first time. The experiment had ended successfully, for "the man who had come to the river had been able to swim with skill and reach the far side in safety"(19). Is it too much to say that it was not the first time for Saddam Hussein that he had swum out into the river and reached the other bank by strength and will, faith and complete trust in his principles and political values.

The nationalization of oil in Iraq did not only have a national effect inside the country. It also had a far-reaching popular effect as regards the situation outside Iraq. The achievement of economic independence and the freeing of the national will by breaking the country's dependence on imperialism were not the furthest-reaching of the goals desired by the "political brain" that entered the battle of nationalization and emerged victorious. Saddam Hussein recalled, " Any victory achieved within the context of one region is a step on the road of the central objectives of the Arab Revolution (20)."

Thus, the slogan " Arab oil for the Arab people" that was first raised by Iraq was put into practice only partially, within the Iraqi region, but continued to call upon the Arab oil states to adopt it and to expropriate the oil as the right of the sons of the Community that was poor, naked and backward despite its dazzling wealth, gripped in the talons of world imperialism.

The slogan " Arab oil for the Arab people" was not merely a sentiment for internal popular consumption. Iraq raised another slogan that sprang from the first and expressed the same pugnacious content: "Oil is a weapon in the battle". In the Congress of the United Arab Defence Ministers on the 27th January 1973 in the ninth month itself, Iraq made a proposal for concerted Arab action on the basis of using oil as a weapon in the popular struggle against imperialism and Zionism by nationalizing oil interests and all the other interests of all states that did not respond to a call to cease military and economic cooperation with the Zionist entity. Iraq said on that day to the other Arabs, "We are an oil state, so do not think that we exaggerate when we utter this slogan. We utter it to brothers. We realize its effectiveness. We were the first to put it into practice. Let what we have done in Iraq make us Fedaiyyin (21)."

The proposal of the Iraqi delegate was a limited one.

It was, "Let every oil state that has the power to nationalize, nationalize the American share and the share of any other country whose attitude is similar to that of America. Nationalized oil must not go to the same markets, but must be sold to other companies and states so that the Arab political position will be strengthened in its links with foreign countries. Those Arab states that cannot nationalize should stop oil exports to America and any other country that takes an attitude similar to the American (22)

In the October War of 1973, Iraq was the first to put its statements and proposals into practice. In the afternoon of the 6th October, the first day of the War, the political leadership issued a decree that was made public on the morning of the 7th and nationalized the American share in the Basra Petroleum Company because of America's attitude towards the Arab struggle. It also sent envoys to other Arab oil states urging them to issue similar decrees, or at any rate to do what they could. But the envoys were told, "We cannot follow this path. We are willing to contribute money, but it is inconceivable for us to play around with the Oil (23)."

As the War escalated and the Arabs achieved victories in its first days, Iraq rushed its army to the western front and popular enthusiasm rose to explosion point. There was no alternative on the oil issue except the adoption of a new line. Those who had considered-and still did so--that oil was worth more than the blood spilt on the Suez Canal and the Golan Heights found themselves in a quandary. At the conference called in Kuwait during the War they were

forced to adopt a weak decree to reduce the flow of oil by 5% initially. But the proportion rose as the War continued, until there was a general cessation of all production, whether for friend, foe, or for those who had been or would have liked to be neutral.

Saddam Hussein says, "All the Arabs could have taken a harder line that they in fact took. Some of the Arab states were in a position to withstand the imperialists, policies directly, and to adopt much stronger lines than they did. If the War had continued for two months many matters would have changed in the Arab World (24)."

Iraq did not favour at that time stopping oil shipments to all countries in the world. Saddam Hussein asked, "Why are we stopping the flow of oil to Western European countries that are not hostile? Are we trying to gain more enemies, or do we want to reduce the number and gain some friends, and neutralize other enemies (25)?" But this misguided policy did not stop at that time, and there is no doubt that the Arabs suffered great moral-and possibly material-losses in some Western European countries. Many studies published after the War showed that it was the United States that gained through this policy because of the rise in the price of its own oil and its exports of petrochemicals to Western Europe, as well as through anti-Arab propaganda.

At any rate, this was the position of Iraq. It was in full accord with its nationalist principles, and stemmed from fine calculations.

When the American share in Basra Petroleum had been nationalized, and then the Dutch share and eventually, too, that of Gulbenkian, the Iraqi people controlled 85% of the oil production in their country. In 1975, however, the political leadership in Iraq declared the nationalization of the remaining proportion of 15%, whereby Iraq's entire oil wealth became the absolute property of the Iraqi people alone. For the first time in the history of Arab oil, the principle for which Saddam Hussein had struggled was achieved, namely " Arab oil for the Arab people". Arab oil in the service of Arab causes everywhere. Did not

Saddam Hussein himself says that the oil of Iraq belongs to all Arabs, and is a weapon in their hands by which they can liberate themselves from subjugation, exploitation and backwardness?

Notes

- 1) Ali Ahmad' Atiqa, al-Naft wat- Tanmiyya al-Arabiyya (Oil and Arab Development), Kuwait, OPEC, 1978, p. 2.
- 2) Ibid., p. 3.
- 3) Ibrahim Sa'ad-ad-Din, al-Athar al-Salbiyya lil-Furuq ad-Dakhiliyya bayna al-Aqtar al-Arabiyya ala at- Tanmiyya fil-Aqtar al-Aqal Dakhlan (The Negative Effects of The Internal Differences between Arab Countries on Growth in the lowest Income Countries), in Istratijiyyat al- Tanmiyya fi Misr (The Strategy of Growth in Egypt), Cairo, al-Hay'a al-Ama lil-Kitab, 1978, p. 107.
- 4) Ibid., p. 108.
- 5) The Arab Institute for Advancement, Strategic and Economic Sciences Section, al-Istithmarat al-Kharijiyya lid-Duwal al-Arabiyya al-Muntijat lin- Naft (Foreign Investment for The Arab Oil-Producing Countries), Beirut, 1977, pp. 106-107.
- 6) Saddam Hussein, Nidhal una Was-Siyasa al-Kharijiyya (Our Struggle and Foreign Policy), Beirut, Dar al-Tali'a, 1972, Part 2., p. 52.
- 7) The Arab Baaath Socialist Party, The political resolution issued by the Eighth Regional Conference, January, 1974, p. 69.
- 8) Ibid., p. 72.
- 9) Tariq , Aziz, op. cit., p. 29.
- 10) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with Fidel Castro in Havana, 1978.
- 11) Ibid.
- 12) Saddam Hussein, Ahadith fil-Qadhaya al-Rahina (Discussion of Current Issues), Beirut, 1974, Dar al-Tali'a, p. 16.

- 13) Ibid.
- 14) Tariq , Aziz, op. cit., pp. 69-70.
- 15) Arab Baaath Socialist Party, op. cit., p. 77.
- 16) Saddam Hussein, op. cit., p. 6.
- 17) Ibid., p, 9.
- 18) Tariq 'Aziz, op. cit., pp. 70-71.
- 19) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with Fidel Castro in Havana, 1978.
- 20) Saddam Hussein, op. cit., p. 17.
- 21) Saddam Hussein, Ma'arakat at-Ta'mim. al-Majida (The Glorious Battle for Nationalization), Baghdad, Dar al-Thawra, 1973, p. 41.
- 22) Saddam Hussein, op. cit., p. 105.
- 23) Ibid., p. 106.
- 24) Ibid.
- 25) Ibid., p. 107.
- 26) Ibid.

SADDAM HUSSEIN

The Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

By Amir Eskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

Part II Chapter 5

Growth Methodological propositions

"There is no growth for men or societies without challenges. Progress, like life, is a battlefield. These facts are never absent from the mind, since the history of human societies can scarcely be separated even today from military history (1)."

These few words were said by Servan-Schreiber, the French intellectual, in his book 'The American Challenge'. They sum up the essence of the contemporary world struggle, which is not only between existing states and organizations but also between the different civilizations that dominate the globe. If military struggles between the great powers present a picture, after the development of the atom bomb, similar to the vision of the end of the world in the Apocalypse of St. John, struggles between civilizations will alone continue until the ultimate stage of human development is reached.

What is the struggle between civilizations? It is the struggle for control over nature in its widest possible environmental, economic, social and political senses. The struggle initiated by Prometheus to make "knowledge" the property of all men without regard for sex, color or creed, to make it a tool for raising the social and moral level of all men, not the preserve of an elite.

There are few centuries in which man has leapt along the road of technical knowledge further than in twenty other centuries. Yet today scientists, intellectuals and historians all over the world agree that this has happened in our century. The nineteenth century, which was called "the Century of Marvels" because of the discoveries and scientific progress achieved by mankind after the Industrial Revolution, appears today as an ordinary century, hardly worthy of consideration. Even the Industrial Revolution itself, in comparison with the scientific and technological revolution that began in the middle of this century, appears as no more than the humble beginning, the embryo of a tremendous giant: as though the history of mankind is beginning afresh.

For long centuries the Arab nation remained in its various backward forms under the yoke of imperialism.

Most regions belonging to it were plunged into bloody struggles before they gained political independence. But they found that political independence without economic independence was an empty shell, lacking a life inside. If the real essence of any economic independence is freedom from dependence on the imperialist structure, the basic goal that

must lie behind it is final victory over backwardness and the possibility of total growth so that Arab Man may achieve the goals for which he is struggling: to build a new Arab civilization.

This is the Arab Man who once made one of the most brilliant civilizations that progressed spiritually and materially and had a great impact on human development as a whole. Then his great homeland was destroyed: its pristine unity fell apart, and it was only subsequently known in its dismembered form, in its numerous different segments. It saw poverty and backwardness as its resources were drained through the wars with the Crusaders that lasted until the thirteenth century. Then it saw a long period of Ottoman domination that lasted for more than three centuries. The very moment when his homeland, rent asunder, faced up to its backwardness happened to be the moment when Europe, fed with the fruits of its civilization, approached its colonial period.

Before it could open its eyes, it found Bonaparte's fleet knocking on its door.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, Muhammad Ali began a new experiment that was progressive compared to what had gone before and what lay around.

But his experiment did not endure for long, and was only a gleaming isle in an ocean of darkness: an interlude in a period of backwardness. Imperialist Europe immediately intervened and surrounded it with its fleets, having broken the bridges that it had been able to build with the Arab hinterland. Then Europe smothered the experiment and let it choke to death.

It might be observed at this point that the problem of backwardness in the Arab homeland has only been raised as a problem that must be solved for about a quarter of a century. This should not be surprising. The last twenty-five years have seen the emergence of what is called the sleeping world or the Third World, according to the designation given to it by a French writer in 1956(2) after the Bandung Conference of 1955. This was a turning point in the history of the backward, sleeping countries. Whatever the accuracy of his statement that these countries were the equivalent of the "Third Estate" under the monarchy before the French Revolution-namely the totality of the people who did not belong to the noble class or the clergy-there is no doubt that this comparison has become widely accepted in academic and technical writings equally. It provides a new perspective on the problem of backwardness in all these countries for their peoples. There is no need to add that the Arab homeland is one of the units that make up this third, backward or sleeping world.

The West never stops talking about "the Arab World" or "the Arabs" who control the sources of oil, conspire to raise its price and cause numerous

economic and financial bottlenecks which cause difficulties for the inhabitants of Europe and America. It does this for its own purposes. Large sections of Western public opinion believe this lying propaganda because of their constant exposure to it and the absence of alternative media that can present the facts free from the distortions of the organizations that serve the oppressive classes in Western society itself. Despite the accuracy of the picture that we have already drawn, and which shows clearly and objectively that the greater part of the oil revenues of the Eastern parts of the Arab World that produce oil-with the exception of Iraq-eventually find their way back to the wheels of the world capitalist system, another important truth is that not only do the advanced industrial states of the West drain the Arab World, but the revenues of the whole Arab World, including the oil-producing areas, do not exceed a third of the budget of the U. S. A. In 1976, for instance, after the oil price increases that followed the October War; they did not reach the gross national product of Italy alone, which has less than 60,000,000 inhabitants-Less than half the total of the Arab homeland.

In 1976 the gross national product of all the Arab regions was 148.4 billion Dollars, whereas that of Italy alone was 163.6 billion Dollars. Of course, a comparison with the gross national product of rich states like France, that reached 346.5 billion Dollars in that year, or West Germany that reached 453.3 billion Dollars, would be quite impossible. And this is despite the great differences in national income between different Arab states that have already been referred to (3).

Such, then, is the Arab homeland. More than 150,000,000 people live in it and it contains the greatest strategic wealth in the world today, yet it is afflicted with backwardness and poverty.

What is the way to go beyond this backwardness?

What solutions may be proposed? How can comprehensive growth be achieved, so that the Arab World may look at the horizons of this age and begin to lay the foundation stones of a new Arab civilization? What are the models that the Arab experiment in growth must copy-if it really must copy models that lie outside it so as to achieve its goals?

What is Saddam Hussein's attitude to all the problems raised by these questions? Or, put differently, what is the ideology of growth-or progress-that he has built as an intellectual and which he struggles to implement, as the head of his society?

"To begin with, our calculations must take us away from the path of imitation. We must not imitate the movement of the big industrial states: their forms, perspectives and styles. We must not imitate them in the time it took them to reach their designated goal. This is because an imitative style--the traditional copying of a movement-will emphasize or even increase the backwardness that divides us from the advanced states. We

must, then, follow a new road, for our Revolution is the Revolution of the new road: the special road whose horizons lie in the thought and experiment of the whole world and the knowledge and skill presented by the human mind. It does not therefore imply that we are isolated if we seek a new road in all those things we consider necessary to our movement, for otherwise we shall remain backward and shall not reach the level that will give us our own particular place to follow our policies and build a new society. Otherwise, we shall become a satellite of others who define our movement, our role and our future at their whim-not at ours! This is what we reject absolutely (4)!"

This is the first methodological proposition set up by Saddam Hussein. The second methodological proposition is concerned with particularizing the Iraqi economy and endorsing the stamp that distinguishes it in a general sense:

"Until now, our economy has been one-sided, in the sense that the oil resources play a decisive role in it. Until now, a large proportion of it has been sold in capitalist markets where it is subjected to the plans that form the strategy of the great capitalist states which ensure that the price of crude oil is subject to the highs and lows of the capitalist market and its strategy. This has a negative effect on our reserves and impedes the implementation of socialism in our society (5)."

The third methodological proposition is concerned with an increased particularization together with a look at the nature of the age we live in, linking it with the nature of the other characteristics of the Iraqi economy: "We are an agricultural country. Such a statement distorts, and is made with the object of keeping Iraq a backward country and keeping the sleeping countries as markets for the raw materials and trade of the capitalist countries. The world moves today in an age, which, as it is well known, is called the age of scientific and technical progress. It is well known that if a country's agriculture develops, it is impossible for that country to acquire the main features of scientific and technical progress, for its concern will be with agriculture, if we may suppose that that is possible (6)."

The fourth methodological proposition is concerned with denoting the goal that growth must have in the Iraqi economy:

"Our country must be agricultural and industrial at the same time. It is a fact that it is impossible for agriculture to flourish really in our country without our country also being industrial and developed in the main areas of industrial development. In the same way, our area, Iraq, cannot become a developed industrial country that is able to progress in the field of industry without there being a link between the areas of industrial development and the required flourishing of agriculture. The reasons for this are well-known (7)."

After these four methodological propositions we must now ask: if it is true that the basic factors that cause growth are three, as the books written by most economists, politicians and managers assert-the power of labour, the different forms of capital, and what is called "know-how" under which are placed the skill and technology needed for production and organization-then what is Saddam Hussein ' s conception of these three factors in relation to economic growth in Iraqi society, strictly speaking?

Notes

- 1) 1.1. at- Tahaddi al-Amriki (The American Challenge), Arabic translation, Baghdad, Maktabat an-Nahdha, p. 313.
- 2) Alfred Sauvy, French economist and demographer, the first to use the expression "The Third World".
- 3) See Ali Ahmad 'Aciqa, op. cit., Table 6, p. 16.
- 4) Saddam Hussein, Tariquna Khass fi Bina' al-Ishtirakiyya (Our Method of building Socialism is peculiar to us), discussion in The Planning Council, 12-4-1977.
- 5) Saddam Hussein, Unqulu Taqalid al-Hizb ila ad-Dawla (Transfer the Party Traditions to the State), discussion in The Party's preparatory school, 26-5-1976.
- 6) Saddam Hussein, loc. cit.
- 7) Ibid.

SADDAM HUSSEIN

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Part II Chapter 6

The basic factors in economic growth

We must first point out that the population of Iraq is only slightly over 12,000,000. In traditional calculations, this number appears small in comparison to other societies such as Iran on Iraq's eastern border, and Turkey on its northwestern border. The annual rate of population growth is only 3.2%.

But Saddam Hussein considers the question from a different perspective, having regard to the possibilities of developing the "quality" of men, for a small number of men in a developed society can withstand and overcome a large number of men from an undeveloped society who only have numbers on their side. He views this from two perspectives: the first is economic, the second military.

He says: "Some say that the 3.2% rate of population growth should not rise; it might be necessary for it to fall. But we consider that this rate should be maintained. If there is a possibility of increasing it, then it should be increased.

The Iraqi area has large economic resources; it also lies on the eastern tip of the Arab homeland, and meets two states that are more populous than itself, so the size of its population must be sufficient to defend both itself and Arab interests in this area. A country carrying such national and popular responsibilities should develop its human resources so that the weight of its population outstrips that of the peoples that face it (1)."

Of course, mere numbers are not the decisive factor-perhaps not even the basic factor-as regards economic growth within a given society. Let us give an example. In most Arab lands, particularly Egypt, approximately one-third of the work force is engaged in agriculture, whereas the proportion in Holland varies between 9% and 10%, and in Sweden it does not exceed 6%. In the U.S.A. only 3%-4% of the total population (namely some 7,000,000 souls) suffice to provide the food for some 200,000,000 people. There is also left over the American agricultural surplus which is generally used as a tool in political negotiations with large countries and as an instrument of political and economic pressure against newly-independent countries in the backward or the sleeping world.

If this is the case with agriculture, how much truer it is of industry--especially in the light of new developments in technology! Indeed, one of the problems occurring with the use of highly developed forms of technology is not the lack or scarcity of workers able to operate them but the unemployment-whether hidden or manifest-that is consequential upon them. This has occurred in some parts of the Arab homeland such as Algeria, where the population only exceeds that of Iraq by 6,000,000, and fundamental problems connected with the course of industrial development have arisen. The extent to which they suit the size and type of the work-force in any society depends not only on the economic and human circumstances and resources of that society, but also on its political and social philosophy which define the nature of economic growth within it, the targets for which it will strive during the period of growth, and the type of classes and social groupings that will profit from it.

The nationalization of oil wealth in Iraq has provided large financial resources that increase every year. To these must be added the traditional resources of agriculture, trade, and national exploitation of some other mineral resources.

So the Revolution that found the treasury empty when it took power, and had national revenue not exceeding Iraqi people, and that there were two consequences to this: freedom from foreign imperialist influence and the achievement of an independent national will. The dependence of the Iraqi economy on the structure of world imperialism was broken.

An aspect of the above was that Iraq was spared entry onto the treadmill of foreign loans that were tied-or were at the very least oppressive--upon the national will in development activities. It is difficult-if not impossible--for the vast majority of backward or sleeping states to avoid them. In the long run they come to form, politically and economically, a wall that blocks their growth and shuts out the horizons of their development and progress. How many attempts at growth have failed in the Third World as a result of seduction by what were originally loans on easy terms but then became debts that smothered all growth. This policy is one of the many ways in which imperialism stops the development of the sleeping lands and keeps them in a state of backwardness, tied by chains that cannot be unlocked to the structure of world imperialism.

Naturally, the accumulation of capital through oil revenues does not provide a way in itself out of the hellish cycle of imperialist loans and multi-national companies.

It is a fact that many of the oil-exporting countries, notably Iran in the Middle East, suffer a crisis of debts accumulating to bodies outside their economies. They are unable to pay these debts because the accumulation of capital alone may force some of these states to increase their external borrowing. This happened to a number of Arab oil-producers after the sudden rises in the price of oil in 1973. Ultimately, the question boils down once again to the political philosophy of the Authorities and the degree to which they represent the poorer social groupings in their society, for the benefit of whom development ought to be directed.

Iraq itself is something of a case in point. Since the Revolution of July 1968 seized power, no new sources of wealth have been found inside the country. Nevertheless, the tremendous developments of the last ten years show the real significance of a leadership closely linked with its people, and the feeling of the people that it works for its own benefit, not for that of a few reactionary and exploitative groups, and that it is building material well-being for its children and future generations.

