

Silver #4
Jensen #4

E. Sivan (1990)

Radical Islam: Medieval Theology
and Modern Politics

(New Haven: Yale University Press)

pp (A-49)

CHAPTER ONE

The Mood: Doom and Gloom

Jeremids Let me introduce this essay by discussing the most accessible facet of radical Islam, namely, the mood prevailing among the radicals and their immediate periphery, a mood grounded in a certain reading of the current state of Islam. This reading helped shape the radicals' worldview and spawn their specific reaction.

A good period to capture this mood is the last few years of the fourteenth century of the Islamic Era (which ended on November 19, 1979), when Muslim thinkers were given to stocktaking, evaluating the meaning of that century in the annals of Islam. If one were to believe the Western media, one could have expected an exultant mood, an Islam triumphant. After all, the very last year of the fourteenth century After the Hijra (A.H.) began with the Islamic Revolution in Iran and ended with the attempted seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. And yet the mood of the hardcore fundamentalists was rather subdued. Their vision of the present was bleak. An eminent Egyptian theologian, Dr. Muhammad al-Bahi, in *The Future of Islam and the Fifteenth Century A.H.* (Arabic), speaks of the "eclipse of Islam and the proliferation of the challenges to its call during the fourteenth century A.H." The caliphate was abolished (1924), Turkey, Soviet Central Asia, Albania, Bosnia, Bangladesh, Zanzibar, Afghanistan, South Yemen, and Somalia

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officially relegated Islam to marginality, if not oblivion: Muslim minorities are persecuted in Cyprus, the Philippines, Burma, China, Ethiopia, and Tanzania. While the author deplors these "crusader-style" offenses, the real dangers, he says, come from within (though often inspired by insidious alien ideas). The elites are becoming secularized and surreptitiously cut the ground from under Islam even if they shy away from declaring a separation of religion and state. Nationalism (be it Arab or Persian) loosens religious solidarity and virtually replaces it. The Islamic establishment stands powerless because it is completely subservient to government, looking only for ways and means to justify the latter's actions. It is all the more unable to stem the tide as its economic basis, the waqf, came effectively under the control of the powers-that-be. No wonder that materialism and individualism run rampant in *Dar al-Islam*.¹

An underground publication of the Syrian Muslim Brethren depicts a "war to the death" waged by the regime in place against the Faith, while a major Syrian thinker, Sa'id Hawwa, in exile in Jordan, laments the absence of Islam from all realms of human activity. In consequence, a Lebanese writer, Fathi Yakan, considers that Islam faces today the worst ordeal in its existence, menaced to be reduced to insignificance and relegated to the dustbin of history; the Lebanese Civil War is for him a prime example of that process. A compatriot of his, Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din, detects this very danger as coming above all from the unflagging warfare carried out by the proponents of secularism who accuse Islam and its "metaphysical mentality" of responsibility for all the calamities that had befallen the Muslims (especially since 1967).²

Similar views were put forward by the Pakistani theologian Abu-l-A'la al-Maudoodi (who died in 1979) and Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini.³ At a less lofty level one finds these views in the fundamentalist Muslim press. A perusal of these organs in Egypt (*al-Da'wa*, *al-I'tisam*) and Syria (*al-Ra'id*, *al-Nadhir*) during the last year of the Islamic fourteenth century comes up with an array of articles on, for example, the Communist danger, difficulties in re-

introducing Islamic law, attacks on Michel Aflaq and George Habash as proponents of secularism, protest against sterilization operations and against sycophant ulama singing the praise of unorthodox rulers, on the Islamic Associations youth "defending themselves" against malevolent press campaigns, the perverting influence of television, the dangers of scholarly criticism of the Sunna, the diminishing role of Islam in school curricula, permissive women's dress, and so forth.

Islamic revival—while activist and militant—is thus essentially defensive; a sort of holding operation against modernity. And though it has no doubt a sharp political edge, it is primarily a cultural phenomenon. Its very strength proceeds from this alliance of political and cultural protest.

The Global Village

The refrain of all fundamentalist liamies is "Islam is isolated from life." This is nowhere more evident, in their eyes, than in the mass media. Television comes in for most of the blame because it brings the modernist message in the most effective, audiovisual form into the very bastion of Islam—family and home. But the same holds true for radio and for tape cassettes, be they specially produced or recordings of radio programs. The electronic media carry out a "destructive campaign" that overwhelms the efforts of religious militants by "broadcasting indecent and vulgar songs, belly-dancing, melodramas on women kidnapped in order to serve in the palaces of rulers, and similar trash."⁴ Pop music, Arab style, comes in for more criticism than explicitly sexual plays (or films), perhaps because of its popularity. According to a field study quoted by *al-Da'wa*, preference for variety programs was expressed by 60 percent of Egyptian viewers and listeners (as against 54 percent for Koran reading). They are all the more dangerous for being indigenous and at the same time impregnated with "the Western poison." A content analysis of the lyrics propagated by popular singers like Umm Kultium, Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhab, and 'Abd al-Halim Hafiz comes up with "terms

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and ideas diametrically opposed to Arab and Islamic concepts, encouraging loose morality and immediate satisfaction, placing love and life and its pleasures over everything else, totally oblivious of religious belief, and of punishment and reward in the Hereafter."

Sociological surveys revealed indeed that love songs take up to 37.8 percent of Egyptian broadcasting time compared with 9 percent for religious programs. ³ Worship of TV, film, and singing stars—generated by the media itself—only tends to make things worse, as it creates idols that subsume the superficial character of this popular culture, lionized for achievements based on image and not on substance. Popular mourning over the death of 'Abd al-Halim Hafiz, given an aura of respectability by the participation of prominent intellectuals and pundits, made one commentator scoff: "All the martyrs of Sinai and Colan . . . did not get the same amount of solicitude from the media. . . . To hear their eulogies, one could think that insipidity is heroism, vulgarity is an uplifting experience, and singing is tantamount to glorious struggle. The populace learned that their problems, grief, and suffering are of no significance, compared with the death of that entertainer." TV "personalities" build up a trivialized hero worship around themselves, enabling them to spread consumerism all the more efficiently by incorporating commercial publicity into their talk shows. Even worse is professional sports, which brings the idolatry of pagan-inspired body worship to a peak. ⁶

Not that the sexually explicit products of popular culture are made light of; it is only that as Islamic criticism of modernity became more sophisticated, it learned that the indirect approach is sometimes more dangerous, precisely for being implicit. But articles on the permissive morality of TV dramas and films (let alone underground pornographic films, whether imported or produced locally) are legion. Here Egypt is no doubt the most prolific center of production in the Arab world, although Lebanese writers find much to complain of about Beirut. This is less true of pulp novels and popular magazines—whether of the implicitly or explicitly sexual vari-

ety—but their availability to the public, even in the proximity of mosques, is often lamented. Buttressed by other forms of popular culture such as beauty contests, the result is inevitable: "the weakening of family bonds battered by the unleashing of carnal appetites." "Rare are the films and plays in which one cannot watch at least one of the following: seminude dancing, wine cups filled, easy-to-learn tricks to woo young females, criticism of the conservative older generation for blocking marriage between lovers, description of the beloved merely in terms of sex appeal, justification of the adultery of a young woman given in marriage to an old man or that of an older woman married to one she does not love."

Other forms of "recreation"—that hated term which signifies, for the fundamentalists, an attempt to divert the mind from the moral values—have their share in this chapter. Foremost is the nightclub industry, which prospered as a result of the growing tourism from puritanical oil states (encouraged by the demise of Beirut). This is a case where moral protest is linked with an economic one: criticism of an unbridled "open-door policy" bent on maximization of foreign-currency income by every means. The "commerce in the human body," bordering on, or even incorporating, high-class prostitution, is rendered all the more obnoxious to the True Believers, as alcoholic beverages can be sold in the same tourist precincts. This "cancerous growth" is bound to spread to the indigenous society as well through those natives who are associated with the tourist trade or with foreigners. ⁷

Religion does figure in the Syrian and Egyptian mass media, but significantly enough, it is a religion made of externals, of gestures shorn of values: prayer, fast, pilgrimage. This is particularly evident in the context and manner of their presentation. The call for the daily prayer comes over television and radio in the middle of entertainment programs (whether belly-dancing or a love scene) with no introductory and concluding presentation designed to separate the holy from the profane. Koran readings are not only much shorter than they used to be, but are also not reverently separated

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be relegated to "religious culture" classes, and at the university level there are even cases where Syrian and Egyptian students of Arabic are no longer required to take courses in Koran and Sunna.¹²

Teaching "religious culture" cannot help matters. Treating it as a separate topic legitimizes the separation between religion and daily life, which is much more bothersome for the Muslim radicals than the more formal separation between religion and state, a danger they do not consider imminent. Moreover, religious culture is a "parasitic teaching matter": its time allocation is small, its prestige low because it is not judged by schools to be a criterion of scholarly aptitude; the caliber of teachers is low (mostly Arab-language teachers who treat it in an offhand manner); the curriculum is dull, designed to have students memorize a few sacred texts and learn some acts of devotion rather than inculcate values. The "religious vacuum" so many youth suffer from—and which was the most popular topic in a youth essay contest organized recently by the Egyptian Muslim Brethren—is certainly not being filled by what is judged a perfunctory endeavor.¹³ Not that it would have been an easy task, for as one teacher remarked to an investigative reporter:

What if I teach that taking interest is forbidden by the Shari'a when our whole economic structure, consecrated by law, is based on it? What if I teach Koranic verses on the virtues of modest dress when my students see décolleté and miniskirts in public places? And what about teaching Islamic doctrine that the rich are morally and legally bound to help the poor when inequity in income distribution is steadily growing?¹⁴

Perhaps the most devastating critique is reserved for the teaching of history, in particular that of the caliphate, which could have been expected to be ideal terrain for religious instruction, basking as it did in glorious achievements. And yet "Islamic history in schools is a war against Islam and Belief" proclaims the headline of one such critical article, and another: "Why should we distort our own history?" Most of the blame is laid at the door of Arab nationalism and its attempt to concoct for itself a genealogy,

thereby—wittingly or not—preempting religion as the prime bond of solidarity throughout history. An elementary school textbook reads: "Mu'awiya thus became caliph [in 661] unifying the Arabs under his leadership," to which a critic retorts, "And what about the Persian Muslims in the East, the Berbers in the Maghreb?" Indeed, wherever the term *Muslims* should have been used, the radicals usually find *Arabs* to have replaced it, "making Islam into a kind of exclusivist nationalist ideology, a trait of which it is in fact entirely free." Awkward hadiths (traditions), such as "An Arab has no precedence over a Persian," are conveniently rendered in textbooks: "None of you shall have precedence over another." The role of non-Arabs in the development of Islam is minimized and some, such as the Turks, are given most of the blame for its decadence, while barely a word is breathed about the vital role played by the Ottomans in defending and even expanding the borders of *Dar al-Islam*. Pre-Islamic history is extolled by the pan-Arabists, and its barbarity ignored. No less "pernicious" is the growing tendency toward supposedly scientific historiography, with Orientalist-style emphasis on natural-rational causation and particular attention to economics. Thus Muslim motivation in the seventh-century conquests is traced back, in large part, to the imbalance between population and resources in Arabia and the attraction of the rich lands to the north; Muslim victories are attributed more to martial valor than to religious spirit, and of course no word is uttered about transcendental causes. Here, God does not intervene or push people to act or impinge upon the form and results of their acts.¹⁵

Equally disquieting for the fundamentalists are present-day tendencies toward nation-state solidarity, especially in the case of post-1973 Egypt with its stress on the Pharaonic past. "One geopolitical solidarity (Pan-Arab) is replaced by another (Egyptian) to the detriment of the wider and all-embracing Islamic one."¹⁶

The intrinsic relationship between all aspects of modernity is brought forward by a literary critic: "This pagan Pharaonic approach . . . ends up by calling to make our country a sort of inter-

national hotel to which guests flock from the world over in order to indulge in luxury and pleasures"; the territorial nationalism and cultural openness called for are but a variation of the old infatuation with European culture designed "to extricate our society from the hold of the Shari'a, make it accept usury, corruption, and sexual permissiveness."¹⁷

Does Modernity Deliver?

Last but not least on the list of challenges to religion is economics. The fundamentalists are by no means nostalgic about "Arab socialism," Nasserist or Ba' thist style, committed as they are to the principle of private property, suspicious of an all-too-powerful state and hostile to even the slightest tinge of Marxism. Yet they are far from happy with the "open-door policy" of the 1970s. The doors are opened, to begin with, toward Western investment (though this is in large part due, as they sadly concur, to the failure of oil-rich Arabs to live up to the expectations of Muslim solidarity; yet another example of Islamic "eclipse"). First, Western investment means the integration of the Islamic world into the system of the multinationals, which is totally alien to Muslim concepts of interest, insurance, taxation, and so on. If these traditional concepts have had little impact ever since the onset of modernization, they risk complete eradication (not only in reality but also in Muslim hearts and minds), and any chance of their reintroduction may vanish.

Second, investment brings with it a large foreign contingent—experts, tourists, and so on—and the need to cater to their desires (for example, alcoholic beverages, entertainment), which is bound to corrupt the morality of those who work with foreigners and the *nouveaux riches* who emulate them, and, by osmosis, of other sectors as well.

A third argument, intertwined with the above, is the growing acceptance of an individualistic and hedonistic lifestyle abetted by an increasingly aggressive commercial publicity, inspired by the lat-

est Madison Avenue gimmicks in line with the underlying ethos of *infitah* ("open door"), which makes economic growth a cherished goal and a rise in the standard of living its hoped-for inevitable concomitant.¹⁸ The appeal of religious values is overshadowed by the "Pepsi-Cola, Seven-Up . . . fast-food and bright-dress culture," laments one writer.¹⁹ He aptly notes that regardless of its moral defects, consumerism is at odds with the pre-take-off stage of the Middle Eastern economy, creating new needs and raising expectations that the economy cannot deliver. This is indeed the strongest argument, in terms of popular appeal, advanced by the radicals. "Instead of industrial and agricultural growth . . . we have a rise in imports of luxury goods."²⁰ Demagoguery aside, it is true that the much heralded take-off has not yet happened, while inflation has soared, and income distribution has become more inequitable (and more prominent as conspicuous consumption is not discouraged as it was in the 1960s). Basic problems such as housing and public transport are as acute as ever, or perhaps even more so because of expectations raised by the October war, the policy enunciated, and by commercial publicity.

Unlike the antimodernist upsurge in the West in the 1960s, which was materially gratified but sought spiritual satisfaction, this is a reaction against a modernity that does not deliver even on its material promises. It creates a gap—or cognitive dissonance, if you will—between Western-style consumerist expectations and "Fourth World" production and per capita income. No wonder that this is one of the major sources of recruitment to the motley revivalist groups in Syria and Egypt, especially from among urban youth who have internalized much of the modernist ethos only to find their mobility blocked by exiguous occupation opportunities (outside a mammoth bureaucracy plagued by latent unemployment).

Yet it would be untrue to say that the Muslim militants see modernity's failure to deliver merely as an opportunity to prove that in the face of a bankrupt "imported solution" Islam is the sole viable way out. For one thing, the majority of urban youth have had their

"base instincts" (in Muslim parlance) released by modernity, and remain committed to its ethos, though by now unsatiated and envious. Their energies are desperately bent on finding their own individual satisfaction either within the loopholes of the system, or by selling themselves to its magnates, or by withdrawing and joining the brain drain. The difficulty in avoiding the commercial ethos is indicated by the fact that the fundamentalist press itself carries lavish-colored publicity on glossy paper for men's underwear, crockery, cars, candies, and high-rise apartments. Moreover, economic problems—no less than consumerist hopes—help erode traditional values. Crowded public transport encourages promiscuity and makes the proposed solution of separate buses for women (or at least for female students) more improbable than ever; urban women tend more to go to work to supplement the family budget (impoverished by inflation and by newly acquired needs), thus aggravating the problems created by the modern career-oriented educational system; and, women who quit the home for the job market acquire in turn new and depraved needs (from dress and hairstyles to sexual mores), develop assertiveness, and may even go so far as to join the nascent women's liberation movement.²¹

The housing shortage and the spiraling cost of the bridal dowry force many young people to postpone marriage (thus diminishing prospective natality) or to renounce it altogether—yet another severe blow to the family, that essential vehicle for transmitting Islamic education. Family planning may even become an attractive solution for the harassed urban middle- and lower-middle class. A reader's letter protesting the official attempts to promote sterilization alleged: "They try to convince you that the only way out is this operation, but do not breathe a word about the failure of their economic and social reforms or about the egotism of the rich who refuse to help the poor. They just rehash the theme that our land cannot feed new mouths."²²

Can Islam Cope? Can Islam cope with these challenges? The fundamentalist verdict is clear cut: not in the present state of the Islamic establishment. One should either re-

structure it entirely or operate outside its system (which they do). It is the establishment, by its timidity, servility, and false religiosity which, more than any other factor, is responsible for making it appear as though "prayer, fast, and pilgrimage are all there is to Islam."²³ Truly enough, the Islamic establishment is a governmental institution: the waqf is managed by a ministry; religious jurists, imams of mosques, preachers, and so on, are all civil servants; al-Azhar is a state university; members of the Superior Council for Islamic Affairs are government-appointed. Not only do the militants deplore this state of affairs, but they claim that, first, the subversion of the Islamic establishment should be traced back to a long and ignominious historical tradition of the "Age of Decadence" (fourteenth to nineteenth century). Second, and more important, the establishment does not even try to exercise whatever powers it has in order to have an impact on society. In a manner reminiscent of Khomeini's attacks on the "palace ulama," they take religious dignitaries to task for not giving much backing to legislative initiatives for application of the Shari'a on matters like divorce, alcoholic drinks, apostasy from Islam, criminal punishment, and so on.

Furthermore, the dignitaries are even said to turn a blind eye when their subordinates justify innovation (*bid'at*), such as family planning, usurious interest, replacing the four shari'i schools by one, rapprochement with the Shi'a. The value of the programs of religious studies in the nontheological faculties of al-Azhar (introduced by government decree in 1961) is quite doubtful and this university even fails to promote the fusha in the literary departments. As for its quarterly *Majallat al-Azhar*, "it is in one wadi and life is in another," preferring as it does to deal with safe and innocuous questions: details of ritual, purely academic exegesis, historical nostalgia, and apologetics. The same holds for the Academy of Islamic Research, operating under the auspices of al-Azhar University, where controversial socioeconomic issues are taboo. An establishment unable to impose norms of modest dress even on Waqf Ministry employees, dares not try to outlaw commercially distributed tape

cassettes of antireligious jokes and plays, and above all, books redolent of "ideological imperialism" (*ghazw' fikri*, that is, the materialist-individualist ethos).²⁴

Could it be otherwise, as long as the religious leadership is government-appointed and not elected by their peers? "What is lacking are ulama free of chains of office, function, and dependence, ulama who cannot be hired and fired at will, and are economically independent, hence impervious to pressures."²⁵ For the effectiveness of the establishment, as representing a system of moral values, is the major victim of such (real or potential) pressures; it results in modes of behavior ranging from sycophantic eulogies of the ruler to supplying information to the security services.²⁶ At the grass roots, the situation is no better. Investigative reporters cull testimonies and complaints that imams and preachers behave as the civil servants they are, seeing as their role the execution of their superiors' orders. Apprehensive of exceeding their mandate, they steer clear of community life and find refuge in teaching meaningless rituals of devotion and rarefied sacred texts. The low pay and low prestige of the imams foster negative selection and poor intellectual caliber.²⁷

Islam thus comes out badly bruised from the encounter with modernity. The latter does not advance at the pace of a Japan, a Russia, or a China, but advances all the same. One fundamentalist found that state of siege epitomized by the fact that "work hours hamper people from praying during the daytime (for lack of special time slots for it) and entertainment programs divert them from it at night." Yet another saw it subsumed by the rhythm of life cadenced by the civil (Gregorian) calendar rather than by the *hijri* one.²⁸

Ordeal and Discord The inevitable result is a state of *miḥna wa-ḥina* ("ordeal and discord"); Islam is virtually absent "in a society where true-blue Muslims are the most marginal of the marginal . . . living outside the framework of time and major events."²⁹ The faithful of Islam are thus "the Party of Allah pitched in battle against the Party of the Devil" (this is the

title of a book by a young engineer, who is in a modern profession that, as we shall see, has contributed much to the rise of Islamic radicalism).³⁰

The picture that emerges is not one which scholars studying Islamic society would tend to refute. Modernity has indeed made important gains, especially in recent decades. Islam, although more resilient than other traditional cultures, has seen its position greatly eroded. It is true that the radicals are given, at times, to conspiratorial explanations, seeing everywhere the hidden hand of the CIA, USIA, KGB, and so forth.³¹ By and large, however, theirs is not the case of "paranoid style in politics." The dangers they point to are quite real.