In 1979 Saddam Hussein was sitting in his office with the Mauritanian Minister of information. They were talking about the revolutionary experiment in Iraq and its successes in various fields. The Mauritanian Minister showed satisfaction mixed with surprise. He said, "You have been in power for about ten years and have found no new sources of growth for your economy. Petrol, gas, dates-all were already there. But you could have advanced your country by exploiting these and new sources of wealth (2)"

Saddam Hussein looked into space as though recalling the harsh struggle in the course of the Revolution over the last ten years. Then he said: "In the summer of 1969 a large delegation went to the Gulf Emirates to borrow \$5,000,000. And in 1970 I visited the U.S.S.R. to try to defer a debt for 17,000,000 Dinars for purchases of military equipment. I hoped that they would agree to postpone it until the following year. When they refused

I said, 'When I return I shall settle the debt even if I have to sell my jacket'-and in fact, we deferred the debt. Then in 1978 the U.S.S.R. asked us for petrol to the value of \$150,000,000 only-they didn't want to pay that year; they wanted to pay the following year! So we said 'Yes' at once! "

Then his gaze returned from the distance and fell upon the man he was talking to. He continued, "So, what you said is true. There are no new sources of wealth here. But if there is a capable leadership and a hard-working people, great steps forward can be made! (3) "

In accordance with this, capital occupies a secondary place and, as regards Iraq, other factors are more important. What are they? Saddam Hussein sums them up as follows: The first basic factor is the power to grasp the tools for Implementing socialism so that steps may be taken in both 896,000,000 Dinars in 1969, had increased this by 1972 to 1,218,000,000 Dinars. In 1979-80 the total exceeded 15,000,000,000 Dinars. It can thus be seen how the nationalization of oil was necessary in the interests of the Iraqi people, and that there were two consequences to this: freedom from foreign imperialist influence and the achievement of an independent national will. The dependence of the Iraqi economy on the structure of world imperialism was broken.

An aspect of the above was that Iraq was spared entry onto the treadmill of foreign loans that were tied-or were at the very least oppressive--upon the national will in development activities. It is difficult-if not impossible--for the vast majority of backward or sleeping states to avoid them. In the long run they come to form, politically and economically, a wall that blocks their growth and shuts out the horizons of their development and progress. How many attempts at growth have failed in the Third World as a result of seduction by what were originally loans on easy terms but then became debts that smothered all growth. This policy is one of the many ways in which imperialism stops the development of the sleeping lands and keeps them in a state of backwardness, tied by chains that cannot be unlocked to the structure of world imperialism.

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But if there is a capable leadership and a hard-working people, great steps forward can be made! (3)"

In accordance with this, capital occupies a secondary place and, as regards Iraq, other factors are more important. What are they? Saddam Hussein sums them up as follows:

The first basic factor is the power to grasp the tools for Implementing socialism so that steps may be taken in both time and place, since long-term growth in industry, agriculture and services must be balanced with the power of the people and the special tools for achieving targets.

The second factor is the nature of the present stage.

This may be considered under two headings:

a) Local characteristics-namely the society that the July Revolution took over, the nature of the relationships within it, and the distribution of wealth among the people. "We did not take over a society owned by a tiny minority while the majority owned nothing-as was the case in the U.S.S.R., for instance, at the time of the Revolution of October 1917. We took over a society that was indeed governed by reactionaries, but property was spread among large segments of the population, the majority of whom were composed of citizens of the country, and some of whom were revolutionaries (4)."

b) The effect of international politics and the nature of economic change in the world at large and in the area of the Middle East of which we form a part. "We must therefore be able to mould a horizontal extension of socialism in the light of the above (5)."

Hence, the central factor in the horizontal extension in the fields of industry, agriculture and service is not "waiting for the realization of the requisite capital accumulation", as Saddam Hussein himself states. But one essential problem remains: the problem of "knowledge"-technical skills that are needed for production in a modern society. What is Saddam Hussein's conception of how this should be dealt with in general, and in Iraq in particular? What solution does he propose?

The Indian nuclear physicist Homi Baba who set up India's nuclear plants said, "What is western civilization but additions to the civilizations of Egypt, Assyria, India and China? Today all these countries are poor, but the West was built on their discoveries: the use of fire, the domestication of animals, agriculture, irrigation, writing, arithmetic, gunpowder, and the technology of many countries that today we call backward (6)."

There is no doubt that the Indian nuclear scientist was quite right when he said this. It is sufficient to mention three of these basic discoveries that the Ancient World knew centuries before Europe but which were very significant in the European Renaissance. China discovered gunpowder before Europe but used it for fireworks, not in making guns. Printing was also used in China for making playing cards, while the compass was known to the Arabs a long while before Europe.

Nevertheless it was Europe that had the first great technological revolution in modern history: the Industrial Revolution in the second half of the eighteenth century. Its essence was the use of machines in place of human muscles as a result of numerous simple inventions that were either original or had been well known in earlier societies. What enabled Europe to do this was the nature of its economic and social structure at a time when its mercantile capitalism controlled a vast colonial empire based on Western Europe and England. It possessed the incentive to increase production, and the capital necessary to finance it. This was the means by which the ideas of inventors were put to practical effect. With every step forward this social structure stood behind it and pushed it yet further forward by means of research, the encouragement of learning and the foundation of universities.

With every step in the development of this social structure technology advanced as well. At the present time it has become one of the most terrible weapons, firmly in the grip of world monopolist capitalism. But this weapon has become a Trojan Horse after the revolutions of the new peoples that were consequent on the Second World War and the collapse of the traditional colonialist empires.

This infiltrates into the hearts of the recently liberated peoples. It is "Neo-Colonialism". . . Until now there have been three stages of this international process. In the first, world imperialist capitalism established a relationship with the colonized countries whereby the latter were purely agricultural and the imperialist countries alone possessed industry. In the second stage the colonialist system was transformed so that the imperialist states exported their capitalism as such and continued to export some manufactured goods.

It became possible for the secondary capitalism in the colonized-or apparently colonized-countries to employ some of its financial resources in manufacturing, provided that they only produced consumer goods and did not set up independent means of production.

In the third stage there is another transformation, if only partial, in the development of imperialism itself into international monopoly capitalism. This is what is known as the third scientific revolution: the revolution of economic brains and automation. It consists in the imperialist states having industries with a very high level of productivity. This depends on a high level of science and technology. This enables heavy industry to be set up in some of the dependent capitalist states. Of course, this is only partial and is dependent on the world imperialist structure.

But what of the position of countries that break dependence and wish to build a new life on the necessary scientific and technological bases? Saddam Hussein says:

"The industrial states seem, so far as I can see, perfectly happy for a Great Wall of China to be built between their technical expertise and .the states of the Third World-or even the states of medium size. It is thus impossible for any of them to escape from the predicament of Third World countries. But I think that the industrial countries are going to behave as follows.

"First, distract the countries of the Third World with some types of industry, but in such a way that the present gap between the industrialized countries and these countries will be much as it is at present. In this way, progress will be slow. There are different ways in which this distraction can be achieved: letting them plunge into different types of industry that have a low priority; encouraging unprofitable investments so as to put their capital out of action, and preventing it from prospering in the true sense of the word. Another way is in their use of their technicians: place them in works of low priority or of secondary priority, or employ a larger number of technicians than is necessary. There are other ways too.

"Secondly, if it is impossible for the industrial states to monopolize all areas of science and technology, then force Third World countries to rely on monopolies of technical specialization. For, by the nature of international politics, the Third World must have recourse to such specializations, as it cannot provide itself. At the same time, the industrial countries can rid themselves of uncomplicated industries, which will not imperil their monopoly of technical specialization. They have two considerations in doing this. First, the environment is being polluted in the industrialized countries, and they realize that they must transfer certain industries and replace them with others that are in different fields. They do not mind the possibility of becoming importers according to special agreements. Secondly, the monopoly in technical fields and the maintenance of standards involve them ridding themselves of certain industries that require a high content of manual labour, of which there is a scarcity in the West; or these states have begun to realize that it is impossible to monopolize all areas and branches –of industry and technology that require specialization...(7)"

How, then, is there interaction with science and technology in an important area such as industry in the light of all these considerations? What is the opinion of?

Saddam Hussein on this matter?

To begin with, he warns against the path of "imitation": "imitation of the movement of the great industrial nations by following in their footsteps. This is because the attempt to follow in them, which is known as "the traditional copying of their movement", will not lead us out of our backwardness but will confirm the distance between us and the advanced states, and may even make it greater (8)".

It must be pointed out here that Saddam Hussein's view is very different from that of the majority of the leaders of modernization in the sleeping world, including some of the leaders of our Arab regions themselves. They are governed by a logic in terms of which "modernization" is a synonym for "progress", and "progress" a synonym for "the West". Now, it is essential to reach the level achieved by the West, which is the "ideal model", but how? There is a fault in this logic: how is it possible to "repeat" the experiment of capitalism whereby the West reached its present level of progress either by means of liberal capitalism or international capitalism? The sleeping societies are backward today for the same reasons that the advanced societies were backward two or three centuries ago. For the leaders of these states and nations, and the social structures that they represent, backwardness has assumed a special meaning: mere backwardness in time, which can be crossed by importing the technological miracles that the West has now achieved.

One of the leading Arab economists tells us: "The Western miracles of technology are the practical fruit of a relatively long development of civilization. The importing of some of

these miracles will not give birth to development as such in our society, just as the importing of a tracking station to link up with a satellite will not bring the importing country into the space age.

Building a nuclear power station will at best only lead to a few individuals gaining skill in handling equipment that was manufactured entirely abroad. Foreign skills must be relied on to work and maintain it. It is possible that the best of the highly trained individuals who work on it will join the army of emigrants; and then the station will remain a body strange to the whole society. If a screw drops out, everything will stop until a replacement arrives from abroad. And that will only happen after those who have paid a vast sum for it have discovered that it has become technologically obsolete (9)."

Saddam Hussein presents a view that is different, percipient and original. It relies on three basic roots.

The first is, "We must prepare ourselves to co-operate with science and technology and master them thoroughly. We must therefore stress research centres and the need for a large number of cadres, and study the most up-to-date scientific and technological discoveries if we are going to be a truly developed country industrially in a form that suits our objectives. So we must co-operate with science and technology, just as others did when they were at our stage (10)".

In this field we must remember that scientific research in the present age has proved extremely profitable. What real growth has there been which did not start with a stage of scientific research, followed by the implementation of that research? Research is thus an integral part of growth. In this age, the link between scientific research and economic production has increased. Perhaps the strengthening of this link and the deep interaction between theoretical research and practical application is what has contributed most to the progress that has taken the form of explosions in theoretical research and in its economic application equally. Furthermore, expenditure on scientific research represents one of the basic criteria of our age for measuring the level of progress in any society, and possibly also has that society's seriousness in overcoming backwardness. If the prevailing trend in many of the sleeping countries is towards the importing of factories and technological discoveries from the advanced countries, and a confidence that this is the ideal implementation of the concept of "coming of age", the experiments have shown firmly that this process does not lead to real progress, and that their partisans have not secured themselves a place as eminent men of our age unless they can also provide resolute and sophisticated leadership of the scientists who represent the dynamic element in development and growth. Science, then, is the criterion, but it is also the foundation. The new civilization is basically science; and without science there is no room for any community-no matter how great its past was-in the future.

The role of every community will be determined by its scientific knowledge, and the scientific civilization will be the stage on which it will perform in the new civilization.

The power that governs the world of today is essentially the power of civilization: the power of science. As Servan-Schreiber put it: "The might of armies, raw materials and capital are neither the signs nor the tools of power. Even factories are only the external signs of this power. Modern power is the ability to invent-to research-and the ability to transform these inventions into products-technology, It is not land, the number of inhabitants, or tools: it is thought or, more precisely the readiness of man to think and create (11),"

The second is "the national adaptation of technology and the adaptation of the uses of science. It is not necessary for us to take all the scientific and technological discoveries and to use them as they are, We modify them or some of them, in the light of our goals and our political social and economic circumstances (12)".

We must say here that the problem of the national adaptation of technology is one of the most important problems that have exercised and do exercise the brains of advanced economic thinkers in the sleeping countries and also in the Western countries themselves. The true concept of technology in the eyes of these thinkers is: "The implementation of the sciences within a given society in a search for a solution to the given problems that face it, relying on the potential that it has in order to encourage the values in which it believes (13)." This is because, just as in the past, any discovery that is made can remain no more than a cause for reflection and have no influence on production at all, even though it may provide the actual solution to a problem which society faces. All technological accomplishments have a social significance and reflect the characteristics of the society that accomplished them. Or, as some, would put it, they "bear its hereditary stamp". Therefore, their effectiveness is linked with the environment in which they are born and will decline if the marks of that society vanish. The converse is also true. Imported technology often resembles organ transplants. It is hardly surprising that some societies treat imported technology which has not been modified in accordance with its new domicile and environment in the same way that a body will treat a transplanted organ: by rejection 4).

Growth cannot mean copying the civilization of the West and erasing the native personality and civilization. The ability to imitate is not the most important human characteristic. The most important human characteristic is the ability to create and innovate. "Modernization", as understood by the majority of Third World leaders, is the concept that has led them to experiments that have failed, even though it is the ability to use what others have produced. Saddam Hussein understands it to mean something different: the power of a society to renew itself as a whole, and to build its life anew without any cultural split in its personality or break with its history.

The third is "industrialization". This is that we should industrialize in our own way and in accordance with our national goals and ambitions. We shall not refrain from industrializing in areas where we could buy what we want instead, while we shall not necessarily industrialize in areas of technical calculation and economic importance where such would not be in accordance with our total economic strategy. To do otherwise would be a mistake.

Another very dangerous mistake is to imagine that a wise choice of the type of industrialization, which ought to be undertaken, can be made merely with reference to our financial potential and the size of our population. We must not enter into industrialization in such a way, since we would fall into the trap of opening up industries in various limited areas while not doing so in those central areas that are vital if we are to change our society and turn our potential into achievement through our, political, nationalist and popular calculations (15).

Saddam Hussein considers here the fundamental problem of the achievement of growth. This is the strategy of growth and its relation to the general strategy of society as a whole. His rejection of slavish imitation of the Western World is not solely because of its impossibility, or the possibility that it might lead to a completely contradictory result-

namely an increase in backwardness. It is also because he considers it to be an immoral strategy for his great society and homeland (16).

For Saddam Hussein, every step on the path of industrialization must be linked with the goals-or more precisely, with the integrated strategic view for the development of Iraqi society, which is itself connected with the horizons of Arab development as a whole. We shall give two examples, which show clearly the course of his thought. The first is connected with the question of building heavy industry in Iraq. "When considering this matter, the technical specialists look at Iraq's need for heavy industry and its potential. They draw up a plan in accordance with their impression of these factors, and then take the first great step towards implementing it. Here they are mistaken 17)." What does he think himself?

He says, "The political brain, when considering the question of heavy industry in this country, must take into account the needs of the community in the light of its future, international political developments, and the development of the link in time, place and social movement between our regions and the whole Arab homeland.

When we consider industrialization, we must consider in depth the probable development economically, socially and militarily in the Arab regions-that is, we must study these matters in the light of the role that Iraq might play in building such industry within the context of national planning (1) ".

The second example is concerned with the construction of an arms industry. Is it possible for Iraq to manufacture all the arms it needs? Saddam Hussein says, "In order to answer this question fully, we must consider a basic point: states that are hostile, now or in the future, will be friendly with the U.S.A. or allied with them for a long time to come. Therefore, the arms we need must be manufactured at the same level of technology as in the U.S.A.

Now we are unable to manufacture all that our army needs or to dispense with alliances with states able to be a major source of arms for our forces, for the states with which we are likely to find ourselves at war are, and probably be in the future, states friendly with the U.S.A. (19)".

Does this imply the abandonment of any thought of building an arms industry? Saddam Hussein replies: "No.

The states that supply us with arms are friendly, but we cannot be certain that the present pattern will continue indefinitely. The states that supply us do not necessarily agree with us in all our aims, for the boundaries of our aims and ambitions do not lie in Iraq but extend through the whole Arab homeland. We must therefore be prepared to manufacture arms when it is appropriate to do so, even though this may conflict with the strategy of some of the supplier nations (20)."

Such are the basic conceptions of his ideology with regard to its implementation in a given area: the question of economic growth in Iraqi society. We consider that this is the dialectical framework which he has constructed to deal with the " problem.

We do not think it is strange that we should have begun our presentation of this section with the words of Servan Schreiber: "There is no growth for societies or mankind without challenges. " This is because one of the basic characteristics of Saddam Hussein ' s thought in this area-and possibly in all other areas-is not just a willingness to meet challenges, but also a willingness to take the offensive.

But taking the offensive does not mean foolhardiness: it means the strategic coronation of a balanced, intellectual solution that a political leader understands entirely and implements successfully.

The slogan of his life, his experiment and his struggle is: Progress is a battlefield, just as life is a battlefield. And when was the history of human society ever really different from military history?

Notes

- 1) Saddam Hussein, Unqolu Taqalid al-Hizb ila al-Dawla.
- 2) From the meeting between Saddam Hussein and The Mauritanian Minister of Information in Baghdad, 1979.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) Saddam Hussein, Tariquna Khass fi Bina' al-Ishtirakiyya.
- 5) Ibid.
- 6) P.M.S. Blackett, Technology and world Advancement in The Advancement of Science IX, 1975 London.
- 1) Saddam Hussein, Hawla at- Takammul ma'a al-Ilm wat- Taqniyya (On the Integration with Science and Technology), address in The Planning Council Meeting, 12-4-1977.
- 8) Ibid.
- 9) Isma'il Sabri Abdullah, Istratijiyyat al-tiknulujiyya (The Strategy of Technology), in Istratijiyyat at- Tanmiyya fi Misr, pp. 531-532.
- 10) Saddam Hussein, loc. cit.
- 11) Sharibir, op. cit., p. 315.
- 12) Saddam Hussein, loc. cit.
- 13) Isma'il Sabri Abdullah, op. cit. p. 537.
- 14) Ibid.
- 15) Saddam Hussein, loc. cit.
- 16) Ibid.
- 11) Saddam Hussein, Tariquna al-Khass...
- 18) Ibid.
- 19) Saddam Hussein, op. cit.
- 20) Ibid.

Saddam Hussein

The Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

Part II Chapter 7

The role of the party supersedes the technocrats

Having reached this point in the thoughts of Saddam Hussein there are a number of important questions, some purely theoretical and others more practical, which must be asked. For instance, can economic growth of the type referred to lead to the creation of socialism? What guarantee is there that it will not go the same way as other experiments in the developing world, also carried out under the banner of socialism, and turn into state capitalism? Looking back at his ideas about the developmental process and the way it should be applied in Iraq, what in Saddam Hussein's opinion is the role of the Iraqi masses? And how is this role represented? What guarantee is there that it will continue, not only amongst the masses, but also amongst the leaders themselves, who may be goaded by success in "battle" imagine that they have won the "war", and consequently make light of the role of the masses, or ultimately do away with it altogether?

Saddam Hussein first of all says: "Not all development is a step along the road to socialism in any country or regime. There has been development in Europe, America, Japan and other countries, but it has not resulted in socialism. The activities of the state in these places have been no more than a form of state capitalism, which is part of the general process of building capitalism. In such instances, the state with its authority is rather ensuring that the capitalist system is maintained (1)." But on the other hand: "Without development, the creation of a flourishing social system which can serve as a model in this area of which we are part, and which can increase the people's well being and provide the where-withal to defend itself and its principles, is unimaginable. Similarly, development in our country cannot but accurately express the socialist roots of the system with its related programmes, to which again it is inescapably linked.

There is therefore a close relationship between this and the principal guidelines of our party in both social and economic fields (2)."

An important conversation held during the meeting between Saddam Hussein and Fidel Castro on the morning of December 15th, 1978, which was also attended by a number of those behind the Cuban revolution, serves to confirm the above and is reproduced here in part:

CASTRO: You are certainly wise in saying that we should gain time, because time works in the interests of revolution. Iraq can advance politically, socially, economically and militarily. The uneducated gained

the first victory for the Cuban army, and we are now summoning the army's middle ranks, and so we are better trained and prepared. They are more skilled in the use of arms. In the case of Iraq, time is working in your favour, because you're developing the whole country and rallying the masses, which they didn't do in Egypt.

SADDAM HUSSEIN: There was no revolutionary party and no one apart from Abdul Nasser. He was a revolutionary, but in different circumstances to yours. You made sure of having revolutionaries before assuming power and he didn't. In Iraq we also made sure we had revolutionaries before taking control. The party made sacrifices and there were martyrs and those who suffered prison and torture; but this had to be done in order to create revolutionaries who knew how to keep the revolution going and benefit the people. That's why we weren't worried. Our worry was how to develop our programmes faster, and what methods we should choose for applying socialism, as well as how, in three years, we could wipe out the illiteracy affecting a sixth of the population. Now we have one and a quarter million enrolled in literacy centres.