Prophecies of doom and gloom are not easily transformed, however, into calls for action. They could well be a recipe for despair and resignation. How do the Muslim radicals combine pessimism and activism? What are the historical circumstances which made that combination work and spread? To answer these questions one has to enquire into the genesis of the radical phenomenon and delve into the intellectual and social history of the 1950s and 1960s. For while the new Muslim radicalism gained recognition and clout in the 1970s, its physiognomy has actually been shaped during the preceding two decades.

CHAPTER TWO

Barbarity and Nationalism

No to Jihad? During the last decade a spate of memoirs told the story of Nasser's political jails. In one of them a former inmate recounts:

In May 1967, during the crisis weeks preceding the Six-Day War, the authorities tried to enlist the support of the political prisoners to the jihad against Israel. Some [Muslim Brethren] inmates of the notorious Abu Za'bal prison camp resolved to voice their unreserved support and even published a wall newspaper to that effect.

Yet a group of young inmates, led by Sheikh 'Ali Abdull Isma'ili, argued that the State is infidel and so is whoever supports it. Israel and Nasser were both, for them, but two variations of tyranny, both totally inimical to Islam; they fight each other for worldly reasons but "in infidelity they are just one bunch." Reported to camp authorities by stool pigeons, Isma'ili and his followers were thrown into solitary confinement, to live on dry bread and a little water. They refused, however, to renounce their views and were later to be remanded to ordinary cells where they kept to themselves, praying in their own group, refusing to have anything to do with Muslim Brethren who aided the anti-Israel jihad, and thereby establishing the first cell of the Takfir wa-Hijra (the major terrorist organization of the 1970s).¹

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The frame of mind of these and other inmates is highlighted by letters sent in late May from the Military Prison by a Muslim Brother:

There is a lot of talk about war. Yet who is it who is going to fight? Those who prostrate themselves before idols, those who worship other deities than Allah? . . . Verily, God is not about to succor in battle people who have forsaken Him. . . . Can He bestow victory upon people who have been fighting Him, His religion, and His true believers, massacring and torturing them, inflicting upon them imprisonment and humiliation? . . . Don't you know, dear Mother, that those [i.e., the Muslim Brethren] who had defeated Israel in 1948 were thrown into jail in 1955, a year before Israel attacked us, and were thrown there once again in 1966, a year prior to another eventual Israeli incursion? . . . Doesn't that indicate, dear Mother, treason and collusion?

And in a letter to his wife:

It is inconceivable that those who abolished the religious courts (in 1957)—with the purpose that no legal recourse would be made to the Shari'a—that they would win this war. And do you think that those who "developed" al-Azhar into a secular type university (in 1961) in order that it deviate from its original mission and dilute the substance of its teaching, that such people could triumph? . . . Can those who massacred Muslims in Yemen by napalm bombs and poison gas . . . and allied themselves with infidel Russia . . . have the upper hand?

No wonder that the June 1967 debacle was greeted in the prison camps with a mixture of shock and gloating. "This was no surprise to us," wrote one, "for how can a ruler governing his people with a whip triumph on the battlefield? . . . dignity is trampled underfoot, hypocrisy and cowardice reign supreme." And after the June 9 and 10 demonstrations, which called upon Nasser not to abdicate: "How shameful it is for their leader (za'im) to remain in power after he had admitted his responsibility for the debacle. Why had he not

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prepared for that war which he said he had expected?" A third prisoner adds: "Soldiers were supposed to obey orders and fight for the slogans and for the za'im. . . . Yet under fire all evaporated. Neither slogans nor the za'im could be of any help. The soldier remained alone and had to save his own skin."⁴

Such reactions are cast into relief when read against the long-term commitment of the Muslim Brethren (hereafter MB) to the Palestinian cause since the 1930s, culminating in their massive participation in the 1948 War and violent opposition to the 1949 Armistice Agreement (as a result of which they were driven underground for the first time). In the mid-1950s, when they were persecuted by Nasser, their erstwhile ally, one of the major accusations they hurled against him was that he had neglected the question of Palestinians and was in effect preparing the terrain for a tacit rapprochement by stages with Israel.⁴

The contrast comes into an even sharper focus when set against the behavior of the MB prisoners during the Suez War. By mid-1956 the prison-camp authorities were trying to brainwash the inmates and also to sow dissension in their ranks by offering parole to all those ready to sign telegrams of support to the regime. Quite a few inmates were persuaded by ideological arguments and/or attracted by the release offer. A hard core refused to sign despite all the promises, the theological admonitions by secret police "Islamic experts," the harassments, and the torture. Yet when the war broke out in October, reminisces one of the hard core:

We presented prison authorities with the request—to be transmitted to Nasser's government—to allow us to volunteer to fight the aggressors. We solemnly pledged that those of us who would survive, having done their duty on the battlefield, would go back to prison. We further suggested that a special battalion of MB prisoners would be set under special command. A list of names of volunteers was appended to the request and the whole dossier was relayed by the camp commander to the powers-that-be.⁵

In the context of the present chapter, it is immaterial that the government—having for a moment accepted the request—finally rejected it. What is important is the state of mind of the prisoners two years after the onset of Nasser's crackdown upon their organization. By 1967 the picture was entirely different. Nor was the Abu Za'bal case an isolated episode; it rather ushered in a brand new attitude among Muslim radicals toward the anti-Israeli jihad predicated upon a reordering of priorities. The Islamic Liberation party (which tried to instigate a coup d'état in Egypt in 1974) would even argue that the fight for the liberation of Sinai cannot be considered a jihad, for its aim is not the establishment upon earth of a unified Muslim state. Well before Sadat's peace initiative, this and other groups made desertion from the "infidel" Egyptian army one of their major slogans. Shukri Mustafa ('Abduh Isma'il's successor as leader of the Takfir group) responded thus to his judges' question as to what his followers would do if Israel attacked Egypt: "If the Jews or others come, our movement should not take part in combat in the ranks of the Egyptian army. We would rather escape to a safe place. . . . For by no means can the Arab-Jewish conflict be considered an Islamic warfare."⁶

Even the Syrian MB, who miss no opportunity to remind President Assad of his responsibility for the loss of the Golan Heights and the crushing of the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon, adhere to the same order of priorities. Their military commander in Aleppo, Husni' Abbu, had the following exchange with the tribunal in his 1979 trial:

- Q. Don't your terrorist actions serve Israel?
- A. They serve Islam and the Muslims and not Israel. What we want is to rid this country of impiety.
- Q. Why don't you fight against Israel?
- A. Only when we shall have finished purging our country of godlessness shall we turn against Israel.⁷

The most comprehensive exposition of the rationale for this

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stand can be found in the book written by 'Abd al-Salam Faraj, ideologue of the jihad group which assassinated Sadat:

There are some who say that the jihad effort should concentrate nowadays upon the liberation of Jerusalem. It is true that the liberation of the Holy Land is a legal precept binding upon every Muslim . . . but let us emphasize that the fight against the enemy nearest to you has precedence over the fight against the enemy farther away. All the more so as the former is not only corrupted but a lackey of imperialism as well. . . . In all Muslim countries the enemy has the reins of power. The enemy is the present rulers. It is hence, a most imperative obligation to fight these rulers. This Islamic jihad requires today the blood and sweat of each Muslim.⁹

The events at Abu Za'bal in May 1967 are, then, a sort of milestone illustrating the transformation of MB radical thought during the late 1950s and early 1960s, which was to spawn the new breed of Islamic radicalism so prominent today. Indeed the New Radicalism is essentially a product of the experience of the 1950s and the 1960s. By 1964/65 it would already have a fully developed ideology and acquire a foothold in Egyptian society. Its presence would begin to be felt in the realm of politics. The shock waves of the 1967 defeat would spread those ideas from Egypt to Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, elaborating their substance in the process somewhat further.

Post-1973 events—the euphoria generated by the Ramadan War, the social dislocations created in Arab have-not countries by the oil price upheaval—would sow these ideas in other Arab countries and gain them wider social acceptance in the core area of the Middle East. They would add precious little, however, to the contents of the radical ideology. To elucidate the genesis of the New Radicalism, in the context of the 1950s and the 1960s, is not only a matter of setting the record straight in terms of chronology. It may

also shed some light upon the nature of the phenomenon—as a reaction to Nasserism and Ba'athism in their prime and at the beginning of their decline.

The New Jahiliyya In the beginning was the idea, or rather set of ideas, which Sayyid Qutb, a modernist literary critic turned MB activist, has been working on since the late 1940s. The importance of the ideological dimension of the new radicalism is attested to by a Lebanese disciple: "One cannot account for the first Muslim Empire unless one takes into consideration the prophecy of Muhammad: the groundwork for the French Revolution was laid by Rousseau, Voltaire, and Montesquieu; the Communist Revolution realized the plans set by Marx, Engels, and Lenin; Nazism grew out of a soil labored by Hegel, Fichte, and Nietzsche. The same holds true for us as well."¹⁰

This self-image was mirrored by the perceptions of the powers-that-be with regard to the movement. Having never underestimated the ideological appeal of the MB in the 1940s and the early 1950s, they gave an even heavier weight to this aspect in their fight against the new incarnation of the MB. It is a measure of how seriously the Egyptian government took these ideas, that the mentors of radical groups (Qutb in 1966, Salih Sirya in 1975, Shukri Mustafa and 'Abd al-'Aziz Bakri in 1978, 'Abd al-Salam Faraj in 1982) would be sent to the gallows in the company of those members involved in actual terrorist activity. Brainwashing of inmates, minute collection and analysis of intelligence data on radical writings, massive propaganda campaigns, including theological debates (not only in the print media but also on TV), continued and developed under Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak—all further attest to the preoccupation with the ideological challenge. It was a battle of sorts for hearts and minds, of youth in particular.¹⁰

Refiguring the profile of future radical leaders, Sayyid Qutb was modern-educated (a literature major at Cairo University). He

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made his mark as a modernist literary critic in the 1930s and 1940s. His brand of antimodernism would be, hence, that of someone who came to know modernity and then decided to turn his back, and not that of an al-Azhar sheikh looking at it from outside. (Among other Egyptian radical leaders, Siriya had a Ph.D. in science education; Mustafa was an agronomist and Faraj an engineer; in Syria, Marwan Hadid and 'Adnan 'Uqia were engineers and 'Ali Bayaruni a lawyer; Muhammad 'Ali Dammawi of Lebanon was also a lawyer.)

Qutb was more directly exposed to modern civilization during a two-year stay in the United States (1948-50), which was indeed the formative experience that converted him to fundamentalism. Upon his return he joined the MB, where he would soon head the Propaganda Section. Prior to his arrest during the 1965 crackdown, he had produced a number of writings that carried further afield the basic tenets of the MB, but as yet in a haphazard and half-developed manner. These new ideas owed much of their original inspiration to Indian Muslim thinkers.

Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Theory" would seem to be valid for Islam as well. Time and time again throughout Muslim history, movements of return to pristine values of that civilization originated in the frontier lands (the Almohads of Saharan North Africa in the twelfth century, the "moral rearmament" of the Seljukid Iranian heartland in the eleventh century, and so on). This may well be the reason why the renaissance that was to inspire Qutb look place in another Muslim frontier country—India.

This renaissance had its origin in the theory of "Modern Jahiliyya" (that is, modernity as the New Barbarity) developed in India since 1939 by Maulana Maudoodi. He was the first Muslim thinker to arrive at a sweeping condemnation of modernity and its incompatibility with Islam, and to formulate a definition of the danger it constituted. The conclusion toward which Rashid Rida and other fundamentalists were slowly and hesitantly moving during the 1930s—that a compromise between modernity and Islam, vaguely

hoped for till then, could not occur—was stated forcefully by Maudoodi.

Maudoodi's major works—*Jihad in Islam, Islam and Jahiliyya, The Principles of Islamic Government*—began to be translated from Urdu and English into Arabic only in the 1950s; the major agent of transmission was his disciple Abu-l-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, the future rector of the Islamic Academy of Lucknow. A famous scholar in his own right (notably on the Ibn Taymiyya legal school), Nadwi had always taken a deep interest in the Arab world, which he considered the heart of Islam. The book he wrote in Arabic, *What Did the World Lose Due to the Decline of Islam?* expounded Maudoodi's Modern Jahiliyya doctrine and has been a resounding success ever since its publication in 1950. The mood of dejection and soul-searching following the First Palestine War created a receptive atmosphere. When the author visited the Middle East in 1951, he was given a triumphant welcome from statesmen (for example, King Abdallah, who was well acquainted with the book) and major thinkers (Ahmad Amin, Lutf al-Sayyid), as well as students and members of various Muslim associations. When he met Sayyid Qutb (who had already read his book) in Cairo, they found their ideas to be in close affinity. "Qutb's ideas seem to have developed along parallel lines, especially during his years in the United States (which he came to loathe). Yet there is no doubt that 'Ali Nadwi's influence helped crystallize the still amorphous ideas of Sayyid Qutb's *The Struggle between Islam and Capitalism* (1952), the fruit of his own American sojourn, into the more mature form of his Koranic exegesis (ca. 1953) where the concept of a modern jahiliyya makes its first appearance in his work (and where 'Ali Nadwi and Maulana Maudoodi are also quoted at length). What is this concept? In this exegesis, *In the Shadow of the Koran*, Qutb wrote:

Jahiliyya (barbarity) signifies the domination (*hakimiyya*) of man over man, or rather the subservience to man rather than

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to Allah. It denotes rejection of the divinity of God and the adulation of mortals. In this sense, jahiliyya is not just a specific historical period (referring to the era preceding the advent of Islam), but a state of affairs. Such a state of human affairs existed in the past, exists today, and may exist in the future, taking the form of jahiliyya, that mirror-image and sworn enemy of Islam. In any time and place human beings face that clear-cut choice: either to observe the Law of Allah in its entirety, or to apply laws laid down by man of one sort or another. In the latter case, they are in a state of jahiliyya. Man is at the crossroads and that is the choice: Islam or jahiliyya. Modern-style jahiliyya in the industrialized societies of Europe and America is essentially similar to the old-time jahiliyya in pagan and nomadic Arabia. For in both systems, man is under the dominion of man rather than of Allah.¹²

Is this just a matter of laws and legislation? No, the jahiliyya denotes, for Qutb, a polity legitimized by man-made criteria, such as the sovereignty of the people (rather than by divine grace), as well as a man-centered system of values and social mores (for example, materialism, hedonism). Philosophical explanatory models—built on science alone with no place in their universe for God—are the apex, or perhaps nadir, of that jahiliyya.

When one looks at Western societies, says Qutb in this and his other writings, one sees the future—and it does not work. This is the future awaiting Muslim societies: unbridled individualism, dissolution, depravity, leading to moral and social decline. A vast array of examples is marshaled to prove his point: from the writings of Western cultural critics (Arnold Toynbee, Alexis Carrel), to current affairs of the 1950s (such as the scandals in Britain over Christine Keeler and John Profumo, the Burgess and Maclean affair). As the world grows smaller, the danger of "culturally poisoning" the Islamic lands becomes more imminent. Hence the violence of tone and urgency of his message to his fellow Muslims who were tempted and even brainwashed by Western ideas, mostly through the agency

of other Muslims, and on a scale and at a pace unprecedented in the history of Islam. "This is the most dangerous jahiliyya which has ever menaced our faith," Qutb writes in his most popular book, *Signposts on the Road* (1964). "For everything around is jahiliyya; perceptions and beliefs, manners and morals, culture, art and literature, laws and regulations, including a good part of what we consider Islamic culture."

In order to "throw off the yoke of jahiliyya," society must undergo a radical change, beginning with its very moral foundations where "numerous man-made idols—from agnosticism to capitalism—hold sway." Domination (hakimiyya) should be reverted to Allah alone, namely to Islam, that holistic system He conferred upon men. An all-out offensive, a jihad, should be waged against modernity so that this moral rearmament could take place. The ultimate objective is to reestablish the Kingdom of God upon earth, "which does not signify that the hakimiyya shall be in the hands of men of religion as in the medieval West" (or, for that matter, among the Shi'ites—Khomeini would not have approved of Sayyid Qutb). "No," says Qutb, "the goal is that the Shari'a will reign supreme," Shari'a not just in the narrow sense of a code of laws, but in a wider one of "the all-embracing way of life, laid down by Allah for the Muslims—from values to customs and social norms, which all in all shape human life."

Does, then, Sayyid Qutb's rejection of modernity entail hostility toward technology and science? No, their instrumental worth is unquestionable, and he even admits the need for basic research, "provided it does not lead one to stray from the path of religion." Hence the need for maximum caution with regard to those fields (biology, astrophysics, and so on) that are liable to have a spillover effect upon major religious tenets. Borrowing ideas from non-Muslims is illicit here, and one should double-check with regard to the religious authenticity of even Muslim scientists.¹³

Qutb's ideas matured during his nine years in prison. The prison experience was to be, in effect, crucial in the making of most

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of the other New Radicals as well. In the nucleus of each group one finds people who had served time in political prison camps, and tales of their experience played an important role in the indoctrination of new recruits.

Qutb nurtured his ideas first on his own, continuing to write the Koranic commentary, *In the Shadow of the Koran*, then further developed them from the late 1950s on in conversations with fellow MB inmate Yusuf Hawwash, who became a close friend (and his future deputy in the resurrected clandestine MB). Very few of their fellow prisoners were apprised of these ideas at this stage, but they were elaborated upon in long letters to Qutb's brother and sister, both former religious activists. Those letters contained the essence of eight of the twelve chapters of his epoch-making book *Ma' alim fi-l-Tariq* (*Signposts on the Road*), which was to be published in November 1964, a few months after his release from prison (the other four chapters were taken from his Koranic commentary). Well before the publication of *Signposts* the ideas filtered out beyond the Qutb family circle and attracted the attention of a group of MB militants of the middle generation (mostly in their thirties; Qutb was almost sixty years old), some of them former inmates of Nasser's prisons. The latter, who had been trying since the late 1950s to reestablish the MB in order to take vengeance on the regime, asked permission to read these letters. Requested by his family, Qutb granted this request. By the time of his release from jail, quite a number of former MB activists and younger recruits (mostly students and young professionals in their twenties) had been converted to his ideas.¹⁸ Their original quest for revenge was transformed and given an intellectual edge it did not otherwise possess. In age and class (lower-middle to middle), the characteristics of this group fitted in with those of the membership of old MB, yet education was more upscale and more distinctly modern. This was an audience of the same type as its mentor.¹⁹

By the time of the police crackdown upon the group in August 1965, the overall number did not exceed 250 (much like that of the

Takfir group in 1977), but smaller than the Jihad Organization of 1981). The number involved and the nature of the terrorist acts planned (but only half-prepared) were perhaps less disconcerting for the authorities than the new message borne by the group.