CASTRO: Despite the difficulties we are optimistic.

SADDAM HUSSEIN: Certainly, otherwise we wouldn't be revolutionaries. The people work with goodwill, and whatever the imperialists have gained they will never be able to make an accurate estimate of the people's strength.

They aren't experts in this field. They only knew how to exploit and carry out undercover work; but as to how the people are able to act in its own interest, experience has always shown us that they miscalculate (3).

In this meeting with one of the most important socialist (Marxist) leaders in the world, the role of revolutionary power, of the revolutionary party, and of the rallying of the masses was confirmed. An obvious comparison was also made between the Nasserite experience on the one hand and the Cuban and Iraqi experience on the other. However, neither Castro nor Saddam Hussein attributed the reason for the first's disastrous end to the neglect to create a revolutionary party and rally together the masses.

Instead they merely said that Abdul-Nasser failed to ensure that there were revolutionaries like himself before he took power, and to form a revolutionary party after. Saddam Hussein expresses the same ideas elsewhere:

"So that ideas can be applied and then take root and build tradition, they must be expressed in a practical form. If they remain in mere book form any counter operation is made simple, and any person who takes power into his hands can return the book to the library, as it were, thereby destroying or weakening any counter influence (4).

Even so, the question still remains. Is it not possible for a party in power to be so proud of its victories and so conceited about its achievements that

it relaxes its muscles, its arteries harden, and the blood in its veins solidifies? In many instances throughout the world there have been parties, which, before they assumed power, were ablaze with revolution. Then no sooner had they gained power than their flames died and their revolutionary spirit grew cold, becoming nothing more than a set of archives which the new bureaucrats take out of their drawers to look at like an old photograph album, or something which is spoken about on national occasions and official feast days.

That Saddam Hussein is fully aware of this is evident, not only from the active days of his youth, but also from the long hard struggle he waged within the party ranks before it took power, and after as its head. He did not acquire the seat of power by design as, for him, to rule was not an aim in itself. On the contrary, he asked more than once to be relieved from top executive positions to retain only his position as an active member within the party ranks. This, however, he only did after the revolution was purged of saboteurs on July 30th, 1968, for the first time, although not for the last. When preparations for the revolution were being made, he told his colleagues that once they had assumed power he only wanted to be considered as an ordinary member of the party. Naturally, they refused his request, which in any case was not viable at the time; but after July 30th, 1968, knowing that the party was assured of full control, he told President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr following the declaration that his former wish could now be carried out. But al-Bakr and his fellow leaders again refused his wish, this time even more decisively, but he continued to feel the same, even after spending many years as Vice-Chairman of the Revolution Command Council. From time to time he still now experiences similar feelings, but he can no longer escape from his major responsibility towards his people and the countries of the world as leader of the country.

Indeed, this true party member is not forgotten, nor does he forget his party, for an instant. As far as he is concerned, the state is the instrument by which to administer the revolution, and it is therefore no surprise that he should constantly urge his colleagues to transfer the party traditions to the state:

"Colleagues, in your task of leading the country you would do well to seek guidance from the party traditions.

They should provide a firm base for your daily work and serve a practical use within the advanced state as need wants. Do not attempt to borrow the state's traditions and substitute them for those of the party, because there is a great qualitative difference between the political and systematic construction of the state and that of the party, even though the state itself is the party's. If there were no difference between the power of the state and the party, the party would become the party of power instead of the

power remaining the power of the party. In this case, we would lose the quality we have of fighting to affect the good of society by a qualitative change for the better.

Alternatively, we would be seriously weakened, and the party would become a conventional tool of the state. The state itself would no longer remain a non-static entity always led by the party in the interests of progress (5)."

Saddam Hussein also recognizes that criticism and self-criticism are vital, and asserts to his party colleagues "we must not stray from the open criticism to be found in democracies "(6). But does criticism for pure criticism's sake mean that the leadership is democratic?

Indeed not. " At the same time, we must not allow mistaken ideas to go by without being pointed out and resolutely dealt with. This is because there are renegades hidden amongst us, or within Iraqi society and the state organizations, and these remain strong because they are present, intellectually and psychologically, in each state sector and emerge in different forms according to circumstances (7)." Beware of renegades is what he always tells them, not because he suspects that his people will rule with an iron hand, but because he knows that the enemies of any true revolution are many, both at home and abroad. He therefore constantly reminds his colleagues to keep their wits about them and not automatically assume there will be none. In his view, this requires a firm supervision of ideas from the top, as well as which the invulnerability of principles should be strengthened.

"We should not disregard our role in supervising the internal life of both party and state, just as we should neither ignore to have supervision by the masses of the state organizations, and even of the small pockets where reactionary or right-wing elements have no specific hold.

We must work unswervingly to purge those vital positions within the state organizations where there are influential right-wing elements, and we must strengthen our control as regards the inviolability of the system and its principles within the party itself (8)."

Renegades, however, have many guises, the most recent of which they have borrowed from the need of various developing societies for technology and modernization. Several revolutions in the third world have gradually lost their hold and been replaced by bureaucrats and technocrats. Technology becomes a hidden secret, which the new high priests keep to themselves and use when required. Under the cover of technical accounts

of the applications of modern technology, the revolutionaries, because of their lack of knowledge, were always spreading the spurious secrets of the high priesthood, thus providing openings for counter-revolution.

However, Saddam Hussein realizes that there are those with good intentions and those with bad. "Many technicians, including Baathists, often find themselves dealing with the issue at stake from a technical point of view, and they forget the link between technical treatment and the general train of thought of the revolution, which is the way to build a new society (9)."

He does not hesitate to clearly state that which, in another time or place, would surely lead to the failure of any leader's experiments: "Here we say, and responsibly so, that you must not deal with major economic and technical questions without consulting the technical experts. But do not leave the task of economic leadership to them. Give them no opportunity to assume the role of leader. Instead, they must always work under the direction and leadership of the revolution, which has unlimited capacity and expert technical knowledge. It knows the revolution, understands the methods by which to alter society in general, and which direction the change should take, and uses every economic movement to serve itself and its aims (10)."

One might wonder, for instance, had matters been left to the conventionally minded technical experts when battle was being prepared to nationalize oil, would Iraq have been able to achieve its economic independence and begin to apply its ambitious projects for development? Technical experts have their own religion and revolutionaries have another. In the majority of cases, the revolutionaries are closer to God's heart for no other reason than that they always listen to the voice of the people!

Notes

- 1) Saddam Hussein, Hawla Iqamat al-Ishtirakiyya.
- 2) Ibid.
- 3) From the meeting between Saddam Hussein and Fidel Castro in Havana, December 1978.
- 4) Saddam Hussein, Unqulu Taqalid al-Hizb...
- 5) Ibid.
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) Ibid.
- 8) Ibid.
- 9) Ibid.
- 10) Ibid.

Saddam Hussein

The Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

CHAPTER 8

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

Development for the sake of man

As well as being the science of change, revolution is also a constant dream of change. Revolutionaries are those who persistently struggle to make their dreams a reality, and the revolutionary who loses his ability to dream simultaneously loses his ability to struggle. A dream achieved becomes a firm reality, which must be surpassed by new dreams and struggles. The tasks of the revolution are never-ending, and there will forever be new and distant goals for which the revolutionary must strive.

True revolutions always have an overall role to play in the process of change. There is no such thing as a strictly economic, political, social or Cultural Revolution, as each is inextricably linked to the other, and cannot occur in isolation. A true revolution affects all aspects of life, and gives new form to all elements of the social structure.

This it does in a way, which harmonizes with its objectives, with the new level of social development, and with the hopes and aspirations of the revolutionary vanguard. A true revolution is one where the priorities are to change man himself, to bring forth his hidden talents, and to provide the means whereby he can make a positive contribution to building his life and being master of his fate.

It is true that the revolution may first concentrate on specific fields, such as the political organization of the state or the reformation of the society's economic relations. Its work, however, is unlimited until perfection is reached, and indeed, such perfection is the standard by which its success, its seriousness, and its continuity can be judged. Nowhere have there been more revolutionary and socialist movements in contemporary history than the third world, Arab countries included. Some have had a false ring to them, whereas others, in the best of circumstances, have been of good intention, but failed to realize that the revolution worthy of its concept cannot be selective and restrict itself only to certain areas whilst ignoring others. The natural and logical outcome, no matter how much, how long, or how little they withstood and resisted the internal corrosion, has been breakdown, collapse and fall.

The truth of the matter is that however good the intention, or however sincere the will to build socialism, society cannot be changed by economic measures alone.

Concepts, ideas, and ancient traditions and customs do not automatically and spontaneously fall just because certain economic steps or material changes, no matter how broad, have been affected. In exactly the same way, no propitious efforts to enlighten can achieve their objectives against the ideologies of exploitation and underdevelopment if they do not use these material changes as their basis. The new man of the living revolutions is the product of this creative interaction between material revolution and spiritual and Cultural Revolution. Concentrating on only one of these, even supposing it were possible, is to digress from the overall aims of the revolution, and to slide in an economic direction producing no more than statistical figures, or in a direction which, although promising, is no sooner stifled by the demands of the material reality. Saddam Hussein's profound awareness of this fact is clear when he says that "reactionary and right-wing principles are only a real threat when they become law, and when they alter the material state of the people's social and "cultural reality (I)". He is evidently referring to the disease, which eats away at other "revolutions" as reflected in the discrepancy between their words and actions,

between their principles and their applications. "Talking about revolutionizing foreign policy and political relations with the national movements at home is useless if the social reality does not change in accordance with the principles, and only when the economy is put to this use, can such change occur. So what is the point of talking about socialism when class structure remains, and when people stay hungry and live without stability? What value do principles have if a workingman is suddenly struck by a debilitating or crippling illness and has no guaranteed source of income or no state health care? (2)" The aim, therefore, of eliminating exploitation by means of state control over "sharing" the basic means of production is "to direct the activities of society, and to establish and provide the economic and social requirements for making the Arab capable of an extraordinary contribution to forming new human relationships on a world-wide scale, as well as to make exceptional use of his hidden strengths in order to build his cultural experiment! (3)".

But how can these relationships be built without including threads from the old relationships? The ancient manners and customs which still prevail, not only in Iraq, but throughout the whole Arab world, are mostly derived from the social structure of Arab society, which suffered the forces of occupation, colonialism and imperialism, and has also been affected by semi-feudalism, and sometimes despotism. Its weave also contains threads from the remnants of tribal, Bedouin and sectarian society. Even when dominated by the various but weak Arab capitalist systems, the very nature of this Arab society only allowed the worst of their values to spread, namely those of selfishness and egocentricity.

Purging our new social structures of such base values, and returning to our own pure values with a contemporary and revolutionary spirit in harmony with the stage of building society over the last quarter of this century, exacts from the true revolutionary no less, and perhaps more effort, toil and struggle than in other more clearly defined fields, such as economics, politics, and international relations.

The strenuous efforts exerted by Saddam Hussein in this respect thus acquire meaning and import. We shall not discuss all his intellectual endeavors and practical decisions here, but deal instead with two fundamental areas in the field of socio-human change, which express the ultimate aims of the Cultural Revolution taking place within Iraq:

A) The general position in Arab society as a whole on the woman's issue reflects the nature of its different material and cultural structures. Its essence varies quantitatively from country to country, with the exception of the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf Emirates, where the differences in outlook are more qualitative.

In order to show the extent of social backwardness vis- a-vis the position of the Arab woman in general from both intellectual and legal aspects, it will suffice here, perhaps, to take the case of Egypt, which is considered more socially advanced than the other Arab countries. The man has the absolute right in matters of polygamy and divorce, and is supported in this by the society's laws and legislations. Statistics say that only 4% of Muslim men in Egypt have more than one wife, but that, in one year, between 7.2 % and 8 % of those already married marry again. This confirms that polygamy is more prevalent than the general figure would suggest. These same statistics also show that polygamy is a major reason for divorce, and the main factor in 20% of divorce cases.

This figure, however, is for the whole of Egypt, and we should not forget that the instances of divorce in the large towns are much greater than in the small towns and the countryside. In Cairo, 42 % of couples divorced, whereas in Alexandria only 35.5% did so (1978 statistics).

It may not be insignificant to point out the violent reaction caused by certain attempts made in 1974 to reform aspects of the marriage and divorce laws. Demonstrations erupted on the streets demanding that discussion of these laws be stopped, and accusing the Minister for Social Affairs-ironically enough woman-of atheism and apostasy. Is this event not a sharp indictment of the extent to which the Arab cultural structure in general is backward?

Saddam Hussein is fully aware of all the dimensions of this situation, and says: "To disregard the objective circumstances is to distort the matter, as is using the existing conditions as a justification for hindering progress. Discussions on the woman and her role in society, and our attitude towards it must be balanced (4)." What, then, is this balanced attitude? According to Saddam Hussein:

"The intellectual guidelines and working theory of our party show that social change is not achieved by laws alone, but by painstaking work, by mass mobilization, and by detailed knowledge and correct usage of the laws which change society. This must be done by a capable leadership, which accurately pinpoints the areas and the sound formulae for the liberation of woman. The process will then be carried out with the utmost possible revolutionary action, and society will tolerate and absorb the maximum within its objective and revolutionary movement. The aim of the latter is to change society, and to preserve the true revolutionary balance, so that the movement and action required remain undisturbed as they surpass the various customs, traditions and frameworks, and transcend the formal bourgeois concepts of freedom (5)."

But does this mean not resorting to legislation to protect the rights of woman? Of course not.

Saddam Hussein says: "In our assessment, the position of women must be rectified by law. Such laws, however, must not be tossed aside at a later date to divide public opinion and provide the reactionary right with a magnet by which to attract people from the revolution (6)." He therefore believes that the introduction into society of a new convention to substitute the old will facilitate the task of subsequent legislation. How, then, should this new convention be formed?

"Strengthening economic position of women with the use of laws and social conventions is part of the process of women's liberation. Similarly, tightening up the present divorce laws, and widening the educational scope by providing equal opportunities for men and women are also part of the same process. Even more important is that woman liberates herself by actively working and making a serious contribution to building society. (7)

Here we reach the essence of Saddam Hussein's logical train of thought on the matter: "In accordance with our beliefs, the total and radical liberation of women is achieved by liberating the entire society, politically, economically and culturally, as this provides the objective condition for the liberation of women, and frees them from the chains of backwardness and retardation (8)."

Liberating woman from her bonds is only achieved by doing the same for man, and both will only be liberated by and through the liberation of society, for can anyone who is himself un-liberated grant freedom to others?

B) The problem of illiteracy in Arab countries is undoubtedly one of the most urgent and pressing problems in the social, political and economic development of the Arab structure. Ever since we opened our eyes to life around us we have all felt the humiliation of this shame so detrimental to our society. We would read statistics published by international organizations or even certain local bodies, and feel shock and despair at the figures. We would listen to the large number of people in our country that talked of socialism, and feel nothing but astonishment and surprise, for

how could there be nationalization of factories, banks and other organizations without nationalization of human knowledge? How could there be talk about redistributing material wealth when it is not preceded, accompanied, or even followed by a fair distribution of human wealth? As all socialist schools and doctrines claim, is not man the most valuable capital, for who is it that builds this socialism? Can civil servants, bureaucrats and technocrats build any true socialism without the active, not outward, participation of the masses, which have the first and last interest in any socialism? How can they actively participate when they have no knowledge of the basic alphabet or of basic arithmetic? Is it not all an intended falsification and obliteration of the depressing facts about our Arab society?

The few following figures on illiteracy (taken from a report by the UNESCO Training Center on the development of Arab society) will give some idea of the true picture: Egypt 70 %, Tunisia 68.7 %, Libya 76 %, Algeria 78 %, Sudan 86.5 %, Morocco 86 %, Saudi Arabia 95%, Jordan 67.6%, Lebanon 13.9%, Kuwait 47.1%, Syria 60.8 %. Figures for the Gulf States and Emirates, fortunately for them, are not available.

Let anyone look at these figures, and then talk about development and joining the modern age as much as he likes, and no one will listen. Let him talk about our past heritage and civilization, but no one unfamiliar with history will believe him. Today's world does not savor classical poetry, only understands the language of scientific and economic power, which leads to independent military power, and is only interested in seeing giant rockets sending 20th century man to walk on the moon.

It is beyond man's imagination to think there is an Arab, whatever his political position or intellectual beliefs, who is not filled with true pride when he reads the law passed in late 1978 by The Iraqi Revolution Command Council concerning the national literacy campaign, affecting one sixth of all Iraqis, and programmed over only three years.

It goes without saying that we are referring here to the great political, social, economic and cultural value of this law. It is pointless to talk again about the nature of our age, sometimes described as the age of technology, and sometimes as the age of the masses, or to discuss its relationship with economic, social or cultural development, or its true democracy in more than its formal parliamentary sense. These are now all clichés, but the strange irony is that the media and constitutions of the Arab countries, as well as their party constitutions, never tire of repeating them.

However, the only country, which will take the initiative to wipe this shame from its forehead, is Iraq. Before the end of 1981, the Arabs, who for centuries have been shrouded in darkness, will shine like candles of hope on the road of the Arab revolution. The novel application of this law will undoubtedly allow Iraqi society to take a cultural leap forward. It will also inevitably lead to profound changes in all concepts, attitudes, customs, traditions and practices, whereby Iraq will be able to offer an inspired example to other Arab countries.

The only endeavors of this type, which have succeeded in other countries, have been those instigated by revolutionary parties un-stultified by bureaucratic organizations.

Perhaps the direct supervision of and strict adherence to the plan of these endeavors by the leading figures symbolizing these parties and revolutions played a vital role in firing national and popular enthusiasm, and in maintaining the initial level of zeal in the daily struggle towards enlightenment. This is what Castro, Mao, Lenin and Ho Chi Minh did, and what Saddam Hussein is doing today for the first time in the whole Arab world.

This is not a cultural revolution, but the same comprehensive revolution making inroads in one of its integral fields. This is because the leader has remained strong, struggling constantly against all adversity, and looking towards a bright future, voices persistently calling him to march forward to new and distant horizons.

Notes Chapter 8

- 1) Saddam Hussein, *Unqulu Taqalid al-Hizb*
- 2) *Ibid.*
- 3) Saddam Hussein, *op. cit.*
- 4) Saddam Hussein, ' *An ath- Thawra wal-Mara'* (On The Revolution and Women), Baghdad, Dar al-Huriyya, 1977, p. 78.
- 5) *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- 6) *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- 7) *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- 8) *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Saddam Hussein, the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

Part II

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

Saddam Hussein AND THE COMPREHENSIVE NATURE OF THE DEMOCRATIC QUESTION

Chapter 9

Democracy: A Comprehensive View of Life

We have now reached a point where we must pause for a while to ask a group of pressing questions which, in one way or another, may arouse sensitivity. Irrespective however, these questions will, on the contrary, clarify certain aspects of the picture hidden to those whose view is obscured by fanaticism, ignorance, hatred, or prejudice. These are the very people at whom this book is aimed.

Is Saddam Hussein an absolute ruler, a lone dictator who tyrannizes and represses? Is he a representative of "bourgeois" interests in his society, trampling underfoot the interests of the poor and hardworking social classes and sectors of society? What is his position towards the national minorities, in particular the Kurds? How does he stand on the issue of other parties, including the Iraqi Communist Party, practicing their political activities within Iraq? In his opinion, was the Progressive Pan - Arab National Front merely a temporary tactical position, or was it an intrinsic part of the revolution strategy, voluntarily established by the revolution, or did the revolution want it to shatter? Or more accurately, is the authority in Iraq, headed by Saddam Hussein, hostile to communism like the other Arab regimes, without exception, including those which have decorative" communist parties which conspire to order from the leader in power, rush to sign his communiqués, and totally absorb themselves in serving his aims and responding to his demands? Or does the authority in Iraq differ from communism in its philosophical principles and in its practical methods of dealing politically with various issues such as Arab nationalism, Arab unity, the Palestinian cause, and the nature, extent and philosophy of relations with the Soviet Union, as practiced by certain Arab communist parties? Were it not merely a philosophical question about the creation of the world, the genesis of man and the development of society, but instead a question of struggle in a given time and place to effect a radical change for the better in all political, economic, social and cultural relations, which is what the authority in Iraq strives to do, then why has everything happened as it has, and why was the firm grip destroyed?