In preparing for the show trial (which was to result in the execution of Qutb and two others and in harsh prison sentences), the secret police carried out in-depth interrogations of Qutb and his volarics on ideological matters. The transcript provides ample evidence that these were done with as much attention to detail as interrogations on operational aspects. The prosecution produced a whole dossier—a veritable *explication de texte*—analyzing *Signposts of the Twentieth Century* (also published in Arabic in 1964), which elaborated on the same set of ideas. This dossier was to serve as a linchpin of the act of accusation and of the prosecutor's speeches.

The core of Sayyid Qutb's ideas thus consists in a total rejection of modernity—following in this his Indian teachers Maudoodi and Nadwi—since modernity represents the negation of God's sovereignty (*hakimiyya*) in all fields of life and relegation of religion to the dustbin of history. Thence the sense of virtual despair which permeates his writings: Islam in this century is in the process of losing its grip over society, the world is passing it by; a new Age of Barbarity (*jahliliyya*) is in the making, similar in nature to one that preceded the rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula; it is thus high time for Islam to take the offensive before it is too late. This brooding cultural pessimism centered not only on external challenges—Maudoodi elaborated the main body of his thinking under British rule—but also on internal ones, that is, modern, usually Western, ideas and modes of behavior spread by native converts. Sayyid Qutb, entering the arena as the age of direct colonial rule was drawing to a close, concentrated on the internal challenges alone. His understanding of them deepened and was greatly transformed as the challenges began to come, not from a corrupt monarchy and upper class with a history of collaboration with imperialism and blatant infat-

nation with Western culture, but from the newly established revolutionary republic, with its impeccable anti-imperialist credentials, close contacts with the MB, and a heavily lower-middle-class origin and all that this intimated in terms of deep attachment to traditional Islam.

Qutb would conclude that the threat was worse and more insidious than at any point in Islamic history, coming as it did from within the citadel and through the agency of ostensibly faithful believers. A sense of almost forlorn urgency ensued—hope against hope. Consequently, he had to develop, for the first time in the history of mainstream Sunnism, a full-blown justification for a revolt against the powers-that-be.

I shall come back later (in Chapter 4) to this revolutionary theory, a sort of Muslim *Vindictive Contra Tyrannos*. What interests me most in the present context is the nature of new Muslim tyranny (or modern jahliyya) the radicals were grappling with. In a way, in his quality as an observer on the fringe, Qutb might perhaps also help us better understand the Nasserist phenomenon. And even if he does not, it is his and his followers' perception of the new jahliyya, whether in Egypt or Syria or Iraq, which lies at the fountain-head of the New Radicalism. This vision accounts for the alienation and the total rejection of the home-grown, nationalist military regimes, as illustrated by the episode with which I introduced this chapter.

Farewell to Pan-Arabism Nowhere are the alienation and rejection better highlighted than in the New Radicals' attitude toward Pan-Arab nationalism. We have already broached this issue in the first chapter, when dealing with the mature form this negative attitude was to take in the 1970s, and it is now time to elucidate its origins.

The old Muslim radicals have been close allies of Arabism since the 1930s, subscribing to the notion of the Arabs' special role in Islam, as the group destined to lead it—and to the concomitant view

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that Arab unity is a necessary and practical stepping-stone on the road to Islamic unity.¹⁶ But the MB were not unaware of the existence of a secularist brand of Pan-Arabism where Islam was relegated to a position of one among many cultural-historical components and where major emphasis was put on language. Yet as long as most proponents of secular Arabism remained sufficiently vague in their formulations, and as long as the overriding goal was to chase out the British and the French colonial rulers, the MB fitted well into the nationalist fold, its alliance with the less religiously oriented nationalists cemented on the battlefields of Palestine and the Suez Canal.

The MB espousal of Pan-Arabism stood in stark contrast to that of the Egyptian religious establishment, which had opposed Pan-Arabism ever since the late 1920s. This was either because the ulama viewed it as a competitor of Pan-Islam or because (much like Egyptian-centered nationalism) it was a Western import. It is quite illuminating that when the major proponent of secular Pan-Arabism, Saïd al-Husri, would collect his polemical essays of the 1930s and the early 1940s, his arrows would be directed not merely against the (secularist) proponents of non-Arab—that is, Syrian, Egyptian, Lebanese—particularistic nationalism, but also against the rector of al-Azhar, Sheikh Mustafa al-Maraghi, who in a famous 1938 essay dismissed the goal of Arab unity as racist. (It should be noted that even Pan-Islamists from outside the religious establishment, such as Shakib Arslan, warned that Pan-Arabism is bound to cut the ground from under the feet of Islam.)¹⁷

By 1952, however, when al-Husri published his *Arabism between Its Supporters and Its Critics*, he would find such critics only among the adepts of particularistic nationalism (*iqlimiyya*). The religious establishment had in the meantime been converted to Pan-Arabism, whether out of conviction—under the combined impact of the mystique of the Arab League (founded in 1945) and the First Palestine War—or just slavishly following in the footsteps of the Egyptian, and Iraqi, monarchies. When the Egyptian Revolutionary

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regime switched, in 1954, to wholehearted Pan-Arabism, the ulama would be quick to join in the chorus.

As for the MB, until their clash with Nasser, and well beyond, they would continue to profess allegiance to Pan-Arabism. Even a purist like Sayyid Qutb would write in January 1953:

Some of us prefer to assemble around the banner of Arabism. I do not object to this being a middle-range, transitional goal for unification, on the road to a unity of a wider scope. There is, then, no serious contradiction between Arab nationalism and Pan-Islam as long as we understand Arabism as a mere stage. The whole Land of the Arabs falls within the scope of the Abode of Islam. And whenever we liberate an Arab territory, we set free a patch of the Islamic homeland, an organic-part of the Islamic body; we would use it eventually to liberate the rest of this one and indivisible Abode.¹⁸

Less than a decade later, in one of those letters from prison, further developed in *Signposts*, he has to say something completely different:

The Prophet Muhammad was no doubt capable of setting forth a movement of Pan-Arab nationalism in order to unify the strife-riven tribes of Arabia. He was well nigh able of endowing his movement with a nationalist orientation in order to liberate [Arab] lands usurped by the Byzantines in the north and the Persians in the south.

Yet Allah, the Omnipotent and Omniscient, did not instruct His Messenger to go in that direction. He only told him to preach that there is no God but Allah. Why? Because Allah knew that there was no sense in liberating the land from a Byzantine or a Persian tyrant in order to put it in the hands of an Arab tyrant. Any tyrant is still a tyrant. The land is to God and should be liberated to serve Him alone. . . . Men should become His servants and none other. . . . All domination (*hakimiyya*) should be in the hands of Allah, all law (*Shari'a*) His only. The sole collective identity Islam offers is that of the

Faith, where Arabs, Byzantines, Persians, and other nations and colors are equal under God's banner.

Pan-Arabism is, thence, flatly rejected as incompatible with Islam:

The homeland (*watan*) a Muslim should cherish and defend is not a mere piece of land; the collective identity he is known by is not that of a regime. . . . Neither is the banner he should glory in and die for that of a nation (*qawm*). . . . His jihad is solely geared to protect the religion of Allah and His Shari'a and to save the Abode of Islam and no other territory. . . . Any land that combats the Faith, hampers Muslims from practicing their religion, or does not apply the Shari'a, becomes ipso facto part of the Abode of War (*Dar al-Harb*). It should be combatted even if one's own kith and kin, national group, capital and commerce are to be found there. . . . A Muslim's homeland is any land governed by the laws of Islam. Islam is the only identity worthy of man. . . . Any other group identity . . . is a jahili identity of the type humanity has known during its periods of spiritual decadence.¹⁹

The divorce with Pan-Arabism is thus definite, all ties to be severed, all former alliances between it and Islam null and void. No wonder that the Egyptian regime made these and other like-minded passages the centerpiece of its case against Qutb. For it was one of major ideas, with the help of which he conferred upon the reestablished MB underground a sense of purpose it had lacked. Though officially the leader of the organization, Qutb seems to have been only haphazardly involved in such mundane matters as training, arms acquisition, and the planning of operations. His ideological ascendancy was, however, uncontested; the challenge to Pan-Arabism was at its core.²⁰

The report of secret police on the case dissects the *Signposts* in order to prove the accused's "rejection of Pan-Arab nationalism." So does the special report of the Legislative Commission of the People's Assembly and the Act of Accusation. The regime understood only too well Qutb's direct swipe at Pan-Arabism's claim that

the Arabs are God's Chosen People (*khayr ummah*), a claim supposedly predicated upon the Koran (II, 110). Qutb, an authority on Koranic exegesis, pointedly quotes this verse to prove that "God's real chosen people is the Muslim community (*umma*) regardless of ethnic, racial, or territorial affiliation of its members. For didn't the first group of Muslims comprise an Arab, Abu Bakr, an Ethiopian, Bilal, a Byzantine, Suhayb, and a Persian, Salman?"²¹

Not did Qutb himself evade the issue during his police interrogation:

Q. What is your opinion of patriotism [*wataniyya*, 'particularistic nationalism']?

A. Patriotism should consist in bonds to the Faith, not to a piece of land. The present, territorial, sense given to this term should thus be greatly stretched.

Q. What do you think of Pan-Arab *qawmiyya*?
A. To my mind, this is a type of ideology that had exhausted its role in universal history. The whole world coalesces today in large ideological formations predicated upon doctrines and beliefs. Striving toward Islamic unity is, hence, much more in tune with the spirit of the times we live in.²²

The Nagging Doubts

Viewed against the backdrop of MB history, the divorce with Pan-Arabism seems abrupt and sudden. It would seem somewhat less so when placed in the intellectual context of the times. Uneasiness with regard to the turn taken by Arab nationalism under the military regimes can be detected in some religious quarters from the late 1950s onward. While the Azharites threw aside past reservations and embraced Arabism fervently, a major independent thinker, Muhammad al-Ghazzali (a former member of the Egyptian MB who left them in 1953), complained that in fighting for Arabism he had to accommodate strange and domineering bedfellows, the secular nationalists:

Who are these people? They are neither Arabs nor non-

Arabs; neither Russians nor Americans. They are the worst misfortune that has befallen our land. They grew out of the evil seeds sown by imperialism in our hearts and minds. Yet these very people are flesh of our flesh, they speak our language. All of a sudden they rose to prominence, their voices penetrating every nook and cranny like frogs croaking in the night. One should tear the mask off their faces so that no more will they be able to mislead. They cloak themselves with the false mantle of Pan-Arab nationalism while at the same time they combat that very [Islamic] Faith which is the true mission of Arabism.²³

Note that Ghazzali does not vituperate against the Pan-Arab idea as such; he rather denies authentically to a major manifestation thereof. His concept of Arabism is still essentially the one he shared with Sayyid Qutb (and the MB in general) in 1953: Arab unity as a step up the ladder leading to Islamic unity. What accounts for Ghazzali's virulent tone in 1959 is certainly not the souring of the relationship between the regime and the MB (from which he has defected in the meantime). It is just that in the early days of the Egyptian Revolution, Pan-Arabism was not a salient slogan and to the extent that the revolution exhibited suspect tendencies (apart from a growing monopolization of power), it was rather toward Egyptianism, that old secularist bogey of the 1920s and 1930s. It is significant that during the second anniversary of the revolution, three months before the major crackdown upon the MB, Pharaonic *tableaux vivants* figured in the July 23 evening processions.

When Ghazzali wrote the above paragraph in 1959, he was reacting to a totally different situation: Pan-Arabism reigned supreme, yet its spokesmen in the media were secularists of the Husri school ('Ali al-Kharbutli, Ahmad Baha' al-Din, Anis Mansur, Muhammad Mandur, Kamal al-Mallakh) who seemed to enjoy the benediction of the regime, for all the latter's continued lip service to Islam. The Egyptian-Syrian Union was founded in 1958 upon an alliance with an openly secularist party, the Ba'ith. Islam came

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are sincerely attracted to this type of nationalism . . . ready to fight other Muslims for their new creed. Many of them disdain going to the mosque and scorn reciting the Koran lest they be branded reactionary."²⁶

Nationalism and Its Discontents Al-Sawwaf was by no means

overstating his case. Not only a propagandist such as al-Kharbuli made the Prophet Muhammad into the "Messenger of Arabism" (title of his 1959 book), but even a prominent novelist such as Mahmud Taymur argued that "every age has its own sacred prophethood and Arabism is the prophethood of the present age in Arab society; its mission being to unite our forces, tap our capabilities. Arab writers should become the apostles of this veracious prophecy." A Lebanese Nasserist would go so far as to claim that "the Arab cause should be for the believing Arab what belief in Allah is for the Muslim," and the Kuwaiti monthly *al-'Arabi* declared in like vein (January 1959) that "Arab unity must be for the Arabs everywhere what the unity of God is for the faithful of Islam."²⁷ The harshest diagnosis about the transformation of Pan-Arabism into a civil religion would be voiced in Saudi Arabia, there perhaps more in glee than in dismay, during the years of the Arab Cold War. One might take with a grain of salt Saudi professed attachment to "true [Islamic-based] Arabism"; this could be no more than a necessary ploy in the polemics against Nasser, given the fact the Pan-Arabism's hold over intelligentsia and masses alike was still strong (albeit already weakened by the breakup of the United Arab Republic [UAR] and the Yemen War). However, Saudi writers were not out of tune with the mood in Islamic circles elsewhere in the early 1960s when they claimed that "the propagandists of Pan-Arabism renege on Islam and seek to dislodge it as religion and polity." That type of "nationalism hell-bent on erasing the very name of Islam from Arab Renaissance today" was, by their lights, the major culprit for the disruption of Arab solidarity.²⁸ Sayyid Qutb's evolution during the 1950s and early 1960s thus

to be a servant of Arabism, a mere historical component of a basically nonreligious ideology. This is, of course, the obverse of Ghazali's notion of "True Arabism" (the title of a book of his, 1961) as "the vessel of Islam." He cannot accept the view that "Islam is nothing but a feature of the Arab Renaissance produced by that great race in the Middle Ages" or that "in a manner of speaking, Islam sprouts out of the earth, not from heaven, it represents the upsurge of a nation rather than Allah's liberating gift freeing us from backwardness and barbarity."²⁴ The enemy has been operating from within and using Arab-Muslim modes of discourse with the blessing of the powers-that-be. It is a stocking-footed enemy and, thence, all the more pernicious. The regime is not explicitly castigated, but the secularist paragons are. After the breakup of the United Arab Republic, the author was restrained by no such prudence with regard to Syria and would attack the Ba'ith for the same sins.²⁵

Fathi Yakan, the major Lebanese disciple of Maudoodi and Qutb and yet another believer in the "Mission of Arab nationalism" (title of a 1958 book of his), expressed there the same fears as to the wrong route lately taken by Pan-Arabism. Yakan still thought a return to an Islamic concept of Arabism was possible. An Iraqi admirer of the MB, Muhammad Mahmud al-Sawwaf, in a lecture delivered in 1964, likewise excoriated what he dubbed the "Arab liber Alles" notion as Nazi-inspired, and he demanded to make religion alone the backbone of Arabism. "We are not opposed to nationalism as such but to nationalism predicated upon birth, ethnic origin, or territory. We are not opposed to a nationalism that glorifies Islam and adopts it as a way of life. We do combat a nationalism shorn of religion, nay even attempting to take the place of Islam." Here al-Sawwaf emphasizes the sorest point: "Don't some nationalists say that an Arab Muslim has two religions, Islam and nationalism, and a Christian Arab has two, Christianity and nationalism? Arab nationalism is allegedly their sole common denominator. . . . What a blasphemy!" Moreover, the author is deeply troubled by the efficacy of Pan-Arabism as a surrogate religion: "Young Muslims

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roughly parallels that of other Muslim thinkers, many of whom used to believe in the alliance between Arabism and Islam, but who had not been exposed to the same prison experience as he had been. Perhaps the most striking parallel is between his evolution and that of Abu-I-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, that Indian Muslim thinker, who had always been a great believer in the special role of the Arabs in Islam, and who wrote in Arabic extensively and maintained close contacts with the MB from the late 1940s on. When he met Sayyid Qutb during a 1951 visit to Egypt, they discovered, as we have seen, a great intellectual affinity predicated upon mutual admiration for Maudoodi's ideas (which Nadwi had been instrumental in introducing into the Arab East).²⁹

By the early 1960s—though based in faraway Lucknow, India (and certainly cut off from his imprisoned Egyptian friend)—this marginal, yet perspicacious observer, grew dismayed by the conversion of Arabism into a surrogate religion by Nasserism and even more so by the Ba'ith. In a series of articles and lectures (two of the latter delivered in Saudi Arabia) he sounded desperate warnings to his Arab friends not to embark upon this slippery and jahlī path. The tone of his Arabic was milder than that of other polemicists, yet the message was clear enough. "The nationalists are sincere and serious; they have been driven into these erroneous theories merely by excess of zeal, by a desire to glorify the Arab cause. Unwittingly perhaps, they become the agents of destructive Western ideas, helping their religion out of the Arab arena by building up a national movement devoid of an Islamic dimension." For him, as well as for some Arab writers, the fact that so many Christian Arabs (beginning with Michel Aflaq) were so prominent in Arab nationalism was a reason for alarm, whereas "the whole future of these minorities hinges upon the spread of secular nationalism and its replacing Islam; only thus can they reach positions of power and authority in the Arab world and cut the Arabs off from the Islamic world with which these Christians share neither beliefs and feelings nor history." Nadwi could find comfort only in the fact that Pan-Arabism

seemed to have made real inroads above all among the intelligentsia: "The masses are still deeply attached to Islam."³⁰ But the doubt persisted: for how long?

The reverse of the monopolization of Pan-Arabism by the secularists—with the backing of the military regimes (as epitomized in Nasser's 1962 Charter)—was the abdication of the Islamic establishment. The majority of the ulama came to be converted to the Pan-Arab cause rather late and retained the zeal of new converts. While the secularists brushed Islam aside or at the very least minimized it, the ulama tended to identify Islam and Arabism completely, the latter virtually absorbing the former. Some would vie in fervor with the secularists, speaking about a new chapter in the history of Arabism and Islam opened by the 1952 Revolution, in which both would perform their mission to spread justice for the sake of all humanity.³¹ An even more excessive formulation is to be found in an article by Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat, editor in chief of *Majallat al-Azhar* (1963). Notwithstanding the breakup of the UAR, he wrote, "The unity established by Muhammad was comprehensive because it was founded upon the bonds of belief, and such bonds, however long-lasting, must ultimately weaken or be transformed. The unity established by Saladin was partial and short-lived, grounded as it was in the personality of that sultan, a mere mortal. As for the unity built by Nasser, it is enduring and capable of further growth, based as it is on socialism in the realm of economics, on freedom of opinion, and on democracy in the realm of politics. These three components constitute a solid guarantee for this union against the danger of exploitation, tyranny, weak rule or corruption."³²

"Progressive" ulama were perhaps less opportunistic but no less zealous. Muhammad Khalafallah celebrated the fact that language-based Arab nationalism had a religious component, and he pronounced that Arabism was bound to spread further and achieve hegemony and unity. "The practicality of Islamic unity is, on the contrary, very doubtful,"³³ he alleged. Few and far between were

the voices who criticized such excesses; their tone (unless they came from Saudi Arabia) was circumspect, their approach roundabout. Quite atypical was the Egyptian Mahmud 'Abd al-Wahhab Fayid—significantly enough, not one of the higher ulema—who dared challenge al-Zayyat. Fayid accused him of trying to "turn people away from the mission of Muhammad," pointing out how under King Faruq, al-Zayyat used to sing the praises of Islam (as better than democracy, more just than socialism).³⁴

Fayid was a particularly courageous individual who had proved his mettle when calling for the resignation of Sheikhi al-Azhar in 1957 for failing to protest against the abolition of Shari'a courts. At that date he seemed to enjoy some half-open support, and al-Azhar students accompanied him to the railway station when he was banished from Cairo to a teaching post in Upper Egypt. If such support was forthcoming at all in 1963, it was at best tacit.