Who bears the historical responsibility for all this? And who is the ultimate loser? Were not the question, as some understand it, an expression of a pragmatic tendency they shy away from, but essentially instead an expression of striving for the "experiment" which for years shined in darkness, could its rays have reached all the "Roman wrestling" -rings in our Arab nation?

Endeavoring to find a reply to these questions requires the following:

- a) a brief glance at the political picture in Iraq before the Revolution of July 17th, 1968; and
- b) another look at the theory and practice of Saddam Hussein's ideology on the issues of democracy, the Kurdish minority and the Progressive Patriotic National Front.

1 - An Alternative to Internecine Fighting between Patriotic Forces.

The struggle of all patriotic and progressive national forces in any society always aims to bring political, economic and social changes to society in response to the hopes

pinned on them by the masses and social classes and sectors which regard them as their leadership and avant-garde. Naturally, each of these forces has strategies and aims, which may or may not coincide with those of the other surrounding forces, and there may be agreement or disagreement over detail.

In third world societies in general, and in Arab societies in particular, and as a natural result of many years of colonization, patriotic and national progressive forces faced, and in some Arab countries still face, one basic problem, which, apart from their ideological premises and strategic aims, is the minimum they can expect. This is to achieve political independence, break the chains of economic dependence, bring about real growth, and embody a form of democracy in line with the objective circumstances of each country.

It is normal that these forces may agree on these objectives at the start of any revolution, but later differ according to their respective interests for society. However, it is illogical for the bourgeois forces in any society to plant roots for building socialism in the country which itself will be their first "victim". On the contrary, these bourgeoisies very often relinquish the original objectives declared at the beginning of liberationist revolutions, and re-establish ties, if they had ever actually been cut, with the forces of imperialism, surrendering themselves, according to Stalin's famous phrase, to the science of patriotism. It is equally illogical for popular revolutionary forces in any society to introduce agricultural reforms and industrial projects, to apply democracy in one form or another, and to think only of achieving the aims of a democratic patriotic revolution. Instead, they should quickly make the radical changes, which will open the doors wide for entering the socialist stage. This, of course, is if we consider the two stages to be completely separate and unrelated, which is the case in many third world countries, including certain Arab ones, following the new changes made internationally.

If we take the general situation in Iraq on the eve of the 18th-30th July Revolution in political, economic and social terms, and judge by previous general standards, we find that there would have been no lasting or influential progress as regards the stage of democratic patriotic revolution.

It is true that the previous stage overthrew the monarchy, established a republic, annulled the Baghdad Pact, had a form of political autonomy, and passed Law 80 on the national use of oil. It also introduced agricultural reforms and nationalized a few small industrial projects.

However, in a country, which has oil wealth as the backbone of its one-sided economy, oil, as before the revolution, was still a spoil for the foreign monopolies. These exploited it at will, thus threatening a people's livelihood. Successive governments and even national projects in this area remained weak, incapable, paralyzed and besieged from without by the interests of the large monopolies, and from within by their clients, stooges and men who carried out their policies in another fashion.

So what is the meaning of economic independence itself, the essence of political independence, if the country's wealth remains in the hands of its enemies?

Semi-feudal conditions still prevailed in the countryside, keeping tight rein over the traditions, morals and customs of the peasants, who represented reactionary pockets opposed to any attempt at progress and development. In trade and industry, even the city capitalists continued to persecute the workers under socialist banners whilst relations between them and the world imperialist structure were again being strengthened and activated in ways, which, although new, still had the same roles and aims.

If this was the general economic position, then what could the political picture possibly be, especially as regards the democratic question?

With respect to the relationship between the two "brother" nationalities in Iraq, namely the Arabs and the Kurds, the armed conflict between the central power and Barazani's tribal power would hardly have stopped to catch its breath under false declarations of peace than it would flare up again, even more fiercely, with increased chauvinistic, reactionary and narrow-minded tendencies. The more the bloodshed lasted, the more the bitterness and resentment increased, putting further impediments in the way of any solutions for injecting new blood, replacing the huge sums of money spent daily, and restoring true peace to the whole nation.

The rights of other small national minorities were also lost and threatened. Naturally, it was pointless for the Turcomans, for example, to demand any social or cultural rights, which would restore features of their national identity, which had been crushed and lost.

With regard to the political freedoms of all citizens, repression and tyranny were the outstanding traits of that time. After the coup by Abdul Salam Arif in October 1963, the country's patriotic parties were replaced by his formal and artificial organization known as the Arab Socialist Union, which followed the same lines as its Egyptian counterpart of the same name. Violent terrorist campaigns, intellectual and material, then began against all national, Pan-Arab and progressive voices raised against it. The prison doors opened to receive those from different political parties, and torture chambers, with their savage methods, were prepared for the prime fighters.

One of the ironies is that the Iraqi Communist Party issued a resolution after the full assembly of the Central Committee in August, 1964, declaring that: "the positive stand taken by our party towards the Arab Socialist Union essentially derives from the progressive ideals embraced or advocated by the progressive elements in this organization, as well as from the possible changes in its leadership and subsequent programme. Our party will not take an isolated stand against it. On the contrary, we will adopt a positive stand, and made the necessary arrangements for cooperation with the aim of consolidating the progressive aspect of its policy and developing its ideology (1)".

Only a few months later, in January 1965, the Iraqi Communist Party issued a communiqué in which it said:

"With regard to prison, banishment and the introduction of the death sentence by Arif's top officials, in one year they executed more communists and ordinary citizens than the monarchy had done in twenty-five years (2)."

In the light of a deeper understanding of the nature of the contradictions of this stage, were the patriotic forces and their political parties growing closer and opening up to each other? Had the time come to stop the bloodshed between them, halt the ignoble conflicts, and cease the accusations and bickering, which had long prevented any form of meeting between them?

In a passage from his book, "The Revolution of The New Way", Tariq 'Aziz says: "A new trend had begun finding its way into people's minds, and from there, although relatively slowly, into their souls. This new direction resulted from long experience in the past, and was still being formed, but the June, 1968 setback was a turning point, and gave it sharp incentive to burst out into the open (3)."

What is the nature of this new trend, and what is its intellectual core? The passage goes on to say that: "The different patriotic groups, despite their varying intellectual premises and methods of work and analysis, began realizing with considerable clarity that they had been following a completely wrong path. So instead of working on the

basis that the major contradiction was between all progressive patriotic forces and reactionary colonialism and Zionism, and that the contradictions between themselves were only secondary and could not possibly escalate to a state of severe tension and violent conflict, these groups began regarding these secondary contradictions as major, and battle flared between them.

The general picture over the past ten years had been that the conflict between the national forces in Iraq and the Arab world was quantitatively and qualitatively sharper and wider than the conflict between all these forces and colonialism, Zionism, and reaction. The June disaster gave inestimable evidence of this erroneous course. That this has been acknowledged, and work done to overcome it, is the minimum requirement for maintaining the Arab nation, and consequently its freedom and ability to progress (4)."

Nevertheless, even though the political climate was ready to meet these forces, even though the right intellectual and ideological conditions, although somewhat late, had been created, and even though the general Arab position after the 1967 catastrophe exacted a hasty union, these progressive patriotic forces failed to unite. The Progressive Patriotic Front seemed far from being achieved, and remained "forbidden ground " which separated the progressive Pan-Arab and national parties.

This certainly had its psychological, intellectual and organizational causes, but it also had its perils. The Arif regime did not realize the tight spot it was in, and so the possibility of it adopting a policy of violent and bloody terrorism was the only potential danger, but perhaps not the greatest. Instead, the possibility of an inside military coup, aiming merely to produce formal changes in the leadership, was the danger within the framework of the circumstances at that time. It is not difficult to imagine what another tyrannical military dictatorship would do, not only with the progressive patriotic and national political forces, but also with the Iraqi masses themselves, who had paid blood for their salvation, which, as yet, had not been achieved. The wait meant only one thing, namely preparing the way before them and gladly giving them more than one opportunity to succeed.

The Arab Baath Socialist Party was then able to strike a blow, thus ending the Arif family's dictatorial and reactionary rule, blocking any further attempts at a military coup, and achieving its revolution on July 17th, 1968. July 30th was the revolutionary culmination to the long hard struggle, whereby the revolution, as we saw in the first part of this book, eliminated the last pockets of infiltrators amongst its ranks.

From the positions of power, where there were usually strong leanings towards autocracy, particularly if they had the aptitude to justify it and a history of struggle to hide behind, the Arab Baath Socialist Party called upon the patriotic and progressive parties and forces in Iraq to cooperate, and rally together to form a progressive national and patriotic front. With this, they could put an end to the tragedy of conflict and division, help to build the country's future, work side by side to solve their problems, effect progress, and with their weight, lay the foundations of socialism, and not only achieve the tasks of a democratic patriotic revolution.

We must mention here that this is the first time, at least in the third world, that a political party alone has reached power, and then of its own accord, decided to share its power with others.

In case we have forgotten, Gamal Abdul-Nasser, leader of the July Revolution in Egypt, did no less than stipulate the dissolution of all political parties in Syria as a condition of union, even though he later cooperated with some of their leaders and members. The dissolution of all political parties in Egypt, irrespective of our attitude towards them then or now, and the establishment, at the beginning, of the so-called

Liberation Organization, then the Nationalist Union, and lastly the Socialist Union, all forms of the one organization which permitted membership of individuals, but not of groups, parties or organizations, were distinctive features of his method and logic of rule from 1952 to 1970.

Not to forget either, the prisons and detention camps in Egypt were never empty of its political pioneers, members of the dissolved parties and secret communist organizations, throughout Nasser's entire rule, apart from a few months. Regardless of what was then right or wrong, the release, in 1964, of Egyptian communists who had been incarcerated for more than five consecutive years, during which, for the first time in Egyptian history, they had seen their colleagues killed before them, before firing squads, or in the torture chambers, ended with a decision to dissolve the Egyptian Communist Party and incorporate it into the Arab Socialist Union. Only some of its members, and only in their capacity as individuals, were permitted to join the Union, which was nothing more than a huge shelter for the bureaucrats and those in authority.

These painful memories, because of their consequences to the internal situation in Egypt and the entire Arab world, have a useful significance for those who wish to know the bare facts. This is that they will realize the great import of the Arab Socialist Baath Party's invitation to the other political parties, including the Iraqi Communist Party, to form a progressive patriotic and national front in Iraq.

Furthermore, these historical and objective facts will perhaps help to form a resistance to the artificial confusion created by some, and remind them of what they always forget, namely that "The Arab Socialist Baath Party is not anticommunist. Only reactionary parties are hostile to communism, and the Arab Baath Socialist Party is not one of these (5) " So said its founder, Michel ' Aflaq, in 1966.

2 - Advocating a United Struggle.

When the Arab Baath Socialist Party assumed power in Iraq, it did not only face a mountain of accumulated economic, political and social problems, but also many of the psychological gulfs separating the national and progressive forces within Iraq. It therefore had to cross those gulfs and remove the mountain from its path.

It must be said here that, despite all the political parties which emerged and became active within Iraq, in the words of the political report from the Eighth National Congress of the Baath Party, it "was the Arab country most lacking in democratic traditions and practices, irrespective of their social content. Iraq had had one despotic regime after the other ever since the Ottomans until the July 17th, 1968 Revolution, and its people had only ever known short periods of relative freedom as regards thought, the press, parties, trade unions and parliaments (6)

In such conditions, it was not easy to disregard the wide gulfs, or to cross the mountain in one leap. It had to tread shaky ground both slowly and cautiously, although nevertheless firmly and with an "unshakeable" will. It first of all directed its attention to popular organizations, and devoted its efforts to building workers' unions, peasant cooperatives, and organizations for students, women and professionals. Many of these organizations had coalition leaderships, or had the participation of representatives from the Baath Party or other progressive political forces.

It then turned its attention to the media in order to ensure that all political forces could compete democratically and freely express themselves. As to the official press, the central party newspaper being ath- Thawra (The Revolution), it permitted the Democratic Party of Kurdistan to publish a daily political newspaper entitled at-Taakhi (Fraternity) (now called al-Iraq). It also gave the Communist Party license to publish a monthly political and cultural magazine called ath- Thaqafa al-Jadida (The

New Culture), a weekly newspaper entitled al-Fikr al-Jadid (New Thought), and a daily political newspaper known as Tariq ash-Sha'ab (The People's Way). It also granted license for a cultural and political magazine to a number of the democratic leftists of Marxist ideology called al-Thaqafa (Culture). Until now, no other Arab country has allowed the communists to have so many media and cultural platforms, or to compete freely in this wide field and express themselves openly and officially through newspapers distributed daily and headed by Lisan Hal al-Hizb al-Shuyu'i al-Iraqi (The Organ of the Iraq Communist Party). This was no ruse on the part of the Baath, or a desire to limit and confine these trends, and in any case, would not be the best and quickest way to do so. Instead, it was a purely democratic expression, and a sincere wish to build a particular democratic experiment in Iraq which could serve as a model to be imitated by other countries, or at least as an example to inspire them. When we speak here of the true democratic direction taken by the Baath Party, we are inevitably talking about the directions followed by Saddam Hussein, and vice versa. This is because he is a party loyalist, and represents the finest intellectual development and highest experience of struggle and organization within the party. His role in guiding the historic events before and after July 17th-30th, 1968, led him to the top position of responsibility as President of Iraq. More than once he told his colleagues of his sincere desire to relinquish his executive powers, because he was always, and still is, proud of the title he declared openly the day the head of the military tribunal asked him what his job was, and he replied "a struggler in the Arab Baath Socialist Party". However, his pride of and endeavors for this title are not justified by ancient history, but by the realities of a historical course followed and constantly rejuvenated in the arena of struggle.

However, perhaps he would prefer us to hear what he said to the North Yemen Prime Minister and his delegate when he met them on June 4th, 1979:

"The Revolution Command Council is a non-advisory council, and like President al-Bakr, we all participate in the decision-making. The system here is different. Ours is a system of leading the Muslims, who were calling Muhammad by name until the revelation. We are like Omar Ibn al-Khattab when he addressed his people saying: "If you think I'm crossing you what will you do?" They said they would resist with the sword, and he replied, "Praise God who gave you the ability to do this. " This is our position. We maintain constant respect for those who struggle against us (7)."

In Saddam Hussein 's view, therefore, democracy is a "comprehensive view of life". The political report from the Eighth National Congress thus referred to Iraq as the Arab country most wanting in democratic traditions.

He himself says:

"In order for them to reach maturity, we must accept some loss with certain of the new practices we are undertaking, particularly those like democracy. We must not conceal such losses, because when we study the overall gains, we find we are certainly required to move in the direction of democracy, of achieving socialism, and of striving for Arab unity)."

Iraq, perhaps more than any other Arab country, has known severe hardship, whether in the internal relationships between the different political groups, or whether in the struggles affected by these national forces within society as a whole. Colonialism, imperialism and reaction are the conventional hooks on which the failures experienced by these forces in their struggle are pinned.

Saddam Hussein breaks through this conventional barrier and points to other factors:

"The secret of this is in subjective factors, maturity, benefiting from experience, correct analysis, adopting the right attitudes, curbing willful sentiments, and

restraining the selfish view arising from mistaken calculations made mostly at the cost of the long-term strategic aim (9) " He then adds more precisely: "Reaction, imperialism, the right and all their bastions, and the right-wing mentality and interests exist in society. They are not a product of today, nor of that abortive stage we have been through, but have been in existence for years (10)." Saddam Hussein's objective in saying this is to create of all the facts: " A way of looking at oneself, at others, and at the progress being made, and envisaging the future and its requirements...(11)" How has Saddam Hussein been able to achieve this view in practical terms? How has he overcome the negative aspects of the past in building democracy? We shall now go on to contemplate this latter process.

Notes

- 1) Resolution of The full assembly of The Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party, August 1974, pp. 32-33.
- 2) From a communiqué issued by The Iraqi Communist Party at the end of January 1965.
- 3) Tariq, Aziz, op. cit., p. 99.
- 4) Ibid.
- 5) Mukhtarat min Aqwal Mu'assis al-Baath (Selections from Sayings by The Founder of The Baath), Beirut, al-Mu'assassa al-Arabiyya Lil –Dirasat wan-Nashr, p. 151.
- 6) Arab Baath Socialist Party, The political resolution issued by The Regional Congress, Baghdad 1974, p. 95.
- 7) From the meeting between Saddam Hussein and The North Yemeni President in Baghdad, January 1979.
- 8) Saddam Hussein, al-Dimuqratiyya Nadhra Shumuliyya lil-Hayat (Democracy: A Comprehensive View of Life), Baghdad, Dar al-Huriyya, 1977, p. 10.
- 9) Saddam Hussein, Ahadith fil-Qadaya ar-Rahina, p. 119.
- 10) Ibid. p. 118.
- 11) Ibid. pp. 119-120.

SADDAAM HUSSEIN the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

Part II

CHAPTER 10

Democracy and progress for the Kurdish people

It must be clearly stated that one of the major problems facing any political leader in Iraq was to find a democratic solution to the Kurdish question. Since the Abdul-Kareem Qasim era, and throughout the Arif family's rule (Abdulsalam' Arif-Abdurrahman' Arif) the mountains of Kurdistan in northern Iraq have known nothing but daily bloodshed, with no foreseeable end, between the Arabs and the Kurds.

The Baath Party has succeeded in establishing a complete theoretical, practical and political formula to solve this problem. This formula is considered a historical turning point, not only in the struggle of the Kurdish masses and their rightful nationalist aspirations, but also in the struggle of the Iraqi masses, Arabs and Kurds alike, to build a progressive democratic society which can serve as an example to other neighbouring societies in solving the questions of their own different nationalities.

This formula is embodied in the famous March 11th Proclamation.

The Baath Party's new formula was based on three fundamental premises defined by the political report from the Eighth Congress:

1) "Despite its accompanying historical environment, and despite its defects and reactionary and isolationist trends, and its shameful ties with colonial and reactionary circles, the Kurdish nationalist movement is essentially and fundamentally just that. It is a nationalist movement, which, within the limits of its demands for the legal and national rights of the Kurdish people in Iraq, and for autonomy in particular, has principled and realistic justifications. Within this framework, it is a fundamental part of the patriotic movement in Iraq “:

2) "The Arab Baath Socialist Party is a nationalist and human party with a socialist democratic doctrine. It is therefore completely natural for it to understand the legal rights of the Kurdish masses and to struggle to secure and guarantee these rights. When the party assumed control of the country between July 17th-30th, it had the basic responsibility of legally and constitutionally securing these rights”:

3) "In order to secure and guarantee these rights the Arab Baath Socialist Party is following a sound and democratic programme of sincere and positive cooperation with the leading Kurdish patriotic and progressive forces. This, again, is within the framework of joint patriotic action as represented in the Progressive patriotic and National front)."

When the March 11th Proclamation was made, giving full nationalist rights to the Kurdish people within the framework of the patriotic union for the Iraqi people, it was opposed by certain Kurdish, and Arab sectors. The Kurdish sectors surrounding their leader, Mullah Mustafa Barazani, who was a reactionary and feudalist overtly associating himself with the reactionary, Zionist and imperialist forces abroad, opposed the Proclamation because they wanted secession and not autonomy. Certain Arab elements, particularly within the Iraqi armed forces, even at commanding level, opposed it, or at least did not believe in its essence. This was because they were considering their own positions in the ranks, and regarded this Proclamation as "tantamount to stripping them of any means of self-defence because of the conditions prevailing before March 11th in the existing relations and within Iraqi society (2)". As Saddam Hussein himself said, "the party leader therefore had a difficult struggle with himself, and with society, to produce the Proclamation of March 11th, 1970 (3)".

However, the March 11th Proclamation, guaranteeing the national rights of the Kurdish people, was followed by a series of laws passed by the Revolution Command Council. These guaranteed cultural rights for all other national minorities in Iraq, which, in terms of population, have little weight. These other minorities had the right to be educated in their own languages, although everyone, of course, would still learn Arabic, to retain their heritage and traditions, and to express themselves through their own press.

The feudalist leadership of the Kurdish movement was not content to oppose the March 11th Proclamation, but recklessly took up arms against it. This leadership was surrounded by sectors of the Kurdish people, which, for historical reasons, were drowned in ignorance, fanaticism and religious loyalty to Mullah Mustafa Barazani. The open borders with Iran in northern Iraq helped them receive arms supplies, not only from the Shah, but also from the imperial front guard in the Arab area, namely "Israel". Northern Iraq thus became the site of counter-revolution against the progressive revolution in Iraq.

Despite everything, the revolution executed the plan for autonomy on the appointed date. It paid no heed to maneuvers made by the separatists, who were talking of marked borders and dividing the oil revenue between the Arabs and Kurds, as if it was a question of establishing a new state and not one of granting autonomy to a national minority within the framework of a single state. At exactly 12pm on March 11th, 1974, the Autonomy Law for Kurdistan was declared. It gave the representatives of the Kurdish Democratic Party two weeks' grace to join the Progressive Patriotic and National Front.

Barazani's representatives, however, of course gave no reply, even after the two weeks. They continued to take refuge in the mountains and maintain their ties with the Shah, and with Zionism and imperialism. The fight against their saboteurs naturally continued and grew more savage on their part. Autonomy had become a reality, and all their hopes of secession were threatened at the core. During one year of fighting, there were more than 60,000 casualties, of which 16,000 alone were from the armed forces. Large numbers of Kurds also fell, having been forced into a war, which had no future or interest for them. Over 14 years they made no gains, and could achieve no decisive victory with arms, no matter how much support their reactionary leadership hostile to national unity received from the forces of imperialism.

There was huge bloodshed, hopes were daily thwarted, and the need for developing the country grew.

Saddam Hussein believed that "decisive elimination of the renegades would not be decided by arms, but by policy. To the extent that this policy agrees with Arab and Kurdish interests, it can succeed in pushing the renegades to surrender (4)".

On March 6th, 1975, a meeting was held between Saddam Hussein and the Shah of Iran during the OPEC Summit in Algeria. They made an agreement to solve the problem of borders between the two countries, and have relations based on mutual respect for sovereignty.

The signing of these agreements by the two sides settled the border control, and put an end to the assistance being given to the reactionary pocket in the north. Barazani's stooges were destroyed, and Barazani himself fled to Iran.

Three years after these agreements were concluded, Fidel Castro said the following to Saddam Hussein:

- Your agreement with Iran was a wise step. -there was no alternative, and even though we were in torment over it, it was a wise and courageous decision.

- We have profited from the revolution and been able to concentrate on building socialism (5).

After the conclusive victory over the reactionary elements in the north there were those, both within and outside the Arab world, who thought the Autonomy Law had been revoked. Some states even enquired of the Iraqi authorities about what happened to autonomy after the 1975 victory. Saddam Hussein always replied: "We did not achieve victory that day merely as Ba'athist, or even Arabs, but as Iraqis, Kurds and Arabs. We had victory over ourselves in tackling the mistake, and over the agents who put themselves at the service of foreigners with the tacit agreement of Arabs, Kurds and the Arab Socialist Baath Party leadership, and with the backing of all progressive patriotic and national forces. We therefore had two victories, one voluntary, and one over ourselves. The deviant was driven out and destroyed, and those at fault withdrew under new conditions and facts.

There has been no change in our policy. The programme for autonomy is not something temporary to be lightly snatched away. Autonomy is rather a true expression of our triumphant programme, and we are at the peak of our victory when we take mature decisions to settle any Iraqi, Arab or international problem. Victory was not only in our solid will in the armed conflict, but is also, along with courageous political decisions, sometimes more valorous than any daring military decisions, however momentous. Autonomy was a brave decision, and was, is, and will continue to be a true principled decision for our Kurdish people (6)."

The victory of the Revolution in Iraq, however, over the most serious problems within her borders, has certainly not pleased various numbers outside the country, namely the reactionaries, imperialists, and the small remaining groups of Barazani chauvinists in Europe and the Middle East. The campaign against Iraq will intensify every time it makes a progressive, revolutionary or anti-reactionary and anti-imperialist move within the country. We will hear tales and stories about the resumption of fighting in the north, and about the migration of Kurds from Kurdistan to southern Iraq. Naturally, those who spread rumors will exploit any incident in the north, which has happened, or is likely to happen, in the area, which, for 14 years, had a war around which myths were fabricated. It is also possible that they will transform normal everyday events, such as the 10-20 kilo meters move inwards by those living on the Iraqi borders with Iran and Turkey to specially prepared model villages with facilities not even available near the capital, into a counter-campaign. With this, they would claim that the Kurds have been "moved" from their villages in order to be absorbed unnoticed amongst the Arabs. Such rumors and biased campaigns, however, do not cause worry, but perhaps instead give reassurance. Those responsible are always the advocates of counter-revolution, but only serve to show that the revolution is following the right course.

After the victory, Saddam Hussein confirmed to his colleagues the meaning of the revolutionary principle which endures in spite of, and perhaps because of, every victory: "Do not be affected by vanity, because you will get caught up in a whirlpool and lose the ability to see the correct goals. Do not lose track of the factors, which lead to victory, for they must evolve if the victory is to become permanent. The essence of these factors is to strive for your people. We don't just love the mountains in Northern Iraq because they are a part of Iraq, but particularly because they contain our people, and to defend our people we defend the mountains. Whoever defends the mountain but crushes its people cannot be triumphant, and you must fully recognize that you are basically defending your people who live on the mountain. (7) "

In the north of Iraq, neither the Ba'athist, nor the Arabs and Kurds alone were victorious. The prime victor was the principle of democracy, which was always, and still is, abominably defeated in more than one of the places in Iraq's vicinity.

NOTES

- 1) The political resolution of The Eighth National Congress, pp. 81-82.
- 2) Saddam Hussein, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
- 3) *Ibid.*
- 4) *Ibid.* p. 82.
- 5) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with Fidel Castro in Havana, December 1978.
- 6) Saddam Hussein, the full text of the press conference attended by 150 journalists from around the world on 18-7-1978, p. 23.
- 7) Saddam Hussein, *Khandaq Wahid Am Khandaqan fi Qadhayya al-Jabha al-Wataniyya (One Trench or two Trenches in The Issues of The National Front)*, Beirut, Dar at-Tali'a, second edition, p. 32.

Saddam Hussein the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

CHAPTER 11

The National Front: A Strategy Objective

The March victory achieved by the July Revolution, in and through which the basis for scientific and principled solutions to the Kurdish problem were established, was not the first of its victories on the road to democracy.

It had achieved another fundamental victory two years earlier with the official establishment, on July 17th, 1973, of the Progressive Patriotic and National Front. It was on that day that President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr declared, through all the Iraqi media, the establishment of the front, after long years of opposition, disagreement and armed conflict, between the Arab Baath Socialist Party and the Iraqi Communist Party. This moment was the crowning glory to long hard efforts, which had more than once fluctuated, until this front was able to see the light.

One might mention here that the Baath Party was the first to extend its hand to the other political forces, including the Iraq Communist Party, in order to unite progressive nationalist political action within the country. This was not after its lone victory in assuming power on the morning of July 17th, but long before, during the dictatorship of Abdul-Kareem Qasim, and even after the tragedies of Mosul and Kirkuk, when it called upon all national and Pan-Arab forces to rally together and form the Patriotic United Front.

When all infiltrators to the July 17th revolution were finally purged, and when the 'plane carrying Abdurrazzaq an-Nayif from the Rasheed military camp to Morocco took off, Saddam Hussein took out the communiqué prepared for the July 30th Revolution. The text of this communiqué, broadcast that day on radio and television, included the following:

" All progressive forces are called upon to be aware of their responsibilities in this delicate stage in the life of our people and our nation, and to make a serious contribution to defending the Revolution and maintaining its progressive path by active participation in bearing the burden of responsibility. In following this route, the Revolution will not take off from positions of weakness, but intends to confirm its belief in the need to have wider mass- participation in pushing the wheels of the revolution forward. (1) "

With these phrases, Saddam Hussein was loyal to the political line decided upon in the Ninth Congress of the Arab Baath Socialist Party held in February 1968, before the Revolution took place. He then asserted clearly and courageously that "struggle by a united front against the negative struggle and the current rule is the only formula capable of meeting the needs of the Arab struggle during this stage, which has been made more complex and significant by Zionist imperialist aggression (2)".

This candid invitation to all forces to participate in the responsibilities of patriotic action was not the last, as it was reiterated more than once by the Baath Party leaders. In December 1968, less than five months after the Revolution, ath-Thawra newspaper published a profound and lengthy study by Tariq Aziz entitled Towards an Established Progressive Patriotic Front. In it he urged the patriotic and progressive forces to make hasty and serious steps to form this front so enthusiastically advocated by the Baath Party. He said: "the patriotic forces must not behave like the logicians of Constantinople,

because "Israel", imperialism, the internal and external reactionary forces, and the sabotage and espionage networks will not wait for the progressives to end their lengthy dialogue, and for an established progressive patriotic front to be formed in Iraq, but will do their utmost to crush these enemies (3)". He concluded his study with a new call: "In all circumstances, and however long the road towards the progressive patriotic front desired, all progressive patriotic groups are asked not to forget a major fact of which the masses are aware. This is that the principal opposition is between all progressive and patriotic groups and Zionist and reactionary colonialism. The existing contradictions, which may arise between the patriotic and progressive groups, are only secondary contradictions, which can be solved. They can never escalate to the level of major contradictions and become a cause of fight and conflict. The new conditions resulting from the changes of July 17th-30th today provide a historic opportunity for putting Iraq on the road to patriotic unity and progressive patriotic revolution. The patriotic groups are responsible for transforming this opportunity into a reality. The cost to the people and to history will be dear should this opportunity, along with the potential to achieve a progressive patriotic revolution on socialist lines, be missed (4)."

On July 20th, 1970, President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr was to hold a press conference in which he confirmed the Baath's attitude to this front, saying: "The Front, in regional and national terms, is a strategic objective established by the Ninth National Congress of The Arab Baath Socialist Party before the July 1968 Revolution. Several moves were made towards the patriotic forces with the aim of establishing the front before the Revolution, but these were met with an irresponsible negativity on their part. When the July 17th Revolution took place, the party renewed its efforts to establish the front, and Proposed that the other forces should share the responsibility, but these unfortunately also adopted a negative stance (5) "

Why were the communists then refusing or proving reluctant to join the front? What were the factors ruling their attitude in this stage just after the Revolution?

It may be said that these factors were essentially the result of the following four factors:

- a) The psychological factor, which permeated the negativism of past relations, and was more subjective than objective as regards the political relations between two vying political forces;
- b) The ideological factor, which prompted a run-through analysis, therefore leading to miscalculation. In the first appraisals of the revolution, this showed that they were merely a link in the chain of coups made by the "petites bourgeois" in the third world and Arab countries.

These quickly lost their enthusiasm, became caught in a maze of problems, and achieved nothing:

- c) The organizational factor: the Iraqi Communist Party was suffering the effects of internal divisions of which no communist movement in any Arab country is free:
- d) The factor of rivalry for the leadership, perhaps the most important of all. The communists first spurned the idea that the Arab Baath Socialist Party had a "distinct" role in leading the front because it had brought about the revolution single-handed. They demanded equal leadership for the different parties within the front, but this was neither practically nor theoretically acceptable, as in relation to front action, there is no such thing as "communicating vessels". In all fronts in both east and west, the party which

brought the revolution to life and holds power always has a leading role, irrespective of whether a front has been established or not.

It is our belief that these four factors constitute the hesitation and indecision of the Iraq Communist Party vis-a-vis the invitation to join the front. The Baath resolutely dealt with these factors, particularly the last.

In a council meeting held in May 1970, Saddam Hussein said, with unequivocal candidness: "This revolution is here to stay, and the Arab Socialist Baath Party is to be its leader. This does not mean to say, that when we call upon the patriotic forces to unite, we shall abandon our leading role in the popular and mass organizations, or in the constitutional and executive aspects of rule. We are not only here to rule, but to apply the Arab Baath Socialist Party programme, which in our view, is that of the hardworking masses in Iraq and all other parts of the Arab world. There is a magazine called ath-Thaqafa al- Jadida (The New Culture) which purports to deal with general intellectual issues, but it is, in fact, a political magazine which publishes all Communist Party reports and all points of view. (6)"

The Communist Party, however, continued to demand the principle of "equality", an "equal-sided front", or the application of the "communicating vessels" theory. This was openly done in the Democratic Kurdish Party Congress by Kareem Ahmad ad-Dawud, a member of the Communist Party politburo at the time.

Ath- Thawra newspaper published an article saying that:

"When Abdul-Kareem Ahmad presumed to talk about "an equal-sided front" he was being unrealistic. The meaning of equality comes from the word itself, and not from subjective feelings which some try to impose on others. Equality basically demands equal and joint responsibility and a guarantee of maintaining the results.

For the party wanting equality to be actually equal, its recent history must be one of actual equality, and be commensurate with "consolidating the nature of its Socialist union". It must participate in the revolution against this rule, whatever the losses and gains, and not merely await the benefit and then say it will divide. It must fully acknowledge the revolution which liberated its members and eradicated all previous restraints, instead of meeting it with ingratitude (7)."

The Second Congress of the Iraqi Communist Party, however, held in September, 1970, reiterated the same sentiments about the invitation extended to it to join the front, and insisted upon the principle of equality for all parties.

In July 1970, ath- Thawra published the Baath Party's concept for the establishment of the front, and its conditions and bases. This required all national parties to do the following: to evaluate the Baath Party, being a unique, revolutionary, socialist and democratic party, both candidly and objectively; to make a clear appraisal which does not distort the progressive national revolution of July 17th, which is anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, and against class exploitation; to acknowledge the leading role of the party in the government, in different organizations and in the front; to completely reject the Zionist presence, have utter faith in the total liberation of Palestine and occupied Arab territory, and reject the Security Council resolution by taking up arms to liberate Palestine; to regard Arab unity as the basic aim summing up all other aims; to believe in socialist transformation and oppose colonialism and reaction, and to "allow no loyalties, other than to the revolution, to be created within the armed forces, as these are one of the

important revolutionary institutions, the unity of which as an effective tool is threatened when their ranks are encroached upon by political parties and organizations (8)". On November 15th, 1971, the Arab Baath Socialist Party issued the Patriotic Action Charter "as a culmination to the triumphant revolutionary march and its earnest endeavors to take front action by overcoming the negative attitudes of certain political forces within the country, and by responding to the national interest and the union of the national rank and file in order to further establish the patriotic revolutionary course (9)". The Charter discusses the necessity for a front, the alliance between the progressive patriotic and national forces within Iraq, how the attitude towards this alliance is "principled and strategic", and the number of great achievements made by the revolution under the Baath leadership. These include eliminating the espionage net works within Iraq; the national investment in oil and sculpture; revolutionary legislation in the field of agriculture, for example, Agriculture Reform Law No: 151 of 1970; issuing Labour Law 151 of 1970, and the Pension and Social Security Law; acting to find a just and democratic solution to the Kurdish question; and preparing the widest five-year development plan in the history of the country.

For three months, ath- Thawra opened its pages for all progressive writers of different leanings to discuss the Charter. The consensus was that "The Patriotic Action Charter is a new and significant victory for the revolutionary movement in the country and within the Arab world. It is the first revolutionary move of its kind undertaken by a ruling progressive party in the Arab world (and in most of the Third World) to rally all major progressive forces in its country with a historic invitation to establish and anchor front action and extensive joint struggle, based on practical strategy and revolutionary tactic, to put the Arab revolution on the road to victory(10) ."

The politburo of the Iraq Communist Party, however, issued a communiqué to the effect that the Patriotic Action Charter "has sound bases for patriotic cooperation", and that "the Charter's plan is anti-imperialist in its principle essence and content". It asserted that the Charter declared "complete support for the camp of peoples struggling against imperialism and aggression (11)". And that it "drew up a progressive programme for socio-economic change, and rejects, on principles, development along capitalist lines (12)". It also stated that the Charter confirmed "a firm democratic settlement of the Kurdish issue", and "the importance of continuing to cement cooperation with the socialist states (13)".

Three months passed. In February 1972, Saddam Hussein visited the Soviet Union as head of a large official delegation. This was followed by a visit to Iraq in April, 1972, of Alexei Kosygin, the Soviet Prime Minister, during which a treaty of friendship and cooperation was signed between Iraq and the Soviet Union. During this visit, Kosygin held a meeting with members of the Central Committee of the Iraq Communist Party to exchange viewpoints between "the two sister parties".

The Communist Party then issued a communiqué on the occasion of the treaty signing in which it said:

"The Iraq Communist Party expresses its great welcome of the Iraq-Soviet treaty. It has followed with interest the development of the relationship between Iraq and the Soviet Union, particularly after the visit of the Iraqi party and government delegation to the Soviet Union in February 1972. Today, the efforts of the two friendly sides have culminated in success with the signing of the treaty of friendship and cooperation. The

Iraq Communist Party truly values this positive step, and declares its total willingness to work with all its energy and without restraint to cooperate with the Arab Baath Socialist Party so that the banner of the Iraqi-Soviet friendship remains flying high (14) "

After the Communist Party had declared this stand, the Baath Party Leadership asked it to take up two seats in the cabinet. The Central Committee held an emergency session to discuss the matter, and decided to adopt a positive stand towards it. They therefore agreed to join the Iraqi cabinet, and two members of the Communist Party's Central Committee, Amir Abdullah and Makram at-Talabani subsequently did so. On July 17th, 1973, after a series of meetings between the two sides, it was announced that Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, permanent secretary of the Baath Party regional leadership, and Aziz Muhammad, first secretary of the Communist Party's Central Committee had signed a "joint communiqué between the Arab Baath Socialist Party and the Communist Party". Ath- Thawra and al-Fikr al-Jadid published the text of the Patriotic Action Charter and the formulae for front action. The Communist Party made open acknowledgement of the fact that the Arab Baath Socialist Party had a distinctive position in the leadership of the front and its different bodies, and that it had the leading political authority in the state and its constitutional establishments. The text also clearly stipulated a commitment from all parties, other than the leading party of the revolution, to refrain from activity within the armed forces. This was because the latter represents an important revolutionary organization, and any extension into its ranks by political parties and organs constitutes a threat to its unity.

A new page had begun, and in all countries outside Iraq and throughout the Arab world, the progressive nationalist strugglers from all parties and organizations with nationalist and progressive leanings considered this last agreement to be an important achievement of the July Revolution in Iraq. This was because it could have ideological import along the road to positive interaction between the two basic trains of thought in the Arab world, Whereby the different members of the front, through their practical struggles, would become more at one on both intellectual and organizational levels.

In his meetings with the Front Committee, Saddam Hussein himself urged the necessity of this positive interaction, and the need to provide the right ideological and psychological conditions. He said: "I believe the mistake made by the Baathists, and by the Communists in particular, is that each one imagines ideological independence will lead him to think that he alone holds the perfect and absolute key as regards the correct method of application. He then works on this basis, wanting to take all others under his wing, and all his subsequent behavior is influenced by this. If this mistaken understanding of independence persists, the front will not achieve its strategic aims (15)."

Saddam Hussein also made special appraisal of the psychological considerations, which play an important role in creating a suitable framework for this interaction:

"The basis of any interaction is to create the spirit and desire for such. A mere desire with no grounding is not sufficient to create the psychological climate, which makes interaction a required and vital process. Interaction, in any case, is not incompatible with ideological independence. Ideological independence does not invalidate interaction which aims to put the ideology on another course, the new face of which is adjustment to and interaction with the realities of society and the objective conditions which have evolved therein, as well as opening new vistas for political, intellectual and social action.

This method enables us to create a front where there are many possibilities for thought to have discourse with give and take for the future, and with a better and constant interaction (16).”

In his estimation, this positive interaction, the starting point of which is that every party has something to offer and something to learn, may be the "central key" to creating the psychological and intellectual climates, which facilitate the accomplishment of practical objectives.

Without it, "there can be no end to the rigid positions sometimes held by the Baathists. Nor can there be any end to the rigid positions and erroneous conduct amongst the Communists, which, in turn, nurture the Baathists rigid positions and provide them with psychological justifications (17).”

Interaction, however, does not simply mean criticism by the two sides of each other, nor is it merely a demand for rights without positive and practical participation in the building process. This criticism is neither justified, necessary, or legitimate, unless through "an outstanding performance of duty (18)" in daily work. It must also be put on its right course, and not be transformed into a hunt for errors, or transgress the objective possibilities of evaluating the measures taken by the revolution. It must always seek to acquire the "front spirit", and adopt its committees and organizations as a framework, rather than attempt to gain at their expense.

"The Communists, like the Democratic Kurdish Party and others, believe in following an ideological line independent of the Baath Party. They must therefore profit in this way and no other, as any other will inevitably lead to conflict between the different patriotic forces, and may cause deviation when it begins conflicting with the progress of the revolution. If we imagine the picture reversed, with us in the Baath Party condemning the Communists in our speeches and media, just as some of them revile our system, our principles, and us by criticizing the administration for their own gain, what do you think the situation would be? In other words, is it acceptable for our party to gain by crushing others? If so, then you must imagine how much you would lose were the Baath Party leaders, in their speeches to the masses, to speak of the negative aspects of the communist Party. However, when we stop and talk positively about the front, and the role of yourselves and the other national forces, then you will have made an immense gain (19).