Severing the Gordian Knot Even Fayid, however, still viewed Arabism as a step up the road to Islamic unity. Here we grasp the exact significance of Sayyid Qutb's quantum leap. Sharing the doubts nurtured by some Muslim thinkers on the marriage between Islam and Pan-Arabism, he moved ahead and took the decisive step calling for a divorce. Qutb came to perceive the secularization of Arabism not as the regrettable (and still reversible) victory of one tendency within the movement over the other, but as an inevitable outcome. As nationalism was a European invention imported to the Middle East, it was bound to ally itself with that other import, secularism; all the more so, as European nationalism was essentially secularist, bred out of a culture where religion and state were different entities. The implicit contradiction between nationalism and Islam was blurred during the anticolonialist struggle, for they had a common enemy. In the post-colonial age, especially with the demise of "collaborationist" monarchies and the rise of nationalist-dominated regimes, the head-on clash was ineluctable. That secularism now had powerful allies

within Middle Eastern societies—allies who seemed dedicated to the welfare of those societies—made their danger even worse. One had, thus, to move from the struggle against outside enemies to combat enemies within; from alliance with nationalism—or efforts to modify its character—to open warfare.

It is not entirely clear whether Qutb was inspired on this chapter by Maudoodi, who had been a fierce opponent of Indian nationalism in the late 1930s and in the 1940s. He fought with particular vehemence the secularist "Muslim nationalism" of Jinnah, "en-language, and economic interests. Nationalism, for Maudoodi, must inevitably bolster up "jahili fanaticism" and bring misfortune upon humanity. It can in no way be compatible with religion. This was true in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century; it is still true today, when "Muslims, blindly emulating the West, glorify in their Arabhood, Egyptianhood, Turkishness, and so forth."

Maudoodi's collected writings on this issue would first be translated into Arabic only in 1967,³⁵ yet Qutb could have gleaned references to these views interspersed in his other books, which were available in Arabic. That he does not refer to Maudoodi at all on this topic must be due not only to the paucity of such references but also to the fact that the relationship of Arabism to Islam was much more complex than its relationship with Indian or Pakistani nationalism. Islam was born in Arabia, its message defined as the ultimate version of monotheism in "the most eloquent language," Arabic. It was Arab tribes the Prophet united; it was these very tribes who spread the Faith beyond the peninsula and established the empire, all whose caliphs (till the early sixteenth century) were Arabs. Not only prayer but the main body of Islamic intellectual production—law, theology, mysticism, philosophy, and science—had always been conducted in Arabic. The relationship between Arabism and Islam was too close, too intricate for even most modern-day secularists to call for outright separation (especially when they wanted to mobilize the masses). No wonder that radical Islam, of

the old MB variety, saw nationalism—interpreted by their own lights, of course—as an ally of Islam. Indeed even Nadyi, who propagated Maudoodi's ideas in the Arab world, thought (and continued to do so well into the 1970s) that an exception should be made for Arabism, as the sole variety of nationalism which is not diametrically opposed to Islam and can even be made its auxiliary.

Hitherto influenced by Nadyi, Sayyid Qutb saw his own thinking transformed during the 1950s. He came to inaugurate a new brand of Islamic radicalism, reacting not to the twilight of colonial rule but to the postindependence age—by calling for the severance of that Gordian knot tying together Arabism and Islam.

The New Tyranny What motivated Qutb to call for a clean slate? What made such a break with the MB past attractive for radicals in the 1960s and 1970s? Both for him and for his followers the prison years were the crucial, formative experience. Not only did incarceration and brutal torture breed hatred, desire for revenge, and alienation, the experience forced them to face up to the realities of the new nationalist, military-controlled state: a state characterized by sincere and combative anti-imperialism—hence not to be impugned as “collaborationist” as the old upper-class rulers used to be. The elite of this state was plebeian in origin and thus able to address the masses in their own idiom; it was military in profession with all that this implies in terms of relative efficiency, cult of order, and penchant for ruthlessness. Consequently, it dawned upon the radicals that not only does the danger to Islam come from within, it now comes in a manner so effective, so insidious, and seemingly hard to fault.

The scale and efficiency of the 1954/55 Nasserist crackdown on the MB, the dismantling of subsequent attempts to reorganize, the manipulation of public opinion against the MB—all this must have intimated to the latter that the rules of the game were being rewritten by the new powers—that be and that these redoubtable adversaries could play hard and fast.

At the outset, the MB found it difficult to comprehend the new circumstances. It is typical that, as late as summer 1954 when they obtained secret police documents dealing with repressive measures planned against them, their leadership did very little about it. The October 1954 mass arrests and the 1955 show trials set off a reconsideration of strategies. New conceptions were slowly fleshing out.

This was particularly true of Brethren thrown in jail or running for their lives. Thus MB leader Hasan 'Ashmawi, living clandestinely in various Egyptian localities during the mid-1950s, recounts in his memoirs his feelings of almost total isolation, cut off as he was from his support base, and with the rest of the membership falling one after the other into cleverly set traps. He notes the fear the ever-present intelligence services spread among the previously sympathetic populace, and the ease with which the common people were converted to support the regime by propaganda campaigns, plebiscites, referenda, and other “distortions of democracy.”¹⁶ Ironically, in this as in other MB writings, a measure of nostalgia creeps in for the good old days of the relatively liberal monarchy, which was more respectful of legality, less efficient in intelligence gathering and in repression. This (admittedly partial) democracy had now been converted into a blatant tyranny. “Former rulers used to maltreat their adversaries, but not until the revolutionary regime have we seen rulers who bring the wife and children of an opponent and torture them in his presence,” notes a prisoner. “Democratic life which had allowed for a freedom of political activity was definitely done away with,” decries another Egyptian. “The present regimes are animated by vicious hatred of Islam. No ideological dialogue with them is possible, for their sole answer is recourse to repression.”¹⁷

In the same vein the Syrian radicals lament the passing of the old-time judiciary, which “used to be the mainstay of society and the pride of the nation. Judges had been above reproach. They had been held to high standards in ethics and scholarship and had administered justice to all, regardless of social position, even if they

had to rule against the powers-that-be. Yet under the [Ba'th] tyranny this venerable institution—much like others—was eaten up by rot. The judiciary and the judges lost their immunity. Opportunists, ignorant diploma holders, greedy individuals, and other time-servers were appointed to the bench. The common people learned that their pleas were of no avail unless they were ready to grease the palms of those who sit in judgment. The guardians of the law became robbers."³⁸ This brings another spokesman of the Syrian underground to paint a much harsher and broader historical canvas:

How miserable you are, oh Syria! The Mongols invaded you, followed by the French, killing, devastating and spoiling. Then a worse disaster befell you: the Alawites infiltrated the [Ba'th] regime and started to shed blood, seize property, and violate taboos. Paralyzed by stupefaction, the nation's power of resistance was sapped; little by little the Syrians resigned themselves to the new state of affairs, and the oppressors firmly sat in the saddle, treating the population arbitrarily.³⁹

The abuse of due process, the manipulation of the legislative system (through retroactive laws) and of the judiciary, are common complaints in letters from prison and in memoirs. Massacres like the one perpetrated in the Torra jail in June 1957 and in the Cairo suburb of Kardasa, an MB redoubt, in August 1964, added poignancy to the emerging awareness of a new reality. What made this reality even more revolutive—yet efficient—was the democratic and revolutionary garb it was cloaked in.

Sayyid Qutb, showing the court the marks of torture on his body, would wryly remark, "The principles of the revolution have indeed been applied to us, Muslim Brethren, in jail." During his police interrogation he rested his case upon the regime's trampling on legality. "A government which is not beholden to any law ceases to be a legitimate government." The prime examples he cited were the mass arrests in 1954, "which gave us an inkling of things to come," as well as the outlawing of the MB, though all it had done

was to "carry out the religious injunction of preaching." Fighting such a regime, he declared, was a measure of self-defense.⁴⁰

"I am writing to you," says another prisoner in a letter, "from the fearful Bastille of Egypt, from that sinful military prison. The whole of Egypt is imprisoned. . . . I was arrested despite my immunity as a judge, without an order of arrest. . . . My sole crime being my critique of the nonapplication of the Shari'a." And on his jailers: "This is the scum which rules Egypt. What a strange sight they are! Their minds are in their bellies and in their hands." As for his prosecutors, they "departed from its old traditions, threw aside law and facts, and concentrated during the trial upon insults and curses." (Judges like General Digawi, president of the military court, indeed conducted themselves in manifest hostility to the defendants, subjected them to rituals of degradation and disregarded procedural rules.) No wonder that songs composed in prison camps promised Nasser the same fate as dictators such as Mussolini and Shitshaki.⁴¹

A Syrian disciple of Sayyid Qutb, Sa'id Hawwa, would try, toward 1970, to explain the way the exercise of power changed under the military elites: "All over the Islamic world the officers' corps is the most depraved social group. This is particularly true for the upper echelons, which are full of traitors, drunkards, fornicators, non-Muslims, and heretics. All that is due above all to methods of officers' selection. Those in charge of admission to military schools are the vilest elements of the corps and they reject virtually all candidates who are religious-minded; their criteria are, as a rule, imbued with the values of the materialistic jahiliyya." The overall judgment of Hawwa—who was to become the major thinker of the New Radicalism in Syria—does not differ significantly from the one proffered long after the event, by Salah al-Din al-Bihar, founder of the Ba'th and erstwhile ally of the army officers (before being demoted, exiled, and ultimately assassinated), as well as from that of Sanni al-Jundi, another prominent, and later disillusioned Ba'th leader.⁴²