Saddam Hussein did not hesitate to put the problem of the special state bodies in their natural framework, and to explain why they sometimes exceed the proper bounds. He also proposed sound and practical solutions for alleviating the pressure they caused: "Throughout the world, in socialist systems and capitalist states, the special bodies may endeavour to face the political leadership with an emergency situation. The untrustworthy elements may do so intentionally, whilst loyal elements may sometimes do so unintentionally, but find themselves psychologically disposed towards creating an abnormal situation in order to assume additional power and increase their weight in dealing with the political leadership.

However, our role in education, supervision, and interaction reduces the opportunities open to the bad or naïve elements for creating an emergency situation to deal with the issues at stake (20).”

But how can this be applied? What is the only way to solve all the problems stemming from the nature of daily work in the practical sense? Saddam Hussein patently states that: "Interaction must increase and meetings be organized. Political decisions and measures

taken by the administration and state must be examined as they are with their basic justifications. The country proverb says incense drives away evil, and we say clarity drives away evil like the candle does darkness."(21)

All this, however, must be based on a fundamental and essential premise without which there is no meaning to interaction or constructive criticism, or to the front itself as such. This premise is one of "belonging to the revolution". Being of the revolution in a clear and defined manner is the necessary preamble, the essential basis, and the solid foundation above, which the process of joint building can rise. The fact alone of sincerely belonging to the revolution can plant the good seeds for every possibility, and perhaps for the need to meet, cooperate and proffer mutual assistance in terms of strategy. Saddam Hussein unambiguously states that this is the "test", and the gauge of success and productiveness in the results for the future:

"There have been many instances throughout the world which demonstrate the high degree of flexibility exercised by the communist parties in response to the patriotic and national conditions in their countries.

Castro's revolution interacted with the Communist Party there to the extent that Castro became its leader. There are communist parties in Eastern Europe, which do not carry this appellation. So why, my communist comrades, do you interpret ideological independence in this country in such a way as to make the possibility of interaction between yourselves and the other political parties remote, whilst interpreting other revolutionary experiments in the world differently? (22)"

It must be said that the principle aim of the front and its strategic vision is not absent from the thoughts of Saddam Hussein, irrespective of the secondary or minor problems some were embroiled in, making them forget the future. However, the question which was repeatedly whispered, sometimes behind closed doors, was put by Saddam Hussein to his colleagues with his usual courage, namely, what have we gained from the front? "Whether Baathists, Communists, or independents from the other political movements which will later join the front, you will all face the same question, which is, what have you gained from the front? This question will be asked continuously, and is a way of attempting to create and widen psychological gulfs. We may sometimes find that our benefits are small, but if we measure these within the framework of the strategic vision of the future, the bases of which we have made concerted efforts to establish for the sake of our people, then we will find an inestimable daily benefit. Let us reverse the question to the disadvantage of those who ask how we will benefit if we fight amongst ourselves. Their reply will be to ask what the Iraqi people and the nation gained from the previous internecine fighting. . The method we are following involves measuring the gain with calculations and strategic concepts. The revolution, its course, and the front are not to be taken separately, but as a whole. If you take the gain and all it indicates, it will make you and all of us proud to belong to it (23)."

The question, however, apparently continues to be repeated in communist circles, some of which have a syndicalist vision of the gain, or at least view it with an attitude remote from the overall strategic concept of the revolution's progress. What have the Communists lost from joining the front? "Comrades, you are searching for what you have gained, but what have you lost? Your number, your mass support, and the forces of your organization have all increased, and there is scope today for your ideas to interact and

work freely with the other national parties, so what would you gain from not being in the front (24)?"

It is strange that the Communist Party itself should make an open acknowledgement of its gain in the political report made by its first secretary, Aziz Muhammad, in the Third Party Congress held in 1976:

"The progressive achievements which preceded and followed the establishment of the front created greater possibilities for the spread of democracy in the country.

In excellent circumstances, it gave our Communist Party the opportunity to act openly, open its headquarters, and legally publish its daily central newspaper, Tariq ash-Sha'ab (The People's Way). The patriotic Kurdish forces are also able to overtly practice their activities, and the autonomy institutions in Kurdistan have been legitimized (25)."

The first secretary also confirmed the Baath Party leadership of the course, which brought all these accomplishments:

"The Arab Baath Socialist Party is leader of the revolution, the state and the political authority in the country, and has a prominent role in leading the front.

The Communist Party lends its support to this, confirms the revolutionary and progressive achievements which have been made, and regards them as vital, prime, and beneficial goals on the road towards building socialism in Iraq (26)."

By all accounts, principle, organizational, and practical, the Communist Party has therefore "'profited" from the establishment of the front, and from its continuance and progress. So what upset the balance, gave isolationist tendencies the upper hand, and magnified illusions of individualism and separatism? Was something other than the surface activity suggested going on underneath?

After the full assembly of the Communist Party Central Committee in March 1978, a political report sharply criticizing the Arab Baath Socialist Party was widely and openly circulated. It also included new demands incompatible with the wording and spirit of the National Action Charter.

The basic content of the report as regards the front and the relationship between the two parties can be summarized as follows:

1) The Communist Party demanded that 1978 be the end of the transition period, and that preparations be made for general elections to the National Assembly following the general political freedoms granted which allow the masses to use their initiative and powers:

2) The Communist Party demanded to study important resolutions together with the front before they were issued:

3) The Communist Party demanded that the condition of party commitment in assuming responsibilities be withdrawn.

If these were clearly defined demands, then the report paved the way for them with a long chain of criticisms suddenly launched to block any attempt at calm serious discussion, free of any nervous commotion, with the committees and higher leading organizations of the front.

The Baath did not hesitate in making preparations for general elections to the National Assembly. The objective conditions experienced by Iraq in its conflict against the imperialist centres and guards in the north represented in Barazani's rebellion, the decisive victory over them, and the return to normal life in the autonomy region prevented this and the Communist Party " demands " for comprehensive free elections.

Furthermore, the latter's assertions pertaining to general political freedoms and the freeing of energies and initiatives revealed that pressure, suppression and sub dual were being experienced in the country.

This was in contradiction with the report from its previous congress, and was also incompatible with the freedoms of open political exercise and full expression of its opinions in its daily central newspaper which it enjoys, and which no other communist party in the whole area has so far had. In addition, general freedoms which lack direction carry the meaning of "liberalism " which cannot be, nor is it, applied, in the third world and Arab countries, to the conditions peculiar to their social, economic and cultural structure which is linked to the long colonization of their land, and which, even after political independence, remains constantly exposed to the possibility of a new colonialism returning yet again.

Even so, can liberal democracy ever be in concord with the Communist Party ideology? And how can liberalism be established in a society where the economy is strongly controlled from the center by the state?

The other demands perhaps clearly contradict the acknowledgement made by the Communist Party in its previous Congress to the effect that the Baath Party plays a leading and prominent role in the revolution, the state and the front. This very acknowledgement was a basis and condition for the formation of the front itself. The return, here, to the principle of "equality" between the different parties is no more than an attempt to destroy the bases on which the front was established, and upon which the Communist Party agreed from the start, declaring its readiness to cooperate and participate in the building process using these bases as the starting point. Does all this mean anything else than putting a time bomb within the front building itself which will only explode to destroy the entire construction?

The detonator has already been activated with the establishment of communist party cells within the armed forces, an indication that the fire has been ignited.

Notes

- 1) From Communiqué No.27 from The Revolution Command Council on 30-7-1978 on the Flank Movements by The Counter-Forces to The Revolution.
- 2) Tariq, Aziz, op. cit., p. 108.
- 3) Ibid., p. 110.
- 4) Ibid., p. 112.
- 5) Ath- Thawra newspaper, 21-7-1970.
- 6) Ibid., 13-5-1970.
- 7) Ibid., 10-7-1970.
- 8) Ibid.
- 9) See Samir Abdul-Kareem, Adhwa' ala al-Haraka ash-Shuyu'iyya fil-Iraq, p. 141.
- 10) Ibid., p. 146.
- 11) From a resolution from The Iraqi Communist Politburo, 27-11- 1971.
- 12) Ibid.
- 13) Ibid.
- 14) From a communiqué issued by The Iraqi Communist Party, 12-4- 1972.
- 15) Saddam Hussein, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
- 16) Ibid., pp. 10-11.

- 17) Ibid., p. 12.
- 18) Ibid., p. 13.
- 19) Ibid., pp. 17-18.
- 20) Ibid., pp. 22-23.
- 21) Ibid., p. 24.
- 22) Ibid., pp. 13-14.
- 23) Saddam Hussein, *Ahadith fil-Qadhaya ar-Rahina*, pp. 132-134.
- 24) Saddam Hussein, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
- 25) Documents from The Third Congress of The Iraqi Communist Party, Baghdad, 1976, p. 48.
- 26) From the resolutions of The Third Congress of the Iraqi Communist Party.

Saddam Hussein the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

CHAPTER 12

The Communists Dismiss their Commitments

Why has all this happened? Why has the Communist Party been thinking and organizing itself in this way when it was fully aware of the outcome? Can it be said that the demands made in its report represent the pure ulterior motives behind this behavior? Or is there something deeper in its thought and ideology, meaning that what has happened is not only self-contradictory, but also expressive of its true nature?

Let us first of all say that a pure, infallible, and profound "interaction", one of the psychological, intellectual and systematic conditions of which Saddam Hussein is speaking, has not occurred. The Communist Party has remained fixed in its traditional concepts and anchored behind its readymade statements, through which it publicizes its views, its analyses, and its practical policies concerning the nature of authority in Iraqi society, the conditions for the transition to and building of socialism, and the so-called theory of non-capitalistic development.

More important still, it does the same concerning the nature of the nationalist phenomenon in general, and in our Arab society in particular, the meaning of Arab unity and its significance in relation to itself, and the dialectic relationship between unity and socialism in our Arab nation.

Khrushchev's famous saying at the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist Party was echoed strongly in the third world, and the Arab countries in particular. Here he said that "many Asian and African countries have gained their political independence, and now have to face the question presented by the post-independence stage, namely, which system will they choose for their development? The capitalist or non-capitalist (1)"? This phrase, which created many illusions about the free choice of the methods of development for societies usually described as "newly independent", irrespective of Khrushchev's responsibility or otherwise for this, did not only reveal the false nature of historical events, but also the danger they posed to the struggle of the exploited classes in the third world, and in Arab countries in particular.

The phrase "capitalist development" was not, in fact, the formulation of a practical theory, as it did not positively define the nature of the social setup. The negative definition here does not allow us to acquaint ourselves with the determined fact of any social structure.

If it was said of some Arab countries in the 'sixties that they were progressing along the so-called "non-capitalist" path, then it means a denial that they are following the capitalist route of development. So does this mean they were, and still are, developing along socialist lines?

The phrase capitalist development, in any case, does not correspond in essence and meaning with the phrase socialist development. What do such vague theoretical formulae therefore suggest? They pointed to the concept, widespread in those days, of what was known as a national democratic state which lead the country along non-capitalist lines, and achieved freedom of action for the Communist Party, until becoming a socialist state where the "avant-garde party" supervised the process of building socialism. Here, the party of the avant-garde is the Communist Party of the proletariat.

Such obscure theoretical formulae, which have ensnared many, reveal no less than the theoretical inability to define the nature of social structures in our countries.

What capitalism or socialism were they talking about without concentrating on the nature of the structural link between the Arab social make-up and the world imperialist capitalist make-up? How can development along capitalist lines, as was the case in relation to the capitalist class in the West, occur in the shadow of this filial dependency when it is impossible both practically and theoretically? How can development, from the start, hope to destroy this dependency without this inevitably leading to the foundations for building socialism being laid? Whoever maintains this tie with the world imperialist structure cannot, no matter what he claims, but fail to build another pillar of imperialism on the land of his country, and whoever is able to break this structural dependence must be qualified to build socialism.

Nevertheless, we must say that this inability to analyze the nature of our social structures is not only the responsibility of Olianovski (2), but also, and perhaps first and foremost, that of political parties and organizations originally called upon to understand and define the nature of the social structures resisting change. Some of these were perhaps unaware of the corrupt nature of such theories until their architect himself became aware of and abandoned them. Even so, he would do this with a sense of shame tinged with the pride to be found in the appointed intellects of the super powers, and after he had been shaken in his distant capital by the repercussions of the clash between his theory and reality in many third world and some Arab countries (3).

The official Arab communist parties did not, unfortunately, devote any time to studying the Arab reality. The Arab communists within these parties adopted many of the cliché statements, concepts and analyses, which abounded in an atmosphere of immorality, and under different historical circumstances. In doing this, they made no attempt to examine them, or gauge the extent of their applicability to their social or historical reality.

Stalin's theory on the nation and nationalism is dependent on four basic elements, namely, one language, one land, one joint economic life, and one psychological formation. This theory is taken as it is, in block like geometrical formulae, to judge the process of forming the Arab nation and Arab nationalism, as well as the resulting struggle for Arab unity.

When disputes erupted and divisions took place within the ranks of the Syrian Communist Party in 1972 over the questions of the Arab nation, Arab nationalism, and Arab unity, they pushed all their intellectual weight against the doors of Marxism. In the old rooms of the Kremlin, we shall hear the voices of Soviet "leaders" and "academicians" talking in obvious Stalinist tones, even though thirteen years have now passed since the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist Party, which condemned Stalin in clear Stalinist tones.

Regarding the current existence of one Arab nation, the Soviet "academicians" said: "We must take the characteristic features of the nation as defined by Stalin. One of these, namely a joint economy, is lacking. Stalin did not say a common market, but a joint economy, and to now consider the Arab nation, as one is not objective. One can talk about the Arab people and the process of forming the Arab nation, but this is not a newspaper report. It is a programme. We cannot therefore say that the Arab nation is perfectly formed. The economic factor is decisive in the establishment and formation of

the nation, and it is an issue where the people, not nationalism, must be discussed. The nation is an objective because it has not yet been formed (4)."

But what about Arab unity? The Soviet "academicians" said: "Unity is not an aim in itself which may have a different content. Unity cannot be the principal objective of the Communists. Their main goal is socialism, which is the most important issue, followed by communism. This we cannot replace with any other issue. The slogan, Arab unity, can sometimes hinder the struggle for social and socialist progress. The Trotskyites before, like the Chinese today, were asking the Soviet Union to dissolve and halt its development for the state of the international socialist movement. Should social progress in any Arab country be sacrificed for Arab unity (5)?"

Unfortunately, the matter does not end there, and many questions emerge, not in relation to the Arab nation itself, to Arab unity, or to Arab nationalism and the concepts it has adopted, but in relation to the Stalinist theory itself. This is because this theory is a product of the situation in Europe during the nineteenth century, and is therefore unable to interpret other nationalist phenomena, which grew up outside Europe several centuries earlier. Stalin attributes the emergence of nationalist realism to that of modern capitalist growth in production, which in his view demands a basic condition of nationhood, namely the oneness of economic life, or the existence of the integral capitalist market. He therefore not only strongly emphasized this element in the fundamentals of the nation, but also stressed discussions between Soviet academicians and members of the Syrian Communist Party's politburo when the dispute between them occurred. However, does not the acceptance of Stalin's theory, lock, stock and barrel, mean that the responsibility for completing the formation of the Arab nation falls squarely on the shoulders of the Arab capitalist systems?

These will look to unify their market, a matter which has become almost a joke to those who know the extent of their development, and just how limited it is as dictated by world capitalism today. The Arab nation then, which is claimed to be in "a state of development", will not be formed at all as long as it can only be within the framework of capitalism, local capitalism in particular, and within the world capitalist system. Such disastrous results can only be achieved if we continue to apply ready-made theoretical models stemming from localized situations in Europe which are radically different, not only in terms of development, but also in terms of the nature of the social formation itself.

This way we shall only accomplish either an absurd simplification or a theoretical maze. This is because the Arab reality must not only resemble, but also actually correspond to the European reality if the same results are to occur. In other words, we must make the transition from feudalism to capitalism, and from they're to the nationalist state. The way will then be open across the contradictions of capitalism to socialism. But what if we had no feudalism? And what if we had no local capitalism capable with its bourgeois authority of anchoring the one nationalist power? Would the historical process come to a standstill?

However, this inability on the part of the official communist parties to understand the development of the social phenomenon particular to the nation and nationalism was also accompanied by a large reduction in its status and importance within the Arab world. As long as this continues to be a bourgeois phenomenon in their view, then concern and emphasis on it will be considered as having fallen into the trap of bourgeois thought, and

a "rival", according to the Soviet academicians, to the nationalists in their positions. The political discussion of the Arab nation and Arab nationalism in the literature of most parties is closer to newspaper reporting than to intellectual statements based on ideological conviction.

At the base of their thought is the idea that socialism will put an end to all the ambiguity surrounding the nationalist issue. They will then take the advice of the Soviet academicians to the effect that " Arab nationalism is not our slogan", and the goal we are striving for is socialism", thus confirming "internationally" their theoretical inability to be in close contact with their reality, or at least to understand it from a practical point of view. This is because what has happened, and is still happening, in the world today indicates that the phenomenon of nationalism will not disappear with the appearance of socialism.

So what happened between China and the Soviet Union? And what convincing explanation has been offered by these orthodox parties, which merely repeat Soviet statements regarding contradiction or doubt to a degree that, at times, has almost reached the point of armed struggle. This reiteration is represented in condemning the Chinese in all conferences and resolutions without admitting to being a party to these contradictions. What happened in the bloody Prague spring?

Imperialism alone is responsible for all this, is what these parties say. So what happened before in Yugoslavia then and in Poland? What is the meaning of the phenomenon of European communism? And what happened on the borders between China and Vietnam? How can we explain history as long as we only change its facts to mere conferences, like detective novels, now monopolized by the organs of colonialism and imperialism? Can the Arab reality really be changed, both regionally and nationally, as long as we continue to have intellectual disputes about its different aspects? This too when these differences can only be decided by a humble return to statements which are nothing more than a reflection of a European reality inevitably different to ours, or by meekly listening to sacred advice, offered by a high priest with no relation to the true "church" of our people. Nevertheless, we must now ask if the experiment has ended. Has divorce become a final reality? The recently-published book in five volumes, entitled *Adhwa' ala al- Haraka ash-Shuyu'iyya fil-Iraq (6) (Lights on the Communist Movement in Iraq)*, is full of documents and communiqués, and concludes on a considerably pessimistic note, particularly when mentioning the traditional leadership of the Communist Party. Behind the pessimism, one can perhaps perceive a faint glimmer of hope in the young cadres who may return the true face to Marxism as a method of analysis in a specific time and place. These same cadres may then abandon the rigidity, dependence, and ideological isolationism, which resulted in the masses being isolated from the traditional leaderships. Saddam Hussein, who is now prepared to embody a new democratic experiment, and to hold mass elections to choose the people's representatives in the National Assembly, which will commence parliamentary activity this year, said before the crowd of journalists and correspondents who assembled in Baghdad in July, 1978:

" As long as the different parties to the front observe their commitment to the revolution, the Arab Socialist Baath Party has at no time had any intention of turning the front into a temporary measure, nor of basing its relationship with it on anything other than a sincere historical duty to put society on the road to socialism by building this society itself and its relations along socialist lines, and by making the revolution more capable of carrying out

its tasks with the participation of all Iraqis. You may want the whole truth, and so we say to you that it has not occurred to us, nor shall we allow any side, whether in the front or not, to impose any conditional relationship between itself and the revolution. There are no conditions, and the revolution accepts conditions from no one.

Instead, it prescribes good intentions to be expressed through daily conduct. Absolute loyalty and deference to the revolution are the final truth, although not the absolute final truth, but the truth connected and responding to the laws of development. Truth is not isolated from the laws of development, including what ensues in the world (7)." Sincere relations between the parties to the front and us are based on this, and continue to flourish, strengthen and deepen along the road to accomplishing the fundamental tasks of the revolution and continuing to build with one design.

Notes

- 1) See the resolution from The Twentieth Congress of The Soviet Communist Party, Khrushchev's speech, Cairo, Novosti Agency.
- 2) Olianovski is one of the major Soviet theoreticians responsible for the Middle East area, and one of the most prominent of those to spread these ideas.
- 3) See al-'Usur al-Haditha (The Modern Times), Soviet magazine, French edition, November 1977.
- 4) See Qadhaya al-Khilaf fil-Hizb ash-Shuyu'i as-Suri, pp. 135-136.
- 5) Ibid., pp. 138-139.
- 6) See Ibid., pp. 267-268.
- 7) See The full text of the press conference, pp. 11-12.