The brutality of the Ba'th regime in dealing with religious

dissent (in 1964, 1965, and 1967), which far exceeded that of Nasr—lent credence to Hawwa's words. Developments under President Assad, who seized power after Hawwa's book was written, would only further bolster his case, especially the arrests, torture, and massacres of MB sympathizers from 1976 onward. No other elite "in Syrian history ever since independence," said a clandestine MB tract, "had such a monopoly, such a tight grip on all power centers." Another tract reviles the "despotism of the repressive apparatus"; "Thousands are in prison, many of whom die under torture—from electrical shock to severe beating. All suffer deliberate degradation. Those who do not die see their property sequestered and are deprived of the right to legal defense."⁴³

Observing these developments from Tripoli, Lebanon, Fathi Yakan would thus sum them up in early 1967: "The Islamic movement faces now a grave challenge. Leadership in Muslim countries fell into the hands of dictatorial rulers who treat the true believers most harshly—torturing and massacring them, making their wives into widows. . . . Simply put, an open season has been declared on Islam. . . . Our enemies have recourse to all the destructive and immoral means available. On top of the repressive measures they launch propaganda campaigns in the service of the new jahiliyya, spreading false accusations against our militants."⁴⁴

When such a military state controls not only all instruments of coercion but also all instruments of persuasion and can infuse the latter with a mass-mobilizing content—personality cult of the za'im and the "religion of Arabism"—the danger it constitutes to Islam is greatly enhanced.

"There are Muslims," writes Hawwa, "who become enamored of this or that political leader and give him their all-out support, come hell or high water. They allege that the leader is working in the service of his nation or that he is a man of genius, a great historical figure or a sublime hero, and so forth." Hawwa thus came to share Qutb's conclusion—divorce with nationalism is the only remedy. "Should a Muslim embrace national goals whatever their

nature?" he asks rhetorically, "or should Islam constitute the supreme goal of our umma? Didn't the Prophet emigrate from his own homeland? For if we are not ready to follow his example, why wouldn't it be licit for a Muslim to embrace the nationalism of an infidel country (*Dar al-Harb*)?"⁴⁵

The rise of the new military state is, for Hawwa, a major cause for the decline of Islam. "Islam has lost hold over real life. Its political regime is a shambles, its concept of the community of the believers (umma) was replaced by [Pan-Arab] nationalism (qawmiyya); its notion of a judicial system was scuttled, its laws relegated to oblivion, its concepts of executive power shunted aside by the barbarity of the jahiliyya.

Combating the state and its nationalistic credo is thus the spearhead of what Hawwa dubs the "Second Islamic Revolution" (the First being the anticolonialist struggle, which ended with independence). This revolution should be directed "against internal, endogenous currents of opinion which are tributaries of powerful worldwide undercurrents," such as secularism and consumerism.⁴⁶

Of all these currents, Hawwa considers nationalism the most dangerous. In a more recent work of his (1979), he sums up the danger with the formula: Arabism as secular religion. "Affiliation to a nationality as such is quite a natural phenomenon. But what is objectionable is that when asked 'What is your creed?' one answers: 'Arab.' For that Arab should rather say that he is Muslim or Christian or Jewish. Ethnic affiliation must have no impact upon the contents of one's beliefs, perceptions, and mores. This grave error ends up making nationalism a substitute for Islam."⁴⁷

Similar ideas had been nourished for some years by another Syrian, Marwan Hadid, who as a student in Egypt (1956-64) seems to have been in contact with Qutb's admirers among former political detainees. Their critique of the military rulers (and of the old-style MB) inspired him to establish in his home country, upon his return, a radical splinter group, Kata'ib Muhammad (Phalanges of Muhammad). It is Hawwa, however, who endowed the group with an ide-

logical coherence, which would later propel it—under Hadid's operational leadership—into armed resistance.

The *Manifesto of the Islamic Revolution in Syria* (1980)—which Hawwa had a hand in drafting—singles out the "Pan-Arab parties" (notably, the Ba'ith) as the major force "conducting at present an open warfare against the Islamic movement and pulling its weight in order to banish Islam's protagonists from public life." The *Manifesto*—as well as the *Charter of the Syrian Islamic Front* (1981)—is ready to envision Arab unity, or the unification of any two Arab countries, as a stepping-stone toward Islamic unity; but it refuses to accept Arabism as the major component of Islam. In its definition of Islamic identity the *Manifesto* reduces Arabism to a purely linguistic factor; it is only one of six factors, or strands (together with creed, law, history, territory, and mores) which, interwoven, make up the fabric of Islam.⁴⁶

Fathi Yakan who, already in 1958, had had his doubts about the turn Pan-Arabism had taken, was swayed by Qutb and came, by 1970, to roughly the same views, albeit formulated in a milder manner; the *Jama'a Islamiyya* (Muslim Association) he had founded in 1964 would become their vehicle:

Pan-Arabism had undergone a dangerous and far-reaching metamorphosis caused by its own intellectual vacuity. Lacking in philosophical contents, it has seen this intellectual vacuum filled in by foreign, materialistic ideas. . . . This would not have happened had we kept the close relationship which had existed in the past between Arabism and Islam, when it has been maintained that Arabism is just body and Islam its soul. The disintegration of this protective alliance explains how the citadel of Arabism could be seized from within. . . . Arabism lost its distinct personality. The umbilical cord linking it to its past was cut off.⁴⁷

Although Yakan still hoped perhaps to have Arabism revert one day to its old self, he knew that at present—and for the foreseeable future—it was all-out war between Pan-Arabism and Islam. Later

Lebanese movements, more radical than the *Jama'a*, such as *al-Tawhid al-Islami* (Islamic Unification), were to take up vigorously this theme of cutting Arabism down to size ("it consists of language alone") and Fathy reject all types of nationalism. "Pan-Arabism," said their leader Sa'id Sha'ban in a November 1983 interview, "has been tried, but did not foster any coming together. Territorial nationalism has been experimented with in Lebanon and brought us nothing but destruction and devastation. Therefore we call upon one and all: come back and worship Allah, your Lord."⁴⁸

Turning Inward It is the farewell to Pan-Arabism and the concentration upon the "jahiliyya within" that account for the change of attitude toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. They well explain the gloating of the radicals in 1967 at the misfortune of the regime, the shock—for there certainly was one even among MB prisoners—related to what the defeat did to the people (still judged as capable of being redeemed) and to territories of *Dar al-Islam*. The struggle for their reconquest figured, however, very low on the radicals' order of priorities.

That such attitudes could persist, as we have seen, well through the 1970s and the early 1980s, is all the more remarkable as many of the young recruits who flocked to the militant Islamic student associations (*Jama'at*) and to terrorist groups, did so as a result of soul-searching set off by the trauma of June 1967.⁴⁹ Though haunted by the defeat, those new disciples learned to see in it nothing but a symptom; it is the root cause of the illness they had to strike at.

The Israeli challenge was real, at times quite exasperating (though the New Radicals, like many of the older generation, would combine hatred with a grudging respect toward Israel, held as an edifying example of a state built upon religion).⁵⁰ But however infuriating the "Zionist entity" was, it could never overshadow the internal challenges.

One catches a glimpse of the problematics involved there with Sayyid Qutb. In his consultations with the five ringleaders of the

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MB underground in May 1965, he opposed certain types of terrorist activity with the argument that blowing up major economic installations may unwittingly serve the cause of "Zionist evil designs to weaken Egypt." In spite of his objections, the meeting decided to proceed with planning and training for such acts—though in scaled-down form—for they were still deemed vital to help the revolutionaries seize power and forestall repression (by knocking out electrical plants and communication systems).⁵³

To the extent that Qutb's followers would continue to entertain such misgivings, they would be greatly alleviated by subsequent experiences in prison; prisons such as the military jail in Cairo, whose commander, a notoriously sadistic torturer, would tell the inmates in 1966: "You know my opinion of you . . . you deserve to be annihilated . . . for you constitute a worse danger to this country than the Jews."⁵⁴ The prison experience would indeed figure as a major factor not only in the making of the first generation of New Radicals but also in the indoctrination of new recruits. Episodes such as the one just quoted must have helped reinforce the argument for a reordering of priorities.

The attitude toward Pan-Arabism among the radicals of the 1970s and the 1980s encapsulates this evolution. Here is how a booklet published by the Muslim Students' Association in al-Minya University (Upper Egypt) comments on the meaning of jihad: "This religion is not a call for the liberation of the Arab man, nor is it a special mission for the sole Arab. It is universal, its scope is the whole earth. . . . It is destined to liberate all humanity from man's domination upon man." "And the Muslim Students' Association at Cairo University—in a book that elsewhere exudes hatred toward Israel—proclaims: "Our prime goal is the realization of a free Islamic society' . . . a society that is not riven by class struggle nor by chauvinistic gawmiyya."⁵⁵

These views affected the somewhat more moderate MB clustered around monthlies such as *al-Da'wa* and *al-I'tisam* (which resumed publication between 1976 and 1981). The attitude toward

Pan-Arabism there is at best ambiguous (a good movement that went off the tracks), at times frankly hostile. In any case, collaboration with the secularist brand of Pan-Arabism is to be excluded, for, as one writer notes, "it evolved into a surrogate for religious bonds under the impact of a set of ideas which had developed in Europe in a specifically Christian situation."⁵⁶ Even in Syria, however much the MB will denounce the regime for losing the Golan Heights "through treason," the frequency and saliency of that charge are eclipsed by sallies against the "apostasy" and "infidelity" of the regime as evidenced in education, laws, nationalizations, and so forth. The ultimate enemy are those false Muslims "who at times cloak themselves with the mantle of Arabism, and at others with the coat of a particularistic (Syrian) nationalism."⁵⁷ In either case—much like in Egypt—it was the regime which articulated and disseminated these ideas; it is this "new tyranny" which had to be extirpated, root and branch.