SADDAM HUSSEIN
The Fighter, The Thinker and The Man
SADDAM HUSSEIN AND THE MUTABILITY OF THE GAME OF
NATIONS

CHAPTER 13

The International Balances between Two Instants

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

Philosophical thought naturally tends to be absolute.

The conduct and thinking of those who have or adopt philosophical theories about life, society and mankind must together represent a complete unity. We shall therefore see that the harmony between Saddam Hussein's thought and its application within Iraqi society equally applies to Iraqi foreign policy. With its inner coherence, and in concord with its practical applications, his ideology acquires its unity, integrity, comprehensiveness and own independence.

The general theoretical features of this ideology in its internal applications are, as we have attempted to confirm, several. The first is its national and Pan-Arab character, which interacts with others without losing its essential nature. It also has a balance. This is not based on fixed mechanical calculations but on the outcome of a living dialectic between the present and future. Also involved is a constant search for new formulae, not for the sake of novelty itself as such, but in order to overcome objective impediments and difficulties, which cannot be done using conventional methods and formulae. These general traits are also embodied in their external applications.

What is the analytical picture it presents of the conflicts between the forces of today's world? From which angle does the analysis begin? On which calculations is Iraq's movement based in its complicated relations with the world movement? What are the practical applications of these analyses and calculations in the different stands towards the countries of the world?

Before endeavoring to reply to this question, it must first be said that the historic moment of Saddam Hussein's appearance on the international stage was all but completely different from the preceding moment, whilst simultaneously full of potential to change. More precisely perhaps, Saddam Hussein's moment was that of a new moment of labour in a new form for the world. Like all moments of labour, it did not only experience inner turmoil and instability, but also the natural pains of birth.

When Gamal Abdul-Nasser emerged in international politics in 1952, for example, with the Egyptian revolution, the world had recovered from the effects of World War II, and its international contours had been defined with considerable clarity. This was apparent not only by the division into two defined camps, but also by the cold war between them. This fact alone sheds important light on the nature of the conduct adopted by Gamal Abdul-Nasser in the international field during the first phase of his revolution at least, namely the phase where the various options found practical application. In view of this, we are able to explain the skill he displayed in striking up discord between the two giant powers, and understand why, at that time, he succeeded in reaping the fruits of this discord, which gave him a great opportunity to maneuver and gain the maximum possible. Thus, when America refused to supply him with arms he was able to obtain them from one of the countries in the socialist camp. Likewise, when Dulles withdrew the

offer of financing the High Dam, he was able to replace America with the Soviet Union. Then when the West was showing reluctance to meet his ambitions for industrialization and development, the East, whether through goodwill or far-sightedness, rushed forward to offer loans and technical and material assistance.

Europe was then still economically and politically weak. Nevertheless, it persisted in adhering to its former colonialist principles, and this limited its ability to deal firmly with the newly independent countries. America was blatantly influencing their foreign policy, as it hoped to inherit the legacy of the downfallen imperialists, Great Britain and France. This was based on theoretical and material premises, which governed its external movement since, and even during, World War II. When the world was drowning in bloodbaths, the American strategist, Nicholas Speakman, published his famous book, *American Strategy in International Politics*, which later became a sort of inspired bible for the American leaders and foreign policy theorists. In the book, he said: "In international society, every type of force and coercion, including wars of destruction, is permitted. This means that power conflicts are in themselves conflicts for become the major objective of American domestic and foreign policy. All else is secondary to that, because in the final moment power alone can accomplish the aims of foreign policy. Power means survival, and the ability to impose its will on others, dictate to those who have no power, and withdraw concessions from those who have less power than US (1)." At that time, the socialist camp was also a united whole. It had been joined by 800 million in 1949, when Mao's peasant revolution triumphed over the imperialists and reactionaries. The only renegade was Tito. The Soviet nuclear umbrella gave protection to this large camp, which extended from the ends of Asia to the borders of Central Europe. The relations between the different parties to this camp were usually described as "granite", like the stone, which cannot be crushed or destroyed, even by bomb. The third world was also beginning to appear at that time in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It sought to be rid of the colonialism and backwardness it had lived with for many years, and wanted to be far-removed from the new and underhand subordination of world imperialism.

Bandung had not yet brought positive neutrality and nonalignment, and the third world, which had had a difficult birth, was consequently faced at every turn with alignment to one of the two sides. Few leaders were then able to skillfully walk the tight rope between the two.

This, however, did not last long, and the 'sixties had hardly begun than new changes and new situations appeared. The socialist camp was divided amongst itself, split by conflict within its ranks. More than one Tito emerged, and the effects of the tragic facts broadcast by Khrushchev in the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956 began to be strongly felt, turning the dreams of many in more than one place into a tragic nightmare. Armed Soviet troops invaded the streets of the capital cities of certain socialist countries.

The aim was to guarantee the people's loyalty to the Soviet system, and that of their leaders to Soviet ideology and politics. In fact, the leaders' remaining in office was made conditional upon this loyalty.

Europe, on the other hand, had recaptured its breath, and had begun demonstrating rebellion against the absolute American influence, reaching the point of independence along Gaullist lines. There was widespread recognition of the changes of the age, and

after the fall of the old empires in 1956 under pressure from the two superpowers, it was realized that the time had passed when armies could occupy the land of others. Algeria gained its independence after much bloodshed, as did many other countries in black Africa.

America also realized that the dream of destroying the socialist states which had always appealed to the fanatic military leaders and hegemonists amongst those who held the true power, had become impossible now that the power in their hands had passed to others. It therefore had no other option than to agree to a peaceful coexistence, both socially and politically, with the different regimes. The fate of the world then became precariously balanced on the nuclear scales. With acute polarization, the third world crisis increased in severity as it alone was crushed between the stones of the mill. The non-aligned movement, which had appeared on the international stage with its positive neutrality, had in practice given it no more than a spiritual cover for its hopes, which in view of the balances in the world at the time, could not be achieved.

The third world itself began experiencing blows aimed at its very core. The respective leaders of Ghana, Mali, the Congo, Indonesia and India all fell victim. Egypt was confronted with imperialism and Zionism, and in many parts of the world America behaved with reckless abandon.

Notes

1 - See Amir Iskander, *Tanaqudhat fil-Fikr al-Mu'asir* (Contradictions in Contemporary Thought), Baghdad, Ministry of Information, 1974, p. 61.

Saddam Hussein the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

CHAPTER 14

The Theory of Multi-Polarization

Despite everything, however, life does not stop, and the new is always born of the rubble of the old. A new moment was on the way to being born, and as Garudi said, for thousands of years, the pains of labour have fortunately not prevented our mothers from giving birth.

What is the nature of this new moment? What are the features it forms? We shall leave it to Saddam Hussein, with his strategic sense, to give us the picture:

"In our vision, the next twenty years will see new centres of power and polarization, in addition to the two existing ones, which will have a leading influence in international politics. China will be a large center of influence and polarization, and Europe, with France playing an important role, will become a pivot distinct from America in the process of influence and polarization. Japan will have a vital part internationally in the formation process in South-East Asia, particularly if it decides to enter the strategic arms industry. The Arab world too will be a center of effective movement in terms of influence and polarization.

"The world today with its major pillars in international politics is being refashioned, and more quickly so than in past years. It closely resembles the political development, which occurred during and after World War II, even if its formulae are different, and even if it is more momentous and comprehensive.

"When the world is being formed with its major elements which effect international politics, and when the process assumes its final forms for a specific time, the main factors involved will continue to influence international politics, and their movement, aims and methods for a long time to come (1)."

Such are the features of the image as seen in the future by Saddam Hussein, and these constitute the theoretical basis of the logic governing Iraq's international relations. The assumption implicit in this logic is that "all participate in the formation process of international politics, whether as major elements or as those which assist, and this they do from their own position, and according to circumstance and the ability to influence (2)".

What then is Iraq's contribution? And how is the method of dealing with other nations defined, not on the basis of current conditions, but on the basis of possible future conditions, whereby light is thrown on the fundamental aspects of foreign policy with all current and possible future formation centres?

Saddam Hussein does not regard the patch of land on which he stands in Iraq as being the ultimate hope of struggle, since it is only part of a larger piece of land, namely the entire Arab world. Hence, the Iraqi people are again only part of a larger people now numbering more than 150 million. "Division is unnatural, and must end in unity (3)."

Here, Saddam Hussein begins talking more practically and realistically about unity than ever before: "This time, unified action must not ignore two essential factors. The first is the economic factor with the influential role it plays in achieving unity, whilst the second is the influence our nationalist struggle and the trends and movement of international politics have on each other (4). The first factor means creating mutual interests and benefits between the citizens of the various Arab countries by forming economic ties. On this basis, the struggle for unity becomes a struggle for the sake of interests as well as principles. The second factor means giving attention to the difficulties, which may face unity on an international scale, and simultaneously

heeding the possibility of a strategic meeting between certain international centres of polarity and the struggle for unity.

" As Arabs and Iraqis within the nation, we must not therefore rely on the movement of time. Instead, we must play a part in the formation process, which will occur. We must also move it in the direction which will make a considerable portion of the center of polarization, in its general strategy, realize that unified struggle is not in contradiction with its general policy and overall aims in the region during a stage of realization of maturation of the essential conditions for unified action (5)."

This vision has its requirements as regards international conduct on a practical level in terms of weight, volume, degree, and the extent of the relationship between Iraq and other nations. Hence, "we have been careful to create a distinct form of relationship with France, as in our estimation, it will play an essential, and even decisive role in European unity (6)". France is therefore the center carrying most weight in Iraq's relations with Europe, but Saddam Hussein also says: "we must not disregard China's role in international politics, which has not yet been proportionate to its size. The reasons for this are well known, and not least of all is the fact that it is so technically underdeveloped in comparison to the United States, Japan, and some of Western Europe. However, the situation will change a great deal in the years to come, and certain European countries, and perhaps Japan in a limited capacity, will play an important role in China's technical development (7)". Saddam Hussein, however, attaches importance to the part Japan may have, and the influential position it may hold, in the process of forming new poles in South East Asia. This influence will increase "the more Japan makes a convincing approach to entering specific strategic arms industries. In a few years, it will have reached a high and sophisticated degree of armament, both electronic and atomic (8)". But how can Japan play this role in the arms industry with the Americans controlling its direction in this field after the World War II defeat? Saddam Hussein thinks differently on the matter: " A basic factor which will lead to the possibility of wide scale armament in Japan is the development of its need to secure its communication lines. This is due to the fact that it will import all primary industrial materials and energy, quite apart from the developments and other considerations in international politics. The formation process in international politics, including events in South East Asia, the emergence of China as a force with additional weight, and Soviet influence in the region, will make it possible that, with a certain measure of flexibility and maneuver of the part of some, including Japan itself, American influence and pressure on Japan will decrease over the next few years)."

According to Saddam Hussein, therefore, two issues link the volume, weight and extent of relations between Iraq and other states. These are "joint interests", and "the degree to which the different strategies meet or interact". The starting point for this is the vision of Iraq's future with its spontaneous movement in international society and the Arab region, and the future vision for the other country or countries who are the second party to the relationship, again with their movement and influence within international society. On this basis, as he was demanding good relations with all other countries of the world, he was also pressing an attempt to influence the new centres of polarization, and in particular the countries which will have a prominent role within these centres. Dealings with France, therefore, differ from those with West Germany, Britain and Italy, for instance, just as dealings with the Soviet Union differ from those with Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

Notes

1) Saddam Hussein,

- 2) Ibid., p. 16.
- 3) Ibid., p. 17.
- 4) Ibid., p. 18.
- 5) Ibid., p. 19.
- 6) Ibid., p. 20.
- 7) Ibid.
- 8) Ibid., p. 22.
- 9) Ibid., pp. 23-24.

SADDAM HUSSEIN the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

CHAPTER 15

Europe and the American Hold

But to what degree can Europe extricate itself from America's grip? The reply to this question exacts a familiarity with the strong justifications for this American hold over Europe. In Saddam Hussein's view, "the strong justifications for America's current hold are political in their influence over the major trends in European policy. Its basic form is the Soviet-American conflict and the two opposing sides, with Western Europe under the American wing for well-known reasons. Furthermore, a significant number of European nations have their own particular economic justifications for their relationship with America. One of these is American aid, as well as the presence of American companies, and wide American investment and capital in Western Europe (1)".

The question therefore has a political and an economic aspect. "In our political appraisals, we must devote particular attention to the matter of European security, Western Europe's fear of the Soviet threat, the role this plays in the American-European alliance, and its reflection on the strength of American influence in international politics (2)." The fact is that Europe, despite the balance of nuclear terror, does not now fear atomic arms as much as war with the conventional arms of the Warsaw Pact. In Europe's mind, the Pact's troops, or most of them, can be swept away by these conventional arms, which quantitatively, and sometimes qualitatively, depend on Europe's conventional arms should the hour of confrontation arise. In Saddam Hussein's assessment, "the matter of European security involves two volitions. The first is Western Europe's will to be rid of the ghost of a threat from the Warsaw Pact, and gain a measure of freedom, and stability, in developing away from the American hold. The second is the Soviet Union's desire to liberate its troops for confrontation with China, and for other international commitments (3)".

This is the political aspect. The economic aspect however, presents a new element in addition to American aid to some of Western Europe, and American capital within its various countries. This is oil. In that it represents a center of American pressure on Europe, this new element also represents, or is perhaps representative of, an Arab center of pressure, not only to loosen America's grip over Western Europe, but also for the Arab causes themselves. The correct solutions should be found for the latter in a way which links up perfectly with true Western European interests, independent of American control.

" After World War II, America played a definite role in driving Europe out of important oil positions, thus weakening the, effect of its individual policy in the Middle East. It drove Europe out of Iran and Saudi Arabia, and brought about the wide scale participation of European nations in other regions. In American policy, oil is no longer a formula for self-sufficiency guaranteeing strategic goods. Neither is it any longer a means of exploitation, but has instead become a decisive matter in America's universal policy, particularly in its relations with Western Europe and Japan (4)."

Saddam Hussein rightly asks where is America's hidden strength. And what is the basic element in its power outside its own territory? He then replies: "The basic factor is its

alliance with Europe and Japan (5)." If energy is the main stay of economic life and European industrial society, then whoever has "the capacity for serious influence in the Middle East, the prime source of energy for Europe and Japan, will be able to control both (6)".

Looking at the picture in this light raises two questions. The first involves freeing this energy from the grip of American influence and exploitation, and consequently freeing Europe and Japan from American dominance, at least in terms of the influence this powerful factor has on their life and economy. The second question involves using this energy in the field of international relations, and its political function in that it brings a positive yield for our Arab causes, with the current Arab-Zionist conflict at the fore. Free oil, or oil nationalized in the interests of the freedom, independence, and true overall development of the Arab people, is sold in accordance with Iraqi policy, its international interests, and within the framework of its Arab and international strategy. Other oil, that is "shared" oil in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other places, will not have the same capacity to influence. Furthermore, even though American and other Western nations have the lion's share, after Iraq nationalized its oil and demands for the nationalization of Arab oil everywhere increased, they were able to conceal their barefaced imperialist exploitation behind long-term purchasing contracts. This practically accomplished most of the objectives behind the former concessions, and helped the imperialist states to avoid political surprises, which harmed their interests and ran counter to their policies. In political terms, this was a fundamental element in the alliance between America, Europe and Japan, and strengthened America's hold over both, as well as consolidating American positions and centres of influence in its overall general policy. The nationalization of Iraqi oil did not therefore only represent liberation from the exploitation and political hegemony of monopolist companies. It also represented liberation for a part of the European will itself from the dominance of America's hold over it, and from the latter's almost total control over European domestic economic life.

Notes

- 1) Saddam Hussein, *Nidhal una Was-Siyasa ad-Dawliyya*, pp. 35-36.
- 2) *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 3) *Ibid.*
- 4) *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- 5) *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- 6) *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Saddam Hussein the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

Part II

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

The political use of energy

CHAPTER 16

But what is the significance of using oil politically to benefit the Arab causes in general, and above all the Palestinian cause, not to mention the national causes of Iraq and its development? Can the Arabs really influence the international policy decisions of the great powers in today's world?

Before going into detail about Saddam Hussein's strategic viewpoint on this vitally important matter of the future of the Arab world and the direction its development takes, it must be said that Iraq's control over its oil wealth, which should serve as an inspired example to the other Arab oil countries, has allowed it to fully liberate itself from all external pressures. This is true, no matter what the source of pressure, as regards its own choice over the methods of developing its economy and society, in accordance with the objective circumstances, and the demands of its strategic socio-political view, without hindrance from the technological centres of polarization in our contemporary world. This fact has a practical dimension in terms of a successful and intelligent application, and a theoretical dimension, which is no less important and should not be ignored. This is that the economic strength afforded by the rise in oil prices, brought in by a revolutionary leadership taking society towards socialism under the supervision of a people's party with a progressive nationalist ideology, put an end to the widespread belief in socialist and progressive circles that there should be an organic tie with the international socialist block wherever industrialization and development generally are concerned. The reasoning behind this belief is that the dangers of dependency on the imperialist states and a return to the new colonialism would be avoided. Furthermore, the advanced Western capitalist states, faced with sharp international competition, and under pressure from their domestic economic crises, would be unable to have a monopoly, or to completely conceal their technological achievements from the developing countries generally. The direct ability to pay for this equipment without pressures, conditions, or problems, does not only diminish dependency and give greater opportunity to choose the best methods of development, but also allows these choices to become a factor in deepening the rifts between the capitalist states themselves, and puts pressure on them to lend support to the Arab causes. This is perhaps not clearly expressed in the position of the EEC countries in general, particularly France, which has a better understanding of these Arab causes. It is also reflected in the flexible attitudes sometimes adopted by the United States towards certain of these causes.

Saddam Hussein asks the essential question on this issue: "Has the West in general, including Europe, America and Japan, never really understood the Arab question before when they do now? The reply to this is in the negative, as their understanding before was no different from now. However, the Arabs now have new means of putting pressure on them in a way which obliges them to acknowledge an understanding, something they had previously refused to do. So, when the Arabs are able to exert yet more pressure, will they not then have an even better understanding? Certainly. They will understand, and this will have its influence, and put Arab interests in a new and favorable context (1)."

This brings us to the real significance of using our energy sources in order to win our causes. Firstly, we must point out the error of two ideas, which prevailed, and perhaps still do, amongst the main Arab centres of decision outside Iraq. The first mistaken idea is that the success or failure of the national issue is dependent on international trends, "as if it were a fated cause, denying us the will to shape and influence international trends, and the ability to move (2)". The other erroneous idea is that international trends and the balance of international forces carry no weight, and are given no importance in any calculations. "Those adhering to this concept believe that, with our national will, we can resolve everything, and have no need to understand international trends and their Influences (3)."

What is the most correct understanding? The answer is that which takes into constant consideration the dialectic between the particular and the general, and the national and the international. When a large nation like the USA has the complete alliance of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, Australia and Japan, then its international policy gives little weight, and even runs counter to the Arab cause. This is particularly so when the Arabs are incapable of effectively influencing international politics, and unable to make intelligent use of their potential.

When these countries adopt a stand different to that of America, however, the latter is obliged to modify its policy in accordance with the new international perspective.

"Thus begins a part of the discussion on the Arab-Zionist conflict. The Soviets, Americans and French are all foreigners, however different their positions, and whatever their ties with each other or others are, whether friendly or allied. None has our understanding of our case, and even in the best of circumstances, expresses it in terms of a so-called meeting of strategies and interests.

Thus, when the Soviets find that the Arabs are defiant, and able to continue the war, they will lend their support and supply them with arms. However, when they see that the Arabs always fall at the first blow, we must not imagine that they will do anything counter to their interests for the sake of the Arabs. Whoever is destroyed by a mere gust of wind must not delude himself that a foreigner will appear to save him only to cause himself irreparable loss (4)."

Saddam Hussein uses this understanding as the basis upon which the issue of international agreement must be properly established in terms of its relationship with the Arab issue. The definition he gave of this agreement as being "a political case of modifying the aspirations and strategies expressed by the parties interested in meeting (5)", does not mean an end to the Soviet-American conflict, but rather a particular understanding of the factors of strength and influence. The strategic area occupied by either of the two superpowers has an increasing counter-influence on others whenever they gain new friends. "In other words, gaining new friends is an influencing factor in having superior strength or consolidating reserves for use in limited or overall emergency situations (6)." Both believe that gaining new ground in the interests of others is an opening for putting them under their influence. "That is, when the Soviets bear pressure anywhere in the Middle East, and seize a part of land, thus putting it outside American control and influence, it does not belong to Russia;

Instead, they only consider it as a gain in the sense that they have taken it outside the political influence of the United States. The Americans view such a result as but the first stage of political action. The second stage is that the Soviets will attempt to make this

territory fall under their power of influence. There is no other way. So what happens when the Soviets come to the Middle East, a sensitive area known for its strategic values in American eyes (7)?" We must mention here Saddam Hussein's view of the American concept of the Middle East and its estimate of the region's strategic significance. This is not only because the area is a sensitive one in strategic military calculations, nor because it includes oil countries, but because of another fundamental factor more important still than the previous two. This is that "whoever has serious influence in the Middle East will also influence Europe and Japan (8)".

On the basis of this simultaneously scientific, realistic and practical understanding of the nature of the international conflict over our area, and the meaning of the international agreement between the two superpowers, Saddam Hussein's Iraq does not only deal with some as friends with a conformity of strategies and interests, and with others as adversaries or enemies with different political strategies and interests. He also brings into question the matter of the Arabs using their potential to influence the course of international politics. "We believe there are specific factors which are not being used as they should to strengthen the Arab nation's ability to counter the adversary, increase its weight in the international balance, and contribute from a stronger position towards changing the directions of international trends, be they American, Soviet, European, or any other (9)."

Notes

- 1) Saddam Hussein, Nidaluna Was-Siyasa ad-Dawliya, p. 63.
- 2) Ibid. p. 60.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) Ibid. pp. 62-63.
- 5) Ibid. p. 64.
- 6) Ibid. p. 65.
- 7) Ibid. pp. 65-66.
- 8) Ibid. p. 66.
- 9) Ibid. p. 70.

Saddam Hussein The Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

Part II

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

CHAPTER 17

The Strategy of Liberation and the Policy of Stages

Saddam Hussein strongly urges the possibility of using the given factors, which increase the national and Pan Arab self-capacities of the Arabs to use "more pressure in a wider area in international politics to counter the enemy in the interests of liberation (1)". This essential point is considered by the self-proclaimed "realistic" Arabs, and by those who waver and hesitate, those who adopt a central position, and those prepared to grant concessions, as their prop in describing Saddam Hussein's Iraq as radical. They attribute him with declaring the need to destroy the Zionist entity now, and with rejecting all interim solutions. But does Saddam Hussein now want to destroy the Zionist entity as they say? We shall leave it to him to express his viewpoint:

"Some of our brethren say so. It is my view, however, that they do not understand international politics, because they think the West can now destroy the Zionist entity, whereas they cannot. This is true. We do not indeed understand international politics if we aspire to destroy the Zionist entity at this stage. The truth, however, is different. We have not said any such thing, nor are we following such a policy. We have no illusions that the Arabs are now capable of destroying the Zionist entity, nor that the world would allow such a thing at this stage. We do say, however, that as Arab brethren we must look into the matter together, and ask if we have used all the given factors which increase our national and Pan-Arab self-capacity to put more pressure in a wider area in international politics in the interests of liberation and countering the Zionist enemy. This is the essential difference between us and them, but we will be taken by surprise, as if we are the bidders, with the others having a more realistic understanding of the situation (2)."

Saddam Hussein does not reject the policy of "stages", provided that each is linked to the other, and that all have the same ultimate aim. The fact of "today" is not the end of the matter. "The facts of international politics are relative to the factors effecting its trends and movements.

The strength of the Arab nation plays a decisive role in developing the facts related to its struggle (3)."

This requires mobilizing the masses in the light of the central strategic aim at a time when the Arabs can use all opportunities to achieve the aims of the various stages.

Saddam Hussein clearly says: "We are not against political activity, but flexibility, if not linked to a central strategic aim, or to the serious requirements for achieving a leap forward, is transformed into a cover for reversion at a subsequent opportunity. However, when flexibility is part of the revolutionary process affecting the central aim's direction, then it is a step forward (4)." "Each part of Palestine we can liberate must be an ultimate aim of our struggle, which we cannot delay if the opportunities and factors to achieve triumph are there.

"The Arab nation will always find additional energies before it for creating new elements, both nationally and internationally, in order to move forward (5)."

To where? To meeting "The Jews" in the sea, if we are to believe the misleading counter propaganda? ...No.

"World public opinion must understand that the conflict is not a religious conflict between the Arabs and the Zionist entity as the Zionists try to make out, or as some Arab policies and media previously gave the impression.

In order to understand the reality of the long-term Arab viewpoint advocating a secular Palestinian state where all citizens, no matter what their religion, live together on joint territory, under one rule, and with equal rights of a Palestinian essence, we must demonstrate it by taking practical and convincing measures. One of these is to extend the opportunity to Iraqi Jews to return to their original homeland of Iraq, to Syrian Jews to return to Syria, and to Moroccan Jews to return to Morocco, just as the American, French and German Jews return to their original countries. Our advocating of forming a democratic Palestinian state from the original citizens of Palestine will thereupon find understanding in the world (6)."

However, what happened in Camp David undoubtedly represents a setback to Arab policy, and is a logical result of what may be caused by "realism" or "moderation", by understanding "the circumstances of the contemporary world" and "the international balances of power". All that Saddam Hussein said before reaching this deep gulf was tantamount to a warning against the foolishness of falling into it if the Arabs followed any route other than adhering to the original strategic aim, without ignoring any positive "move" in the conflict.

Yet even when the Egyptian president was falling hopelessly into the depths of the chasm, and "the others" were in a state of confusion, Saddam Hussein maintained his vigilance and awareness. He fearlessly pushed the others away from the edge of the chasm, and again urged them to take a united stand maintaining the minimum solidarity and coherence on their part, so that they could once again join and continue along the road. He expressed the significance of Iraq's struggle in endeavoring to hold the Baghdad Summit as quickly as possible when he said the following to Fidel Castro:

"Sadat betrayed the Arab cause when he dared to visit Jerusalem, and when he signed the Camp David agreements with the Americans and Zionists. This had an effect more serious than anyone outside the area can imagine. The American imperialists were trying to force the Arabs to surrender. After succeeding in winning over certain governments they concentrated their efforts on convincing the Arab people that they would be unable to achieve any important objective, or that they would feel bewildered over their conflict with Zionism. They then planned to use this inability and confusion against the Arab people's struggle to build their society and free themselves from independence.

"The situation has now reached a stage similar to this, and when Sadat signed the agreements even the leaderships were blinded by confusion. The nation should have got out of its predicament and the psychological attitude, which inevitably has a practical outcome in terms of policy. The leadership convened a series of meetings, and we were convinced we could not counter these circumstances using current conventional formulae. We needed new formulae, a method of stirring up Arab sentiment to make it positive and forward-looking. The psychological attitude was one of the central issues, which needed changing.

"On this basis, we made three major resolutions.

These were to consider Iraq complementary to Syria, and to introduce the Iraqi army into the arena of conflict in order to raise the morale of the Syrian rulers and people, and of the Arabs in general. We also resolved to prepare the way for building new relations with

Syria, which took into consideration the common danger. The third resolution involved a call to hold the summit conference in Baghdad with the aim of reaching an Arab consensus to reject the outcome of Camp David, and achieving a united Arab stand. We moved quickly before the Americans recovered from surprise. The Baghdad Summit was convened, and the Arabs unanimously agreed to reject Camp David, and to have no dealings with it or its effects. A fund to support the fronts was set up, and it was decided to enforce economic and political sanctions against the Egyptian government. It was also agreed to move the Arab League from Egypt.

"These arrangements were effective and significant, and the direct response to Carter's endeavors was that he imagined the key to the Arab world to be in the hands of Sadat. This in itself constituted an important victory, and the resolutions must now be followed up and executed (7)."

In Saddam Hussein's words, the Baghdad Summit was distinguished by the fact that "its resolutions were Arab, and not Soviet or Western (8)". But what would happen should the Americans be determined to push Camp David, along with Sadat, forward, and attempt to draw Arab parties to it through intimidation?

In his meeting with Francois Deneux, the French Minister for Foreign Trade, in February 1979, Saddam Hussein said:

"There will be two situations, one American-Arab, the other Soviet-Arab. Failing this, there will be an infiltration into the area, unwanted by us both, as you will be the overall losers, just as we will. France and must make this point clear to the Americans (9)."

The Baghdad Summit, however, with its "Arab resolutions", finds the integral expression of its spirit and the most comprehensive shaping of its logic in "Saddam Hussein's Promulgation" made to the Arab nation on February 8th, 1980, which later came to be known as the "National Charter".

The promulgation is based on the following principles:

"One...rejecting the presence of armies, military forces, and any foreign bases or troops in the homeland, and refusing to facilitate their presence in any form, under any pretext or cover, for any reason; and politically and economically isolating any Arab regime which does not abide by this principle, opposing its policy by all means.

"Two...forbidding the resort by any Arab state to the use of armed troops against any other Arab state, and settling any disputes which may arise between Arab states by peaceful means and in accordance with the principles of the joint national charter and with the Arab interest.

"Three...the principle mentioned in the second clause also applies to relations between the countries of the Arab nation and those nations and states lying adjacent to it.

No country can resort to the use of armed forces disputes with these states unless to defend itself and sovereignty against threats to the security of the Arab countries and their essential interests.

"Four...the joint solidarity of all Arab countries against any aggression -or violation committed by any foreign party against the regional sovereignty of any Arab country. Similarly, should any foreign party enter into actual war with any Arab country, all Arab countries must move together to thwart and counter such aggression or violation using all possible means, including military action and joint economic and political sanctions. The same applies to all other instances requiring such steps in the national interest.

"Five...asserting the adherence of Arab countries to the international laws and conventions concerning the use of waters, air space and regional territories by any state not at war with any of the Arab countries.

"Six...the Arab countries remaining far-removed from the field of international conflicts or wars, and maintaining a completely neutral and non-aligned position towards any of the parties involved in the war or conflict unless violating Arab regional sovereignty and the established rights of the Arab countries as defined by international laws and conventions. The Arab countries must also refrain from entering their armed troops-in whole or in part-into military wars and conflicts, whether inside or outside the area, on behalf of any foreign state or side.

"Seven... the commitment by Arab countries to establishing constructive and developed economic relations between them whereby the common ground for building a developed Arab economy, as well as Arab unity, is provided and strengthened. The Arab countries should strive to avoid any behavior, which may harm these relations or hinder their continuity and development, this irrespective of the differences between the various Arab regimes and the destructive political disputes which occur between them, provided that the parties to the relationship adhere to the principles of this promulgation.

"The Arab countries adhere to the principle of national economic solidarity and the economically powerful amongst them undertake to offer all forms of economic aid to other Arab countries in such a way as to disallow the possibility of any dependence on foreign powers which affects their independence and national will.

"Eight...in formulating the principles of this promulgation, Iraq is confirming its readiness to abide by it as regards all Arab countries and any other party also abiding by it. It is prepared to discuss it with its Arab brethren and to hear their comments, whereby the effectiveness of its principles may be strengthened and its content rendered more profound.

"Iraq also asserts that this promulgation is not an alternative or substitute to the Arab League Charter or the joint economic and defence treaty between the nations within the League. On the contrary, it believes it to strengthen and develop both in a manner proportionate to the new international conditions and the dangers threatening the Arab nation and the national responsibilities which result in both present and future conditions.

"I say to the people of Iraq and the masses of the glorious Arab nation that Iraq, in putting forward this promulgation, is using as its starting point its national responsibility which is greater than all self or regional interest. In directing this promulgation to the Arab governments, these being the body responsible for its establishment and the adherence to it, we firmly believe that its principles cannot be realized or become a charter for Arab relations unless the Arab masses demonstrate their struggle and support for it, since it guarantees their basic interests and responds to their national aspirations for freedom and independence, and facilitates the path to Arab unity. "

Notes Chapter 17

- 1) Saddam Hussein, Nidaluna Was-Siyasa ad-Dawliya, p. 71.
- 2) Ibid. p. 70.
- 3) Ibid. p. 97.
- 4) Ibid. p. 98.
- 5) Ibid. p. 99.

6) Ibid. pp. 82-83.

7) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with Fidel Castro in Havana, December 1978.

8) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with Francois Deniau, The French Minister for Foreign Trade, 20-2-1979.

9) Ibid.

Saddam Hussein the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

Part II

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

CHAPTER 18

The Gulf and the Western Desert

With these practical stands, Saddam Hussein was merely expressing his deep-rooted belief in the future development of the Arab nation and the weight of its potential provided by the movement of Arab struggle.

He was also voicing his firm conviction in the importance of ideological independence, and its deep import in relation to both the progress of the nation and the development of its abilities. His relations and dealings with all nations, irrespective of their regime or ideological expressions of their national interests, are based upon this independence so closely related to the national character of his nation and its openness to all international and human trends. His eye is always on the great nation, but his feet are firmly planted in Iraq. His friends are those of this nation, and his enemies are its enemies. Anyone who tries to mar its Arab essence is to him a mortal foe.

Concerning the events in Iran, which are causing chaos in the whole area, and the possibility of intervention in the Gulf by the Americans and Egyptian forces under Sadat, Saddam Hussein said to Francois Deneux:

"We are keeping an eye on matters, but the Americans should not become foolishly involved. For instance, they are making it easy for Sadat to send troops to Oman.

This means provocation in the area, and we are the first to be provoked, and the first to resist. This will facilitate the entry of other troops into the area. There is no danger to the Gulf States. You know we have no expansionist ambitions. If we did, we would now be able to achieve them, but we do not. No foreign or local force enters the Gulf area without our consent. So what danger is there to Qabus that he calls in a force to stir up unrest in the area? (1)"

This determined independent Arab stand does not only apply to the Gulf, but to all parts of the Arab World.

When Saddam Hussein met the Algerian president's personal envoy to Iraq, Muhammad Salih Yahyawi, in August 1979, he said the following about the conflict between Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania over the Western desert:

"We are careful to show our point of view to our Arab brothers without being influenced by personal considerations. We have always made it clear to Morocco and Mauritania that we must not be understood to stand with Morocco and not Algeria. We clearly told their ambassadors that Algeria is closer to us, and shares some of our characteristics, even though we are all Arabs. We are therefore extremely concerned not to offend you, and sanction any stand you think will serve you. We agree with any stand you believe will serve yourselves and the Arab nation. We always follow the same national course, and whoever has the cause close at heart must make a finer appraisal. We are on common ground, and so must voice our opinion. Consequently the brother closest to the cause must have an opinion, and if we fail to devote our full attention to the question of the Western desert, the colonialists will use it to harass you. We take any stand you believe will serve you, the Arab nation, and the matter of its unity (2)."

This determined independent Arab stand, however, is not only applicable to both practical policies, and the assessment of the political directions taken by the Arab countries. It equally applies to all ideological endeavors undertaken by the Arab regimes. Let each regime take the course it chooses, provided its choice is independent and linked to the objectives of the Arab nation and the future of its struggle.

When Saddam Hussein met the President of North Yemen, Abdul Aziz Ghani, in June, 1979, he clearly stated: "We must make any endeavors we can, but not by taking instructions beyond limits, as this will be at the expense of the nation. Human thought has benefited from the Arab conviction, and in its revival stage, the Arab nation will naturally benefit from the experiences of the age (3)."

Furthermore, this determined independent Arab stand is also embodied in Saddam Hussein's vision of relations between the Arabs and Africans. Afro-Arab relations must remain just that, and there must be no intervention from any third party to exploit them to its advantage or direct them according to its interests.

In his 1979 meeting with al-Shazli al-Qubayli, Secretary General of the Arab League, Saddam Hussein said:

"The French proposed the idea of having a European-Arab-African dialogue, but we believe this to be a pompous formula owing to the imbalance of power between the three parties. We are agreeable to a European-Arab dialogue, a European-African dialogue, or an Arab-African dialogue. We told the French that although they may be thinking of isolating the Soviets from Africa, this is not our concern, and we have no part or interest in it. We are not prepared to act as an international police force. We support an Arab-European dialogue in the overall context of politics and economics. The overall framework of Afro-Arab relations, however, must be based on more than pure business and trade. It must be within a comprehensive strategic view, such as how the Arabs can help the Africans along the road to liberation, and vice-versa. Iraq will make a generous contribution towards Arab aid for Africa (4)"

Notes

- 1) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with Francois Deniau, The French Minister for Foreign Trade, 20-2-1979.
- 2) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with Muhammad Salih Yahyaw, Coordinator of the Algerian Liberation Front Party, 2-1979.
- 3) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with Abdul-Aziz Abdul-Ghani, Prime Minister of North Yemen, 4-6-1979.
- 4) From Saddam Hussein's meeting with al-Shazli al-Qubayli, Secretary General of The League of Arab Nations, 21-7-1979.

SADDAM HUSSEIN the Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

By Amir Iskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

CHAPTER 19

The Meaning of Non - Alignment

This determined independent Arab stand finds its wider political expression in Saddam Hussein's concept of "non-alignment", and in the positive and effective role he plays in the non-aligned movement.

What then is his concept of non-alignment? It involves the non-intervention in the internal affairs of any of these nations, and the dialogue and relations based on adherence to principles with the aim of achieving better results. According to this method, "Iraq chooses its policy and its friends in the world. Its choice is based on a long-term overall view, and not on current views or relations divorced from the comprehensive vision of the world's development, the factors affecting this development, and the nature of the present struggle between the Arab nation and colonialism and its aides, the Zionist entity above all. It also takes into account the struggle against backwardness and for independence (1)."

But how do the non-aligned nations counter outside pressure? Saddam Hussein replies that this can be done in two ways. The first is to create a national ideology, expressing the people's interests independently, which is derived according to their circumstances and aimed to solve their problems. This ideology should comprise an overall and sophisticated view of life, mankind, the problems of various peoples, and international relations.

The second is to provide the will able to transform this ideology into a working programme following this direction.

However, Saddam Hussein does not ignore the role of economic pressures exerted on the developing countries by the superpowers and the advanced industrial nations.

Talking of "non-alignment" without considering its economic content sometimes becomes a mere beatification. Saddam Hussein frankly stated the following at the Sixth Non-Aligned Summit in Havana in 1979 for the whole world to hear:

"Iraq asserts the absolute necessity of eliminating all forms of economic exploitation and privilege, and advocates rapid action towards achieving a fair economic system. Iraq also holds a deep conviction in the people's right to have full and effective control of their natural resources, including the right to nationalize these, and use them in the interests of independent growth and ending the dominance of multi-national companies, which represent the new colonialism in robbing the wealth of developing countries. Iraq likewise advocates the establishment of specific unions and cooperatives for the producers of primary materials in the developing countries. Those already in existence should be strengthened and consolidated. This is in order to counter the monopolies of the developed industrial nations, and create an effective force to accompany the political will to do so.

Iraq too calls for the creation of efficient means to resist the effects of inflation, brought to the developing countries by the developed industrial nations. This is one of the most important negative factors affecting the economies of the developing countries and impeding their economic growth. In order to deal with a vital aspect of the issue, Iraq has suggested the establishment of a long-term world fund to help these countries counter the effects of inflation, irrespective of their political and economic systems. The basis of this is that the advanced industrial nations will contribute to the fund according to the amount of inflation they cause. The OPEC countries will also make their contribution. In our opinion, when applied, this project will provide an

important and fundamental solution to this current state of economic relations linking the economies of developing and developed nations. It will also form a basic pillar towards achieving a new international economic system.

"Realizing the truth about the economic conditions being currently experienced by the developing nations, and assessing the future relations between Iraq and the Third World, the Iraqi government has decided to recompense those developing nations which currently have direct oil contracts with Iraq for any official price rises in Iraq oil from June 1st, 1979, until the end of this year. This it will do by offering long-term interest-free loans to these countries equivalent to the sum of the raise in oil prices, and, in the hope of finding the start to a just and serious solution to this situation 2).

This, then, is the Third World of today.

The Third World is reappearing, making itself felt once again through this tall youth from the East, from a great nation, which has given mankind all known prophets.

Here is the Third World recovering its face of struggler in this Knight, not yet forty-three, who speaks profoundly, discusses wisely, and acts with pride, as if Tito had left him his experience, Nehru his rationality, and Gamal Abdul-Nasser his Arab decisiveness, his leading magnetism and proud youth.

Yet Saddam Hussein himself, thanks to all this, and despite it, always remains a pure expression of a new historic moment. This moment is witness to the birth of a new stage in an ancient nation, which thrives, with its national, progressive and human thought and its generous sacrifice and struggle, to overcome all its difficult and complicated contradictions, and to surpass, in its future, all the glories of its past.

Notes

1) Saddam Hussein, full text of The Press Conference in Baghdad, 18-7-1978, pp. 60-61.

2) Saddam Hussein, *Harakat Adam al-Inhiyaz Hakadha Nafhamuha (Our Understanding of the Non-Aligned Movement)*, Baghdad, Ministry of Culture and Information, 1979, pp. 18-22. 409